

Afghan Emergency Response Survey

Fieldwork: 12th– 25th January 2022

Wave 3

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Afghan Emergency Response Survey

This report presents results from the third monthly questionnaire sent to a cohort of Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations working directly with Afghan communities in London.

For this third survey, two changes were made:

- Local authorities and other statutory partners were invited to participate in the survey
- The survey asked about work with those in Afghan bridging hotels specifically

The rationale for the change was the need to focus specifically on the acute needs of people in the bridging hotels, which are now likely to be open much longer than originally envisaged, and in recognition that statutory partners are playing a key role in wraparound support for hotel residents.

The survey was therefore renamed from the Afghan Community Response Survey to the Afghan Emergency Response to reflect the wider cohort involved in working with new Afghan arrivals.

The survey received a total of 25 valid responses, 22 of them were full responses and 8 were partial. Both full and partial responses have been included in the report. Six out of the 25 organisations that completed the survey in January also completed the second wave of the survey.

In the following sections, N indicates the number of responses received for each question. Due to the low sample size, figures have not been reported as percentages, though some rough fractions are used to aid ease of understanding in the text.

The information contained in these reports should be considered indicative only and may not be fully representative of all civil society organisations and local authorities working with Afghan refugees in London. However, alongside other intelligence, we hope the information will be useful.

Results from the survey will be shared with responding organisations and with decision-makers supporting the pan-London emergency response.

SUMMARY

Overall:

- All London boroughs were represented in the cohort. Seven out of the 25 organisations worked across more than one borough and 3 worked across the whole of London.
- Results suggests that pressures on organisations may be levelling off.
- Respondents highlighted a range of concerns about the experience of women and girls in hotels, some of which are quite serious. This is likely to require the attention of those providing services and support to residents.
- Concerns are expressed among hotel residents about resettlement – the length of wait, and where they might be resettled to.
- Respondents also highlighted concerns among residents about the need for family reunion with family members who are not already in the UK.
- No respondents indicated poor housing/ bridging accommodation issues.

PROFILE OF SERVICE USERS

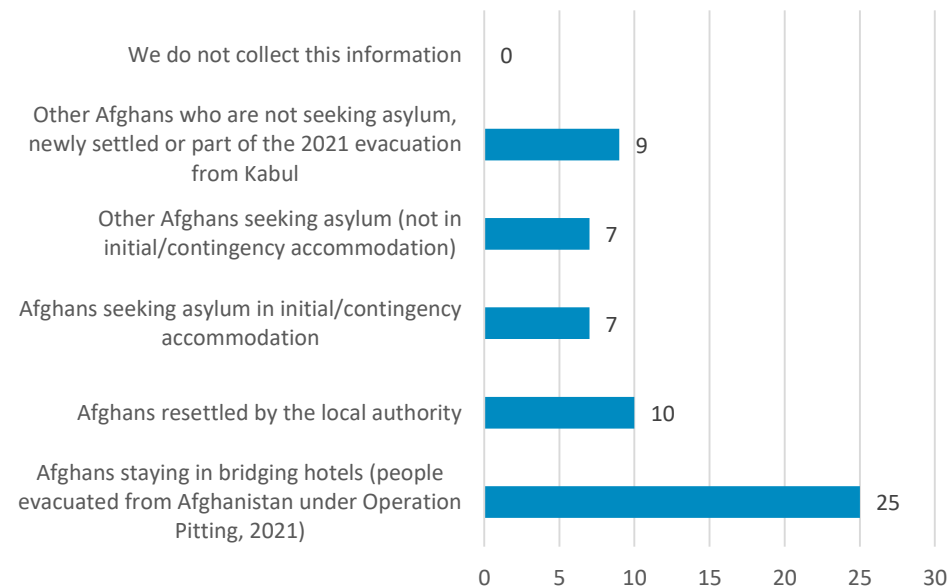
Overall:

- When asked which category of Afghans they were supporting, 13 out of 25 organisations selected more than one of the options presented to them.

Supporting Afghans in bridging hotels:

- All of the 25 organisations supported Afghans families in bridging hotels.

Which category of Afghans is your organisation supporting? Select all that apply - N=25



Base: all responding organisations (N=25).

Types of organisations and support in Bridging hotels by VCS

Overall:

- The majority of organisations who completed the survey were from the voluntary, community and faith sector.

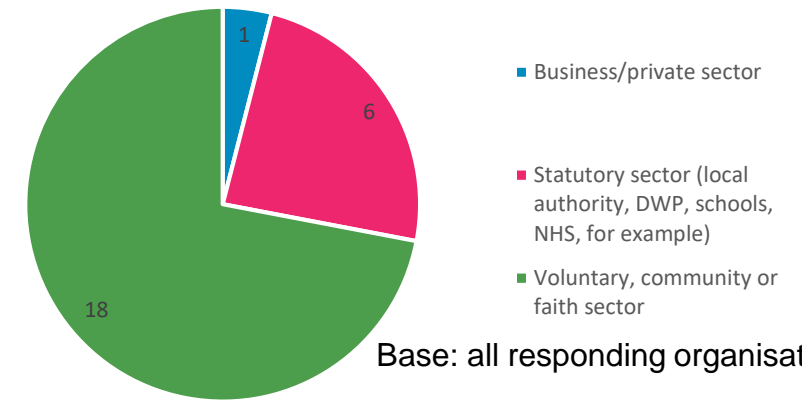
Supporting Afghans in bridging hotels:

- All of the 25 organisations supported Afghans families in bridging hotels. 17 of them were on-site.

Support provided by VCS organisations

- Among all 18 voluntary, community and faith sector organisations who provided support to Afghan families in bridging hotels, the majority provided a volunteering and coordination role.

What is your organisation type? N=25



What type of support is your organisation providing to Afghans currently resident in bridging hotels? (select all that apply). N=17



Beneficiaries/service users

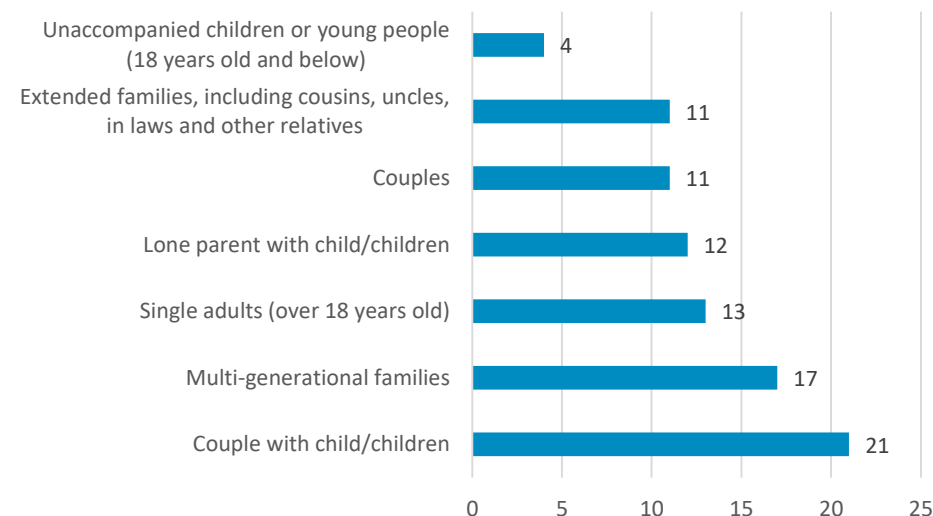
Number of Afghans being supported:

- Organisations were asked about the make-up of the families they are supporting. 20 out of the 25 organisations selected more than one option. The average number of options selected was 4.

Supporting Afghans in bridging hotels:

- Of the 17 organisations that supported Afghans in bridging hotels on site, 14 supported a couple with children and 13 supported multi-generational groups including children.
- Organisations were less likely to have supported a lone parent with children, single adults and unaccompanied children or young people.

Thinking specifically of Afghans currently resident in bridging hotels, what would you say is the make-up of the people you are supporting? (select all that apply) N=25



*As organisations working across the same borough may support the same individuals this figure may contain double counting

Demand For Support

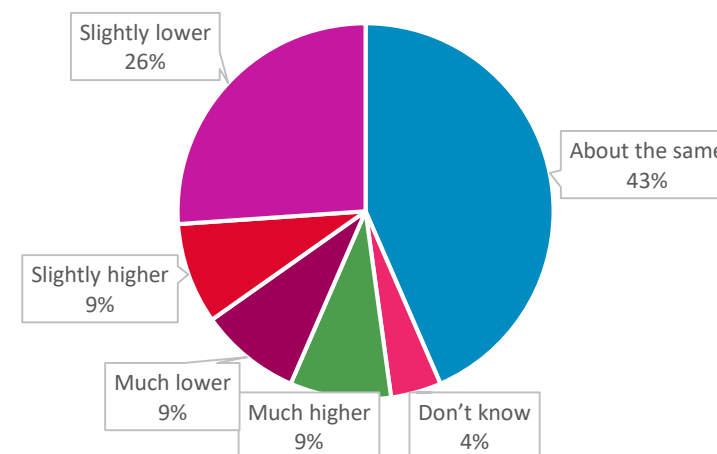
Overall:

- Half of the 25 organisations surveyed were just about managing the demand for support. Eight were managing comfortably.
- Over the last four weeks or since last survey completion, 10 organisations said that they had seen about the same level of demand for support from Afghan arrivals.

Thinking specifically of Afghans currently resident in bridging hotels, currently, are you, or are you not, managing to cope with the demand for support from Afghan arrivals?



Thinking specifically of Afghans currently resident in bridging hotels, in the last 4 weeks has the level of demand for support you are seeing from this group been higher or lower?



Adequately inclusive and accessible support

- We asked organisations: “It is important that provision for people in bridging hotels is adequately inclusive and accessible to all residents, including women and girls. Please let us know if you have any comments or concerns about differing experiences of bridging hotel residents particularly on the basis of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and/or sexual orientation.”
- 13 organisation have reported issues and commented:

[One young women (20s) who is on her own, with health issues, who has found it difficult to integrate with other women most of whom have families. At the time of seeing her she was relatively new having been moved from a another part of the country and it may be that her issues have been resolved.]

[..one family in particular has explicitly mentioned that a staff member is racist but this has been raised and escalated as a Safeguarding concern.]

[Clients feel isolated from the community. They also feel restricted in terms of moving about town.]

[There have been reported incidents of discriminatory behaviour by hotel staff towards residents (race, disability, sex)..... has dealt with the reporting of these incidents.]

[Financial issues concerns: men have access to Universal credit while women has no control of income and finance]

[Women and girls have been held back by husbands, parents, and guardians, from participating in funded events and activities, resulting in men and boys benefiting disproportionately from these activities. Women have been held back from eating communally due to modesty restrictions, reducing their socialisation and access to healthy foods....]

[We have received feedback that some women feel unsafe in bridging hotels, due to lack of any separation. I have had feedback from people in who feel unsafe due to their religious views (which caused them to leave their own countries and those who are LBGQTQ)]

[Most appear to be family groups and the presence of men in the families seems to have avoided some of the issues we have seen with women feeling unsafe in standard initial accommodation.]

[We have recorded some tensions related to different believes and religion]

Support Needs

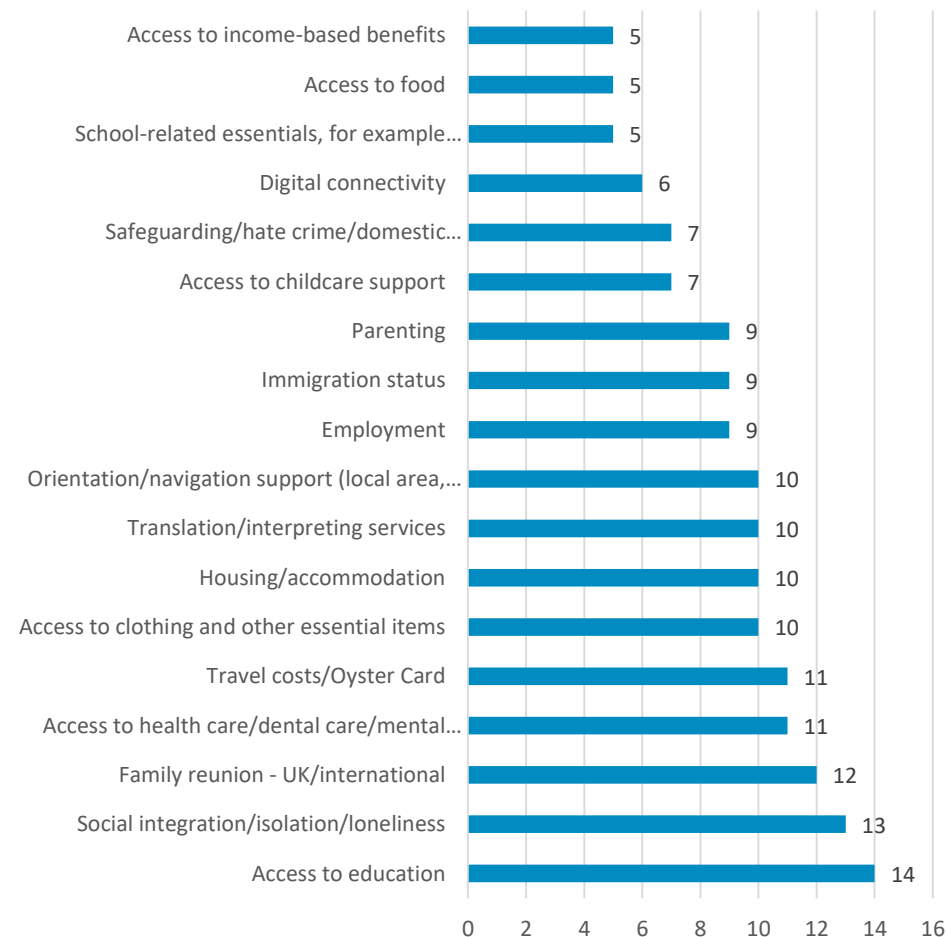
Overall:

- 23 out of 25 organisations selected multiple areas of need for Afghan communities over the last four weeks or since they last completed the survey. On average, organisations selected seven areas of need.
- Over half of the organisations noted that Afghan families needed support in relation to access to education (14 out of 25 organisations); Isolation and loneliness (13 out of 25 organisations) and family reunion (12 out of 25 organisations).

Supporting Afghans in bridging hotels:

- Across the 17 organisations that supported Afghans in bridging hotels on site, 15 selected multiple areas of need for Afghan communities over the last four weeks or since they last completed the survey. On average, organisations selected seven areas of need.
- The top areas of need were in relation to access to health care, family reunion and loneliness (selected by nine organisations each).
- The next top areas of need were translation and orientation support (selected by seven organisations each).

Thinking specifically of Afghans currently resident in bridging hotels, in the last four weeks, what have been the areas of need? N=25

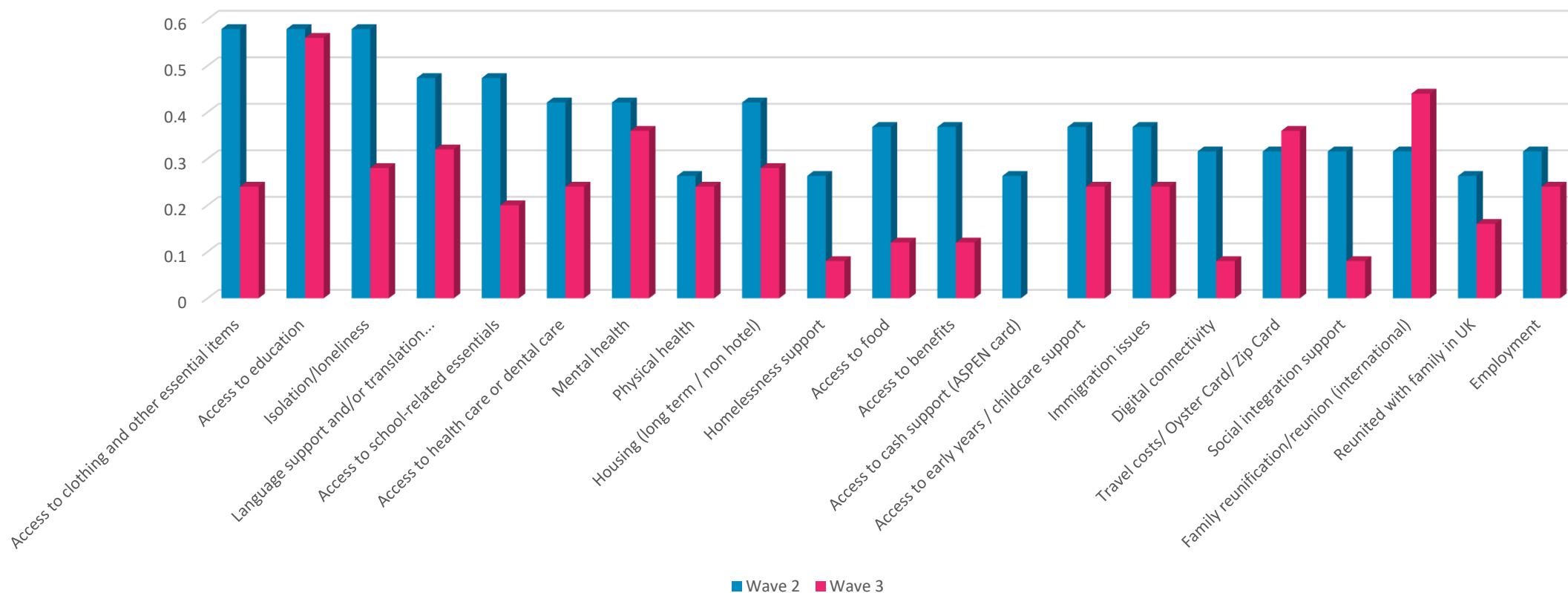


Base: all responding organisations (N=25)

Chart only shows responses selected by at least 5 organisations.

Support Needs comparison with Wave 2

- The below chart shows a comparison of the support needs between wave 2 and wave 3 of the survey. Worth noting that there has been a few changes in the options in the survey as some have been merged or renamed.



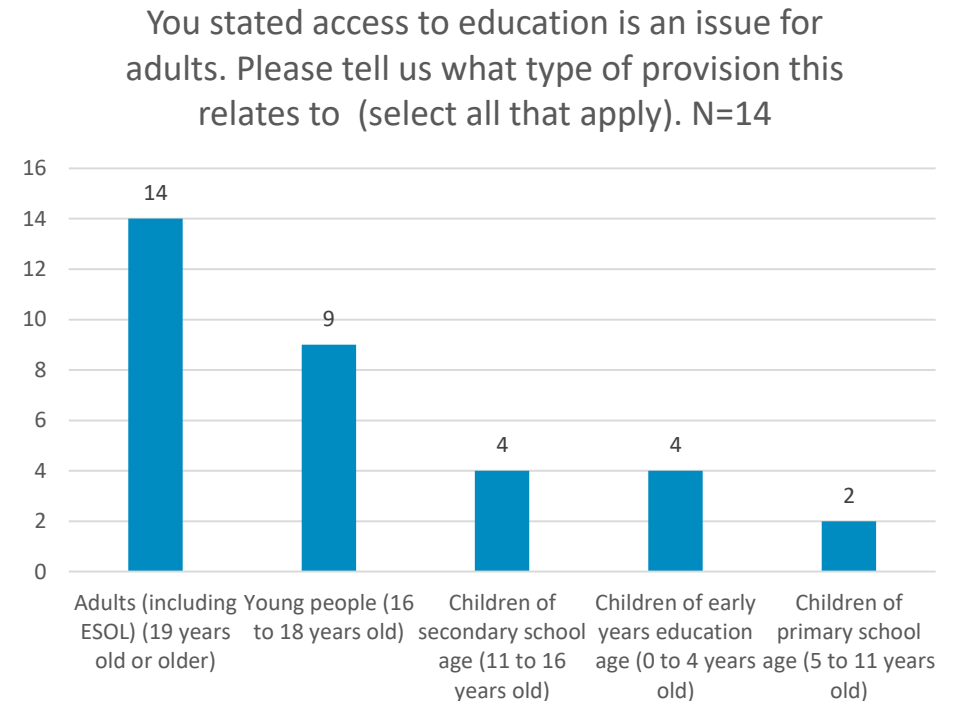
Education Provision

Overall:

- Of the 14 organisations that cited limited education provision as an issue in the last four weeks or since the survey was last completed, 11 identified that it was an issue for more than one group presented in the question.
- All of the 14 organisations stated that limited education provision was an issue for adults. Nine organisations stated that limited education provision was an issue for young people (16 to 18 years old).

Adults (including ESOL)

- Across the 14 organisations that selected Adults (Including ESOL), 11 stated ESOL needs and nine stated the need for Basic skills (literacy/functional English, ICT and/or maths).



Base: organisations that selected education provision as an issue in the last four weeks or since the survey was last completed (N=14).

Housing support needs

Housing:

- Across the 10 organisations who indicated housing as an area of need, all have indicated that this is related to need for long term/non-hotel housing.
- Two organisations indicated homelessness support need. None indicated poor housing/bridging accommodation issues.

[residents are declining offers, maybe some orientation of the location needs to take place before or when the offers are made so residents are aware of where they are going.]

[We have many very large families and accommodation matching is difficult]

[Families based in bridging hotels do not know how long they have to wait for permanent accommodation. Families as well are afraid of being relocated not close to their relatives or not in M25 boundaries, families are not happy with moving to Scotland, Wales etc. Families when receiving information about housing never see pictures of the accommodation offered therefore they are anxious to move out. Lastly, families are sometimes notified about their move 24h before which doesn't give them enough time to think, inform the schools, find out about the area therefore they are refusing to move.]

[waiting time to receive permanent accommodation is very long.]

[Many Newly Arrived Refugees left the bridging hotels to stay with friends and family. This meant that they were no longer looked after under the system. And so are no longer receiving updates on housing and immigration.]

[General anxiety about waiting for accommodation and concern about whether they can refuse accommodation if it is far away or not in good condition.]

[Most people we have spoken to want to be settled within reach or in London, which we have to say is likely to be a scarce resource.]

[They want to know when they will be housed and if this will be in London or not.]

Health and safeguarding needs

Health:

- Across the 11 organisations who indicated health as a need, four indicated that the needs are across mental, physical and dental health. Across all the 10 organisations. the three areas were almost equally needed.

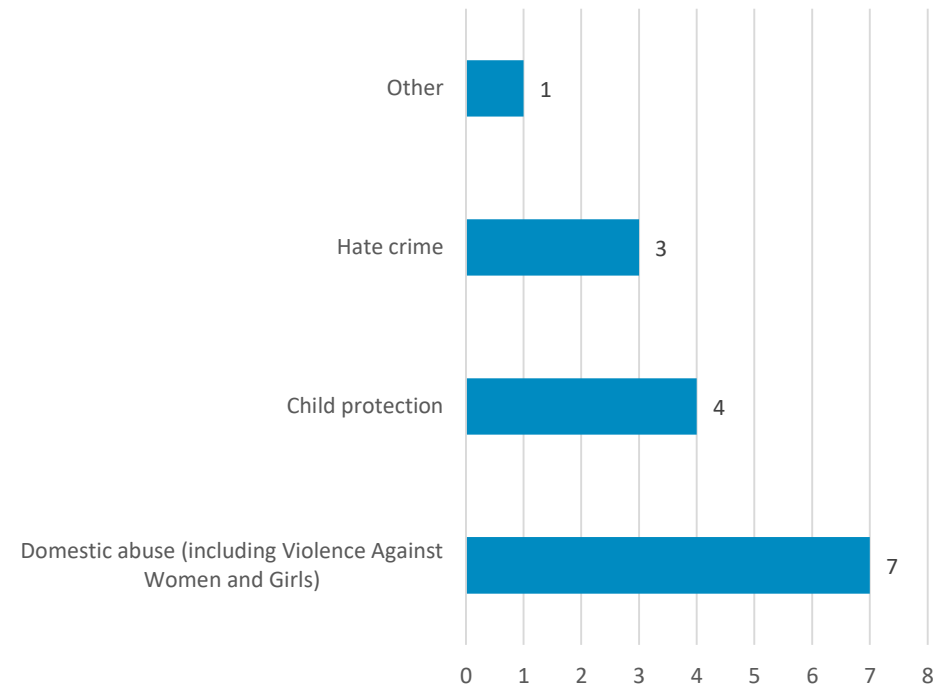
Safeguarding:

- Across the seven organisations who indicated safeguarding needs, domestic abuse cases were reported as the most common safeguarding need.

Family reunion:

- Across 12 organisations who indicated family reunion as a need, 11 stated this in relation to being reunited with families who are not in the UK, including four who also stated that this is in addition to the need to be reunited with other family members who are in the UK.

You told us Safeguarding was an area of need.
Which of the following does this relate to? (select all that apply)/ N=7



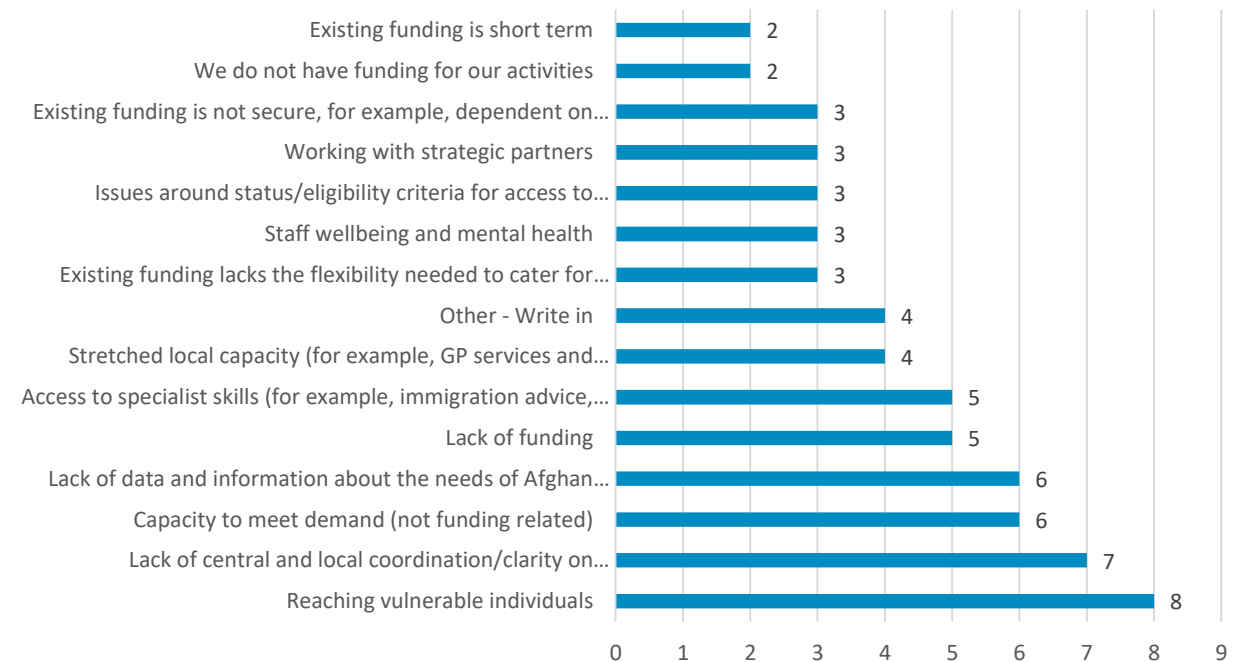
CHALLENGES IN THE PROVISION OF SUPPORT

Overall:

- Across the 19 non-statutory organisations surveyed (VCS and private sector), 10 selected multiple challenges being faced by their organisation. On average, organisations highlighted 4 challenges from the options presented.
- Eight organisations stated the challenge of reaching vulnerable individuals among Afghan arrivals. This was followed by lack of capacity to meet demand and lack of local and central coordination (seven organisations)

In the period since you last completed this survey, or the last 4 weeks if you are completing the survey for the first time what challenges has your organisation faced in supporting Afghan arrivals?

Select all that apply - N=19



Base: all Voluntary, community or faith sector and Business/private sector organisations (N=19).

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Challenges in the provision of support:

- Organisations were offered the opportunity to make additional comments regarding challenges in the provision of support. 15 out of the 25 organisations surveyed took the opportunity to do this.
- Organisations stated that families are worried about their relatives in Afghanistan and more guidance is needed on family reunification.
- Organisations shared the concerns of about the uncertainty on how long families will be staying in hotels. And the need for integration activities for adults, women, and girls such as ESOL, building IT literacy, and sport.

Having an interpreter in bridging hotels having ESOL classes in bridging hotels for the **women** who have small children and unable to attend school

Families are waiting too long for BRPs therefore they can't start work if they found some as they do not have status - letter from HO would help with assuring employees that they will receive "Leave to remain" status.

Need to support women and girls, especially sports, health activities, mental health support through activities such as yoga, breath work. Also to support women and girls to access education opportunities in areas such as the arts, law, human rights

Tremendous demand to start family reunion process, but zero guidance from government

the biggest challenge we faced was convincing the hotel management to improved the quality of food they were serving to the residents. having 3 meals a day which was unpleasant and unhealthy (due to too much spices), caused stress and effected the mental wellbeing of the residents. Staff behaviour is also a challenge as most families feel humiliated by their comments and ignorance.

The reason many left the hotels is because of the uncertainty surrounding how long they would stay there, and the lack of knowledge about the consequences that would have. Suggestions on how to resolve this is to be more transparent with the refugees and to make sure they understand the information.

Just helpful for them to have as much information as possible, explanation that it will take time and clear guidelines about under what terms they can refuse accommodation offered to them.

Women particularly need further support to access health services. Many women have health-related issues and do not contact the GP as they do not feel confident, others feel embarrassed and shy. It's very important to ensure women have all the information related to access to healthcare services. Furthermore, parenting is a big area of concern, parents are looking for support related to positive parenting. Having info sessions focused solely on parenting would have a very positive impact on the families confidence.

Flu vaccination from age 2.
Childhood vaccination catch up.

Lack of adult supervision,
Acceptable behaviour of boys
towards girls.

Most people we have seen are very worried about relatives in Afghanistan, especially where there is no male relative in the family group left behind.

Many people want to access the activities and services on offer, particularly sport, exercise and cultural activities but even when these are provided for free, they cannot engage if any form of transport is required for anything not in walking distance or for those with mobility issues.

...they need a space to be able to integrate together, they don't have access to a communal area where they can spend time together aside from when we go in once a week. The children also need some space to play together, they just don't have access to anywhere where they can interact and play with each other which is so important.

Digital provision and IT training, especially when delivering online support. Young mothers need parenting advice. Mobile phones provided for males only if family has many members.

RESOURCES FOR RESPONDENTS

- How voluntary, community and faith groups can welcome refugees to their neighbourhood through the [Community Sponsorship Scheme](#).
- Register your offer to [help refugees](#) coming to the UK.
- Find a volunteer or be a volunteer- [Team London](#).
- Find out what other support is available for Afghans in your area and/or list your offer/request on [London Plus](#).
- Offer an affordable property to a refugee family via a [Community Sponsorship Group](#) or the [Government's Housing Portal](#).
- For a temporary period [TFL](#) will be accepting Border Force ID cards as an alternative form of evidence for Zip Oyster Card application for Afghan arrivals.
- Afghanistan resettlement and entitlements: [policy statement](#)
- [Guidance](#) on the eligibility of Afghan nationals, including people on the standard asylum route, to the Adult Education Budget, including ESOL.
- Join the GLA's ESOL newsletter for information on AEB and other course vacancies, funding and resources: esolcoordinators@london.gov.uk
- [Find \(AEB\) adult education providers near me](#)
- The [Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership](#) (VCSEP) operates a [national support service](#) for VCS orgs, through which they can request various forms of support from the partnership if it's not available through local councils for voluntary service, local resilience forums and local authority hubs. The support on offer includes transportation and delivery, PPE, funding advice, specialist training, guidance or volunteering capacity
- [The Afghan Evacuees Emergency Grants Programme](#) aims to support Christian churches and charities helping to tackle the ongoing Afghanistan evacuee crisis. Funding will help cover costs associated with resettlement in the UK during a time when the economic and resource effects of the pandemic are still being felt.
- [ESOL for Resettlement guidance](#)

NEXT STEPS

- The next wave of the [Afghan Emergency Response Survey](#) will be issued to organisations in February 2022.

Contact details:

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