A Fair Way Forward: An evaluation of an action learning partnership tackling the impacts of UK immigration policy on destitution and homelessness in Scotland

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An evaluation of an action learning partnership tackling the impacts of UK immigration policy on destitution and homelessness in Scotland

Final Report

Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE), Heriot-Watt University

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Acronyms

ARE	Appeal Rights Exhausted
DUKS	Destitution in the United Kingdom Survey
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EEA	European Economic Area
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
EU	European Union
EUSS	European Union Settlement Scheme
GP	General Practitioner
HMRC	His Majesty's Revenue and Customs
HNS	Homeless Network Scotland
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
LA	Local Authority
LGBTQ+	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender plus
MAPPA	Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements
MP	Member of Parliament
MSP	Member of Scottish Parliament
NACCOM	No Accommodation Network
NHS	National Health Service
NRPF/RE	No Recourse to Public Funds/Restricted Eligibility
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIP	Personal Independence Payment
PRS	Private Rented Sector
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
QRR	Qualifying Right to Reside
UC	Universal Credit
WEMWBS	Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

Executive summary

Fair Way Scotland is an action learning partnership tackling destitution and homelessness. The partnership offers casework, modest financial support and community-based accommodation to people unable to access other forms of support because of their immigration status.[1] During 2024/25, around 1,000 people were provided with ongoing casework support, 266 with cash support and 45 accommodated in Fair Way accommodation across Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire. Fair Way Scotland also advocates for policy and practice change at the local, Scottish and UK-level to improve outcomes for those with No Recourse to Public Funds or other restricted eligibility (NRPF/RE) under UK immigration policy.

This report details the findings of a 3-year mixed methods evaluation funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The study involved a quantitative survey of 255 people accessing Fair Way, in depth qualitative interviews with 38 people with direct experience of Fair Way support, and interviews 13 frontline Fair Way staff and 18 wider expert stakeholders.

Key findings

- Fair Way Scotland supports an exceptionally disadvantaged group of people. Almost all those we surveyed were destitute (93%) and one in five (19%) were sleeping rough. Well over half (61%) had slept rough in the previous year and 17% had had to leave accommodation in the last year because they did not feel safe.

- These exceptional levels of deprivation are driven by UK immigration policy, which excludes some people from the key supports. These 'hostile environment' policies impact on a diverse range of people who came to the UK to seek sanctuary, work, study or be with family and who have very often been in the UK for very long periods.

- This evaluation finds that Fair Way Scotland effectively mitigates destitution and addresses homelessness for many of those supported. Those receiving support for more than three months are less likely to be sleeping rough, living in overcrowded conditions, or have had to leave accommodation with nowhere else to go. They are also less likely to be destitute or to report deprivation in relation to meals, toiletries and shelter. Those in receipt of cash payments and casework are less likely to be destitute than those receiving just casework, and those in receipt of cash payments are less likely to report deprivation in relation to food.

[1] No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) is a restriction attached to an individual's immigration status. Someone can have NRPF either because their leave to remain imposes this as a condition of lawful residence (for example, students or workers), or because they no longer have leave to remain (for example, appeal rights exhausted asylum seekers, visa overstayers, or undocumented people). EU citizens who have pre-settled status but are unable to establish their eligibility also face restrictions in accessing benefits. They are not NRPF and we refer to them as having restricted eligibility (RE). NRPF status *only* prohibits accessing to specific funds set out in Home Office Public Funds immigration guidance. See Home Office (2025) Public Funds (Accessible) Guidance. Online: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-funds/public-funds-accessible

- All Fair Way services secured positive outcomes for a substantial proportion of those they supported in 2024/25, with rates achieved ranging from 26% to 91% and improvements in progress for others. Rates were higher in accommodation services, indicating the benefit of people having a safe place to stay while pursuing their case. Rates were also higher in smaller casework services able to provide more intensive support to a smaller number of people. These rates do not include a range of important outcomes Fair Way services achieve with those they support, including reaching key interim milestones in relation to their immigration case or enabling people to engage effectively with other forms of support, etc.

- Casework, access to a safe place to stay and cash support are key enablers of improvements in people's circumstances and the progression of their immigration or asylum case. Demand for these supports far outstrips supply, however. We estimate that around 4,000 individuals require such support annually, with 67-70% of demand concentrated in the cities in which Fair Way currently operates. Extending Fair Way nationwide would require increasing resources by between 37% and 49%.

- Access to effective legal representation is essential for appeal rights exhausted asylum seekers and many others accessing Fair Way. Despite investments in legal advice and support by Fair Way Scotland and Scottish Government, there remains significant unmet need for timely, quality legal advice and representation for the groups Fair Way supports, reflective in part of wider and acute issues with the Legal Aid system that support such work in Scotland.

- The profile of need varies significantly between the cities in which Fair Way operates. Demand in Glasgow (until 2022, Scotland's only asylum dispersal city) has primarily been from appeal rights exhausted asylum seekers, whereas in Aberdeen has mainly been from European nationals with restricted eligibility under post-Brexit transitional arrangements. Edinburgh sees a mix of both groups.

- Local authorities have legal duties and powers to provide support to adults with NRPF/RE in particular circumstances. In Edinburgh, thresholds for support are interpreted relatively inclusively, while in Glasgow only those with very high needs tend to be able to access support. Aberdeen's social work response lies somewhere in the middle, but its homelessness team prioritise recording presentations from ineligible households and accommodating those for whom there is any uncertainty about eligibility.

- Since the COVID-19 pandemic, emergency single-room accommodation was accessible to people with NRPF/RE who were facing rough sleeping in Edinburgh over the winter. At the time of writing (October 2025), it appears that this provision will be accessible to those with NRPF/RE on a more limited basis than in the past during winter 2025/26. Equivalent provision in Glasgow did not operate during winter 2024/25, and at the time of writing it is unclear whether such provision will be available over the coming winter.

- Fair Way Scotland has achieved a range of systems-level impacts, securing significant funding from independent funders; increasing the visibility of destitution and homelessness among people with NRPF/RE; generating new evidence on the levels of and nature of need; building confidence in stretching devolved powers to their full extent; and enhancing the capacity of the third sector to engage with key stakeholders. In the localities in which the partnership operates, it has advised statutory decision makers; provided a route to refer ineligible households for support and advice; and informed strategic discussions and decision making.

- Our evidence suggests that the cost of investing in support for those with NRPF/RE, like that provided by Fair Way Scotland, outweigh the costs. A simple public sector cost-focused economic analysis of Fair Way Scotland based on evidence-informed assumptions about the impacts of the support model indicated that for every £1 spent, £0.64 in public service cost savings are accrued, increasing to £1.20 for every £1 spend if monetary valuations of potential wellbeing gains are included. These calculations do not include a range of benefit/cost-savings, including to local authorities, likely associated with more inclusive and effective responses to this group.

- Extending Fair Way's community-based housing offer to those sleeping rough and in other especially adverse housing circumstances (e.g. hotel/B&B accommodation) would achieve cost offsets significantly exceeding the actual (social rental) costs necessary to do so. There is also an economic case for extending this community-housing offer to some of those with NRPF/RE who are staying in hostels.

Migration status

Fair Way Scotland supports a highly diverse group of people who have come to the UK from a wide range of countries to seek sanctuary, study, work or reunite with family. What these groups have in common is that they are facing crisis and are unable to access statutory supports because of their immigration status. The 'hostile environment' policies that exclude people from such support impact especially acutely on appeal rights exhausted asylum seekers (referred to as the 'Asylum group' in this report), European nationals who have not yet secured status entitling them to statutory supports via the European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS) (referred to as the 'EEA group'), or those have no recourse to public funds for other reasons including conditions attached to their visa or because they are undocumented (referred to as the 'Other group'). Those accessing Fair Way services tend to have been in the UK for long periods: the vast majority have been in the UK for five years or more.

Data collected by Fair Way delivery partners suggests that half or more of those accessing support in 2024/25 saw a significant improvement in their immigration status and/or access to statutory supports and that all services secure positive outcomes for a substantial proportion of those they support (26% to 91%). Varying positive outcome rates across casework services indicate different approaches to managing caseloads, with some services providing intensive support to a smaller number of individuals and larger services carrying significant open caseloads. Higher positive outcome rates in

accommodation indicate the benefit of people having a safe place to stay while pursuing their case and the added value of receiving housing and casework support. In some cases, this also reflects prioritisation of those whose immigration case is deemed to have a reasonable chance of success, on grounds that maintaining high rates of move-on will maximise the numbers who can be accommodated.

It's important to note that this data covers only a subset of particularly significant 'positive outcomes'. Fair Way services regularly support those they work with to achieve other positive outcomes including reaching key interim milestones in relation to their immigration case (for example, securing legal representation, accessing evidence to support their case, securing key documents or submitting an EUSS application). Nor do these measures include instances of other (non-migration status) related outcomes e.g. provision of cash payments, connecting people or enabling them to engage effectively with other forms of support, etc.

We spoke to 26 people who had been accessing Fair Way support for some time (on average 16 months). Half had experienced positive progress with their case, nine stability or no change, and four a deterioration. For the European Economic Area (EEA) group, progress was typically marked by the sudden securing of settled status via the EUSS. This had a transformative impact as it enabled them to access benefits and homelessness assistance. For the asylum group, progress involved (re)accessing Home Office accommodation and subsistence support. Such progress, however, was tempered by a continuation of uncertainty and fear associated with having to await the outcome of their fresh claim for asylum, restricting their ability to build life in the UK.

Fair Way casework plays a critical role in supporting people with NRPF/RE to progress their immigration case, but the capacity of the casework team is insufficient to meet demand. Caseworkers are also constrained by difficulties gathering evidence and a lack of input from effective immigration lawyers, reflecting acute challenges in the Legal Aid system that supports such work in Scotland.

Most of those accessing Fair Way (over 80%) are receiving some specialist legal advice alongside casework support. Most of the asylum group have an immigration lawyer, whereas EEA nationals and others are most likely to be getting second tier legal advice on their case via the Fair Way partnership. A significant proportion of the small Other group are accessing second tier advice on their case, support through a legal clinic *and* have an immigration lawyer, likely reflecting the especially complex and challenging nature of these cases. Despite these levels of utilisation of legal advice and support, the qualitative aspects of this study make clear that there is significant unmet need for timely, quality legal advice and representation for the groups Fair Way supports.

Some cases are especially hard to progress. For appeal rights exhausted asylum seekers, effective casework support and legal counsel has reasonable prospects of enabling people to re-access Home Office support via a fresh claim for asylum. The process of submitting a fresh claim can in itself be long and challenging, with Fair Way supports – where available and accessible – providing invaluable relative stability. The outcome of fresh claims remains contingent on numerous factors, many beyond the

control of the individual in question or the caseworker. Regularisation could take many years, if it happened at all.

On balance EEA nationals appear to face easier routes to settled status, but a history of offending, evidential requirements, complex needs, and other barriers to engagement could extend or completely jeopardise progress. Unauthorised or undocumented migrants appear to face the severest challenges and uncertainty in progressing to regularisation and are also less likely to be able to avail themselves of crisis support via Fair Way Scotland.

Frontline workers identified missed opportunities to have prevented the intense hardship facing some of those accessing Fair Way. Competent legal advice and robust case preparation at the outset of the asylum process (something that currently sits outside the Fair Way model) was identified as pivotal in preventing individuals from falling into a prolonged cycle of destitution and homelessness. More effective support to EEA nationals, especially at key transition points like losing employment or accommodation, were also seen to have had potential to avoid long-term hardship. Addressing the problematic interaction between even minor criminal convictions and gaining settled status via the EUSS also emerges as an important potential prevention opportunity.

Homelessness

Those accessing Fair Way Scotland are exceptionally disadvantaged in housing terms. 19% were sleeping rough at point of survey and 61% had done so over the last year. This represents a risk of current rough sleeping nine times that for the overall destitute population in the UK. High proportions were experiencing other adverse living situations including living in some form of congregate hostel/refuge/shelter (13%), staying in a hotel/B&B (12%) and staying with family and friends/sofa surfing (9%). Shockingly, a fifth (17%) of respondents had had to leave accommodation in the last year because they did not feel safe.

Experiences of adverse living situations varied. Those that make up the small Other group appear to experience particularly severe insecurity, reporting on average four adverse living situations in the last year, compared to three for the EEA group and two for the asylum group. Almost 80% of the Other group reported having slept rough in the last year. Use of temporary accommodation was much more commonly reported in Aberdeen; B&B, hostel, rough sleeping and unconventional accommodation more common in Edinburgh; and staying with friends & family most common in Glasgow. The number of adverse housing circumstances experienced in the last year is higher for those in Edinburgh (at three), than in Glasgow and Aberdeen (two), reflecting the city's particular housing challenges and the near exclusive presence of the especially disadvantaged Other group in the city.

Our survey results indicate that accessing Fair Way support helps people avoid adverse housing experiences. Those who had been accessing such support for more than three months at point of survey were less likely to have slept rough in the last year (57% v. 66%), stayed with friends/family/sofa surfed in the last year (26% v. 56%), or lived in a caravan

or on a boat in the last year (1% v. 4%) than those who had been receiving Fair Way support for a shorter period. Those accessing support for longer were also less likely to have lived in overcrowded conditions in the last year (17% v. 38%), left accommodation with nowhere else to go in the last year (64% v. 73%), moved multiple times due to affordability in the last year (8% v. 18%), or had difficulty finding rental accommodation in the last year (11% v. 30%).

During 2024/25, a total of 45 people were provided with accommodation in Fair Way community flats, up from 16 in 2023/24 and 6 in 2022/23. Most were in Glasgow where the accommodation portfolio is concentrated. Providing this accommodation is foundational in enabling progress with people's immigration case and general wellbeing, but the need for such accommodation far outstrips demand. Frontline workers faced long waits for spaces to become available and challenging decisions on who to prioritise given levels of vulnerability. Fair Way partners and wider stakeholders saw a further expansion in the scale of Fair Way's accommodation as a central priority, and identified access to funding as the major barrier to doing so.

Of the 26 people with direct experience of NRPF/RE we spoke to, most (19) reported improvements in their living situation since accessing Fair Way support. For the asylum group, positive progress usually meant accessing Fair Way accommodation and from there re-accessing Home Office support, though the quality and suitability of Home Office accommodation varied significantly. The key enablers of positive change were access to quality legal advice to submit a fresh claim and access to Fair Way support – both accommodation and casework. Casework support had also been crucial in sustaining access to Home Office accommodation following a negative decision for some of those we spoke to.

Positive progress for EEA nationals usually involved gaining access to mainstream social housing or temporary accommodation, having secured eligibility via a change of status under the EUSS, but sometimes local authority accommodation was provided despite ongoing restricted eligibility or uncertainty about eligibility. The support of Fair Way caseworkers was a crucial enabler of positive changes for this group.

Frontline workers see securing access to safe accommodation (alongside financial assistance) as essential to protect the basic wellbeing and meet the subsistence needs of those they support via Fair Way. Addressing acute forms of homelessness like rough sleeping was regarded as the preeminent priority. Beyond their importance for survival, these forms of assistance enable engagement with caseworkers and lawyers that could help people to resolve their precarious situations sustainably, and help prevent reoffending for those at risk of committing survival type crimes like shoplifting, that could seriously jeopardise and/or delay progress on their immigration case.

Destitution

Virtually all those accessing Fair Way Scotland (93%) are destitute. Those who had been receiving Fair Way support for longer (more than three months at point of survey) were less likely to be destitute on both the material deprivation criterion (77% v. 89%) and

income criterion (78% v. 88%), and also overall (92% v. 95%, though this last difference was not statistically significant). This suggests that Fair Way support helps reduce destitution. Survey results also suggest that people who were receiving casework and cash support were less likely to be destitute than those receiving just casework (82% v. 95%). We do not see this same pattern for those in Fair Way accommodation, which could reflect selection effects/small sample sizes, or possibly their isolation from or difficulties accessing forms of in-kind support.

The majority of those accessing Fair Way (76%) reported incomes of less than £60 per week, compared to 32% of people experiencing destitution in the UK during 2022. Over a third of those accessing Fair Way (37%) reported no income at all over the past month. The most common sources of income were charities (including Fair Way itself), family, and friends. Those accessing support for longer were also more likely to have received some form of income and to have received income via benefits, reflecting positively on the impact of the partnership on people's income sources.

Those accessing Fair Way are far more likely to have experienced material deprivation in relation to food, clothes, toiletries and shelter than those facing destitution in the UK. Our survey indicates that Fair Way helps mitigate material deprivation among those it supports. People who had been accessing Fair Way support for a longer period (three months or more) were less likely to report going without meals, toiletries and shelter than those who had been accessing support for a shorter period. Project data indicates that 266 people received cash support from Fair Way (usually for 6 months) in 2024/25. This represents a radical increase in the numbers supported compared to previous years when cash support was only offered to those in Fair Way accommodation. This expansion was enabled by cross-directorate Scottish Government funding.[2] Our survey suggests that those who receive this cash support are considerably less likely to report deprivation in relation to food (80% v. 63%).

Fair Way partners, external stakeholders and frontline workers all stressed the importance and positive impact of Fair Way cash payments. Frontline workers and local authority participants emphasised the dire lack of any alternative sources of sustained cash support for this group. Fair Way partners explained that their positive value went beyond their impact mitigating destitution directly (though that was seen as centrally important), highlighting that these payments give people choice and dignity and support engagement with Fair Way casework that can sustainably resolve their hardship. Scaling up the provision of cash support to more people was identified as a priority.

Of the 26 people accessing Fair Way support who we spoke to in the second round of qualitative interviews, almost all (25) remained destitute, although the majority (18) had experienced an increase in their income, most frequently involving accessing cash payments via Fair Way which offered a buffer against the harshest forms of deprivation. Some in the EEA group's income increased because they accessed social security

[2] The award was funded by the Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights directorate (where the Ending Destitution Together strategy sits) and the Tackling Child Poverty and Social Justice directorate (under their food insecurity focus).

benefits and some in the asylum cohort because they (re)accessed Home Office support, with Fair Way casework support often important in enabling these changes.

Many we spoke to had had their material deprivation mitigated by accessing charitable support (including via Fair Way), food banks or the support of friends or community members, but these forms of support were often time limited or temporary and/or failed to give access to the type or quality of support that was needed to get by or achieve basic levels of dignity. People were better able to alleviate their own hardship where they had accommodation and therefore access to storage and cooking facilities. Some form of cash income also enabled access to buy the specific basics they actually needed, e.g. clothes in the right size, rather than relying on limited options in food banks etc. Access to a phone also guarded against deprivation by enabling people to access other support effectively.

The single person we spoke to who escaped destitution altogether was able to do so because they secured settled status via the EUSS, access to Universal Credit and had a job. Receiving benefits alone would not have enabled them to escape destitution altogether.

A small number of those we interviewed had experienced a deterioration in their financial situation, in two cases because they had moved from Fair Way accommodation and cash support to relatively less generous Home Office support, and in the remaining two cases because changes or disagreements about their immigration status had precipitated an end to Universal Credit payments.

The majority (56%) of those accessing Fair Way are not legally permitted to work. This includes virtually all of the asylum group (94%), most of the group with NRPF for other reasons (64%) and a sizeable component of EEA nationals (27%). People were desperate to work, not only as a route out of hardship, but for their own sense of dignity, self-worth and wellbeing and because they had a strong desire to support themselves. For those accessing Fair Way who are permitted to work (mostly in the EEA group), health issues and complex needs are often a barrier. Frontline workers were clear that accessing employment for this group is dependent on first attaining some stability via safe accommodation and cash support.

Local authority responses

Local authority social work teams assist adults with NRPF/RE in particular circumstances under relevant statutory duties and discretionary powers. There are considerable differences in interpretation of duties between Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen, which have implications for the level of demand for Fair Way Scotland support. Thresholds are exceptionally high in Glasgow, with only those experiencing very acute issues assisted (e.g. very severe mental health problems that render them a risk to the public) . Thresholds are also high in Aberdeen, whereas Edinburgh's Refugee and Migration Team interpret their powers and duties more inclusively.

Local authority homelessness teams also respond differently to this group. In Glasgow and Edinburgh, local authority homelessness teams emphasise that they are not legally able to accommodate those with NRPF/RE, though in Edinburgh they may do so for very short periods in exceptional circumstances. The emphasis in Aberdeen is on accepting statutory homelessness applications and providing temporary accommodation where there is uncertainty about eligibility, with efforts taken to move people out of such accommodation after a reasonable period where there is a decision of ineligibility.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, emergency single room accommodation has been available to those facing rough sleeping over the winter months which was accessible to people with NRPF/RE until winter 2024/25. At the time of writing (October 2025), it appears that the emergency accommodation offer for those with NRPF/RE this winter will be more limited, representing a backward step in provision for this group. Equivalent provision in Glasgow had also been open to those with NRPF, but did not operate during winter 2024/25, and at the time of writing it is unclear whether such provision will available over the coming winter.

Estimating demand Scotland-wide

Using data from the *Destitution in the UK* survey and other sources, we derived formula-based estimates of likely need/demand for Fair Way support across Scotland. These estimates suggest that around 4,000 individuals require such support annually, with 67-70% of demand concentrated in the cities in which Fair Way currently operates. We estimate that extending Fair Way as it currently operates nationwide would require increasing resources by between 37% and 49%.

Economic analysis

People accessing Fair Way support use health services more than comparable UK adults, and the excess costs involved are considerable (£2.35m in total). For example, this group report visiting the General Practitioner, using and ambulance and attended A&E 2-3 times more than the general population, and having a hospital appointment nearly 5.5 times more often. This group also report higher levels of involvement with the criminal justice system, with excess costs totalling £3m, primarily from the Court service. These excess costs were overwhelmingly associated with the EEA (and Other) groups of Fair Way service users. Our survey indicated, however, that those who received cash or accommodation support, utilised most of these services less.

Using a widely used and validated measure of mental wellbeing, our survey results show that people accessing Fair Way have a higher incidence of poor and very poor mental wellbeing than the general population, but that those accessing Fair Way for longer reported lower levels of poor mental wellbeing.

Based on a range of evidence-informed assumptions about the difference Fair Way Scotland makes to public service utilisation and mental wellbeing, we have shown that the benefit of investing in support for those with NRPF/RE, like Fair Way Scotland, are likely to outweigh the costs. We estimate that for every £1 spend, Fair Way generates

£0.64 in public service cost savings and £1.20 when monetised mental wellbeing improvements are included. The actual economic value of Fair Way is almost certainly higher, as our analysis does not include a range of other types of benefit/cost-savings that are likely associated with more inclusive and effective responses to this group (e.g. costs to LA and homelessness and social work services, the Home Office, and wider charitable responses to need among this group).

Extending Fair Way's community-based housing offer to those currently sleeping rough, in 'other' especially adverse circumstances, plus those in hotel/B&B accommodation which is poor quality, would achieve cost offsets which would significantly exceed the actual (social) rental costs necessary to do so. There is also an economic case for extending this community-housing offer to some other core homeless groups e.g. those in hostels.

Systems-level impacts

Fair Way Scotland has brought together a consortium of independent funders to address the extreme disadvantage faced by some people because of their immigration status and learn how to do so more effectively. In doing so, the partnership has raised the profile, visibility and understanding of NRPF/RE destitution generally and especially within Scottish Government and Parliament. These impacts have been achieved via: evaluation outputs sharing unique evidence of need; a legal briefing designed to build confidence in stretching devolved powers to their full extent; an increased emphasis on public affairs work; building the capacity of the third sector to engage with policy-makers and other key stakeholders; and maintaining a regular programme of meetings with key officials.

Scottish Government has laid out a clear ambition to end homelessness and destitution for *everyone* in Scotland, backed by the Ending Destitution Together strategy, the only one of its kind in the UK. Fair Way partners are nevertheless disappointed by the slow pace of policy reform and investment to address NRPF/RE-related destitution and homelessness in Scotland. The shape and form of the upcoming Ending Destitution Together strategy refresh and delivery plan will be an important marker of Fair Way's influence, but stakeholders caution against expecting a radical expansion in investment or activity given wider pressures.

Fair Way Scotland has had wide-ranging and important impacts in the local authorities in which it operates, particularly in Edinburgh and Aberdeen. These include increasing understanding and confidence of NRPF/RE destitution and homelessness; giving local authority staff more confidence in their interactions with and decisions regarding this group; advising on particular cases; and as a route to refer ineligible households for support and advice. In all three local authority areas, Fair Way's work has informed strategic discussions and/or decision making, either in council committee meetings (Edinburgh and Glasgow) or (in Aberdeen) by informing shifts in approaches to recording presentations from ineligible households.

Fair Way has achieved other valued systems-level impacts, including bringing Housing Associations to the table as accommodation providers within its integrated support

model; inspiring and informing the development of responses to NRPF/RE destitution and homelessness in Wales and Northern Ireland; and developing a Community of Practice for frontline workers. Scaling up Housing Association contributions to accommodating NRPF/RE households was seen as a priority, as was refreshing and strengthening the frontline worker Community of Practice.

Influencing policy and legal change at the UK-level has not been a major focus for Fair Way to date, reflecting capacity constraints, a recognition that other UK-wide organisations may be better placed to pursue this agenda, and to some extent pessimism about the potential for radical progress at UK level. Following the election of a new Labour Government in Westminster, however, there was some cautious hope that a greater focus on UK-level influencing might pay dividends, especially if focused on reforms perceived to be less controversial, like improving the quality of decision making and ensuring due progress in the asylum system. The increasingly challenging and polarised nature of debate on matters relating to immigration since then, and the tenor and content of the UK Government's response, has no doubt muted this hope.

Achieving further systems-level impacts will require the navigation of a series of challenges, including: anti-immigration political sentiments; the challenging fiscal context and a lack of resource for the anti-destitution agenda; local authorities – especially Edinburgh and Glasgow – struggling to meet rapid escalations in demand for statutory homelessness support from recently granted refugees and Scotland's wider housing emergency; a lack of capacity within Fair Way Scotland itself; and ongoing challenges effectively advocating for more inclusive responses from social work teams.

Conclusions

Two core arguments have emerged from this three-year, multi-methods evaluation of Fair Way Scotland. First, the partnership is making a tangible and significant difference, at both the individual-level to those it supports directly, but also more broadly in promoting understanding of the issues facing this group and the role of a range of social actors in responding to it. Our economic analysis also shows that Fair Way Scotland represents value for money, driving real reductions in public service use and associated costs and improving people's mental wellbeing. Second, the scale of current efforts to address these issues is inadequate. Ending destitution and homelessness in Scotland – explicit aims of the current Government – is simply not possible without increased political will, investment and more ambitious contributions from Scottish Government, local authorities, housing associations, and independent funders.

Recommendations

Our previous evaluation reports have made a series of recommendations, and these remain in place. In this final report, we offer the following recommendations taking account of the overall conclusion of the study and reflecting on the complex and ever-changing shape of relevant law, policy and practice. Many of the recommendations below take direct inspiration from the Legal Briefing written by Jen Ang published as part of the Fair Way evaluation in January 2025. We are especially mindful of the critical need

for a consistent and positive public discourse about migrants and the value of evidence-based, practical solutions in the run up to next year's Scottish election.

Scotland can lead the way and show what's possible. At their heart, our recommendations over the years have asked that we unequivocally take steps to prevent the most extreme forms of hardship facing people in Scotland and that the UK Government work in partnership with local and devolved authorities to create a more compassionate, coherent and cost-effective system that keeps issues of immigration and security separate from issues around welfare.

UK Government / Home Office

The UK Government could at a stroke resolve the humanitarian crisis documented in this report and obviate the need to pursue many of the recommendations laid out below by reforming NRPF and wider hostile environment policies to actively prevent destitution and homelessness.

In addition to pursuing this radical and urgent change of course, the UK Government should:

- Recognise the economic and human costs of immigration and asylum policy and practice, including the impact of hostile environment policies, and poor quality and inconsistent decision making within the Home Office. The costs and harms are being felt by those facing homelessness, destitution, exploitation, trafficking and ill health as a result of these policies. The costs fall on local government, national public authorities and charities who bear the burden of responding to these injustices. The UK Government should adequately resource the costs incurred.

- Take responsibility for the impacts of negative decisions on asylum claims, recognising that in most cases, given the capacity of relevant systems, those receiving such decisions do not face immediate removal but remain in local communities facing often extreme hardship. Negative decisions should trigger clear protocols to connect individuals with local sources of support and rapid legal advice.

- Implement anti-destitution reforms to the EUSS and its implementation, including consistent approaches to ensuring European nationals with pre-settled status, but no qualifying right to reside, who are facing destitution are granted access to social security benefits by Department for Work and Pensions and ensuring that minor criminal matters do not delay Home Office decision-making.

Scottish Government / COSLA should:

- Design, deliver and evaluate an Ending Destitution Together pilot which builds on learning from Fair Way Scotland and seeks to implement this learning in practice to achieve the approaches set out in Ending Destitution Together and New Scots strategies. Supported by Fair Way and Scottish Government, the pilot would seek to strengthen preventative local approaches to designing out destitution for migrant

households at risk by ensuring that statutory rights are fully maximised, barriers to support are minimised, and local resources fully and efficiently deployed. We recommend it focus on an area or areas not already covered by Fair Way and where housing pressures are less acute. It would create valuable learning and a clear blueprint for other areas.

- Work with local authorities to ensure that they are providing a fair and consistent response across Scotland, and are effectively using the levers at their disposal to tackle NRPF//RE destitution, including by:

  - providing temporary accommodation while eligibility is being assessed and recording applications for homelessness assistance from ineligible households
  - ensuring fair and equal access to health and mental health services
  - providing adequate access to education and employability support (including ESOL classes)
  - not setting social work thresholds for adults with NRPF/RE who have care needs prohibitively high

- Establish a 'last resort' Hardship Fund to prevent homelessness, destitution or other forms of extreme disadvantage where, for any reason, other forms of financial or practical support are not available, accessible or effective. The fund could be administered flexibly and inclusively to dismantle barriers for anyone in Scotland who may struggle to attain access to appropriate support.

- Accelerate progress to tackling destitution and homelessness by rapidly reviewing relevant areas of law, policy and practice that cause or fail to adequately respond to destitution and homelessness for people with NRPF/RE. Embed mitigation measures in all relevant policy portfolios and strategies, and reform law and policy to redress these failures. Increase investment, training and resources for frontline workers.

- Increase investment in the Ending Destitution Together strategy, scaling up access to casework and cash support for those experiencing NRPF/RE destitution and homelessness to better align with demand; and ensuring that all those who need it have access to specialist legal advice and representation. Expand the Cash First pilot programme into a national approach to ensure all those in urgent need have rapid access to the support they need.

- Early access to quality legal advice can prevent destitution and homelessness among those with NRPF/RE. Scottish Government should ensure that the Scottish Legal Aid Board Review identifies effective solutions to ensure that those with NRPF/RE have access to quality asylum and immigration legal advice and representation.

- Strengthen accountability for progress by ensuring greater participation of people with NRPF/RE who are directly impacted by UK and Scottish Government policies and practices.

Scottish Government / Local Authorities should:

- Work in partnership with the third sector to ensure emergency accommodation provision is reliably available for everyone at risk of rough sleeping during winter and extreme weather. This should be single-room provision, accessible out-of-hours, and provide access to living essentials as well as a safe place to stay. This provision must be accessible to those with NRPF/RE.

Fair Way Scotland should:

- Establish effective data infrastructure and common recording across Fair Way delivery partners to enable reliable measurement and tracking of the profile of those supported and the outcomes achieved by receiving Fair Way support.

- Increase capacity within the partnership to provide accessible, quality legal advice and representation to people with NRPF/RE through direct commissioning of legal advice services

- Increase capacity for policy and public affairs work in partnership with other advocacy organisations across the UK to push for systems-level changes in policy and practice at local authority, Scottish Government and UK levels.

Other actors:

- Meeting the costs of community-based accommodation accessible to those with NRPF/RE who would otherwise be sleeping rough or in other unsafe living conditions is a key challenge in addressing the needs identified in this study. Scottish Government should lead the creation of a strategic funding partnership between local authorities, Fair Way Scotland and independent funders to ensure sufficient resource is available to support the accommodation and essential living costs of this group.

- Fair Way Scotland and Scottish Government should work with Housing Associations to build consensus on their role in supporting people with NRPF/RE, with the aim of securing access to decent quality, community-based accommodation at a reasonable cost for this group.

1. Introduction

Background

Some people in the UK are unable to access mainstream forms of support, like social security benefits and homelessness assistance, when they need to as a result of their immigration status. Having No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) affects people in a range of circumstances, including those who came to the UK for work, to study or to be with family and who have a NRPF condition attached to their visa and those seeking asylum. Those seeking asylum can receive accommodation and subsistence support via the Home Office, but appeal rights exhausted asylum seekers face a cessation in such support at point of refusal. Some European Economic Area (EEA) nationals living in the UK before Brexit have not yet achieved settled status via the European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS) and face restrictions on their access to benefits and homelessness assistance as a result. Finally, anyone in the UK without authorisation[3] (sometimes called undocumented migrants), e.g. because they have overstayed a visa, are also not permitted to claim benefits or access some public services, and – like those seeking asylum or yet to make a valid EUSS application – are not permitted to work.

We do not know how many people in the UK are in these situations, but recent years have seen increases in the estimated number of people in the UK on visas that typically carry the NRPF condition, from 2.6 million in 2022 to 3.6 million at the end of 2024.[4] There is no official data source on the number of appeal rights exhausted (ARE) asylum seekers in the UK, but the number of people coming to the UK to claim asylum is increasing[5] and the proportion of applications being refused also appears to be growing.[6] The number of European Union (EU) nationals in the UK with restricted eligibility (RE) is also unknown, but high numbers of applications to the EUSS have continued since the 2021 deadline.[7] The number of people in the UK without authorisation is notoriously hard to measure, but the most recent estimates put numbers at least 674,000 and at most 1.2 million.[8]

[3] The Migration Observatory (2025) Unauthorised migration in the UK. Online: Migration Observatory. https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/unauthorised-migration-in-the-uk/

[4] See House of Commons Library (2025) Research Briefing: No recourse to public funds. Online: UK Parliament. https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9790/ and The Migration Observatory (2023) Deprivation and the no recourse to public funds (NRPF) condition. Online: Migration Observatory. https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/deprivation-and-the-no-recourse-to-public-funds-nrpf-condition/

[5] Home Office (2025) Accredited official statistics: How many people claim asylum in the UK? https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2024/how-many-people-claim-asylum-in-the-uk

[6] Home Office (2025) Accredited official statistics: How many people claim asylum in the UK? https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2024/how-many-people-are-granted-asylum-in-the-uk

[7] Home Office (2024) Accredited official statistics: How many people claim asylum in the UK? https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-june-2024/how-many-people-have-been-granted-settlement-via-the-eu-settlement-scheme

[8] The Migration Observatory (2025) Unauthorised migration in the UK. Online: Migration Observatory. https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/unauthorised-migration-in-the-uk/

Despite these uncertainties, it is clear that the number of people with NRPF/RE and facing destitution and homelessness is increasing.[9] UK-wide, levels of destitution among migrants are estimated to have increased by 136% between 2019 and 2022 according to the *Destitution in the UK* study, more than double the 61% increase in destitution overall over the same time-period.[10] The same research clearly shows that migrant households are over-represented among the population experiencing destitution.

People with NRPF/RE also face high risks of homelessness, including its most acute manifestation, rough sleeping. Despite representing only 15% of the overall population, non-UK nationals made up over half (55%) of those recorded sleeping rough in London in 2023/24,[11] up from 48% in 2021/22. Across England as a whole, non-UK nationals made up over a quarter of those sleeping rough according to the snapshot estimate undertaken in autumn 2024.[12] In Scotland, more than half (16 of 30) of LAs surveyed in spring 2023 anticipated seeing an increase in demand from people with NRPF/RE in the coming year,[13] and the Welcome Centres open over the winter months to provide routes out of rough sleeping in Edinburgh and Glasgow experienced a dramatic spike in demand from those with NRPF over winter 2022/23.[14]

Those with an NRPF condition attached to their visa can apply to the Home Office for a 'change of conditions' to lift the NRPF condition, but this only impacts very small numbers[15] and does not apply to appeal rights exhausted asylum seekers, undocumented migrants or European nationals with restricted eligibility. Some people with NRPF/RE can access subsistence support from their local authority, though this is only available to families with children or vulnerable adults with care needs.[16] COSLA (in collaboration with COMPAS at the University of Oxford) have conducted an annual survey to better understand local authority (LA) NRPF support since 2020/21.[17] The results show substantial increases in the numbers supported, which stood at 1,868 in 2023/24, more than three times the 578 reported in 2020/21 and up 24% on the last year.

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[9] Leon, L. & Broadhead, J. (2024) Understanding Migrant Destitution in the UK. Online: COMPAS. https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/UMDUK-Research-Findings-2024.pdf

[10] Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Treanor, M., Blenkinsopp, J., McIntyre, J., Johnsen, S., & McMordie, L. (2023) Destitution in the UK 2023. Online: JRF. https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2023

[11] Greater London Authority (2023) Chain Annual Report: Greater London, April 2022-March 2023. Online: London Assembly. https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports

[12] Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (2024) Official Statistics: Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2023. Online: DLUHC. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2023/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2023#:~:text=There%20were%203%2C898%20people%20estimated,since%20the%20peak%20in%202017

[13] Watts-Cobbe, B., Bramley, G., Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., McMordie, L & Young, G. (2024) The Homelessness Monitor: Scotland 2021. London: Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/homelessness-monitor/scotland/the-homelessness-monitor-scotland-2024/

[14] Glasgow City Mission (2024) Overnight Welcome Centre 2023/24. Online: Glasgow City Mission. https://www.glasgowcitymission.com/2024/05/17/overnight-welcome-centre-2023-24/#:~:text=Glasgow%20City%20Mission's%20Overnight%20Welcome,the%20number%20of%20last%20year; Bethany Christiam Trust (2024) Welcome Centre Annual Report 2023/24 https://www.bethanychristiantrust.com/welcome-centre-annual-report-2023-24/.

[15] House of Commons Library (2025) Research Briefing: No recourse to public funds. Online: UK Parliament. https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9790/

[16] COSLA (no date) Migrants rights and entitlements. Online: Migration Scotland. https://migrationscotland.org.uk/migrants-rights-and-entitlements/social-services-support-adults/

[17] COSLA (no date) Migrants rights and entitlements. Online: Migration Scotland. https://migrationscotland.org.uk/migrants-rights-and-entitlements/social-services-support-adults/

The largest groups accessing such support are those with a visa with the NRPF condition attached, those making an asylum application, and EEA nationals. The majority (84%) of those supported are assisted under the Children (Scotland) Act, reflecting the focus of these duties on families. The costs incurred by LAs in providing this support – for which they received no specific funding from the UK or Scottish Government – stood at £6.4 million in 2023/24. Accommodation dominated these costs but spend on subsistence support, staffing and legal costs is increasing.

Single people and other households without dependent children who cannot access this support face very limited options for financial and housing assistance indeed, bar emergency cold weather or winter accommodation provision where it is available and charitable crisis supports like food banks. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Edinburgh City Council and Bethany Christian Trust have run a Rapid Rehousing Welcome Centre over the winter months which was accessible to people with NRPF/RE who were facing rough sleeping until winter 2024/25. At the time of writing (October 2025), it appears that this provision for those with NRPF/RE will be more limited this winter. Glasgow's equivalent Overnight Welcome Centre did not operate during winter 2024/25, and at the time of writing it is unclear whether such provision will available over the coming winter.

UK policy developments

The NRPF condition was introduced via the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act and 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, following moves in the 1980s to restrict social security access for some migrants as a visa condition. Since then, immigration trends and policy have seen additional major shifts. Fifteen percent of the UK-population were born overseas in 2023, putting the UK in the middle of the pack of OECD countries, with around the same level of foreign-born population as France (14%), the Netherlands (16%) and the United States (15%), and less than other high-income countries like Germany (18%), Canada (22%) and Australia (31%).[18] Levels of immigration and net migration have been on a broad upward trajectory since around the 1990s, though in the last five or so years migration from the EU is estimated to have reduced substantially while immigration outside the EU has spiked.[19] Those coming to the UK to seek asylum continue to be a very small, though increasing, proportion of overall migration (13-15% in 2024).[20]

Against this backdrop, the last fifteen years have seen a plethora of reforms to the immigration and asylum systems driven by consecutive Government commitments to reduce net-migration. In 2010, the Conservative Party began to explicitly pursue a

[18] The Migration Observatory (2025) Net migration to the UK. Online: Migration Observatory. https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/long-term-international-migration-flows-to-and-from-the-uk/

[19] The Migration Observatory (2025) Net migration to the UK. Online: Migration Observatory. https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/long-term-international-migration-flows-to-and-from-the-uk/

[20] House of Commons Library (2025) Research Briefing: Asylum statistics. Online: UK Parliament. https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn01403/#:~:text=Proportion%20of%20all%20migrants%20who,would%20fall%20into%20that%20category.

"hostile environment"[21] policy to deter 'illegal immigration'. The Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016 strengthened measures against illegal working, restricted access to public services, prevented illegal migrants from obtaining driving licenses and bank accounts, and enhanced authorities' powers to remove and deport individuals without legal status.

Subsequent Conservative UK Governments doubled down on 'hostile' or 'compliant environment' approaches, in part reflecting the high priority placed on reducing the number of small boat crossings bringing migrants to the UK, which have escalated rapidly in the last five years.[22] Key reforms were introduced in the 2022 Nationality and Borders Act and the 2023 Illegal Migration Act expanding deportation powers, allowing for the return of people entering the UK through unauthorised routes to their home or a third country, limiting access to UK modern slavery protections, and permitting the disregard of most asylum and human rights claims made by recent arrivals.[23]

A key policy central to implementing the Illegal Migration Act – the UK and Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership (Rwanda Plan) – would have enabled the relocating of asylum seekers to Rwanda for processing and resettlement. Despite legal challenges, the then UK Government passed the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act 2024,[24] allowing the Rwanda Plan's core provisions, including the return of people arriving by irregular means, to come into force.[25]

The former UK Government also initiated efforts to 'clear the backlog' of asylum claims that have built up in recent years[26] and reduce the number of asylum seekers accommodated in expensive hotel accommodation. The move to e-visas as a digital record of immigration status – intended to be rolled out in full by the end of 2024 – has been beset by technical difficulties, including failures to automatically update people's status (for example, removing their NRPF status when appropriate) leaving people unable to claim support to which they are entitled.[27]

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[21] Kirkup, J. & Winnett, R. (2012) 'Theresa May Interview: 'We're Going to Give Illegal Migrants a Really Hostile Reception'', *Telegraph*, 25 May. Online: Telegraph. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/0/theresa-may-interview-going-give-illegal-migrants-really-hostile/

[22] Home Office and Boarder Force (2025) Migrants detected crossing the English Channel in small boats. Online: UK government. IPPR (2022) Understanding the rise in channel crossings. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/migrants-detected-crossing-the-english-channel-in-small-boats

[23] The Law Society (2023) Nationality and Borders Act. Online: The Law Society. https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/immigration/nationality-and-borders-act; Refugee Council (no date) What is the Nationality and Borders Act. Online: Refugee Council. https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/what-is-the-nationality-and-borders-act/

[24] Jones, J. (2023) "What is the government's new Rwanda asylum plan?", Institute for Government, 7th December. Online: Institute for Government. https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainer/government-rwanda-asylum-bill-treaty

[25] Carrell, S., Syal, R., & Adu, A. (2024) Home Office to detain asylum seekers across UK in shock Rwanda operation, The Guardian, 28 April. Online: The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/apr/28/home-office-to-detain-asylum-seekers-across-uk-in-shock-rwanda-operation.Home

[26] The Migration Observatory (2023) The UK's asylum backlog. Online: The Migration Observatory. https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/the-uks-asylum-backlog/

[27] The Unity Project (2025) eVisas and NRPF – issues and practical advice for caseworkers. Online: The Unity Project. https://unity-project.org.uk/evisas-and-nrpf/

Box 1: Hussein, aged 25-34

Hussein arrived in the UK in 2018 to seek asylum. When we first spoke to him, he was appeal rights exhausted and staying in Fair Way Scotland accommodation following a period sleeping rough and sofa-surfing. He experienced a dawn arrest from this accommodation and was detained under the threat of removal to Rwanda. Following the intervention of a new solicitor – who promptly submitted a fresh asylum claim – and a close friend who could offer bail, Hussein was released from detention and returned to Scotland. This experience has significantly impacted his mental health, leading to severe anxiety and recurring panic attacks. He also experienced worsening physical health associated with ongoing stress. Hussein is now housed in Home Office accommodation awaiting a decision on his fresh claim. He receives £49 per week and is not permitted to work. He is often unable to afford the basics, forcing him to rely on goodwill of friends and others from his ethnic community or take up occasional cash-in-hand jobs for essentials like food, clothing and toiletries. Hussein feels somewhat more optimistic now that his fresh claim is being considered. He hopes to receive a positive decision that will let him work, achieve financial independence, and move beyond this long period of uncertainty.

As noted above, following the UK's exit from the European Union, some EU nationals resident in the UK prior to Brexit have faced restricted eligibility for support as they have not yet secured settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme. While the general deadline for applying for status via the EUSS was in 2021, a high number of applications to the Scheme continue to be made.[28] Since then, rules permitting late applications have been tightened and rights of review restricted, making it harder for some people to progress their case and leaving them with ongoing restricted eligibility for statutory supports.[29]

Aspects of the UK immigration system have been subject to ongoing legal challenge and review. Some provisions of the Illegal Migration Act, for example, were successfully challenged and disapplied on human rights grounds in Northern Ireland.[30] Legal challenges have been made arguing that EU nationals with pre-settled status may be eligible for Universal Credit and housing assistance in particular circumstances have also been successful.[31] No Recourse to Public Funds policy has been subject to ongoing

[28] The 3 million (2025) EU Settlement Scheme Statistics. Online: the 3 million. https://the3million.org.uk/eu-settlement-scheme-statistics

[29] Zaman, A. (2024) Changes announced for late EUSS applications: what you need to know. Online: Cranbrook Legal. https://www.cranbrooklegal.com/changes-announced-for-late-euss-applications-what-you-need-to-know/

[30] Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (2024) Illegal Migration Act challenge Factsheet – updated 20 May 2024. Online: NIHR. https://nihrc.org/assets/uploads/publications/Illegal-Migration-Act-Challenge-Fact-Sheet-updated-May-2024.pdf

[31] The 3 million (2024) Success! Court finds EU citizens with pre-settled status are eligible for housing assistance. Online: the 3 million. https://the3million.org.uk/news/2024-05-29/success-court-finds-eu-citizens-pre-settled-status-are-eligible-housing-assistance; O'Brien, C. (2023) 'No room for doubt': EU citizens access to benefits and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Online: EU Rights and Brexit Hub. https://www.eurightshub.york.ac.uk/blog/qol2xenw5pbuowcdu5tz3vrp5zpezu#:~:text=Folder:%20Activities-,'No%20room%20for%20doubt':%20EU%20citizens%20access%20to%20benefits,the%20Charter%20of%20Fundamental%20Rights&text=In%20the%20latest%20twist%20in,of%20the%20Brexit%20transition%20period

legal challenge and strategic litigation, with multiple judgements pointing to the unlawfulness of the policy on various grounds.[32]

There has also been a great deal of broader critique of the Government's hostile environment approach to immigration, and NRPF/RE policies specifically, on grounds of the harm they cause and their failure to achieve intended aims.[33] There is evidence, for example, that hostile environment policies (including restrictions on access to welfare support) fail in their primary aim of deterring migration, because migrants expect to work on arrival, tend to have little to know knowledge of welfare structures and are attracted to 'destination countries' for other separate reasons, including the presence of diaspora communities.[34] Other recent critiques include The Centre on Migration, Policy and Society work to promote understanding of and improve "patchy and dysfunctional"[35] responses to the migrant destitution locally;[36] an economic analysis of changes to NRPF policy from the Centre for Social Policy Studies which concludes that there is "a strong case for reviewing NRPF policy and opening up access to public funds for some, or all, legal migrants to the UK"[37]; and a range of work focusing on the negative impacts of NRPF policy on child poverty and wellbeing.[38]

The Home Office itself has recently published an interim output from an ongoing evaluation of the compliant environment. It concluded that *"the system appears to be working well in terms of preventing access to [work, benefits and services for] those not eligible"*,[39] but was narrowly focused on questions on the effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms in ensuing that those without a right to do so cannot access work and benefits, and the effectiveness of safeguards ensuring those *with* these rights are not erroneously excluded. It included no focus on the negative impacts of the compliant environment on individuals appropriately targeted and the communities and services left to respond to their hardship.

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[32] Deighton Pierce Glyn (2025) Home Office's NRPF policy found unlawful for the third time in as many years. Online: https://dpglaw.co.uk/home-offices-nrpf-policy-found-unlawful-for-the-third-time-in-as-many-years/

[33] These are reviewed at length in chapter two our previous report: Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Treanor, M., Blenkinsopp, J., McIntyre, J., Johnsen, S., & McMordie, L. (2023) Destitution in the UK 2023. Online: JRF. https://www.jrf.org.uk/deep-poverty-and-destitution/destitution-in-the-uk-2023

[34] Home Office Analysis and Insight. (2020) Sovereign borders: International asylum comparisons report (Section 1: Drivers and impact on asylum migration journeys). *Migration and Border Analysis, September 2020*. Online. https://freemovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Annex-A-Sovereign-Borders-International-Asylum-Comparisons-Report-Section-1-Drivers-and-impact-on-asylum-migration-journeys.pdf; Hagen-Zanker, J., & Mallett, R. (2016) Journeys to Europe: The Role of Policy in Migrant Decision-Making. Online: ODI. https://media.odi.org/documents/10297.pdf

[35] Leon, L. & Broadhead, J. (2025) Understanding Migrant Destitution in Scotland. Online: Compas. https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025-Understanding-Migrant-Destitution-in-Scotland.pdf p.4.

[36] See https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/project/understanding-migrant-destitution-in-the-uk

[37] WPI Economics (2024) No reason for no recourse: Why reform of 'No Recourse to Public Funds' conditions would be good for London and the UK. Online: WPI Economics. https://wpieconomics.com/publications/no-reason-for-no-recourse-why-reform-of-no-recourse-to-public-funds-conditions-would-be-good-for-london-and-the-uk/ p.5.

[38] COMPAS (2025) Poverty among children affected by UK government asylum and immigration policy. Online: COMPAS. https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/publication/poverty-among-children-affected-by-uk-government-asylum-and-immigration-policy; Whitaker-Yilmaz, J. & Mort, L. (2025) Every child is equal: Bridging the childcare gap for families with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). Online: IPPR. https://www.ippr.org/articles/every-child-is-equal

[39] Home Office (2025) Evaluation of the compliant environment: interim report. Online: Home Office. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-compliant-environment-interim-report/evaluation-of-the-compliant-environment-interim-report#final-reflections

Box 2: Dion, unknown age

Dion is a European national and has lived in the UK for over twenty-six years. He encountered complications with his EU Settlement Scheme application due to losing his passport and delays accessing the required paperwork from his country of origin's embassy. He used to work in the food industry, but his current immigration status means he can no longer work. He has now applied for settled status based on long residency, but that, too, remains unresolved. His MP contacted the Home Office, but he was only informed that there is a backlog and he must wait. Dion lives in shared temporary accommodation, an arrangement that feels precarious, and he misses the security he once had when he was steadily employed and could choose his own home. He currently survives on roughly three hundred pounds a month from benefits secured with the help of if Fair Way caseworker, and struggles to afford food and toiletries. Friends help out with small loans or essential items. He says the uncertainty leaves him feeling low, especially as he cannot support or visit his ten-year-old daughter, who now lives overseas with her mother. He went through a period of heavy sleeping and hopelessness, but feels his mental health has improved somewhat as he has adapted to his situation, and taken up more exercise, such as gym sessions and running. Dion hopes to return to work as soon as his immigration status is resolved. His lawyer is handling the paperwork, and he has also received advice from his MP as well as via Fair Way Scotland. He remains hopeful that he will soon secure proper status, return to employment, secure stable accommodation, and re-establish a closer relationship with his daughter.

There is a long history of community and third-sector efforts to support destitute migrants across the UK.[40] For example, in 2024, the No Accommodation Network (NACCOM) accommodated over 4,146 people across the UK in hosting, lodging or emergency accommodation or other schemes and 4,212 people were given financial support over the same period.[41] Recent projects include the Oxford Homelessness Movement's pilot Housing First programme for people with NRPF, which has supported 50 individuals since 2021 and been shown to improve health and wellbeing, support community integration, and be cost-effective[42] and a Centre for Homelessness Impact 'Test and Learn' programme that provides time limited accommodation and legal advice to a cohort of people with NRPF and sleeping rough and tracks the outcomes.[43] In 2023 the NRPF partnership was established by Migration Exchange, Citizens UK and Praxis, pursuing a collective impact model to build the infrastructure for collaboration and amplify the work of relevant organisations to achieve change.[44]

Many hoped that the UK Labour Government elected in July 2024 would take a different direction on immigration and asylum policy,[45] and indeed, upon election one of the new

[40] See: https://naccom.org.uk/about-us-2/
[41] NACCOM (2024) Our Impact 2023-2024. Online: NACCOM. https://naccom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/NACCOM-ImpactReport_2025-05-15_DIGITAL.pdf
[42] Aitken, J. (2025) Housing First for People with NRPF – Evaluation. Online: Policy Panda Research. https://www.policypandaresearch.co.uk/research/nrpf-housing-first-evaluation
[43] See https://www.homelessnessimpact.org/projects/support-for-non-uk-nationals
[44] See https://www.praxis.org.uk/news/new-partnership-no-recourse-to-public-funds-collective-impact-partnership
[45] Hilton, T. N. (2024) New government, new opportunity to the hostile environment for refugees. Online: Refugee Action. https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/new-government/; The 3 million (2024) Grassroots groups of EU citizens

Government's first actions was to cancel the Rwanda Plan. Another was to end the retrospective elements of the Illegal Migration Act allowing the resumption of the processing of the asylum claims of those who arrived in the UK after 7th March 2023. In December 2024 the UK Government announced that it would pilot an extension in the notice period given to newly granted refugees from 28 to 56 days before they were evicted (those refused still face a shorter notice period of 14 or 21 days depending on their circumstances).

Hopes that the new Government would address the negative impacts of NRPF/RE policy alongside the efforts it has taken to strengthen border control have not yet been realised, however. No actions have been taken since July 2024 to ease experiences of destitution, homelessness and broader hardship among those with NRPF/RE and the Government's broader immigration and asylum policy agenda has been focused on restricting access to the UK for new migrants, reducing the small boats crisis by tackling the criminal gangs and strengthening return arrangements, closing asylum hotels, reforming the asylum appeals process, restricting and extending routes to settlement including via a new contribution-based model, and reviewing and restricting family reunion.[46] In late August 2025, the Government indicated that it would soon reverse the extension in the time given to asylum seekers to find accommodation prior to their eviction from Home Office accommodation following a decision on their claim, albeit with some exemptions.[47] As this report went to press, the Government had just announced major further reforms to the UK asylum and returns policy in its policy paper *Restoring Order and Control*. This includes plans to extend the period needed to settle in the UK from give to 20 years and introduce 'safe return' reviews every two and half year.[48] The proposed reforms could significantly increase the number of people facing NRPF and the duration of NRPF conditions.

A Scottish approach

While immigration policy is reserved to Westminster under the current devolution settlement, the Scottish Government is treading a different path, both in its positive and welcoming orientation to immigration[49] and in its response to those with NRPF/RE. Key

in the UK call for the labour government to reform the EU settlement scheme. Online: the 3 million. https://the3million.org.uk/news/2024-07-15/grassroots-groups-eu-citizens-uk-call-labour-government-to-reform-eu-settlement

[46] Home Office (2025) Restoring control over the immigration system: white paper. Online: Home Office. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/restoring-control-over-the-immigration-system-white-paper; Home Office (2025) Asylum and immigration – briefing note. Online: Home Office. https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2025/09/02/asylum-and-immigration-briefing-note/#:~:text=Refugee%20Family%20Reunion&text=In%20May%202025%2C%20the%20Government,unprecedented%20demand%20for%20temporary%20accommodation; Home Office (2025) New contribution-based settlement model to reduce net migration. Online: Home Office. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-contribution-based-settlement-model-to-reduce-net-migration

[47] Taylor, D. (2025) Home Office plans to halve time asylum seekers given to find accommodation, 27th August, Online: Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/aug/27/charities-warn-rise-rough-sleeping-refugees-winter-uk

[48] Free Movement (2025) Home Secretary announces major asylum and other changes in new policy paper: "Restoring Order and Control". Online. https://freemovement.org.uk/home-secretary-announces-major-asylum-and-other-changes-in-new-policy-paper-restoring-order-and-control/

[49] Scottish Government (2021) A Scotland for the future: opportunities and challenges of Scotland's changing population. Online: Scottish Government. https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotland-future-opportunities-

to this approach is the 2018 New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy, devised in partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council and COSLA. Revised in 2024, following the results of an evaluation, six principles underpin the approach: integration from day one of arrival; a rights-based approach; a restorative and trauma-informed approach; involvement of people with lived experience; an emphasis on building inclusive, intercultural communities; and partnership and collaboration between national and local government and the third sector.[50]

Scottish Government have also pursued ambitious responses to both destitution and homelessness that are explicitly inclusive of those with NRPF/RE. The 2021-2024 Ending Destitution Together strategy,[51] the first of its kind in the UK, laid out a set of actions including: investment in cash support for those facing destitution, including those with NRPF/RE (initially via the Scottish Crisis Fund, which closed in March 2024, and more recently via Fair Way Scotland, see below); increasing specialist immigration advice to support local authorities assisting people with NRPF; updating guidance and training for local authorities via COSLA;[52] and funding Fair Way Scotland (see below).[53] Post 2024-25 budget allocations included an increase in funding to Fair Way Scotland, including resource to increase provision of cash support and caseworker capacity.[54] At the time of writing, the Ending Destitution Together Strategy is being refreshed following a consultation exercise.

The Scottish Government's 2018 Ending Homelessness Together High Level Action Plan also emphasises the need for an NRPF inclusive approach to homelessness prevention and relief.[55] This emerged as an especially strong priority in the 2020 refreshed Plan developed in response to the pandemic, in which the UK Government's policy on NRPF was identified as "one of the greatest barriers in our efforts to end homelessness and

challenges-scotlands-changing-population/documents/; https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-enabling-sustainable-communities-action-plan-address-depopulation/documents/

[50] Scottish Government (2024) New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy: 2024. Online: Scottish Government. https://www.gov.scot/publications/new-scots-refugee-integration-strategy-2024/; Biggs, H., Minty, S., Hamid, A., MacGregor, A., Morton, S. & Roberson, G. (2023) Evaluation of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy in Scotland. Online: National Centre for Social Research. https://natcen.ac.uk/publications/evaluation-new-scots-refugee-integration-strategy-scotland

[51] Scottish Government (2021) Ending destitution together: strategy. Online: Scottish Government. https://www.gov.scot/publications/ending-destitution-together/documents/

[52] COSLA (2020) COVID-19 Response Planning: Supporting Migrants with No Recourse to Public Funds. Online: Migration Scotland. https://www.migrationscotland.org.uk/uploads/Guidance%20Covid%2019%20Supporting%20People%20with%20NRPF%20200420_0.pdf

[53] Scottish Government (2023) Ending Destitution Together: progress report – year two 2022-2023 Online: Scottish Government. https://www.gov.scot/publications/ending-destitution-together-progress-report-year-two-2022-2023/documents/

[54] This reflects a broader Scottish approach to cash-first approaches. See https://www.gov.scot/publications/cash-first-towards-ending-need-food-banks-scotland/

[55] COSLA and Scottish Government (2018) Ending Homelessness Together: High Level Action Plan. Online: Scottish Government. https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2018/11/ending-homelessness-together-high-level-action-plan/documents/00543359-pdf/00543359-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00543359.pdf

rough sleeping."[56] In the strategy, and subsequent updated report,[57] Scottish Government committed to continuing to press for change in UK policy and law (including allowing those with NRPF to access the Scottish Welfare Fund); working with the Everyone Home Collective to inform the anti-destitution strategy; exploring alternative routes (including philanthropic investment) to providing accommodation for this group; providing funding for advocacy and legal advice and Fair Way Scotland partners; and continuing work to improve housing outcomes for women and children with NRPF experiencing domestic abuse.

Fair Way Scotland

Fair Way Scotland is a partnership of third sector organisations that aims to prevent and mitigate destitution and homelessness among people with NRPF/RE via direct provision of integrated support and by advocating for policy and systems change. The partnership evolved from the work of the Everyone Home Collective, a group of third sector and academic organisations convened by Homeless Network Scotland during the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain gains made throughout the public health emergency in responses to homelessness, including accommodating those sleeping rough irrespective of migration status. The Collective developed a route-map to achieve these aims[58] and in late 2020, the Scottish Government commissioned Homeless Network Scotland to develop this into a costed delivery plan through a collaborative service design process.[59]

The 5-year delivery plan laid out a phased approach to national mobilisation,[60] with the estimated costs across the full five years totalling approximately £5.5m, with £1.8m anticipated as being needed in year one. Having secured a proportion of the funding required to implement this plan from Scottish Government, The Robertson Trust, the Oak Foundation and City of Edinburgh Council, Fair Way Scotland mobilised in three Scottish cities – Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen – in August 2022, with sufficient funding in place to run for three years.

Fair Way seeks to offer integrated support to people with NRPF/RE and facing destitution or homelessness in Scotland, combining community-based accommodation with support, modest cash assistance, casework provision, and second tier legal advice where needed. Fair Way specifically targets people with NRPF/RE who are not able to access the alternative safety nets available to specific groups. Asylum seekers with an application in progress, for example, qualify for Home Office subsistence and

[56] Scottish Government (2020) Ending homelessness together: updated action plan - October 2020. Online: Scottish Government. https://www.gov.scot/publications/ending-homelessness-together-updated-action-plan-october-2020/documents/. p. 42.
[57] Scottish Government (2020) Ending homelessness together: updated action plan - October 2020. Online: Scottish Government. https://www.gov.scot/publications/ending-homelessness-together-updated-action-plan-october-2020/documents/
[58] Everyone Home Collective (2020) Route-Map 2 Scotland's Ambition to End Destitution and Protect Human Rights. Online: HNS. https://everyonehome.scot/pdf/route-map-2.pdf
[59] Homeless Network Scotland (2021) Fair Way Scotland: Gateway to a safe destination, support and advice for people with no recourse to public funds. Online: HNS. https://homelessnetwork.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Fair-Way-Scotland-Delivery-Plan-FINAL-051021.pdf
[60] Ibid.

accommodation support and families with children[61] who are NRPF can access such support via the local authority *"parallel welfare safety net"* if they are facing homelessness or destitution.[62] Fair Way therefore supports single people or in some cases couples who are appeal rights exhausted asylum seekers, EEA nationals with restricted eligible for supported because of their status under the EUSS, or a small group of others in a range of different circumstances (e.g. unauthorised/undocumented migrants).

Four main partners deliver the core services of accommodation and casework support: Refugee Sanctuary Scotland (Glasgow and Edinburgh, accommodation only),[63] Scottish Refugee Council (National helpline and casework), Simon Community Scotland (Glasgow and Edinburgh, accommodation and casework),[64] and Turning Point Scotland (Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, accommodation and casework). Caseworkers have access to second-tier legal advance and training from a coalition of legal firms, these being: JustRight Scotland, Latta & Co, Legal Services Agency, Shelter Scotland and more recently Settled.

According to data provided by delivery partners and collated by Homeless Network Scotland (see table 1.1), in 2024/25 Fair Way partners provided casework support to 974 people in total, compared to 1,229 in 2023/24 and 725 in 2022/23. During 2024/25 , the highest numbers were supported in Glasgow (452), followed by Edinburgh (406) and Aberdeen(shire) (116). An additional 15 people in other part of Scotland were provided with casework support in 2024/25. In 2024/25, the make-up of Fair Way's caseload shifted to include more people in the Asylum/Other groups, and few EEA nationals.

Table 1.1 *Number of people supported by Fair Way Scotland by year and type of support*

	Number of people assisted		
	2022-23	**2023-24**	**2024-25**
Casework People receiving advice, advocacy and support	724	1,229	974
Accommodation A stay in Fair Way Scotland's community-based flats	6	16	45

Source: delivery partner data collated by Homeless Network Scotland. Note: while each column counts unique individuals supporting during that year, many of those accessing Fair Way support do so across more than one year meaning that some individuals will be counted in multiple years of data. As a result, the columns cannot be totalled to provide the total number supported across all periods. We estimate this number to by 1,870 (see above and Appendix 1).

[61] Adults with NRPF who have a care need may be entitlement to LA support. See the section titled 'Local authority responses to adults with NRPF/RE' in chapter three for more details.

[62] Leon, L. (2023) Understanding Migrant Destitution in the UK: Literature Review. Online: COMPAS. https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/publication/understanding-migrant-destitution-in-the-uk-literature-review; Price, J. & Spenser, S. (2015) Safeguarding Children from Destitution: Local Authority Responses to Families with 'No Recourse to Public Founds'. Online: COMPAS. https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/PR-2015-No_Recourse_Public_Funds_LAs.pdf

[63] Formerly, Refugee Survival Trust.

[64] Safe in Scotland, a founding member of the Fair Way Scotland partnership merged with Simon Community Scotland in 2022.

Note that the numbers in each column of table 1.1 represent unique individuals, but these annual numbers cannot be summed as many people accessing Fair Way have done so over more than one of these periods and thus will appear in multiple columns. Using our own survey data in combination with partnership data, we estimate that between April 2022 and March 2025, Fair Way Scotland supported around 1,870 unique individuals (see appendix one and chapter two).

Fair Way accommodation is in the main leased from housing associations.[65] At March 2025, Fair Way Scotland had use of 21 flats (mostly one or two-bedroomed) with capacity to accommodate 31 individuals, up from 10 flats with capacity to accommodate 15 individuals at March 2024. Most of the accommodation available is in Glasgow (16 flats), with some provision in Edinburgh (4 flats) and one as it stands in Aberdeen. During 2024/25, a total of 45 people were provided with accommodation in Fair Way community flats, up from 16 in 2023/24 and 6 in 2022/23. Fair Way partners also have access to an additional 11 flats in Glasgow with capacity to accommodate 21 individuals at any one time that are currently operated by Fair Way delivery partners but until November 2025 funded separately.[66] In 2024/15, 31 people were accommodated in this accommodation.

Initially, cash support was provided only to those individuals accessing Fair Way Scotland or linked partner accommodation. This took the form of £50 weekly cash payments, either distributed as cash or through an app weekly or biweekly. In 2024, payments were increased to £60 per week, recognising inflationary cost of living pressures. A prior evaluation report recommended the expansion of cash support beyond only those in Fair Way Accommodation. This was enabled from September 2024 by a cross-directorate Scottish Government funding award from the Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights directorate (where the Ending Destitution Together strategy sits) and the Tackling Child Poverty and Social Justice directorate (under their food insecurity focus) .[67] As a result, during 2024/25 a total of 266 individuals received cash support via Fair Way Scotland, 76 of whom were receiving the full integrated support offer (accommodation, cash and casework) and 190 of whom were receiving casework and cash support alone. For this latter group, cash payments are provided for 6-months.

Fair Way Scotland combines this direct accommodation and support provision with a strong emphasis on systems change, influencing, and learning/evaluation. The partnership seeks to leverage its expertise to drive policy, practice and legal change at the local, Scottish and UK level to improve the circumstances of people with NRPF/RE who are facing destitution and homelessness. Key routes to doing so include the regular meetings with strategic partners Scottish Government and COSLA; regular meetings with local partners via Local Liaison Group structures; and the involvement of the Joseph

[65] Over the evaluation period, the Housing Associations leasing to Fair Way across Edinburgh and Glasgow were as follows: Maryhill Housing Association, Cairn Housing Association, Govan Housing Association, Queens Cross Housing Association, Southside Housing Association. In addition, one property in Aberdeen was leased from Aberdeen City Council.

[66] This provision was mainly funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and Robertson Trust. Funding was transferred to the Fair Way funding partnership in Nov 2025.

[67] The award was funded by the Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights directorate (where the Ending Destitution Together strategy sits) and the Tackling Child Poverty and Social Justice directorate (under their food insecurity focus).

Rowntree Foundation and I-SPHERE as learning partners. In 2021, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) commissioned I-SPHERE to independently evaluate Fair Way Scotland. This report is the third and final major output of the commissioned evaluation.

Study aims

The objective of this study was to understand the extent to which Fair Way Scotland has been able to effectively prevent and mitigate homelessness and destitution among those with NRPF/RE via both direct delivery of support and systems change. The following six research questions have guided the work:

1. What are the **aims** of Fair Way Scotland and **how** do partners intend to achieve them?
2. To what extent is Fair Way Scotland being **delivered as intended** and why?
3. What are the **needs, circumstances** and **experiences** of those accessing Fair Way Scotland services?
4. What **individual outcomes** are being achieved for individuals accessing Fair Way Scotland services? What is and isn't working for whom, and why?
5. What **wider outcomes** on policy, practice and wider systems are being achieved by Fair Way Scotland and what has helped/hindered in the pursuit of these wider changes?
6. How much does Fair Way cost and what does that tell us about the **costs and benefits** of alternative legal, policy and practice approaches to those with NRPF?

Our end of year two report published in September 2024[68] focused on questions 1-3 and began to answer question 4. In this final report, our main focus is on questions 3-6.

Methods

This mixed-methods evaluation involved five elements.

First, we conducted a **quantitative survey of those accessing Fair Way Scotland support**. The survey covering demographic information, migration status, housing circumstances, income level and sources, employment, material deprivation, health and wellbeing, and use of Fair Way and other support services. The data gathered provide a unique source of information on a group often hidden from public view and poorly represented in other data sources. The survey was piloted in summer 2023 and rolled out in most services in Autumn that year, and shortly thereafter in the remaining services. It was hosted online and administered by either members of the research team or frontline Fair Way staff. The survey ran until the end of March 2025, with 255 valid responses in total and 209 responses covering the majority of questions. This represents a response rate of 14% or 11% counting only responses that covered all or most questions. Response rates varied, and were higher in accommodation-based services than in casework settings, reflecting the challenge of securing responses from a highly disadvantaged population in a crisis service context. To account for this variation, the results have been weighted to give a more accurate overall picture of the population

[68] Watts-Cobbe, B., McMordie, L., Bramley, G., Sims, R., Young, G., & Rayment, M. (2024) Destitution by Design: righting the wrongs of UK immigration policy in Scotland. Heriot-Watt University. https://doi.org/10.17861/D38D-X029

using Fair Way Scotland services, and in particular to reflect the higher number of people accessing Fair Way services in Glasgow and Edinburgh (see appendix 1). Our results show that the majority of those accessing Fair Way are male (89%). Most are 35-44 (36%), 25-34 (27%) or 45-64 (23%), with only 12% under 25 and just 2% 65 or over.

We asked Fair Way delivery organisations to share their views on the representativeness of survey respondents compared to their overall population of users. In their view the achieved sample was fairly representative with the caveat that those with serious mental health issues were not routinely approached to participate based on wellbeing and capacity concerns. In Edinburgh, the city's Roma population are likely underrepresented given challenges securing their attendance for survey completion and securing appropriate interpreting support.

Second, we conducted **qualitative longitudinal interviews with people with direct experience of NRPF/RE** and accessing Fair Way Scotland services. Interviews focused on how, if at all, people's circumstances, needs and experiences had changed over time, in relation to migration status, housing and homelessness, employment, health, income, and destitution/access to essentials. The key aim was to understand whether, and how, Fair Way Scotland supports had enabled positive or prevented negative change in relation to these domains. Recruitment was via Fair Way services with the emphasis on recruiting participants spanning the three main groups Fair Way support (appeal rights exhausted asylum seekers, EEA national and other people with NRPF) and the three cities in which it operates. In round one (December 2023 to March 2024) we sought to speak to people who had recently started receiving support via Fair Way and interviewed 30 people.[69] In round two (December 2024 and March 2025) we were able to re-interview 18 round one participants (a retention rate of 60%). We conducted a further eight retrospective interviews with people who had been accessing support via Fair Way for some time but had not participated at round one, leaving us with a total round two sample of 26 people. Overall, we spoke to 38 people with direct experience across the evaluation period.

The round two sample was made up of 21 men and five women. Thirteen participants were appeal rights exhausted asylum seekers, nine EU nationals, and four in the 'other' category. Most (15) were in Glasgow, seven in Edinburgh and four in Aberdeen. The average age was 43, with the youngest participant 27 years old and the oldest 70. The average length of time participants had been in the UK was 13 years, and ranged from five to 26 years. The average length of engagement with Fair Way support was 16 months. A more detailed account of the sample, their main characteristics, and key changes in people's circumstances across relevant domains is presented in appendix two, and boxed biographies of some participants are included throughout the report. People in Fair Way accommodation at round one are likely over-represented in the sample as it was practically easier to recruit those in accommodation-based services.

[69] For more details on this round of analysis see Watts-Cobbe, B., McMordie, L., Bramley, G., Sims, R., Young, G., & Rayment, M. (2024) Destitution by Design: righting the wrongs of UK immigration policy in Scotland. Heriot-Watt University. https://doi.org/10.17861/D38D-X029

Third, we conducted six **focus groups with frontline workers**[70] supporting those with NRPF/RE in March-April 2025. We spoke to 13 people overall, the majority of which (10) were caseworkers, and the remaining three support workers i.e. providing support (but not migration-status focused casework) to those residing in Fair Way accommodation. The largest number (8) work in Glasgow, three in Edinburgh and two in Aberdeen. These focus groups deployed 'vignettes' (hypothetical but realistic cases) of people with NRPF/RE and facing homelessness and/or destitution to test how frontline workers would approach supporting them, how effective they anticipated that support being, and the barriers to and enablers of being able to achieve (more) positive outcomes for these individuals. The vignettes were developed drawing on insights and data gathered from previous phases of the study. Hypothetical but recognisable vignette scenarios offer a 'safe space' to explore sensitive topics and can more easily illicit reflections on key issues more 'direct' lines of questioning about actual cases, as well as avoid the ethical challenges of asking about specific individuals. They also offer an effective means of comparing how responses and outcomes may vary across institutional and geographic contexts.

Fourth, we conducted 18 **one-to-one interviews with senior stakeholders** in a variety of roles relevant in March-May 2025. These interviews focused on participants' perspectives on the development of the Fair Way partnership; the individual-level impacts and effectiveness of the partnership; its impacts at the systems-level on policy and practice at the UK, Scottish and local level; and the enablers of and barriers to positive impacts. Six participants were selected as they have been centrally involved in the development, mobilisation and operation of Fair Way Scotland as delivery or other central partners. Nine participants were from the statutory sector, spanning those working in relevant roles within Scottish and local government. Three participants participated because they had specific legal expertise in relation those with NRPF/RE. Participants spanned all three cities Fair Way operates in.

Fifth, we have undertaken a broad brush **economic analysis of the costs and benefits of Fair Way Scotland** based on evidence-informed assumptions regarding the impacts of the partnership on public service utilisation rates and mental wellbeing among those supported.

Report structure

Chapter two focuses on the theme of migration status, exploring the migration background of people accessing Fair Way services and the effectiveness of that support in helping people regularise or progress their status.

Chapter three focuses on homelessness, exploring the effectiveness of Fair Way support in preventing and mitigating this and other adverse housing experiences. The chapter includes a review of local authority responses to adults with NRPF who are facing homelessness and how they vary.

[70] Of these six sessions, four were focus group involved 2-3 individuals and were two one-to-one interviews conducted to ensure all those who wished to do so could participate. We refer to all six sessions as focus groups for simplicity.

Chapters four focuses on destitution and the capacity of and ways in which Fair Way Scotland is able to mitigate and prevent it. The chapter includes a focus on the role of employment and prohibitions on employment in driving or mitigating experiences of deprivation and associated disadvantage for people with NRPF/RE.

Chapter five presents the vignette analysis arising from our focus groups with frontline Fair Way Scotland practitioners. It focuses on routes to securing more positive outcomes for individuals with NRPF/RE, and the barriers to and enablers of doing so.

Chapter six covers the economic analysis of the costs and benefits of Fair Way Scotland as it currently operates and under some alternative scenarios of expended support being provided.

Chapter seven explores Fair Way Scotland's impact at the systems-level on policy and practice at the UK, Scotland and local level, and considers the key challenges to achieving further systems-level change in the future.

Chapter eight concludes the report, providing an overview of key findings and drawing out key policy and practice recommendations for key actors to better address homelessness and destitution among those with NRPF/RE in the future.

2. Migration status

This chapter focuses on the theme of migration status. The first section draws on survey data to provide an overview of the migration status and experiences of those accessing Fair Way Scotland. The second section draws on qualitative interviews with people with direct experience of NRPF/RE to track changes in their migration status and case over time, and the role of Fair Way Scotland services and other factors in enabling positive – or preventing negative – change. The third and final section draws on key stakeholder and frontline worker perspectives to identify the key factors influencing Fair Way's ability to effectively progress people's immigration case.

The aim is to provide a clear picture of the cohort accessing Fair Way Scotland and rigorously examine the effectiveness of the partnership in preventing or mitigating homelessness and destitution by supporting people to regularise or progress their migration status.

The migration status and background of people accessing Fair Way Scotland

People accessing Fair Way Scotland have highly diverse backgrounds, with 58 countries of origin recorded among survey respondents. Of the 1,870 people we estimate to have accessed Fair Way between April 2022 and March 2025, the largest group are EEA nationals (53%), followed by appeal rights exhausted asylum seekers (35%) and others (13%) (see table 2.1). Most were in Edinburgh (56%), followed by Glasgow (34%) and then Aberdeen (10%). The main groups are highly unevenly distributed across the cities: the asylum group is heavily concentrated in Glasgow and the EEA group in Edinburgh and Aberdeen. The Other group appear almost exclusively in Edinburgh.

This perspective on those accessing Fair Way reveals a different picture to the caseload data reviewed in chapter one, which showed the highest numbers being supported in Glasgow in 2024/25. This apparent discrepancy is explained in part by the fact that people in the Asylum group (who dominate in Glasgow) access Fair Way support for longer periods than the EEA group (who dominate in Edinburgh) and also by a spike in the numbers of mainly EEA nationals accessing casework support in Edinburgh in 2023/24.

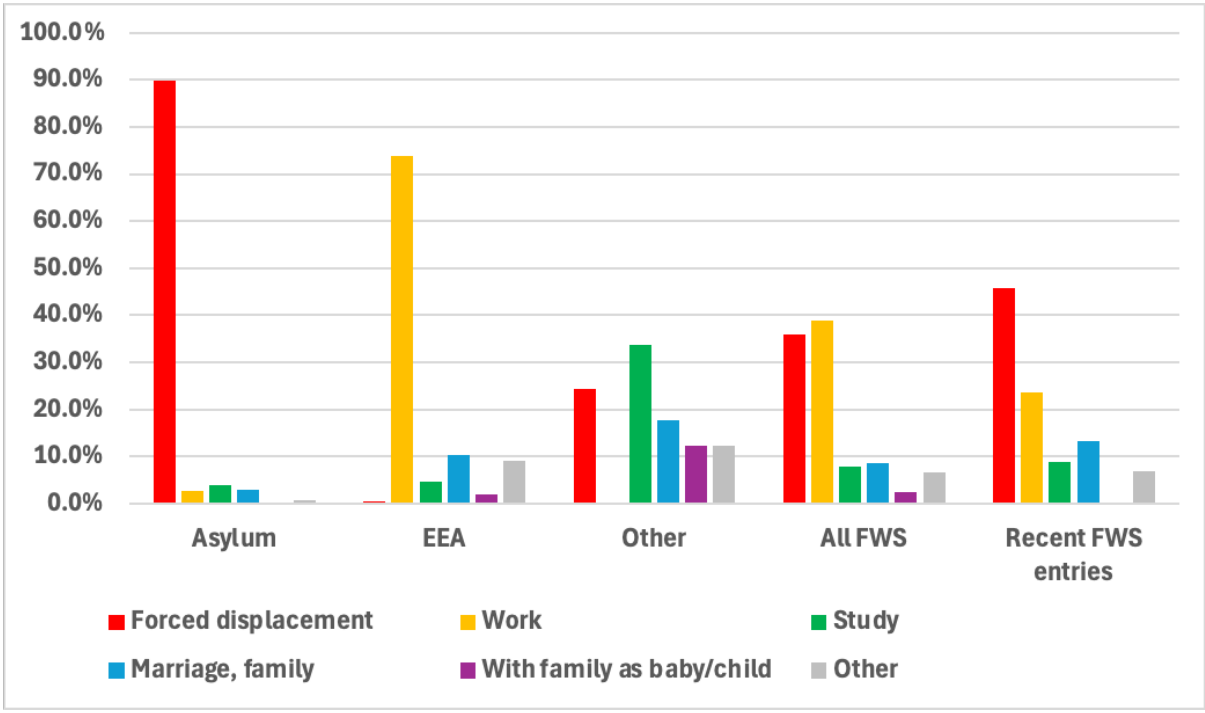
Table 2.1: Profile of Fair Way Scotland cases 2023-2025 by main group and area (percent of total cases)

	Main categories			Total
	Asylum	EEA	Other	
Aberdeen City Council	0.3%	9.7%		9.9%
City of Edinburgh Council	5.5%	37.6%	12.5%	55.6%
Glasgow City Council	28.7%	5.3%	0.4%	34.4%
Total	34.5%	52.6%	12.9%	100.0%

Source: weighted analysis of Fair Way Scotland survey data

Reflecting this picture, people's reasons for coming to the UK are highly diverse (see figure 2.1). For asylum cases the overwhelming dominant reason was forced displacement. For EEA migrants, the majority (74%) came for work, with around one in ten coming for marriage/family or for other reasons. For the small 'other' category, the main reasons for coming to the UK were study (34%), forced displacement (24%) and marriage/family (18%). Those accessing Fair Way more recently (those who responded to the survey from April 2024-March 2025) were more likely to cite forced displacement as their reason for coming to the UK, with much less likely to cite work reasons.

Figure 2.1: Reason for coming to UK by main group and more recent cases



Source: weighted analysis of Fair Way Scotland survey data 2023-2025

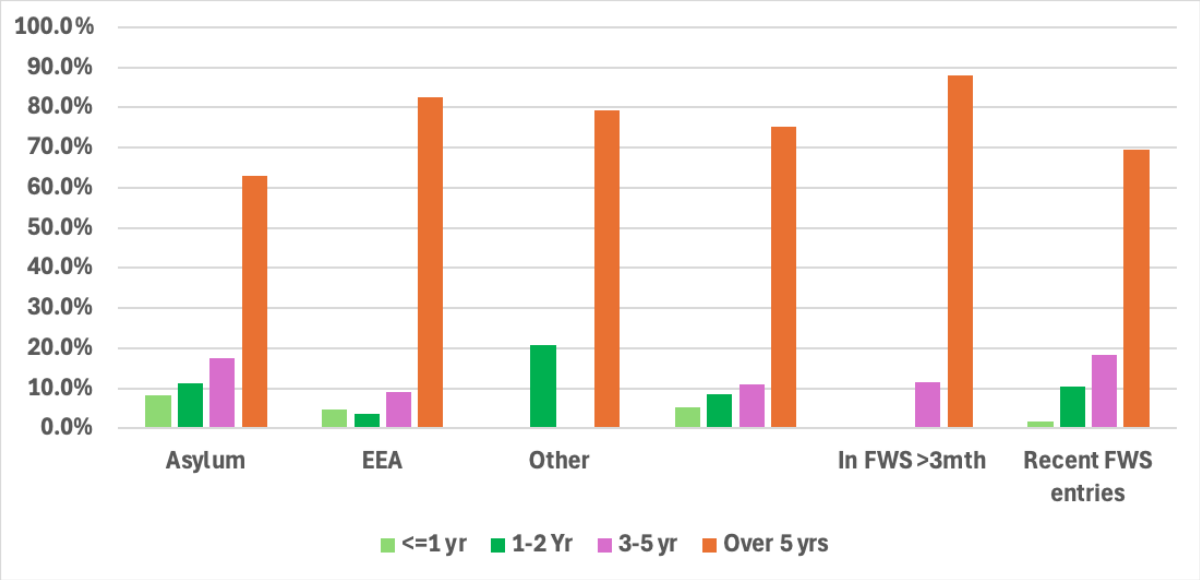
Those accessing Fair Way tend not to be recent migrants to the UK (see figure 2.2). The large majority (75%) had been in the UK for more than 5 years, with only 5% present for less than a year. This broad pattern is consistent across the different groups, though the asylum group are more likely than the other two groups to have been in the Uk for five years or less.

As might therefore be expected, most (68%) of those accessing Fair Way report speak English well or very well, with only 7% not speaking it at all. Nevertheless, that a third (32%) of the group do not speak English well or at all underlines the importance caseworkers having access to appropriate interpretation support, as well as individuals being able to access English language courses.

In terms of people's current immigration status, as expected, the asylum group is dominated by those who are appeal rights exhausted. One in five (20%) of this group are

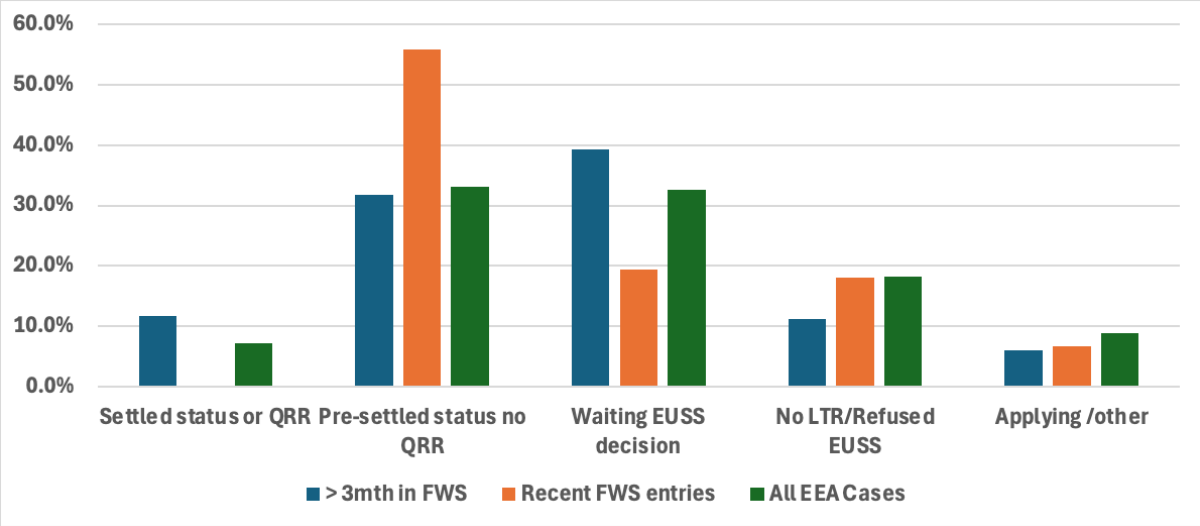
now waiting on the outcome of a fresh claim.[71] This may reflect difficulties accessing Home Office support once an application is submitted and/or that Fair Way support is 'sticking with' some people for a period after they access such support.

Figure 2.2: Time in UK by main group and time accessing Fair Way support



Source: weighted analysis of Fair Way Scotland survey data 2023-2025

Figure 2.3: Status of EEA cases in Fair Way Scotland caseload at time of survey by length of time accessing Fair Way support and recency of entering Fair Way caseload



Source: weighted analysis of Fair Way Scotland survey data 2023-2025.

[71] This may reflect difficulties accessing Home Office support once an application is submitted and/or that Fair Way support may sometimes stick with people for a period after they access such support.

The EEA group are more diverse in their current status (see figure 2.3). The highest proportions have pre-settled status with no 'qualifying right to reside' (meaning they generally cannot access means tested benefits) or are awaiting a decision on an application made to the EUSS (33% in each case). Almost a fifth (18%) have no leave to remain (in at least some cases this will reflect having arrived in the UK post-Brexit). A further 9% are in the process of applying to the EUSS or in other circumstances and 7% have settled status or pre-settled status and a qualifying right to reside. The presence of this last group in the sample suggests that Fair Way support may sometimes stick with people for a period after they have secured status rendering them eligible for statutory supports. Figure 2.3 also shows that there has been a considerable shift in the profile of EEA nationals accessing Fair Way, with those accessing support more recently (2024/25) significantly more likely to have pre-settled status without a qualifying right to reside and much fewer awaiting a decision.

Our survey results show that the 'other' group is in the majority of cases (59%) made up of those who have no Leave to Remain because they are undocumented, visa overstayers, or have otherwise broken rules; this rises to 90% for cases in Fair Way for more than 3 months. The remaining cases have a spouse visa or maintenance arrangement (16%), a work or study visa (13%), or are in some other category (12%).

Box 3: Hinata, aged 45-64

Hinata arrived in the UK in 1998 to study, but overstayed his visa and has been living undocumented long term. When we first spoke to him, he was staying in emergency accommodation which he struggled in, experiencing conflicts with other residents. He felt staff were hostile and unqualified and that he was at constant risk of eviction. Since the last interview, Hinata's situation has improved significantly. With help from his Fair Way Scotland caseworker, Hinata has now finally secured a passport from his country of origin after considerable difficulties. This enabled his lawyer to submit a Leave to Remain application and secure a Home Office reference number, placing him in a safer legal position while he awaits a decision. His living situation has also improved. When the winter provision he was staying in closed, he moved into a room in a Bed and Breakfast in May with help from the local authority and a charity. Despite the poor quality of the accommodation, he feels much calmer and more secure there. These improvements mean Hinata feels less anxiety and stress and more in control, though he remains apprehensive about the Home Office's final decision. On the other hand, ongoing physical health issues have worsened somewhat, but Hinata is relieved to have reconnected with NHS services after losing track of his GP. He still lacks permission to work and has no income, relying on vouchers, free meals, and donated clothing. Nevertheless, he feels safer and more hopeful. Overall, access to legal advice and accommodation that suits him better has placed him in a better position, though his immigration status remains unresolved and his future uncertain.

Change over time

The analysis above has described the migration status and backgrounds of those accessing Fair Way support. A key question for this evaluation is the extent to which Fair Way support has enabled people to progress their immigration status, allowing them to access support via (for example) benefits, homelessness assistance or the Home Office. This section adopts two lenses on this question: first, drawing on outcomes data collected by Fair Way delivery partners and second, analysing data gathered via qualitative longitudinal interviews with people who have received Fair Way support.

Fair Way Scotland delivery partner outcomes data

As part of the evaluation, we gathered the basic outcomes data collected by individual Fair Way delivery partners for the year 2024/25. The partnership does not yet have a shared infrastructure for recording the characteristics and circumstances of those accessing Fair Way or the outcomes achieved, but individual delivery partners all record somewhat disparate data on those they support as part of Fair Way, including some basic outcomes data. Having collated this data, we can report overall 'positive outcome rates' for each six services that form part of the partnership. In doing so, we count the following outcomes as positive vis-à-vis Fair Way's intended aims of progressing people's migration status and preventing homelessness, especially rough sleeping:[72]

- **For the asylum group:** securing access to Section 4 Home Office accommodation/support or being granted Refugee status;
- **For those in other situations:** getting Leave to Remain;
- **For EEA nationals:** gaining Settled or Qualifying Right to Reside (QRR) status.

We also include, for all groups, accessing LA accommodation (e.g. via social work) as while this does not represent progress in a person's migration case or asylum status, it may enable such progress and clearly represents a positive service outcome. It's important to note that this represents a narrow interpretation of 'positive outcomes' as services will regularly support those they work with to e.g. reach key milestones in relation to their immigration case that fall short of those listed above (for example, securing legal representation, accessing evidence to support their case, securing key documents). Nor do these outcome measures include instances of other (non-migration status) related outcomes e.g. provision of case payments, connecting people or enabling them to engage effectively to other forms of support, etc.

We report below headline outcomes data covering six services[73] which are highly diverse, spanning three cities, and including very large casework services in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and much smaller casework and accommodation services across the

[72] In doing so, we are not claiming that these outcomes enable those impacted to straightforwardly escape destitution and/or homelessness, but that they offer (at least potential) progress in that direction.

[73] There are four Fair Way delivery partners, one of which (Simon Community Scotland) operates in effect three separate subservices (a casework service in Edinburgh and Glasgow and an accommodation-based service in Glasgow). This data does not cover all aspects of Fair Way delivery: community housing provision in Aberdeen and some in Edinburgh that came on stream during the evaluation and remains relatively small scale by comparison to accommodation provision in Glasgow is not covered.

three cities. These services operate and record outcomes differently, target different groups, and provide different services seeking different kinds of positive outcome (see above) so the rates reported are not comparable, but are shared to offer an indication of the range of significant positive outcomes known to be achieved by the diverse services over the last year of the evaluation period. Bearing all this in mind, the positive outcome rates reported by these six services are shown in table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Summary of 2024/25 outcomes data collected by Fair Way delivery partners (by service type, main target group and size)

Type of service	Main target group	Size	Positive outcomes rate (%)
Accommodation	Asylum	Small	91%
Casework	EEA	Medium	75%
Accommodation	Mixed	Small	75%
Casework	Asylum	Large	37%
Casework	EEA	Large	39% (+12% in progress)
Casework	EEA	Medium	26% (+17% in progress)

The data suggests that all Fair Way services report achieving these positive outcomes for a significant proportion of those they support each year. Positive outcome rates are higher in accommodation-based and smaller casework services. This is likely to reflect in part that larger casework services carry significant open caseloads of individuals for whom these positive outcomes have not yet been secured (but may be in the future) whereas at least one smaller casework service caps caseloads providing intensive support to a smaller group and opening up support to new cases only when space allows. In addition, we might reasonably expect more positive outcomes for those in accommodation services for a range of reasons explored further throughout this report, including that they benefit from housing support alongside casework support; they may be more able to progress their case in the context of having a safe place to stay; and that at least some Fair Way accommodation provision is targeted at those whose immigration case is assessed to have a reasonable chance of success.

A reasonable overall interpretation of this data would be that across Fair Way as a whole, half or more of those accessing Fair Way support saw a significant and tangible improvement in their immigration status and/or access to statutory supports over the course of their engagement with support.

Qualitative evidence from people with direct experience

This section draws on interviews with 26 people accessing Fair Way casework support, focusing on their experiences of change over time related to their immigration status since accessing this support (on average 16 months ago). A key focus is on the role and efficacy of Fair Way support in enabling people to progress their immigration case, thereby enabling them to access mainstream statutory supports and sustainably address their disadvantage. Of the 26 people with lived experience of NRPF/RE and accessing Fair Way support we spoke to, half (13) reported positive progress in relation

to their migration status over the relevant time period, nine no change, and four a deterioration in their status.

Positive progress

Of the 13 participants who reported positive progress (13), most (7) were EEA nationals. Almost all (6) reported obtaining settled status, and one reported securing a qualifying right to reside, with all describing a sense of relief and even jubilation at these shifts:

> *"It's [a] second birthday… thanks to [my caseworker]… I have a chance now… I have a lot more options."* (Emma, female, 45-64, EEA)

These improvements typically represented a sudden end to extensive waits, repeated paperwork submissions, and/or ongoing follow-up. One participant recalled how they unexpectedly received news of settled status after their Fair Way caseworker made direct contact with the Home Office, while another received an expected letter that delivered the news:

> *"[My caseworker] made that call [to the Home Office] and their answer… He check, check there on the system. Put on hold, put on hold, and later on say, 'Nothing else she need to provide, just [I have status].'"* (Sofija, female, 45-64, EEA)

> *"I… waited a very long time… my application [was] on hold because of this my outstanding [case] in the court… Then I didn't have any evidence of my visa to work, receipts of my self-employment… [and so] a problem to prove how long I was here… The letter stated… you have your settlement status… Then, obviously, I was like, 'What's going on?' Like, how has this happened… I think you heard my prayers. I think it was like… surprise, yes… I had to read it twice."* (Jan, 35-44, EEA)

For most in this group, the successful resolution of their cases hinged on support from Fair Way caseworkers who assisted in assembling crucial evidence or navigating complex legal procedures

> *"[My caseworker]. [Fair Way partner]. Only these people helped me… I tried [others], because I used to live in different council… that is on other side of Scotland, and I think even [an advice service] tried to call the Home Office but I was just stuck."* (Sofija, female, 45-64, EEA)

A few in this group also mentioned being supported by solicitors and/or their own personal contacts.

The impacts of these changes of status were immediate and far-reaching, granting access to benefits, accommodation, and healthcare that had previously been out of reach:

> *"It's a lot [of difference].… for example, with a dentist. I don't need to pay for my own. For I need glasses…"* (Emma, female, 45-64, EEA)

Being able to access vital services on the same terms as other UK citizens, was seen as a major step toward achieving a more normal and settled life, albeit most continued to struggle with destitution and homelessness (see chapter four).

All those within the asylum group (6) who reported positive progress did so on account of fresh claims being submitted to the Home Office, typically following previous refusal(s). The successful submission of a fresh claim usually hinged on the support of skilled solicitors. Some participants reported difficulties securing a lawyer to work on their case and even once a lawyer was found, progress could be difficult. Things moved fast for this participant:

> *"So, she submitted a fresh claim for me, and I'm now waiting for the Home Office decision... She submitted my first claim in one week. So, I've got everything..."* (Hussein, 25-34, Asylum)

But others faced long waits before progress was achieved. In this case, the participant had struggled to access an effective lawyer that was able to take on their case in a timely way, and eventually resorted to gathering fresh evidence and making a fresh claim independently:

> *"I came here and I tried for a lawyer... I waited eight weeks... then he said, 'You need to wait another twelve weeks'... so I decided to study by myself and I studied the whole law, and I've applied... with the new evidence."* (Dhruv, 25-34, Asylum)

Long waits were also caused by the effort and time required to secure necessary documentation, including expert reports, new passports, or witness statements. This participant's lawyer voiced frustration to them that an expert report had not been submitted in the past, indicating that better quality legal advice earlier could have prevented or shortened their experiences of hardship:

> *"My lawyer said... 'I am waiting for an expert report from your country, because it's the thing you have never submitted before... Those letters you gave me from groups... have you not been sending them all these years?...' He was annoyed... Then on a Monday the secretary for my lawyer called, 'The expert's report we were waiting for has come.' That day my lawyer is happy... 'We read; we made corrections... we submitted...' I'm still waiting."* (Chipo, female, 65 plus, Asylum)

Another had to re-submit documents after the Home Office lost them, creating additional financial and practical hardships, while another had to overcome prohibitive legal costs and restrictive rules, such as expectations that they would leave the country to appeal or needing funds for judicial review.

> *"[They said] I had to go outside the country and appeal. That was the rule.... How could I go elsewhere?... Then they gave me permission... I can go to judicial review... The only thing put me off is I wasn't able to get the funds I needed."* (Dhruv, 25-34, Asylum)

ARE participants who reported positive progress often credited their Fair Way caseworkers and support workers with providing crucial assistance during these periods, including both practical and emotional support:

> *"[My caseworker] called me every day, twice a week… if I need anything, if I need a solicitor… She helped me a lot, and [my Fair Way support worker] also helped me a lot."* (Hussein, 25-34, Asylum)

Other voluntary organisations and community groups offered transport to appointments, wrote emails to solicitors, or provided interpreters:

> *"My group [a voluntary sector support group for migrant women]… gave me two people to accompany me to Home Office… They gave me someone… responsible for taking this one to the lawyer."* (Chipo, female, 65 plus, Asylum)

Unlike EEA respondents, whose positive shifts were usually associated with permanent changes to status, ARE participants who had submitted a new asylum claim remained in a waiting phase, albeit most felt bolstered by the newfound momentum, stronger evidence, and at times more engaged legal representation. While many were cautiously hopeful that their fresh claim would yield a positive outcome, some expressed uncertainty and apprehension, experiencing both hope and fear as they awaited decisions. Fear oriented around the eventuality that their claim was rejected, and the implications in terms of the removal of Home Office support.

One participant within the Other group reported positive progress. Again, this involved the submission of a new human rights application for indefinite leave to remain based on long residence. The participant's Fair Way caseworker played a crucial role, bridging bureaucratic hurdles, helping the participant to understand the immigration process, rectifying misunderstandings, and securing access to important documentation:

> *"Without [my caseworker] support I wouldn't have got this new passport… we are meeting nearly every week. Really, I have a lot to thank [them] about."* (Hinata, 45-64, Other)

Despite making this important step forward, this participant was also now in a waiting phase, worried about having to *"face the unknown again"* if his application is rejected. He is ultimately concerned about deportation to a country he had not lived in for 25 years:

> *"I'm scared to go back and then re-establish myself… There is a good chance eventually the Home Office would reject me, and then I'd have to face that reality. I don't know. So that scares me."* (Hinata, 45-64, Other)

Stalled or no change

Nine of the 16 people we interviewed had experienced no change in their migration status. Of these, most (5) were in the asylum group, 2 EEA nationals, and 2 within the Other cohort. Most (3) within the ARE cohort had moved through a full cycle of fresh claim, refusal, and then submission of a further fresh claim, while others (n=2) had yet to

make a fresh claim. All (2) in the no change EEA cohort had a pending EUSS application and those in the Other grouping (n = 2) had no active claim.

Across all cohorts, participants reported feeling stuck or experiencing little to no movement in their cases despite repeated attempts to pursue all avenues. Participants identified multiple barriers hindering progress. First, prolonged waiting times, limited communication from the Home Office, and very long waits for decisions contributed to a pervasive sense of stagnation. Once this participant's EUSS application was submitted, there was little beyond advice that Fair Way could offer (note that this participant had accommodation through the local authority and had been able to claim contribution-based Universal Credit given his long work history in the UK):

> *"No, [Fair Way] only really helped me just for giving advice… They said the process is long, so I just need to wait… There's a backlog. I don't know… When we deal with someone who's got more power, like the Home Office, there's nothing you can do. You just have to wait."* (Dion, unknown age, EEA)

Second, while some benefited from proactive legal representation, others described inconsistent or unclear legal advice, unanswered messages, and limited momentum on submitting applications. Some were confused and uncertain about what their current applications entailed, or which routes they were pursuing. When asked, one participant responded: *"Actually, I don't even know"* (Fadumo, 25-34, Asylum). While some participants trusted their solicitors: *"I really don't know exactly what she is thinking… I trust her. I think she is young, but looks very smart"* Hana, female, 45-64, Asylum), others felt abandoned or only received very sporadic updates about their cases:

> *"[relayed by interpreter] Nothing has changed… his solicitor didn't contact him… whenever he tries to go to the solicitor's office, the receptionist just tells him that he's not there."* (Said, 35-44, Asylum)

These challenges resulted in repeated setbacks and refusal, which people found exhausting and frustrating. Pursuing new legal routes often involved lengthy delays in securing new legal representation, alongside a need to retell and make sense of migration experiences that were often traumatic to recount:

> *"Yes, because that lawyer… two times he applied… [it was refused]… [My caseworker], she started to give me a list for [other lawyers], just she said, 'Try, go there, please try to ask'… From February… Now, November… six, seven months, yes, [I'm] really late [in making a new application]."* (Tsehay, female, 35-44, Asylum)

These issues were particularly relevant for those within the ARE cohort who were more reliant on legal representation (the EEA group could more readily secure progress with casework support alone).

Third, across all cohorts, interviewees struggled to provide sufficient and/or fresh evidence, such as original documents or proof of nationality, often reflecting a lack of means to easily acquire and validate these materials and long waits to secure

replacements. Original copies had often been left behind in people's country of origin, or lost on people's journey to the UK or during periods of homelessness. For those within the ARE cohort, obtaining relevant evidence sometimes required reaching out to family members abroad under risky circumstances. One participant (see also Box 3) explained how their relative took considerable personal risk to send photocopies of identification (ID) from their country of origin:

> *"No one is allowed… she is taking a big risk. She sends the thing, the letter and the photocopy of the ID."* (Bekela, 35-44, Asylum)

Participants within the EEA cohort faced less perilous but still challenging requirements collating evidence of residency from disparate sources, such as employers, landlords, healthcare providers and elsewhere, and in doing so, facing lengthy, bureaucratic delays:

> *"I don't know because I'm waiting for the GP to give me all my history… 11 years. Too much paper…"* (Michal, 45-64, EEA)

Finally, those within the EEA cohort with criminal convictions faced particularly lengthy delays. Some were told they must complete community service or resolve court fines before their EUSS applications could be advanced, yet the practicalities of scheduling such service or acquiring the necessary funds could make progress enormously challenging and slow:

> *"I can't complete that before December… I cannot work without the settlement, and I don't get the settlement before I finish my community service… It's Catch-22."* (Tomasz, 45-64, EEA)

Box 4: Bekela, aged 35-44

Bekela arrived in the UK ten years ago after a traumatic journey through Africa, across the Mediterranean sea, and through Europe. When we first spoke to him, he was staying in Fair Way Scotland accommodation, receiving £50 a week in cash support, and had been working with his solicitor and Fair Way Scotland casework to submit a fresh asylum claim. Previous claims have been rejected owing to doubts over his nationality which seem to be the result of Bekela living in multiple countries during his childhood. After submitting the fresh claim, Bekela moved into Home Office accommodation. His application was initially accepted, but later rejected, once again citing doubts over his nationality. After this rejection, his solicitor refused to help him further and he had to find new legal representation. He has now submitted another fresh claim, supported by a photocopy of his ID documents sent by a family member, which has given him some optimism. Bekela has received casework support from Fair Way Scotland, which has helped guided him through legal appointments and the asylum system. He currently stays in Home Office accommodation far outside the city centre, and struggles to afford public transport and access key services. The accommodation is uncomfortable, with a mattress that worsens his chronic back pain. Bekela has suffered anxiety, nightmares, and thoughts of suicide, particularly

during the development of the Rwanda scheme. He has received counselling and medication but neither have really helped. He is not permitted to work, so relies on the weekly £49 provided through the Home Office ASPEN card, which does not cover all his needs. He especially struggles to afford food he can eat given his gluten intolerance. Bekela has occasionally resorted to extremely low-paid, cash-in-hand labour to afford essentials such as underwear. Neighbours have also given him small amounts of food and money. He hopes that if his new asylum claim is successful, he will be able to work, pay taxes, and live independently. But at the moment his future remains uncertain and his day-to-day life a struggle.

Deterioration

Four participants described how their migration cases not only stalled but deteriorated over time. This included two within the ARE group who had moved from having a fresh claim to refusal, one within the EEA group who was expecting to be deported, and one within the Other group whose visa had expired.

As with the no-change group, many whose circumstances had deteriorated had struggled to contact their solicitors or receive updates, and some recounted switching solicitors multiple times due to poor communication, perceived lack of progress, or because solicitors felt unable to continue with their cases. In some instances, solicitors failed to meet deadlines or file critical paperwork, resulting in detentions or other negative outcomes. One participant described being detained for deportation to Rwanda while waiting for his solicitor to submit a fresh claim:

> *"They came to my house at 6 am… They catch me like a criminal… They want to send us to Rwanda… I was waiting for my solicitor. I'd been waiting for her… She didn't submit my first claim, otherwise everything is ready… [If she had submitted it] I might not [have] been detained."* (Hussein, 25-34, Asylum)

Another interviewee attributed prolonged homelessness to a lawyer's reported inaction:

> *"Because of the lawyer, I've been homeless… This is my third lawyer… it's not fruitful to change the lawyer, unless I get any further decision."* (Kunal, 35-44, Asylum)

Others reported repeated rejections by the Home Office, sometimes on grounds they considered spurious, such as minor spelling errors or doubts about nationality, while others saw no clear rationale behind negative decisions, suspecting bias or inconsistency:

> *"They accept that [fresh claim]. Then they reject them… They say we are not Eritrean… They don't have any evidence, just saying that."* (Bekela, 35-44, Asylum)

For many, these protracted struggles left them feeling worthless after years spent navigating the migration system facing repeated refusals or dead ends:

> *"I just want my biometric card and start a new life. I feel like I am not human or something. I feel more or less than animal. It's crazy. 14 years is enough."* (Rachid, 45-64, Other)

Key stakeholder and frontline worker perspectives

Casework

Casework was seen as a crucial and effective means to progress people's immigration status. This view was strongly held by Fair Way partners themselves and by external stakeholders, like this local authority participant:

> *"we've had some great successes of people getting their status, and either then being able to access homeless assistance, or they've got their status while they've already been in the mainstream [accommodation], and been able to continue living there. So, yes... [Fair Way Scotland] has met that aim"* (Key stakeholder, local government)

A local authority participant in another area emphasised that Fair Way caseworkers had managed to engage people in the process of progressing their status in a way the local authority itself had not:

> *"[Fair Way] supported people to... access services that potentially, well, they were not able to do partially due to their own disengagement or unwillingness to provide us with information or not having that support to know where to go to for immigration advice or employability advice or whatever it was."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

The practical support provided by Fair Way caseworkers via provision of travel costs/bus passes was also identified as instrumental and indeed necessary to progressing some people's case by enabling attendance at appointments. Stakeholders made the additional point that caseworkers are important mediators between people and their lawyers, encouraging and enabling engagement that can be transformative to their circumstances:

> *"I think what has been good with the project [Fair Way] is the advisers can then be that person who goes in between them and their lawyer and makes sure that there is effective engagement... some people, after you help them to do that... pick things up... start working with their lawyers more effectively, and they go on to submit fresh evidence"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

This participant stressed that this dynamic cuts both ways, with caseworkers also checking that lawyers have *"acted on what they told the client they will act on"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner), an especially important point given concerns regarding the quality of some legal representation discussed in the section below.

Several participants stressed that this emphasis on casework and legal advice alongside accommodation (see chapter three) was an integral part of the Fair Way model, it offered the opportunity to sustainably resolve their circumstances, freeing up capacity to accommodate others in crisis:

> *"with the casework support being in there, some people are moving relatively quickly... So it means that we are potentially able to support [i.e. accommodate] more people through that year"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Stakeholders identified four barriers or concerns in relation to the capacity of casework support to realise positive outcomes for people with NRPF/RE. First, many accessing Fair Way need the input of an effective immigration lawyer to progress their case, and access to such representation was often challenging, as discussed in the sections above and below. Second, local authority participants across Fair Way's areas of operation were of the view that there is insufficient casework capacity relative to demand:

> *"they could do with more capacity to help more people... You need to make sure that you're providing quality help... So that means it's limited to how many people you can work with at the same time."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

> *"advisers were inundated, and really there was basically a waiting list for this service... Increased capacity for advice work... that's really critical... that's one of the operational areas they need to focus on is in enhancing access"* (Key stakeholder, local government)

Third, caseworkers stressed that gathering evidence to support people's cases could be immensely challenging. For the asylum group, understanding the nature of new evidence required could be a challenge depending upon how well the reasons for the refusal of a prior claim had been explained:

> *"Theoretically, if you get a refusal, your lawyer explains the refusal reasons to you and what the gaps are, but we don't know how well that's done... Then you might not be able to see another lawyer until you've got that new evidence, but if you don't know what that new evidence is, you need legal advice to talk you through that."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Gathering new evidence is particularly challenging where individuals are from crisis-affected or conflict zones. Displaced families and destroyed infrastructure could make it nearly impossible:

> *"Usually, people will reach out to relatives or friends or colleagues or neighbours to get some sort of documentary evidence, but that might not be possible because it's hard to actually get in touch with these people. If the country is at a crisis, then you don't know where people have left to, displaced."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

The material and financial costs involved in securing evidence could also be prohibitive:

> *"Sometimes you'll be trying to get paper evidence out, and they literally can't afford the cost of postage."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

> *"We have people who are trying to get evidence from their home country but the evidence - if the originals are not couriered to the solicitor, then that affects the credibility of the evidence, and there's a cost involved of £200 or more, depending on which country."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Document loss was a further significant barrier to progressing cases. This often occurred due to housing instability or homelessness and/or document mishandling by the Home Office:

> *"They [documents] get lost if they've been homeless, don't they, and then you have to start from scratch…"* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

> *"We had somebody whose documents were posted to the wrong address, so then there was the practical thing of their documents were lost and in a different flat."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Difficulties compiling evidence were also a challenge for those supporting an EUSS application. Gathering evidence of residence and work history was described by workers as time-consuming, inconsistent across institutions, and often reliant on informal personal networks and perseverance:

> *"it depends on who we're asking. We have quite good relationships with the council… [and] some of the other third-sector organisations, so we can usually get that information pretty quickly. Whereas the NHS [National Health Service], for example… it's a 30-day turnaround unless it's complicated. Similarly with HMRC [His Majesty's Revenue and Customs] or the DWP [Department for Work and Pensions]. You may find yourself waiting a month or even longer to even get that initial evidence… to then start seeing where the gaps are… [It's] a lengthy piece of work. You're going to be at that for months."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Sometimes long-run efforts failed to deliver what was required (*"In the end it didn't confirm the dates that we had hoped it was going to confirm so we couldn't use it"* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)) or employers would simply refuse to provide requested information *("Sometimes we don't get a response… They're just not willing to cooperate"* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)). Such challenges were compounded when clients have informal work histories, with many unable to confirm their eligibility as a result.

Fourth, participants recognised that the ending of casework support when people gain status or access to Home Office support is a limitation. The ceasing of support at this point can feel like a cliff-edge, when people continue to face immense challenges and significant transitions:

> *"they miss that ongoing support from [Fair Way caseworkers]… There's this big fear… what do we do because actually you guys support us just now, and actually*

we're going to be out in this big bad world and we don't know what to do because that again is another whole journey that people need to think about." (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

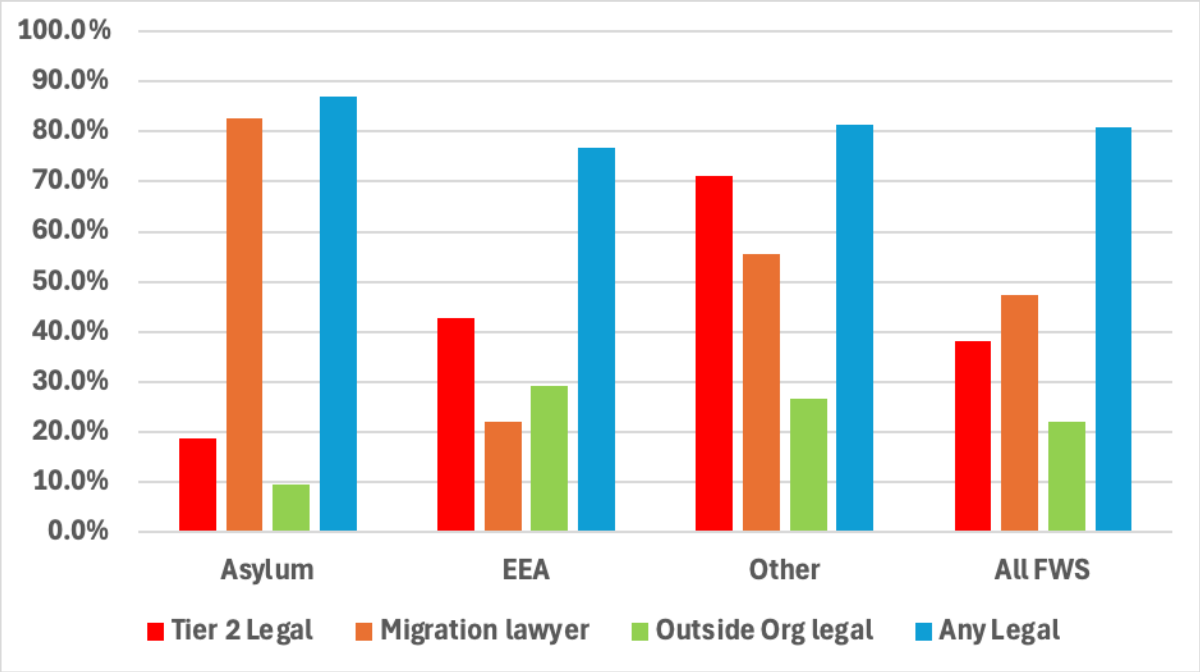
"People do feel that... drop-off in... support, but I think there's generally a positivity... being one step closer to the settled status. Yes, so mixed feelings." (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Legal advice and representation

Provision of legal advice is baked into the Fair Way model through a partnership with a consortium of legal organisations. Legal professional with specialised expertise provide advice to Fair Way caseworkers where needed (see chapter one). Those accessing Fair Way may also have an immigration lawyer and/or be receiving legal advice from another organisation (e.g. a community law centre).

Figure 2.4 shows the proportion of each group (ARE, EEA and other) accessing these forms of legal support.

Figure 2.4: Types of legal advice and support used by main group



Source: weighted analysis of Fair Way Scotland survey data 2023-2025.

It shows that the vast majority (over 80%) of those in the asylum group have an immigration lawyer, likely working with them to make a fresh asylum claim. Tier two legal advice appears to be sought by caseworkers in around one in five cases (19%) for this group and few are accessing legal advice through another organisation (under 10%). By contrast, only around one in five EEA nationals have an immigration lawyer (22%), though almost 30% are accessing legal support from another organisation and tier two advice is sought in a high proportion (43%) of cases. The Other group show a distinct pattern again.

This is the group for which caseworkers are most likely to access second tier advice (71% of cases). A majority of this group have an immigration lawyer (56%) and a quarter (26%) have received legal support from an external organisation.

Overall, while the asylum group are the most likely to be receiving legal advice and support on their case, the other group are most likely to be receiving such advice and support from multiple sources, likely reflecting the complexity of issues facing those in these often-undocumented situations. Finally, while accessing legal support was exceptionally common across the entire cohort, almost a fifth of respondents (19%) had apparently not had any legal advice or support. This may reflect the relatively straightforward nature of their case – this is especially likely for the EEA group – but for some is highly likely to reflect difficulties accessing legal representation (see below).
Second tier advice was viewed as an important component of the Fair Way model, and in particular as a necessary support to and resource for caseworkers who are regularly faced with complex and challenging cases:

> *"that's really important for us to have... frontline workers that have been able to access it, and have used it, have found it so useful and important... it's somebody that can give them the actual law in relation to their problem as quickly as possible"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

This resource was seen as perhaps especially valuable in Aberdeen given the dearth of legal resources in the region (see below):

> *"Historically, in the North East, we may have been isolated from some of that central belt activity and being able to access things like law advice... so it's a real, great resource for us... we are able to lean into that infrastructure that Fairway gives us because it simply wouldn't [otherwise] exist in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

There had been recent tweaks in provision of this legal advice to incorporate ongoing legal supervision for asylum-focussed caseworkers, as well as specific case advice, and this was seen as a positive development that should be maintained:

> *"[that's] something I would really want to continue in the future... because the cases are complex by nature... Some cases have been in the system for almost 20 years, so people have complicated immigration history. Sometimes, unfortunately, people go on the wrong side of the law, and the criminal justice system kicks in. That complexity of having, maybe someone who has already a complex asylum case, going through criminal justice system, probably also has mental health problems is, yes, it's very complicated."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Less positively, there were recognised to have been challenges with the provision of tier two advice for EEA cases, both in terms of the accessibility of that advice and the level of legal expertise available:

> *"I don't think we've quite managed to make the provision right… the feedback from advisers was that they were using solicitors less because they didn't have expertise in EU law… and… there have been some issues around… availability of the lawyers when they are needed to respond to cases."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

This may reflect a lack in legal expertise on the EUSS scheme in general, given the recency of its introduction and increasing complexity:

> *"there's a real dearth of … higher level immigration advice specifically on the EU settlement scheme… referrals have increased and really the complexity of referrals has increased… I think it was originally envisaged by those who had come up with the EU settlement scheme that… this would be something that would be easy… done and dusted within a short period of time, but really, the way in which it was designed, and the complexities of immigration law in the UK meant that… they really significantly underestimated what was needed."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

The growing number of late applications rejected as 'invalid' (because the grounds provided for lateness were deemed insufficient by the Home Office) was identified as a particular current challenge.

Actual legal representation – beyond second tier advice – was identified as essential to progress the immigration cases of the majority those accessing Fair Way. The only exception were EEA nationals with straightforward cases for settlement. Accessing such representation, was however, a major challenge. There was a strong consensus that there are not enough lawyers with relevant expertise, capacity and willingness to take on this kind of work in Scotland:

> *"we need more lawyers in Scotland. We need more lawyers who are high level and free at the point of delivery… not… just general immigration advisors… people with expertise in this area."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

> *"qualified legal advice from… firms… currently undertaking Legal Aid immigration work… [there] is not nearly enough…. It's not nearly sufficient. Not nearly enough."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

Such capacity as there is in Scotland is almost exclusively concentrated in the Central Belt, with efforts to spread expertise more widely unsuccessful to date: "*despite many years of discussions about Central Belt lawyers upskilling people, there's just no take"* (Key stakeholder, legal). This is increasingly problematic in the context of the expansion of asylum dispersal across the whole of Scotland in 2022.

Serious concerns were also raised about the quality of legal advice available to this group, as well as limited understanding of how to choose an effective lawyer or what to expect, and the lack of effective accountability mechanisms:

> *“[It’s] not just access to legal advice; it needs to also be quality legal advice. The legal sector in this area very rarely faces any complaints. Very rarely. You're seeing so many people who are vulnerable, and they don't understand their rights… A lot of what you hear is they're trying to call the lawyer, but the lawyer's not replying… [there’s] a big power imbalance.”* (Key stakeholder, legal)

> *"People just don't know [how to choose a good lawyer]. And so… they'll just go off to the first person who says, ‘don't worry, I'll sort you out. I'll look after you… sort me out with some money and…’. There's such a dearth that they don't know who to turn to, so they'll turn to all the wrong people."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

Recognising these issues, Fair Way services have developed processes to try and ensure those they support have the best chance of accessing quality representation, offering vetted lists of lawyers and proactively checking that their clients are receiving the service they should be.

Stakeholders explained that these issues of capacity, access and quality reflect, in substantial part, the well documented and acute limitations of the Legal Aid system that funds such work.[74] Scotland is acknowledged to have a more favourable Legal Aid system than England and Wales in the sense that the scope of work funded is considerable broader, covering essentially all immigration and asylum issues (in England and Wales, non-asylum immigration issues are excluded).[75] Nevertheless, the system was consistently seen to fail in securing the quality and capacity of legal assistance required:

> *“Scotland has historically been much, much better for legal aid [than England], but… the lawyers are overwhelmed and will often just not touch something if they think it's going to be too much work.”* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

One key stakeholder working in legal services went so far as to describe the system as *“abysmal”* (Key stakeholder, legal). A key issue is the low rates that the Scottish Legal Aid Board will pay for this kind of work, meaning that such cases are deprioritised:

> *“the rates are unattractive compared to other things lawyers can spend their time on, deeply unattractive, profoundly unattractive.”* (Key stakeholder, legal)

Even lawyers willing to work on such cases were observed to deprioritise the Fair Way cohort, as their cases can be the most complex, challenging and time consuming:

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[74] King, J. (2025). Loudly Quitting — 41% of Scotland's solicitors considering ditching legal aid services. Online: Law Society of Scotland. https://www.lawscot.org.uk/members/journal-hub/articles/loudly-quitting-41-of-scotlands-solicitors-considering-ditching-legal-aid-services/; Wilding, J. (2025) No Access to Justice 2: Mapping the UK’s continuing immigration and asylum legal advice crisis. Online: Justice Together. https://justice-together.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/No-Access-to-Justice-Report-2025.pdf

[75] Ibid and Wilding, J. (2022). No access to justice: how legal advice deserts fail refugees, migrants and our communities. https://sussex.figshare.com/articles/report/No_access_to_justice_how_legal_advice_deserts_fail_refugees_migrants_and_our_communities/23490653

> *"Some work is harder than others, and the kind of work that the Fair Way cohort needs is the hardest, least profitable work. So even amongst the restricted capacity it's going to be really hard to place those Fair Way cases."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

Accelerated decision making processes at the Home Office to manage the asylum backlog were seen to be magnifying this issue:

> *"right now... there are lots of appeals that are going in because people's claims are refused in the first instance. That does take solicitors' time away. What we think is happening is the priority for ARE clients becomes less and lesser because solicitors don't have time."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Caseworkers noted that community-based legal clinics can play a role here in helping establish that a person's case has merit, thus increasing the chances of securing a legal representation. But this role was limited given constraints on clinics' capacity. One particular barrier was a lack of access to interpretation in one major legal clinic:

> *"The Law Clinic is a godsend, but we don't have enough access to it because they don't have interpreters... It's very ad hoc, depending on who they've got." (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)*

These challenges have the impact of extending the length of time taken to progress people's cases, trapping them in extreme hardship (see chapters three and four) and requiring Fair Way support for longer. This is not only a challenge for Fair Way partners but local authorities supporting people with NRPF as this participant explained:

> *"there is no question that the cost that we have incurred has been greater than it need otherwise have been because of a lack of availability of legal support, because... we have had to wait weeks for an available appointment" (Key stakeholder, legal)*

This participant explained that some LAs employ immigration lawyers because they *"realise that that's necessary to resolve cases and that the legal aid system is not providing it"* (Key stakeholder, legal).[76] Of note, data collected by COSLA on the scale and costs of LA support to those with NRPF shows a very significant escalation in the legal costs incurred by LAs in supporting NRPF cases, from almost nothing (£200) in 2021/22, to around £75,000 in 2023/24 (and peaking at an exceptionally high £382,000 in 2022/23).[77] Note that LAs also have access to specialist legal advice to support them to

[76] This report details the current landscape of local authority funding of immigration advice and makes the case for an expansion of it: Wilding, J. (2023). 'It's a No-Brainer': Local Authority Funding for Immigration Legal Advice in the UK. Online: Justice Together. https://justice-together.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/JT-Local-authority-funding-for-immigration-v3.pdf

[77] COSLA (2025). COSLA Survey of Local Authority NRPF Support. Online: Migration Scotland. https://migrationscotland.org.uk/policyarea/policy-context/cosla-survey-of-local-authority-nrpf-support/

assist people with NRPF funded via a COSLA/International Organisation for Migration collaboration.[78]

In this stark context, stakeholders felt that an adjustment to the Fair Way Scotland and wider Scottish Government/COSLA Ending Destitution Together strategy model to include the direct employment or funding of lawyers to take on these cases was worthy of serious consideration:[79]

> *"you basically just need to grant fund or pay the salaries of lawyers to do this work because a market model is not going to work... [caseworkers] hit a wall... Just add two or three lawyers to the Fair Way partnership because you can't refer the cases."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

> *"having a lawyer on the team or a paralegal on the team at least would be a real asset... actually having our own person that was sufficiently well-qualified across asylum and EU, and social care stuff as well, housing... that would be incredible."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

> *"[prioritise] putting money into... training in house or getting solicitors from outside who are dedicated to dealing with complex cases... You have to put money into good quality, higher level [legal advice], free at the point of delivery."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

While considerable emphasis was placed on Fair Way adapting its model in this way, participants also recognised the need for wider reforms to resolve these issues in the Legal Aid system.[80]

Challenging cases

Cutting across these discussions was a recognition that cases varied considerably in how challenging and (in)tractable they were. EEA cases were recognised to have the potential to be easier to progress, on average, than others, especially in EUSS eligible cases where evidence of residency and work history was available (see above).

> *"EUSS people with pre-settled status have more options and probably would require, if you had to look at time or resource, less resource in order to move out of destitution."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

It was recognised, however, that the relatively easier to progress EUSS caseload was and would continue to shrink as time goes on and that some such case are already

[78] For details see p. 15 in Scottish Government (2023). Ending Destitution Together: progress report – year two 2022-2023 Online: Scottish Government. https://www.gov.scot/publications/ending-destitution-together-progress-report-year-two-2022-2023/documents/

[79] Scottish Government fund the International Organisation for Migration to provide legal advice to LAs on complex NRPF/RE cases via the Ending Destitution Together strategy, but the vast majority of those accessing Fair Way Scotland are not receiving support from LAs and thus will not be assisted via this route.

[80] See also Wilding, J. (2022). No access to justice: how legal advice deserts fail refugees, migrants and our communities. https://sussex.figshare.com/articles/report/No_access_to_justice_how_legal_advice_deserts_fail_refugees_migrants_and_our_communities/23490653

exceptionally challenging to progress. There were concerns about Roma people who, it was felt, could have *"real reluctance"* (Key stakeholder, legal) to engage with advice and authorities:

> *"They stick within the community… sometimes because of language issues, cultural issues… so trying to get them to reach outside for help can be very difficult and this is an area where bad advice and dodgy advisors really thrive because… they make money off of these people and they promise them all kinds of rubbish."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

Roma people's perceived prioritisation of paid work opportunities was also seen as a barrier to their consistent engagement with casework:

> *"the Roma community… they will go anywhere and do anything to make money because they're trying to send money to the kids back home. So… we'll have the lawyer, we'll have the advisor, and then they'll have got a call to go and do a shift in some career… and that's their priority."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

> *Another key group of concern were those with complex needs, primarily those with alcohol and substance misuse-related issues, a history of criminal convictions/court matters in progress and/or experiences of street and other forms of homelessness. Addiction was identified as a serious challenge to sustaining engagement with some men from Eastern Europe by caseworkers in Edinburgh:*

> *"We have… [a group of] primarily Eastern European men… [who] have issues with alcohol or other substances… and that can create a massive barrier… their priority is finding a drink so that they can stave off the withdrawals…"* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Similar issues were faced by a small group of those accessing Fair Way in Aberdeen:

> *"in the main we have people in Aberdeen who maybe don't have high support needs …they are using Fair Way because of their immigration status and then if that was solved, they would move on and live lives beyond services. And then we have this cohort of people with really complex cases and really complex trauma and really complex needs, mostly as a result of the destitution"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Cases of people with a criminal record or pending court matters were stressed as especially challenging. In the rare unusual cases where an individual has a serious criminal record this can radically reduce the chances of a successful EUSS application, but the more significant challenge from a Fair Way caseload perspective was that minor and more common offenses can cause exceptionally long delays:

> *"there are lots of things that are outwith our control that sometimes impede [progress]… particularly if the person has an offence or an outstanding criminal case… it doesn't matter how active we are… that is a real lag in terms of being able*

to get people through or get people active status quicker" (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

The glacially slow pace of criminal proceedings were lamented here as a frustrating and preventable driver of extended periods of hardship for this group:

> *"that court process is so slow. Nobody owns it. It's nobody's responsibility. It's far from connected to destitution and people's experiences of that. So it does feel sometimes that that is a bit hopeless."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

These impacts of criminal conduct were often judged to be both harsh and counterproductive, in that they could reflect long distant offending histories from which people had rehabilitated, but also because the repercussions of these criminal records could force people into even more precarious and vulnerable circumstances:

> *"It's just a really depressing thing for people to realise that there's this long history that they'd got away from is going to catch them again and prevent them building a life here. That can be quite tricky in casework"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

> *"we're in a landscape which is very quick to just say, you know, you're a criminal or you've broken the law and then these people just disappear. So you're never going to fix the problem. And in fact, they'll just fall prey to exploiters and traffickers."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

Some hope has been offered by recent case law establishing that the Home Office *"must consider the individual circumstances of EU citizens/EEA nationals before delaying determination of their EUSS applications pending criminal prosecutions"* rather than delaying them by default.[81]

These factors rendering cases especially challenging were more likely to apply to the EEA group than the appeal rights exhausted asylum group. This reflects that having got in trouble with the police and reporting drug and alcohol problems are more common for EEA nationals in the sample than the asylum group.[82]

Cutting across all groups, key stakeholders were very clear that that homelessness itself was a complicating factor for any case, both because it is associated with higher risk of document loss and because people facing homelessness can struggle to engage with the work required to move their case forward:

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[81] Berry, A. (2024) Home Office policy of refusing to determine thousands of EUSS applications for leave to remain by EU citizens/EEA nationals found to be unlawful Online: Garden Court Chambers. https://gardencourtchambers.co.uk/home-office-policy-of-refusing-to-determine-thousands-of-euss-applications-for-leave-to-remain-by-eu-citizens-eea-nationals-found-to-be-unlawful/

[82] 34% of EEA respondents to the survey reported having gotten in trouble with the police in the last year compared to 8% of the asylum group and 13% of the other group; 36% of the EEA group reported having a problem with drugs or alcohol in the last year, compared to 18% of the asylum group and 32% of the other group.

> *"when you're dealing with those who are homeless, complexities often arise because they lead such chaotic lives because... because they don't keep paperwork"* (Key stakeholder, legal)

> *"people struggle psychologically and emotionally every day especially... when they don't have a roof over their head, or they don't have any subsistence money. That does impact to how they navigate the system, and how prepared or how able they are, rather, to engage with other important services."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Facts about people's case, including their specific country of origin and the nature of their ties to the UK, were also consequential for how challenging progress could be. EEA nationals who arrived after the Brexit deadline were identified as a small group, but one that it is exceptionally hard to assist:

> *"There are people who've come after the deadline and they're never going to make it, but they think they'll make it... They're... going to fall into that large underbelly. That pool of people who just carry on being here..."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

For asylum seekers, successful claims from those arriving from countries deemed safe to return to by the Home Office were noted to be very rare:

> *"Sometimes, depending on nationality [it can be very challenging]... Most of the people who struggle very much to come out of the destitution, they come from countries where the government doesn't believe that there are any human rights abuses."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

However intractable someone's chance of progressing their case, it was recognised that some would simply never voluntarily return to their country of origin, either because they were fleeing persecution or because they have children in the UK:

> *"for someone who is afraid of persecution or someone who won't lose their children, there's actually no endpoint to that casework because they're just going to keep going."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

Regardless of the particulars of an individual's case, stakeholders emphasised that whatever actions caseworkers and legal advisors pursue, ultimately the Home Office hold all the power with regards to the progress of someone's case: *"It all depends on the Home Office"* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists). Importantly, there is seen to be a considerable degree of unpredictability in Home Office decision making. The reported inconsistency and opacity in Home Office decision making was a major frustration for this caseworker:

> *"There is no guarantee. Some people providing some evidence, some medical evidence... their case has been successful... Some other people providing quite the same evidence... have not been receiving any positive outcome from the Home Office."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Another caseworker specialising in EEA cases made a similar point about how pending convictions impact a case:

> *"We have had... decision-makers that... [say] it is a Community Payback Order so therefore it's not pending, so they can make a decision. We have had others that have said that the Community Payback Order could be revoked or converted into something else... so they weren't comfortable making a decision..."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

A local authority participant too had experienced apparently inexplicable inconsistencies in Home Office decision making in the case of family members who had arrived at the same time and were in apparently *"indistinguishable circumstances"* (Key stakeholder, statutory).

Beyond acknowledging that some cases are especially challenging to progress, several stakeholders with legal expertise acknowledged that some cases offered no realistic chance of substantive progress: *"there are intractable cases definitely... With some of these there won't be any hope."* (Key stakeholder, legal). This raised the question of returns from the UK to other countries, voluntary or enforced, which at the UK level have started to increase dramatically following radical falls in the decade to 2020.[83] Several people made the point that EEA nationals have far greater options in terms of leaving the UK – either to return to their country of origin or to avail themselves of their right to freedom of movement within the EEA - than the asylum or other group:

> *"EU nationals... do have open to them a multitude of other countries that are considered developed, that you have very free access to, which is very different from... someone from Sudan, who's only got Sudan to be sent back to... They have access to a whole bunch of - like, 30-odd countries that they can move to"* (Key stakeholder, legal)

Where there are no other options, returns were acknowledged to be a legitimate route that the state may pursue, though there was interest in making returns more supportive, and even the best kind of return was seen as highly sensitive in the case of refused asylum seekers:

> *"you should be supported until the point at which, obviously, nobody can think of any other right that you have, at which point you probably should be... I'm not a pro-borders person, but yes, you should be removed or assisted to return somewhere else."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

> *"repatriation could be something that could be supportive... I would also say that would be something for EEA or EU nationals, rather than ARE individuals."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

[83] The Migration Observatory (2024) Deportation, removal, and voluntary departure from the UK. Online: the Migration Observatory. https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/deportation-and-voluntary-departure-from-the-uk/

It was recognised (as above) that there is a significant and in large part hidden population living 'off grid' who have – or perceive that they have – reached a dead end with their case and who are exceptionally vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking alongside persistent destitution and homelessness. One local authority participant commented with frustration on the impacts of this on their services given their duties to some people with NRPF in this context:

> *"when somebody's claim is rejected the communication that goes out from the Home Office effectively says, 'And you now need to make arrangements to leave', in my experience, the Home Office rarely if ever does anything about that... there is a literal washing of hands. ... Local authorities have this residual responsibility to ensure that people do not fall into destitution, therefore they will come our way inevitably... [and] because a lot of people [are] so traumatised by the experience of bureaucracy [they] want nothing to do with authority, so they don't until there's a point of crisis."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

Fair Way caseworkers reported handling conversations about returns with great care, offering them as an option they could support people to pursue if they were interested (see chapter six).

Key points

- Fair Way Scotland support a highly diverse group of people who have come to the UK from a wide range of countries and a variety of reasons, including to seek sanctuary, study, work or reunite with family. What these groups have in common is that they are facing crisis and are unable to access mainstream statutory supports because of their immigration status. Those accessing Fair Way services tend to have been in the UK for long periods: the vast majority have been in the UK for five years or more.

- Data collected by Fair Way delivery partners suggests that half or more of those accessing support in 2024/25 saw a significant improvement in their immigration status and/or access to statutory supports and that all services secure positive outcomes for a substantial proportion of those they support. Varying positive outcome rates across casework services indicate different approaches to managing caseloads, with some services providing intensive support to a smaller number of individuals and larger services carrying significant open caseloads. Higher positive outcome rates in accommodation indicate the benefit of people having a safe place to stay while pursuing their case and the added value of receiving housing and casework support. In some cases, this also reflects prioritisation of those whose immigration case is deemed to have a reasonable chance of success, on grounds that maintaining high rates of move-on will maximise the numbers who can be accommodated.

- We spoke to 26 people who had been accessing Fair Way support for some time (on average 16 months). Half had experienced positive progress with their case, nine stability or no change, and four a deterioration.

- For the EEA group, progress was typically marked by the sudden securing of settled status via the EUSS. This had a transformative impact as it enabled them to access benefits and homelessness assistance. Casework support via Fair Way was the key enabler of such progress. Challenges securing evidence of residence and work history were a key barrier, as well as delays in decision making due to pending criminal matters.

- For the asylum group, progress involved (re)accessing Home Office accommodation and subsistence support. Such progress, however, was tempered by a continuation of uncertainty and fear in having to await the outcome of their fresh claim for asylum, restricting their and ability to build life in the UK. For this group and the Other group, accessing legal counsel was identified as an absolute precondition of progress towards regularisation via an asylum or other human rights claim. But access to such support was acknowledged to be difficult, and even if secured, navigating claims for status could potentially take a great deal of time and be dependent upon the long-term engagement of the individual in question. Practical and emotional support from Fair Way caseworkers as well as wider voluntary organisations and community groups were also important. Progress could take significant periods of time and the key barriers to it were lack of access to effective legal representation; practical and financial challenges amassing the required evidence; and long waits for decisions by the Home Office.

- Fair Way casework plays a critical role in supporting people with NRPF/RE to progress their immigration case, but the capacity of the casework team is insufficient to meet demand. Caseworkers are also constrained by challenges gathering evidence outwith their control and a lack of input from effective immigration lawyers, reflecting acute issues with the Legal Aid system that support such work in Scotland.

- Most of those accessing Fair Way (over 80%) are receiving some specialist legal advice alongside casework support. Almost all of the asylum group have an immigration lawyer, whereas EEA nationals and others are most likely to be getting second tier legal advice on their case via the Fair Way partnership. A significant proportion of the small Other group are accessing second tier advice on their case, support through a legal clinic *and* have an immigration lawyer, likely reflecting the especially complex and challenging nature of these cases. Despite these levels of utilisation of legal advice and support, the qualitative aspects of this study make clear that there is significant unmet need for timely, quality legal advice and representation for the groups Fair Way supports.

- Some cases are especially hard to progress. While in general EEA cases are seen to be easier to progress, those involving Roma individuals and people with addiction issues can be exceptionally challenging, reflecting difficulties maintaining consistent engagement. Criminal convictions or pending court matters (more common for the EEA group) can cause lengthy delays in securing progress driving persistent hardship, even where offenses are minor or historic. Across the board, progressing the cases of people experiencing homelessness is difficult, given its impacts on people's capacity to engage and implications for document loss. Caseworkers and

stakeholders reported inconsistent and unpredictable decision making by the Home Office, making the chances of progress hard to judge and fuelling uncertainty about people's future prospects of escaping hardship.

3. Homelessness

This chapter focuses experiences of and trajectories in relation to homelessness and wider forms of housing disadvantage among people accessing Fair Way Scotland. The first section draws on survey data to provide an overview of these experiences. The second section draws on qualitative interviews with people with direct experience of NRPF/RE to consider changes in their housing circumstances while receiving support from Fair Way, and the role of this support and other factors in enabling positive – or preventing negative – change. The third and final section draws on key stakeholder and frontline worker perspectives to identify how effectively Fair Way Scotland is able to achieve one of its core aims – to prevent and alleviate experiences of homelessness among those it supports – and the key factors influencing this. This final section also provides an analysis of how LA responses to adults with NRPF/RE vary across the three cities in which Fair Way operates.

The homelessness experiences of people accessing Fair Way Scotland

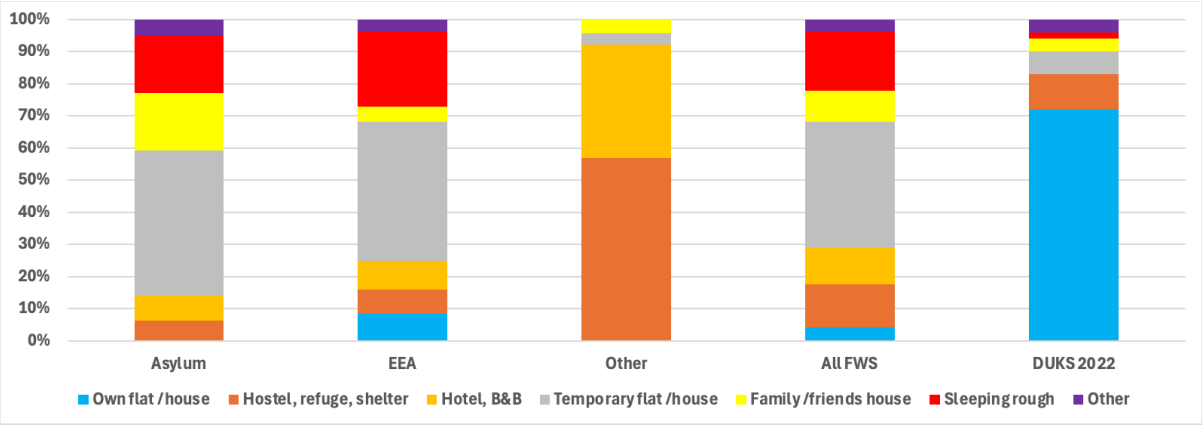
Figure 3.1 shows the current living situation of people accessing Fair Way Scotland compared to the group of people experiencing destitution in the UK in Autumn 2022 (the latest data available) as measured via the *Destitution in the UK* research study (DUKS).[84] This comparison enables us to 'benchmark' the experiences of the Fair Way cohort to those of another highly disadvantaged group.

The figure demonstrates that almost all of those accessing Fair Way Scotland were experiencing some form of homelessness at point of survey and that such experiences are far more common for this group than for the general destitute population of the UK. Very few people accessing Fair Way have their own house or flat (4% overall), confined to 8% of the EEA group (and none whatsoever of the two main subgroups), compared with 72% of destitute households across UK in 2022. Alarmingly high proportions (19%) were sleeping rough at the point of survey, *nine times* that for the overall destitute population in UK.

The most common current living situation for the Fair Way cohort is staying in a temporary flat or house (39%), provided by the LA (19%), Home Office (8%), Fair Way Scotland (8%) or another provider/charity (4%). The next most common current living situation was (shockingly) sleeping rough (19%, see above), underlining that for those unable to access LA or Home Office accommodation, Fair Way provision is often the only alternative. Smaller but still significant proportions reported staying with family or friends (often sofa surfing) (9%), living in some form of congregate hostel/refuge/shelter (13%) and staying in a hotel/B&B (12%).

[84] Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Treanor, M., Blenkinsopp, J., McIntyre, J., Johnsen, S., & McMordie, L. (2023) Destitution in the UK 2023. Online: JRF. https://www.jrf.org.uk/deep-poverty-and-destitution/destitution-in-the-uk-2023

Figure 3.1: Current living circumstances of people accessing Fair Way by main group and of UK destitute (percent)



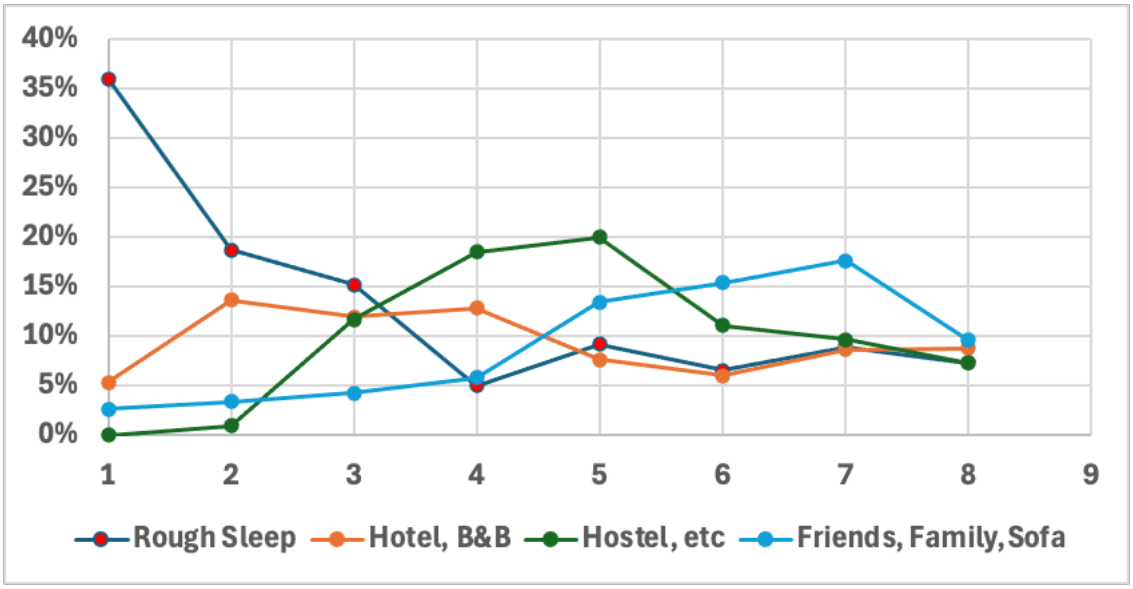
Source: weighted analysis of Fair Way Scotland survey data 2023-2025; Destitution in the UK survey, Autumn 2022. Note 1: DUKS survey combines Hostel etc. with Hotel, B&B. Note 2: most Home Office Accommodation classified as 'Temporary flat/house, some as Hotel, B&B.

People's current living situation varies quite significantly by group. Those in the asylum and EEA groups were similarly likely to be in a temporary flat or house (45% and 43% respectively), but for the EEA group, such accommodation was in virtually all cases provided by the LA, whereas for the asylum group Home Office accommodation dominated. The asylum group were the most likely to be in Fair Way accommodation (14%), followed by the EEA group (6%) and other (just 1%). The asylum group are by far the group most likely to be staying with family/friends (18% compared to 4-5% for the EEA/other groups). Rough sleeping is most common for the EEA group (23% compared to 18% for the asylum group). The asylum and EEA groups are similarly likely to be in hostel etc. accommodation (6% and 8% respectively) and hotel/B&B accommodation (8% and 9% respectively) but the small 'other' group are much more likely to be in these forms of housing.

The living situation profile also varies by city, with staying in a temporary flat (47%) and rough sleeping (21%) more likely in Glasgow, whereas in Edinburgh there is much less use of temporary house/flat (33%) but much more reliance on hostels (20%) and hotel/B&B (18%). In Aberdeen, the largest proportion of participants were in a temporary flat (43%) and a much higher proportion than elsewhere in a flat or house of their own (20%).

Figure 3.2 explores trends over the period of the survey in the pattern of living circumstances reported by respondents, focusing on four adverse types of living circumstance (rough sleeping, hotels/B&Bs, hostels etc., and friends/family). It shows that there appears to have been a fall over the period in the proportion of people accessing Fair Way who were sleeping rough at point of survey. The proportion staying in hotel or Bed and Breakfast accommodation initially increased before reducing and in the recent period rising again. The proportion staying in a hostel increased significantly in the mid-period before falling somewhat but not down to original levels. Staying with friends and family increased steadily over most of the period but fell back in the most recent quarter

Figure 3.2: Selected adverse current living circumstances over time period of survey (3-quarter moving average of date entered Fair Way Scotland, from Q1 2023 to Q1 2025)



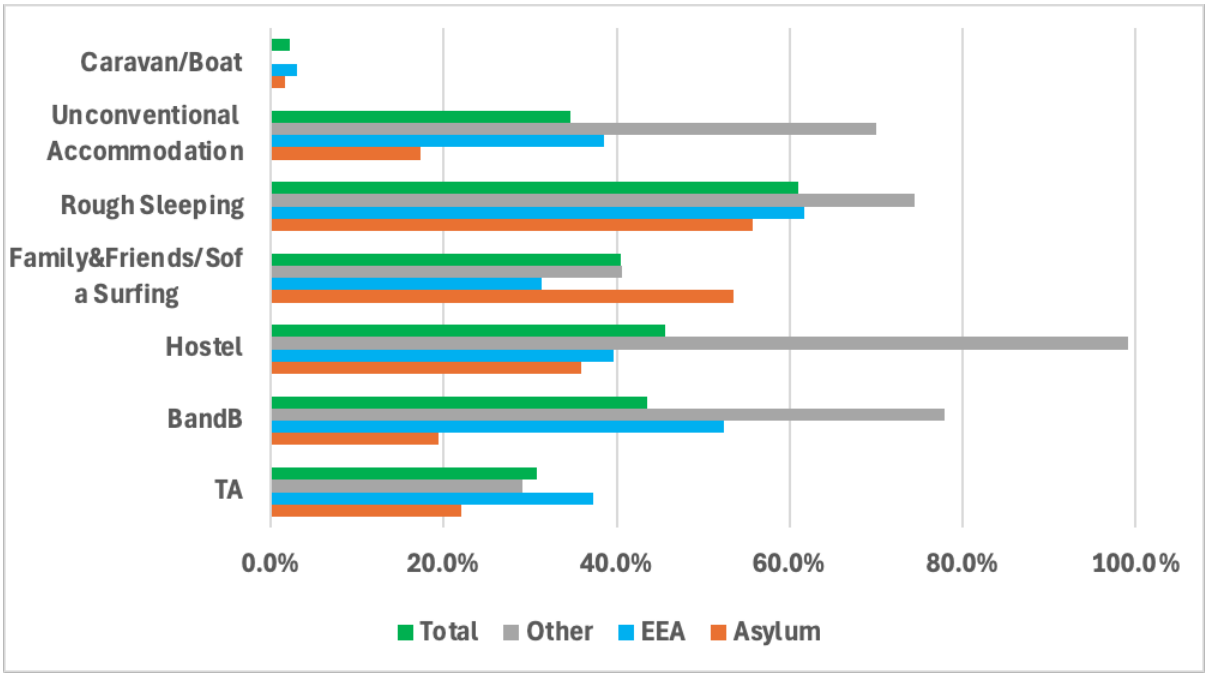
Source: weighted analysis of Fair Way Scotland survey data 2023-2025

The initial fall in rough sleeping in late 2023/24 is very notable. The exceptionally high proportion of those surveyed reporting sleeping rough in Spring/Summer 2023 could be connected to accelerated decision making in the Home Office during this period. The subsequent substantial fall to rough sleeping to just 5% in Jan-March 2024 could reflect in part the coming on stream of winter emergency accommodation provision in Glasgow and Edinburgh in the form of the Overnight/Rapid Rehousing Welcome Centres. These were both accessible to those with NRPF/RE that winter and this may also partly explain the increase in the proportions in hostels/hotels during this period. The spring/summer period in 2024 did not see a rapid increase in rough sleeping among this group following the closure of emergency winter provision, however, nor did numbers decrease substantially in winter 2024/25. This may reflect in part that emergency winter provision was only opened in Edinburgh that winter, and not in Glasgow. A final possible contributing factor to the reduction in rough sleeping seen over the whole period is of course Fair Way support itself, including a) the role of caseworkers advocating for those they support to LAs and the Home Office and b) the expansion in Fair Way accommodation (see chapter one) and its prioritisation for those sleeping rough or at high risk of doing so. Finally, it is possible that the upward trend in staying with friends and family or sofa surfing from the middle of the period reflects an increasing reliance on informal community networks as the proportion of those able to access hotel/hostel accommodation began, for whatever reason, to decrease.

Our survey also asked people about the types of accommodation they had resided in over the last year. Figure 3.3 shows this data, demonstrating the severe housing precarity insecurity and chronic homelessness facing this group, showing that a *majority* (61%) slept rough at some point during that period. Very high proportions also report having stayed in a hostel or similar congregate emergency accommodation (46%), with friends or family (41%), in B&B hotel (44%), in temporary accommodation (31%) and

unconventional accommodation (for example, staying in non-residential structures, sheds/garages, tents, cars, vans etc.) (35%). This data underlines the intense housing insecurity of this group. Indeed, 72% reported having experienced two or more adverse living situation (as listed in figure 3.3) in the last year, 57% three or more and 28% four or more.

Figure 3.3: Types of accommodation stayed in during last 12 months, by main group (percent reporting by category)



Source: weighted analysis of Fair Way Scotland survey data 2023-2025;

The smaller 'other' group stand out as being more likely to have experienced the majority of these adverse living situations, in many cases by quite some way. On average this group report experience of 4 adverse living situations in the last year, compared to 3 for the EEA group and 2 for the asylum group. Importantly, while no Other group respondents reported sleeping rough at the point of survey, almost 75% reported having done so in the last year (more than any other group). The EEA group generally come next in terms of recent experience of most of these adverse living situations, except staying friends and family where more in the asylum group mentioned this. This latter point is likely to reflect the history of dispersal of asylum seekers in Glasgow, and the building up of community support networks linked to common experiences, nationalities, ethnicities and religious community. Asylum seekers placed outside of Glasgow in the context of the expansion of dispersal nationwide are likely to be less able to avail themselves of such community supports.

The profile of recent living situations also varied by city, with use of temporary accommodation much more common in Aberdeen; B&B, hostel, rough sleeping and unconventional all much more common in Edinburgh; and friends & family was most common in Glasgow. The number of adverse housing circumstances reported in the last year is higher for those in Edinburgh (at 3), than in Glasgow and Aberdeen (2). This

underlines the particular housing challenges faced in Edinburgh and the near exclusive presence of the especially disadvantaged Other group in the city.

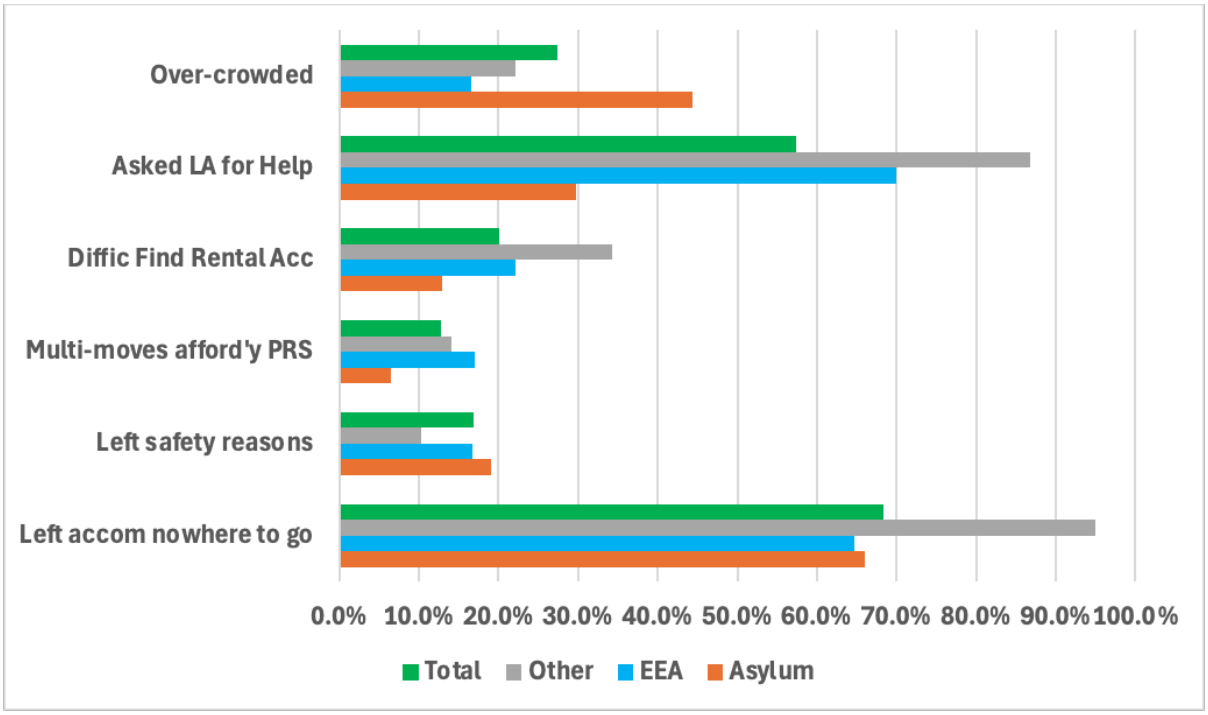
Our survey results indicate that accessing Fair Way support may help people move away from adverse living situations. Those who had been accessing such support for more than three months at point of survey were less likely to be have been staying with friends/family/sofa surfed in the last year (26% v. 56%), rough slept in the last year (57% v. 66%) and lived in a caravan or on a boat in last year (1% v. 4%) than those who had been receiving Fair Way support for a shorter period.

Box 5: Naftal, aged 35-44

Naftal arrived in the UK in 2017 to seek asylum. His initial claim was refused in 2020, after which he experienced prolonged periods of rough sleeping, first in London and later in Scotland. After enduring harsh conditions sleeping rough over winter 2023/24, he connected with a Fair Way partner and was prioritised for accommodation. He moved into a two-bedroom flat that he shared with one other person and also received modest cash support from Fair Way. This marked a substantial improvement in his living situation, access to essentials, and overall well-being. Physically and mentally, the transition away from the instability and severe challenges of rough sleeping made a significant difference, allowing him to rest, engage with support services, and more recently to volunteer – activities that help restore his sense of purpose. Naftal remains in limbo in terms of his immigration status. He is now pursuing a fresh application. If accepted, this is likely to mean Naftal can re-access Home Office support. While this would offer him lower financial support and (likely) poorer quality accommodation compared to his current situation, he sees it as an important step toward achieving refugee status. He is not permitted to work, though he is eager and confident in his ability to work in various roles and feels passionately that this would help him move towards independence and self-sufficiency.

In addition to data on current and past living situations, the survey asked whether people had experienced specific housing related problems in the last year. Figure 3.4 displays the results, providing further evidence that the Fair Way cohort are exceptionally disadvantaged in housing terms. The most commonly adverse housing experience reported was having left accommodation with nowhere alternative to go, reported by over two-thirds (68%) of respondents. Asking the local authority for help was also very common (57%). Next most common was living in overcrowded accommodation (27%) but this has been experienced by a much higher proportion (44%) of the asylum group. The relatively extreme marker of having left accommodation for safety reasons was also reported by a 17% of respondents.

Figure 3.4: Particular housing experiences over last year (percent reporting by category)



Source: weighted analysis of Fair Way Scotland survey data 2023-2025

The distribution of these experiences also varied by city. Overcrowding was most common in Glasgow (43% v. 27% overall), whereas having left accommodation with nowhere to go, and specifically for safety reasons, were most common in Edinburgh (82% and 20% respectively v. 68% and 17% overall). Problems finding rental accommodation and having to move multiple times in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) were more common in Aberdeen (26% and 25% respectively v. 20% and 13% overall), reflecting that the EEA group – that almost entirely dominate the Aberdeen caseload – are the only group likely to have their own accommodation in the Fair Way cohort. Asking the local authority for help was much more likely in Edinburgh and Aberdeen (81% and 47% respectively compared to just 22% in Glasgow), likely reflecting difference in local authority responses to adults with NRPF/RE in discussed further below.

Our survey data suggests that support from Fair Way may help reduce exposure to these adverse experiences. Those who had been accessing such support for three months or more were less likely than those who had accessed this support more recently to have lived in overcrowded conditions in the last year (38% v. 27%), left accommodation with nowhere else to go in the last year (73% v. 64%), moved multiple times due to affordability in the last year (8% v. 18%), and had difficulty finding rental accommodation in the last year (11% v. 30%).

Experiences of Home Office accommodation are an important part of the picture for the asylum group, of whom almost three quarters (73%) have experience of residing in the last year. 54% of this group have experience of being asked to leave Home Office accommodation over the same time period, and 26% required to move multiple times

between Home Office accommodation. All these experiences are heavily concentrated in Glasgow reflecting the make-up of the Fair Way cohort across the cities of operation.

Change over time

Of the 26 people with direct experience of NRPF/RE we spoke to, most (19) reported improvements in their living situation over their time accessing Fair Way support. Some (n=5) reported no change, and a small number (n=2) reported deteriorations.[85]

Positive progress

Most improvements were reported by the asylum cohort (10) and in most cases (7) this meant having moved from rough sleeping to Fair Way accommodation, with two then moving on again to Home Office accommodation. A small number (n=2) progressed from sofa surfing/staying with family/friends to Fair Way accommodation, with both then moving on to Home Office accommodation. Finally, one in this group progressed from sofa surfing straight to Home Office accommodation.

The trajectory of the three people in the Other cohort who reported improvements in their living situation were somewhat similar to the asylum group in that they tended to have moved into Fair Way accommodation from worse situations, two from shelter provision via B&B accommodation to Fair Way accommodation, and one from hotel accommodation to Fair Way. For this reason, we consider the asylum and other groups experiences of positive progress together.

Fair Way provided accommodation was key to the positive trajectories of these two groups. Most described this accommodation as clean, comfortable, and well-located, and were often able to access valued supplementary benefits like bus passes and one-off grants for clothing through their accommodation provider and support worker:

> *"I think the flat is good. I have a bathroom. I have a room... It's near to the superstore, and bus. [Fair Way support worker] give me a bus pass."* (Hana, female, 45-64, Asylum)

> *"[Fair Way] is much, I prefer there. It's clean and comfortable. I like the accommodation."* (Bekela, 35-44, Asylum)

For some, Fair Way accommodation was an extremely welcome intervention after a period of sleeping rough and/or sofa surfing, and participants expressed considerable gratitude for having access to a home of their own, albeit one they understood to be temporary. Some credited Fair Way directly for helping them avoid street homelessness:

> *"[relayed by interpreter] He's saying Scottish Refugee Council are the people who helped him after he got evicted... They helped to get his current accommodation."* (Said, 35-44, Asylum)

[85] As noted in chapter one, people in Fair Way accommodation at round one are likely to be over-represented in this qualitative sample as participants were recruited through Fair Way services and this was practically easier in accommodation-based services.

Participants really valued the help provided by support staff attached to Fair Way accommodation. One highlighted the assistance they had provided resolving day-to-day accommodation issues, while another explained how his support worker not only helped with accommodation but also offered ongoing checks:

> *"[My support worker] is about accommodation… All the problems I have in the accommodation, he is fixing other things. If he doesn't know how to do, he will contact people who can fix."* (Hana, female, 45-64, Asylum)

> *"[relayed by interpreter] He's saying [Fair Way]… are helping him pretty well… they keep contacting him and ask him if he needed anything."* (Said, 35-44, Asylum)

Most Fair Way flats are shared by two people and living in such a shared space could create anxiety for and feel daunting for some. One person felt deeply uncomfortable sharing space with her flatmate's friends:

> *"I think because all my flatmates have friends… for me it's intimidating. I cannot go to the bathroom… or the kitchen… always there is somebody there that I don't know… so this is really making me feel bad."* (Hana, female, 45-64, Asylum)

Another shared a flat with someone who had behaved extremely violently, forcing them to be relocated to a hotel while the issue was resolved:

> *"but first time they mix me with one guy, and… they have a fight… They stabbing each other… I've been to hotel for six weeks. Finally, they move this guy to somewhere else."* (Mahdi, 35-44, Other)

Five of those we spoke to who'd experienced positive progress in their living situation were now residing in Home Office accommodation having submitted a fresh asylum claim. This was viewed as a positive change because of its wider association with progress in people's case and associated prospects of securing leave to remain. However, experiences of living in Home Office accommodation varied widely, depending on location, maintenance standards, and the presence of other tenants. Some who moved from Fair Way to Home Office accommodation spoke positively about improved access or environment:

> *"It's [Home Office accommodation] better because I was struggling with stairs [in Fair Way]… because of my age."* (Chipo, female, 65 plus, Asylum)

> *"I feel much better now… because I'm surrounded by lots of trees… a long garden of the flat… So that makes me feel good."* (Kunal, 35-44, Asylum)

However, the quality of accommodation was often low, with disrepair and inadequate or dirty furnishings common:

> *"My bed is just too small and I am a big person… Even the sofa… is very dirty and old."* (Chipo, female, 65 plus, Asylum)

> *"They moved me now from accommodation from [Fair Way to Home Office]… The ceiling is like it's going to fall down… They just come and take pictures… They're not fixing. I don't know why."* (Chipo, female, 65 plus, Asylum)

A common thread across all living in Home Office accommodation was the unsettling nature of waiting, day by day, in fear that they would be forced to move again, or be evicted following refusal:

> *"I didn't go [from] home. I am thinking because maybe I'm go out, they was to throw my stuff out, you know?… I am sitting home, maybe there is to come… by force to take me out."* (Tsehay, female, 35-44, Asylum)

The six EEA nationals who had seen improvements in their living situation had experienced different positive trajectories, not involving Fair Way accommodation provision. Most (4) had moved from rough sleeping to temporary accommodation (two to hostels, one to a hotel, and one to a host), with two then moving again to permanent social housing. A smaller number (2) had been resident in temporary local authority flats for some time (since first interview or since accessing Fair Way support), but are counted as having seen improvements because they had been moved to a more suitable flat in one case and in the other, a change in sharing arrangements had improved the individual's quality of life.

Those who had moved into a permanent social housing tenancy having secured settled status (2) had experienced a sense of relief, independence, and improved daily life in virtue of this change in their living situation. These participants who had been previously reliant on the goodwill of others or on temporary accommodation, expressed a sense of freedom at finally settling into their own home. They emphasised the importance of autonomy and normalcy; having a place to cook, sleep, and come and go without interference:

> *"[I feel] much better. You feel more freedom, because that lady [host]… that's pressure, but now better."* (Sofija, female, 45-64, EEA)

> *"So I get my new apartment from council, so it's a brand-new house, and I'm the first one who did rent in there."* (Edgars, 45-64, EEA)

One participant reported securing her home after having enlisted the support of an MSP:

> *"Finally I wrote to MSP… because I knew that… if local authorities no help you, you can approach these people… he reply me… council start looking for me… Very strange, you know, because this MSP [Member of Scottish Parliament] put pressure."* (Sofija, female, 45-64, EEA)

Despite the relative stability of a permanent tenancy, both spoke about environmental and financial stressors that undermined their newfound sense of security:

> *"It's brand-new… but at the moment there is nothing. No carpets arrive. No kitchen. That is empty… It's like lots of people [living in the apartments] from prison. Sometimes you see ambulances come… One time, seven ambulances! They're drug dealers… next door."* (Sofija, female, 45-64, EEA)

> *"It's important to me [the house]… It's still hard, though. I have no job, but I have a home, and I have something to eat… despite that there is no furniture… the amount of money that the Universal Credit is giving me is just only for food."* (Edgars, 45-64, EEA)

These experiences were compounded for one participant because Fair Way support ended soon after settled status was secured: *"[My caseworker] finished my support when I got status… Not allowed with housing"* (Sofija, female, 45-64, EEA).

Most in the EEA cohort who had seen an improvement in their living situation were living in temporary homeless accommodation, such as shelters, B&B hotels or hostels, at point of second interview. In some cases, these placements were an alternative to rough sleeping and/or precarious sofa surfing, and people typically expressed an element of relief at having somewhere to stay (see also box 5):

> *"I live in a hotel [now for] a couple of months… Of course [it is better]. I don't live on the street."* (*Mateusz*, 25-34, EEA)

Box 6: Mateusz, aged 25-34

Mateusz came to the UK from Eastern Europe in 2014 to work. When we first spoke to him, he was had pre-settled status under the EUSS. Gaining settled status required him to complete community service under a Community Payback Order and finish paying court fines linked to a petty theft conviction. Mateusz explained that the conviction was for stealing food during the pandemic, when he felt he had no other choice. Mateusz was permitted to work which he did part time as a cleaner to fit around his community service obligations. He earned £130 per week, and could not afford accommodation. He was sleeping rough at the time of our first interview, as he had done for long periods in the years prior, interspersed with periods in hostels and emergency winter accommodation provision. Mateusz had a Fair Way caseworker who had helped with pursue their settled status and regularly used the facilities available at a Fair Way partner's drop-in service to stay clean and wash his clothes. When we spoke to Mateusz for the second time, he had recently gained settled status, having cleared his conviction to obtain a clean criminal record. This enabled him to access mainstream housing assistance and social security benefits. As a result, he is now in temporary accommodation (a hotel room) and hopes to access his own flat in due course. Mateusz is about to start a new job cleaning buses and working more hours. His wages and Universal Credit combined (around £300 a month (after deductions) covers food, gym membership, and a phone. These improvement in Mateusz' living

situation have significantly boosted his mental and physical well-being. He has gained weight, spends time reading and exercising, and can see a GP whenever necessary. He is optimistic about transitioning into full-time employment and excited about having a home of his own in the future.

Others were grateful simply to have shelter, especially where restrictive conditions such as curfews were minimised:

> *"I was on the top floor… We've got the bathroom to share… there wasn't a curfew. I came back whatever I like… For two years I was living there… not so much of the problems."* (Tomasz, 45-64, EEA)

Some participants described how local authorities had arranged or facilitated access to temporary accommodation. This was often because they had recently gained settled status with the support of Fair Way caseworkers (see chapter two), making them eligible for housing support, but in some cases such accommodation was accessed despite people having restricted eligibility for statutory supports. In Aberdeen, some were accommodated by the local authority while their eligibility was assessed and for some time afterwards during which decisions on applications made under the EUSS were being made by the Home Office. In Edinburgh, the winter running Rapid Rehousing Welcome Centre provided by Bethany Christian Trust in partnership with the local authority and Scottish Government since the COVID-19 pandemic has also played a role, as it has been accessible to those with NRPF:

> *"The council found me [the hostel], because then I slept rough for maybe another two weeks… Then, obviously, I went for the council, and they got me a place."* (Jan, 35-44, EEA)

> *"Streetwork, etc… the organisation for the homeless people, always just very grateful and very helpful… first steps such as going to the… emergency, homeless accommodation."* (Mateusz, 25-34, EEA)

At the time of writing (October 2025) the evaluation team have been informed that the Edinburgh Rapid Rehousing Welcome Centre emergency accommodation offer to those with NRPF/RE will be more limited than in previous years during winter 2025/26. This represents a backward step for the city and country's response to rough sleeping for this group.

Although most in LA arranged accommodation were grateful for shelter, the reality of living in shared flats, the rules and routines of congregate provision, and the poor quality of some provision, often undercut that sense of relief. Many participants complained about severe disrepair, unfriendly staff, or being evicted on short notice:

> *"At the moment I have no choice, in my position. It's better than to be on the street. At least I've got all that… [but] they can kick me out any time they want to… You're still living with constant stress, and you just want to get rid of it and start my life."* [Dion, unknown age, EEA]

Stalled or no change

Five participants' living circumstances had remained the same between first and second interview (or since they engaged with Fair Way). Three of these participants were in the asylum group and all of these had been resident in Home Office accommodation continuously since accessing Fair Way. Casework support around submitting a fresh claim had been essential to sustaining this accommodation following refusal of their claims:

> *"Nothing has been changed. I'm still waiting... I'm still waiting on a decision... I want to say that it's been a long time since I left my home country... and I'm really fed up with the things. I don't have much here, I don't have enough information about stuff... I don't have any paper or have no decision, nothing."* (Abbas, 25-34, Asylum)

The two EEA participants who had experienced no change in their circumstances had faced continuous rough sleeping in one case and ongoing movement between shelters, hotels and hostels in another. The participant sleeping rough had been accommodated in emergency accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic, during which he experienced conflict with staff and exclusions linked to his alcohol use. More recently opportunities to access emergency accommodation over the winter and in very bad weather were not pursued as he is unwilling to stay anywhere where he is subject to curfews, which he views as infantilising or far away from the services he accesses for food and where he sees his friends:

> *"I cannot agree with the curfew... I don't see any reason why I have to stay from 11:00 to 7:00 in that room"* (Tomasz, 45-64, EEA)

Another EEA respondent encountered repeated moves between TA, making it impossible to settle:

> *"It's a hostel. Toilet and kitchen is for everyone. Before that one... I was on the [hotel], but just only for two months.... Before the [hotel], I was on the [B&B]."* (Pawel, 35-44, EEA)

Deterioration

Only two participants of 26 reported deterioration in their living circumstances since their first interview or engagement with Fair Way. One, in the EEA cohort, described a breakdown in his relationship with his family, with whom he lived at the point of first interview. This had led to a period rough sleeping, and then a period in a hotel. The second participant who, at least on some metrics, faced a deterioration in their living situation was in the Other cohort. He was previously residing in LA accommodation (accessed when he had recourse to public funds) and had experienced multiple placements. He was finally faced with having to move to a placement in Dundee which he did not wish to. As a result, he left temporary accommodation and ended up sofa

surfing with someone he had met via a friend. This arrangement in fact felt like an improvement on his most recent situation, given the quality of the accommodation and the generosity of the host, though of course, he had no security in the situation:

> *"I need to remember where I've been. I've been with my friend maybe for two days… She gave me a room… She has a big house… I don't pay rent… Of course, it's better [than hotels and hostels]."* (Rachid, 45-64, Other)

Key stakeholder and frontline worker perspectives

Fair Way accommodation provision

Key stakeholders and frontline workers stressed that people with NRPF/RE having suitable accommodation to live in was an essential foundation for making progress on their case. This stakeholder described at length why being accommodated appropriately is so transformative in terms of people's capacity to progress their case:

> *"for the people who are not in accommodation, it's very hard to engage with them. There are so many things, other needs they have, including accommodation… Having a decent home… allows people to focus on what they have to focus on, which is a complex legal process…"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

This caseworker similarly explained the centrality of appropriate housing to practical functioning and psychological readiness to engage with casework and legal support:

> *"[Accommodation is] the basis for everything… The immigration cases are so long term that they need you to be in a stable environment to actually work on them and progress… It's more secure. The documents are secure, if they have documents. The ability to get to the lawyer's office is easier… Just being in a frame of mind that's not just survival."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

In this context Fair Way partners expressed satisfaction that they had been able to scale up the amount of accommodation available via Fair Way, and help more people facing destitution and homelessness as a result:

> *"we've been able to increase our accommodation provision… which has meant we're able to provide more services to individuals… 100 per cent [that] is helping [alleviate] destitution because all the people that are getting referred to us are either homeless, sofa surfing.."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

> *"we have managed to increase the capacity for those flats. The accommodation partners have worked very hard, with the support of everyone in the management team, to make sure that happens… So, [that's been] really good."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

This had been achieved despite costly challenges getting the accommodation available up to specification:

> *"some of the flats that we are getting from housing associations, they are flats that no one else wants. So they're quite rundown… [and] need quite a lot of work to get them up to a liveable standard"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

There was a sense that the scale of provision achieved was at the limit of what could have been resourced via available funds. This marked an important step for the partnership, who had faced challenges in the past accessing accommodation to match the funding secured:

> *"The scale of accommodation that we've been able to achieve with the funds that we've had available to us is good enough. If we've had more money we would've done more, but with what we've had and what we've got we've done well."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

There was a very strong consensus across and beyond the partnership that continuing to scale the accommodation available via Fair Way was essential in improving the partnerships capacity to address homelessness and destitution for those with NRPF/RE. When asked what Fair Way's priorities for the future should be, there was a universal and strong focus on increasing accommodation capacity:

> *"more accommodation, absolutely."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

> *"more housing stock would be ideal so that we had more flats to be able to house people. That would probably be a big thing."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

> *"I think we are still challenged in terms of accommodation capacity and I think we need to make sure that we retain a focus on that."* (Key stakeholder, statutory)

Local authority participants in Edinburgh made clear that their central hope for Fair Way at the point of its inception was that it would bring accommodation accessible to this group *"in the volume that was needed"* (Key stakeholder, local government) to the table, and that they were disappointed it had not (at the time of writing, Fair Way has four flats with capacity to accommodate six people in Edinburgh):

> *"I know we didn't get many properties in Edinburgh but there was the potential that that might have took off so that was a hope and aspiration… it didn't go as far as we probably would have hoped it to go."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

A participant in Aberdeen, where there is only one space in Fair Way accommodation felt that this limited the engagement of other players in the city:

> *"[we need] more money, more investment… being able to upscale… other people would engage I think more if we are being a bit more progressive in in those areas*

in terms of being able to upscale our accommodation… provision." (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

While early in the partnership there had been some challenges accessing accommodation, there was a shared and clear view that the key barrier to further scaling Fair Way's accommodation portfolio was *funding* for that accommodation (mainly, ongoing rent payments) rather than securing access to it. Trying to 'unpick' this challenge was seen as a central priority in the period ahead:

"there has been challenges around getting funders on board who are willing to contribute in that space… it's important that Fair Way are able to unpick that further and see if there is something that can be done more to unlock funding in that space." (Key stakeholder, statutory)

This was seen as a priority primarily because of the clear and manifest need for accommodation among this group, as demonstrated in the quantitative data presented above and clearly articulated by partners:

"that [accommodation provision]'s running behind the other parts of the programme, just in terms of its ability to get… funded. I would love us to have a much bigger accommodation offer… People… taking up a Fair Way flat… [have] access to nothing [else]. The more we can understand that and provide that, the better." (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

One partner noted that the partnership is at crucial stage of development in terms of securing future funding, noting with concern the risk that the current portfolio has to shrink if funding cannot be secured: *"to increase the accommodation capacity… that is very much needed. If we can't increase, can we at least maintain what is there? It would be very sad if we start losing some properties."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner).

That the need for Fair Way accommodation far outstrips its supply was something directly felt by frontline workers, who spoke about lengthy waiting lists and fluctuating but consistently low availability, which severely constrained their capacity to offer timely accommodation support to clients. One support worker described their joy at a rare surge in Fair Way availability:

"We had a massive run after Christmas. We've just put something like eight people in, which was amazing… There were new flats… that was all very exciting… We maybe move a couple of people in a month, maybe sometimes more. There's people who have been on the list since [four, five, six months ago]. Put it that way." (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

"It's been a bit inconsistent, because the numbers of flats has changed a lot, but… on average, every six weeks to two months a space would become available." (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

The process of allocation was described as challenging. Given the scarcity of accommodation available, spaces come up only rarely and partners must confirm that people's circumstances and needs remain the same and ensure that those at highest risk or in the greatest need are prioritised, rather than those who have been waiting longest:

> *"There's no indication... [whether] there will be another flat coming up in two weeks, or in six months.."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

> *"Sometimes it [allocation] takes... a while... because they had to check people's needs haven't changed."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

> *"People that technically have been on the list longer... but then other people would come on... and their needs are maybe greater."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Local authority responses to adults with NRPF/RE

Our interviews with key stakeholder and frontline Fair Way staff indicate that there are considerable differences between Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen in how relevant local authority teams interpret and act on their legal duties to adults with or thought to have NRPF under relevant social services and homelessness legislation. These differences are significant in that they impact the level and nature of demand for Fair Way Scotland support.

In Edinburgh and Glasgow, local authority participants were clear that people with NRPF are ineligible for homelessness assistance and thus not assisted via this route to access temporary or settled accommodation when facing homelessness. Even here though, there were important differences in how this understanding of the legal position was operationalised, in that Edinburgh's homelessness team expressed willingness – *in exceptional circumstances* – to accommodate adults with NRPF on a very short term basis, while this didn't appear to be practice in Glasgow:

> *"if somebody presented who... we thought were vulnerable, then we would provide accommodation for a night to allow social work to do their assessments... and on occasion, if social work said, we can't see the person until tomorrow, then we would continue with that kind of accommodation"* (Key stakeholder, local government)

The other significant difference between the two cities during winter 2024/25 was their approach to winter provision and its accessibility for those with NRPF/RE. Whereas Edinburgh operated a Rapid Rehousing Welcome Centre over the winter providing emergency access to single room accommodation for those at risk of rough sleeping that was accessible to those with NRPF, no equivalent provision operated in Glasgow this winter. An independent community-run communal night shelter has operated in Glasgow since early 2024 and is accessible to this group. Serious concerns have been

raised about the quality and safety of this provision by the sector and those who have stayed in it.[86]

Aberdeen's LA homelessness service stood out as taking a different approach for the EEA nationals who approach their service and for whom there are questions about their eligibility for support given their status (or lack thereof) under the EU Settlement Scheme. Here the emphasis was on people's right to make an application and, where appropriate, be temporarily accommodated while their eligibility for support is considered:

> *"within housing, we generally won that argument. They've got an entitlement to make an application, and they've got an entitlement to temporary accommodation while we make that decision."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

> *"It will all come down to how quickly we can evidence eligibility. If we are able to confirm it on day one, and we know that they're not eligible, then we wouldn't offer temporary accommodation. If we can't confirm they're not eligible, then they do go into temporary accommodation."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

One stakeholder in the city explained that this approach had its origins in past efforts to effectively respond to rough sleeping in the city over winter. Around a decade ago, the city had commissioned a voluntary sector organisation to run a night shelter in the city, but the local authority had not been satisfied with the cost or outcomes of this approach. As part of a wider review of temporary accommodation provision and use in the city, the decision was made to accommodate the cohort using this provision in temporary accommodation, including those for whom there was a question about their eligibility. Initially the temporary accommodation used was communal – a shared room in a congregate hostel, but the city's focus then moved to providing self-contained housing for those in temporary accommodation.

In cases where ineligibility is later confirmed, stakeholders explained that efforts would then be made to assist the person to resolve their situation, either by securing them status or other accommodation. Ultimately however, after a 'reasonable period' stakeholders were clear they would need to ask people to leave:

> *"It's difficult, because we want to give them a reasonable period of time... but we can't let people remain in indefinitely... We can't just say, one, three months, six months, that's it. No, it needs to be looking at the full facts of the case, before we make a decision"* (Key stakeholder, local government)

It was at this point of confirming current ineligibility and asking people to leave statutory temporary accommodation that stakeholders wanted Fair Way accommodation

[86] Homeless Network Scotland (2025) April 2025 Briefing: We must do better: ensuring everyone can sleep safe in winter 2025/26. Online: Homeless Network Scotland https://homelessnetwork.scot/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Winter-planning-briefing.pdf; Glasgow Homelessness Involvement and Feedback Team (2025) Homeless in Winter: Experiences of using overnight services in Glasgow. Online: Homeless Network Scotland. https://homelessnetwork.scot/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Experience-of-using-winter-night-shelters-2.4.25.pdf

available as a safe place from which routes to status/eligibility could be explored and supported: *"hopefully, we can try and get more properties for the Fair Way project so that, as soon as we make an ineligible decision, as part of the referral to Fair Way… you'd be looking to secure accommodation for this individual."* (Key stakeholder, local government).

The nature and scope of social work responses to adults with NRPF also varied significantly across the three local authority areas. Glasgow was recognised by other local authorities to take a "harsher line" (Key stakeholder, local government) than other areas and Fair Way frontline workers in the city stressed the exceptionally high threshold for support via this route:

> *"I think, for social work, it [the threshold for support] would probably be danger to others… like psychosis… We've had really unwell people where they've just left them because… They just shrug… We've had people who were accommodated by social work long term because of their risk to others… They would go through a programme where they're sectioned, and they would be treated and then accommodated… Very small numbers… very rare."*

A local authority stakeholder in the city explained that only a small number of adults with exceptionally acute mental health needs or subject to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) received support from social work if they were NRPF:

> *"We spend significant amounts of money supporting families in particular who are NRPF… single males to a lesser extent, but we certainly extend social work services to folk who will tend to be MAPPA or [where]… there's a public protection argument or there is just a really pronounced social care need there… we did do a delayed discharge protocol for NRPF households… We took the view that in essence, offering accommodation and support was a preventative tool for readmission into an acute site… If you have acute mental health disorder and we manage to get you stabilised in hospital, you get back on your meds and then we put you back on the streets, then that's problematic in terms of pretty quickly you're going to be off your meds and you're going to be back looking at acute admission."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

It was acknowledged that assessing whether someone meets the threshold for intervention in this area *"can be incredibly subjective"* despite there being *"objective criteria"* and that *"pressure on services"* inevitably influenced those decisions (Key stakeholder, local government). It was also recognised that the high threshold applied in NRPF cases was reflective of a broader necessity to strictly prioritise social work services in the city.

In Aberdeen, securing access to support for those with NRPF via social work was also recognised to be challenging, unusual, and influenced by wider pressures on services and resources, with frustration voiced that people with NRPF could be refused support in the absence of an assessment being undertaken:

> *"the bar is pretty high, but it changes... and we're kind of going into that phase again, is that money is shorter, so the thresholds all rise... If you're telling us that somebody doesn't meet the threshold, do the assessment to demonstrate that. They would say they don't need to... what do we have to work with now? You're just telling us no, basically, and that's it, we're stuck."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

Another local stakeholder gave the specific example of a man with NRPF who was undergoing cancer treatment who had been able to access accommodation and support via social work while undergoing treatment.

The situation in Edinburgh was quite distinct, reflecting the particular approach taken by the Refugee and Migration Team, part of the city's wider social care response who alongside providing resettlement and wider support to refugees in the city, run the social work response to adults with NRPF. The team's interpretation of its statutory duties and powers to assist adults with NRPF appears to be substantially more inclusive than those indicated in Aberdeen and especially Glasgow:

> *"The criteria that we will use to assess whether or not somebody qualifies for our support are that they are destitute, by which we generally mean they've got less than £50 available to them, that they have a community care need... and dependent on the specifics of their circumstance is there a barrier to return to country of origin, and/or is there some form of... live application to resolve their residence... Those don't always have to be in place on the day that they're referred to us. We might do a quick and dirty, 'Right, have they got any health needs? Yes, no'... I would say that we support for some period of time the vast majority of people who are referred to us"* (Key stakeholder, legal)

Key points

- Those accessing Fair Way Scotland are exceptionally disadvantaged in housing terms. 19% were sleeping rough at point of survey and 61% had done so over the last year. This represents a risk of current rough sleeping nine times that for the overall destitute population in the UK. High proportions were experiencing other substandard living situations including staying with family and friends/sofa surfing (9%), living in some form of congregate hostel/refuge/shelter (13%) and staying in a hotel/B&B (12%). Shockingly, a fifth (17%) of respondents had had to leave accommodation in the last year because they did not feel safe.

- Experiences of adverse living situations vary by group and city. The small other group appear to experience particularly severe insecurity, reporting on average four adverse living situations in the last year, compared to three for the EEA group and two for the asylum group. Almost 80% of the Other group reported having slept rough in the last year. Use of temporary accommodation was much more commonly reported in Aberdeen; B&B, hostel, rough sleeping and unconventional accommodation more common in Edinburgh; and friends & family most common in Glasgow. The number

of adverse housing circumstances experienced in the last year is higher for those in Edinburgh (at three), than in Glasgow and Aberdeen (two), reflecting the city's particular housing challenges and the near exclusive presence of the especially disadvantaged Other group in the city.

- Our survey results indicate that accessing Fair Way support may help people avoid adverse housing experiences. Those who had been accessing such support for more than three months at point of survey were less likely to be staying with friends/family/sofa surfed in the last year (26% v. 56%), rough slept in the last year (57% v. 66%) or lived in a caravan or on a boat in the last year (1% v. 4%) than those who had been receiving Fair Way support for a shorter period. Those accessing support for longer were also less likely to have lived in overcrowded conditions in the last year (38% v. 27%), left accommodation with nowhere else to go in the last year (73% v. 64%), moved multiple times due to affordability in the last year (8% v. 18%), and had difficulty finding rental accommodation in the last year (11% v. 30%).

- During 2024/25, a total of 45 people were provided with accommodation in Fair Way community flats, up from 16 in 2023/24 and 6 in 2022/23. Most of those accommodated by Fair Way were in Glasgow where the accommodation portfolio is concentrated. Providing this accommodation was seen to be foundational to enabler wider progress with someone's case and general wellbeing, but the need for such accommodation far outstripped demand. Frontline workers faced long waits for spaces to become available and challenging allocations between people in highly vulnerable and risky circumstances. Fair Way partners and wider stakeholders saw a further expansion in the scale of Fair Way's accommodation as a central priority, and identified access to funding as the major barrier to achieving this.

- Local authority interpretations of their duties and powers to assist adults with NRPF facing homelessness and/or with care needs differ across the three areas in which Fair Way operates. In Glasgow and Edinburgh, local authority homelessness teams emphasise that they are not legally able to accommodate those with NRPF/RE, though in Edinburgh they may do so for very short periods in exceptional circumstances The emphasis in Aberdeen is on accepting statutory homelessness applications and providing temporary accommodation where there is uncertainty about eligibility, with efforts taken to move people out of such accommodation after a reasonable period where there is a decision of ineligibility.

- Thresholds to access social work support for adults with NRPF also vary across the three areas. While these thresholds are exceptionally high in Glasgow and Aberdeen, and support packages rare, Edinburgh's Refugee and Migration Team interpret their statutory duties and powers in this area more inclusively.

- Of the 26 people with direct experience of NRPF/RE we spoke to, most (19) reported improvements in their living situation since accessing Fair Way support. Some (n=5) reported no change, and a small number (n=2) reported deteriorations.

- For the asylum group, positive progress usually meant accessing Fair Way accommodation and from there re-accessing Home Office support. The key enablers of positive change were access to quality legal advice to submit a fresh claim and access to Fair Way support – both accommodation and casework. Casework support had also been crucial in sustaining access to Home Office accommodation following a negative decision for some of those we spoke to. The quality and suitability of Home Office accommodation varied significantly and people remained in a position of limbo and uncertainty in terms of their prospects of being able to settle in the UK.

- Positive progress for the EEA nationals we spoke to usually involved gaining access to mainstream social housing or temporary accommodation having secured eligibility via a change of status under the EUSS, but sometimes local authority accommodation was provided despite ongoing restricted eligibility. The support of Fair Way caseworkers was a crucial enabler of positive changes for this group, but it is important to note that improvements in their living situation and status did not mean an escape from ongoing destitution and disadvantage.

4. Destitution

This chapter focuses on experiences of destitution among people accessing Fair Way Scotland. The first section draws on survey data to provide an overview of levels of destitution and how they vary across the sample. The second section draws on qualitative interviews with people with direct experience of NRPF/RE to consider changes in their experiences of destitution, low income and material deprivation while receiving support from Fair Way, and the role of this support and other factors (including accessing or being prohibited from employment) in driving or preventing positive and negative chances in people's circumstances. The third and final section draws on key stakeholder and frontline worker perspectives to identify how effectively Fair Way Scotland is able to achieve one of its core aims – to prevent and alleviate experiences of destitution among those it supports – and the key factors influencing this.

Experiences of destitution among people accessing Fair Way Scotland

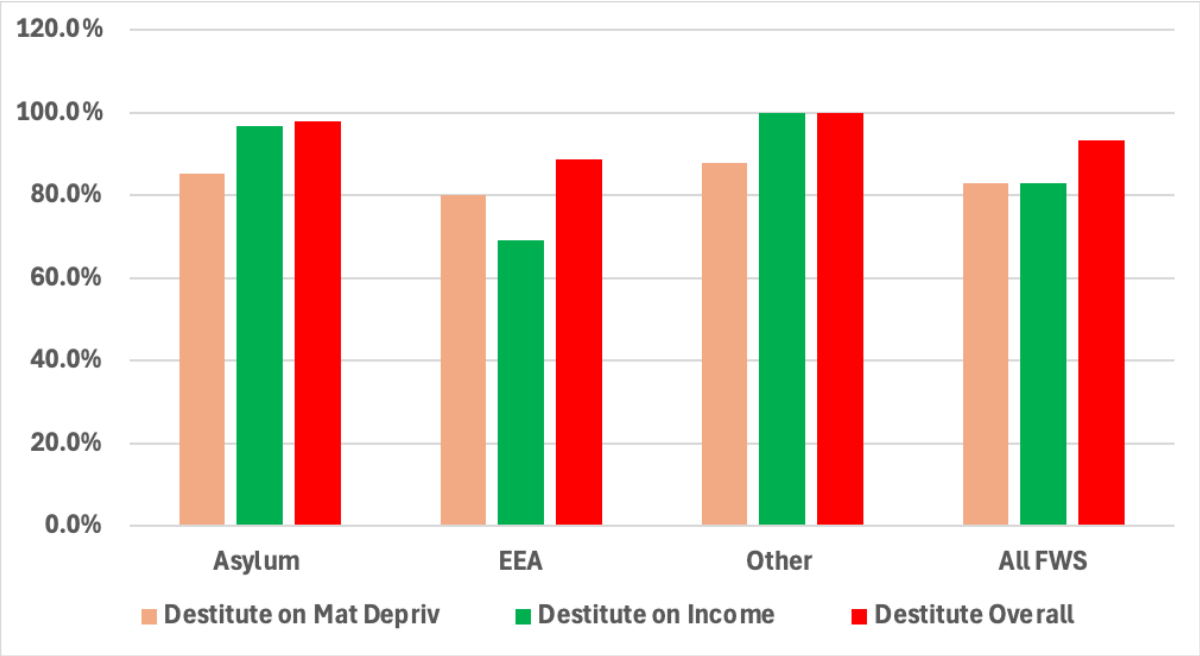
Following the long-running Joseph Rowntree Foundation-funded *Destitution in the UK* study, we define someone as destitute in our analysis if *either* 1) they have lacked access to two or more of the following six essentials over the past month because they cannot afford them: shelter, food, heating, lighting, clothing, toiletries[87] (the material deprivation criterion) *or* 2) their income is so low that they are unable to purchase these essentials for themselves (the income criterion). The income threshold for destitution in 2022 (the last time the *Destitution in the UK* study was undertaken at the time of writing) was set at £95 for a single adult living alone and £145 for a couple with no children, after housing costs.[88]

According to this definition, almost all (93%) of those with NRPF/RE and accessing Fair Way support were destitute at the time of survey. By way of comparison, among households using crisis services during 2022 (food banks, welfare rights advice services, homelessness services etc.) the *Destitution in the UK* survey found that 70% were destitute, though in some types of services, like food banks, the proportion was higher (85-95%). Figure 4.1 shows that, of the two larger groups, those in the asylum cohort were more likely to be destitute (98%). The relatively small group with NRPF for other reasons appeared to be even more likely to be destitute (100%), but this difference is not significant given sample numbers. Fewer, but still almost all of the EEA cohort were experiencing destitution at point of survey (89%).

[87] 'Lack' here is specific as follows for each essential: shelter – they have slept rough for one or more night; food – they have had fewer than two meals a day for two or more days; heating their home – they have been unable to heat their home for five or more days; lighting their home – they have been unable to light their home for five or more days; clothing and footwear - appropriate for the weather; basic toiletries – such as soap, shampoo, toothpaste and a toothbrush.

[88] For more information on the background to and development of this definition see Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Treanor, M., Blenkinsopp, J., McIntyre, J., Johnsen, S., & McMordie, L. (2023). Destitution in the UK 2023. Online: JRF. https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2023

Figure 4.1: Proportion of each main group experiencing destitution on the criteria of material deprivations, low income or the combination of both



Source: weighted analysis of Fair Way Scotland survey data 2023-2025; Note: application of Destitution criteria as used on DUKS autumn 2022 survey

Destitution was higher in Glasgow at 97%, than in Aberdeen (93%) and Edinburgh (91%), reflecting the relatively higher rates of destitution for the asylum group. While overall, destitution among those accessing Fair Way was driven equally by low income and material deprivation (83%), in Edinburgh the material deprivation criterion was more decisive (86% of those in the city were destitution on this measure v. 78% on the income criterion). This could reflect that the asylum group concentrated in Glasgow appear to be able to rely to some extent on family and friends for essentials, as they do for accommodation (see chapter three).

Our survey data suggests that Fair Way support may be successful in addressing destitution among those it supports (see table 4.1). Those who had been receiving Fair Way support for longer (more than three months at point of survey) were less likely to be destitute on both the material deprivation criterion (77% v. 89%) and income criterion (78% v. 88%), and also overall (92% v. 95%, though this difference was not statistically significant).

One of the key levers within the Fair Way model to mitigate destitution is the provision of cash payments of initially £50 per week, raising to £60 across all services during 2024. The scale of such provision and who these payments have been allocated to has changed significantly over time. Initially, cash payments were made only to the relatively small numbers accommodated in Fair Way or Fair Way partner accommodation. From September 2024, a Scottish Government grant facilitated the expansion of cash payments to others receiving 'only' Fair Way casework support. People sleeping rough and in the riskiest sofa surfing situations are prioritised for these payments.

Table 4.1: Destitution Rate (percent) on material deprivation criterion, income criterion and combination of both by length of time receiving Fair Way support

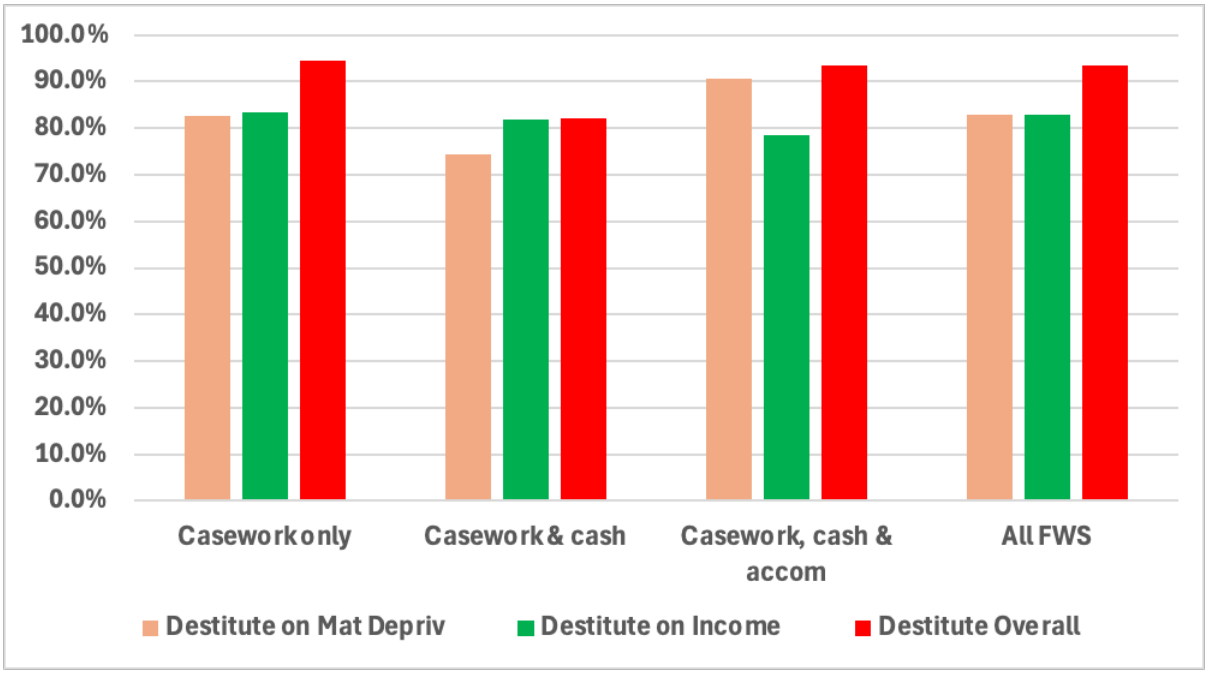
	Receiving Fair Way support for less than 3 months	Receiving Fair Way support for 3 months or more	Total
Destitute (Material Deprivation criterion)	89.3%	77.1%	82.9%
Destitute (Income criterion)	88.3%	78.0%	82.9%
Destitute Overall	**95.2%**	**91.7%**	**93.4%**

Source: weighted analysis of Fair Way Scotland survey data 2023-2025;
Note: application of Destitution criteria as used on DUKS autumn 2022 survey

It is important to note that these cash payments alone will not (by definition) shift people out of destitution, as they sit below the £95 per week threshold within the income criterion (see above). They do hold potential to mitigate destitution in two ways; first, by directly increasing income and second, by enabling people to purchase essentials thereby reducing material deprivation.

To unpick the impacts of cash payments on destitution, figure 4.2 compares levels of destitution (overall and on each criterion) across three comparator groups – those receiving casework support only at point of survey, those receiving casework support and cash payments, and those casework, cash support and accommodation via Fair Way.

Figure 4.2: Destitution Rate (percent) on material deprivation criterion, income criterion and combination of both by type of support being received via Fair Way



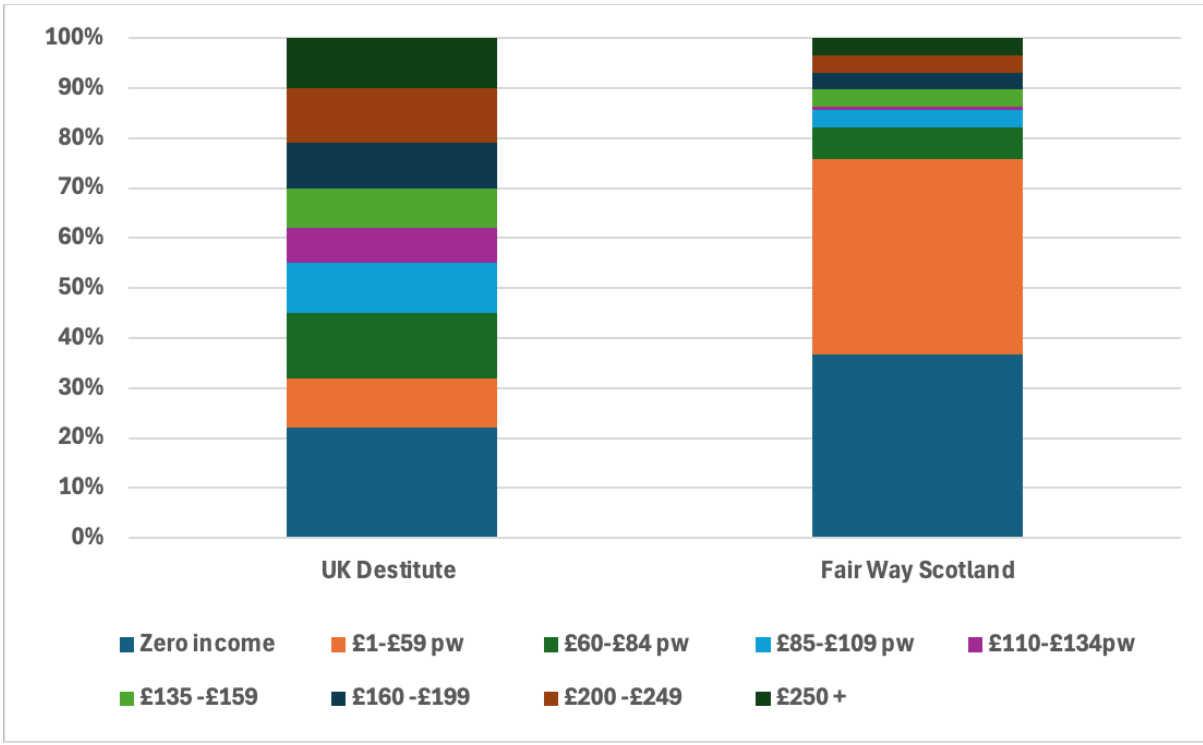
Source: weighted analysis of Fair Way Scotland survey data 2023-2025;
Note: application of Destitution criteria as used on DUKS autumn 2022 survey

This data suggests that providing cash alongside casework is associated with lower destitution rates: 95% of those receiving just casework support were destitute at point of survey compared to 82% of those receiving casework and cash support. Receiving cash as well as casework appears to reduce destitution measured in relation to material deprivation more than in relation to income, which indicates (consistent with qualitative evidence presented later in this chapter) that those receiving cash alongside casework are spending this extra income on necessities like food and clothing. However, these findings, while suggestive, are not conclusive: (a) there could be selection effects, which may reverse the causality; and (b) in view of the small sample numbers in some of the sub-groups and overall, these differences are not statistically significant at the conventional 5% level.

When focusing on the group receiving casework, cash support and accommodation, the picture is more complex. As we would expect, this group experience lower rates of destitution on the income measure than those receiving just casework (79% v. 84%), but they do not experience significantly lower rates of destitution overall (93% v. 95%) and, counter-intuitively, they appear to experience *higher* rates of destitution on the material deprivation measure (91% v. 83%). There are a few possible explanations for this. One is that in the context of having a safe place to stay this group are less likely or able to access in-kind supports (e.g. food and clothes from charities or friends), either because they choose not to or perhaps because accommodation is located out of city centres where such support may be more easily accessible. Certainly, those in Fair Way accommodation are by definition not staying with friends/family (as 10% of the overall cohort are) and thus less likely to benefit from opportunities to share meals or access other in-kind supports that may arise in such contexts (see chapter three). It may also be that those in Fair Way accommodation are choosing to spend the cash support they receive on items that do not lessen their material deprivation (travel costs, mobile phone payments, etc). Finally, these results may well reflect selection effects i.e. factors about the make-up of the relatively small group of people accommodated by Fair Way compared to the other two groups that confound the expected impact of case payments on material deprivation. That Fair Way prioritises the very most disadvantaged for accommodation is relevant here. Whatever the cause, these results suggest that the partnership may wish to review access to basic essentials for those residing in Fair Way accommodation and seek to better address their exposure to material deprivation.

As well as looking at destitution overall, our survey enables us to explore people's level and sources of income generally and their specific experiences of particular material deprivations. Figure 4.3 shows the reported income levels of those accessing Fair Way Scotland, in comparison to those experiencing destitution in the UK in 2022. It makes clear that, in terms of income, people with NRPF/RE and accessing Fair Way supports are significantly more destitute than the wider destitute population. The majority of those accessing Fair Way (76%) reported incomes of less than £60 per week, compared to 32% of people experiencing destitution in the UK during 2022. Over a third of those accessing Fair Way (37%) reported no income at all over the past month.

Figure 4.3: Net Household Incomes reported in Fair Way and Destitution surveys by banded weekly values (After Housing Costs)



Source: weighted analysis of Fair Way Scotland survey data 2023-2025; Note 1: Destitution survey proportions based on DUKS autumn 2022. Note 2: Those reporting 'None at all' here are generally referring to regular, recurrent income some of them, in response to a different question (as reported in Figure 4.4) may have also received occasional one-off or irregular amounts of money from family, friends, charities or begging.

Incomes vary quite substantially by group, with the small cohort with NRPF for 'Other' reasons standing out as exceptionally income poor. All respondents in this group report incomes of £84 per week or less, and the majority (73%) report no regular income whatsoever. While the EEA group are the next most likely to record zero income (37% compared to 24% of the asylum group), this group are also more likely to report higher incomes, with 25% reporting incomes of £135 per week and over compared to virtually none of the other two groups. This reflects that the EEA group are more likely to be in receipt of some form of benefits or earned income. The majority of the asylum group (64%) report weekly incomes of less than £60.

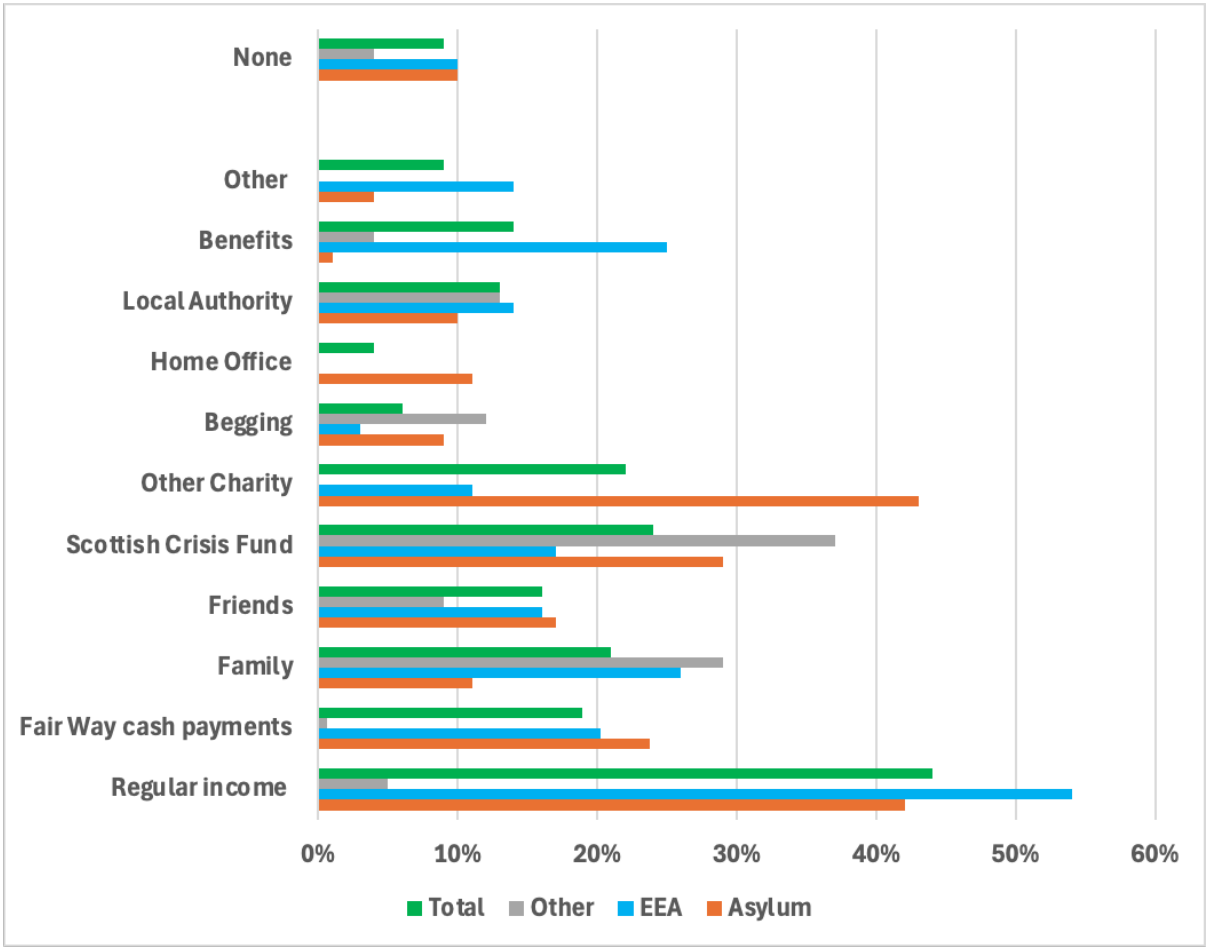
Figure 4.4 shows the sources of income in the last month reported by respondents, by main group. Over the evaluation period, the most commonly reported source of income was the Scottish Crisis Fund despite the fact that it ceased operating in March 2024 (see chapter one). Next most common was receiving some income from other charities (22%), family (21%), Fair Way Scotland (19%) and friends (16%). Receiving some level of income from a Local Authority was less common (13%) with income from begging less common still (6%).

There are some important variations in income sources by group, including that some (11%) in the asylum group had received money from the Home Office in the last month.

This group were by far the most likely to have received some income from 'other charities' in the last month (43%) and more likely to have received Fair Way (24%). They were less likely than the others to have received income from family (11%). The EEA Group were far and away the most likely to report income from benefits (25% compared to virtually none of the other two groups), reflecting the eligibility of some in this group for e.g. contributions-based and/or some disability benefits. This group were much less likely than the other two groups to have received help via the Scottish Crisis Fund (17%). The 'Other' group stand out as being most likely to have generated income by begging (12%), via family (29%), and via the Scottish Crisis Fund (37%) but almost (virtually) none had received cash payments via Fair Way or other charities.

Those who had been accessing Fair Way support for three months or more were less likely to have received income from friends in the last month, perhaps indicating that Fair Way support enables less reliance on this kind of informal network. Those accessing support for longer were also more likely to have received some form of income and to have received income via benefits, reflecting well on the impact of the partnership on people's income sources.

Figure 4.4: Sources of income in the last month among people accessing Fair Way Scotland by category

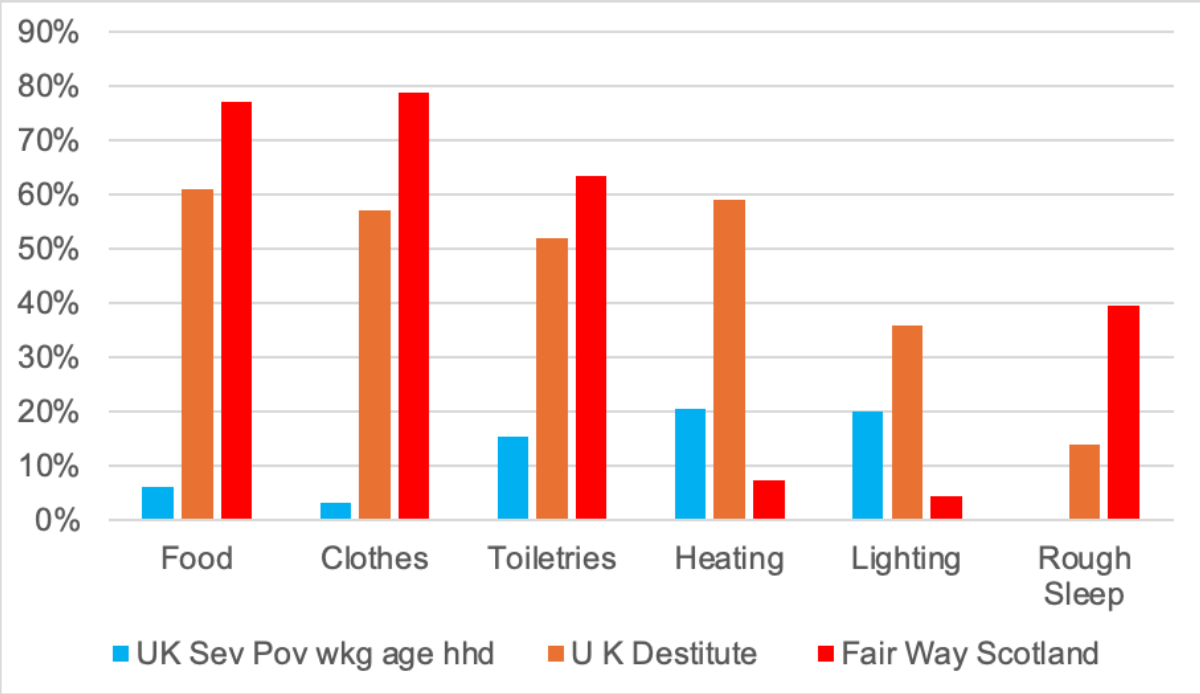


Source: weighted analysis of Fair Way Scotland survey data 2023-2025

We can also breakdown the types of material deprivation experienced by those accessing Fair Way, and compare these experiences to those of the wider destitution in UK population and in some cases to the UK general population using Family Resources Survey data, although in the latter case the contrast is so extreme that it is difficult to compare them on the same graph.

Figure 4.5 shows the percentage of these two (or in some cases three) groups experiencing each of the six forms of material deprivation used to measure destitution. It shows that the Fair Way cohort are substantially more likely to experiences four of the six forms of deprivation than the destitute in the UK cohort, these being food, clothing, toiletries and shelter (operationalised as experience of rough sleeping). The Fair Way cohort are *less* likely to experience deprivation in relation to being able to heat and light their home, simply because this group are rarely householders with responsibility for paying energy bills (see chapter three).

Figure 4.5: Material deprivations reported by all UK Destitute households in 2022, Fair Way survey respondents in 2023-25, and UK households in severe poverty in the Family Resources Survey 2023-24



Source: weighted analysis of Fair Way Scotland survey data 2023-2025; Destitution in the UK Survey (DUKS) 2022; authors' analysis of Family Resources Survey/(HBAI 2023/24. Note: severe poverty defined as net equivalised income <40% median after housing costs.

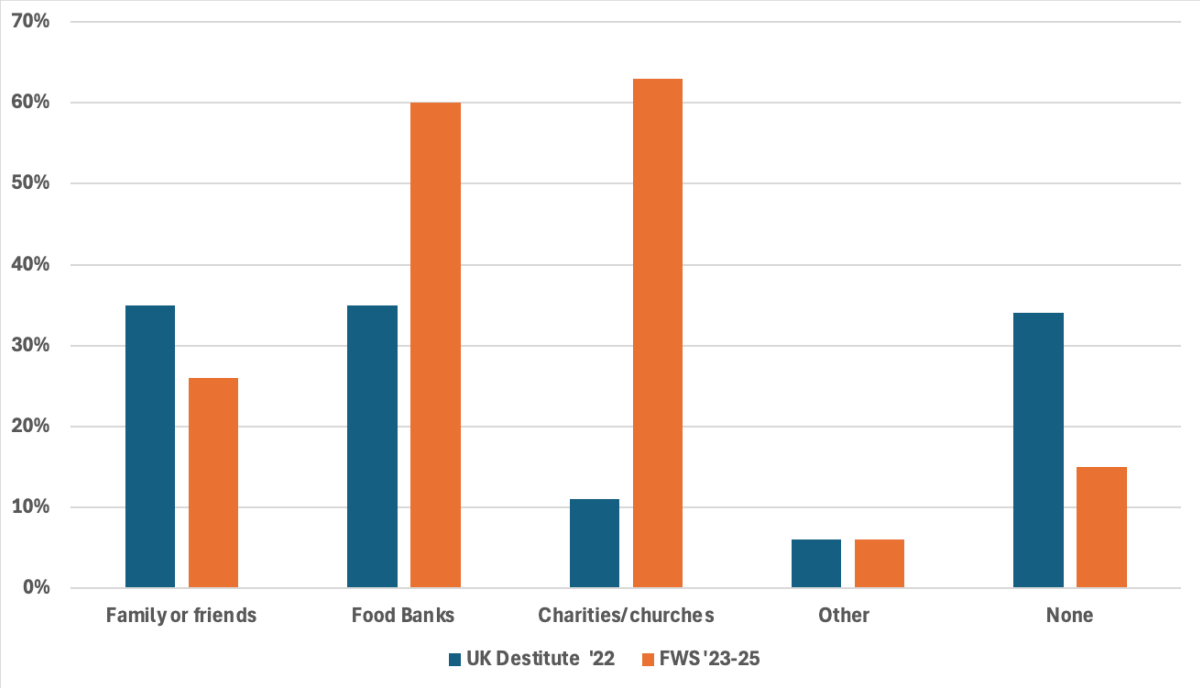
Box 7: Jamal, aged 35-44

Jamal came to the UK as a very young adult in 2007 from a country in North Africa experiencing civil war. He has been refused asylum twice. He subsequently tried to return to his county of birth, but was told he could not by the relevant embassy as they disputed his citizenship in the absence of appropriate documentation. When he broke up with his partner (with whom he has a teenage son) he experienced rough sleeping, and stays in hostels. During this period, his mental health was very poor and he experienced exploitative labour on several occasions. When we first met Naftal, he was staying in Fair Way Scotland accommodation and in the process of submitting a fresh asylum claim to the Home Office. This application was not accepted and Naftal remains in Fair Way accommodation still. Having received support from two separate lawyers, he is now in the process of mounting a case to remain in the UK legally on grounds that he is stateless. Naftal still struggles with his mental health. He suffers from depression and insomnia. He briefly tried medication, but felt it did little to help. Physically, he is in fair health, though he sometimes is only able to afford one meal a day and goes hungry. His migration status prohibits him from working legally but he occasionally engages in informal, cash-in-hand work. These opportunities are sporadic and unreliable, leaving him unable to provide adequately for himself or contribute to the costs of raising his son. To make ends meet, he relies heavily on charities for food, clothing, and toiletries. Overall, while his accommodation continues to be secure and relatively stable, the lack of progress in his legal case, insufficient income, and ongoing prohibition from formal work have made his situation increasingly challenging. He remains desperate for more financial stability and the chance to work so he can support his child and reclaim some independence.

We also see some patterns in levels/types of deprivation across groups accessing Fair Way support in different ways. Most importantly, those receiving cash payments from Fair Way are less likely to report deprivation in relation to food than those not (80% v. 63%), which chimes with qualitative findings shared in our previous report that people tend to prioritise spending these modest cash payments on food. Those who had been accessing Fair Way support for a longer period (three months or more) were less likely to report going without meals, toiletries and shelter, indicating that Fair Way may be effective in enabling people to better escape these deprivations.

Given the extreme poverty facing those accessing Fair Way support, we would expect them to make high use of any available in-kind supports. Figure 4.6 confirms this looking at use of in-kind support in the last month and presenting the comparable data for the destitute in the UK population. It shows that the Fair Way cohort are around twice as likely than the overall destitute cohort to use some form of in-kind support. Most strikingly, they are almost six times more likely to have received in-kind support from charities or churches in the last month (63% v. 11%), and considerably more likely to have used a food bank (60% v. 35%). The Fair Way cohort are less likely to rely on friends and family for in-kind support, however (26% v. 35%), likely reflecting lesser access to social networks given their immigration journey and/or that their family and friends may be relatively impoverished themselves. Nevertheless, it is still worth noting that over a quarter of the Fair Way group do rely on friends and family to some extent.

Figure 4.6: Extent of in-kind support from different sources for those accessing Fair Way Scotland support and UK Destitute households (% receiving any support)



Sources: weighted analysis of Fair Way Scotland survey data 2023-2025; Destitution in the UK Survey (DUKS) 2022

Those in the EEA group are most likely to use of food banks (75% v. 60% overall) and the Other group are much less likely to rely on family and friends (16% v. 26% overall) or food banks (23% v. 60% overall).

Receiving cash support from Fair Way is associated with less use of friends/family for in-kind support and less use of food banks (though these differences do not meet the threshold for statistically significance), but more use of other (i.e. non-food bank) charities (which does meet the threshold. This could suggest that provision of cash support enables people to rely less on social networks and foodbanks.

Change over time

In this section we consider whether the 26 people we interviewed lives had changed since accessing Fair Way support in relation to destitution. Almost all (25) of those we interviewed remained destitute at point of second interview, but many of these had experienced mitigations (albeit often not sustained) to their experiences of material deprivation and 18 had experienced an increase in their income specifically, albeit not an increase significant enough to enable them to escape destitution altogether. Four of those we interviewed had experienced a deepening of their destitution and a single person had moved out of destitution.

Positive progress

Only one person who we spoke to fully escaped destitution during their engagement with Fair Way support. He was in the EEA group, and at the point of first interview had pre-

settled status and had recently started a part-time job. He did not have access to benefits or housing assistance and was destitute on both the income and material deprivation criteria. He was also sleeping rough. By our second interview, two things had changed. First, he had gained settled status with the help of his Fair Way caseworker and because of that was receiving Universal Credit and in local authority provided housing. Second, he had changed job, and was working more hours. While the housing assistance resolved his lack of shelter, his now dual income sources lifted him over the destitution income threshold, something that his income from benefits alone would not have done.

While escape from destitution was rare, 18 participants reported an increase in their income. The most common driver of such an increase was securing access to Fair Way cash support, experienced by seven participants (5 ARE and 2 EEA). This assistance enabled people to cover some immediate essentials, such as food, clothing and/or transportation and had thus made an appreciable difference to people's lives:

> *"Every two weeks, yes, something like that, £120… I appreciate it… I want to say thank you to them for supporting me with this money."* (Abbas, 25-34, Asylum)

Fair Way cash support acted as a partial buffer against the harshest impacts of food insecurity, allowing participants some space to focus on longer-term legal and migration issues. However, while the testimonies highlighted meaningful improvements in income for recipients, the level of support given was often described as simply *"not enough"*:

> *"…it's an improvement… but it's still not enough."* (Tomasz, 45-64, EEA)

> *"£55-a-week, but we get it every two weeks: £110… Absolutely not [enough]… It's not."* (Jamal, 35-44, Asylum)

For those in the EEA cohort, securing access to social security benefits was an important route to a higher income (experienced by 6 people). Accessing benefits significantly improved people's financial situation and support from Fair Way caseworkers had been crucial in helping most in this group to secure relevant status, and from there to navigate the complexities of benefit applications, with their guidance on online systems and form-filling often the decisive factor in successful claims:

> *"That day when we got status she [my Fair Way caseworker] straight away applied for Universal Credit… [I needed help] because it's online. Digital world…"* (Sofija, female, 45-64, EEA)

> *"Beforehand I had no income, and again, because of [my Fair Way caseworker] she helped me… now all my income… would be the Universal Credit."* (Edgars, 45-64, EEA)

Frontline workers also highlighted that for the largest subgroup of the EEA cohort (see chapter two) – those with pre-settled status but no qualifying right to reside – access to benefits was uncertain. While most in this situation are not able to access Universal Credit, in rare cases, welfare rights advocacy had succeeded in overturning these

barriers on grounds of destitution, likely reflecting the results of recent legal challenges in this area (see chapter one):

> *"He's not fit for work, but the DWP were refusing to give him Universal Credit… We challenged that on the grounds that he'd face destitution… and they agreed to give him Universal Credit. That's really rare."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

If such practice became more common, it would have important impacts on caseworkers' ability to mitigate destitution for this group.

While accessing benefits represented a transformative change in people's financial situation, it is important to note that for most, it was not sufficient to enable them to escape destitution altogether, as people's income in most cases continued to fall under the destitution threshold and they remained exposed to material deprivation, as many others receiving mainstream benefits do.[89]

For some in the EEA group, accessing employment was a potential route to increasing their income and mitigating their destitution. Our survey results suggest that 36% of the EEA group are unemployed and seeking work with an additional 9% in formal work and 10% are in informal work. Only just over a quarter (27%) report not being permitted to work while 18% are not working due to health problems. Of the nine EEA nationals we interviewed, three had experienced some positive change in their employment situation since engaging with Fair Way. Key to enabling this was the submission of a valid EUSS application, with employment support playing a role thereafter. One participant, having gained pre-settled status, took up full-time work in a food processing facility for a time, while another pursued part-time cleaning work for a transport company. While the latter participant's employment was not yet fully stable, the part-time role represented a pathway back to earning an income and staying engaged in the labour market. With legal obstacles lifted, another participant could finally lay plans for college and a practical, job-focused programme of study:

> *"I didn't work, because I didn't have the right to be here… I wanted to go to college and study… I was basically stuck… So now it's like… I'm going to definitely go for this… it's a course with the job placement."* (Jan, 35-44, EEA)

Where people had the right to work, practice assistance, such as updating CVs and support around applying for job openings were valued alongside help accessing courses to improve their English or develop other skills. Fair Way Scotland caseworkers, lawyers and the Jobcentre were mentioned as sources of this kind of support. One individual explained, for example, how a lawyer, along with council services and support from Fair Way, helped arrange multiple computing courses and that this had improved their wellbeing:

[89] Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Treanor, M., Blenkinsopp, J., McIntyre, J., Johnsen, S., & McMordie, L. (2023). Destitution in the UK 2023. Online: JRF. https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2023

> *"…the lawyer helped me to find some computing courses… So I just started taking some courses… I got one from the council, one course, plus the one [Fair Way caseworker] found for me… I just tried to get maybe four or five, just to… help me feel better."* (Dion, unknown age, EEA)

For the small number who accessed employment during their time receiving Fair Way support, it's important to note that they continued to face significant challenges. A participant who secured work in food processing described working in a cold environment without proper protective equipment, which resulted in swollen hands and ongoing medical concerns:

> *"they not provide gloves. Meat, it's very cold. Their oil goes in your hands… Even when I spoke last day to the general manager I said, 'Look, my hands is double-sized, red, red, red,' and you go home it's too cold. Eight hours you stand in that fridge and your feet swollen double-size. At the moment [time it happens] you don't feel very big pain, but later, it settles in, you'll be suffer later on."* (Sofija, female, 45-64, EEA)

Within the asylum group, a small number of participants (2) had moved from having no income whatsoever to accessing Home Office support. This was experienced as a positive shift income-wise. One participant was of the view, for example, that if you were smart, this money could just be stretched to cover the food he needed:

> "…if you're clever about it, you can just go and manage with food… if you spend it wisely." (Dhruv, 25-34, Asylum)

But the value of Home Office financial support was very limited given the low level of support provided (usually £49 a week, just over half the weekly income threshold below which someone is considered destitute) and the medium in which it was given (Aspen cards that can only be used in some shops). Fair Way cash support was strongly preferred for this reason:

> *"[Fair Way cash support] was better [than Home Office support]… Because… they were giving us cash. These ones [Home Office], they just put your money in this card, and say don't withdraw."* (Chipo, female, 65 plus, Asylum)

> *"They [Fair Way] gave me cash, so I can go anywhere. I can do what I want…"* (Bekela, 35-44, Asylum)

In addition to these formal routes to increased income, personal connections and community groups were a source of financial support for some of those we spoke to. One individual described how a friend provided regular monetary support so he could buy essentials, while another explained how a close friend gave repeat loans to cover urgent expenses, expecting repayment only if circumstances improved:

> *"Sometimes… I've got a friend… he helped me a lot, £50 a month. So, it's good for me."* (Hussein, 25-34, Asylum)

> *"…he helped me… He used to give me like £100… he's my friend… When I've got back on my feet I'm going to pay back."* (Dion, unknown age, EEA)

Destitution was not only mitigated by these forms of financial support, but also via access to in-kind supports. Many we spoke to described they had access to a patchwork of supports from Fair Way, statutory and voluntary services and community networks, which – often combined with personal resourcefulness – could help them get by or access the essentials. Food banks, charities and community groups were an important source of food, clothing and toiletries for some:

> *"The clothes are from the food banks… They give you only a couple in a month… I get my jacket from [them]… I got [toiletries] in the space from the food banks as well."* (Emma, female, 45-64, EEA)

Fair Way Scotland delivery partners themselves provided highly valued access to bus passes for some, which enabled people to attend appointments relating to their migration status, and other essential matters, and to maintain social contacts. These passes were only sometimes available and lasted a limited period though. One individual described the difference it made:

> *"Six months ago [Fair Way]… gave me the bus pass for six months… I'm travelling everywhere… [Now] I can't afford the bus pass… it's more than £5 [per day]."* (Bekela, 35-44, Asylum)

Some reported that Fair Way case and support workers had signposted them to community groups and charities, noting that this was helpful in addressing their clothing needs:

> *"Many people want to help you for clothes… [My caseworker is] sending me… so yes, it was good."* (Tsehay, female, 35-44, Asylum)

Friends, neighbours and even strangers were other notable sources of in-kind support for food, toiletries and travel:

> *"I've got a friend… he bought me a ticket for bus ticket… it's like £20, £25 for a trip."* (Hussein, 25-34, Asylum)

> *"Sometimes… she [my friend] gave me a lot of shampoo and all these things, like razors… she's been really, really nice."* (Dion, unknown age, EEA)

This participant recounted receiving food deliveries and even small sums of money from his neighbours:

> *"They gave me love… They come to put some food in my door… They posted some cash in the post… I love these people, so I want to pay back."* (Bekela, 35-44, Asylum)

Ethnic and religious communities also provided such support, for example for this person: *"in the Kurdish community it's easy, I can ask. They know I don't do gambling… So, they help me a lot"* (Hussein, 25-34, Asylum)

While these charitable and community resources provided some relief, such support was limited in various ways. Most notably, it was precarious and access often unreliable leaving gaps during which people lacked the most basic of items. Others struggled with the type of assistance available. One explained that when they had any money they preferred to *"buy proper food"* (Emma, female, 45-64, EEA) rather than what was available via food banks, even when their resources were incredibly strained. Some people had made a skill out of piecing together all available forms of support:

> *"I ask, if you don't ask they don't give you all… You have to find it all. There's a place… they give food, they give clothes also."* (Chipo, female, 65 plus, Asylum)

Others found asking for help hard. This person made clear that asking for and receiving help from friends stirred feelings of vulnerability:

> *"Sometimes my friends help me… They bought me a jacket… I feel like I'm in a bad situation… but I don't want [them] to think like I'm in a bad situation… I don't want to ask, but sometimes I have to."* (Hussein, 25-34, Asylum)

Particular aspects of people's situation could enable them to minimise their exposure to material deprivation and make very limited resources go further. Access to accommodation with cooking and food storage facilities enabled much more efficient use of limited resources:

> *"Now you have your own cook. You have your own fridge… You're more free. It's a lot different than [the hub]."* (Mahdi, 35-44, Other)

Cooking from scratch was a necessary step many we spoke to took to make limited funds go further:

> *"We're getting £49 in vouchers for a week… everything is price… so I need to cook everything."* (Bekela, 35-44, Asylum)

Having access to some cash similarly opened up options, including crucially to buy affordable clothes from charity shops rather than relying on hand outs from food banks or other charities. This could give people choice and access to quality items:

> *"You cannot afford clothes… A cheap jacket is £70… I go and look in the charity shop… a nice jacket for £12, £15."* (Jamal,35-44, Asylum)

Though these choices were often limited. A lack of shoes in the right size meant this participant wore wet shoes for weeks:

> *"…they don't have any shoes… or it's the wrong size… I need to walk… with wet shoes… I have no choice."* (Tomasz, 45-64, EEA)

Finally, having a functional phone to progressing their immigration status and access to essentials unlocked access to other resources and supports. With a phone they could coordinate appointments, stay in touch with caseworkers, and/or access online resources and entertainment. For these reasons, one participant used their first instalment of Fair Way cash support to buy a phone. Another prioritised using their Fair

Way cash support to fund phone top-ups and internet access, seeing these as essential expenses:

> *"...I have to top up £20 every month, because that's very important... to be connected with the people... find things."* (Jamal,35-44, Asylum)

However, phones were difficult to obtain and maintain:

> *"At the minute, I just want money, especially a [working] phone again... [My Fair Way worker] tried to call me... I can't hear anything... If you don't have communication... It's important."* (Chipo, female, 65 plus, Asylum)

Stalled or no change

Four of those we interviewed reported stalled or no change in their level of income. Of these, most (3) were in the asylum group and had – thanks in significant part to the support of Fair Way caseworkers – been receiving support via the Home Office throughout the study period. The remaining participant was in the other group and had lacked any consistent income across the course of the study, though had accessed the Scottish Crisis Fund before it closed:

> *"The same [no income]... I wish I could have another British [Red Cross] one, but no that passed."* (Hinata, 45-64, Other)

The previous section has detailed the various factors that enabled people to mitigate and reduce the severity of their destitution, often for short periods only. While these mitigations were significant to people's wellbeing, it is important to stress that most of the people we spoke to remained in destitution at the point of their second interview. Even those that had access to Fair Way or Home Office support remained well under the destitution income threshold and faced significant hardships:

> *"It's not enough, the money they give. I can't afford to buy good food... it's a problem."* (Chipo, female, 65 plus, Asylum)

Most participants described how they were unable to afford weather-appropriate and/or durable clothing, including these three participants all in accommodation and receiving financial support from the Home Office or Fair Way:

> *"The all money is finished. I can't afford to [buy clothing]. It will be finished. It is £49."* (Chipo, female, 65 plus, Asylum)

> *"It would be enough for food, but... [clothes, and toiletries] no, no way."* (Kunal, 35-44, Asylum)

> *"Do you remember this [indicates his jumper]?... Last time... still am wearing it..."* (Bekela, 35-44, Asylum)

Such limited budgets forced stark trade-offs, for example, between purchasing hygiene products (such as shampoo, shower gel, toothpaste etc.) or other essentials, such as food and clothing:

> *"That's [essential toiletries] what I'm buying in the first place because this stuff is more important than food for me."* (Edgars, 45-64, EEA)

> *"You just have to manage… sometimes like this week I need this [deodorant], so you're going to not get food…"* (Dion, unknown age, EEA)

Having no funds for travel, some had to walk long distances to make essential meetings with caseworkers, healthcare appointments, or to connect with others, as described by these two participants receiving Home Office support and therefore lacking cash to pay for buses:

> *"The buses wouldn't take these [Aspen] cards… I had to walk everywhere… It'll take at least hour-and-a-half [to my caseworker]… if you're walking quick… if you're on the bus it's 35 [minutes]."* (Dhruv, 25-34, Asylum)

> *"…I want to go out, no any transport money… I'm sitting home… depression, too much, more, more, more."* (Tsehay, female, 35-44, Asylum)

For the majority of those we spoke to, employment did not offer a realistic or legitimate route out of destitution. While for a moderate number of EEA nationals the barrier here was ill-health (19% of EEA survey respondents), by far the most significant barrier was prohibitions against working. These applied to over half (56%) of those accessing Fair Way, including virtually all of the asylum group (94%), most of the group with NRPF for other reason (64%) and a sizeable component of EEA nationals (27%). This could be because, for instance, they do not have a share code because they have not submitted a valid EUSS application. Those who we spoke to had powerful views on these restrictions. They expressed a desperate desire to work, viewing employment as essential for their wellbeing, reclaiming dignity, achieving financial independence:

> *"without a share code you cannot work… I can't do nothing… All my life I've worked… I can't stay at home. This is another thing that's killing me."* (Dion, unknown age, EEA)

> *"I need to work. I need to pay taxes. I need support, because I have a child. I need to support his birthdays, his Christmas… He's almost 11 years old."* (Jamal, 35-44, Asylum)

> *"It would make a difference [if I could work] because no worries, no depression. You'll be having peace of mind. Stress-free. Be happier…"* (Chipo, female, 65 plus, Asylum)

This enforced inactivity created feelings of deep frustration, lost potential and dependency. Many struggled to see the logic of a government refusing to allow them to

work, foregoing tax from their income and leaving charities and statutory bodies to secure and pay for assistance and accommodation when they saw themselves as entirely able to support themselves:

> *"I told [my Fair Way support worker] last time when I left the property, I don't want you to pay for my accommodation... Government... if they allow me to work, I can work and can pay for my bills, pay for my accommodation."* (Hussein, 25-34, Asylum)

> *"...if they give me paper to make it easy, insurance number, I'm going to work. If I receive £700 or £600, I pay my own house, pay tax, I pay insurance number. Government, how much are they going to receive from me each year?"* (Fadumo, 25-34, Asylum)

These restrictions pushed some individuals into informal, cash-in-hand and/or illegal work, where they were vulnerable to exploitative conditions and unsafe practices. According to our survey, over a fifth (22%) of those accessing Fair Way Scotland have had experience of forced labour in the last year, with rates relatively similar across the three main groups, but noticeably higher in Edinburgh (27%) and lowest in Aberdeen (3%).

Box 8: Mahdi, aged 35-44

Mahdi came to the UK in 2007 from the Middle East and claimed asylum on the basis that he was at risk of political persecution in his country of origin. Repeated claims have been rejected and more recently he has sought to regularise his immigration status on family groups – he has a young daughter in the UK with his former partner. He has struggled to find consistent quality legal representation for reasons including issues with the Legal Aid system. The Home Office refused his latest application, citing insufficient proof of his nationality. He alleges that his ex-partner destroyed or has withheld his identity documents, and repeated attempts by him and his Fair Way Scotland caseworker to contact the relevant Embassy have been unsuccessful. Without these documents, he may have to wait until 2028, after 20 years in the country, before being able to pursue Leave to Remain. Mahdi describes having lived 'off grid' with no bank account, no legitimate income, no right to work or ability to access substantive help for almost 20 years as inhumane. He has been a victim of exploitation. After the emergency winter provision he was staying in during winter 2023/24 closed, Mahdi accepted the offer of sleeping in a takeaway restaurant in exchange for working their because he felt he had no choice. He now feels he was badly taken advantage of during this period. His situation radically improved when Mahdi was prioritised to stay in a Fair Way Scotland shared flat. He describes his living conditions now as *"fantastic."* He receives weekly cash support of £60 from Fair Way which he spends on food and toiletries. His Fair Way caseworker has also given him a bus pass, which gives him much valued freedom. He remains unable to work legally and very reluctant to take on informal work given past experiences. Physically, he is in good health but needs reading glasses, which he has postponed buying due to cost. Although Mahdi's day to day life has significantly improved, he still feels constant stress and describes feeling 'stuck' because progress on his immigration status

continues to feel elusive. He hopes a new immigration lawyer will help him obtain the necessary identity documents or that the Home Office will show leniency, so he can finally live a normal life, work and focus on trying to rebuild a relationship with his daughter.

Deterioration

Four of those we spoke to had experienced a reduction in their income since their initial engagement with Fair Way. In two cases, this was the result of moving from Fair Way cash support to Home Office support, with the reduction in the value of cash assistance exacerbated by abrupt and unpredictable halts to Home Office support. The reason for the stop to this person's support had still not been uncovered:

> *"Just I get £49 per week… Now, since January, they just blocked my account… still I don't have one."* (Hussein, 25-34, Asylum)

Such stoppages usually occurred when applications were refused. Once a negative decision was reached, Home Office support could be terminated quite swiftly leaving people with nothing until they could submit a fresh claim or access other support from friends, or Fair Way. There were few if any other options. One participant recounted going two months without any income:

> *"…10th of December they [Home Office] stop my money. Now this week they restart it… two months without anything… everything is very sad"* (Tsehay, female, 35-44, Asylum)

Where these disruptions coincided with cold winter months or holidays during which voluntary sector support services were limited, the emotional stress and financial strain was compounded. Some participants reported receiving food vouchers or interim financial aid from Fair Way delivery partners during interruptions in Home Office support. One recalled first encountering a caseworker only after their Aspen card was terminated:

> *"That's why… I got in touch with [my caseworker]… [She] helped with some food vouchers… I used them for three, four months."* (Dhruv, 25-34, Asylum)

In these instances, caseworkers provided crucial lifelines, helping clients sustain themselves while fresh claims were explored and submitted.

For the EEA and Other participants who reported deteriorations, these both related to the loss of Universal Credit for reasons related to their migration status. One described how payments ended suddenly following the expiration of their biometric card. Another reported that a dispute over status let to the cessation of their Universal Credit payments.

> *"they close my claim… They said… I don't have status… My status is pending."* (Pawel, 35-44, EEA)

Many participants reported deteriorations in their ability access to essentials due to rising costs:

> *"[It's] so very harder than previously because for the past six months, the prices went up by one and half. For instance, if I used to buy bread for 99p and now it's cost £1.35."* (Edgars, 45-64, EEA)

> *"Obviously [harder], the cost-of-living payments, and things like that, when prices went sky-up, I'm like, 'What do you expect me to do?"* (Jan, 35-44, EEA)

Some reported scaling back meals or existing on a very limited diet as a result:

> *"Every day, I eat sardines and bread"* (Jamal,35-44, Asylum)

> *"I'm really slim… I don't eat enough. Always I'm hungry."* (Abbas, 25-34, Asylum).

This was especially challenging for those needing specific diets (e.g., due to allergies or health conditions), who found costs prohibitive:

> *"…my body choose some foods. When I eat some foods, it's not good feeling… so I need to choose better foods."* (Bekela, 35-44, Asylum)

A lack of access to appropriate kitchen facilities or storage undermined participants ability to prepare cost-effective meals:

> *"If I maybe have a fridge-freezer in the room… I could buy in bulk and then freeze it… My fridge broke in the room… I spent £100 for the food I had to throw out."* (Jan, 35-44, EEA)

Key stakeholder and frontline worker perspectives

The key stakeholder and frontline workers we spoke to stressed the importance of the cash payments component of the Fair Way model, and in particular the value of expanding the cash offer beyond just those in Fair Way accommodation. There were several reasons for this. Most obviously, these payments were seen to directly mitigate the destitution and deprivation people were suffering while longer-term solutions were pursued:

> *"It's absolutely improving quality of life and experience of destitution… The fact that the partnership couldn't take it beyond those that were in accommodation, but now can, is brilliant."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

> *"the evidence is so clear that people literally have no access to any assistance… and [are] totally dependent on charity, [and] that Fair Way are really effective in meeting those very basic needs"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

This view was reinforced by a local authority participant who emphasised the enormous gap in the provision of cash – and even in-kind support – for this group, and especially welcomed the decoupling of Fair Way cash support from accommodation:

> *"Food banks sometimes can limit the amount of food parcels, and it's like... how are they going to survive?... so the fact that it [the cash support and the accommodation] got decoupled... was a good thing, because... if [adults with NRPF] don't meet a social work support [threshold], then that's just people with nothing... it was good to hear that that's not linked together, and that they're getting some sort of support for their basic needs."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

The gap filled by the Fair Way cash offer was also recognised by frontline workers in their description of the paltry, partial and inconsistent alternative forms of cash support available to those they support, as described by this Glasgow caseworker:

> *"The Fair Way project is for financial support... other organisations would be able to from time to time, varying amounts of vouchers. There's a grant that we apply for, and we can only apply for two people per month, and... it's a one-off. Then we have the internal destitution grant, which is £10 every now and then."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

A caseworker in Edinburgh added that the local authority support was sometimes accessible to those with care needs (see also chapter three). In this light, a key challenge for frontline workers had come during the hiatus in the availability of cash support between April and September 2024 after the Scottish Crisis Fund had ceased operating but before Fair Way cash payments had been expanded beyond the relatively small numbers in accommodation.

What is especially striking from Fair Way partners is the view that these cash payments had significant wider positive impacts beyond their direct mitigation of deprivation. First, several emphasised the importance of *cash* support specifically in giving people choice, autonomy and as a symbol of dignity. Their importance went beyond the efficiency argument that people could buy the food they actually wanted or needed to eat, though that was seen as important. Partners were of the view that the provision of unconditional cash support could be transformative to people's mindset in a context where they had had so little for often long periods:

> *"the fundamental premise that somebody can make choices as to what matters most to them in preventing their own destitution is just so key for so many different reasons."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

> *"[The cash payments] are just such a massive thing... for people... in terms of seeing light at the end of the tunnel. Like, OK, maybe... I can navigate this. It's just been able to give people choice... to be able to get this money unconditionally with no strings attached... [It's] really powerful for [the] workers to be able to give something when sometimes there is no bloody hope."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Second, there was a strong view that cash payments encouraged and supported engagement with Fair Way casework support. This was not because people were *forced* to engage to receive their payments – once set up, payments are made automatically via people's phones. Rather, the primary mechanisms here appeared to be people that people were not hungry or focused on accessing bare essentials rather than progressing their case:

> *"we have managed to increase the number of people who are also getting the cash grants, that had made a difference. It means that you are not spending your time trying to address the situation, but you actually go to the issues you should be discussing, mainly the legal situation, and making sure that people are engaging well because that is the only way….it's important that we provide people, at least with spaces, with money, so that we are able to concentrate on resolving their issues… with their lawyers."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

> *"it's important, not only for the individuals, but actually important for Fair Way, because until you get these living essentials provided for, it's difficult to provide casework support that goes beyond that because people are, obviously, mostly worried about if they're going to be able to eat tomorrow… it's a crucial part of the model as a whole."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

One partner was also of the view that the provision of cash payments shifted something in the quality of the relationship between the individual and their caseworker that aided engagement:

> *"You could disengage and just take the cash… [but] that doesn't seem to have been happening. It seems to have actually increased engagement. It seems to have created some bond… something in the dynamic of the relationship between casework and the individual being supported… There's some alchemy in it that wasn't there before."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

The importance and value of the cash payments was underlined by frontline workers emphasis on expediting access as a top priority when people newly approach them for support:

> *"whenever we meet anybody new, that's one of the first things we're doing—can we get this person on cash perks?"* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Frontline worker perspectives also highlighted some limitations or weaknesses in the cash offer and its administration. It was recognised the budget for cash support was limited and access prioritised to those in the worst living situations (see chapter six). In addition, access was intended only for those with a feasible prospect of progressing their immigration case, though in practice frontline workers described an inclusive approach to operating this:

> *"the Home Office and DWP assume people aren't eligible unless they can prove 100 per cent… We sort of count ourselves in the opposing camp."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

The administration of payments also posed a challenge for some individuals, as it depended upon access to a mobile phone and navigation of a process and set of codes that could provide difficult for some:

> *"The cash perks is reliant on them having a working mobile phone… they have to go to a cardless ATM [cash machine]… inputting codes, their mobile number, then their own personal code… We have issues every Monday when the texts go out—it's not simple… especially when people don't speak the language or are unsure with technology."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Recognising the positive impacts of cash payments detailed above, but that they are *"probably not [being funded at] the scale that we want [them] to be"* (Key stakeholder, statutory), several partners and external stakeholders emphasised that expanding the scale of the cash payments offer to more people with NRPF/RE should be a key priority for Fair Way and its funders:

> *"[The priority should be] to maintain and increase the cash payment part, quite simply."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

> *"there's still massive need that they're [current cash payments] not able to meet."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Key points

- Virtually all those accessing Fair Way Scotland (93%) are destitute. Those who had been receiving Fair Way support for longer (more than three months at point of survey) were less likely to be destitute on both the material deprivation criterion (77% v. 89%) and income criterion (78% v. 88%), and also overall (92% v. 95%, though this last difference was not statistically significant). This suggests that Fair Way support helps reduce destitution. Survey results also suggest that people who were receiving casework and cash support were less likely to be destitute than those receiving just casework (82% v. 95%). We do not see this same pattern for those in Fair Way accommodation, which could reflect selection effects/small sample sizes, or possibly their isolation from or difficulties accessing forms of in-kind support.

- The majority of those accessing Fair Way (76%) reported incomes of less than £60 per week, compared to 32% of people experiencing destitution in the UK during 2022. Over a third of those accessing Fair Way (37%) reported no income at all over the past month. The most common sources of income were charities (including Fair Way itself), family and friends. Those who had been accessing Fair Way support for three months or more were less likely to have received income from friends in the last month, perhaps indicating that this support enables less reliance on informal network. Those accessing support for longer were also more likely to have received

some form of income and to have received income via benefits, reflecting positively on the impact of the partnership on people's income sources.

- Those accessing Fair Way are far more likely to experience material deprivation than the overall population experiencing destitution in the UK in relation to access to food, clothes, toiletries and shelter. Our survey indicates that Fair Way support helps mitigate material deprivation among those it supports. People who had been accessing Fair Way support for a longer period (three months or more) were less likely to report going without meals, toiletries and shelter. Project data indicates that 266 people received cash support from Fair Way (usually for 6 months) in 2024/45 and our survey suggests that those who receive this support are considerably less likely to report deprivation in relation to food (80% v. 63%).

- Fair Way partners, external stakeholders and frontline workers stressed from various perspectives the importance and positive impact of Fair Way cash payments. Frontline workers and local authority participants emphasised the dire lack of any alternative sources of sustained cash support for this group. Fair Way partners explained that their positive value went beyond their impact mitigating destitution directly (though that was seen as centrally important), highlighting that these payments give people choice and dignity and support engagement with Fair Way casework that can sustainably resolve their hardship. Scaling up the provision of cash support to more people was identified as a priority.

- We spoke to 26 people who had been accessing Fair Way support for some time. While almost all (25) remained destitute, the majority (18) had experienced an increase in their income, most frequently this involved accessing cash payments via Fair Way which offered a buffer against the harshest forms of deprivation. Some in the EEA groups income increased because they accessed social security benefits and some in the asylum cohort because they (re)accessed Home Office support, with Fair Way casework support often important in enabling these changes.

- Many we spoke had experienced mitigations to their material deprivation by accessing charitable support (including via Fair Way), food banks or the support of friends or community members, but these forms of support were often time limited or temporary and/or failed to give access to the type or quality of support that was really needed. People were better able to address their own hardship where they had accommodation and therefore access to storage and cooking facilities. Some form of cash income also enabled access to buy the basics they actually needed (e.g. clothes in the right size) rather than relying on limited options in food banks etc. Access to a phone also guarded against deprivation by enabling people to access other support effectively.

- The single person able to escape destitution altogether was able to do so because they secured settled status via the EUSS, access to Universal Credit and had a job. Receiving benefits alone would not have enabled them to escape destitution altogether.

- A small number of those we interviewed had experienced a deterioration in their financial situation, in two cases because they had moved from Fair Way accommodation and cash support to relatively less generous Home Office support, and in the remaining two cases because changes or disagreements about their immigration status had precipitated an end to Universal Credit payments.

- The majority (56%) of those accessing Fair Way are not legally permitted to work. This includes virtually all of the asylum group (94%), most of the group with NRPF for other reason (64%) and a sizeable component of EEA nationals (27%). Those we spoke to were desperate to work, not only as a route out of hardship, but also reflecting a strong desire to support themselves and for their own sense of dignity, self-worth and wellbeing. For those accessing Fair Way who are permitted to work (mostly in the EEA group), health issues and complex needs are a barrier for some. Frontline workers were clear that accessing employment for this group is dependent on first attaining some stability via safe accommodation and cash support.

5. Frontline worker perspectives: vignette analysis

This chapter discusses the findings from six focus groups involving a total of 13 frontline Fair Way Scotland practitioners examining vignettes representing people with NRPF/RE and facing destitution and/or homelessness. These discussions aimed to shed light on the likelihood of and routes to securing more positive outcomes for the individuals in these realistic but hypothetical circumstances, and the barriers to and enablers of doing so.

The vignettes were developed drawing on insights from previous phases of the study, in particular our *Destitution by Design* report. The recognisable nature of the scenarios was intended to provide a safe way to explore workers experiences that avoided the ethical challenges of discussing actual cases. They offer a 'stepping off point' to open up broader discussions that extend beyond the particular scenarios laid out.

We developed six vignettes in total, two covering each of main groups assisted via Fair Way. Vignettes 1 and 2 (Faven and Hassan) cover cases where individuals came to the UK to seek asylum but are now appeal rights exhausted. Vignettes 3 and 4 (Aleksy and Jakub) cover EU nationals seeking regularisation via the EUSS. Vignettes 5 and 6 (Kiann and Mohammad) cover undocumented or unauthorised migrants in other situations. In each focus group, up to three vignettes were discussed with the selection depending on the expertise of the frontline workers attending.

After examining the response to each vignette in detail, the chapter concludes by drawing out key themes from across the discussion.

Vignette 1 – Faven

> Faven is a 45-year-old woman from Eritrea who is appeal rights exhausted and has been in the UK for 3 years. She hopes to become a nurse or similar if she gains refugee status. She is currently facing eviction from Home Office accommodation after having received a negative decision on her claim resulting from a lack evidence. She hopes to submit a fresh claim if she can secure new evidence.

Faven's situation was discussed across three focus groups by a total of six workers. They viewed her case as *"very familiar"* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists) and *"a fairly typical example of the people we support"* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists), though accommodation-based support workers (noted that they often begin working with people *after* they have been evicted from Home Office accommodation, rather than while still under threat of eviction.

All frontline workers agreed that a positive immigration outcome was possible in Faven's case, but that progress would likely be gradual and unfold over a long period of time. Caseworkers' immediate goal would be to support preparation of a fresh asylum claim, which could then restore her access to Home Office accommodation and financial

support. Achieving this was viewed as a *"transitional positive outcome"* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists).

However, caseworkers also highlighted significant challenges in achieving both a transitional and longer-term positive outcome, with success highly dependent on factors beyond their control. The key potential barrier identified was the likely difficulty of gathering the necessary new evidence to support a fresh claim. For Eritrean nationals like Faven, this was seen as especially challenging due to *"a lack of telecoms"* and the likelihood that *"she might have left Eritrea a long time ago,"* which were both said to complicate efforts to obtain credible documentation (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists).

Effective legal representation was identified as key enabler to submitting an application likely to successful progression of her case:

> *"She would work with her solicitor to get together fresh evidence for her fresh claim, and that would be submitted, and then she would get Section 4 support, and move into Home Office accommodation…"* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Frontline workers stressed that secure accommodation would also play a pivotal role in offering her a place of stability while preparing a fresh claim, as well as being vital in meeting Faven's most basic needs. Their initial priority would be *"figuring out whether we can keep her in her [Home Office] accommodation and avoid her being evicted."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists). Pursuing a vulnerability assessment could prevent the imminent eviction, but thresholds for a successful challenge on medical grounds were noted to be "very high" (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists). In the absence of clear vulnerabilities, the likelihood of Faven retaining Home Office accommodation post-refusal was described as *"low"* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists).

If the eviction went ahead, caseworkers would pursue alternative temporary options. In Glasgow, where people in Faven's situation are most likely to present to services, these options would include Fair Way accommodation, other charitable accommodation, or hosting schemes. In all cases, workers cautioned that availability remains a major barrier:

> *"We've had people accommodated by very short-term shelters for women… but there is no capacity."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Securing Faven financial support while pursuing the fresh claim was a critical concern for caseworkers and support workers. Until the reinstatement of asylum support, she would remain reliant on minimal charitable assistance. Frontline workers consistently pointed to Fair Way cash support as the most likely and only regular potential source of income for Faven during this period:

> *"Financially it's only that option [Fair Way cash support] at the moment that I am aware of."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Faven's educational and professional background and aspirations were seen as significant in several ways. Participants inferred a level of prior education that could act as an enabler in securing positive changes in immigration status:

> *"She's hoping to achieve a nursing degree, which would suggest that she's educated to a certain level… [and that she may therefore] understand a little bit more about the asylum process and the evidence that she might want to produce."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Support workers also emphasised that pursuing access to education for Faven would be a priority, both as a means to longer-term positive outcomes if and when Faven gains status but also as a means to promote mental wellbeing and resilience in the meantime: *"Helping [her] access education and training would be something I'd… probably jump on"* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists).

Securing Faven access to Home Office support via a fresh claim would be the key focus of caseworkers, as it would secure her both accommodation and (very limited) financial support (via an Aspen card) while her claim was considered, staff noted Faven would remain vulnerable to delays, further refusals, and the continued precarity of restricted rights and entitlements linked to her NRPF status.

In the event of another refusal, caseworkers were clear that return to Eritrea would be neither feasible nor safe for Faven: "Eritrea is not a country that is easy to return to, it's not safe" (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists). As such, the assumption among frontline staff was that their support would resume and continue to focus on identifying lawful avenues for remaining in the UK:

> *"We would always assume that was the avenue she was moving in, unless she said otherwise."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Reflecting more broadly, caseworkers emphasised that earlier intervention could have prevented Faven's case reaching this crisis point. In particular, the lack of evidence in her initial claim was seen to indicate that she had received inadequate or poor quality legal support:

> *"[That] might suggest that she's not actually submitted any evidence… That she's not had a good lawyer or any legal advice at all… that's what would have made an enormous difference."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

They stressed the importance of high-quality caseworker and/or legal representation at the initial stages (i.e., first submission) of the asylum process:

> *"It's all very much dependent on the lawyer at that point to make sure that what's being submitted is the best possible submission."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Vignette 2 – Hassan

Hassan is 34 and from Syria. He has been in the UK for 15 years. He was evicted from Home Office accommodation several years ago following a negative decision. He is now appeal rights exhausted, with no current claim in process. Hassan has a diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and is currently sleeping rough. He sometimes stays in emergency accommodation/a shelter or with friends/acquaintances where he can. Hassan lost his documents on his journey to the UK.

Hassan's case was discussed across three focus groups by six people and seen to be highly realistic and representative of many individuals they work with. Caseworkers anticipated supporting Hassan to pursue regularisation of his migration status, either through a protection claim[90] or, more likely, through a human rights-based application based on long-term residence:

> *"He's been in the UK for 15 years… there's a family life, human rights claim to be made, probably, if a lawyer helps him out."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Caseworkers stressed that good-quality legal advice would be pivotal but also difficult to access for someone like Hasan who has been disengaged from the asylum system for some time. Delays in securing legal representation were expected:

> *"You'd assume that it's going to be a couple of months maybe before you've even got them in front of a lawyer."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Even once engaged with a lawyer, caseworkers noted that the process of building a claim for someone in Hasan's situation would be complex and drawn out:

> *"We might be able to make improvements in terms of getting them a lawyer… but it might well then take a lot longer for him to get past that point and make a fresh claim and move on."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

The uncertain status of Syrian asylum claims following the end of the Assad-regime and ongoing civil war were seen as another potential challenge impacting Hassan:

> *"The regime change. All of the claims probably said, 'I'm in danger from Assad,' and now… probably, everybody's claims will have to be rewritten on the basis of whoever is in charge, but there's no clarity on that… Further turmoil… might [validate their claim] or get them humanitarian protection, but we don't know."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Aspects of Hasan's situation were viewed as potential enablers of progressing his case, in particular his Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) diagnosis was seen as relevant evidence that could strengthen his claim, although workers cautioned that it would not be determinative:

[90] A protection claim means an asylum claim, a humanitarian protection claim or a claim made on other human rights grounds regarding the risk of return (e,g. torture or trafficking).

> *"The diagnosis of PTSD… would be beneficial in his case to have that diagnosis and have that submitted as evidence. It's not saying that a person would receive a positive outcome… but he does already have some evidence that he might not be aware of."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Access to stable accommodation was considered essential for Hasan's progression; not only to enable him to effectively pursue his legal claim, but also as a foundation for improving his mental health and day-to-day wellbeing. However, caseworkers noted that a PTSD diagnosis alone would not make Hasan eligible for statutory support, and could exclude him from some options, such as hosting schemes:

> *"Sadly, PTSD is not a diagnosis that would get him accommodation with social work or the Home Office."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

> *"We probably wouldn't be able to place him in hosting if his PTSD was really impacting on his mental health."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Fair Way accommodation was identified as the most likely housing pathway for someone in Hasan's position, though even in Glasgow – where Hassan is most likely to present and the accommodation offer the greatest – this would be highly dependent on availability:

> *"We would assume that his best chance was to get into something like [Fair Way]."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Access was also seen to be unlikely in the short term, and more likely following a period of rough sleeping and Hassan being prioritised above others in similar situations:

> *"If he was struggling and sleeping rough, we might prioritise him for Fair Way… we'd struggle to find him anything else, so that would be our goal… if a space became available and there wasn't somebody more vulnerable*." (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Income was another major concern in Hasan's case with very few potential options open to him. Financial support would potentially be accessible via Fair Way for someone in Hassan's position following the expansion of the cash support offer in September 2024, but is subject to budgetary limits and strict prioritisation (see chapter four).

Beyond efforts to secure accommodation and financial support, workers felt that the priority focus in Hassan's case would be access to healthcare:

> *"There's every chance he's not been anywhere near a GP for years if he's been transient…. [and] we would address that [as a priority]"*. (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

> *"Just getting him an HC2 [a certificate enabling access to full help with health costs] so he can access prescriptions, and get his eyes tested, and go to a dentist."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Although Hasan's PTSD diagnosis was seen as potentially helpful in pursuing his immigration case, workers foresaw difficulties getting Hassan the help he likely needed

to manage the condition. Accessing to the specific supports required through NHS pathways could take years:

> *"He'd go on a waiting list, and it's currently about three years,... [although] he might get community-sector mental health support more quickly than that if he needed it."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

> *"It is really hard to get support."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Given the limited capacity of NHS services, some caseworkers would look to specialist charities such as Freedom from Torture for support:

> *"We look beyond that, because it's unlikely that the NHS... is going to be able to do much to support people with their mental health."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Socially, Hasan was noted to have some degree of informal support through friends which was seen as a positive for his wellbeing:

> *"He's got friends, so he's got some sort of social group."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Workers said they would try to build on this by encouraging community participation:

> *"Reach out and become engaged in the community, and have things to do, and a social life."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Vignette 3 – Aleksy

Aleksy is a 34 year old man from Poland, who has been in the UK for 7 years. He has pre-settled status but no qualifying right to reside. Aleksy worked in hospitality for many years often with tied accommodation. He lost his job and accommodation during the pandemic and really struggled to get by. He is currently undertaking a community order relating to convictions for theft during that period and these convictions are holding up his progression to settled status.

Aleksy's case was discussed by seven people across three focus groups and was seen as highly realistic, closely mirroring the experiences of many of those they currently support. Frontline workers viewed there to be "a reasonable chance" (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists) of a positive immigration outcome in Aleksy's case, most likely through securing settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme.

Workers were clear, however, that the success of Aleksy's application would depend heavily on the nature of his criminal convictions. Minor offences were not seen as a major barrier, but more serious convictions (particularly those resulting in custodial sentences) could seriously undermine Aleksy's case:

> *"Ultimately probably [success is] quite likely if it's said that there's convictions or the ongoing cases are to do with shoplifting and things. It's relatively minor*

convictions so they're unlikely to have an impact on his application for settled status." (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

"Any prison sentence over a year becomes problematic… Anything that doesn't result in a prison sentence seems to be fine." (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Delays in criminal proceedings were identified as a further obstacle. Even in relatively minor cases, the legal process can significantly stall progress

"Most of last year, [my clients'] court dates were cancelled and then reorganised about five or six times, and it just takes a whole year off that person's life." (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Administrative delays even after a case is resolved were also flagged. Workers noted the time-consuming process of confirming clear police records before an application can proceed:

"You have to then interact with the police to make sure that all their records are clean before you can even begin the process of starting the application." (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

A major enabler in Aleksy's case was his employment history. One caseworker explained that his long-standing work in hospitality could serve as strong evidence of residence:

"He's worked in hospitality for many years… [hopefully] paid through his National Insurance number… all of that work would go in his favour to prove evidence of residence." (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

They described how they would support Aleksy by gathering formal documentation from a range of sources to evidence five years of continuous residence. This process was seen as achievable, provided Aleksy had not been living entirely 'off grid':

"We'd try to get evidence from NHS Scotland, evidence of bank statements together to go along with his work history… to build up as much evidence to five years' residence as possible, and he's been in the UK for seven years, so there'd be a fair chance we'd cover a good chunk of five years. Again, it would all depend on if he's been living entirely off grid… that would make it more difficult." (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Workers stressed that gathering this evidence would take time, consistency, and – crucially - Aleksy's sustained engagement. Thus, while workers generally saw Aleksy's case as having good potential, they cautioned that *"it could equally trundle on forever."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists):

"If he's able to come and meet me once every couple of weeks for a couple of hours… we would make a request… to HMRC… to NHS Scotland… Police Scotland… With a good wind behind you, and all of the factors in your favour, I'd say you're looking at… between three and nine months, and with hold-ups, life getting in the way, you're into over a year." (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

The inferred absence of addictions or serious mental health conditions in Aleksy's case, and an assumed greater willingness to engage regularly were all therefore considered highly beneficial and enablers of success:

> *"[It looks like] he doesn't have any addictions or mental health issues…[and] the more he's able to engage with us, and the more he's able to make appointments with me and stick to them, and come in regularly and engage, that is a big determining factor."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Securing Aleksy a safe place to stay and some form of income or financial support were seen as urgent priorities, both to ensure progress on his immigration status by providing a foundation for his consistent engagement with casework support, but also for improving his overall wellbeing and laying the groundwork for future employability:

> *"I think for me I would probably focus on accommodation first, try and ensure someone's got a safe place to stay. I think the other bits… You could progress some of the benefits side of it, but I think certainly the employability would be very difficult if someone doesn't have safe, settled accommodation."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

> *"No, I would definitely look and see if we could get him, first off, a roof over his head, and second off, some money in his pocket, in that order, I think. Really just to make it easier for him to engage."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

In terms of securing accommodation, the very top priority, it was clear that the prospects of doing so varied across the three cities Fair Way operates in, reflecting differing interpretations of LAs' statutory duties and powers to assist adults with NRPF. Prospects were most positive in Aberdeen where the local authority homelessness team regularly temporarily accommodate those where there is uncertainty about their NRPF/RE status while this is being investigated or where there is seen to be an imminent prospect of a status change that will render someone eligible for assistance (see chapter three):

> *"We are in quite a different position in Aberdeen… evidencing his pre-settled status and the fact that we're exploring his right to reside, the local authority would most likely provide him with temporary accommodation whilst we continued to work on his settled status."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

In Edinburgh and Glasgow, however, access to local authority accommodation via the homelessness route was not an option:

> *"If somebody does not show up at application with proof of their eligibility, proof of their pre-settled status and a qualifying right to reside, then they're going to be told they're ineligible. No temp will be provided until they come back with proof of the qualifying right to reside."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

> *"He's got pre-settled status but no qualifying right to reside, so that rules him out of homeless accommodation…. Statutory services would simply… look at it and go well, he's got no recourse to public funds, there's nothing we can do for him."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

If Aleksy could be shown to have a care need, this could open access to support in Edinburgh via the city's Refugee Migration Team under the city's social work powers and duties. This team were acknowledged to interpret these fairly widely compared to other areas albeit that delays to assessments could mean people's health deteriorated before they accessed this help:

> *"The refugee and migration team… will take on cases like this if there is an underlying health or social care need, and they take a relatively wide definition of health and social care need."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

The prospects of assistance via the social care route in Glasgow were seen to be very low, with caseworkers anticipating that Aleksy would likely face street homelessness or unstable sofa-surfing arrangements. The only alternatives to this would be the potential access to winter provision during the coldest months of the year, the limited stock of Fair Way accommodation or potentially hosting.

As above, access to a basic, reliable source of income was also identified by frontline workers as essential to stabilising Aleksy's situation and improving his quality of life.

> *"That… [focus on] employability and benefits really… could be a drastic situation-changer for the person, you know? Massively improving their quality of life whilst waiting on their immigration status."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Accessing mainstream benefits was unlikely given Aleksy's pre-settled status without a qualifying right to reside, but not impossible.[91] While workers would explore potential entitlements, securing access to Fair Way cash support would be the immediate focus. This was not only about meeting basic needs, but also about reducing the risk that Aleksy engaging in survival strategies like shoplifting that could endanger or further delay his route to settled status:

> *"when you've got someone that can be… provided a form of financial support, those… survival crimes… are less likely to happen because people… [do not] need to steal… If I've got cash into that person's hand, that might help to mitigate those survival crimes. It might help to stop the point that they were at [in their immigration case] getting slightly worse."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Aleksy's status also opened up the possibility of employment as a route to income and a means to unlock access to broader rights and entitlements:

> *"I think very often the first thing, I suppose the route into accommodation for [Aleksy] is through work… [so] trying to get them started with some kind of employment."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Even short-term employment was seen as potentially transformative, by creating a qualifying right to reside, which could enable access to benefits and housing:

[91] Some disability benefits are accessible to those with pre-settled status and recent legal challenges mean Universal Credit may be accessible to some in particular circumstances (see chapter one).

> *"Even if he gets a job and holds it for two or three months, and then loses it, that would be enough to give him a qualifying right to reside and qualify for Universal Credit. Then the homeless team would accommodate him, because he'd also be getting Housing Benefit."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Workers stressed the likely barriers to employment, however, particularly Aleksy's unstable housing situation: *"employability would be very difficult if someone doesn't have safe, settled accommodation"* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists). One caseworker in Glasgow commented that it is "incredibly rare" (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists) for those in situations comparable to Aleksy's to successfully access employment. If Aleksy were to secure employment or access accommodation before receiving settled status, support would continue to help him secure settled status (if Aleksy continued to engage), albeit in a less urgent and intensive form given the improvement in his material circumstances employment could enable.

As in Faven's case, workers saw missed opportunities to prevent Aleksy's current situation. Timely advice and help to access benefits at the point he lost his job and housing during the pandemic could have avoided his descent into destitution:

> *"If he'd been supported, had some advice and been able to claim Universal Credit whilst he still had retained worker status, then that destitution stage could have been prevented."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Vignette 4 – Jakub

Jakub is a 50-year-old Roma man from the Czech Republic. He is in the process of submitting a late application to EUSS. He drinks heavily, occasionally presents with aggressive behaviours, and communication can be difficult because he prefers not to use an interpreter. Jakub has been in the UK for 9 years but has very little evidence of his work and residency history. He currently lives in overcrowded privately rented accommodation with his extended family.

Jakub's case was discussed by seven people across three focus groups and his situation generally regarded as realistic, though Roma people are reportedly more likely to present in Edinburgh than elsewhere. The best-case scenario for Jakub would involve the successful submission and acceptance of a late application to the EU Settlement Scheme ideally leading to settled status, or at minimum, pre-settled status. Several barriers we expected to make this path difficult, however:

> *"It's definitely possible, but yes, very challenging." (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)*

The first major hurdle workers identified to achieving this outcome was Jakub's orientation to engagement with support and the priority he accorded to pursuing status via the EUSS. Frontline workers observed that within Roma communities, informal arrangements around housing and income are often the norm, and can reduce reliance on and pursuit of formal supports:

> *"There are opportunities to be accommodated with other family members and extended family… and to maybe eke out some money somewhere without actually having to have a national insurance number etc… Where there are opportunities, people tend to take them."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

In this context, Jakub's engagement with formal services like Fair Way was seen as potentially limited, not necessarily due to disinterest, but because of a stronger pull toward trusted, community-based alternatives. Jakub's potential to disengage from Fair Way services might also be shaped by frustration with the complexity and slow pace of immigration processes:

> *"People can a lot of the time just go, 'You know what? This whole immigration thing is pish anyway. I've lived here for nine years. I've been fine. I don't need it. It's a stress, and I'd much rather just go and get some cash working for my uncle. I'll go and live with my sister and her three kids,' or whatever."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Assuming Jakub chose to engage with Fair Way caseworkers and pursue his late EUSS application, a major initial hurdle would be the requirement to justify a late application to the EUSS with clear and robust evidence:

> *"Since the Home Office tightened up late application criteria… You would need to have evidence of his alcohol use or homelessness or limited English to justify why that application's being submitted late."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

If Jakub could be shown to have health needs linked to his heavy alcohol use, this could offer a means to justify his late immigration application if adequately evidenced through health records:

> *"that could be proven if we were able to get hold of medical records, or hospital visits that talk about his drinking"* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists).

Communication difficulties were also highlighted as a key challenge, particularly Jakub's preference not to use an interpreter. Workers stressed the importance of clear understanding when providing immigration support:

> *"When it comes to giving the immigration advice you need to be 100 per cent certain that the person understands what you're saying"* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Building trust to enable the appropriate use of interpreters was therefore seen as essential to making progress.

While offering a potential justification for Jakub's late EUSS application, his complex support needs (including substance use and mental health difficulties) were overall identified as significant barriers to achieving a positive outcome. One frontline worker described the situation starkly:

> *"You've got all the person's addiction and mental health issues plus communication issues, which is an absolute trifecta from hell."*
> (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

The effort required to gather years' worth of evidence under these conditions was seen as immense:

> *"It's like a full-time job… [and ultimately they might] just disappear again."*
> (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

But addressing these mental health and addiction issues effectively prior to attaining settled immigration status was seen to be exceptionally difficult:

> *"it's difficult for someone to get through the addiction without having some sort of settled support… it's a chicken and egg thing. It's difficult to deal with the immigration status without [addressing addiction and instability]"* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists).

Jakub having access to stable accommodation and some form of income was seen as crucial to the pursuit of his immigration case. Relevant here was understanding his current housing situation and whether Jakub saw staying there as sustainable:

> *"If… it is overcrowded technically, legally, it could be deemed… as homeless, but that's not to say that the person's not happy living in that situation."*
> (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

If Jakub were seeking alternative accommodation, frontline workers noted that access to statutory support would depend on the local authority's policies. As in Aleksy's case, in Aberdeen temporary accommodation via the local authority might be an option for Jakub, "as long as he was then continuing to work with us on his application for settled status." (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists). In Edinburgh, this was "absolutely not" an option (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists). One possible exception discussed was if Jakub were part of a mixed-eligibility household in which a family member held legal status. If statutory routes to accommodation where not possible, Fair Way accommodation was mentioned as a possible alternative for Jakub, though dependent on availability and his level of assessed vulnerability compared to others.

In terms of income, an initial step would be to assess his current situation: "*what income he was able to generate. Was he working, was he on benefits, [and] is he eligible to get benefits?"* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists). Absent access to mainstream benefits, other options would be pursued. Caseworkers recognised that in the longer-run – following the submission of a valid EUSS application – employment could offer a potential route to an income for Jakub, but in practice, his problematic alcohol use left caseworkers thinking *"it would be quite difficult for him to gain and maintain employment just now"* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists). As such, the immediate focus would be on other routes forward, with Fair Way cash support identified as the only realistic option: *"If he was eligible for the cash perks scheme… we would be getting him on that as soon as possible"* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists). The reference to eligibility here reflects that such payments are limited by

available funding and thus prioritised, with those sleeping rough accorded most priority, followed by those sofa surfing (and thus deemed at high risk of rough sleeping), followed by those saying with friends and relatives and risk of exploitation. If successful, caseworkers would address any practical barriers to access, including ensuring Jakub has a functioning mobile phone to receive payment notifications. This approach to securing financial support was seen as essential to meeting Jakub's immediate needs and enabling him to engage with the longer-term processes of immigration regularisation and recovery.

In reflecting on move-on pathways post Fair Way engagement, caseworkers identified two possible scenarios. Either, Jakub would gain status via the EUSS, in which case, as one put it "we can happily send him off to the DWP and the homeless casework team" (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists). In this case, however, the transition from Fair Way to mainstream services was recognised as challenging, potentially resulting in feelings of abandonment or loss of trust:

> *"They in effect go from having a support worker who's dedicated to working with them to not having that." (*Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

The possibility of Jakub returning to his home country was seen as a last resort, to be explored only if the chances of regularising his status in the UK became very limited. One practitioner reflected on how this conversation might be approached:

> *"I suppose I would begin… talking about how difficult things are here, and are there no set of circumstances in which life back in the Czech Republic may be easier for you to build a life around?"* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Vignette 5 – Kiann

Kiann is 24 and from India. He came to the UK 6 years ago on a student visa but didn't complete the course due to mental health problems. After leaving university accommodation, he stayed with acquaintances from the wider Indian community but struggled to contribute to the rent and was eventually asked to leave. He has slept rough since, intermittently accessing emergency accommodation. Kiann is gay and faced discrimination in India. He is not in touch with his family in India but has a sister in the UK who he gets on well with.

Kiann's case was discussed by six individuals across three focus groups. His circumstances were seen as atypical across their caseloads, reflecting the specialisation of Fair Way caseworkers in either appeal rights exhausted asylum seeker or EUSS cases. Our survey analysis suggests that around 11% of people accessing Fair Way have NRPF for reasons other than being EEA nationals or appeal rights exhausted asylum seeks.

Caseworkers in ARE-focussed services explained that Kiann's situation placed him outside their eligibility criteria. While they may assist Kiann to connect with other

services, direct support would not typically be provided. In EEA-focused services, the response to Kiann's case would vary. Some services would provide initial guidance and referrals, but not ongoing casework:

> *"We probably wouldn't caseload him … We would support with… get[ting] a lawyer, and if there's still ongoing health concerns then put him in touch with… the adult protection social work team… It would be more… directing him into the appropriate services."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Another seemed more willing to provide ongoing albeit light-touch support. Practitioners agreed that the primary pathway forward for Kiann would be to seek specialist legal advice and consider making an asylum claim. As such, early referral to legal services was a priority: "We would link him with a solicitor hopefully as soon as possible for legal advice." (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists). The view was that if legal counsel confirmed a viable protection case, the asylum process could proceed relatively quickly, especially given that Kiann had not previously made a claim:

> *"There's certainly a suggestion there that there is some form of protection case that he could potentially make, in which case… if somebody is at that point in the process and they haven't applied for asylum before… you might get a screening interview within a couple of weeks."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Submitting an asylum claim could also open access to Home Office support, which includes emergency accommodation and subsistence allowances:

> *"I think for us I guess it would depend on the advice the lawyer gave. If, for example, it was, 'Go down the asylum route,' for us a positive outcome would be him being able to submit an asylum claim and access Section 98 accommodation."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

That said, caseworkers highlighted the complexity of cases where people have overstayed their visa. These were seen as legally difficult because the person has already breached the conditions of entry. This can mean people face limited routes forward and end up in *"really desperate"* situations. (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists). Kiann's opportunity to avoid this was based on his potential to seek protection in the UK, but it is worth nothing that asylum claims from Indian nationals have a very low success rate.[92]

Prior to or in the absence of any asylum claim, Kiann's accommodation options would be exceptionally limited and informal arrangements, such as sofa surfing, likely the most feasible option. Whether his sister was able to accommodate him was something caseworkers would potentially explore. Wider crisis services, including those run by Fair Way partners, would be likely support Kiann with basic needs and referrals. As frontline workers noted:

[92] Home Office (2024) Accredited official statistics: How many people claim asylum in the UK? https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-september-2024/how-many-people-are-granted-asylum-in-the-uk#:~:text=on%20GOV.UK.-,3.,%25)%20nationals%20were%20also%20granted.

> *"If they were sofa-surfing or whatever and they were accessing the hub, we'd totally still support them with things like food vouchers, with things like GP referrals, that type of thing, absolutely. We just wouldn't get involved in the immigration side of it."* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists)

Income options were also seen to be "very difficult" (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists) given Kiann's inability to work legally or access benefits. Any financial support would come informally, if at all, through food banks or other charitable sources:

> *"It's going to be relying on things like food banks and the third sector, which is never as good as you want it to be"* (Frontline worker, focus group, EEA specialists).

Practitioners stressed the importance of connecting Kiann with supportive communities, particularly Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer plus (LGBTQ+) spaces, for his mental wellbeing and resilience:

> *"If I can get that person linked in with the local gay community... that can really give people a sense of belonging... make a huge difference"* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists).

This form of peer support was seen as vital to helping individuals like Kiann navigate the personal impact of exclusion and trauma.

Vignette 6 – Mohammad

Mohammad is a 53 year old man from Iran, who has been in the UK for 13 years. He claimed asylum on arrival, and was refused. He went on to submit further applications, but these too were refused. He stopped even trying to apply and has lived irregularly in the UK for around 8 years. Mohammad now has a child here and does not want to return to Iran as he wishes to be a father to his daughter. He is separated from his child's mother.

Mohammad's case was discussed by seven participants across three focus groups. His situation was seen to be plausible, but more unusual than the ARE and EEA cases above, though one participant was currently supporting a man in a very similar situation. Whether Mohammad was able to access Fair Way support would depend on the presence of a viable legal pathway to regularised status: *"They'd have to be working with an immigration solicitor towards settled status, and for that to be a possibility... being granted settled status as a refugee"* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists).

The most likely routes to status for Mohammed were via a protection claim or a family-based application via his (assumed) British-born daughter. However, frontline practitioners emphasised that both routes were fraught with potential challenges. Any progress would depend on working closely with effective legal support. Pursuing status regularisation based on having a daughter in the UK was subject to strict conditions, including that the individual can provide evidence of a "genuine and subsisting relationship" with the child:

> *"If the Home Office deem that he doesn't have a genuine and subsisting relationship with his child because he's not able to access the child, then it wouldn't be an option for him to use that relationship within his asylum case."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Even if a genuine relationship were established, further complications arise from the child's age:

> *"It's only [possible to pursue this route] when the child turns seven years old, even if the child was born in the UK."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

It was thought possible that Mohammad could access Fair Way accommodation, but this depended upon it being judged that he has a viable pathway to settlement and would again be subject to the significant availability limitations and prioritisation exercises discussed above.

Likewise, if engaged in developing an immigration claim, Mohammed's access to income could, in the short term, be facilitated through Fair Way's emergency cash payment scheme, again subject to availability within the budget and prioritisation processes. If access to this cash support were achieved, practitioners were of the view that it would help meet Mohammad's immediate needs, but emphasised that sustainable income options remained severely limited pending the resolution of his immigration status. Without legal status, Mohammed would have no access to employment or mainstream benefits, leaving him financially dependent on short-term, charitable support.

Finally, caseworkers emphasised again that earlier intervention, particularly at the point when Mohammad's visa situation began to deteriorate, could have prevented much of the ensuing and enduring hardship, instability and legal complexity and associated pressures on public and other services:

> *"The hope really… would be to move towards that… Advice from the beginning. Be involved from the beginning in order to improve outcomes. If you could resolve somebody's case well in six months, rather than stringing it out for ten years, it would alleviate pressures on mental health services, accommodation, and legal systems."* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

Key points

- While each scenario drew out specific points affecting people facing destitution and homelessness who have NRPF/RE in the particular circumstances sketched out, there were also strong recurring themes that cut across all or several of the vignette discussions.

- First, for those in the ARE group and other undocumented or unauthorised migrants in varied circumstances, accessing legal counsel was identified as an absolute precondition of progress towards regularisation via an asylum or other claim. But access to such support was acknowledged to be difficult, and even if secured, navigating claims for status could potentially take a great deal of time and be dependent upon the long-term engagement of the individual in question.

- Second, securing access to safe accommodation and financial assistance was seen as essential to protect the basic wellbeing and subsistence needs of those with NRPF/RE and facing crisis. Addressing acute forms of homelessness like rough sleeping was regarded as the preeminent priority. Beyond their importance for survival, these forms of assistance are seen as an invaluable enabler of engagement with caseworkers and lawyers that could help people to resolve their precarious situations sustainably, and as a guard against reoffending for those at risk of committing survival type crimes like shoplifting, that could seriously jeopardise and/or delay progress on their immigration case. In those (EU national) cases where employment could offer a route to an income and benefit eligibility, the feasibility of accessing employment was seen to depend on first attaining some stability via safe accommodation and cash support. Access to both Fair Way accommodation and cash support was always contingent on availability of spaces in limited housing units or budget, and prioritisation relative to others in need.

- Third, vulnerabilities including physical and mental health issues could enable access to statutory support via the Home Office or local authorities, but thresholds are exceptionally high. It is clear, however, that decision makers have some latitude in decisions in this area. Access to accommodation and subsistence support via social work is a possibility for those with a demonstrable care need, with this threshold seen to be reasonably generously interpreted in Edinburgh. In Glasgow, this threshold appears to be all but insurmountable for the vast majority of those accessing Fair Way. In Aberdeen, support via social work for adults with NRPF/RE was also seen to be hard to access, but the group supported by Fair Way are – where there is a reasonable prospect of progress towards settled status – often able to access LA temporary accommodation provided via the local authority for a period. Such access was not a possibility in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

- Fourth, our consideration of cases across the three groups Fair Way serves suggest some important comparisons. For appeal rights exhausted asylum seekers, effective casework support and legal counsel hold reasonable prospects of enabling people to re-access Home Office support via a fresh claim. The process of submitting a fresh claim can in itself be long and challenging, with Fair Way supports – where available and accessible – providing invaluable relative stability. The outcome of re-applications remains contingent on numerous factors, many beyond the control of the individual in question or the caseworker. Regularisation could take many years, if it happened at all. On balance EU nationals appear to face easier routes to settled status, but a history of offending, evidential requirements, complex needs, and other barriers to engagement could extend or completely jeopardise progress. Unauthorised or undocumented migrants appear to face the severest challenges and uncertainty in progressing to regularisation and are also less likely to be able to avail themselves of crisis support via Fair Way Scotland.

- Fifth, frontline workers saw many opportunities to have prevented the intense hardship facing those in the situations presented. Competent legal advice and robust case preparation at the outset of the asylum process (something that sits outside the

Fair Way model) was pivotal in preventing individuals from falling into a prolonged cycle of destitution and homelessness. It also seems plausible to suggest that Kiann's exit from his programme of study and (potentially) university accommodation could have been an important intervention point. More effective support to EU nationals, especially at key transition points like losing employment or accommodation, were also seen to have had potential to avoid long-term hardship. Addressing the problematic interaction between even minor criminal convictions and gaining settled status via the EUSS also emerges as an important potential prevention opportunity.

6. The economic case for more inclusive responses

So far, this report has focused on experiences of destitution and homelessness among those with NRPF/RE in Scotland and how to address them. This reflects a humanitarian imperative to address these most extreme forms of social disadvantage. To complement this humanitarian case for more inclusive responses to those facing extreme disadvantage because of their immigration status, this chapter considers the economic case for doing so.

In the first section, we draw some provisional conclusions on the economic case for Fair Way Scotland over its initial three years. To do so we utilise partnership data on the costs of delivering support alongside survey, qualitative and outcomes data collected as part of this evaluation. This enables us to estimate in economic/financial terms the impacts of the partnership, in terms of reduced public service usage and gains in subjective wellbeing.[93]

The second section sets out ways in which the Fair Way approach could be extended and the potential impacts of this. A key focus is on modelling the impact of strengthening or scaling-up certain elements of the Fair Way offer, particularly in terms of housing and cash payments. This section also considers the impact of extending Fair Way's coverage from the three cities in which it currently operates to a more national basis across Scotland.

A provisional economic analysis of Fair Way Scotland to date

There is a small but growing number of studies which seek to evaluate policy initiatives in the homelessness field from an economic (cost-benefit) perspective (Bramley 2024). An important element in many has been an attempt to identify the 'excess' costs which people experiencing homelessness incur in certain public services, costs which may be reduced substantially if solutions are found to people's homelessness and wider needs (e.g. poverty). According to Culhane (2002, 2012) and Spellman (2010), the main areas of excess cost, beyond emergency housing and support, are in health services, criminal justice and income maintenance (where provided). As such, we designed our survey of people accessing Fair Way Scotland support to measure use of these services. Gains in mental wellbeing can also be attributed monetary value,[94] and to enable this approach to valuing the economic benefits of Fair Way Scotland, our survey included the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale.

[93] The originally proposed study design included an entry/exit survey that would have allowed us to quantitatively measure the individual-level impacts of Fair Way Scotland as changes between two points in time, but running detailed surveys with a highly vulnerable group at two points in time in the context of crisis services could not be practically implemented. See Watts-Cobbe, B, McMordie, L, Bramley, G, Sims, R, Young, G & Rayment, M 2024, Destitution by Design: righting the wrongs of UK immigration policy in Scotland. Online: Heriot-Watt University. https://doi.org/10.17861/D38D

[94] Based on Trotter, L. & Rallings Adams, M-K (2017) *Valuing improvements in mental health: applying the wellbeing valuation method to WEMWBS.* HACT (Housing Associations Charitable Trust), London, UK www.hact.org.uk@HACThousinginfor@hact.org.uk

The rest of this section builds towards provisional conclusions about the economic case for Fair Way Scotland, via the following steps: establishing the cost of providing support via Fair Way Scotland; reporting our findings on the use of public services by those accessing Fair Way and the mental wellbeing of this group; and making evidence-informed assumptions about the difference Fair Way Scotland support makes to people's use of public services and mental wellbeing.

Fair Way service costs

The initial overall budget for Fair Way over three years was £2.55m and actual spend to date suggest that that budget will be fully utilised. This included £300k for the evaluation, which it may be reasonable to exclude from the economic analysis. An additional £0.5m of costs to deliver Fair Way that were not included in the core budget were identified across four of the partners, suggesting an overall cost (including of the evaluation) of £3.05m.

Changes made to the service offer since mid-2024 have incurred additional costs, particularly to support increased casework capacity and an expansion in the provision of cash payments beyond only those in Fair Way accommodation. These changes were funded by an additional £440k grant from Scottish Government (less £14k underspend allowance, making £426k net). Our own survey data suggests the additional cash payments would have accounted for between £121-£257k of that during the period our survey was open. As detailed in chapter three, the amount of accommodation provided directly by Fair Way has increased over the time, but this expansion in the offer has been achieved within the original core budget (reflecting primarily a delay in scaling up the accommodation offer to the intended level).

In sum, the total cost for Fair Way over the initial period of operation considered in this study has been £3.48m, or £3.18m if we exclude evaluation costs.

Public service usage

Our survey of those accessing Fair Way Scotland asked questions about the frequency and duration of use of five categories of health service and five categories of criminal justice service over the preceding six months. Survey respondents reported using all five of the health services we asked about more frequently than the relevant benchmark population averages (typically for working age men/adults).[95] More specifically, those accessing Fair Way report:

- Visiting a GP more than twice (2.1 times) as often than the general population
- Having a hospital appointment 5.5 times more often than the general population
- Using an ambulance 3.7 times as often than the general population
- Attending Accident and Emergency 2.5 times as often than the general population
- Staying in hospital overnight 1.8 times as often than the general population.

Table 6.1 presents the analysis of the costs of this usage of health services combining survey responses with published data on general population benchmarks and

[95] Excess usage was not markedly different between the asylum, EEA and other groups.

contemporary unit costs of the relevant services. The estimates are annualised (assuming continuance of usage at the level of the period preceding the survey) and multiplied by the grossed-up number of service users.

Table 6.1: Health service utilisation data and derived excess annual costs for Fair Way Scotland cohort

Item	General Practice Visits	Hospital App's	Ambulance	A&E	Hospital Overnight	Total Health Services
Ave. no. of times used in 6 months	2.12	1.37	0.22	0.36	0.73	
Annualised	4.23	2.73	0.45	0.73	1.46	10.04
Benchmark all ages	3.00	0.70	0.14	0.30	1.34	
Adj. benchmark working age adults	2.23	0.50	0.14	0.30	1.00	3.94
Excess annual usage	2.44	2.23	0.31	0.43	0.46	6.10
Unit Cost	£40	£203	£372	£341	£534	
Total Excess Cost	£165,300	£838,200	£256,000	£285,100	£802,200	£2,346,900

Sources: usage frequency derived from the Fair Way survey, weighted to reflect the scale of different providers by year of commencement; benchmarks are derived from relevant NHS admin or national survey statistics; unit costs are from standard sources including Public Health Scotland, Scottish Government and Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

Although all five headings show excess utilisation and cost, the overall total cost of health service utilisation by this group is mainly driven by hospital out-patient appointments, and also overnight stays in hospital, although none of the other items could be described as trivial in scale. The excess costs in health were driven by both main groups, Asylum accounting for £1.05m and EEA (& other) for £1.29m. Given the weighted number of people accessing Fair Way each year totalling approximately 1,850 and a total excess health care cost of £2.35 million, the annual average excess costs of providing health care to those accessing Fair Way is £1,270 per person.

Box 9: Tomasz, aged 45-64

Tomasz initially came to the UK from Easter Europe in 2005, travelling back and forth before returning long term in 2012. His EUSS application remains pending due to unpaid fines and incomplete community service following previous convictions. As a result, he is not able to access homelessness assistance or benefits and has been homeless since at least the time of the pandemic. During the pandemic, Tomasz was accommodated in a B&B hotel, but was evicted when pandemic support ended. He now sleeps in a makeshift tent in an area of woodland. He is barred from at least one major hostel and distrusts other services due to curfews which he sees as infantilising

and negative staff experiences, preferring his current rough sleeping spot despite harsh conditions. Tomasz reports drinking less alcohol than in the past, but he continues to smoke marijuana. His physical health has worsened, including arthritic pain and lung issues, aggravated by exposure to cold and damp. He lost his GP registration during the pandemic and relies on ambulances in emergencies, though he intends to re-register with a GP eventually. Tomasz is not currently permitted to work in the UK, but even if this changes, he is concerned that his age and health would make it difficult for to return to the kind of construction work he used to do. Tomasz' Fair Way caseworker has helped him secure legal representation and recently case support of £120 every fortnight. He used his first payment to buy well-fitting winter clothes, which he finds hard to find from charities, and a phone, which he uses to research topics of interest and keep occupied. The modest but steady income via Fair Way is a small step forward, offering some control over day-to-day essentials. Yet without resolved legal status or accommodation, he remains in a very difficult position.

The Fair Way survey also asked about usage of five categories of criminal justice service. Table 6.2 presents an analysis of the associated costs. Again, all of the service categories show above average utilisation or involvement by the Fair Way cohort. We would expect to see rates of engagement with the criminal justice system higher than for the general population, given that this group experience some of the most extreme forms of marginalisation in society, including frequent rough sleeping, near universal housing adversity and destitution, limited or no formal opportunities to work, and in many cases trauma.[96]

The association between homelessness, complex needs and criminal justice involvement is well evidenced in other studies, for example in the evaluation of Housing First Scotland, a programme targeted at people facing homelessness alongside other complex needs.[97] Relevant data is also available from the 2022 Destitution in the UK Survey, which shows that respondents experiencing core homelessness were six times more likely to have been in trouble with the police over the last year than those no experience of homeless. Those who were sleeping rough (or had done so in the last month) were 5 times more likely to have been in trouble with the police than those with no homeless experience.

There are a number of reasons such associations are likely to arise: first, people experiencing homelessness may engage in 'survival' or acquisitive crime to meet their basic needs; second, being on the street overnight/during the day rather than in a private dwelling means people experiencing relevant forms of homelessness are more likely to come into contact with the police for public order type offences; third, people experiencing core forms of homelessness may have other characteristics that mean they are more likely to come into contact with the police (e.g. mental health problems).

[96] Both in their country of origin, on their journey to the UK and since their arrival. See Watts-Cobbe, B., McMordie, L., Bramley, G., Sims, R., Young, G., & Rayment, M. (2024) Destitution by Design: righting the wrongs of UK immigration policy in Scotland. Heriot-Watt University. https://doi.org/10.17861/D38D-X029

[97] See p.116 in ibid and Johnsen, S., Blenkinsopp, J. & Rayment, M. (2022) Scotland's Housing First Pathfinder Evaluation: Final Report. Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh. https://doi.org/10.17861/8GJ7-SV28

Indeed, qualitative data we gathered as part of this evaluation clearly shows that some of the criminal justice system engagement recorded among those receiving Fair Way support was survival crime, public order or mental health related. It is worth noting that the rates of engagement recorded for the Fair Way cohort appear to be substantially lower than those documented in the baseline survey of people accessing the Housing First Scotland programme, for instance.[98]

Within the Fair Way cohort, the EEA group tended to incur much greater criminal-justice related costs than the asylum group, whose costs are in fact broadly in line with or below the general adult population.[99] It is also worth noting that one service – court appearances – dominates the picture in terms of excess costs as it has exceptionally high unit costs.[100]

Table 6.2: Criminal justice service utilisation data and derived excess annual costs for Fair Way Scotland cohort

	Caution	Arrest	Court App'nce	Custody	Prison Overnight	Total
No. of times x % of weighted response	0.20	0.14	0.27	0.23	0.10	
Annualised	0.40	0.27	0.54	0.45	0.20	1.86
Benchmark all ages	0.03	0.02	0.05	0.03	0.01	
Adj. benchmark W A adults	0.03	0.02	0.07	0.03	0.01	0.16
Excess annual usage	0.37	0.26	0.47	0.42	0.19	1.70
Unit Cost	£442	£920	£2,280	£363	£133	
Total Excess Cost	£300,900	£434,000	£1,966,500	£284,700	£46,600	£3,032,700

In making use of these data to include within an assessment of the impact of Fair Way, we need to make a judgement as to the extent to which engagement with Fair Way support would reduce the extent of adverse health conditions/episodes, improve mental wellbeing, reduce health services use and/or interactions with the police or criminal justice system. Our survey data provides a range of relevant data relevant to this question, including that those who have received Fair Way accommodation or cash support reported lower utilisation and associated costs under a majority of public services usage headings. Specifically:

[98] See p.116 in ibid and Johnsen, S, Blenkinsopp, J & Rayment, M 2022, Scotland's Housing First Pathfinder Evaluation: Final Report. Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh. https://doi.org/10.17861/8GJ7-SV28

[99] In all five criminal justice service categories, there were no Asylum respondents reporting more than one instance, whereas multiple instances occurred quite frequently for EEA respondents.

[100] The unit cost for the court service is notably high, but there were also quite a few cases of multiple court appearances in the EEA group. For one instance it was decided to reduce a high sampling weight for one extreme case.

- In the case of most (3/5) health services, those in Fair Way accommodation report less or much less utilisation than those who are not
- In the case of all types of criminal justice engagement, those in Fair Way accommodation report less or much less engagement than those not so accommodated
- In the case of most (3/5) health services, those who received cash support from Fair Way report less or much less utilisation than those who had not received cash support
- In the case of most (4/5) types of criminal justice engagement, those who received cash support from Fair Way report less or much less than those who had not received cash support.

Moreover, those who have been accessing Fair Way support for more than three months were:

- Much less likely to report mental health problems or have a low score on the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)
- Somewhat less likely to report poor physical health.

This association between accessing Fair Way support and mental health gains is relevant both as an explanation of why we may see lower health service utilisation among those accessing Fair Way for longer, but also because we see an association between lower mental wellbeing and getting in trouble with the police (see below).[101]

In addition to this data showing direct associations between accessing Fair Way support and better health/lower public service usage, previous chapters have presented data showing associations between accessing Fair Way support and improvements in people's wider circumstances that we would expect to impact positively on people's health, wellbeing, and use of public services, including that those who had been accessing support for more than three months were:

- Less likely to be currently rough sleeping, staying with family/friends, or in hostels, hotels or B&B
- Slightly less likely to be destitute on the income criterion or the material deprivation criterion
- Much more likely to have accessed support services relating to food, other essentials and welfare, and somewhat more likely to have used support with emotional, health or employment issues
- Somewhat more likely to work, formally or informally, while being less likely to be not permitted to work.

Our judgements about the likely impact of Fair Way on public service usage are also informed by the Fair Way delivery partner outcomes data for 2024/5 reviewed in chapter

[101] These associations pertain in the case of low and very low WEMWBS scores, but do not reach the usual standard for statistical significance given small sample sizes.

2, which indicated positive outcome rates of between 26% (with 17% in progress) and 91%, with rates higher in accommodation-based and smaller casework services.

The final set of evidence drawn upon to inform our judgements regarding the difference that Fair Way support makes to public service usage is of course our qualitative interviews with people accessing Fair Way and the frontline workers supporting them, much of which has been reviewed in previous chapters. These data support the evidence presented above that many of those accessing Fair Way have seen substantial improvements in their circumstances, though of course any conclusions drawn must bear in mind that the qualitative sample is not necessarily representative of the wider cohort.

Taking an overall view (see appendix two), it is clear that there is a difference between the Asylum group and the EEA and Other groups, with overall improvements in people's circumstances more common for the EEA and Other group than for the asylum group. Focusing on particular domains, in terms of *migration status*, about half of those we interviewed had seen an improvement in their status, with only a small number seeing a worsening (see chapter two). The improvements were mainly in the EEA group. Among the Asylum (ARE) group, those who saw an improvement had typically submitted a fresh claim (and thus re-accessed Home Office support), rather than having received a final decision on status.

In terms of *housing or living situation*, the overall picture was positive, with large majorities reporting improvements across all three groups, though it is worth noting that those in Fair Way accommodation are likely over-represented in the qualitative sample (see chapter three). Access to Fair Way's own provided accommodation was generally very much welcomed, and this had chiefly benefited the asylum group. There were still some concerns about unsettling multiple moves and the quality of some temporary accommodation offered, particularly that offered at the emergency end of the spectrum.

In terms of *destitution*, almost all of those we interviewed (save one person) remained destitute, but many of these had experienced mitigations to their experiences of material deprivation and 18 had experienced an increase in their income specifically (see chapter four). For *employment,* the overall picture was of 'no change', reflecting in particular that most in the Asylum and Other groups are not permitted to work (also covered in chapter four). For the EEA group, there was some improvement for a minority, with others constrained by health issues as well as concern about the poor, even abusive, quality of some jobs.

Looking beyond the qualitative data reported in prior chapters, we can also provide an overview of qualitative results covering other relevant domains (again, see appendix two).

For *mental health,* the qualitative evidence review paints a less positive picture than the quantitative measures in the survey, which found significantly better scores on self-reported mental health and using the WEMWBS scale for those in Fair Way for longer (over 3 months), with a more marginal possible improvement in self-reported physical

health. Of the 26 people who took part in qualitative interviews at round two, a majority indicated that they had experienced a deterioration in their mental health, with around a third reporting an improvement. Improvement was more likely in EEA group and attributable mainly to better accommodation and/or an improved migration status. The main negative impacts on mental health were ongoing stress and anxiety related to precarity of migration status, unaddressed trauma from the past and looming threats from certain policy initiatives (including the Rwanda scheme at the time of the study). Other factors mentioned included unsafe or unstable housing, the difficulty of getting a GP appointment, and fragmented access to mental health services.

For *physical health*, deterioration outnumbered improvement by a large margin, but with slightly more cases of no change than in the mental health case. Deterioration was particularly highlighted in the Asylum group. Deterioration in physical health was in some cases attributed in part to the impacts of adverse mental health, as well as delays in waiting for treatment or finding the right team. A variety of conditions were mentioned and some of these could be clearly related to living conditions, including poor (or no) housing and poor diet.

In terms of *criminal justice* involvement, our qualitative evidence aligns with the survey results in evidencing a high overall incidence of engagement with the system, particularly within the EEA group. The data reveals a number of instances of criminal justice involvement triggered by public order/nuisance issues in the public domain related to rough sleeping. These issues were acknowledged to be compounded for some by alcohol use and/or mental health problems. Within the survey, involvement with police and alcohol/drug issues were associated with very low mental wellbeing measured by WEMWBS.[102] There was also evidence of an amount of survival (acquisitive) crime, unsurprising given the financial position of nearly all service users. For the asylum group, the fear of removal from the UK was a potent deterrent to engaging in crime. The qualitative evidence on these issues also highlights experiences of victimhood, for example being a victim of the theft of key resources (a bike) as well as cash, physical attacks (sometimes by people sharing accommodation), hate crime and domestic violence. Some participants reflected on how these incidents could be blamed on poverty, as well as substance misuse and opportunism, but many were afraid to complain due to their precarious migration status.

Part of the purpose of reviewing this qualitative evidence here is to inform judgements about how much difference overall Fair Way has made, or will make by the time people finish their period of casework support, to these key outcomes. It is clear from the above summary that it is a mixed picture, with a predominance of gains in some domains (housing particularly, and to some degree in migration status, and destitution/income), stasis for most with gains for just a few individuals (employment), or an even balance between gains, stasis and worsening (mental health). In one significant domain (physical health) a worsening in people's circumstances seems to predominate. These results on mental and physical health are somewhat counter-intuitive and in some tension with our

[102] We see associations between low and very low WEMWBS scores and having got in trouble with the police/had drug or alcohol issues in the last year, though in virtue of small sample sizes only the association between very low WEMWBS scores and drug/alcohol problems reaches the usual threshold of statistical significance.

quantitative survey results, but encourage us to be cautious in our assumptions about the difference Fair Way makes to people in these domains.

Translating these data into an indicative cost/benefit calculation requires data on the duration of people's engagement with Fair Way Scotland and the duration of positive impacts achieved. Fair Way Scotland does not systematically collect data on duration of engagement, though collating available delivery partner data that the average duration people receive casework suggests a period of around 8 months.[103] Using our survey, if we assume that on average the survey was completed halfway through the casework period, then the average duration would be 10.3 months, though we would expect large variations around this average given the diversity of people's circumstances.

We would generally expect that the benefits of better health and wellbeing, and reduced use of health services or involvement with the criminal justice system would gradually build up during people's engagement with Fair Way. Major progress on people's migration status would generally be expected to occur towards the end of their engagement with Fair Way, and this would be expected in turn to support further improvements in mental health and wellbeing. It would also be realistic to expect those benefits (and associated cost savings) to persist for a period into the future beyond the formal end of casework. A relatively conservative assumption would be that the benefits/reduced costs extend over a period of 1.5 years including both before and (more importantly) after the end of casework. While hopefully these benefits would persist longer term, this needs to be set against an implicit counterfactual in which, over time, the people involved would have managed to achieve some improvements, through accessing other services or sources of support, even in the absence of Fair Way (so called 'deadweight').

Taking all the above into account, we make a working assumption that accessing Fair Way support can reasonably be expected to reduce excess public service usage costs by around 25%. Noting the review of the qualitative evidence in particular, a higher level of improvement could be applied to the EEA group. However, in the interests of simplicity and caution, we apply the 25% assumption across the board. These would translate in financial terms to annual savings of £0.59m in health service costs and £0.76m in criminal justice costs per year, making a total of £1.35m altogether. Linking this to the suggested conservative period of 1.5 years over which this level of improvement would be realised, we have a total cost saving of 1.5x1.35 or £2.03m.

Two points should be noted about these estimates. Firstly, the larger part of these savings would be attributable to the EEA group, and the calculations rest on the assumption that their comparatively high criminal justice engagement could be significantly reduced by accessing Fair Way support. The qualitative evidence supports this by showing that some of the criminal justice cost seems to relate to public order and survival crime issues, which would be avoidable with a consistent Fair Way offer in terms of accommodation and cash and progress securing this group access to mainstream benefits via an EUSS application. Future research could usefully explore the proportion

[103] This could be biased downwards by the fact that some longer-drawn out cases have not yet concluded within the survey period.

of criminal justice engagement by this group that is 'survival'/acquisitive or public order related, something that our data does not capture. Secondly, these estimates are conservative in the sense that the period over which these savings is set at only 1.5 years; it is not unreasonable to think that these benefits would be sustained over a longer period in most cases, against a counterfactual of slower improvement in the absence of Fair Way.

Mental wellbeing

Our survey of those accessing Fair Way included a validated measure of mental wellbeing, The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale or WEMWBS. The results show that:

- Low mental wellbeing is around twice as likely among those accessing Fair Way Scotland than for the general population (33.7% compared to 16.5%)
- Very low mental wellbeing is around 3 times more likely among those accessing Fair Way Scotland than for the general population than (7.8% compared to 2.5%).

By combining this data with evidence-informed judgements about the extent of improvements in people's mental health and wellbeing associated with accessing Fair Way support, we can attribute monetary value to this aspect of Fair Way Scotland's impact.[104] As detailed above, our survey data shows that people accessing Fair Way support for longer than three months, as well as those receiving cash or accommodation from Fair Way, were *much less likely* to report mental health problems or to score low on the WEMWBS scale than those accessing support for a shorter period.

As well as being evidenced in this way, such improvements are theoretically highly likely given the levels of success Fair Way partners are achieving in terms of improvements in people's migration status (see above and chapter two) and the likely potent role of insecurity in people's migration status in generating poor mental health and wellbeing. This supposition is accorded additional support by qualitative data gathered from people with direct experience and frontline workers.

On this basis, we assume that accessing Fair Way support would enable *half* of those in the lowest scoring WEMWBS category in the survey to move up to the merely poor mental wellbeing category and a proportion of those with poor mental health to move up to the average level. Given the difference in prospects of gaining leave to remain between the EEA and asylum groups (at least over the short to medium term), we would expect a smaller proportion (set at one-quarter) of the latter to experience this move out of poor mental health (we set it at one half for the other groups). For these two groups, the equivalent income value to these gains would be £5,730 per individual in the first case and £3,940 in the second case, after allowing for improvement which would have happened anyway, through spontaneous or natural remission of the condition at 27% (so-called 'deadweight'). On this basis, the average annual individual value of these

[104] Based on Trotter, L. & Rallings Adams, M-K. (2017) Valuing improvements in mental health: applying the wellbeing valuation method to WEMWBS. HACT (Housing Associations Charitable Trust), London, UK www.hact.org.uk@HACThousinginfor@hact.org.uk

gains across the cohort is calculated to be £729, giving a total annual figure of £1.19m and a value realised over an average of 1.5 years of £1.79m.

Box 10: Tsehay, aged 35-44

Tsehay arrived in the UK in 2003 and claimed asylum due to religious persecution in her country of origin. Her journey was dangerous and traumatic. On arrival, she was arrested and spent time in detention in England before being 'dispersed' to Scotland. When we first met her, she was in Home Office accommodation following submission of the latest in a series of asylum claims. When we spoke to Tsehay for the second time, this claim had been refused but she had once again submitted a fresh claim and was residing in Home Office accommodation. Despite receiving no refusal, her financial support had been stopped several months prior and eviction threatened, but her Fair Way caseworker had eventually been able to restore their allowance. This disruption left Tsehay struggling with no money for some time and completely reliant on food banks and charitable vouchers in order to eat. Her physical health has deteriorated as she faced ongoing complications from a previous Tuberculosis infection and had recently been hospitalised with a chest infection. Stress exacerbates these symptoms, and although she sees a GP regularly and is awaiting further specialist appointments, she worries the condition could worsen. Her mental health has also declined due to prolonged uncertainty and the repeated threat of losing housing and support. She now takes medication for depression and insomnia and has been referred for a mental health assessment. She sometimes self-harm when overwhelmed. Accessing health support is challenging because Tsehay's ASPEN card does not allow for cash withdrawals making bus travel difficult. A Fair Way Scotland partner and other charities have provided food, clothing, and emotional support to Tsehay, but the slow progress of their legal case, ongoing threats of eviction, and repeated stoppages of meagre cash support have significant mental and physical strain. Her hope is that a successful asylum outcome might finally bring some relief.

Comparing overall benefits and costs

Using the costs calculated above and estimates of benefits accrued from savings made *only via reductions in public service use*[105] suggests a benefit-cost ratio for Fair Way Scotland of 2.03/3.18 or 0.64, meaning that for every £1 spent, £0.64 in benefits (cost savings) are expected. A wider social cost-benefit perspective including the assumed mental wellbeing benefits gives a benefit-cost ratio of (2.03+1.79)/3.18 or 1.20, suggesting that for every £1 spent, £1.20 in benefits (cost savings) are expected and thus the benefits of Fair Way Scotland moderately outweigh the costs.

This analysis depends on several key assumptions, which can give rise to a wide range of values, but we have picked cautious assumptions within those ranges here, while presenting relevant evidence to support the reasonableness of our assumptions. It is also important to stress that this provisional economic analysis is narrowly focused, and does not include a wide range of potentially significant benefits (and associated cost

[105] Given the short time periods involved, we do not deem it necessary to adjust future costs/benefits to their present day value (i.e. including discounting in these calculations).

savings) likely to accrue from Fair Way Scotland support, including to local authorities and the Home Office in not needing to accommodate/support those whom Fair Way effectively support to regularise their status, and to statutory and voluntary-sector crisis services providing support to people in extreme destitution/rough sleeping.

Overall then, this suggests that under plausible scenarios, the benefits of investing in support for those with NRPF/RE like Fair Way Scotland are likely to outweigh the costs. Put differently, our analysis highlights the cost of current UK hostile environment policies that exclude people from access to some supports at considerable cost to them personally, but also to the public services left to pick up the pieces. These conclusions support the prioritisation of inclusive responses addressing destitution and homelessness alongside a focus on promoting health and wellbeing and minimising public service usage, especially in relation to expensive emergency health and criminal justice interventions.

Extending the scale and scope of Fair Way Scotland and wider responses to adults with NRPF/RE

Fair Way Scotland currently operates across three cities and with a limited budget. We have seen evidence throughout this report that the scale of current delivery falls well short of demand. Given these constraints, we have shown that Fair Way is making a significant difference to the circumstances of those it supports and that this performance is likely on a set of plausible assumptions to represent good value for money. This raises the question of the difference that could be made – both to those supported and in cost-benefit terms – if Fair Way Scotland were scaled up or equivalent provision provided to meet or more closely meet the scale of need.

Estimating the scale of potential need Scotland-wide

To explore the potential impacts of such changes in the scale of support provision, this section estimates overall levels of need Scotland-wide and down to Local Authority (LA) level. To do so we build on the Destitution in the UK Survey (DUKS) of around 3,700 crisis services users conducted in 2022 and associated analysis of secondary indicators to predict levels of destitution across all Great Britain local authorities. The 2022 DUKS did not include a specific question on whether respondents were NRPF, but included a range of relevant questions that help us deduce NRPF status with some confidence, including whether respondents were born outside the UK, had Leave to Remain or Refugee status, and were destitute and received no money from benefits.[106] We found in 2022 that 36.5% of destitute migrants using crisis services were probably subject to NRPF/RE.

This data has been modified and updated for current purposes using complementary evidence, and specifically inclusion of factors based on (1) Scottish local estimates of

[106] Most weight is given to responses to questions listed in the main text, but also included in the calculation with lower weighting are the following factors: whether someone came to live in UK last year; whether they experienced a problem with their right to live or work in UK in last year; whether they were turned down for an application to receive Universal Credit; whether they reported no sources of money in last month; whether they responded to a banded income question for the last month with 'nothing' or £1-59.

'core homelessness', (2) new Scottish Census data on relevant countries of birth,[107] and (3) the up-to-date Home Office information on asylum cases supported in Scottish Local Authorities. The resulting numbers are shown in Table 6.3. To translate the resulting 'point in time' figure shown in the first column of the table into an annual ('stock and flow') figure, we make the broad but conservative assumption that the annual figure would be 2.3 times the spot figure.

We would expect potential/actual Fair Way caseloads at any one time to lie somewhere between these figures, depending upon service capacity, the turnover of clients and their length of time receiving support. The annual number will include those actively using the service at a point in time, those registered as live cases but not in contact that week, and others whose service journey started and/or ended during the year.

We can compare the data-based estimates of need in table 6.3 to the grossed-up estimates of the number of people actually accessing Fair Way support annually based on our survey. In Edinburgh, the Fair Way survey suggests a total 'spot' figure of 352, which is very high (more than double) compared to our formula-based estimate of point in time need in the city (160). At the other extreme, Glasgow reported a grossed-up number of people accessing Fair Way (218) which was only 26% of the point in time total generated from our formula-based estimate, while Aberdeen/shire reporting figures of 70 representing 45% of our formula-based estimate of need. These wide variations partly reflect differences in the way recruitment into the survey worked across different services and cities. In Edinburgh there was a large number survey respondents who had been accessing Fair Way support for over a year (36% of weighted number), while still quite a lot who had only been receiving it for less than 2 months (26%), a 'bimodal' pattern which was less in evidence in the other areas. These differences may reflect factors such as service capacity relative to need, but also distinct approaches to caseload management. In our previous report we detailed distinct approaches in Edinburgh and Glasgow (where large caseloads are maintained) and Aberdeen, where caseloads are capped to ensure provision of relatively intensive support. The discussion of key stakeholder and worker perspectives at the end of Chapter 3 also provides some pointers to the different degree and types of rationing of service, and different levels of complementary provision by the local authorities in the three case study areas. Taking all this together with Table 6.3 suggests that Glasgow may be a case where Fair Way support most severely falls short of actual levels of need.

Table 6.3 shows that the current three cities in which Fair Way operates account for an estimated two-thirds (66%) of the total potential need across Scotland. If some of those accessing Fair Way support come from adjacent districts in the wider Lothians or Clyde Valley area, then this percentage could rise to around 70%. The implication of extending the service to cover the whole of Scotland is that sufficient additional resources would be required to scale up by between 37% and 49%, depending on the extent to which the Lothian and Clyde Valley catchments are already covered by Edinburgh and Glasgow-based services, though it might be argued that extending the service to areas where the

[107] This focuses on ten regions or groups of countries which are highly represented in the Fair Way cohort (new post 2004 EU; Africa Central and West; Pakistan; Other Middle East; Non-EU Europe; South America; Africa North; Iran; Iraq; Central America), supplemented by other evidence of involvement in asylum or irregular migration flows.

relevant populations are more thinly spread might incur additional costs e.g. for travel or multiple service locations. Bypassing such complications, this suggests that extending the existing service to cover the whole of Scotland could incur additional costs of (based on current budgets) between £1.1m and £1.6m for a service that ran effectively for just over two years.

Table 6.3: Formula-based estimated numbers of potential demand for Fair Way support by grouped local authorities, based on DUKS, Core Homelessness and Census migration data

City/Region	Spot	Annual
Aberdeen/shire	157	361
Dundee	48	110
Tayside	53	123
Central	56	129
Fife	60	139
Edinburgh	160	369
Lothians	61	140
Glasgow	828	1,904
Clyde Valley	159	366
Ayrshire	51	118
Borders, D&G	38	87
Highland, A&B, Islands	52	120
Scotland	1,724	3,966
Share of 3 cities	1,145	66%
include 30% of subregion	1,211	70%

Recognising that the existing shape of the service offers accommodation and cash support to only limited numbers (given budgetary constraints), the following sections consider the cost of extending these elements to meet estimated levels of need.

Expanding the housing offer

To date, the scale of the Fair Way accommodation offer has been limited by the available budget. Given levels of homelessness among those accessing Fair Way (see chapter three), there is clearly a strong case to increase accommodation provision to a level which would meet the needs of relevant sub-groups, and in particular prevent rough sleeping and other elements of core homelessness affecting this group. This section considers the cost implications of such an expansion in the Fair Way accommodation offer.

Table 6.4 sets out the current (at time of survey) living accommodation of those accessing Fair Way Scotland in the period 2023-25 based on our survey, including a

reapportionment of those who did not answer the current living question. Table 6.6 then sets out a set of reallocations of cases from less suitable/more expensive forms of housing (all essentially forms of 'core homelessness') to the preferred Fair Way offer of community-based accommodation i.e. shared (usually two-bedroom) social rented flats, and the cost implications of this. Two priority groups are identified for rehousing: first, those rough sleeping and in hotels/Bed & Breakfast accommodation, plus half of the 'other' group;[108] and second, the remainder of the 'other' group plus half of those staying with friends and relatives (sofa surfers, i.e. where people are overcrowded and their situation is not sustainable) and half of those in hostels and other congregate settings.

Table 6.4: Current living arrangements of Fair Way Scotland (FWS) cohort 2022-25

	Survey Data: In Fair Way Accom?		Total	Adjusted Not FWS	In FWS
Current living arrangement	**No**	**FWS already**			
	0	1			
Not known	307	13	320	0	0
Family/friend's house (e.g., sofa surfing)	145	0	145	177	0
Own flat/house, rented or owned	66	0	66	81	0
Hostel, refuge, shelter (inc charity/agency)	156	45	201	191	20
Other	56	0	56	69	0
Room in a hotel / B&B via Local Authority	178	0	178	218	0
Sleeping rough	282	0	282	345	0
Temporary flat/house agency/charity	54	5	59	66	30
Temporary flat/house Fair Way Scotland	24	98	122	29	113
Temporary flat/house Home Office	119	2	121	146	0
Temporary flat/house Local Authority	293	0	293	359	0
Total	1680	163	1843	1680	163
subtotal known	1373				
Markup for unknown	1.22				

Note: The first three columns are grossed up numbers from the survey; columns 4 and 5 are adjusted numbers following (a) pro rata reallocation of cases 'Not known' (i.e. did not answer question); and (b) further prudential reallocation of some cases responding 'hostel/refuge/shelter' but also 'In FWS accommodation', to reflect the fact that there has been very little use of such accommodation by Fair way.

[108] Following practice in analysing DUKS data, we assume 'Other' to include a combination of unconventional accommodation or No Fixed Abode plus cases where respondents are in various forms of congregate or temporary accommodation but not sure what box to tick.

Table 6.5: Potential reallocation of service users into Fair Way temporary accommodation (shared 2-bed flats) – numbers and cost impacts

					Net Cost Change	
Current housing	**Option 1**	**Option 2**	**Unit Cost**	**Unit Cost**	**Option 1**	**Option 2**
	Move to FWS	**Move to FWS**	**saved £pw**	**incurred £pw**	**x 40 weeks /case**	
Family/friends		-89	0	80		0
Own home						
Hostel, etc.		-95	280	80		-1,068,935
Other	-34	-34		80	0	0
Hotel / B & B	-218		400	80	-3,484,807	
Sleeping rough	-345		194	80	-2,677,624	
TA agency/charity						
TA Fair Way (pref)	*597*	*398*		*80*	*1,910,771*	*1,272,542*
T A Home Office						
T A L A		-179	267	80		-1,914,466
Total moves to FWS	597	398			-4,251,660	-1,710,859
			Aff rent	80		
Feasible no./dur.			Half of time/cases		-2,125,830	-855,430

The publicly funded costs of these moves are based on estimates from a range of published sources covering different forms of homeless temporary accommodation including, where applicable (i.e. for hostels, rough sleeping), associated support costs (which would in this case be covered by Fair Way). These unit costs (£ per week, shown in columns 3-4 of Table 6.5) are intended to be representative of Scotland as a whole, while noting that Edinburgh costs may be higher. The additional cost per individual (occasionally couple) accommodated by Fair Way is based on the level of 'affordable' (or intermediate) rent chargeable in the social rented sector, taken to be the 'opportunity cost' of Fair Way using these units. This rent level is above the level of social rent to allow for furnishing, higher management input given higher turnover, etc. relative to long-term social renting. These costs are assumed to be incurred over the whole duration of the person's (or couple's) period receiving Fair Way casework (40 weeks), to show the maximum possible impact from this expanded accommodation offer. At the bottom of Table 6.5, alternative figures are shown, assuming either that only half of these cases

could realistically be housed in this way, or alternatively that on average it would only be possible to house them for half of the period of their casework journey.

With the first tranche of these moves in place, roughly a third of those accessing Fair Way would be in more appropriate social rented accommodation and the public sector financial position would have improved, by around 2.1m. With the second tranche included, there would be additional benefits of around £0.86m. These figures use the more realistic 'half of time or cases' estimate shown in the bottom row of Table 6.5. Challenges with this scenario would of course include the very scarce supply of social rented units, in Edinburgh in particular, and potential difficulties securing this volume of flats for this group given other demand pressures. Nevertheless, our analysis shows that expanding Fair Way's accommodation offer to better meet levels of need could in principle be done in a way that does not increase overall public spending and indeed should reduce it. In addition, insofar as this would shorten the time service users spent sleeping rough or staying in unsatisfactory forms of accommodation, this could increase the likelihood and duration of benefits realised in terms of lower public service costs in health and criminal justice, and improved mental wellbeing.

A minimum income floor

Our survey has shown that virtually all of those accessing Fair Way are destitute (93%), including 83% on grounds that their income falls below the destitution threshold (set at £95 for single adults in the 2022 which make up 90% of the Fair Way cohort). An obvious means to address this would be to provide cash payments bringing this group above the income threshold for destitution, though this seems highly aspirational in the current context. Instead, we calculate in this section the cost of extending the £60 per week payment (shown above and in previous chapters to be associated with a range of positive outcomes) to all those who need it.

Table 6.6 calculates how much it would cost over a year, at a minimum, to make up the shortfall between the current income of those accessing Fair Way and a basic £60 per adult minimum, this being almost £2.77m. It shows that this move would come close to doubling the overall cost of Fair Way, from £3.18m to £5.95m. It breaks the amounts down by household composition (singles vs couples) and in terms of whether any cash payments were received from Fair Way and whether that was in the earlier or later period. Unsurprisingly, the large bulk of the cost would be to make up the incomes of the majority of those accessing Fair Way who received no cash payment. The totals of the income enhancements divide fairly evenly between the asylum and EEA groups (£1.2m each) with a significant amount also for the small 'other' group (£0.5m).

There are challenges associated with this policy proposition, even beyond the question of political will to secure sufficient funding from Scottish Government and/or grant funders. In particular, these estimates are based on the shortfall between the £60 level and the current actual income. Practical administration might entail flat rate payments involving some over or underpayment to people with small informal incomes.

Nevertheless, such payments would improve the health and wellbeing of this group, and reduce the extent of involvement in survival crime, public order issues and exploitative and/or illegal work. It is particularly the EEA group where this measure, along with an improved housing offer, would offer the most potential for public service cost savings. Such reduced public sector costs as well as the economic value of the improvements in personal wellbeing, both of which would be larger in magnitude than those assumed in our baseline assessment, would certainly defray the financial costs of this proposition.

Table 6.6: Income shortfalls relative to the Destitution minimum level by household composition in the Fair Way cohort (annual, after housing costs)

Category	Singles	Couples
No FWS cash	£2,303,544	£298,284
Early cash group	£6,240	£0
Late cash group	£160,680	£0
All cohort	£2,470,464	£298,284
Overall total		£2,768,749

Source: author's analysis of Fair Way Survey.

Key points

- People accessing Fair Way support use health services more than comparable UK adults, and the excess costs involved are considerable (£2.35m in total). For example, this group report visiting the General Practitioner, using an ambulance and attending A&E 2-3 times more than the general population, and having a hospital appointment nearly 5.5 times more often. This group also report higher levels of involvement with the criminal justice system, with excess costs totalling £3m, primarily from the Court service. These latter excess costs were overwhelmingly associated with the EEA (and Other) groups of Fair Way service users. Our survey indicated, however, that those who received cash or accommodation support, utilised most of these services less.

- Using a widely used and validated measure of mental wellbeing, our survey results show that people accessing Fair Way have a high incidence of poor and very poor mental wellbeing than the general population, but that those accessing Fair Way for longer reported higher levels of mental wellbeing.

- Based on a range of evidence-informed assumptions about the difference Fair Way Scotland makes to public service utilisation and mental wellbeing, we have shown that the benefit of investing in support for those with NRPF/RE like Fair Way Scotland are likely to outweigh the costs. We estimate that for every £1 spend, Fair Way generates £1.20 in cost savings and monetised mental wellbeing improvements combined. The actual economic value of Fair Way is almost certainly higher, as our analysis does not include a range of other types of benefit/cost-savings that are likely associated with more inclusive and effective responses to this group (e.g. costs to LA

and homelessness and social work services, the Home Office, and wider charitable responses to need among this group).

- Using data from the *Destitution in the UK* survey and other sources, we derived formula-based estimates of likely need/demand for Fair Way support across Scotland. These estimates suggest that around 4,000 individuals require such support annually, with 67-70% of demand concentrated in the cities in which Fair Way currently operates. We estimate that extending Fair Way as it currently operates nationwide would require increasing resources by between 37% and 49%.

- Extending Fair Way's community-based housing offer to those currently sleeping rough, in 'other' especially adverse circumstances, plus those in hotel/B&B accommodation which is expensive and often poor quality, would achieve cost offsets which would significantly exceed the actual (social) rental costs necessary to do so. There is also an economic case for extending this community-housing offer to some other core homeless groups e.g. those in hostels.

- Increasing financial payments to all those accessing Fair Way to ensure a minimum weekly income of £60 for a single adult would require an additional financial input of around £2.8m. This would generate further benefits in terms of service cost offsets and mental wellbeing that would at least partially offset these costs.

7. Systems impacts

This chapter draws on interviews conducted with key stakeholder and Fair Way Scotland frontline workers to explore the extent to which the partnership has achieved its aim of securing policy and practice change at the UK, Scotland and local-level to improve the circumstances and experiences of this group as a whole, thereby reducing their exposure to destitution and homelessness

UK level

UK immigration policy and law designs-in the destitution and homelessness experienced by adults with NRPF/RE by excluding them from the forms of support that prevent these harmful experiences for other people.[109] The deep flaws of UK immigration policy and law were clearly recognised by key stakeholders: *"It's a mess... [and] needs major reform"* (Key stakeholder, legal). While recognising that hostile environment polices are intentionally pursued to make life difficult for those they target, there was also a sense that if the consequences of this policy were fully and properly recognised the approach would not survive:

> *"if the asylum system properly recognised the external impacts of its ineffectiveness, we wouldn't be in this position"* (Key stakeholder, local government)

> *"It's very hard... I don't think the UK Government understand the bigger picture... for them, it's still very much the gospel of hostility."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Reforms to UK immigration policy and law were therefore recognised to be the way to address at their root the drivers of NRPF destitution and homelessness, and their manifold and costly consequences: *"at systems-level... the most critical stakeholder is UK government"* (Key stakeholder, statutory).

Despite this, influencing policy and legal change at the UK-level has not been a major focus for the partnership. Limited capacity for influencing work within the Fair Way Scotland partnership over its first phase of operation was the main reason for this, with capacity focused on mobilising the partnership and increasing the scale of direct delivery:

> *"We could use Fair Way to influence at a UK level... if we had more capacity, we could do that really effectively, because that takes time to build relationships with other organisations across the UK, other partners, with policymakers at a UK level. It's a massive piece of work... so... unless we have more people, it would barely scratch the surface."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

[109] See chapter one and Watts-Cobbe, B., McMordie, L., Bramley, G., Sims, R., Young, G., & Rayment, M. (2024) Destitution by Design: righting the wrongs of UK immigration policy in Scotland. Heriot-Watt University. https://doi.org/10.17861/D38D-X029

Also relevant was the establishment in 2024 of the NRPF collective impact partnership[110] which is *"working towards transformational change on NRPF… [as] an issue of racial and economic justice"*.[111] In this context, Fair Way partners came to the view that their best approach would be "*to connect in with that and use that as our influencing mechanism at a UK level"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner), rather than pursuing UK policy change independently. There was a recognition that this influencing mechanism had not yet been fully utilised.

In addition, there was a sense from some that the UK-level policy focus on hostility and compliance – and associated lack of concern with the disadvantage faced by those who are NRPF/RE – is deeply ingrained and may be 'locked in' in the current Reform-inflected political context and thus there was some reticence to devote too much resource to influence at this level: *"they're not listening… nothing is changing"* (Key stakeholder, statutory). During a focus group held in the aftermath of announcements to further restrict access to British citizenship for some groups of migrants (see chapter one), frontline workers were especially downbeat about the prospects of UK-policy reform to improve the circumstances of those with NRPF/RE and disappointed about developments they saw to be further strengthening the hostile environment:

> *"It's getting worse… The guidance we saw yesterday about the illegal entry and the good character guidance… We didn't expect to see more of this. We thought that sort of stuff would maybe roll back, but I think it's all just about trying to please the masses… They're making political decisions, yes"* (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)

One stakeholder agreed that since early policy changes cancelling the Rwanda Plan and making changes to the Illegal Migration Act there has been "*nothing really tangible… to give our hope [that things might improve] any kind of credibility… at least as things stand."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner).

Some stakeholders were cautiously positive about the contribution of Fair Way to UK-level policy debate and the value of future efforts to influence UK-level policy. Fair Way had clear visibility at the UK-level in November 2024 when Member of Parliament Scott Arthur raised a question in the House of Commons, drawing attention to our *Destitution by Design* report. He said the report made "*absolutely clear the human impact of the so-called hostile immigration policy operated by the previous Government on real people in our country."* In response, Minister Angela Eagle wrote to Scott Arthur, confirming that she had read the report and initiating a meeting between the research team and Home Office officials, including the Deputy Director of Compliant Environment.

[110] See chapter one and https://www.praxis.org.uk/news/new-partnership-no-recourse-to-public-funds-collective-impact-partnership
[111] See: https://www.funderscollaborativehub.org.uk/collaborations/enabling-the-movement-to-end-no-recourse-to-public-funds-nrpf

Box 11: Hana, aged 45-64

When we first met Hana she had been in the UK for five years and had tried to claim asylum unsuccessfully. Hana had some savings when she arrived, but these have now been used up. She had no right to work, but with no other source of income engaged in cash-in-hand work. She was arrested by the Police and taken to a detention centre, which was frightening and traumatic. Following this, she spent some time moving from shelter to shelter eventually seeking support from a Fair Way partner and accessing Fair Way Scotland accommodation. She initially struggling sharing, due to her mental health difficulties and what she describes as their 'strange behaviour', but reported now being happy with the accommodation. She had a solicitor, a Fair Way caseworker and Fair Way support worker, whose support she saw as invaluable. Hana's mental health was very poor, and she had spent in a psychiatric ward, but said that medication and support from a psychiatrist were beginning to help. When we spoke to Hana for the second time, there had been little progress regarding her migration status. She has had to change solicitor several times, which has delayed process. Her current solicitor is exploring possible medical grounds for a fresh claim, and Hana trusts their approach, though the solicitor refuses to engage with a community law centre who have historically provided support to Hana and whom she trusts. Hana continues to stay in Fair Way Scotland accommodation and values having a place to stay but still struggles sharing, partly due to anxiety and past negative experiences of physical assault and theft of personal belongings in shelters and other shared forms of accommodation. She does not report any recent incidents but remain uneasy and fears potential conflicts. Her mental health remains a central concern: she experiences high levels of anxiety, distressing physical symptoms (such as headaches and chest pains), and is under the care of a psychiatrist who recently prescribed stronger medication. Although this is helping somewhat, she describes her mental health overall as slightly worse than before, largely due to ongoing uncertainty about her status and future. Hana receives cash support from Fair Way but sometimes struggles to afford clothes and toiletries and reports no longer being able to access food banks. Despite suggestions that Hana could volunteer or engage in other activities, she remains hesitant due to anxiety. Hanna's situation has changed little since our first interview despite the support she is receiving and there remains a great deal of uncertainty about her future.

One statutory sector participant saw it as *"really important"* for the third sector, including Fair Way to continue to raise these issues at UK-level, regardless of *"whether we are actually seeing any impact in terms of policy outcomes"* in the short run (Key stakeholder, statutory). Another made the point that independent evidence from Fair Way about the impact of UK-level policy gives Scottish Government *"more clout"* in its own interactions with UK Government. One Fair Way partner acknowledged that there had been only very limited positive shifts in policy, but felt there had been a change in the broad approach of the new Government as compared to the scale, frequency and radical nature of challenging reforms pursued by previous Conservative-led Governments:

> *"Although we've not seen significant changes, I just noticed that at least we didn't have that, almost anxiety... We know there's the Refugee Bill, but I think the*

intensity of those changes was just too much with the former government." (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Other stakeholders saw at least some potential to influence in this new context:

> *"with a new administration in the UK government (UKG)... we're in a good space to really engage with that and to use examples, like the [Fair Way] consortium's collaborative approach in Scotland, as evidence to UKG about what's able to be done... what more could be done in the space should things be different, or if there was more resource, or if there were more powers."* (Key stakeholder, statutory)

Several others highlighted a specific potential route to impact at the UK level, focusing on the pursuit of what they saw to be a less controversial reforms focused on the quality and timeliness of decision making and ensuring due progress in the system:

> *"[If] we had... a government that was willing to look with us at what could be done to move people faster through the system and deal with the backlog, we might have made more progress... we could've had shorter stays, for example, in accommodation or... short[er] periods experiencing destitution."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Specific examples given included extending the timescales within which the Home Office require additional (for instance) medical evidence to be submitted, and improving timely access to the health professionals needed to conduct e.g. psychological assessments. Frontline workers similarly stressed the difference that could be made improving the quality of decision making within the Home Office, for example through training or quality assurance processes. Highly consequential examples were given of people receiving positive decisions that were later retracted as in error:

> *"Someone might get a decision letter that says they've been granted asylum, and then that gets withdrawn because it was in error... it's very bad... I've seen it at least three times" (Frontline worker, focus group, Asylum specialists)*

Scotland level

Stakeholders viewed Fair Way as having achieved significant influence to date at the Scottish level. The partnership has brought together a consortium of independent funders to address the extreme disadvantage faced by some of those with NRPF/RE. While the funding secured is insufficient to meet demand, it is nevertheless substantial and this report has demonstrated its positive impacts. Stakeholders also stressed the role of the partnership in raising the focus on destitution and homelessness among adults with NRPF/RE generally:

> *"impact with external stakeholders and influencing that communication side of things, that has really grown... over time."* (Key stakeholder, statutory)

> *"Fair Way are really leading the work on destitution and anti-destitution… Having the partnership in place is really critical, and it keeps a lot of the momentum in terms of the conversation."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

Fair Way's role raising the visibility and profile of these issues to Scottish Government specifically was also welcomed. The partnership is viewed as having improved understanding of NRPF/RE homelessness and destitution among ministers and Government-staff more widely as well as offering a *"blueprint"* (Key stakeholder, statutory) in terms of how to respond:

> *"from a policy perspective… [Fair Way Scotland] has been a valuable resource for the Scottish Government to understand [the issue]… to get that third eye as to how [to address these issues] is a valuable resource"* (Key stakeholder, statutory)

> *"it's grown in terms of profile for national government… ministers are aware of Fair Way, when we're talking about funding streams, strategies, pulling things together for people with no recourse to public funds and other immigration statuses. Fair Way is always now in the conversation… so… it's having that impact at a national level."* (Key stakeholder, statutory)

More specific positive impacts were also mentioned. This included Fair Way's work directly informing COSLA's longstanding work on local authority responses to people with NRPF/RE, with for example – some of the recommendations made in Jen Ang's legal briefing reported directly feeding into COSLA's workplan for 2025/26. Stakeholders also reported that Fair Way has helped *"break down in silos"* between different parts of Government by "delivering this full suite of support which sits across multiple different policy areas and… ministers" (Key stakeholder, statutory). Another stakeholder attributed the *"reasonable profile"* the Ending Destitution Together strategy (see chapter one) had received in the housing and homelessness sphere directly to Fair Way:

> *"I don't think we'd have had the same focus and momentum and strategic leadership in the homelessness and housing context without the Fair Way partnership."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

Most tangibly, Fair Way secured considerable additional funding (£440,000) from Scottish Government to expand casework capacity and radically increase the provision of cash payments to those accessing Fair Way support during 2024/25. This was a major allocation from the Scottish Government's Ending Destitution Together annual budget, signalling growing recognition of the Fair Way approach and its impacts by Scottish Government and COSLA. Fair Way partners strongly welcomed this additional resource reflecting its value to (see chapter four), but the remaining scale of hardship and need appeared to temper their sense of achievement (see below).

Fair Way was seen to have achieved these impacts at the Scottish-level in a range of ways. The focus on "action-learning" and developing and disseminating new evidence and unique data sources on the nature of the problem and effective responses, through

previous evaluation reports and associated outputs,[112] was seen to be invaluable (and was facilitated by significant investment from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation). This point was emphasised consistently by Fair Way partners, but also external stakeholders:

> *"We've never had such a good, just such a solid, not just snapshot, but a real sense of the experience and the figures around this group… it is a really important legacy of the project… something we would never have [otherwise] had… for the ten years prior, we were always struggling to say anything other than, from… practice, anecdotal evidence, or here's this one case study of a person, and here are all the things that happened to them."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

> *"To have a tangible evaluation… something to refer back to and use as a… blueprint to improve… and building on, I think will always be valued."* (Key stakeholder, statutory)

> *"The fact that we have this evolving evidence base is really, really critical… It's really helping raise the profile that this is an important issue and it's not a marginal issue… We have the evidence base to show and say, 'Actually, we understand what it requires to support someone away from that destitution because of the Fair Way programme,'"* (Key stakeholder, local government)

Over time, Fair Way was seen to have developed and strengthened its emphasis on public affairs and influencing. Examples of this include engagement at UK-level (See above), but in particular in Scottish Parliament. Key examples include the presentation of evaluation findings and the Legal Briefing to the Cross-Party Group on Migration in March 2025 and these issues being successfully proposed by MSP Maggie Chapman as the focus of a Parliamentary Members Business Debate on March 26th focused on the motion – *Ending Destitution in Scotland – a Road Map for Policymakers*.[113] The motion received cross-party support and in her closing remarks the Minister for Equalities Kaukab Steward agreed that *"more can be done"* to address destitution in Scotland, expressing her intention to deliver a new revised Ending Destitution Together Strategy. She said: *"it is absolutely right that we continue to challenge ourselves to ensure that we are doing everything that we can to reduce destitution in Scotland"*. The Social Justice and Social Security Committee wrote to the Minister in May 2025 requesting a response to the recommendations made in Jen Ang's Legal briefing. In her response the Minister committed to "*testing the boundaries of devolved competence to ensure people in our communities are supported"*. [114]

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[112] The key evaluation output being referred to here is out previous report: Watts-Cobbe, B., McMordie, L., Bramley, G., Sims, R., Young, G., & Rayment, M. (2024) Destitution by Design: righting the wrongs of UK immigration policy in Scotland. Heriot-Watt University. https://doi.org/10.17861/D38D-X029. Homelessness Network Scotland put together a short video sharing the stories of three people with experience of NRPF/RE who participated in the research. It can be viewed here: https://homelessnetwork.scot/fairway-scotland/.

[113] The Scottish Parliament (2025) Meeting of Parliament: Wednesday, March 26, 2025: Ending Destitution. Online: The Scottish Parliament https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/search-what-was-said-in-parliament/meeting-of-parliament-26-03-2025?meeting=16341&iob=139617

[114] The letter and ministerial response can be viewed here: https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-social-justice-and-social-security-committee/correspondence/2025/ending-destitution-in-scotland-a-road-map-for-policymakers-response.

Reflecting these achievements, the legal briefing commissioned as part of the Fair Way evaluation was described as having *"really ramped up"* the potential for policy influence:

> *"from a policy perspective… the legal briefing … and other… work [in] Parliament, has been a valuable resource for the Scottish Government to understand [the issue]… to get that third eye as to how [to address these issues] is a valuable resource."* (Key stakeholder, statutory)

> *"the [Legal Briefing is] going to be discussed in parliament. So that systems change is happening. It's slow, but it's happening. You would hope that all these inputs are going to create… the bigger change that you would want."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Another key means via which Fair Way was seen to be contributing to systems-level change at the Scotland level was by increasing capacity within the third sector to engage with policymakers as the key authoritative voice on issues of NRPF/RE destitution and homelessness:

> *"COSLA and Scottish Government has better interlocutors because Fair Way is funding casework manager time… before Fair Way existed was that government either could be less well informed, could be misinformed, could basically say that one of the issues in not coming to solutions is that there wasn't capacity on the table to bring forward useful solutions."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

> *"[one] of the achievements so far… [has] been… keeping the Scottish Government and COSLA informed around people's experiences on the ground and making sure that it doesn't fall off the agenda… Fairway*] has helped to make sure that this particular group of people and what they need is given attention"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

The involvement of Fair Way partners in stakeholder meetings convened by Scottish Government to inform the refreshed Ending Destitution Together strategy workplan was given as a specific example of such capacity building directly contributing to policy development. Another important example was Fair Way partners' regular contact with COSLA and Scottish Governments Ending Homelessness Together and Ending Destitution Together teams in regular monthly catch-up meetings. One partner explained:

> *"It's [a] genuine healthy connection of people across very diverse sectors on a very niche problem, and they come together every four weeks, to give it 45 minutes of their time in a serious way… it's really important for us to recognise… the uniqueness of that… and their [Scottish Government's] willingness to do that… It is a group of people that are… all trying to push it forward in the same direction."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Ultimately, this participant hoped that these relationships and structures could evolve into having a greater focus on *"decision making both in terms of policy and budget level"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Balanced against this considerable positivity about Fair Way's success to date and ongoing potential to impact on Scottish policy was a different narrative. Stakeholders acknowledged the enormous value, significance and uniqueness of having an Ending Destitution Strategy:

> *"counterparts in other [UK] nations... they don't have that national strategy, that national programme and commitment, [and] they really struggle to get this network of practitioners, a consensus and agreement that this is an issue that needs work, and the political will to actually be innovative and drive change."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

> *"I think the Scottish Government have done good things with their Ending Destitution strategy... the very fact that they have that and that Fair Way is part of it is really good and really positive"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

But there was also clear frustration from multiple stakeholders about the pace of policy change in Scotland over the first phase of Fair Way's operation:

> *"[change] is frustratingly slow... I'm not sure it's the best that we could expect. We would expect more... when we see people in huge amounts of need"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

> *"the people who've worked on it [trying to influence Scottish Government] have done an extraordinary amount, but... We're not seeing any change as a result of it. We haven't seen any shift."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

For some, this frustration was exacerbated by their sense that the benefits and impacts of the Fair Way approach were now clear, but that support from Scottish Government to resource the response required longer-term, at a scale to better meet need and using all the levers at its disposal remained absent:

> *"[Scottish Government is] obviously seeing the benefit of that [casework], and they're seeing the benefit of them providing that legal support element for the individuals. So... at a systems level, everything coming together is actually creating the output that you want it to create. It would be nice if things moved a little bit faster"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

> *"we want [Scottish] government to fund this issue in the long-term. That is... where I have disappointment and frustration, and impatience... we can see what they [Scottish Government] can do, and now we just have this brilliant articulation of exactly where and how [referring to the Legal Briefing], and the only thing that's getting in the way of that is the decision to do it."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Testimony from several statutory sector stakeholders made clear that while *"commitment to alleviate destitution or homelessness for people with no recourse to public funds... still exists... [and is] really prominent in policy conversations"* (Key stakeholder, statutory), Scottish Government was of necessity *"bearing in mind the fiscal context"* (Key stakeholder, statutory). The signal that resourcing such responses remains a barrier to future progress was clear, and there were also indications that despite the message articulated in the Legal Briefing, the devolution settlement was still seen to be *"the biggest challenge"* (Key stakeholder, statutory) to progress:

> *"if UK government moved to unlock something that [Scottish] Government could actively do, that would still need to be resourced. And... you would hope the resource would flow from there [i.e. UK Government]... where [Scottish] government make decisions to provide support that's different to UK government... [Scottish] government have to supplement that... there's a resource ask."* (Key stakeholder, statutory)

At the time of stakeholder interviews and of writing this report, the influence of Fair Way on the refreshed Ending Destitution Together workplan was acknowledged – in the words of one stakeholder - to be *"in the churn"* (Key stakeholder, statutory) and for this reason stakeholders' judgements on the effectiveness of Fair Way in meeting its systems-level change objectives were somewhat provisional:

> *"we know that they are looking [at the Legal Briefing] in light of that review... that's as good as it can be... That they are considering the recommendations... is really good. We've still to see what it actually looks like, obviously."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Local level

Partners were clear that one of the key aims of Fair Way is to promote maximally inclusive responses to NRPF/RE destitution and homelessness from local authorities and that on this dimension the partnership *"still has quite a lot of distance to cover"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner). Nevertheless, our stakeholder interviews provide extensive evidence that Fair Way Scotland has had impacts at the local level, the most significant of these in the local authority areas in which Fair Way operates. Impacts identified included driving better safeguarding of this group, increasing understandings of issues relating to NRPF/RE destitution and homelessness, giving LA staff more confidence in their work in this area:

> *"these caseworking teams ... they're helping to increase the confidence of local authority workers, so social work, housing and so on. They have the time to challenge barriers, but also just to engage and inform in the course of their work."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

> *"Fair Way Scotland has really helped a lot more people in the areas it operates, particularly understand what NRPF is and who it affects... [we] shouldn't*

underestimate the contribution it's made to that" (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

This perspective was borne out by stakeholders with a view of practice across multiple LA areas:

> *"I've been really pleasantly surprised in terms of practice change and a changing of how officers approach homelessness across NRPF destitute households once they've been involved with the Fair Way project."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

As well as by local authorities themselves, although the distribution of testimony suggests that these positive impacts may only have been seen in two of the three areas Fair Way operates in (Edinburgh and Aberdeen):

> *"we've just been grateful to get any help that we could get... it's such an area that people don't feel like they've got any expertise in... we were just grateful for any help."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

> *"what we got from Fair Way was... a better understanding of the EEA Nationals who were presenting to us because we had a lot of Romanian families that were coming from a specific village... Fair Way... were able to give us more background... it was a good insight to have... we didn't actually understand fully... what the person was dealing with, why they were here... [Fair Way] made us think about the decisions that we're making... that was quite good for my housing officers."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

Numerous examples were given across these two areas of Fair Way supporting or influencing LA decision making in relation to particular cases. LA stakeholders were clear that where decisions of ineligibility for homelessness assistance were made, Fair Way had become a crucial part of the infrastructure. In one LA area the focus was on Fair Way as a place to refer people for support, including – crucially – to establish eligibility:

> *"[Fair Way] have been helpful... [for] people who have maybe initially approached the local authority, but haven't had the necessary documentation to allow us to work with them... That support, and working intensely with them, getting the right documentation together, and such like, to establish eligibility... that that has been a success."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

> *"on a weekly basis, I provide [Fair Way partner] with a list of people who we've assessed as not being eligible... some weeks, maybe five households. It's still quite a hefty list of people who are still coming to us who've got no recourse to public funds."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

In another area, Fair Way was used as a referral route but there was additionally a focus on partnership working between the LA and Fair Way partner and asking caseworkers early for advice on whether decisions they were intended to make may be challenged:

> *"it was really great to actually be able to refer in to a project that was able to do the work, to help them again eligibility for homelessness assistance and benefits."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

> *"we'd probably speak to the Fair Way team... about... basically, anybody with no recourse to public funds, we would ask them to see if they know anything that we could do, or any opinion that they would make or challenges... it has given us a definite referral route for the people who approach our service, homeless with no recourse to public funds to get assistance."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

While this reflects the important role Fair Way is playing at the local-level, it also highlights a gap in statutory sector expertise that ought to be addressed by LAs and Scottish Government.

In another example, conversations in a Local Liaison Group meeting (see below) had opened up dialogue about a particular case that Fair Way partners *"didn't think had been decided... properly... [by] the local authority*" (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner). In response, an LA worker involved in the decision had:

> *"made the offer to bring [Fair Way Scotland] into a meeting that would be part of the decision making... about that [case], and that was just a significant shift... that's an example... of where people came together on the point and everybody was courteous... of each other's position and perspective, and that a really good thing happened."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Beyond these impacts on practice at the officer level, there were examples across all three areas in which Fair Way operates of Fair Way influencing strategic discussions and/or decision making. In Glasgow, stakeholders explained that Fair Way Scotland was impacting discussions in the city's Community Wellbeing Board, mediated by the influence of the partnership on COSLA and Scottish Government:

> *"You can very clearly see within... the board... Fair Way Scotland's influence on both COSLA's thinking and the Ending Homelessness Together strategy. Also the recommendations in [the Legal Briefing] being picked up and looking to pull that into the ... work plan for Ending Destitution Together strategy... it's clearly having an influence"* (Key stakeholder, local government)

In Edinburgh, the publication of our *Destitution by Design* report prompted Green Councillor Ben Parker to ask the City's Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work committee how Edinburgh Council is currently responding to NRPF/RE destitution and

homelessness and request a briefing covering how the Council would respond to the report's recommendations.[115] The Addendum motion was not passed.[116]

In Aberdeen the strategic influence had occurred within the council's homelessness team itself rather than in the City's governance structures. Here, officials' close engagement with Fair Way Scotland combined with its long history of pursuing inclusive responses to those with restricted eligibility for support and facing homelessness (see chapter three) had prompted a review of practice recording presentations from ineligible households:

> *"The homelessness team... had been working really closely with Fair Way and they'd started reflecting on their own practice around recording and reporting homelessness presentations, and... they've now implemented a change around that. Their homelessness team now record all homelessness presentations from people with NRPF as is the expectation to do so... In other instances [i.e. in other LA areas] maybe once people raise that they are NRPF or an official realises they're NRPF that exploratory route stops for a range of reasons."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

Indeed, it was very clear from stakeholders in other areas that recording presentations from ineligible households was not normal practice:

> *"They [housing officers] won't undertake that assessment at all. They'll just get as far as, 'All right, looks as though you haven't got recourse. We'll punt you on to [other support service]'"* (Key stakeholder, local government).

A local stakeholder in Aberdeen explained the value of this intentional shift to ensuring all such presentations are recorded from their perspective:

> *"if this person is [homeless], they should have an open homeless case. It might show that it's a long-standing case, and we might ruin our homeless journey statistics or whatever else... [But] this is something we have to deal with... If we turn people away, we can spend hours at the front line dealing with somebody and have no record of the fact that that's been something that we've had to try and manage"* (Key stakeholder, local government)

In considering the impacts of Fair Way Scotland on policy and practice at the local level, a key focus was on reviewing the role of the Local Liaison Groups, organised as a forum for discussion between Fair Way partners, local authority stakeholders and Scottish Government. Initially, both operational and strategic meetings were established, but fairly early on this structure was streamlined into one meeting. It is also important to note

[115] See page 4 of Addendum by the Green group Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work committee, Item 7.3 - Support for Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Displaced People, in Motions and Amendments, Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/documents/b25274/Motions%20and%20Amendments%2001st-Oct-2024%2010.00%20Housing%20Homelessness%20and%20Fair%20Work%20Committee.pdf?T=9

[116] See https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/documents/b25274/Motions%20and%20Amendments%2001st-Oct-2024%2010.00%20Housing%20Homelessness%20and%20Fair%20Work%20Committee.pdf?T=9

that these structures were only established in Edinburgh and Glasgow as Aberdeen already had an established structure in place led by the local authority. One Fair Way partner explained the intended purpose of the Groups as follows:

> *"[The first aim was] creating the space for people to come together and talk about the issue… bringing it into the open, recognising it… not as a UK issue, but a local issue, [for] local people, and local organisations… The second was the objective… about maximising the activity taken by the local authority … [on] this issue, so that by coming together with charitable organisations that together we could find a set of solutions."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

There was some positivity about the role that these groups had played. An example was given above, for instance, demonstrating that a meeting had prompted partnership working between a local authority and Fair Way partner to consider a particular case. Furthermore, Fair Way partners were clear that securing the attendance of LA staff to focus on NRPF/RE destitution and homelessness was an important achievement in itself:

> *"the fact that in most cases at least one member of the local authority will come… [and] give their time… despite that not being what we need alone to make the type of difference that we need to at local area, it is still a significant step in the direction of achieving that… they're at the table, they might not be saying what we want, but they're there, and it's now through time, persuasion… that things might be able to move on."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

There was however a strong consensus that the groups were not meeting their intended aims effectively, and indeed at the time of writing meetings had been paused to review and refresh the approach taken. Two key areas for improvement were identified. The first concerned who was present at the meetings, and in particular a lack of representation from relevant social work teams who were seen to be crucial in developing responses to NRPF/RE destitution and homelessness that are as inclusive as possible (see chapter three). This point was especially clearly articulated in Edinburgh, where despite initially being invited to attend the LA's Refugee and Migration team (who assess the care needs of and deliver support to adults with NRPF/RE) had not regularly participated:

> *"it would have seemed to me to be better for [The Refugee and Migration Team] to have been the lead contact with Housing involved rather than the other way around… [that Team] should have been far more involved with this."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

It seemed that this had been the result about the miscommunication or misunderstanding about the nature of Fair Way and the specific focus of the meetings early on. In Glasgow, the situation was slightly different and while Fair Way partners were keen for greater social work engagement, local authority stakeholders were sceptical about the value or practicality of this, partly reflecting perhaps that social work and homelessness both sit within the City's Health and Social Care Partnership:

> *"we try and just have that single point of contact for the liaison group. Social work is huge, honestly, you would have a cast of a thousand at it from across the various care groups."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

The second key area for review and improvement was the tone and tenor of Liaison Group meetings, in particular in Glasgow. Both Fair Way partners and local stakeholders acknowledged that these meetings had sometimes been more adversarial than was desirable and productive:

> *"the early days when they were meeting regularly sometimes in person, the tone was a bit more optimistic... as we came to the point of reviewing, and part of the reason for their being [a review is] it was starting to feel a little bit dead-end... a set of organisations lobbying for things from the council that the council can't deliver"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

> *"We deliver services in a very, very complicated, challenging terrain and... I'm not convinced that everybody else on the group gets that, but equally I'm really conscious that they're working at the sharp end of destitution and stuff so equally we get that as well. Their job is to extend the safety net [and] our job [is] to manage that safety net, but what I would always say [is.. you need] trust in that relationship."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

There was an appetite to address these issues creatively and reconvene meetings that were of value to all participants, and there was a sense that the model in Aberdeen had achieved this balance:

> *"I was at a strategic meeting with Aberdeen. The way they are approaching this is totally different from [Glasgow*] and [Edinburgh*] because they [the local authority] are in the forefront, and then they bring the third sector in, so the conversation is totally different"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Other system-level impacts

Our stakeholder interviews suggested a number of further systems-type impacts that do not fit neatly into the structure above, so we consider them briefly here.

First, Fair Way's success in bringing Housing Associations on board as accommodation partners in the delivery of the model was identified as an important achievement. While it was recognised that the scale of such properties available via Fair Way was modest in relation to overall need (21 flats with capacity to accommodate 31 individuals at March 2025), increasing this stock and partnerships with Housing Associations to accommodate those with NRPF/RE and no other options was a clear priority for many of those we spoke to, within and outwith the partnership:

> *"The fact that these [properties] are being made available is really important to share with other housing associations, particularly where there may not be as high a demand on housing."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

> *"we've been fortunate to have links... with the housing associations, etc., where they've given a commitment to housing... So that conversation maybe needs to happen with [more] housing associations."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Second, several stakeholders emphasised that the Fair Way Scotland model is of considerable interest in both Wales and Northern Ireland and thus that Fair Way has begun to at least inform systems and practice-level change in those contexts:

> *"when in both of the devolved areas, there was such intense ... interest... in what the partnership was doing. Colleagues already knew about it. They've been told to look at it and to think about the approach. So the greater sphere of influence [the partnership] have actually is to carve out a way and support devolved authorities to exercise their powers to mitigate the impacts... that's definitely happening."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

Finally, and reinforcing themes discussed early in this chapter, a key systems-impact of the partnership was seen to be workforce development and capacity building via investment in casework, the Fair Way Community of Practice and wider engagement with relevant stakeholders:

> *"working together has definitely increased the capacity, the knowledge and experience of the caseworkers who've been involved, including the ones that have come and left. A whole bunch of people in Scotland are much more competent at caseworking in this area and with other migrant groups than they would have been before."* (Key stakeholder, legal)

While this was identified as an important success of the partnership, there was also a sense that the Community of Practice established for Fair Way frontline staff had perhaps lost its momentum and had uneven levels of commitment across the delivery organisations, something lamented by this partner:

> *"[caseworkers] finds it so useful to be able to connect with other people working in this sector because... it's a very lonely space... what [is] frustrating is the lack of commitment... for people to give their time... people don't attend, so it can be really frustrating."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Barriers to systems impact

In this final section we consider some key barriers to or challenges associated with Fair Way's pursuit of systems-level change to improve responses to NRPF/RE destitution and homelessness. Some of these have emerged in the course of discussions above but are worth highlighting again, including that the fiscal context and a difficult environment for increasing public spending is seen to be constraining the scale of Scottish Government's ambition and investment in ending destitution and homelessness among those with NRPF/RE:

> *"the Ending Destitution Strategy is... very, very good in terms of aspiration and ambition, but it's got no money behind it"* (Key stakeholder, local government)

> ***"****the government... feel very limited in their resource, and this [issue] needs a good deal of money put in... the Scottish Government have done good things with their Ending Destitution Strategy... the very fact that they have that and that Fair Way is part of it is really good... but in effect have only put a little bit of money and resource into Fair Way, when it needed a great deal more."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Another constraint that emerged above was Fair Way capacity to pursue systems change:

> ***"****there's massive potential to... get actual change in terms of policy and practice in Scotland... Fair Way has done really well with the limited capacity that it has, but I think it could do a lot more... if it just had more capacity."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

While there was appetite within the partnership to increase this capacity, there was also a recognition that targeting resources in this way has to balanced against maintaining a strong focus on direct service delivery to those in need.

Three further key barriers to achieving systems-level change of the significance and at the scale sought were identified. First, the political context was seen to be highly challenging, and in particular in the short-term at least, that Scotland is entering a pre-election period in which Reform is expected to make gains on an anti-immigration platform. There was a view that tailoring the framing of Fair Way's policy and practice change agenda to recognise this context was essential:

> *"the rise of Reform... the political context... we have to be very mindful of [that]... it means that we need to frame this as being... about making sure everybody has what they need to live."* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Box 12: Fadumo, aged 25-34

Fadumo came to the UK 19 years ago from an African country and has two children who were born here. He claimed asylum at some point after his arrival, but while awaiting a decision was remanded in prison for two years on charges that were later dropped. During this period, he received no correspondence from the Home Office and lost all his documents and belongings, including identification and birth certificates. As a result, he currently has no authorisation to be in the UK and no legal status. Although he has attempted to submit a fresh claim, he struggles to gather the necessary evidence because so many of his papers are missing. He is now waiting for his solicitor to advise him on what further information is required. After leaving prison, he had no stable place to stay. He recalls being released with only the clothes he was wearing and a small amount of cash, leading to a period rough sleeping. Eventually, he accessed a shared Fair Way Scotland flay. He is relieved to be off the streets, but the

accommodation is described only as temporary, leaving him worried about what will happen next. He says his experiences have severely affected his mental health. In prison, he experienced threats and physical violence from officers and other inmates, and still experiences sudden physical shocks when these traumatic memories surface. At times, he has felt overwhelmed by despair. He drank alcohol to cope in the past, but with support from his GP, he has managed to reduce his intake, and going to the gym also helps. However, constant uncertainty over his immigration status and the risk of losing his accommodation disrupt his appetite and sleep. He also faces physical health challenges he attributes to stress. Though he has not been formally diagnosed with a specific condition, he believes anxiety, poor diet and traumatic memories have left him feeling run-down. It finds it difficult to access appropriate healthcare given his lack of status, but he can still see his GP and has been given transport tokens his caseworker so he can reach essential appointments. Because he is not permitted to work, he relies on modest Fair Way cash support, which he finds insufficient to meet his basic needs. He wants to work and feels that if he were allowed to, he could support himself. He is also wary of taking any job informally, as he would have no legal protection if his employer refused to pay him. Despite his gratitude for the practical help he has received from Fair Way partners and his GP, he feels stuck in limbo, weighted down by his inability to see his children or attain independence.

Second, local authorities themselves saw the context as a very challenging one in which to improve responses to NRPF/RE destitution and homelessness. A key factor here was the significant increase in demand seen in especially in Glasgow but also in Edinburgh from newly granted refugees as a result of accelerated Home Office decision making on asylum claims, including from households coming to Scotland from elsewhere:

> *"Glasgow now faces a situation whereby we are taking more homeless applications from people coming to the city having received leave to remain elsewhere in the country, than we actually are from those who are receiving [it] whilst accommodated in this dispersal zone. We are looking at 8500 homeless applications this year and a live caseload of 6500, which is something like up 1500 in the space of 22 months. That's unprecedented... many local authorities were talking about bankruptcy if we don't get external funding, and we won't get external funding to the extent we need. That's the context... and that's why it's very, very difficult to confront the reality of NRPF stuff and being asked to step up. It was so much easier in COVID. We were awash with cash, etc."* (Key stakeholder, local government)

Third and finally, relationships with and approaches in social work were seen as a barrier to achieving more inclusive responses to NRPF/RE destitution and homelessness. Part of the dynamic here, as discussed in chapter three, is highly diverging practice in social work teams in terms of assessing entitlement to social work support and whether people's care needs meet the required threshold. As a result, this was seen to be a particular issue in Glasgow, where thresholds and assessments were viewed as especially hard to navigate for this group. Another issue was seen to be *"a perceived hierarchy"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner) between professional social workers and those working in social care organisations like Fair Way delivery partners. In response to

this challenge, one Fair Way partner suggested that bringing social work expertise into the Fair Way model would be worth considering:

> *"co-location of a social worker within the team... [is] a very effective model... whether it's an independent social worker... or... there is actually a secondment from a local authority... That would be the most effective thing... [if] you [can] make sure that person isn't a gatekeeper, that's actually an enabler?"* (Key stakeholder, Fair Way partner)

Key points

- UK Government policy and law was recognised to the be the fundamental driver of NRPF/RE destitution and homelessness in Scotland. Despite this, influencing policy and legal change at the UK-level has not been a major focus for the partnership, reflecting capacity constraints, that other UK wide organisations may be better placed to pursue this agenda and to some extent a pessimism about radical progress at UK level. In the context of a newly elected Westminster Government, however, there was some cautious hope that a greater focus on UK-level influencing might pay dividends, especially if focused on reforms perceived to be less controversial in the current political context, like improving the quality of decision making and ensuring due progress in the system

- Fair Way Scotland has achieved a range of impacts in Scotland, including raising the profile, visibility and understandings of NRPF/RE destitution generally and especially within Scottish Government and Parliament and directly informing COSLA's work plan. These impacts have been achieved via: evaluation outputs and an associated legal briefing; an increased emphasis on public affairs work; building the capacity of the third sector to engage with policy-makers and other key stakeholders; and maintaining a regular programme of meetings with key officials. Despite these achievements, Fair Way partners are disappointed by the pace of policy change and investment in tackling NRPF/RE destitution and homelessness. The shape and form of the upcoming Ending Destitution Together strategy refresh and delivery plan will be an important marker of Fair Way's influence, but statutory sector stakeholders caution against expecting a radical expansion in investment or activity.

- Fair Way Scotland has had wide-ranging and important impacts in the local authorities in which it operates, particularly in Edinburgh and Aberdeen. These impacts include increasing understanding and confidence of NRPF/RE destitution and homelessness; giving local authority staff more confidence in their interactions with and decisions regarding this group; advising on particular cases; and a route to refer ineligible households to support and advice. In all three LA areas, Fair Way's work has informed strategic discussions and/or decision making, either in council committee meetings (Edinburgh and Glasgow) or (in Aberdeen) by informing shifts in approaches to recording presentations form ineligible households.

- Local Liaison Group meetings established in Edinburgh and Glasgow as local forums for discussion on NRPF/RE destitution and homelessness and to improve LA practice had achieved some positive outcomes, but there was a consensus the structure and

approach needed refreshing given the sometimes adversarial tenor of discussions and a recognition that the right people were not always in attendance, in particular social work colleagues with migration expertise and knowledge.

- Fair Way had achieved other valued systems-level impacts according to key stakeholders, including bringing Housing Associations to the table as accommodation providers within its integrated support model; inspiring and informing the development of responses to NRPF/RE destitution and homelessness in Wales and Northern Ireland; and developing a Community of Practice for frontline workers. Scaling up Housing Association contributions to accommodating NRPF/RE households was seen as a priority, as was refreshing and strengthening the frontline worker Community of Practice.

- Achieving further systems-level impacts in the future will require the navigation of a series of barriers or challenges, including: the anti-immigration political sentiment; the challenging fiscal context and a lack of resource for the anti-destitution agenda; local authorities – especially Edinburgh and Glasgow struggling to meet rapid escalations in demand for statutory homelessness support from recently granted refugees; a lack of capacity within Fair Way to pursue systems-level changes; and ongoing challenges effectively advocating for more inclusive responses from social work teams.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

The Fair Way Scotland partnership seeks to support one of the most disadvantaged groups in society, those whom, when they face a crisis, are unable to rely on mainstream forms of support because of their immigration status. This research programme has made visible the scale and depth of hardship faced by this group. Almost all are destitute, with no or minimal and insecure incomes, and regularly going without basics like food, toiletries and clothing. They face exceptional housing disadvantage. The majority have slept rough in the last year, and most are living in situations that are inadequate and insecure. A fifth have had to leave their accommodation in the last year because they were not safe. In the face of such extreme and multi-dimensional hardship, this group are heavily reliant on inconsistent and insufficient supports provided by friends, family, churches or charities because they are excluded from key statutory supports.

It is this hidden humanitarian crisis that Fair Way Scotland has sought to address, via an integrated offer of casework, legal advice, community-based accommodation and cash support designed to meet people's basic needs, and give them dignity and choice while addressing the underlying drivers of their disadvantage. As well as offering this direct provision in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen(shire), the partnership has sought to leverage its 'learning by doing' to achieve system-level changes in policy and practice at the local and national level.

Two core overarching themes have emerged from this three-year, multi-methods evaluation of the partnership. First, Fair Way Scotland is making a tangible and significant difference, at both the individual-level to those it supports directly, but also more broadly in promoting understanding of the issues facing this group and the role of a range of social actors in responding to it. Second, the scale of current efforts to address these issues is inadequate. Ending destitution and homelessness in Scotland – explicit aims of the current Government – is simply not possible without increased political will, investment and more ambitious contributions from Scottish Government, local authorities, housing associations, and independent funders.

Our survey of over 250 people accessing Fair Way Scotland provides a unique new source of quantitative evidence on the level and depth of need facing this group of people. It has also provided extensive evidence indicating the positive impacts of Fair Way Scotland. People who have been accessing Fair Way support for longer are less likely in the last year to have slept rough, lived in overcrowded conditions, had to leave accommodation with nowhere else to go, met the threshold for destitution (in relation to income or material deprivation), or report deprivation in relation to meals, toiletries and shelter. Those in receipt of cash payments and casework are less likely to be destitute than those receiving just casework, and those in receipt of cash payments are less likely to report deprivation in relation to food.

The qualitative aspects of this research, involving longitudinal/retrospective interviews with people with direct experience, frontline workers and key stakeholders, have brought

to light the personal stories behind these statistical associations, identifying the aspects of Fair Way provision that have made a difference, the wider enablers of positive change, and the barriers and impediments to progress. It is clear that Fair Way caseworkers provide essential support which enables people to progress their immigration case, asylum claim or EUSS application. Caseworkers play a direct role in amassing the evidence required and supporting individuals through complicated and lengthy processes, and also an essential mediating role connecting people to legal advice and representation as well as other supports. Fair Way partner outcomes data show that substantial numbers are supported to tangibly progress their immigration case and access mainstream supports, and also that smaller casework services providing more intense support may achieve higher positive outcome rates. This insight must be balanced against the desire to assist as many people as possible, especially in Glasgow where demand is especially high.

Fair Way cash support, provision of which radically expanded to support 266 people in 2024/25, is often the only source of income for this group. While payment levels sit well below established destitution thresholds, and there is no doubt that even those receiving these payments remain acutely disadvantaged, this financial assistance does enable people to avoid the harshest edges of material deprivation. These cash payments are also seen to have significant wider positive impacts beyond their direct mitigation of deprivation. Caseworkers and other stakeholders describe them as giving people choice, autonomy and as a symbol of dignity, arguing that they could shift people's mindset in a context where they had had so little for often long periods. There was also a strong view that cash payments supported engagement with Fair Way casework support, offering respite from focus on accessing bare essentials and enabling a focus on the often hard and extended work of progressing their case.

Fair Way provision of community-based accommodation, usually in shared socially rented flats has also expanded over the course of the partnership's operation, to a total of 21 flats with capacity to accommodate 31 individuals in 2024/25, during which 45 people were housed. This accommodation is prioritised for those in the most difficult circumstances, including those who would otherwise be sleeping rough; for many Fair Way support is the only option of a safe place to stay. Having access to such accommodation was seen to be foundational to enabling wider progress with someone's immigration case, and as well as fundamentally important to people's general wellbeing, albeit that those accommodated remain extremely disadvantaged in a range of ways including experiencing material deprivation, despite their access to cash support. The main challenge identified by caseworkers and Fair Way partners was the insufficient scale of the accommodation offer, relative to need, and the very challenging decisions about prioritisation that must take place in that context.

Fair Way Scotland also provides access to second tier legal advice. Our survey data suggests that this resource is used in over a third of cases overall, and is especially important for the EEA and Other group. For the asylum group, and others, access to direct legal representation is essential in progressing their immigration case, but access to timely and quality legal counsel can be very difficult for this group (especially those with complex or especially challenging cases), reflecting wider acute challenges with

Legal Aid in Scotland. Provision of such legal support currently sits outside the Fair Way model, but it is clear that progress for many of those supported fundamentally depends upon it.

Overall, this evaluation makes a strong humanitarian case for Fair Way Scotland's effectiveness in mitigating destitution, minimising exposure to the worse forms of homelessness, and progressing people's immigration case. Our economic analysis, moreover, indicates that more inclusive responses to those with NRPF/RE are likely to offer good value for money for the public purse, with our estimated cost/benefit ratios for Fair Way Scotland suggesting a return of between £1.20 for every £1 spent. Put differently, this analysis provides evidence that the UK Government's hostile environment policies cost the public sector a great deal by forcing people into poor health, greater use of health services, and higher engagement with criminal justice services (in many cases the result of preventable public order and survival crime issues linked to their severe disadvantage). The resultant excess cost burdens amount to around £5 million a year in Scotland. Combined with existing evidence casting serious doubt on the efficacy of the deterrent effect that motivates hostile environment policies, these conclusions ought to weaken the 'gospel of hostility' that has dominated UK immigration policy for so long.

While this evaluation thus provides robust support for the efficacy of the Fair Way model on humanitarian and economic grounds, it is also clear that the scale of provision falls short of what's needed. We estimate that around 4,000 individuals require such support annually, four times the numbers supported in 2024/25. The route towards closing this gap between need and the scale of support on offer requires a twin-track approach.

The first track involves scaling up Fair Way Scotland itself, to better meet need in the areas in which it currently operates and across the whole of Scotland. We estimate that extending Fair Way Scotland *as it currently operates* nationwide would require increasing resources by between 37% and 49%. The second track involves expanding the accommodation and cash-support offer, which would require more resources still. We calculate that expanding cash payments to all those who need them across Scotland would cost £2.8 million, though would lead to benefits/cost savings of various kinds, including in relation to public service use. Extending the community-based accommodation model to those rough sleeping and in other especially adverse living situations could be achieved at net benefit to the public purse, given that some of the accommodation used by local authorities to accommodate this group (e.g. hotels, B&Bs and hostels) are expensive, as well as very often poor quality.

Recognising limits on the partnership's growth and the inherent precarity of seeking grant funding at scale to address these issues, Fair Way Scotland partners are themselves strong advocates for pursuing the second track forward in tandem with the first, that being maximising the contribution of mainstream public services in responding to destitution and homelessness among those with NRPF/RE. In a legal briefing commissioned as part of this evaluation (*Ending Destitution in Scotland – A Roadmap for Policymakers*), Jen Ang sets out a clear vision and roadmap for how this might be done across a wide range of policy areas, including health, transport, education, social work

and so on.[117] This evaluation report clearly shows the extent to which Local Authority interpretations of their powers and duties to assist adults with NRPF vary. Levelling up practice across Scotland to the most inclusive interpretations modelled here (in Aberdeen's homelessness services and Edinburgh's Refugee and Migration Team in particular) would represent substantial progress.

The broader context in which Fair Way operates remains exceptionally challenging. The change of Government at UK level in 2024 was met with hope and relief among key stakeholders involved in this evaluation, and indeed the new Government made limited initial moves to reverse the worst features of recent immigration reforms, restarting decision making asylum claims and cancelling the Rwanda Plan that had sparked so much fear, anxiety and concern in the migration sector and also among those with direct experience we spoke to as part of this research. Subsequently, however, there have been no moves to address the destitution- and homelessness-generating features of UK immigration and asylum law, policy and practice. Indeed, the broader direction of UK immigration policy is driving in the opposite direction, ramping up hostile environment measures in a political context increasingly inflected by anti-immigration (and indeed anti-migrant and anti-asylum seeker) sentiments.

In this exceptionally concerning context, the current Scottish Government's distinct approach to immigration generally, and policy commitments and associated strategies to end destitution and homelessness *for everyone,* provide a welcome environment for Fair Way's work. Arguably, Scottish Government's position provides the most propitious context there is in the UK to pursue the policy implications that arise from this report and that are presented in the next and final section. While the fiscal context, wider housing emergency, and anti-immigration political sentiment present real challenges, our hope is that the humanitarian and economic case for Fair Way Scotland laid out in this report helps all relevant social actors in Scotland meet these challenges with resolve and confidence.

Recommendations

Our previous evaluation reports have made a series of recommendations, and these remain in place. In this final report, we offer the following recommendations taking account of the overall conclusion of the study and reflecting on the complex and ever-changing shape of relevant law, policy and practice. Many of the recommendations below take direct inspiration from the Legal Briefing written by Jen Ang published as part of the Fair Way evaluation in January 2025. We are especially mindful of the critical need for a consistent and positive public discourse about migrants and the value of evidence-based, practical solutions in the run up to next year's Scottish election.

Scotland can lead the way and show what's possible. At their heart, our recommendations over the years have asked that we unequivocally take steps to prevent the most extreme forms of hardship facing people in Scotland and that the UK

[117] Ang, J. (2025) Ending Destitution in Scotland – A Roadmap for Policymakers. Online: Homeless Network Scotland. https://homelessnetwork.scot/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Fair-Way-Legal-Briefing-12.2.25.pdf

Government work in partnership with local and devolved authorities to create a more compassionate, coherent and cost-effective system that keeps issues of immigration and security separate from issues around welfare.

UK Government / Home Office

The UK Government could at a stroke resolve the humanitarian crisis documented in this report and obviate the need to pursue many of the recommendations laid out below by reforming NRPF and wider hostile environment policies to actively prevent destitution and homelessness.

In addition to pursuing this radical and urgent change of course, the UK Government should:

- Recognise the economic and human costs of immigration and asylum policy and practice, including the impact of hostile environment policies, and poor quality and inconsistent decision making within the Home Office. The costs and harms are being felt by those facing homelessness, destitution, exploitation, trafficking and ill health as a result of these policies. The costs fall on local government, national public authorities and charities who bear the burden of responding to these injustices. The UK Government should adequately resource the costs incurred.

- Take responsibility for the impacts of negative decisions on asylum claims, recognising that in most cases, given the capacity of relevant systems, those receiving such decisions do not face immediate removal but remain in local communities facing often extreme hardship. Negative decisions should trigger clear protocols to connect individuals with local sources of support and rapid legal advice.

- Implement anti-destitution reforms to the EUSS and its implementation, including consistent approaches to ensuring European nationals with pre-settled status, but no qualifying right to reside, who are facing destitution are granted access to social security benefits by Department for Work and Pensions and ensuring that minor criminal matters do not delay Home Office decision-making.

Scottish Government / COSLA should:

- Design, deliver and evaluate an Ending Destitution Together pilot which builds on learning from Fair Way Scotland and seeks to implement this learning in practice to achieve the approaches set out in Ending Destitution Together and New Scots strategies. Supported by Fair Way and Scottish Government, the pilot would seek to strengthen preventative local approaches to designing out destitution for migrant households at risk by ensuring that statutory rights are fully maximised, barriers to support are minimised, and local resources fully and efficiently deployed. We recommend it focus on an area or areas not already covered by Fair Way and where housing pressures are less acute. It would create valuable learning and a clear blueprint for other areas.

- Work with local authorities to ensure that they are providing a fair and consistent response across Scotland, and are effectively using the levers at their disposal to tackle NRPF//RE destitution, including by:

    - providing temporary accommodation while eligibility is being assessed and recording applications for homelessness assistance from ineligible households
    - ensuring fair and equal access to health and mental health services
    - providing adequate access to education and employability support (including ESOL classes)
    - not setting social work thresholds for adults with NRPF/RE who have care needs prohibitively high

- Establish a 'last resort' Hardship Fund to prevent homelessness, destitution or other forms of extreme disadvantage where, for any reason, other forms of financial or practical support are not available, accessible or effective. The fund could be administered flexibly and inclusively to dismantle barriers for anyone in Scotland who may struggle to attain access to appropriate support.

- Accelerate progress to tackling destitution and homelessness by rapidly reviewing relevant areas of law, policy and practice that cause or fail to adequately respond to destitution and homelessness for people with NRPF/RE. Embed mitigation measures in all relevant policy portfolios and strategies, and reform law and policy to redress these failures. Increase investment, training and resources for frontline workers.

- Increase investment in the Ending Destitution Together strategy, scaling up access to casework and cash support for those experiencing NRPF/RE destitution and homelessness to better align with demand; and ensuring that all those who need it have access to specialist legal advice and representation. Expand the Cash First pilot programme into a national approach to ensure all those in urgent need have rapid access to the support they need.

- Early access to quality legal advice can prevent destitution and homelessness among those with NRPF/RE. Scottish Government should ensure that the Scottish Legal Aid Board Review identifies effective solutions to ensure that those with NRPF/RE have access to quality asylum and immigration legal advice and representation.

- Strengthen accountability for progress by ensuring greater participation of people with NRPF/RE who are directly impacted by UK and Scottish Government policies and practices.

Scottish Government / Local Authorities should:

- Work in partnership with the third sector to ensure emergency accommodation provision is reliably available for everyone at risk of rough sleeping during winter and extreme weather. This should be single-room provision, accessible out-of-hours, and provide access to living essentials as well as a safe place to stay. This provision must be accessible to those with NRPF/RE.

Fair Way Scotland should:

- Establish effective data infrastructure and common recording across Fair Way delivery partners to enable reliable measurement and tracking of the profile of those supported and the outcomes achieved by receiving Fair Way support.

- Increase capacity within the partnership to provide accessible, quality legal advice and representation to people with NRPF/RE through direct commissioning of legal advice services

- Increase capacity for policy and public affairs work in partnership with other advocacy organisations across the UK to push for systems-level changes in policy and practice at local authority, Scottish Government and UK levels.

Other actors:

- Meeting the costs of community-based accommodation accessible to those with NRPF/RE who would otherwise be sleeping rough or in other unsafe living conditions is a key challenge in addressing the needs identified in this study. Scottish Government should lead the creation of a strategic funding partnership between local authorities, Fair Way Scotland and independent funders to ensure sufficient resource is available to support the accommodation and essential living costs of this group.

- Fair Way Scotland and Scottish Government should work with Housing Associations to build consensus on their role in supporting people with NRPF/RE, with the aim of securing access to decent quality, community-based accommodation at a reasonable cost for this group.

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Appendix 1: Survey response rates, grossing up and weighting

The base population for the survey is those individuals (or households) receiving casework support from Fair Way over the financial years 2022/3 to 2024/5. Although survey fieldwork was conducted during the second and third of the above financial years, some of our cases commenced casework during the first of these years (2022/23), mainly in the latter part of that year.

We estimate that 1,870 unique individuals/households accessed Fair Way services over this time period. Data shared by Fair Way partners and collated by Homelessness Network Scotland regarding the total cases supported each year will double count individuals (likely to a considerable degree) because many individuals remain in the service across more than one year.

Survey response rate data by service delivery partner is presented in Table A.1.

Table A.1: Survey response rates by Fair Way service (city)

Service (city, type)	**Response rate**
Refugee Sanctuary Scotland (Glasgow, accommodation)	59%
Simon Community Scotland (Glasgow, accommodation)	53%
Simon Community Scotland (Glasgow, casework)	29%
Scottish Refugee Council (Glasgow, casework)	21%
Turning Point Scotland (Aberdeen, casework)	14%
Simon Community Scotland (Edinburgh, casework)	6%
Total	**14%**
Total (responses that covered all/ most questions)	**11%**

When calculating the weights to use when 'grossing up' from the sampled survey respondents to the overall cohort population, we estimate these for each of the above services separately for each year, defined as the year when the individual /household commenced casework. This gives the numerator for the calculation. There is an element of approximation here because our question on how long respondents had been in touch with the service had banded responses. For one service, Turning Point Scotland (Aberdeen), we had no cases starting in the first year.

The denominator for the calculation is the estimated caseload in terms of cases starting in each year. For three of the larger services (Scottish Refugee Council, Simon Community Scotland and Turning Point Scotland) we obtained this information across years in a form (including quarterly new starts) which enabled us to calculate annual new case starts, and for the largest service (Simon Community Scotland) we obtained further information on the split between Edinburgh and Glasgow. In our own fieldwork we also obtained estimates from local service staff of the numbers of cases they were handling in 2023/4 and 2024/5, which helped particularly with two smaller services. By piecing this information together and making certain reasonable assumptions we created the new case numbers estimates for the six services for each of the three years (two years in one case). These were then the denominators for the response rates for each service-start year.

The grossing weights are simply the reciprocal of the response rates.

The only complication, when grossing up, was the need to deal with the fact that for 45 of our 255 responding service users we only had answers to the first 56 questions/data items; those covering key dates, service, locality, caseworker, case category (asylum, EEA, etc), current status, current use of Fair Way accommodation, cash, duration of support, legal support details, and access to a range of other supports. When analysing other questions, we have inflated the grossing factor by 1.214 times the value calculated as above, so that when generating numbers of individuals /households we continue to produce a total of around 1,870, which is what we would have when analysing the first set of questions. This involves assuming that the respondents with only partial sets of answers were similar to those with full sets.

Appendix 2: Overview of qualitative longitudinal (restrospective) sample

The table below provides an overview of the 26 participants with direct experience of NRPF/RE and accessing Fair Way support who took part in round two qualitative longitudinal (or retrospective) interviews. In addition to detailing participants pseudonyms, basic demographic information, length of time in the UK, length of engagement with Fair Way, and components of Fair Way support accessed, the table also summarises changes in participants' lives between interviews/since accessing Fair Way covering seven domains, these being migration status, accommodation/housing circumstances, mental and physical health, employment, income, and access to essentials (material deprivation). Changes are categorised in terms of improvement, stability/stasis and deterioration with information in subsequent rows summarising the nature of any changes and sources of help/assistance relevant to the domain in question. The final column provides an assessment overall of whether the individual's circumstances improved or deteriorated between interviews/since accessing Fair Way Scotland support. As detailed in chapter one, most participants took part in two qualitative (longitudinal) interviews on average 11 months apart, but eight participants took part for the first time and were asked about changes in their circumstances since accessing Fair Way. On average participants had been engaged with Fair Way support for 16 months.

Pseudonym	Main group	Sex	Age range	Fair Way (months)	Time UK (years)	Fair Way Component			Domain							Overall
						Accom'n	Cash	Casework	Migration	Accommodation	Mental	Physical	Employment	Income	Access to Essentials	
Hussein	ARE	M	25-34	12	6	Y	Y	Y	Improved	Improved	Deterioration	Deterioration	Same	Deterioration	Same	Overall mixed, tending towards deterioration
									ARE to Fresh Claim	Rough Sleeping to Fair Way to Home Office	Increase anxiety	Increase stress related	Not permitted	Fair Way to Home Office	Destitute	
									Fair Way casework Fair Way SW Solicitor	Fair Way casework Fair Way SW Home Office	GP				Friends Community Food bank	

Chipo	ARE	F	65 plus	16	16	Y	Y	Y	Improved	Improved	Improved	Same	Same	Deterioration	Deterioration	Overall mixed, tending towards improvement
									ARE to Fresh Claim	Sofa Surfing to Fair Way to Home Office	Reduced anxiety		No permitted	Fair Way to Home office	Destitute	
									Solicitor Community Other vol	Fair Way Solicitor Community Home Office	Community Counsellor				Friends Community Other vol Food bank	
Bekela	ARE	M	35-44	22	9	Y	Y	Y	Same	Improved (Deterioration)	Deterioration	Deterioration	Same	Improved (Deterioration)	Deterioration	Overall mixed, tending towards deterioration.
									Fresh claim to ARE to Fesh claim	Sofa surfing to Fair Way to Home Office	Increased anxiety	Back pain etc	Not permitted	Home Office to Fair Way to Home Office	Destitute	
									Fair Way casework Solicitor	Fair Way Home Office		GP		Fair Way	Food banks	
Naftal	ARE	M	35-44	12	7	Y	Y	Y	Improved (Same)	Improved (Same)	Improved (Same)	Same	Same	Improved (Same)	Same	Overall improved, with some stasis.
									Fresh claim to ARE to Fresh claim	Rough Sleeping to Fair Way	Less anxious		Not permitted	None to Fair Way Cash		

									Fair Way casework	Fair Way				Fair Way		
Jamal	ARE	M	35-44	14	17	Y	Y	Y	Improved (Same)	Improved (Same)	Same	Same	Same	Improved (Same)	Same	Overall stasis, with some improvement.
									ARE to Fresh Claim	Rough Sleeping to Fair Way	Depression & insomnia		Not permitted	None to Fair Way Cash	Destitute	
									Solicitor Fair Way casework	Fair Way				Fair Way Friemds	Friends Community Food bank Vol sector orgs	
Bilal	ARE	M	45-64	13	15	N	N	Y	Deteriorated	Same	Deteriorated	Deteriorated	Same	Same	Same	Overall stasis, with some deterioration.
									Fresh claim to ARE	Home Office	Increased anxiety	Memory loss; weight loss	Not permitted	Home Office	Destitute	
									Solicitor Fair Way casework	Fair Way casework Home Office	GP	GP		Solicitor Fair Way casework		
Thierry	ARE	M	45-64	13	11	N	N	Y	Improved	Improved	Deteriorated	Deteriorated	Same	Improved	Same	Overall mixed, tending to improvement.
									ARE to Fresh claim	Sofa surfing to Home Office	Trauma & ongoing stress	Stress related pain	Not permitted	None to Home Office	Destitute	
									Solicitor Fair Way casework	Friends Home Office				Friends Home Office	Faith groups Other vol orgs	
Fadumo	ARE	M		17	19	Y	Y	Y	Same	Improved	Deteriorated	Deteriorated	Same	Improved	Same	

			35-44					ARE to Fresh claim to ARE	Rough Sleeping to Fair Way	Steadily worsening	Stress related	Not permitted	None to Fair Way cash	Destitute	Overall mixed, tending to stasis
								Solicitor Fair Way casework	Fair Way	GP Gym	GP		Fair Way		
Kunal	ARE	M	25-34	13	12	N	N	Y	Deterioration	Improved	Improved	Deteriorated	Same	Improved	Same	Overall mixed, tending to improvement
								Fresh claim to ARE	Rough Sleeping to Fair Way to Home Office	Less anxious		Not permitted	None to Home Office	Destitute	
								Solicitor	Fair Way Home Office				Home Office		
Dhruv	ARE	M	25-34	17	14	N	N	Y	Improved	Same	Same	Deterioration	Same	Same	Same	Overall stasis, with some mixed outcomes
								ARE to Fresh Claim	Home Office		Injury	Not permitted	Home Office	Destitute	
								Self	Mears		GP				
Tsehay	ARE	F	35-44	15	12	N	N	Y	Same	Same	Deterioration	Deterioration	Same	Same	Same	Overall stasis, with some deterioration
								Fresh claim to ARE to Fresh Claim	Home Office	Increased anxiety	Lung condition	Not permitted	Home Office	Destitute	

									Solicitor	Fair Way casework Home Office	GP Community Mental Health Team	GP Consultant		Home Office Fair Way casework		
Said	ARE	M	35-44	11	8	Y	Y	Y	Same	Improved	Deterioration	Deterioration	Same	Improved	Same	Overall mixed
									ARE	Rough Sleeping to Fair Way	Increased stress	Decreased wellbeing	Not permitted	None to Fair Way	Destitute	
									Fair Way casework Solicitor	Fair Way						
Abbas	ARE	M	25-34	7	16	Y	Y	Y	Same	Improved	Deterioration	?	Same	Improved	Same	Overall mixed
									ARE	Rough Sleeping to Fair Way	Building stress		Not permitted	Home Office to Fair Way	Destitute	
									Fair Way casework Solicitor	Fair Way				Fair Way	Friends	
Sofija	EEA	F	45-64	15	12	N	N	Y	Improved (same)	Improved	Deteriorated	Deteriorated	Improved	Improved	Same	Overall mixed, tending to improvement
									Pre-SS to SS	Rough Sleeping to Hosting to Perm Social	Grief, Stress	Work related harms	None to working to none.	None to Universal Credit	Destitute	

									Fair Way casework	MSP			Vol sector Job centre	Fair Way casework	Food Bank	
Edgars	EEA	M	45-64	12	9	N	N	Y	Improved	Improved	Improved	Deteriorated	Same	Improved	Deterioration	Overall improved, with some deterioration
									None to SS	Rough Sleeping to hostel to Perm Social	Better mood & wellbeing	Untreated health condition	Seeking	None to Universal Credit	Destitute	
									Fair Way casework	Fair Way casework Local Authority			Job Centre	Fair Way casework		
Dion	EEA	M	-	10	26	N	N	Y	Same	Improved (same)	Improved	Improved	Same	Improved	Same	Overall improved, with some stasis.
									EUSS application submitted	Temp LA Flat	Reduced anxiety	Through exercise	Not permitted	Universal Credit	Destitute	
									Solicitor MSP	Local Authority	Gym membership	Gym membership		Fair Way casework Friends	Food Bank Fair Way Friends	
Emma	EEA	F	45-64	11	5	N	N	Y	Improved	Improved	Deterioration	Deterioration	Same	Improved	Same	Overall mixed, tending to improvement.
									None to SS	Temp LA Flat to better Temp LA Flat	Increased anxiety	COPD	Not able due to health	Personal Independence Payment (PIP)	Destitute	

														to PIP & pending (Universal Credit) UC		
								Fair Way casework	Fair way casework				Fair Way casework	Food Bank		
Mateusz	EEA	M	25-34	22	10	N	N	Y	Improved	Improved	Improved	Improved	Improved (same)	Improved	Improved	Overall improved.
									Pre-SS to SS	Rough Sleeping to Hotel	Increased wellbeing	Increased wellbeing	Employed	None to UC	Destitute to not destitute	
									Fair Way casework	Fair Way casework Other vol sector	GP	GP		Fair Way casework		
Tomasz	EEA	M	45-64	27	12	N	Y	Y	Same	Same	Deterioration	Deterioration	Same	Improvement	Same	Overall stasis, with some deterioration.
									Pending application	Rough sleeping	Steadily worsening	Impacts of Rough Sleeping	Not permitted	None to Fair Way cash	Destitute	
									Fair Way casework Solicitor					Fair Way casework	Other vol orgs	
Jan	EEA	M	34-44	21	19	N	N	Y	Improved	Improved	Improved	Same	Improved	Improved	Same	Overall improved.
									None to SS	Rough Sleeping to Hostel	More hopeful	Remain poor	Work plans in place	None to Adult Disability Payment	Destitute	

								Fair Way casework	Other vol org Local Authority				Fair Way casework	Other vol sector		
Michal	EEA	M	35-44	10	10	N	Y	Y	Improved	Deteriorated	Improved	Improved	Same	Improved	Same	Overall improved, with some mixed outcomes
									No QRR to QRR	Family to Rough Sleeping to Hotel	Less anxious		Seeking work	None to Fair Way cash	Destitute	
									Solicitor	Solicitor Local Authority	Solicitor Local Authority			Fair Way	Food bank Other vol orgs	
Pawel	EEA	M	35-44	11	16	N	N	Y	Deterioration	Same	Deterioration	Deterioration	Same	Deterioration	Same	Overall deterioration, with some stasis
									Detailed for deportation	Moving between temp	Increased anxiety	Ongoing decline	Unable to work due to health	UC & PIP to PIP	Destitute	
									Fair Way casework Solicitor	Local authority	GP	GP				
Hinata	Other	M	45-64	15	25	N	N	Y	Improved	Improved	Improved	Deterioration	Same	Same	Same	Overall mixed, tending to improvement.
									None to Leave to Remain application	Shelter to B&B	Reduced stress	Slight decline in health	Not permitted	None	Destitute	

								Solicitor / Fair Way	Local Authority Vol sector org		GP NHS			Vol sector orgs		
Hana	ARE	F	45-64	27	5	Y	Y	N	Same	Improved (same)	Deterioration	Same	Same	Improved (same)	Deterioration	Overall mixed, tending to stasis.
									No active claim	Shelter to Fair Way	Increased anxiety		Not permitted	None to Fair Way	Destitute	
									Solicitor	Fair Way	Psychiatrist Community Mental Health Team			Fair Way	Food banks	
Rachid	Other	M	45-64	15	13	N	N	Y	Deterioration	Deteriorated	Deterioration	Same	Deterioration	Deterioration	Same	Overall deterioration, with some stasis
									Visa expired	Shelter to LA Temo Flat to sofa surfing	Increased anxiety		Not permitted	UC to none	Destitute	
									Solicitor Other vol orgs	Friend Fair Way casework Local Authority Other vol orgs				Fair Way casework	Friend Other vol orgs	
Mahdi	Other	M	35-44	24	16	Y	Y	Y	Same	Improved	Same	Same	Same	Improved	Same	Overall stasis, with some improvement.
									ARE						Destitute	

										Hotel to Fair Way	Ongoing anxiety		Not Permitted	None to Fair Way cash		
									Fair Way casework Solicitor	Fair Way						