

**Safe homes:**  
ensuring access  
to safe  
accommodation  
for survivors of  
modern slavery



# Introduction

**The Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group (ATMG) is a coalition established in 2009 to monitor the UK's implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (ECAT). The ATMG operates according to a human rights-based approach to protect the well-being and best interests of survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery. It comprises seventeen leading UK-based anti-trafficking organisations.<sup>1</sup>**

**Hope at Home is a charity providing innovative accommodation options for survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking in the UK. This is currently delivered via a national hosting scheme.**

Domestic and international law provides that potential and confirmed survivors of modern slavery should have access to appropriate and secure accommodation in order to assist their recovery. Yet, access to a safe and appropriate house is not guaranteed in the UK.

Recent immigration policy changes, outlined in this briefing, have exacerbated the already stretched availability of social housing.

This has made it even more difficult for those survivors with recourse to public funds to access appropriate and safe housing, and sometimes any accommodation at all.

In this context, the tension between Local Authority duties and the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC), which was set up by the UK Government to perform its duties to provide accommodation, financial support, and other assistance to adult survivors, is creating a vacuum in support, resulting in many potential and confirmed survivors falling through gaps and becoming at risk of destitution and homelessness.

It is difficult to estimate how many survivors are affected by this situation due to the lack of publicly available data around the number of survivors who are also accessing the asylum system; the number of potential and confirmed survivors who apply for social housing and long-term outcomes in terms of securing safe and stable housing.

This briefing analyses some of the obstacles and gaps in support potential and confirmed survivors of modern slavery in asylum accommodations face when evicted because of becoming eligible to apply for social housing.

<sup>1</sup> Anti-Slavery International, Ashiana Sheffield, Bawso, Children's Law Centre (CLC), East European Resource Centre (EERC), ECPAT UK, Flourish Northern Ireland, Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX), Helen Bamber Foundation, Hope for Justice, JustRight Scotland, Kalayaan, Law Centre (NI), Scottish Refugee Council, TARA service, The Snowdrop Project, The UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK).

# Summary of findings

## Fol Requests

The ATMG and Hope at Home submitted Freedom of Information (Fol) requests to Local Authorities across England and Scotland to better understand what information housing officers gather around modern slavery when assessing homelessness applications; how many applications of this kind they received from survivors with an asylum leave between August 2023 and February 2024 and of these how many were considered in priority need.

Of the Fols submitted across 47 Local Authorities in England, 38 received a reply with the following findings:

- There is not a clear statutory requirement to ask and record information about the NRM and modern slavery as part of homelessness applications to Local Authorities in England, except for a statutory requirement to record support needs (Modern Slavery is included in these but categorised as other support needs in publicly available data).
- The above creates an inconsistent approach across Local Authorities when determining if someone has support needs linked to modern slavery as part of housing applications.

- ✓ 15 out of the 38 Local Authorities that responded do not ask any questions about modern slavery when assessing priority needs for housing applications.
- ✓ 12 out of the 38 Local Authorities who responded ask questions about modern slavery.
- ✓ 11 out of the 38 Local Authorities who responded either ask if the applicant has priority needs and some would specifically ask if the applicant has priority needs as a victim of modern slavery.

- The nature of the questions can affect the capacity of a housing officer to determine if someone is a survivor of modern slavery and its associated needs. Over 7 months, 38 Local Authorities across England recorded about 135 homelessness applications by survivors with asylum leave. Of these:

- ✓ 42 applicants were found to be in priority need.
- ✓ 44 applicants were not considered to be in priority need – of these, 20 were accommodated under relief or prevention duties.
- ✓ 49 applicants were still waiting for a decision and no interim accommodation had been offered.

Of the FOIs submitted across 30 Local Authorities in Scotland, 27 received a reply so far with the following findings:

- 27 out of the 27 Local Authorities that responded do not ask questions about modern slavery as this is not required under the Scottish Government's HL1 Homelessness Data Capture specification.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, data and information shared by partner organisations highlighted an increase in referrals to hosting scheme due to statutory gaps in support or reliance on unsafe temporary accommodations even when an accommodation is provided:

- ✓ Hosting scheme Hope at Home, operating across England, between financial year 22/23 and 23/24, recorded more than a fivefold increase in referrals for survivors with either a positive Reasonable or Conclusive Ground decision and recourse to public funds.
- ✓ The tension between Local Authority duties and services provided under the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract often results in a vacuum in support and confusion about what service should step in to provide support.

- ✓ Even when survivors are able to secure accommodation, the process is highly traumatising and accommodations provided are often unsafe and inappropriate to meet their recovery needs. This is due to the use of inappropriate settings such as hostels or hotels, which from temporary emergency provisions become longer-term accommodations.



<sup>2</sup> The Scottish Government. (January 2023). *Homelessness data (HL1) output specification and associated guidance*.

# Our Recommendations

1

## A 56-day move-on period

The Home Office should implement a 56-day 'move-on period'<sup>3</sup> for all individuals leaving the asylum system, to ensure Local Authorities and other services put in place necessary housing arrangements and reduce the risk of homelessness.

2

## A cross-departmental strategy

The Home Office, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as well as devolved nations administrations, where housing is a devolved matter, should develop a cross-departmental strategy to reduce homelessness. This should include close cooperation with Local Authorities.

3

## Modern slavery as a priority need

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) should explicitly include modern slavery as a priority need for access to housing in the Housing Act 1996.

4

## Assess housing provision

The Modern Slavery Unit should assess what housing provisions survivors of modern slavery are currently able to access and the associated impact on their recovery

5

## Statutory duty to refer

The Government should introduce a statutory duty to refer (within the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) for the Home Office and any relevant subcontractors to refer people to homelessness services if they are at risk of homelessness. Many other public authorities have this duty and yet the Home Office is not amongst them.<sup>4</sup>

6

## Publishing information

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) should introduce a requirement on local authorities to record information about homeless applicants who present as/are identified as survivors of modern slavery to be published in their homelessness statistics.

7

## Mandatory modern slavery training

Local Authorities should provide mandatory modern slavery and human trafficking training for their housing staff.

8

## Mandatory move-on training

There should be mandatory training on issues relevant to the move-on period (including homelessness assistance, other housing options, welfare benefits) for support workers supporting survivors under the MSVCC.

<sup>3</sup> The move-on period is the time frame after which people who have been granted a form of leave in the UK as a result of an asylum claim, must leave government-funded accommodation. In the UK, the move-on period is 28 days after receiving a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). During this time, the person is expected to find alternative accommodation, arrange receipt of mainstream benefits, and/or find a job.

<sup>4</sup> Crisis. (19 January 2024). Homelessness upon discharge from Public institutions. Other public institutions include: prisons, Jobcentres, social services, hospitals amongst others

# Background

Article 12 of the European Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings (ECAT), of which the UK is a signatory, states that:

***Each Party shall adopt such legislative or other measures as may be necessary to assist victims in their physical, psychological and social recovery. Such assistance shall include at least:***

***A standard of living capable of ensuring their subsistence, through such measures as: appropriate and secure accommodation, psychological and material assistance.<sup>5</sup>***

The UK primarily implements these responsibilities through the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC) for adults, while children and those with recourse to public funds are routinely signposted to Local Authorities. Other survivors are instead in receipt of asylum support if they have a pending asylum claim.

Despite the above provisions, survivors of trafficking and modern slavery are facing destitution and homelessness as a result of difficulties around accessing social housing across the UK.

The ongoing scarcity of available safe and appropriate social housing has been exacerbated by some recent immigration policy changes, which created a spike in individuals presenting themselves to Local Authorities for housing support.

These policy changes include the streamlined asylum process, introduced in February 2023 to allow quicker decision-making for those individuals of certain nationalities with high positive grants rates.<sup>6</sup> This resulted in a rapid increase in positive decisions being issued very quickly, which consequently increased the number of individuals evicted from asylum accommodations as a result of the move-on period policy.

The spike in evictions started in Quarter 3 2023 when asylum grants came in a relatively short period of time,<sup>7</sup> meaning services weren't able to respond. According to Refugee Council statistics, a total of almost 50,000 people were granted protection following an asylum claim in the year ending December 2023, a 247% increase on the previous year.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> [Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings \(ECAT\)](#).

<sup>6</sup> Home Office. (23 February 2023). [Streamlined asylum processing](#).

<sup>7</sup> Grant of asylum protection figures in 2023:

- Quarter 1 2023: 4,395;
- Quarter 2 2023: 6,354;
- Quarter 3 2023: 22,858;
- Quarter 4 2023: 31,755

Home Office. (last updated 23 May 2024). [Immigration system statistics data tables](#).

<sup>8</sup> Refugee Council. [Top facts from the latest statistics on refugees and people seeking asylum](#).

The current asylum guidance provides that when a person is recognised as a refugee in the UK, they have 28 days “move-on” period from the date of issue of their Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) to find an alternative accommodation to avoid homelessness and destitution.

Once an individual is granted refugee status, they have recourse to public funds and can make a housing application to a Local Authority. The Home Office issues a discontinuation notice and ‘Notice to Quit’ (via the accommodation provider), which states that the person’s asylum support is ending within a certain period of time (the ‘move-on period’) and that they must leave their asylum accommodation.

These letters specify the date by which they must have left the property. The move-on period is 28 days, and previously the beginning of these 28 days started from the date the Home Office issued the notice to quit.

However, in August 2023, people were issued with 28 days’ notice from the date they were granted leave to remain. At the same time, the Home Office started to send Notices to Quit to individuals granted refugee status giving just 7 days’ notice to leave their accommodation.

This further increased pressure on Local Authorities who are struggling to cope with the increasing number of people in need of accommodation without being afforded additional resources.<sup>9</sup>

The updated policy<sup>10</sup> which has led to a much shorter period of time before people are evicted also – for the first time – clarified that people who have been granted leave to remain (temporary permission to stay) as a victim of human trafficking would also have their asylum support discontinued in this way.

This disregarded the importance of stable accommodation for survivors and the harmful impact of housing insecurity on those affected by modern slavery.<sup>11</sup>

This change to the move-on period in conjunction with Streamlined Asylum questionnaires and other attempts to ‘clear the backlog’ of ‘legacy’ asylum claims, leading to more people being granted refugee status within a shorter time frame, compounded by Local Authority housing situation at breaking point, has resulted in more people being evicted from asylum accommodation and becoming in need of an alternative accommodation.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Refugee Council. (6 September 2023). *Thousands of new refugees face destitution and homelessness after being told to leave their accommodation at short notice.*

<sup>10</sup> Home Office. (Last updated 13 July 2023). *Ceasing asylum support: caseworker guidance.*

<sup>11</sup> Journal of the British Academy. (4 May 2023). *A house is not a home: housing disadvantage, homelessness, and modern slavery.*

<sup>12</sup> Right to remain. (8 January 2024). *Increase in Home Office evictions for those who have refugee status.*

# Survivor referral data

As a result of increased levels of homelessness, before the Christmas holidays, the Home Office stated that this shorter move-on period was only meant for the month of August and changed their policy to the current position, meaning that the 28 day notice/move-on period begins from the date the person's BRP is issued.<sup>13</sup> However, charities, Local Authorities and the UK government's own Homelessness Reduction Unit say that at least 56 days are needed to allow more time to assist with housing arrangements and reduce the risk of homelessness.

Meanwhile, individuals continue to become homeless and since August 2023, there has been an increasing number of referrals and requests of support recorded by hosting schemes such as Hope at Home and Refugees at home as well as by homeless shelters. Between financial year 22/23 and 23/24, Hope at Home, which delivers a hosting scheme across England, recorded more than a fivefold increase in referrals for survivors with either a positive Reasonable or Conclusive Ground decision and recourse to public funds as shown in the below tables.

<b>Total referrals for survivors with recourse to public funds</b>	<b>11</b>
Survivors with positive Reasonable Grounds	6
Survivors with positive Conclusive Grounds	5
Survivors recorded as sleeping rough at point of referral	1

**Table 1. Hope at Home** – Referrals for survivors with recourse to public funds **2022/2023**

<b>Total referrals for survivors with recourse to public funds</b>	<b>62</b>
Survivors with positive Reasonable Grounds	51
Survivors with positive Conclusive Grounds	11
Survivors recorded as sleeping rough at point of referral	27

**Table 2. Hope at Home** – Referrals for survivors with recourse to public funds **2023/2024**

<sup>13</sup> The Guardian. (21 December 2023). [Home Office reverses policy on UK hostel evictions after surge in refugee homelessness.](#)

# Homelessness data

London Councils, a consortium representing all London Boroughs, said that only in January 2024, 331 individuals were made homeless as a result of these evictions.<sup>14</sup> They also found that 846 homelessness applications were made in October 2023 from those with refugee status and others evicted from asylum support accommodation, representing a 39% increase on September's figure. October saw at least 112 people sleeping rough in London after leaving Home Office accommodation.<sup>15</sup>



In November 2023, unprecedentedly, Glasgow City Council declared a housing emergency, raising concerns around the Home Office plans to make around 2,500 batched asylum decisions in Glasgow by the end of 2023.<sup>16</sup>

The Law Centre Northern Ireland reported they have been seeing the impact of this issue with some individuals being placed in airport hotels and children being moved more than 30 miles from their communities and schools resulting in disrupted education and isolation.<sup>17</sup>

A report by the Centre for Homelessness Impact found there was a 223% increase in street homelessness for people leaving asylum support accommodation between June and September 2023.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> London Councils. (14 March 2023). *Spiralling London rough sleeping figures 'latest evidence of homelessness emergency'*.

<sup>15</sup> London Councils. (2023). *Alarming increase in refugees ending up homeless in London, December 2023*.

<sup>16</sup> Glasgow City Council. (30 November 2023). *Glasgow declares housing emergency*.

<sup>17</sup> Law Centre NI. (13 September 2023). *Seven days to sidestep homelessness for refugees: major concerns at the new Home Office policy*.

<sup>18</sup> Centre for Homelessness Impact. (2024). *Homelessness, refugees and resettlement*.

# Tension between Local Authorities duties and Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract support in England and Wales

The situation described above affecting survivors of trafficking and modern slavery is also the result of the tension between support provided by the Local Authority and the one under the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC).

## Local Authority support and priority needs in homelessness applications

Usually, individuals granted refugee status/humanitarian protection or another form of leave to remain who are evicted from asylum accommodations have to turn to Local Authorities for support by completing a homelessness application to housing departments. Many of these individuals are also potential or confirmed survivors of modern slavery and despite their vulnerability as victims of trafficking and modern slavery, they are not included in priority housing lists.

The modern slavery statutory guidance as well as the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities<sup>19</sup> only states that a victim of trafficking MAY have a priority need for accommodation if they are assessed as being vulnerable according to section 188(1)(c) of the Housing Act 1996.

The ATMG and Hope at Home have recently submitted a Freedom of Information request to 47 Local Authorities across England to understand what information housing officers gather around modern slavery when assessing homelessness applications.

On the basis of the 38 replies received, in the majority of cases, Local Authorities ask questions about modern slavery, however, their approach widely varies.

The majority of Local Authorities who do ask questions about modern slavery, ask the following questions:

Number of local authorities	Number	% of total number
Who replied to the FOI	38	
Who don't routinely ask questions about modern slavery	15	39%
Who ask direct questions about modern slavery	12	32%
Who ask if someone has support needs (including being a victim of modern slavery)	11	29%

**Table 3. Hope at Home** – Replies to Freedom of Information request to Local Authorities across England

<sup>19</sup> Home Office. (Updated 3 May 2024). *Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities*.

- ***Are you a victim of modern slavery? Do you have support***
- ***needs as a victim of modern slavery?***

The above questions on their own are quite problematic when relied upon to determine someone's modern slavery status because they don't follow a trauma-informed approach and individuals may not identify as being a victim of modern slavery.

A recent report from the British Institute for International and Comparative Law and the Human Trafficking Foundation found that 15% of all potential victims referred to the Duty to Notify in 2020–2021 denied their exploitation experience or victim status.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, some survivors have a limited understanding of the NRM as a result of their mental health, lack of access to specialist legal advice and the multiple immigration/criminal justice processes they may be going through simultaneously.

Additionally, many survivors may not have been identified as a survivor of modern slavery, and it continues to be extremely difficult to be referred into the NRM,<sup>21</sup> with the evidential threshold also having increased due to provisions within the Nationality and Borders Act 2022.<sup>22</sup>

Some Local Authorities, however, showed good practice when assessing support needs by tailoring questions to information shared by each applicant, which resulted in higher numbers of individuals identified as being survivors of modern slavery within those Local Authorities.

For example, one of the Local Authorities who replied to our FoI, outlined the process

followed by officers when dealing with homelessness applications.

*During the homeless assessment officers will initially ask directly whether they are a victim of modern day slavery or trafficking, then in order nobody slips through the net in case they don't understand what this means, they ask whether a person has come to the UK of their own free will, did anyone make them work or do anything they did not want to, if they have experienced any trauma on their route to the UK or during their time here.*

*They will also ask if they are being supported by any charities, such as Hestia or others which would indicate to us whether there is a known risk. They will then follow up with appropriate questions should any concerns be flagged. We have a specific assessment form devised for refugees to ensure they are asked direct and indirect questions in every assessment. Appropriate referrals and support are then put in place.*

One of the issues emerging from our FoI is that there is not a clear statutory requirement to ask and record information about the NRM and modern slavery as part of homelessness applications, which creates inconsistent approaches when gathering information and data gaps as part of this process.

There is a statutory duty to collect homelessness data for any household who presents to the Council as homeless, which is reported quarterly to the Government's Department for Levelling Up and Housing & Communities.<sup>23</sup> This data set is called H-CLIC (Homelessness Case Level Information Collection).

Within this data set there is a question (HCLIC 3.2) about the support needs of the applicant; one of the support needs listed is 'victim of modern slavery'.

<sup>20</sup> British Institute for International and Comparative Law and the Human Trafficking Foundation. (February 2024). [Identification of adults with lived experience of modern slavery in the UK.](#)

<sup>21</sup> Kalayaan. (February 2024). [The National Referral Mechanism: Near Breaking Point – Progress Report 2024 – One Year On.](#)

<sup>22</sup> Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group, British Institute of International and Comparative Law and Human Trafficking Foundation. (June 2024). [Assessing the Modern Slavery Impacts of the Nationality and Borders Act: One Year On.](#)

<sup>23</sup> Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities and Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. (last updated 29 February 2024). [Tables on homelessness.](#)

**Based on the answers received by 38 Local Authorities across England, 31% of survivors of modern slavery, who made an housing application between August 2023 and February 2024, were found to be in priority need.**

However, there is no breakdown of other support needs in the data published, so we have limited understanding of how many survivors of modern slavery make these applications.

be considered when assessing priority needs. This is however not the case for other types of abuses such as Domestic Violence, which is instead explicitly listed as a priority need.

Modern slavery is not explicitly reported as a support need in the statistics because being a survivor of modern slavery is not considered a priority need itself, but only a vulnerability to

Issues around consideration of priority needs are resulting in survivors becoming homeless, often putting them in serious life-threatening situations.

<b><i>Number of people with refugee status/humanitarian protection with a record of modern slavery</i></b>	<b><i>Number of people</i></b>	<b><i>% of total number</i></b>
<i>Who made a homelessness application between August 2023 and February 2024</i>	135	
<i>Who were considered to be in priority need</i>	42	31%
<i>Who were not considered to be in priority need</i> --- <i>Of these, people who were accommodated under relief or prevention duties</i>	44 20	33%
<i>Who were still waiting for a decision and no interim accommodation had been offered</i>	49	36%

**Table 4** – Referrals for survivors with recourse to public funds 2023/2024  
This is based on FoI replies from 38 Local Authorities across England

*In January 2024, Hope at Home received a referral for a survivor of modern slavery with a positive Reasonable Ground Decision, who was sleeping rough. The referral confirmed that this was the result of receiving refugee status and being evicted from NASS accommodation. This individual was due to have surgery at the beginning of May as a result of an injury encountered in their country of origin, which resulted in the man developing serious health conditions. However, the hospital said they can't operate if he is homeless as he will be more prone to infection. Despite this, the individual was not considered in priority need by the Local Authority and became homeless as a result.*

Also, ATMG members have reported multiple issues when survivors with newly granted leave to remain try to apply for social housing support.

The Helen Bamber Foundation reported witnessing evictions almost every day towards the end of 2023 despite the relatively small number of people they support. In their significant experience, homelessness applications are complex applications, requiring a significant amount of evidence and experience of knowing how to navigate the gatekeeping local authorities often employ, due to the very high demand for their services and in particular emergency accommodation.

They have seen Local Authorities offer homelessness assessment appointments for

weeks after the date a person will be homeless, and people be informed that they will not be provided with accommodation because they are not in priority need. Where Local Authorities do agree to provide someone with emergency accommodation, this is invariably at the end of the day they will be homeless, and is often following legal intervention, if a housing solicitor is involved.

This process is exceptionally distressing for individuals as they often have to wait at the council all day with no guarantee they'll be housed. Additionally, the accommodations provided are often unsafe and inappropriate to meet their recovery needs, due to reliance on the use of temporary accommodations such as hostels.

*Sara\* was evicted from her asylum accommodation on a Friday and was placed in a mixed hostel. Her Snowdrop caseworker received the following messages from Sara:*

*"I do not feel safe [here] at all. It's a mix of boys and girls. . .I'm scared. I don't want extra stress."*

*"What a sleepless night!!! I don't want to spend any more nights in here please. I don't want to remember my past – I feel like a prisoner."*

*Following Snowdrop's advocacy on behalf of the client, and explaining the potential impacts of unsuitable and unsafe accommodation on survivors, the housing worker agreed to move Sara. She was moved into a hotel for a couple of nights, then into another hostel. This was a women-only hostel, however Sara experienced it as a hostile place because there were male security guards, no visitors were allowed, she had to notify staff every time she left or arrived, and needed written authority to stay out overnight.*

*Sara's experience is not uncommon for Snowdrop's client group, due largely to a lack of appropriate emergency and interim accommodation. Snowdrop has repeatedly heard survivors describe their temporary accommodation as replicating their experience of exploitation, and some have expressed feelings of guilt that the move from hostel to hostel has disrupted their children's education. Following Snowdrop's advocacy regarding Sara's experience, the local authority agreed never to use the original mixed hostel for Snowdrop clients in future.*

**\*Sara is not her real name**

## Support under MSVCC for survivors with recourse to public funds

If the Local Authority do refuse to provide emergency accommodation on the day, the person will often be asked to self-refer to StreetLink; this requires knowing where they will be 'bedded down' whilst sleeping rough, and then being located by rough sleepers' outreach teams in the early hours of the morning, a significantly dangerous situation particularly for survivors of modern slavery.

It is also important to acknowledge that Local Authorities have not received funding to support people in asylum hotels since 1 April 2023, therefore are under extreme resource pressure. This and their limited understanding of what support can be offered under the MSVCC results in many Local Authorities suggesting survivors to contact the Salvation Army for support.

Conversely, the Salvation Army doesn't routinely provide accommodation to survivors with recourse to public funds in line with the modern slavery statutory guidance stating that the MSVCC provisions should not prevent a person from receiving statutory support 'they would otherwise be entitled to receive'.<sup>24</sup>

Further clarification has been provided through the Home Office Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract Assessing Destitution Guidance, which includes a table clarifying that those who have a right to homelessness assistance would not usually be considered destitute and therefore, won't qualify for MSVCC services (e.g. accommodation and financial support.)<sup>25</sup>

In essence, survivors in the NRM do not automatically get access to safe house accommodation.

This discretionary measure, compounded by Local Authorities' overstretched resources, is resulting in an increasing number of survivors falling through the cracks and being referred to homelessness shelters or housing schemes.

Hope at Home is encountering many vulnerable survivors who are finding themselves without support and left vulnerable to exploitation.

*A lady with a positive Reasonable Ground decision with leave to remain was 'staying with friends' and being exploited by the 'friend' she was staying with. The reason given by the Salvation Army for not providing a safe house is that an individual will not typically be accepted by a Salvation Army safe house because the Local authority/council has a duty of care. If the council does not meet the duty then they have to provide a reason as to why. The Salvation Army will need evidence from the LA if they are not able to comply with this duty, e.g in the form of a letter/email.*

*The Salvation Army will not accept referrals for clients who have access to alternative accommodation provision e.g private renting, local authority. The Salvation Army safe houses are for individuals who have no immigration status.*

<sup>24</sup> Home Office. (last updated 22 February 2024). Modern Slavery: statutory guidance for England and Wales (under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015) and non-statutory guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

<sup>25</sup> Home Office. (28 May 2024). Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract Assessing Destitution Guidance.

The Helen Bamber Foundation has been informed by MSVCC support workers that they cannot request a safe house space on behalf of a survivor due to become homeless that day because they have refugee status and/or recourse to public funds.

There are reports of the Salvation Army housing some of these individuals when it was clear that the Council would not have provided emergency accommodation. However, the reply to the request for support is largely in line with the above case study.

Therefore, there is a clear gap in support for survivors who are granted asylum leave and evicted from asylum accommodations. Despite their legal entitlement to recourse to public funds (and with that, homelessness assistance under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996), in practice, the support mechanisms are not sufficient to prevent survivors from becoming homeless.

While there is significant pressure on MSVCC safe house spaces, survivors of modern slavery still face significant barriers to accessing social housing. A review is sorely needed to determine the housing provisions that are available to survivors once they have received leave to remain and have been evicted from asylum accommodations.

The tension between Local Authority duties and MSVCC support is resulting in people being left without support and therefore the third sector having to step in to fill these gaps. This situation is unsustainable because it relies on the already stretched resources and capacity of frontline organisations and creates a postcode lottery around what services survivors are able to access depending on which area of the country they find themselves in. Above all, survivors of trafficking and modern slavery need a safe and stable environment to recover and rebuild their lives, and this includes having a place they can call home.

## Situation in the Devolved Nations

### Scotland

The new immigration policies have also had a significant impact in Scotland where both Glasgow and Edinburgh city council have declared a housing emergency with a growing number of individuals sleeping in tents on the streets towards the end of 2023.<sup>26</sup> This is of particular significance as Glasgow is the largest dispersal area outside London and the main one in Scotland. Data around the end of June 2023, shows that most of the 5,000 individuals seeking asylum recorded as living in Scotland were mainly in Glasgow.<sup>27</sup>

The absence of a local connection test in Scotland brings individuals to apply for housing in the main cities where they can access their communities and appropriate services, which won't be possible in more rural areas of the country. Furthermore, the priority need test for homeless households was abolished in 2012.

The ATMG submitted a Freedom of Information request to 30 Local Authorities across Scotland to understand what information housing officers gather around modern slavery when assessing housing applications.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid; The City of Edinburgh Council. (November 2023). [\*Edinburgh declares a housing emergency.\*](#)

<sup>27</sup> Social Justice and Community Committee. (23 February 2024). [\*Asylum seekers and refugees – Housing and homelessness.\*](#)

Local Authorities who don't routinely ask questions about modern slavery	27
Local Authorities who ask questions about modern slavery	0

**Table 5** – Replies to Freedom of Information request to Local Authorities across Scotland

100% of the Local Authorities who have replied to the FOI do not ask questions about modern slavery as this is not required under the Scottish Government's HL1 Homelessness Data Capture specification. Some Local Authorities have stated that if the applicant discloses a story of trafficking/exploitation, this data will be submitted, and safeguarding processes will be followed.

Because of the lack of requirement to capture information about modern slavery, it was not possible to ascertain how many housing applications were made by survivors of modern slavery in this situation. There is also no data in relation to the number of those granted refugee status living in Scotland, although there is data on individuals who have arrived on resettlement schemes.<sup>28</sup>

*However, a report from Glasgow City Council highlighted that "Since the start of the year (until 21st November 2023), the Asylum and Refugee Support Team have received 1,000 referrals from Mears for asylum households in Glasgow who have been granted leave to remain, with an increased scale of decision-making since August 2023. These figures have translated to increased homelessness applications resulting in an increase in the use of hotel and B&B placements, particularly for single males..."<sup>29</sup>*

ATMG members in Scotland have also raised issues around the potential increasing number of individuals refused leave to remain who may be evicted from asylum accommodations. Changes to the withdrawal policies, expanding the reasons why an asylum claim can be withdrawn, meant that more people are at risk of losing support.

The Refugee Council highlighted that over half of the asylum decisions made in the first 3 months of 2023 were withdrawals.<sup>30</sup> If survivors are still going through the NRM, this may result in more pressure for TARA and Migrant Help to accommodate individuals in this situation.

*Glasgow Council shared similar concerns about the growing number of individuals seeking asylum with negative decisions which may lead to an "increased pattern of people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), rough sleeping requiring outreach capacity from third sector, health and social care support for those who are deemed most vulnerable. For those families with children the council retains a statutory role in providing accommodation through Section 22 of the Social Work Scotland (1968) Act."<sup>31</sup>*

<sup>28</sup> Scottish Government. (November 2023). *Refugee Integration – role of Local Authorities: research.*

<sup>29</sup> Glasgow City Council. (October 2023). *Impact of Home Office Decisions via the Streamlined Asylum Process.*

<sup>30</sup> Refugee Council. (June 2023). *The Asylum backlog and the asylum accommodation.*

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

JustRight Scotland reported that the above situation is even more critical when considering the limited capacity of immigration solicitors to represent individuals. In their experience, this could be exacerbated if there were a large number of refusals/withdrawals and in turn, this could then impact on appeals being lodged on time, if at all, and the consequential

ineligibility for asylum support and accommodation.

We are not aware of how many survivors may be caught in this situation, but even for those individuals with no current or historic experience of trafficking, this may result in additional vulnerabilities which can lead to trafficking and exploitation.

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## Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland as in the rest of the UK the housing situation is critical with growing pressure on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, which is responsible for administering all social housing.

The way the system currently works is that once an individual gets their move on date, they can register their details with the Housing Executive. On the move-on day, they present to the Housing Executive or telephone and a housing application is made.

However, human trafficking is not listed under priority needs.<sup>32</sup>

Organisations in Northern Ireland report that usually an allocation of temporary accommodation is made that same day but can be late in the day and sometimes after working hours, so it is then passed to the out of hours team.

Flourish NI reported that they have not seen a proper house used as temporary accommodation in a long time and individuals are more routinely placed in bed and breakfasts, hostels and hotels. These arrangements are very inappropriate as shown in the following case studies provided by Flourish NI.

*A male who was placed in a hostel where all residents were searched for drugs 4 times per day. It took a lot of advocating to have him moved from this hostel and this experience was very distressing for him.*



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<sup>32</sup> For further information, see: [https://www.housingrights.org.uk/housing-advice/homelessness/homelessness-assessment?gad\\_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjw48-vBhBbEiwAzqrZVPsCaplyfx5BHqMnU4UhNdarotXyjOzLALtDey\\_PDJu8bfr-1JsXRRoCKIOQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.housingrights.org.uk/housing-advice/homelessness/homelessness-assessment?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjw48-vBhBbEiwAzqrZVPsCaplyfx5BHqMnU4UhNdarotXyjOzLALtDey_PDJu8bfr-1JsXRRoCKIOQAvD_BwE)

*A young woman with a positive conclusive decision was granted refugee status. She had been living in a hotel with her young son. A caseworker from Flourish presented at the Housing Executive with her on her move on date at 9am.*

*She waited all day for a housing representative to tell her where she would be going. She was then passed to the out of hours team. She was advised the NIHE would be sending a taxi to pick her up and take her to her new temporary accommodation – in the meantime Mears (company running with asylum accommodations) came and took her property keys meaning her and her young son were left on the street.*

*Her caseworker from Flourish went to be with her and they were able to wait in her car however she was still a vulnerable woman on the streets of Belfast with a young son in the middle of January – cold and dark.*

*She was taken around 9pm to a hotel close to the airport. There were no shops nearby so she was relying on hotel food which was very expensive on Universal Credit and unsustainable. It was also expensive to access services and she had to let her counselling place go as she could no longer attend. This was a highly stressful situation as all her activities for her and her son were no longer accessible to her and it was over 1 month before she was moved to a temporary family hostel.*

*Accommodations can be in any location across Northern Ireland, but specialist services concentrated in Belfast therefore those placed in other parts of the country are left without access to adequate support.*

## What are the long-term implications?

Despite the lack of available data that could help us ascertain how many people could be affected by this situation and therefore to determine the scale of the issue, a recent report from the Human Trafficking Foundation,<sup>32</sup> tells us that in September 2023 only 13% (1000) of adult survivors were housed in MSVCC accommodation. Therefore, the majority of survivors live in other settings, including asylum accommodation.

We submitted an FOI request to the Home Office to understand how many survivors were granted refugee or humanitarian protection between August 2023 and February 2024 and of how many were living

in asylum accommodations. However, as of the time of writing, we are yet to receive a reply.

Nevertheless, information gathered to inform this briefing tell us that potential and confirmed survivors of modern slavery who have recourse to public funds as a result of a grant of asylum leave are increasingly at risk of destitution and homelessness.

This is the combined result of the outlined immigration policies changes, lack of a consistent approach across Local Authorities when processing housing applications in relation to applicants with a

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<sup>32</sup> The Human Trafficking Foundation. (October 2023). *The Key Issue: Housing for survivors of modern slavery*.

history of modern slavery and the confusion around what support options are accessible to this cohort of survivors.

The above, compounded by the limited time available to accessing accommodation upon eviction from an asylum accommodation, is often resulting in survivors having to resort to alternative forms of accommodation, leading to further exploitation or leaving them at risk of homelessness with serious implications on their mental and physical health, as demonstrated by some of the case studies presented in this briefing.

Research shows that housing insecurity is in itself a root cause and a consequence of modern slavery. Having a suitable, stable and safe home is a crucial part of a survivor's journey to recovery and the lack of options in this regard can have a detrimental impact on survivors' mental health, putting them at heightened risk of re-trafficking and exploitation.<sup>34</sup>

This situation is also putting the UK in clear breach of its international obligations under Article 12 ECAT as well as failing in its duties to prevent homelessness. The UK Government is a signatory of ECAT and has therefore a responsibility to provide appropriate and secure accommodation to survivors of modern slavery. What constitutes an appropriate and secure accommodation should be interpreted in line with the Modern Slavery Core Outcome Set (MSCOS)<sup>35</sup> and in consultation with the interested survivor.

Additionally, domestic legislation puts a duty on the UK Government and devolved administrations to prevent homelessness, specifically the 1996 Housing Act in England and subsequent legislation,<sup>36</sup> the Housing

(Scotland) Act 1987 and subsequent legislation,<sup>37</sup> Housing (Wales) Act 2014<sup>38</sup> and Housing Order (Northern Ireland) 1988.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the above provisions, this briefing highlights systemic failures often resulting in the inability of modern slavery survivors to access housing from either local Authorities or MSVCC services.

This may result in survivors becoming destitute and homeless or having to rely on short-term/temporary housing arrangements, which could turn survivors into easier targets for traffickers, heightening their vulnerability to re-trafficking and exploitation.

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<sup>34</sup> The Human Trafficking Foundation. (2018). *The Slavery and Trafficking Survivor Care standard*

<sup>35</sup> Helen Bamber Foundation, et al., (2023). *Modern Slavery Core Outcome Set Project Report*.

<sup>36</sup> For more information see: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/overview-of-the-homelessness-legislation>

<sup>37</sup> For more information see: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/homelessness/>

<sup>38</sup> For more information see: <https://law.gov.wales/homelessness>

<sup>39</sup> For more Information see: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1988/1990/contents>

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## Further information

**Helen Hodgson**, Operations Director,  
Hope at Home at  
[Helen@hopeathome.org.uk](mailto:Helen@hopeathome.org.uk)

**Eleonora Fais**, Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group Coordinator,  
Anti-Slavery International at  
[e.fais@antislavery.org](mailto:e.fais@antislavery.org)

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