# Information and Data Hub

Bulletin 10: 30 April 2021

[Executive Summary](#)
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## Executive Summary

*In our 10th [Information and Data Hub](#) survey, we looked at two key themes, the impact of the pandemic on refused asylum seekers who are destitute or waiting for support and Responses to the 'New Plan for Immigration'. This bulletin presents data collected from 39 organisations working with people in the immigration system across the UK.*

### Client Needs and Barriers

The top three areas of *client need:*
1. **Housing** (56%) remains the highest area of need, as across Surveys 8 and 9, with homelessness or risk of homelessness as the most common issue.
2. **Mental health (**49%) has remained second highest need areas, as in Survey 9
3. **Basic subsistence needs**, also at 49%, has increased by 28% since Survey 9.

The top three *barriers to support* for clients:
1. **Mental health** issues including depression and anxiety (79%)
2. **Language and communication** difficulties exacerbated by remote delivery, also at 79%
3. **Inability to access emotional support or meaningful activities** in their community due to social distancing (77%)

### Organisational Needs and Funding

The main *organisational challenges* reported:

- **Lack of physical space** to adapt services/relocation issues (46%)
- **Insufficient management time/capacity** for service adaptation (41%)
- **Lack of staff/volunteers** to meet increased client need at (38%)

- And **insufficient, inflexible or insecure funding** also at 38% (15).

Specific organisational *funding issues* reported:

- **Lack of staff capacity** to engage in fundraising (62%)
- **Funding gaps for key staff roles** impacting project sustainability  (49%)
- **Lack of available funding opportunities** (35%)

## The impact of the pandemic on refused asylum seekers who are destitute or waiting for support

In this largely qualitative section, respondents discussed the **impact** of the pandemic on **destitute refused asylum seekers** with regards to **accommodation, basic support and Covid-19 risk.**

- The overall picture shows heightened instability of accommodation options for this client group. Staying with family and friends **has become less reliable and less safe** and it has also been **more difficult for organisations to find accommodation in hosting schemes.**

- There has been **increased access to emergency accommodation provided by the Local Authority and the Home Office.** However, in some cases this has been **inadequate and inappropriate** and respondents expressed concern about when this **temporary accommodation comes to end.**

- **61%** of respondents told us that clients in this group had experienced **reduced access to usual sources of support.**

- **61%** said they consider people in this client group at **'high risk' of contracting and transmitting Covid-19.**

*"During the pandemic, the destitute and refused asylum seeker groups were confused and not sure what support and services were available to them and how to go about them. Digital poverty contributed to this lack of awareness and ability to make phone calls for support."*

## Responses to the 'New Plan for Immigration'

We received additional responses to this section, for which we had 40 participants:

- **85%** of organisations have **read the proposals** outlined in the New Plan for Immigration.

- We asked for respondents' opinions on **6 key changes** proposed by the Government in the New Plan (see Appendix 1 of the bulletin). All of these changes were **strongly opposed** by a majority (70%-98%) of respondents. Some specific reasons for this opposition are cited in the bulletin.

- **75%** of organisations told us they **will be responding to the consultation on the proposed changes**. 10% told us they lack the time or capacity to respond before the deadline (6th May).

# Information and Data Hub

Bulletin 10: 30 April 2021

This is the tenth bulletin of the COVID-19 Information and Data Hub presenting the findings from our latest survey of refugee and migration focused organisations.

The survey received **39 responses**[1] from organisations working across all regions of UK[2]. 33 of these organisations have participated in the Information and Data Hub before. 19 organisations participated in Survey 9 as well as Survey 10, and 16 of these also participated in Survey 8. The largest groups of respondents were operating in London (18%), followed by the 13% in both Yorkshire and the Humber and the North West and 10% in Wales.

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[1] Two additional respondents participated in Section 2.2 of the survey alone.
[2] Respondent's turnover: 56% between £150,000 and £1,000,000, 31% £150,000 or under and 13% £1,000,000 or over

# Section 1: Needs and Barriers

## 1.1. Current needs of people in the immigration system
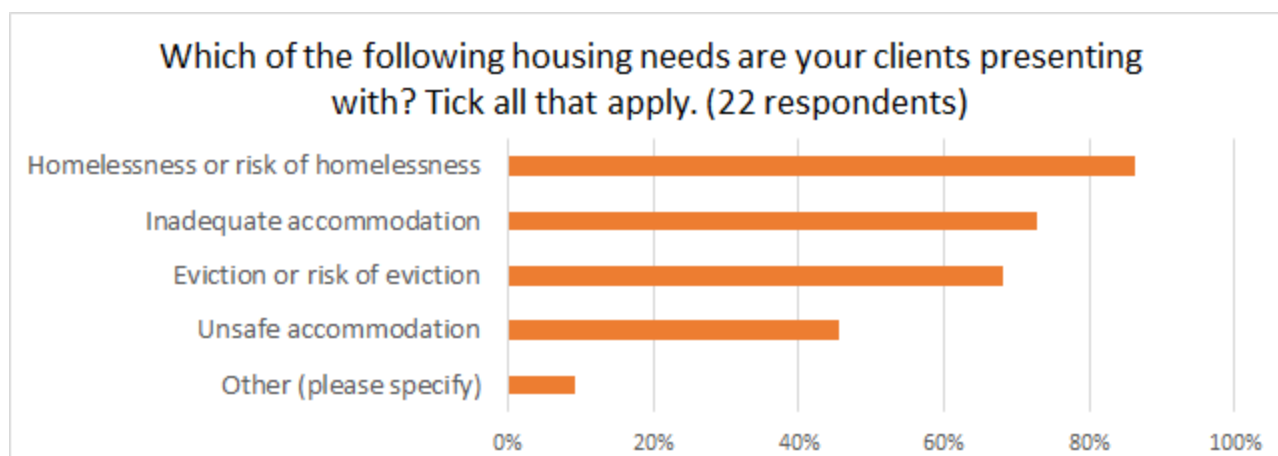


What are the top 3 most common areas of need that your clients are currently presenting with?
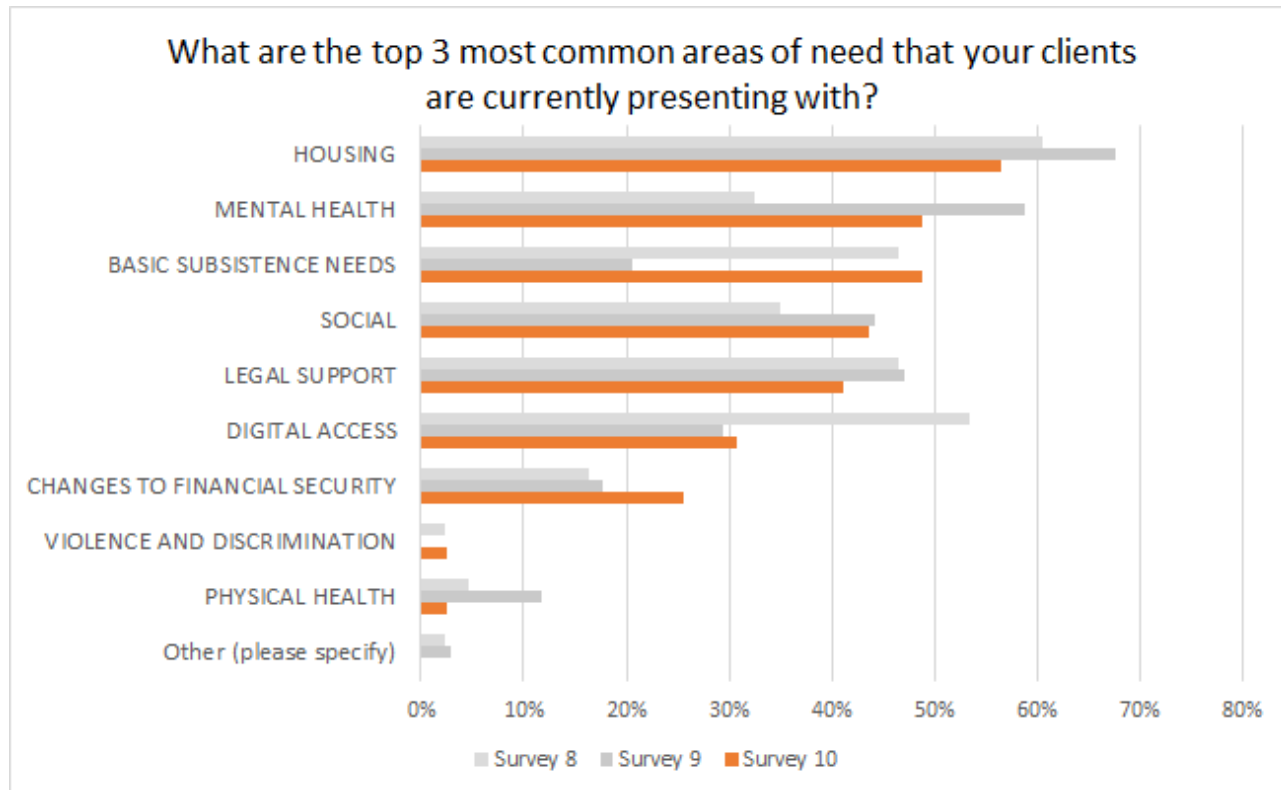
- The most common area of need, as with Surveys 8 and 9, was **housing**, selected by 56% of respondents (22). **Mental health** was the second highest, as in Survey 9, at 49% (20), along with **basic subsistence needs**, also at 49% (20). These categories will be discussed in more detail below.
- It is notable that reportage of **basic subsistence needs** dropped drastically between Surveys 8 and 9, and then rose again between Surveys 9 and 10. This may be related to the make-up of the respondent group: in Survey 10 we targeted organisations who work with destitute refused asylum seekers (see Section 2.1). We will monitor the prevalence of this area of need in future surveys.

### Housing



**Which of the following housing needs are your clients presenting with? Tick all that apply. (22 respondents)**
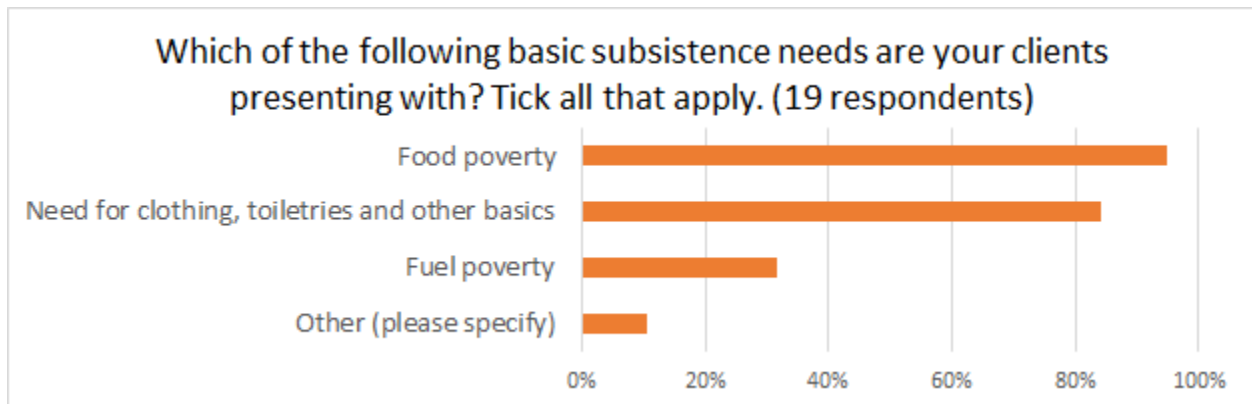
- 86% (19) of the respondents who selected **housing** as a top need reported clients experiencing **homelessness or risk of homelessness**. **Inadequate accommodation** was reported by 73% (16) and eviction or risk of eviction by 68% (15).

- In **'other'** respondents also specified issues with initial accommodation (a theme covered in previous bulletins) and accommodation being unsafe for LGBT people.

### Mental Health



**Which of the following mental health needs are your clients presenting with? Tick all that apply. (19 respondents)**
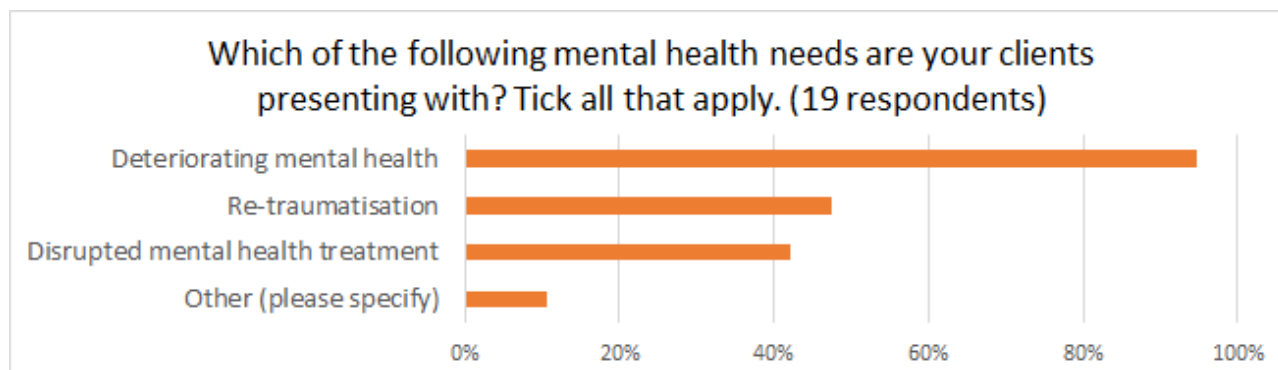
- 95% (18) of the respondents who selected **mental health** as a top area of need reported **deteriorating mental health** among their clients. 47% (9) reported **re-traumatisation** and 42% (8) reported **disrupted treatment**.

- **Other** needs reported included suicidal thoughts and stress from asylum delays.

### Basic subsistence needs



Which of the following basic subsistence needs are your clients presenting with? Tick all that apply. (19 respondents)

- 95% (18) of the respondents who said **basic subsistence needs** were a top concern for their clients reported that their clients are presenting with **food poverty**. 84% (16) said their clients are in need of **clothes, toiletries and other basics**.

- In '**other**', two respondents noted travel costs.

## 1.2. Barriers preventing people from accessing services



What are the key barriers preventing or obstructing your client group(s) from accessing the support they require? Tick all that apply.
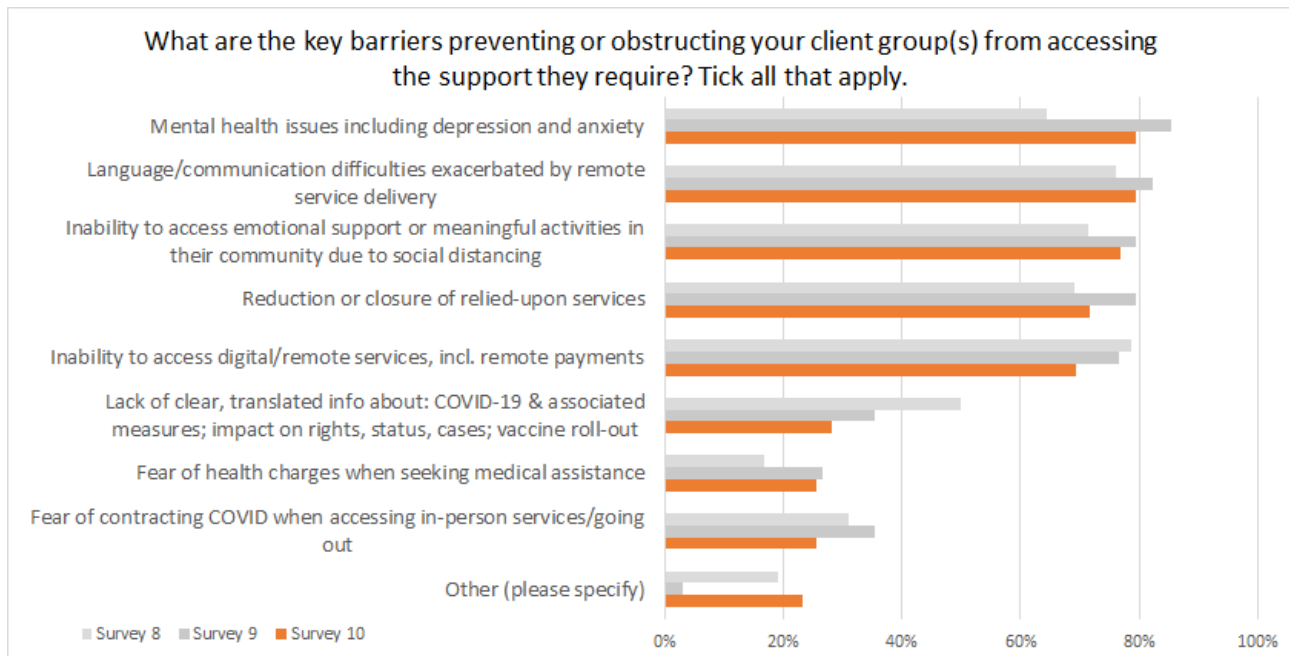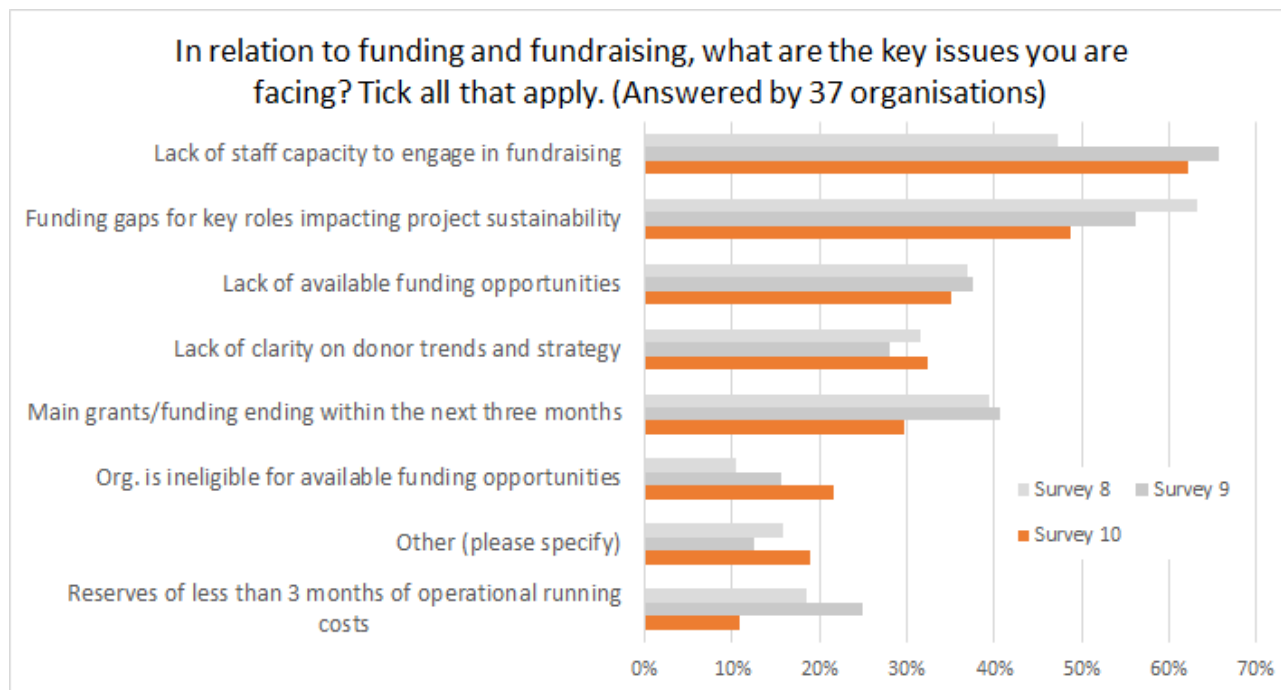
- The top 5 **barriers preventing clients from accessing support** have been consistent across Surveys 8, 9 & 10. In Survey 10 they were reported as follows:
    1. **Mental health issues** reported by 79% of organisations (31)
    2. **Language and communication difficulties** exacerbated by remote service delivery also reported by 79% of organisations (31)
    3. **Inability to access emotional support or meaningful activities in their community due to social distancing** reported by 77% (30)
    4. **Reduction or closure of relied-upon services** reported by 72% (28)
    5. **Inability to access digital/remote services, including destitution payments/benefits** were reported by 69% (27). One respondent also noted that it is impossible to know how many clients face barriers to digital or remote access, and the prevalence of 'digital fatigue' among clients.

- Under '**other**' barriers, three mentioned **immigration-related barriers** (including fear of detention/deportation, having No Recourse to Public Funds, and loss of residence rights), two mentioned pre-COVID issues with a lack of high-quality support, including service capacity and geographical limitations, one respondent reported an inability to access regular COVID testing and one mentioned general destitution and a lack of accommodation options.

## 1.3. Organisational Challenges



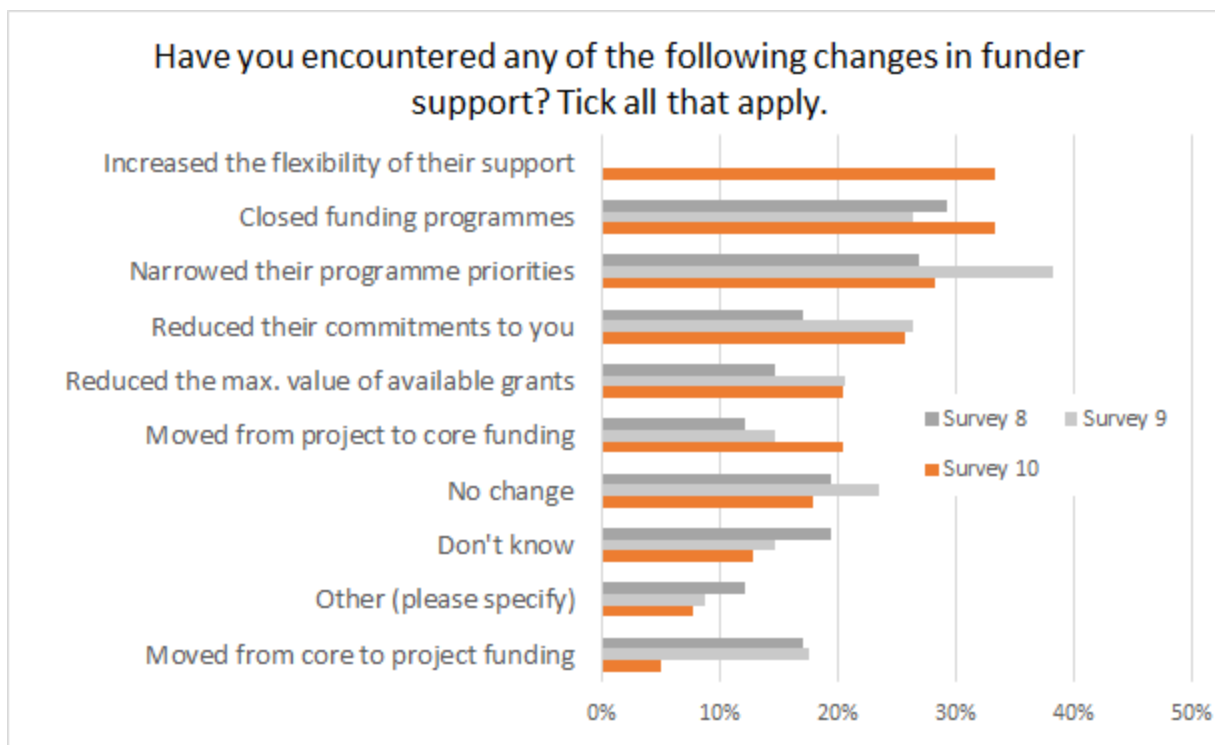What are the top 3 challenges your organisation is currently facing?

- The most common organisational challenge for respondents to Survey 10 was their **lack of physical space to adapt services/relocation issues**. This issue has more than doubled since Survey 9, rising from 21% to 46% (18 organisations), reflecting a change in restrictions and a drop in rates of COVID-19.

- The next top 3 challenges are consistent with previous responses: **insufficient management time/capacity for service adaptation** at 41% (16), **lack of staff/volunteers to meet increased client need** at 38% (15), and **insufficient, inflexible or insecure funding** at 38% (15).

- There has also been a large drop in the challenge in reportage of **supporting clients to access remote services**, from 59% in Survey 9 to 23% in Survey 10, suggesting that organisations are in flux with service delivery.

- Under '**other**', one respondent reported staff leaving for more secure employment elsewhere, creating a skills and knowledge gap in the service.

## 1.4. Fundraising and Funder Support



In relation to funding and fundraising, what are the key issues you are facing? Tick all that apply. (Answered by 37 organisations)

- 62% of respondents (23) told us they **lacked staff capacity to engage in fundraising**. Over the last three surveys, responses have consistently indicated that underfunded organisations lack capacity to get the funds they need. A recent report by the [Network of Migrant Innovators (NOMI)](#) adds a crucial dimension to this picture by highlighting the barriers to funding faced by organisations led by people with lived experience of the immigration system[3].

- 49% (18) of respondents told us that **funding gaps for key staff roles were impacting their project sustainability**, and 35% (13) that they face a **lack of available funding opportunities**.

- Under '**other**', respondents reported grants and statutory contracts being too short term, meaning organisations are constantly reapplying or negotiating extensions. As two others noted, the necessity of focusing on fundraising activities puts a **strain on development capacity**.

- Another respondent raised concerns about funders prioritising a 'theory of change' model over destitution support: 'no one will be left to give out the food and clothes'.

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[3] 'Barriers to funding': experiences from the Network of challenges in accessing charitable funding. Report, 2021 https://nomi-network.co.uk/our-work/

**Have you encountered any of the following changes in funder support? Tick all that apply.**

- 39 organisations responded to this question. 33% (13) of those told us that they have encountered an **increased flexibility of funder support**[4]. 33% also told us that funders had **closed funding programmes**. 28% (11) had encountered a **narrowing of programme priorities** and 26% (10) said that funders had **reduced their commitments to them**.

- Under **'other'**, two participants told us they have mostly seen funding increase, while one clarified that they have had very different responses from different funders.

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[4] This option was new to Survey 10.

## 2.1.  Impact of the Pandemic on Destitute Refused Asylum Seekers

**33** respondents provide support to asylum seekers who have had their claim refused and are destitute or waiting for support.

**Forms of accommodation support**



Has your organisation provided any of the following accommodation support to people whose asylum claim has been refused?
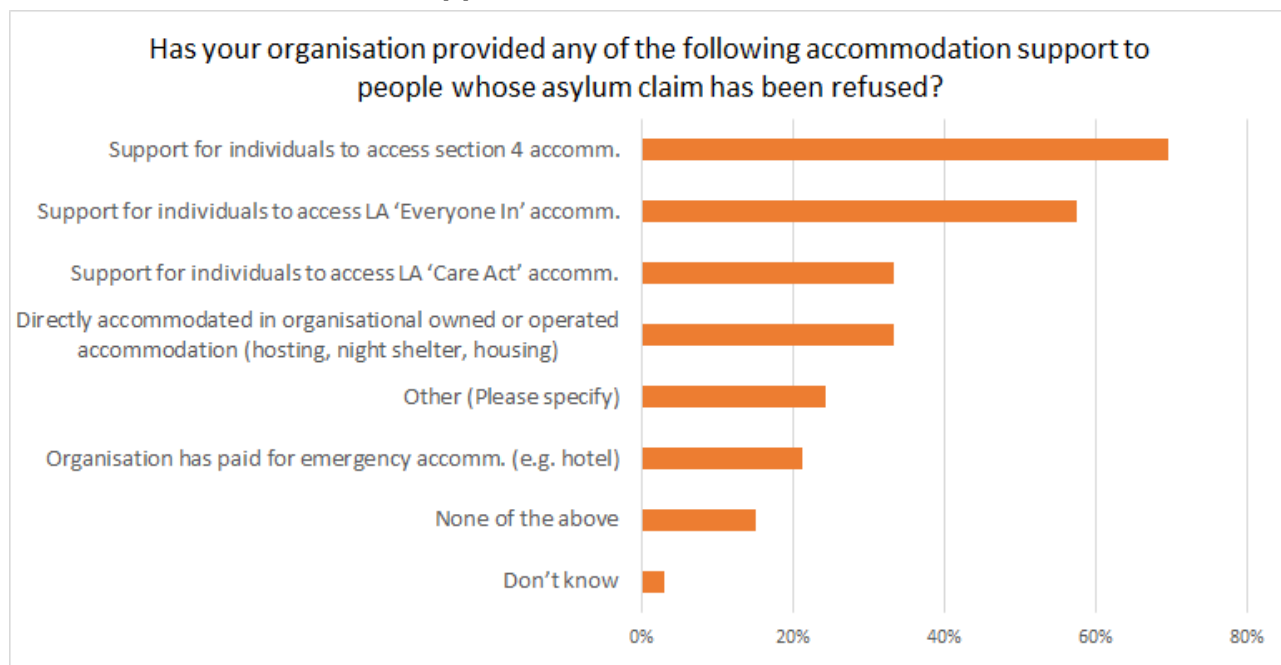
- Of the 33 respondents who answered this question, 70% (23) told us they have provided **support for individuals to access Section 4 accommodation**, and 58% (19) have provided **support for individuals to access Local Authority 'Everyone In' accommodation**.

- '**Other**' support provided includes: facilitating hosting; making referrals for advice and legal support, accommodation and food/cash support; offering floating support to people accommodated by services without a specialist knowledge of working with this client group (including 'Everyone In' accommodation).

We asked respondents to give us their perspective on the impact the pandemic has had on refused asylum seekers who are destitute. We asked specifically about the **impact on accommodation options, access to basic support and risk of contracting and transmitting Covid-19.** Their comments will be reported across the next 4 pages.

**<u>Changes to accommodation options for refused asylum seekers who are destitute:</u>**

- **Staying with family and friends:** Responses across this section suggest that staying with family and friends, already a precarious form of accommodation, has become even **less reliable and less safe**. This is due to: **Covid-19 risks** for both parties; family or friends needing to self isolate, or their concern about non compliance with rules and fear of losing accommodation or breaking the law; and reluctance of guests to burden people by asking to stay for longer periods, when moving around is more risky.

> *"People feel like more of a burden and unable to ask friends and family to let them stay as they have to be with them all of the time rather than at night or a few nights each week."*

- **Hosting Schemes:** Organisations report that it has been more difficult to find hosts due to reasons including **Covid-19 fears** and **delays in legal cases** such as processing fresh claims[5]. Organisations operating these schemes are having to take difficult decisions about guests who are not following Covid-19 and social distancing regulations and risk losing accommodation.

- **Emergency/temporary accommodation:** Organisations highlight this client group's **increased access to emergency and temporary forms of accommodation,** provided by the Local Authority**,** under 'Everyone In', and the Home Office. However, respondents reported that some of this accommodation has been **inadequate or inappropriate[6]**, and lacking specialist/expert support for this client group[7].

- **Uncertainty of provision:** Organisations are concerned about **temporary Local Authority and Home Office support coming to an end**, and being increasingly difficult to access**.** Respondents also expressed concern about the Home Office

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[5] Some hosting options require an asylum claim to be ongoing or for guests to have made a fresh claim so delays in legal cases can impact eligibility for some hosting options.

[6] The British Red Cross 2021 report "Far from a home: why asylum accommodation needs reform" outlines issues in accommodation provided by the Home Office finding that underlying systemic issues have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

[7] One respondent mentioned that workers in the 'Everyone In' accommodation lacked knowledge of where to signpost or refer the individual for move-on support and for legal/ immigration support.

**restarting evictions** following a negative decision[8], as well as the impact of "Appeal Rights Exhausted" decisions in the pipeline.

NACCOM have produced a briefing document outlining the present situation regarding evictions from asylum accommodation: "[Everyone Out?: preventing migrant homelessness during Covid-19 and beyond](#)".

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### Impacts of increased instability of accommodation options:

*"In Bristol, accommodation provided by the Council for those who were street homeless during the pandemic will end on 17 May. **They are not accommodating newly street homeless refused asylum seekers.** Those waiting for section 95/4 accommodation **are waiting for very long periods of time.**"*

*"This is a painful situation for both the community and the client.**The physical and mental deterioration of the clients** and the inability of the community to offer them sustainable support is having **a negative impact to the psyche of the community and the individuals concerned**."*

*"One man was kicked out by his sister and needed to get statutory support - we had it set up for him to be picked up from a Police Station and the Home Office refused him at 5 to 5 on a Friday - we didn't find out until the Monday and by that time he'd tried to commit suicide."*

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### Access to support

**61%** of respondents (20) told us that **clients in this group had experienced reduced access to usual sources of support.** 21% (7) said this access had increased, 12% did not know and 6% said no change.

*Key issues regarding access to support:*

- **Reduction of informal support:** Many refused asylum seekers have **lost access to their usual sources of support** during the pandemic: **support from friends,**

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[8]On the 5th November 2020, the Home Office paused evictions of people with a negative decision in light of the nationwide lockdown. The Home Office announced on 23rd April 2021 that they are starting the review of cases of people on section 95 asylum support.

**family or in-person networks**, and **payment from cash-in-hand jobs**, for example in restaurants and car washes.

- **Lack of access to information:** It was noted that with the closure of usual sources of in-person support, many in this client group **struggle to find out about changes to service provision**, or **how to access support** under changed conditions.

- **Digital poverty:** This was cited as a barrier to finding out about and accessing services, and while it can be easy to address in terms of equipment and credit, it can be very hard to assess. Even with a phone many clients struggle to access services remotely due to **language issues**, or **lack of private space** in which they can make a call or access remote services online.

> *"During the pandemic, the destitute and refused asylum seeker groups were confused and not sure of what support and services were available to them and how to go about them. Digital poverty contributed to this lack of awareness and ability to make phone calls for support."*

- **Reduced social interaction:** Additionally, clients have lost aspects of in-person services that cannot easily be replicated online: **physical support** (e.g. clothes, somewhere to sit, somewhere to print/scan documents); **in-person meetings with lawyers**; support to **book and attend NHS appointments** (including chaperones); and **social contact**. This is coupled with a general **lack of access to community and social support.**

- **Reaching clients:** services raised concerns that it is very difficult to know who is out of the loop when drop-ins are closed.

One the other hand, respondents commented on the increased statutory support available for clients during the pandemic as they have been **eligible for accommodation and more holistic support through Everyone In or Home Office** accommodation (although the quality of this support may vary). It was also noted that many **third sector services have increased their offer of destitution support** in the form of cash and food parcels.

> *"Overall I feel the support has diminished, although in some very specific areas (e.g: cash destitution payments) it has increased. Whilst a lot of services are still open via phone call or email, the lack of face to face services is a barrier to many people."*

## Covid risk level and transmission

**61%** (20) of the respondents to this question said they considered this client group to be at **'high risk' of contracting and/or transmitting Covid-19**, compared to the UK population average. 1 said 'low risk', while 12 (36%) did not know. The reasons given for this were as follows:

- People in this client group often lack the 'options or opportunities to prevent' contraction and transmission, because of the **limited accommodation options available to them**. **Staying with friends and family**, particularly when moving between houses, results in a **high risk** of contraction or transmission. Respondents also mentioned the **impossibility of social distancing** in cramped, 'poor-quality' statutory shared accommodation. In shared accommodation with unrelated adults, one person choosing not to observe social distancing puts everyone at risk.

- People in this group are **less likely to have access to information on how to mitigate COVID risks**, particularly due to language issues.

- They are also **less likely to be registered with a GP**, less likely to **seek medical help** (or be able to do so without a chaperone) and **more likely to have ongoing, untreated health problems**.

- A **lack of social support and generally poor mental health compound the risks** faced by this group.

- Two respondents shared concerns that these clients are **less likely to get vaccinated.**

## 2.2.  Responses to the UK Government's 'New Plan for Immigration' Proposals

**40 organisations** answered these questions, as we received 2 additional sets of responses from organisations who did not complete the rest of the survey. Of these:

- **85%** of organisations (34) have read the proposals outlined in the New Plan for Immigration
- **15%** of organisations (6) told us they have not had time to read the proposals

In the next section, we enquired about whether organisations planned to respond to the consultation about the New Plan for Immigration proposals, which is open for six weeks until 6th May 2021:
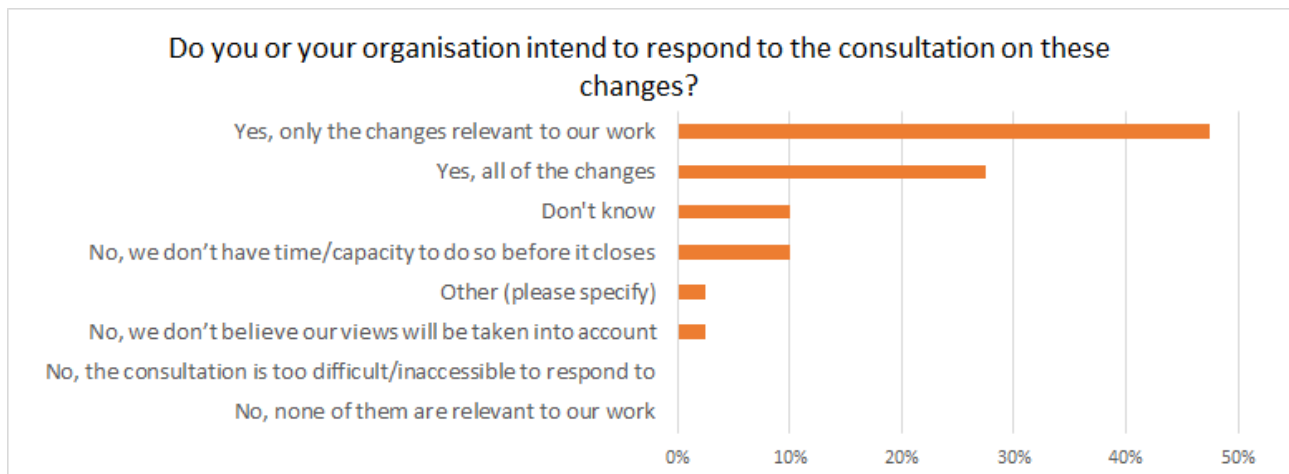


- 48% of organisations (19) are responding to the consultation regarding **only proposed changes relevant to their work**.

- 28% of organisations (11) said they will be responding to **all the changes**,

- 10% (4) told us they **don't have time or capacity** to respond before the consultation closes.

We asked respondents about the extent to which they support or oppose the changes proposed by the Government in their New Plan for Immigration[9]. **All 6 proposals were 'strongly opposed' by most respondents** (blue in the graphs).



To what extent do you support or oppose the following changes proposed by the Government?

| Proposal | Strongly oppose | Somewhat oppose | Neither support nor oppose |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| (1) Not committing to a multi-year target for number of refugees to be resettled directly each year | 70% | 20% | 10% |
| (2) Considering someone's asylum claim 'inadmissible' if they could have, or should have, claimed asylum somewhere else | 95% | | |
| (3) Introducing a temporary protection status for those claiming asylum in-country, with no right to settle, no recourse to public funds & regular reassessment for removal | 98% | | |
| (4) Introduce 'reception centres' to provide basic accommodation and process people's asylum claims | 85% | 10% | 5% |
| (5) Putting in place a more "rigorous" standard for assessing asylum claims | 80% | 15% | |
| (6) For those refused asylum, the Government will develop a new 'one-stop' appeals process in which all relevant matters are raised together. | 78% | 13% | 10% |

■ Strongly oppose  ■ Somewhat oppose  ■ Neither support nor oppose  ■ Somewhat support  ■ Strongly support

- Each proposal was **'strongly opposed' by 70%-98% of respondents**.

- Some respondents added caveats for less strong opposition: One who was **'somewhat opposed'** to more **'rigorous' assessment standards** told us they would support a more consistent approach and increased training of case workers to ensure that more claims are correct and do not require appeal. Another who was **'somewhat opposed'** to the **one-stop appeals process** said they were unsure about their position because it isn't yet clear what the process would involve.

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[9] The order of options in the graph corresponds to the order in which the proposals were listed in the survey. The wording that we used to describe these changes can be found in Appendix 1.

Several organisations used a text response to underline their moral opposition to the proposals:

- Hostile, cruel and targeted: *"All the items they are proposing above makes an already challenging and hostile asylum process even worse"*

- The inaccurate portrayal of the volume of people claiming asylum in the UK and the framing of asylum seekers as a 'threat'

- The proposed changes go against the principles of the Geneva Convention

- And would severely impact client wellbeing

Specific concerns include:

- **The consultation process is not intended to take responses into account:** *"[it is] a thinly veiled public relations exercise with a predetermined outcome"*

- The proposals are **not evidence based.**

- **Wording and tone used, including the use of the word "illegal":** *"We are deeply concerned about the tone of the proposals, the direction it is taking our country and the use of discriminating, divisive language about how people enter the UK and 'criminality' issues."*

- **Disregard fo**r **the amount of time necessary to gather evidence** for claims, often involving overcoming significant barriers including mental health, language and understanding as well as access to legal support.

- **Lack of clarity** around some of the proposals, specifically 'rigorous' standards and a 'one-stop' appeals process.

- **Lack of attention to specific groups** within the proposals including young people / children, LGBT asylum seekers.

Below are some resources on responding to the consultation:
**Women for Refugee Women guide for responding to the consultation:**
https://www.refugeewomen.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Guide-for-responding-to-the-New-Plan-for-Immigration-public-consultation.pdf
**Asylum Matters guidance:**
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nNCa62ptaEAAuEPAuGsHc1lSBms8IwQ9-mcMOPksREA/edit

Appendix 1: Outline of proposals in the New Plan for Immigration

*Below is the text used in Survey 10 to gauge respondents' views on the New Plan.*

Some of the Government's proposed changes are outlined below:

- They have made **no firm commitment to resettle a certain number of refugees via a resettlement scheme**, saying that 'numbers [are] subject to ongoing review guided by circumstances and capacity at any given time'. **(1)**
- Anyone who arrives in the UK having travelled through another 'safe country' **will be considered inadmissible to the asylum system**. The government will seek to **deport** these people as soon as possible. **(2)**
- If these people cannot be deported in a reasonable amount of time, their claim will be assessed. If they are successful, they will be given a new **temporary protection status, with no recourse to public funds**. They will be '**regularly reassessed for removal**'. **(3)**
- They will introduce **asylum reception centres** to provide 'basic accommodation' for these people and to process their claims. **(4)**
- They will develop a **'more rigorous' standard for testing whether someone has a well-founded fear of persecution**: **(5)**
  - Part 1: The person is who they say they are, and they are experiencing genuine fear of persecution, on the balance of probabilities. This includes considering opportunities the person had to claim asylum in other countries.
  - Part 2: Whether there is a 'reasonable likelihood' that they are likely to face persecution.
- A **'one-stop' process requiring people to bring forward all relevant matters in one go,** before their appeal. Decision makers will have to give **minimal weight** to evidence **brought after this point**, unless there is a 'good reason'. **(6)**