

**Welcome to
South Yorkshire**

**Ending homelessness for people
seeking sanctuary in South Yorkshire**

An impact report by
South Yorkshire Housing Association

March 2023



Introduction

At South Yorkshire Housing Association (SYHA), we're doing all we can to prevent destitution and end homelessness for people who come to the UK seeking sanctuary. As a founding member of the **Homes for Cathy** group, we are committed to:

Working together to end migrant homelessness in the areas that Housing Associations operate.

(Homes for Cathy commitment 8)

We have a history of working to prevent homelessness for people seeking sanctuary – between 2003 and 2009, our Safe Haven Yorkshire support service provided housing and support for over 3,000 people. We remain true to our organisation's purpose of supporting our customers to ***settle at home, live well and realise their potential*** by continuing to offer people help and a place to call home.

People seeking sanctuary in the UK often face difficulties in accessing support to find and settle in a home when they arrive. For non-European Union and European Economic Area (EEA) migrants, this is because they often have no recourse to public funds (NRPF) as they are 'subject to immigration control'. Individuals with NRPF are unable to work, claim benefits or access housing assistance in the same way that British citizens can. Communities that have lived and worked in the UK for many years can also suddenly find themselves subject to immigration control - including Commonwealth citizens, such as the Windrush Generation. For EEA migrants, the 'Habitual Residence Test' and the UK's move to Universal Credit can prevent or delay people being able to access support.

Working with people with NRPF can be challenging, as there is limited funding available to offer the right support. However, there are many brilliant organisations that can support people through these challenges and help them to remain in the UK.

We are committed to fulfilling our purpose and the Homes for Cathy commitments, and to working with local organisations to support people to settle at home in South Yorkshire.

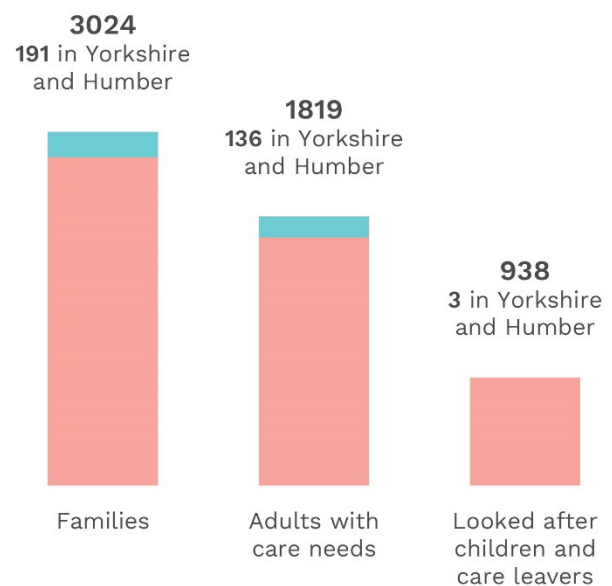
The numbers



According to the [No Recourse to Public Funds Network](#), in the financial year 2021/22, 5781 households were referred for support across England and Scotland, with 330 in Yorkshire and the Humber.



Breakdown of referrals



In 2007, with the support of the City Council, Sheffield became the UK's first City of Sanctuary for asylum-seekers and refugees—a city that takes pride in the welcome it offers to people in need of safety.

Find out more at: sheffield.cityofsanctuary.org

According to Sheffield City Council's Homelessness Prevention Strategy, the requirement 'to leave asylum support provided by the home office is a key reason for homelessness within [racially and ethnically diverse] communities. For Asian customers, 14% of [homeless] cases were due to end of asylum support. Likewise for Black customers, 7% of cases were due to end of asylum support. This is compared to 5% of all customers across the wider cohort'.

How we work with people seeking sanctuary in South Yorkshire

The Homes for Cathy commitments provide an aspirational standard for its members, and align with Crisis's 'Plan to end homelessness in Great Britain'. We work with partner organisations to support people seeking sanctuary to...

Access secure housing

We work with local authorities, charities and the voluntary and community sector to provide temporary homes for people and families quickly, and to support transitions into long-term tenancies.



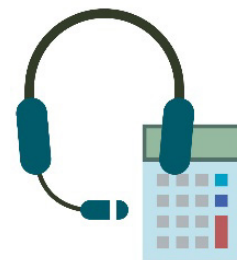
Navigate the immigration system

This enables people to achieve settled status. We also support with applications for National Insurance numbers and biometric residence permits.



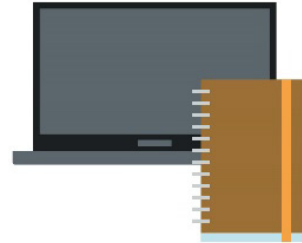
Access financial support

We support applications for destitution grants, and work with local charities to seek funding and donations. We also check entitlements, and ensure that people claim benefits if they need to.



Access employment and education

We support people with training and education to develop their confidence, skills and future prospects, and to access employment support as soon as they are allowed to work.



Identify community connections

Our knowledge and partnerships in South Yorkshire help people to find opportunities, spaces and groups are important to them - including cultural and religious connections.



Stay safe

Some families come to us following a breakdown in a relationship or fleeing domestic abuse. We help keep them safe and provide the right support. We also encourage and support all the people we work with to access healthcare.



Our partnerships help to prevent homelessness, and support people to settle and flourish in South Yorkshire. They are efficient, personalised, and cost-effective for the wider system.

Our stable accommodation is both better for people and the system, as it means that fewer individuals and families are placed in B&Bs and hostels. We also support people to settle in their new home and community, which reduces costs in social care. Helping people to access healthcare results in less emergency intervention and pressure on the NHS.

Our work with Local Authorities

Lettings and Local Authority Nominations

We have entered into nomination agreements with Local Authorities in areas where we have accommodation. In line with local authority choice-based lettings policy, we rehouse people seeking sanctuary who have homeless priority as and when they appear on nomination lists.

Where we can, and in line with our nomination agreements, we have also been increasing the places and platforms where we advertise our available properties. This is to encourage applications from diverse communities who may not be familiar with the nomination process, or that wouldn't usually come to us through traditional routes.

For example, we have advertised homes to let in local hospitals and local community groups – our approach resulted in us letting a beautiful refurbished flat in Sheffield to a student from Indonesia.

UK (Refugee) Resettlement Scheme - UKRS

We work with Local Authorities to provide homes in areas where they would like to rehouse homeless refugees. Local Authorities cover the cost of the rent until the families arrive in the UK – this creates opportunities to furnish properties before people arrive, meaning people can move into somewhere that feels more like home. We have let 7 properties in Sheffield via Sheffield UKRS, and let 3 properties in Doncaster via Doncaster UKRS.



**Welcome
to Sheffield**



**Welcome
to Doncaster**

Rotherham Homeless - Responsive Direct Letting Scheme

We have assisted Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council to offer 5% of our Rotherham social housing properties to homeless applicants. This helps to reduce the number of people being placed in hotels for extended periods of time, and the first referral we received was from a family who had limited Leave to Remain.

Cuthbert Bank – ring-fenced homes for people with no recourse to public funds

Cuthbert Bank is SYHA's homeless service for families facing homelessness, funded by Sheffield City Council. Since September 2021 seven of our 35 homes have been ring fenced for families with NRPF. In partnership with Sheffield housing commissioning and children's social care, we have provided temporary/emergency accommodation and supported families with their applications for Leave to Remain, develop settled status, to find employment and to claim benefits. We've worked with these families to move on to stable, long-term tenancies.

Indigo Project

Indigo Project is a community-based service that was developed in October 2021 to support people in emergency accommodation. Indigo Project was created following the Government's 'Everyone In' campaign, and was funded via the Covid Outbreak Management Fund (COMF). The service was commissioned to provide 'in reach' floating support to people in temporary placements with the Local Authority, with the aim of moving people onto longer term, sustainable tenancies. The service has supported 150+ people and approximately 20% of these were migrant and refugee individuals and families that were stuck in temporary accommodation.

Terezia and Julius's story

Terezia and Julius are of Slovak origin and came to the UK about 15 years ago. They lived in private rented properties but had to leave their last property due to rats and spent a period of time sofa surfing. Terezia has several health and mobility issues and is cared for by her brother, Julius. Neither Terezia nor her brother speak English. Julius is deaf and at the time of being referred had not accessed medical care for over five years.

The siblings were referred to Indigo Project after hospital discharge, when their family were no longer able to accommodate them. Their goals were to ensure that Julius achieved EU settled status, claimed the benefits he's entitled to and to be enrolled and supported to bid for properties and find a long-term social rented home. Terezia already had settled status and was in receipt of PIP and Carer's Allowance.

Sarah, our Keyworker, worked with Terezia and Julius to understand and access the healthcare they were entitled to. This included liaising with the GP, occupational therapists, and their local pharmacist. Sarah supported them to get their heating and washing machine fixed, to get bins for their property, and to understand what to do with their mail. Sarah also advocated for them to have an adult social care needs assessment and carers assessment, and to engage with family they had living in the UK.

With support from Rotherham Council and Rotherham Citizens' Advice Bureau, Julius achieved EU settled status which allowed him recourse to public funds. Terezia and Julius are doing much better thanks to the holistic support and partnership working that we were able to offer.

Our work with local partners

Filling the Void, delivered in partnership with ASSIST

ASSIST has a 17-year history of amazing work with asylum seekers in Sheffield, providing accommodation, information and practical support. For the past three years, we have been working with ASSIST, and learning from their expertise, to help contribute to ending migrant homelessness.

We work together by using SYHA properties that are void (empty) to offer short-term emergency accommodation for asylum seekers. So far, two blocks of accommodation - each with five bed spaces that were either being refurbished, or awaiting disposal - have provided accommodation for people being supported by ASSIST. This means that fewer people with NRPF access the emergency night shelter - and it means that they have their own bedroom and a stable foundation to make longer-term plans.

Ahmed's story

Ahmed (not his real name) is 40 years old, and originally from the Kurdish area in Northern Iraq. His asylum claim was refused in the first half of 2021. In August, Ahmed's GP at the Mulberry Practice (a health centre that works predominantly with asylum seeker and refugee communities) alerted us to his case - Ahmed had been evicted from his Home Office accommodation in Sheffield and was now homeless. He spoke no English and was in very poor mental health.

We were able to offer Ahmed a place at our 'first-stop-house' at Gell Street. Settling in stable accommodation made an almost instantaneous difference to Ahmed's wellbeing. He participated in the weekly house meeting with ASSIST's emergency accommodation coordinator, and, although he was not always able to follow what was being said, took a lead among the residents to initiate joint house cleaning.

He also started engaging with his casework team, which he accessed through the use of a Kurdish interpreter, and was referred to SYRLJ (a legal charity) and the dental hospital as he was in urgent need of dental treatment. He was also supported with applying for a disabled person's bus pass due to his mobility issues.

After three weeks in the emergency accommodation, Ahmed was able to move into a long-term home which he shares with two other men. He will be able to stay for at least the next 12 months while he is progressing his case with the help of SYRLJ.

Ahmed continues to struggle with the effects of past trauma that affects both his mental and physical health, and sometimes finds it difficult having to wait for progress to be made on his legal case, but he is now much more hopeful and confident that he will ultimately be able to be recognized as a refugee.

Working with Ashiana

Ashiana have over 30 years of experience in providing support and accommodation to female survivors of abuse and human trafficking, and their children. They also provide direct support to people with NRPf. Working in partnership with Ashiana, we have provided 26 bed spaces across five properties. The homes are rented at 75% of social rent (below our standard rent levels) to enable Ashiana to retain a proportion of core rent to deliver support to survivors.

Homes for Hallam

Homes for Hallam is an organisation that rehuses people seeking asylum and helps them settle into a new city. We partnered with Homes for Hallam to offer a home to a Syrian family experiencing homelessness.

Working with Migrant Action in Barnsley

There is an existing framework in Barnsley supporting migrants to meet their health and housing needs. Our Work and Wellbeing team often attend a drop-in service for migrants and offer employment support there. We're in the early stages of developing a partnership with Migrant Action (Barnsley) to build on this work.

Our Work and Wellbeing services

Our Work and Wellbeing services provide holistic employment support using the individual placement and support (IPS) model. We use strengths-based approaches to help us gain an in-depth understanding of every customer and how they would like us to be involved in their employment journey.

For anybody who has migrated from another country to the UK, restarting your career and rebuilding your life is a huge challenge. Employment support can help overcome the significant challenges some migrants face when trying to get into work, including:

- Having qualifications recognised in the UK. Our employment specialists can pull strengths from previous work history and highlight past achievements and 'soft skills'.
- Understanding completely new recruitment systems and working cultures. Our employment specialists work with customers to help them navigate new systems.
- Being treated unfairly by employers because of visas and the fears around recruiting employees without indefinite Leave to Remain. Our employment specialists work with potential employers to mitigate bias in their hiring practises.

Mariana's story

Mariana is a refugee from Ukraine, and she referred herself to our Good Work employment service in June 2022. She was living with a host family, and alongside the recent trauma of fleeing the war in her home country, she also has health conditions meaning she was needing to travel back to Ukraine to get the medical help she needs. Our Employment Specialist, Jill, worked with Mariana to identify her employment goals (to teach TEFL and find work as an ESOL teacher), and to overcome the challenges she was facing - including her emotional wellbeing and lack of access to money. She has a Ukrainian Master's in teaching English, and so we funded her to complete a CELTA course to enable her to teach in the UK. Jill also worked with her to update her CV, and to find customers to offer private tuition to. We supported her to access Westfield Health to help with her health challenges, as well as restarting her hobbies: yoga and singing. Mariana is working towards financial independence to enable her to move into her own home.

Our three commitments for the next 12 months:

1. Strengthen and build partnerships with organisations across South Yorkshire who work with refugees and asylum seekers. Through our Race Action Plan, we have committed to making sure that our services are open to all, and we will do this by continuing to develop stronger relationships with organisations who are working with racially and ethnically diverse people. Additionally, through projects like our Changing Futures co-production service, we will empower people with lived experience to be part of the design of policies, services and system.

2. Continue to play an active role on the Homes for Cathy Board. We will continue to be members of Homes for Cathy, and Charlotte Murray, our Director of Care Health and Wellbeing, will continue in her role as Homes for Cathy Board member. We will support the campaigns led by organisations such as NACCOM, Crisis and Praxis to end migrant homelessness and we will play an active role in challenging the hostile environment that many migrants face when they seek sanctuary in the UK.

3. Improve the data we're collecting on migrant homelessness. We know that there is a lot of work happening across the Association to support migrants to settle in the region. We will commit to checking our progress against the Homes for Cathy commitment on an annual basis to ensure that we keep migrant homelessness central to our purpose to support people to settle, live well and realise their potential.

With thanks...

We would like to thank the following partners for their hard work and commitment to ending homelessness for people who seek sanctuary across South Yorkshire:

- Assist
- Ashiana
- Crisis
- Homes for Hallam
- Clifton Learning Partnership
- All the partners we are working with locally to support people seeking sanctuary across South Yorkshire
- The Local Authorities in Sheffield, Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster.
- South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, who support our Work and Health programmes.