



Migration, Population and Diversity

COSLA's Migration, Population and Diversity team has responsibility for policy issues relating to migration to Scotland in all its forms (including asylum seekers and refugees), human trafficking, population and demographic change.

COSLA Strategic Migration Partnership (CSMP) is one of a number of local authority-led Strategic Migration Partnerships based across the UK and works with partners from across the public, private and voluntary sector as a means of ensuring that Scotland is a welcoming place for new migrants

The following document will detail MPD's contact details, team achievements and a summary of the key policy areas covered.

TEAM CONTACTS

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TEAM ACHIEVEMENTS

RESETTLEMENT LEADS IN-PERSON EVENT

In February, COSLA held an in-person local authority resettlement leads meeting at Verity House. The event, made up of three sessions, focused on opportunities for learning, sharing and peer support. The first local authority-led session focused on how resettlement teams are structured and have changed over the last few years. A second LA-led session aimed to explore current housing pressures and the impacts upon LA participation in different resettlement schemes. Guest speakers were invited for the final session and presentations largely focused on taking a trauma-informed approach to work and refugee integration.

UKRAINE

2023 to 2024 has been a time of change for COSLA's involvement in the Ukraine schemes in Scotland, moving away from national matching of hosts and guests towards supporting a transition from crisis response to business as usual and advocating for the interests of Local Government. Key achievements include contributing to the development of new Moving On and Re-entry Policies to help reduce reliance on Welcome Accommodation, successfully lobbying for continued payment for 'eligible costs' funding for local authorities from Scottish Government, and facilitating data onboarding, cleansing and updating on the Warm Scottish Welcome (WSW) app on behalf of several local authorities. We have also been key members of the WSW Delivery and Programme Boards.

GYPSY/TRAVELLER LOCAL LEADERS NETWORK

As part of the action plan on improving the lives of Gypsy/Travellers, COSLA launched a national cross-party network of councillors who pledged to be 'Local Leaders' to champion key aspects of the action plan. Thus far this has attracted participation from over 100 councillors.

The network is chaired by COSLA Community Wellbeing Spokesperson, Cllr Maureen Chalmers and provides a space for councillors to be involved in opportunities to support the national action plan, to foster new connections and encourage local action.

The types of activities that have taken place are community conversations; information sessions; a meeting with national politicians to join up national and local action; sharing learning and connecting with other councillors who are committed to tackling inequality and promoting human rights.

HONG KONG (BNO) WELCOME HUB

COSLA's Hong Kong (BNO) Welcome Hub grant funds organisations to focus on identified areas of need for Hongkongers in Scotland. This includes support for English language and Employability.

One of the grant funded organisations is Glasgow-based Bridges. They help build confidence and language skills, and explain differences in recruitment approaches in Scotland compared to Hong Kong. They also organise work placements and interviews with companies that are recruiting, and offer one-to-one support where needed. Bridges has reported that out of the 100 people who attended their English language and Employability projects for Hongkongers during 2022/23, 61 people went into employment and 5 into volunteering. They currently have two more courses running, one in Edinburgh and one in Glasgow. Both are fully subscribed.

NEW SCOTS ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

COSLA, as one of the three New Scots partners along with the Scottish Refugee Council and the Scottish Government, ran a series of 5 engagement sessions for professionals working on refugee integration to gather their assessment on the last New Scots Strategy and their views on the draft of New Scots 3. The engagement sessions were held in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and online, and brought together hundreds of practitioners across a wide range of local authorities, third sector organisations, and other frontline service delivery agencies. The results from these sessions were collated and analysed and will help shape both the New Scots 3 strategic framework and the delivery plan, to be published in spring and summer of 2024.

ELECTED MEMBERS BRIEFING ON ENDING DESTITUTION FOR PEOPLE WITH NRPF

COSLA developed an Elected Members Briefing in partnership with the Improvement Service and Scottish Government, which briefed elected members on how No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) conditions are applied and the increased risks of destitution facing people with NRPF.

This Elected Members briefing provides members with information on the impact of NRPF conditions upon people and communities and highlights the critical role members can play in raising awareness and supporting people at risk of destitution. It is also intended as a legacy resource for councils including local authority frontline teams supporting people with NRPF.



BRITISH NATIONAL (OVERSEAS) VISA HOLDERS FROM HONG KONG

In January 2021, the UK Government launched a bespoke immigration route for British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) visa holders from Hong Kong and their family members. This immigration route opened in response to the decision of the Chinese Government to impose its national security legislation on Hong Kong in 2020.

The Scottish Hong Kong Welcome Hub has information for Hong Kong migrants and Local Authorities covering areas such as: **No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), ESOL provision, Education and Housing.**



COSLA receives funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to support Hongkongers in Scotland. Our work is focused on key areas such as **language, employability, immigration advice** and **cultural/social activities**. Since 2022, the ESOL and Employment Program has supported over 400 Hongkongers with bespoke English Language and Employment support. One course reported that over 50% of attendees accessed employment after or during the program.

In partnership with local authorities, community organisations and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the COSLA BNO project seeks to support Hongkongers into employment and also provides support to those who are destitute or are at risk of destitution, so that they can apply to change the No Recourse to Public Funds condition on their visas.

COSLA officers answer individual enquiries from Hongkongers, local authorities and third sector partners. We also feed directly into policy discussions with the UK Government to highlight the key role of local authorities.



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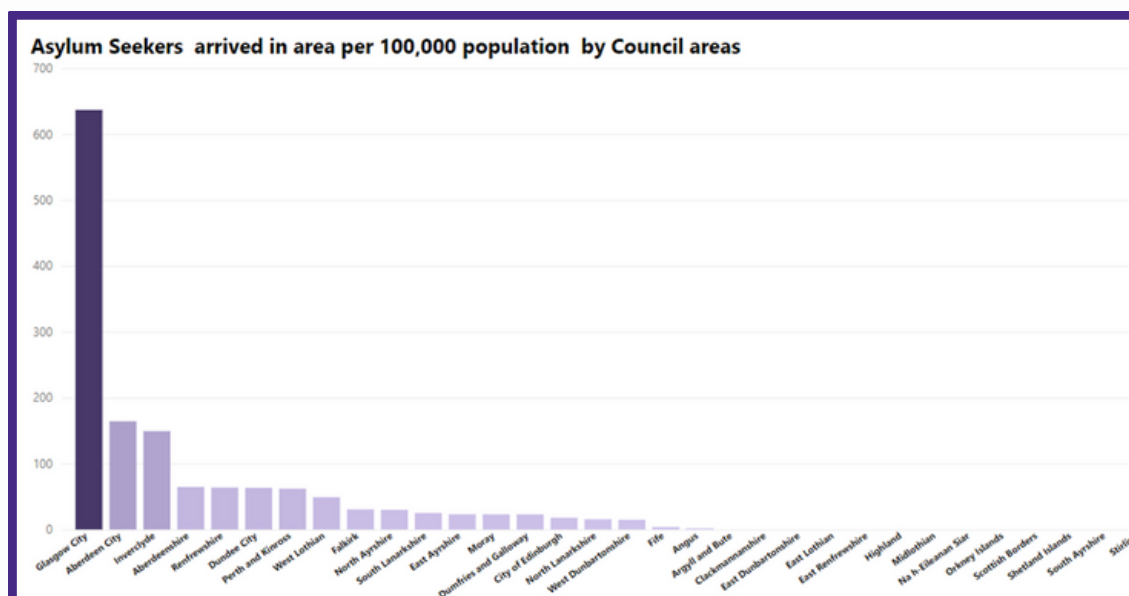
hongkongwelcomehub.migrationscotland.org.uk



PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM

In 2022, the Home Office announced a policy of ‘full dispersal’ which would see people seeking asylum accommodated outwith existing asylum sites and properties in Glasgow. All 32 local authorities have agreed to have asylum dispersal in their areas. **There are 4,000 asylum applicants in dispersed accommodation (excluding hotels) throughout Scotland**, accommodated by the Home Office and their accommodation provider, but supported in the community by local authorities and their partners such as health boards, police and third sector.

Currently, there are 16 contingency accommodation (hotel) sites across 12 local authorities, housing approximate 1,325 people seeking asylum. Two hotels have been closed down in the last 6 months as the Home Office looks to phase out their use.



Glasgow City Council and COSLA chair the strategic Asylum and Refugee Partnership Board (ARPB) and the associated Third Sector Forum and operational Delivery and Procurement Group (DPG). These consider issues related to asylum dispersal and other resettlement schemes, and look at pressures on local services, safeguarding issues and the move-on process in addition to accommodation procurement.

COSLA, as Scotland’s Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP), together with the Chair of the ARPB, represent local authorities on a variety of UK forums, including the Asylum and Resettlement Council Senior Engagement Group (ARCSEG) and associated subgroups. COSLA also liaises with the other regional and devolved SMPs on a weekly basis in order to share issues, learning and good practice across the UK.

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GYPSY / TRAVELLERS



Gypsy/Travellers remain one of the most marginalised and disadvantaged communities in Scotland. A shortage of good quality, culturally appropriate accommodation, barriers to education and healthcare services as well as challenges in accessing employment mean that Gypsy/Travellers are at a high risk of poverty and social exclusion.

In October 2019, the Scottish Government and COSLA launched the joint national action plan, 'Improving the Lives of Gypsy/Travellers 2019-21', which set out actions to tackle entrenched inequalities and better protect the human rights of Gypsy/Travellers. The plan was extended until 2023 with COSLA now working with the Scottish Government and key partners to develop and publish the next phase of the action plan.

Key achievements thus far:

- COSLA hosts a 'Local Leaders' Network of politicians from across Scotland. The network supports local councillors to better understand the needs and culture of the community, to champion Gypsy/Traveller's rights, and to help deliver the action plan in local communities.
- A capital fund of £20 million was secured for local authorities for 2021-26, through the Scottish Government's Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Fund for more and better accommodation.
- Driving significant improvement in the quality of Gypsy/Traveller sites and producing an Interim Site Design Guide through the development of demonstration projects in conjunction with local authorities and with input from members of Gypsy/Traveller communities, supported by third sector partner MECOPP.

The next phase of the action plan will take forward work on an accommodation business case beyond 2026, continue the Local Leaders Network at a national and local level, and take forward recommendations from COSLA's Negotiated Stopping pilot to shape the future of culturally appropriate accommodation.

The next phase of the plan is being shaped in conjunction with Gypsy/Traveller communities and local authorities.

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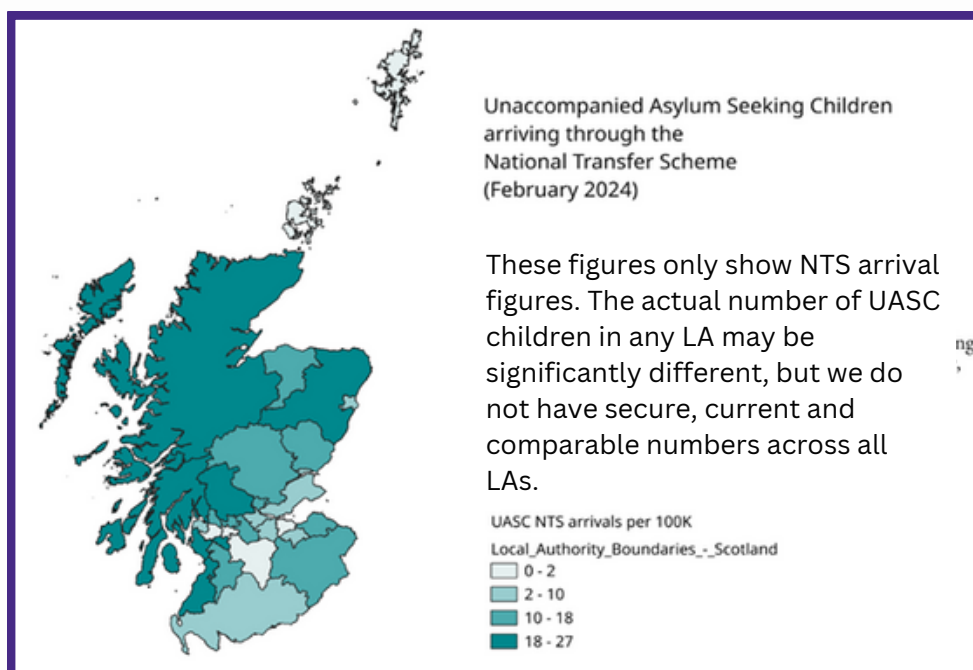
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UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN

Unaccompanied Asylum- Seeking Children (UASC) are entitled to support from local authorities and become the responsibility of the local authority where they initially present on arrival to the country. The *National Transfer Scheme* (NTS) is a protocol established by the UK Home Secretary in 2021 to enable safe transfer of young people from entry local authorities to other local authorities across the UK with significantly smaller numbers of UASC in care. Since November 2021, all Scottish local authorities are playing their part and have welcomed in their care around 500 unaccompanied children.



From 2021-2023, 7,130 children were transferred to local authorities UK- wide, which is over three times the number of transfers in the same time frame in previous years. It is predicted that the trend of high numbers of children in the NTS will continue.

The COSLA MPD Team, in its role as Scotland's Strategic Migration Partnership, manages the NTS Rota protocol in Scotland. Our UASC Coordinator liaises closely with a network of local authority officers and the UK Government to facilitating safe transfer of children to Scotland. We also support local authorities in developing local structures and building capacity, share good practice and address emerging issues. In addition, COSLA manages close relationships with the UK Government, the Scottish Government and leading national third sector partners (such as Guardianship Scotland), and seeks to influence policies relating to UASC.

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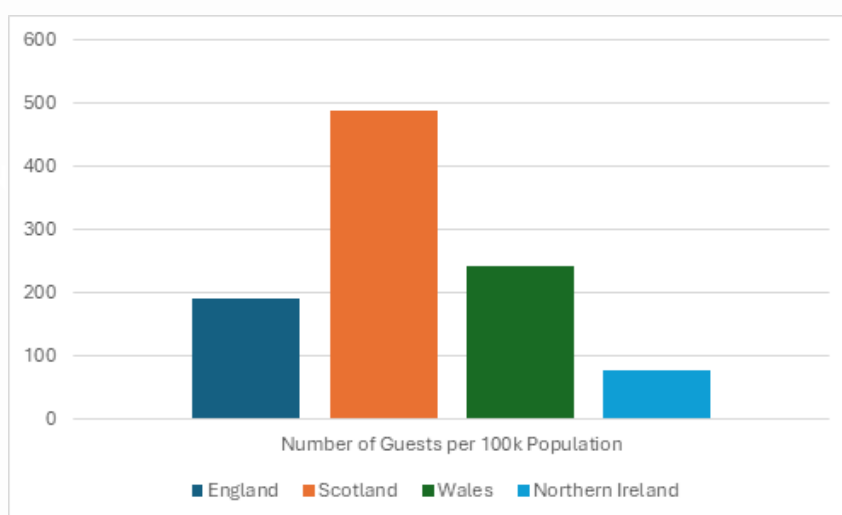
UKRAINE SCHEMES IN SCOTLAND

Since Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, a number of visa schemes have been created by the UK and Scottish Governments to provide a safe haven to displaced Ukrainians fleeing the conflict. All of these schemes include a right to work and full recourse to public funds. **Local authority resettlement teams have been at the heart of delivering these schemes.**

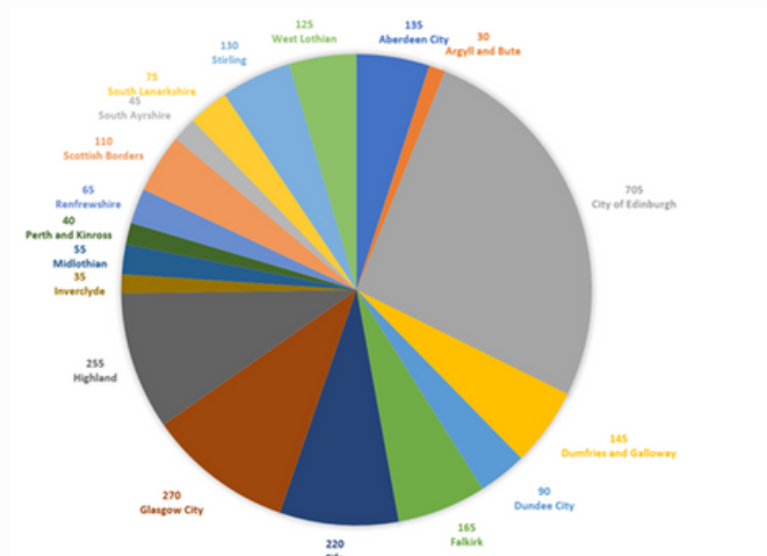
As of 27 February 2024, **26,705** Homes for Ukraine Visa Holders with a Scottish Sponsor had arrived in the U.K:

- **20,871** were sponsored by the Scottish Government (Super Sponsor Scheme)
- **5,834** were sponsored by individuals.

These figures are by the far the highest of any UK nation as a proportion of the population:



Ukraine Welcome accommodation population per Local Authority. **Total: 2,700**



Visa Schemes

- Homes for Ukraine (HfU) – 3 year visa for existing guests, 18 months for new guests. Applications supported by either:
 - Individual Sponsors/Hosts (as per England)
 - Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme (Scottish Government sponsors Homes for Ukraine visas, meaning guests did not need to arrange accommodation before travelling). Paused indefinitely in July 2022 and also known as the 'Warm Scots Welcome (WSW) programme.
- Ukraine Family Scheme – 3 year visa allowing displaced Ukrainians to join family members already in the U.K., now closed.
- Ukraine Extension Scheme – 3 year scheme allowing guests already in the U.K. on temporary mainstream visas to extend their stay.
- Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE) scheme allowing any of the visas above to be extended by 18 months.

COSLA's Role and Achievements:

- Representing and advocating for Local Government in Scottish Government's Warm Scottish Welcome (WSW) Governance Structures and Decision Making;
- Developing collective local positions across all 32 local authorities via the COSLA Leaders meeting and Community Wellbeing Board;
- Working with SG/LAs to support the development and evolution of operational guidance, strategy, and policy, e.g. delivery of move on policy and re-entry policy, and development of on-going reform of WSW offer;
- Providing operational support to WSW IT systems;
- Support the consolidation and closure of hotels in a manner that delivers the best possible outcomes for those who are being supported in them; and
- Sharing best practice with Strategic Migration Partnership colleagues across the UK.

Case Study: Innovative Accommodation in South Lanarkshire – Barrack Street, Hamilton

South Lanarkshire Council have pioneered the use of former student accommodation to provide 26 affordable and popular communal flats, each with 6 bedrooms, 2 shower rooms and 2 toilets for use by Ukrainian guests. This interim accommodation has proven successful in helping guests move on from hotels and live a more 'normal' life, e.g. by having access to a kitchen while enabling the continuation of support networks within the Ukrainian Community developed in hotel accommodation. The accommodation is well located in central Hamilton and has on-site support from the Salvation Army.



Barrack Street, Hamilton

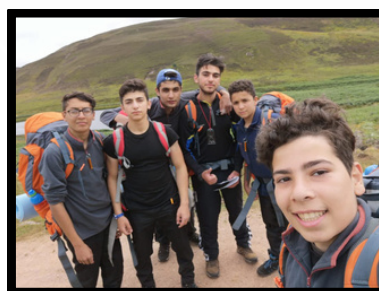


REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

Since 2015, Scotland has welcomed an increasing number of refugees in response to a wave of recent humanitarian crises, from the civil war in Syria and the withdrawal from Afghanistan, to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Scotland's local authorities are playing a pivotal role in delivering humanitarian protection programs and supporting refugee integration.

In a complex and fast-moving policy environment, local authorities have adapted to a succession of new schemes to deliver a comprehensive package of integration support for those arriving via the UK Government resettlement schemes.

- The UK Government Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)
- The Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP)
- The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)



Since 2021, Scottish local authorities have accommodated 1,665 individuals as part of these schemes, which continues to be over 10% of UK allocations.

As Scotland's Strategic Migration Partnership, together with the UK Government, COSLA's MPD Team plays a key role in coordinating the arrival of refugees to local authorities, working directly with refugee resettlement teams in councils and liaising with various UK Government departments including the Home Office, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), and the Ministry of Defence.

As well as supporting local authorities in operational matters, we work closely with resettlement teams to develop local structures, build capacity and share best practice.

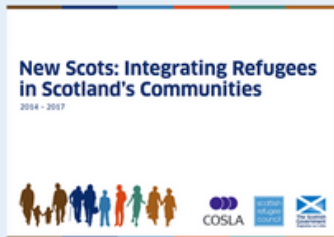
NEW SCOTS REFUGEE INTEGRATION STRATEGY



New Scots

First draft, 2013.

2014-7



2015 European Refugee Crisis.

The New Scots Strategy was first published in 2014. It was a 3 year strategy, developed in partnership by COSLA, Scottish Refugee Council and Scottish Government. It was based on research done in Scotland, looking at how best to integrate refugees, and centred on the voices of refugees.

In 2015, the European refugee crisis put the New Scots strategy to the test. Every single Scottish local authority stepped forward. Syrian families became part of communities across Scotland. The New Scots Strategy got worldwide attention.

New Scots 2

2018-22



Brexit

2019 Pandemic

2022 Russia invades Ukraine



On the basis of learning from the refugee crisis, the partners developed and published New Scots 2, intended to last from 2018 to 2022. Thousands more refugees from all over the world made homes in Scotland.

In those four years, the UK left the European Union (and the Dublin accord), the COVID-19 pandemic killed millions of people worldwide and halted international travel, and Russia invaded Ukraine. Thousands of Ukrainians found refuge in Scotland.

New Scots Refugee Integration Delivery Project 2020-3

£5 Million, 50 projects

2024

New Scots 3

>> NewScots

In 2021, the partnership launched the New Scots Refugee Integration Delivery Project, a £5 million EU funded effort to learn from New Scots 2 and create the next New Scots strategy. COSLA supported 15 projects with a budget of £1 million in local authorities across Scotland.

On March 28th 2024, we will publish the Strategic Framework for New Scots 3. The Delivery Plan will follow in June.

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www.gov.scot/publications/welcome-pack-new-scots/



ENDING DESTITUTION TOGETHER STRATEGY

In 2021 Scottish Government and COSLA published 'Ending Destitution Together'. This is the first strategy of its kind and sets out the ambition to ensure that people living in communities across Scotland do not experience destitution because of their immigration status. It is estimated that in 2019, *around 1.3 million people* were resident within the UK with NRPf restrictions. Of these people, it is estimated that around 13% are under 18 years of age

The vision for the strategy is to create a Scotland where **'No one is forced into destitution and everyone has their human rights protected, regardless of their immigration status.'** It takes a human rights-based approach and recognises the fundamental right to an adequate standard of living.

Uncertain immigration status can be the foundation of many other additional challenges for migrants and communities. For instance, it can expose people, who may already be in very vulnerable situations, to serious risks, homelessness, exploitation. Having an uncertain immigration status can seriously undermine the ability of a person to meet their basic needs in life, as well as to integrate in and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

COSLA has a partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to provide immigration advice to vulnerable migrants who have no recourse to public funds and are supported by local authorities and the third sector. We also work together to help raise awareness by building the capacity of frontline workers and other professionals to spot the need for immigration advice/support. This can serve as a pathway out of destitution and help to prevent as many as possible from ending up in irregular situations.

From April 2023 until March 2024, over 45% of vulnerable beneficiaries supported with direct immigration advice and over 75% of those supported with second tier advice by IOM caseworker capacity had as primary vulnerabilities homelessness, destitution or risk of destitution.

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