



Project 17 annual report: 2013-2014

Project 17 works to end destitution among migrant children. We work with families experiencing exceptional poverty to improve their access to local authority support

Registered charity number: 1152621

Contents

Contents	2
About us	3
Section 17 of the Children Act 1989	4
Message from the trustees.....	5
Our people.....	6
Overview of services.....	8
Advice	9
Case study	10
Training.....	11
Advice line	13
Campaigning.....	13
The way ahead.....	15
Launch party	16
Financial information.....	17
Thank you	18

About us

Project 17 registered as a charity in June 2013.

Our staff and trustees were deeply concerned about rising levels of homelessness among migrant families. We felt that local authorities were systematically failing to safeguard children whose parents had no recourse to public funds, creating unnecessary and preventable destitution.

To tackle these issues and improve the implementation of support, we created Project 17.

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

We believe that all children have the right to a home and enough to eat, regardless of their parents' immigration status. To achieve our vision, we provide advice, advocacy and support for individuals. We build capacity in other organisations and we campaign for the improved implementation of statutory support.

Project 17 works towards ensuring that local authorities comply with the duties imposed on them by section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need. Section 17 enables local councils to provide accommodation and financial support to avoid children being taken into the care of the local authority.

This duty exists even if the family has no right to work, no access to welfare benefits and social housing and no leave to remain in the UK. Project 17 exists to ensure that individuals eligible for support under section 17 are able to access it effectively.

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989

Project 17 works to reduce destitution by improving the implementation of section 17 of the Children Act 1989

Section 17 imposes a duty on local authorities to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in need within their area. It gives social services departments the power to provide support, including cash and accommodation, to families with children in need.

Support under section 17 is available even if the family has no leave to remain in the UK, or 'no recourse to public funds' (i.e. no access to welfare benefits or social housing, NRPF).

Section 17 promotes the upbringing of children with their families and recognises that, except in exceptional cases where children are at risk, it is in the best interests of children to live with their families.

Unfortunately, in our experience section 17 is very poorly implemented. Local authorities are not always aware of their powers and duties under section 17, and stretched budgets, overworked professionals, and increasing numbers of destitute families mean that people often struggle to access the support to which they are entitled.

Message from the trustees

Project 17 was formed in January 2013 in response to our concerns about destitution among migrant families who had no recourse to public funds and no means of meeting their basic living needs. We were concerned that local authorities were not always providing the support that these families needed. We therefore set about establishing Project 17 with the aim of assisting migrant families to access the support that they needed and to support and empower other voluntary sector organisations to do the same. At the end of a challenging first year we are proud of how much we have achieved in such a short space of time:

In May we began running outreach services in Lewisham offering direct advice and assistance to migrant families. As news of our work spread we were invited to run an outreach service from Hackney, and then Newham too. We now run regular outreach services in all of these areas and have been successful in helping over a hundred families in obtaining the support that they desperately required.

We have also established services aimed at assisting other voluntary organisation to support their clients to access section 17 support. In January 2014 we set up our advice line for advisors, where we provide free advice to other voluntary organisations on issues concerning s.17 support. We have also developed a comprehensive training programme and have delivered training days across London to other voluntary sector organisations on section 17 support.

The year ahead is likely to bring new challenges. As funding cuts to local authorities' budgets begin to really bite, coupled with changes to immigration law that mean more migrants have been granted leave to remain with a NRPF restriction, it may become increasingly difficult for migrant families to access the support they need. Changes to legal aid, in particular the proposed residence test and the remuneration for judicial review may also make it even harder to challenge local authority wrongdoing.

However, whilst these changes will bring new challenges, we feel that Project 17 is well placed to meet them and that our work has never been more vital. We look forward to the year ahead and have big plans for the future. We hope in the next year to expand our outreach service offering advice and support in more areas and to more families. We intend to use the information that we have gathered so far to undertake research in this overlooked area so that we are better able to advocate for change. We hope to further develop our training programme to cover more subjects and to increase our reach outside of London. We look forward to taking on new challenges and building on our success of the first year.

Our people

Project 17 employs one staff member. We have a Board of six Trustees and a team of five volunteers.



Abi Brunswick, Director

Abi has an MA and graduate diploma in law. She has been working in the migrants' rights sector since 2008. Prior to becoming Director of Project 17, she worked as the Advice Coordinator of Action for Refugees in Lewisham. She has direct experience of working with NRPF migrants and developing new services in small organisations. She was keen to establish Project 17 to address the significant needs of NRPF migrant families attempting to access local authority support. Abi has been Director of Project since November 2013. Prior to this she was on the Board of Trustees.



Frederick Guobadia, Trustee (from May 2014)

Frederick qualified as a lawyer in Nigeria. He is single parent who used Project 17's advice services to access support under section 17. He subsequently joined the organisation as a trustee to ensure that support is readily available to all those who need the service.



Clare Jennings, Trustee

Clare has been involved in Project 17 from the very start and is one of the founding trustees. Clare is a solicitor at Matthew Gold and Co Ltd where she specialises in public law. She has particular expertise in acting for migrant families in challenging refusals of local authorities to provide appropriate s.17 support and is currently working on a project with Project 17 aimed at addressing local authority failure to provide proper support to survivors of domestic violence. Prior to this Clare worked as a solicitor at the Public Law Project and Bindmans LLP. Whilst at the Public Law Project Clare ran their destitute migrant project which aimed to use strategic litigation to tackle the issues faced by migrants with NRPF.

Our people



Claire McGuinness, Trustee (from April 2014)

Claire has an MA in Human Rights. She has worked in the refugee and migrant sector for the past six years, working for the British Red Cross, Refugee Action and The Children's Society mostly in casework and advocacy for children and families. Project 17 is closely linked to her current role and she has seen first-hand the extremely difficult circumstances destitute migrant families are living in and understands the overwhelming need for an organisation working specifically with this group.



Isabella Rossi, Trustee

Isabella is an independent domestic violence advocate. Prior to this she worked and volunteered for other migrant charities including Action for Refugees in Lewisham and Detention Action. Isabella is passionate about supporting women and children experiencing domestic violence whose choices are limited by the restrictions to access to public funds.



Gwawr Thomas, Trustee

Gwawr is a barrister at 1 Mitre Court Buildings (Chambers of Lord Gifford QC), and is proud to have been one of Project 17's founding trustees. In addition to having a busy immigration, asylum and public law practice, she has a wealth of experience in challenging decisions to refuse support to migrants, asylum seekers and failed asylum seekers, having developed through her role as an Asylum Support Appeals Project Duty Scheme Volunteer a sound understanding not only of the substantive law in this area, but also of the double prejudice faced by migrant families who need to access support to relieve destitution.



Diana Trimiño Mora, Trustee

Diana has an LL.M. in International Human Rights Law and is currently a Women's Protection and Empowerment Policy Advisor for the International Rescue Committee. She previously conducted research on refugee protection for the University of London and has also worked with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organisation for Migration. She has used her positions and her focus on gender, migration and asylum issues to hone her legal analysis, advocacy and policy development skills.

Overview of services

All of our services work towards reducing poverty among migrant families by improving access to support under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. We do this by providing direct advice and advocacy; building capacity in other organisations; and campaigning for the improved implementation of support.

Frontline services

- Advice and advocacy, working directly with clients to access support

Support for organisations

- Training sessions for voluntary sector workers on section 17 in law and practice
- Telephone advice line for organisations working with NRPF migrant families
- Downloadable resources for advisers

Campaigns

- Policy work campaigning to improve support
- Strategic litigation in partnership with law firms



Advice

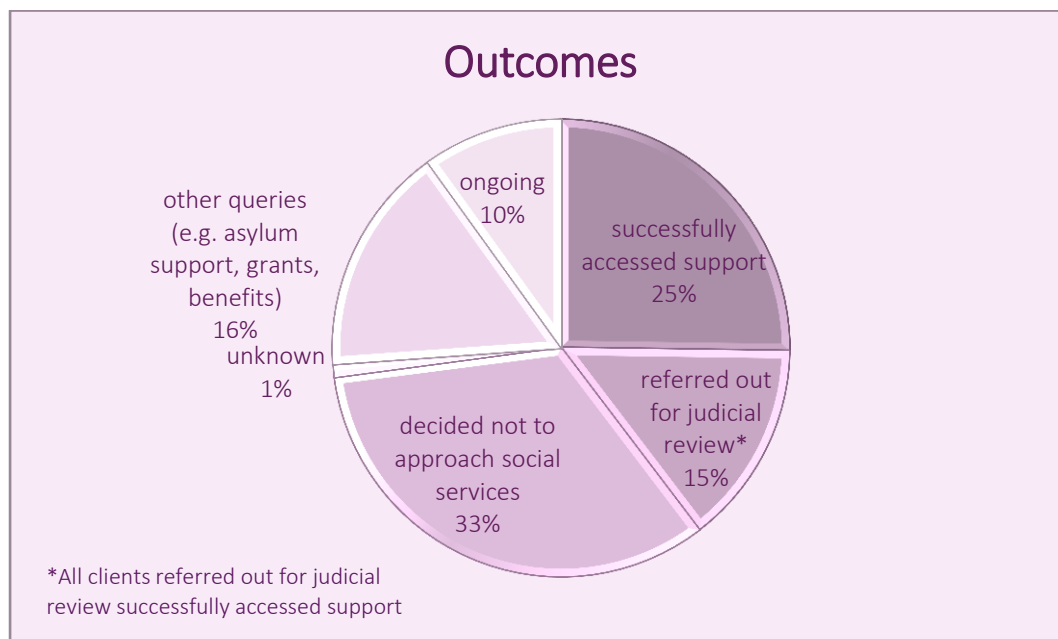
We deliver advice and advocacy services, supporting clients to approach social services to request support and challenge inadequate support.

We work with Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network to deliver advice from their office in Deptford, and the Ann Tayler Children's Centre to deliver advice from their office in Hackney.

We started our advice service in June 2013. Between June 2013 and March 2014:

We assisted 135 clients (approximately 400 people including families)

- 32% of our clients were homeless when they approached us
- 100% were living below the poverty line and struggling to meet their basic needs
- 90% of our clients were women



Case study

Names, dates and other identifying details have been changed to protect the identity of our client.

Rosemary is from Nigeria. She came to the UK in 2004 and has three children, all born in London. Rosemary was granted Limited Leave to Remain because the children had established a family life in the UK.

Although Rosemary has Limited Leave to Remain, she has 'no recourse to public funds', so while she can work, she cannot access welfare benefits or social housing. Rosemary works as a cleaner, but she does not earn enough to pay rent and she has to pay for childcare while she works. She earns £150 per week, but spends £80 on childcare.

The family had been sleeping on the living room floor of a friend's flat. Rosemary's friend was worried about what might happen if her landlord found out, and asked them to leave.

They had nowhere to go and were facing street homelessness.

We helped Rosemary to approach social services and request support under section 17.

Social services accepted a duty towards Rosemary and her children, and are now providing accommodation for the family.

*'No amount of words
can show my
appreciation to
you...I was given a
room yesterday by
social services. If not
for your help we
would have been
homeless.'*

Message from a client



Training

Our training sessions build capacity in other organisations. We provide free and low-cost sessions for advisers around accessing local authority support for NRPF families.

In 2013-14, we ran 12 training sessions with participants from organisations including:

- Refugee Council
- Migrant Help
- Children's Society
- Shelter
- Asylum Support Appeals Project
- British Red Cross
- Refuge
- Praxis
- Gaia Centre
- Refugee Action

alongside health visitors, family support workers, student social workers and representatives from smaller community organisations.



Training



“So helpful, clear and important to understand”

- 100% of participants found the training ‘excellent’ or ‘good’
- 100% of participants agreed that the trainer was knowledgeable and clear

Participants particularly enjoyed the interactive use of case studies, role plays and exercises. The training sessions are also an excellent opportunity to network and share experiences.

With thanks for Praxis, the British Red Cross, Coram Children’s Legal Centre, Lewisham Town Hall and Clyde Children’s Centre for allowing us to use their premises to deliver these sessions.

“Very knowledgeable and engaging”

“I learned a lot. Every frontline worker should attend this course”

Advice line

In January 2014 we launched our telephone advice line, providing telephone support for frontline staff working with destitute migrant families with no recourse to public funds.

The advice line builds capacity in other organisations by supporting frontline staff to feel more confident approaching social services and challenging decisions. We take an average of 8 calls per week from schools, health professionals, children’s centres and voluntary organisations.

The advice line enables us to widen our reach and reduce destitution by supporting other organisations to assist their clients more effectively.

Typically, we provide advice around support options and how to approach local authorities. We also provide letter templates that advisers can use to refer clients to social services. We signpost to community care solicitors and other organisations who help challenge negative decisions.

We also collect data through our advice line, which enables us to build a picture of how section 17 support is implemented in different areas. This data will feed into our campaigns and policy work, as described on page 14.

*“Thank you so much...
This is invaluable and
will save us a lot of time”*

Adviser, Klevis Kola Foundation



Campaigning

We campaign to effect lasting change and reduce destitution on a larger scale, benefitting more people than we can reach through our advice services and second-tier work.

We carry out research and policy work to highlight problem areas. We also work with solicitors to bring challenges through strategic litigation. In 2013-2014:



- We gathered data through our advice outreach services
- We collected information through our telephone advice line
- We asked our training participants to share their experiences
- We issued Freedom of Information requests to all London local authorities
- We provided evidence to support legal action
- We worked with Matthew Gold Solicitors Ltd to conduct pre-litigation research into how local authorities refuse to support families with children in need as a result of domestic violence.

We spent our first year of operation collecting data and establishing our place in the migrants' rights sector. We look forward to building on this work and undertaking strategic campaigning in 2014-15.

The way ahead

We have had a really exciting first year. The next twelve months will be an opportunity to develop and consolidate our services and ensure that we continue to be effective in our goal of reducing destitution.

Advice

- Employ an adviser to carry out casework and advocacy
- Develop our use of volunteer advisers
- Expand our reach and deliver outreach advice from new locations

Support for organisations

- Extend the opening hours of our advice line
- Deliver a wider range of training courses
- Improve our range of downloadable resources for advisers

Campaigns

- Undertake pre-litigation research to support cases where children are in need as a result of domestic violence
- Build evidence to support strategic litigation around rates of support under section 17
- Work with other organisations to produce a policy document on gatekeeping



Launch party

In January we held an event to mark our official launch



The party was attended by almost 100 voluntary sector workers, solicitors and barristers. It was a chance to find out more about Project 17, to network and enjoy an informal evening.

We would like to say a big THANK YOU to

- Opus Trust for allowing us to use their space
- Dexion Capital for providing wine and raffle prizes
- Our speakers:
 - Deborah Gellner from ASAP
 - Ben Hawkin from 1 Mitre Court Buildings
 - Frederick Goubadia, our Trustee and former service-user



Financial information

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Total
	Funds	Funds	Funds	Funds
	£	£	£	£
Incoming resources:				
Incoming resources from generated funds				
Voluntary income:				
Grants		10,250	10,250	
Activities for generating funds				
Interest received	4		4	
Other	3,911	640	4,551	
Total incoming resources	3,915	10,890	14,805	0
Resources expended:				
Costs of generating funds				
Charitable activities				
Core Activities	482	6,633	7,115	
Governance costs				
Total resources expended	482	6,633	7,115	0
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources	3,434	4,257	7,690	
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward				
Total funds carried forward	3,434	4,257	7,690	0

The financial information shown above is a summary of the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2014, which were approved by Project 17's Board of Trustees on 29 June 2014. The full financial statements can be obtained by contacting Project 17 at 144 Evelyn Street, London SE8 5DD.

Thank you

With particular thanks to

Our volunteers

- Rachel Balabanoff
- Peter Jennings
- Justin Leslie
- Sarah Parkes

Our partners

- Ann Tayler Children Centre
- Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network
- Matthew Gold & Co Ltd

Our funders

- AW.60 Charitable Trust
- Eleanor Rathbone Charitable Trust
- Santander
- Strategic Legal Fund
- And a number of generous individuals

And with special thanks to Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network, who have allowed us to use their office space, and 1 Mitre Court Buildings who have hosted our Trustee meetings and raised funds for us.



Project 17 Annual report 2013-14

Registered charity: 1152621

Legal name: Project Seventeen

Registered office: 39c Tressillian Road, SE4 1YG