

Case Studies and evidence relating to Asylum Accommodation For Westminster Hall Debate on Asylum Accommodation Contracts, 10th October 2018

Asylum Matters works in partnership locally and nationally to improve the lives of refugees and people seeking asylum through social and political change. These case studies have been supplied by our partner organisations from across the UK. See our [Parliamentary Briefing on Asylum Accommodation Contracts](#) for full details of the issues we are drawing attention to with regard to the contracts.

A great many support organisations had evidence to share about housing conditions and the experiences of people living in asylum accommodation under the current COMPASS contracts. This evidence has been arranged into themes below. In some instances details about exact location or the name of the organisation supplying the evidence have not been shared in order to protect the identity of the individual(s) involved, however the region of the UK that the case study or evidence relates to has been noted. **This evidence has been shared with a number of MPs and may therefore be quoted by others taking part in the debate.**

Themes covered by case studies and evidence:

1. [Housing Conditions](#)
2. [Forced Bedroom Sharing](#)
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1. Housing Conditions

HOUSING CONDITIONS/ INFESTATION

In early January 2018 in a G4S house in Leicester a researcher found a house with an infestation of bed bugs and a range of repair and heating issues. Four men lived there, one of them said through an interpreter: "I have been here over a year and the bedbugs have got worse. I had to throw my mattress in the yard and I sleep on the floor. I try and stop the bugs coming in through the floorboards by taping up the room."

Location/ Source: Leicester, South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group (SYMAAG)

HOUSING CONDITIONS/ CHILDREN/ INFESTATION

A lone parent living in a G4S property in Halifax that was infested with mice and rats. The problem was reported to G4S several times but, one month later when no action had been taken, the support agency was informed that the complaints had been recorded but not followed up. It took so long that the children were too scared to stay in their own home. Even after the infestation was cleared, over a month later, G4S did not provide an interpreter to explain the process until the support agency intervened. Then three months on, the same family found themselves living without hot water or heating for three days after their boiler broke. This was in the middle of winter, with night time temperatures reaching below 0 degrees.

Location/ Source: Halifax, St Augustines

HOUSING CONDITIONS/ CHILDREN/ INFESTATION

In October 2017 a woman went to a drop in centre to try and get advice about persistent rat problem. G4S had not responded to complaints, so the Council were called in. Despite attempts to clear the rats the issue persisted. Her 6 year old child - whose shoes were eaten by rats and had to be thrown away - said "I don't like rats. Yes, I am frightened." His mother said "It's half-term and [my son] can't play out the back – the rat holes are by the back door. At the front, there is the road just across from the door."

Location/ Source: Location anonymous, South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group (SYMAAG)

HOUSING CONDITIONS/ CHILDREN/ SAFETY/ INFESTATION

A, from Egypt, arrived in the UK in 2015. She lives with her husband and three children in Merseyside. They have been refused asylum and are submitting a fresh claim. A was living in the top floor flat in a large property that had a structural and persistent problem with rodents. The property was split up into three self-contained flats with three different families on asylum support. Serco and her housing officer were aware of the rodent problem and provided A with poison and sent maintenance round on more than one occasion to cover up holes that mice were going through. Because the problem was with the entire property, none of the measures taken solved the problem and only temporarily masked the symptoms. The mice were there constantly, new holes emerged, and it was a constant hazard to the family as they have three young children, as well as an environmental health issue.

We worked with the family to collect evidence as to the severe nature of the problem. Through various emails, phone calls and escalation to senior staff at Serco Warrington, they were eventually moved out of the property. They are now in a safe and hygienic house. Although the end result for this family was positive, the experience has affected them gravely and was an additional, unnecessary stressor in what is already a difficult time. Further, we then began working with another family who were, just a week later, moved into their vacant flat.

Location/ Source: Merseyside, Refugee Women Connect

HOUSING CONDITIONS/ CHILDREN/ MENTAL HEALTH

A single parent was moved into a three bed end terrace house with her three young boys. The house smelt of smoke and sweat, it was filthy. The small room was damp and in the rain water ran down the walls. The family sleep in one room. Over the past twelve months one of our workers has 40 emails relating to this property. There are more emails from other workers too. The toilet was without a seat, the drains were blocked and the boiler was continually breaking. The impact on the client was depression and thoughts of suicide. The distress she felt or still feels is great.

Location/ Source: Halifax, St Augustines

HOUSING CONDITIONS/ CHILDREN/ HEALTH/ INAPPROPRIATE ACCOMMODATION

In Initial Accommodation, one woman struggled through summer with a broken radiator which made the room she shared with her small baby unbearably hot. Despite complaining about this several times, it was only when her health visitor highlighted the health risk for her baby that it was repaired by Serco.

In Dispersal Accommodation, one woman who has just given birth sleeps in one room with her three children and her partner. This is because the furniture does not adequately fit her two-bed property, and the second bedroom does not accommodate the two beds as they are large. A request to swap the larger beds with smaller ones was rejected.

Location/ Source: Merseyside, Refugee Women Connect

HOUSING CONDITIONS/ PRIVACY/ SAFETY/ MAINTAINANCE

B, from Iran, arrived in the UK in 2012. She now lives in Manchester and has received Refugee status, however, at the time of this incident, she was living in Liverpool and was awaiting a decision on her further submissions. B lived in the front room of a large house-share for four years whilst her asylum claim was being heard. Most tenants of asylum accommodation can have a lock on their room, however, B was not allowed due to her bedroom containing the boiler. Staff told her that they needed 24-hour access to this. Not being able to lock her door made her feel uncomfortable due to her past traumatic experiences and especially given that there was a high turnover of tenants. She desperately wanted a safe space that she could relax in.

After one year of living in this property, she noticed a drip in the ceiling of her bedroom. She made numerous complaints, but nothing was done until a small part of the ceiling actually collapsed. B was not in the room at the time and Serco was quick to act. Before moving back into the room, she was reassured that it would not happen again, and that the bedroom was safe. However, just six months later a drip started in the same area as before. Rather than fix the problem, she was told by maintenance to hold a bucket under the leak so that it did not ruin the carpet. A quarter of the ceiling of her bedroom collapsed and she was in the room at the time. She was extremely shocked and distressed but, very luckily, was not physically harmed. Once B was safely housed, we asked Serco to provide us with a log of all the complaints that had been made about the leak and the subsequent actions but we were told that they would not be able to share this due to the matter being the subject of an internal investigation.

Location/ Source: Merseyside, Refugee Women Connect

HOUSING CONDITIONS/ MAINTAINANCE/ TREATMENT BY STAFF

Refugee Women Connect report mothers feel that they were not respected when reporting maintenance issues in their homes, both in Initial Accommodation and Dispersal Accommodation. Under instruction not to 'touch any of the fittings themselves' by the compass provider, Serco, one woman was forced to wait for two weeks in the dark simply for a lightbulb to be replaced. The lightbulb was eventually replaced by her after she had given up on waiting for somebody to come round to do it. In a similar case, one woman waited three weeks without hot water for her boiler to be repaired. Another lives with a leak that drips into her living room from the bathroom above. It has been like that for months – despite intervention from us and numerous reports to the housing provider. Similarly, when one tenant's cooker would only heat to a lukewarm temperature, she was not believed. She now spends additional money buying prepared food which she can no longer cook from scratch using raw ingredients. Despite numerous complaints, the situation is ongoing.

Location/ Source: Merseyside, Refugee Women Connect

2. Forced Bedroom Sharing

BEDROOM SHARING

"Jomast want me to go crazy in here, I have no privacy, I have to share my space with another man who I don't know, who doesn't speak my language, doesn't speak English, we can't communicate!"

"It is so hard sharing with so many people in the house, the others I share with, sometimes they smoke in my bedroom – and I have asthma! So many men all together – with different cultures and customs – the house is a mess, Jomast are supposed to provide cleaning materials but they never come to fix anything – we are eight people in four bedrooms – no space"

Location/ Source: North East, testimony from asylum accommodation residents, Migration Asylum Justice Forum

BEDROOM SHARING/ PREGNANCY/ VULNERABILITY

Property B has five residents sharing 3 bedrooms – all women. One pregnant resident with a due date of 04/01/2018 had another women moved into her bedroom on the 01/12/2017. The women did not share a common language and were unable to communicate with one another. The pregnant lady was given no advice about what would happen/ where she will be housed once she has her baby or where she will be discharged from hospital to. This was raised with the Home Office 18/12/2017 but no update/ response was received.

Location/ Source: Newcastle, Newcastle City Council

BEDROOM SHARING/ CHILDREN

"Avoid two people share a room. Me and my child in loft room. It is so uncomfortable. I can't stand. No places to walk or play. Steps are too dangerous. My 2 year old child wants a room. Me and my child can't live with happy or peaceful life."

Location/ Source: Doncaster, testimony from asylum accommodation resident, Doncaster Conversation Club

BEDROOM SHARING/ VULNERABILITY/ SAFEGUARDING

An 18-year-old male X, under the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) as a potential victim of human trafficking/ modern day slavery, sharing a bedroom with a much older male with no common language. The older man allegedly drinks a lot

of alcohol, and keeps opening the bedroom windows every night and turning off the radiators, X has complained about the cold and is always getting ill. X recently asked [Organisation] for support with his mental health as he feels he may have depression, which is something he felt he did not need before. [Organisation] have seen a noticeable decrease in his mood since moving into NASS accommodation.

On one occasion when X tried to turn the radiator back on, the other man pushed him to the ground. X informed his support worker that he was scared to go back to his house because he was worried what the man may do next. The support worker called the Housing Provider to express concern for his safety; they said there wasn't much they can do about this but they will send out a worker tomorrow or in the next week to speak to both residents. X commented that this never happened. [Organisation] raised their concerns for X with the Council and the Council raised this case with the Home Office, who in turn referred to the safeguarding unit and a relocation was advised. Despite being made aware that X was in the NRM at both his asylum screening interview and in his Asylum Support application, the Home Office advised that being identified as a potential victim of trafficking is in itself not a sufficient trigger to identify someone as vulnerable or a safeguarding concern.

Location/ Source: Newcastle, anonymous, shared by Newcastle City Council

BEDROOM SHARING/ OVERCROWDING/ LOCAL AUTHORITY POWERS

"Our ability to set our own local standards has been legally challenged on the basis that there is no statutory legislation on which we can rely. It is our experience that room sharing is detrimental to the health and wellbeing of individuals and also puts pressures on the communities surrounding these properties. We do not believe that enforced room sharing of unrelated people, who may not know each other, speak the same language and may be suffering from physical and mental trauma is acceptable. As a Council we do not expect any tenant housed by us, or through commissioned services, to be provided accommodation on a room share basis. We do not agree that this same standard should not apply to this group of individuals.

We do not think that it is right that Local Authorities are powerless to influence asylum accommodation standards despite the impacts that poorly managed/overcrowded accommodation has on residents and local communities. We believe that the safety and well-being of people seeking asylum, and the communities where they are housed, should take precedence over commercial considerations."

Location/ Source: Newcastle, Newcastle City Council

BEDROOM SHARING/ HOUSING CONDITIONS/ SAFETY/ VULNERABILITY/ RELOCATION

An asylum seeking man in Stockton was placed in incredibly poor and dirty accommodation in the area. There were blood stains on his mattress and there was mould throughout the bedroom. He was forced to share the bedroom with an alcoholic, which was distressing and the man lived in fear. Following a church group advocating on his behalf, G4S visited the property and reported that there was no evidence of poor conditions or alcoholism. Following the intervention of Paul Williams MP, the asylum seeker was moved. Even with advocates and the involvement of an MP, it took 6 months for the man to be moved. Unfortunately this was to another city, away from his support network of the church goers - much to his distress.

Another man was part of a local church and in a room sharing situation. He was moved out of area. He continues to travel back every Sunday to attend the church, despite it being a full day round trip, and costing almost all the money he has to live on, as the church community provides him with safety and support.

Location/ Source: North East, Tees Valley of Sanctuary

BEDROOM SHARING/ VULNERABILITY/ SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexuality is not considered in placing individuals into room sharing situations. In the North East, a young vulnerable gay man was asked to share a bedroom with another man in an all male HMO. In a separate instance, a heterosexual woman felt uncomfortable sharing a bedroom with a lesbian woman. In both cases, there was apparently no consideration given to the appropriateness of bedroom-sharing for the individuals, and it was left to them to enquire about changing their housing after they were placed there.

Location/ Source: North East

BEDROOM SHARING/ DISTURBED SLEEP

"The most urgent thing is a single room. Room mates sleeping habits, snoring and cooking during the night prevent sleep. This effects how I feel the next day e.g. for college"

Location/ Source: Doncaster, testimony from asylum accommodation resident, Doncaster Conversation Club

3. HMOS and Overcrowding

HMOs/ OVERCROWDING/ CHILDREN/ PROVISION OF EQUIPMENT & NOT MEETING CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS

Tiny bedsit with one room and a small kitchen for a mother, her three-month-old daughter and two-year-old son. There was no chair to sit on and no table in the main room. 'All the flats here have mothers with two children, most of them small children, they're all G4S.' An asylum seeker from Asia, had been in the bedsit for nearly a year. There was no vacuum cleaner, so she saved up and bought a very cheap second-hand cleaner – that recently broke down. "My cooker wasn't working, and I had nothing to warm my baby's bottle."

Location/ Source: Location anonymous, South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group (SYMAAG)

HMOs/ MOTHER & BABY/ PREGNANCY/ VULNERABILITY/ RELOCATION REQUEST

In Barnsley, a woman who was 33 weeks pregnant, was moved from Barnsley town, near the hospital, to a shared house six miles away in a former mining village, on the outer edge of the borough. She worried about how to attend midwife appointments. "I cannot stay here, I could walk to the hospital when I was in Barnsley. The G4S driver said this place was six miles from Barnsley, he pleaded with the G4S welfare officer not to put me up here. I rang about a taxi to get to the hospital — he said it would cost £18 there and back." Her midwife wrote to G4S and the Home Office. The letter confirmed that the woman was now 34 weeks pregnant and at high risk. It went on: "She is currently housed in accommodation in the attic up two flights of very steep stairs. This is impacting greatly on her physical and mental wellbeing and will not be suitable for her baby when she delivers. She has also been moved away from this surgery which means a two bus journey for appointments. This is impacting greatly on her physical and mental wellbeing".

After the birth of her son she was returned to her tiny room in the G4S property. She requested to move to Sheffield, where she has friends and a support network, supported in her pleas to G4S and the Home Office by medical staff, and social workers. This was submitted in December 2017. In October 2018 she remains in the same property.

Location/ Source: Barnsley, South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group (SYMAAG)

HMOs/ MOTHER & BABY/ PREGNANCY/ HEALTH

A local agency who work with women survivors of human trafficking protested to G4S on behalf of a client from West Africa, a heavily pregnant woman, who had been placed in a room at the top of the house, up three flights of stairs. In pain with poor knees and unable to take painkillers she was stranded. She had been told that she may need a C Section and is fearful how she will climb the stairs with the baby to prepare food or go to the toilet.

Location/ Source: Location anonymous, South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group (SYMAAG)

HMOs/ VULNERABILITY/ INFESTATION

A property in Yorkshire houses five single women asylum seekers - some survivors of human trafficking. They are terrified of opening the door to anyone. The area is totally the wrong place to house the women - with an adult book store nearby and massage parlours. The property has had a rat infestation problem for at least 10 months.

Location/ Source: Yorkshire and Humber, South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group (SYMAAG)

HMOs/ OVERCROWDING/ MOTHER & BABY/ CHILDREN

"We want to see an end to overcrowding for families. In Newcastle three houses are licenced to accommodate 55 people in 23 rooms. Often one room is allocated to a woman with multiple children of different ages with limited space for play and storage. Small kitchens with insufficient fridge or cupboard space pose an additional challenge. In Gateshead, in a house conversion, Jomast were recently found in breach of planning permission and HMO licence conditions as 17 residents were squeezed into 7 bedrooms. This is unacceptable.

Additionally, in many of the 2-3-bedroom houses, women are expected to share with other families, again producing problems with storage, space and privacy. In one example a woman in Newcastle shares her bedroom with her 6-year-old son and a 6-week-old baby, with another family occupying the other bedroom. The impact of sharing a bedroom with a new born baby is resulting in problems at school for the son as his sleep is completely disturbed.”

Location/ Source: Newcastle, Migration and Asylum Justice Forum

HMOs/ CHILDREN

In a large Initial Accommodation centre in Liverpool comprising of over 100 rooms, there are three washing machines, open from 8am until 8pm. Many women with small babies who live on the 3rd floor of their block are forced to leave their babies unattended whilst they use the washing machines. As it is difficult to get a space in the washing machines, this can mean many trips up and down to the laundry room. It can even mean queuing, which causes anxiety for mothers concerned about their unattended children. Mothers report that they would bring their babies down to the laundry room with them, but that it is ‘dirty and unhygienic’ and they don’t want their children to play on the floor.

Location/ Source: Merseyside, Refugee Women Connect

HMOs/ CHILDREN/ VULNERABILITY

“We as a church group, support an asylum seeker in Middlesbrough, a young mother with a young child from Nigeria. She was moved by the Housing Provider from two other cities originally, and then to a shared house in Middlesbrough with another woman and her child. The trouble is the women are from different countries, they are both damaged emotionally and physically, and should not be in this position. They have a bedroom each and share other facilities which is the cause of the problems. They are from different African countries with different languages and culture. Both women living there now have young children. It’s a very stressful situation for them both, in a different country, waiting and waiting for a decision that will determine their futures. In the last year I have had 2 hysterical phone calls from the woman we support, as she is often bullied and intimidated by the other woman. I have spoken to Jomast the housing provider and they are aware of the problems and say they will move her as soon as something comes up; this is months ago. The problem has existed for over a year now. The lady we support says she came here to feel safe, but feels frightened and unsafe all the time. It is not at all good for her little boy who is 2 years old.”

Location/ Source: Middlesbrough, St Vincent De Paul Society

HMOs/ HOUSING CONDITIONS/ MOTHER & BABY/ CHILDREN/ INFESTATION

A woman moved into shared accommodation with her baby daughter. The house is a traditional back to back and the rooms are over three storeys. Her room is in the attic with a bathroom on the same floor. The issues she had were about the stairs, a broken fridge and the infestation of bed bugs. The stairs in these old properties are very steep especially going into the attic. Our client found the stairs difficult especially carrying a child. The child is now walking and the client is five months pregnant, she is out of breath carrying the child up the stairs and cannot leave her alone as she can climb over the safety gate. We emailed a request to have her rehoused but as yet have not had any response.

Location/ Source: Halifax, St Augustines

4. Forced Relocations and Handling of Relocation Requests

FORCED RELOCATION/ CHILDREN/ EDUCATION

“The current contracts allow providers to forcibly move residents to an unspecified area with only 7 days’ notice for the benefit of their commercial operations. This has been particularly disruptive for families with children at school or nursery. We are aware of several forced moves that took place at the beginning of the school year this September which has left families without school places for their children. This has been done without any consultation with the Local Education Authority or council. Had this been done with more foresight and planning, alternative arrangements could have been found for the children. Similar issues are raised when individuals are moved away from their support networks and solicitors due to these forced moves.”

Location/ Source: Newcastle, Migration and Asylum Justice Forum, Newcastle

FORCED RELOCATION/ CHILDREN/ EDUCATION/ LOW ASYLYM SUPPORT

We had a family that had been in Newcastle since November 2017. In September, after the summer holidays, the two eldest children returned to high school into yr 8 and yr 9 and the youngest child started in reception at primary school. The family were struggling to afford school uniforms for the children so were supported by our family support team in the form of food bank vouchers so that they could use what money they had to afford school uniforms. After one week back at school the family were notified (with 5 days' notice) that they were to be moved to a different Local Authority area – requiring the children to change schools. Not only was this incredibly distressing for the children (especially at such an important stage of their education) it also meant that the family needed to buy full new sets of school uniforms for the three children.

Location/ Source: Newcastle, Newcastle City Council

FORCED RELOCATION

“An individual in a single room had lived at their address for some time and was pleased with the provision and had made local connections. They had no problems and caused no issues but they were told that they had to move out of town, and were given one weeks' notice. The individual didn't know why. Another person in the property is in a shared room and was allowed to stay. This person has no specific issues that would necessitate them remaining. We don't understand the rationale.”

Location/ Source, Swindon, Swindon Refugees & Asylum Seekers

5. Health and Vulnerability

HEALTH NEEDS/ UNSUITABLE ACCOMMODATION

B was living in second floor asylum accommodation and was involved in a serious accident resulting in a prolonged stay in hospital. On discharge, because of injuries to his feet, his mobility and ability to walk was seriously affected. He was unable to climb the stairs or carry out everyday tasks such as walking to the shops to buy food, and the fact that the toilet was unadapted meant he had difficulties with basic self-care. Despite repeated requests to his housing officer for ground floor accommodation, with a shop accessible, no housing officer came to the house to see if he needed assistance. Migrant Help were also contacted and took no action. Only after interventions by a support agency and the Home Office Safeguarding Team were arrangements made to find suitable ground floor accommodation: before these interventions he was stuck in this situation for a period of over two months.

Location/ Source: North West

MENTAL HEALTH/ VULNERABILITY

In a shared house of people awaiting decisions on their claims, one housemate had a mental breakdown. He threw his possessions outside, switched the gas on the cooker on, and threatened to blow the house up. His housemate struggled to get assistance for the man, and also felt fearful for his own safety. However on contacting the subcontracted housing provider, Jomast, they stated that it was not their responsibility. He then approached G4S who said that the police had to deal with it. He contacted the police who said that, as it was a safeguarding issue, it was Jomast/G4S's responsibility.

Location/ Source: Stockton, anonymous

HEALTH/ PREGNANCY/ FORCED RELOCATION

One mother reported that in her final two months of pregnancy she was moved from London to Bolton, to Liverpool. This resulted in a missed pre-natal appointment and a breakdown in the communication between her previous midwife and her new one. One pregnant mother waited two weeks in her new location to be allocated a midwife. Even then, she felt that she was only eventually given one because she arrived at the hospital in distress and waited several hours.

Location/ Source: Merseyside, Refugee Women Connect

MENTAL HEALTH/ VULNERABILITY/ YOUNG PEOPLE

“There have been at least 5 suicides of young people in Initial Accommodation and Dispersal Accommodation, some whom had won age disputes, and others who just didn't cope. There is no support for these young people. As with the latest addition to Local Authority duties within guidance for care leavers - which sees young people as those up to 25 yrs

of age - we want to see this copied within the asylum process in recognition of the need for specific and meaningful support.”

Location/ Source: Birmingham, MEENA Centre, Birmingham

6. Move-on Period

MOVE-ON PERIOD/DESTITUTION

“We are continuing to see a number of clients who are newly recognised refugees and who are destitute due to delays in accessing mainstream benefits – highlighting the gap in the current move-on process for those transitioning between asylum and mainstream support. Current Home Office policy is that those in receipt of asylum support cease to be entitled to accommodation and financial support 28 days after notification of the granting of refugee status. However, this period is often less due to delays in correspondence and documentation. This represents a rapid change in circumstances for people who may not have been in the UK for very long, are unfamiliar with the systems, may have limited English language ability and who have not had access to employment and savings. We believe that the move-on period should be extended from 28 days to 56 days, to match the timeframe under the Homelessness Reduction Act. This longer time-frame would also mean that refugees have longer to apply for and begin receiving benefits, reducing the risks of financial hardship.”

Location/ Source: Newcastle, Newcastle City Council

7. Low Asylum Support Rates and Isolated Dispersal Accommodation

LOW ASYLUM SUPPORT/ ISOLATED DISPERSAL ACCOMMODATION

Living 8 miles outside of Bradford in a tiny village, a concerned community group have highlighted their concerns about the isolation of asylum seekers housed there who cannot afford to travel into the city to access essential services or buy groceries at affordable prices. The group wrote to the housing provider who suggested residents could apply to the Home Office for relocation, but the group point out even if they successfully relocate, others will be sent in their place.

Location/ Source: Bradford, City of Sanctuary Bradford

LOW ASYLUM SUPPORT/ ISOLATED DISPERSAL ACCOMMODATION

“We spoke to women living in more remote areas/small towns in dispersal accommodation in Merseyside. The consensus was that the financial support they received was difficult to survive on, with transport costs being what caused the most amount of financial pressure. Most women must buy a minimum of two or three adult return tickets in Merseyside per week, at a cost of £4.30 each. It was reported that the walking distance to big supermarkets, hospitals and other services often exceeded a 50-minute walk. Most of the women we spoke to live in dispersal accommodation that are a bus ride to the nearest town (i.e. living in Haydock, the nearest urban town being St Helens, or living in Tuebrook, the nearest urban city being Liverpool).”

Location/ Source: Merseyside, Refugee Women Connect

8. Asylum Dispersal, Cohesion and Impact on Local Services

ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

“The arrival of asylum seekers has enriched our city. Asylum Seekers and Refugees bring important skills, enterprise and energy – all of which contribute to the economy and social capital of the City. We have seen a rich and diverse number of voluntary and community projects develop to offer support and friendship, and we have seen local communities revitalised; and while those seeking asylum have no choice over where in the UK they are dispersed to, we take great pride in the fact that so many refugees chose to settle here once their claim for asylum is determined.

Much of this success is down to the processes and relationships we have had to develop at a local level rather than any support or guidance nationally. We have worked hard to make sure that dispersal works for our city and our residents. [But] there remains a lack of local accountability or routes in for local services to raise concerns, for example around safeguarding concerns or disputes between residents/neighbours and for these to be prioritised. We work hard to meet the incredibly short-time frame to approve properties for use by the accommodation providers and this puts considerable pressure on our and our partners’ resources. The lack of dedicated funding to support wider services in asylum dispersal

areas is a particular challenge facing Local Authorities and the wider statutory and VCS. By its very nature asylum dispersal places increasing and unpredictable pressure on local statutory and voluntary services who are providing services with little or no funding.”

Location/ Source: Newcastle, Newcastle City Council