



HMSC

**HARINGEY MIGRANT
SUPPORT CENTRE**



ANNUAL REVIEW 2018-19

Haringey Migrant Support Centre

About us

Haringey Migrant Support Centre is a charity, staffed by volunteers and a small number of paid workers, that was set up in 2012 to run a weekly drop-in service offering advice and support to migrants in Haringey and its neighbouring boroughs.

Why we are here

If you are a migrant, life in the UK can be very precarious. The Windrush scandal has revealed the devastating impact of the 'hostile environment', unveiled in 2012 and made concrete in the 2016 Immigration Act. The result has been ever-harsher immigration laws; the spiraling cost of immigration applications (apart from asylum); steep NHS charges for those who fall ill; and a ban on welfare benefits (including for many with the right to live and work here). This has been compounded by the lack of legal aid and free/low-cost legal services, not to mention over ten years of austerity policies that have left local authority housing provision and social services in crisis. The experience of many migrants today is often one of destitution and homelessness. As we face the prospect of an even more punitive immigration regime, the services HMSC offers are needed now more than ever.

Message from Fiona McKay, Chair of Trustees

HMSC was formed in Haringey in 2012 by local people to meet the needs of migrants in the community facing desperate circumstances.

Unfortunately, these needs have continued and become ever more complex. The Centre provides legal and social welfare advice and assistance, a safe space and a hot lunch to hundreds each month. I am continually in awe of the extraordinary commitment of our staff and volunteers who strive week after week, determined to get the best results possible for each individual and treating each one sympathetically and professionally. For many we are able to make a significant difference, and we do the best we possibly can for everyone who comes through the door.



*About 30 people
volunteer for HMSC
every week*



**Our Trustees
(April 2018 - March 2019)**

Clare Croft-White: Chair (resigned Nov 2018)
Fiona McKay: Chair (appointed Nov 2018)
Margaid Gosschalk: Secretary
Christopher Heyes: Treasurer (resigned Nov 2018)
Cornelia Bower: Treasurer (appointed Nov 2018)
Chris Parr
Claudia Claros-Saavedra
Elizabeth Charles
Elizabeth Heaton
Elizabeth Stazicker (resigned May 2018)
Helen Jackson-Grimes (appointed Nov 2018)
Lisa Vlahovic
Sheila Fletcher
Philip Naylor (resigned Nov 2018)
Violeta Butcovan

**Our Members of Staff
(April 2018 – March 2019)**

Full-time:
Karolina Maroszek: Centre
Manager

Part-time or free-lance:
Judith Lancet: Destitution
Coordinator
Jennifer Blair: Immigration Adviser
Leila Hekmat: Volunteer
Coordinator (to December 2018)
Rosa Pinard: Casework
Administrator then Interim Office
Manager (to April 2019)
Anna Konarska: Fundraiser

What we do

The primary purpose of HMSC is to identify and improve the legal position and personal well-being of migrants, irrespective of their immigration status

We work towards this goal by running a drop-in triage service on a Monday, which is open to people from all migrant groups, regardless of their specific immigration status, but with a particular focus on those who are unable to access advice or support elsewhere.

The drop-in reception venue, where visitors register for the triage session, provides a safe and welcoming space, helping reduce social isolation. At the triage, we offer professional advice on immigration and housing or welfare issues; practical help to alleviate immediate hardship; referrals or signposting to other services; and a number of appointments with immigration lawyers and housing/welfare experts for more in-depth advice and help.

As HMSC has an ethos of empowerment, we also offer visitors the opportunity to become involved in supporting themselves and others. And finally, we participate in campaigns around issues relating to migrants and, in particular, seek to raise awareness of their circumstances amongst the local community.



“Working for HMSC is incredibly inspiring because we see people who are more or less on the margins of society, people living in abject poverty, hyper poverty, and yet, in the face of that, they resist and they survive. We see a very large number of women who are the most incredible people you can imagine because they manage to support their families against all the odds.”

Jude Lancet, Destitution Coordinator

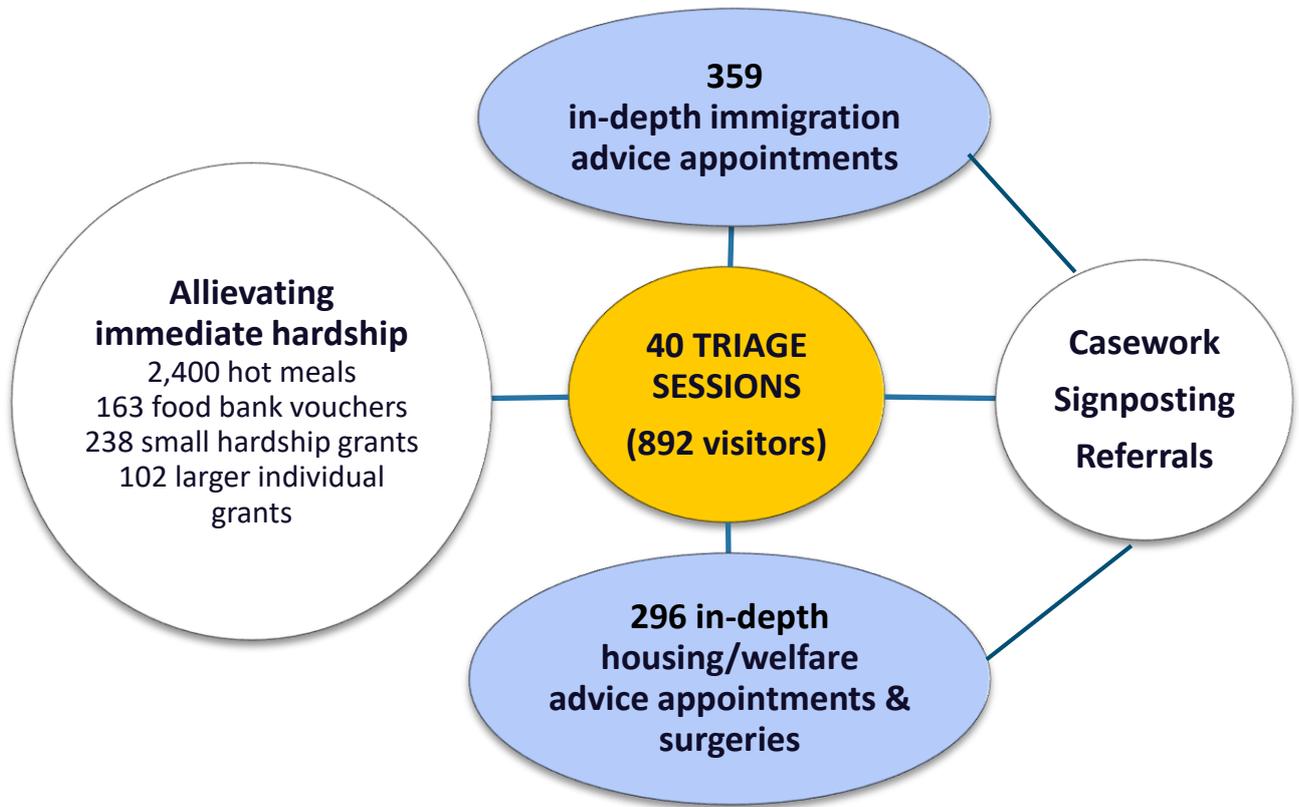
We offer:

- Free immigration, housing and welfare advice, provided by specialist advisers
- Help with finding free or low-cost reputable immigration lawyers
- Applications for legal aid ('Exceptional Case Funding')
- Referrals to family, welfare or housing lawyers
- Help with finding emergency accommodation for homeless visitors, as far as is possible
- Support with many of the other problems that migrants face and referrals to other specialist services
- Applications to charities for individual grants for financial help during a crisis
- Food bank vouchers
- A hot meal and a small food bank during our Monday drop-in

2,400 meals were prepared by volunteers in 2018-19 under the expert supervision of our chef



In 2018-19, HMSC received 892 visitors and held 1,530 triage consultations over 40 Monday sessions. Of these, many received conclusive advice at triage stage. However, 359 visitors were given appointments for more in-depth immigration advice and 296 were given appointments for in-depth housing/welfare advice or specialist surgeries.



Special project: Exceptional Case Funding applications

For many of those who come to HMSC, a lack of immigration status lies at the root of their difficulties. Generally, this is because they have not been able to afford the services of an immigration solicitor. Our priority, therefore, is to secure our visitors access to legal representation. Although most immigration cases do not qualify for normal legal aid, it is possible to apply for 'Exceptional Case Funding' (ECF). Applicants, however, must prove that their case is compelling, that they cannot represent themselves with any hope of success, and that they have a low income or no income at all. Thanks to our in-house immigration adviser, who set up this project and supplied us with guidance, factsheets and training, we now have a small team of volunteers who are able to apply for ECF on our visitors' behalf. In 2018-19, we made 71 applications, only two of which were refused. Once ECF is granted, we are then able to refer visitors to trusted legal aid solicitors.

Who we've helped

We welcome all migrants, regardless of immigration status or country of origin. In 2018-19, HMSC received 892 visitors from 87 different countries.

Those who come to the centre include:

- asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers, and those recently granted refugee status whose support is terminated before they have found housing or work, or accessed benefits;
- those who have been in this country for many years but who have been unable to regularise their status;
- those who have exhausted their options for immigration applications or cannot afford to make the application due to the cost;
- those who have the right to live and work here but who are barred from claiming welfare benefits or lack the necessary documentation.



892 visitors attended our triage sessions

CASE STUDY*

Briony's story

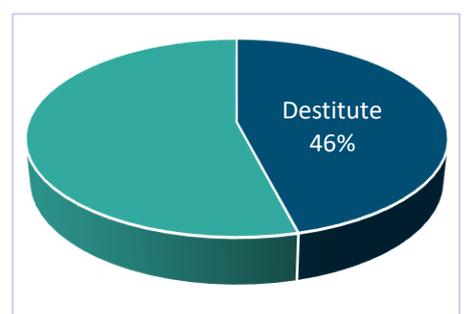
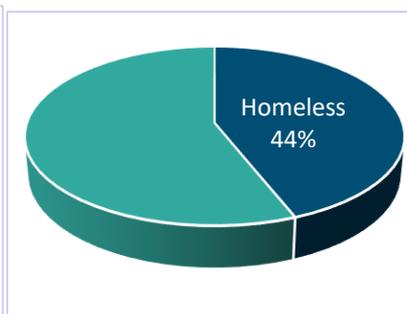
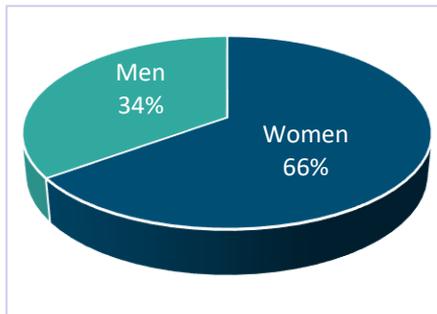
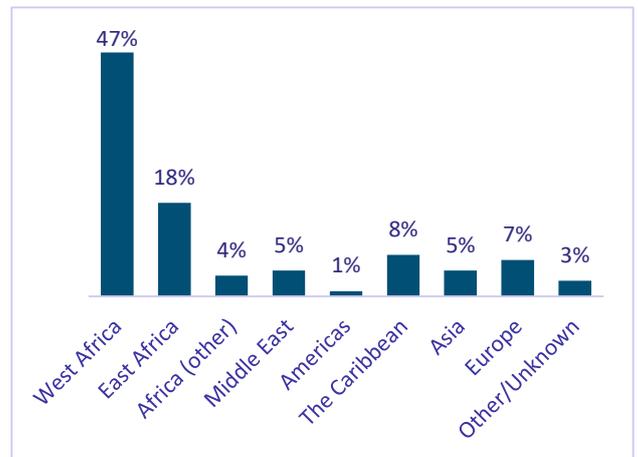
Briony, originally from Ghana, had been sleeping with her baby on a friend's sofa. When she was asked to move out, she was desperate as she had nowhere else to go and faced sleeping on the streets.

"HMSC welcomed me with open arms. The welfare adviser referred me to social services. She made me aware that it would be a difficult process – she prepared me. When social services refused to help me, HMSC helped me get legal aid and found me a solicitor. When the solicitor took the matter up, the local authority provided us with accommodation. The father of my daughter is British, so the barrister at HMSC helped me to apply for a British passport for her. I then applied for a fee waiver which meant I could apply for leave to remain. It took over a year, but with some help from my local MP, I eventually got limited leave to remain.

"My daughter is now four. It hasn't been easy, and it's still not easy, but I have to be strong for her. HMSC has supported us both. Because of them, we managed to get the help we needed."

*Name has been changed

Our visitors in 2018-19



46% of our visitors were destitute and 44% were homeless

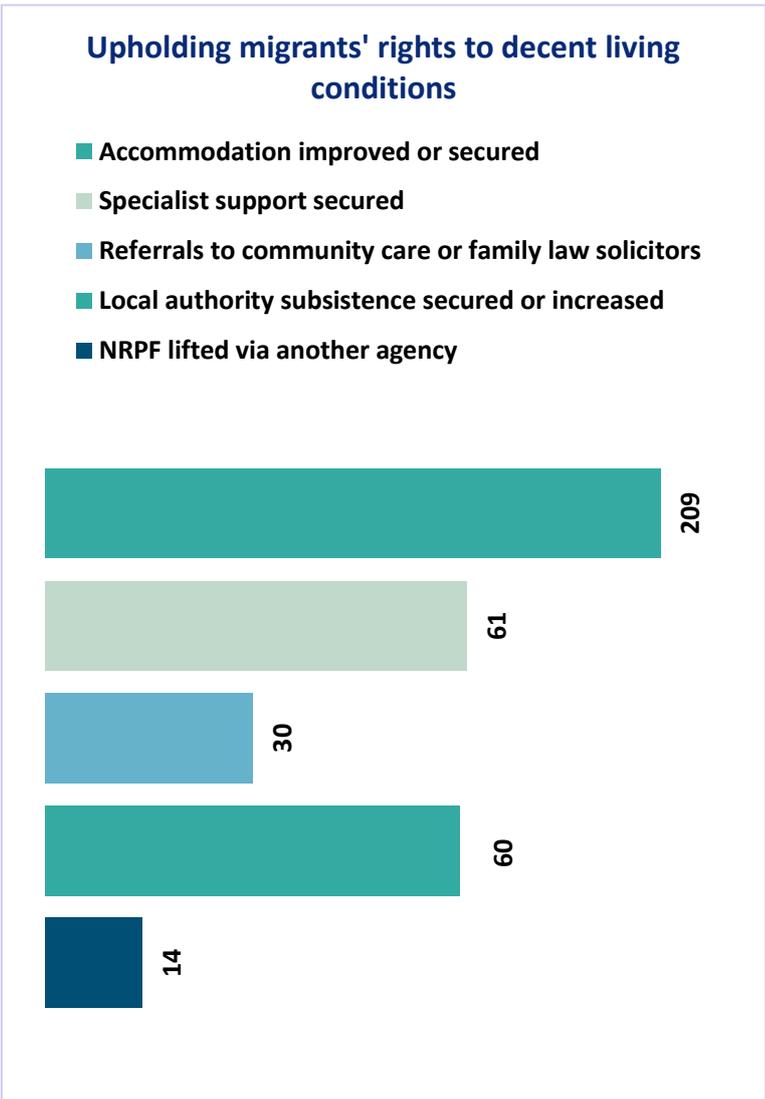
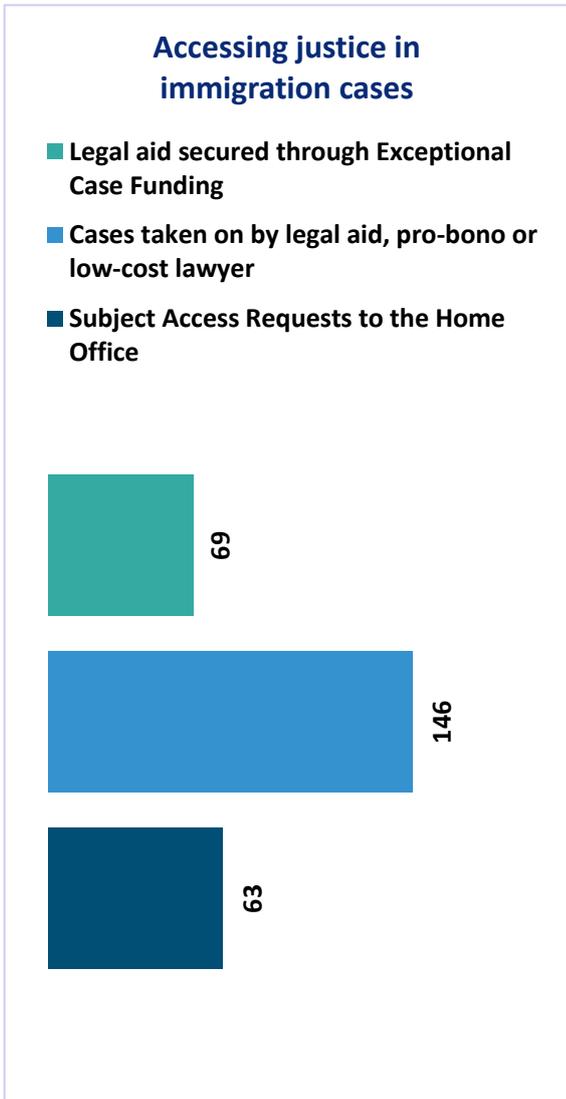


“Now our solicitor is moving forward with our case. My wife is not better yet, but because of your help, there’s hope. You guys helped us when no one else was there for us”

What we've achieved

In 2018-19 we secured ECF for 69 visitors, referred 146 to legal representatives, and helped 63 to obtain their Home Office immigration files (vital for legal assistance). We helped 209 visitors to access accommodation or to improve it, secured local authority subsistence funding for 60 families, found 91 visitors specialist support or the services of a community care or family law solicitor, and referred 14 visitors to a specialist agency to help lift the ban on claiming welfare benefits.

In 2018-19, we referred 146 visitors to trusted legal representatives



Financial position

Our income for 2018-19 was £136,547, including grants to cover staff salaries and professional immigration advice.

During the year, HMSC acquired the lease on new premises. Our Monday drop-in reception venue remains at St John Vianney church hall, but our Monday triage sessions, and the appointments with legal professionals and follow-up casework during the week, now take place in a nearby, stand-alone venue. This has had a positive impact, enabling us to reorganise and expand our work, but it has also demanded significant financial resources, placing a strain on our funds. We have therefore employed a part-time fundraiser, whose efforts should bear fruit in the coming year.

Nevertheless, we ended the financial year with sufficient funds to cover all anticipated costs until our new funding comes on stream in 2020.

Future plans

As the number of visitors and the problems they face increase, so do the demands on our services. We plan to secure funding to employ another manager, who will focus on running the centre, leaving our current manager free to concentrate on developing our services. We also hope to recruit an administrator to support all of our activities.

CASE STUDY*

Ella's story

Ella was a teenager when she moved to the UK to join her dad. Once here, she studied at college and worked until her visa expired. A few years later, Ella had a baby son, but when things became difficult with her partner, she and her baby had to move back in with her dad and siblings in their overcrowded home.

HMSC referred Ella and her son to social services (under Section 17 of the Children's Act) to secure adequate accommodation. When Ella's son turned 10, HMSC helped her with the application for his British citizenship. This meant that Ella herself became eligible to apply for limited leave to remain. HMSC referred her to a partner organisation to apply for a waiver of the immigration application fees.

Ella was recently granted limited leave to remain for 30 months on the 10-year route to indefinite leave. She will have to reapply when her leave expires and then make two further applications, all of which represents a huge financial challenge. However, she says: *"I'm so happy that I now have leave to remain – at least I can now get a proper job and take care of my son properly. I can be independent."*

Ella is now an active volunteer at HMSC.

A big thank you to our supporters and partners

In 2018-19, we received essential support from a number of trusts, foundations and professional consultants, which was fundamental to our ability to continue our important work:



*Cranfield Trust - Dave Garratt – The Evening Standard Dispossessed Trust - HAVCO Legacy - Hornsey Parochial Charities - Human Rights Aid - Kingsley Napley Solicitors - MSN Fund - Muswell Hill Friends Quakers - Passionist Grants Fund - Publica - Reel Fund
... as well as individual donors and St John Vianney Church*

Another huge thank you is due to those funders who have provided hardship grants to visitors, making their lives better in times of need:

Catholic Women's League - Heinz, Anna and Carol Kroch Foundation - Mary Strand Charitable Trust - Methodist Church Fund for Human Need - National Zakat Foundation - Nawaal Benevolence Fund - St John Southworth Caritas Fund - Sheila Hind Trust - Society of Friends for Foreigners in Distress - Vicar's Relief Fund

Thank you also to local businesses and residents who donated food, clothes and toys for our visitors and their children, in particular:

Cudi - Gail's - Green Guru - Local foodbanks - Prestige Patisserie - Sainsbury's - traders at Wood Green Market

Last but not least, thank you to our partners and all the specialist advisers for their invaluable work:

Coram Children's Legal Centre - Doctors of the World - Islington Law Centre - Lawstop - Martha House - NELMA - NHS Mobile Health Unit - No5 Chambers - Project 17 - Public Interest Law Centre - Refugee Action - Refugee Council - Shelter - The Unity Project

... and a MASSIVE thank you to all our volunteers!



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