



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.

Annual report 2018-19

Charity number:
1152621



2018-19 at a glance

- 198 families (380 people) accessed frontline advice
- 72% received s.17 support following our intervention
- 26 training sessions delivered
- 251 telephone advice line calls from professionals
- 280 members of the online Section 17 Hub
- Seen and Heard campaign launched, centralising children's experiences of s.17 support
- Information Tribunal case settled out of court, confirming right to access local authority policies and procedures

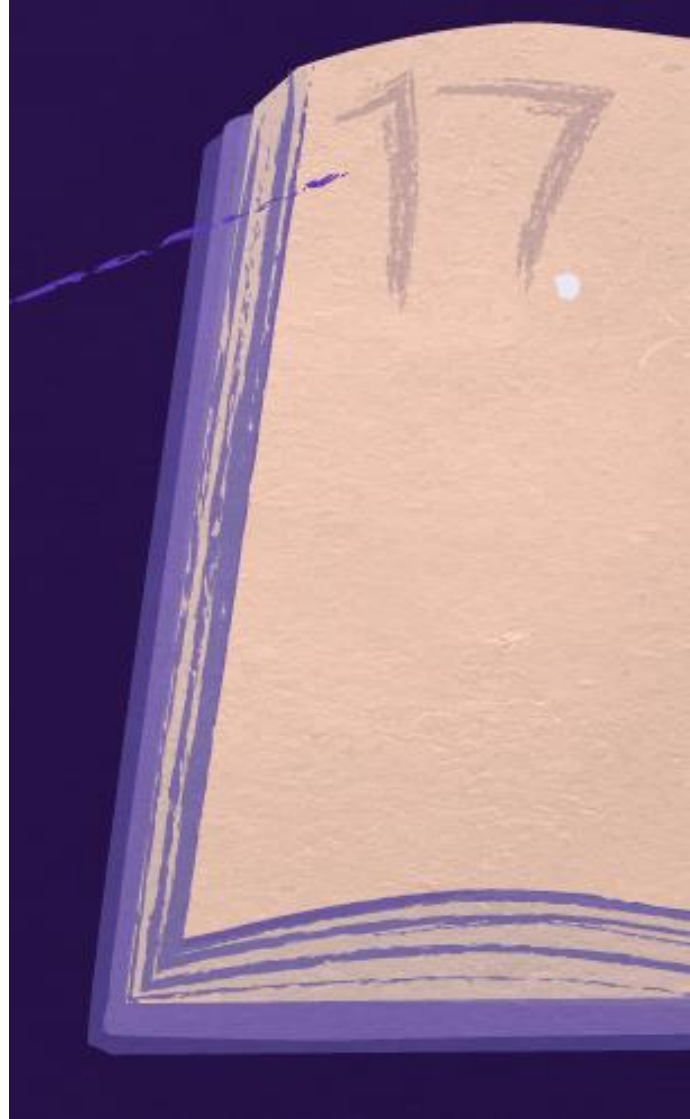
Mission and vision

Project 17 is an organisation working to end destitution among migrant children. It works with families experiencing exceptional poverty to improve their access to local authority support.

We believe that all children have the right to a 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.

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.





Introduction

2018-19 has been a particularly challenging year for Project 17. Our capacity building and policy work grew in size and scope, but our advice service suffered a loss of funding that led to a reduction in frontline work. Although the situation has now improved, we are conscious of the many families we had to turn away from the service because of a lack of capacity.

We have seen an improvement in the way section 17 support is implemented in some local authority areas following sustained influencing work from Project 17 and like-minded organisations.

However, these positive developments are in sharp contrast with the increasingly rigorous assessment processes adopted by some other authorities, whose procedures appear designed to undermine the credibility of families requesting help.

This year we have tried to focus on children's experiences of accessing section 17 support, using research and campaigns to draw attention to the children facing homelessness and extreme poverty because their parents are excluded from mainstream welfare.

Who we are

Abi Brunswick, Director: Abi is the Director and one of the founders of Project 17, and is responsible for the overall running of the organisation. She has worked in the migrants' rights sector since 2008. Prior to establishing Project 17 she ran a small generalist advice service for migrants and refugees. Abi has an MA and a Graduate Diploma in Law.

Amy Murtagh, Adviser/Interim Director from August 2018: Amy joined Project 17 in 2014 as an Adviser. In 2018 she took on the role of Interim Director while Abi was on maternity leave. Amy has a Graduate Diploma in Law and an MA in Human Rights. She previously worked at the legal charity Rights of Women and worked with survivors of trafficking at Ashiana Sheffield.

Afsana Aramesh, Outreach Adviser: Afsana has worked with us since December 2016. She covers advice sessions at various centres in Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey and Lambeth. She previously worked at Coram Voice for 12 years as a specialist advocate, providing advocacy for young refugees, migrants, looked after children and care leavers.

Emma Bulmer, Adviser (August 2018-February 2019) Emma worked as an Adviser covering Amy's post while she stepped-up to the Interim Director role. Unfortunately, a loss of funding meant that this position was cut short. Emma is a qualified social worker and completed local authority placements before coming to Project 17. She has an MSc in social work and an undergraduate degree in Philosophy.

Eve Dickson, Policy Officer: Eve is responsible for Project 17's policy and campaigns work. She also undertakes research into no recourse to public funds and supports families to make complaints about local authorities. Alongside her work at Project 17, Eve runs Akwaaba's children's project and helped set up NELMA's accompanying scheme.

Madeleine Ellis-Petersen, Training and Development Officer: As well as providing frontline advice, Madeleine delivers training to professionals across England. She also provides advice on Project 17's advice line for advisers, and develops our online resources. Madeleine previously worked in social policy research at the New Economics Foundation and volunteered at Hackney Migrant Centre.

Special thanks to our volunteers and trustees. We wouldn't exist without their hard work and commitment.

Volunteers

Ifeltayo Akingbehin

Roli Aiyemo

Bethany Eldon Kerr

Ivy Kwayisi

Felicia Owokoniran

Rosanna Ellul

Sydney Shea

Kameal Thomas

Kofo Williams

Trustees

Clare Jennings

Sue Ponter

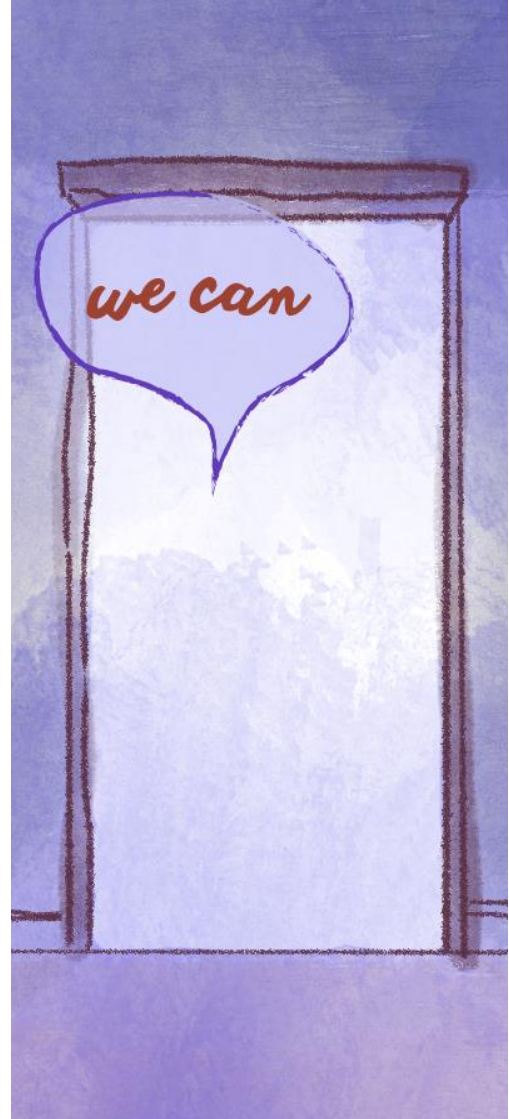
Sue Causton

Claire McGuinness

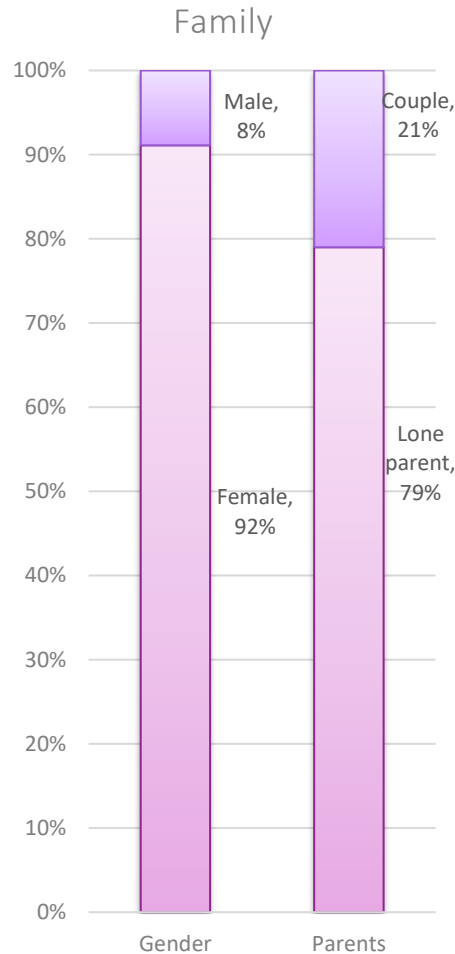
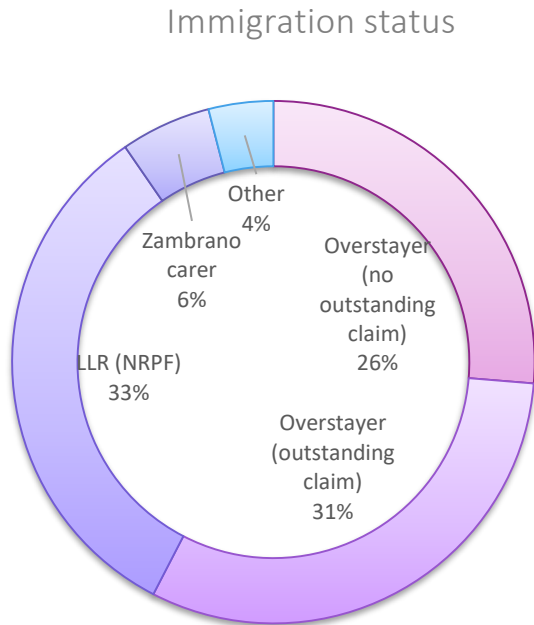
Felicia Owokoniran

Rupinder Parhar

Gwawr Thomas



Advice service



This year we worked with 318 clients, including 198 new clients.

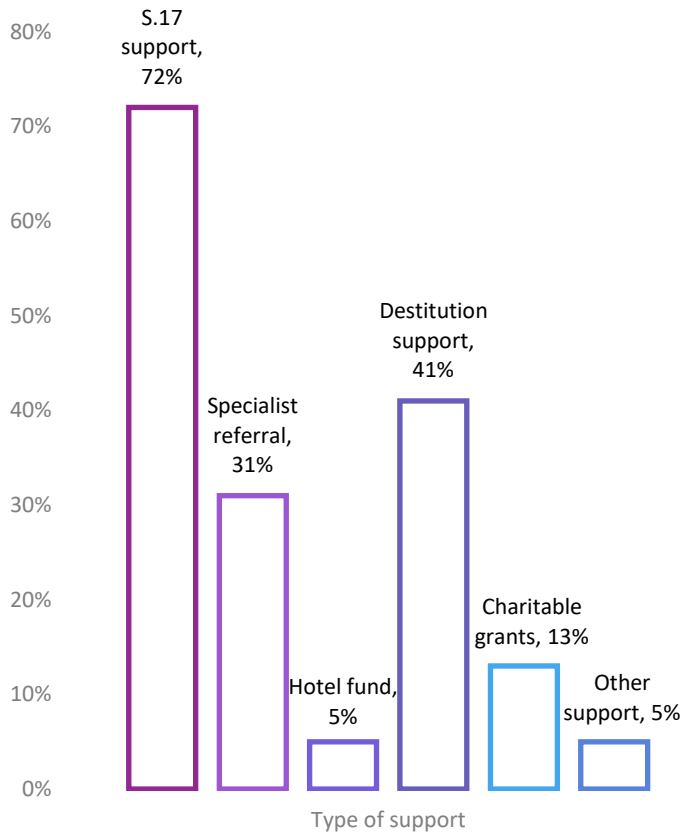
52% were homeless when they approached us

100% were struggling to meet basic needs

Clients came from 33 local authorities across London and the South East

65% had already asked the council for support before they came to us

Results



72% of clients accessed s.17 support with our help

Explanatory notes

‘S.17 support’ is accommodation and/or subsistence support under s.17 Children Act 1989

‘Specialist referrals’ include referrals to immigration advisers and community care solicitors, independent social workers and other specialists

Clients benefited from the Hotel Fund when Project 17 paid for hotels while refusals of s.17 support were challenged

‘Destitution support’ includes small emergency payments from Project 17 (normally £20), foodbank vouchers, toys, clothes or food

Charitable grants come from small grant-making organisations and normally range from £100 to £300

Other support includes accessing healthcare, free prescriptions and school meals. It also includes child maintenance, relevant benefits and declarations of parentage

'[The adviser] helped me not to lose hope. She encouraged me.'

'We were able to sleep in a house for the very first time.'

"So, so, so much progress! Brilliant progress!"

"I have a roof over my head. Before I didn't have nowhere to go."

Feedback

We asked a random selection of clients for feedback. We got 28 responses, and these are the results.

97% of clients said we understood their situation well.

88% said we helped them to progress their case.

87% rated their overall experience of the service as 10/10.

"There's a huge difference now. [The adviser] helped me and now me and my daughter have a place to sleep and we are eating. I'm really thankful."

Case study*

Taniyah approached us for support because she and her baby, Martin, were homeless. They had been staying with a friend for several years, sleeping on the living room floor. Taniyah's friend could no longer support them and they had nowhere to go.

Martin was a British citizen, but Taniyah was undocumented and couldn't work or claim benefits for Martin. She had been advised that she could apply to the Home Office for leave to remain, but could not afford a solicitor or pay the application fees.

We referred her and Martin to the local council for support under section 17. A member of staff spoke to her aggressively, saying *'we can't help you, so why don't you go back'* and *'in situations like these we would normally take your child away from you.'* These statements are wrong and illegal.

With advocacy from Project 17, Taniyah and Martin were housed and given financial support. But there were rats in the property and no cot was provided for Martin, so he kept falling out of the single bed he had to share with Taniyah. Subsistence payments were often late, leaving the family with no money to buy food.





With advocacy, subsistence payments became more regular and a cot was provided. A partner organisation helped them to access free immigration advice and eventually Taniyah was able to regularise her immigration status, enabling them to move out of local authority support

Project 17 worked with Shelter to submit a group complaint to the council, raising issues experienced by several families in the area, including Taniyah. The complaint demonstrated the inadequacy of the service provided to families with no recourse to public funds. It was upheld and Taniyah received compensation.

***Names and other identifying features have been changed to protect the identity of our client.**

Training for professionals

26 training sessions, including 8 sessions outside London

462 participants

81% rated the training as Excellent

99.7% rated it as Good or Excellent

“Trainer was very knowledgeable. Really well-facilitated. Very clear, informative and well explained. One of the best trainings I've ever participated in”

Participant at Migrant Action, Leeds (June 2018)

“Clear, comprehensive and well structured. One of the best workshops we've had.”

Participant at Asylum Welcome, Oxford, (September 2018)



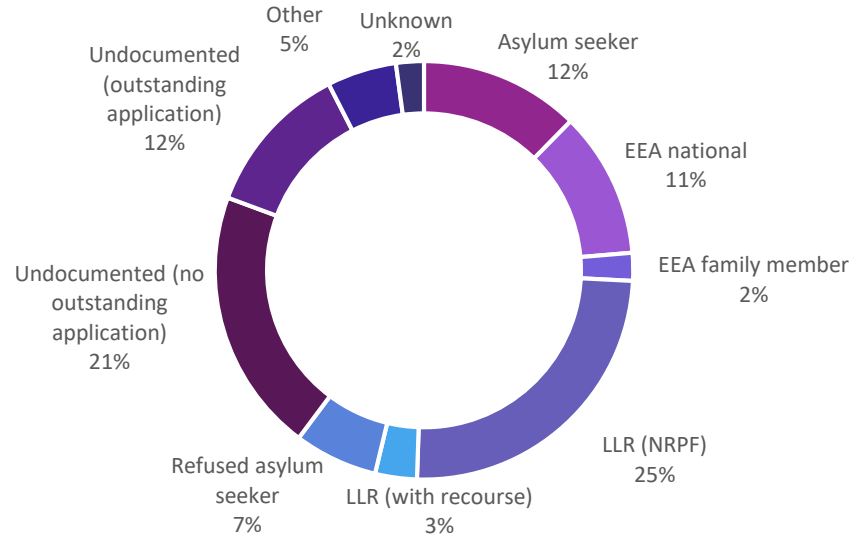
Telephone advice for professionals

251 calls

171 organisations

86 local authority areas

Immigration status



*places a duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children 'in need' in their area.**



Expanding our reach

This year we focused on developing online resources, supporting self-advocacy and creating materials for frontline workers, lawyers and those involved in strategic work.

We worked in partnership with Youth Legal to establish the Section 17 Hub, a members' area of our website that houses policy documents from all local authorities in England, obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests. We are also uploading anonymised case data to help practitioners identify trends in bad practice and call for change. The Hub now has 280 members.

Policy and campaigns

Our policy work aims to create longer term change through research, consultation, complaints and litigation. This year our work included:

- Following pressure that involved engagement, group complaints and litigation, Lewisham Council undertook an independent review of its NRPF services; removed its embedded Home Office officer and significantly improved decision-making.
- We worked with Kate Osamor MP and Just Fair to establish the All-Party Parliamentary Group on No Recourse to Public Funds. The first meeting will take place in May 2019.
- Our research into children's experiences of NRPF led to the creation of a report, an animation and a best practice charter for local authorities.



Not Seen, Not Heard

In February we published the research report 'Not Seen, Not Heard: Children's Experiences of the Hostile Environment'. The report explores the challenges faced by children living in families with no recourse to public funds.

The report shows that the barriers to accessing local authority support and the failure to meet children's essential needs have a significant emotional and physical impact on young people. The children we spoke to had been left street homeless, in inadequate or unsafe accommodation, and without enough money to eat. They told us that they were left feeling socially isolated, distressed, ashamed and unsafe. You can read the full report [on our website](#).





The Children's Charter

'Not Seen and Not Heard' inspired us to create a Children's Charter. Working with consultants Sue Lukes and Minda Burgos-Lukes, we developed a Children's Charter for local authorities to adopt. The charter is a mechanism for councils to formally demonstrate their commitment to upholding the rights of children living in families with no recourse to public funds. So far, Hackney council has adopted the Charter and Islington council is working towards adopting it.

We made an animated film telling the story of Joel, a child facing homelessness and extreme poverty with his mother while trying to access support under s.17. You can watch the film [on our website](#). It has been viewed over 1,300 times.

By signing this charter, local authorities make a commitment to:

1. Listen to Children

2. Ensure accommodation is suitable and meets children's needs

3. Treat all children fairly and equally

4. Treat all children sensitively and supportively

5. Support children to live with their families where possible

6. Ensure children have what they need for healthy survival and development

7. Place children's best interests at the heart of decision-making

8. Ensure disabled children are provided with the support they need

Looking ahead

Our priorities for next year include

Growing the frontline advice service to assist more families facing destitution because they have NRPF. We hope to employ 3 advisers

Developing more training sessions for specialist workers so we can encourage non-traditional allies to make s.17 referrals

Using the APPG on NRPF to raise the profile of the issues our clients face and call for change on a national platform

Working with partners to grow the S17 Hub so that it includes case data from more frontline organisations, making it easier to identify trends

Involving service users in the planning and delivery of our policy work by supporting those with lived experience of NRPF to call for change on issues that matter to them



Financial information

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds 2019	Total funds 2018
<i>INCOME</i>				
<i>Grants & donations</i>	£33,581	£194,716	£228,297	£176,199
<i>Other income</i>	£2,625		£2,625	£3,867
<i>Total income</i>	£36,206	£194,716	£230,922	£180,066
<i>EXPENDITURE</i>				
<i>Charitable activities</i>	£36,877	£176,391	£213,268	£174,123
<i>Governance costs</i>	£10		£10	£28
<i>Total expenditure</i>	£36,887	£176,391	£213,278	£174,151
<i>Net income</i>	(£681)	£18,325	£17,644	£5,915
<i>Reconciliation of funds</i>				
<i>Funds brought forward</i>	£45,551	£84,586	£130,137	£124,222
<i>Transfer between funds</i>	(£1,489)	£1,489	£124,222	
<i>Funds carried forward</i>	£43,381	£104,400	£147,781	£130,137

A full copy of these accounts can be obtained by emailing info@project17.org.uk

Funders

Trust and foundations

A B Charitable Trust

Family Holiday Association

The Hilden Charitable Trust

Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust

London Catalyst

Metropolitan Migration Foundation

Stephen Clark Charitable Trust

Lloyds Bank Foundation

Oak Foundation

Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Strategic Legal Fund

The Sam and Bella Sebba Trust

Trust for London

Tudor Trust

Support of our funders means we can continue our work

Other sources

Deep Throat Choir

Fundraising events

Individual donations

Training income

Grants for clients

Buttle Trust

Glasspool Charity

Heinz Carol and Anna Koch Foundation

Mary Strand Trust

Positive Action in Housing



Special thanks

1MCB Chambers for organising and hosting a fundraising quiz

James Costerton for pro bono website management

Catherine Cunningham for pro bono independent examination of our accounts

Clare Jennings, Matthew Gold & Co. Ltd for pro bono legal advice and representation

Deep Throat Choir for donating the proceeds of their Christmas concert

Andrew Lane, Blake Morgan for pro bono advice on the terms of our premise

Matthew Gold & Co. Ltd for fundraising efforts

Eric Metcalfe, Monckton Chambers – for pro-bono advice and representation

Kate Osamor MP for chairing the APPG on NRPF

The Salvation Army, Catford, for donating Christmas presents for our clients' children

Nick Watts, Together with Migrant Children for advice and support with our research

Everyone who walked with us at the London Legal Support Trust

The individuals who give regular and one-off donations to support our work

The illustrations in the report are by Maddie Dai and come from our animation, 'Not Seen, Not Heard'

