

Safe and Secure: The No Recourse Fund

REPORT OF FINDINGS

Dr Ravi K. Thiara

University of Warwick

Acknowledgements

A huge thanks to all the practitioners working to support women and children with No Recourse to Public Funds who took part and provided crucial information for this evaluation. The No Recourse Campaign Group and other professionals working in the sector were especially generous with their time in offering their experience and ideas and in completing the surveys. Hannana Siddiqui, Meena Patel, Pragna Patel and Debdatta Dobe at Southall Black Sisters provided much support throughout. Above all, women caught up in the protracted processes of the immigration system openly shared their painful experiences of this and the abuse they endured so that it would bring about change. Let their hopes not be in vain.



Contents

Tables and diagrams

Executive summary	1
1. Introduction	14
Context	14
Aims of the Tampon Tax funded No Recourse Fund	16
Evaluation approach	17
Report	17
2. Survey Findings	18
Number of women supported	18
Demographic overview	19
Women's immigration status	21
Support provided – length and type	22
Housing/Accommodation	23
Impact of No Recourse Fund	25
Key outcomes reported by women	27
Worker assessment of outcomes for women	31
Key outcomes for women reported by workers	32
Women's satisfaction	33
Worker assessment of NRF and support	34
Case Study: Aleena	35
3. Women's Perspectives	37
Abuse contexts	38
Compromised mental health	44
Uncertainty about future	45
Looking for help and responses	46
Value of NRF and specialist support through VAWG services	48
Challenges	52

4. Professionals' Views	56
Use of the NRF	56
DDV Concession relies on specialist BME VAWG organisations	57
Continuing challenges with DDV Concession process	57
Lack of knowledge and reluctance to undertake complex immigration work	59
Non-spousal women locked out of systems	59
Administrative issues	60
Case Study: Alice	61
5. Recommendations	64
Endnotes	67
References	68



Tables and Diagrams

Tables

Table 1: Total number of women supported

Table 2: Age of women

Table 3: Immigration status

Table 4: Housing and Subsistence Support

Table 5: Where women were housed

Table 6: Outcomes for women

Table 7: Outcome 1

Table 8: Outcome 2

Table 9: Outcome 3

Table 10: Outcome 4

Table 11: Outcome 5

Table 12: Outcome 6

Table 13: Outcome 7

Table 14: Outcome 8

Table 15: Outcome 9

Table 16: Outcome 10

Table 17: Outcome 11

Table 18: Outcome 12

Table 19: Outcome 13

Table 20: Worker assessment of outcomes for women

Table 21: Women's satisfaction with NRF

Table 22: Worker assessment of NRF

Table 23: Details of interviewed women

Diagrams

Diagram 1: Ethnicity of women accessing NRF

Diagram 2: Women's marital status

Diagram 3: Areas women were fleeing

Executive Summary

Safe and Secure: The No Recourse Fund

The disproportionate impact of violence and abuse on migrant women resulting from their intersectional location amplifies both the ways in which violence is experienced and the barriers to accessing support and justice. Women with insecure immigration status and no recourse to public funds (NRPF) find that control of immigration status takes precedence over their rights as victims of violence against women and girls (VAWG), and statutory and other support services frequently fail to provide the type of help they require. Consequently, they are left with little choice than to either remain trapped in abusive contexts or face the threat of destitution, detention and/or deportation and are exposed to further economic and sexual exploitation.

The responsibility for supporting women with NRPF falls disproportionately on services run 'by and for' black and minority ethnic (BME) women and children. The annual report from Women's Aid shows that only 5.8% of refuge vacancies in 2017–18 would even consider a woman who had NRPF and in some cases this was conditional on her having funding in place to cover her stay. The lack of a safety net has raised concern that women with NRPF are vulnerable to high rates of domestic and sexual violence, sexual and economic exploitation, domestic homicide (including so called 'honour' killings) and suicide.

Despite three decades of campaigning resulting in change for women on spousal visas gaps in available support to those on non-spousal visas have been repeatedly highlighted across the UK. In light of these issues, the aims of the No Recourse Fund (NRF) project, funded by the Tampon Tax Fund, were to implement and evaluate a pilot providing housing, subsistence and refuge support costs for a period of three months to women (and their children) on non-spousal visas with NRPF facing VAWG in the UK. It also aimed to assess the effectiveness of the DDV Concession for those on spousal visas and consider any further measures needed to address problems in this scheme.

Data collection for the evaluation incorporated: 70 surveys completed by both women and by organisations; interviews and follow up with 33 women supported by the NRF; three group discussions with women's organisations; individual discussion (n=5) and feedback through a survey (n=8) with agencies; and discussion with staff involved in the administration of the Fund.

Key Findings

The number of women and children supported by the NRF exceeded the original target number of 60 so that a total of 78 women and 32 children were supported. Women accessing the NRF were highly diverse, with the three largest groups being South Asian, African, and Eastern European. Women from across the age range were supported, with the majority aged mid-20s to mid-40s, with over half aged between 25–34 years. A higher

number (n=43) had no children; 13 were reported to have a mental health related disability and two were deaf/hearing impaired; all women were heterosexual; nearly two-thirds were married, with the remainder either single, separated, or widowed; and they reported a wide range of religious backgrounds.

Immigration status

Women's immigration status was varied and complex: 29 had entered the UK on a spousal visa, though five had subsequently been abandoned and one had her visa revoked; 28 were on non-spousal visa; and 13 were EEA/EU nationals. Of the 70 women, six had obtained indefinite leave to remain and 27 temporary leave to remain. Various routes to regulate women's immigration status were used by organisations, including asylum, Article 8, and indefinite leave to remain on the basis of a British child. Of the 24 women on a spousal visa, 22 had received the DDV Concession; it was pending for two women. Sixteen women had other pending applications which included waiting for decisions on asylum, Article 8 applications and indefinite leave to remain.

Support provided

The majority of women had been subjected to extreme economic abuse and none had any source of income at the point they were supported by the NRF. Twenty-five of the 27 women supported for a month or less were on a spousal visa and able to claim benefits within three weeks through the DDV Concession, with the NRF bridging a gap. Such cases could be resolved within a month to six weeks if all went smoothly with the DDV Concession process. Cases required longer to resolve where there were delays in getting the biometrics or a NI number or where women had their visa revoked and/or were abandoned. Whilst women with children (n=7) who were able to access housing through Section 17 of the Children Act or went into the asylum route and received NASS support after the initial weeks of NRF support had moved on to other routes of support, they stated that an extension of the NRF to at least six months would have been beneficial as these alternate routes were fraught with difficulty.

Women on non-spousal visas required support for longer and those supported for three months or over were mostly non-spousal women; follow up indicates that some had still to obtain any security in immigration status after almost two years of being in contact with the NRF. Thus both non-spousal visa cases and complex spousal visa cases typically required up to six-eight months of support to enable them to recover and re-settle in their lives more fully, including resolving their very complex immigration status. Coercive control, resulting in complex issues for EEA/EU nationals with the right to work, meant they needed support for three months or more before they could consider seeking employment.

Housing/Accommodation

Over a three-quarter (78.5%, n=55) of women were provided with housing and subsistence

support, with others securing safe housing through friends, family or housing charities. At the time of contact with the NRF, women were housed in different types of accommodation including over half in a B&B, where some faced harassment and further victimisation. At the point of exit from NRF support, the largest number (a quarter) were housed in a refuge, followed by those accommodated by Social Services and those who had not secured any accommodation. The 21 women who had stayed in a refuge said this was preferable to a B&B. Having support available in a refuge, being able to connect with other women, get peer support and the absence of men were key reasons given. Others were positive about the space and independence provided in a supportive context away from community pressures. Almost half of these who had stayed in a BME refuge preferred this to a generic refuge and mentioned the common understanding and experiences among women and the possibility of forming a connection with others from similar backgrounds with whom they could communicate easily. Women also felt better understood by staff.

Impact of NRF on women

All responding women said the NRF enabled them to stay out of the abusive situation though almost two-thirds remained anxious because of their still insecure status and future uncertainty. Women were asked questions about the difference the NRF had made along a number of dimensions: ability to escape abusive context; ensure safety; space to consider the future; self-esteem and confidence; health and well-being; positive thinking; understanding of options and rights; confidence to seek help; communicate needs and views to services; how to ensure safety; ability to cope better with daily needs.

The findings show that the support provided by the NRF impacted positively on many dimensions of women's situations. Option to escape violence, sense of safety, and feeling better about oneself (self-esteem) were the areas with the greatest difference for all women. Notably, for all 13 outcomes, greater numbers of women on a spousal visa reported the greatest difference compared to those on a non-spousal visa or those who were EEA/EU nationals. Only on three dimensions – health and wellbeing, confidence to seek help, and ability to communicate needs and views to organisations – did women on a spousal visa report below 90% and none reported below 80%. Undoubtedly greater positive outcomes are linked to entitlement to the DDV Concession, which enabled women to move on, re-settle and start their journey towards recovery sooner. In straightforward cases having a shorter period of support was sufficient to meet their needs.

Women on a non-spousal visa, however, reported the lowest impact along the 13 outcomes, below 50%, other than in three areas – option to escape violence, safety, and coping better with daily needs. The areas with the least difference made were improvements in health and wellbeing, ability to communicate needs/views to organisations, and knowledge about how to keep themselves and their children safe. This is most likely to be related to the continuing uncertainty in the situations of women on a non-spousal visa, including about immigration status, financial support and housing. *In all other areas non-spousal visa women were almost half as likely as spousal visa women to report a difference along*

the outcomes. Uncertainty about their immigration status even when receiving support for the full three months or over led to less positive outcomes. Although EEA/EU nationals reported a higher level of difference than non-spousal women, the difference reported was lower than spousal visa women. The areas with the lowest difference were coping with daily needs, knowledge about how to keep themselves and their children safe.

Workers supporting women were also asked to complete 10 outcomes along similar dimensions to women and the overwhelming majority underscored the positive impact of the NRF, reported between 82% and 95%.

Women's Perspectives

Interviews and follow up with women and information from the 70 surveys highlights women's experiences of abuse and its effects; their experiences of trying to get help from other services; the difference made by the NRF to their situations; and women's recommendations for changes to the NRF. Women's accounts of violence indicate extreme coercive control and wide-ranging abuse from multiple perpetrators over long periods where their insecure immigration status was used as a weapon to amplify abuse and to secure their silence, cutting off any access to help and redress. Most women were extremely isolated and without any family support or social networks in the UK.

They were torturing me, hitting me. I was all day working for them, finding fault with everything. Abusing me, my family. My husband was hitting me, kicking me. He was offering me dog shit to eat. He said he wanted to kill me.

Economic abuse was a common thread where women were prevented from working and given very little money for basic needs or were made to work and their wages taken. A woman was given £5-10 every few weeks and when she had used this up was subjected to extreme verbal abuse, whilst another with a young son was given £30-40 every two months.

He bought food every two weeks. He didn't buy me anything. When I asked for £5 he gave me a beating.

Frequent and extreme sexual violence was reported by over 80%, which sometimes involved people outside the family; some were sexually exploited by their partners when they arrived in the UK. Women's narratives reveal the ways in which men and their families subjected them to dehumanising treatment and used them as domestic servants, as sex slaves and as punch bags. They were intimidated, threatened and exploited by wider relatives and by a range of others in the community – coerced for sexual favours by male relatives and landlords. The threat of deportation was routinely used to manipulate women; for some on spousal visas, this had been followed through and women were duplicitously taken back and abandoned in their country of origin or their visas were revoked. They spent months trying to re-enter the UK, often to be reunited with their children. Where children were involved, child contact applications were used to track women down; in

such cases, women required on-going support to help deal with court processes and the anxiety this caused. In a couple of cases, children were placed with the perpetrator because of the woman's insecure status. EU nationals were deliberately prevented from working or made to work casually by their partners, which resulted in them having no recourse to public funds. The severity of abuse experienced was so debilitating that they needed to recover from this before they could seek employment and exercise their treaty rights.

Compromised mental health: the overwhelming majority of women spoke about mental distress as a result of the abuse they had endured. This was made worse by poverty and financial hardship, racism–discrimination and children's issues. Many were on medication for depression and anxiety and talked about suicide ideation and/or actual suicide attempts, something that migrant women have been found to be particularly vulnerable to. Having left the abusive context, women were re-traumatised by the immigration process and the racialised assumptions of services about their issues. They felt out of control as so much rested on the right decision being made; this, coupled with a lack of accessible therapeutic support, entrenched women's trauma and sense of physical and psychological safety. They also feared being separated from their children. '*She is distressed and has lost all her confidence*' was a comment frequently made by those helping women.

Uncertainty about future: beyond safety, women were uncertain about their future and worried about the lengthy process ahead of them in securing their immigration status. They could not think about other things until this was done and could not even begin to address the impact on their wellbeing until they felt safe and secure. Once they were helped, became informed about support available to them and no longer felt alone, women were able to start addressing some of these issues. On follow up, while women on spousal visas had been supported to secure leave to remain (though they encountered other challenges such as child contact issues), those on non-spousal visas were still awaiting outcomes of their applications almost two years after they had accessed the NRF. Even those who had indefinite leave to remain spoke about isolation and having nothing, with some living in accommodation without the basic necessities. The toll that years of fighting for immigration certainty had taken on their mental and physical health was considerable.

Looking for help and responses

At the time of contact with the NRF women had been in abusive contexts for between a year and 17 years. Women's space to speak and act was highly constrained. Threats of deportation by partners and family members, financial dependence, extreme isolation and abuse, lack of information about their rights and support services, pressure to remain in abusive situations, fear of reprisals and consequences of speaking out including losing their children, belief that things would get better, not knowing anyone, not wanting to upset family relationships, being unable to speak English, and compromised mental wellbeing

all intersected to prevent women from looking for help for several years. Immigration status was the biggest barrier to seeking help. Women tried various ways to cope before accessing help, which included staying with anyone who could house them for a short time, sleeping in cars, gardens, airports, buses, shopping centres and on the street. Some were housed by a church or were able to pay rent for a few days. Despite great reluctance and in desperation, often in the face of escalating violence and fear for their lives, women turned to external help. Mostly they did not know where they could get help and few were aware of specialist VAWG services.

I didn't know anything and called the police as my last hope cos' of the physical attack and beating. I thought he was going to kill me.

Before being supported by the NRF, they largely received unhelpful responses and were passed from one agency to another without few positive interventions. A woman who was living on the streets was in contact with eight agencies before she received help; once in NASS accommodation, it took a further four months to get a decision about Section 4 support. The police was the most frequent route out of abuse even though women did not feel safe calling, and received mixed responses. In some cases the police had informed immigration authorities and women ended up in detention centres whilst their children, who had witnessed extensive violence, were left with the perpetrator. Experiences with housing agencies were largely very negative and this was also reflected in responses from Social Services, leaving them little choice other than to remain in abuse or to become destitute. Some Social Services departments suggested women return to the country of origin and leave children with the perpetrator and others removed children and refused women any financial help. Women who had accessed solicitors on their own described the challenges they had encountered as '*one of the worst experiences*' where solicitors were not interested in their cases but keen to take their money. Others were given junior people when their complex cases required specialist experience – '*I had to do so much of my own work*'.

Value of NRF and specialist support through VAWG services

Without them I was in the street, with them I am in a house even though its temporary. I'm getting help because of their help.

Receiving support from the NRF to access specialist VAWG services, especially BME, was a lifeline and life-saving for abused migrant women who had nothing, giving them some dignity in the face of the dehumanising treatment they had received at the hands of their abusers. They were able to access solicitors for help with immigration applications, get their biometric cards and NI numbers, get help with benefits applications, and, for some, support with child contact applications and proceedings. Emotional support alongside practical support and the opportunity to form connections and friendships with other women in similar circumstances were all greatly valued in facilitating a sense of community and recovery.

Being/feeling safe: a sense of safety was the biggest difference made to women and they spoke repeatedly about feeling safer once they were in a refuge/safe housing, which helped them to start rebuilding their emotional and physical strength. Knowing they did not have to return to the abusive context was life-changing for women, who had believed they had no other option. All of this had a positive impact on their mental wellbeing.

Feeling stronger and happier: women felt stronger and happier but had required considerable support to achieve this. This was just the beginning of a journey for some whose mental health was still fragile, especially if their future remained uncertain. A woman who had been subjected to extreme physical and sexual violence over a year, with great cost to her physical (injured eye and teeth) and mental health (constant suicidal thoughts and attempted suicide) was slowly being built back up through counselling and intense support. Enabled to access a wide range of additional support and help, such as a Support Group, women were positive about the warmth and support provided by VAWG services, something they had previously never received from anyone. They constantly referred to specialist BME services such as SBS as being part of a family.

More aware of help available: women who had accessed VAWG services became more aware of their rights and better informed about other organisations and support available to them. They said they felt reassured by this and now felt they had support networks rather than being alone. Had they been aware of such help this would have enabled them to leave earlier. Some women knew more about their rights but still lacked the confidence to ask for help.

Challenges

I have nothing. I have spent everything I have on fighting my case. Sometimes I feel I have also lost my mind.

Women highlighted some continuing challenges:

- i) They wanted support to be accessible, timely and affordable. Travel to solicitors, to GPs and counsellors, and to school could be difficult because they did not have the money to pay for travel – ‘do you spend £3 to get to support or to buy food?’ – resulting in a lack of access to help needed for recovery;
- ii) The length of the process for them to become settled and/or resolve immigration status was greatly concerning not least because of the anxiety caused. This took longer for single women and those without a NI number or other documentation. They were entirely dependent on the NRF for which they were extremely grateful;
- iii) For the majority the amount of subsistence was not enough to live on as they struggled to manage on the amount provided (£30 per week), relying also on food banks and friends (if they had any). Women who had children especially mentioned the need for a higher amount of subsistence or those who had specific needs, such as for clothing or when they had to travel to school, GPs,

and solicitors to access support;

- iv) The amount of accommodation support provided also made it a challenge for some to find housing, especially in London;
- v) The complexity of women's cases, particularly for non-spousal women, and delays in obtaining biometrics and NI numbers means that a longer time is required to support them through a complicated immigration process than the three months currently funded. It was suggested that help should be available for at least six-eight months to enable women to ensure some sense of security and safety. Thus, abused migrant women need support for longer than three months and need greater level of support than currently available to them.

Professionals' views

Precarious doesn't sum up how women are living.

Professionals acknowledged the precarious position of abused migrant women and the continuing discriminatory responses they receive, which frequently frame them as immigration offenders in need of punishment rather than VAWG victim-survivors in need of support and protection. In this way, violence in women's intimate lives intersects with structural violence to constrict their options and choices. The work to support abused migrant women continues to fall disproportionately on BME VAWG organisations, which have the expertise to respond to the complexity of women's immigration issues.

Use of the NRF

The NRF took some time to become known, despite publicity and training provided to organisations. The message that it could be drawn on by those outside London took some time to register and highlights the need to conduct more extensive development work with those outside London. It was mainly in the second year that the Fund began to be utilised by a range of organisations outside of London, highlighting the need to also run the project for longer than two years. Although a half of women accessed the NRF through SBS, the Fund was also used by organisations across England and Scotland. The under-utilisation by mainstream services is likely to reflect many organisations' lack of confidence about accepting and supporting women with NRPF. Professionals highlighted a range of key issues.

DDV Concession relies on specialist BME VAWG organisations

While the DDV Concession was considered to be working well this was thought to be a result of specialist BME VAWG organisations informing women about the process, linking them with specialist immigration solicitors/advisors, and helping them to submit applications whilst also offering a range of other much needed support. Where women had not benefitted from those with such expertise they experienced delays or negative outcomes to their applications. Problems with online and telephone applications remained

especially for those not supported by a specialist service. Thus, the smooth operation of the process is based on women receiving timely and adequate support from specialist BME VAWG organisations and being linked with experienced and reputable immigration advisors.

Continuing Challenges with DDV Concession process

- i) The need to secure biometric details causes delay as women have to wait longer before they obtain the change in leave status and access benefits. Issues were also highlighted about the limited places where the biometric service is provided, with some women having to travel a great distance to access this; sometimes women had to return to re-register if it did not work the first time, creating challenges for women who had little or no money for travel. Women sometimes being expected to pay for their biometric details (despite exemption under the DDVC) had been the experience of some organisations;
- ii) Language support was required by a majority of women and it was evident that this is a necessary underpin, alongside the wide range of emotional, financial, immigration and other support provided to women. A number of responding organisations repeatedly commented on the lack of interpreting facilities as a challenge encountered in supporting abused migrant women and something that was left to BME women's organisations to do;
- iii) Challenges of evidence with regard to domestic violence have been widely acknowledged especially for women in the asylum process who are rarely believed and considered to be making things up to strengthen their cases. Although VAWG organisations are able to provide women with letters of support, issues with some services without expertise writing inadequate letters that result in poorer outcomes were repeatedly highlighted. This clearly underlines the need for training for staff supporting women with DDV Concession applications;
- iv) A key pillar of the DDV Concession is access to benefits while women await outcomes of their applications. However, a number of organisations raised issues about delays in women being able to access benefits. A continuing issue relates to the lack of or limited knowledge of the DDV Concession by staff in Job Centre Plus and an unwillingness to apply the Job Seekers Allowance DV Easement (which exempts DV victims from labour market conditions which requires applicants to be available for work and actively seeking work for up to 13 weeks) introduced in April 2012. Some women were expected to meet the Habitual Residency Test and turned down when this was deemed to be unmet even if they had a waiver from the Home Office. Local authority Housing staff was also reported to be unaware of the DDV Concession;
- v) The lack of bank accounts is a further issue in the payment of benefits. Challenges were encountered in providing proof of identity to the banks, as many left without

or never had such documents, as well as proof of address, as many lived in temporary accommodation, often a B&B or a refuge, the address of which they could not disclose.

Thus there is concern that some women are not getting timely benefits and housing, leading to a call for the Department of Work and Pensions, like UKBA, to monitor and fast track DDV Concession applications.

Lack of knowledge and reluctance to undertake complex immigration work

Although some refuges reserve a limited number of spaces for women with NRPF and do their best to support them, many refuges lack knowledge and expertise of immigration issues. In general, the complexity of immigration cases and possible financial implications – refuges refuse to take women in immediately as they are worried they will not get the funds – were deterrents to many accepting women with NRPF. The tendency of refuges to only accept women if they have a NI number, biometric card and entitlement to benefits and ILR means the initial immigration work has already been done at the point of entry into a refuge, often by BME VAWG services. Some carry out no work on immigration applications and expect women to do this themselves. This is part of the wider crisis that refuge services face and some women return to SBS to get help with their applications. Many were also not able to provide the intersectional advocacy that abused migrant women require. Generic organisations commissioned for No Recourse work lack expertise in this area and are referring to specialist BME VAWG services, expecting them to undertake the support work without any funding.

Non-spousal women locked out of systems

Few VAWG services, other than BME, are prepared to accept women on a non-spousal visa, effectively locking these women out of protection and support. GPs are not registering non-spousal women as this is against the law if women are not lawfully present in the UK and the Home Office can access GP data to catch those deemed to be illegal. Private landlords and B&Bs also refuse to rent if women do not have the relevant documents and/or exploit women, cutting off this route to housing while their cases are being processed. Young women who entered the UK as students and are unable to sustain living costs were said to become involved in sex work to survive or were sexually exploited by predatory men in communities. Some police forces are using incorrect mechanisms for women, advising them to go through the Trafficking route when this is inappropriate, resulting in refusals. Some police areas are using immigration rather than safeguarding, detaining women and reporting them to the Home Office. That some professionals believe that getting a perpetrator deported is the best way to protect women was also highlighted. Some professionals were reported to be telling women they cannot leave the abusive context because of their immigration status and some social workers want to send women back.

Thus wider immigration policies and law are undermining abused women's (and their children's) rights. Consequently, it takes migrant women longer to become secure, to deal with the effects of abuse and to rebuild their lives. Asylum applications can take up to three years or more and pending their outcomes, women are often dispersed to areas where they are acutely isolated and without support.

Recommendations

Clearly, a large number of migrant women subjected to gender violence are left unprotected, insecure and without support. The data shows that 40% of all women accessing support from the NRF were on a non-spousal visa and are not entitled to support under the DDV Concession (41% were on a spousal visa and 19% EEA/EU nationals). That almost as many women on a spousal visa accessed the NRF highlights the on-going challenges also faced by those who are eligible to the DDV Concession in accessing the support and protection they need. The issues encountered by abused EEA/EU nationals also create concern. The findings show that women with insecure immigration status and NRPf are subjected to some of the most extreme forms of violence but have constricted options. They experience chronic mental health and once they pluck up the courage to leave, often in desperation, they are further re-traumatised by the immigration system which blocks or delays avenues to help, leaving women without safety, security and protection. In order to meet its Human Rights obligation in affording protection to all victim-survivors of VAWG and in addressing the challenges faced by women on a non-spousal visa, as well as continuing problems in the administration of the DDV Concession, the following recommendations are made to address these issues.

- ***The DDV concession should be extended from three months to six - eight months.***

The three month period is insufficient for a range of reasons: gathering of evidence can take a long time; it can take a long time to find specialist immigration legal aid solicitors; very few solicitors are willing to take on complex cases; there are delays in women getting their benefits. This would help agencies to gather evidence, have good statements, identify specialists for reports and have funds for in-country and psychiatric reports.

- ***The DDV Concession to be extended to all women who have insecure immigration status and are being subjected to gender violence.***

The majority of women have been in the country for a number of years and are experiencing VAWG. An amnesty for such women is required – they have contributed to society, often have children and are part of the invisible workforce. For a range of reasons returning to the country of origin is untenable because of threats to their safety and life.

- ***Subsistence should be increased to be in line with Universal Credit.***

Support to those with NRPf should be in line with Universal Credit to ensure women and

children have the minimum financial support to rebuild their lives. This should also be available to non-spousal cases.

- ***Training and guidance for statutory organisations (including the Department for Work and Pensions, local benefits agency and Housing).***

The Department for Work and Pensions needs to make the process easier through a new Directive or Memo as the Home Office waiver through the DWP is not recognised or even understood at a local level. The process at Benefits Offices is lengthy and this should be expedited on grounds of VAWG/DV so that housing benefit and JSA is granted within 2-3 weeks rather than 8-12 weeks it takes currently. Training for local benefits agency staff and Housing is required on this issue. In the face of issues highlighted in police and Social Services practice guidance is required on their duty to protect abused migrant women rather than enforce immigration control.

- ***Establish safe reporting pathways for abused migrant women.***

To enable abused migrant women have access to support from the police and other statutory agencies, without fear of being deported or detained, safe reporting pathways are needed. This includes establishing a firewall to separate life-saving specialist support from immigration control.

- ***Training and knowledge development among mainstream VAWG services.***

Given reluctance and lack of knowledge and expertise among refuges and VAWG organisations to support abused migrant women with NRPF, training should be provided to address these gaps and to change practice.

- ***Funding for specialist BME refuges and support services that have an expertise in providing wrap around holistic support to abused migrant women.***

Specialist BME VAWG services tend to have an understanding of immigration complexities and issues but generic refuge services lack understanding and struggle with the concept of concessions. The majority of women are placed with BME VAWG services, with only around two out of 10 women going to mainstream refuges. Thus greater resources for BME refuges are required.

- ***Extension of Legal Aid to abused migrant women.***

Legal aid should be provided for all women with insecure immigration and NRPF to prevent them from being trapped in abusive relationships or dependence on the NRF.

- ***Fast tracking of VAWG cases through a specialist trained team-unit.***

Fast tracking of VAWG cases through a specialist team should be explored and it should be

ensured that the system operates fairly. This team should be trained annually. In addition, officers dealing with dependent visas and over stayers who have limited or no knowledge of VAWG should be trained. Home Office needs to process cases – including biometrics – more speedily and give emergency payments until benefits are secured.

- ***Develop a comprehensive strategy on violence against migrant women***

There is an urgent need to have a single framework for support and protection that addresses all the intersectional barriers that lead to abuse, homelessness, destitution, and exploitation amongst all migrant women. This holistic and comprehensive strategy should focus on protection for all abused migrant women and follow the contours of the existing multi-pronged strategy for VAWG in general.

1. Introduction

Context

The pervasive nature of violence against women and girls (VAWG) worldwide is indisputable in the face of extensive evidence (WHO, 2013; FRA, 2015), as are the differentiated experiences and impact of VAWG on different groups of women and girls (Thiara and Gill, 2010; Imkaan, 2017). In the UK, activists and researchers have continuously emphasised the disproportionate impact of violence and abuse on migrant women resulting from their intersectional location, which amplifies the ways in which violence is experienced and the barriers to accessing support and justice (McIlwaine *et al.*, 2019; SBS, 2019; Bates *et al.*, 2018; Safety4Sisters, 2016; SBS and WRC, 2007). Women with insecure immigration status and no recourse to public funds (NRPF)¹ find that control of immigration status takes precedence over their rights as victims of VAWG and statutory and other support services fail to provide the type of help they require. It has been found that the hostile environment reinforces migrant women's fragility and rather than being supported they are criminalised and framed outside of expected standards of best practice in supporting VAWG survivors (Sharma and Marsh, 2017; Anitha, 2010). Consequently, migrant women with NRPF are frequently left with little choice other than to either remain trapped in abusive contexts or face the threat of destitution, detention and/or deportation (McIlwaine *et al.*, 2019; Siddiqui, 2013; SBS and WRC, 2007), and remain forgotten and disposable, exposed to further economic and sexual exploitation (Anitha *et al.*, 2008). Recent research shows that over a quarter of migrant women were left destitute as a result of NRPF (Bates *et al.*, 2018).

In general, research has highlighted the reluctance of women with NRPF to disclose violence and abuse for fear of the consequences, including the service responses they receive (Bates *et al.*, 2018; Anitha, 2010; SBS and WRC, 2007). Given their inability to pay rent or subsistence, income that is used by refugees to survive, victim-survivors with NRPF are frequently prevented from accessing women's refuges unless refuges make exceptions (Women's Aid, 2017). This usually falls disproportionately on those services run 'by and for' black and minority ethnic (BME) women and children. Responses from Social Services show inconsistency at best and indifference and negligence at worst. Single women in such situations are faced with refusal from Social Services, which also deny or limit assistance to those for whom they are responsible - children and vulnerable adults². Some offer to take children into care or place them with the perpetrator's family whilst offering to pay for women to return to the country of origin, ignoring the danger this represents for many women (Siddiqui, 2013). Research has repeatedly emphasised the constricted options available to migrant women, which means they do not have the same rights to access safety and support when compared to other victims of VAWG and are denied life-saving support. Bates *et al.* (2018) found that migrant women were particularly vulnerable on several measures of poverty, including homelessness, and lack of access to resources. Indeed, the lack of a safety net has raised concern that women with NRPF are vulnerable to high rates of domestic and sexual violence, sexual and economic exploitation,

domestic homicide (including so called 'honour' killings) and suicide (Siddiqui and Patel, 2010). There is also some evidence to suggest that migrant and BME women suffer from disproportionately higher rates of these types of deaths linked to a history of abuse (Mayor of London, 2010). Notably, research has shown that the police make an arrest and bring a criminal charge in fewer cases involving migrant women. Indeed, there is also increasing evidence to show that they are more likely to be reported to the Home Office rather than protected as victims of gender-based crimes (SBS, 2019). Migrant women were also less likely to get a civil injunction or protection order or to use the family courts (Bates *et al.*, 2018).

Despite three decades of campaigning by SBS and a coalition of over 30 women's organisations³ resulting in change for women on spousal visas, concern has remained for other migrant women entering the UK on other types of visa who fall outside of these revised measures. The introduction of the Destitution Domestic Violence (DDV) Concession in April 2012 enabled women on a spousal visa subject to a probationary period of two years⁴ (extended to 5 years on 9 July 2012) the right to access benefits and social housing for a period of three months while they applied to stay in the UK under the Domestic Violence Immigration Rule (introduced as a concession in 1999 and became part of the immigration rules in 2002) on grounds of domestic violence. Cuts in legal aid for those making Domestic Violence Rule applications were also prevented and the evidence required to prove domestic violence – convictions and non-molestation orders – was extended after successful legal challenges to include letters from domestic violence services and other evidence. Given the long periods that women had to wait for outcomes, the UK Border Agency, after much lobbying, established a specialist unit to fast track Domestic Violence Rule cases (Siddiqui, 2013).

The DDV Concession was preceded by a pilot initiative funded by the Home Office, resulting from intense pressure from the Campaign to Abolish No Recourse to Public Funds (Amnesty International and SBS, 2008), known as the 'Sojourner Project', which was managed by Eaves Housing for Women. Supporting women whose applications were considered by the fast track team in the Home Office, through upfront payments for short periods, the pilot remained in place between the end of November 2009 and March 2012. The funding also provided interpretation, management and training costs to ensure the effective implementation of the pilot, which was independently evaluated (Kesete, 2013). It was followed by the introduction of the DDV Concession. Despite its invaluable role in helping over 1,400 women with accommodation and subsistence while they resolved their immigration status, commenced family, civil and criminal proceedings, settled children, and accessed health and social care, the pilot was unable to support considerable numbers of women with insecure immigration who were ineligible for funding, suggesting an unmet need among those on non-spousal visas. A snapshot survey had also found that between November 2012 and January 2013, 64% (n=154) of 242 women did not qualify for the DDV concession and were without a safety net (Campaign to Abolish No Recourse to Public Funds, 2013). The most recent annual report from Women's Aid shows that only

5.8% of refuge vacancies in 2017–18 would even consider a woman who had NRPF and in some cases this was conditional on her having funding in place to cover her stay (Davidge and Magnusson, 2019). Earlier, the Women's Aid 'No Woman Turned Away' (NwTA) project showed that in the first seven months of 2016, over a quarter of women supported had NRPF and of these, 75% were not eligible for the DDV Concession, and 17% remained where they were living, suggesting they may have been forced to stay in abusive situations. In addition, SBS report assisting almost 300 women (January 2009 to end of December 2016) through its No Recourse Fund (NRF), which was set up in 2009. Between April 2015 and March 2016, SBS dealt with 66 cases, 67% of which were women on non-spousal visas unable to access any support other than from the SBS NRF for a short period. Problems in providing accommodation and/or assistance to those on non-spousal visas have been highlighted by many VAWG organisations across the UK.

Thus, despite some important developments in response to women with NRPF, there are continuing gaps and some groups of women experiencing VAWG remain unprotected. These include women who entered or remained in the UK on other dependent visas such as student and work permit holders, women who had these visas in their own right, overstayed their visas or are undocumented. It also includes trafficked women, not identified as such and thus not supported through the National Referral Mechanism and overseas domestic workers subject to abuse and exploitation. Unlike the Sojourner Project, the government did not fund a specific pilot for this group of women on non-spousal visas until the current Tampon Tax funding.

Aims of the Tampon Tax funded No Recourse Fund (NRF)

The aims of the NRF project were to implement and evaluate a pilot providing housing, subsistence and refuge support costs for a period of three months to women (and their children) on non-spousal visas with NRPF facing VAWG in the UK. It also aimed to assess the effectiveness of the DDV Concession for those on spousal visas and consider any further measures needed to address problems in this scheme. The pilot was an expansion of the existing NRF, administered by SBS since 2009⁵. It was intended that the pilot would:

- Expand to include women and their children outside of London, to a total of 60 (or more if some women used the NRF for less than the maximum period of three months) over two years. It would continue to be last resort and not a substitute for local authority support or other legal obligations to support by agencies; and would only assist for a temporary period if there were unavoidable delays in accessing legal entitlements.
- Pay current rates for housing and subsistence costs (and some costs per child) for a maximum period of three months for women on spousal and non-spousal visas inside and outside of London. However, the NRF pilot would also pay for limited support costs for all organisations supporting women and other essential costs for some women in urgent need of clothing, toiletries and travel

costs to reach safe accommodation.

The evaluation was intended to:

- Assess the impact of the pilot and the operation of the DDV Concession over a period of two years.
- Use a sample of 20 women per year (total of 40 over two years) on non-spousal visas to assess the effectiveness of the pilot scheme.
- Use a sample of 10 women per year (total of 20 over two years) on spousal visas to assess the impact of the DDV Concession where they have used the NRF due to delays or problems in accessing the Concession or benefits.

Evaluation approach

In order to meet the broad aims of the evaluation, data gathering incorporated:

- 70 surveys completed by both women and by organisations;
- interviews (n=18) and follow up (n=15) with women supported by the NRF;
- three group discussions with a range of women's organisations;
- individual discussion (n=5) and feedback through a survey (n=8) with agencies;
- discussion with staff involved in the administration of the Fund.

Report

This report presents the findings of the evaluation research of the Tampon Tax funded element of the No Recourse Fund (NRF), administered by Southall Black Sisters, which provided accommodation and subsistence support to women with insecure immigration status who have been subjected to VAWG. The report is divided into four main sections. After this introduction, the first presents an overview of data from the surveys completed by women and by organisations which accessed the NRF; the second discusses women's perspectives about the violence and abuse to which they were subjected and their experiences of seeking help; the third presents the issues and challenges identified by professionals in supporting women with NRPF. The final section is focused on the key recommendations arising from the evaluation.

2. Survey Findings

By drawing on data from the completed surveys by organisations accessing the No Recourse Fund (NRF), this section presents an overview of the 70 women who were supported by the NRF. It also presents the data outlining the key difference made by the NRF as reported by women themselves and by workers supporting them.

Number of women supported

The number of women and children supported by the NRF exceeded the original target number of 60 women so that a total of 78 women and their children were supported by the NRF, as seen in the table below.

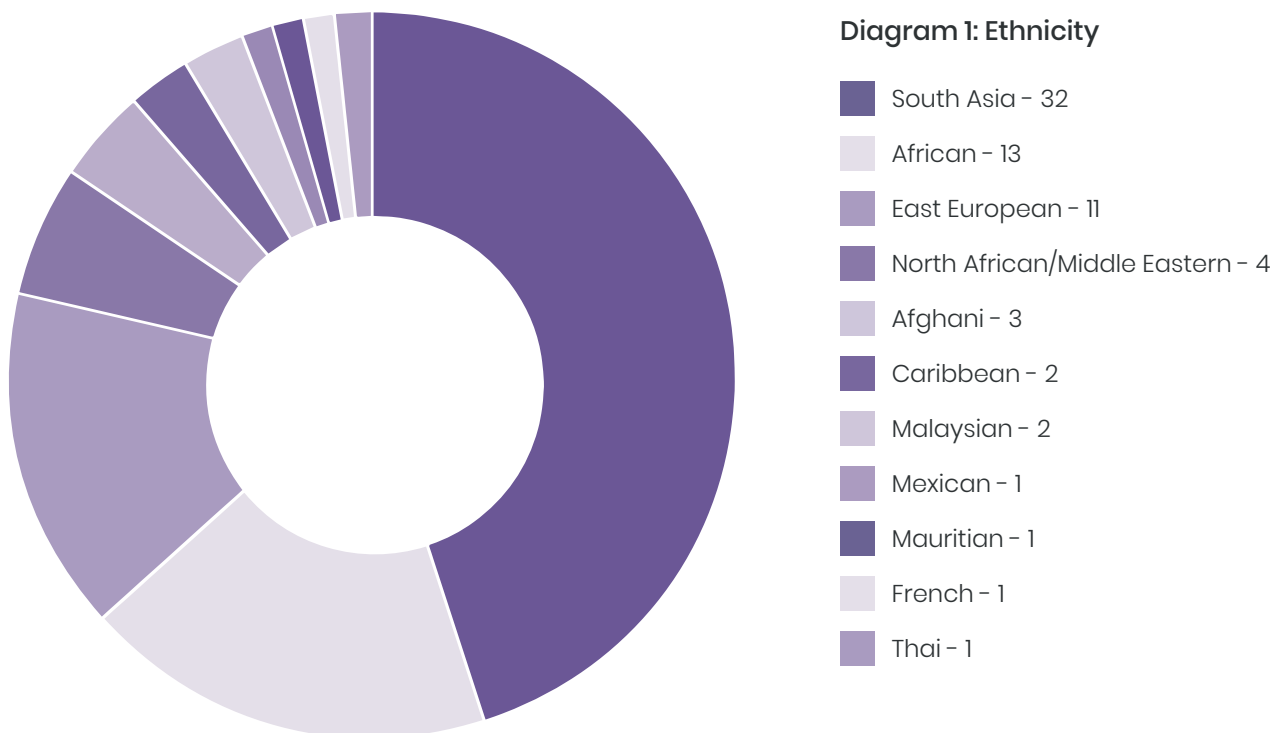
Table 1: Total Number of Women Supported

Time Period	Target No. Women	Actual No. Women/Children
July – Sept 2017	5	9/1
Oct – Dec 2017	8	8/7
Jan – March 2018	8	8/3
April – June 2018	9	11/4
July – Sept 2018	9	7/2
Oct – Dec 2018	8	17/10
Jan – March 2019	8	11/0
April – June 2019	5	7/5
TOTAL	60	78/32

Demographic overview

Ethnicity

As the diagram below shows, women accessing the NRF were highly diverse. The largest three groups were from countries in South Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe.



Further details of women’s ethnicity are provided below:

32 South Asian: Pakistani (12); Indian (15); Nepalese (2); Bangladeshi (2); Sri Lankan (1)

13 African: Nigerian (4); Eritrean (2); Sudanese (2); Zimbabwean (1); Somali (1); African (3)

11 East European: Polish (3); Romanian (3); Albanian (2); Hungarian (2); Slovakian (1)

4 North African/Middle Eastern: (Egyptian (1); Moroccan (1); Lebanese (1); Iranian (1)

Age

Although women from across the age range were supported, the majority of women were aged between mid-20s to mid-40s, with over half aged between 25-34 years, as seen below.

Number of children

A higher number (n=43) of women had no children. Of those with children (n=27), 18 had one child, eight had two children and one had three children.

Disability

Thirteen women were reported to have a mental health related disability and two women were deaf/hearing impaired.

Table 2: Age of Women

Age	Number
18-21	1
22-24	5
25-34	38 (54.2%)
35-44	13 (18.5%)
45-54	4
55-64	1
65+	1

* 7 missing responses

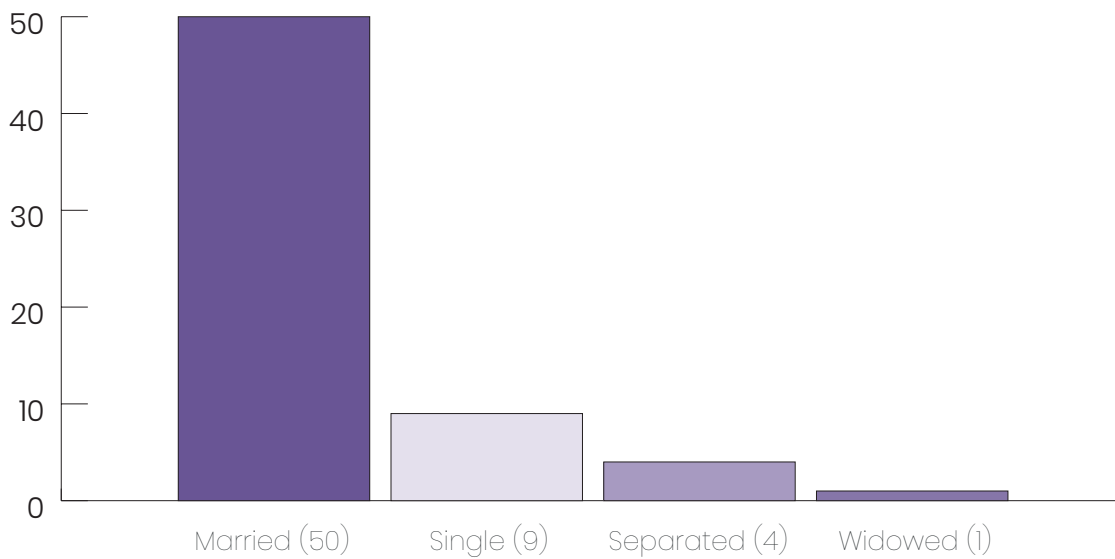
Sexuality

All women were heterosexual.

Marital status

Where this information was provided, and as the diagram below highlights, nearly two-thirds (64%) of women were married, followed by those who were single, separated, and widowed (6 missing responses).

Diagram 2: Women's marital status



Religious background

Women were from a wide range of religious backgrounds:

- 24 were Muslim
- 23 were Christian
- 11 were Hindu
- 8 were Sikh
- 1 was Buddhist
- 2 did not disclose

(1 missing response)

Women’s Immigration Status

Women’s immigration status at the time of accessing the NRF varied and was complex. Twenty-nine women had entered the UK on a spousal visa, though five had subsequently been abandoned and in one case the visa had been revoked, underlining the importance of considering the complexity when considering the needs of those on spousal visas. Twenty-eight women were on non-spousal visas and 13 were EEA/EU nationals.

Table 3: Immigration Status

Immigration status	No. Women
Spousal visa	24
Spousal visa abandonment	4
Spousal visa revoked	1
EEA/EU national with NRPF	13
Visitor visa overstayer	6
Visitor visa	1
student visa	3
student visa overstayer	3
10 year route	4
Asylum – No NASS	3
Trafficked	2
Discretionary leave to remain	1
Leave to remain with NRPF	1
Human Rights application	1
Leave to enter outside of the Rules	1
Dependent visa	1
Other	1

Of the 70 women, at the point of accessing the NRF, six had obtained indefinite leave to remain whilst 27 had obtained temporary leave to remain. Organisations accessing the NRF used various routes to regulate women’s immigration status – applying for Asylum, Article 8, indefinite leave to remain on the basis of a British child – though the majority had only obtained temporary leave to remain at the time of completing the survey.

Of the 24 women on a spousal visa, 22 had received the DDV Concession; it was pending for two women. Sixteen women had other pending applications which included waiting for decisions on asylum, Article 8 applications and indefinite leave to remain.

Support Provided – Length and Type

Table 4: Housing and Subsistence Support

Length of Support	No. Women
Over 3 months	7
1-3 months	21
Under a month	27

As the table above shows, 27 women were supported for a month or less, with almost half among them receiving close to a month of support. Of the 27 women, 25 were on a spousal visa and were able to claim benefits within three weeks through receipt of the DDV Concession. In the absence of an alternative, the NRF served to bridge the gap for these women during this time. Cases of women who had entered the country on a spousal visa could be resolved within a month to six weeks if all went smoothly with the DDV Concession process though the process for women getting benefits was often frustrated by delays in obtaining a national insurance number and/or biometrics. Where there were such delays or where women had their visa revoked or they were abandoned in the country of origin, their cases required considerably longer to resolve.

Seven others were women with children, who were able to access housing through Section 17 of the Children Act or went into the asylum route and received NASS support after the initial weeks of being supported through the NRF. However, six of these seven women felt that while they had moved on to other routes of support, extension of the NRF to at least six months would have been beneficial to them as these alternate routes were fraught with difficulty. For example, a woman who accessed Section 17 support required a VAWG organisation to obtain a solicitor for her to challenge Social Services; she grew disillusioned with the process and ended up sofa surfing for a long period. Another woman who accessed Section 17 reported that Social Services attempted to push her and her children back to the perpetrator after providing limited support, traumatising her and making her wish that the NRF could have supported her for longer. Yet another woman left and returned to her country of origin (she was an EU national) as she could not cope with the prolonged delay and the inability of the system to resolve her issues.

Women on non-spousal visas required support for longer. Those supported for three months or over were mostly non-spousal women and were variously assisted for between three to eight months (three were complex spousal visa cases due to various reasons including difficulty gathering evidence, abandonment, and revocation of spouse visa

and hence required longer support). Follow up with women indicates that some women on non-spousal visas had still to obtain any security in immigration status after almost two years since they had been in contact with the NRF. Thus both non-spousal visa cases and complex spousal visa cases typically required up to six-eight months of support.

In total, 33 of the 55 women (60%) supported for between under a month to over 3 months said that a greater period of support was required to enable them to recover and re-settle in their lives more fully, including resolving their very complex immigration status. Twenty-seven (82%) of these 33 women who said a longer period of support was needed were on a non-spousal visa (96.4% of all non-spousal women). A follow-up with 22 of the 27 non-spousal visa women over 12 months after being supported by the NRF further reinforced this finding. Moreover, a majority of women followed up for interview also indicated that they needed support for longer than three months before a positive outcome could be secured.

Although EEA/EU nationals⁶ have the right to work, many had complex issues and were so controlled within coercively controlling relationships, had mental health and/or substance use issues, that they needed support for three months or more before they could consider seeking employment.

In terms of the type of support, of the responses given, over a three-quarter (78.5%, n=55) of women were provided with housing and subsistence support. Of the remainder, some women did not need housing support as they had alternative means of securing safe housing through friends or family or housing charities, such as Catholic Workers Farm, and felt they would be more secure in a familiar environment.

Housing/Accommodation

At the time of seeking help from the NRF, women were housed in different types of accommodation and where information was provided, it showed that over half had stayed in a bed and breakfast (n=36) though this was most likely to be arranged by SBS, which placed women with vetted bed and breakfast places, and was not a universal practice amongst respondents. Smaller numbers had been accommodated in the following ways:

- 6 were in a refuge
- 3 had stayed in a hostel
- 2 were homeless
- 2 were in private rented accommodation
- 1 was in temporary accommodation
- 1 had stayed with family

As noted later, some women faced harassment whilst being housed in bed and breakfast housing. While this can be critical in averting homelessness, it is not suitable for long-term housing and could place already vulnerable women at risk of further victimisation.

However, due to an absence of any other means of assistance as a result of the crisis in safe housing, especially for NRPF women, organisations face the difficult choice of having to place women in bed and breakfast (see SBS, 2019)

At the point of exit when support from the NRF had ended, a quarter of women, the largest number, were housed in a refuge, followed by those accommodated by Social Services and those who had not secured any accommodation. This is shown in the following table.

Table 5: Where Women Were Housed

Type of Accommodation	No. Women
Refuge	17
Social Services funded accommodation	10
Catholic Workers Farm	6
B&B/hostel	4
NASS accommodation	4
Living with supportive friends	4
Returned to country of origin	2
Reconciled	1
No secure accommodation	9

* 13 missing responses

Where women had lived in NASS accommodation they found this ‘very uncomfortable’. When in homeless hostels they spoke about a lot of fighting between families and other individuals living in the same accommodation. This has implications for women who are escaping abuse as it can lead to re-traumatisation – ‘*you don’t feel safe, it affects you. You need peace*’. However, it provided an important stopgap for some women. Women placed in bed and breakfast by the police spoke about having no money for food.

Refuge

Although for many women this was not applicable (n=35), 21 women who had stayed in a refuge said this was preferable to a bed and breakfast. This preference for a refuge related to being able to cook, cleanliness and safety. Having support available in a refuge, being able to connect with other women and get peer support and the absence of men were key reasons given. Some women were also positive about the space and independence provided in a supportive context away from community pressures.

There is only women, don’t feel safe with men at B&B; like family in refuge.

It’s clean in the refuge and better facilities than in B&B as the B&B did not have

any cooking facilities.

I have access to services and support network.

I have support from a worker and safety. No men.

I got to sort out all my papers and feel supported.

Of these 21, 11 women who had also stayed in a BME refuge preferred this to a generic refuge. They mentioned the common understanding and experiences among women and the possibility of forming a connection with others from similar backgrounds with whom they could communicate easily. Women also felt better understood by staff.

They are from the same culture, we know about the same things, easy to make friends.

It's easy to have conversation. Everyone is very helpful and supportive.

Better understanding of needs.

Staff understood that I had a different culture and language.

Impact of No Recourse Fund

Women were asked about the difference the NRF had made to them through a range of open and closed survey questions as well as in the interviews. All those who responded (n=55) to this question in the survey said the NRF enabled them to stay out of the abusive situation.

However, almost two-thirds (63%, n=34) of those who responded (n=54) remained anxious because of the uncertainty about their future. Of these, over a third (35%, n=12) had temporary leave to remain and one had indefinite leave to remain; 62% (n=21) had not yet managed to secure any type of leave. Unsurprisingly, given this uncertainty, only 29% (n=20) of women reported either looking for or being in paid work.

The majority of women had experienced high levels of economic abuse (see section 3) from their partners and/or other family members. None of the women had any source of income at the point they were supported by the NRF.

Difference made by NRF

Women were asked to complete 13 outcomes on a scale of 1-4 rising level of improvement. These questions related to the difference the NRF had made along a number of dimensions: ability to escape abusive context; ensure safety; space to consider the future; self-esteem and confidence; health and well-being; positive thinking; understanding of options and rights; confidence to seek help; communicate needs and views to services; how to ensure safety; ability to cope better with daily needs. As the table below shows, women reported a high level of difference along all 13 outcomes.

Table 6: Outcomes for Women

Immigration Status	1 – None	2 – Some	3 – A Lot	4 – Huge
1. Access to safe housing / refuge gave me the option to escape violence/ abuse 13 missing	1 (EEA)	4 (2 SV; 2 EEA)	8 (5 SV; 3 NSV)	44 (22 SV; 14 NSV; 8 EEA)
2. Being in safe housing / refuge helped me to be/feel safer 16 missing		4 (3 SV; 1 EEA)	6 (3 SV; 2 NSV; 1 EEA)	46 (26 SV; 13 NSV; 7 EEA)
3. Being in safe housing / refuge gave me space to think about my future 17 missing	1 (SV)	5 (2 SV; 1 NSV; 2 EEA)	11 (6 SV; 3 NSV; 2 EEA)	36 (26 SV; 10 NSV; 5 EEA)
4. Support in safe housing / refuge has made me feel better about myself (self-esteem) 17 missing	2 (SV)	4 (2 EEA; 1 SV)	8 (4 SV; 3 NSV; 1 EEA)	36 (18 SV; 12 NSV; 6 EEA)
5. Support in safe housing / refuge has helped me to feel stronger (confidence) 15 missing		6 (3 SV; 2 EEA; 1 NSV)	11 (7 SV; 2 NSV; 2 EEA)	38 (21 SV; 11 NSV; 6 EEA)
6. Support in safe housing / refuge has improved my general health and wellbeing 15 missing	1 (SV)	4 (2 EEA; 1 SV; 1 NSV)	13 (8 SV; 3 NSV; 2 EEA)	36 (20 SV; 10 NSV; 6 EEA)
7. Support safe housing / refuge has made me think differently (more positive) about my future 15 missing	3 (2 EEA; 1 NSV)	8 (6 SV; 2 EEA)	14 (10 SV; 2 NSV; 2 EEA)	30 (15 SV; 10 NSV; 5 EEA)
8. I have a better understanding of the options available to me 11 missing		8 (4 SV; 3 EEA; 1 NSV)	12 (8 SV; 2 NSV; 2 EEA)	38 (20 SV; 12 NSV; 6 EEA)
9. I know more about what my rights are 12 missing	4 (3 SV; 1 NSV)	6 (3 SV; 3 EEA)	20 (13 SV; 4 NSV; 3 EEA)	28 (13 SV; 10 NSV; 5 EEA)
10. I have more confidence to seek help 14 missing	3 (1 EEA; 2 NSV)	7 (4 SV; 2 EEA; 1 NSV)	8 (6 SV; 2 EEA)	38 (19 SV; 11 NSV; 8 EEA)
11. I am better able to communicate my needs/views to organisations 13 missing	2 (1 EEA; 1 NSV)	10 (5 SV; 3 EEA; 2 NSV)	16 (12 SV; 2 EEA; 1 NSV)	29 (13 SV; 11 NSV; 5 EEA)
12. I know more about how to keep myself / my children safe 18 missing	2 (NSV)	10 (5 SV; 3 EEA; 2 NSV)	16 (12 SV; 2 EEA; 1 NSV)	29 (13 SV; 11 NSV; 5 EEA)
13. Receiving living expenses helped me to cope better with daily needs 13 missing	2 (1 SV; 1 EEA)	8 (5 SV; 3 EEA)	6 (5 SV; 1 NSV)	41 (21 SV; 14 NSV; 6 EEA)

Key Outcomes Reported By Women

The following discussion highlights the 13 outcomes where women reported a huge or a lot of difference (and where relevant other levels of difference reported are also highlighted).

Table 7: Outcome 1

Outcome 1	All Women	Spousal Visa	Non-Spousal Visa	EEA/EU Nationals
Access to safe housing/refuge and living expenses gave me the option to escape violence	91.2%	93% (n=27)	61% (n=17)	62% (n=8)

The overwhelming majority (91.2%) of women who responded said that the NRF had given them an avenue of escape from abuse. Over 90% of these were on a spousal visa (n=27; 93%), 61% (n=17) were on a non-spousal visa and 62% (n=8) were EEA/EU nationals.

Table 8: Outcome 2

Outcome 2	All Women	Spousal Visa	Non-Spousal Visa	EEA/EU Nationals
Being in safe housing/refuge helped me to be/feel safer	96.2%	100% (n=29)	54% (n=15)	62% (n=8)

For all (96.2%) except two women who responded, being supported through the NRF had resulted in a lot (11%) or huge (85%) improvement in their level of safety. Interviews with women indicate that safety was the biggest concern when leaving an abusive context and the NRF helped all but two women to achieve this. All of these were on a spousal visa, just over half (n=15; 54%) were on a non-spousal visa and 62% (n=8) were EEA/EU nationals. This shows that having safe accommodation for spousal visa women had huge impact on their sense of safety; this was only afforded to around half of women on a non-spousal visa and almost a two-third of EU women.

Table 9: Outcome 3

Outcome 3	All Women	Spousal Visa	Non-Spousal Visa	EEA/EU Nationals
Being in safe housing/refuge gave me space to think about my future	88.6%	93% (n=27)	46% (n=13)	54% (n=7)

For an overwhelming majority (88.6%) of women safe housing had made a huge (68%) difference or a lot (20.7%) of difference in affording them the chance to think about their future. For one woman on a spousal visa, this had made no difference. Over 90% of these were on a spousal visa (n=27; 93%), 46% (n=13) were on a non-spousal visa and 54% (n=7) were EEA/EU nationals.

Table 10: Outcome 4

Outcome 4	All Women	Spousal Visa	Non-Spousal Visa	EEA/EU Nationals
Support in safe housing/refuge has made me think differently about my future (more positive)	88.6%	93% (n=27)	46% (n=13)	54% (n=7)

Being supported in safe housing made 88.6% of women feel more positive about their future. For four women this had made some difference and for two no difference. Over 90% of these were on a spousal visa (n= 27; 93%), 46% (n=13) were on a non-spousal visa and 54% (n=7) were EEA/EU nationals.

Table 11: Outcome 5

Outcome 5	All Women	Spousal Visa	Non-Spousal Visa	EEA/EU Nationals
Support in safe housing/refuge has made me feel better about myself (self-esteem)	100%	97% (n=28)	46% (n=13)	62% (n=8)

All women reported an increase in their feelings of self-esteem as a result of being given support in safe housing. For 89% of women, this was a huge or a lot of improvement and for 11% this had resulted in some improvement. All except one women on a spousal visa reported this (97%); 46% (n=13) were on a non-spousal visa and 62% (n=8) were EEA/EU nationals.

Table 12: Outcome 6

Outcome 6	All Women	Spousal Visa	Non-Spousal Visa	EEA/EU Nationals
Support in safe housing/refuge has helped me to feel stronger (confidence)	89%	97% (n=28)	46% (n=13)	62% (n=8)

89% of women reported a lot or huge increase in confidence after being supported in safe housing. For 7% there was some improvement and for one woman there was no improvement in confidence. All except one woman on a spousal visa reported this (97%); 46% (n=13) were on a non-spousal visa and 62% (n=8) were EEA/EU nationals.

Table 13: Outcome 7

Outcome 7	All Women	Spousal Visa	Non-Spousal Visa	EEA/EU Nationals
Support in safe housing/refuge has improved my general health and well-being	80%	86% (n=25)	43% (n=12)	54% (n=7)

The majority of women (80%) reported a lot or huge improvement in health and wellbeing. For 14.5% of women there was some and for three women there was no improvement. This was reported by 86% (n=25) of women who were on a spousal visa, 43% (n=12) of those on a non-spousal visa and over half of EEA/EU nationals.

Table 14: Outcome 8

Outcome 8	All Women	Spousal Visa	Non-Spousal Visa	EEA/EU Nationals
I have a better understanding of the options available to me	84.7%	97% (n=28)	50% (n=14)	62% (n=8)

All women reported a greater understanding of their options. For 84.7% of women there was a huge or a lot of improvement in understanding and for 15.3% there was some improvement. All except one woman on a spousal visa reported this (97%), a half (n=14) of those on a non-spousal visa and 62% (n=8) of those who were EEA/EU nationals.

Table 15: Outcome 9

Outcome 9	All Women	Spousal Visa	Non-Spousal Visa	EEA/EU Nationals
I know more about what my rights are	82.7%	90% (n=26)	50% (n=14)	62% (n=8)

The majority of women (82.7%) reported knowing more about their rights. For six women there was some improvement whilst four said their knowledge of their rights had not improved. An overwhelming majority of these women were on a spousal visa (n=26; 90%), 50% (n=14) on a non-spousal visa and 62% (n=8) EEA/EU nationals.

Table 16: Outcome 10

Outcome 10	All Women	Spousal Visa	Non-Spousal Visa	EEA/EU Nationals
I have more confidence to seek help	82%	86% (n=25)	50% (n=14)	62% (n=8)

82% of women had increased confidence in seeking help. For 12.5% of women there was some improvement in confidence and three said their confidence in seeking help had not improved. 86% (n=25) of spousal visa women reported this, a half of those on a non-spousal visa and just under two-thirds of EEA/EU nationals.

Table 17: Outcome 11

Outcome 11	All Women	Spousal Visa	Non-Spousal Visa	EEA/EU Nationals
I am better able to communicate my needs/views to organisation	78.9%	86% (n=25)	43% (n=12)	54% (n=7)

78.9% of women were better at communicating about their needs/views to organisations. For 17.5% there was some improvement whilst for two women there was no change. 86% (n=25) of spousal visa women reported this, 43% (n=12) of non-spousal visa women and just over a half (54%) of EEA/EU nationals.

Table 18: Outcome 12

Outcome 12	All Women	Spousal Visa	Non-Spousal Visa	EEA/EU Nationals
I know more about how to keep myself/my children safe	86.5%	93% (n=27)	43% (n=12)	46% (n=6)

86.5% of women said they were better informed about keeping themselves and their children safe. For four women there was some improvement in knowledge about safety and for two there was none. Over 90% of these were on a spousal visa (n=27; 93%), 43% (n=12) were on a non-spousal visa and 46% (n=6) were EEA/EU nationals.

Table 19: Outcome 13

Outcome 13	All Women	Spousal Visa	Non-Spousal Visa	EEA/EU Nationals
Receiving living expenses helped me to cope better with daily needs	82.4%	90% (n=26)	54% (n=15)	46% (n=6)

82.4% of women said receiving subsistence had helped them to cope better with daily needs. For 14% receiving living expenses had only made some difference and for two women this had made no difference. An overwhelming majority of these women were on a spousal visa (n=26; 90%), 54% (n=15) on a non-spousal visa and just under a half (46%) EEA/EU nationals.

As shown by the data above, support provided through the NRF impacted positively on many dimensions of women's situations. Option to escape violence, sense of safety, and feeling better about one self (self-esteem) were the areas with the greatest difference made for all women. Indeed, in the interviews women repeatedly spoke about the value of the support they received from workers to repair their sense of self away from the abusive context.

It is notable that on all of the 13 outcomes, greater numbers of women on a spousal visa reported the greatest difference compared to those on a non-spousal visa or those who were EEA/EU nationals. Only on three dimensions – health and wellbeing, confidence to seek help, and ability to communicate needs and views to organisations – did women on a spousal visa report below 90% and none reported below 80%.

Women on a non-spousal visa reported the lowest impact along the 13 outcomes, below 50%, other than in three areas – option to escape violence, safety, and coping better with daily needs. The areas with the least difference made were improvements in health and wellbeing, ability to communicate needs/views to organisations, and knowledge about how to keep themselves and their children safe. This is most likely to be related to the continuing uncertainty in the situations of women on a non-spousal visa, including about financial support and housing, and the impact this has on their mental wellbeing. **In all other areas non-spousal visa women were almost half as likely as spousal visa women to report a difference along the outcomes.** Although EEA/EU nationals reported a higher level of difference than non-spousal women, the difference reported was lower than spousal visa women. The areas with the lowest difference were coping with daily needs and knowledge about how to keep themselves and their children safe.

It is evident that greater positive outcomes were reported by spousal visa women on account of their entitlement to the DDV Concession, which in turn enabled them to move on, re-settle sooner and start their journeys towards recovery, which took many more months. Having access to the DV Rule and the DDV Concession was the key factor in shortening the length of time for which women were destitute; in straightforward cases having a shorter period of support was sufficient to meet their needs. However, outcomes for non-spousal visa women were less positive even when receiving support for the full three months or over as their status remained uncertain. These women were commonly in need of a longer period of assistance and a greater intensity of support.

Worker Assessment of Outcomes for Women

Workers supporting women were also asked to complete 10 outcomes on a scale of 1-4 (1= no improvement; 2= some improvement; 3= a lot of improvement; 4= huge improvement). Similar to women, these related to the areas of safety; self-esteem; self-confidence; health and wellbeing; positivity about future; understanding of options and rights; confidence to seek help; communicate needs and views to services; and ability to exit violence.

Table 20: Worker Assessment of Outcomes for Women

Outcome	1	2	3	4
1. Help given by NRF has improved applicant's safety	1 (1.6%)	4 (6.7%)	7 (12%)	48 (80%)
2. Help given by NRF has improved applicant's self-esteem	1 (1.6%)	9 (15%)	13 (22%)	36 (60%)
3. Help given by NRF has improved applicant's self-confidence	2 (3.2%)	8 (13%)	15 (25%)	35 (58%)
4. Help given by NRF has improved applicant's general health and well-being	3 (5%)	7 (12%)	12 (20%)	38 (63%)
5. Help given by NRF has made applicant more positive about the future	3 (5%)	6 (10%)	13 (22%)	38 (63%)
6. Help given by NRF has increased applicant's understanding of the options available to her	1 (1.6%)	7 (12%)	12 (20%)	37 (62%)
7. Help given by NRF has increased applicant's knowledge about her rights	1 (1.6%)	7 (12%)	17 (28%)	35 (58%)
8. Help given by NRF has increased applicant's confidence to seek help	1 (1.6%)	6 (10%)	11 (18%)	41 (68%)
9. Help given by NRF has enabled applicant to better communicate her needs and views to organisations	1 (1.6%)	5 (8%)	15 (25%)	38 (63%)
10. Help given by NRF has improved applicant's ability to exit violent situations	1 (1.6%)	2 (3.2%)	12 (20%)	42 (70%)

*10 missing responses

Key Outcomes for Women Reported by Workers

- The overwhelming majority (92%) of workers who responded said that the NRF had improved a woman's safety a lot or hugely. For four women this had resulted in some improvement in safety and for one woman there was none.
- 82% of workers thought that women's self-esteem had improved as a result of the NRF a lot or hugely. However, over 15% said there was only some difference and for one there was no difference.
- In terms of enhancing women's self-confidence, 83% of workers stated this had been achieved a lot or hugely; though for 13% this had only made some difference and for two there was no difference.
- Similarly, 83% of workers reported a lot or a huge difference in women's health and well-being as a result of help provided by the NRF though for 12% this had

only made a small difference and for two women made no difference.

- 85% of workers said women were a lot or hugely positive about the future; for a tenth this had made some difference and for three no difference.
- 86% of workers thought that women had a substantially increased understanding of their options though for 12% this was only a small difference.
- 87% of workers said that women had a considerably increased knowledge about their rights; for 12% there was some increase.
- A substantial increase in women confidence to seek help was reported by 88% of workers though for 10% there was only some increase. Given women’s lack of knowledge about help available and low self-esteem and confidence, this constitutes a major impact of support and engagement with support services.
- Notably, 90% of workers said women were considerably better able to communicate their needs to organisations after being supported by the NRF.
- 95% said that the NRF had improved women’s ability to leave violent situations.

Women’s Satisfaction

The table below details the three questions women were asked about the level of satisfaction with the service they received from the NRF.

Table 21: Women’s Satisfaction with NRF

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied
1. Thinking about the person who you may have had most contact with at Southall Black Sisters dealing with the No Recourse Fund, how would you rate your satisfaction with the service they provided? 15 missing	41	13	1 (EEA-NRPF)	44
2. What is your satisfaction with the difference made to you by the support provided by the No Recourse Fund? 13 missing	44	9	3 (SV-10 yr. route; EEA-NRPF; Asylum-No NASS)	1 (EEA-NRPF)
3. Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with the service you received support from with the No Recourse Fund? 15 missing	43	9	2 (SV-10 yr. route; EEA-NRPF)	1 (Asylum-No NASS)

As can be seen, of the women who responded (n=54) the majority were very satisfied (76%) or satisfied (24%) with the service provided by the person they had most contact with in relation to the NRF. Only one remained ambivalent about this. Similarly, of the responding women (n=57), the majority were very satisfied (77%) or satisfied (16%) with the difference

made by the support provided by the NRF. However, more women were ambivalent about this while one remained dissatisfied. The majority of responding women (n=55) were very satisfied (78%) or satisfied (16%) with the service received from the NRF, with two women remaining ambivalent and one dissatisfied.

Worker Assessment of NRF and Support

The table below details the three questions workers were asked about the NRF and the support they received from SBS.

Table 22: Worker Assessment of NRF

Questions	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1. How would you rate the NRF application process?	1	13	13	33
2. How would you rate the support you received from staff at SBS?	1	11	13	34
3. If you had a complaint, please rate how you feel it was dealt with.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

* 10 missing responses

As can be seen, of the workers that responded (n=60) over half rated the NRF application process as excellent, with equal number rating it as very good (22%) and good (22%). Only one worker considered it as poor. Similarly, of the responding worker (n=59), the majority rated the support they received from staff at SBS as excellent (58%), very good (22%) or good (19%) with only one considering it to be poor. With regards to making a complaint respondents considered this to be not applicable or did not respond, suggesting that none of those completing the survey had made a complaint.

Case Study – Aleena

Aleena is 34 years old and contacted a BME VAWG support service at the end of March 2019, when she was referred by the Police from a London borough. She had endured rape and other incidents of violence from her second husband for six years but fled when his behaviour started to escalate. In the last six months before separation, he started to threaten her with deportation using her insecure immigration status as a means of control and abuse. The last incident occurred two days before she fled when her husband sexually and physically assaulted her. Aleena called the Police, who arrested her husband and accommodated her for the evening. When she sought help with accommodation from the local Housing department the following day this was refused as she had no recourse to public funds.

Aleena came to the UK in 2011 when she married her first husband, who was also physically, verbally and emotionally abusive. She found out that her husband was gay and had only married her to have children. He frequently abused and assaulted her including hitting her with objects. His friend also attempted to use her for sex and her husband told her she had no choice. Aleena fled after three months when her husband broke a plate over her. She called the Police, who arrested her husband and took her to a refuge. Following the end of her first marriage, her relationship with her family also broke down and she feared that her younger brother would kill her. She remains in occasional contact with one of her nieces, who told her that it is not safe for her to return to her own country and will be killed if she does.

Aleena was originally on a spousal visa. She was advised to make an asylum application later in 2011, which was refused. Between 2012 and 2015, a number of appeals and judicial reviews were lodged and refused. In September 2018, she was served with a notice for removal from the UK. In October 2018, Aleena made a human rights application, which was refused in February 2019, and then appealed. The appeal was pending with the Home Office when she approached the support service. Her second husband had not assisted her with making any immigration applications and told her that she did not need to regularise her status.

Support provided

In April 2019, Aleena was referred to an immigration surgery to get advice on regularising her immigration status. At the time, she was relying on friends and acquaintances for accommodation. When this was no longer possible, Aleena was supported through the No Recourse Fund as she was destitute and homeless. She was accommodated in a bed and breakfast and given weekly subsistence. The support service liaised with the Police and Aleena has been in contact with an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) at a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), and will be supported through the criminal justice system.

In early May 2019, an application for Exceptional Case Funding was completed to use in

an eventual immigration application. In mid-June 2019, Aleena's pending Human Rights application was refused by the Home Office. Advice was sought from an immigration solicitor, who advised that she may be able to make a DDV Concession application as she believed she entered the UK on a spousal visa. Advice was given for Aleena to lodge an appeal to preserve her position and then apply for urgent Exceptional Case Funding (ECF) to continue with the appeal. A DDV Concession application was submitted on Aleena's behalf in June 2019. The Concession was refused on the basis that she had received Entry Clearance to join her spouse and her husband did not hold settled status at the time of her application, and hence she did not qualify for the DDV Concession.

A Human Rights appeal is being prepared for Aleena currently, after which an ECF application will be made to continue with her human rights appeal.

3. Women’s Perspectives

This section draws on interviews with 18 women and the additional information provided in the open-ended questions in the 70 surveys completed by both women and organisations. It highlights women’s experiences of violence and abuse and its effects. It discusses women’s experiences of trying to get help from other services as well as the ways in which the NRF was thought to have made a difference to their situations. Finally, it considers women’s recommendations for changes and/or improvements to the NRF.

Table 23: Details of Interviewed Women

Age	Ethnicity	Type of visa/ Immigration status	Time in the UK	Children	Housing	Nature of Abuse
35	Pakistani	Student – applied for asylum/refugee status	8 years	No	NASS	DVA – family (FM) and partner
27	Albanian	Refugee	5 years	1	Refuge	DVA – partner
27	Afghani	Spousal visa – has ILR	6 months	No	Refuge	FM, DVA and SV – partner
28	Indian	Spousal visa	2.5 years	1	Refuge	DVA – partner and in-laws
30	Indian	Spousal visa	4.5 years	1	Refuge	DVA – partner
28	Indian	Spousal visa/partner on student visa	1.5 years	No	Refuge	DVA – partner
26	Indian	Spousal visa	5 months	No	Refuge	DVA – partner
33	Indian	Student visa	9 years	2	NASS	DVA – partner/ family
46	Trinidadian	Visitor visa	18 years	No	Private rented	Family-community
40	Malaysian	Visitor visa	10 years	1	Private rented	Partner
53	Zimbabwean	Over stayer	16 years	2	B&B	Partner/brother
49	Nigerian	Trafficked	19 years	No	Refuge	Partner
36	Iranian	Asylum seeker		No	Homeless	Partner/multiple
30	Pakistani	Spousal visa	1 year	No	Private rented	Partner
34	Pakistani	Asylum seeker		No	NASS	Partner/family
33	Polish	EEA/EU	3 years	No	Private rented	Partner
25	Pakistani	Spousal visa	4 years	1	Private rented	Partner/family
27	Albanian	LTR until 2020	6 years	1	Private rented	Partner

Abuse contexts

The interconnected and overlapping nature of violence against women, which occurs across transnational spaces, has been amply highlighted (Thiara and Roy, 2020; Walby and Towers, 2017). The experiences of violence of the 70 women in this research show that they were subjected to wide-ranging abuse from multiple perpetrators over long periods of time. Invariably, their insecure immigration status was used as a weapon to amplify this abuse and to secure their silence, cutting off any access to help and redress.

I was used as a servant, nobody helped if I was ill. There was a lot of fighting, he pulled my hair, strangled me and choked me. I was not allowed to call my family. I couldn't take my son out. I was like a slave, a prisoner.

They really treated me very badly. I used to think why are they doing this and maybe they will change after the baby was born. They have no regrets.

They were torturing me, hitting me. I was all day working for them, finding fault with everything. Abusing me, my family. My husband was hitting me, kicking me. He was offering me dog shit to eat. He said he wanted to kill me.

She was treated as a domestic servant, working from 5am-7pm. She was not allowed to eat meals or help herself to food; prevented from leaving the house and kept locked in; reprimanded when asked to go into the garden or open the front door. She was trapped like a prisoner. In-laws were heavily critical of her and complained to her parents in India, after this ill treatment intensified. She wasn't given any money and berated for not bringing enough dowry. She used clothes from India. Regularly assaulted by her in-laws; father-in-law held her head and banged it against the wall and regularly slapped her. Husband abused her and subjected her to sexual violence – found this deeply upsetting, shameful and painful but was too frightened to say anything or tell anyone.

Women had lived with regular and extreme forms of violence and abuse over long periods. They described contexts marked by extreme coercive control. Threats from perpetrators to report them to immigration authorities created fear in women about reporting to the police, which bolstered abusers and prolonged the time spent in abusive contexts.

The perpetrator is extremely controlling and abusive. She is high risk, is in fear of her life and he has threatened to kill her and has used a knife to threaten her.

He is using drugs and alcohol most of the time. He has abused her emotionally, financially and controlling her all the time. He raped her. After last incident of physical assault she was very frightened and left the house and went to a friend.

She was hit at least twice a week, he used foul language, demanded £22k as

dowry. He kicked her in the face causing injury to left eye; she has photographic evidence. She was not allowed to go out or have contact with anyone until it healed. Following this, he assaulted her 2-3 times a week, pulling her hair and spitting at her. He has also hit her whilst holding the baby and hit the baby in the process. Recently, he assaulted her, hit her in the neck, strangled her, pulled her hair, punched her stomach and threw TV remote. She went into her room, he followed her, took the baby from her and threw the baby in the cot and began urinating on her. He also pushed her and banged her head against the kitchen wall.

Physical violence, reported by all women, was escalating at the time women sought help in one way or another.

There is physical, emotional and financial abuse and control and getting worse and more frequent. DV in front of children and shouting and aggressive towards children on a daily basis; breaks things to instil fear in them. Attempted to choke her many times, threw hot frying pan at her; jealousy; isolated her; financial abuse, no money or account of her own; prevented her from eating. Threats to kill her and her family in India. He has warned her several times that if she leaves him or reports him to anybody he will finish her.

Women who had sought help from the NRF were extremely isolated and without little if any family support or social networks in the UK. This was especially the situation of those women who had left their families in country of origin and entered into relationships without family approval. Returning to their families, who had threatened to kill them on return, was not an option for these women. Indeed, keeping women isolated by preventing them from going out and seeing anyone was a core aspect of the abuse described by the majority.

He would not let me go out, if I did he made a big fight. I was really really stressed, who likes swearing, fighting all the time? I tolerated everything cos' of my son but there's a limit to everything. I can't tolerate the hitting. I got lonely, depressed.

Economic abuse was a common thread and all of the 70 women with insecure status had been economically abused and had no or very little money of their own. They were prevented from working and not given any or very little money for basic needs or were made to work and their wages taken off them. A woman was given £5-10 every few weeks and when she had used this up was subjected to extreme verbal abuse, whilst another with a young son was given £30-40 every two months. Sometimes women were denied food - a woman survived by eating two-three biscuits each day and had developed problems with eating whilst another had hardly eaten anything for five days at the point she was in contact with a support service.

He bought food every two weeks. He didn't buy me anything. When I asked for

£5 he gave me a beating.

I had no money though he has opened accounts in my name. He tells me: I sponsor you, you are my maid, you are in this country because of me, I have the power to get you out of the country. He controls me in every way, I can't speak in front of him. He is rich and I am from a poor family.

Regular and often extreme sexual violence was reported by over 80% of women. This sometimes involved people outside of the family. A woman who was destitute, sleeping in people's gardens and on the street, had been sexually violated numerous times which left her with complex trauma. On arrival in the UK, some on spousal visas were sexually exploited by their partners.

Within days, he started forcing her to work as a prostitute, she refused and violence started. She works and he takes all her money. After an attack when she was unconscious, an ambulance was called but she was scared to admit domestic violence. Another attack led to a two-inch scar and she had nosebleeds after another attack. She can't go back to the country of origin as she married him against family's wishes and her father has threatened to kill her because of shame on the family.

A woman who had been subjected to FGM was thrown out and made homeless because of the problems created by this.

He would blame me... he caused me a lot of mental sadness... I would cry a lot... he'd accuse me of being the reason he could not act like a man... he accused me of not being a virgin and accused me of adultery. He started threatening me saying that he would tell my family that I cheated and send me back to Sudan... but for the culture of a married girl from Sudan this is very severe... being married but having to return home from a short period of marriage... they could kill me and accusing me of sleeping with people before marriage is punishable by killing... my family will not accept me... they will not believe me because of these rumours that he has threatened to spread. There is no document to believe me or my facts... facts are important... it would be punishable by death.

Women's narratives reveal the ways in which men and their families used them as domestic servants, as sex slaves and as punch bags.

Violence started in the evening of their wedding when he stated there was no love, only anal sex. He subjected her to anal and vaginal sex three times. She suffered profuse bleeding due to the rape. He threatened to throw her in the river if she told anybody what had happened. From her wedding day she was repeatedly being hit with a belt and repeatedly raped every 2-3 days. If she refused oral sex he would force his penis into her mouth. She was told to

do the housework and to not talk back to him as it was his choice to behave in this way... At a family party and in front of his family he held a knife to her throat and told her he wanted to cut her throat. His sister-in-law took a photo of this but then deleted the photo. She was shocked, petrified he would kill her and heart broken and emotionally drained. She asked him why she couldn't go the doctor and he threatened to push her under a car... He told her to do the housework and beat her whenever he wanted, once threatening to burn her face with an iron. She was subjected to anal and vaginal rape constantly.

Women were subjected to dehumanising treatment not only by partners but also other family members.

He took her mobile and money and told her she was brought to the UK as a slave to do as he told her. His parents said she was to blame and supported their son. Throughout her marriage she was also subjected to abuse from her mother-in-law and father-in-law, his three brothers and their three wives, and two sisters-in-law. They would hit her and tell her she was lying and subjected her to constant verbal abuse. Her father-in-law pushed her down the stairs and on one occasion she hit the back of her head on the staircase causing considerable swelling. Throughout she was never allowed to see a doctor. She was not allowed out of the house and told she was the servant rather than a daughter-in-law. She would prepare the food but was not allowed to eat with the family. She would have to wait for everyone to eat, clean up and then allowed to eat in a separate room on her own.

I was brought to the UK to be a slave. I would cook, clean, wash and iron for everyone but it would not make them happy. Instead they would continuously criticise me and call me an illiterate and a villager. My life was completely controlled by my in-laws. I was not allowed to contact my own family. I felt trapped in the situation. I never reported the abuse to anyone and suffered in silence.

They were intimidated, threatened and exploited by wider relatives and by a range of others in the community – coerced for sexual favours by male relatives and sexually harassed by landlords. The threat of deportation was routinely used to manipulate women and secure their silence. However, for some women on spousal visas, this had been followed through and women were duplicitously taken back and abandoned in their country of origin. The account below highlights the way in which, after they were violated, women were considered 'disposable' by men and their families (Anitha et al., 2016).

She was asked to pack a bag for an overseas trip. Her in-laws took her to India without her husband. They took her to her parents' house and said they were going to get medical treatment for her. They saw a doctor who was a friend of her in-laws and he said she was mentally unsound and had bipolar disorder.

The medication was making her anxious. Her parents saw another doctor who said the diagnosis was incorrect and not to take the meds. Her in-laws returned to UK and took her passport with them; this was eventually returned without her residence permit. She was then served with a nullity petition by her husband alleging that the marriage was not consummated due to her mental health problems.

In such situations women made attempts to seek help from numerous agencies but were ultimately helped by SBS.

Her son was diagnosed as autistic but her husband never allowed her to see a specialist. She was granted leave to remain in 2012 and they all visited her parents in 2015. He coerced her to stay there for more than two years, threatening to put her son in foster care and destroy her passport if she questioned him. She was unaware of the impact of her absence on her indefinite leave to remain until it was too late. She tried to persuade her husband and father-in-law to help her return to the UK but they reduced their contact. She made many efforts to seek help from the embassy, the home office, immigration solicitors, and many other agencies before being referred to SBS.

She was tricked by her husband and his family and forcefully taken back to Pakistan without her daughter. Her husband abandoned her and came back to the UK with her passport. She managed to make a new passport and submitted to the visa office. The visa process has been very challenging as her husband cancelled the spousal visa while she was in the process of getting her new passport. He made it very difficult for her to come back. With support – working with the police, social work department, local MP and family and immigration solicitors – she managed to get a visitor's visa.

In other cases, women's visas were revoked. Women spent months trying to re-enter the UK, often to be reunited with their children. Where children were involved, in many cases men and their families did their best to deny women a positive relationship with them and were extremely persistent in finding them when women separated. Child contact applications were used to track women down and to continue control (Thiara, 2010), a situation that a number of the interviewed women found themselves in. In such cases, women required on-going support to help deal with protracted court processes and the anxiety created by this. In a couple of cases, children were placed with the perpetrator because of the woman's insecure status.

She had been defending herself against her husband and he called the police. She was charged and since then Social Services have placed her child in her husband's care although she is the primary carer.

Women who were EU nationals were deliberately prevented from working or made to work casually and isolated by their partners, which resulted in them having no recourse

to public funds. The severity of abuse experienced was so debilitating that they needed to recover from this before they could seek employment and exercise their treaty rights. The NRF provided much needed respite in such situations whilst support services assisted women to secure employment.

She fled her abusive husband, he kept her imprisoned for three days without food until she managed to escape. For three years she was kept dependent on her husband's income. He isolated her, didn't allow her to learn English and earn money therefore she has not exercised treaty rights and has not passed HRT to access benefits.

They had an argument whilst walking in public as husband wanted to have sex with her and she was menstruating. It turned into a physical fight and he picked up a brick, he threw her on the floor and kicked her in her head several times. This is not the first assault... She is currently homeless and has not eaten for a few days. She is lost on the streets and is at risk of further abuse... She has never worked in the UK and has no proof to show husband is working. She doesn't have any family or friends and does not speak English. She is fit to work but needs support to find a job.

She suffered physical violence and rape and imprisonment at hands of her partner who has been charged and is awaiting trial. Three years ago he broke her neck. As an EU national she can work but not able to claim benefits. She will start to work once recovered.

Women tried various ways to cope before accessing help, which included staying with anyone who could house them for a short time, sleeping in cars, gardens, airports, buses, shopping centres and on the street. Some were housed by a church or were able to pay rent for a few days. Generally they relied on the goodwill of others.

Women's space to speak and act was highly constrained. Threats of deportation by partners and family members, financial dependence, extreme isolation and abuse, lack of information about their rights and support services, pressure to remain in abusive situations, fear of reprisals and consequences of speaking out including losing their children, belief that things would get better, not knowing anyone, not wanting to upset family relationships, being unable to speak English, and compromised mental well-being all intersected to prevent women from looking for help for several years. Immigration status was the biggest barrier in women accessing help. Given women's lack of support networks and the barriers encountered, their decision to leave can only be seen as a sign of their desperation.

I didn't have the strength to tell anyone at the time...I have now told my parents and they want me to do what is best for me and my son.

Despite great reluctance to expose themselves to surveillance by immigration authorities,

and in desperation, often in the face of escalating violence and fear of their and/or their children's lives, women turned to external help but often found themselves being let down.

She was very controlled by husband who would not let her go shopping by herself. He was jealous of her friends and didn't like her going out with them. If she went out even for an hour he would call her constantly to return and then subjected her to physical violence when she returned. Her in-laws witnessed violence and did not intervene. She was warned that he had a knife in his bag and wanted to kill her, she removed the knife and called the police but was unable to speak to them. He hit her repeatedly in her face and when he went to the bathroom she responded to a call from the police who attended.

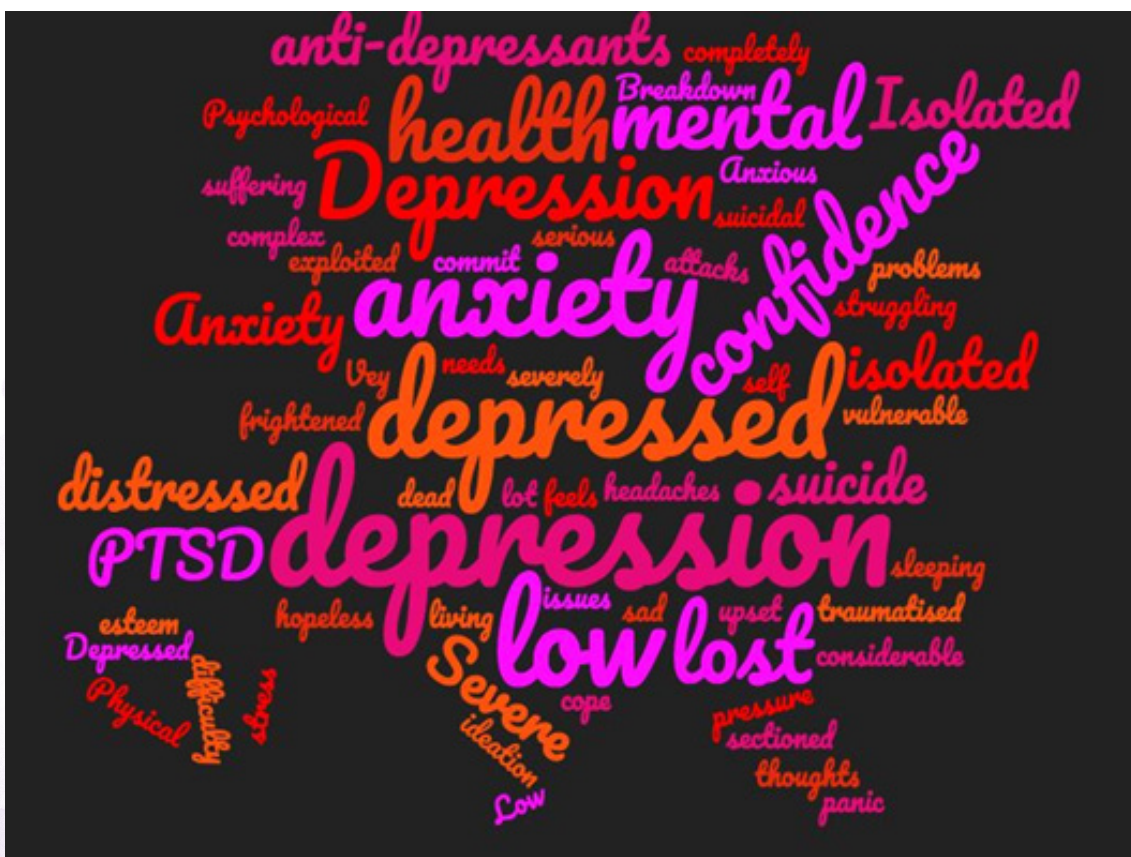
Compromised Mental Health

I cried a lot, I don't want to cry anymore.

Been feeling so bad, so sad cos' I didn't know anything. I didn't tell anybody about him. He called my family and shouted at them and my family is shouting at me and saying 'we can't accept you'. It feels bad. I miss them.

I had hopes for a new life for myself but they've broken all my dreams... I was really scared of them. My family are poor in India so they thought I was nothing. They told me to go back to India and leave my son behind.

I had become mad but am getting better. It was like I was going crazy. Marriage breakdown is a big thing for me but now I can get on with the rest of my life.



The overwhelming majority of women spoke about mental distress as a result of the abuse they had endured. Being isolated from their families or where families placed great pressure on women to reconcile all led to women feeling under pressure. This was made worse by poverty and financial hardship, racism–discrimination and children’s issues (see also Sharma and Marsh, 2017). Many were on medication for depression and anxiety and talked about suicide ideation and/or actual suicide attempts. The impact of violence and abuse on women’s mental health is widely recognised (Humphreys and Thiara, 2003) and migrant women, in the face of few options, have been found to be particularly vulnerable to depression, self-harm, and suicide ideation and attempts (Siddiqui and Patel, 2010). Unable to afford prescribed medication, many of those supported through the NRF were denied access to much needed treatment.

For women with insecure immigration status this was further exacerbated by the insecurity about their futures. Having left the abusive context, women said they were re-traumatised by the immigration process and the racialised assumptions of services about their issues. They felt out of control and this, coupled with a lack of accessible therapeutic support, entrenched women’s trauma and sense of physical and psychological safety. So much rested on the right decision being made. They also feared being separated from their children. ‘She is distressed and has lost all her confidence’ was a comment frequently made by those helping women.

Uncertainty About Future

I don't have stay, I don't know what's going to happen. I just don't want to be separated from my son.

Now I feel a bit safer. Emotionally I feel really really really stressed. What's going to happen? I have a child, he's been missing school. My future, how I will survive, my immigration.

Beyond safety, women were uncertain about their future and worried about the lengthy process ahead of them in securing their immigration status. They could not think about other things until this was done.

The insecurity–uncertainty came at a cost as many of them spoke about depression and anxiety caused by not knowing if they would have to return to an unsafe situation and/or be deported. Women could not even begin to address the impact on their wellbeing until they felt safe and secure. Once they were helped, became informed about support available to them and no longer felt alone, women were able to start addressing some of these issues.

On follow up, while women on spousal visas had been supported to secure leave to remain (though they encountered other challenges such as child contact issues), those on non-spousal visas were still awaiting outcomes of their applications almost two years after they had accessed the NRF. Even those who had indefinite leave to remain spoke

about isolation and having nothing, with some living in accommodation without the basic necessities. The toll this had taken on their mental and physical health was considerable. A woman who had been in the UK since 2001 and worked in the NHS for over a decade had to battle for over six years to regularise her status, eventually being given asylum. She had used up all her savings on legal fees, was destitute and now had serious physical and mental health issues.

If any normal person was to lose their job, their home and people they love die, fighting with the Home Office, dealing with solicitors and different organisations, its bound to affect any person. When I finally moved to my flat last year my whole body shut down. I have been needing help with my mental health for the last five years.

Another woman who had been trafficked, and deemed an over stayer, and had been subjected to high levels of physical and sexual violence, surviving an attack on her life by her husband of over 17 years, had been unsuccessfully trying to secure her status since 2003. Her case was still unresolved as she awaited further hearings. She had to sell personal items to pay for food and at the same time deal with the huge toll on her mental and physical health. Similarly, a woman who was sexually exploited for more than a decade was still trying to become secure, first starting the process in 2002 and having spent time in detention. She had paid the price through deterioration in her mental health and developed a physical disability. Another woman who was extremely traumatised and had complex mental health issues was soliciting to survive.

Looking for Help and Responses

I felt like a beggar on the street, it was like a nightmare for me.

I didn't know anything and called the police as my last hope cos' of the physical attack and beating. I thought he was going to kill me.

I didn't speak English. Just crying and with my suitcase...I lost all my money (someone stole her purse). I was thinking I would stay on the road.

Women's lack of support networks, isolation and lack of information about sources of help frustrated their exit out of abuse. At the time of contact with the NRF women had been in abusive contexts for between a year and 17 years. Mostly they did not know where they could get help and few were aware of SBS or other specialist VAWG services. Instead they had contact with a wide range of non-specialist and statutory agencies before a VAWG specialist service, which then helped them to access the NRF. They had different routes into the NRF. Some were guided by their friends to contact the police, housing or SBS; some had disclosed at their child's school; a few had accessed help from a Christian based charity, which the police had informed them about.

Before being supported by the NRF, they largely received unhelpful responses and were

passed from one agency to another without few positive interventions. A woman who was homeless and on the streets was in contact with eight agencies before she received help; once in NASS accommodation, it took a further four months to get a decision about Section 4 support. The police was the most frequent route out of abuse, often in an emergency, despite women's reluctance to report. Women had mixed responses from the police: some were assisted for a night, some were informed about a Christian charity which could not offer specialist support, were not routinely referred or informed about VAWG services, and others found they used the wrong route – the National Mechanism for Trafficking – for their immigration application. A woman who had called the police after her husband attempted to kill her and constantly made threats to do so was asked if she had a friend she could stay with. After spending the whole day at the police station, she had to take a train to her friend's place where she waited for the police to call her back for two days and the call never came. It was her friend who told her about SBS and she made contact, describing her experience with SBS as completely different to that with the police.

Since 26 out of 45 police forces are reported to be collecting immigration data, women did not feel safe calling the police. In some cases where women had called the police, or where this was done by concerned neighbours, the police had informed immigration authorities and women ended up in detention centres whilst their children, who had witnessed extensive violence, were left with the perpetrator. When the Home Office had made mistakes over women's applications, they were treated like criminals and detained. Where women had defended themselves against the perpetrator, they found themselves charged by the police. However, where they reported, the cases were deemed as no further action by the police.

She was on a student visa and due to a mix up with addresses by the HO the visa was revoked. She was detained in Yarvis Wood Immigration Removal Centre for two months and then let out on bail. Her application for a SV was rejected and she is now an overstayer. After release she experienced abuse from her partner again.

Experiences with housing agencies were largely extremely negative and this was reflected in responses also from Social Services. Women's narratives reveal the struggles they had with the latter. Some had little choice but to remain in abuse because of a lack of willingness on the part of Social Services to believe them and to give support even when they had children.

He was arrested for common assault. Since then he has been extremely controlling and psychologically abusive, and has isolated her from everyone. She is frightened of him and locks herself in her room to keep herself safe. She needs support to leave him with her children. Social Services say they are unable to help as they cannot conclude that she is the victim in the relationship.

In the face of such failures, women became homeless and destitute.

She fled from [local authority 1] with children to stay with sister-in-law, who asked her to leave after a week. Went to [local authority 2] Social Services and they told her to go back to [local authority 1]. Solace advocated with Social Services but she was still refused and offered her train ticket back to the danger area. She stayed with friends for a few nights in [local authority 3] where Social Services also refused support and contacted the perpetrator who said he would take them in and look after them. [Local authority 3] said it was a matter of private family law and declined to assist. She is scared to return to him, in the last incident he punched her in the head... in the meantime she is homeless and destitute with children.

Some Social Services departments suggested women return to country of origin and leave children with the perpetrator and others removed children and refused women any financial help.

She fled rental address to a relative's house. She has been refused Section 17 accommodation by [two local authorities]. SBS is helping her to challenge this. Local authorities have suggested children live with the perpetrator... She was living between a cousin's and a friend's house with her children after fleeing until she overstayed her welcome. Both [local authorities] Children's Services advised her that the children live with the perpetrator and she felt pressured to reconcile but fled again six months later. This issue is continuing.

Women who had accessed solicitors on their own also described the challenges they had encountered. This was considered 'one of the worst experiences' where solicitors were not interested in their cases but keen to take their money. Others were given junior people when their complex cases required specialist experience – 'I had to do so much of my own work'.

Largely, as can be seen from women's experiences, much of the current response reinforces the view that 'abused migrant women are worthless and undeserving of help'.

Value of NRF and Specialist Support Through VAWG Services

The money from the NRF helped me because I would not have been able to access a refuge quickly, which helped me to apply for my DDVC and helped me find family solicitors, immigration solicitors, talk to police and keep safe and away from my husband.

Without them I was in the street, with them I am in a house even though its temporary. I'm getting help because of their help.

First time I seen a refuge. It's like home from home. I'm very thankful to SBS, they held me by the arm and led me in the right direction. I can't forget what they

did for me. It's like visiting family, they give me such a tight hug. When I was wandering like a mad woman they pushed me forward, not held me back.

Without this help I'm in the road. I didn't know what I can do. I was homeless lady. I didn't have anything. I didn't have anybody to help.

It was like a bridge. My life changed. Most of the time I feel hope.

Receiving support from the NRF to access specialist VAWG services including SBS was a lifeline and life saving for abused migrant women who had nothing, giving them some dignity in the face of the dehumanising treatment they had received at the hands of their abusers and some professionals. They were able to access solicitors for help with immigration applications, get their biometric cards and NI numbers, receive help with benefits applications, and, for some, support with child contact applications and proceedings. Emotional support alongside practical support and the opportunity to form connections and friendships with other women in similar circumstances were all greatly valued in facilitating a sense of community and recovery.

Before I was home, cooking, just in the house. Now I am safe, I feel reborn again. My life has changed for good.

I see my support worker three times a week. She is very helpful. Any questions I have, she gives me information, and explains things. She goes to appointments the first time so I get used to it and then I do it myself.

Abused migrant women were extremely positive about BME VAWG services. Whilst their priority was to be safe, in the absence of supportive family and friends, they valued being with other BME women which helped to end their isolation – 'It's good for me. I can understand the language and I can speak to other women and we can all mix up'.

Women spoke highly of the attitude of SBS workers and other VAWG services, describing it as very different to the police and housing. They mentioned having things explained to them so they understood, of things moving quickly to ensure their safety and the emotional support they received. Help in replacing necessities such as food, documentation (passports, birth certificates) and medication was critical for those who had left home with nothing.

As well as the impact reported in section 2, women said the NRF made a difference to them in the following ways.

Being/feeling safe

I feel very safe. I just do everything just to be safe. I never been good in my life but now I am. I don't care if he finds me now (he had found her in the first refuge).

It was like a second birth for me. I'm here now surviving otherwise god knows

what would happen.

I'm really thankful to SBS. Many women are surviving because of this. He was about to kill me and I had lost all hope in life. I was like a caged bird but now I feel better.

Being safe, as noted earlier, was the biggest difference made to women and they spoke repeatedly about feeling safer once they were in a refuge/safe housing, which helped them to start rebuilding their emotional and physical strength. Knowing they did not have to return to the abusive context was life changing for women, who had believed they had no other option.

I don't know what to say...without your help I would have been killed. After giving my statement to the police I was told that I am free to go but I didn't know where to go. I had no clothes, no money, my oyster card was broken in half, I didn't have any ID documents and my bank account has been closed. My mobile phone was smashed and I didn't have my glasses so I couldn't see properly. Even if I wanted to go back to my ex-partner's room I wouldn't know how to get there. I was left alone with no help. I sat at the police station for hours and then my IDVA worker arrives and she took me to a hotel. She bought my food and soap and shampoo. She told me about SBS Fund and asked for my consent to make the application. On the next day I was placed in a refuge and I was given some money for food. I was told it is being paid by SBS and that we need to work on getting me more independent. I have sustained lots of injuries in the assault and I have had bleeding for the next four weeks. I have been very weak and I was on medication. I wasn't able to attend my employment appointments because of the pain and bleeding. I needed some space and time to recover and think about what happened to me. You gave me the time to get better. I knew that I am safe thanks to the SBS Fund. I am very grateful for your help. No one helped me and now I have people around me.

All of the women spoke about the difference made to them by being away from abuse. Being in a safe place enabled women to ensure stability for children and feel less stress and anxiety. All of this had a positive impact on their mental wellbeing.

I was able to get enough sleep, rest and after my operation I could recover from my situation. It saved me from being homeless.

Feeling stronger and happier

I'm very happy since I left and with my son I feel like I can breathe again.

If I had no help, my situation would have been very bad... India was also a risk, they know where I was, they could have done anything... My life would have been destroyed. I'm very grateful, I thank them morning and afternoon. It was a very bad time. My son keeps me strong, I won't let them destroy his future.

My counsellor encourages me a lot and my support worker to change my thinking. If I didn't have their help I would have committed suicide.

Women felt stronger and happier but had required considerable support to achieve this. However, this was just the beginning of a journey for some whose mental health was still fragile, especially if their future remained uncertain. A woman who had been subjected to extreme physical and sexual violence over a year, with great cost to her physical (injured eye and teeth) and mental health (constant suicidal thoughts and attempted suicide) was slowly being built back up through counselling and intense support.

They kept me so ignorant of things and stopped me from moving forward. They put emotional pressure to protect the family and said nothing to him... I thought about suicide constantly but SBS made the difference. After counselling I notice a difference in myself... now I'm determined to show him what I can make of myself.

Women were positive about the warmth and support provided by VAWG services, something they had previously never received from anyone. They constantly referred to SBS as being part of a family.

Support from SBS was amazing. I feel like I was part of the family and everyone was so kind and welcoming.

They solved my problem. I appreciate what they are doing for us. SBS shows so much care and interest. They have excellent services. They so understand and solved my problem. I really appreciate it.

The No Recourse Fund and the support SBS has provided is absolutely amazing. It is not even excellent. It is triple. I cannot thank you as those words are not enough.

The Fund helped me a lot. I was abandoned in Pakistan. My in-laws ruined my mind and made me out to be mad. This has really upset me and I did not see my son for months. SBS helped me a lot. I am very grateful. The worker is very good and the kindest. She goes with me wherever I need to go. She helps me to the High Court. The money you gave me was a godsend. I thank you very much. I am going to look for work once there has been a decision about my son, there is a further delay in my hearing. But I want to work and I want to show that I can be useful and have my son with me. I thank you again for your help.

Women were enabled to access a wide range of additional support and help, such as a Support Group, which was considered a lifeline by women (see also Sharma and Marsh, 2017).

Support group is amazing. I have made friends and learnt different skills. I feel mentally good that I am coming here every week. I feel good. If I don't have the NRF I cannot come to Support Group and English class. If I cannot come I just lie in my bed and think I should just die.

More aware/informed of support/help available

I didn't know anything and called the police as my last hope cos' of the physical attack and beating. I thought he was going to kill me.

Those women who had been helped by the NRF and accessed VAWG services became more aware of their rights and better informed about other organisations and help available to them. Women said they felt reassured by this and now felt they had support networks rather than being alone.

Before I was just blank. I was so depressed, just worried about the next day. Now I know where to go for help but before I knew nothing.

Now I know more, before nothing. Now I know where to get help and how to ask. In the beginning I go to police just to escape, I knew nothing, no English. Now I am different.

Had they been aware of such help, women said this would have enabled them to leave earlier.

I did not know about this before otherwise I may have left earlier and saved myself so many difficulties... Without the NRF women and children would be staying on in violence relationships.

As noted earlier in section 2, some women knew more about their rights but still lacked the confidence to ask for help.

Challenges

Alongside the invaluable role of the NRF in altering their situations, women highlighted challenges that remained.

Denied crucial support

Women with no recourse were denied support they desperately required. They wanted support to be accessible and affordable. Travel to solicitors or counsellors could be difficult because they did not have the money to pay for travel – 'do you spend £3 to get to support or to buy food?' A woman who was extremely depressed and in great need of

counselling was not yet able to access any funds and hence unable to get the support she needed. Others with depression found it difficult to keep their appointments if they had to travel some distance resulting in a lack of access to help needed for recovery.

A woman whose partner had made an application for child contact (as a way of continuing the abuse) found the court allocated for her case was at a great distance, costing her £100 by taxi and taking up to two hours to get to. For another woman, the long walk to her son's school was a source of great anxiety as it was too much for a small child – 'even to catch a bus it is a 20 minute walk. How can a child walk so far? There are schools nearby, they're all full'. Women were being referred to non-specialist services and then getting referred on to VAWG organisations which delayed their access to much needed support.

Women wanted key support to be accessible, timely and affordable.

Lengthy process

All of the women spoke about the length of the process for them to become settled and/or resolve immigration status and the anxiety this caused them (see below). This took longer for women with no NI number or other documentation, especially if they had no children. They were entirely dependent on the NRF. Whilst waiting, they were housed at a distance and found it difficult to access the support provided for them, such as counselling through a GP.

Although getting the DDV Concession was mostly experienced positively, especially when supported by VAWG specialists, some women had problems/delays with getting their benefits. In such cases, the NRF was invaluable in providing a stopgap.

The NRF helped me to have sustenance and pay my service charge while I was not able to access funds. It takes a long time for benefits to be set up and in the process the NRF helped me by having an income that would allow me to buy food and necessities.

Need longer and more

It is not enough if they have to travel on public transport more often. Travel is very expensive. If you're not close to a library internet access is very expensive as well. Phone calls can be expensive too so all that should be taken into consideration.

I had nothing, no money. £30 was enough at that time. But I had a child so they should give more help... but I am happy with the help I got, I had no one in this country.

I have been fighting for over 15 years to stay, what more do I have to do? How much longer is it going to take?

Women were extremely grateful for receiving the funds from the NRF, particularly as they

had been denied money and never had any of their own – ‘it was enough at the time because I had nothing to feed my son’. However, on reflection the majority said it was not enough to live on (£30 per week) and suggested the amount should be increased. Women who had been financially abused were able for the first time to have money but struggled to manage on the amount provided, relying on food banks and friends (if they had any) to supplement the amount given.

Women who had children especially mentioned the need for a higher amount of subsistence or those who had specific needs, such as for clothing or when they had to travel to school, doctors, and solicitors to access support.

It would have been helpful to have some daily meal subsistence for me and my children and to have some of my travel costs covered as I have children to take to school and I lives in a different borough. If some kitchen supplies could also be ensured when there is childcare involved that would be very helpful.

I think its great, even getting this much support was very helpful to me. It is a small amount and I think more money is needed – for a single person its manageable but for people with children and especially if they need more items then it would not be enough – i.e. nappies. Where I was staying was good also with other women and children.

The £30 weekly helped me to travel to appointments and some food. I think more money should be offered for a longer period of time for travel and food and bills so I don't worry and can concentrate on finding a job so I can become settled again.

The money helped with food for my daughter and her clothes. It helped with bus fares to collect my child at contact times and days. I was living in a safe place. I had dignity as I had a little money in my purse and budgeted to live.

The amount of accommodation support provided also made it a challenge for some to find housing, especially in London. The complexity of women's cases, particularly for non-spousal women, and delays in obtaining biometrics and NI numbers means that a longer time is required to support them through a complicated immigration process than the three months currently funded. Cases of single women take even longer to resolve. It was suggested that help should be available for at least six-eight months to enable women to ensure some sense of security and safety.

I was unsafe at my friend's house. It would have been great if there was longer as my DDVC visa was delayed. The bar code for the biometrics letter did not work which caused a delay.

I don't know how much more I have to do to prove what happened to me. I suffered at his hands and now I am suffering because I still don't know how long it will take to get my stay.

I have nothing. I have spent everything I have on fighting my case. Sometimes I feel I have also lost my mind.

It is evident that abused migrant women need support for longer than three months and need greater level of support than currently available to them.

4. Professionals Views

This section reports the findings from the three group discussions with women's organisations, individual discussion and survey feedback from key specialist agencies and discussion with SBS staff involved in the administration of the NRF. This data aimed to gain the perspectives of those with experience of supporting women with NRPF and accessing the NRF to identify issues both with the operation of the DDV Concession as well as insights into the issues faced by women on a non-spousal visa.

Precarious doesn't sum up how women are living.

Professionals acknowledged the precarious position of abused migrant women and the continuing discriminatory responses they receive, which frequently frame them as immigration offenders in need of punishment rather than VAWG victim-survivors in need of support and protection. In this way, violence in women's intimate lives intersects with structural violence to constrict women's options and choices. The work to support abused migrant women continues to fall disproportionately on BME VAWG organisations, which have the expertise to respond to the complexity of women's immigration issues and abuse experiences.

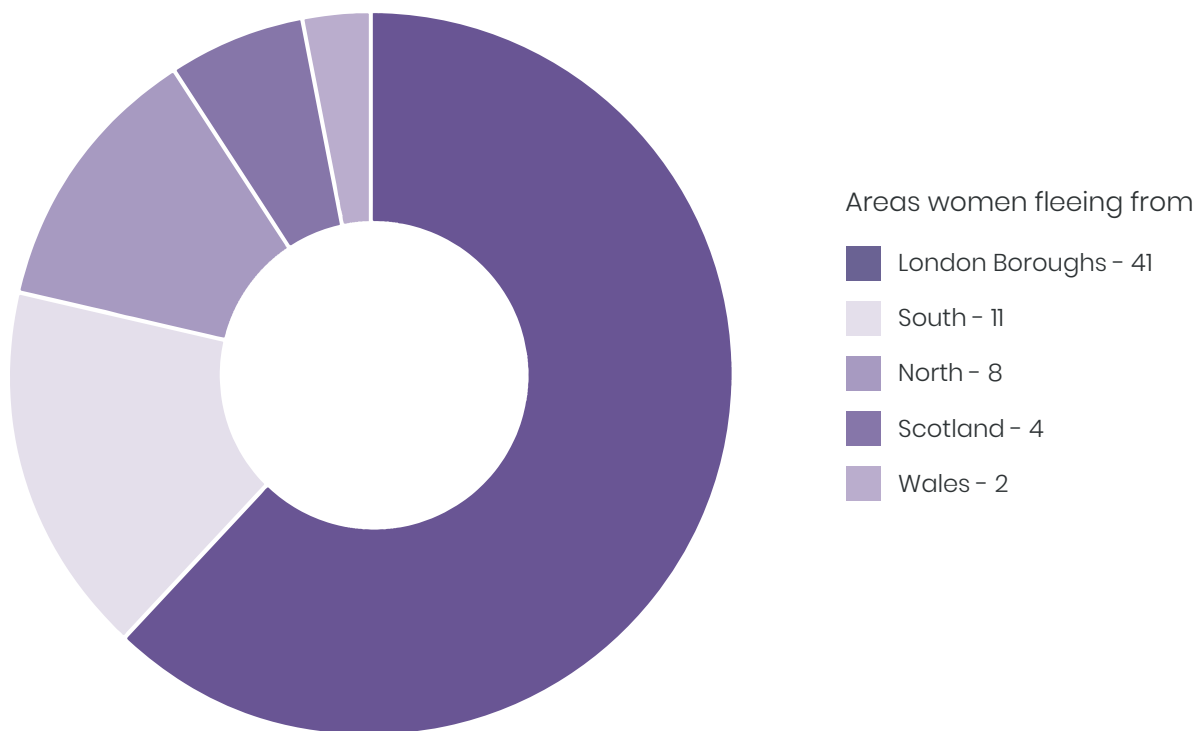
Use of the NRF

The NRF took some time to become known, despite publicity and training provided to organisations. It was mainly in the second year that the Fund began to be utilised by a range of organisations outside of London, highlighting the need to run the project for longer than two years. Data shows that although a half of women accessed the NRF through SBS, the Fund was also used by organisations across England and Scotland, as follows:

- Solace (n=11); Refuge East European Service (n=3); Shakti Women's Aid (n=3); Anah Project (n=2); Athena (n=2); Hestia (n=2); Victim Support (n=2); British Red Cross (n=2); Ashiana (n=1); Reigate and Barnstead Women's Aid (n=1); Saheliya (n=1); Praxis (n=1); Greater Manchester Police (n=1); Changing Lives (n=1); IKWRO (n=1); Bradford Women's Aid (n=1).

Given that the previous NRF was only accessible to women in London, the message that it could be drawn on by those outside London took some time to register. This could highlight the need to conduct more extensive development work with those outside London who do not readily access networks in London. Indeed, it was evident from interviews that many services remained unaware of the existence of the NRF as a possible resource for supporting women with NRPF. The initial under-utilisation by mainstream services is also likely to reflect many organisations' lack of confidence about accepting and supporting women with NRPF. Consequently, as shown in the following diagram, the majority of women seeking help through the NRF were fleeing from several London boroughs (n=41; 58.5%); 11 were from the South; 8 from the North; 4 were from Scotland; and 2 from Wales.

Diagram 3: Areas women were fleeing from



Professionals highlighted the following key issues.

DDV Concession Relies on Specialist BME VAWG Organisations

While the DDV Concession was considered to be working well this was thought to be a result of specialist BME VAWG organisations informing women about the process, linking them with specialist immigration solicitors/advisors, helping women to submit applications whilst also offering them a range of other much needed support (see also Kesete, 2013). Women were also very clear that they would struggle to do this on their own; indeed where women had not benefitted from those with expertise in immigration matters they experienced delays or negative outcomes to their applications. A woman whose case was still on-going had been financially drained by inexperienced legal officers when she had not been in contact with the NRF. In other cases where women were supported by services without expertise, they reported difficulties in the process. Problems with online and telephone applications remained issues especially for those not supported by a specialist service. Thus, the smooth operation of the process is based on women receiving timely and adequate support from specialist BME VAWG organisations and being linked with experienced and reputable immigration advisors.

Continuing Challenges with DDV Concession Process

Continuing problems with the operation of the DDV Concession were reported by a number of respondents:

The need to obtain biometric⁷ details was said to cause delay as women have to wait longer before they obtain the change in leave status and access benefits. Issues were also highlighted about the limited places where the biometric service is provided, with

some women having to travel a great distance to access this. As also noted by Kesete (2013) in her evaluation of the pilot, sometimes women had to return to re-register if it did not work the first time, creating challenges for women who had little or no money for travel. This was reported in a number of the cases accessing the NRF. Women sometimes being expected to pay for their biometric details (even though they are exempt from doing so under the DDV Concession) had been the experience of some organisations.

The need for language support was a factor for a substantial majority of women. Where they were helped by a women's organisation that did not have this in place women commented on the efforts made by staff to understand them. It was evident that this is a necessary underpin, alongside the wide range of emotional, financial and other support provided to women. A number of responding organisations repeatedly commented on the lack of interpreting facilities as a challenge encountered in supporting abused migrant women and something that was left to BME women's organisations to do.

The challenges of evidence with regard to domestic violence have been acknowledged previously. It has also been shown that women in the asylum process are rarely believed and considered to be making things up to strengthen their cases, especially if not supported by specialist women's organisations (Thiara and Roy, 2020). Although domestic violence and VAWG organisations are able to provide women with letters of support as part of the accepted evidence, issues with some services without expertise writing inadequate letters were repeatedly highlighted which result in poorer outcomes. This clearly underlines the need for training for staff supporting women with DDV Concession applications.

A key pillar of the DDV Concession is access to benefits while women await outcomes of their applications. However, a number of organisations highlighted issues with delays in women being able to access benefits. A continuing issue relates to the lack of or limited knowledge of the DDV Concession on the part of staff in JobCentre Plus and an unwillingness to apply the Job Seekers Allowance DV Easement (which exempts DV victims from labour market conditions which requires applicants to be available for work and actively seeking work for up to 13 weeks) introduced in April 2012. In a number of cases women were expected to meet the Habitual Residency Test and turned down when this was deemed to be unmet even if they had a waiver from the Home Office. Research done by the DWP (2013) has also shown that Benefits Office staff was unaware of the DDV Concession. In addition, local authority Housing Department staff was also reported to be unaware of the DDV Concession.

As noted earlier, all of the women had been economically abused and had left with little or nothing to their name. Most had been prevented from having independent financial means and their own bank accounts, relying on tiny hand outs to meet their personal needs. The lack of bank accounts is an issue in the payment of benefits, usually paid into an account, for many. Challenges were encountered in providing proof of identity to the banks, as many left without or never had such documents, as well as proof of address, as many lived in temporary accommodation, often a bed and breakfast or a refuge, the

address of which they could not disclose. Thus there is concern that some women are not getting timely benefits and housing, leading to a call for the Department of Work and Pensions, like UKBA, to monitor and fast track DDV Concession applications.

Lack of Knowledge and Reluctance to Undertake Complex Immigration Work

Although some refuges reserve a limited number of spaces for women with NRPF and do their best to support them, many refuges also lack knowledge and expertise of immigration issues and regard them as too complex. Sometimes this is due to a lack of willingness to undertake the level of work required. This was also highlighted in the pilot of the DDV Concession, with a quarter not being able to assist women with NRPF (Kesete, 2013:8), as well as a general lack of training for practitioners. Many voluntary sector organisations were considered to be unaware of reforms, with refuges being reluctant to support women only entitled to benefits for a period of three months (even though benefits should continue if there is an appeal against refusal) and/or not applying to the NRF. In general, the complexity of immigration cases and possible financial implications – refuges refuse to take women in immediately as they are worried they will not get the funds – were deterrents to many accepting women with NRPF.

The tendency of refuges to only accept women if they have a NI number, biometric card and are entitled to benefits and will get ILR means the initial immigration work has already been done at the point of entry into a refuge, often by BME VAWG services – *'This is a pattern. You do the work and we will take her in'*. Some carry out no work on immigration applications and expect women to do this themselves. This is part of the wider crisis that refuge services face and some women were reported to return to SBS to get help with their applications. Many were also not able to provide the intersectional advocacy that abused migrant women required. Generic organisations commissioned for 'No Recourse' work lack expertise in this area and tend to refer to specialist BME services, expecting them to undertake the support work without any funding. There are particular issues for EU nationals also who work in the informal economy and have no NI number and tax proof. Whilst they can exercise Treaty rights they cannot claim benefits and thus are likely to be turned away by refuges.

Non-Spousal Women Locked Out of Systems

It was reported that few VAWG services are prepared to accept women on a non-spousal visa, effectively locking such women out of protection and support. These women are also too scared to access help they need desperately. Even when they do, other than specialist BME VAWG services, many organisations are not well placed to help them.

Non-spousal women are disproportionately affected by poverty and homelessness and by structural violence. It was reported that GPs are not registering non-spousal women as this is against the law if the women are not lawfully present in the UK and the Home Office can access GP data to catch those deemed to be illegal. Private landlords and B&Bs which can be very isolating for women in any case, also refuse to rent if women do not have the

relevant documents and/or exploit women, cutting off this route to house women while their cases are being processed. Young women who came to the UK as students and are unable to sustain living costs were said to become sex workers to survive or were sexually exploited by predatory men in communities.

Some police forces were reported to be using incorrect mechanisms for women, advising them to go through the Trafficking route when this is inappropriate, resulting in refusals. Some police areas are using immigration rather than safeguarding, detaining women and reporting them to the Home Office. Moreover, that some professionals believe that getting a perpetrator deported is the best way to protect women was also highlighted. Some MARACs consider the woman's and perpetrator's immigration status to see if he can be deported. Concerningly, some professionals were reported to be telling women they cannot leave the abusive context because of their immigration status and some social workers wanting to send women back, reinforcing what men constantly threaten women with.

Thus wider immigration policies and law are undermining women and children's rights. Consequently, it takes migrant women longer to become secure, to deal with the effects of abuse and to rebuild their lives. Asylum applications can take up to three years or more and pending their outcomes, women are often dispersed to areas where they are acutely isolated and without support. Where women go after a refuge is largely unknown. This is the reason why it was difficult for women to secure housing/accommodation at the point of exit from the NRF and also to follow women up – many had changed phone numbers or were unavailable.

Administrative Issues

A number of issues arose in the administration of the NRF that reflect the findings about the lack of knowledge and expertise in the VAWG sector about how to deal with complex immigration issues that abused migrant women present with. SBS as a known specialist picked up additional work as many women, positive about the intervention from SBS, were supported over the telephone even when they had gone to other services. Since applications to the NRF had to be done online, a worker had to sit on the telephone with applicants to help them to complete the form. Many organisations did not complete the relevant paperwork and/or took too long to submit the outcomes form, at times after a woman had left their service. This resulted in a number of incomplete or part completed forms.

Case Study – Alice

Alice moved to the UK 16 years ago with her three eldest children. Prior to this, she was subjected to regular physical abuse by her first husband, which was witnessed by her children, until his death. In the UK she entered into a relationship, fell pregnant, and was subjected to physical and verbal abuse throughout her pregnancy. She made the decision to leave three months after the birth of her child and had no contact with the child's father. In 2013, a new relationship became controlling and abusive, with a high level of coercive control. The abuse often occurred in front of the children. The police were called several times and her older son attempted to take her younger children to ensure they were in a safer environment. Her partner did not work and expected Alice to pay for everything even though he knew she had restricted income because of her immigration status.

Alice has No Recourse to Public Funds as she came to the UK on a visitor's visa and was granted temporary leave to remain on account of her ancestry. This expired in 2014, making her an over-stayer. She tried to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) but her son took her passport away and she has since not had the funds for an application to the Home Office. SBS was first contacted by Social Services in 2015 because of the domestic violence and also to seek assistance for her immigration status. However, successful contact could not be made with Alice following this referral.

After leaving her second UK partner, Alice moved in with a new partner in mid-2016 and became engaged. Soon after she suffered high levels of verbal abuse and occasional physical violence. This was reported to the police on several occasions. Her children were also subjected to verbal abuse and on occasion refused entry into his house. Alice escaped from this relationship in mid-2017 and was offered temporary accommodation by Social Services until her brother offered to accommodate her and her children at a rental property in Wales. Shortly after they settled into the property, her brother became abusive, subjecting the family to emotional and financial abuse on a regular basis. Money given to her by her sister to fund an ILR application was instead used by her brother. The mistreatment of her children by her brother and his girlfriend eventually led to her daughters running away.

The stress and abuse caused Alice to have a heart attack in 2018; she also suffered from panic attacks. One of her daughters started to haemorrhage from the stress and became very ill. She eventually left when her brother forced her out of their home. She had no money to support herself and her children. She took refuge with a neighbour who allowed her to stay whilst she sought help from the council, from whom she received a very negative response. She was dismissed and told to go to another city in Wales instead, but she had no money to get there. Meanwhile, her brother continued to emotionally abuse and to physically intimidate Alice and threatened to go to the police and have her deported. In desperation, she returned to London mid-2018 after a friend agreed to accommodate her and her child, whilst another dependent child stayed with a relative.

Support provided

Alice presented at SBS with her daughter in mid-June 2018. She was extremely distressed and fearful that her children would be taken away from her due to her immigration status. A risk assessment found her to be at high risk of domestic violence; she suffered from long-term physical and emotional abuse, depression, isolation, suicidal ideation, and homelessness. She was supported in the following ways:

- An immediate referral was made to Social Services for accommodation funded under Section 17 of the Children's Act.

A social worker contacted Alice and the friend that she was staying with soon after the referral. The social worker was very rude and impatient and asked Alice's friend why she could not allow Alice and her daughter to stay on their sofa and questioned the extent of Alice's homelessness. The social worker also made contact with her colleague in Wales and reported this social worker had no knowledge of Alice's brother's abuse and that her child did not need Children's Services involvement as they had no grounds to consider her at risk. Both social workers told Alice to sort out her immigration status and used this to justify why they could not help her.

- Three weeks later Alice was accompanied by SBS to present at Social Services in the hope they would change their decision; it was decided if they did not then a legal challenge would be made. They agreed to temporarily house Alice but did not grant her Section 17 funding as they were still disputing her history of domestic violence.

When contacting her social worker, Alice was advised to return to Wales although her abuser was located there. She was offered transport but no accommodation. Alice refused, saying that she would rather die than return to a place where she was subject to so much stress and trauma.

- Alice was given access to the 'No Recourse Fund' to temporarily provide her with subsistence and accommodation after she was denied Section 17 funding and forced to vacate the temporary accommodation she had been given.
- Contact was made with a community care solicitor to prepare the challenge to Social Services' decision to deny Alice Section 17 funding. The solicitor required evidence to build a case against Social Services, such as details of police reports, which were provided.

Upon receiving the pre-action correspondence from the solicitor, Social Services re-assessed Alice for Section 17 funding and provided her with accommodation. Two and a half months after her first contact with SBS, Alice presented at Social Services once again with SBS and was finally allocated accommodation by Social Services.

- Once accommodation had been secured, SBS focused on Alice's immigration status. She was unable to afford an application for Leave to Remain. Contact

was made with CORAM Children's Legal Centre for advice regarding this and a referral was made to the Hackney Migrant Centre for assistance in making an Exceptional Case Funding application. SBS attended with Alice in mid-September.

Alice was advised by Hackney Migrant Centre about her immigration status and that of her two dependant daughters. The eldest daughter has a British father but his name is not on her birth certificate and so paternity has to be proved. Her younger daughter has lived in the UK for long enough and can apply for discretionary citizenship, but lacks the funding to do so though one of Alice's sisters may be willing to assist. SBS has helped Alice to collect evidence so that she can make an application for ILR through ancestry, with recourse to public funds and CORAM has also assisted in finding ways to do this. If unable to secure this route for the three immigration applications, an application can be made under the 7-year rule.

- Attempts to apply for Child Maintenance mid-September 2018 were frustrated as Alice was not in receipt of Child Benefit, criteria she cannot meet as she has No Recourse to Public Funds. With advice from CORAM, a number of attempts were made to challenge this and that Child Maintenance Services wrongly use Child Benefit to identify habitual residence. After weeks and much advocacy, the application was finally made for Alice and her daughter to be properly assessed.
- Alice was unhappy in the accommodation provided by Social Services, which houses drug users, and there was a knife fight in the building to which her daughter responded by calling the police. Alice fears for her own and her daughter's safety but her request to be relocated has not been responded to by Social Services as she has not been allocated a social worker.

SBS is supporting Alice to gather all the necessary evidence to make an application for ILR. If granted recourse to public funds, SBS will assist in applying for benefits that will enable her to become financially stable.

5. Recommendations

Clearly, a large number of migrant women subjected to gender violence are left unprotected, insecure and without support. The data shows that 40% of all women accessing support from the NRF were on a non-spousal visa and are not entitled to support under the DDV Concession (41% were on a spousal visa and 19% EEA/EU nationals). That almost as many women on a spousal visa accessed the NRF highlights the on-going challenges also faced by those who are eligible for the DDV Concession in accessing the support and protection they need. The issues encountered by abused EEA/EU nationals also create concern.

The findings show that women with insecure immigration status who have NRPF are subjected to some of the most extreme forms of violence but have constricted options. They experience chronic mental ill-health and once they pluck up the courage to leave, often in desperation, they are further re-traumatised by the immigration system which blocks or delays avenues to help, leaving women without safety, security and protection. In order to meet its Human Rights obligation in affording protection to all victim-survivors of VAWG and in addressing the challenges faced by women on non-spousal visas, as well as the continuing problems in the administration of the DDV Concession, the following recommendations are suggested to address these issues.

- ***The DDV Concession should be extended from three months to six - eight months.***

The three month period is insufficient for a range of reasons: gathering of evidence can take a long time; there can be delays in accessing specialist immigration legal aid solicitors; very few solicitors are willing to take on complex cases; there are delays in women getting their benefits. This would help agencies to gather evidence, have good statements, identify specialists for reports and have funds for in-country and psychiatric reports.

- ***The DDV Concession to be extended to all women who have insecure immigration status and are being subjected to gender violence.***

The majority of women have been in the country for a number of years and are experiencing VAWG. An amnesty for such women is required – they have contributed to society, often have children and are part of the invisible and key workforce. For a range of reasons returning to the country of origin is untenable because of threats to their safety and life.

- ***Subsistence should be increased to be in line with Universal Credit.***

Support to those with NRPF should be in line with Universal Credit to ensure women and children have the minimum financial support to rebuild their lives. This should also be available to those on a non-spousal visa.

- ***Training and guidance for statutory organisations (including the Department for Work and Pensions, local benefits agency and Housing).***

The Department for Work and Pensions needs to make the process easier through a new Directive or Memo as the Home Office waiver through the DWP is not recognised or even understood at a local level. The process at Benefits Offices is lengthy and this should be expedited on grounds of VAWG/DV so that housing benefit and Job Seekers Allowance is granted within 2-3 weeks rather than 8-12 weeks it takes currently. Training for local Benefits Agency and Housing staff is required on this issue.

In the face of issues highlighted in Police and Social Services practice, guidance is required on their duty to protect abused migrant women rather than enforce immigration control.

- ***Establish safe reporting pathways for abused migrant women.***

To enable abused migrant women have access to support from the Police and other statutory agencies, without fear of being deported or detained, safe reporting pathways are needed. This includes establishing a firewall to separate life-saving specialist support from immigration control.

- ***Training and knowledge development among mainstream VAWG services.***

Given reluctance and lack of knowledge and expertise among refuges and VAWG organisations to support abused migrant women with NRPF, training should be provided to address these gaps and to change practice.

- ***Funding for specialist BME refuges and support services that have an expertise in providing wrap around holistic support to abused migrant women.***

Specialist BME VAWG services tend to have an understanding of immigration complexities and issues but generic refuge services lack understanding and struggle with the concept of concessions. The majority of women are placed with BME VAWG services, with only around two out of 10 women going to mainstream refuges. Since the major responsibility for addressing these issues falls on BME VAWG services/refuges greater resourcing is required.

- ***Extension of Legal Aid to abused migrant women.***

Legal aid should be provided for all women with insecure immigration and NRPF to prevent them from being trapped in abusive relationships or dependence on the NRF.

- ***Fast tracking of VAWG cases through a specialist trained team-unit.***

Fast tracking of VAWG cases through a specialist team should be explored and it should be ensured that the system operates fairly. This team should be trained annually. In addition,

officers dealing with dependent visas and over stayers who have limited or no knowledge of VAWG should be trained.

Further, there is a need for the Home Office to process cases – including biometrics – more speedily and give emergency payments until benefits are secured.

- ***Develop a comprehensive strategy on violence against migrant women***

There is an urgent need to have a single framework for support and protection that addresses all the intersectional barriers that lead to abuse, homelessness, destitution, and exploitation amongst all migrant women. This holistic and comprehensive strategy should focus on protection for all abused migrant women and follow the contours of the existing multi-pronged strategy for VAWG in general.

Endnotes

- 1 They are not entitled to most non-contributory social security benefits, including housing, by virtue of s115 Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 which prevents “a person subject to immigration control” from receiving these benefits. Those who are NRPF are specifically excluded under subsection 9(b).
- 2 Destitute women facing violence are not classified as ‘vulnerable adults’ unless they can show vulnerability due to other reasons.
- 3 The Campaign to Abolish NRPF was set up in 2007, led by SBS, and included Women’s Aid, Amnesty International UK and Women’s Resource Centre; it was later joined by more organisations. It sought to exempt all victims of gender based violence (GBV) from NRPF, including trafficked women and domestic workers.
- 4 Although the DDV Concession was much welcomed, at the same time, the government also increased the probationary period from two to five years in July 2012 to safeguard against ‘sham’ marriages.
- 5 SBS has run a NRF since 2009. In the first year or so, the NRF provided these services UK wide but for some years afterwards it was funded by London Councils and therefore limited to women in London. However, from July 2017 to June 2019 it was England wide as it was also funded by the Tampon Tax fund. The NRF is last resort as it only funds cases where women do not have other options, including access to local authority support or welfare benefits; or where there is a temporary unavoidable delay in accessing these options.
- 6 Access to benefits for EEA and Swiss nationals is dependent on what they (and/or their EEA or Swiss family members) are doing in the UK. They are unable to access the DDV Concession or welfare benefits, including housing benefit, if they are not working or self-employed.
- 7 After a confirmation of receipt of the DDVC application, the Home Office sends applicants a biometric notification letter with instructions on how to enroll biometric details.

References

Amnesty International and Southall Black Sisters (2008) *'No Recourse', No Safety: The Government's failure to protect women from violence*, London.

Anitha, S., Roy, A. and Yalamarty, H. (2016) *Disposable women: Abuse, violence and abandonment in transnational marriages*, University of Lincoln, Lincoln.

Anitha, S. (2010) 'No recourse, no support: State policy and practice towards South Asian women facing domestic violence in the UK', *British Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 40 (2): 462-79.

Bates, L., Gangoli, G., Hester, M. and Justice Project Team (2018) *Policy Evidence Summary 1: Migrant Women*, University of Bristol, Bristol. Available at <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sies/sps/documents/justice/migrant-women-policy-evidence-summary-pdf>

Campaign to Abolish No Recourse to Public Funds (2013) *Home Office Concession for Destitute Victims of Domestic Violence and a Call to Save the Lives of All Women and Children*, London.

Davidge, S. and Magnusson, L. (2019) *The Domestic Abuse Report 2019: The Annual Audit*, Women's Aid, Bristol.

Department for Work and Pension (2013) *Domestic Violence: Implementation of JSA DV Easement and DDV Concession – Small Scale Qualitative Research*, DWP, London.

Fundamental Rights Agency (2015) *Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. Main results*, Publications Office of the EU, Luxembourg.

Humphreys, C. and Thiara, R. (2003) 'Domestic violence and mental health: 'I call it symptoms of abuse'', *British Journal of Social Work*, 33: 209-226.

Imkaan (2017) *Safe Pathways? Exploring an Intersectional Approach to Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls – Good Practice Briefing*, Ascent (London VAWG Consortium), London.

Kesete, N.Z. (2013) *Destitution Domestic Violence Concession – Monitoring Research Report*, Eaves and SBS, London.

Mayor of London (2010) *The Way Forward Taking action to end violence against women and girls Final Strategy 2010 – 2013*, Available at https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/the_way_forward_-_strategy.pdf

McIlwaine, C., Granada, L. and Valenzuela-Oblitas, I. (2019) *The Right to be Believed: Migrant women facing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in the 'hostile immigration environment' in London*, Kings College London and the Latin American Women's Rights Service, London.

Safety4Sisters (2016) *Migrant women's rights to safety: Pilot project*, Manchester.

Sharma, S. and Marsh, V. (2017) 'Group Work: a powerful site of resistance for migrant women experiencing gender-based violence', *Families, Relationships and Societies*, Vol. 6 (2): 307-15.

Siddiqui, H. (2013) 'Ending the Stark Choice: Domestic Violence or Destitution in the UK', *Open Democracy*, 3 December. Available at <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/shine-a-light/ending-stark-choice-domestic-violence-or-destitution-in-uk/>

Siddiqui, H. and Patel, M/SBS (2010) *Safe and Sane*, Available at <http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk/reports/safe-and-sane-report/>

Southall Black Sisters (2019) *Protection for All: The Domestic Abuse Bill and Migrant Women. A Briefing Paper*, SBS, London.

Southall Black Sisters and Women's Resource Centre (2007) *'How Can I Support Her?' Domestic violence, immigration and women with no recourse to public funds*, London.

Thiara R.K. (2010) 'Continuing Control: child contact and post-separation violence', in Thiara, R.K. and A.K. Gill (eds) 2010 *Violence Against Women in South Asian Communities: Issues for Policy and Practice*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Thiara, R.K. (2019) *Safe and Secure: The No Recourse Fund: Interim Findings*, SBS, London.

Thiara, R.K. and Roy, S. (2020) *Reclaiming Voice: Minoritised Women and Sexual Violence*, Imkaan and University of Warwick, London.

Thiara, R.K. and Gill, A.K (eds.) (2010) *Violence Against Women in South Asian Communities: Issues for Policy and Practice*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London.

Walby, S. and Towers, J. (2017) 'Measuring Violence to End Violence: Mainstreaming Gender', *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, Vol. 1 (1): 11-31.

Women's Aid (2017) *Nowhere to Turn: Findings from the first year of the No Women Turned Away project*, Bristol.

World Health Organisation (2013) *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence Against Women*, WHO.



Dr Ravi K Thiara

Associate Professor of Sociology
University of Warwick

www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/staff/thiara



Dr Hannana Siddiqui

Project Advisor – Policy & Research
Southall Black Sisters

www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

December 2020

Published by Southall Black Sisters

ISBN 978-1-8383051-0-9



9 781838 305109 >