



Annual Report 2015-16

Project 17 works to end destitution among migrant families.

We believe all children have the right to a safe home and enough to eat, regardless of immigration status.





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Our goals and values

Project 17 is a charity organisation working to end destitution among migrant children.

We work with families experiencing exceptional poverty to improve their access to local authority support.

We believe that all children have the right to a safe home and enough to eat, regardless of their parents' immigration status. To achieve our vision, we provide advice, advocacy and support for individuals. We build capacity in other organisations and we campaign for the improved implementation of statutory support.

In particular, Project 17 works towards ensuring that local authorities comply with the duties imposed on them by Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need. Section 17 enables local councils to provide accommodation and financial support to avoid children being taken into the care of the local authority.

This duty exists even if the family has no right to work, no access to welfare benefits and social housing and no leave to remain in the UK. Project 17 exists to ensure that individuals eligible for support under Section 17 are able to access it effectively.



Our staff



Abi Brunswick, Director

Abi is the Director and one of the founders of Project 17. She has worked in the migrants' rights sector since 2008 and has experience of developing small and emerging organisations. She is also a Trustee of Lewisham, Greenwich and Southwark Samaritans. Prior to establishing Project 17, she was as the Advice Coordinator of Action for Refugees in Lewisham. Abi has an MA and a graduate diploma in law.



Murtagh, Adviser

Amy joined Project 17 in November 2014 as our part-time Adviser, and in February 2016 we were able to increase her hours so that she now works with us 4 days each week. Amy has a Graduate Diploma in Law and an MA in Human Rights. She previously worked at Rights of Women and worked and volunteered at Ashiana Sheffield. She has a wide range of experience in supporting migrants, both in the voluntary sector and whilst working as an asylum caseworker for a solicitors' firm.



Our trustees

Sue Causton

Frederick Guobadia

Clare Jennings

Clare McGuinness

Gwawr Thomas

Diana Trimiño Mora

Our volunteers

Eve Dickson

Bushra Khalidi

Judith Lancet

Esther Ogunsakin

Felicia Owokoniran

Fatmata Sesay

Alice Twaite

Kofo Williams

A word from our trustees

As we mark our third year, demand for Project 17's services continues to grow. We are dismayed to note, in particular, the rise in street homeless families approaching Project 17's advice service, suggesting that as the 'hostile environment' bites and local authorities feel the pressure of yet further cuts to their budgets, organisations such as ours are more needed than ever.

We are grateful to the Tudor Trust for a substantial grant which has enabled us to extend the operational capacity of the advice service in order to try to meet this increased demand. In addition, funding from Evening Standard Dispossession Fund has enabled us to launch a project whereby former Project 17 clients are empowered to volunteer to accompany current clients as they approach local authorities for support. We also continue to run our ever popular outreach sessions in Haringey and Hackney. We are enormously grateful to our committed volunteers and our dedicated, tenacious and resourceful staff members, Director Abi Brunswick and Adviser Amy Murtagh.

Our commitment to building capacity in other organisations persists: not only have we continued to run our highly regarded course, 'Local Authority Support for Families with No Recourse to Public Funds', but we expanded our arsenal to include a course for frontline workers assisting clients making applications to the Home Office for the removal of NRPF restrictions. We have also developed a user friendly click through guide to section 17 support, available for free on our website.





September 2015 saw Project 17 relocate to its own premises at Resource for London in Holloway, offering much improved space for client consultations. As Project 17's profile continues to grow, we have worked hard to strengthen our governance structures, welcoming two new trustees to the Board. Fatmata Sesay's background in accountancy makes her well placed to take on the role of Treasurer, whilst Sue Causton brings years of experience as a management coach specialising in the development of third sector organisations.

Looking ahead, Project 17 will be keeping a close eye on the progress of any regulations made under the newly inserted paragraph 10A of Schedule 3 to the Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act 2002: we cautiously welcome support to NRPF families being placed on a statutory footing, but harbour concerns that there is as yet insufficient clarity as to how eligibility will be assessed. By far the biggest unknown that we face as we head into our fourth year, however, is what will happen in the wake of the EU referendum, and the impact on our many clients who depend for their stay on rights derived from European law. Project 17 has however proved itself to be nothing if not resilient and we are confident that we are well placed to meet the challenges that the year ahead throws at us.

Gwawr Thomas

Trustee

2015-16 at a glance

- We saw 321 clients through our advice service
- We took 178 calls to our telephone advice line for advisers
- We delivered 20 training sessions for 280 professionals
- We developed an online guide for individuals
- We challenged the lawfulness of policies governing support under s.17
- We engaged in consultation and litigation to support our client group



Kemi's story

Names and identifying details have been changed

Kemi is from Nigeria. She came to the UK 16 years ago and her 10-year-old son, Thomas, who was born in London. Although Thomas has never been outside the capital he had no legal right to be in the UK.

Because of their immigration status, Kemi and Thomas were not able to access mainstream welfare benefits or social housing, and Kemi was not allowed to work. For years, they relied on the generosity of friends for housing and food.

“When they approached us they had been sleeping on night buses for 4 nights and had just £1 left.”

We helped them to get immigration advice, and applied for a grant for Thomas' school uniform. Kemi and Thomas now have a safe home and enough money for basic needs. Thomas has become a British citizen, and Kemi is waiting for a decision from the Home Office about her leave to remain.



Eventually, their support network disintegrated. When they approached us they had been sleeping on night buses for four nights and had just £1 left.

We helped them access support from the local authority under s.17. We also provided immediate financial support from our destitution fund, as well as food vouchers and a winter coat.

Kemi's story, in her own words

My husband left us for another woman in 2009 December and we have be moving from One house to the other until I met a lady on the bus who told me to go to Hackney Migrant Centre, as I was on the phone talking to someone and was crying, and always sleeping on the Night buses.

That was where we got our help and all support from I was given a letter to Project 17 to see Abi, who took all our problems and pain away, by making sure that we have a place of ours, to us it was a mansion, we slept well on the bed after many years of me sleeping on the floor and my son on the chairs, we woke up at 3pm, I could remember very well, we were so happy to have a place of ours and we can cook and eat what we want not the usual chips and some time, if I have extra money will buy chicken and chips for £1.50, but the 50p is bonus for us, only on weekends.

Project 17 also sent us to Southwark Council who gives us £140.00 every two weeks by NRPF Team, up till today. Oh Project 17 gave us £20.00 on our first day, we had Subway as a good meal.

Thomas' story, in his own words

Hello, my name is Tim. I'm writing a letter to say thank you for your loyal support, it means the world to me and my lovely mum. Project 17 helped me secure a home and gives me £70:00 every two weeks. Project 17 also helped me get a very good solicitor, who applied for my British Registration Certificate, which was successful.

I'm so happy thank you very much.

Our advice service reach across London

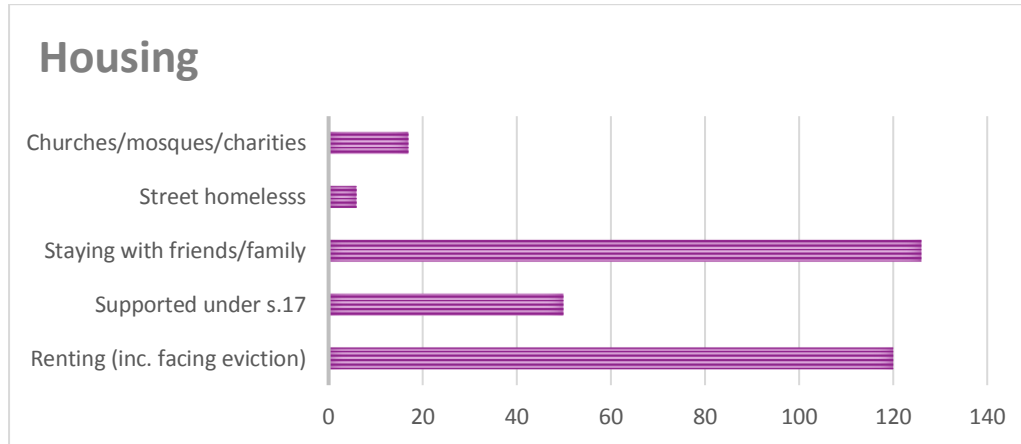


Each of the 306 dots on this map represents a family that accessed the advice service.

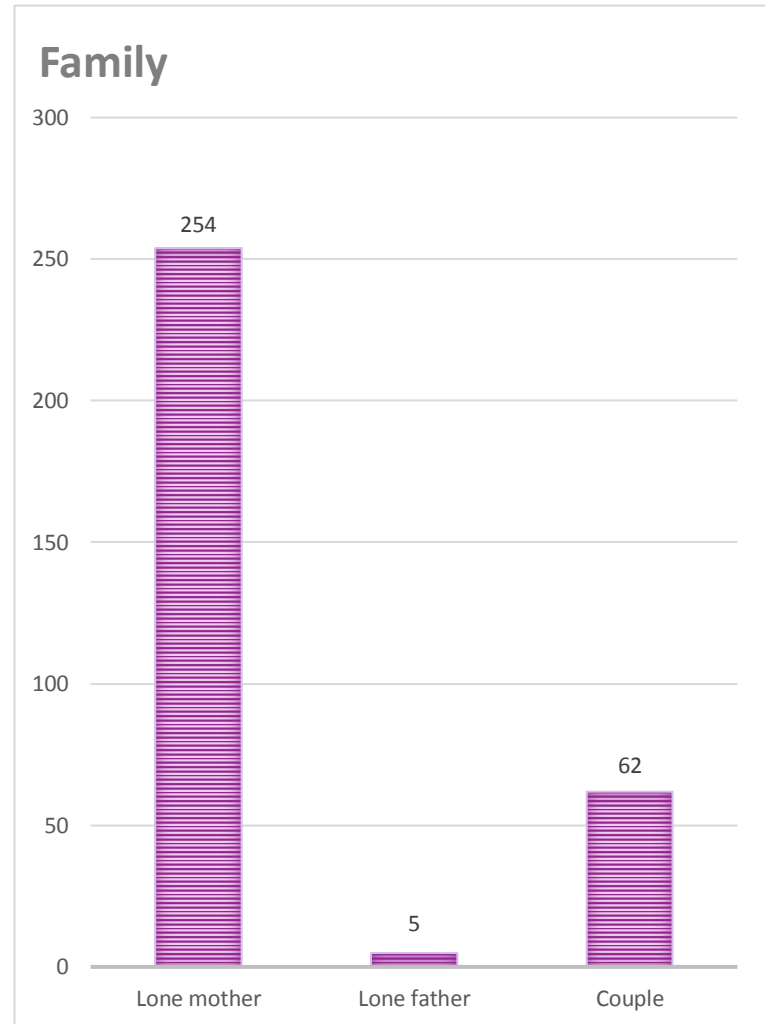
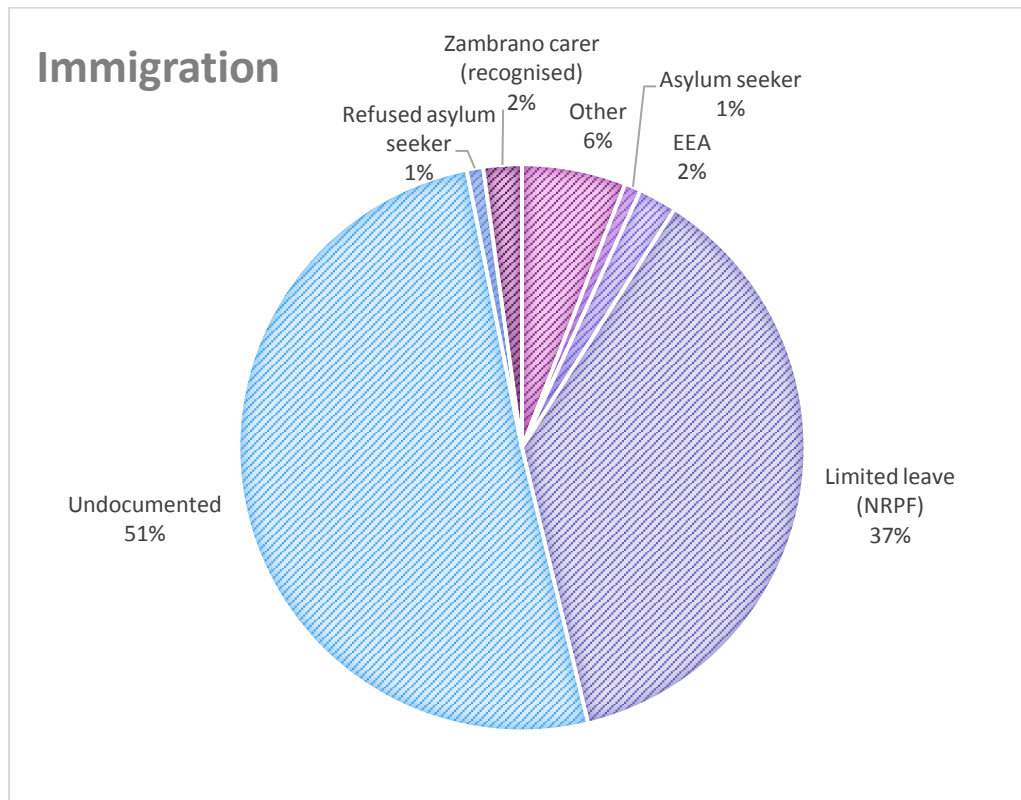
There were a further 15 families that travelled from outside London to get advice from us last year

Advice service clients

We saw 321 clients in 2015-16



Our clients came from 42 different countries. The largest numbers came from Nigeria, Jamaica and Ghana



Feedback

“They are just down to earth. It is as if they are in my shoes. They really understand me and my situation.”

We asked every 10th client to give us feedback on the service we provided. Here are the results.

- 96% said the adviser understood their situation very well
- 100% understood their options after the appointment
- 74% felt we progressed their case successfully

“My current situation is much, much better. At least I can smile now. I'm so happy with the current situation. The way I am now I've got hope. Like something good is going to come now. Before I didn't know where I was going.”



“Project 17 is an organisation that really gives hope and light to strengthen and empower people. It's a lifesaving organisation. They are very confidence building...[They] really appreciate your concerns, I'm really thankful for what you did and you should just keep on doing what you are doing.”

“I've been housed, so the result was perfect. I'm in a hostel now with my child.”

“[My situation is] completely different. Now I'm able to get help from the government. I would say that now I'm not discriminated against.”

Outcomes



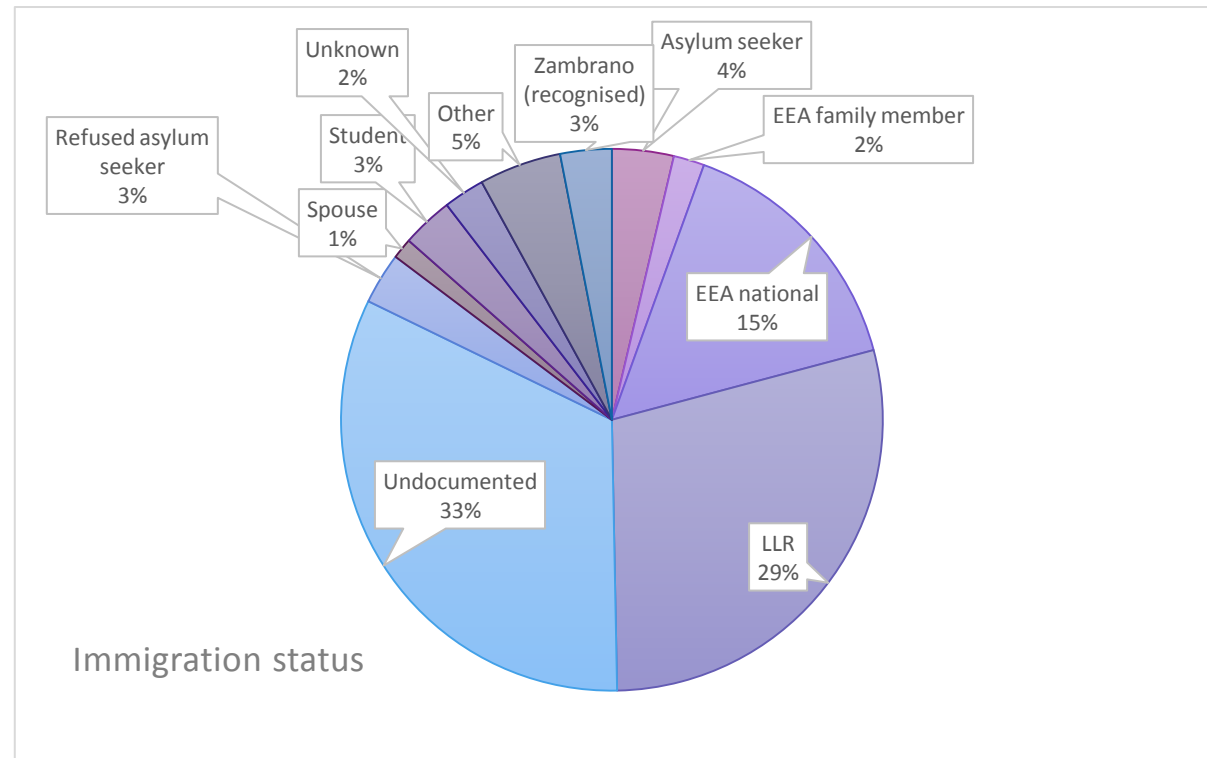
Advice line

Our telephone and email advice line allows advisers to seek advice on specific cases.

In 2015-16 we took 177 calls to the advice line.

We took calls from the following areas

Barking & Dagenham	Essex	Merton
Barnet	Great Yarmouth	Newham
Bath	Greenwich	Nottingham
Bexley	Guildford	Nuneaton
Birmingham	Hackney	Oxford
Bournemouth	Hampshire	Portsmouth
Brent	Haringey	Redbridge
Buckinghamshire	Harrow	Sheffield
Cardiff	Hillingdon	Shropshire
Chelmsford	Hounslow	Slough
Coventry	Islington	Southwark
Croydon	Kent	Thurrock
Dartford	Lambeth	Tower Hamlets
Derby	Leeds	Waltham Forest
Derbyshire	Lewisham	Westminster
Ealing	Medway	Wiltshire
Enfield		



Janine, British Red Cross

"I have used the advice line/email advice on a number of occasions and have always found the service extremely useful.

You have provided a response with practical, client focused advice. The specialist advice given has made us able to explain quite complex legal matters in an easily digestible format and this has made a real difference to their situations and helped relieve destitution. As a front line service, we have found your advice invaluable when advocating to Social Services and giving us the confidence to ensure that the correct procedures are followed and people have access to the support they are entitled to."

Training

“Best training I have ever attended! I feel much more knowledgeable and empowered to help families affected by this.”

We delivered

“Would recommend it to any organisation working with clients with NRPF”

“Very resourceful and informative. Brilliant training”

- 20 training
- For 280 professionals

Our training sessions covered

- Support options for families under s.17
- Support options for adults under the Care Act
- Removing NRPF restrictions for people with limited leave to remain

100% of participants rated the training as excellent (85%) or very good (15%)

100% strongly agreed that the trainer was knowledgeable and clear

94% strongly agreed that the training would be useful for their work



Accompanying project

Our pilot accompanying scheme has supported 5 former service users to volunteer with us as part of our accompanying project.

Volunteers accompany new clients to approach local authorities for support and attend assessments with them. This provides valuable emotional and practical assistance.

Volunteers are able to empathise with clients because they have been through the process themselves. They also help facilitate the request for support by ensuring clarity, taking notes and identifying next steps.

Volunteers are now accompanying our clients about once a week.

The success of this project influenced the development of North East London Migrant Action, which has now set up a wider accompanying scheme, assisting numerous organisations by providing volunteers to accompany their clients. We were able to deliver free training sessions to NELMA volunteers and help them grow the project.





Policy and advocacy

Challenge to Lewisham's 'robust front door'

This year we brought a judicial review challenging the legality of Lewisham council's 'robust front door' approach to implementing support for families for no recourse to public funds. This model of working led the local authority to turn away 87% of the families requesting help under s.17 of the Children Act 1989 without an assessment.

We were able to settle the claim out of court and are pleased that, following the concerns we raised in our challenge, Lewisham made significant changes to their policy for assessing eligibility and introduced new internal guidance. The new guidance and policy in principle addressed the concerns we had raised, although we continue to have concerns over implementation.

In addition to our own legal challenge, we:

- Contributed evidence to support other strategic litigation
- Responded to government consultations on issues affecting NRPF families
- Created a database of local authorities' policies and procedures
- Researched a report on 'gatekeeping' which will be published in late 2016

The way forward

Our clients are raising their children in increasingly hostile times. Demand for our services is increasing as the number of families facing destitution because they have no recourse to public funds grows. We are trying to adapt and develop our services to better meet the needs of our clients. Our future plans include:

Capacity building

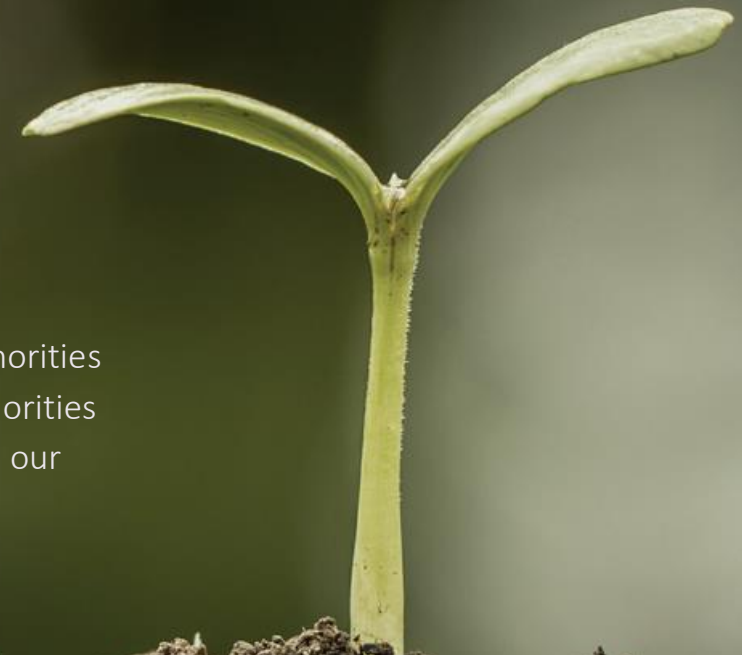
- Developing our training materials and online resources to help organisations understand the consequences of the Immigration Act 2016
- Offering advanced training sessions on preparing clients for s.17 assessments and challenging refusals

Policy work:

- Supporting clients to complain against historic poor treatment from local authorities
- Publishing a report evidencing 'gatekeeping' practices employed by local authorities
- Working collaboratively with other organisations to highlight the issues facing our client group
- Supporting strategic challenges using our evidence base

Advice

- Increasing the capacity of our advice service by employing another Adviser
- Improving our accessibility by holding advice outreach sessions in two new areas
- Registering with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner so that we can continue to support families to remove NRP conditions on their leave to remain
- Incorporating our volunteer accompanying scheme into our mainstream advice service following a successful pilot





Thank you....

to our committed staff, passionate volunteers and dedicated trustees

Thank you to our caring and resilient partners

Beecroft Garden Children's Centre
Hackney Migrant Centre
Haringey Migrant Support Centre
Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network

Thank you to our generous funders

Evening Standard Dispossessed Fund
Trust for London
Tudor Trust
Unbound Philanthropy

Financial information

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2016	Total Funds 2015
	£	£	£	£
Incoming resources:				
Incoming resources from generated funds				
Voluntary income:				
Grants	4,115	67,941	72,056	37,086
Other income	9,474	1,380	10,854	1,565
	_____	_____	_____	_____
Total incoming resources	13,589	69,321	82,910	38,651
	_____	_____	_____	_____
Resources expended:				
Costs of generating funds	-	-	-	-
Charitable activities				
Core Activities	4,080	44,038	48,118	24,905
Governance costs	-	-	-	-
Total resources expended	4,080	44,038	48,118	24,905
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources	9,510	25,282	34,792	13,746
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward	5,147	16,288	21,435	7,690
Total funds carried forward	14,657	41,570	56,227	21,435

The financial information shown above is a summary of the financial statements for the year ended 31/03/16, which were approved by Project 17's Board of Trustees on 20/04/16. The full financial statements can be obtained from Project 17 at Resource for London, 356 Holloway Road N7 6PA.

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