



Migration Foundation Strategic Plan

2020-2025 Version for External Partners

Approved by the MTVH Board: March 26th 2020

This strategic plan was endorsed by the MTVH Migration Foundation Advisory Committee in January 2020. The committee includes independent experts, MTVH colleagues and people with lived experience.

1.Context

Purpose

The overall purpose of the MTVH Migration Foundation (the Foundation) is to alleviate Migrant destitution and make Migration work for migrants and communities. The MTVH Migration Foundation is a fund restricted by deed with the following objects:

“The relief for the public benefit of people who have become refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, other displaced persons or persons seeking entry to or leave to remain in the United Kingdom because of hostilities or political, economic, social, environmental or religious persecution, oppression, discrimination, natural disasters or other like causes and their families and dependents who are in conditions of need, hardship and distress (the beneficiaries)

It shall endeavour to:

- *Promote, support, influence or oppose legislative or other policy measures or proceedings or to petition the Crown, Parliament, or other public persons or bodies in the United Kingdom in respect of any matter affecting the interests of the beneficiaries.*
- *Maintain a focus on innovation in services to the beneficiaries.*
- *Encourage a whole community approach which recognises that the introduction of beneficiaries into existing communities is a two-way integration process that requires the provision of support to the beneficiaries on the one hand and the existing communities on the other”*

The Foundation is the only fund dedicated to tackling migrant destitution in the UK. Often, grants are made in conjunction with other funders including Unbound Philanthropy, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, The Sebba Trust and many others.

Migrant destitution is a national issue and the Foundation exists to serve both residents of MTVH and others. The Foundation is wholly part of Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing which has the vision ‘Everyone has a home and the chance to live well’.

Compared to these aims, what is the situation for destitute migrants in 2020?

From research, the views of expert professionals and the experience of the Foundation situated within a major social housing organisation, the following are root causes of destitution:

- Public and political perception of migrants
- Lack of access to justice
- Immigration policy and system not fit for purpose/difficult to navigate
- Housing supply/affordability
- Poverty and lack of resources
- Unmet health needs including mental health issues
- Exploitation (e.g. modern slavery, predatory lending and other financial crimes).
- Domestic violence

Migrant destitution is a complex and intersectional issue. The Foundation and peers in the funding sector have conceptualised the issue into two broad types of circumstances. Firstly, those who have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPFs). This situation can be temporary or last years. Secondly, those who experience homelessness, poverty and serious ill health for other reasons (e.g. someone homeless who has no documentation).

Both of these situations are a direct result of a policy of ‘Hostile Environment’ by the UK Home Office as a deterrent to ‘low-value migration’ and wider cuts to public services and welfare.

Narrowing the issue risks oversimplification. However, one further way of focussing on root causes is to consider critical failure and critical success factors.

Critical failure factors for migrants

For a migrant, without the right to remain and clear resolution of any legal issues, they are almost certain to experience abject hardship. This applies to asylum seekers who fall out of the asylum support system but increasingly can apply to other migrant groups – some who may not have even considered themselves to be at risk (e.g. the Windrush generation).

Case Study: An older couple who have fled Syria

Mr and Ms A, in their 80s, had their weekly support budget and accommodation cut by the Home Office. The Home Office believed they could receive support from their son-in-law. Mr A disputed this as his son-in-law was abusive.

The case went to the Asylum Support Tribunal. The Asylum Support Appeals Project (ASAP) arranged for a volunteer lawyer to represent Mr A. In the proceedings, the Tribunal Judge found that Mr A and Mrs A had been made to sleep on the kitchen floor at their son-in-law's house, store their belongings in bin bags in the garden and use the upstairs toilet (for which Mr A had to try and carry his wife up the stairs). Although the Home Office disputed these claims, citing a testimonial from the son-in-law, the volunteer lawyer was able to establish the evidence to support these experiences and the court reinstated support.

The Foundation is a core funder of ASAP as the only source of free representation at Tribunal. ASAP supports hundreds of people a year from across the UK with access to justice.

Critical success factors for migrants

While access to justice is crucial, having a secure status is no guarantee that migrants will avoid destitution and be able to participate in society. For new migrants, navigating domestic agencies and systems can be extremely confusing and at times omissions like failure to receive timely notification of status or rejection of documentation when trying to get a bank account can have a huge impact. Public and political perception continues to make reform and any change to confused integration policy extremely difficult.

Case Study: Customer of MTVH ReStart Point

Mr S was referred to MTVH ReStart Point in Derby by the volunteer-run Derby Refugee Advice Centre. He had recently been granted leave to remain in the UK following an application for asylum. Despite this positive decision, Mr S had been rough sleeping under a railway bridge for some time and his health had suffered.

Mr S was offered flexible accommodation, support and a single bedroom. He was able to attend some talking therapies – to open up about his experiences and fears. His support plan covered everything from cooking alone for the first time through to education and career aspirations. From early on, Mr S wanted to give back and volunteered at a local school with caretaking and also organised a cleaning rota for the ReStart point hostel. After staying with ReStart point for a few months, Mr S gained an apprenticeship at a local barbershop. He was able to save some money and was offered a change of tenancy to a hard-to-let MTVH general needs flat. He has completed his apprenticeship, is working and moving on with his life.

Refugees newly granted status have four weeks to leave Home Office accommodation and adjust to life in the UK with no prior effort from authorities to integrate. The period of an asylum application is filled with anxiety, stress and uncertainty. Receiving the news of a positive decision and safety (often received late or, sometimes, not until the point of eviction) can be the moment when trauma and stress or 'load' catches up with people and they cannot face the systems they have to navigate.

2. Objectives

The Foundation strategic plan 2016-2019 pursued better sector infrastructure and direct intervention to tackle destitution.

Highlights 2016-2019

Infrastructure:

- Became a core funder of ASAP (Asylum Support Appeals), the only source of free legal representation for people seeking asylum at a tribunal. Protecting this crucial service for hundreds of people per year.
- Improved the quality of support to vulnerable migrant children through increased funds to Project 17 and the integration of children granted safe passage from Calais migrant camp.
- Stabilised NACCOM – the UK ‘No Accommodation Network’ between two periods of funding. NACCOM went on to win Guardian Charity of The Year and the network has doubled from 1,000 bed-spaces to over 2,000 for migrants who have No Recourse to Public Funds.
- Co-funded a new free public law clinic at Sheffield Hallam University.

Direct intervention:

- Established **MTVH ReStart Point Derby**, the first hostel for destitute migrants in the UK.
- Finished a three-year programme of capacity-building for Roma community organisations, demonstrating possibilities and priming these communities to handle risks from the UK’s departure from the EU.
- Sponsored the Women on the Move Awards as part of Southbank’s WOW festival and International Women’s Day projecting MTVH brand and culture.

MTVH ReStart Point Derby: Directly run by MTVH Care & Support

Derby has one of the highest ratios of asylum dispersal¹ in the UK and has a poorly funded homelessness support network. Based on research funded by the Foundation², in 2017 the MTVH Board agreed that Derby was a highly suitable place to pilot and demonstrate learning. The Board approved the renovation and commissioning of the first hostel for destitute migrants in the UK.

ReStart Point receives referrals from local charities in Derby. It provides housing, support, destitution funds, high-quality food and links to legal advice. It is integrated with MTVH Community Investment services like financial inclusion and employment advice. The service is included in the MTVH tenancy transition procedure and, if customers are granted leave to remain in the UK, they can apply to transfer to a longer-term tenancy in an MTVH property. Previously these properties will have been vacant and hard-to-let.

Customers are accommodated on flexible license agreements tailored to known timeframes for resolving their crisis. The objective is to meet basic needs, encourage participation in society and enduring resolution. This has included customers with very complex asylum appeal cases, homeless EEA nationals and people who have accepted voluntary return to Country of origin. All residents are either homeless or would have been without the support of this service.

Through resolving their crisis, in 2019 fourteen customers moved out of ReStart Point (six of whom moved into MTVH general needs properties). This rate of flow is continuously improving.

To date, all customers who have moved on have maintained the positive change they have made.

¹ Housing of people applying for asylum across the UK in Home Office funded (HMO) properties. People can be asked to leave this accommodation by the Home Office, either because of an initial negative decision on for other reasons. This figure, amongst other migration statistics, is a good indicator of destitution levels.

² <https://www.irf.org.uk/report/how-improve-support-and-services-destitute-migrants>

Learning

While these investments have focussed the Foundation back towards destitution and created some better links between Foundation investments and core MTVH operations, further focus is needed if the Foundation is to make the most of its position within MTVH, resources and role within the funding sector.

- During the lifetime of the existing strategy, MHT has become MTVH and is a reinvigorated social purpose organisation with a clear set of social change goals.
- While the position of MTVH and its Foundation is strong, the situation for many migrants continues to be stark with further political and policy turmoil expected.

New objectives

As a corporate foundation, there are three ways MF can use its position and funding to create change:

- Work with colleagues in MTVH to improve the response to MTVH residents and offer to communities. *High influence/high control/impact on hundreds and thousands of people.*
- Intervene in the housing, migrant support and funding sectors to improve the response. *High influence/medium control/impact on tens of thousands of people.*
- Influence society and government to change policy and systems. *Low influence/low control/impact on tens of thousands of people.*

It is proposed that the Foundation direct all three of these levers towards two goals that respond to the critical failure and critical success factors faced by Migrants in the UK:

- 1. Better access to justice for migrants to tackle the fundamental legal reasons for destitution (*address critical failure factors*).**
- 2. Better housing, support and opportunities to participate to tackle the circumstantial reasons for destitution (*contribute to critical success factors*).**

This framework for action is illustrated on page 7.

March 2020: Implications of the Coronavirus Pandemic

Since writing this strategic plan, the Coronavirus (Covid-19 disease) epidemic has spread globally affecting health, finance and public life. The Foundation endowment value has experienced a marked drop.

The Foundation's Investment Manager is responding to this and providing assurance. The Foundation has good financial health and is confident of continuing core services.

The pandemic has already affected the sectors that the Foundation funds. Refugee and migrant support organisations are curtailing services and enacting business continuity plans. The larger, more influential organisations like the British Red Cross and JCWI are desperately trying to influence HM Government to extend destitution support funds to people in crisis. For homeless migrants or those at risk of homelessness, it will mean further uncertainty and periods without basic items or services.

In response to this:

1. **The needs and opportunities presented in this plan are still valid.** The financial context has changed and may not recover until 2021 or beyond. The aims of this plan were to be achieved in three years. It is now recommended that this plan is for five years. **The intention is still to make strategic grant contributions.** However, MTVH and partners will benefit from greater flexibility to time this appropriately.
2. **The Foundation will work with existing partners to help keep services running.** The free grant budget for 2020/2021 and internal reserves will be positioned towards:
 - fundamental parts of the plan (e.g. continuity of services like the Asylum Support Appeals Project).
 - Contribution to emergency pooled funds being developed by partners .
 - Contingency for the Foundation overall as dividend income may drop slightly.
3. **It is crucial that the Housing and Refugee Support sectors work together to influence Government:** The Foundation will work with the British Red Cross-led Asylum Reform Initiative and others to minimise the impact of the epidemic on homeless migrants and other people living with destitution. While Coronavirus has brought a great deal of harm – this may be a once in a decade opportunity to make the system work for everybody – migrants and local communities - not just the Home Office.

MTVH is signatory to a funding sector statement on coronavirus response:

<https://londonfunders.org.uk/about/covid-19>

**MTVH Migration
Foundation
2020-2025**

Root cause

Justice: Legal advice customer choice and voice is poor. Poor providers rarely exit the market. Large parts of the UK have either no legal aid provision or provision is so poor that no outcomes are achieved. Without legal security, migrants face destitution.

Housing, health and participation: Public perception and government policy create destitution. People face homelessness, hunger and ill-health. At best, the system is difficult to navigate and, many become destitute when they do not have to be.

Change needed

Remove critical failure factors:
New communities have access to justice

Build critical success factors:
New communities have appropriate housing, support and opportunities to participate in society

What will we do?

<p>1. Start from the inside: Improve the MTVH response</p>	<p>Respond to legal reasons for an MTVH customer crisis before it is too late. Rethinking onboarding, use of data and the advice MTVH is able to offer its residents.</p>	<p>Level the playing field for migrant customers and help make MTVH a service leader by improving the skills of colleagues, proactively offering help to residents and continuing to grow MTVH housing options (especially supported transition accommodation).</p>
<p>2. Invest in the Housing and Migrant Support Sector</p>	<p>Protect existing services and partner to significantly scale-up the legal advice available to migrants. Share learning and tools with other Housing Associations.</p>	<p>Break housing barriers, increase the voice of marginalised groups and grow specialist housing options like night shelters, hosting and other offers through partners.</p>
<p>3. Influence society and government</p>	<p>Advocate for destitute people as part of MTVH Public Affairs aims to 'promote diversity and immigration'</p>	<p>Champion improved integration outcomes as part of MTVH Public Affairs aims to 'promote diversity and immigration'</p>
<p>What does success look like?</p>	<p>Increased speed, availability and quality of legal advice compared to baselines for our residents and others.</p>	<p>More housing options, information and increased influence of marginalised people. Leading to the prevention of crisis.</p>

3. Finance and investment

The current investment strategy is incredibly straightforward: highest returns over a long-term period for lowest volatility with a single Investment Manager, CCLA which is a leader in responsible investing.

For some time, the sentiment amongst MTVH leaders is that some or all of the Foundation endowment value should be unlocked to increase the impact of its activities – so-called ‘spend down’. While the value of investments has increased, the size of shareholding has not. Therefore, any spend down is likely to have an impact on yearly income received in service of the Deed objectives.

Funds are invested in the CCLA Ethical Investment Fund which has a series of ethical screens (e.g. ‘no holding in companies who derive more than 1% of profits from weapons sales’) and also some proactive ethical investment approaches (e.g. standards of executive pay, climate change policies and avoidance of rogue and oppressive regimes). Change in investment strategy would increase risk.

Foundation finances are in a strong position to enter a new strategic plan and the intention was to recommend that the board approve the creation of a large cash deposit within the fund. However, the impact of recent market turbulence warrants a more cautious approach.

- From 2016 to February Endowment values rose from £12m to £16.8m with a steady annual income of circa £525k. Savings to major project costs and staffing (Head of Service time now split between Foundation and MTVH Community Investment) have resulted in healthy reserves (approx. £170k).
- As described above on pages 5 and 6, the impact of market turbulence has affected endowment values which have dropped. In addition to Covid-19, an end to US Fed liquidity measures and an oil price war have spooked markets into huge single-day losses.
- CCLA’s responsible approach to long-term investing has prevented the fund from experiencing the same level of impact seen by markets overall. For example, the fund disinvested from fossil fuels in 2019 and has been cautious towards equities with high gearing.

Coronavirus is likely to add to existing trends of increasing migrant destitution. Changes in a border relationship with the EU/EEA are likely to complicate this, as would further rollout of an Australian-style points-based immigration system. Currently, more than 50% of destitute Migrants go without any legal advice let alone quality or timely provision. The Foundation is the only dedicated grant-making organisation in this space.

The two most significant items of spending in this Strategic Plan are:

1. a strategic-size contribution to increasing legal advice capacity.
2. A significant investment in housing options.

Planning for five years is a long time in Immigration Policy development but a short time for value growth investors. Given current circumstances, the proposal is to delay any commitment to **(1)** a strategic-size contribution to increasing legal advice capacity until the Foundation Advisory Committee and MTVH Treasury Team are satisfied this is prudent to re-visit³. In the first year of the plan, any investment in **(2)** housing growth will be through investment in crucial community partners like night shelters and vacant MTVH once the coronavirus epidemic is under control.

These measures will enable MTVH to respond to the needs of today whilst maintaining an ambition for the future.

The Foundation is subject to normal MTVH financial rules and annual budget setting. In collaboration with MTVH finance and governance colleagues. This framework will be kept under review and there may be opportunities to create more impact. For example:

³ This will be shaped with the direction of MTVH Finance and Treasury and through normal Investment Management procedures.

- Structuring all or part of the Foundation to make Social/Impact Investments. Currently limited by MTVH corporate debt obligations and limits on lending.
- Structuring all or part of the Foundation to raise further income/fundraise. Currently limited by MTVH I&E size and perception amongst funders.
- Combinations of the above and changing endowment investment strategy as summarised in this paper.

4. Communicating MTVH's impact

2020 marks ten years of grant-making by the Foundation. This coincides with a bold new MTVH Public Affairs strategic plan.

- The Foundation will continue to fund cross-party dialogue and research on destitution and integration.
- Celebration of Windrush day internally and externally will be an initial theme alongside MTVH Public Affairs. Colleague groups and the central team will receive funding support to enable this work and maximise reach.
- The Foundation will sponsor events like 'Women on the Move' and raise awareness of solutions to migrant destitution through conferences, workshops and groups like the NHF Refugee Network.

5. Governance & Risk

Important steps have been taken 2016-2019 to steward the good governance of the Foundation:

During the Metropolitan and Thames Valley Housing partnership process, Foundation Terms of Reference were reviewed by legal advisors and aligned with other MTVH Board Sub-committee terms.

- Movement of accountable officers to MTVH Community Investment, situating the day-to-day work of the Foundation alongside peers experienced in grant-making, research and social change.
- Four new committee members joined the Advisory Committee. Two external bringing additional experience and expertise, one colleague representative from the MTVH 'Black-on-Board Programme' and a member of the Executive Team to represent the leadership of the organisation and deputise for the Chief Executive.
- Recruitment of a new independent chair – Hazel Williams (Director, NACCOM) – a leader experienced in migration, housing issues and political advocacy.

In this strategic plan, the Foundation will make at least three further improvements to governance:

- Review of the original deed considering further opportunities and risks such as those listed in the section on finance and investment above.
- Development of a bespoke impact framework (theory of change, outcomes and indicators of success) for the Foundation building on a version that will be developed for MTVH Community Investment in 2020. This will support further alignment with MTVH and greater accountability for results.
- Recruitment of two more Advisory Committee members with lived experience of being subject to the UK's immigration system and one MTVH resident Advisory Committee member.

Appendix One: External environment

The UK is fundamentally changing its immigration system to end freedom of movement and introduce new laws and policies to govern migration. This is the biggest set of changes to UK immigration law in

the past four decades and will inevitably create a need for advice as people navigate this new system. Without representation, there is a high risk of immigration decisions going wrong, and as a result, people risk losing their jobs, homes, health care, access to the welfare state, being detained indefinitely and ultimately removed from the country they have made their home.

The need for immigration legal advice and representation

Equality of arms is a fundamental principle of the justice system, yet while the Home Office is always represented, people applying for status or challenging refusals of their immigration and nationality applications often have to do so without representation. Despite the lack of access to lawyers, more than 50% of appeals about Home Office decisions are successful, indicating the poor quality of decision making. Incorrect decisions, removals and deportations are often only stopped by Judicial Review, a technical and highly skilled area of law. Currently, a third of all Judicial Reviews are immigration cases.

There is evidence of significant ‘advice deserts’ around the UK. Yet free specialist immigration advice is critical to prevent large numbers of people from facing destitution and deportation. Anybody without immigration status is subject to a suite of stringent enforcement policies, known as the ‘Hostile Environment’. Many families and individuals fall into irregularity due to onerous immigration rules which they do not understand, because they cannot access legal assistance to navigate the rules and secure their status, or because they cannot afford the high Home Office application fees and health surcharges. These policies are forcing many people into destitution and can also be felt by many people legally in the UK, as the recent cases of the Windrush generation show.

Austerity-driven cuts to central and local funding have resulted in the number of providers of legal aid dropping by a third⁴, and not for profits by half. With a shortage of lawyers across social welfare law, there has been a 30% increase year on year since 2014 of people representing themselves at an additional cost to HM Courts & Tribunals Service of £3 million per year, plus direct costs to the Ministry of approximately £400,000. There are several regions of the UK where there are no free immigration advisors⁵

Problems with the settled status scheme for EU citizens have already emerged in the pilot phase. Even if 10% of the EU citizens currently in the UK are vulnerable or have difficulties with their applications this would amount to 380,000 people. The population of people from outside the EU who are undocumented is at least 600,000 based on 2007 figures (thus probably much higher in 2020), and therefore may increase by over 50% if EU citizens do not obtain settled status through the proposed new scheme. In November 2018, the Home Office announced a £9 million fund for 12month grants for advice and outreach projects to ensure that people apply for settled status. Whilst this is a welcome step and should ameliorate the situation for some, it will not address specialist advice or complex cases⁶.

Note on housing supply

In 2016, Joseph Rowntree Foundation published guidance (co-funded by the Foundation) for funders separated into legal advice, housing and legal basis for intervention. Since then, networks like

⁴ The number of Civil Legal Aid providers has fallen from 4,253 providers in 2011-12 to 2,824 in 2017-18. Not for profits have also fallen from 500+ to c. 250. Large parts of the South West (Devon and Cornwall, Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire), East of England (Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk), East Midlands (Lincolnshire), West Midlands, (Warwickshire, Worcester, Herefordshire, Shropshire), North West (Cheshire, Lancashire, Cumbria), Yorkshire and Wales have no providers.

⁵ Analysis of the 57 organisations in receipt of this funding so far shows only 5 have OISC level 3 and above. The majority is for low level information and guidance; a very different (and very necessary) need.

NACCOM (past recipient of funding from the Foundation) have grown temporary housing and some night shelter provision – especially amongst successful smaller charities.

Whilst there has been some progress and new initiatives like Refugee Community Sponsorship have encouraged new groups to build local capacity for housing and support, continued cuts and ‘Right to Rent’ checks (now overturned) continue to force migrants into homeless and housing insecurity. In London, the cost of housing is a barrier to the majority of community providers whereas some Cities (like Nottingham) are tackling high levels of need with significantly cut support sectors.

It is telling that, if JRF were to conduct their research again, the overall picture on housing supply would be similar to that in 2016 – significant gaps, overwhelming demand and stretched providers. Much is the tale of the homelessness sector in general.

However, this is not a picture of total doom and gloom. Promising innovation pilots cross-subsidising housing for destitute people alongside fee-paying residents, night shelter setup, hosting and ‘changed usage’ of hard-to-let properties are starting to mature. Partners like NACCOM are working more closely with national homeless charities and specialist refugee support organisations to advocate and innovate.

Appendix Two: Alignment with MTVH Strategy and Strategic Plans

- The Foundation strategic plan sits underneath the **MTVH Resident and Community Empowerment Strategy**. It supports these aims by tackling inequalities – specifically lack of secure legal status or access to justice – and investing in routes out of destitution through housing models.
- Further investments in internal services e.g. legal advice for residents and MTVH case teams, growth of housing options support the ambitions of the **MTVH Customer Experience Strategy**.
- Alignment of influencing ambitions and added financial support to **MTVH Public Affairs Strategic Plan**. Specifically, the aim of celebrating diversity and immigration.
- Financial support to colleague groups to celebrate immigration and diversity in support of the **MTVH People Strategy**.

Following a succession of team changes in 2018 and 2019, the Foundation’s accountable colleagues sit within the Community Investment Team and with a Head of Service who is accountable for all resident and community funding, research, learning and evaluation of social impact.

Questions and comments

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With thanks to the Foundation Advisory Committee: Hazel Williams (Chair), Tim Wilson, Caroline Foster, John Baldwin (Executive Team Representative), Chana King (MTVH Colleague Representative). Chris Birchall and Almamy Taal (Members until November 2019), and Andy Gregg (Chair until 2020).

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