Annual report 2018-19: Local authority support for people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)

This report provides information about the households that requested, and were provided with, local authority accommodation and financial support in the financial year 2018-19. This support is provided by social services in order to alleviate destitution when a person is excluded from mainstream benefits by their immigration status and has ‘no recourse to public funds’ (NRPF).

Headline figures: 2018-19

Caseload and costs

59 local authorities supported 2658 households at an annual cost of £47.5 million (at year end)

Local authorities saw an overall reduction of £100,000/week (10% over the year) due to a decrease in the number of households receiving support by the year end

Requests for support

Increased by 17% compared to 2017-18

The Home Office responded to 14603 requests for immigration status information

Pathways off support

80% of households exited the service due to a grant of leave to remain with recourse to public funds, enabling them to access mainstream benefits and housing

Supporting these households cost local authorities £62 million (based the average cost and length of time that a household is supported for)

Data source: NRPF Connect

The data in this report is taken from the NRPF Connect database, which is used by 59 local authorities to obtain immigration status information from the Home Office. The NRPF Network project manages the database. The Home Office Data and Sanctions Team works to ensure that supported cases are treated with priority. The database has been operational since 2013 and local authorities pay a subscription fee to join.

The NRPF Network is hosted by Islington Council and provides information and practice guidance to local authorities across the UK.

For more information see: www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk
Key findings

When families and vulnerable adults are excluded from employment and mainstream benefits by their immigration status, local authorities play a key role in safeguarding their welfare by providing **2658 households** with accommodation and financial support at cost of **£47.5 million/year**.

For local authorities using the database, this cost has **reduced by 10%** over the year. Support from the Home Office in providing immigration status information and prioritising local authority supported cases clearly saves the UK tax-payer money.

However, local authorities are facing an **increasing number of requests** for support. Although this may be expected with more local authorities using the system, it demonstrates that there continues to be a significant number of people unable to access mainstream services due to their immigration status and who need to navigate complex rules regarding their entitlement to services.

The average time that households were provided with support **increased to 820 days** throughout the year. With **80% of households** leaving the service following a **grant to leave to remain** with recourse to public funds, any barriers that delay achieving this outcome lead to increasing costs for local government. Additionally, being excluded from employment and mainstream benefits for lengthy periods of time negatively impacts on the wellbeing and integration of children and adults who have a future in the UK.

The reduction in the number of households that have received support for **1000 days or longer** can be attributed to targeted work by local authority staff and the Home Office team operating the database. However, such efforts alone are not sufficient, as these households make up **one fifth** of the overall caseload.

**Recommendations for local authorities**

Using NRPF Connect is of clear benefit to local authorities, providing a combined weekly cost-saving of £100,000. Those that are not currently using the system are encouraged to join. As most households will exit the service due to grants of leave to remain, it is also essential to consider how to make legal advice provision available in the absence of legal aid funding. [1]

It will be essential to take steps to reduce the risk of EEA residents, particularly vulnerable groups, failing to secure their status under the EU Settlement Scheme. [2]

**Recommendations for the Government**

In order to limit the need for local government to spend scarce resources supporting people who are clearly going to be accepted as having a future in the UK through grants of leave of remain on settlement routes, a one-off case resolution exercise is urgently required. The Government must also review all immigration policies that give rise to homelessness and child poverty, and which impede the resolution of local authority supported cases. Similar recommendations have been made by the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee [3]

The Home Office must ensure it resources its response in order to continue to fulfil the service level agreement and meet increasing demand as more local authorities use NRPF Connect. This will enable local authorities to correctly fulfil their statutory duties and operate services cost-effectively at a time when they are experiencing unprecedented funding pressures.

In order to reduce the time that social services' support is provided once leave to remain has been granted, the DWP needs to provide clarification to local authorities about the correct processes to follow when people are granted recourse and are claiming benefits for the first time.
**Local authority users**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Local authorities using NRPF Connect (31 March 2019)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>England</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East of England</td>
<td>Essex County Council, Luton Borough Council, Norfolk County Council, Thurrock Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>Leicester City Council, Nottingham City Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council, Middlesbrough Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>Manchester City Council, Salford City Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>Brighton &amp; Hove City Council, Buckinghamshire County Council, East Sussex County Council, Hampshire County Council Kent County Council, Medway Council, Milton Keynes Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Surrey County Council, West Sussex County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>Bristol City Council, Gloucestershire County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>Birmingham City Council, Coventry City Council, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Walsall Council, Wolverhampton City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yorkshire &amp; the Humber</strong></td>
<td>Bradford Metropolitan District Council, Leeds City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scotland</strong></td>
<td>City of Edinburgh Council, Glasgow City Council, North Lanarkshire Council</td>
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Over one third of the local authorities in England that are responsible for delivering social care use the database, including 27 out of 32 London boroughs.

The number of local authorities subscribing increased from 53 to 59 in 2018-19.

As of July 2019, 63 local authorities are using the system with 4 joining since 31 March 2019:

- Walsall Council
- Westminster City Council
- Durham County Council
- Camden Council

**References**

1. [http://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/nrpconnect/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/nrpconnect/Pages/default.aspx)
Data analysis

1. Households receiving support

As of 31 March 2019, 2658 households and 3318 dependants were financially supported by 59 local authorities.

Despite six new authorities joining during the year, the overall caseload reduced by 400 households from 3058 to 2658, representing a decrease of 13%.

The most significant reduction was achieved for family households with a decrease of 20% over the year (from 1999 to 1617 households).
2. Cost of providing support

At 31 March 2019, 59 local authorities were spending £915,677/ week or £47.5 million/ year on accommodation and financial support to 2658 households.

The average annual cost of supporting one household is £17,914.

By the end of the year, local authorities were collectively spending £100,000 less per week, making a combined saving of 10%. This equates to an annual reduction in spend of £88,135 per local authority.

3. Requests for support

4712 new cases (referrals) were created on the database, reflecting a high number of requests for support and which resulted in increasing demand for immigration status information from the Home Office.
The Home Office Data and Sanctions Team (DAST) responded to 14603 requests for information, which included providing immigration status checks for new cases and responding to further queries raised by the local authority. Average response times across the year indicate that DAST adhered to the timeframes agreed in the Service Level Agreement (5 working days for new cases and 10 working days for queries).

Referrals have increased by 17% since 2017-18, when 4042 requests for support were received by 53 local authorities.

35% of the households that requested assistance were provided with accommodation and/or financial support. When a person is not eligible for accommodation and financial support, advice and guidance is being issued to help people access benefits, asylum support, employment or legal advice. A significant amount of homelessness prevention work is being achieved through the social services response.

4. Duration of support

![Chart 4: Average number of days financial support is provided (end of quarter)](image)

Despite a reduction in the overall number of households supported by local authorities, the average number of days that a household will be provided with accommodation and financial support has marginally increased by 25 days across the year.

This small increase has significant financial implications: supporting a household for 820 days represents an average spend of £40,245 with the additional 25 days costing £1200.
Local authorities and DAST have worked in partnership to successfully reduce the number of households that have been supported for 1000 days or longer by 20% (from 741 to 587).

This reduction is essential in order to reduce the average time that a local authority supports a household for. However, these longstanding cases represent 29% of non-EEA households.
5. Pathways off support

During the year, the service was withdrawn for 1904 family and adult households when they no longer qualified for this.

Of these, 80% of households left the service following a grant of leave to remain with recourse to public funds, enabling them to access mainstream benefits and housing. The proportion of households exiting support for this reason has increased from 67% in 2017-18.

For the majority of households, it is clear that the exit pathway will be achieving a grant of leave to remain in the UK, usually on a settlement route. Therefore, more should be done by central government to ensure that a person’s right to remain in the UK is recognised expeditiously.

Return has only been the outcome for a very small number of households, mainly where the main applicant is an EEA national. Presently, EEA nationals exercise free movement rights but this will change following the UK’s departure from the EU when they will become subject to the UK’s Immigration Rules. As the Government has guaranteed the future residence rights of EEA nationals currently living in the UK through the EU Settlement Scheme, return may become less of a realistic option when an EEA national is unable to access mainstream benefits.
6. Households by immigration status

This chart reflects the immigration status of the main applicant that has been recorded by the Home Office on the system. In family households, the main applicant will be a parent.

The majority of households (65%) receiving support comprise of a person or parent who is a non-EEA national who has no current immigration permission and needs to obtain leave to remain to stay in the UK.

The main applicants in 15% of households have leave to remain with recourse to public funds. Local authorities report that delays in households being able to access benefits from the DWP mean that support may continue to be provided for several weeks after a person has been granted leave.

It is not mandatory for the Home Office to record a barrier to return on the system, so the number of households where the main applicant is without any current immigration permission, but has an outstanding application or appeal, is likely to be under recorded given that 80% of households left the service following a grant of leave to remain. (See chart 5)