

A person wearing a dark hoodie is shown in profile, looking out of a window. The window is covered with patterned curtains that have a repeating scalloped or wave-like design. The lighting is dramatic, with the person's face mostly in shadow, and light coming from the window behind them. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

# **BULLETIN 7**

**INSIGHTS INTO  
HOTELS AND BARRACKS,  
HATE CRIME,  
DESTITUTION,  
EVICTIONS  
AND ACCESS  
TO JUSTICE**

**REFUGEE  
ACTION**

*In our 7<sup>th</sup> Information and Data Hub survey, we looked at key themes including hotels and barracks, hate crime and far right activity, destitution and evictions, access to justice and funder priorities. This bulletin presents data collected from 49 organisations working with people in the immigration system across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.*

## NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

The top three client needs remain the same as in the two previous surveys: **Isolation and loneliness** reported by 55% of respondents, **deteriorating mental health** (39%) and **homelessness** / risk of homelessness (37%).

The top three barriers faced by clients also remain the same as in Surveys 5 and 6: **Tech poverty** (50%), changes in **availability of services** providing destitution and food support (50%) and **language issues** exacerbated by social distancing or remote service delivery (44%).

The top three operational needs of organisations are **increased internet access** for clients (42%), more **management time** and capacity to develop new ways of working (33%) and **more staff** (31%).

The **impact of Covid-19 lockdowns** also emerged through this survey. The majority of respondents under Tier 2, Tier 3 or full lockdown restrictions reported a negative impact on **service provision** and **staff wellbeing**, with increased stress and the cumulative impact of remote working and 'Zoom-fatigue' taking a toll on staff morale.

## HOTELS AND BARRACKS

**61% of surveyed organisations reported working with people housed in hotels/barracks.** The top issues identified by organisations working in this initial accommodation include:

1. Issues with **facilities** and **physical space** – inadequate provisions, food (77%)
2. Inability to meet **essential living needs** – lack of cash support, clothing (77%)
3. **Social isolation** and lack of access to mental health support (73%)
4. Lack of access to **legal advice** (63%)
5. **Security risks** including vulnerability to hate crime and conflict with staff, authorities or other residents (57%)
6. **COVID-19 transmission** risks (53%)

The main challenges faced by organisations in meeting client needs in hotels include: Difficulty **accessing clients**, issues with the **management** of the accommodation and the additional **pressure** and capacity required to provide this support. **Lack of coordination** on regarding the closure of hotels and transfers of clients between locations was also mentioned as a key challenge.

To respond to these issues:

- 73% of organisations reported that they need **clarity** about the future of the accommodation provision
- 70% of organisations reported needing **good communication** with accommodation providers.

*“We are extremely **small** with only part time staff. We have been leading the local response with another charity and capacity for both of us is a major issue. We have also had long-running and extensive problems gaining **access to the hotel** to hand out even basic information about local services... [Provider]/ Home Office/ [Contracted organisation] at this hotel all seem to have a **limited understanding of the asylum system** which is really impacting on our ability to offer support.”*

## HATE CRIME AND FAR RIGHT ACTIVITY

**35%** of respondents reported that their clients have experienced a **rise in discrimination and/or hate crime over** the last six months.

Experiences included harassment and hate crime both inside and outside of asylum accommodation, racist verbal and physical abuse, Islamophobic abuse and violent threats experienced in public areas. One respondent highlighted the misconception of asylum seekers and migrants being responsible for the outbreak as a factor in rise of this activity. Organisations reported that this is having a **detrimental impact on their client’s mental health.**



Organisations also shared how their work had been affected by hate crime and far right activity:

- 20% perceive a High or Very High **threat level from far-right groups**, with 39% reporting a Moderate threat level, and 30% reporting a Low threat level.
- 14% reported **increased levels of hate mail, online attacks and/or negative press**, citing hate speech and racist trolling on social media, bad press in newspapers, and threatening emails.

**20% of respondents told us that hate crime and far right activity is impacting their work.** This proportion was higher among organisations led by people with **lived experience** of the immigration system (45%).

## DESTITUTION AND EVICTIONS

71% of organisations reported that they are supporting **people who have been evicted or are facing eviction**, and 61% told us they support people who will be **at risk of rough sleeping** due to the closure of night shelters this winter. In response to this increased risk of homelessness and housing insecurity:

- 66% of organisations are providing or procuring **legal advice** for clients
- 54% are securing **referrals** to other housing providers
- 51% are **negotiating** with local authorities
- 49% are **mapping** local providers

Organisations reported that in order to respond to these issues sustainably, they need more access to **information and advice**, **increased funding** and **more options** for specific groups including those with NRPF.

## ACCESS TO JUSTICE

In light of changes to the asylum and immigration system, organisations reported the following barriers to justice experienced by their clients:

- **67%** said that remote service provision is negatively impacting the **quality** and **accessibility** of legal advice.
- **65%** mentioned **technological** or **communication** difficulties in remote interviews

11 organisations who are supporting people who are participating in **remote interviews, tribunals or courts** with the Home Office reported specific issues faced by these clients, including **stress** caused by the lack of information about the process, lack of access to the necessary **technology** and **wifi**, lack of access to **appropriate space** to hold the interview and remote **communication issues** (language barriers, lack of body language etc.).

## FUNDER SUPPORT

27% of organisations told us that they **do not have secure funding** beyond the end of this financial year. The most common changes respondents had encountered in funder support were a **narrowing of programme priorities** (35%), **reduced maximum value** of available grants (29%), and a **reduction of existing commitments**, e.g. reducing multi-year to single-year grants (24%). Some respondents also reported that the **supportive** and **flexible** response from funders has helped to make necessary operational changes.

*For more detail and analysis on the findings from this survey, you can access the full Bulletin [here](#). Please contact **Helen Barley** at Refugee Action with any queries.*