



Beauty for Ashes Refuges (BFAR) Impact Report 2024- 2025

The canvas on the previous page was painted by a resident during their time in the refuge. The description below was written by them to describe the meaning behind the painting. This artwork embodies a profound expression unfolding in three powerful stages, each narrating a chapter of a transformative journey.

The First Stage: The Depths of Despair

Rendered in deep blue, this stage embodies grief, hopelessness, and a piercing coldness that conveys fear and profound misery. Here we see a group of women—mothers with children, pregnant women, and women without children—all victims. They endure psychological, verbal, physical, and sexual violence, even a form of abuse that defies naming, yet its devastating effect breeds depression, isolation, surrender, and terror. Yet within this darkness, some resist to stay afloat, desperately struggling to escape the abyss. They fight with all their strength to survive a spiritual death more cruel than any physical end.

The Second Stage: Rescue and Radiance

This stage is defined by the vessel that searches for and awaits every woman seeking survival who believes she is not alone. It bears the name "Beauty for Ashes"—the team that rescued me from potential drowning and spiritual death. They are the team of rescue, struggle, and advocacy for abused women and children. They are her voice, with a countenance that blends beauty and rigor in struggle, possessing a single-eyed gaze that is the eye of justice, in recognition of their efforts to provide all means of assistance to transition from a dark reality to a bright and warm one. This new reality is represented by warm colors like orange, red, and yellow, proving that what was once in cold, dark blue can become radiant and warm through the compassion offered by the entire team.

The Third Stage: Transformation and Hope

This is no ordinary team; they are depicted in the form of angels, reflecting the purity of their hearts and their mercy towards the victims. The golden disk above the head symbolizes the sanctity of humanitarian work emanating from the soul and heart. The golden butterfly represents the transformation from a dark, unknown state to a better, brighter one, filled with hope and positivity for the future. The flowing hair symbolizes moving forward—no surrender, no retreat.

This is the "Beauty for Ashes" team.

The painting completes its story with a slight smile expressing self-confidence, human struggle, and the future to come. As for the sunset behind the boat, it signifies the setting of the era of fear and despair, while the light blue, red, and yellow at the apex of the painting represent the dawn of a warm future and a new life. This painting expresses my story and that of many women—it is a painting of survival.



Beauty for Ashes Refuges

Safety for Migrant Women

Foreword

As I sit and write this, I couldn't have envisioned how far we would have come, in just 5 years, when I first took a phone call from a woman desperate for a place in refuge, who I couldn't help due to her immigration status. To have opened 3 refuges and have housed a total of 51 women and 41 children up until now (November 2025) is testament to the desperate need for refuge for migrant women and children fleeing domestic abuse.

Beauty for Ashes Refuges was born out of the belief that every human being is made in the image of God and deserves dignity, respect and safety. Every figure in this report represents a life changed, A child living free from abuse. A woman in college/work. A life that was in ashes transformed. A life given Beauty for Ashes.

At the time of publication (November 2025) we have had to decline over 100 women seeking a place in our refuge, mostly because we were full. These are sobering statistics and sometimes can be overwhelming but then I'm reminded of this quote: **"Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it."**

So we continue to walk alongside those we support, remembering those words and working hard towards our goal of refuge for all.

Becky Barlow
CEO and Founder, Beauty for Ashes Refuges

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Glossary

Destitute Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC)	A scheme allowing people on spousal or partner visas who experience domestic abuse to access public funds for up to three months while applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). It offers short-term financial and housing support but is not available to most other migrant women.
Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)	Permanent immigration status in the UK that allows an individual to live and work freely without time restrictions.
Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC)	A temporary concession granting three months' leave to remain for certain migrant survivors of domestic abuse, with access to public funds and housing, allowing them to escape abuse and apply for longer-term immigration status.
No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)	An immigration condition that prevents people from accessing most welfare benefits, social housing, and other state support in the UK.
Settlement for Domestic Violence (SET DV)	A route to permanent residency for survivors of domestic abuse who were previously on a partner visa, enabling them to remain in the UK independently of the abuser.
Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)	A term that refers to acts of gender-based violence, including domestic abuse, sexual violence, forced marriage, and other forms of abuse directed at women and girls.

1. Introduction

Beauty for Ashes Refuges (BFAR) exists to challenge the hostile systems that deny migrant women safety, dignity, and justice. We believe that every woman fleeing domestic abuse deserves refuge and protection, regardless of her immigration status.

For too many women, this is not the reality. Imagine: you make the brave decision to leave an abusive relationship, seeking safety in a refuge. But because of your immigration status, doors are closed to you. If you have children, you may be placed in unsafe hostels or told that social services will remove your child while you sleep on the streets. If you have no children, you are left with an impossible choice: homelessness or returning to your abuser.

The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) could have safeguarded migrant women. Instead, it left them excluded. This injustice is why our work is urgent and necessary.

At BFAR, we not only provide safe refuge for women with no recourse to public funds, but we also address the root causes of their vulnerability - structural racism, discriminatory immigration policies, and unethical professional practice. We walk alongside women on their journey to safety, healing, and independence, while advocating for systemic change.

This report shares the impact we have made together: the lives rebuilt, the safety restored, and the hope renewed. Thank you for standing with us in this vital work.



2. Why Beauty for Ashes Refuges exists

2.1 The Challenge

The need for specialist refuge services for migrant women with insecure immigration status or No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) is urgent. According to [Women's Aid's No Woman Turned Away \(NWTa\) 2020](#) report, 43% of the women supported were Black and minoritised, and 25% had NRPF. Of those, only 13% were offered a refuge space. [A 2022 Women's Aid report](#) also found that although 34% of children and young people in refuges are from Black and minoritised backgrounds, outside of London there is very limited specialist “by and for” provision, meaning services that are both designed and delivered by people from the same communities they support, ensuring cultural relevance, trust and deeper understanding. Specialist services make up just 13% of all refuge spaces in England, half of which are located in London.

The [Women's Aid Domestic Abuse Report 2023](#) found that only 9% of refuge vacancies listed on Routes to Support (2021–22) could consider survivors with NRPF. The combination of coercive control by perpetrators using immigration status as leverage, and limited access to specialist legal advice, means many migrant women continue to be at serious risk. Misunderstandings around NRPF further restrict access to the support to which some women are legally entitled.

Many of the women supported by Beauty for Ashes Refuges are trapped in a cycle of homelessness and financial insecurity. Without access to safe housing due to No Recourse to Public Funds, discrimination, or being turned away from mainstream refuges unequipped to support migrant survivors, they face significant instability. This is compounded by their inability to access benefits or legal employment, leaving many reliant on charities for essentials or forced into exploitative conditions just to survive. The constant need to apply for funding for food, toiletries, and transport creates a relentless cycle of dependency and exhaustion.



"He didn't even let me go out or speak to anyone. I couldn't even go to the GP. I didn't know my rights. I didn't know what to do."

These challenges have far-reaching and deeply damaging consequences. Women experience severe mental health struggles, fear, stress, and isolation, often exacerbated by language barriers, stigma, and services that do not recognise cultural or immigration-related nuances. Many continue to face abuse, whether from partners, families, or even police perpetrators, with few trauma-informed or culturally competent services

available to support them. Opportunities for education and stability are lost, reinforcing their marginalisation. Ultimately, these issues stem not from individual failings but from institutional neglect and policies that treat them as invisible.

The women we support come from many different countries and backgrounds, but their stories often carry striking similarities. Based on case study interviews with five of our previous residents, we see how each woman's journey is unique - yet certain themes emerge again and again.

Most of the women arrive in the UK on spousal visas, full of hope for a new life, only to find themselves trapped in controlling or abusive relationships once they are married.



"I didn't know how to use the bus, how to send an email, or even how to ask for help, I felt totally blank."

Isolation is a constant theme: separated from their families, with little or no English, many are left without the knowledge or confidence to navigate everyday life in the UK. Something as simple as using public transport, sending an email, or making a GP appointment can feel impossible without support. Alongside this, many women face uncertainty over their immigration status, which compounds their fear and limits their options for seeking safety.

For most, the decision to leave is an act of immense courage - often made not only for their own survival but for the wellbeing and future of their children. When they arrive at Beauty for Ashes Refuges, women are often at their lowest point, carrying the emotional and physical effects of prolonged abuse, isolation, and financial control. Yet, with safe accommodation, specialist immigration, legal

advice, and a community of care, they begin to rebuild. What unites their stories is resilience: step by step, they move from fear and dependence towards safety, confidence, and independence.

3. Our Response

At the heart of Beauty for Ashes Refuges' work is the transformative way it makes women feel. We are committed to creating a place of safety, healing, and transformation for women who have experienced trauma and adversity. We aim to be one of the safest spaces a woman can walk into, a place where fear gives way to courage, and where women can rediscover their self-worth. Women are welcomed into a supportive environment that feels like home: warm, affirming, and rooted in respect. It is a space where they can feel secure, connected, and part of a family that celebrates and uplifts one another. There is an emphasis on sharing, mutual care, and recognising the value of every woman's story.

Our governance and accountability are rooted in racial and gender equity. The project is led by female professional Trustees from Global Majority communities, many with lived experience of domestic abuse. This ensures that power dynamics are continually challenged and that our work remains relevant and responsive. Our Board includes expertise in areas such as Gender Based Violence Social Research, Human Resources Management, Housing and Immigration Law with a Chartered HR Project Specialist and Immigration Solicitor among our Trustees.

Having survivors from Global Majority backgrounds represented on both the Trustee board and staff team ensures that lived experience shapes our strategy and delivery. We are also committed to training and empowering women who have come through the refuge to become volunteers and staff. As their stories and experiences evolve, so too does the refuge, ensuring it remains grounded in the real lives and needs of the women it exists to support.

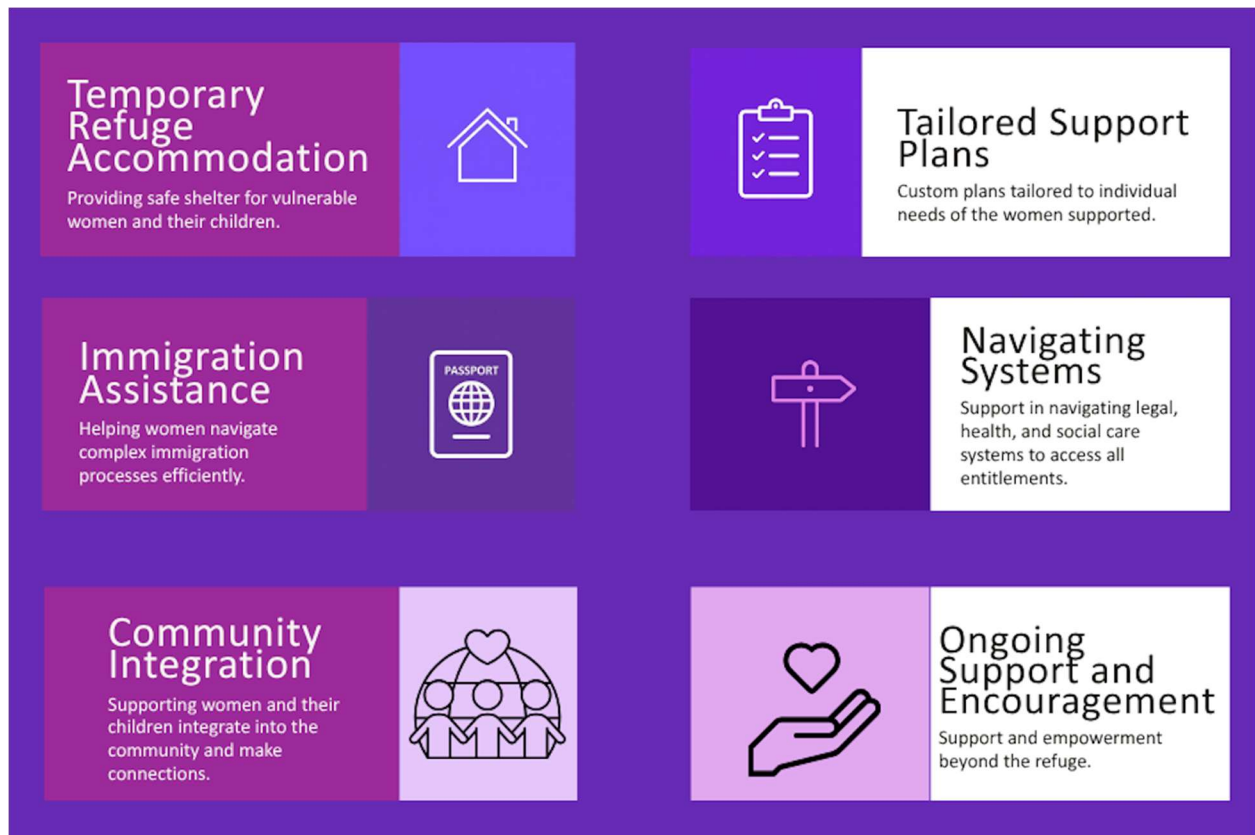
BFAR works to counter the hostility and exclusion many women face in the wider world. We want to send a powerful message: not everyone is hostile, and there is a better way to live. It is a place where women are empowered, energised, and reminded that they are not alone. Faith is gently integrated into the support offered, for those who want it, and women are encouraged to move forward feeling fearless, brave, and celebrated. These are the foundations we at Beauty

for Ashes Refuges believe can unlock lasting change and help women build the lives they choose for themselves.

We aim to empower women fleeing gender-based violence and facing No Recourse to Public Funds to live safely, rebuild their lives with dignity, and access the support, education, and opportunities they deserve - within communities that welcome them and systems that uphold their rights.



3.1 Our Core Services:



Our comprehensive support services ensure that women and their children receive the safety, stability, and guidance they need to rebuild their lives. We provide **temporary refuge accommodation** for those in crisis, alongside **tailored support plans** designed around each individual's needs. Through **immigration signposting** and help **navigating systems**, we empower women to access their rights and essential services. Our **community integration** initiatives foster belonging and connection, while **ongoing support and encouragement** extend care beyond the refuge, promoting long-term confidence, independence, and wellbeing.

“Finding Strength Again: Selam’s Story”

Selam (not her real name), originally from Eritrea, came to the UK two years ago. At first, she felt lost in a new country - the language, culture, and circumstances all unfamiliar. *“When you come to the UK as a new person, you feel like you’ve lost yourself,”* she explained. *“You need help to start again.”*

After leaving a difficult situation, Selam was referred to the refuge. She remembers the first day clearly: *“When they opened the door, they gave me a big smile. From that moment, I felt safe. They wanted me to heal from my trauma and learn to be independent again.”*

The refuge team supported Selam in every aspect of her new life. They helped her secure her visa, access the Job Centre, and eventually move into her own accommodation in Liverpool.

“They did everything for me. I can’t thank them enough.”

During her eight months in the refuge, Selam began to rebuild her confidence. With encouragement, she started studying and pursuing qualifications in adult care. *“Before, I was just sitting in the house thinking about myself. But with their support, I started to know who I am again. Now I study, I work, I feel independent.”*

Today, Selam is thriving. She has completed Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications, a mental health course, and is preparing to begin a year-long vocational course with her employer in the care sector. *“Life is good now. I can do everything by myself. I still go back sometimes to say thank you, because I am here today because of them.”*

Reflecting on her journey, Selam feels both grateful and resilient. *“I never regret what I have been through. Every mistake, every difficulty - it made me stronger. I thank God every day. And I thank the people who helped me. Because of them, I can live my life again.”*

3.2 Our Story So Far

MARCH 2021



We became a registered charity.

JANUARY 2023



We opened our first refuge - a 'dispersed' 3 bedroom property, which houses one large family (a woman with up to 5 children).

JUNE 2023



We opened our second refuge, a 6 bed purpose built refuge for women with up to 2 children per room.

APRIL 2025



We opened our third refuge, a 9 bedroom refuge for single women



Since opening the doors of our first refuge, we have supported 27 women through our intensive, holistic support (until March 2025). Out of these, the majority (56%) were of Pakistani nationality with the remaining 12 of other Asian, African or South American nationalities.



Women arriving at our refuges range from teenagers to mothers in their forties, the youngest just **19 years old**, the oldest **43**, with an **average age of 29.7**.



Most women (81%) arrived on **spousal visas**, and nearly **two-thirds were mothers**, bringing children as young as **4 months old**. Two women were expecting babies when they came to us.



While **Greater Manchester** remains the main point of referral - home to over a **quarter of all arrivals (27%)** - our reach extends far beyond the city. Women came from across the North West and even further afield, from Bolton and Preston to Southend-on-Sea and Leicester. This reflects the growing recognition of our refuges as safe, specialist spaces for women wherever they are.



4. How We Measure Our Impact

4.1 Our Theory of Change

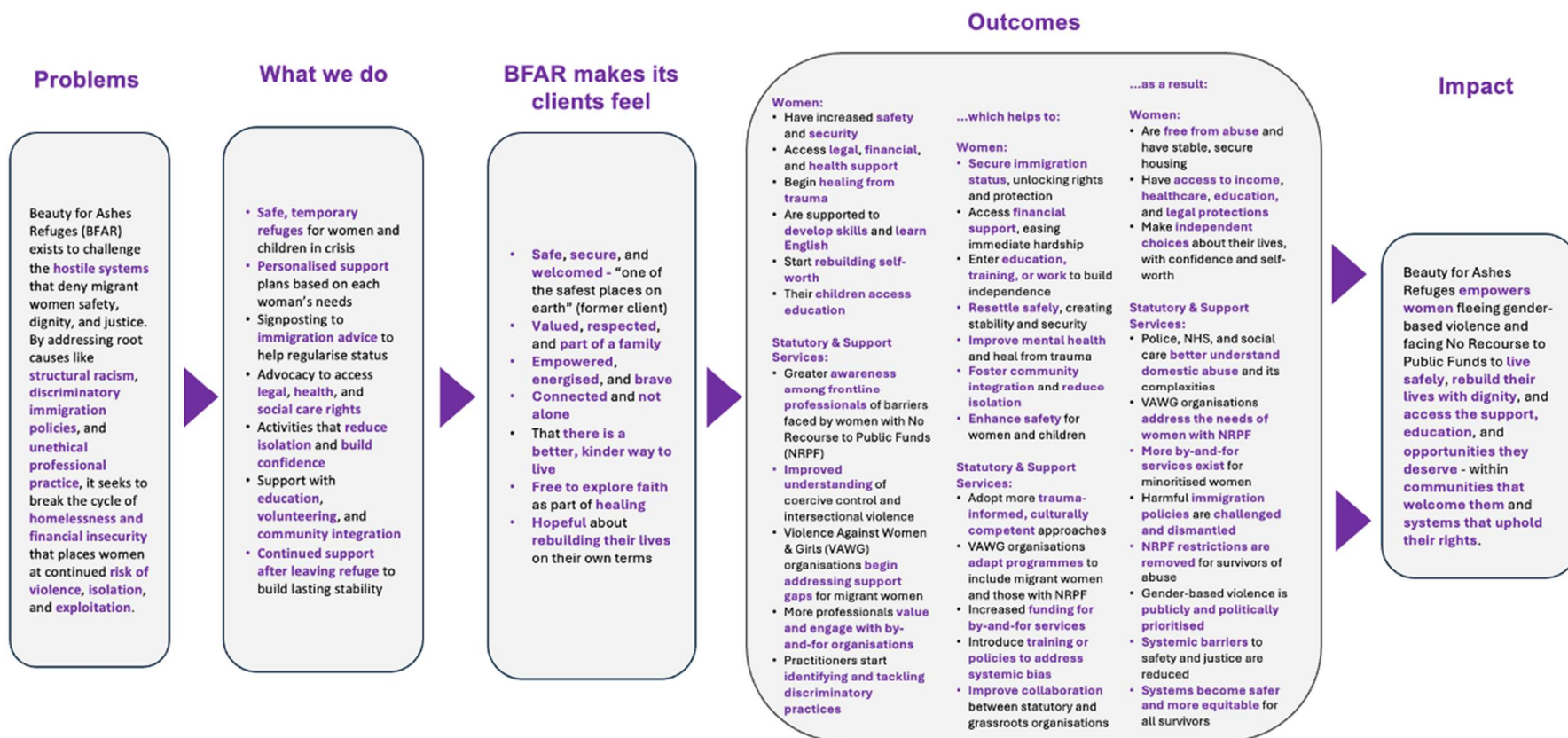
Our impact measurement framework and data collection methods are based on our theory of change, which has been developed collaboratively with staff and trustees and contributions from women who are currently being supported by us as

well as those who have moved on into independent lives. We have also listened to feedback from partners, which is represented in the visual outline of the theory of change on page 16. We review our theory of change on an annual basis to ensure it continues to represent us as an organisation and serves us as an impact planning tool as well as to share our story with different audiences.

At Beauty for Ashes Refuges, we believe that when women fleeing gender-based violence – especially those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) – are provided with safety, support, and dignity, they can rebuild their lives and thrive.

In the **short term**, women who come to us gain immediate safety and security, begin healing from trauma, and start rebuilding their self-worth. They access vital legal, financial, and health support, while their children return to education. We also support women to develop skills and learn English, laying the foundation for independence. Alongside this, our work with statutory and support services raises awareness among frontline professionals of the unique barriers faced by migrant women, deepens their understanding of coercive control and intersectional violence, and begins to shift attitudes and practices within Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) organisations.

In the **medium term**, this means women can secure their immigration status, gain financial stability, and access education, training, or employment to build independent futures. They resettle safely in the community, improve their mental health, and forge strong connections that reduce isolation. For statutory and support services, it leads to more trauma-informed and culturally competent approaches, improved collaboration with grassroots organisations, and greater recognition of the essential role by-and-for services play in supporting minoritised women.



Ultimately, in the **long term**, women are free from abuse and live in stable, secure housing with access to income, healthcare, education, and legal protections. They have confidence, self-worth, and the power to make independent choices about their lives. Systems, too, transform: public services better understand domestic abuse and its complexities; VAWG organisations address the needs of women with NRPF; more by-and-for services emerge; harmful immigration policies are challenged and dismantled; and systemic barriers to safety and justice are reduced. Gender-based violence becomes publicly and politically prioritised, creating safer, more equitable systems for all survivors.

Our impact goal is to empower women fleeing gender-based violence and facing NRPF to live safely, rebuild their lives with dignity, and access the support, education, and opportunities they deserve within communities that welcome them and systems that uphold their rights.

4.2 Our Methodology

We use both quantitative and qualitative methods to measure our impact, combining questionnaires, surveys, and evaluations to understand the difference we are making. Feedback from residents shapes the day-to-day running of the refuge, with weekly house meetings providing a vital space for women to share their views and needs. Alongside providing refuge accommodation, our work focuses on resettling women and their children safely into the community and creating long-lasting networks of support through our Life After groups, enabling women to heal and thrive well beyond their time in the refuge.

A key tool we use is the **Empowerment Star**, which supports women to track their own journeys across areas such as finances, housing, emotional and mental health, and parenting. This personalised support plan helps us and the women to see their progress clearly. We also see the removal of children from at-risk registers as a significant measure of success, indicating improved safety and wellbeing within families. Every contact with residents is recorded in daily diaries by staff, ensuring consistent and holistic support. Our approach reduces isolation, stigma, and discrimination, and supports women – a group so often misrepresented in the media due to the ‘hostile environment’ – to integrate into and contribute to community life through meaningful connections and resettlement opportunities.

Throughout our impact measurement, we prioritise the ethics of working with survivors. Protecting the identity, safety, and dignity of the women we support is central to how we collect, store, and share information. This is of paramount importance to us.

“Now I Feel Safe”: Rania’s Story

When *Rania* (not her real name) first arrived in the UK on a spousal visa, she was hopeful about her future. *“At the beginning, everything was good with my partner,”* she said. *“We were happy, and I trusted him.”*

But once they were married and settled, things began to change. His behaviour became controlling and abusive. *“He didn’t let me go out or speak to anyone. I couldn’t even go to the GP. I didn’t know my rights. I didn’t know what to do.”*

Eventually, Rania found the strength to leave and was referred to a women’s refuge. *“I was scared, but when I arrived, they welcomed me. They said, ‘You are safe now.’ That was the first time I felt calm.”*

At the refuge, Rania received practical and emotional support - from understanding her legal and immigration rights, to accessing healthcare and learning English. *“They supported me step by step. I used to panic and cry, but they always listened. They helped me feel strong again.”*

She now lives independently and has started rebuilding her life. *“Before, I didn’t speak any English. Now I go to appointments and speak for myself. I’m learning, and I want to study more. I want to work. Now I feel safe - and that means everything to me.”*

5. Our Year in Numbers

From April 2024 to March 2025, Beauty for Ashes Refuges provided safety, stability, and hope for 15 women and 17 children escaping abuse. Every resident accessed legal immigration advice, with 12 women successfully securing Indefinite Leave to Remain and 8 families removed from Child in Need plans, easing the burden on social services.



We celebrated the births of two healthy babies in our care, supported women into training and employment - including four achieving teaching assistant qualifications and three moving into paid roles, and ensured that every school-aged child was placed in education. These outcomes demonstrate not just refuge, but transformation: lives rebuilt with dignity, independence, and opportunity.

Beyond the numbers, we launched our new *Be Prepared* resettlement course, giving women practical skills for independent living, and extended our care through an outreach service providing 12 weeks of follow-on support after women moved into their own homes.

We strengthened our community presence by hosting an International Women's Day celebration with past and current residents, while our CEO represented the charity at both the Greater Manchester Mayor's IWD event and the Buckingham Palace Garden Party. Looking ahead, we are growing to meet the urgent need: acquiring the building next door to our main refuge and beginning development of a new 9-bedroom safe house for single women, due to open in April 2025 under our newly appointed Refuge Manager.

Sadly, demand for our services once again far exceeded our capacity. We were forced to turn away 36 women seeking safety, with 89% unable to access refuge because our accommodation was already full - bringing the total number turned away since 2023 to 75.

A small number of women presented with highly complex needs requiring specialist provision, while others were unable to accept placements due to personal circumstances such as relocation or facility requirements. Each case represents a woman, and often children, left at risk - powerfully underlining the urgent need for greater investment in specialist refuges and wider support services. Our expansion into a new 9-bedroom safe house in 2025 is one step toward meeting this need, but the scale of demand makes clear that much more support is required.

5.1 Our People and Resources

In 2024–25, Beauty for Ashes Refuges continued to grow its capacity and strengthen the team behind our life-changing work. Our small but dedicated staff of seven - comprising a CEO, Refuge Manager, Family Case Worker, Children's Worker, Support Worker, Admin and Finance Manager, and Cleaner - ensured that every woman and child received consistent, compassionate, and professional support.

We were also enriched by the contributions of five talented volunteers, who shared their time and skills to deliver a vibrant programme of activities. These included ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), Sewing, Art Therapy, and Creative Writing - helping women build confidence, community, and new opportunities for the future.

Our **financial position** remained stable, with careful management of income and expenditure allowing us to maintain essential services while investing in our forthcoming 9-bedroom refuge. Every pound raised was directed toward safety, recovery, and empowerment for women and children rebuilding their lives.

Our Year in Pictures (April 2024 – March 2025)



15 women and 17 children were provided with refuge accommodation.



8 families were removed from *Child in Need* plans, reducing pressure on social services.



2 healthy babies were born safely within our care.



100% of residents accessed legal immigration advice and progressed their status.



12 women secured Indefinite Leave to Remain with our support.



4 women achieved teaching assistant qualifications.



3 women entered paid employment.

Beauty For Ashes Refuges Support and Recovery Insights

27

27 women and their children have found refuge and support since we opened our doors, reclaiming their lives from the shadows of trauma.



"Healing is a journey, not a destination."

Unknown

This journey is often long and arduous, but each step toward independence is a victory worth celebrating. The resilience demonstrated by these women highlights the power of support and community in overcoming life's challenges.

2 days

The **shortest stay** recorded was just 2 days, emphasising the urgency in providing immediate assistance to those in need.

394 days

Conversely, the **longest stay** reached 394 days, showcasing the ongoing support and resources necessary for deeper healing.

155 days

The **average stay** of 155 days reflects the commitment to fostering a safe environment for recovery and rebuilding lives.

Each statistic tells a story of resilience, courage, and the overarching mission to support women and children in their recovery. Together, we can continue to make a significant impact, helping create a brighter future for those in need.

Join us in making a difference!



Since opening our first refuge, we have provided intensive and holistic support to **27** women and their children. The lowest number of days a woman spent in one of our refuges was two days and the highest number of days was 394, equating to just under a year and one month. On average, the women spent **155 days** in a refuge, just over five months. This is the average amount of time it takes them to recover from the acute trauma of abuse and begin stabilising their lives. Only then can they start to look ahead - addressing their legal status, accessing healthcare, supporting their

children's wellbeing and education, building confidence, developing skills through courses, and ultimately feeling ready to move on to independence.

6. Outcomes for Women Supported

The outcomes achieved for women leaving our refuge demonstrate both the challenges they face and the progress they are able to make with intensive, holistic support.

- ➔ **Resettlement:** Of the 27 women represented in this data, **21 (78%)** successfully moved on to safe, stable accommodation, including social housing, supported accommodation, and private rented homes. A further 1 woman was still in refuge at the time of reporting. However, 5 women (19%) were not able to secure safe move-on housing, with some moving to other refuges and, in one concerning case, returning to the perpetrator. This underlines the ongoing barriers to safe housing for survivors.



"I feel like a different person now"

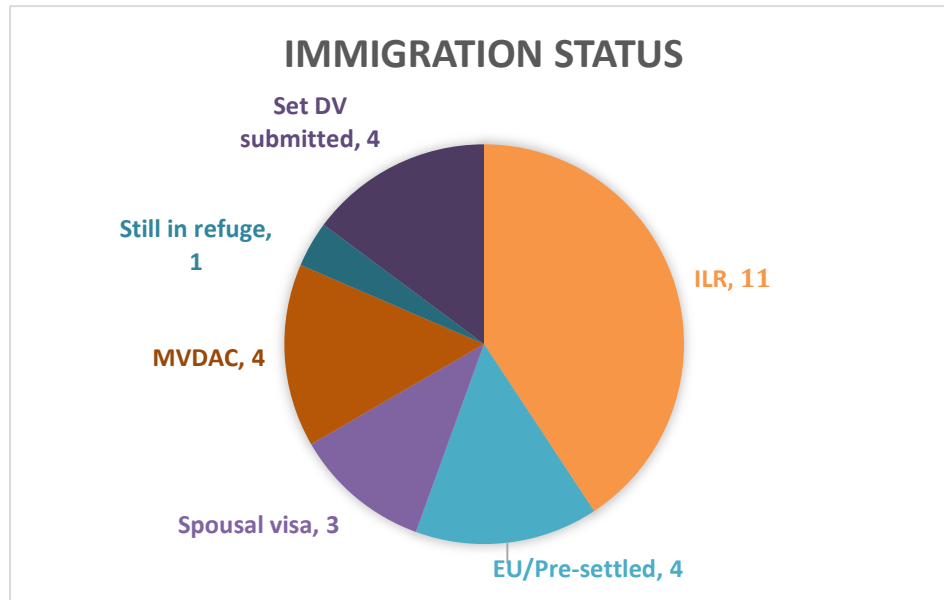
When *Amina* (not her real name) arrived in the UK from Pakistan on a spouse visa, she was full of hope for a better future for herself and her young child. But her dream quickly unravelled as her husband's behaviour became abusive. With little English, no family nearby, and no knowledge of how to navigate life in a new country, Amina made the incredibly difficult decision to leave the relationship - for her safety and for her child's future.

At first, life alone in the UK felt overwhelming. *"I didn't know how to use the bus, how to send an email, or even how to ask for help,"* she recalls. *"I felt totally blank."* Her confidence was at its lowest, and she didn't know where to turn.

Things began to change when she was connected to the charity through her midwife and GP. *"From the first conversation, I felt like I was talking to my mother,"* Amina says. *"They listened to me, supported me emotionally, and helped me feel safe."* She was supported to access refuge accommodation, navigate her housing options, understand her rights, and learn everyday practical skills. Even now that she has moved on from the refuge, she knows she can contact them when problems arise, she doesn't know how to address.

The emotional support was just as crucial. *"They treated my son like family. He felt safe with them. That made all the difference."* Through the charity, Amina also began to build a new social network and made friends she's still in contact with today. Now, she describes herself as *"a completely different person."* She feels confident, informed, and independent. *"I used to be shy. Now I can speak in front of people, and I know my rights. I want to work, provide for my kids, and give them everything they need."*

Amina credits the charity with changing her life. *"They gave me and my children a new future. I feel lucky every day that I found them."*



- **Immigration progress:** With specialist support, most women were able to make significant progress in securing their immigration status - a crucial step towards stability and independence. At the point of entry, the majority held **spousal visas**, with a smaller number on **EU Pre-Settled, family member, or fiancée visas**, leaving them dependent on their partner and highly vulnerable to abuse. By the time they exited refuge, many had progressed to **Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)**, confirming their right to live and work in the UK.
- Four women received status under the **Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC)**, which provides three months' leave to remain with access to public funds and housing, enabling them to escape abuse and make longer-term applications. In addition, four women applied for **SET DV**, the settlement route for victims of domestic abuse, granting permanent status to those previously on partner visas. These outcomes are vital in reducing women's vulnerability to abuse and exploitation, giving them the security, independence, and legal certainty they need to begin rebuilding their lives.

- **Children's services involvement:** At the point of arrival, 14 women had open involvement with Children's Social Care (CSC) or Adult Social Care (ASC). By the time they left refuge, 9 of these cases had been closed, reflecting the stabilising impact of refuge support on family life. For those with continuing involvement, risk had been reduced, and families were better equipped to engage positively with professionals.



Overall, this data demonstrates that with safe housing, legal advocacy, and wrap-around support, women are able to move from crisis to stability. While systemic barriers - particularly housing shortages - remain significant, the outcomes show the transformative difference specialist refuge provision can make. The feedback from previous residents demonstrates just how important this kind of support is.

Our Impact: From Fear to Strength

Resident Feedback



"The house was spotless clean and everything is new... My stay here was like a home, it didn't feel like a refuge."

– RESIDENT



9.9/10 Accommodation

Residents described the refuge as clean, safe, homely, and well-maintained.



10/10 Support from staff

Residents consistently described staff as "supportive," "kind," and "always available": "I want to say thank you for everything you did to support me. The 5 months for me was the happiest moment because of you."



9.7/10 Safety

All women reported feeling safe during their stay. Safety measures such as CCTV, secure entry, and staff vigilance were frequently praised: "I felt incredibly safe during my stay... knowing I had a secure place to sleep each night was a huge relief."



10/10 Children's Needs

All mothers reported being fully satisfied with the way their children's needs were met. Women spoke about their children receiving food, clothing, safe play spaces, and emotional support: "My son enjoyed playing in the playroom... staff gave my children love, presents, and so many happy memories."

The report illustrates a highly positive experience for women and children, highlighting exceptional care, safety measures, and overall satisfaction with the refuge, creating a nurturing environment for all residents.

This year, seven women completed our resident feedback survey, offering invaluable insight into their experiences of refuge life. The results were overwhelmingly positive, with consistently high satisfaction across all areas measured.

Across the written comments, a number of themes emerge:

The refuge felt like **a real home**, not an institution, giving women and children a safe place to breathe, recover, and rebuild.

Staff were recognised not just for practical help, but for their **emotional support and kindness**, which women described as life-changing.

Several women highlighted that their **confidence grew** during their stay, allowing them to begin thinking about their future.

In the words of one resident:

"This place gave me the space I needed to breathe, recover and start rebuilding. I finally had the space to think about my next future with my kids. I appreciate the kindness of the staff - I'm truly grateful for the help I received."

At Beauty for Ashes Refuges, impact is seen most powerfully in the stories of the women we support. Each journey is different, but together they show what happens when migrant women fleeing abuse are met with safety, dignity, and care.

For many women, the very first step is the most important: finding safety. Selam remembers the moment she arrived at the refuge: ***"When they opened the door, they gave me a big smile. From that moment, I felt safe."*** Rania described a similar relief: ***"They said, 'You are safe now.' That was the first time I felt calm."*** These first encounters mark the turning point from fear to security - creating space for healing to begin.



With safety came emotional support and the chance to rebuild confidence. Nadia recalls, ***"Becky didn't just offer me help; she listened. She cried with me when I was in pain. She treated me like a person, not a number."*** For Sarah, who had endured severe trauma and the frightening experience of having her son taken from her, talking therapy helped her process her experiences and begin to regain her strength. And for Amina, the kindness extended to her child was transformative: ***"They treated my son like family.***

He felt safe with them. That made all the difference."

Alongside emotional healing, practical support enabled women to take control of their lives. Selam gained her visa, moved into her own accommodation, and started studying. ***"Before, I was just sitting in the house thinking about myself. But with their support, I started to know who I am again."*** She has since completed multiple qualifications and is now working in adult care.

Nadia's journey was similarly transformative. Once isolated and unsure of her future, she went on to complete a computer course and a teaching assistant qualification, and is now employed in schools. ***"Before, I wasn't confident at all.***

Now, I feel safe and independent. I can live on my own. I've made friends. I'm working. I'm moving forward."



For women like Rania and Amina, everyday independence is equally significant. Rania reflected on her progress: *"Before, I didn't speak any English. Now I go to appointments and speak for myself. I'm learning, and I want to study more. I want to work."*

Amina, once overwhelmed by the smallest daily tasks, now describes herself as *"a completely different person... I used to be shy. Now I can speak in front of people, and I know my rights."*

These transformations ripple outwards, shaping not just individual lives but families and communities. Sarah, now settled in her own council home with her son safely returned to her care, has begun volunteering as a Sunday school teacher and hopes to support other families in the future. Amina speaks with pride about wanting to provide for her children and give them everything they need. Selam looks back with resilience: *"I never regret what I have been through. Every mistake, every difficulty - it made me stronger."*





Together, these journeys show BFAR's theory of change in action. In the short term, women find safety and begin to heal. In the medium term, they gain legal security, housing, education, and employment. And in the long term, they live free from abuse, financially independent, and deeply connected to their communities. Most of all, their voices show the heart of our impact: women moving from fear to safety, from isolation to confidence, and from survival to independence.

"Now I feel safe—and confident"

When *Nadia* (not her real name) arrived in the UK from Pakistan in early 2023, she hoped for a fresh start - but found herself facing fear and uncertainty instead. *"At first, I wasn't stressed,"* she says, *"but slowly, things became more difficult."* Isolated, unsure of her rights, and struggling with her mental health, she was eventually referred to the Beauty for Ashes Refuges.

From the moment she arrived, Nadia says she felt truly seen. *"Becky didn't just offer me help; she listened. She cried with me when I was in pain. She treated me like a person, not a number."* Nadia recalls a time when she was suffering with severe toothache, and Becky booked her an emergency appointment and personally accompanied her to it. *"That kind of care - you don't forget."*

The charity supported Nadia to understand her immigration rights, access mental health support, and rebuild her confidence. But perhaps the most transformative support came through education. With their encouragement, Nadia completed a computer course and a teaching assistant qualification. She now works as a teaching assistant through an agency and is actively seeking a permanent role.

"Before, I wasn't confident at all," she says. *"Now, I feel safe and independent. I can live on my own. I've made friends. I'm working. I'm moving forward."*

For Nadia, the impact of Beauty for Ashes Refuges' support has been life-changing: *"All the credit goes to them. They helped me start again."*

Sarah's Journey to Safety and Stability

Sarah (not her real name) came to the refuge after enduring prolonged domestic abuse that took a serious toll on her mental and physical wellbeing. With no family support nearby, she faced the daunting task of rebuilding her life for herself and her young son, Lucas.

When Sarah first recognised the abuse, she reached out to trusted women in her community for help. The situation escalated when her husband removed Lucas from the home and falsely accused her of abuse, leading to a distressing police investigation. Isolated and deeply anxious, Sarah's mental health deteriorated to the point that she was at risk of being sectioned. During this crisis, a close friend provided vital emotional support and helped her to leave home safely.

Sarah was then connected with Beauty for Ashes Refuges, who immediately began supporting her with safety assessments, legal advocacy, and housing and immigration matters. Working closely with the police and social services, they ensured Lucas's safe return and helped Sarah move into specialist refuge accommodation.

Over the following months, Sarah had to move several times for her own safety, including to a refuge in another city. Despite the upheaval, she gradually found stability and began to rebuild her confidence with the consistent support of Beauty for Ashes staff. She accessed talking therapy through her GP, attended ten sessions that helped her process her trauma, and began to rediscover her sense of self-worth. Encouraged by the positive relationships and safe space she found, Sarah started volunteering as a Sunday school teacher and became involved in early help initiatives supporting other families in need.

Now, with her son about to start school and their own council home secured, Sarah looks toward the future with renewed hope and determination. Her story reflects the power of wraparound support - from emergency safety to long-term emotional and practical help - in enabling women and children to recover from abuse and build independent, **thriving lives**.

7. Voices from Our Partners

Beauty for Ashes Refuges is not only a lifeline for women with No Recourse to Public Funds, but also a trusted partner for the statutory services and frontline organisations that refer into us. Professionals across health, social care, and victim support consistently describe our staff as compassionate, trauma-informed, and deeply knowledgeable about the complex barriers migrant women face. What stands out is the way we work collaboratively - going above and beyond to ensure women's safety, dignity, and long-term independence. These testimonials from our partners reflect a common theme: BFAR fills a critical gap in the system, offering both immediate protection and the chance for women to rebuild their lives with confidence and hope.

Khalida Sharif, Victim Support



Khalida first came across Beauty for Ashes Refuges when she received an email about their specialist work supporting women with *No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)*. Having previously made a referral, she later referred a woman in urgent need of refuge and was struck by the team's response. ***"The staff were absolutely wonderful, and the way we collaborated to***

ensure the safety of the victim and her child was excellent. Their approach was compassionate and focused on putting the woman's safety first."

Since then, Khalida has referred two women to BFAR and has seen the impact of their work first-hand. ***"Both women spoke about how safe they felt and how well cared for they were. It was clear that the support they received made a significant difference to their lives, both practically and emotionally."***

What stands out most to Khalida is BFAR's trauma-informed approach and their refusal to let immigration status be a barrier to safety. ***"They do not require survivors to apply for the Destitution Domestic Violence concession before offering support, especially when it's clear that the woman is eligible. They provide valuable guidance around immigration and take a trauma-informed approach to every case."***

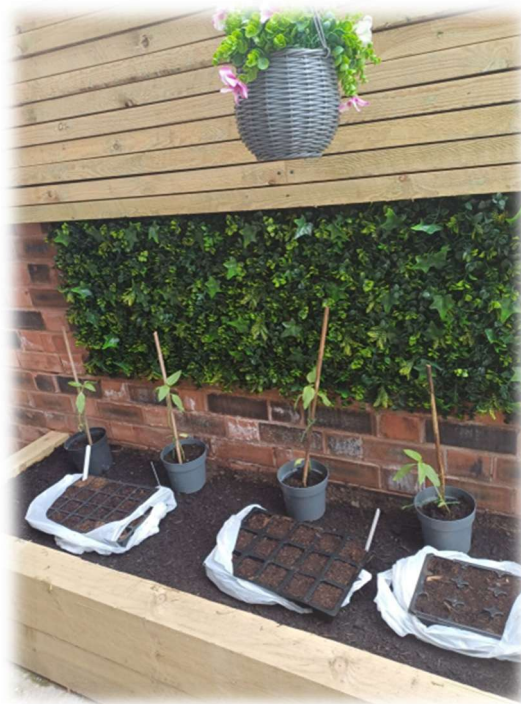


They fill a critical gap by offering refuge spaces and holistic support to those who might otherwise be turned away due to their immigration status. Their willingness to work with complex cases and offer individualised, non-discriminatory care ensures that some of the most marginalised women can access safety and begin to rebuild their lives. They are an essential part of the wider network of support services.

Above all, she highlights the charity's values of compassion and collaboration: ***"What truly sets them apart is their willingness to work closely with social care and other agencies to ensure women get the comprehensive support they need. They have a deep understanding of the complex needs of women with NRPF, and they go above and beyond to make them***

feel safe, heard, and respected. Their work is rooted in dignity, empathy, and practical action."

In Khalida's view, BFAR plays a vital role in the wider system of support for survivors of domestic abuse, particularly migrant women.





Leanne Dunn, NHS Health Visitor

As a health visitor, Leanne has supported a number of vulnerable women and children who have been placed at Beauty for Ashes Refuges. Through this work, she has seen the dedication of the staff first-hand. ***“I have worked with, witnessed and observed numerous members of staff going above and beyond for the ladies and children who they care for.”***

She recalls one particular situation where a mother and child's safety was compromised due to a hospital error. ***“Staff at BFAR immediately secured a safe alternative provision for the mother and child as soon as they were made aware of the circumstances, including informing all the professionals involved. This protected them from the risk of significant harm. Staff worked tirelessly to execute this as soon as possible.”***

Beyond crisis response, Leanne notes the charity's commitment to empowerment and recovery. Staff don't just provide safety but opportunities for women to grow and rebuild. She describes how one staff member ran a creative writing class to help women express themselves and build confidence: ***“It gave them a voice and helped them believe in their own abilities.”***

For Leanne, what stands out most is BFAR's culture of respect and understanding: ***“The staff are all incredibly dedicated, compassionate and have a great depth of knowledge of the cultures, constraints and difficulties that these women face. There is no judgement of background or religion. All women are treated with respect; they are nurtured and supported to begin to build a better life for themselves.”***

In her view, the charity plays a crucial role in the local system of support: ***“BFAR provides a safe, secure, nurturing home for women and children who are victims of domestic abuse. They not only provide a room, but they also provide opportunities for these women to gain confidence and independence. They are educated on the signs of domestic abuse, and they learn new skills that will equip them when they go on to a new life.”***

8. Cost Savings Analysis

Independent research from the [Investing in Safety report \(2024\)](#) demonstrates that when migrant victim-survivors of violence against women and girls (VAWG) with **No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)** are able to access **specialist, intersectional 'by and for' support services** - designed and delivered by and for Black, minoritised and migrant women, **significant net savings** are generated for local public services.

Over a three-year period, the estimated **net saving per woman** supported through these services is **£18,024**, broken down as follows:

Public Service Area	Net Saving per Woman (3 years)
NHS	£11,444
Children's Social Care	£4,928
Housing & Homelessness Services	£936
Police	£643
MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)	£73
Total	£18,024



Based on this model, for the **27 women** we have housed and supported to date, the **total net saving to local public services** is estimated at:

$$27 \text{ women} \times \text{£}18,024 = \text{£}486,648$$

This analysis highlights that investment in specialist 'by and for' services is not only vital for ensuring safety, stability, and dignity for migrant women with NRPF - it also delivers clear financial value to statutory services by reducing demand across health, social care, housing, and criminal justice systems.

9. Learning & Challenges

9.1 Learning

This year has brought many opportunities for growth and reflection at Beauty for Ashes Refuges. Through our work, we continue to learn what makes the greatest difference for the women and children we support:

- ➔ **The power of lived experience leadership:** Embedding lived experience into all levels of the organisation – from trustees to staff and volunteers – has strengthened services, ensuring support is rooted in understanding, cultural competence, and the realities women face.
- ➔ **Holistic approaches create lasting change:** The importance of combining safe accommodation with legal, emotional, educational, and practical support has become even clearer. Women progress further and faster when services address their whole lives, not just immediate safety.
- ➔ **Community and peer networks are vital:** The Life After groups and informal networks built through the refuges remain crucial in reducing isolation and supporting long-term resettlement. Investing in these connections enhances wellbeing and confidence long after women leave the refuge.

- ➔ **Advocacy remains essential:** Working with partners to advocate for systemic change is as important as frontline support. Ongoing learning from women's experiences highlights how policy and practice must change to remove barriers and create safer futures for migrant survivors.
- ➔ **Flexibility in delivery increases accessibility:** Adapting how services are delivered – including language support, cultural sensitivity, and flexible appointment times – continues to improve accessibility, enabling more women to engage confidently and safely.

9.2 Challenges



Beauty for Ashes Refuge continues to face several challenges in its mission to support migrant women and children fleeing domestic abuse:

- ➔ **Funding and resources:** Securing consistent funding remains a significant challenge. The refuge relies heavily on grants and donations to provide its services, and fluctuations in funding can impact its ability to offer stable, ongoing support to women in crisis.
- ➔ **Awareness and outreach:** Raising awareness of the refuge and reaching the most marginalised women remains difficult. Many migrant women are unaware that support is available, or they face language and cultural barriers that prevent them from seeking help, leaving them at greater risk of harm.
- ➔ **Legal and policy barriers:** Despite progress, systemic legal and policy barriers persist. Complex immigration laws and the No Recourse to Public Funds policy can prevent women from accessing the help they need, with many afraid to seek safety due to fear of deportation or lack of financial support.

- ➔ **Capacity and demand:** The demand for refuge spaces and specialist support often exceeds the refuge's capacity. This can lead to waiting lists and the heartbreaking reality of having to turn away women and children in urgent need due to a lack of space.
- ➔ **Providing holistic support:** Delivering truly holistic support that meets all aspects of a survivor's needs – including mental health, legal advice, education, and long-term housing – requires significant resources and strong coordination with other organisations. Meeting these complex needs remains an ongoing challenge as the refuge strives to empower women to rebuild their lives.



9.3 Policy and Legal Context

The policy landscape for migrant victim-survivors of violence against women and girls (VAWG) with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) continues to present significant barriers to safety and stability.

In her [Safety Before Status report \(2021\)](#), the Domestic Abuse Commissioner recommended vital amendments to the Domestic Abuse Bill to:

1. Extend the Destitute Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC) to all victims with NRPF, and
2. Increase the period of support from three to six months.

While these recommendations were widely supported by parliamentarians, they were not enacted.

In 2024, the Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC) was expanded to include individuals on dependent student visas and dependent work visas, alongside those on spousal visas. However, this expansion did not extend the right to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) to these new cohorts. As a result, women on dependent visas now face an even more precarious situation - able to access temporary support but with no route to long-term security.

This policy change has generated confusion and caution within the VAWG sector. Many refuges that had begun to accept women with spousal visas under the MVDAC are now reluctant to accommodate women with other dependent visas, due to uncertainty over entitlements after the three-month concession period.

As highlighted in [Women's Aid's Nowhere To Turn Report \(2025\)](#):

“Refuge workers are now more uncertain whether survivors with the concession can apply for the DA Rule. This has led to more refuges declining referrals for survivors with the concession, or requesting that a solicitor is in place to make a further immigration application and/or the survivor is already accessing benefits.”

The outcome is a **narrowing of safe accommodation options** for women with insecure immigration status, reinforcing systemic inequities and leaving many at continued risk of harm.

9.4 Housing and Accommodation Pressures



The ongoing housing crisis is exacerbating pressures on refuge spaces nationally and locally. The [Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Annual Progress Report \(2022–2023\)](#) found:

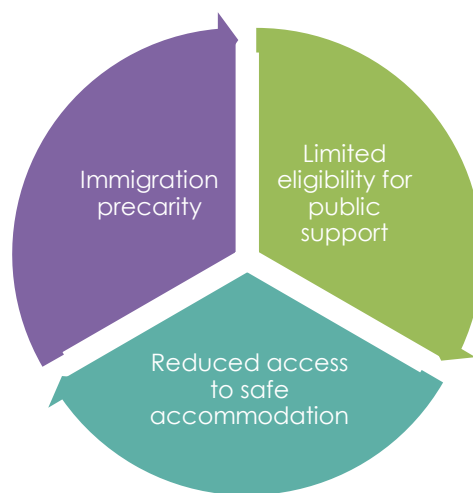
- 19% of residents stayed less than 1 month
- 27% stayed between 1–3 months
- 25% stayed between 3–6 months
- 29% stayed longer than 6 months

According to [Women's Aid England \(June 2025\)](#), the average length of stay in refuge has increased by 50 days, with women waiting for social housing remaining in refuge significantly longer - on average, almost two additional months. Our own data mirrors these national trends:

- 38% of women we supported were resettled into social housing.
- Two women waited more than 12 months for a social housing property.

The result is a severe bottleneck in refuge capacity. If each woman stays for an average of six months, each refuge space can accommodate only two families per year. This limits the sector's ability to meet demand and restricts the number of women and children who can access safety.

These combined policy and housing pressures mean that migrant women with NRPF face a triple disadvantage: immigration precarity, limited eligibility for public support, and reduced access to safe accommodation.



Despite these challenges, our service continues to bridge the gaps, offering specialist, trauma-informed, and culturally competent support to women who would otherwise be excluded from safety.

10. Looking Ahead

10.1 Strengthening Support Beyond Refuge

In the year ahead, we will focus on expanding our **Outreach Programme** to provide sustained, wraparound support for women as they move on from refuge into independent living. Our goal is to ensure that women with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) continue to feel safe, supported, and connected beyond the immediate security of refuge - rebuilding confidence, accessing essential services, and establishing lasting stability within their communities.



10.2 Developing Move-On Pathways

A key priority is to **develop alternative “move-on” accommodation pathways**. Many women, particularly those with insecure immigration status, face significant barriers when transitioning from refuge to permanent housing. We are therefore exploring **“inbetween” accommodation models** - safe, affordable, and supportive environments that enable women to recover, build independence, and work towards long-term housing solutions.

10.3 Building Partnerships for Change

We will also strengthen partnerships with local authorities, community organisations, and housing providers to advocate for more inclusive housing options for migrant women with NRPF. Through collaboration and policy engagement, we aim to influence systemic change, ensuring that every woman has a clear pathway to safety, stability, and independence.

11. Thank You & How to Get Involved

We could not do what we do without the incredible generosity and commitment of our funders and supporters. Our heartfelt thanks go to **Bible Gateway, Albert Hunt, Allen Lane Foundation, Eric Wright Charitable Trust, Lankelly Chase, Schroder Charity Trust, Sir Halley Stewart Trust, The Big Give, Tudor Trust, West Hill, Wigan Council, Benefact Trust, The Charity Service, Greater Manchester Mayor’s Charity, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Skipton Building Society, Lush, UNLTD**, and once again to **Albert Hunt** for their ongoing belief in our work.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the many **individuals, volunteers, and church communities** who have stood by us, prayed with us, and

supported us from the very beginning - including **Kings Church Wigan, Ramp Church Manchester, our local Baptist Church, and Grace Church Atherton.**

A special thank you to everyone who has **donated time, skills, or resources**, and to our local **Soroptimist group** and **Days for Girls** for their continued partnership and practical support. We are also grateful to Angela Schlenkhoff-Hus for her support in preparing this impact report.

Finally, we want to express our heartfelt appreciation to our **dedicated staff team**, whose compassion, resilience, and unwavering commitment make our work possible every day.

Together, you make it possible for us to stand alongside migrant women with NRPF helping them rebuild their lives with safety, dignity, and hope.

Call to action: donate, volunteer, partner, or follow us

Our work is only possible because of the compassion and commitment of people like you. There are many ways to stand with migrant women with NRPF:



Donate – Your gift helps provide safety, stability, and hope for women rebuilding their lives.



Volunteer – Share your time, skills, or expertise to make a direct difference in our community.



Partner – Collaborate with us to create more inclusive housing, support, and advocacy opportunities.



Follow Us – Stay connected, share our story, and help raise awareness of the issues faced by migrant women.

Together, we can build a future where every woman has the chance to live safely, independently, and with dignity.