



Operational Report July 2014

Purpose of the Report

NACCOM is not, as yet, a registered charity. It has operated for the past eight years as a network of loosely affiliated member groups. Over the past two years the steering group have decided that, in order to effectively meet the aims of the members, it needs to have a more solid infrastructure. With that in mind we have begun to implement a number of measures to achieve this. Details of these appear later in this report, which is our first interim report prior to application for charitable status.

Historical Context

NACCOM was set up in 2006 in response to increasing destitution and homelessness amongst asylum seekers and other migrants in cities across the UK. These are mainly people whose asylum claims have been refused, and who have not been returned to their country of origin. With no recourse to public funds, and fearing persecution and hardship if they were to return, they are left in a desperate situation, relying on the help of charities and friends, sofa-surfing and often becoming street homeless.

Since refused asylum seekers do not qualify for Housing Benefit, they cannot access mainstream housing services. The lack of statutory funding also means that NACCOM member groups cannot operate in the same way as most social housing projects. We have to devise new and innovative ways of providing accommodation.

Since our inception NACCOM has operated as a collaborative network, relying on the goodwill and expertise of member groups. By sharing resources and best practice, we have grown from three groups in 2006 to 31 projects connected to NACCOM running in 22 towns and cities across the UK. Regional focus meetings are held 3-4 times a year, as well as an annual conference.

Developing the Network

In 2013 a steering group was formed to help with the development of the network. The group consists of ten key people with a range of skills from some of the largest and most active NACCOM projects. At the same time we were able to obtain a grant from the Homelessness Transition Fund for capacity building within the network. This funding paid for the Annual Conference, the focus and steering group meetings, and an inaugural mapping exercise. It also funded the coordinator, Dave Smith, to undertake a number of consultative visits to member organisations in 2013 and early 2014.

"I look back at the time being hosted by BEACON and am inspired to be a host one day when I have a place of my own. This was a life changing experience for me because I was offered help when I really needed it the most."

Guest, BEACON Hosting Project, Bradford

Accommodation Surveys 2013 & 2014

HTF funding enabled us to undertake a quantitative survey of accommodation projects amongst NACCOM members, and produce a report entitled ***Tackling Homelessness and Destitution amongst Migrants with No Recourse to Public Funds: A Report on the Extent and Nature of Accommodation provided by NACCOM Member Organisations***. It found that NACCOM projects were accommodating a total of 375 people from 46 countries. 45% of these were in the 18-30 age range. One of the targets was to demonstrate a 10% increase in accommodation within a year, and to do this it was decided to undertake a similar survey on an annual basis. The results of the 2014 survey appear at the end of this report.

Focus Groups 2013-14

The aim is to hold 3-4 focus groups each year to tackle issues of concern within member groups. They are half-day afternoon sessions, designed to start at a time that enables cheaper rail fares. By holding them in different geographical areas it is easier for groups to attend at least one or two. Since 2013 we have tackled four themes –

- Housing models, with emphasis on a mixed housing for refugees and destitute asylum seekers
- Making your Project Sustainable
- Campaigning
- Hosting

Consultation Visits

Thanks to funding from The Scurrah Wainwright Charity and the Metropolitan Migration Foundation, there has been money in the budget for the coordinator to visit projects with the specific aim of building capacity.

In 2013 I visited three projects: to date in 2014 I have carried out eight further visits, including a full strategy day at Open Door North East. Just having someone come from outside, with a fresh view, can be hugely beneficial, especially to smaller projects where there is little opportunity for reflection in the busyness of everyday life.

At the same time there is funding available for cross-fertilisation visits between projects, which enable members to learn from each other.

Further funding is being sought so that these visits can continue in the future.

National Conference 2014

This year the conference was held in Newcastle, the furthest North it has been thus far. Thanks to the hard work put in by Julian Prior and colleagues at Action Foundation, the representation from the North East was excellent. We were also delighted that the location also enabled our Scottish projects to attend. Altogether there were around 70 attendees.

With a choice of eight workshops, and keynote speeches from Mike Kaye from *Still Human* and Lyndsey Henderson from *Homeless Link*, it proved to be the best conference in our eight year history. Feedback from the conference was overwhelmingly positive, with attendees giving the various elements of the programme an average of 4.52/5.

"I was an angry and aggressive person and very depressed. I have changed a lot, found peace. Abigail Housing saved me from the hell I was in".

Resident, Abigail Housing, Bradford

Steering Group

The formation of a steering group in January 2013 is key to the strategy of NACCOM. With ten members from some of the most active groups the tasks needed to move the network forward can be shared out. At present the group is made up of –

<i>Dave Smith</i>	<i>Boaz Trust (Coordinator)</i>
<i>Julian Prior</i>	<i>Action Foundation, Newcastle</i>
<i>Paul Catterall</i>	<i>Open Door North East, Middlesbrough</i>
<i>Will Sutcliffe</i>	<i>Beacon, Bradford</i>
<i>Jochen Kortlaender</i>	<i>ASSIST, Sheffield</i>
<i>Caron Boulghassoul</i>	<i>Nottingham Arimathea Trust</i>
<i>Shari Brown</i>	<i>Hope Projects, Birmingham</i>
<i>Karina Martin</i>	<i>Upbeat Communities, Derby</i>
<i>Rachael Bee</i>	<i>Bristol Hospitality Network</i>
<i>Jean Demars</i>	<i>Praxis / London Hosting</i>

*"Without somewhere to live, I would not have been able to continue fighting for my asylum case."
Resident, Nottingham Arimathea Trust*

Membership

At present there is no charge for membership. The only criterion is that member organisations are providing, or are aiming to provide, accommodation for destitute asylum seekers or migrants. As part of the move towards charitable status the criteria for membership will be reviewed and updated, along with some form of membership fee that will reflect the size of the member group.

Sustainable Housing (Financial Modelling Tool)

One ongoing concern for members is financial sustainability. Providing accommodation for those with no recourse to public funds is challenging, to say the least. In 2013 The Boaz Trust was able to access some consultation from Mark Goldup (MG Consultancy) to develop a financial modelling tool for member groups, based on the model of providing accommodation for those with refugee status (or other in receipt of public funds) and using the income to fund accommodation for those who are destitute and have no recourse to public funds.

Thanks to a grant from the Metropolitan Migration Foundation NACCOM has been able to engage Mark to widen the research with eight member groups. The final modelling tool should be available for use by the end of 2014.

Strategic Alliance on Migrant Destitution

In 2013 the Rough Sleeper Count in England discovered that 53% of those sleeping rough were not UK citizens, and that many of them were not eligible for public funds. This highlighted the need for a different approach to rough sleeping, as the Rough Sleepers Initiative is dependent on Housing Benefit to get people off the streets and into accommodation.

As a result the work of NACCOM began to be recognised as playing an important role in reducing rough sleeping. NACCOM itself, as well as several member organisations, was able to access some Homelessness Transition funding to support its work. For many this was the first statutory funding they had ever been able to access. Homeless Link then joined with Refugee Action to hold a joint conference on Migrant Destitution, and subsequently Dave Smith was invited, as coordinator of NACCOM, to join with representatives of Homeless Link, Housing justice, Refugee Action, Refugee Council, the British Red Cross and the Migrants' Rights Network in a Strategic Alliance on Migrant Destitution.

"Without ASSIST there would be more people on the streets, dying during the winter. Stress-related illness and desperation would increase."

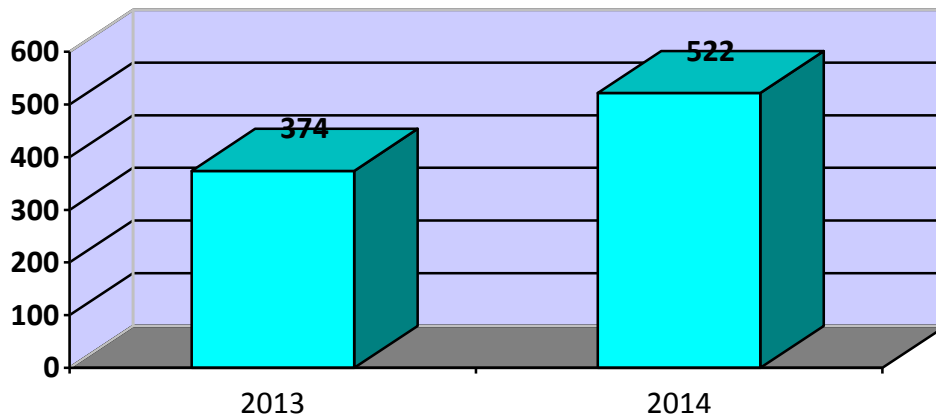
Resident, ASSIST Sheffield

Accommodation Survey 2014

The survey took place during July 2014. Of the 36 member groups surveyed, 27 completed the survey. Of the nine that did not, four responded that they were not currently accommodating anyone. Two of these were new hosting projects and had not yet placed their first guests.

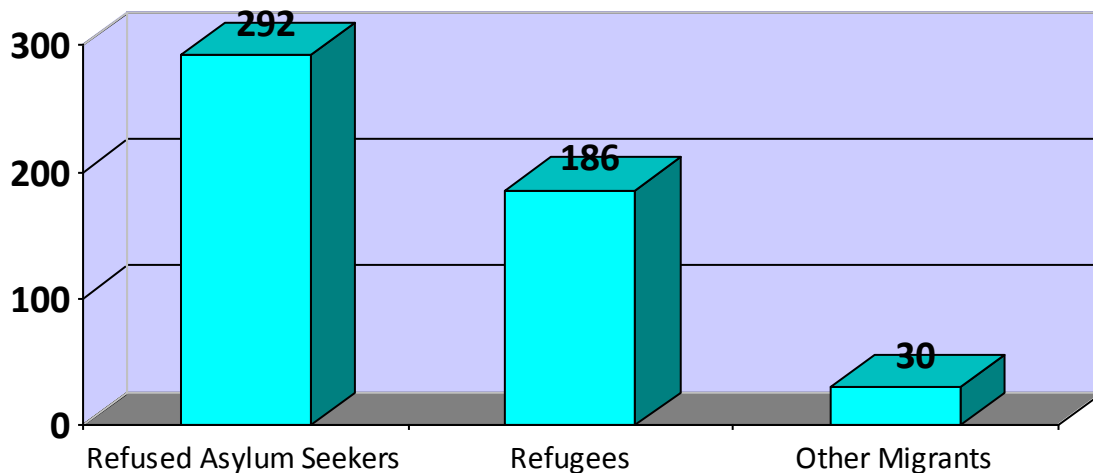
It is estimated that the five projects that did not respond would have been accommodating up to 25 who would have counted towards the total numbers. Where there are discrepancies in numbers, this is generally accounted for by some projects not including children in all their statistics – e.g in the male / female demographic.

■ Total Number of Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants accommodated by NACCOM Projects



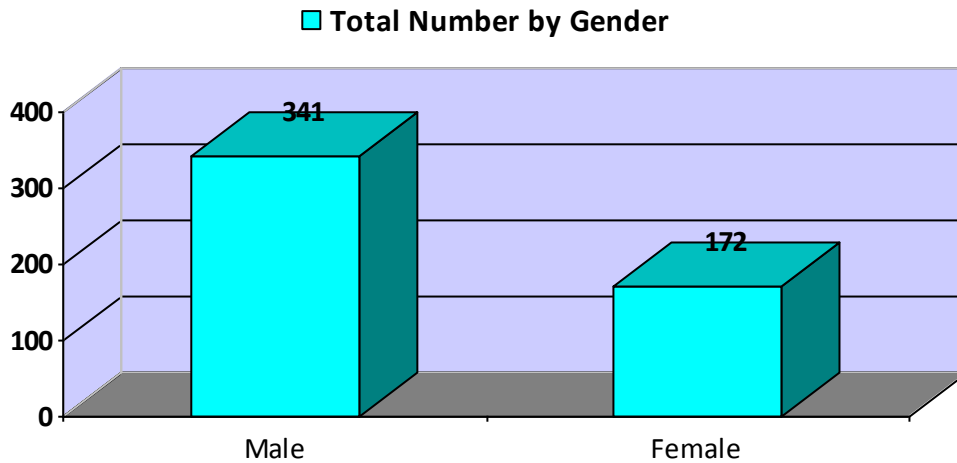
The 28% rise in numbers is partly due to a new emphasis on sustainability within groups, with many groups now accommodating more refugees, with any profits from rents and housing benefits being used to fund places for those who are destitute.

■ Total Number by Status

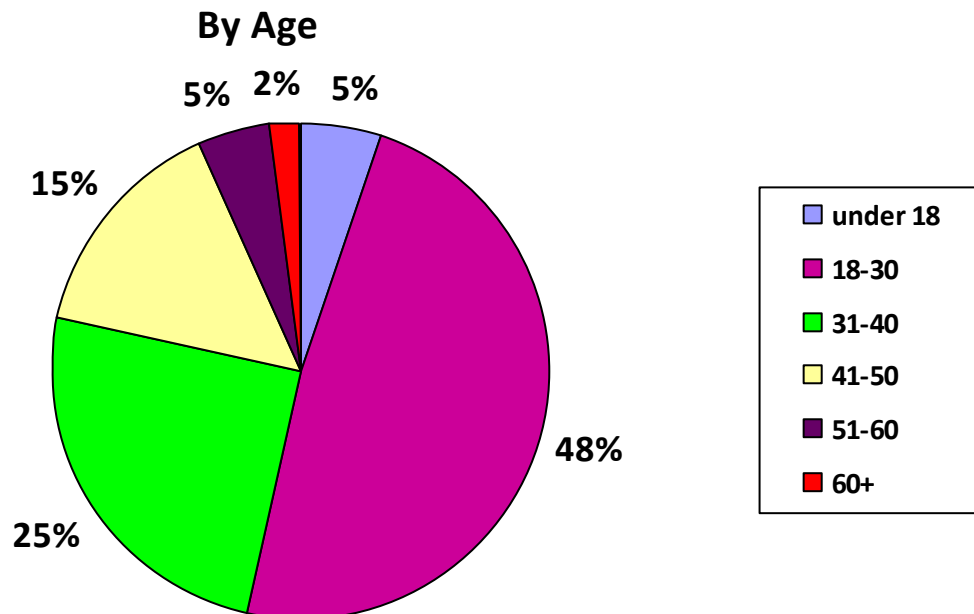


Now that we are recording the *status* of those being accommodated, we can accurately plot the effectiveness of NACCOM. In the future it is quite likely that figures will show a significant rise in the numbers of refugees. The reason for this is two-fold. Firstly, changes in immigration legislation and pressure on local housing are making it much more difficult for immigrants to access local authority or privately rented accommodation: and secondly, NACCOM groups are increasingly using refugee income to offset destitution costs.

As a result, we can expect a surge in refugee numbers, but steady growth in the number of refused asylum seekers accommodated. How the migrant demographic will change is less certain, and depends greatly on whether new members include migrants in their target group.



These figures are roughly in line with the percentages of men and women seeking asylum in the UK. There are approximately two men for every woman. The discrepancies are much higher in South Asian countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, where the percentage of women can be as low as 10%. In African countries like Zimbabwe and Eritrea it is more likely to be 50 /50.

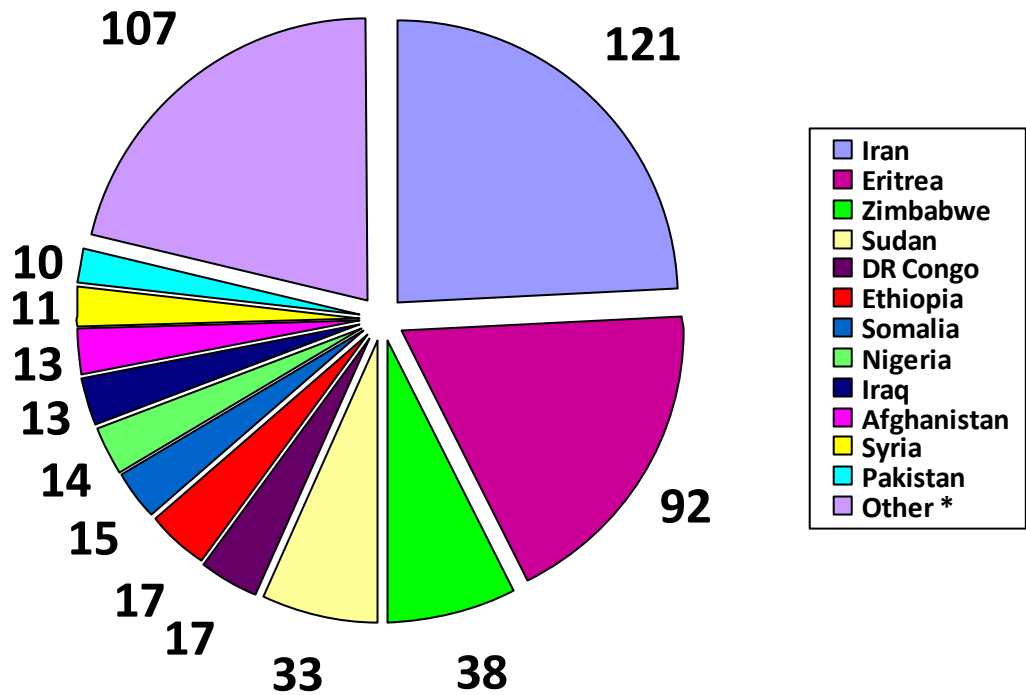


Only a few projects take minors. This is mainly because those under 18 are usually looked after by local authority Social Services and / or the Children’s Society. Those over 60 are also rarely accommodated. Few are able to travel as far as the UK, and many who do have additional health needs, and are therefore more likely to be granted Community Care accommodation. Nearly half are in the 18-30 age bracket, and therefore well able to work and contribute to the UK economy, if allowed to do so.

"I don't have any words, just to say thank you, I am very blessed. You've been a family, I don't have family around. I didn't have a house but you gave me a house, shelter to live in."

Resident, Action Foundation Newcastle

By Nationality

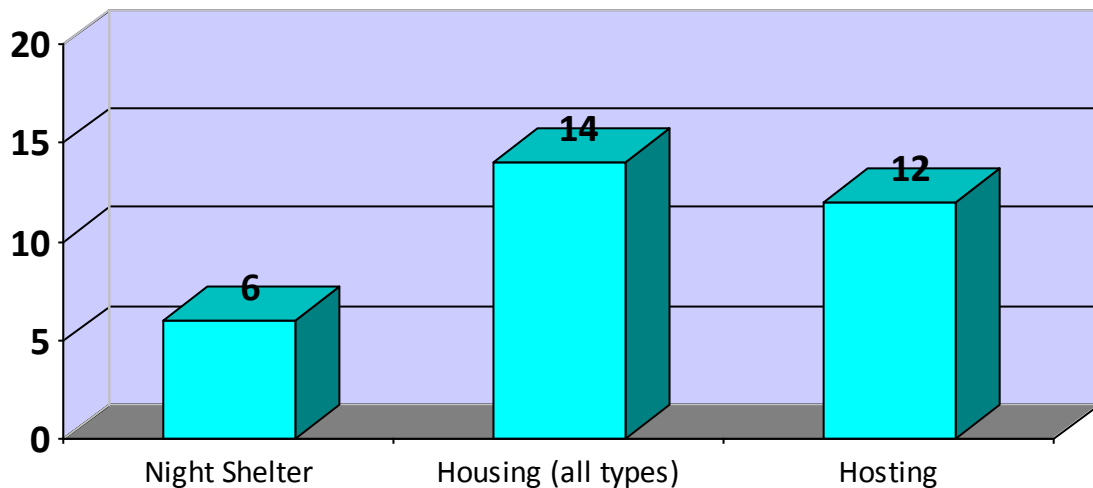


Nearly 40% of those accommodated came from just two countries – Iran and Eritrea. This would be expected of Iran, as the second highest producer of asylum seekers, but less so of Eritrea. It appears that certain cultures, especially those from South Asian countries, are more likely to seek help from their own communities rather than the voluntary sector, especially in areas where those communities have been established for many years.

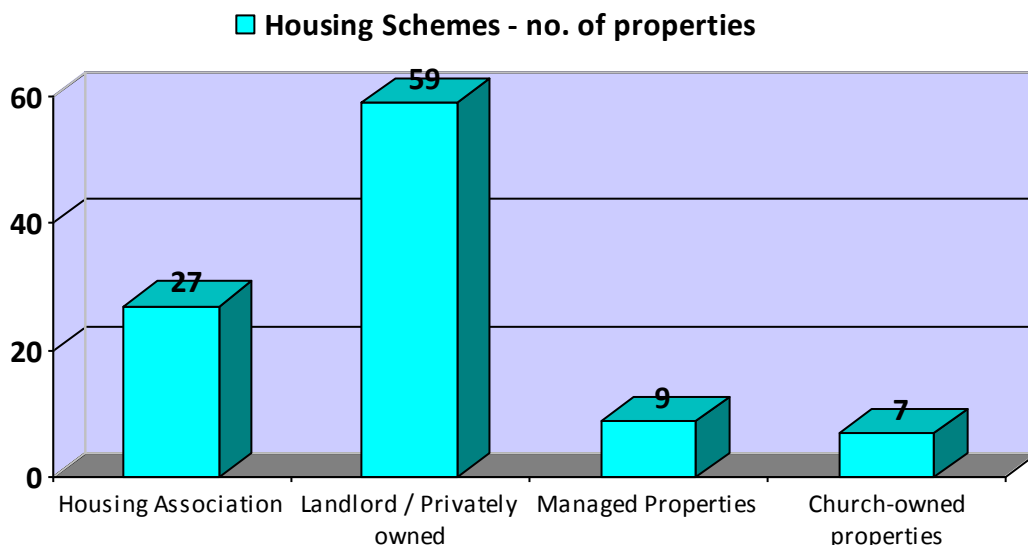
*'Other' comprises small numbers of people (less than 10) from the following nations: Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India, China, Palestine, Gambia, Guinea, Kuwait, Liberia, Cameroon, Algeria, Ivory Coast, Turkey, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Israel, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, Togo, Morocco, Chad, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Mauritania, Tunisia, Mongolia, Russia, Jamaica, Tanzania, Swaziland, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau and St.Lucia – a total of 49 countries. Interestingly there was no one from Libya or Albania, despite them having figured in the top ten UK refugee countries in the last two years.

One project was not able to give nationalities for its 19 residents.

■ NACCOM Partner Schemes



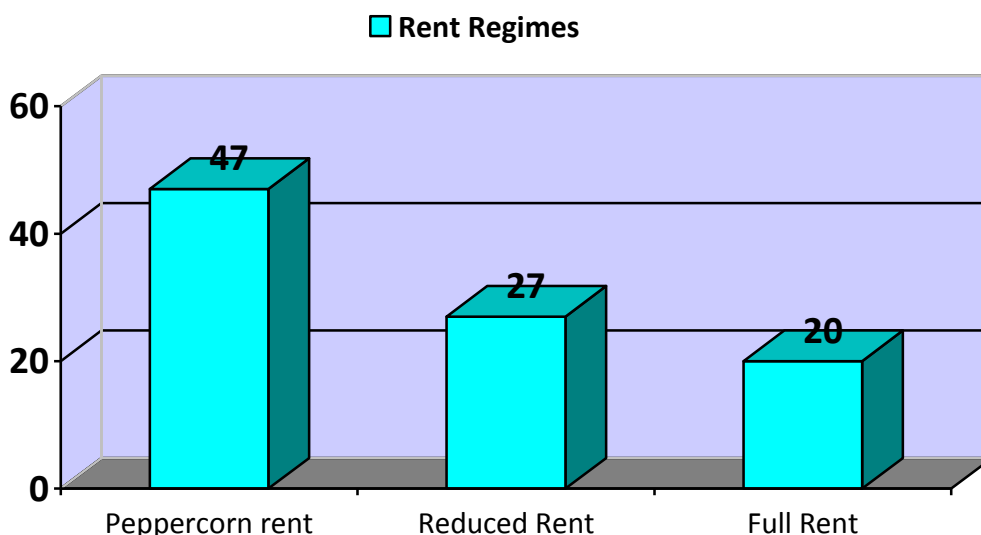
The greatest growth within NACCOM is in housing projects. Night Shelters are an invaluable resource for those who are street homeless, and have proved a very useful filter for housing schemes. Hosting schemes are relatively easy to set up and run, but difficult to grow beyond a certain size, whereas the only real restriction on housing schemes is finance to start up.



There is great potential in working with churches to put back into use empty vicarages and presbyteries, but the age and size of some properties mean that they often come with maintenance problems and high utility bills, so growth in that area is likely to remain slow.

Recently NACCOM groups have begun to look at ways of working with Housing Associations to accommodate those who are destitute. It is not easy to find HAs that are open to partnership work of this kind, but once they have been engaged and the scheme is working well, there is potential for significant growth.

Similarly, some projects are beginning to consider taking on the management of landlord lets in return for a management fee. Again, this has a number of benefits in terms of sustainability, as well as being able to offer better support to the refugee residents.



Paying market rent for a property makes it difficult to maintain a project in the long-term, as there is little profit margin from refugee housing, and it requires significant financial input to house those with no recourse to public funds. However, if the project is exempt from Local Housing Allowance (LHA), the viability of the property is greatly enhanced.

Conclusion

Despite hard economic times, when many charities are struggling to survive, NACCOM member groups are continuing to grow, mainly due to the passion and commitment of project leaders, volunteers and supporters. They are not working in the charity sector simply to feel good or to earn a living. They are there to right a wrong, and to end migrant destitution. The 2014 survey demonstrates clearly that they are having an increasing impact on homelessness, though it is still small compared to the growing need to accommodate those who are destitute.

The next year will be crucial for NACCOM. It is one thing to run a loose network of associated groups, but quite another to mould it into an effective national charity. There are many different ways of working within NACCOM, and many different types of scheme. Much of this is determined by resources, availability and local conditions. Since the inaugural meeting in 2006 there has been an understanding that “no one size fits all”. What works in Newcastle will probably not work in London, where house prices are high and accommodation difficult to find.

Therefore, as we move forward, we must make sure that support and resources are available for local groups to grow in a way that is most effective for them. Unity in diversity is our strength, and must not be lost in the transition to charitable status.

Having said that, there is a clear need for models that can be replicated across the network. Templates like the financial modelling tool can be adapted by any group, and both increase effectiveness and reduce costs for those who use it. In the same way there will be many other areas where sharing resources and ideas, and working together will be not just possible but essential.

Looking back at the progress of NACCOM during the past year, we can see that it has enjoyed its biggest growth thus far. I look forward to writing this report in a year from now, and seeing how much NACCOM has grown, flourished and made a difference to many more lives.

Dave Smith, NACCOM Coordinator

"Before I came to the Boaz Trust I was on the street. Boaz gave me a home, food and safety. The staff are like family. If the Boaz Trust had not helped me I would be on the street or in jail."

Former Resident, Boaz Trust, Manchester

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