

Early intervention and intensive casework support across the asylum support pathway: A London Test and Learn assessing feasibility and observed Employment, Housing stability and Homelessness outcomes

Evaluation protocol

Table 1: Research Summary

Project title ¹	Early intervention and intensive casework support across the asylum support pathway: A London Test and Learn assessing feasibility and observed Employment, Housing stability and Homelessness outcomes
Evaluator (Institution)	University of Huddersfield
Principal investigator(s)	Prof. Phil Brown
Co-Investigators, and affiliations	Dr Santokh Gill; Dr Vickie Barratt
Protocol author(s)	Dr Santokh Gill
Research design	Mixed-methods, theory-based process and feasibility evaluation, comprising quantitative analysis of programme monitoring data and qualitative research with participants, delivery staff and partner organisations. No comparison group; no causal impact evaluation is proposed.

Table 2: Protocol Version History *

Version	Date	Reason for revision
1.0 [original]	September 2026	N/A – first draft for team and CHI review
3.0	October 2026	Updates from team and from consultation with delivery partners
5.0	October 2026	Updates from team and from consultation with delivery partners

* Any changes to the research plan or to protocols in the Standard Operating Procedures Manual need to be discussed with CHI prior to any change(s) being finalised. Please update this document where needed to reflect changes.

Table 3: Key Personnel and Team Contributions

Staff	Affiliation	Contribution
Professor Phil Brown	University of Huddersfield	Principal Investigator, responsible for overall study design
Dr Santokh Gill	University of Huddersfield	Co-Investigator; qualitative research design and delivery, participant and staff interviews, qualitative analysis
Dr Vicki Barratt	University of Huddersfield	Co-Investigator; Salesforce data audit, quantitative analysis framework, engagement typology development
Dr Mihretab Salasibew	Centre for Homelessness Impact	Senior responsible officer (SRO), contribution to the evaluation
Kerri Bissoonauth	Centre for Homelessness Impact	Programme Lead, contract management
Luke Arundel	Centre for Homelessness Impact	Evaluation Lead, management and contribution to the evaluation

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Open Science Framework:

The final agreed evaluation protocol will be registered on the Open Science Framework (OSF) by the University of Huddersfield prior to the main outcome analysis. The registration will provide a time-stamped public record of the agreed evaluation design, methods and analysis approach. Relevant members of the evaluation team and CHI will be added as contributors, with access permissions reflecting their roles. Any substantive subsequent changes to the protocol will be documented through version-controlled amendments to the OSF registration.

Sponsor:

This evaluation has been commissioned by the Greater London Authority (GLA) as part of the expanded funding agreement between the GLA and the Centre for Homelessness Impact. The original agreement funded a deep dive into the single homelessness crisis pathways in London, with the aim of improving the evidence base on what works to prevent rough sleeping and supporting the redesign and optimisation of services within this pathway. The expanded agreement includes additional Test & Learn evaluations, including the Asylum Support Pathway and the Family Hubs studies.

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Background

The move from asylum support to independent living can be a particularly difficult period for newly recognised refugees. Although people may spend months or years waiting for a decision on their asylum claim, there is often little opportunity to prepare for employment, housing and independent living during this time. Once refugee status is granted, people are expected to leave asylum accommodation and quickly navigate a range of practical challenges, including finding somewhere to live, accessing benefits, opening bank accounts and, where possible, securing employment.

There is increasing evidence that people who receive refugee status through the asylum system face a heightened risk of homelessness. Of the 769 people recorded as rough sleeping in London in September 2023 who had left an institution, 222 (29%) had left asylum accommodation within the previous 85 days, a 283% increase on the equivalent figure in June 2023 (Brown et al., 2024a). More recently, IPPR's national analysis of immigration status and homelessness confirms the pattern is not confined to London and not improving: people with insecure or recently-resolved immigration status remain significantly over-represented in single homelessness presentations across England (Qureshi & Omeike, 2026).

The risk of homelessness appears to be particularly high for people who obtain refugee status through the asylum system rather than through organised resettlement programmes (Brown et al, 2024a). While resettlement schemes often include planned housing arrangements and structured support, people granted refugee status following an asylum claim may have relatively little time to secure accommodation and establish financial stability before asylum support ends. Qureshi and Omeike (2026) identify this "cliff edge" at the point of status change, rather than the asylum process itself, as one of the strongest structural drivers of homelessness risk among people with recent immigration status changes, which is directly relevant to a programme designed around the pre-decision and move-on transition. At the same time, newly recognised refugees are entering a housing market that is increasingly difficult to access in general, particularly in London and other areas experiencing sustained housing pressures. This is a constraint affecting the whole population, but one that bears down hardest on people with the least time, the least savings and the least established support network to draw on.

A number of factors specific to people seeking asylum and newly recognised refugees compound this general housing pressure. People seeking asylum are generally unable to work for most of the asylum process. A limited right to request permission to work exists for those whose claim remains outstanding after a set period. The rules governing which roles qualify changed on 26 March 2026 and now depend on when the application for permission to work was submitted, not when it was decided: applications submitted before 26 March 2026 and later granted remain restricted to the Immigration Salary List, a shortage-occupation list; applications submitted on or after 26 March 2026 are instead restricted to the Appendix Skilled Occupations list, at Regulated Qualifications Framework

(RQF) Level 6 or above – graduate-level and professional roles such as doctors, nurses and dentists (Home Office, 2026a). Because eligibility depends on application date rather than decision date, the cohort may at any point include people subject to either rule. The evaluation will record which rule applied to each participant, based on application date, rather than treating the restriction as a single fixed position. The practical effect for most people seeking asylum is the same regardless of the exact qualifying period, little or no opportunity to build employment history, references or savings before a decision is made. This has direct consequences for move-on, people who are granted refugee status typically have no employment record to draw on, no established credit history for renting, and little accumulated capital, at precisely the point they must find work and housing within the fixed period allowed by the move-on rules then in force. Access to affordable housing is difficult for the population as a whole and Universal Credit and homelessness systems are under sustained pressure; newly recognised refugees must learn to navigate both while also, in many cases, managing the practical and psychological aftermath of the asylum process itself. Research has also highlighted the importance of English language provision, employment opportunities, trusted advice and support services, and strong community networks in helping refugees establish stable and independent lives (Brown et al., 2024a).

Most support services are focused on helping people after refugee status has already been granted. Whilst these services are important, they often have limited time to address employment, housing and other practical barriers before asylum support comes to an end. As a result, there is increasing interest in approaches that begin earlier and support people before and after a decision on their asylum claim.

Several recent and ongoing evaluations address related questions and help to place this evaluation in context. The Home Office's evaluation of the Refugee Employability Programme, covering the programme's first year and drawing on management information for around 7,900 service users alongside surveys and qualitative interviews, examines a national programme of employment support delivered after grant of status (Barri et al., 2025). The evaluation of the Refugee Transitions Outcomes Fund, conducted by Ecorys with Social Finance and a group of academics, examines a related national fund aimed at improving move-on outcomes over 2021–2024, also focused on the post-decision period (Ecorys, 2025). CHI's own systems-wide evaluation of homelessness and rough sleeping, conducted by RSM UK Consulting with the Centre for Homelessness Impact and Cordis Bright, examines the interaction between the wider homelessness system and the asylum system at a strategic rather than programme level (RSM UK Consulting et al., 2025). Each of these is national in scope and, with the partial exception of the systems-wide evaluation, begins its focus after a positive asylum decision has been made. What is largely untested in the published evidence base is a programme that begins support before a decision is made, in a single city, and follows participants through the transition itself. This is the gap the Asylum Support Pathway Test and Learn programme, and this evaluation, are designed to address, and it is discussed further in the Rationale below.

The Asylum Support Pathway Test and Learn programme has been developed in response to this gap. The programme is led by Breaking Barriers and delivered in partnership with Croydon Refugee Day Centre (CRDC) and Spires, bringing together a joined-up pathway of

support aimed at improving move-on outcomes and reducing the risk of homelessness. Participants are engaged through outreach in asylum hotels and through existing CRDC services, including the Community Hub, Essentials Centre, Women's Project and Helpdesk. This allows relationships to be built before a positive asylum decision is received and provides a route into ongoing support.

The programme combines outreach and relationship building, housing and employability workshops, practical move-on support and one-to-one employment casework. Housing expertise is provided by Spires, employment support is provided by Breaking Barriers, and community-based engagement and support are provided by CRDC. Together, the organisations aim to provide more continuous support through the move-on period than is typically available.

The programme focuses on single adults and couples without dependent children aged 18 and over. This group represents the majority of people seeking asylum in the local area, and, unlike households with children, does not automatically have priority on the basis of having children under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996. Single adults and couples without children may therefore need to establish priority on another qualifying ground, such as vulnerability, and can face greater uncertainty in accessing statutory accommodation. By working with participants before and after a decision on their asylum claim, the programme aims to improve preparedness for move-on, strengthen employment prospects, increase housing stability and reduce the risk of homelessness among newly recognised refugees.

1.2. Rationale

The Asylum Support Pathway Test and Learn programme has been developed in response to a gap in the timing and coordination of support available to people moving through the asylum system. Housing, welfare and employment support is often accessed only after a positive asylum decision, when individuals may already be facing significant time pressure to leave asylum accommodation and establish an income and somewhere to live. This limits opportunities for earlier preparation and prevention.

The programme therefore tests an earlier and more joined-up approach. It seeks to address this gap by engaging people earlier in the asylum journey and continuing support through the move-on period. The underlying proposition is that earlier preparation and continuity of support may help people navigate the transition from asylum support to independent living more effectively. Preparing people for employment, housing and independent living is expected to work better if it begins before refugee status is granted, rather than after a positive decision has been received. Bringing together outreach, housing information, move-on support and employment casework creates an opportunity to provide more joined-up support during a period when people are often required to navigate multiple systems simultaneously.

This proposition draws on a growing body of evidence. Brown, et al (2024a) and Brown, (2024b) highlight the difficulties experienced by refugees moving on from the asylum system, particularly those without access to the accommodation and support arrangements typically

associated with organised resettlement programmes, and identify the absence of early, face-to-face support as a recurring theme across their interviews. Lindley, et al (2026) argue that current move-on policy, specifically the length and administration of the move-on period itself, actively generates homelessness rather than merely failing to prevent it, and set out the case for earlier engagement as a policy response. Qureshi and Omeike (2026) add weight from a national perspective, arguing that homelessness responses which treat immigration status as a fixed backdrop, rather than as a driver of risk in its own right, will continue to miss the transition points, such as the move from asylum support to refugee status, where risk is concentrated. Evidence also points to the importance of stable housing, employment opportunities, trusted advice and practical support during the transition to independent living (Brown et al, 2024a). Despite this, housing, employment and welfare support are typically delivered by different organisations working to different funding streams and different timescales, even though the challenges people experience are closely interconnected. A broadly comparable service model exists in Greater Manchester, where the Greater Manchester Combined Authority's Refugee Welcome Programme similarly combines early engagement with housing and integration support (Greater Manchester Combined Authority, n.d). That programme is regional in scope and not structured around the pre-decision/move-on distinction this evaluation examines; it is noted here as the nearest comparable service design, rather than as a direct precedent for this evaluation's approach.

The programme also responds directly to recommendations emerging from Brown et al (2024b), commissioned by the Centre for Homelessness Impact. That research highlighted the importance of earlier intervention, greater access to face-to-face support, better navigation of housing and welfare systems, and the need to develop stronger evidence on what works to prevent homelessness among refugees. Lindley et al, (2026) have continued to highlight the challenges associated with the move-on period and the need for preventative approaches that allow people more time and support to plan for life beyond asylum accommodation. NACCOM (2026), reflecting on the Home Office's evaluation of initiatives to enhance the move-on process (National Centre for Social Research & Fortia Insight, 2026), draw similar conclusions, emphasising the value of providing people and services with additional time and support to prevent homelessness before it occurs.

This evaluation adds to this evidence base. It is a test, at implementation level, of a model that has been recommended in principle but not yet evaluated in practice. The Home Office's own evaluations of related programmes such as the Refugee Employability Programme (Barri et al., 2025) and the Refugee Transitions Outcomes Fund (Ecorys, 2025), assess national-level interventions that begin support after a positive asylum decision; neither tests pre-decision engagement specifically, and neither is designed around a single, geographically bounded partnership of the kind Breaking Barriers, CRDC and Spires have developed in Croydon. This evaluation is, to the evaluation team's knowledge, the first to examine a programme that begins engagement before an asylum decision is made and continues it through the move-on period, using routine programme monitoring data alongside primary qualitative fieldwork rather than relying on retrospective interviews or administrative data alone. It is a feasibility and process evaluation rather than an impact evaluation, reflecting the early stage and scale of the intervention, but it is designed to produce evidence that a future, larger-scale study could build on.

The evaluation will therefore examine how the model is implemented in practice, its feasibility and acceptability, participant engagement, and observed employment, housing stability and homelessness outcomes (see Section 4.2, Theory of Change). It will also identify lessons for programme development and for the design of future, more robust evaluations of approaches to preventing homelessness among people moving through the asylum system. It will contribute to a growing evidence base on refugee homelessness prevention, an area where significant evidence gaps remain despite increasing policy and practice interest.

2. PROJECT SUMMARY

2.1. Project Description

This study is an independent mixed-methods evaluation of the Asylum Support Pathway Test and Learn programme led by Breaking Barriers and delivered in partnership with Croydon Refugee Day Centre (CRDC) and Spires.

The programme is designed to support people seeking asylum and newly recognised refugees as they prepare for and move through the transition from asylum support to independent living. Approximately 120 participants will take part across two broad pathways: people seeking asylum pre-decision, including a small subgroup with permission to work, and newly recognised refugees in the move-on period following a positive asylum decision. As a single-site evaluation of a programme delivered in one city, the findings will speak most directly to the feasibility of this model in a London context; the extent to which they generalise to other areas will depend on local housing markets, referral infrastructure and delivery partner capacity, and is discussed further in Section 5.5.

The evaluation combines quantitative and qualitative data. Monitoring and case management data will be used to examine programme reach and engagement and to describe observed outcomes relating to employment, income, housing stability and homelessness. Interviews with participants, delivery staff and partner organisations will explore how the programme is delivered in practice, how people experience the support provided and the challenges and opportunities that emerge during implementation.

The study is informed by the programme's Theory of Change (see Section 4.2) and seeks to understand how the different elements of the programme work together to support participants during the move-on period. Given the relatively small scale of the programme and the absence of a comparison group, the evaluation focuses on implementation, participant experiences, observed outcomes and lessons for future policy and practice. Given the relatively small scale and early stage of the programme, and the absence of a comparison group, the evaluation is not designed to estimate causal impact. Instead, it will assess implementation, feasibility and acceptability, participant experiences and observed outcomes, and generate learning to inform future programme development and evaluation.

2.2. Aims, Objectives, and Research Questions

2.2.1. Aims and Objectives

Aim

To assess the implementation, feasibility and acceptability of the Asylum Support Pathway Test and Learn programme, and to examine participant experiences and observed

employment, housing stability and homelessness outcomes across the pre-decision and move-on period.

Objectives

The evaluation will:

- Examine how the programme is delivered across its different components, including outreach, workshops, move-on support and employment casework.
- Assess the feasibility and acceptability of delivering coordinated support across the pre-decision and move-on period.
- Explore participants' experiences of the programme and the challenges they face in preparing for employment, housing and independent living.
- Examine programme reach, engagement and observed outcomes relating to employment, income, housing stability and homelessness using programme monitoring and case management data.
- Explore how partnership working and wider contextual factors support or hinder programme delivery.
- Identify lessons for future policy and service delivery, including opportunities for programme improvement and wider implementation.

2.2.2. Research Questions

RQ1. How is the Asylum Support Pathway Test and Learn programme delivered in practice? This question explores how the different parts of the programme are delivered, including outreach, workshops, move-on support, employment casework and partnership working.

RQ2. How do participants experience the support provided through the programme and how acceptable is the support provided? This question explores participants' experiences of the programme, including the support they receive, its perceived relevance and accessibility, and the challenges they face in preparing for employment, housing and independent living.

RQ3. To what extent does the programme reach, engage and retain participants throughout the asylum and move-on journey? This question examines participant recruitment, referral, attendance, engagement, retention and progression through the different stages of support.

RQ4. What do programme data tell us about employment, income, housing stability and homelessness outcomes among participants? This question uses programme monitoring and case management data to examine outcomes relating to employment, income and housing stability. It is not intended to estimate the causal effect of the programme.

RQ5. What factors facilitate or hinder the feasibility and delivery of the programme? This question explores the organisational, operational and contextual factors that influence programme delivery, including partnership working, referral processes, data systems and wider service and housing conditions.

RQ6. What lessons can be drawn for programme development, future policy and practice, and any subsequent evaluation? This question focuses on lessons for improving the programme, informing homelessness prevention and refugee support, and assessing whether and how a future more robust evaluation could be undertaken.

RQ7. What would a more rigorous future evaluation of this model require, and what does this study suggest about its feasibility? This question will draw on the evaluation's existing process and data-quality findings, including the reliability and timeliness of decision-tracking in the programme's monitoring data, so that it can inform any future decision to move to a pilot or efficacy study.

3. STUDY TIMELINE

The timeline may be subject to minor revision following final ethics approval, completion of data sharing agreements and discussions with delivery partners regarding the Theory of Change and monitoring framework.

Table 4: Study Timeline

Strand	Staff responsible/leading	Activity	Dates	Dependencies
Mobilisation and inception	Phil Brown, Santokh Gill	Project meetings with CHI and delivery partners; review of project documentation; finalisation of Theory of Change; development of evaluation framework and outcome measures	July-September 2026	Partner availability
Ethics and governance	Phil Brown, Santokh Gill	Submission of ethics amendments; final ethics	August-September 2026	University ethics approval;

		approval; participant materials finalised; data sharing agreements completed		signed agreements
Theory of Change and monitoring framework	Phil Brown, Santokh Gill, Vickie Barrett and Partners	Theory of Change workshop with partners; review of monitoring arrangements; agreement of key outcome definitions, including employment, income, housing stability and homelessness indicators	September 2026	Partner participation; availability of monitoring information
Data audit and quantitative framework	Vickie Barrett	Salesforce review and data quality audit; mapping available variables; definition of follow-up points and denominators; development of quantitative analysis framework	September-November 2026	Data sharing agreements; access to Salesforce data
Qualitative data collection (Round 1)	Santokh Gill	Interviews with staff, delivery partners and early participant interviews (service user and staff/service provider guides); review of programme documents and	October-December 2026	Ethics approval; recruitment support from delivery partners

		referral processes		
Quantitative monitoring and analysis (Phase 1)	Vickie Barrett	Descriptive analysis of programme monitoring data; review of engagement, participation and early outcomes	October 2026-January 2027	Sufficient monitoring data available
Interim review and learning discussion	Phil Brown, Santokh Gill, Vickie Barrett	Interim analysis and presentation of emerging findings to CHI and delivery partners	January-February 2027	
Quantitative monitoring and analysis (Phase 2)	Vickie Barrett	Analysis of employment, income, housing stability and homelessness outcomes at 3 and 6 months following the defined outcome baseline/reference point. Three-month outcomes will be analysed for all participants reaching that follow-up point within the study period. Six-month outcomes will be analysed for the subset reaching six months before the final data cut-off. The number and proportion of participants eligible for and providing data at	February-July 2027	Follow-up data available

		each follow-up point will be reported.		
Analysis and reporting	Phil Brown, Santokh Gill, Vickie Barrett	Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings; analysis against Theory of Change; drafting final report and policy brief	May-August 2027	Completion of data collection
Dissemination	Phil Brown, Santokh Gill, Vickie Barrett	Final report, policy brief and dissemination activities with CHI and delivery partners	August-September 2027	Final outputs agreed

4. INTERVENTION

4.1 Intervention

The intervention is described in full using the TIDieR framework (Table 5), populated from the programme's Theory of Change and Background/Rationale documentation. A small number of items including: provider training, session dosage, and tailoring decision rules are not specified in the source documents available to the evaluation team and are flagged within the table for confirmation with Breaking Barriers, CRDC and Spires.

Table 5: TIDieR Framework² (please complete the table)

Brief Name Provide the name or a phrase that describes the intervention	Asylum Support Pathway Test and Learn - an integrated pre-decision and move-on employment and housing support programme for people seeking asylum and newly recognised refugees.
Why: Describe any rationale, theory, or goal of the elements essential to the intervention	Newly recognised refugees face a short move-on period with little time to secure housing and income, having typically been unable to work and having had limited opportunity to prepare during the asylum process. The programme's underlying theory (Section 4.2) is that

² BMJ 2014;348:g1687; doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.g1687>

	beginning employability and housing preparation before a decision is made, and maintaining continuity of relationship and support into the post-decision period, will improve move-on preparedness, accelerate employment and housing outcomes, and reduce homelessness risk.
What (Materials): Describe any physical or informational materials used in the intervention, including those provided to participants or used in intervention delivery or in training of intervention providers. Provide information on where the materials can be accessed (such as online appendix, URL)	Workshop materials across the modules covering housing, CVs, temporary accommodation, how to rent in the private rented sector, tax, financial literacy and budgeting, benefits, foundations of work in the UK, volunteering, how to make a homelessness application, and building relationships. Laptops provided to participants who have received refugee status. Promotional and outreach materials for engagement in asylum hotels. CRM system and Referral Tracker for case recording.
What (Procedures): Describe each of the procedures, activities, and/or processes used in the intervention, including any enabling or support activities	Outreach and relationship-building through visits to asylum hotels and through CRDC's existing community services (Community Hub, Essentials Centre, Women's Project, Helpdesk). Group workshops delivered on a rolling basis to participants at the pre-decision stage (with and without permission to work) and to newly recognised refugees. One-to-one casework, individualised and open-ended, provided by Spires (housing) and Breaking Barriers (employment) once a participant has right to work or has received refugee status. Casework includes CV development, language and re-accreditation support, digital literacy support, support to apply for benefits and volunteering, employer workshops, housing referrals, support to open a bank account, job clubs, employer brokerage, structured employment pathways and in-work support.
Who provided: For each category of intervention provider (such as psychologist, nursing assistant), describe their expertise, background, and any specific training given	Delivered jointly by Breaking Barriers (employment advisers and management - employment casework, CV development, employer brokerage), Croydon Refugee Day Centre (CRDC) (caseworkers and outreach staff - community engagement,

	outreach in asylum hotels, workshop delivery, referral coordination) and Spires (housing specialists - housing advice and casework).
How: Describe the modes of delivery (such as face to face or by some other mechanism, such as internet or telephone) of the intervention and whether it was provided individually or in a group	Group workshops delivered face-to-face at community venues and in asylum hotel settings. One-to-one casework delivered face-to-face in private rooms, supplemented by phone and digital contact (laptops provided to participants post-status). Referral and case management coordinated through a shared CRM system between Breaking Barriers and CRDC/Spires.
Where: Describe the type(s) of location(s) where the intervention occurred, including any necessary infrastructure or relevant features	South London, primarily Croydon and surrounding boroughs. Delivery settings include contingency hotel accommodation and dispersed asylum accommodation (for outreach), CRDC community venues (Community Hub, Essentials Centre, Women's Project, Helpdesk), and private rooms for one-to-one casework sessions.
When and how much: Describe the number of times the intervention was delivered and over what period of time including the number of sessions, their schedule, and their duration, intensity, or dose	Programme delivery runs for 12 months, July 2026 to June 2027. Dose varies by participant group and engagement level: light-touch engagement may involve workshop attendance only; full pathway engagement spans pre-decision workshops and outreach through to intensive, individualised, open-ended one-to-one employment casework following a positive decision.
Tailoring: If the intervention was planned to be personalised, titrated or adapted, then describe what, why, when, and how	The programme is explicitly differentiated by participant group and legal status: workshop-only pre-decision support for those without permission to work; workshops plus employment casework for those with permission to work; and full pre-decision-to-post-decision pathway support for those who receive a positive decision during the intervention period. Within this, one-to-one casework is described as individualised and open-ended, meaning content and intensity are tailored to individual need (e.g. ESOL level, prior qualifications, housing risk, support needs) rather than

	following a fixed protocol.
Modifications: If the intervention was modified during the course of the study, describe the changes (what, why, when, and how)	None to date. Any modifications made during delivery will be recorded here, along with the rationale and date, and considered at the January 2027 interim learning review.
How well (Planned): If intervention adherence or fidelity was assessed, describe how and by whom, and if any strategies were used to maintain or improve fidelity, describe them	Fidelity will be assessed primarily through the qualitative strand (staff and service provider interviews exploring how each component is actually delivered) and through the quantitative engagement typology, which will capture which components each participant received and at what intensity. This provides a proportionate, process-evaluation approach to fidelity appropriate to the scale and budget of the study, rather than a formal fidelity checklist or observation protocol.
How well (actual): If intervention adherence or fidelity was assessed, describe the extent to which the intervention was delivered as planned	To be completed following data collection, drawing on Round 1 and Round 2 qualitative findings and the quantitative engagement typology analysis.

4.1a Core intervention offer by participant pathway

The intervention is differentiated by right-to-work and asylum decision status into three pathways, consistent with the Theory of Change (Section 4.2, Figure 1). Table 5a sets out what each pathway actually receives, read alongside the full TIDieR description above.

Table 5a: Intervention offer by pathway

	Pre-decision, no right to work	Pre-decision, with right to work	Refugee status granted
Primary employability route	ESOL/language provision is the primary entry point; formal ESOL requires six months' UK residence, so participants whose decision arrives faster may not reach it within the evaluation period. Volunteering in this	ESOL/language provision remains the primary entry point. Where formal ESOL is not yet accessible, structured, DBS-checked volunteering is offered as a parallel route, building English proficiency	As with the RTW pathway, with full access to formal volunteering and employment casework.

	group is limited to informal, community-level roles, as DBS-checked placements require a National Insurance number.	and UK workplace exposure — distinguishing this group's offer from the no-RTW pathway.	
Casework	Workshop attendance only (housing and employability workshops). No one-to-one employment casework, consistent with the absence of right to work.	Individualised, open-ended one-to-one casework: CV development, language and re-accreditation support, digital literacy, employer brokerage, job clubs, structured employment pathways, in-work support.	As with the RTW pathway, casework continues or begins depending on when status is granted.
Housing support	Workshop-level housing information only (how to rent in the PRS, homelessness application process).	As above, plus referrals and information on housing with specific reference to the implications for continued entitlement to asylum support while a decision is pending.	Full housing casework and referral through Spires.
Distinguishing rationale	Workshop-only support reflects both the absence of right to work and the uncertainty of decision timing.	Structured, DBS-checked volunteering — not employment — is the actual distinguishing activity between the two pre-decision groups (right to work gives access to the NI number and DBS check volunteering requires; informal, community-level	Full pathway support, pre-decision engagement carried through into the post-decision period.

		volunteering remains the only option without it).	
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This differentiation reflects direct input from Breaking Barriers, CRDC and Spires at the Theory of Change development workshop (2 October 2026).

4.2 Theory of Change

Refugees face a critical and often abrupt transition when they receive a positive asylum decision. While asylum support ends within a relatively short timeframe, individuals are simultaneously expected to secure housing, access benefits, navigate unfamiliar systems and begin rebuilding their lives. For many, this creates a heightened risk of homelessness, financial insecurity and social exclusion. Existing support often begins only after refugee status is granted, missing important opportunities to prepare individuals for move-on and reducing the scope for early intervention.

This programme is based on the premise that earlier engagement can improve outcomes. By working with people while they are still in the asylum system, the intervention aims to build knowledge, confidence and practical readiness before move-on pressures arise. Through workshops, tailored employment support, housing information, digital inclusion activities and ongoing one-to-one casework, participants are supported to better understand UK employment, welfare and housing systems, strengthen their work readiness and develop plans for transition.

A key feature of the programme is the development of trusted relationships between participants and advisers. It is anticipated that these relationships encourage engagement, increase confidence and improve individuals' ability to access and act upon advice and support. The programme also brings together employment, housing and wider integration support, recognising that these outcomes are interconnected and that progress in one area can support progress in others.

The programme draws on the expertise and resources of Breaking Barriers, CRDC and Spires, including employment advisers, housing advisers, outreach workers, community-based services and partnership networks. Activities include outreach, workshops, housing advice, employment support and one-to-one casework. These activities are expected to result in sustained participant engagement, increased access to housing and employment support, improved preparedness for move-on, and stronger links to relevant services and sources of support.

In the short term, participants are expected to become better prepared for move-on, with increased understanding of housing, welfare and employment pathways, greater confidence, improved work readiness and stronger connections to sources of support. In the medium term, these changes are expected to contribute to quicker access to benefits and income, improved employment outcomes, greater housing stability and reduced risk of homelessness during the move-on period. Longer term, the programme aims to support

sustained employment, secure housing, increased independence and greater social integration.

The overall intended impact is a more preventative, well-connected system in which individuals leave asylum accommodation with support already in place, reducing homelessness and rough sleeping, increasing employment and social integration, and helping refugees establish stable and independent lives.

Figure 1 presents the full Theory of Change diagram, developed collaboratively with CHI and Breaking Barriers, mapping inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts against the programme's three participant groups.

Figure 1 Theory of Change



Not every outcome in the Theory of Change is observable within the evaluation's fieldwork period. Short-term outcomes, move-on preparedness, adviser-participant trust, confidence and understanding of UK systems, are expected to be evident by the end of Round 1 fieldwork (autumn 2026) and are addressed directly by the qualitative strand. Medium-term outcomes, employment, income and housing stability at 3 and 6 months, fall within the evaluation's primary quantitative outcome window and will be reported using CRM and Referral Tracker data (Section 5.2.2). Long-term outcomes, sustained tenancy, wellbeing, and feelings of life satisfaction and neighbourhood belonging, extend beyond what a study of

this length can observe directly; the evaluation will report short- and medium-term progress against these as leading indicators, rather than claim to measure the long-term outcomes themselves.

Assumptions and external factors

The Theory of Change identifies a number of assumptions and external factors. These include:

Policy and process

- Participants receive a positive asylum decision during the intervention period
- Decision timing is bimodal: some decisions land within 6 weeks–2 months, others take considerably longer
- E-visas issued promptly once a decision is made
- Benefits are rarely secured within the move-on period – claims are typically still in progress at eviction, with first payment ~6 weeks after application
- Right to work, where granted pre-decision, depends on application date: before 26 March 2026 → Immigration Salary List; on or after → Appendix Skilled Occupations at RQF Level 6+ (graduate-level). A material constraint on this subgroup's employment pathway, not a measure of programme performance

Local market and infrastructure

- Affordable housing supply is limited, particularly for people under 35
- Job market is constrained
- Formal ESOL requires 6 months' UK residence, so for people who receive a fast-decision often can't access it in time; the main local provider serving people with low-English who are being supported by CRDC is under threat of closure
- Banks willing to open accounts for newly recognised refugees
- Smooth referral process with Croydon Local Authority

Delivery context

- Breaking Barriers is newly established in Croydon, without prior local delivery history or relationships
- Consistent data collection and shared outcome definitions across Breaking Barriers, CRDC and Spires, and onward sharing with CHI/evaluator
- Programme eligibility is limited to single adults and couples without dependent children who are not a priority need for local authority housing support

Site access (live risks, as at September 2026)

- Clear Springs Ready Homes closed its MOU to new groups (late Sept 2026)

- The Corporate Travel Management (CTM) site remains inaccessible (NDA requirement CRDC won't sign)
- Crystal Palace, the largest site, flagged for closure 27 December 2026

The programme operates within a wider context shaped by housing market pressures, labour market conditions, immigration processes and access to services. Outcomes may vary according to factors such as English language proficiency, previous qualifications and work experience, family circumstances, health and wellbeing, social networks, digital access, and the availability of affordable housing and employment opportunities. These factors will be considered within the evaluation when assessing how, for whom and under what circumstances the intervention is most effective.

4.3 Intervention Dates

The Asylum Support Pathway Test and Learn programme began delivery in Summer 2026 and will continue as described in Table 5. The programme includes outreach activities, housing and employability workshops (which began on the 16 September), employment support, and move-on support for people seeking asylum and newly recognised refugees.

Participants may enter the programme at different stages of the asylum and move-on journey and therefore engage with support for varying lengths of time. The timing and duration of support will depend on individual circumstances, including asylum decision timeframes, housing needs and employment readiness.

As the programme is being delivered in a complex and changing policy environment, delivery arrangements may be adapted over time in response to operational requirements, participant needs and wider developments within the asylum, housing and welfare systems.

5. EVALUATION

5.1 Aims and Research Questions

As set out in Section 2.2 above.

5.2 Research Design and Methods

5.2.1. Methodology

The project will use a mixed-methods, theory-based process and feasibility evaluation, comprising two linked strands: a quantitative analysis of programme monitoring data, and qualitative research with participants, staff and partner organisations. No comparison group is proposed; the scale of the programme (approximately 120 participants) and its early stage of development, make a causal impact evaluation inappropriate at this point. Findings will instead be synthesised using a contribution analysis approach (Mayne, 2012; see below), assessing the extent to which the pattern of observed outcomes is consistent with the Theory of Change, rather than claiming to isolate the programme's causal effect.

Rather than attempting to isolate the programme's causal effect on outcomes, the evaluation will set out the Theory of Change as a testable causal story, then assess the extent to which the pattern of evidence (quantitative outcome data, qualitative accounts

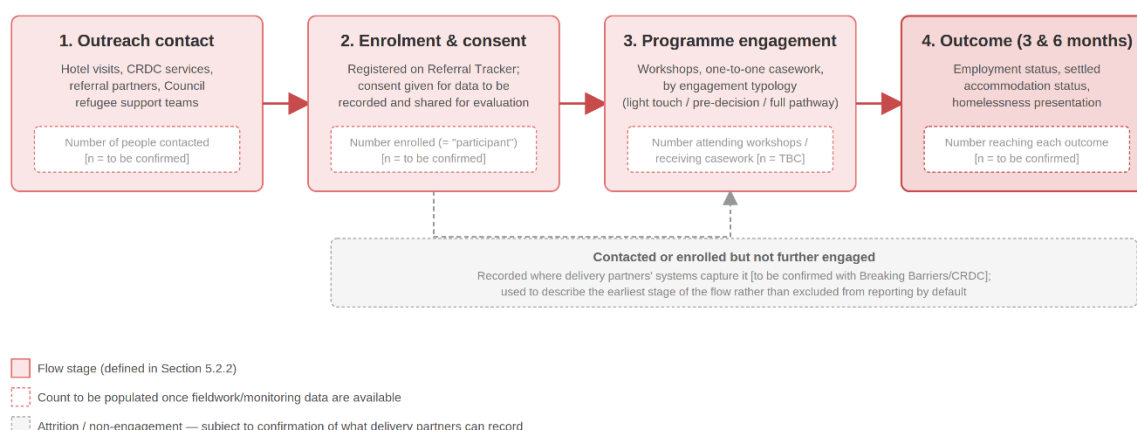
from participants and staff, and delivery records) is consistent with that story, alongside plausible alternative explanations for the outcomes observed. In practice this means: comparing observed engagement and outcome patterns against what the Theory of Change predicts (Section 4.2); using qualitative interviews to test whether the mechanisms the Theory of Change assumes (for example, that trusted adviser relationships increase engagement and confidence) are actually described by participants and staff; and considering, for each core assumption identified in the Theory of Change, whether the available evidence supports or challenges it. The result is a substantiated judgement about the programme's contribution to observed outcomes, with its strength and limits made explicit.

5.2.2 Quantitative strand: CRM/Referral Tracker audit and analysis

Methodology. Analysis of routine monitoring and case management data held in the delivery partners' CRM system and the dedicated Referral Tracker, covering participant demographics, immigration status, engagement across programme components, and employment, income and housing outcomes where recorded. See Figure 3 for an example template for the participant flow which will be completed through the work.

Figure 3: Participant Flow — Outreach to Outcome

Boxes will be populated with actual counts as programme and evaluation data become available



Note

This flow reflects the structure described in Section 5.2.2 (Data sources; Engagement typology) and the ToC's Activities/Outputs framework (Section 4.2). It is intended as a reporting template: boxes will be populated with actual participant counts as the Referral Tracker and CRM data quality audit (Section 5.2.2) confirm what each stage can reliably capture, including whether contacted-but-not-enrolled individuals are recorded at all.

Target population. All programme participants (approximately 120), comprising people seeking asylum without permission to work, people seeking asylum with permission to work, and newly recognised refugees in the move-on period. Following CHI's recommendation, participants will be analysed as a single programme flow rather than as separate cohorts defined by legal status at entry. Immigration status, permission to work and stage in the asylum/move-on pathway will nevertheless be retained as descriptive characteristics and used in exploratory analysis where relevant.

Sampling strategy. Full population analysis of available CRM and Referral Tracker records; no additional sampling required for this strand.

Data sources. For the purposes of this evaluation, a participant is a person who has been enrolled and has given consent to data being recorded and shared for evaluation purposes, consistent with the Referral Tracker's enrolment status field. Where outreach contact does not lead to enrolment, delivery partners' capacity to record this varies; where such records exist, the evaluation will use them to describe the earliest stage of the participant flow (outreach contact → enrolment → engagement → outcome) rather than treating enrolled participants as the sole population of interest throughout. The Referral Tracker captures, per participant: demographic and household detail; immigration status, e-Visa validity, right to work and date confirmed; accommodation type, move-on notice date and days remaining in the move-on window; homelessness/eviction risk and any homelessness application; employment history, CV status, HMRC/NI and bank account status, and identified employment barriers; support needs including health, interpreter and device access; consent status; referral route (Breaking Barriers only, CRDC only, or both) and enrolment status. Breaking Barriers' and CRDC/Spires' CRM system holds parallel and more detailed casework data. A structured data quality audit will be conducted across both sources to assess completeness, consistency and usability, with a written feedback note to CHI and delivery partners.

Engagement typology. Given that participants will engage with different programme components at different intensities and for different reasons (e.g. permission to work, housing instability, ESOL level, timing of decision), an engagement typology will be developed collaboratively with delivery partners. For example: light touch (workshop engagement only); pre-decision casework (workshops plus CRDC/Spires outreach and casework); and full pathway (pre-decision engagement through to intensive post-decision Breaking Barriers employment casework). This typology, grounded in what the CRM and Referral Tracker actually capture, will be used descriptively to examine patterns of engagement and observed outcomes across different forms of programme participation, rather than to estimate the effect of different levels of engagement.

Outcome indicators. The Theory of Change specifies employment status and settled accommodation status at 3 and 6 months from the relevant pathway reference point: commencement of casework support for participants with permission to work pre-decision, and grant of refugee status for participants entering the post-decision pathway. The evaluation will use these as the primary quantitative outcome window. Pending confirmation through the CRM/Referral Tracker data quality audit (Section 6.1), the evaluation proposes the following working definitions, to be tested against what the data can actually support: employment - any paid work of any duration or hours, recorded at the point it starts; a minimum-hours threshold (e.g. 16 hours/week, aligned with Universal Credit conditionality thresholds) will be explored as a secondary indicator if data completeness allows. Settled accommodation – a tenancy or licence agreement of at least 6 months' expected duration, excluding temporary or emergency accommodation. Both definitions will be finalised and version-controlled in the protocol once the audit confirms what the Referral Tracker reliably captures (Section 6.1).

Data quality, assurance and confidentiality. All CRM and Referral Tracker data will be handled under a data sharing agreement with Breaking Barriers, CRDC and Spires, stored on secure University servers accessible only to named team members, and reported only in aggregated or non-identifiable form.

5.2.3 Qualitative strand: participant, staff, employer and partner interviews

Methodology. Semi-structured interviews, using separate topic guides for service users and for staff/service providers, conducted in two rounds (autumn 2026 and spring 2027).

Target population and sampling strategy. Purposive sampling of: (i) participants at different stages of the programme and across the engagement typology, including those who have partially disengaged, not only those progressing well; (ii) employment advisers and caseworkers at Breaking Barriers, CRDC and Spires; (iii) employers, via Breaking Barriers' existing employer brokerage network; and (iv) partner organisations. We will sample across the diversity of national backgrounds and asylum stages represented in the programme.

Recruitment. All participant recruitment will be mediated through CRDC, Spires and Breaking Barriers rather than direct cold contact, given their existing trusted relationships with participants. Staff will identify potential participants meeting the study criteria and provide the Participant Information Sheet; individuals will then contact the research team directly or agree to their contact details being shared, ensuring participation is voluntary and free of any pressure. A recruitment process has been agreed with both organisations, formalised as part of the SREIC ethics application. Professional interpreters, not bilingual delivery partner staff, will be used for participants with limited English, avoiding any conditioning of responses through the service relationship.

Interview format and location. Interviews will last approximately 45–60 minutes and take place face-to-face, by telephone or online, according to participant preference. Face-to-face interviews will be conducted at recognised delivery partner premises during normal working hours – not at participants' homes. Online interviews will use University-approved platforms (Microsoft Teams). Given participant mobility following a positive decision, remote formats will remain available throughout, and the research team will follow participants beyond the immediate South London delivery area where feasible.

Data collection procedures. Round 1 (autumn 2026): approximately 8–10 staff/service provider interviews and 6–8 early participant interviews, using the respective topic guides, focused on implementation fidelity, referral pathways, participant background and early barriers. Round 2 (spring 2027): approximately 10–12 participant interviews at different pathway stages including post-decision, 4–6 employer interviews and 4–6 partner organisation interviews, focused on move-on preparedness, housing and employment experience, relationships with advisers, and perceived changes and outcomes. Where feasible, a subset of participants interviewed in Round 1 will be re-interviewed in Round 2 to explore how their experiences and circumstances have changed over time. Additional participants will also be recruited in Round 2 to ensure coverage of different pathway stages, including post-decision experiences. These are indicative targets; if access proves more limited than anticipated, this will be documented as a substantive methodological finding.

Practical considerations for fieldwork with this population

- **Working with interpreters.** Professional interpreters, rather than bilingual delivery partner staff, will be used for participants with limited English, to avoid any conditioning of responses through the service relationship (see Section 8.2). Interpreters will be briefed ahead of each interview on the purpose of the research, the topics likely to be covered, and the requirement to interpret faithfully rather than summarise or advise. Where practicable, the same interpreter will be used across Round 1 and Round 2 for a given participant, to preserve continuity and the rapport established at first interview. Interpretation will be consecutive rather than simultaneous, and interview length will be adjusted accordingly to allow time for accurate interpretation without rushing the participant. Where a participant speaks a less commonly encountered language or dialect, the research team will work with delivery partners and interpreting providers in advance to confirm interpreter availability before scheduling the interview, rather than assuming availability at short notice.
- **Conducting interviews in delivery settings.** Face-to-face interviews will take place at recognised delivery partner premises during normal working hours, not at participants' homes (Section 5.2.3). A private room will be booked in advance for each interview, and delivery partner staff will be asked not to be present or within earshot during consent or the interview itself, so that participation does not feel bound up with the staff member's role in providing support. Interviews will be scheduled to avoid the busiest periods of service delivery, both to protect participant privacy and to avoid disrupting the delivery partner's core service. Where outreach or hotel-based settings are used for initial contact or recruitment, no research interview will take place in these settings; interviews will always be moved to a private, appropriate location once a participant has agreed to take part.

- **Building rapport while maintaining appropriate boundaries.** Prior research by the team has found that rapport-building materially improves the quality and depth of engagement in interviews with refugees and people seeking asylum (Brown et al., 2024a). Interviewers will take time at the start of each interview to explain the research clearly, check understanding, and give participants space to ask questions before proceeding, rather than moving directly into topic questions. At the same time, interviewers will be mindful not to encourage disclosure beyond what is needed for the research, particularly given that many participants will have experienced difficult or traumatic circumstances during the asylum process; where a participant begins to discuss such experiences unprompted, the interviewer will gently redirect toward the research topics unless the participant indicates they wish to continue, consistent with the approach set out in Section 8.3 (Psychological wellbeing).
- **Flexibility around participant circumstances.** Interview format (face-to-face, telephone or online) will be agreed according to participant preference, and remote formats will remain available throughout, given participant mobility following a positive decision (Section 5.2.3). Interviews will be rescheduled without question where a participant has a conflicting Home Office appointment, is in the process of a hotel transfer, or is otherwise unable to attend at short notice. Where a participant appears fatigued or distressed partway through an interview, the researcher will offer to pause, continue at a later date, or end the interview altogether, and will not treat a shortened or incomplete interview as a failed data point. Where a participant receives their asylum decision between the interview being scheduled and it taking place, the interview will proceed only if the participant confirms they are still willing to take part, and the interviewer will be sensitive to the fact that the decision itself, positive or negative, may be a significant and recent event for the participant.

Data quality, assurance and confidentiality. Interviews will be audio recorded with consent (or notes taken where a participant prefers not to be recorded), stored securely, and deleted following transcription and analysis. No identifiable participant data will appear in any output. Given the relatively small number of staff and partner organisations involved, complete anonymity for this group cannot be guaranteed; job titles, organisational roles and other potentially identifying detail will be generalised or removed, and participants will be informed of this limitation before taking part.

5.3 Data Analysis

Analysis Methods

Quantitative. Descriptive analysis of participant flow, engagement (by typology) and outcomes across the delivery period, benchmarked against the Theory of Change's 3- and 6-month outcome points. Variation in outcomes by participant characteristics and engagement typology will be explored descriptively. Where sample size, outcome frequency, data completeness and distribution are sufficient, exploratory statistical analyses, including regression analysis, may be undertaken to examine factors associated with observed outcomes. Any such analyses will be treated as exploratory and will not be interpreted as estimates of programme impact or the causal effect of different levels of engagement.

Missing data and inconsistencies identified through the data quality audit will be handled transparently and will not be imputed without clear justification. For each outcome point, the evaluation will report the number of participants eligible to have reached that point, the number with outcome data available and the extent of missingness.

Qualitative. Interviews will be coded and analysed thematically in NVivo, using a framework approach structured around the research questions and Theory of Change, allowing both a priori and emergent themes.

5.4 Study Triangulation

Quantitative and qualitative findings will be integrated through the contribution analysis : quantitative patterns in engagement and outcomes will be interpreted alongside qualitative accounts of why those patterns occur, and qualitative findings on delivery and experience will be checked against what the CRM and Referral Tracker show about reach and consistency. Areas of convergence and Divergence between the two strands will be reported explicitly rather than resolved by default toward one source.

5.5 Study Limitations

- The evaluation's qualitative and quantitative findings primarily describe the experiences and outcomes of participants who engage with the programme. People who are contacted through outreach but do not go on to enrol, or who disengage early, are less likely to be captured in either the CRM/Referral Tracker data or the qualitative sample, meaning the evaluation may say less about why people do not take up or sustain support than about the experience of those who do.
- Several of the Theory of Change's long-term outcomes (sustained tenancy, wellbeing, neighbourhood belonging) fall outside what a study of this length can observe directly; the evaluation reports progress against short- and medium-term outcomes as leading indicators rather than claiming to measure long-term impact.
- No comparison group; the evaluation cannot support causal claims about programme impact.
- Small overall sample (approximately 120 participants) limits statistical power for sub-group and regression analysis.
- CRM and Referral Tracker data quality is not yet known and may constrain the quantitative analysis possible; the inception audit will clarify this.
- Participant access for qualitative interviews, particularly post-decision, may be more limited than anticipated given legal precarity and geographic mobility.
- The Theory of Change identifies several external assumptions (e.g. e-Visa processing speed, housing supply, ESOL provision) outside the programme's control that may affect outcomes independently of programme quality; the evaluation will report on these where evidenced but cannot isolate their individual effect.
- The 26 March 2026 change to permitted employment (Section 1.1) means that employment outcomes for the pre-decision, permission-to-work subgroup should be read with care, particularly for those who applied on or after that date and are therefore restricted to graduate-level roles under the Appendix Skilled Occupations list. Few participants in this cohort are likely to meet that threshold, given limited opportunity to build UK employment history, qualifications or references during the asylum process. Lower employment outcomes in this subgroup should be read

against this labour market access restriction, not as evidence of programme underperformance. The evaluation will report outcomes by right-to-work status and, within that, by which eligibility rule applied.

- Findings reflect a single delivery site (South London) operating under specific local conditions and may have limited generalisability to other areas. Because participants enter the programme and receive asylum decisions at different times, not all participants will reach the 3- and particularly 6-month outcome points within the evaluation period. Longer-term outcome analyses may therefore be based on smaller and potentially selective subsets of participants, and will be interpreted accordingly

6. QUALITY CONTROL AND ASSURANCE

6.1. Data Quality and Assurance

Quantitative data. A structured data quality audit of the CRM system and Referral Tracker will be conducted at inception, before any substantive analysis begins. This will assess completeness, consistency and usability across all relevant fields, and will result in a written feedback note to CHI and delivery partners identifying gaps and recommending improvements to routine recording where needed. The audit will be repeated at the interim review point (January 2027) to check whether data quality has improved, deteriorated or remained stable, and to confirm whether the engagement typology and outcome indicators are being captured as intended.

- Validation checks. Prior to analysis, CRM and Referral Tracker extracts will be checked for internal consistency (e.g. dates falling outside the delivery window, duplicate participant records, engagement typology categories that do not align with recorded activity) and cross-checked against the Referral Tracker's own summary counts where both sources cover the same participants. Discrepancies will be resolved with delivery partners before use in analysis; any that cannot be resolved will be reported as a limitation rather than silently corrected.
- Analytical transparency. All quantitative analysis will be conducted using documented, reproducible syntax retained by Dr Vickie Barrett for the duration of the project and available for internal review by the Principal Investigator. Descriptive statistics will be reported alongside any inferential analysis (T-tests, ANOVA, regression). Where sample size is too small to support a planned analysis – for example, sub-group comparisons within the engagement typology – this will be stated explicitly rather than the analysis being run and reported regardless

Qualitative data. Interview recordings will be checked against notes for accuracy before coding. Coding will follow a shared framework developed by Dr Santokh Gill and reviewed by the Principal Investigator, to ensure consistent application of codes across both rounds of fieldwork. A sample of coded transcripts will be second-checked by another team member to confirm consistency of interpretation, and emerging themes will be discussed within the team before being finalised.

Outputs. Draft interim and final reports will be reviewed internally by all three investigators before submission to CHI, checking that reported findings are supported by the underlying

data and that limitations are stated accurately. The Principal Investigator holds overall responsibility for the accuracy and quality of all evaluation outputs.

6.2. Protocol Deviations and Non-Compliance

Definition - A protocol deviation is any departure from the methods, timeline, sample sizes or data handling procedures set out in this protocol – for example: a significant shortfall against the indicative interview targets in Section 5.2.3; a material change to the engagement typology or outcome indicators agreed at inception; a delay to a phase of the timeline of more than four weeks; or any departure from the agreed consent, safeguarding or data handling procedures in Section 9.

Reporting process - Any deviation identified by a member of the evaluation team will be raised with the Principal Investigator as soon as it is identified. The Principal Investigator will assess whether the deviation is minor (a practical adjustment that does not affect the validity or ethical conduct of the study) or material (one that could affect data quality, participant welfare, or the interpretation of findings).

Minor deviations - for example, a small delay to a fieldwork round, or a lower-than-target number of interviews in a single wave, will be recorded by the Principal Investigator, noting the date, nature of the deviation and any action taken. These will be summarised for CHI at the next scheduled contact point (the interim review, or sooner if requested) rather than reported individually as they arise.

Material deviations - for example, a significant change to the evaluation design, a data protection or ethics breach, or a safeguarding concern will be reported to CHI in writing within five working days of identification, along with the Principal Investigator's initial assessment of cause and impact. Any deviation with ethical implications will also be reported to the University of Huddersfield SREIC in line with University procedures, and any data protection concern will be escalated in line with the University's data breach procedure and the data sharing agreement with delivery partners.

Investigation and correction - Where a material deviation is identified, the Principal Investigator will lead a short internal review involving the relevant investigator(s) to establish what happened, why, the consequences for data quality or participant welfare, and what corrective action is needed. Corrective action may include revising the analytical approach to account for the deviation (for example, treating an affected sub-sample as a limitation rather than excluding it silently); amending recruitment or data collection procedures going forward; or, where appropriate, seeking a protocol amendment from CHI and, if the change affects the ethics application, from SREIC. Any resulting change to the protocol will be recorded in the Version History (Table 2), consistent with the process already established for this document.

Escalation route - Team-level issues are resolved by the Principal Investigator. Issues requiring a decision by CHI, for example, a proposed change to scope, timeline or budget – are escalated to Luke Arundel as CHI's Evaluation Lead (or designated staff member). Any issue that cannot be resolved between the evaluation team and CHI, or that raises a serious ethical or safeguarding concern, will be escalated to the University of Huddersfield's research governance procedures

7. REGISTRATION, if applicable

Ensure the evaluation is registered, and that the registry is updated with outcomes at the end of the project.:

Open Science Framework (OSF): include a link to the project page when it becomes available.

The final agreed evaluation protocol will be registered on the Open Science Framework (OSF) by the University of Huddersfield prior to the main outcome analysis, providing a time-stamped public record of the agreed evaluation design, methods and analysis approach. A link to the OSF project page will be added here once available.

8. ETHICS

8.1. Ethical Approval

Ethical approval is being sought from the University of Huddersfield School of Human and Health Sciences Research Ethics and Integrity Committee (SREIC), via application led by Dr Santokh Gill. No primary data collection will take place until approval is confirmed and evidence of organisational approval from delivery partners has been provided to SREIC – this is the critical path dependency for the qualitative strand. Formal organisational permissions and data-sharing arrangements with delivery partners are being progressed alongside the ethics application as part of project set-up.

8.2. Informed Consent

Separate Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms have been developed for (i) service users and (ii) staff and service providers. Consent will be sought without any delivery partner staff present, ensuring it is genuinely free and not conditioned by any perceived effect on service access, employment or professional relationships. Consent forms confirm that: the project has been explained and questions answered; participation is voluntary; the interview will be audio recorded, transcribed and anonymised; anonymised quotations may be used in outputs; a professional interpreter may be present, bound by confidentiality; personal information will be processed only for the purposes of the research in line with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018; and choosing not to participate, or withdrawing, will

not affect any support or services received from Breaking Barriers, CRDC, Spires or any other organisation.

Right to withdraw. Participants may withdraw their data up to two weeks after their interview by contacting Dr Santokh Gill directly. After this point, interviews will have been anonymised and incorporated into the analysis, and individual contributions may no longer be separable. This limit and the process for withdrawal are set out in both the Information Sheet and Consent Form.

8.3. Ethical Challenges

Participants are people seeking asylum and newly recognised refugees, a population facing significant legal precarity, potential language barriers, and in some cases prior experience of trauma, exploitation or domestic abuse. Key ethical challenges include: ensuring recruitment through delivery partners does not create pressure to participate; ensuring interpreter-mediated interviews do not distort or filter participant accounts; managing potential distress arising from discussion of housing, employment or asylum experiences; the limits of anonymity for staff and partner organisations given their small number; and maintaining appropriate boundaries between the evaluation team and delivery partner staff to avoid any perceived conflict of interest in reporting. No conflicts of interest have been identified; the evaluation is independent of programme delivery.

Psychological wellbeing. The research team has considerable experience of research with people seeking asylum, refugees and other vulnerable groups. Participants will be reminded they need not answer any question and may pause or stop the interview at any time. If a participant becomes distressed, the researcher will check whether they wish to continue and end the interview if appropriate, signposting to support available through Breaking Barriers, CRDC or Spires where relevant. Any safeguarding concerns will be managed in line with University of Huddersfield safeguarding procedures and discussed with the Principal Investigator where appropriate.

8.4. Risks

Table 9: Risks

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Researcher personal safety as a lone worker conducting interviews	Low	Medium	Interviews primarily via Microsoft Teams; face-to-face interviews at recognised partner premises only, not private residences; interview times/locations logged with colleagues; lone-working procedures followed for any travel
Emotional distress during interviews discussing asylum, housing or employment experiences	Low–Medium	Medium	Participation voluntary throughout; participants may decline questions or stop at any time; researcher monitors wellbeing and signposts to support services where appropriate

Disclosure of safeguarding or welfare concerns during interview	Low	High	Limits of confidentiality explained before interview. Researchers will not routinely disclose information about participants' immigration status or informal/unauthorised work to the Home Office or other authorities. Any disclosure would only be made where required by law or where a serious safeguarding concern requires action, in line with University and partner procedures; this is stated explicitly to participants as part of the consent process. Standard safeguarding procedures apply only where a disclosure raises a serious concern about risk of harm to the participant or another person (e.g. exploitation or coercion), in line with University and partner procedures.
Loss or theft of research data	Low	High	Data stored only on password-protected University systems; recordings and transcripts secured; identifiable information removed from transcripts; access restricted to named team members; data sharing agreements and GDPR observed
CRM/Referral Tracker data quality poorer than anticipated once audited	Medium	High	Structured data quality audit at inception across both CRM and Referral Tracker, with written feedback to CHI and partners; analytical framework adapted to what the data can support
Participant access for post-decision qualitative interviews limited by mobility and legal precarity	Medium–High	Medium	Recruitment mediated through CRDC, Spires and Breaking Barriers; purposive sampling across engagement typology; telephone/video interviews available; access difficulties documented as a methodological finding
Confidential discussions overheard during interview	Low	Low	Interviews conducted in a private room where available; participants encouraged to find a private location for remote interviews; audio recording only with consent
Small sample size (approx. 120 participants) limits statistical power for sub-group analysis	High	Medium	Single participant flow analytical approach as recommended by CHI, supplemented by engagement typology; descriptive analysis prioritised; regression only where sample size supports it

9. DATA PROTECTION AND SPONSOR INDEMNITY

9.1. Data Protection Statement

Personal data collected and processed for this evaluation will be handled in line with the Data Protection Principles (Article 5 UK GDPR and Part 2 DPA 2018) and all other relevant data protection legislation, including the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025. This is governed by a Referral Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) between the Greater London Authority (as Funder), Breaking Barriers, Croydon Refugee Day Centre (CRDC), Spires, the Centre for Homelessness Impact (as Evaluation Management) and the University of Huddersfield (as Evaluator), which sits alongside a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) and Legitimate Interest Assessment (LIA) as the central points of accountability for the Project.

Scope. Personal data is processed for two distinct purposes which this evaluation must keep clearly separated. The Intervention (delivery of the programme by Breaking Barriers, CRDC and Spires) is the sole responsibility of the delivery partners, who are independent Controllers for that data. The Evaluation (this Project) is a separate processing purpose: routine monitoring and administrative data collected by delivery partners in the course of delivering the Intervention will be shared with the University of Huddersfield for evaluation purposes, and the University will separately collect qualitative data directly through interviews with participants, delivery staff and stakeholders.

Categories of data subject. People seeking asylum and refugees ("Participants"); Intervention delivery staff and strategic stakeholders; and Project Team members across organisations.

Categories of personal data. For Participants: name, age, ethnicity, gender, contact details, next of kin, relevant health conditions, consent signature; reason for referral, eligibility outcome, refugee/immigration status, employment status, readiness for employment, housing stability information, referral pathway; demographic characteristics, employment history, qualifications, skills, barriers to employment and employment goals; engagement with workshops, casework, employability activities, job applications, interviews and employment outcomes; opinions and information provided in interviews; and safeguarding information where relevant. For staff and stakeholders: name, contact details, job title and level of involvement, and opinions provided in interviews. For the Project Team: name, employer, job title, contact details, and any interview recordings/transcripts where a team member is also interviewed.

Security and prevention of unauthorised processing. Personal data will be stored on secure University of Huddersfield systems (and, for administrative/monitoring data, the delivery partners' Salesforce-based case management system), protected by password access and two-factor authentication, with access restricted to named Project Team members. Data will only be transferred between organisations via secure, access-controlled digital folders. All parties to the DSA are contractually committed to appropriate technical, organisational and contractual security measures, including data protection training, confidentiality agreements within contracts of employment, and, for the Evaluator specifically, full liability for all personal data it processes as Evaluator, without holding CHI liable for any data protection infringement for which the Evaluator is responsible.

Records of processing. A Record of Processing Activities (RoPA) has been completed as part of the DSA, setting out the data flow (what is collected, by whom, how it is shared, and

where it is stored and accessed from) and the lawful basis for each processing activity, in accordance with Article 30 UK GDPR.

9.2. Legal Basis

Personal data (Article 6). Processing relies on legitimate interests (UK GDPR Article 6(1)(f)) for the referral of participants into the Intervention and evaluation, for conducting the evaluation itself using data collected during service delivery, and for related project administration. Where data is collected directly through evaluation interviews (participants and stakeholders), the lawful basis for that specific processing is ethical consent, which under the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 [s.68(3)] is compatible with consent as the lawful basis under UK GDPR Article 6(1)(a).

Special category data (Article 9). Given that participants' immigration and asylum status, health information, and (in some cases) ethnicity or religion/belief data will be processed, this qualifies as special category data. The lawful basis relied upon is Substantial Public Interest under UK GDPR Article 9(2)(g), in line with the Asylum Act 1999, for data collected in the course of the Intervention; and ethical consent under Article 9(2)(a) for special category data volunteered in interviews. Where safeguarding concerns arise, processing may additionally rely on Article 6(1)(d) and 9(2)(g) (vital interests and substantial public interest in preventing harm) to take protective action.

Rationale for legitimate interests. A Legitimate Interest Assessment (LIA) has been completed and forms part of the DSA. This confirms: the evaluation serves a genuine public interest in improving the evidence base on preventing refugee homelessness, with wider benefit to local and central government, sector stakeholders and future participants in similar programmes, rather than any commercial interest; the processing is necessary because the evaluation cannot be conducted without personal data, and no less intrusive alternative exists; and the impact on individuals is proportionate, given the transparency built into the design (information sheets, privacy notices, informed consent for interviews, the right to withdraw, and the option to decline without any effect on service access). The LIA notes an elevated overall risk profile for this Project – principally due to the vulnerability of the participant group and the special category nature of asylum/immigration status data – and concludes that ICO consultation is warranted, notwithstanding the mitigations in place (see Table 9, Risks, for the evaluation-specific risk treatment; the DSA's own risk assessment and mitigation schedule addresses Project-wide data protection risk).

9.3. GDPR Compliance

Data subject rights. Any data subject rights request received by any party to the DSA will be handled by the receiving organisation, which is responsible for verifying identity, coordinating any necessary search across other parties' systems, and responding within statutory timescales. All parties have agreed to assist each other in good faith to meet these obligations. Where a participant withdraws consent for an interview within two weeks of taking part (see Section 8.2), their data will be removed; if analysis has already progressed beyond the point where individual contributions remain separable, this limitation will be explained to the participant at the time consent is sought.

Purposes for processing. Data will only be used for the purposes communicated to participants and stakeholders in the relevant privacy notice and information sheet: to deliver and evaluate the Intervention, and to produce a published evaluation report and dissemination outputs on the effectiveness and implementation of this type of pre-decision

and move-on employment support. Data will not be used for any other purpose without seeking fresh consent or establishing a separate lawful basis.

Parties with access to data, and reasons. Breaking Barriers, CRDC and Spires (Intervention Partners) hold and are responsible for the accuracy of routine monitoring and case management data collected during Intervention delivery, and share this with the University of Huddersfield for evaluation purposes. The University of Huddersfield (Evaluator) processes this shared data, together with data it collects directly through interviews, for the purposes of analysis and reporting; the University is the party with day-to-day, hands-on access to Participant data for evaluation purposes. The Centre for Homelessness Impact (Evaluation Management) has no routine access to Project-based personal data and makes no decisions about how the Evaluator processes it, other than the personal data of Project Team members it needs to manage the contract; CHI does, however, retain a right to audit data protection compliance across the Project at its discretion. The Greater London Authority is joint Controller and Funder, with a right to co-operate on any Freedom of Information request relating to the Project.

Retention periods. Retention of Intervention data is the responsibility of the Intervention Partners under their own privacy arrangements and is separate from the evaluation. For evaluation data, the DSA specifies retention until at least the end of September 2027 (marking delivery of the final evaluation report), plus a further 12 months, with a hard limit of no more than 12 months and one day after actual completion regardless of any delay to the reporting timeline.

9.4. Data Processing Roles

Organisation	Role	Basis
Greater London Authority	Independent Controller (Funder)	Funds both the Intervention and its evaluation; joint Controller for the Project as a whole
Breaking Barriers, with CRDC and Spires	Independent Controllers (Intervention Partners)	Collect and hold routine monitoring/case management data during Intervention delivery (in a Breaking Barriers-hosted Salesforce instance); responsible for the Intervention's own privacy notice and data accuracy
University of Huddersfield	Independent Controller (Evaluator)	Receives shared monitoring data from Intervention Partners; collects qualitative interview data directly; carries full liability for all personal data it processes for evaluation purposes
Centre for Homelessness Impact	Independent Controller (Evaluation Management)	Coordinates and manages the Evaluator on behalf of the Funder; supplies the Evaluation Privacy Notice; has no routine access to Project-based personal data; retains an audit right

Processors - Breaking Barriers' processor for data used in the evaluation is Salesforce. The University of Huddersfield's processor(s) for evaluation data (e.g. secure storage, transcription services if externally provided) are to be confirmed and added to the DSA's

processor schedule before data collection begins. Any processor engaged by any party must be bound by a data processing agreement incorporating the requirements of Article 28 UK GDPR, with the engaging party remaining fully liable for that processor's acts and omissions.

Sequencing at project close - Data processing roles as set out above apply throughout the delivery and analysis phases. At the point personal data is deleted in line with the retention periods in Section 9.3, each party is responsible for the secure destruction of the personal data it holds and for evidencing this to other parties on reasonable request, in accordance with the DSA's retention and destruction provisions.

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11. APPENDIX