



Annual report 2017-18

Charity number:
1152621

Project 17 works to
end destitution among
migrant families.

We believe all children
have the right to a safe
home and enough to
eat, regardless of
immigration status.

At a glance

Our work in 2017-18:

- We worked with 345 families including 214 new clients
- Advice in 6 locations across London
- Delivered 16 training sessions and events across the UK
- 262 Advice Line calls
- Working with 10 partner organisations
- Supporting strategic litigation
- Engaging with decision makers
- Calling for change



Mission and vision



Project 17 is an 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.

Introduction

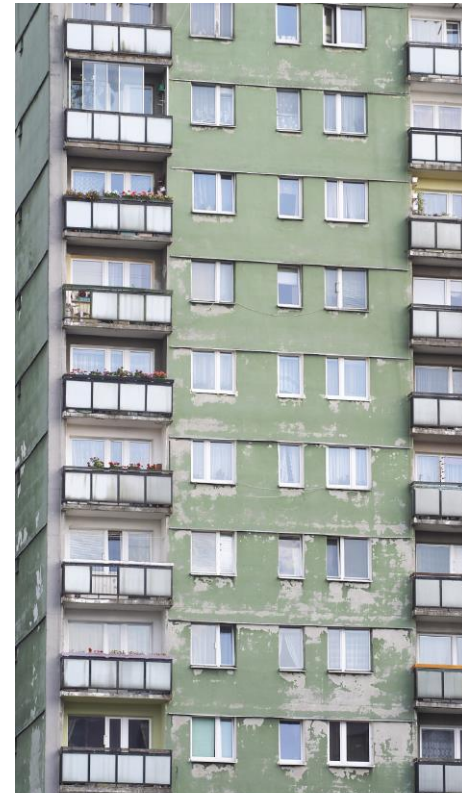
In recent years Project 17 has grown to try to meet the need for our service. 2017-18 has been a time to consolidate this growth and build on our policy work, addressing some of the structural issues which create the problems we are fighting.

Worryingly, we saw more families left street homeless by local authorities refusing support than ever before. We have responded to this by establishing a 'Hotel Fund', providing emergency accommodation to these families to prevent the clear and significant risk to children's safety that this presents.

Section 17 support is becoming more and more difficult to access, the result being that more children are left living in poverty. Increasingly, we are seeing the use of 'Fraud Officers' employed in local authority assessments. In our experience, this can make challenging a refusal of support extremely complex and difficult.

Looking ahead, the impact of Brexit on families rights to regularise immigration status is still uncertain, as is the impact that this will have on the numbers of families in need of section 17 support. We will however continue to adapt and develop in response to new challenges, inspired by the resilience of the families we support.

Amy Murtagh, Interim Director (formerly Adviser)



Core values and behaviours

As an organisation, we hope to demonstrate these values through all our work:

Principles

1. A commitment to challenging social injustice with an inclusive and feminist approach
2. A commitment to learning from the experiences and the resilience of our clients

Behaviours

3. Working with a family-focused approach by displaying care and empathy and building trust through non-judgmental, honest relationships
4. Creating a supportive, warm and open working environment

Operations

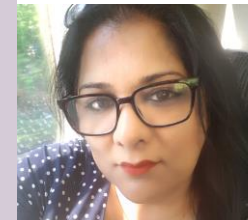
5. Working hard to deliver expert services in an innovative, adaptable and professional way
6. Maintaining and strengthening external relationships that support our core principles

Our staff



Abi Brunswick, Director: Abi is the Director and one of the founders of Project 17, and is responsible for the overall running of the organisation. She has worked in the migrants' rights sector since 2008. Prior to establishing Project 17 she ran a small generalist advice service for migrants and refugees. Abi has an MA and a Graduate Diploma in Law

Afsana Aramesh, Outreach Adviser: Afsana has worked with us since December 2016. She covers advice sessions at various centres in Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey and Lambeth. She previously worked at Coram Voice for 12 years as a specialist advocate, providing advocacy for young refugees, migrants, looked after children and care leavers.



Amy Murtagh, Adviser

Amy joined Project 17 in 2014 as our part-time Adviser. She is now full-time, and has been doing a mixture of advice and policy work. Amy has a Graduate Diploma in Law and an MA in Human Rights. She previously worked at the legal charity Rights of Women and worked with survivors of trafficking at Ashiana Sheffield.

Our staff

Eve Dickson, Policy Officer (Since May 2017):

As well as being responsible for Project 17's policy and campaigns work, Eve undertakes research into no recourse to public funds and supports families to make complaints about local authorities. Alongside her work at Project 17, Eve runs Akwaaba's children's project and is one of the co-ordinators at NELMA's accompanying scheme. Eve is also in her final year of a PhD at Queen Mary University of London.



Madeleine Ellis-Petersen, Training and Development Officer (since October 2017): As well as providing frontline advice, Madeleine delivers training to professionals across England. She also provides advice on Project 17's advice line for advisers, and develops our online resources. Madeleine previously worked in social policy research at the New Economics Foundation and volunteered at Hackney Migrant Centre.

Volunteers and trustees

We wouldn't exist without the hard work and dedication of our excellent trustees and volunteers. They do an amazing job and keep our services running. Thank you!

Our trustees are:

Clare Jennings

Sue Ponter

Sue Causton

Clare McGuinness

Felicia Owokoniran

Gwawr Thomas

Rupinder Parhar



Our volunteers are:

Ifetayo Akingbehin

Roli Aiyemi

Ivy Kawyisi

Felicia Owokoniran

Kameal Thomas

Margaret Thomas

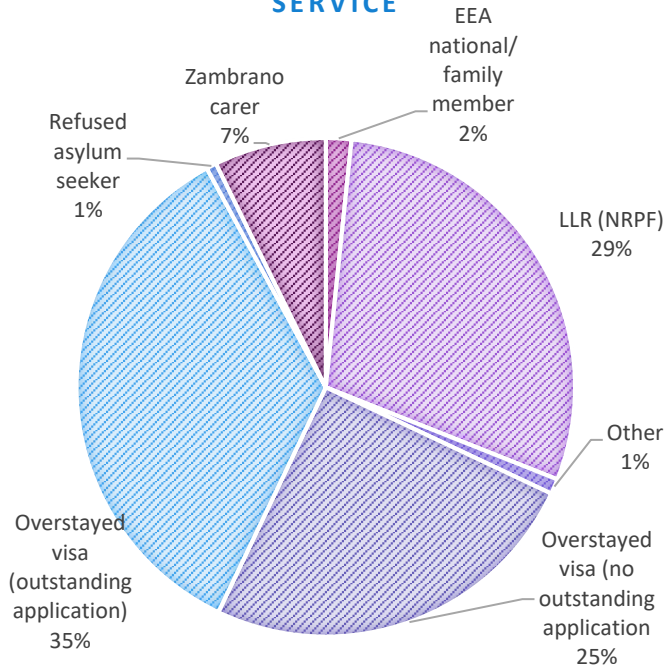
Kofo Williams

Sara Pereira

Rosanna Ellul

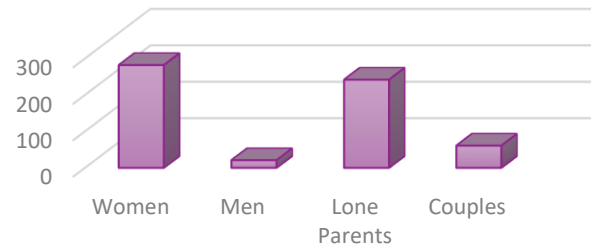
Advice service

IMMIGRATION STATUS OF CLIENTS ACCESSING THE ADVICE SERVICE



In 2017-18 our advisers worked with 345 families, including 214 new cases

Gender & family



Clients from 32 different countries accessed our advice service.

The largest numbers were from Nigeria (179), Ghana (46) and Jamaica (21).

Working across London

We continue to deliver services through outreach services in 6 boroughs: Islington, Hackney, Haringey, Lewisham, Greenwich and Lambeth. The graphics below show the distribution of our clients across the boroughs of London. Each dot represents a family accessing casework support from us.



2017-18 (345 clients)

The largest numbers we supported were in Greenwich (49), Lewisham (48) and Southwark (36)

25 families travelled from outside London to access our service



2016-17 (355 clients)

Feedback

We asked a random sample of 30 clients for feedback about our advice service.

- 93% said we understood their situation well, and explained their options effectively
- 97% said we helped them to make progress with their situation
- However, our lack of capacity to see new clients was a barrier for some clients - the time taken to access an appointment varied from immediately being offered an appointment, to waiting up to two months.

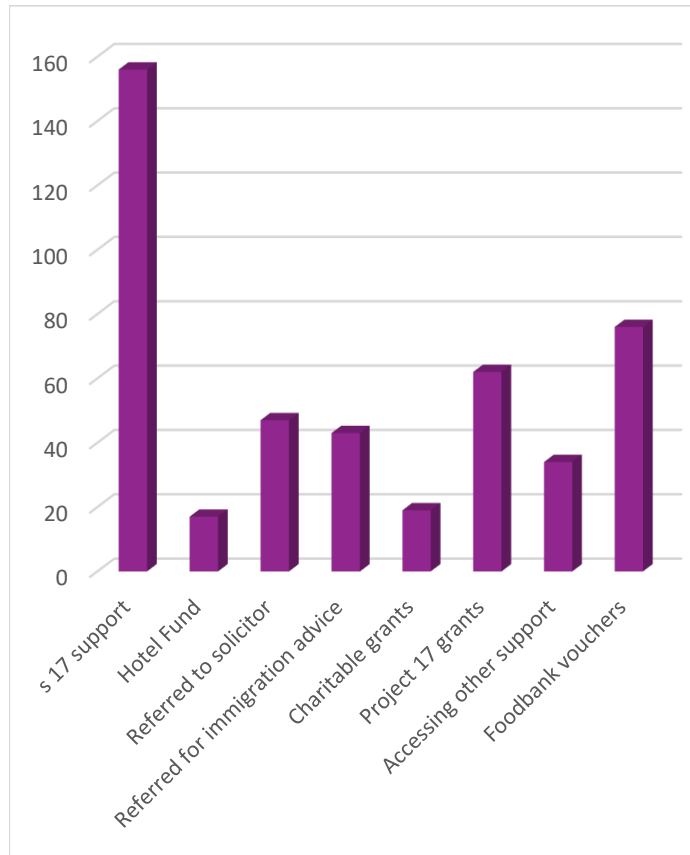
When I was referred to P17 we were homeless, sleeping on a friend's floor, now we have accommodation, money from the council, and I still call my adviser if I am stuck"

"Project 17 helped us with vouchers on many occasions and fought very hard to get the council to start supporting us. My children are happy, there's real food on the table since this month and my children have all their school needs for the new school season"

"[Now] It is so different, the children are happy, we are still fighting some little battles but I can call my adviser at any time. She has never said to me no, she is always ready to do more for me and the children. Within two months I can't believe it can happen"

"... before I was sleeping in a damp place and I was living in a dirty room with my daughter, and now I have a 2 bedroom house and my daughter has space"

Outcomes



Explanatory notes

- Access to s.17 support can be accommodation and/or subsistence support under s.17 Children Act 1989
- 'Referrals to solicitor' are referrals to community care solicitors to challenge refusals of support by local authorities. The vast majority of these clients are successful in accessing s.17 when the local authority is challenged, suggesting poor decision initial decision making
- Charitable grants come from small grant-making organisations and normally range from £100-£300
- Project 17 grants come from our Destitution Fund, which can provide small one-off payments in urgent situations
- Other support includes accessing healthcare, free prescriptions and school meals. It also includes child maintenance, relevant benefits and declarations of parentage
- We hold foodbank vouchers for 15 local authority areas.

Accompanying project

Our **accompanying volunteers** go with clients to request help, providing **emotional** and **practical** support and keeping a clear record of what happens so our advisers can follow up effectively. All our accompanying **volunteers** are ex-clients who have **personal experience** of the difficulties in trying to access s.17 support. This year we worked with **6 volunteers**, who went on a total of **47 visits** to local authorities. Clients told us they felt more **confident** approaching the council with a volunteer and were better able to explain their situation.

"It was very helpful because before the social worker they talk to you any how, they shout at you, but with the volunteer they were not shouting and they respected me and they talked to me like a human being - it was a very big difference"

" the last time I went there they [social services] approached me the way they spoke, it was scary, I wouldn't want to go back again. But when Project 17 sent someone to go with me, they were able to stand by me and calm me down, and tell me everything was going to be ok"



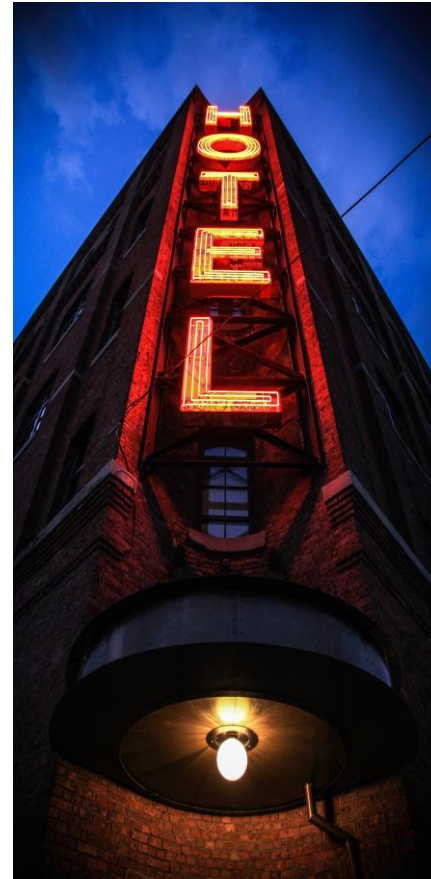


Hotel Fund

Unfortunately, families are often wrongly refused section 17 support. We support families to seek legal advice in order to challenge unlawful refusals. Finding a solicitor can take time, and there is often a delay whilst the case is being prepared. During this time, a family may be left unsupported, often facing serious hardship and even street homelessness. Families are in some cases forced to sleep on night buses or go to a police station or an A&E department of a local hospital. In April 2017 we established a 'Hotel Fund' to pay for emergency accommodation for our clients who were facing street homelessness.

Between April 2017-March 2018, we spent £2,822 on hotels for 17 families (18 adults and 28 children) who were left street homeless by a local authority refusing to provide support with accommodation under s.17 of the Children Act.

We also produced an in-depth report, *"In the night we didn't know where we were going': Provision of emergency accommodation to families left street homeless following a local authority refusal of support under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989"*. This is available to download from our website at <https://www.project17.org.uk/policy/research-and-reports/>



Case study

Names and identifying features have been changed

Mary approached Project 17 for advice in early 2018 as she was facing homelessness with her two children. Mary had been staying with her cousin since her first daughter Rachel was born 8 years ago. Mary had since had another child, Michael, who is now 6 years old. Michael has severe autism and needs constant supervision and care.

Mary, Rachel and Michael were all sharing a bedroom which was extremely cramped. This was especially difficult due to Michael's challenging behaviour. Mary had approached social services for help a year earlier after her relationship with the children's father had broken down, leaving her struggling to meet her children's essential needs. Unfortunately Mary was misinformed by the local authority that she was not entitled to any support due to her immigration status.

Mary's cousin lost his job and was being evicted from his home. This meant that Mary and the children would also have to leave. Mary had nowhere else to go and was worried because social services had refused her support before. She was also concerned as her application for a 'fee waiver' for her immigration application had been rejected. We referred Mary to an immigration adviser who took on Mary's case on a pro-bono basis. We also referred the family to the local authority for support with accommodation and subsistence.

Case study (continued)

Following advocacy from Project 17, the local authority agreed to provide support with self-contained accommodation and regular financial support. We successfully advocated for the family to be placed locally (families are normally dispersed out of area) due to Michael's special needs.

Finally Mary can provide for her family's essential living needs, Rachel and Michael have their own rooms, and a garden to play in. This is extremely beneficial for the children, especially Michael who needs regular physical exercise and stimulation to manage his behaviour.

Mary's adviser also referred the family to a child and family practitioner who is providing regular support to help Mary provide for her children's emotional and developmental needs.

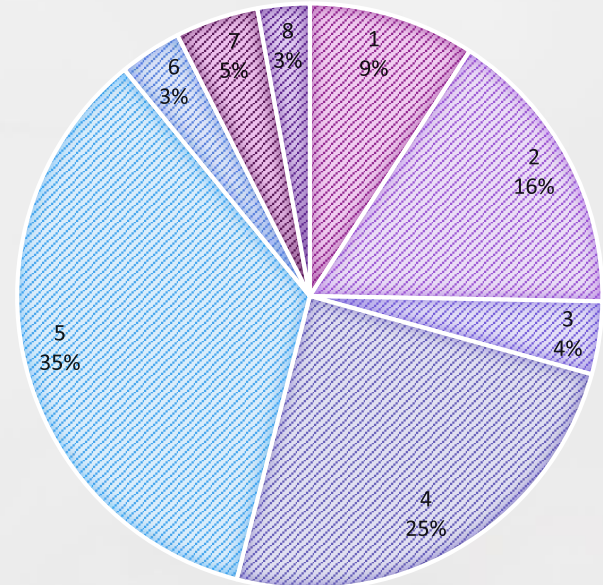


Telephone Advice Line

Our advice line provides specialist advice and guidance for professionals. The below chart shows the immigration statuses of the families they enquired about.

During 2017-18 we:

- Took 262 calls (a 22% increase from 2016-2017)
- From 176 different organisations
- Across 65 different local authority areas



We always get a quick response to queries & the advice is invariably very useful & practical – if anything you are too successful as it can be difficult for clients to get an appointment” Yvonne, Good Counsel Network

Training

We support other professionals to work with NRPF families by delivering training and workshops.

We delivered 16 training sessions and events to organisations across England, on a range of issues such as:

- Challenging refusals of section 17 support
- Local authority support for NRPF families

Some feedback from our training courses included:

“Really beneficial and much needed training. Please keep providing it up and down the country for free!”

“Trainer was clear and exceptionally knowledgeable. Made complex material easy to understand. Training materials excellent”

“I feel more knowledgeable in the area and more able to challenge social services”



'Intensive Support' and sharing resources

Under our 'Intensive Support' project, we worked with 9 organisations to develop their skills and capacity to undertake specialist section 17 casework. We supported organisations across London and the South East, as well as in Manchester and Sheffield.

In addition to providing bespoke training to suit organisations' needs, we also:

- developed and shared specialist resources such as template letters, factsheets and guides
- provided one-to-one support and advice with casework
- provided opportunities to shadow our advisers
- trained organisations to set up an accompanying scheme

Policy & advocacy

Our policy and advocacy work focuses on systemic problems with the implementation of s. 17 support

We worked collaboratively in Hackney to bring about a positive change in policy and culture. Through meetings and correspondence with the Mayor, councillors and staff we have been able to create a more positive approach and Hackney has revised its policy on supporting NRPF families.

We continued to support our clients to complain about poor practice in Haringey. These complaints were upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman. We were able to instigate an independent review of their NRPF team. The review found fault with the operation, case management and level of knowledge in the team. There was significant personnel change following the review. We built constructive relationships with the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel at Haringey, providing evidence which led to a number of positive recommendations, and with senior management in Children's Services.

Another major legal case was brought by one of our clients - *R (CO and KO) v Lewisham* [2017] challenged the lawfulness of the local authority's approach, finding it to be inconsistent with s.17 duties. As a High Court decision, it sets a precedent and the principles in this case can be relied upon in other litigation.

Project 17 also undertook pre-litigation research regarding the lawfulness of the presence of Home Office officers during s.17 assessments, and we hope to support a judicial review challenging this approach.

In addition, we are trying to bring a claim to challenge the low rates of subsistence paid by some local authorities and we submitted evidence to support a case against Camden on this issue.



Partnership working

We are proud to work in partnership with the following organisations to deliver our services. We believe that working together increases our scope and our efficiency. Sharing resources reduces duplication and helps provide more holistic services. It also gives us a broader view and helps us better understand the implementation of support for NRPF families.

[North East London Migrant Action](#) - we have worked in partnership on policy and influencing activities

[Ladywell Children's Centre](#) – we deliver a weekly outreach advice from the centre in Lewisham

[Coram Children's Legal Centre](#) – delivering joint training on immigration and support options

[Greenwich Migrant Hub](#) – we attend the Hub to provide advice once a month

[Hackney Migrant Centre](#) – we attend the centre to provide advice once a month

[Haringey Migrant Support Centre](#) – we attend the centre to provide advice once a month

[Together with Migrant Children](#) - specialist, holistic family support and independent social work assessment

[South London Refugee Association](#) – we attend the centre to provide advice once a month

[Southwark Law Centre](#) – advice focusing on short and longer-term outcomes and shared learning

[Youth Legal](#) - we jointly established the section 17 'Hub' to support casework, policy work and strategic litigation

[Deighton Pierce Glynn Solicitors](#) - we worked together to conduct pre-litigation research

Looking ahead

We expect to see further cuts to local authorities, and government policies taking effect designed to make the environment increasingly more hostile to migrants. These harsher conditions will make it increasingly hard for families to access the support they need. We have already seen local authorities employing new approaches in their assessments such as undermining parents' credibility, to justify refusals of support. As a result, local authority decisions are becoming increasingly complex and difficult to challenge. Specialist advocacy such as we provide will be needed more than ever. Our new plans include:

Advice service:

Working in partnership with other organisations in order to support clients to tackle wider issues and causes of destitution

Supporting clients to complain about poor practice from local authorities

Capacity building:

Extending the reach of our advice line

Adapting our model of 'intensive support' to best support other organisations who work with NRPF families

Policy and advocacy:

Undertaking a review of our communications work

Placing the voices of children at the centre of our advocacy work through research and service user involvement

Conducting pre-litigation research using data and trends identified by our advice service

Infrastructure:

Improving our use of data to improve research, policy work and efficiency

Achieving the 'Advice Quality Standard' quality mark

Financial information

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2018	Total Funds 2017
	£	£	£	£
Incoming resources:				
Incoming resources from generated funds				
Voluntary income:				
Grants & donations	25,458	150,741	176,199	183,500
Other income	3,867	-	3,867	4,531
Total incoming resources	29,325	150,741	180,066	188,030
Resources expended:				
Charitable activities	8,631	165,492	174,123	120,035
Governance costs	28	-	28	-
Total resources expended	8,659	165,492	174,151	120,035
Net income	20,665	14,751	5,915	67,997
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward	24,885	99,337	124,222	56,226
Total funds carried forward	45,550	84,587	130,137	124,222

A copy of our full accounts can be obtained from Project 17, St Joseph's Hospice, Mare St, Hackney, London E8 4SA

Our funders

Thank you to the generous funders who have made our work possible:

Trusts and Foundations

- A B Charitable Trust
- Hilden Trust
- Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
- London Catalyst
- Lloyds Bank Foundation
- Network for Social Change
- Oak Foundation
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation
- Strategic Legal Fund
- The Sam and Bella Sebba Trust
- Trust for London
- Tudor Trust

Other Groups

- Deep Throat Choir
- Wrap Up London
- Little Village
- Individual donors

Grants for our clients

- Buttle Trust
- Mary Strand Trust
- Glasspool Charity Trust
- Positive Action in Housing
- Heinz and Carol Koch Foundation

As well as our staff, volunteers, partners, trustees and funders, we would like to thank the following for their support

Bright Spark Digital for pro bono website management

Clare Jennings, Matthew Gold & Co. Ltd for pro bono legal advice and representation

Eric Metcalfe, Monckton Chambers – for pro-bono advice and representation

Daniel Macedo for pro-bono expert IT advice

Louise Mankau, 1MCB Chambers, for pro bono employment advice

Matthew Gold & Co. Ltd for fundraising efforts

Everyone who walked with us at the London Legal Support Trust

The individuals who give regular and one-off donations to support our work



A photograph of a mother duck and her ducklings on a cobblestone path. The mother duck is in the center, facing away from the camera, showing her brown and white mottled feathers and a purple patch on her wing. She is surrounded by several small, fluffy ducklings with yellow and brown down. The ground is made of grey cobblestones with some scattered debris like twigs and leaves.

Project Seventeen

St Joseph's Hospice

Mare St

Hackney E8 4SA

www.project17.org.uk

@Project17UK

Charity number: 1152621