



Geo-Mapping access to Community Assets as Access to Human Rights in Action: Early Lessons from the MigRefHealth Project

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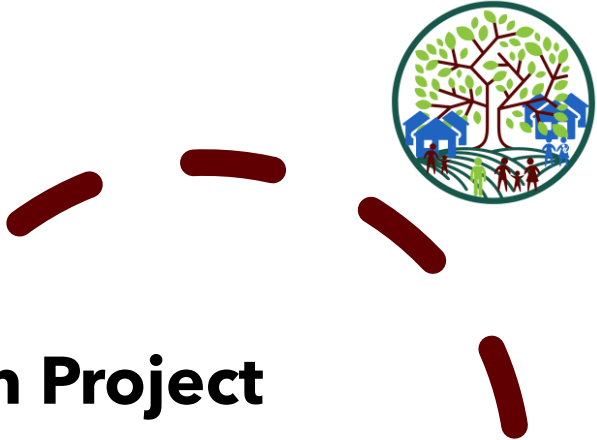
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Aims

- 
1. The #**MigRefHealth Project** overview
 2. **Mapping** access to community assets: the chosen process and approach
 3. Access to community assets as '**human rights in action**'
 4. Project findings so far



The Project (2024-27)



#MigRefHealth

www.migrefhealth.co.uk



Co-creating asset and place-based approaches to tackling refugee and migrant health exclusion

#MigRefHealth

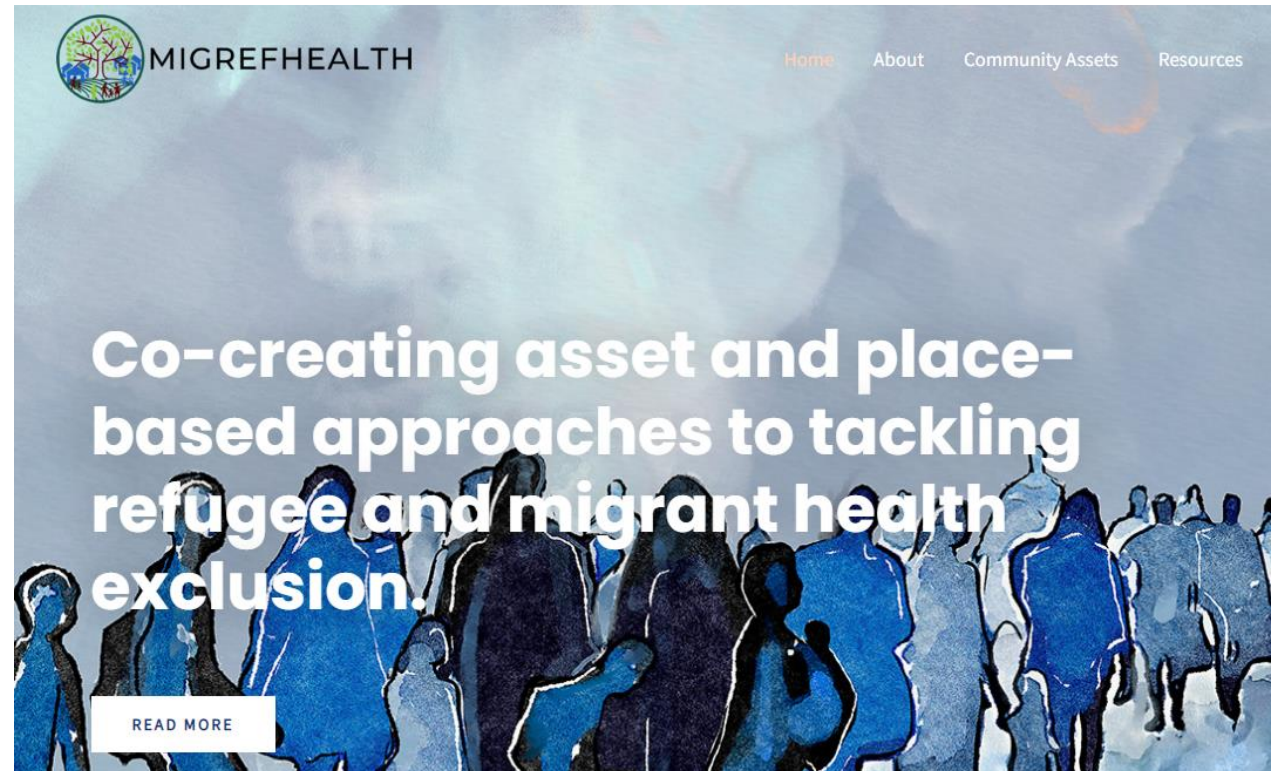
What are we doing?

This project explores the use of community assets by refugee, asylum seekers and migrants in their daily lives. Community assets are fundamental to people's ability to navigate complex and unstable living situations and include community organisations, food banks, green spaces blue spaces and support services among others.

Aim of the project:

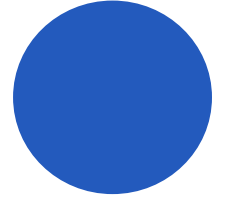
The project seeks to understand the ways that these groups make use of the different assets within and beyond their local communities to support their health and well-being – focusing in particular on access to accommodation and housing, food and nutrition and services.

The goal is to make sure that assets used by local communities are collaboratively identified and better supported to help improve the health outcomes for refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant communities.



Project Goal

To make sure that **community assets** used by **local communities** are collaboratively identified and better supported to help **improve the health outcomes** for refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant communities.





A “community asset” is a service, activity, space or a person that is an integral part of community life. It can include advice and information services, community hubs, community groups, religious organisations, open spaces, food banks, leisure centres etc.

12 Fieldsites in 3 Regions

Academics

**Community
partners**

**Community
researchers**

Migrants

Stakeholders



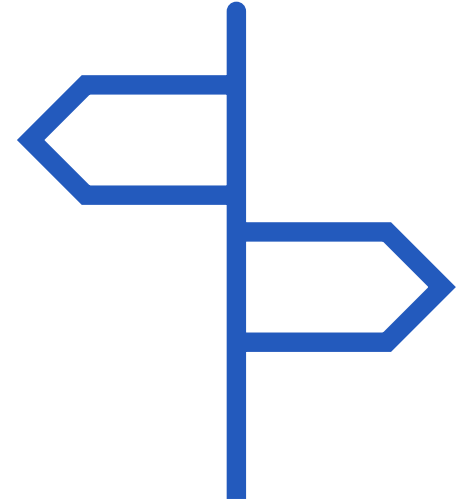
Core Areas of Research



Accommodation



Food/Nutrition



Support Services



Key migrant groups in each research Fieldsite

- Syrian
- Afghan
- Ukrainian
- Hong Konger



... plus 2 other nationalities:

- 1 x EU
- 1 x non-EU



Progress so far

Up to June 2025:

- 490 project participants (415 unique individuals) in **focus groups** and **walking interviews**
- **Asset map** (draft) in all 12 sites
- **Stakeholder** engagement and co-creation

July-December 2025:

Creative workshops - methods:

- Theatre/music
- Photo/object elicitation
- Storyboarding/'River of life'
- Cooking

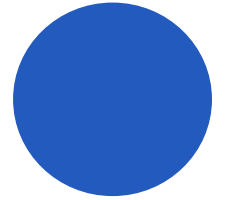




Mapping access to
community assets:
the chosen process
and approach

Asset-Mapping: the approach

- Asset mapping - for what **purpose**?
For **whose benefit**?
- **Counter-cartography**
(countermapping) - a practice of creating maps that **challenge dominant power structures and narratives**, often in support of marginalized or dispossessed groups:
 - [Harley, 1989](#)
 - [Peluso, 1995](#)
 - [Crampton & Krygier, 2015](#)
 - [Pezzoni, 2020](#)
 - [Gautreau & Noucher, 2022](#)
 - [This Not an Atlas](#)

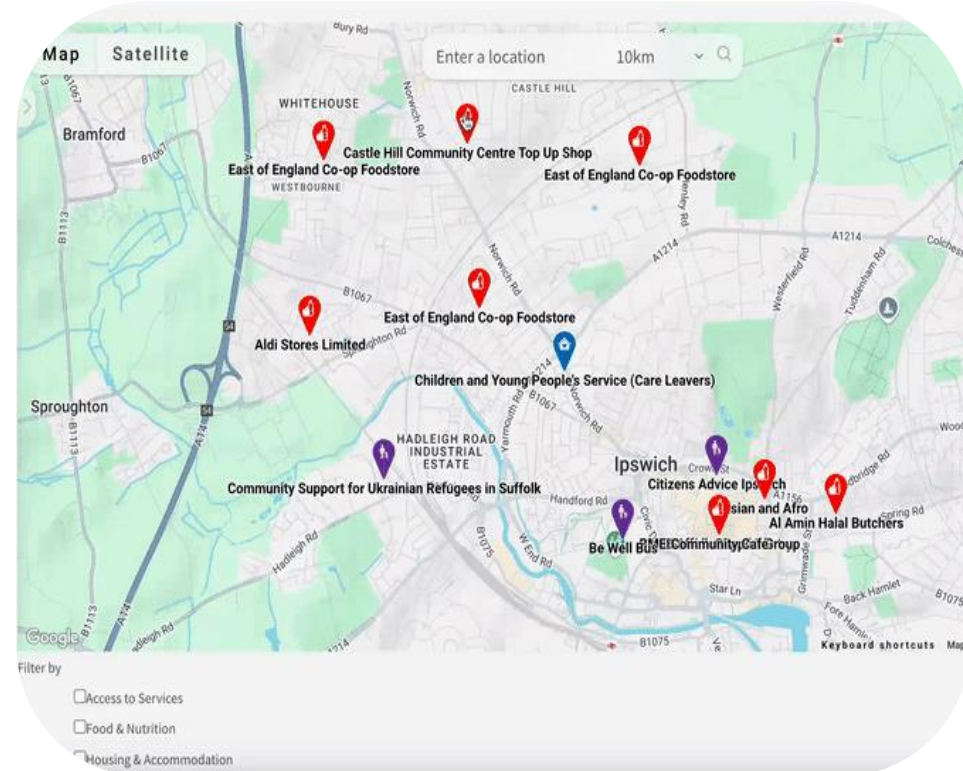


The asset map(s) – so far

Centralised platform: **12 individual maps** tailored to each unique Fieldsite.

Co-created: data acquired through reviews of existing literature and information from the local area, as well as **collaborative feedback from stakeholders and members of the local community.**

To be publicly accessible on the <https://migrefhealth.co.uk/> website.



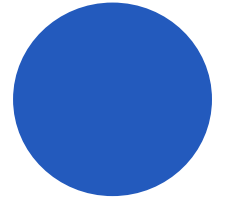
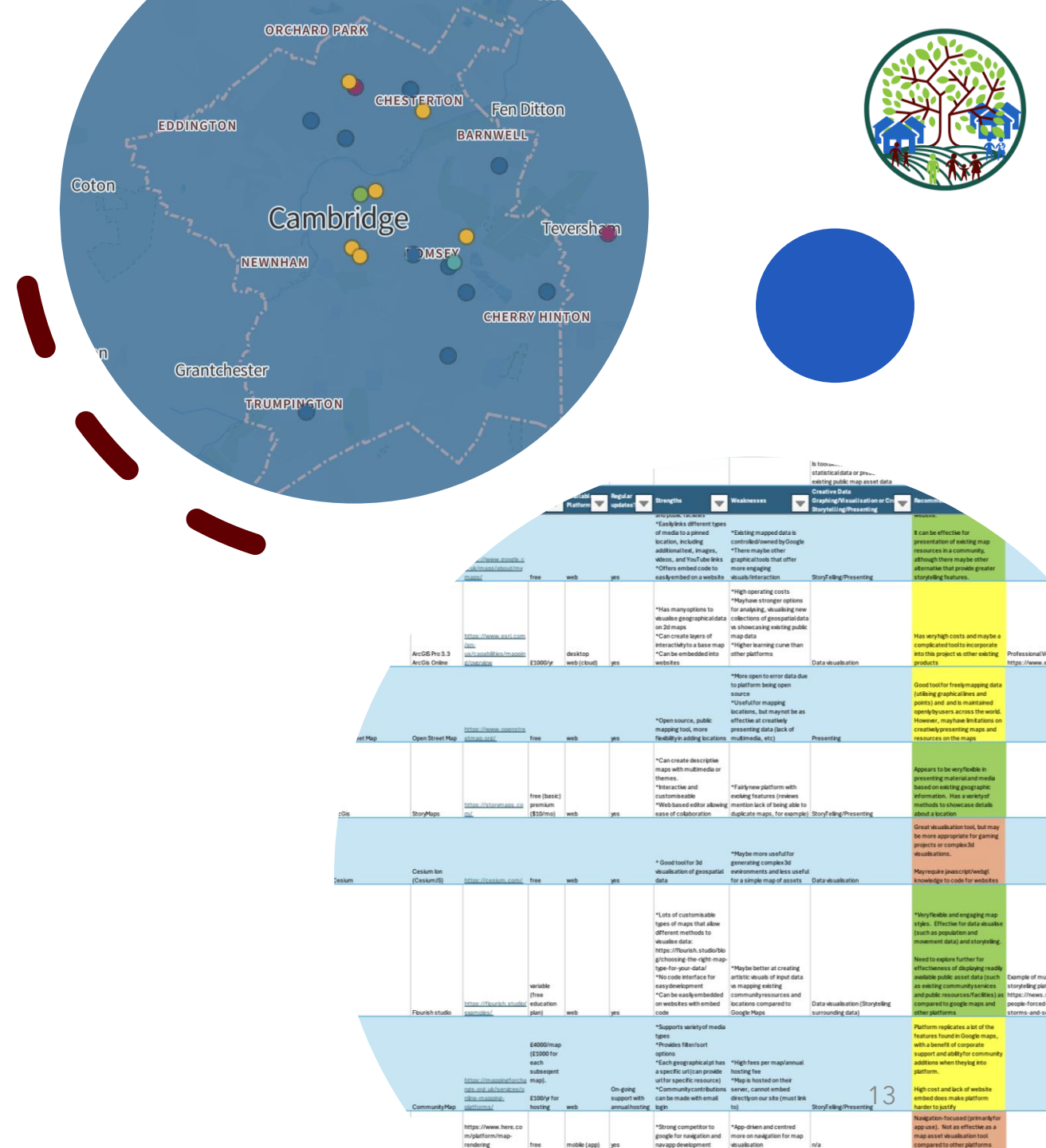
Geo-Mapping – the technological choices

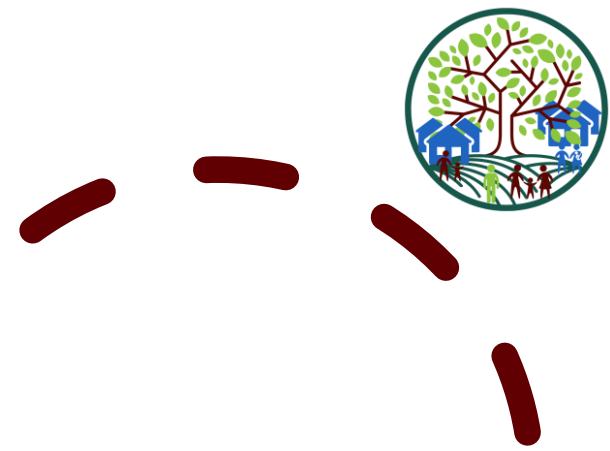
12 platforms were compared, analysing strengths and weaknesses of each, based on their ability to:

1. Graph and visualise **large data sets**
2. Present data in engaging, narrative formats with **varying media types** (*text, imagery, video, audio, hyperlinks, etc.*)

Google Maps excelled in the following:

- Accessibility & familiarity (low threshold of engagement for new users)
- Adaptability (works across all devices)
- Cost
- Ease of sustainability across project lifespan





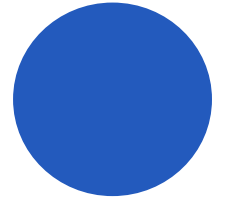
Access to community
assets as '**human rights
in action**'

Human Rights in Action

Critical analysis of “the **application** of human rights in a **concrete context** in both education and professional practice” ([Dijkstra et al, 2021](#))

Promoting rights “**in everyday practice** ... to deliver person-centered care” ([Bright, 2006](#))

“Rights as agents for **change**” ([Harvey, 2005](#))



“behavior of **specific actors** in the legal system in light of particular fundamental rights of the individual” ([Gertsch, 2021](#))

The **street-level bureaucracy** theory looks at frontline staff and institutional decision-making ([Lipsky, 1980](#); [Rudes et al, 2021](#))

Which human rights for MigRefHealth Project?

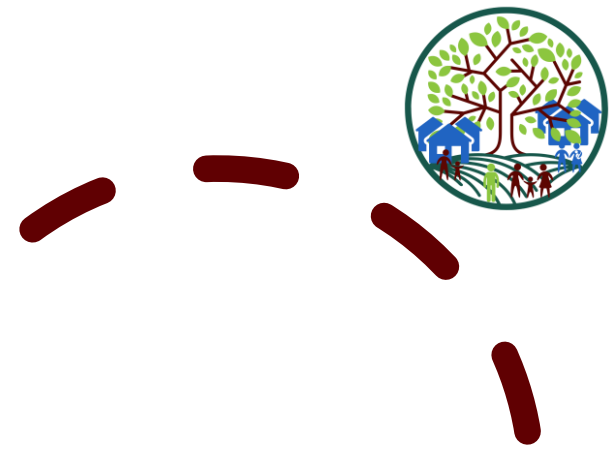
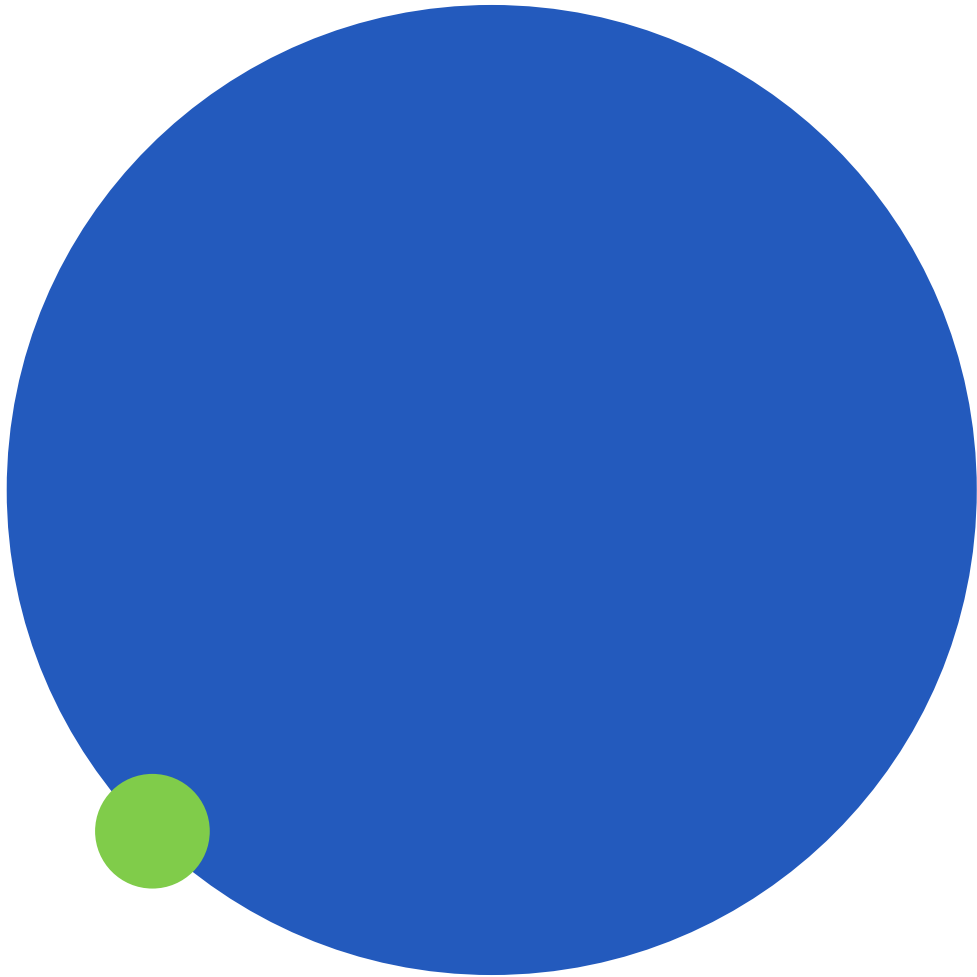
- Right to health (and healthy environment)
- Right to education (and information)
- Right to equal treatment
- Right to dignity (food, adequate housing)
- Right to (seek) work



Rights conceptualisation as **universal, interdependent and interconnected**

Rights conditionality/restrictions:

- Immigration status dependent, eg the NRTPF restriction



Project findings so far

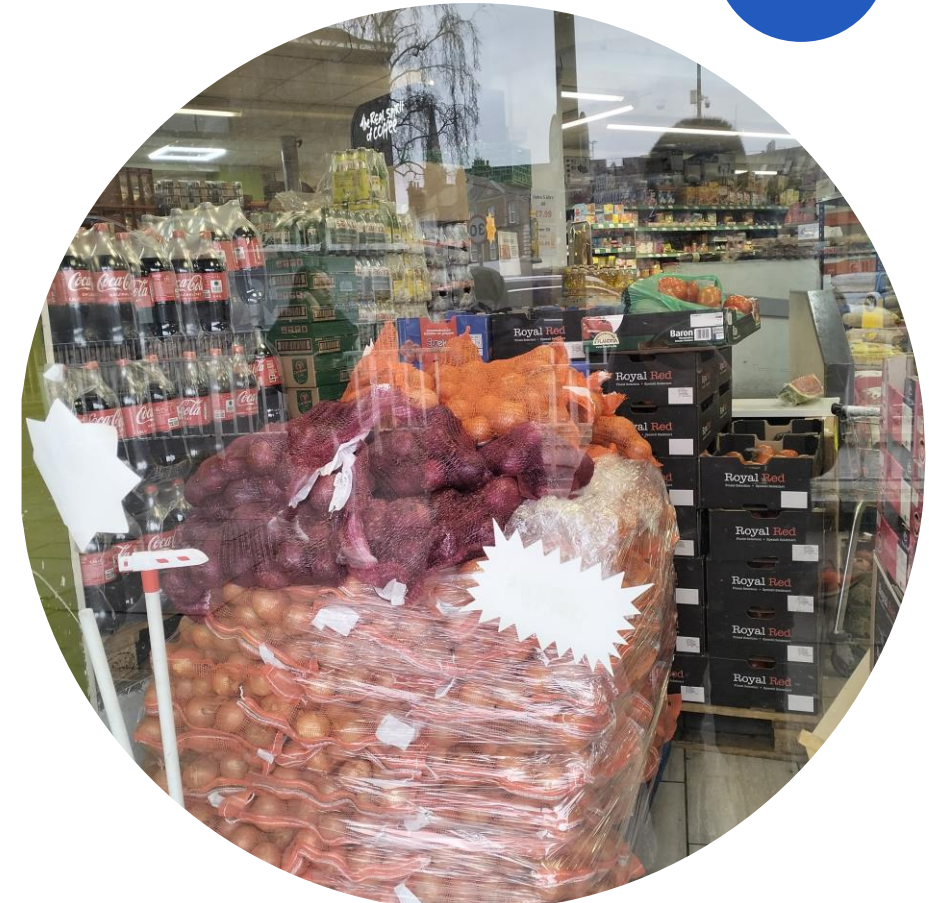
Project findings: Food

Assets:

- Supermarkets and specialist suppliers
- **Travel** - sometimes long distances
- Concerns about **cost, quality & children's nutrition**
- **Foodbanks** - mixed use

Themes:

- Adept at finding appropriate food (despite digital exclusion)
- Gives emotional comfort
- Nostalgia and remembering childhood
- Often shared community spaces encouraging community bonding
- "Feels like home"
- Also encourages cultural adaptation



Project findings: Housing

- **Ease of finding** varies by entry route and therefore support provided
- **Social housing:** lack of understanding about process & waiting times
- **Private housing:** difficult to find, reference checks, guarantor, deposit
- **Concerns:** too small, overcrowding, mould, inadequate for large and/or multiple generation families; poor maintenance, lack of privacy





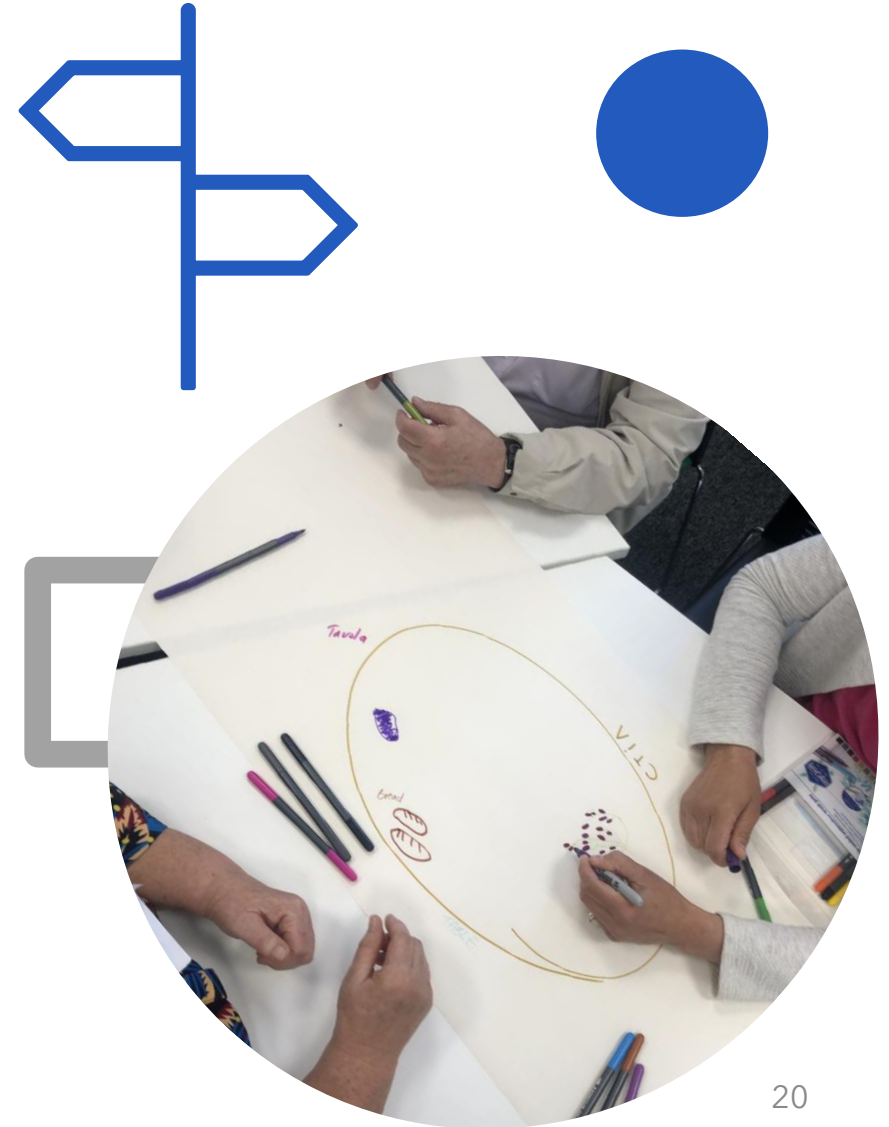
Project findings: Services - General

Systemic/structural barriers

e.g., inefficiency & delays, dismissive and fragmented services, lack of clear guidance, benefits delay and unaffordability, including for transport

Migrant-specific issues:

- Digital exclusion
- Insufficient/inadequate interpreting (esp. for the elderly)
- Lack of knowledge, cultural differences
- Negative staff attitudes & racism
- Concerns dismissed
- Greater vulnerability to negative health impact





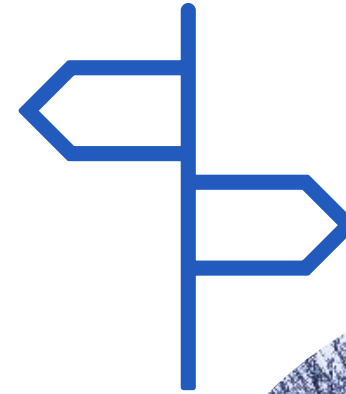
Services: Health and Legal

Health:

- Some positive experiences with staff
- Diversity: doctors speaking same language
- Obtain advice from informal networks
- Use of health services, especially dentistry, in other countries (eg Ukraine)

Legal services:

- Lack of knowledge of where to find: use informal advice, VCSEs, and personal connections
- Mixed experience with CABs and other organisations
- Legal aid (if available) is slow, and even some funded applications are rejected



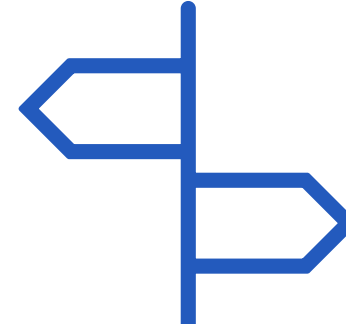


Services: Education

Children: schools generally supportive but competitive for places, lengthy application process and sometimes long travelling times. Lack of childcare outside of school.

Adults: ESOL mainly at college but also VCSEs. Make friends as well as learn English

Barriers: Legal status & therefore eligibility, waiting lists, costs (for some)





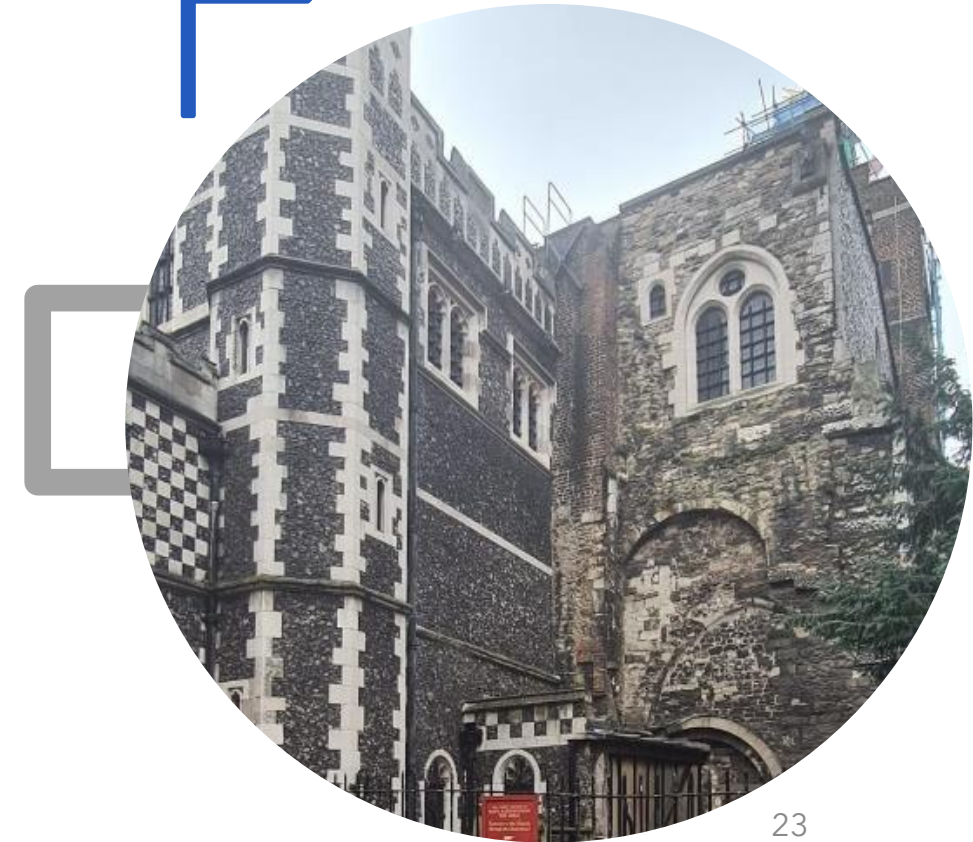
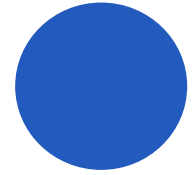
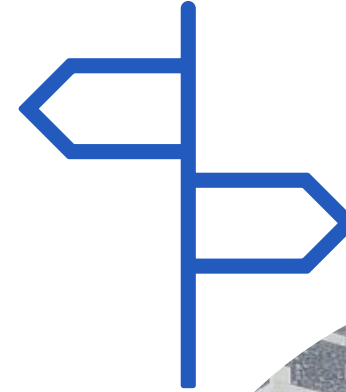
Services: Employment & Other

Employment:

Lots of barriers to employment incl. language ability, qualification recognition, pressure from job centre to take any job, fewer jobs in rural locations, lack of childcare or part-time employment, lack of professional network

Other:

- Community and faith groups highly valued, aith places important, attended for spiritual, mental, and social wellbeing.
- High cost of amenities (gyms); advance booking needed (badminton) or unsuitable opening hours
- Uncertainty for various migrant communities due to changes in legal status / war / UK government policy announcements





Thank you

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