



## **Hostile Environments:** Understanding the drivers and characteristics of energy deprivation in UK refugee communities

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# Overarching Aim and Methods:

- Investigating socio-political **drivers, characteristics and experiences of energy deprivation** among refugees
  - Interlinkages with broader processes of exclusion and homemaking
  - 3 case studies; London, Greater Manchester & Calderdale, West Yorkshire
- Designed to be co-creative, participatory with actionable policy outcomes
  - Ethnographic Observations
  - Interviews
  - Photovoice
  - Policy workshop



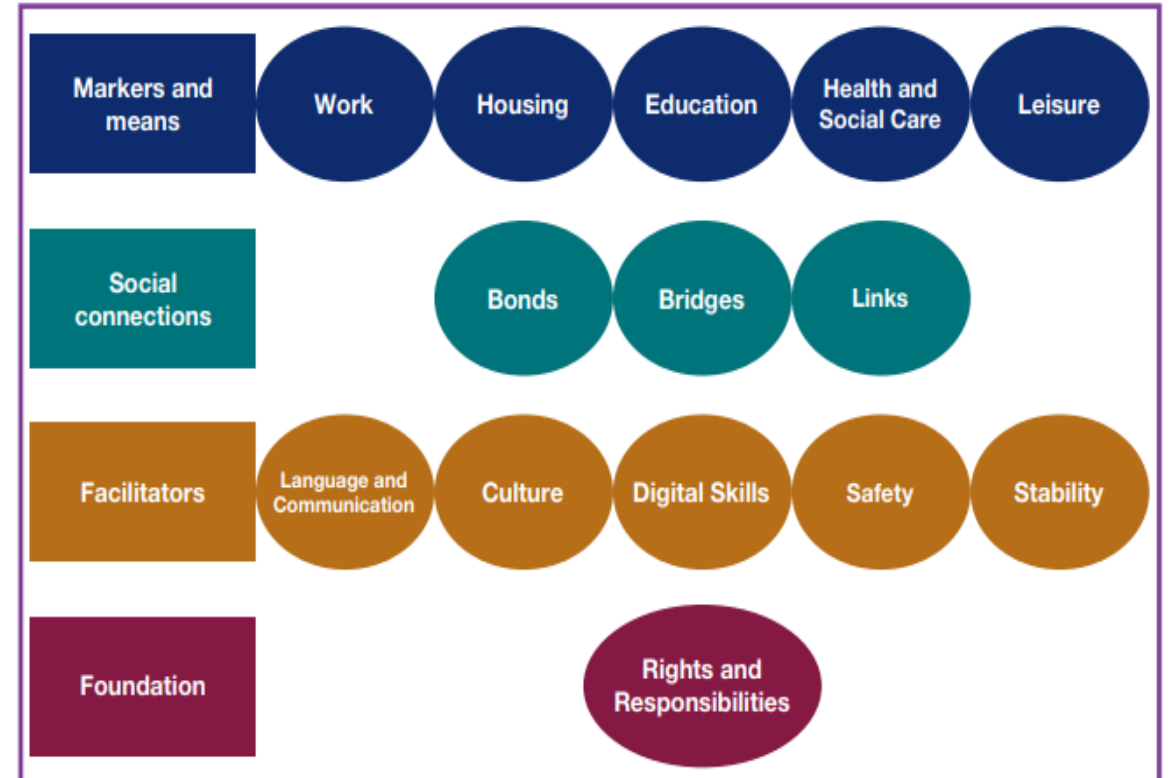
# A Note on Definitions:

- **Refugees and Asylum Seekers**
  - Using UK legal definition
  - Diverse and heterogenous group
- **Energy deprivation:**
  - Harmful lack of energy services (Bouzarovski and Petrova, 2015)
  - Deliberate *denial* of energy



# Background:

- **Energy underpins many** (all?) of the Home Office's refugee **integration indicators**
- **Energy issues largely absent** from knowledge base on refugees and vice versa
- **Absence of knowledge ≠ absence of a problem**
  - Energy remains a hidden and invisibilised issue among refugee communities (Willand et al., 2021)



*Home Office Indicators of Integration 2019*

# “Non-energy” policies – an explanatory framework:

- “Non-energy” policies shape experiences and conditions of energy deprivation (C. Butler, 2022)
- Two key policy arenas identified as contributing to “policy-imposed marginality” (Darling, 2022)
  - “Hostile Environment” asylum/refugee policies
  - Housing policies
- Energy deprivation emerges as hidden consequence



# Impact of housing policies (*prelim. results*):

- Housing **shortages**
  - Extended stays in temporary accommodation
  - Street & hidden homelessness
- Reliance on **PRS**
  - Informal renting arrangements
  - Exploitation
  - Low awareness of tenancy rights
- **Poor quality** of housing
  - Mould/damp
  - Disrepair
  - Lack of accountability



*“There is mould and damp... I clean and paint myself but it keeps coming back. I have asthma and it makes it worse” – Zara (GM.01)*

# Impact of asylum policies (*prelim. results*):

- **Persisting experiences of destitution and poverty**
  - Impoverishment when seeking asylum
  - 28-day move-on period (Hughes, 2023)
- **Fragmented, inefficient and piecemeal services**
  - Austerity – cutbacks to public services
  - Services often provided by VSOs
  - People falling through the cracks

Photo – Manon Burbidge, 2024



*“When you get your status, you think your fight ends (with the Home Office). But really, another fight starts... Would they live here? No, they wouldn’t, why do they make us live here?” – Rafiah (GM.10)*

# Outcomes for energy deprivation (*prelim. results*):

- **Widespread exposure to energy deprivation:**
  - Interviews in Calderdale and Greater Manchester (n=26)
    - 42% in energy debt
    - 73% with damp/mould
    - 77% feel cold at home
- **Disjointed non-existent systematic provision of advice**
  - Charities, VSOs providing this service.
  - Knowledge-sharing between friends/communities
- **No energy for energy –**
  - Constant crises and lack of money means energy issues are secondary/sidelined



*“I am fighting for bills...I am stressed because I haven’t always got money to top up” – Claude (GM.05)*

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I would be delighted to hear your thoughts, comments and questions!



# References:

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