



A Rapid Needs Assessment of Excluded People in England During the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic

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Dispersals of asylum seekers to other parts of the country have been paused, people being left with the uncertainty of their permanence in their current location. Asylum seekers are reluctant to register with GPs or begin to access local services in anticipation of imminent relocation.

10.4 Impact on employment and finances

10.4.1 Job losses and destitution

The COVID-19 pandemic comes at a time when many in the UK are already living in poverty or destitution. During COVID-19, due to pressures on businesses and temporary closure of many workplaces, many have lost their jobs. Many examples were reported during interviews.

A number of people in the UK are formally employed on temporary visas that do not permit the bearer to any access to public funds such as housing or employment benefits. This means that some people have lost their jobs during COVID-19 but have no access to public funds or savings and have become newly destitute. These temporary residents, who may have ordinarily returned to their country of origin after a job loss, are currently unable to do so due to international travel restrictions.

Some people, such as sex workers or those with irregular immigration status, make an income through informal work in order to survive. People working informally, who have lost their jobs or can no longer work, are not eligible for the benefits, protections and entitlements offered to others during the pandemic. Many of these people, previously managing to support themselves, have become newly destitute.

“Now the highest number of people we see, they are not our usual service users, but people who now have lost employment, illegal employment, they have lost their means of support, and have become homeless. They have been washed out” Casework coordinator of an NGO

Another group that has been heavily impacted by job losses are the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community. This is because many are self-employed, or the work undertaken is informal or seasonal. The manager of Southward Travellers action group explained how this loss of employment is not only concerning for the immediate household but for extended families and communities: *“What I am really worried about, is that the people who work...they very much share their income with the poorer people on the sites, so they have been there almost as a safety net on the site, and I’m really worried... they won’t be able to support the community as much as they used to”*.

The reported rise of destitution by interview participants is corroborated by DOTW staff operating their advice line. They report a significant increase in calls since the pandemic from people facing destitution. DOTW has been required to divert resources to match this increase