

Asylum Support Partnership Policy Report



The Second Destitution Tally

An indication of the extent of destitution among asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers and refugees

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Report design: Iris Teichmann
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34 year old Alain sits with his bags packed outside the house in North London where he was staying for a while. He does not know where he will sleep tonight. After fleeing DR Congo and claiming asylum in the UK in 2002 he spent months destitute. His work as a TV journalist led to his arrest and torture by government soldiers in DR Congo, and only after paying a huge bribe was he able to escape and flee the country. If he returns he believes he will be killed. His asylum claim was refused, and unable to work or support himself, he began sleeping rough in the Elephant and Castle area of London. He is completely destitute and struggles to survive, depending on a friend who is also a refused asylum seeker but who has support from section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (no choice of accommodation and GBP 35 of supermarket vouchers a week). Two years ago Alain was the victim of a racist attack, when a white man blinded him in one eye with a piece of broken glass. "As asylum seekers we have been punished twice – once back home and once here. In Kinshasa I was tortured physically and here I'm tortured mentally. I've transferred from one prison to another." Alain is one of an estimated 300,000 rejected asylum seekers living in the UK.

This photo is part of the Still Human Still Here photo exhibition commissioned by Panos Pictures.

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This report is divided into two parts.

The **Executive Summary** provides a brief overview of the research for policy makers: it sets out the aim of the exercise, the key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

The **Research Results** section gives additional evidence to reinforce the key findings set out in the Executive Summary. It gives detailed statistical tables and analysis based on the results of the survey, sets out the findings of other research into destitution, and gives more detail about the methodology used to conduct the Second Destitution Tally.

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About the Asylum Support Partnership

The Asylum Support Partnership¹ (ASP) is a partnership of refugee agencies that are contracted by the UK Border Agency (UKBA) to deliver a range of services to asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers and refugees across the UK. These services include providing advice on claiming asylum support and Section 4 'hard case' support. At the time that this survey was conducted the Partnership included the Refugee Council (and its sub-contractors), Refugee Action, Migrant Helpline, the Scottish Refugee Council, the Welsh Refugee Council and the North of England Refugee Service. Migrant Helpline left the Asylum Support Partnership in November 2008.

The Asylum Support Partnership and Destitution

The Asylum Support Partnership is very concerned about the scale of destitution witnessed by its advice services. For years, these services have been approached for help by large numbers of destitute asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers and refugees. The limitations of current asylum support policies and procedures mean that it is extremely difficult to find fast and simple solutions to destitution, even when an individual is entitled to support from the UKBA. This prolongs the hardship experienced by individuals and creates a challenging working environment for the Partnership's frontline teams.

The Partnership feels it is important to conduct research to highlight the extent of destitution in the UK and to explore its causes. By doing so, the Partnership hopes to bring destitution to the attention of policy makers, and to provide evidence that can inform the search for solutions.

The Destitution Tally

The Destitution Tally, published by the Asylum Support Partnership in January 2008, was the first attempt to capture statistics on destitution throughout the UK. The summary of reports at the end of this report shows that studies by other organisations have collected statistics on destitution within particular localities but not nationwide. The Asylum Support Partnership was uniquely able to provide a national picture through its network of services offering advice on asylum support to asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers and refugees in key locations throughout the UK. A simple survey was completed for every visit made to the services in a four-week period in November and December 2007.

The definition of destitute used in the survey was:

“currently with no access to benefits, UKBA support or income, and either street homeless or staying with friends only temporarily”

It was important for the survey to use a simple definition that could be easily understood by asylum seekers and refugees. This simple definition is somewhat more stringent than the definition of destitution provided by Section 95(3) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, which says:

*“a person is destitute if – (a) he does not have adequate accommodation or any means of obtaining it (whether or not his essential living needs are met);
or (b) he has adequate accommodation or the means of obtaining it, but cannot meet his other essential living needs”*

¹ The Asylum Support Partnership was known previously as the Inter-agency Partnership on Asylum Support.

The Destitution Tally was successful in capturing simple data from thousands of visits to the Asylum Support Partnership's services, including data about the immigration status of destitute people. In particular it brought to the UKBA's attention the extent to which asylum seekers, who have entitlements to support from the UKBA, are destitute.

The Asylum Support Partnership decided to repeat the survey in order to demonstrate the persistence of destitution as a feature of the lives of asylum seekers and refugees and as a feature of the work of its services, and to understand further its extent and causes.

The Second Destitution Tally

The Second Destitution Tally survey took place between 1st and 31st October, 2008. As before, a simple survey was completed for each visit to one of the participating services.

The aim of the Second Destitution Tally is:

To give policy makers an indication of the extent and causes of destitution among asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers and refugees in the UK, and to recommend solutions to alleviate destitution

To meet this aim, the survey was extended in two ways compared with the original Destitution Tally:

1. There are concerns that the extent of destitution is largely hidden: while the services run by the agencies in the Asylum Support Partnership are intended to be a focus for advice for asylum seekers and refugees, many of those who are destitute seek support elsewhere. In particular, numerous small organisations provide practical assistance such as food, clothing and companionship. Resources were not available to co-ordinate a survey of visits to all such organisations but as examples we chose two well established small organisations following recommendations by the Refugee Council head office in London and by the Scottish Refugee Council.

These were the Southwark Daycentre (London) and Positive Action in Housing (Glasgow). The British Red Cross was asked to join the Asylum Support Partnership in this survey because it has a network of services for asylum seekers and refugees throughout the UK that provide practical assistance. British Red Cross services based in Manchester, Peterborough, Norwich, London and Birmingham took part. Including the experiences of these additional agencies made this a wider-ranging study of destitution than the previous one. Throughout the report, the total figures for all the participating agencies are given, but at the end of the report, an indication is given of how the experiences of the other agencies differ from that of the Asylum Support Partnership.

2. While keeping the survey questionnaire brief, a small number of questions were added to provide evidence of the extent and causes of destitution, which could inform recommended solutions. These questions included how long a person had been destitute, whether or not they had applied for support, whether or not they had dependent children, their health needs and their country of origin. The inclusion of the additional questions has produced a rich data set and the detailed findings are set out in the [Research Results](#) section of this report.

Key findings and statistics

1 There is widespread and long term destitution

Figures for October 2008 show that destitution is a significant feature of the work of the agencies that took part in this exercise, despite the introduction of the New Asylum Model (NAM), which was intended to improve the efficiency of the asylum system. Destitution is not a short term condition: roughly half of visits by destitute people are by people who have been destitute for more than six months.

Visits	Percentage
4093 visits	
1792 visits by NAM cases	44% of visits
1972 visits by destitute people	48% of visits
952 visits by people destitute for more than 6 months	48% of visits by destitute people
700 visits by destitute NAM cases	40% of visits by NAM cases

2 Mainly among refused asylum seekers:

Destitution is most common among refused asylum seekers. The main reason for their destitution is that they have not applied for Section 4 support. Experience of working with this client group suggests that this could be for a number of reasons, for example because they are unaware that this support is available, or they have not yet had the opportunity to claim, or they know that they do not meet the eligibility criteria.

Visits	Percentage
1178 visits by destitute refused asylum seekers	60% of visits by destitute
731 visits by refused asylum seekers destitute for over 6 months	37% of visits by destitute
576 visits by destitute refused asylum seekers who had not applied for Section 4 support	49% of visits by destitute refused asylum seekers

3 Mainly from a small number of countries

Although the destitute people who visited these services in October came from over 40 different countries of origin, most visits by destitute people are by people from one of a very small number of countries where there are well documented human rights abuses and persecution, impunity for human rights abuses and/or conflict. This is particularly true for refused asylum seekers, including refused asylum seekers who have been destitute for a long time. Breakdowns of the regions of origin within some countries give an indication of numbers coming from areas of conflict.

Visits	Percentage
995 visits are by destitute people from the top 4 countries (Iraq, Iran, Eritrea and Zimbabwe)	50% of visits by destitute people
407 visits are by refused asylum seekers, destitute over 6 months, from the top 4 countries (Iraq, Iran, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan)	55% of visits by refused asylum seekers destitute for over 6 months
567 visits are by refused asylum seekers, destitute over 6 months, from the top 10 countries (Iran, Iraq, DRC, Sudan, Eritrea, China, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Congo-Brazzaville, Somalia)	78% of visits by refused asylum seekers destitute for over 6 months
126 visits are by Iraqi refused asylum seekers destitute over 6 months who come from parts of Iraq other than the 3 Northern governorates.	82% of visits by Iraqi refused asylum seekers destitute for over 6 months

4 It includes people with children

Some visits were by destitute people with dependent children. In half of the visits by destitute people with children, they had been destitute over six months. These are most commonly visits by refused asylum seekers. Refused asylum seekers are only eligible for UKBA support if they have a child who was born no more than three weeks after they lost their claim for asylum, and is not older than six weeks. They can apply for support from local authorities, but local authorities may decide to support only the children but not the parents. The dilemma facing parents in these situations adds weight to the argument that people will choose destitution over return if they do not feel return is safe. The most common country of origin for destitute people with children in the survey was Zimbabwe. The incidence of illness was slightly higher among those who had been destitute for a long time.

Visits	Percentage
250 visits by destitute people with dependent children	13% of destitute people
124 visits by people destitute for over 6 months with dependent children	50% of destitute with children
74 visits by destitute refused asylum seekers with dependent children, who have been destitute for over 6 months	10% of visits by refused asylum seekers destitute for over 6 months
139 visits by refused asylum seekers, destitute for over 6 months, with physical illness	19% of visits by refused asylum seekers destitute for over 6 months

5 Delays in processing asylum support are common

The second most common type of visit by destitute people were visits by asylum seekers who were waiting for a decision on their asylum application, and the most common reason was that they had applied for support and were waiting for approval or allocation.

Visits	Percentage
557 visits by destitute asylum seekers who were waiting for an outcome on their asylum application	29% of visits by destitute people
299 visits by destitute asylum seekers who were waiting for an outcome on their asylum application, who had applied for support and were waiting for either approval or allocation	54% of visits by destitute asylum seekers who were waiting for an outcome on their asylum application

6 Other studies have similar findings

Compared with the original Destitution Tally, the Second Destitution Tally found that a slightly higher proportion of visits to services was by destitute people. This is because more organisations took part in the survey this time, including organisations that provide practical support such as food and clothing. A review of other reports on destitution found a similar picture and common recommended solutions are to grant leave to remain, and to provide support, advice and the right to work for destitute refused asylum seekers who remain in the UK. Common recommendations in relation to people with support entitlements are ending delays and ensuring seamless transition between different forms of support. Improving access to centres to claim asylum is also highlighted.

Visits	Percentage
3466 visits recorded in the original Destitution Tally	
1524 visits by destitute people recorded in the original Destitution Tally	44% of visits recorded in the original Destitution Tally

Conclusions

This survey of visits to voluntary sector services specialising in asylum has created a large data set. In particular, it has recorded a large number of visits by asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers. Destitution is a significant feature of the work of the agencies that took part in this survey.

Most of the visits by destitute people were by destitute refused asylum seekers. The survey results suggest that Section 4 support is not providing a safety net to prevent destitution among refused asylum seekers.

Destitution is not a short term condition. Nearly half of the visits by destitute people were by people who had been destitute for more than six months. A third of destitute refused asylum seekers had been destitute more than two years. This strongly indicates that refused asylum seekers are prepared to face destitution in the UK for long periods without returning to their country of origin.

The most striking feature of the survey results is that the majority of destitute people visiting came from one of a very small number of countries. These are countries where there are well documented human rights abuses and persecution, impunity for human rights abuses and/or conflict.

This indicates that individuals will remain in the UK destitute for long periods if they do not consider return to be safe, and that destitution could be more than halved by focussing on finding solutions to destitution for refused asylum seekers from these countries, including recognising the difficulties of safe and sustainable return, and granting leave to remain in UK.

This should not detract from the principle of judging each asylum claim on its merits. Nor should it imply that those from less common countries have fewer protection needs. More research is required to better understand the links between frequently occurring countries of origin of people, their protection needs and views about return.

While the majority of visits by destitute people were by destitute refused asylum seekers, it is important to recognise that this is not the only destitute group. The survey highlights how people who make applications for asylum support and mainstream benefits can be destitute because of administrative weaknesses. The UKBA should take practical steps to address this, involving the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as necessary. More consideration needs to be given to suggestions already made to the UKBA by the Asylum Support Partnership and other voluntary agencies. These are set out in this report's recommendations. The limited number of Asylum Screening Units in only two localities was also a factor in destitution for those who wished to claim asylum. The UKBA should make it possible for people to lodge asylum claims locally.

The asylum system is not succeeding in protecting the welfare of children. The agencies that took part in the survey, received visits by destitute people with children, including people of all types of immigration status and people affected by delays in processing asylum support, Section 4 support and mainstream benefits. Some had been destitute for a long time. The dilemma facing parents in these situations adds weight to the argument that people will choose destitution over return if they do not feel that return is safe. The most common country of origin of destitute people with children was Zimbabwe. For those recorded in this survey, destitution has not led them to take steps towards voluntary return, which would entitle them to Section 4 support.

In a minority of visits to the agencies, people disclosed that they were not only dealing with destitution but were also suffering from ill health. This was slightly more prevalent in cases of refused asylum seekers who had been destitute for a long time. There is a need to investigate further to understand better the extent of the health needs of destitute people.

When comparisons were made across UKBA regions, variations were found in the proportion of visits by destitute people, the extent to which they were destitute asylum seekers or destitute refused asylum seekers, and the extent to which they were waiting for asylum support or Section 4 support to be processed. The UKBA should investigate how to ensure consistently high standards in processing support applications across all its regions.

There were differences in the types of people who visited the different agencies. Compared with the Asylum Support Partnership agencies, the other agencies (the Red Cross, Southwark Day Centre and Positive Action in Housing) received more visits by destitute people and by long term destitute refused asylum seekers. This suggests that a truer picture of the extent of 'hidden' destitution can be gained by not only recording the experiences of the larger refugee agencies but also those of small organisations providing practical support.

The Second Destitution Tally recorded more visits by destitute people than the original Destitution Tally, and therefore gives a better indication of the extent of destitution.

The work of the agencies participating in this survey is made more challenging than it needs to be, for two reasons. In the first place, they are seeing high numbers of destitute refused asylum seekers, many of whom are long term destitute and for whom little help is available. Secondly, procedural problems mean that accessing support for those who are entitled to it is resource intensive. This survey gives an indication of the extent of that workload.

Recommendations for the UKBA

The Asylum Support Partnership asks the UK Border Agency

- 1.** To accept the evidence that destitution does not lead refused asylum seekers to return to their country of origin.
- 2.** To adopt the principle that destitution should not be a feature of the UK asylum system.
- 3.** To explore solutions to destitution for those currently not entitled to support. Options made available should include provision of support, the right to work and regularisation of status, depending on circumstances.
- 4.** To regularise the status of destitute refused asylum seekers from the most frequently occurring countries of origin.
- 5.** To provide cash support² without delay for all destitute refused asylum seekers with dependent children regardless of whether the children were born after the asylum application was refused.
- 6.** To significantly improve processes to end destitution among those with entitlements to support, by implementing the following:
 - Enable asylum claims to be lodged locally in order to avoid destitution among those who wish to claim asylum but cannot travel to the Asylum Screening Unit.
 - Simplify procedures for applying for asylum support and Section 4 support, in particular, ensure that eligibility for support does not require evidence, which is impossible for applicants to provide.
 - Set tight timescales for processing asylum support applications and Section 4 support applications and introduce management systems to ensure that these are met.
 - Ensure that there are effective procedures for providing temporary emergency support and accommodation to counteract delays in processing support applications.
 - Ensure that there are effective channels of communication for applicants and voluntary agencies to resolve queries about the handling of asylum support applications.
 - Ensure seamless transition between support for asylum seekers and support for refused asylum seekers.
 - Ensure seamless transition to mainstream benefits for those granted refugee status or leave to remain.

²See Refugee Council (2008). *More Token Gestures*. London: Refugee Council.

The Research Results section gives more detailed information about the research findings to provide background to the key findings, conclusions and recommendations given in the Executive Summary. This section covers:

- Number and type of visits to agencies
- The extent of destitution
- The main type of destitution
- The length of destitution
- Destitution and country of origin
- Other types of destitution
- Destitute with dependent children
- Destitute with health needs
- Variations by UKBA region
- Variations by voluntary agency
- Comparison with the results of the original Destitution Tally
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1. Number and type of visits to agencies

The agencies saw a total of 4093 visits to their services in October 2008. These are all services that specialise in the asylum system, and therefore the survey identified the asylum status of those visiting as one of the following four categories:

- People who wish to claim asylum but have not yet registered their claim
- Asylum seekers who are waiting for an outcome on their asylum application
- Refused asylum seekers who have exhausted their appeal rights
- People who have been granted asylum

Results

The majority of visits, 78 per cent, were either by asylum seekers or refused asylum seekers (1543 and 1653 of 4093).

Visits by people who wished to claim asylum but had not yet done so, or by people who had recently been granted refugee status or leave to remain in the UK, were in the minority.

Conclusion

This survey of visits to services specialising in asylum has created a large data set. In particular it has recorded a large number of visits by asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers.

Table 1: Status of cases visiting

	Visits	Percentage
Total visits	4093	
Visits by refused asylum seekers who had exhausted their appeal rights	1653	40% of visits
Visits by asylum seekers who were waiting for an outcome on their asylum application	1543	38% of visits
Visits by people who had been granted asylum	651	16% of visits
Visits by people who wished to claim asylum but had not yet registered their claim	246	6% of visits

2. The extent of destitution

To give an indication of the extent of destitution, the survey recorded the number of visits by people who were destitute.

Results

The survey showed that 48 per cent of visits – nearly half – were by destitute people (1972 of 4093 visits).

Destitution was not only found among people whose cases had been in the UK asylum system for a long time, but also among more recent cases that have been processed since the introduction of the New Asylum Model (NAM). NAM was expected to introduce a more efficient system, though not necessarily to reduce destitution. In October 2008, 44 per cent of visits were by NAM cases (1792 of 4093) and 40 per cent of these were destitute (700 of 1792).

Conclusion

Destitution is a significant feature of the work of the agencies that took part in this survey.

Table 2: Visits by destitute people

	Visits	Percentage
Total visits	4093	100%
Visits by destitute people	1972	48% of visits

Table 3: Visits by NAM cases

	Visits	Percentage
Total visits	4093	100%
Visits by NAM cases	1792	44% of visits

Table 4: Visits by destitute NAM cases

	Visits	Percentage
Visits by NAM cases	1792	100%
Visits by destitute NAM cases	700	40% of NAM cases

3. The main type of destitution

The participating agencies see people at different stages of the asylum process, with different types of immigration status. The survey identified the immigration status of destitute people for each visit to the agencies.

Results

Table 5 shows that destitution was most commonly found among refused asylum seekers. 60 per cent of visits by destitute people were by destitute refused asylum seekers (1178 of 1972).

Table 6 shows the extent to which destitute refused asylum seekers feature in the work of these agencies. 29 per cent of all visits to the agencies were by destitute refused asylum seekers (1,178 of 4,093).

Access to Section 4 support for destitute refused asylum seekers

Refused asylum seekers have very limited rights to apply for support from the UKBA. They can apply for support under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 if they are destitute and meet one of the following criteria³:

- They are taking all reasonable steps to leave the United Kingdom.
- They are unable to leave because of a physical barrier to travel or for some other medical reason.
- They are unable to leave because UKBA believes there is no safe route of return.
- They have applied for a judicial review of their asylum application (and, if in England, Wales or Northern Ireland, this has been given permission to proceed).
- Accommodation is necessary to prevent a breach of rights under the Human Rights Act 1998.

Table 5: Immigration status of destitute people

	Visits	Percentage
Visits by destitute people	1972	100%
Visits by destitute refused asylum seekers who had exhausted their appeal rights	1178	60% of destitute people
Visits by destitute asylum seekers who were waiting for an outcome on their asylum application	557	29% of destitute people
Visits by destitute people who had been granted asylum	153	8% of destitute people
Visits by destitute people who wished to claim asylum but had not yet registered their claim	84	4% of destitute people

Table 6: Visits by destitute refused asylum seekers

	Visits	Percentage
Total visits	4093	100%
Visits by destitute refused asylum seekers	1178	29% of visits

³ See www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/asylum/support/apply/section4

Table 7 shows that the main reason recorded for destitution in visits by refused asylum seekers was that they had not applied for Section 4 support. In half of the visits by destitute refused asylum seekers, they were destitute because they had not applied for Section 4 support (49 per cent, or 576 of 1178).

The survey did not ask why they had not applied. Experience of working with this client group suggests that this could be for a number of reasons, for example because they are unaware that this support is available, or they have not yet had the opportunity to claim, or they know that they do not meet the eligibility criteria.

The second most common reason for destitution in visits by refused asylum seekers was that they had applied for Section 4 support and were waiting for a decision or allocation (40 per cent of the destitute refused asylum seekers, or 469 of 1178). The Asylum Support Partnership has long-standing concerns about delays in processing Section 4 support. Delays can have various causes, for example because of high thresholds of evidence requested to ‘prove’ that a person is destitute. A further reason is that support has been approved in principle but accommodation has not yet been provided (and Section 4 support is paid by the accommodation provider).

In the remaining 11 per cent of visits by destitute refused asylum seekers, they had been refused Section 4 support (133 of 1178).

Conclusion

Most of the visits by destitute people were by destitute refused asylum seekers. The survey results suggest that Section 4 support is not providing a safety net to prevent destitution among refused asylum seekers.

Table 7: Access to Section 4 support for destitute refused asylum seekers

	Visits	Percentage
Visits by destitute refused asylum seekers who had exhausted their appeal rights	1178	100%
Not applied for Section 4 support	576	49% of destitute refused asylum seekers
Applied for Section 4 support and awaiting decision/allocation	469	40% of destitute refused asylum seekers
Applied for Section 4 support and been refused	133	11% of destitute refused asylum seekers

4. The length of destitution

To understand the severity of destitution, the survey not only looked at how many visits were made by destitute people, but also for how long they had been destitute.

Results

Table 8 shows that nearly half of the visits by destitute people were by people who had been destitute for more than six months (48%, 952 of 1,972).

The Asylum Support Partnership's experience of working with these people is that they are living in the most desperate circumstances.

Long term destitution was found to be particularly common among refused asylum seekers, as Table 9 shows. 62 per cent of visits by destitute refused asylum seekers were by people who had been destitute for more than six months (731 of 1178), and in a third of visits, they had been destitute for more than two years (31 per cent, 369 of 1178).

Conclusion

Destitution is not a short term condition. Nearly half of the visits by destitute people were by people who had been destitute for more than six months. A third of destitute refused asylum seekers had been destitute for more than two years. This strongly indicates that refused asylum seekers are prepared to face destitution in the UK for long periods without returning to their country of origin.

Table 8: Length of destitution

	Visits	Percentage
Visits by destitute people	1972	100%
Visits by people destitute for more than 1 month	1496	76% of visits by destitute people
Visits by people destitute for more than 6 month	952	48% of visits by destitute people

Table 9: Length of destitution of refused asylum seekers

	Visits	Percentage
Visits by destitute refused asylum seekers	1178	100%
Visits by refused asylum seekers destitute for more than 6 months	731	62% of destitute refused asylum seekers
Of which, visits by refused asylum seekers destitute for more than 1 year	523	44% of destitute refused asylum seekers
Of which, visits by refused asylum seekers destitute for more than 2 years	369	31% of destitute refused asylum seekers

5. Destitution and country of origin

The survey asked for information on the countries of origin of destitute people visiting the participating agencies. This question was included because it is the UKBA’s position that refused asylum seekers should return to their country of origin unless there are barriers to travel such as medical conditions, and that this is the most appropriate solution to destitution for this group. In this section, the results are given for visits by all destitute people, and for destitute refused asylum seekers who had been destitute for over six months.

Table 10: All countries of origin cited in visits by destitute people

	Visits	Cumulative Percentage		
Total visits by destitute people:	1,972	100% visits by destitute people		
20 countries listed on survey:				
Iraq	335	33%	50%	70%
Iran	328			
Eritrea	117			
Zimbabwe	162			
China	117			
Sudan	98			
DRC	93			
Afghanistan	76			
Somalia	68			
Sri Lanka	67			
Pakistan	37			
Palestine	29			
Ivory Coast	26			
Angola	25			
Nigeria	23			
Ethiopia	21			
Congo-Brazzaville	20			
Vietnam	10			
Lebanon	6			
India	5			

Results: Visits by destitute people

The survey found a high level of diversity among the destitute people who visited the services in October: they came from over 40 different countries of origin⁴. Despite this it is striking that there is a highly uneven distribution in the frequency with which different countries occur in the sample.

⁴ The survey questionnaire listed 20 options for country of origin and the option of 'other'. In the 'other' category, staff completing the survey noted a further 24 countries of origin, while for some that were marked 'other', no country of origin was recorded.

	Visits	Cumulative Percentage
Other countries noted by staff		
Syria	10	
Turkey	8	
Kenya	5	
Western Sahara	4	
Sierra Leone	4	
Algeria	4	
Uganda	4	
Ukraine	3	
Libya	3	
Guinea	3	
Cameroon	3	
Liberia	3	
Egypt	3	
South Africa	3	
Jamaica	2	
Botswana	2	
Kuwait	2	
Gambia	2	
Kosovo	1	
Burma/Myanmar	1	
Mongolia	1	
Russia	1	
North Korea	1	
Ghana	1	
Not stated	175	

Table 10 and Figure 1 show that most visits by destitute people were by people from one of a very small number of countries. In 33 per cent of visits, people were from one of two countries: Iraq and Iran (656 of 1972). In 50 per cent of visits, people were from one of four countries: Iraq, Iran, Eritrea and Zimbabwe (995 of 1972). In 77 per cent of visits, they were from one of ten countries (1521 of 1972).

Results: Visits by destitute refused asylum seekers, destitute over six months

A total of 34 countries of origin were cited for visits by refused asylum seekers who had been destitute for over six months. The concentration of destitution in a few countries of origin was found to be particularly true for refused asylum seekers, including refused asylum seekers who had been destitute for a long time.

Figure 1: Destitution and country of origin (1)

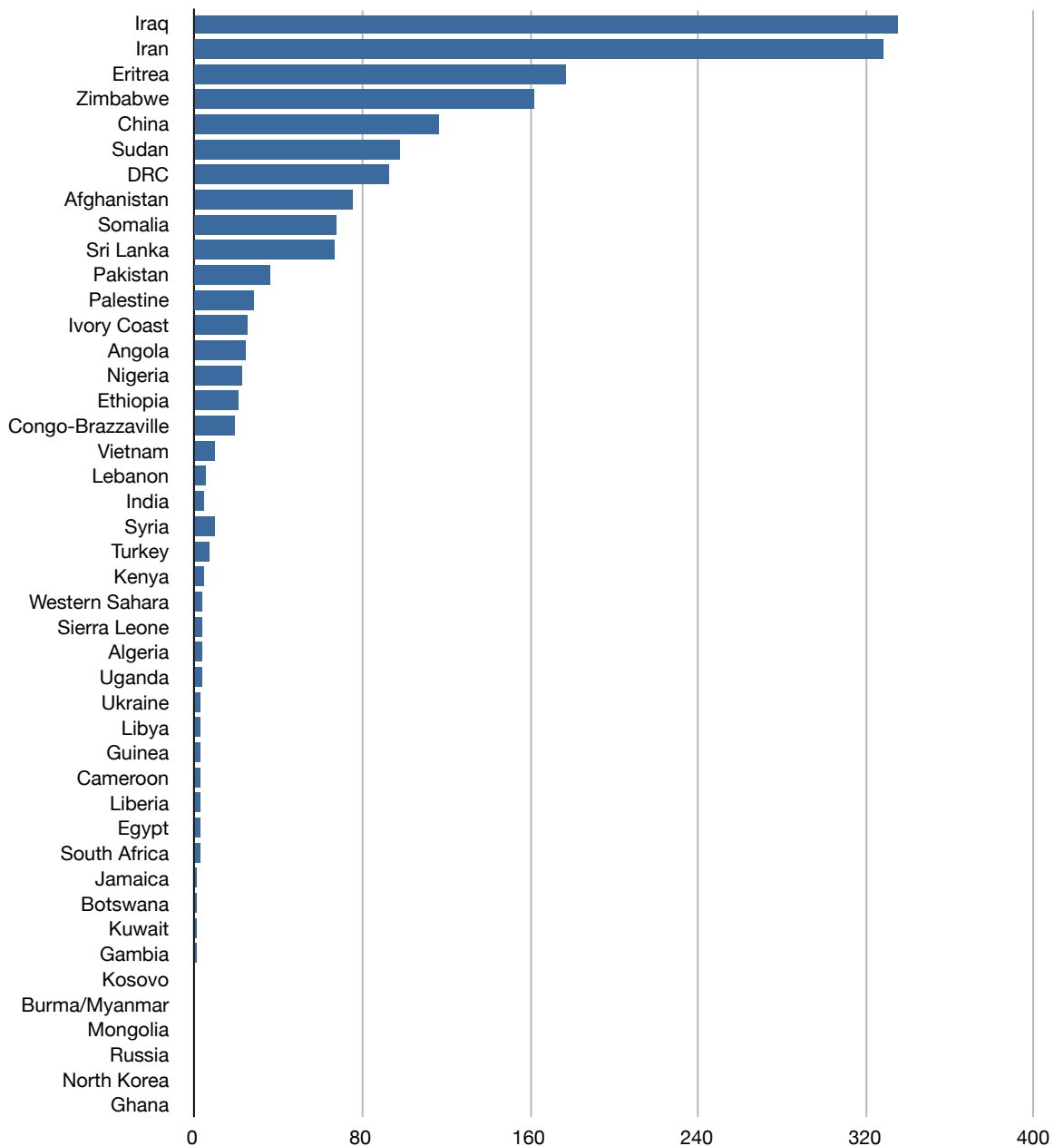


Table 11 and Figure 2 show that: In 41 per cent of visits, people were from one of two countries: Iraq and Iran (297 of 731). In 55% of visits, people were from one of four countries Iraq, Iran, DRC and Sudan (405 of 731). In 78 per cent of visits, people were from one of ten countries (567 of 731).

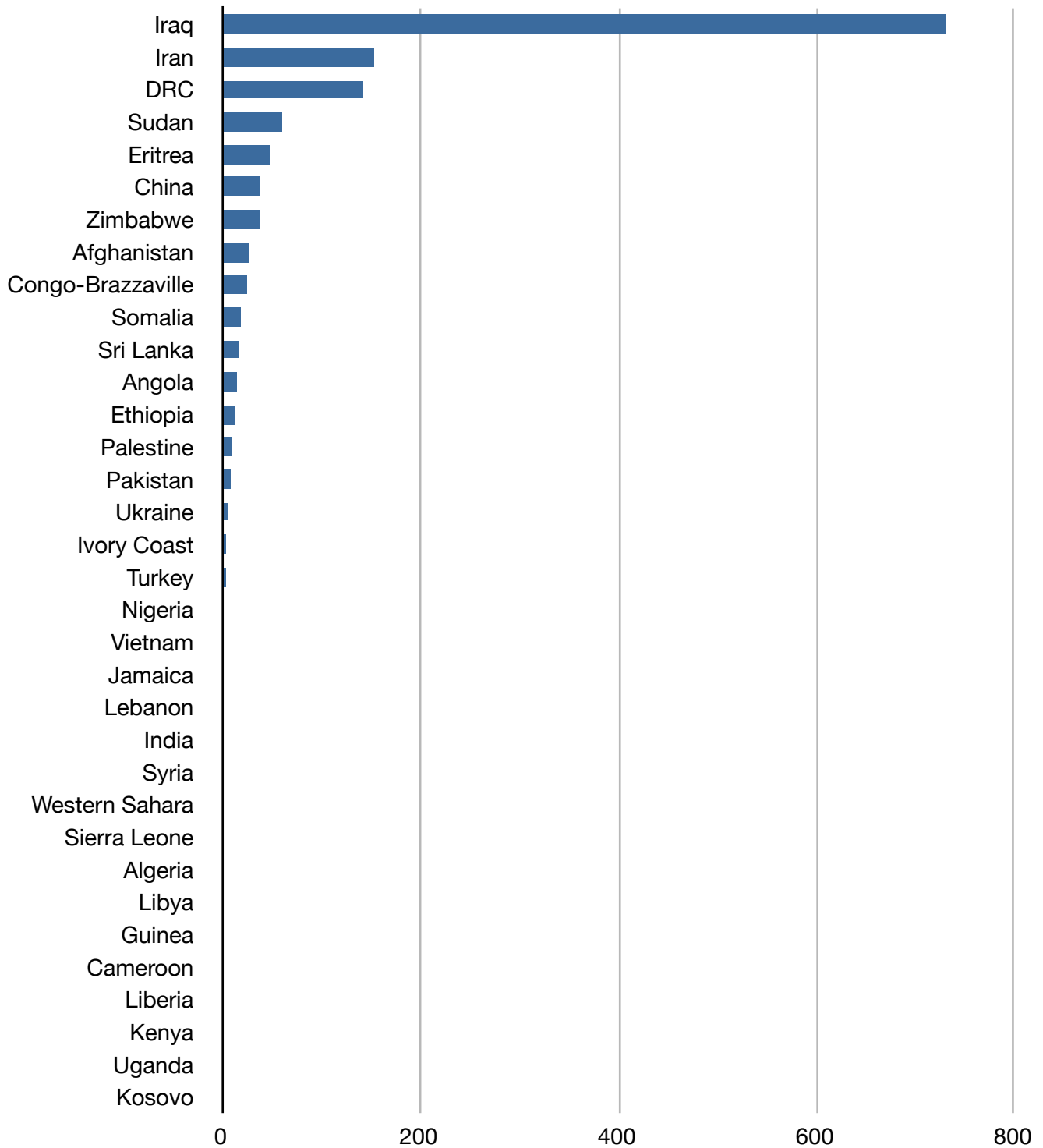
Table 11: All countries of origin cited in visits by refused asylum seekers destitute for over six months

	Visits by destitute people	Cumulative Percentage		
Total visits by refused asylum seekers destitute for over 6 months:	731	100% visits by refused asylum seekers destitute for over 6 months		
20 countries listed on survey:				
Iraq	154	41%	55%	78%
Iran	143			
DRC	60			
Sudan	48			
Eritrea	38			
China	37			
Zimbabwe	27			
Afghanistan	25			
Congo-Brazzaville	19			
Somalia	16			
Sri Lanka	16			
Angola	15			
Ethiopia	11			
Palestine	8			
Sri Lanka	16			
Angola	15			

Although Eritrea and Zimbabwe were in the top four countries of origin for visits by destitute people, they drop to fifth and seventh place in the list of countries of origin for visits by destitute refused asylum seekers. This perhaps suggests that people from these countries may be more successful in getting Section 4 support if they are refused asylum, compared with some other nationalities. Conversely, almost all of the visits by destitute people from the DRC were destitute refused asylum seekers.

	Visits	Cumulative Percentage
Ethiopia	11	
Palestine	8	
Pakistan	5	
Ivory Coast	3	
Nigeria	3	
Vietnam	2	
Lebanon	2	
India	2	
Other countries noted by staff		
Syria	7	
Ukraine	4	
Turkey	3	
Jamaica	2	
Western Sahara	2	
Sierra Leone	2	
Algeria	2	
Libya	2	
Guinea	2	
Cameroon	1	
Liberia	1	
Kenya	1	
Uganda	1	
Kosovo	1	
Not stated	70	

Figure 2: Destitution and country of origin (2)



Further details for some countries of origin

The most commonly occurring countries of origin⁵ are countries where there are well documented human rights abuses and persecution, impunity for human rights abuses and/or conflict. For example, the Home Office is currently not enforcing returns to Zimbabwe or returns of non-Arab Darfuris to Sudan due to commitments made during outstanding court challenges.⁵

The survey could only gather limited additional information on locality or ethnicity. However, it is striking that in the case of visits by destitute people from Sudan, including long term destitute refused asylum seekers, over half were non-Arabs from Darfur, ie. they were from the persecuted group within the conflict zone.

Table 12: Further details for Sudan

	Visits by destitute people	Percentage	Visits by refused asylum seekers destitute for over 6 months	Percentage
Sudan	98	100%	48	100%
Non-Arabs from Darfur	58	59%	27	56%

Table 13: Further details for Iraq

	Visits by destitute people	Percentage	Visits by refused asylum seekers destitute for over 6 months	Percentage
Iraq	335	100%	154	100%
From 1 of 3 Northern governorates (Erbil, Dahuk, Sulaymaniyah)	65	19%	28	18%
From another part of Iraq	270	81%	126	82%

As shown in Tables 10 and 11, the most common country of origin cited in visits by destitute people, and by long-term destitute refused asylum seekers, is Iraq. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) position is that all Iraqi asylum seekers from Central and Southern Iraq are in need of international protection and should be considered refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention criteria⁶.

Table 13 shows that in over 80 per cent of visits by destitute people from Iraq, including long-term destitute refused asylum seekers, the majority were from Central or Southern Iraq, i.e. from the areas deemed unsafe for return by the UNHCR.

⁵ www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200708/ldhansrd/text/81021-0001.htm

⁶ www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,UNHCR,,IRQ,4562d8cf2,4766a69d2,0.html Addendum to UNHCR's Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers (December 2007)

Conclusion

The most striking feature of the survey results is that the majority of destitute people visiting came from one of a very small number of countries. These are countries where there are well documented human rights abuses and persecution, impunity for human rights abuses and/or conflict.

This indicates that individuals will remain destitute in the UK for long periods if they do not consider return to be safe, and that destitution could be more than halved by focussing on finding solutions to destitution for refused asylum seekers from these countries, including recognising the difficulties of safe and sustainable return, and granting leave to remain in the UK.

This should not detract from the principle of judging each asylum claim on its merits. Nor should it imply that people from less common countries have fewer protection needs. More research is required to better understand the links between frequently occurring countries of origin of people, their protection needs and views about return.

6. Other types of destitution

As is explained in Section 3 of this report, the majority of visits by destitute people were by refused asylum seekers. This section looks at destitution among people with other types of immigration status.

Results: Asylum seekers who have not had a final decision on their case

The survey found that the second most common type of visit by destitute people was visits by destitute asylum seekers who had not yet had a final decision on their case. Over half of them were waiting for UKBA to process their application for asylum support. For some, this would be a matter of days, but this survey found that in one third of visits by destitute asylum seekers, people were waiting for support to be processed and had been destitute for over a month.

While some people in this group had been destitute for a long time, and may have only just applied for support, the experience of the Asylum Support Partnership is that it is not uncommon for asylum seekers to wait for months for support to be processed due to the UKBA's poor administrative procedures.

People who have been granted asylum

Table 15 shows that in half of the visits by destitute people who had been granted asylum, they had applied for mainstream welfare benefits but were waiting for payments to be made. In a third of visits by destitute people granted asylum, people had applied for benefits, were awaiting payments and had been destitute for over a month.

The survey was not sufficiently detailed to ascertain whether these people had been destitute for a length of time before applying for benefits, or whether they had become destitute because they had been waiting for a long time for benefits to be processed. However, the asylum support system allows a 28-day grace period, which should ensure that people granted asylum continue to receive asylum support for 28 days to allow them to transfer to mainstream

welfare benefits. If this was working effectively, destitution would only occur among people granted status, who had applied for benefits, in the most exceptional cases. The experience of the Asylum Support Partnership suggests that the most likely explanation is that there is insufficient joint working between the UKBA and Jobcentre Plus to ensure a seamless transition from asylum support to mainstream benefits.

Table 14: Other causes of destitution: visits by asylum seekers who have not had a final decision on their case

	Visits	Percentage
Visits by destitute asylum seekers	557	100%
Visits by destitute asylum seekers who applied for support and were waiting for the UKBA's decision/allocation	299	54% of destitute asylum seekers
Visits by destitute asylum seekers who applied for support, were waiting for the UKBA's decision/allocation, and had been destitute for more than 1 month	196	35% of destitute asylum seekers

Table 15: Other causes of destitution: people who have been granted asylum

	Visits	Percentage
Visits by destitute people granted asylum	153	100%
Visits by destitute people granted asylum who applied for benefits and were awaiting payment	78	54% of destitute people granted asylum
Visits by destitute people granted asylum who applied for benefits, were awaiting payment, and were destitute for more than 1 month	50	35% of destitute people granted asylum

People who wanted to claim asylum but had not yet registered their claim

Table 16 shows that in 38 per cent of visits by destitute people who wanted to claim asylum but had not yet done so, they stated that they had difficulty accessing an Asylum Screening Unit (ASU) to make a claim for asylum. The majority said that there was another reason.

There are only two ASUs in the UK, one in Croydon and one in Liverpool. Both offices have limited opening hours, and the Asylum Support Partnership’s advice teams often find that they need to use their hardship funds to assist people who wish to travel to an ASU to claim asylum. The UKBA can make exceptional arrangements for people who have difficulty claiming asylum. For example, UKBA representatives can travel to the applicant, but these procedures are not sufficient to meet the needs of the number of people who wish to claim asylum but have access problems.

Conclusion

While the majority of visits by destitute people were by destitute refused asylum seekers, it is important to recognise that this is not the only destitute group. The survey highlights how people who make applications for asylum support and mainstream benefits can be destitute because of administrative weaknesses. The UKBA should take practical steps to address this, involving the DWP as necessary. More consideration needs to be given to suggestions already made to the UKBA by the Asylum Support Partnership and other voluntary agencies. These are set out in this report’s recommendations. The limited number of ASUs in only two localities was also a factor in destitution for those who wished to claim asylum. The UKBA should make it possible for people to lodge asylum claims locally.

Table 16: Other causes of destitution: people who want to claim asylum but have not yet registered their claim

	Visits	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Visits by destitute people who wanted to claim asylum but had not yet registered their claim	84	100%	
Could not travel to ASU because of mobility difficulties	17	20% of destitute people who had not yet claimed asylum	38% of destitute people who had not yet claimed asylum
Could not afford to travel to ASU	15	18% of destitute people who had not yet claimed asylum	

7. Destitute with dependent children

The Asylum Support Partnership’s frontline teams struggle to find solutions for the desperate plight of destitute people with dependent children, and so it was important that the experiences of this group were captured by the survey.

Results

This survey found that 13 per cent of visits by destitute people were by people with dependent children (250 of 1972).

Immigration status of destitute people with dependent children

The following tables give details of immigration status. Table 19 shows that half of the visits by destitute people with dependent children were by refused asylum seekers. In almost every case, they had either not applied for Section 4 support, or they had applied and were waiting for a decision or allocation. This highlights once again the delays in processing support applications. It also shows that destitute refused asylum seekers with children are not making support applications, perhaps because they know that they do not meet the eligibility criteria.

Refused asylum seekers who already have children when their asylum application and appeal are refused can continue to receive asylum support payments. Refused asylum seekers who have children after their asylum application and appeal are refused are only eligible for UKBA support on the grounds that they have children, if that child was born no more than three weeks after the asylum claim had been rejected, and if the child is no more than six weeks old at the time of the application for support. Refused asylum seekers with children who are not eligible for Section 4 support can apply for support from local authorities, but local authorities may decide to support the children but not the parents. Otherwise, refused asylum seekers with children can only receive Section 4 support if they meet one of the other eligibility criteria, eg. they are taking steps

Table 17: Destitute with dependant children

	Visits	Percentage
Visits by destitute people	1972	100%
Visits by destitute people with dependent children	250	13% of destitute people

Table 18: Destitute for over six months with dependant children

	Visits	Percentage
Visits by destitute people with dependent children	250	100%
Visits by people destitute for over 6 months with dependent children	124	50% of destitute people with children

Table 19: Immigration status: refused asylum seekers, destitute with dependent children

	Visits	Percentage
Visits by destitute people with dependent children	250	100%
Visits by destitute refused asylum seekers who had exhausted their appeal rights	123	50% of destitute people with children
Visits by destitute refused asylum seekers who had exhausted their appeal rights and had not applied for Section 4 support	65	26% of destitute people with children
Visits by destitute refused asylum seekers who had exhausted their appeal rights and were waiting for Section 4 support decision/ allocation	54	22% of destitute people with children

to leave the UK, or there is a medical impediment to travel. This situation is leading refused asylum seekers with children to be destitute for long periods: the survey results show that a third of destitute people with children were refused asylum seekers who had been destitute for over six months.

Table 20 shows that a third of the visits by destitute people with dependent children were by asylum seekers who were waiting for an outcome on their asylum application. In over half of these cases, the reason for their destitution was that they had applied for asylum support but had not yet received a decision or an allocation. This shows that even for asylum seekers with children, delays in processing their support applications are contributing to destitution.

During the period of this survey, there were also visits by destitute people with dependent children who had been granted asylum. Most people in this group had applied for benefits but were waiting for these to be processed.

Table 22 shows that a small proportion of visits by destitute people with children were by people who had not yet applied for asylum.

Table 20: Immigration status: asylum seekers, destitute with dependent children

	Visits	Percentage
Visits by destitute people with dependent children	250	100%
Visits by destitute asylum seekers who were waiting for an outcome on their asylum application	82	33% of destitute people with children
Visits by destitute asylum seekers who were waiting for an outcome on their asylum application and waiting for asylum support decision/allocation	48	19% of destitute people with children

Table 21: Immigration status: granted asylum, destitute with dependent children

	Visits	Percentage
Visits by destitute people with dependent children	250	100%
Visits by destitute people who had been granted asylum	26	10% of destitute people with children
Visits by destitute people who had been granted asylum and were waiting for benefit payment	19	8% of destitute people with children

Table 22: Immigration status: not yet claimed asylum, destitute with dependent children

	Visits	Percentage
Visits by destitute people with dependent children	250	100%
Visits by destitute people who wished to claim asylum but had not yet registered their claim	19	8% of destitute people with children

Countries of origin of destitute people with children

There are differences between the countries of origin identified in visits by destitute people as a whole and those in visits by destitute people with children.

Table 23 shows that the most common country of origin in visits by destitute people with dependent children was Zimbabwe. This group face a stark decision. They can either return with their children to a country facing the most severe humanitarian crisis, or remain with them, destitute, in the UK.

The second most common country of origin in visits by destitute people with children was China. The Asylum Support Partnership has raised concerns with the UKBA about provision for the growing number of young Chinese women with babies and small children who seek help, as we suspect this trend may have links with trafficking and prostitution.

Health needs of destitute people with dependent children

Table 24 shows that one in ten of visits by destitute people with dependent children those people had some physical illness. A small number of visits were by pregnant destitute people with children. There were very small incidences of mental illness or disability.

Table 24: Health needs of destitute people with dependent children

	Visits	Percentage
Visits by destitute people with dependent children	250	100%
Visits by destitute people with dependent children and physical illness	25	10% of destitute people with children
Visits by destitute people with dependent children and pregnant	10	4% of destitute people with children

Conclusion

The asylum system is not succeeding in protecting the welfare of children. The agencies that took part in the survey received visits by destitute people with children, including people of all types of immigration status and people affected by delays in processing asylum support, Section 4 support and mainstream benefits. Some had been destitute for a long time. The dilemma facing parents in these situations adds weight to the argument that people will choose destitution over return if they do not feel return is safe. The most common country of origin for destitute people with children was Zimbabwe. For those recorded in this survey, destitution has not led them to take steps towards voluntary return, which would entitle them to Section 4 support.

Table 23: Top 4 countries of origin of destitute people with children

	Visits	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	
Visits by destitute people with dependent children	250	100%		
Zimbabwe	45	18% of destitute people with children	30% of destitute people with children	45% of destitute people with children
China	29	12% of destitute people with children		
Sri Lanka	19	8% of destitute people with children		
Ivory Coast	17	7% of destitute people with children		

8. Destitute with health needs

The Asylum Support Partnership's frontline teams find it particularly difficult to assist destitute people who suffer from illness, especially mental illness. This survey sought to capture basic information about the number of visits by people suffering physical or mental illness, and those who are pregnant or disabled. Staff completing the survey asked people visiting their services to disclose whether any of these four types of health needs applied to them. The data in this section is based on visitors assessing themselves as having health needs and choosing to disclose this information to staff. No attempt was made to ensure that standardised definitions, eg. of mental illness, were used in all cases. The survey allowed staff to 'tick as many as apply' when recording physical illness, mental illness, disability and pregnancy.

Results

This survey found that in a minority of the visits by destitute people, they had health needs, particularly common were physical and mental illness. The results are shown in Table 25. The incidence of physical and mental illness was slightly higher among those who had been destitute for a long time: 16 per cent of visits by destitute people were by people who had physical illness (321 of 1972) and 19 per cent of visits by destitute refused asylum seekers, who had been destitute for more than six months, were by people who had physical illness (139 of 731). 14 per cent of visits by destitute

people were by people who had mental illness (279 of 1972) and 18 per cent of visits by destitute refused asylum seekers, who had been destitute for more than six months, were by people who had mental illness (135 of 731). Given the harshness of destitution, it is perhaps surprising that there was not a higher incidence of ill health, particularly among long-term destitute refused asylum seekers. It is possible that a higher proportion suffered ill health, but chose not to disclose this information, and that more information could be gleaned from further research.

In order to avoid deteriorating health, it is important to take steps to avoid destitution among those with health needs. This means ensuring that both the UKBA and other agencies have procedures for assessing health needs and finding ways of enabling those with health needs to access support without delay.

Conclusion

In a minority of visits to the agencies, people disclosed that they were not only dealing with destitution but were also suffering from ill health. This was slightly more prevalent in cases of refused asylum seekers who had been destitute for a long time. There is a need to investigate further to understand better the extent of the health needs of destitute people.

Table 25: Health needs of destitute people

	Visits	Percentage of destitute people	Refused asylum seekers destitute for over 6 months	Percentage of asylum seekers destitute for over 6 months	Refused asylum seekers destitute for over 2 years	Percentage of refused asylum seekers destitute for over 2 years
Visits by destitute people with dependent children	1,972	100%	731	100%	369	100%
Visits by destitute people with physical illness	321	16%	139	19%	70	19%
Visits by destitute people with mental illness	279	14%	135	18%	60	16%
Visits by pregnant destitute people	91	5%				
Visits by disabled destitute people	33	2%				

9. Variations by UKBA regions

The UKBA has decentralised most of its management of asylum support away from London to six regional directorates, so it is important to note the differences in destitution in the different regions. The survey recorded in which UKBA region the visits took place. The numbers of visits between regions cannot be compared because the sample was not designed to give an accurate comparison of numbers⁷, but the proportion of visits within each region of people who are destitute can be compared.

Results

Table 26 shows that a high degree of variation was found in the proportion of visits by destitute people across regions. In Wales and the South West region, 27 per cent of visits were by destitute people, but in the Midlands and the East region, 70 per cent of visits were by destitute people.

Immigration status of destitute people in each region

In all regions, the most common visits by destitute people were by destitute refused asylum seekers. Visits by destitute asylum seekers were the second most common group.

Table 27 shows that the difference between these two groups is least in London and the South East. 37 per cent of visits by destitute people in London and the South East were by destitute asylum seekers, and 45 per cent were by destitute refused asylum seekers. This is in contrast to Wales, where a higher percentage of visits by destitute people (81 per cent) were by destitute refused asylum seekers.

Experience of working with these groups suggests that the difference may be because asylum seekers who choose to remain in London rather than be dispersed to other regions, usually rely on support from family and friends rather than on UKBA support. Perhaps it is a breakdown in the support from family and friends which is leading to relatively high levels of destitution among asylum seekers in

London. Alternatively, it could be that the UKBA's procedures for processing asylum support in London and the South East are less efficient than elsewhere. The proportion of visits by destitute people who had not yet claimed asylum were generally low with the North West seeing the highest numbers (6 per cent). The proportion of visits by destitute people who had been granted status were also generally low, but higher in London where they make up 12 per cent of visits by destitute people.

Destitution in each region linked to processing support for asylum seekers and Section 4 support for refused asylum seekers

Since processing asylum support and transition to mainstream benefits has been regionalised, a regional breakdown is given on how far destitution is linked to waiting for support and benefit applications to be processed.

Table 28 shows that Scotland and Northern Ireland was the only UKBA region where waiting for asylum support to be processed was not the cause of destitution in the majority of visits by destitute asylum seekers. Only 10 per cent of destitute asylum seekers in Scotland and Northern Ireland were destitute for this reason. Elsewhere, it varied from 56 to 65 per cent. Further research is needed to explain this trend, but it may be that asylum support processing for asylum seekers who are waiting for a decision on their asylum application is more efficient in Scotland and Northern Ireland. If this is the case, there may be lessons that other UKBA regional directorates can learn from UKBA Scotland and Northern Ireland. Between a quarter and a half of visits by destitute asylum seekers in each region, were by people waiting for a Section 4 support application to be processed. Numbers for visits in each region by destitute people who had been granted status and were waiting for benefits, were too small to draw conclusions.

⁷ See Section 13 for further information about the Second Destitution Tally.

Table 26: Variations in destitution by UKBA region

	London, South East	Wales, South West	North West	North East, Yorkshire & Humberside	Midlands, East	Scotland, Northern Ireland
Total visits	940	973	534	432	646	569
Visits by destitute people, as % of total visits in that region	54% (511 of 940)	27% (259 of 973)	42% (222 of 534)	53% (231 of 432)	70% (454 of 646)	52% (295 of 569)

Table 27: Immigration status of destitute people by UKBA region

	London, South East	Wales, South West	North West	North East, Yorkshire & Humberside	Midlands, East	Scotland, Northern Ireland
Total visits	940	973	534	432	646	569
Visits by destitute people – not yet claimed asylum	5% (28 of 511)	5% (14 of 259)	6% (13 of 222)	3% (8 of 231)	2% (8 of 454)	4% (13 of 295)
Visits by destitute people asylum seeker	37% (191 of 511)	7% (18 of 259)	20% (44 of 222)	36% (84 of 231)	30% (134 of 454)	30% (86 of 295)
Visits by destitute refused asylum seekers	45% (232 of 511)	81% (209 of 259)	68% (151 of 222)	58% (135 of 231)	60% (273 of 454)	60% (178 of 295)
Visits by destitute people granted status	12 % (60 of 511)	7% (18 of 259)	6% (14 of 222)	2% (4 of 231)	9% (39 of 454)	6% (18 of 295)

Conclusion

When comparisons were made across UKBA regions, variations were found in the proportion of visits by destitute people, the extent to which they were destitute asylum seekers or destitute refused asylum seekers, and the extent to which they were waiting for asylum support or Section 4 support to be processed. The UKBA should investigate how to ensure consistently high standards in processing support applications across all its regions.

Table 28: Variations by UKBA region, with destitution linked to processing support for asylum seekers and Section 4 support for refused asylum seekers

	London, South East	Wales, South West	North West	North East, Yorkshire & Humberside	Midlands, East	Scotland, Northern Ireland
Total visits	940	973	534	432	646	569
Visits by destitute asylum seekers who had applied for support but were waiting, as % of destitute asylum seekers in that region	65% (124 of 191)	56% (10 of 18)	61% (27 of 44)	58% (49 of 84)	60% (80 of 134)	10% (9 of 86)
Visits by destitute refused asylum seekers who had applied for Section 4 support but were waiting as % of destitute refused asylum seekers in that region	45% (105 of 232)	31% (65 of 209)	24% (36 of 151)	39% (53 of 135)	49% (135 of 273)	42% (75 of 178)

10. Variations by voluntary agency

In order to achieve a better picture of destitution, this survey was not only completed by the agencies that make up the Asylum Support Partnership, but also by three other agencies which provide practical assistance to destitute people. These are the British Red Cross, which conducted the survey in several centres, and two small local organisations, Positive Action in Housing in Glasgow and the Southwark Day Centre in London.

Results

Table 29 shows the different experiences of the Asylum Support Partnership agencies and the additional three agencies taking part in the survey. Although over a third of visits to the Asylum Support Partnership agencies were by destitute people, the additional agencies saw a higher proportion of destitute people (up to 98 per cent of visits) and a higher proportion of long term destitute refused asylum seekers (up to 55 per cent of visits).

The Asylum Support Partnership's experience of working alongside these other agencies suggests that the reason why the latter see a higher proportion of destitute people is because of the practical help such as food, clothing, and befriending services, that they provide.

Conclusion

There were differences in the types of people who visited the different agencies. Compared with the Asylum Support Partnership agencies, the Red Cross, Southwark Day Centre and Positive Action in Housing received more visits by destitute people and by long term destitute refused asylum seekers. This suggests that a truer picture of the extent of 'hidden' destitution can be gained by not only recording the experiences of larger refugee agencies but also those of small organisations providing practical support.

Table 29: Variations by voluntary agency

	Visits	Percentage	Destitute	Percentage	Refused asylum seekers destitute for over 6 months	Percentage
All agencies	4093	100%	1972	48% of visits	731	18% of visits
Total for Asylum Support Partnership	3436	100%	1413	41% of visits	495	14% of visits
British Red Cross	388	100%	366	94% of visits	163	42% of visits
Southwark Day Centre (London)	185	100%	111	60% of visits	27	15% of visits
Positive Action in Housing (Glasgow)	84	100%	82	98% of visits	46	55% of visits

11. Comparison with the results of the original Destitution Tally

The Asylum Support Partnership wanted to show the extent to which destitution is a long term feature of its work, so the survey results for the Second Destitution Tally were compared to those of the original Destitution Tally, conducted between November and December 2007.

Results

Since a larger number of organisations took part in October 2008, a larger number of visits were recorded. This is shown in Table 30.

The New Asylum Model (NAM) was introduced in 2006. As a result, a higher proportion of visits in the Second Destitution Tally were by people whose cases are being processed by NAM. Compared with the original Tally, the Second Destitution Tally showed an increase of four per cent in the

proportion of visits by destitute people (from 44 per cent to 48 per cent). This reflects the participation of additional agencies that provide practical support to destitute people, since the proportion of visits by destitute people to the Asylum Support Partnership is 41 per cent (see Table 29). It indicates that more information can be found about the extent of destitution by including the experiences of small community-based organisations. Table 31 shows that the proportion of visits by asylum seekers and by refused asylum seekers are broadly the same in both monitoring periods.

Conclusion

The Second Destitution Tally recorded more visits by destitute people than the original Destitution Tally, and therefore gives a better indication of the extent of destitution.

Table 30: Comparison with original Destitution Tally: Visits

	Original Destitution Tally: Nov-Dec 2007		Second Destitution Tally: Oct 2008	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Visits	3466	100%	4093	100%
Visits by asylum seekers whose cases are processed by NAM	1036	30% of visits	1792	44% of visits
Visits by destitute people	1524	44% of visits	1972	48% of visits

Table 31: Comparison with original Destitution Tally: Destitution

	Original Destitution Tally: Nov-Dec 2007		Second Destitution Tally: Oct 2008	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Visits by destitute people	1524	100%	1972	100%
Visits by destitute refused asylum seekers	878	58% of destitute people	1178	60% of destitute people
Visits by destitute asylum seekers	404	27% of destitute people	557	28% of destitute people
Visits by destitute asylum seekers processed by NAM	204	13% of destitute people	309	16% of destitute people

12. Summary of other reports

This summary covers reports written between 2005⁸ and 2008 which include statistics on destitution among asylum seekers and refugees in the UK. There are solutions recommended in these reports which echo the recommendations of the Second Destitution Tally. These are:

- Enable asylum claims to be lodged in Scotland.
- Provide adequate support for asylum seekers, which should include a reduction in delays for processing support applications and a seamless transition between different forms of support as circumstances change.
- Provide support for refused asylum seekers at the end of the process until they leave the UK, in particular support for those with children, regardless of whether the children were born after the asylum application was refused.
- Allow asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers to work.
- Promote provision of help and advice to explore options for refused asylum seekers.
- Seek solutions for people for whom it is not safe to return to their country of origin.
- Grant Leave to Remain in the UK for refused asylum seekers who have been in the UK for a long time.
- Ensure seamless transition to mainstream benefits for people who have been granted refugee status or leave to remain.

⁵ Some of the older reports refer to the National Asylum Support Service (NASS), a Home Office department that no longer exists.

Report	Background summary	Statistical content	Recommendations
2005			
What's going on?	Refugee Survival Trust administers grants to asylum seekers left without support.	Refugee Survival Trust received over 1,000 applications for help between January 2000 and May 2004:	► Ensure that all possible measures are taken to prevent destitution of people seeking asylum.
A study into destitution & poverty faced by asylum seekers & refugees in Scotland	Concludes that people experience destitution through all stages of the asylum process.	52% due to administrative errors and procedural delays	► Reinstate the facility to register a claim for asylum in Scotland.
Refugee Survival Trust April 2005		95% of them attributable to the Home Office.	► Provide an adequate support service to people seeking asylum.
		A further 17% were for travel grants to go to claim asylum in Liverpool.	

Report	Background summary	Statistical content	Recommendations
2005			
<p>A report of destitution in the asylum system in Leicester</p> <p>Leicester Refugee and Asylum Seekers' Forum June 2005</p>	<p>From 17th January to 18th February 18th, a partnership of 6 organisations from Leicester Refugees and Asylum Seekers' Voluntary Sector Forum and the local health service project surveyed the number of destitute asylum seekers and refugees that came asking for help and assistance.</p>	<p>253 visits were made to the 7 organisations. 168 people were surveyed as being destitute in the month of the survey.</p> <p>70% of people were destitute because their asylum claims had ended or they were unable to continue their asylum case.</p> <p>37% of people were assessed as being highly vulnerable, in poor health and difficult personal circumstances.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Improved decision-making and ensure cases are properly and fairly heard. ▶ Allow asylum seekers to support themselves with dignity by working. ▶ Do not remove support systems in a swift manner with no arrangements put in place when it is not safe for them to return.
2006			
<p>The destitution trap. Research into destitution in the UK</p> <p>Refugee Action 2006</p>	<p>The research aimed to explore the causes and effects of destitution among refused asylum seekers in the UK.</p>	<p>A total of 125 asylum seekers were interviewed.</p> <p>49% had been destitute for up to a year. The majority had been destitute for one or two years.</p> <p>The average time people had been destitute was 21 months.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Home Office should grant a legal status including right to work or claim benefits and with full access to healthcare and education, to refused asylum seekers who have been in the UK for a number of years. ▶ All refused asylum seekers should be offered advice about and support with their options, including voluntary return. ▶ Asylum support and accommodation should be offered on a continuum, from arrival to leaving the country or granting of leave, with no break or distinction between the levels of support on offer at the different stages. ▶ Where appropriate, asylum seekers should be encouraged to take up employment or voluntary work.
<p>Destitute and Desperate</p> <p>A report on the number of failed asylum seekers in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the services available to them</p> <p>Julian Prior, the Open Door (North East) April 2006</p>	<p>The report depicts the hardships faced by asylum seekers who are living in destitution and the effects of it.</p> <p>It shows the lack of legal and housing support available to asylum seekers in Newcastle.</p>	<p>There is an estimate of 300 destitute asylum seekers in Newcastle.</p> <p>20 to 30 are estimated to be sleeping rough.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Give people seeking asylum the right to paid employment while they are in the country. ▶ If they are unable to work, they should be able to access to NASS support for as long as they are in the UK.

Report	Background summary	Statistical content	Recommendations
2006 (continued)			
What am I living here for? A report on destitute asylum seekers and refugees	6 partnership organisations from the Voluntary Sector in Leicester Forum surveyed the number of refugees and asylum seekers who came asking for assistance.	253 visits were made to the organisations. 168 were surveyed as being destitute during the survey period (a month). 70% were recorded as being destitute because their asylum claim ended. 19% slept rough at some point in the survey. 18% had dependents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Need for better provision for solicitors and legal advice in Leicester. ▶ Those who have had a full and fair process should be allowed to support themselves with dignity by working and not have support systems removed in a swift manner with no arrangements put in place when it is not safe for them to return. ▶ Families must not be threatened to have their children removed from them as a means of enforcing government policy.
Refugee Action 2006	The report looks at the effects of cuts of legal aid and the strict conditions attached to it.		
Mental Health, Destitution & Asylum- Seekers: A study of destitute asylum-seekers in the dispersal areas of the South East of England	The report is based on interviews with 49 destitute asylum seekers and a range of service providers developing services to refugees and asylum seekers. The report looks at the mental health needs of destitute asylum seekers in South East Region. It describes the difficulties the statutory services such as social care and healthcare face in relation to destitute asylum seekers.	<p>About 64% of destitute asylum seekers are being housed by friends and acquaintances.</p> <p>83% refused to sign up for Section 4 support because they did not agree to return voluntarily to their country of origin.</p> <p>About 55% had been destitute for more than a year.</p> <p>23% admitted they felt depressed.</p> <p>20% had other health problems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There needs to be more liaison over the termination of NASS accommodation for all asylum seekers. This would give all support agencies the opportunity to help refused asylum seekers to explore the options available to them. These should include NASS and voluntary sector agencies.
Hildegard Dumper, Richard Malfait, Nick Scott-Flynn 2006			
They think we are nothing: a survey of destitute asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland	In response to growing numbers of destitute people approaching their services, the Scottish Refugee Council organised a quantitative survey with 5 other local voluntary agencies.	<p>At least 154 asylum seekers, refugees and their dependents were destitute in Glasgow between 30 January and 26 February 2006.</p> <p>25 destitute children under the age of 18. 46.5% had been destitute for more than 6 months.</p> <p>76.6% of people interviewed had been destitute because they were refused asylum. 26.5% were destitute despite the fact that their claim was still active.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Reinstating the right to work for asylum seekers, particularly those at the end of the asylum process, is one potential solution. ▶ Decision-making times for Section 4 support should be reduced to prevent people waiting extended periods, such as six weeks or more. ▶ The quality of decision-making should also be improved.
Mhoraig Green			
Scottish Refugee Council August 2006			

Report	Background summary	Statistical content	Recommendations
2005 (continued)			
<p>They think we are nothing: a survey of destitute asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland</p> <p>(continued from page 37)</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ All families with children should continue to be supported while they remain in the UK, regardless of whether the children were born after their parents became refused asylum seekers. ▶ The process of applying for Section 4 support should be reviewed to avoid destitution for people waiting for their support to start. ▶ To bridge the gap, emergency support should be provided for people who apply for Section 4 support after their NASS support has ended. ▶ NASS, HM Revenue Customs and local authorities should work together to ensure that claims for child benefit and credit are processed promptly.
2007			
<p>Failing the failed?</p> <p>Asylum Support Appeals Project (ASAP) 2007</p>	<p>The report looks at the quality of decision-making which is leading many asylum seekers to being refused access to shelter and financial support.</p>	<p>ASAP examined 117 Section 4 refusal decision letters. 88% contained a misapplication or misinterpretation of the law.</p> <p>17% of decisions correctly assess destitution based on the law and the evidence provided by the applicant. Over a third, or 38%, did not address the issue of destitution at all.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Asylum support decision-makers should remain within the law and their own policies. ▶ They should receive regular training on the law surrounding on asylum support. ▶ They should be prepared to negotiate with advice workers and legal representatives following a negative decision. ▶ Public funding should be made available so asylum seekers can be represented in their appeals.
<p>Destitution in Leeds</p> <p>Hannah Lewis</p> <p>Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust 2007</p>	<p>4-week survey, October-November 2006, carried out by 5 voluntary agencies in Leeds; interviews also conducted.</p>	<p>Survey counted 251 people who visited refugee agencies in Leeds. The people surveyed came from 21 countries.</p> <p>38% were destitute for one year or more.</p> <p>84% were refused asylum seekers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Give asylum seekers the right to work. ▶ Improve legal representation and decision-making. ▶ Improve communication between refugee agencies, statutory bodies and the Home Office.

Report	Background summary	Statistical content	Recommendations
2007 (continued)			
Destitution in Leeds (continued from page 38)		6% were awaiting an asylum decision. 5% had a positive decision.	► Monitor NAM outcomes such as the quality of decision-making, timescales, training for staff, and presentation of options for voluntary return.
2008			
More destitution in Leeds Dave Brown Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust 2008	Survey carried out by 5 agencies in Leeds for 4 weeks in April-May 2008, repeating the 2006 survey	Destitution had increased since 2006. 331 individuals were counted as destitute, including 51 dependent children. The destitute people came from 35 different countries, with 21% coming from Zimbabwe, 16% from Iran, 12% from Eritrea, 8% from DRC and 7% from Iraq. 75% were refused asylum seekers. 27% were waiting for Section 4 support to begin. 26% had not applied for Section 4 support.	► Implement procedures to ensure that no child is refused support and made destitute. ► Section 4 support should include the provision of adequate interim support arrangements in the event of delays. ► Temporary leave to remain should be given to refused asylum seekers, particularly in cases where removal is difficult.
Asylum Matters, Restoring Trust in the UK Asylum System The Centre for Social Justice 2008	Report by the Centre for Social Justice and the Asylum and Destitution Working Group which gathered evidence from hearings in 6 UK cities.	Numbers cited include 2000 asylum seekers were estimated to be destitute in Manchester (source: evidence to CSJ from Boaz Trust).	► Asylum seekers should be properly supported from arrival through to integration into the UK or return to their home country. ► Destitution should play no part in an asylum seekers' experience in the UK.
21 days later: Destitution and the Asylum System Refugee Survival Trust and British Red Cross 2009	Refugee Survival Trust draws on 5½ years' experience of providing small grants to alleviate destitution among asylum seekers in Scotland	527 received grants to travel to Liverpool to claim asylum. In 2003, 34% of grants were paid because of problems in asylum support procedures, as a result of regionalisation of UKBA. This fell to 18% in 2008. In 5½ years, 626 grants were made to 704 adults and 126 children left destitute because of delays in processing Section 4 support.	► Allow claims for asylum to be submitted in Scotland. ► Processing Section 4 support should be devolved to the UKBA Scotland. ► Support should be maintained for refused asylum seekers.

13. Further information about the methodology of the Second Destitution Tally

The survey questionnaire was designed in consultation with the staff of the Asylum Support Partnership agencies. Throughout October 2008, frontline staff in One Stop Services and day centres (including case workers, advice workers and volunteers working under their supervision) completed the questionnaire for each visit to their services, either on paper or through an on-line survey facility and the results were collated and analysed to produce the figures shown in this report.

The first questions in the survey were answered for every visit to the services, whether or not the person was destitute. Further questions were only answered if the visit was by a destitute person.

The method used was successful in capturing a large amount of data about visits by destitute people to voluntary agencies during one month. The results are a good indication of the experience of destitution across the UK and give a useful insight into the extent and causes of destitution.

Every effort was made to complete the survey for every visit to the participating agencies in October. There is some undercounting mainly due to either lack of staff time to complete the survey or because the survey could not be completed for people who were turned away at the door when the services were full to capacity. For example, at large offices such as the Refugee Council in Brixton, advisers recorded details of people who visited them and received advice, but not those who visited the offices but did not receive advice. Taking account of the estimates of undercounting, which each of the participating organisations made at the end of the exercise, we estimate that between 300 and 600 visits were made in October which were not recorded, but the figure may be higher.

Our main aim was to reflect the experiences of the Asylum Support Partnership's offices, which are not evenly spread across the UKBA regions, so the survey was not completed by the same number

of offices for each UKBA region. For example, in the UKBA region Wales and the South West, there were six participating offices (four run by the Welsh Refugee Council and two by Refugee Action), whereas in the UKBA region Scotland and Northern Ireland, there were two (one run by the Scottish Refugee Council and one by Positive Action in Housing). This means that no valid comparisons can be made between the numbers of visits in each region.

The survey counted the number of visits made by destitute people. From records already kept by the Asylum Support Partnership, we estimate that on average, people visit these services two or three times in a month. Therefore it is possible to roughly estimate the number of individuals by dividing the number of visits by 2.5.

It is possible that during the monitoring period some individuals visited more than one centre. As destitute people have limited options to travel, this is only likely to have occurred where two centres participating in this survey are geographically close.

In order to capture data on every visit to the participating agencies during the monitoring period, the survey questionnaire needed to be easy to complete. It could not include qualitative data, such as the extent of ill-health suffered by destitute people, or ask sensitive questions such as why individuals did not return to their country of origin.

14. Second Destitution Tally survey questions

2. ORGANISATION	3. REGION	
Refugee Action	London and South East	
	North West	
	North East, Yorkshire and Humberside	
	Midlands and East of England	
	Wales and South West	
Refugee Council	London and South East	
	North West	
	North East, Yorkshire and Humberside	
	Midlands and East of England	
Scottish Refugee Council	Scotland and Northern Ireland	
Welsh Refugee Council	Wales and South West	
Migrant Helpline	London and South East	
North of England Refugee Service	North East, Yorkshire and Humberside	
British Red Cross	London and South East	
	North West	
	North East, Yorkshire and Humberside	
	Midlands and East of England	
Southwark Day Centre (London)	London and South East	
Positive Action in Housing (Glasgow)	Scotland and Northern Ireland	
SBASSG (Swansea)	Wales and South West	

4. TYPE OF CASE	
New Asylum Model NAM (ie. claimed asylum since April 2006)	
Case resolution (legacy or older cases)	

5. Is this the first time this survey has been completed for the client?	Yes
	No

6. STATUS	7. IS PERSON DESTITUTE?	8. REASON
Person who wishes to claim asylum but has not registered their claim	No, not destitute (do not answer further questions)	
	Yes, destitute (if yes, please continue to question 7)	Could not afford to travel to the Asylum Screening Unit (ASU)
		Was not able to travel to ASU because of mobility difficulties
		Other
Asylum seeker who has not had a final decision on their case	No, not destitute (do not answer further questions)	
	Yes, destitute (if yes, please continue to question 7)	Has not applied for support
		Applied for support and is waiting UKBA's decision/allocation
		Other
Refused asylum seeker who has exhausted their appeal rights	No, not destitute (do not answer further questions)	
	Yes, destitute (if yes, please continue to question 7)	Applied for Section 4 support and been refused
		Not applied for Section 4 support
		Applied for Section 4 support and awaiting decision/allocation
Person who has been granted asylum	No, not destitute (do not answer further questions)	
	Yes, destitute (if yes, please continue to question 7)	Cannot apply for benefits – awaiting UKBA documents
		Applied for benefits and is waiting for payment
		Other

9. 'DESTITUTE PLUS' (TICK IF ANY APPLY, AND AS MANY AS APPLY)	
Physical illness	
Mental illness	
Disabled	
Pregnant	
Dependent children	

10. LENGTH OF TIME DESTITUTE	
Less than 1 month	
Between 1 month and 6 months	
Between 6 months and 1 year	
Between 1 and 2 years	
Over 2 years	

12. COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	13. FURTHER QUESTION FOR SOME COUNTRIES
Afghanistan	Which province and district does the person originate from?
Angola	
China	
Congo-Brazzaville	
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	Which province does the person originate from?
Eritrea	
Ethiopia	
India	
Iran	
Iraq	Please circle which part: Dahuk, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, other
Ivory Coast	
Lebanon	
Nigeria	
Palestine	
Pakistan	
Somalia	Please circle which part: southern Somalia, central Somalia, Somaliland or Puntland
Sri Lanka	Please circle which part: north, east or Colombo. Please circle which apply: Tamil, Sinhalese, Muslim
Sudan	Is the person a non-Arab from Darfur?
Vietnam	
Zimbabwe	
Other (please state)	

14. Can we ask this client more questions?	Yes
	No

Refugee Action, registered charity no 283660, www.refugee-action.org.uk

Refugee Council, registered charity no 1014576, www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Scottish Refugee Council, registered charity no SCO08639, www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk

Welsh Refugee Council, registered charity no 1044885, www.welshrefugeecouncil.org.uk

North of England Refugee Service, registered charity no 1091200, www.refugee.org.uk

Asylum Support Partnership

