



Report: Learning from the Immigration Advice for Rough Sleepers Fund

June 2022

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Immigration Advice for Rough Sleepers Fund was established by the GLA in 2021 and managed by Homeless Link. Seven organisations were awarded grants to establish partnership-based projects to provide immigration advice for rough sleepers and those who were imminently homeless.

The main objectives of the fund were to increase free immigration advice and specialist support for non-UK national rough sleepers as well as improving the integration of homelessness and immigration service and embedding specialist immigration advice in rough sleeper support services. The total amount for the fund was £557,000 and was distributed to seven grantees. All grant holders operated partnership models, lead partners were: Depaul UK, Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network, Micro Rainbow, NEWway Project, South London Refugee Association, St Mungo's and Thames Reach.

Models

A range of models for immigration advice provision were explored across the seven projects. OISC refers to Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner, which is the regulating body for immigration advice and services within the UK. The models included:

- Homelessness staff acting as immigration link workers (non-OISC)
- Homelessness staff providing initial advice (OISC Level 1)
- Immigration advice staff, in-house or external partners supporting homelessness organisations (OISC Levels 2-3, solicitors)
- In-house homelessness staff providing coordination and admin support to release the funded capacity of immigration partners to focus on regulated legal matters

Process maps for the seven projects can be found online here:

- [Depaul](#)
- [Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network](#)
- [NEWway Project](#)
- [South London Refugee Association](#)
- [St Mungo's](#)
- [Thames Reach](#)
- [Micro Rainbow](#)

Outputs

The fund achieved the following outputs across all partners by the end of the funded period:

- Total number of people referred/assessed: 786
- Total number of people receiving immigration advice: 534

- Total number of people linked into accommodation: 244
- Total number of people achieving secure status and access to public: 107

Recommendations

Homeless Link gathered learning points from across the funded period from all seven of the lead organisations. These have led to the following recommendations for service providers, central and local government who are interested in exploring work of this nature. We have specified who the recommendation is for in parentheses.

1. **Advantages of Homelessness Sector Involvement** (Service Providers, Commissioners, Local Authorities)

Homelessness organisations across the partnerships took on a “bridging and holding” role and were vital in assisting people who were rough sleeping to keep in contact with their immigration advisors, this increased efficiency and the ability for holistic support to be delivered. Commissioners should be aware of the benefit of cross-sector service delivery and the need for enhanced investment to support this.

2. **Approaches to accessing OISC (Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner) registered advice and capacity** (Service Providers, Commissioners)

Achieving OISC accreditation has been transformative for organisations funded through the IARSF, allowing them to do work that previously needed a referral to complete. Organisations need to be aware of what the actual need is for OISC advice amongst their client cohort and what level of OISC accreditation is needed to address that. They should also have an understanding of their organisational capacity to take on OISC training and exams.

3. **Managing Fluctuating Demand** (Service Providers)

Fluctuating demand for immigration advice was experienced across organisations, this was particularly impacted by the deadline for EUSS applications, opening of winter provision and the closure of Everyone In hotels. Organisations found that working across borough boundaries and establishing partnerships with a variety of services helped to manage demand more effectively.

4. **Impact of Home Office decision delays** (Central Government, Commissioners, Local Authorities, Service Providers)

There were significant delays in Home Office decision making, coupled with unexpectedly complex cases and a distorted perception of waiting times due to the initial quick turn arounds on EUSS applications in 2021. This meant that clients needed support and emergency accommodation for much longer than predicted. This exacerbated issues around precarious accommodation when a decision was not quickly returned. It is vital that organisations are aware of every route to escalate a case to the Home Office and make use of these to move along delayed cases. Central Government should also expand and formalise case escalation pathways.

5. Providing accommodation for rough sleepers receiving immigration advice
(Commissioners, Local Authorities, Central Government, Service Providers)

Stable and appropriate accommodation is important for clients while they receive immigration advice to better enable engagement with services. This is especially important once cases have been referred to immigration advice providers as supporting cases through to completion can take long periods of time. Budgets should take accommodation needs into account at the planning stage of projects.

6. Data Sharing and need for robust data policies (Service Providers, Commissioners, Local Authorities, Central Government)

Organisations need robust policies on data sharing between partners from the very beginning, to enable implementation of the work. Charities must be aware of Local Authority expectations regarding what data is shared and how, and decide how they can remain independent considering this.

7. Unexpected complexity of cases and impact on outcomes (Service Providers, Commissioners, Funders)

Due to the unexpectedly complex nature of cases receiving immigration advice, more time was spent on casework than initially budgeted for. Subsequently there was an impact on the number of cases advisors could take on. It is recommended that projects have flexible targets and that case work hours be considered in terms of the quality of outcomes as well as numbers of people worked with.

8. Funding for Partnerships and Cross-sector Collaboration (Service Providers, Commissioners)

The IARSF specifically sought to fund partnerships and cross sector collaboration and therefore capacity for this was built into the projects from the beginning. This allowed projects to be holistic in their support and for partnership development to be frontloaded. It is recommended that service providers and commissioners allow flexibility for partnership development to be frontloaded and capacity for this to be fully funded.

9. Need for longer term funding, impact on long term objectives (Local Authorities, Central Government, Commissioners)

Long term funding is recommended for projects of this nature as it allows for unexpected delays on immigration cases as well as giving capacity for more casework on complex cases.

10. Impact of the IARSF Grant Holder Network (Local Authorities, Central Government, Commissioners, Funders)

As well as funding project delivery, the IARSF also established a grant holder network. Tangible connections were made in the network meetings and even resulted in some cross-referrals as well as cross-organisational training. Funding arrangements which enable collaboration and shared learning are recommended.

Legacy

While not all of the organisations will continue to provide the same services as were developed from this funding, each of them has reported an impact on how they will work going forward.

Funding for new Sub-regional Immigration Advice services (SIASs) for people rough sleeping in London has been secured by London Councils and the GLA from Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative [2022-2025](#). Some of the initial learnings from the IARSF were used to inform the need and possible models for these new projects and a number of the IARSF grantees have been successful in applying to deliver part of the SIASs. These new services will significantly increase the immigration advice capacity available for people rough sleeping in London and support with embedding immigration advice within rough sleeping services.

The fund has also meant the establishment of an additional OISC registered organisation (Micro Rainbow) as well as creating posts such as the Thames Reach Immigration Navigator. This has increased access to immigration advice for rough sleepers in the short term. In the longer term, Thames Reach also plan to have a specific member of each of their outreach teams who will specialise in immigration issues.

Other organisations have also developed lasting partnerships that will allow them to cross-refer going forward. Training provided by both homelessness services and immigration providers will have a lasting impact on how services are operated.

Introduction

Overview of the fund

The Immigration Advice for Rough Sleepers Fund (IARSF) was established by the GLA in 2021, with funding awarded in March of that year. The fund was managed by Homeless Link, who processed applications, managed panel decision making processes and monitored and supported grantees post-award. Seven organisations across London were awarded grants to establish partnership-based projects to provide immigration advice for rough sleepers and those who were imminently homeless. There was a range of organisations awarded from both the homelessness and immigration sectors, representing how the fund took a cross-sector approach to awarding grants.

The main objectives of the fund were:

- Increase free immigration advice available to non-UK national rough sleepers to access their rights and entitlements, including people from Roma communities, women and the hidden or mobile homeless;
- Increase the specialist support available to non-UK national rough sleepers within homelessness support services to facilitate a positive move-on from rough sleeping;
- Improve integration and/or collaboration of migration and homelessness work;
- Embed specialist immigration advice in support services for rough sleepers.

The total amount for the fund was £557,000 and was distributed to seven grantees. This is broken down as follows:

Lead Organisation	Partners	Area of focus	Amount received
Depaul UK	Cardinal Hume Centre , New Horizon	Pan-London	£60,458
Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network	Bench Outreach	South East and parts of East London (mostly Lewisham, Greenwich, Bexley, Bromley, Hackney and Southwark)	£90,000
Micro Rainbow	Wesley Gryk Solicitors	Pan-London	£57,932
NEWway Project	Caritas Anchor House , Renewal Project	Newham	£58,950
South London Refugee Association	Ace of Clubs , Thames Reach Croydon , Crisis Croydon , Glass	South West (including Kingston, Croydon, Wandsworth)	£83,975

	Door (these organisations were not funded directly)		
St Mungo's	Praxis	Pan-London	£100,063
Thames Reach	Tower Hamlets Law Centre, Hammersmith and Fulham Law Centre	Pan-London	£106,034

Why was the fund developed?

As part of the research project "[A Huge Gulf: Demand and Supply for Immigration Legal Advice in London](#)", commissioned by the Justice Together Initiative and Paul Hamlyn Foundation, and funded by the Greater London Authority, it was identified that demand for immigration work far outstripped supply. The report states that capacity for legal aid work within London is,

...for just over 10,000 immigration and asylum 'matters' per year, including applications and tribunal appeals within the scope of legal aid (but note that one client may account for more than one matter), and 700 higher court matters, including judicial review applications and appeals to the Court of Appeal or higher.¹

The report goes on to add that for OISC (Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner) levels 2 and 3 there is combined capacity of "no more than 4,000-4,500 pieces"². On the other hand, demand estimates are in the hundreds of thousands. This would include approximately 4,300 first-time adult asylum applicants per year, at least 238,000 who are likely to be eligible for regularisation, 23,000 individuals needing to extend their leave and an unknown number of EU nationals who have not yet applied under the EU Settlement Scheme as well as those that will need to upgrade from pre-settled status to settled status.³

During 2019/2020, the number of people sleeping rough in London who were non-UK nationals was around 52%⁴. In the year 2021/2022, this percentage fell to 48%⁵ of rough sleepers whose nationality was known. However, in quarter 1 of 2022/2023 this

¹ Wilding, J., Mguni, M., Van Isacker, T., A Huge Gulf: Demand and Supply for Immigration Legal Advice in London, 2021, pg. 4

² Wilding, J., Mguni, M., Van Isacker, T., A Huge Gulf: Demand and Supply for Immigration Legal Advice in London, 2021, pg. 5

³ Wilding, J., Mguni, M., Van Isacker, T., A Huge Gulf: Demand and Supply for Immigration Legal Advice in London, 2021, pg. 5

⁴ Greater London Authority, n.d. Rough Sleeping in London (CHAIN Reports), Greater London bulletin 2019/20. Available at: <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports>

⁵ Greater London Authority, n.d. Rough Sleeping in London (CHAIN Reports), Greater London bulletin 2021/22. Available at: <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports>

Homeless Link

percentage went up again to 49.9%.⁶ Accommodation provided by the GLA through the “Everyone In” hotel scheme indicated there were even higher numbers of rough sleeping migrants in London. It was estimated that around 70% of people accommodated through Everyone In hotels were non-UK nationals, and within this figure, 68% had unclear or insecure immigration status. This finding is likely to have been reflected in hotels obtained by Local Authorities as well. It should also be noted that it is a criminal offence to provide immigration advice without accreditation and advisors must be registered with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC).

In line with the findings from this report, the Immigration Advice for Rough Sleepers Fund was established to better enable organisations to provide immigration advice to rough sleepers in the capital. Homeless Link came onboard to manage the fund as this was an opportunity to support the homelessness sector and gather learning on bringing together immigration and homelessness services. Homeless Link’s wider work includes running the Support Don’t Deport campaign, and the report [“Unlocking the door: A roadmap for supporting non-UK nationals facing homelessness in England”](#) around meaningful support for people experiencing homelessness and immigration issues. The fund itself took a partnership approach to capacity building within organisations and gave them space for cross-sector collaboration.

How the Models Worked

The seven projects funded by the Immigration Advice for Rough Sleepers Fund each explored a different model of delivery. Within each of these models we saw provision of advice alongside holistic support and all projects represent cross sector collaboration between homelessness services and immigration services. Three organisations within the cohort were from the migrant rights sector; Micro Rainbow, Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network (LRMN), and South London Refugee Association (SLRA). The remaining four organisations are all working within the homelessness sector.

Process maps illustrating how each of the seven projects delivered the funded services can be found online here:

- [Depaul](#)
- [Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network](#)
- [NEWway Project](#)
- [South London Refugee Association](#)
- [St Mungo’s](#)
- [Thames Reach](#)

⁶ Greater London Authority, n.d. Rough Sleeping in London (CHAIN Reports), CHAIN quarterly report Greater London April-June 2022/23. Available at: <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports>

- [Micro Rainbow](#)

Depaul

At Depaul, partnering with New Horizons Youth, their delivery model was to identify young people with immigration issues as they accessed a Youth Hub hotel. From there, young people were referred by a manager, part funded by IARSF, to the Cardinal Hume Centre (CHC), who were also partners on this project. Depaul maintained contact with the young people and provided wrap around ETE (Employment, Training, Education) support such as CV writing help and employment access.

At CHC, cases were referred to an IARSF funded solicitor and legal administrator who established if cases were open elsewhere. If not, CHC provided immigration advice and casework or made onward referrals to legal aid. Throughout this process, Depaul and New Horizons Youth helped maintain engagement between the young person and their immigration advisor.

Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network (LRMN)

At LRMN referrals were obtained from an IARSF funded worker at partner organisation Bench Outreach, who worked with soup kitchens, hostels, hotels, outreach teams, day centres and local authorities across Lewisham, Greenwich and Tower Hamlets. They were referred to an IARSF funded Level 3 Immigration Advisor at LRMN, who either took on the case or made an onward referral to legal aid. The IARSF also made provision for interpretation and client welfare costs (travel, ID, mobile data). LRMN made internal referrals to housing and counselling services where relevant. As well as being supported by LRMN after referral, clients also continued to work with other services for housing and support.

Micro Rainbow

Micro Rainbow accepted referrals from specialist LGBTQI+ organisations such as Rainbow Migration, Stonewall Housing and the Albert Kennedy Trust as well as taking self-referrals. Those who had unmet immigration needs were referred to Micro Rainbow's IARSF funded OISC Level 1 Advisor. Clients also received holistic support and housing from Micro Rainbow. Cases that were not able to be closed by the OISC Level 1 Advisor were referred to partners at Wesley Gryk Solicitors on a flat fee per case. Most of these cases were then onward referred for legal aid.

NEWway Project

NEWway Project partnered with Caritas Anchor House and the Renewal Project in the London Borough of Newham. Referrals were made from NEWway's 'NEWday' centre and from people who were staying in Caritas Anchor House's beds for people with no recourse to public funds. IARSF funding was used to coordinate referrals. The Renewal Project took referrals for their IARSF funded immigration solicitor (who worked on a 3 days per week basis) who was able to provide assessment and casework on-site at the NEWday Centre. Onward referrals were made of cases that were eligible for legal aid. Funding from the IARSF was also used to cover supervision for the Renewal Project

solicitor so they could be well supported. NEWway provided holistic support for clients referred as well as helping with gathering documents for their immigration cases.

South London Refugee Association (SLRA)

SLRA worked with local partners at Robes Project, Glass Door, Thames Reach, Crisis and Ace of Clubs to accept referrals. The IARSF funded immigration advice staff working up to OISC Level 3 to provide assessment and casework on referrals. They also provided onward referral for cases eligible for legal aid. SLRA worked with partners to offer holistic support to clients, including access to housing. As well as casework, SLRA were funded to deliver training for homelessness service providers on immigration issues and to host a multi-agency forum for homelessness sector partners.

St Mungo's

After having been referred to a GLA's COVID-19 response hotel, clients who were accessing the beds for people with limited or unclear entitlements, engaged with the IARSF funded Immigration Link Worker. The Link Worker was on-site at the hotel and made onward referrals to immigration advice funded through IARSF or within St Mungo's Street Legal team. The Immigration Link Worker also coordinated access to bedspaces reserved for "immigration initial assessment" and as cases progressed, "immigration ongoing advice". An Immigration Advisor, funded by IARSF, sat within the wider Street Legal Team and was able to provide assessment, casework where appropriate and onward referral of cases to legal aid. The IARSF also funded training by St Mungo's to improve outreach teams' understanding of immigration issues.

Thames Reach

Internal outreach teams refer clients with immigration issues to Thames Reach's Immigration Navigator, funded by IARSF and with OISC Level 1 accreditation. The Navigator can resolve simple immigration issues themselves, and for any they are unable to process, make an onward referral to partners at Tower Hamlets Law Centre or Hammersmith and Fulham Law Centre. The IARSF also funded phone data, translation and travel for clients. The Navigator also continues to work with clients after onward referral to develop an action plan of ongoing support and engagement while casework continues.

What were the outputs

Each organisation delivered a different model of support and/or advice, which meant some of the outputs were not comparable. However, all organisations provided outputs related to the number of people receiving immigration advice through the project, which are reflected below. Most of the organisations also reported on the number of people achieving status and access to public funds by the end of the funded period, although this does not include the immigration status outcomes that will likely be known after the last outcome reporting. Additionally, the majority of the organisations recorded outcomes related to linking their clients into accommodation,

but again some of those positive outcomes might have only been known after the latest reporting period.

Finally, several organisations provided some form of support or assessment of immigration need by non-immigration staff which often lead to a referral to immigration advice within or outside the project. This work has been reflected under “total number of people referred/assessed”, which also includes the numbers of those receiving advice for those projects that did not specifically record this type of support separately.

The fund achieved the following outputs across all partners by the end of the funded period:

- Total number of people referred/assessed: 786
- Total number of people receiving immigration advice: 534
- Total number of people linked into accommodation: 244
- Total number of people achieving secure status and access to public: 107

Learning and recommendations

The learning presented here has been gathered from all seven projects across all quarters of the funded period by Homeless Link.

Advantages of homelessness sector involvement

One of the challenges of working with people who are rough sleeping and facing immigration issues often combined with multiple and complex needs, is the risk that they will disengage with services. This is compounded by the extended periods of time that immigration work takes place over. Across the board, funded organisations commented on how important it was to maintain client engagement but that this was also one of the biggest challenges. Homelessness organisations played a “bridging and holding” role, enabling clients to make the initial connection with immigration advisors while at the same time helping them to maintain that relationship. The overall advantages of homelessness sector involvement seen across the funded organisations were:

Bridging and holding role: homelessness services have the skills, relationships and flexibility of contact via outreach or day services to maintain communication between the individual and their immigration advisor. This better enables appointments to be kept and timely action to ensure the individual is informed of, and understands, their case progress.

Holistic support: organisations provide a range of additional support, which is essential alongside immigration advice e.g. help with housing, mental and physical health, employment and education support.

Efficiency: organisations report that it is difficult for an individual to track progress of their case while homeless, as they often approach multiple services for advice and this creates significant inefficiencies, which are overcome by the bridging and holding role providing a consistent point of contact between the individual and their casework.

For example, Thames Reach highlighted the need for their Link Worker to be able to hold face to face meetings with clients and how this became a key part of the role. They also pointed out the benefit of having the Link Worker work from partner organisation offices, meaning they were able to establish a more effective working relationship with partners.

Recommendation for Service Providers, Commissioners, Local Authorities :

The impact of these projects stems from the close working of both the immigration and homelessness sectors. The importance of having homelessness sector organisations involved in ongoing immigration cases was evidenced by all projects. It is recommended that this kind of partnership working be aspired to going forward.

Approaches to accessing OISC (Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner) registered advice and capacity

There were different approaches to accessing OISC advice across the projects. This included having staff within homelessness services who were OISC registered or having staff act as Link Workers to bridge the gap between homelessness services and immigration advice. There were differing views on the impact of the first option here. Some projects said it was useful to have staff who were OISC accredited in-house, as it meant that there was an enhanced understanding and greater knowledge of immigration issues across the organisation. Referral processes were therefore improved within the organisation. Micro Rainbow, seeing the benefits of OISC registration as funded by the IARSF, have gone on to seek accreditation for two more members of staff.

On the other hand, NEWway Project did not find the OISC accreditation process to be easy. This was due to the time commitment required to become OISC Level 1 accredited for staff members working at full capacity, and concern that the time investment would not enable better outcomes since many of the referrals received by the project required a higher level of legal advice than covered by OISC Level 1.

It is expected that the time commitment and benefit to the organisation should be a consideration in any training programme, but on the whole organisations saw many benefits of Level 1 OISC accreditation.

As well as having advice to OISC Level 1, each of the funded projects needed to have a referral pathway to a higher level of advice. There were different pathways across the projects, including:

- Referral to OISC Level 2-3 and solicitors at external partners
- A mix of fixed fee and pro bono partnerships with legal firms for initial assessment and referral on to Legal Aid solicitors
- In-house OISC Level 2-3 (in immigration & asylum charities)
- Solicitor providing in-reach to homelessness service

Recommendation for Service Providers, Commissioners:

Organisations need to evaluate their own capacity for obtaining OISC Level 1 accreditation. OISC Level 1 accreditation is recommended to improve staff knowledge, quality of referrals and ultimately outcomes for individual cases. There is also a need to have strong referral pathways beyond Level 1 advice and good partnerships to ensure that people can access the correct level of advice for their case.

Managing Fluctuating Demand

Throughout the funded period, it was found that there were peaks and troughs of demand. This was particularly evident around the June 2021 deadline for the EU Settlement Scheme and for localised services who were focused on one geographical area. This created an image of fluctuating demand across the year for most organisations. Homelessness sector winter provision also meant that there was more demand in those months as people were more likely to access services at this time and

therefore be linked to immigration advice and case work. Flexibility was found by some of the projects to manage this demand by taking a sub-regional or pan-London approach.

Recommendation for Service Providers:

Projects found that working across local authority boundaries as well as establishing partnerships with a range of services including immigration and homelessness sector organisations was useful to address issues of fluctuating demand.

Impact of Home Office Decision Delays

All projects experienced delays in receiving decisions from the Home Office, which exacerbated issues for clients in precarious accommodation. Initially, there was a faster turn around on EUSS applications before the June 2021 deadline. However, after the deadline delays returned. This is coupled with more complex cases being presented, meaning that it took longer for cases to reach the Home Office, only to be delayed further when they did. Due to the time it takes for decisions on these cases to be returned, this places people at a more precarious position due to lack of access to funds, being in uncertain accommodation and the need for organisations to find more funding for long term case management support.

Recommendation for Central Government, Commissioners, Local Authorities, Service Providers:

Central Government should expand and formalise case escalation routes to ensure faster decision times as well as providing funding for emergency accommodation for people who are rough sleeping while awaiting a decision. Organisations need to be aware and actively use any routes possible to escalate delayed cases. The complexity of cases should be considered at the beginning of a project. This is particularly important in regard to accommodation where people can often be in precarious housing situations.

Providing accommodation for rough sleepers receiving immigration advice

A variety of accommodation models were utilised across the funded projects. Organisations emphasised the need for suitable accommodation for clients as they waited to receive immigration advice or decisions on their cases. Provision of accommodation allowed organisations to build more trusting relationships with individuals while at the same time made it easier for people to be contacted with updates on their cases. Safe and secure housing can also be effective at mitigating some of the mental stress caused by delays in decision-making and the uncertainty that surrounds that.

Recommendation for Commissioners, Service Providers:

Accommodation needs of individuals should be considered at the planning stage of any project like the ones funded. This should be built into budgets from the beginning

of the project. All accommodation routes should be considered but organisations need to be aware of the potential time disparity between the length of accommodation available and the length of time it can take for a Home Office decision to be returned.

Data Sharing and need for robust data policies

There is a history of mistrust between rough sleepers with irregular status and outreach teams due to instances in the past of outreach teams sharing data with the Home Office. This means that more work needs to be done in the early stages of projects to ensure trust can be established and that there are clear protocols around data sharing between partners. It must also be made clear that clients' fully informed consent is needed for any aspect of information sharing. Transparency is key and can be achieved by having rigorous confidentiality policies. This should extend to partner organisations. Clients should be made aware of what information is shared and with whom.

Recommendation for Service Providers, Commissioners, Local Authorities, Central Government:

As well as robust policies, organisations should also have clear data sharing agreements between partners. Charities must also be aware of what is expected of them from Local Authorities and be able to remain independent despite this. Clear communication with clients and making expectations known from the beginning of the relationship is also important.

Unexpected complexity of cases and impact on outcomes

Most of the organisations mentioned the unexpected complexity of cases they received. There were more clients in need of Subject Access Requests (SARs) than anticipated. Often people were found to have been living in the UK for years with no regularised status or awareness of what their status might be. Many also did not have any form of ID or paperwork. This meant that more hours were needed to be spent on these cases and as a result, some target numbers for new cases could not be met.

Recommendation for Service Providers, Commissioners, Funders:

Contingency hours should be included in target outputs at the beginning of the project. There should be flexibility in outcomes to take account of cases that are unexpectedly time consuming. Organisations need to be aware of the potential for cases to be more complex than expected and to factor in the need for additional work including waiting times for SARs to be returned. This, coupled with learning around case duration as well as fluctuating demand shows the unpredictable reality of working in this space.

Funding for Partnerships and Cross-sector Collaboration

One of the highlights of the fund was the capacity provided to build partnerships. The design of the fund allowed for cross sector collaboration from the start. To facilitate this, project and funding timeframes needed to allow for capacity building and

partnership development. Partnership development was frontloaded at the beginning of the projects so that later down the line those partnerships were evolved enough to meet demand. There was a universal learning that even where informal partnerships existed there was a need to allow time for these to be properly established.

Some of the immigration organisations had not worked with rough sleepers before so there was a steep learning curve for them to adapt to working with people who are often uncontactable and sometimes can't be easily located. Homelessness organisations commented that they had learned a lot around how the immigration sector works, particularly in regard to the length of time that it took for decisions to be returned. Similarly, those from the immigration sector commented that they had learned a lot about the need for holistic services when working with clients experiencing homelessness. An organisation also noted that immigration sector relationships with clients are often more binary than in the homelessness sector.

Some organisations also carried out training with partners to ensure that referral forms were as robust as possible. They highlighted that this had a positive effect towards the end of the project as the partner organisations became more effective at using referral forms. Training for partner organisations was highlighted as beneficial across all of the organisations that carried out this work.

Recommendation for Service Providers, Commissioners:

To foster truly holistic services, organisations need to be given the capacity to develop strong partnerships beyond their immediate sector. This should be frontloaded so that organisations can begin knowledge sharing as soon as possible. Communication methods and frequency, training and relationship building before the project delivery commences should all be considered.

Need for longer term funding, impact on long term objectives

Due to the nature of immigration case work, it was noted that longer term funding would be more suitable to this kind of project. Some organisations that had underspends also noted that they would have put part time staff into the original budget and used the remainder on accommodation. In fact, there were multiple organisations who noted that if they were to apply again they would include funding for accommodation in their budgets.

Those that saw increased demand for their project and experienced highly complex cases pointed out that longer than expected waiting times meant they could not take on new clients towards the end of the project. For example, NEWway repurposed some of their own funding and used it to continue the work being done by their partners at the Renewal Project to ensure that as many cases as possible could be closed.

Recommendation for Local Authorities, Central Government, Commissioners:

Combined with the need for frontloading partnerships, projects of this nature should ideally be funded for longer than 12 months and with the flexibility built into budgets to work on cases that go on longer than the funded period.

Impact of the IARSF Grantee Network

As well as directly funding project activities, the IARSF also established a quarterly network meeting for organisations and partners. The meetings, all of which took place over Zoom, were hosted by Homeless Link. They provided space for people to share updates and challenges on their projects as well as bringing in external speakers to share on different relevant topics. All organisations reported that they found network meetings, facilitated alongside the grant programme useful, especially for sharing challenges and learning from others. A Slack channel was also set up for this project and tried to encourage people to engage there. However, there was minimal engagement and one organisation said that it felt like this was another thing to keep up to date with and therefore didn't find it useful. Feedback on the network meetings was always positive and people said they benefitted the most from hearing about other people's work. One organisation suggested that localised networks would be more useful to their work going forward. Another organisation noted that they had been able to provide training to another organisation on how to work with the LGBTIQ+ community.

Recommendation for Local Authorities, Central Government, Commissioners, Funders:

The network provided a positive space for organisations to share challenges and successes. It also allowed organisations to share best practice. Networks should be planned with the capacity of staff to take part in mind as well as allowing space for people to share and connect.

Organisational Legacy of IARSF

There has undoubtedly been a positive impact on how these seven organisations will operate services after this funding ends. For some, the projects will continue in a similar way through other funding.

Funding for new sub-regional Immigration Advice services (SIASs) for people rough sleeping in London has been secured by the GLA and London Councils from Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative 2022-2025. Some of the initial learnings from the IARSF were used to inform the need and possible models for these new projects and a number of the IARSF grantees have been successful in applying to deliver part of the SIASs. These new services will significantly increase the immigration advice capacity available for people rough sleeping in London and support with embedding immigration advice within rough sleeping services in the capital.

For other organisations the training and knowledge building that has gone on throughout the life of the grants has meant that they are better equipped to tackle the need for immigration advice within their client base. For example, Micro Rainbow were

able to provide training to SLRA on how to work with LGBTQI+ migrants, and SLRA themselves have provided training to their partners that has resulted in a better, more efficient referral process. Immigration advice providers have also recognised that learning from this fund will impact how they work with people experiencing rough sleeping going forward, reporting how they are now more confident in accepting these kinds of referrals.

The fund has also allowed Micro Rainbow to become OISC accredited, adding to the immigration advice provision across the capital. Thames Reach have also seen the impact of having an OISC accredited member of staff. The results of this funding mean that they are also planning to have a dedicated member of each of their outreach teams specialise in immigration issues.

Conclusion

The aim of the Immigration Advice for Rough Sleepers fund were:

- Increase free immigration advice available to non-UK national rough sleepers to access their rights and entitlements, including people from Roma communities, women and the hidden or mobile homeless;
- Increase the specialist support available to non-UK national rough sleepers within homelessness support services to facilitate a positive move-on from rough sleeping;
- Improve integration and/or collaboration of migration and homelessness work;
- Embed specialist immigration advice in support services for rough sleepers.

The outputs outlined in this report show that these aims were met and that the Immigration Advice for Rough Sleepers Fund was impactful not only for the funded organisations but also for the people who received advice.

The learning and reflections covered here highlight the benefits to the partnership-based projects and the cross sector collaboration that the fund allowed for. Both the homelessness and immigration services who received funding or were involved in these projects learnt about the demand for such work. More importantly, they learnt how to better integrate these services and provide a truly holistic offer to clients.

Appendix 1: Case Studies

Micro Rainbow

In 2022, John, a gay man from Honduras, who had been sofa surfing approached Micro Rainbow as he was being asked to leave his friend's home. He had started to rough sleep. He had been in the UK for 6 months and overstayed his tourist visa. He had not previously received legal advice about his immigration status.

Micro Rainbow's OISC registered staff organised an initial assessment with Wesley Gryk in which the solicitor advised John to claim asylum. John claimed asylum and with the support of Micro Rainbow outreach officers, stated that he needed emergency accommodation. John was accommodated in Section 98 accommodation.

Micro Rainbow and Care4Calais assisted John to find legal representation with a law firm. Micro Rainbow conducted a risk assessment with John for our safe housing. A referral to Tower Hamlets Talking Therapies was also made for John whose father had recently passed away. John moved into Micro Rainbow safe housing in early October. John has also attended Micro Rainbow socials including an event at the Tate Modern.

Thames Reach

The client was referred to the Immigration Navigator project by one of our local outreach teams, they made the Navigator aware of the client experiencing severe mental health issues and that they had been referred to different external supporting services such as the borough's local Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol teams.

After the referral was received and accepted, the Immigration Navigator contacted the manager of the emergency temporary accommodation where the client was staying and arrange a meeting to introduce himself to the client and conduct an assessment.

Due to the client's personal circumstances and mental health issues, engagement proved to be an important challenge when working with them. It took several visits and attempts in coordination with the Drug and Alcohol and Mental Health team to speak to the client, complete an assessment, identified their eligibility to make an EU Settlement Scheme application and help them understand the implications and importance of regularising their immigration status and securing their resident's rights in the UK.

The client was sectioned under the mental health act and started receiving medical help.

The Immigration Navigator referred the client's case to one of the Law Centres we build a partnership with via the project, which rapidly accepted the referral and started working with the Navigator and the client on their case.

While the client was in Hospital, the Immigration Navigator followed up with their case and visited them on various occasions; facilitated online meetings with the Law Centre and helped the client follow the advice that they had received.

The Law Centre submitted the client's application and not too long after the Home Office sent back their decision letter informing the client that they were granted Settled Status / ILR.

The Immigration Navigator updated the Local Authority and relevant internal and external colleagues about the client's outcome. The client continues to receive medical treatment and is on the waiting list for supported accommodation, client now also has access to public funds.

Case working with the client proved to be intense and complex and it took 7 months from the client's referral to a successful immigration outcome.

What We Do

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness services. We work to improve services through research, guidance and learning, and campaign for policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.

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Let's End Homelessness Together

