

**The Biopolitics of Asylum Seeker Housing  
Provision in the United Kingdom**

*The COMPASS Asylum Housing Project  
and the Securitisation of Home*

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## **Abstract**

This thesis uses data gathered from twenty-six semi-structured interviews with asylum seekers and eighteen area support workers and volunteers in three UK dispersal regions – Glasgow, Yorkshire and Humber, and the North East of England – to explore residents' perceptions of their housing and community experiences under the Home Office's 'COMPASS' project. Through individual accounts with refugee and asylum support service staff, I highlight specific housing conditions ranging from the quality of housing to respondents' perceptions of safety and community inclusion. For those who experienced moves during the transitional period between contracts, I gather observational accounts of the practical, psychological and physical effects of being moved, which include the management of children moving schools or residents being placed further away from shopping facilities, support services and health care practices.

The empirical research is situated within a historical account of British immigration policy dating back to the twelfth century and a theoretical framework of Foucault's biopower and the expansion of Deleuze's 'society of control'. Attempting to distance this research from alternative theories of biopower, such as that of Agamben and Hardt and Negri, which I argue conflate biopolitical and sovereign methods of control, I demonstrate the resistive capacity of asylum seekers through their engagement with support agencies or their individual decisions to disengage their contact with housing provider representatives. Through an analysis of interview responses using purposive coding methods, I assess the extent to which current UK housing practices represent a deliberate policy of 'deterrence' and the degree to which contracts with multinational private security firms reflect a neoliberal strategy of privatisation and market creation concurrent with state aims toward population management and control.

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## **Author's Declaration**

I, Steven Hirschler, confirm that this thesis is wholly my own, original piece of work. No element, part or whole, has appeared in any other published form or distributed in another format. As this was a self-funded dissertation, I am neither dependent upon nor affiliated with any funding body. As a research student within the Department of Politics at the University of York, I was required to apply for approval from and fulfil the obligations of the Economics, Law, Management, Politics and Sociology Ethics Committee.

## Introduction

At the outset of this research project, I had in mind an entirely different series of aims and objectives. In late 2010, asylum and refugee services in the United Kingdom were facing a transformative period; funding cuts and diminished access to charitable grant resources were impacting services' abilities to meet the needs of communities that had come to rely on them for critical advice and support. The charity, Refugee Action, published a report in January 2011 that highlighted the many areas of its service affected by a reduction in Home Office funding, which included a 63 per cent cut to its One Stop Service, a 50 per cent cut to its Initial Accommodation Wraparound Service and a full termination of funding for the charity's Refugee Integration and Employment Service. As a result, Refugee Action shut offices in four cities and reduced services in three others (Refugee Action, 2011: p. 1). Around the same time, in November 2010, the Ministry of Justice released its *Proposals for the Reform of Legal Aid in England in Wales*, a document that set out the coalition government's aims to reduce Legal Aid spending by 23 per cent, which would represent a £350m savings per annum by 2014-15 (Ministry of Justice, 2010: p. 5). In response, Anne Singh, an immigration lawyer, and Frances Webber, a retired immigration barrister, published a report itemising the effects Legal Aid cuts would have on the lives of destitute asylum seekers, which included possible threats to their 'fundamental human rights' (Singh and Webber, 2010: p. 6). In this climate of diminished access to legal and practical support, I believed that an important investigation might be one that analysed interview data collected from asylum and refugee support staff responding to questions about the ways in which these cuts were impacting their abilities to deliver services and the effects these changes were having on the conditions and circumstances of asylum seekers living in the UK. It is a subject I hope to return to in the future, though such an effort would follow the work of others (see: Webber, 2012; James and Killick, 2012; Morris and Barr, 2013; Webber, 2013; Cobb, 2013). Instead, developments in the management of asylum seekers' dispersed housing in late 2011 necessitated a change of research focus.

There were reports in Autumn 2010 that Home Office contracts with two local authorities, Birmingham City Council and Glasgow City Council, to house asylum seekers under the government's dispersal scheme were unlikely to be renewed. The official explanation for Birmingham City Council's decision to end its five-year contract with the government was that it needed its properties for its 'own people' (Councillor John Lines quoted in BBC News, 2010). The breakdown in negotiations between Glasgow City Council and the Home Office were due to a disagreement 'on the costs of housing asylum seekers' (Damien Green, quoted in Hansard, 2010). The cessation of these contracts introduced a gap in housing provision, which was to be filled with a new set of contracts.



In early 2012, I was invited to attend a meeting in Sheffield that included a small number of academics, two employees of the then UK Border Agency and two representatives from the private security firm, G4S, one of the 'preferred bidders' on the new dispersal housing contract called COMPASS, an acronym for 'Commercial and Operational Managers Procuring Asylum Support Services'. The details of this meeting are discussed in chapter 4, section 4.4, though three points that arose from this meeting fundamentally shaped my decision to alter my research trajectory. First, the grounds upon which G4S was awarded the contract included the fact that its bid was both financially and technically competitive, according to the representatives in attendance. Second, the firms tasked with delivering accommodation to destitute asylum seekers viewed the contract as an opportunity to expand the breadth of their companies' services. Stephen Small, the Managing Director of Immigration and Borders at G4S, explained that the corporate vision for asylum housing was the expansion of a new 'asylum market'. Finally, both G4S and UKBA representatives stated that contractors on the COMPASS project were not duty-bound to consult Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) when moving families and children to newly sourced accommodation.

Some initial research questions formed on the back of these points. For instance, if the Home Office selected G4S as a preferred bidder on financial grounds, what impact - if any - would cost savings have on the quality and location of asylum housing following the transition to the COMPASS programme? As G4S had no experience in providing housing, particularly to vulnerable groups, was the decision to select the firm on 'technical' grounds due to its preexisting contracts with the Home Office to manage immigration removal centres and provide asylum transportation? How might asylum seekers with prior experiences in detention or removal services respond to the knowledge that they were being housed by an organisation involved in both of these services? Small's description of 'asylum markets' made me question the extent to which the Home Office's discretionary delivery of accommodation support for destitute asylum seekers may be transformed from a service into a valorised commodity. Lastly, if an expectation to minimise disruption to families was solely contractual, what oversight would exist to ensure that the well-being of asylum seekers and their dependents was being acknowledged and practiced in the delivery of the COMPASS project? These questions helped me formulate a new research agenda, which I detail in the next section. However, I wish to begin by addressing some of the regional legislation informing domestic policies, as the laws and practices of the UK Government and its contractors do not exist within a hermetically sealed environment; they represent an interpretation and implementation of European asylum strategies and are ostensibly bound by the expectations and requirements enshrined in EU law.

In proceeding with a review of asylum housing within the United Kingdom, particularly the introduction of a marketised system of provision in which private firms are

the exclusive contract holders of the government's dispersal strategy, it is important to situate the UK's asylum policies within a broader regional context. While the interview data and historical framework presented in this thesis centre largely on the UK experience and specific legislative developments within Britain, European law and international agreements exist as both the foundations upon which domestic policies are established and, often, as the primary inhibiting measures limiting state action.

In October 1999, the European Council met at Tampere and identified the need for a concerted policy response to asylum. It determined that a common asylum system was required to correspond to the refugee rights established within the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 amendment. The introduction of regulations and directives since that time have expanded EU member states' responsibilities and established minimum standards states must apply to their domestic asylum practices. Toshkov and de Haan (2013) identify some of these key policies. They cite the 1990 Dublin convention as being significant in that it required asylum seekers to claim in the first EU country they arrived in; the responsibilities of each EU member state as they related to application assessment are enshrined in the 2003 Dublin II Regulation (p. 663). Additionally, the 2003 Reception Centres Directive and 2005 Asylum Procedures Directive ensured that member states met minimum standards relating to access to legal aid, health care, education and housing (ibid: 663; ). Furthermore, Directive 2013/32/EU introduced 'common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection' (Ch. 1, Art. 1). In addition to establishing common application review procedures, Articles 19 through 21 dictate that member states provide free legal assistance to asylum seekers during the initial application stages and upon appeal. However, it grants states the discretion to limit the distribution of free legal assistance 'only to those who lack sufficient resources' (Art. 21, para. 2(a)), effectively allowing states to establish their own boundaries of financial need as long as they meet the minimum requirements of provision established in previous legislation.

While EU regulations are designed to standardise asylum provision across member states, discretionary approaches to asylum support have resulted in disparities in the nature and level of services offered. More broadly, an imbalance exists in the admission rates and distribution of asylum seekers across the EU member states with some states admitting proportionally more asylum seekers than others. For instance, using countries' GDPs as a basis of comparison, Toshkov and de Hann (2013) determine that some countries, such as Greece, Sweden, Norway and Belgium, receive a disproportionately higher number of applications compared to other member states (p. 678). They state that '[t]he persistent inequality of the asylum burden is bad news for the sustainability of the common asylum policy' (ibid: p. 681). This imbalance is coupled with a moderate disparity in the percentage of positive decisions member states grant asylum

seekers from specific countries:

[I]n 2009, applicants from Afghanistan face 30 per cent positive decisions in Austria but only 3 per cent in the Netherlands. Serbs have a less than 2 per cent chance in most countries, but a 10 per cent chance in Belgium. The recognition rate for Eritreans ranges from a whopping 78 per cent in Germany to less than 5 per cent in the Netherlands and Malta. For Iraqis the rate is 79 per cent in France but 8 per cent in Great Britain [...].

(Toshkov and de Hann, 2013: p. 676)

Despite European efforts to standardise national responses to inflows of asylum claimants, the management of asylum seekers and the provision for those who are destitute upon arriving in the United Kingdom are largely contingent upon domestic solutions. James Fry (2006) explains that asylum is an area in which a cohesive European response remains elusive: '[A]sylum is still determined by EU member states' national laws, which vary significantly' (p. 97). While European Council directives ostensibly aim to make asylum reception more 'liberal' across EU states by instituting 'provisions that increase the rights of actual asylum-seekers' (Hansen and King, 2000 in Kaurert and Léonard, 2012: p. 1400), restrictive domestic legislation and social control practices sometimes hinder the advancement of progressive responses to asylum inflows. Throughout chapters 2 and 3, I identify eras in which English and British immigration policy has developed counter to its commitments to broader international agreements and imperatives. With consideration to the European context, I turn now to the specific aims and objectives of this thesis.

### *Research aims and literature overview*

In order to develop a significant and original contribution to the fields of migration studies and political theory, I have adopted four primary aims for this thesis. First, I challenge concepts of sovereignty and 'bare life' as best-fit descriptors of asylum seekers' experiences within the United Kingdom. While it is useful to adopt these terms as a way of reflecting the extremity of individual and collective experiences within the asylum system, limitations exist. It is therefore necessary to employ different concepts, such as Foucault's biopower and Hollifield's 'liberal paradox' to better reflect the prospect of resistance within the society of control and highlight the state's duality of purpose: the promotion of neoliberal ideals and a commitment to protecting the population through restrictive migrant management practices. Second, by way of historical analysis, I develop the trajectory of state racism as it pertains to the control of immigration. The purpose in this is to

emphasise the exclusionary practices of the state and the tactics of control operating primarily on non-white migrants, as the logics of restrictionism and state imperatives to ensure the protection of society and the citizen-ideal continue to inform current asylum policies and practices. Third, I present the first multi-regional analysis of asylum seekers' experiences during and following the transition to COMPASS housing, the UK government's privatised asylum accommodation programme. Asylum seekers' first-hand accounts alongside the perspectives of employees and volunteers within the field of refugee and asylum support illuminate the extent to which the COMPASS programme and the tactics of private security firms and their subcontractors have resulted in further challenges for asylum seekers dispersed across the United Kingdom on a no-choice basis. Following an analysis of the interview data, points of comparison between dispersal regions can be made, for instance in regards to the differences and similarities of COMPASS provision and the benefits and challenges faced in regions where the support environment is relatively robust, as in Glasgow, or dependent on smaller over-subscribed drop-in services, as in the North East of England and West Yorkshire. Finally, I argue that asylum seekers' expression of individual agency, either in directly combatting the conditions of their experiences or in employing assistance from the asylum support community, reinforce the adopted theoretical positions of biopower and resistance while undermining representations of asylum seekers as a population wholly subjected to the dictates of sovereign power.

Challenging Agambenian representations of asylum seekers as *bare life*, the thesis argues in favour of Michel Foucault's more plural notion of biopower. In situating UK asylum policy within a historical legislative context, the thesis argues that biopolitical forms of population control in England and Britain extend back to the 13th century. The thesis also argues that conflicting aims of exclusion and neoliberal marketisation have necessitated the perpetuation of asylum seekers' containment within securitised zones of control. A description of 26 asylum seekers' experiences within COMPASS housing alone is insufficient in situating these experiences within a theoretical and historical context, which I believe is necessary in analysing the extent to which a privatised and securitised asylum housing service might alter the conditions of destitute asylum seekers' support in the United Kingdom. I argue that the COMPASS programme represents a form of population management that serves an exclusionary function in that destitute asylum seekers' are dispersed to areas around the UK on a no-choice basis - as they have been since the introduction of the dispersal policy within the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act - to areas that may lack support networks or feature adverse conditions, such as poverty or community hostility. However, there is also an inclusionary function operating in the delivery of COMPASS services due to market dependence upon asylum seekers' presence within supported housing and their detention within immigration removal centres

around the country.

There is an initial temptation to apply Giorgio Agamben's (1998) theory of *bare life* to the experiences of asylum seekers living within dispersed housing, particularly given some of the conditions described in interviews conducted with 26 asylum seekers and 19 asylum support agency staff, which included descriptions of asylum seekers' dispersal into unsanitary and unhygienic environments, their placement in areas far from support services and access to essential dietary requirements, and their association of dispersed housing with previous traumas within and outside the United Kingdom (see: chapters 6 and 7). Agamben refers to *bare life* as life that is 'exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable' (Agamben, 1998: p. 28). He adapts Carl Schmitt's 'state of exception' to describe spaces (the 'camp') in which the rule of law is suspended through the use of a legal allowance, which provides the state the capacity to 'ban' *bare life* or 'to say that anyone may harm him' (ibid., pp. 105-105). Agamben's work has been influential in the construction of some representations of asylum seekers' experiences within the UK and elsewhere (see: Edkins and Pin-Fat, 2005; Perera, 2002; Evans, 2003), and I have also employed the concepts presented in Agamben's *State of Exception* and *Homo Sacer* to reflect the extremity of asylum seekers' experiences within COMPASS housing. However, I contend that the use of Agamben's notion of *bare life* is limiting for two reasons: 1) it neglects the individual agency of asylum seekers and their access to support through legal and advocacy channels, and 2) it fails to acknowledge the *value* asylum seekers represent for agents of social control, particularly those profiting from their management and/or incarceration.

I therefore I turn to Foucault's more nuanced concept of 'biopower' in the first chapter to better reflect the experiences of asylum seekers within the COMPASS programme. As the interview data reveals (see: chapter 8), while the COMPASS experience has been dominated by feelings of discomfort and isolation, a number of respondents took direct action in either confronting housing officers about their conditions or using refugee and asylum support services to initiate desired changes to their experience. Within the framework of biopower, individuals are 'in a position to both submit to and exercise this power. [...] [P]ower passes through individuals' (Foucault, 2004: p. 29). I employ Foucault's biopower to demonstrate the networked nature of power through institutions beyond the state (i.e. the incorporation of private security firms and the co-option of certain charitable organisations in the management and containment of asylum seekers) and to challenge representations of asylum seekers as perennial victims of a 'Leviathan' state, as they can also be agents of power and resistance. As Foucault states, to better reflect power relations it is crucial that we analyse power apparatuses 'only if we do not see them as an overall unity, only if we do not try to derive them from something like the Statist unity of sovereignty' (Foucault, 2004: p. 45). Contributions from Coleman

and Grove (2009), Darling (2009; 2011), Stoler (1995) and others help in articulating a form of biopower that contrasts with Agamben's and provide further support for critical theoretical engagement. In chapter 1, I point to Hollifield's concept of the 'liberal paradox' to highlight the seemingly incompatible state aims of pursuing an exclusionary policy toward asylum seekers while at the same time promoting the neoliberal tenets of marketisation and privatisation. The COMPASS programme, I argue in chapters 3 and 4, is best understood within the dichotomous contexts of the market expansion of asylum service provision and the political imperative of limiting 'illegitimate' immigration through deliberate tactics of isolation and unease.

Experiences within dispersed housing do not occur within a legislative vacuum; logics of exclusion and containment extend to other historical eras, most recently to conditions under previous dispersal programmes following the introduction of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act. However, in the second chapter, I draw on other historical periods to argue that current biopolitical objectives and tactics represent one point in an evolution of policies directed at the isolation and containment of migrant groups on the basis of race. Employing the concept of 'state racism' introduced by Foucault (2004) and adopted by Fekete (2001) and Tyler (2010), I conduct a historical analysis of policies and practices from the 13th century to the late 20th century to demonstrate the biopolitical objectives of the state and the techniques of power that have been employed in the management of immigrant populations in order to construct 'belonging' upon racial and nationalistic constructions of the citizen. I suggest that legislative and rhetorical developments in the 1960s led to racially exclusionary practices adopted by both Conservative and Labour Party leaders, which have endured through to modern controls placed upon the entry and oversight of asylum seekers in the United Kingdom. While I rely on archival material from the National Archives in Kew and the Enoch Powell collection at the Churchill Archives Centre at the University of Cambridge, a number of secondary sources are helpful in developing this historical analysis. The work of Abrahams (1895) and Mundill (2003) are crucial in framing early exclusionary practices, such as the expulsion of England's Jewish population in the 13th century. Gainer (1972) and Wray (2006) provide historical and critical context for developments in immigration policy from 1905 through 1920, and Studlar (1974) offers important background information for a discussion of Enoch Powell's influence on the trajectory of UK immigration policy from 1971 onward.

In chapter 3, I draw on theoretical perspectives from Esposito (2008; 2013), Walters (2004) and Darling (2011) to develop the exclusionary functions of citizenship and the logics underpinning attitudes justifying asylum seekers' containment. Esposito's concept of 'immunisation' frames the detention and management of asylum seekers in biological terms; in this view the state isolates foreign agents while allowing their brief

exposure to the body politic in order to develop a resistance to and ultimately to eradicate the threat of the 'other'. I contend that while useful in demonstrating the subjugation of object communities, including asylum seekers, 'immunisation' does not adequately address the value asylum seekers represent in the marketised environment of private security. Equally, Walters's (2004) notion of 'domopolitics', which is adopted and adapted by Darling (2011) to situate methods of social control dominating the management of asylum seekers as representative of a politics of 'home', is ultimately insufficient in reflecting the valorisation occurring alongside logics of exclusion within the privatised asylum housing estate.

At the outset of chapter 4, I address the early development of the United Kingdom's dispersal policy with an analysis of the 1998 White Paper, *Fairer, Faster, Firmer* and a reflection on some of the parliamentary support and resistance to plans laid out in that document. I argue that objectives of discomfort underpin the government's dispersal policies and develop an overview of dispersal since the 1999 Immigration Act; this is supported through reference to the works of Kissoon (2010), Phillips (2006) and Silove *et al* (2000). The remainder of the chapter is dedicated to a description of COMPASS, the contemporary roles of G4S and Serco as detention and transportation contractors to the UK government and some of the concerns, official and otherwise, of the firms' performance in the delivery of the COMPASS contracts to date.

Chapters 5 through 8 represent the bulk of my empirical research findings. Chapter 5 features responses from employees and volunteers within the asylum support service sector who provide perspectives on the transition to the COMPASS project from previous providers and offer holistic views of asylum seekers' experiences within properties subcontracted by G4S and Serco to firms in West Yorkshire, the North East of England and Glasgow. In chapter 6, interviews with asylum seekers living in COMPASS properties provide perspectives on the transition process. In addition, residents' responses about prior trauma experienced within and outside the United Kingdom help demonstrate some of the compounding vulnerabilities some face within the dispersal programme, which at times are amplified through feelings of exposure and isolation within COMPASS housing. In chapter 7, I focus on asylum seekers' responses to the conditions within dispersed properties, acknowledging the few instances in which respondents were satisfied with their accommodation, and highlighting the psychological and physiological effects many reported that they endured living in unsanitary conditions or in unwelcoming environments. Examples of resistance and subjugation are reflected in residents' descriptions of their interaction with housing agency staff. Chapter 8 is dedicated to representing examples of resistance within the society of control. I use asylum seekers' descriptions of their own proactivity in making complaints to housing providers about poor living conditions and the emphasis many placed on the importance of third-party support

agencies in forwarding their needs on to primary and secondary housing providers. It is here that Foucault's biopower better reflects asylum seekers' lived experiences within the COMPASS programme.

### *Research methodology*

In designing a research plan for this thesis, it was important to select the best method for representing detailed, individual accounts of asylum housing experiences. As such, the decision to pursue in-depth semi-structured interviews was informed following a review of literature outlining best practice in qualitative research. Martin Packer's *The Science of Qualitative Research* (2011) was particularly useful in developing a robust, critical defence of qualitative methods in the study of asylum seekers' perceptions of life within COMPASS accommodation. Packer explains that qualitative research is 'good for *historical ontology*', a phrase he adopts from Foucault, which Packer interprets as a 'form of investigation' (original emphasis, p. 6). He continues, stating that such an investigation 'would include both "genealogical" and "archeological" components and have an "ethical" aim. That is to say, it would include a historical dimension, attentive to genesis and transformation without reducing them to the linear unfolding of a unidimensional "progress"' (ibid: p. 6). This perspective informed my decision to pursue an interview method that developed a trajectory of asylum seekers' experiences over time in order to capture the crosscutting effects of life within the asylum system, as housing represents a single - if significant - element of a complex series of management and control practices. This interpretation of qualitative research also provides respondents scope to discuss experiences of prior trauma without feeling that they are straying off course of the researcher's stated aims and objectives.

The selection of a primary research methodology was also dependent upon a critical reflection of valued, political terms like 'vulnerable' and 'asylum seeker'. Vulnerability can, at times, suggest a lack of agency or autonomy. To classify asylum seekers as a vulnerable community is problematic in that it perpetuates assumptions of continual victimisation, while at the same time appropriately captures the risk involved in exposing asylum seekers to the potential dangers of reprisal by state authorities. As agency and resistance remains an important factor in asylum seekers' experiences, I prefer to conceptualise the asylum experience as a highly compromised existence. Indeed, even adopting the term 'asylum seeker' suggests an implicit acceptance of the political categorisation of refugees who have not yet been validated as such. Smith and Pitts (2007) identify this as a problem with naming, which they believe constitutes a 'political act' (p. 9). They also explain that a secondary problem with naming is the fact that it 'involves the identification of specific communities and groups in a manner that



draws them to the attention of the state when previously they were “invisible” or overlooked’ (ibid: p. 9). One of the dangers in producing a publicly accessible piece of work is that the researcher potentially exposes her respondents to a level of attention and scrutiny they had hitherto avoided; the imperative for caution and anonymity therefore becomes paramount within the research agenda.

The primary qualitative interview data used to support the theoretical and practical analyses of asylum seekers’ experiences within the UK Government’s current dispersal programme, the COMPASS project, was collected through 46 semi-structured interviews conducted from May to September 2013. Twenty-six of these interviews were conducted with asylum seekers who had recent experience of living in a property managed by one of three subcontractors: Jomast in the North East of England, Orchard and Shipman in Glasgow and Cascade Homes in West Yorkshire. Jomast and Cascade were subcontractors to G4S while Orchard and Shipman was a subcontractor to Serco on the Home Office’s COMPASS housing programme. Eighteen interviews were conducted with representatives from a variety of refugee and asylum support agencies, which included drop-ins, integration networks, registered charities, non-profit organisations and larger organisations, such as the Scottish Refugee Council and the North of England Refugee Service. The final interviewee was secured early during the research process as I was developing the historical narrative intended to support the theoretical and empirical research analyses. The former Home Secretary, Rt. Hon. David Blunkett MP, met with me at his advice surgery in Sheffield on 02 November 2012 to address questions about the Labour Government’s development of immigration controls in the early 2000s and some of the justifications the Home Office had in continuing to detain asylum seekers and their families at immigration removal centres around the country. An extended extract of this interview appears near the end of the second chapter.

I used the snowball sampling method to gain access to asylum seekers, support workers and service employees. As Bilger and Van Liempt (2009) state, ‘[s]nowball sampling is a way to facilitate access to respondents where they represent a comparatively small population or where some degree of specific trust is required to initiate the contact’ (Bilger and Van Liempt, 2009: p. 124). Jacobsen and Landau (2003) argue that this approach is limited by the potential for bias inherent within a small sample size of connected individuals from a specific community (Jacobsen and Landau, 2009: p. 190). Interrogating the efficacy of common refugee research methods is undoubtedly a worthy endeavour, and I acknowledge potential limitations to this research within this methodology. However, this thesis is rooted in a belief that it is necessary to give individual voices within abject communities the space and time to develop into singular and interweaving narratives in order to develop a fuller understanding of their lived experiences (see: Stewart, 2005). I use qualitative research methods to provide a rich,

nanced and authentic view of transition under COMPASS from the service users themselves.

I made efforts to engage a diverse range of interviewees in order to represent different experiences of transition and life within the COMPASS housing programme. The determination to select three geographical regions for this doctoral thesis was made on the basis of four factors. First, each region, Glasgow, the North East of England and Yorkshire and Humber are designated dispersal areas within the Home Office's dispersal scheme for destitute asylum seekers. This allows for comparative analyses between regions as well as an investigation into how housing allocation may have changed in each region over time. Second, to both broaden the population sample and avoid region-specific factors that might have skewed individual experiences or perceptions, it was necessary to select respondents that could reflect on accommodation experiences in areas in which housing was managed by a different subcontractor within the COMPASS programme. Third, the decision to include Glasgow was due to the fact that Serco was the primary contractor in the region rather than G4S in both Yorkshire and Humber and the North East of England, and because Glasgow has developed an organised series of integration networks since the introduction of dispersal. I wished to explore the degree to which the presence of interconnected support agencies may have altered - if at all - asylum seekers' housing experiences in Glasgow compared to the other two regions. Finally, financial limitations and my proximity to the Yorkshire and Humber region informed my decision to use Leeds as a primary research geography over cities like Birmingham or Manchester.

In terms of gaining access to refugee research participants, Harrell-Bond and Voutira (2007) state that 'the challenge for the researchers is to identify and bypass the obstacles that stand between them and the refugees' (Harrell-Bond and Voutira, 2007; p. 295). To surmount this challenge I initiated contact with gatekeepers in close contact with asylum seekers (Bloch, 1999), initially employing a purposive sampling method in order to approach employees and volunteers at various support agencies in the designated regions via e-mail or telephone. This was preceded by researching some of the available agencies within each area, including local asylum and refugee drop-in services, larger services like the Scottish Refugee Council and the North of England Refugee Service and a variety of charities and non-profit organisations. Representatives from these organisations, who had built up a level of comfort and trust with individual asylum seekers accessing their services were able to facilitate the arrangement of interview dates and times with asylum seekers. This snowballing sampling method provided me access to a marginalised community which would otherwise have been extremely limited (Bilger and Van Liempt, 2009: p. 124). One of the potential limitations to this method included the fact that I was only able to meet with asylum seekers who were accessing support services;

those who were not accessing these services for a variety of reasons are not represented within this research. However, approaching gatekeepers from geographically diverse organisations mitigated the risk of 'over-dependence on one network' (Bloch, 1999; p. 372). The snowballing method was also useful in accessing housing service employees. For instance, over the course of my interviews with support agency staff in Glasgow, I was put in contact with a former employee of Orchard and Shipman; that individual agreed to an interview and her observations are presented in chapter 6.

The decision to use semi-structured, face-to-face interviews rather than questionnaires or focus groups was founded upon this perceived need to identify, record and contextualise the actual experiences of those who went through the process of transitioning to the COMPASS programme. The views of asylum seekers and support agency staff were necessary to provide both first-hand observations of the conditions within dispersed housing as well as in-depth biographical accounts of the physiological and psychological effects of living within COMPASS properties. Representatives from support agencies were able to provide wider regional perspectives that may otherwise have not been reflected in the interviews with individual asylum seekers. Having a relatively small sample size was necessary, because it allowed me more time with each interviewee and provided respondents the opportunity to address a variety of questions and expand at length on other observations that were not fixed within the constraints of a questionnaire. As a result, interviews ranged between 30 minutes to two hours, with the average interview lasting about one hour and twenty-five minutes. I used a series of pre-prepared questions, which included reference to housing conditions, community experiences, reflections on dispersal areas and other topics in order to ensure that my primary research objectives were being met. However, I also encouraged respondents to speak about their experiences in an open-ended fashion where time allowed in order to enrich the collected data and give space for respondents to unload concerns or frustrations, as many did. In total, transcriptions from interview recordings and notes amounted to approximately 400,000 words.

Interviews were primarily conducted on-site at drop-ins or at centres designed for the purpose of receiving asylum seekers on a regular basis. This allowed respondents to speak with me in a familiar, 'neutral' location (Stewart, 2005: p. 505), and it also prevented the need for them to expend resources or extra time in order to participate. Further, it ensured a degree of safety both for respondents and myself, as agency support staff were present at these locations. On five occasions, I met asylum seekers in their homes, but in each instance, prior contact had been facilitated through a third-party support worker and in all instances but one, I had met the respondent at a local agency prior to conducting the interviews at their nearby residences. All but two interviews with support agency staff were conducted on-site at the organisations' offices. One interview was conducted in a quiet

environment at a local library and another outside a local restaurant. Where possible, I provided potential interviewees with an information sheet outlining the aims of the project prior to our meeting. As some interviews with asylum seekers were ad hoc on a day I was attending one of the drop-in sessions, I provided this document prior to our interview the same day. For those that requested, I read the document aloud before beginning. Further detail about the informed consent process is provided in the section below, titled 'Ethical considerations'. One interview required the use of a translator. While the primary respondent spoke rudimentary English and understood the nature and purpose of my research and felt confident in consenting to participate, he requested that a trusted friend help in the translation of the questions and responses. The translator was also presented with the information contained on the information sheet and signed the informed consent form alongside the primary respondent.

My primary exclusion criteria was age. Due to ethical concerns and the limits of the ethics approval I was granted through the university, I did not interview anyone under the age of 18. The youngest asylum seeker interviewed was 22 years old while the oldest was 51. The median age of the asylum seekers interviewed was 34.5 years; the mean age was similar at 35.5 years. The views of children are extremely important in assessing the full effects of living within dispersed accommodation and some of the impacts the transition into the COMPASS may have had on children's experiences. I relied on accounts of parents with children who were able to provide secondary perspectives on their children's emotional and physiological responses to their housing conditions. I did not exclude anyone on the basis of their ability to speak English, but I realise that I was likely put in contact with asylum seekers that support staff felt could best articulate their feelings about their accommodation experience. There were no doubt many asylum seekers whose limited command of English excluded them from participation in this doctoral research project, and I acknowledge it as a limitation in the representativeness of the data collected. Any others that were passively excluded from this research included asylum seekers that did not access the organisations I approached for the purposes of this thesis and those that I was not put in contact with by support agency staff.

I endeavoured to include a representative sample of respondents across all age ranges provided they were over 18 years old, to include an even spread of individuals identifying as male or female and to ensure both single asylum seekers and those with families were represented in the research. Due to limitations already acknowledged, my use of the snowballing sampling method meant that I interviewed those I was directed to and who were willing to participate in the research. Of the 10 asylum seekers interviewed in Glasgow, nine identified as female and one as male. All nine respondents living in the North East of England in the cities of Middlesbrough and Sunderland were male. Of seven respondents in West Yorkshire, three asylum seekers were female and four were male.

Eight respondents had dependent children living with them in the United Kingdom. Four respondents reported having children outside the United Kingdom. Interview respondents came from a variety of countries, which included but were not limited to: Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Iran, Rwanda, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Lebanon and Algeria. The average amount of time respondents had lived in the United Kingdom at the time of the interview was just over five years; the greatest period was 13 years, and the shortest was two months. The average length of time since each respondent had made their first asylum claim within the United Kingdom was three years; the most recent claimant initially applied for asylum within two months of our interview and the longest period since an initial claim was 12 years.

For the purposes of anonymity, all responses from asylum seekers were anonymised. They were first coded based on date and location of interview and then given pseudonyms. In future, I would consider recommending that the respondent provide their own pseudonym to allow greater input on the part of the participant. In the case of agency support staff, I gave respondents the option to have their comments affiliated with them or their organisation or to have either association (or both) fully anonymised. In the small number of cases in which anonymity was sought, I used pseudonyms. David Blunkett agreed to have his comments attributed to him. Each respondent was asked if they were willing to be recorded for the sole purpose of producing transcriptions for the purposes of this thesis. For those that opted out, I did not use a recording device and instead relied on handwritten notes which I later anonymised and coded; handwritten notes were also taken during interviews in which a recorder was present.

My analysis of the interview data included a full transcription of all recorded material and handwritten notes. A dependency on handwritten notes was necessary in cases in which the respondent did not consent to the interview being recorded. As King and Horrocks (2010) explain, 'there are circumstances where you may be forced to rely on written notes, and where such notes can be of value in the absence of a recording' (p. 47). In my analysis of the interviews, handwritten notes were an important initial resource for developing common themes across different interviews. While King and Horrocks also indicate that transcription of all interviews in full may sometimes be unnecessary (2010: p. 143), I believe the process was essential in developing common themes within interview responses. Transcriptions also allowed for the isolation of specific quotes used to highlight individual interpretations or reflections on asylum seekers' COMPASS housing experiences. Transcripts were organised based on the location of the interview, the interview date and the order in which an individual was interviewed. For instance, if two people were interviewed in West Yorkshire on 19 September 2013, the second interviewee was labeled: WY-19/09/13-02. These labels along with biographical details, such as age, sex, and current housing provider were entered into a spreadsheet to allow

for statistical comparisons to be made. Pseudonyms were also generated at this stage. A thematic analysis of anonymised interview transcripts - or attributable transcripts, where consent was given - was conducted using a selective coding method and the NVivo software suite, version 10 for Windows. I was aware of the subjectivities involved in developing themes, as the researcher's biases and research interests can influence the decision to select certain themes over others. King and Horrocks were again helpful in building awareness of this particular problem. They state that '[I]dentifying themes is never simply a matter of finding something lying within the data like a fossil in a rock. It always involves the researcher in making choices about what to include, what to discard and how to interpret participants' words' (2010: p. 149). With these considerations in mind, I aimed to focus on the use of descriptive codes - codes that emanated from the transcripts - rather than apply interpretive codes early in the coding process. I considered the observation of Ryan and Bernard (2000) as quoted in Packer (2011): '[T]hemes are abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs that investigators identify before, during and after data-collection' (p. 58). In developing my coding structure, I adopted Packer's view that thematic analysis is generally inductive and tracks themes 'common to several interviews' (2011: p. 58). The large amount of interview data necessitated a selective method, though where persistent themes arose from the data, I included these in my analysis. For example, while I had not asked a specific question about the stigmatisation arising from destitute refused asylum seekers' dependence upon the Home Office-issued Azure card, it arose as an issue for enough respondents that I coded for it and include mention of these experiences in chapter 7, section 7.4. In chapter 6, I provide a comprehensive explanation of my coding procedures related to the thematic analysis of asylum seekers' interview responses. Appendix 3 includes a full list of the clusters and nodes used.

### *Ethical considerations*

A core focus of my research examines the impact of the entry of privatised security firms into housing services on asylum seekers' housing experiences, perceptions of their own mental and/or physical health, family life and established social and community bonds. To investigate this, I conducted a series of purposive, semi-structured face-to-face interviews with a range of people, including asylum seekers, asylum support agency staff and volunteers, one public official, and one former staff member of an organisation subcontracted by Serco to house asylum seekers in Glasgow. Naturally, ethical concerns arise in relation to interviewing highly vulnerable groups and other members of the community. Underpinning the whole of this thesis is a firm belief that a fundamental way of limiting the potential risks to vulnerable interviewees such as asylum seekers is to

maintain full transparency as a researcher. Therefore, in this section, I detail the ethical considerations that informed my approach to data collection and my interview methodology, and the practical steps taken to ensure the safety, comfort and trust of the interviewees who spoke to me of their experiences.

Addressing the ethical imperatives of qualitative research, particularly in the context of interviews with respondents from marginalised communities, necessitates a careful exploration of the potential impacts of participants' inclusion within such a study. Kimmel (1988) writes that 'one of the investigator's primary responsibilities is to fulfil subjects' expectations of anonymity and confidentiality [as] this obligation is intricately related to informed consent' (p. 89). While I explain my efforts to ensure interview data remained anonymous and confidential later in this section, it is necessary to emphasise the significance of informed consent and to reinforce its importance in this piece of research. I accept Kimmel's description of informed consent as an ethical and moral imperative; he asserts:

The moral justification for informed consent is that the individual who is to submit to research should be given full opportunity to exercise judgement in order to determine what will be done to his or her mind and body.

(Kimmel, 1988: p. 28)

Under typical university ethics committee rules, achieving the full informed consent of research participants involves full, unambiguous disclosure of the research aims and the implications of a participant's inclusion within the study. Additionally, an informed consent form is provided to the potential interviewee so that their consent is documented in writing. In the case of this research, I have achieved both of these aims, as all participants received information sheets describing the research and all participants completed informed consent documents. However, this is a problematic process, particularly given the potential risk of exposure for participants from marginalised communities. As Miller and Bell (2002) indicate, the promise of anonymity is not always enough to put participants at ease. They state that '[i]ndividuals who identify themselves as socially excluded or belonging to a marginalised group, are unlikely to formally consent in writing to participation in a study' (p. 54). While this was not the case for participants in this research, this reflection is useful in considering the potential for missed opportunities and the silenced voices due to the institutionalised nature of common ethics approval processes.

An overarching consideration was the potential for emotional distress on the part of an interviewee, whether caused by the recollection of painful or traumatic experiences, increased stress due to lower levels of English language proficiency, or anxiety regarding

potential implications that participation could have on their housing situation or immigration status. Many of the practical steps taken throughout the data gathering process were designed to mitigate this potential as far as possible. I sought to reassure participants from the beginning of my contact with them. To identify individual asylum seekers for interview purposes, I initially approached asylum agency support staff, first gauging their own willingness to participate in voluntary interviews in relation to my research, and then working with them to find asylum seeker respondents. The level of trust these staff members had already developed amongst service users was invaluable to my recruitment efforts. In most cases, they were able to explain my intentions to potential participants prior to any formal request made by myself. By working with support staff to facilitate my engagement with asylum seekers, I was able to reassure potential interviewees, and ensure their full understanding of the nature of my research, the reasons I approached them for voluntary participation in my project and the potential benefits such research might have in ensuring a better understanding of the housing conditions of destitute asylum seekers within the United Kingdom. The reliance on 'gatekeepers' like support agency staff in accessing marginalised communities does present potential problems, however. One such issue is the fact that individuals from marginalised groups may feel compelled to participate in the research if asked by a person in a position of relative authority. Miller and Bell (2002) explain that the use of gatekeepers, which is 'implicit within [...] professional research guidelines', assumes that 'providing consent is "voluntary" [and] "coercion" is deemed not to have occurred. Yet such an assumption ignores the potentially complex power dynamics that can operate around access and consent' (p. 56). My efforts to avoid these types of assumptions included meeting individually with asylum seekers and ensuring that they were fully aware that their participation was fully voluntary. However, the use of gatekeepers in itself and the sense of obligation potential respondents may have had to participate in the research may still be subject to scrutiny. Another possible limitation to relying on gatekeepers is the fact that the pool of respondents from the asylum seeking community was limited to those that were known to service support workers and those accessing such services. Citing Muñoz (1983), Kimmel (1988) writes that 'in our well-intended attempts not to coerce people into our research programs, we may be withholding valuable resources from those most in need (p. 78). In other words, the benefits of participation in the research project, such as having experiences acknowledged and chronicled, are unavailable to those who were not sought for participation. Given the difficulty in accessing willing respondents of marginalised groups like asylum seekers, the likelihood of omitting important voices is undoubtably high. However, I hope that in providing a relatively diverse sample of interview respondents within other practical constraints of this research, I have helped minimise the effects of non-participation due to selection biases.



Once I received a prospective participant's informal agreement to voluntarily participate in an interview, I presented each potential interviewee with an information sheet and consent form for his or her review (either in person or via e-mail or post). I attempted to alleviate any sense of pressure or stress by ensuring that each participant was consistently reminded throughout the entire process that his or her participation was entirely voluntary, and that they could freely opt out of their inclusion in the research project at any time, including after the interview process. On the date of the interview, I provided the interviewee with a paper copy of the information sheet and consent form, offering the opportunity to ask any further questions or opt out of the interview process prior to signing the consent form. In the one instance in which a translator was used, the translator received the same information sheet as the primary interviewee and signed a declaration asserting their willingness to participate in a facilitatory role in the research project.

While mindful of the need to present a rich dataset for my intended research, I was also compelled to ensure that asylum seekers participating in the study could be free from fear of reprisal by their housing provider, confident that their immigration status would remain unaffected and aware of the support options available to them if our conversations were to unearth particularly distressing memories. I have therefore coded my data sets fully, particularly that information that relates to asylum seekers, and used pseudonyms for all asylum seeker interview subjects. I ensured all respondents were aware that their information would be fully anonymised, and within this thesis, I have removed identifying particulars from all asylum seeker data including name, exact age, country of origin, detailed family composition, exact date of arrival, their specific locality of residence and their asylum application status. Where anonymity was requested by support or housing staff, I generalised their professional position and region and used pseudonyms where required. To protect personal data, I managed my data in accordance with the requirements of the ELMPS Committee. For instance, I ensured that recordings, transcriptions and consent forms were held securely through a variety of encryption techniques and careful storage. Marshall and Rossman (2011) highlight the need for reciprocity within qualitative research, which they identify as 'giving time to help out [respondents], providing informal feedback, making coffee, being a good listener, or tutoring' (p. 121). Given the financial constraints of self-funded research, participants were not paid for taking part in this project. I did not have the excess resources to commit to offering an incentive for participation. While this may have limited the scope of my research in that I was only able to interview those willing to participate without a financial incentive, I avoided the ethical concerns relating to the potential for coercion or unfulfilled expectations. I did not offer research participants any reimbursement of expenses apart from one instance in which I paid for a respondent's bus fare. However, I believe

reciprocity was achieved in other respects, including Marshall and Rossman's informal methods like listening carefully and conscientiously to individuals' accounts. I also participated in small ways, such as donating clothing to a drop-in service where I sourced interviewees for this thesis.

In closing, I aim to highlight a final consideration that underpins my approach toward methodological practice and informs the entirety of the thesis. The importance of reflexivity within the research process is particularly acute in the context of pursuing an investigation of asylum seekers' housing experiences within the United Kingdom. Reflexivity is an active process, which demands the researcher remain engaged with a critical view of their position within the research and the subjectivities and biases he or she brings to the research environment. King and Horrocks (2010) describe reflexivity in the following way:

[R]eflexivity responds to the realisation that researchers and the methods they use are entangled in the politics and practices of the social world. This realisation brings about the unavoidable acceptance that doing social research is an active and interactive process engaged in by individual subjects, with emotions and theoretical and political commitments.

(p. 126)

In pursuing this research, I have maintained an objective stance while realising that my own experiences and biases continue to shape my ontological perspectives. In my view, the researcher cannot be fully extracted from his or her own ideologies, as such 'underlying beliefs and ideologies [...] formulate and drive the research' (ibid: p. 128). Instead, I believe that it is necessary to pursue what Gill (1995 cited in King and Horrocks, 2010) describes as accountable reflexivity; once we 'have accepted that research cannot be value-free, we should actually be explicit about particular agendas' (ibid: p. 134). This may mean seeking to go beyond 'doing no harm' and instead becoming an active participant in the promotion of respondents' well-being.

MacKenzie *et al.* (2007) explain that researchers of vulnerable groups must do more than simply 'do no harm'; the researcher must 'aim to bring about reciprocal benefits for refugee participants and/or communities' (MacKenzie *et al.*, 2007: p. 301). Throughout this thesis, I hope to provide a full and impartial account of individual experiences; in future, I aim to publish generalised findings from my collected data in order to raise public awareness of asylum seekers' perceptions of their experiences within the COMPASS housing estate. During the course of my research, a potential respondent was detained in an immigration removal centre before our interview could take place. Upon the individual's request, I provided contact details for Public Interest Lawyers in Birmingham. That person

was eventually released from detention, but I do not know their whereabouts and have not had further contact. While there are compelling arguments to be made for maintaining full distance from research subjects and remaining purely observational as an individual researcher, I find that Baillot *et al.* (2013) put forth a more convincing perspective; they state that, in some cases, emotionality is appropriate when dealing with human suffering, loss and distress and that too great a reliance on 'neutrality' and 'professional distance' can be harmful. Throughout this thesis, I have pursued an impartial approach to the research process, but did not prioritise emotional disengagement in my interviews with research participants.

## Chapter 1: Navigating theories of biopower

Much of the literature on refugee experiences within the British asylum process depicts state power as both sweeping and repressive; the inherent exclusiveness of citizenship and the securitisation of migrant populations are presented as key components of state restrictionism. Reports of oppressive immigration policies and asylum seekers' enforced destitution seem to confirm the representation of the British state as the supreme arbiter of exclusion. Asylum seekers' restricted access to housing and the construction of their 'otherness' are articulated as designs of a British state intent on preventing them from developing a sense of domestic belonging within the country (Silove, Steel *et al.* 2000; Darling, 2011; Tyler, 2010). It is argued that, through legislation, the state utilises apparatuses of power to entomb asylum seekers within a perpetual state of 'inclusive exclusion' within Britain's borders (Diken, 2004; Edkins and Pin-Fat, 2005). Indeed, as I address in chapter 2, immigration policies and practices over the last millennium reaffirm the state's pedigree of exclusionary attitudes and tactics in the management of migrant populations. More recent techniques of state power, such as the indefinite detention of asylum seekers, the incarceration of asylum-seeking children and the UK government's no-choice dispersed housing policy for destitute asylum seekers further demonstrate the state's ability to frame asylum-seeking within the language of external threats and domestic vulnerability. These positions are at times at odds with the state's commitments to international human rights agreements and its duties to protect minority groups from domination by majority will. Bloch and Schuster (2005) refer to the United Kingdom's policies of dispersal, deportation and detention as weapons in the 'state's arsenal of control'; they state that the use of these tactics has intensified (Bloch and Schuster, 2005: p. 508). Emma Stewart (2005) writes that attention must be paid to 'the "vulnerable" individual [and the] state mechanisms which cause or exacerbate experiences of vulnerability' (Stewart, 2005: p. 509). These representations of state power help formulate an understanding of the legal apparatuses and logics underpinning exclusionary forms of immigration control.

The carceral logic of the UK government's asylum policy is illuminated in Bloch and Schuster's (2005) identification of three manifestations of state control operating on asylum seekers lives: detention, dispersal and deportation. '[T]hese measures', they write, 'have become an integral part of the migration regime in the course of a decade' (p. 493). These forms of control are interrelated in the sense that they each represent an attempt to limit individual agency and demarcate the boundaries of inclusion for asylum-seeking populations. Bloch and Schuster reveal the exclusionary function of each strategy, stating:

While deportation is an explicit form of exclusion from the territory of the state, detention is both 'enclosure' within a camp or prison, and exclusion from the receiving society. Dispersal, perhaps counter-intuitively, is also a form of exclusion [...]. Dispersal takes away asylum seekers' freedom to choose where they settle in Britain and so doing it removes them from kinship and other social networks as well as community organisations that are known to be crucial in the early stages of settlement (Carey Wood *et al.* 1995; Bloch 2002; Robinson *et al.* 2003).

(Bloch and Schuster, 2005: p. 493)

These forms of control are related at an operational level as well. Companies, such as Serco and G4S, which have been contracted to transport asylum seekers to airports for deportation and between detention facilities are now the very firms operating asylum housing under the UK government's current dispersal programme, COMPASS. However, while connections can be made between these expressions of state control, it is important to remain mindful, as Bloch and Schuster do, that these tactics are distinct and do not operate on all asylum seekers in a total or uniform way. For instance, not every asylum seeker has been detained, though many may have experienced exclusionary practices during their initial claim period, throughout appeals processes or following their no-choice dispersal. In addition, while the private operators of detention and dispersal may be representatives of the same security firms, individual employees will be bound by different expectations based on the nature of the service and specific contractual obligations. Indeed, it is the very lack of cohesiveness and predictability in the management of asylum seekers that perhaps best demonstrates government aims to undermine asylum seekers' sense of belonging within the country.

Joel Migdal's (2001) distinction between the 'image' and 'practices' of the state is useful in demonstrating the plurality of power within and outside the organisation of the state while it simultaneously maintains an exterior guise of 'a dominant, integrated, autonomous entity that controls, in a given territory, all rule making, either directly through its own agencies or indirectly by sanctioning other authorised organisations' (Migdal, 2001: p. 16). Within this framework, the state's commitments to humanitarianism can exist alongside its practice of isolating and excluding asylum seekers from access to full support or the ability to seek paid work. Migdal's 'state-in-society' model deconstructs the notion of the state as a unitary actor with a well-formed ideological vision. For Migdal, 'the state is constructed and reconstructed, invented and reinvented, through its interaction as a whole and of its parts with others. It is not a fixed entity' (*ibid.*, p. 23). This perspective helps develop a more critical understanding of the techniques of power expressed throughout formal and informal networks and between individuals and various agencies.

The theme of this thesis - the privatisation of asylum housing - depends on a construction of state power that allows for both formal and informal expressions of power as *outcomes* of individual relationships and the discretionary practices of state-contracted organisations like G4S, Serco and their respective subcontractors. Equally important is the capacity for resistance within models of containment and isolation, something that is not always addressed in literature on asylum and refugee studies, though some writers have taken care to acknowledge that state actors do not necessarily share a unitary vision (Shacknove, 1993: p. 518; Gill, 2010 in Darling, 2011: p. 270). Certain qualitative and critical studies aside (see: Bailey, 2009; Baynham, 2006; Crawley, 2010), asylum seekers are not always ascribed the same level of independent agency attributed to those seeking to exclude them. This may be due, in part, to the nature of the questions being asked of asylum seekers in interviews aimed at depicting their experiences of anxiety, destitution and social exclusion. Much focus has been on asylum seekers' continued subjugation and victimisation through state policy, the media and public opinion. Paradoxically, it is within the popular press, in which asylum seekers are often portrayed as exploitative or subversive, that they are attributed a semblance of agency. News stories emphasising asylum seekers' penchant for criminality or their engagement in 'welfare tourism' paint them as active figures seeking to extract value out of the country; this is an image decidedly different to that of the victimised asylum seeker who exists in a perpetual state of passivity and silent fear. This representation of asylum seekers and migrants as active figures coming to the United Kingdom with malignant intent is also a dominant political narrative proposed by the mainstream parties, at least since the late 1980s.

In the last decade, a range of literature has emerged linking the plight of the asylum seeker and other migrants to the oppressive designs of the British state as a totalising force; the work of Giorgio Agamben has been particularly influential in expressing the relationship between 'bare life' and the sovereign power of the state in instituting exclusionary tactics and draconian policies (see: Edkins and Pin-Fat, 2005; Schinkel, 2009; Klein and Williams, 2012; Perera, 2002; Evans, 2003). Agamben has effectively returned the sovereign to pre-eminence in his representation of biopower, and in so doing, deviates markedly from the form of diffuse biopower Michel Foucault offers in *The History of Sexuality* and in his lectures at the Collège de France. I argue that an overemphasis on sovereign power results in a neglect of the immanent powers arising from within the population itself. While many of the techniques of power operating within and above the population result in the vilification of asylum seekers and an emphasis of their otherness, various nodes of power exist which serve to qualify and even contradict those narratives. As Stefano Lucarelli (2010) writes of his interpretation of biopower, 'the relation of power to the subject or, more precisely to the individual, cannot be based merely on subjection' (Lucarelli, 2010: p. 121). The research findings in this dissertation

are more consistent with the positions adopted by Papastergiadis (2006), Owens (2009), Darling (2009), Mountz (2011) and Ramadan (2012), who find Agamben's analysis of 'bare life' and sovereign supremacy lacking in its ability to address the multitudinous actors involved in the repression and advocacy of asylum seekers and neglects the possibility for resistance both within and against the state. Imogen Tyler (2006) offers another critical reflection on Agamben's work. She writes:

In [Agamben's] hands, the refugee becomes a sentimental trope [...]. Agamben proposes that radical politics must oppose the very idea of "legality". However, it is patently unclear how opposing legality per se can translate into material forms of opposition to the detention of asylum-seekers, or indeed be mobilised in ways that will grant asylum-seekers the possibility of the agency that they desperately require.

(Tyler, 2006: p. 197)

As Tyler suggests, the agency of asylum seekers exists and it is often facilitated through legal opposition to state rulings and the work of refugee and asylum agencies functioning with marginalised groups' interests in mind. Indeed, it is through the very apparatuses of the state and its legal system that effective challenges against asylum seekers' treatment have been achieved. Through the use of data collected on asylum seekers' experiences within current government housing schemes and qualitative interviews with refugee and asylum seeker service representatives, I offer further empirical grounding for the theoretical and practical work offering counter narratives to Agamben's 'bare life'. Agamben's notions of the 'state of exception' and the 'camp' help develop a conceptualised view of asylum seekers' containment and management within securitised zones, such as detention, which exist 'outside the juridical order', but are still subject to the 'force of law' (see: Agamben 1998; 2005).

My intention is not to abandon the Agambenian notion of power as expressed through the state, as the state wields an unquestionable degree of control over asylum seekers' lives. Indeed, even for Foucault, the state remained an important site of biopolitical influence. As Ann Stoler (1995) explains, Foucault is aware that 'state institutions foster and draw on new independent disciplines of knowledge and in turn harness these micro-fields of power as they permeate the body politic at large' (Stoler, 1995: p. 28). With this in mind, I wish to return to a Foucauldian understanding of power, which states that power is decentralised and 'not appropriated in the way that wealth or a commodity can be appropriated' (Foucault, 2004: p. 29). This opens the door for the familiar discussion of how state power has been used to control and subjugate asylum

seekers, but also explains the avenues of resistance that can develop through the very same mechanisms that repressive policies generate.

In the move toward a presentation of state power more akin to Giorgio Agamben's 'state of exception' or a top-down approach to sovereignty, as presented by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000), the subtleties of Foucault's original concept have been somewhat blunted. The most concise explanation of Michel Foucault's concept of biopower is found within the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, and while he further articulates its core features during a 1976 lecture at the Collège de France, he never returns to the concept directly (Gane, 2008: p. 353). As Rabinow and Rose (2006) indicate, Foucault's promise to 'flesh out his sweeping generalisations' on biopower in later volumes of *The History of Sexuality* remains largely unfulfilled (Rabinow and Rose, 2006: p. 196), and the underdevelopment of Foucault's specific brand of biopower has placed it at risk of misinterpretation and misappropriation. The potential for multiple readings is reinforced by the fact that Foucault actively encourages others to consider themselves free to use his material for their own purposes, referring to his own proposals as 'instruments' (Gane, 2008: p. 354). This does not mean, however, that Foucault is wholly indifferent about the ends to which his concepts are used. In the opening of Foucault's lecture on 07 January 1976, he tells his audience:

Ultimately, what you do with [my ideas] both concerns me and is none of my business. It is none of my business to the extent that it is not up to me to lay down the law about the use you make of it. And it does concern me to the extent that, one way or another, what you do with it is connected, related to what I am doing.

(Foucault, 2003: p. 2)

While Foucault encourages the dissemination of his ideas, it is unclear what he would deem an appropriate use of his material. Foucault's turn away from direct discussions of biopower in subsequent lectures left a void that has since been filled with new interpretive approaches that have not always remained faithful to his initial concept. The work of Giorgio Agamben, for instance, bears greater resemblance to Foucault's description of disciplinary societies and traditional sovereign power than it does to the 'society of control'.

For Foucault, the development of biopower is very much dependent on specific conditions arising throughout European history from the seventeenth century onward, and it is debatable whether these concepts were ever intended to be transferrable to other eras and circumstances. Mathew Coleman and Kevin Grove (2009) suggest that Foucault's theory of biopower is both 'time-specific and place-specific', and that any use



outside of its original setting must be exercised with caution; they refer to biopower as a 'geographically and historically grounded investigation of state power' (Coleman and Grove, 2009: pp. 489, 491). Rabinow and Rose share this view, stating: 'The concept of biopower - like that of discipline - was not trans-historical or metaphoric, but precisely grounded in historical, or genealogical, analysis' (Rabinow and Rose, 2006: p. 199). The basis for this strict interpretation of Foucault's theory is evidenced in his own writing. He describes the development of biopower as a sequential event that began with the development of a power over the body during the seventeenth century. The maximisation of human potential and the 'extortion' of the body's capabilities became predominant themes within the disciplinary society of this period. From the eighteenth century onwards, as pandemic health threats waned, greater emphasis was placed on regulating populations within what both Foucault and Deleuze refer to as 'the society of control' (Deleuze, 1995; Foucault, 1998: pp. 139, 142).

While the society of control may have its roots in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Foucault does not discourage the application of his concepts to other situations. In fact, he actively promotes the use of his ideas for new purposes, referring to his notions as 'schemata' for others to 'do what [they] like with them' (Foucault, 2003: p. 2). Perhaps the larger point of concern is not the transposition of biopower from an eighteenth century context to that of our modern era, but the confusion of the concepts of discipline and regulation. In his lectures, Foucault proposes that there has been a turn away from disciplinary power identifiable by its carceral forms of punishment toward a 'new technology of power' that acts on 'man-as-species' rather than 'man-as-body' (Foucault, 2003 in Macey, 2009: p. 188; Foucault, 2003: p. 242). While disciplinary techniques are still present in this new form of 'bio-power', both the mechanisms and intended use of power are vastly different. Biopower is understood as 'the power to make live' and let die rather than the power to make die and 'let live' (Foucault 2003: p. 247).

As biopolitical strategies are aimed at the promotion of life rather than the constant threat of death present in the disciplinary power of the sovereign, the dynamics between the state and its subjects are altered. It is within this new biopolitical space that the defence of the population results in its purification through the filtering out of abnormalities, or outsiders (Foucault, 2003: p. 257). In this respect, Agamben's description of the 'sacred man' as one that is abandoned rather than overtly killed corresponds closely to Foucault's explanation of 'state racism', identified by the state's efforts to 'separate out the groups that exist within a population' (Foucault, 2003: p. 255). Where Agamben falters is in reinstating what Peter Gratton (2006) regards as a 'retroversion' and 'naive view of power' - the power of the sovereign - which Foucault was attempting to move away from in his lectures and within the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (Gratton, 2006: p. 446). Foucault explains that power arising within the

population cannot be viewed as simply an expression of sovereign power. Power is expressed through a series of discrete networks and interactions. He writes: 'We have to abandon the model of Leviathan, that model of ... a unitary man who contains all real individuals, whose body is made up of citizens but whose soul is sovereignty' (Foucault, 2003: p. 34). The technology of power, as expressed through biopower represents a 'new body, a multiple body, a body with so many heads that, while they might not be infinite in number, cannot necessarily be counted' (ibid., p. 245). Foucault is clear in his distinction between 'the mechanisms of discipline' and the 'apparatuses of security', but theorists like Agamben and Hardt and Negri, who fail to maintain the dividing lines between these two concepts, threaten to further obfuscate the meaning of biopower. While a misreading of biopower may seem unimportant when isolated within individual texts, the significance is greater when these altered views become the basis for real-world responses to policy proposals. To adopt Agamben's outlook as a working model, Darling explains, would result in the rejection of the state's categorisation of life, but also the denial of the possibility of political resistance within existing frameworks (Darling, 2009: pp. 652-653). This would do little to measurably improve the experiences of asylum seekers living in destitution or detention.

Foucault does not promise to provide a grand theory of power, but rather an 'analytics' of power relations that are unshackled by the common representation of power as both centralised and repressive (Foucault, 1998: p. 82). In his analysis, Foucault is attempting to move away from 'rule-governed [...] forms of power which have a single centre.' He believes power can be understood better through 'looking at its extremities, at its outer limits at the point where it becomes capillary' (Foucault, 2003: p. 27). It is through this peripheral form of power, which exists within the population rather than above it, that the relationships between asylum seekers, the state, private firms, voluntary organisations and local residents are articulated. Foucault's 'infinitesimal mechanisms' of power therefore emerge as a useful lens through which to illustrate asylum seekers' struggle for legitimisation (ibid., p. 30). I continue this chapter with a review and critique of Agamben's representation of state power and his description of the 'camp', and I assess the appropriateness of applying the theory to recent asylum housing developments. The theory of biopower presented by Agamben and Hardt and Negri will be contrasted with Foucault's initial concept and I will consider the implications this approach has had on refugee and asylum research. I contextualise Foucault's concept of biopower within the historical and contemporary developments of immigration and asylum policy in order to emphasise the capacity for resistance existing within populations that Agamben either neglects or disregards outright. While resistance does not take the form of Hardt and Negri's utopian 'multitude', opposition to the state's so-called 'deliberate policy of destitution' (Darling, 2009: p. 246) exists within government, civil society and legal

institutions. I conclude by returning to Foucault's presentation of 'state racism' and describing the ways in which the biopolitics of border maintenance and belonging are converging into the very homes asylum seekers inhabit.

### *1.1 The Agambenian dimension to asylum studies*

Giorgio Agamben's introduction of the concept of 'bare life' in *Homo Sacer* (1998) triggered a deluge of academic literature that has either embraced or rejected his view of the refugee (and by extension, the asylum seeker) as the archetypical biopolitical construction of the sovereign state. Those wishing to emphasise the indeterminacy of asylum seekers' territorial belonging and their plight as victims of the full might of state power are apt to adopt Agamben's views, while those arguing for greater acknowledgement of asylum seekers' agency and capacity for resistance are more likely to contest them. The debate often centres on Agamben's interpretation of sovereignty and the many critiques levelled against him concentrate on his supposed misunderstanding or misrepresentation of Foucault's notion of biopower. While those criticisms will be addressed later in this section, I begin with a brief overview of Agamben's concepts and consider the ways in which his ideas have been considered by writers in the area of asylum studies.

Agamben advances Carl Schmitt's definition of sovereignty, which positions the sovereign as 'he who decides upon the state of exception' (Agamben, 1998: p. 11; Schmitt, 1996 in Bredekamp, 1999: pp. 251-252). In this view, the sovereign is a totalising force that is capable of using the law to place himself outside the juridical order to initiate a state of exception (Schmitt, 1985 in Agamben, 1998: p. 15). The sovereign is, therefore, both the source and the beneficiary of a legal system that allows it to act with the 'force of law' while remaining external to the juridical order (Agamben, 2005: p. 39). During states of emergency, the sovereign can suspend the rule of law and act outside of it until circumstances are normalised. However, the determination as to when a situation is under control remains the prerogative of the sovereign, and while Schmitt conceived of the state of exception as a response to extraordinary circumstances, Agamben adopts Walter Benjamin's view that 'the state of exception has become the rule' (Benjamin, 1942 quoted in Agamben, 2005: p. 6). To demonstrate this, Agamben points to the passage of the U.S.A. Patriot Act in 2001 and the erasure of 'any legal status of the individual' as an example of a sovereign power instituting the state of exception in perpetuity (Agamben, 2005: pp. 3-4). Indeed, President Barack Obama's decision to endorse the 2011 National Defense Authorization Act might be identified as a further entrenchment of this exception as it allows American citizens to be held indefinitely without trial (Nakamura, 2011). Agamben also points to the 1929 Emergency Powers Act as an example in British history

when the sovereign was granted the power to declare a state of emergency (Agamben, 2005: p. 19). A brief consideration of the development of UK immigration policy over the last two hundred years reveals equally illustrative examples of the expansion of the exception-as-rule.

While the 1793 Aliens Act was issued in response to an influx of French refugees and popular fears that rebellious attitudes would spill over into Britain (Walters, 2002: p. 278; Saunders, 2003: p. 25), it was intended as a temporary measure (Dinwiddy, 1968: p. 194). So too was the 1905 Aliens Act, which expanded the Secretary of State's control over border management and empowered immigration officers and medical officers to refuse entry to unwanted migrants (Aliens Act 1905, s.1(1), s.3, s.8(4) in Wray, 2006: pp. 311-312). Following the First World War, however, the emphasis on temporary measures shifted to an adherence to long-term restrictions and expanded discretionary powers in the hands of individual immigration officials and the Home Secretary. When the war drew to a close, the provisions of the 1914 Aliens Registration Act, which hastily granted great latitude to the Home Secretary in regards to the deportation of aliens, were extended to peacetime and renewed year on year until the 1971 Immigration Act was introduced (Coleman, 1987: p. 1145; Money, 1997: p. 699; Bloch and Schuster, 2005: p. 494). The expanded discretion given to immigration officers in the 1971 Act and the Home Secretary's power to detain 'persons pending examination or pending removal from the United Kingdom' represented a codification of powers previously limited to exceptional circumstances (Immigration Act 1971, s4(2)(d), Sch. 2). With the expansion of detention centres, the introduction of dispersal schemes and the reduction of benefits provided to destitute asylum seekers in subsequent policies, the British government relegated asylum seekers to an interstitial space between recognition and abandonment; their presence was acknowledged only insofar as they were actively banned from involvement with and engagement in British society.

The object of exception, whether represented by untried Guantanamo Bay prisoners or asylum seekers detained in Yarl's Wood or Brook House, is one who is inclusively excluded under sovereign authority. In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben defines the 'sacred man' as one who cannot be sacrificed, but whose murder is not condemnable (Agamben, 1998: p. 71). In other words, the 'sacred man' represents a life that is unworthy of acknowledgement through spiritual ritual and is so worthless that his death is not punishable by law. The 'sacred man' is, according to Agamben, one who exists 'outside both human and divine law' (ibid., p. 73); where such 'bare life' *does* appear within the law, it arises as an active exclusion. In Agamben's words:

At once excluding bare life from and capturing it within the political order, the state of exception actually constituted, in its very separateness, the hidden foundation on which the entire political system rested.

(ibid., p. 9)

For Agamben, this 'bare life' is most plainly exposed in the camp, an extreme 'space of exception' where the interned and the refugee become the embodiment of bare life in their absolute abjection and the ambiguity of their belonging. Though concealed from society behind walls and barbed wire, detainees are nevertheless under scrutiny of constant guard with their daily activities carefully routinised. The methods of surveillance and techniques of population control employed to secure these groups represent a suspension of the rule of law where the exception has become the norm. The perpetuation of a 'state of danger' must always be maintained, as the secure society depends on the ceaseless identification and categorisation of the foreign; social identity is derived from this exclusion of the other (ibid., p. 169, pp. 173-174). Agamben stresses the fact that the camp is not representative of a total absence of juridical order. Instead, the camp is the expression of the sovereign's ability to frame the exception within the juridical order itself (ibid., p. 170).

Agamben's concepts have been influential in asylum research, and his description of bare life has been used as a way of illustrating the lived experiences of asylum seekers whose existence is acknowledged mainly through their ostracism from the rights and recognition of citizens. These accounts can be persuasive in positioning the asylum seeker as a victim of the state's violent authority and they demonstrate the potential futility in waging political resistance against the machine of the state, which utilises surveillance and exclusion as its favoured instruments of control. Brian Turner (2007) has described these mechanisms as part of an 'immobility regime' which seeks to 'protect residential populations' by restricting access into its territory and reinforcing an ontology of the criminal migrant (Turner, 2007: p. 289). Adopting Agamben's description of camps as spaces of exception where the rule of law no longer applies, Turner points to other 'camps', such as gated communities and prisons, where the chief aim is protection from foreign dangers both without and within.

Turner's contribution to social theory is his proposition that the development of spaces of exception and processes of 'bio-sequestration' have extended far beyond the walls of the concentration camp and have taken shape in the form of an 'enclave society' where 'governments and other agencies seek to regulate spaces and ... immobilize flows of people, goods and services' (ibid., p. 290). This envelopment of segments of the population into enclaves where the rule of law is suspended allows the state to reaffirm its sovereignty and encompass the whole of society under a unified 'moral arch' (Corrigan

and Sayer, 1985 in Turner, 2007: p. 295). Turner writes that the positioning of the migrant as a 'hostile stranger', which society needs to be protected against is 'closely related to conceptions about rights and membership of the household' (Turner, 2007: p. 298). This domestic-themed approach to citizenship and belonging is similar to the concept of 'domopolitics' advanced by William Walters (2004) and Jonathan Darling (2011), which encompasses methods of securitisation and governance and the 'reconfiguring of the relations between citizenship, state and territory' (Walters, 2004: p. 241).

Domopolitics is a way of conceptualising issues of international security and population management within the context of the home. Walters explains that domopolitics is underpinned by a logic of protecting "our" values, "our" way of life' (ibid., p. 247). By situating the other as something outside the domestic space that is deviant and criminal, the state manufactures a need for greater securitisation and tighter border controls. The defence of society does not end at the territorial boundary of the nation-state, as the foreigner is capable of breaching this boundary both legally and illegally. Securitisation is, therefore, internalised with new sites of surveillance emerging within the state; the state develops techniques to aid in the classification and the pacification of perceived threats (ibid., p. 251). Through this process, the state is able to develop a narrative of the asylum seeker that is marked by illegitimacy and danger.

Jonathan Darling has adopted the concept of domopolitics to describe the British state's method of dispersing asylum seekers to different locations around the country. Since the adoption of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, asylum seekers have faced compulsory, non-negotiable relocation to areas outside London and the South East. Darling writes that the 'machinery of dispersal ... acts as a mode of regulation on a population constructed as disorderly and threatening' (Conlon, 2010 and Gill, 2009 in Darling, 2011a: p. 267). Crucially, Darling has linked this process of surveillance and population management to the methods of practice adopted by asylum seeker accommodation providers. When Darling was writing in 2011, the housing of asylum seekers was largely carried out through contractual agreements between the government and various consortia of local authorities and private companies. He explains that the government 'designates the location and form that accommodation takes' and this represents a 'significant power in disciplining and controlling the lives of those accommodated within a system of domopolitics' (Darling, 2011: p. 268). Today, it might be argued that the government has expanded its reach into asylum seekers' lives by abandoning its contracts with local governments and instead making deals with the nation's three largest private security firms: Serco, Reliance<sup>1</sup> and G4S. Notable for their

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<sup>1</sup> Reliance was acquired by Capita in August 2012. All references to Reliance in this thesis are related to the period of the acquisition of the COMPASS contract, which occurred before the Capita change.

involvement in the detention and transportation of asylum seekers, these companies have been viewed as an extension of the state with an ever greater capacity to monitor and report on the movements of asylum seekers housed by their subcontractors. Having maintained close ties with the UK Border Agency as managers of many of its detention and removal centres, these firms have developed poor reputations amongst asylum seekers and some fear the prospect of life under the gaze of virtual government agents. Grayson (2012), addresses the potential for detention-like surveillance in the delivery of COMPASS housing provision:

Target, a subcontractor for G4S administering asylum housing provision in Sheffield, explained that it would monitor its residents and report to the UK Border Agency if it believed asylum seekers were engaged in suspicious activity, involved in paid employment or 'living beyond the means of their support.

(Grayson, 2012)

Agreements with private security firms also raise questions about the government's accountability for potentially controversial human rights practices conducted by its business partners. Since the introduction of the 1971 Immigration Act, private companies have carried out the administration of many of the United Kingdom's detention centres. Bevan (1986) explains that private security personnel are not members of a 'police force [and are] not therefore subject to the normal guidance over detention conditions such as the Police Disciplinary Code' (Bevan, 1986: p. 355). The diversification of G4S, Reliance and Serco into the asylum housing market raises further questions about the limits of responsibility and the ineffectiveness of international human rights agreements in protecting the lives of asylum seekers housed by these corporations. For instance, while the UK is currently bound by Article 3 of the European Commission on Human Rights, which prevents it from engaging in 'inhuman or degrading treatment', the obligations of private subcontractors are more ambiguous. While individual employees of security firms may face legal consequences for questionable actions, it is difficult to implicate the state in these matters, as it has effectively outsourced its ethical and humanitarian responsibilities. Failed asylum seekers are therefore left exposed not only to the physical and emotional traumas associated with destitution and abandonment, but possible subjection to the excessive use of force without adequate recourse for complaint.

Indeed, as Darling states, 'the failed asylum seeker is effectively rendered *homo sacer*' by being denied the right to work and access to adequate means of support (Darling, 2009: p. 651).

### *1.2 Challenging Agamben and considering asylum housing through a new lens: Hollifield's 'Liberal Paradox'*

Darling (2009) explains that Agamben neglects the possibility for a political challenge to the state's hegemonic control over life. For Agamben, the current order is flawed, and the sovereign's construction of bare life must be dismissed categorically. Quoting Mills (2004), Darling states that Agamben 'rejects any notion of immanent resistance and argues instead for the necessity of a messianic event' (Mills, 2004 quoted in Darling, 2009: p. 660). However, Darling argues that political and ethical appeals are still possible even when operating within the constraints of the sovereign ban (Darling, 2009: pp. 655-656). He points to the flawed but partial attempt by Tony Blair's Labour government to introduce the Gateway Protection Programme, which welcomes 'legitimate' refugees into the country through a process separate from the typical asylum route. The government offers 750 vulnerable refugees a chance to settle in the UK following a series of health inspections and lifestyle and language tests which are intended to aid in their assimilation into the country (ibid., p. 658; Home Office 2012b). The biopolitical implications of this scheme are clear, Darling writes, as it reinforces the exclusionary asylum policies already in place and represents another method for which the state can exercise its sovereign ban through the use of evaluations and monitoring; the programme is, however, of some benefit to those it serves (Darling, 2009: p. 661).

There are other examples Darling could have used to contest Agamben's reduction of biopower to 'the power of the sovereign' (ibid., p. 660). For instance, the success of campaigns that have overturned government policies on immigration have generally arisen from within the population with the support of activist groups and supportive lawyers. Struggles to block deportations, end the practice of child detention and reverse discriminatory immigration rules are often initiated with individual cases that are advanced through the efforts of a network of committed people. For instance, following a Supreme Court ruling in October 2011, the Home Office was compelled to change its spousal visa policy from a requirement that the foreign applicant and UK-born partner each be twenty-one years of age to an expectation that they be at least eighteen. Diego Quila failed in his application for a marriage visa due to the fact that he and his wife, Amber Aguilar, were both under twenty-one when he applied. The High Court sided against Quila and Aguilar and the case was brought forward to the Court of Appeal, which found the Home Office in violation of the couple's human rights. The Home Office made a



subsequent appeal to the Supreme Court, but the previous decision was upheld and the immigration legislation was found to be in conflict with the UK's commitments to Article 8 of the ECHR. The couple benefited from the case's high profile and the fact that they were supported by a lawyer and charity - Richenda Buxton, a solicitor for the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants - that espouse a commitment to human rights.

More recently in March 2015, the local campaign 'Close Campsfield' was successful in persuading the government to withdraw its planning application to expand Campsfield Immigration Centre in Oxfordshire from 256 to 566 places. The government recently announced plans to close Haslar immigrant detention centre near Portsmouth, and proposed a 28-day time limit on the detention of asylum seekers and migrants (Close Campsfield, 2015; Fishwick, 2015; Hansard, 2015). Similar organisations, such as the Migrants' Rights Network, have made other appeals to Parliament on behalf of immigrants, in the hope that restrictive policies will be reversed. In response to the expansion of G4S and other firms into the housing asylum market, the South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Group (SYMAAG) has teamed with small asylum service providers to identify cases in which asylum seekers have experienced adverse living conditions under the watch of private security companies; their ultimate aim is to bring an end to the government's contract with the organisations (SYMAAG, 2012; Van Steenberg, 2012). These resistance efforts serve to qualify the view that UK asylum policy and practice represent an omnipotence of state power. Instead, power is expressed through the actions and interactions of multiple agencies, some closely aligned with state agendas and others in direct opposition to them.

Agamben's concepts remain useful insofar as they help illustrate the extremity of asylum seekers' experiences. Indeed, in chapters 6 and 7, I rely heavily upon an Agambenian perspective to highlight the conditions of asylum seekers' housing and the degree to which respondents' viewed their experiences within COMPASS accommodation as reflective of a state of utter abjection. However, there are additional grounds with which Agamben's conceptions of sovereign power and bare life can be critiqued, particularly if the political complexities of the UK government's privatised asylum housing regime can be fully realised. Within the context of neoliberal state agendas, such as the advancement of markets and the openness of corporate competition, the management of asylum seekers is also informed by neoliberal imperatives. It is helpful, therefore, to engage with the work of James Hollifield, who unpacks some of the incongruities of a purely restrictionist approach to immigration within neoliberal systems. His notion of the 'liberal paradox', which I detail below, can be adapted to inform the competing influences of market liberalisation and sovereign imperatives of domestic protectionism at play within the context of asylum housing in the United Kingdom.

Hollifield (2004) explains that immigration presents a challenge to the sovereignty of the nation-state, 'in the sense that the (unauthorised) movement of individuals across national boundaries can violate the principle of sovereignty, which requires a degree of territorial closure' (Hollifield, 1994; Sassen, 1996; Joppke, 1998 in Hollifield, 2004: p. 887). Hollifield continues, stating that a movement of migrants within the territory of the state threatens the state's ability to carry out one of its essential functions: its ability to 'identify its population vis-à-vis other states' (ibid: p. 887). However, the state is also compelled to ensure that it promotes and facilitates the expansion of free markets and capital. This has historically entailed, Hollifield argues, the state's acceptance of 'the growing trend towards internationalisation of markets for capital, goods, services and labor' (ibid: 896). There exists, therefore a 'liberal paradox' between market openness and the closure of borders in an effort to protect the 'sanctity of the social contract' of citizenship (Hollifield, 1998: p. 623). Hollifield (2004) identifies the First World War period as representing a significant shift in European states' attitudes toward immigration, as fear of infiltration and 'othering' overshadowed economic objectives of expanded labour forces; restrictionism became particularly acute following the Cold War, as the political capital acquired from accepting refugees from communist states waned. Despite states' entry into international agreements, such as the Geneva Convention, which establish rights for refugees, asylum seekers have increasingly become a burden to the state, as their presence fuels 'the perception among Western publics that immigration is raging out of control' (p. 899). Hollifield's historical mapping of European restrictionism toward immigration broadly corresponds with trends I identify in chapter 2. For instance in the UK context, there was a rapid increase in the issuance of legislation restricting immigration from the early 20th century onward beginning with the introduction of the 1905 Aliens Act (see section 2.1.3).

The scope of Hollifield's 'liberal paradox' extends beyond domestic policies of nation-states and seems best fit in an analysis of international responses to the precipitous increase in migration - particularly refugee migration - over the last thirty years. Indeed, Hollifield suggests that previous models of the state, such as Rosecrance's 'trading state' with its focus on free trade and 'economic openness' (1986 in Hollifield, 2004: p. 888), must give way to notions of an emergent 'migration state'. Hollifield offers a conceptual ultimatum: '[I]f states want to promote freer trade and investment, they must be prepared to manage higher levels of migration' (ibid: p. 902). He explains that '[a] model that integrates immigrants, markets, and rights is more promising than push-pull or transnational models alone in accounting for the volume and composition of immigration flows' (Hollifield *et al.*, 2008: p. 95). These sorts of macro-level prescriptions go beyond the ambitions of this thesis, but I believe that the underlying concept of the liberal paradox is useful in describing the British state's seemingly incompatible imperatives of creating a restrictive, exclusionary environment for asylum seekers while at the same time

attempting to maintain its commitments to marketisation and the privatisation of public services. If the responsibility of asylum housing rests solely with the state, then state aims to exclude or even remove asylum-seeking populations from its territory can remain a primary aim. However, in opening up asylum accommodation provision to market forces, with preferred bidders and profit margins, the state has introduced a wholly conflicting imperative of ensuring an asylum-seeking population exists within state borders in order to promote and facilitate the expansion of a developing 'asylum market'. Agamben's proposition that the sovereign 'ban' is responsible for the extremity of migrants' experiences is unhinged by both the capacity of resistance within the society of control *and* the injection of market ideologies into the management practices of the state. While private firms may be carrying out certain exclusionary functions of the state, including objectives of creating a 'hostile environment' to disrupt asylum seekers' sense of belonging within the UK (see chapter 4, section 4.3.2 and chapter 7, section 7.5), they are also motivated by the prospect of future returns on investment and reliant on a population (or 'asset') with which to ensure profitability (see chapter 3, section 3.2 and chapter 4, section 4.2). To further explore the limitations of Agamben's perspective, it is useful to develop Foucault's concept of biopower in further detail, as it provides a clearer reflection on the dynamics underlying the asylum management regime.

### *1.3 Foucault's 'biopower' in context*

Foucault's concept of biopower was not necessarily intended to be a firm theoretical model. Katia Genel (2006) and Tom Frost (2010) affirm that Foucault offers a 'hypothesis of power' rather a 'thesis' of power, which others like Agamben have subsequently attempted (Genel, 2006: p. 43; Frost 2010: p.546). Coleman and Grove reiterate this point, stating that Foucault's 'speculative approach to the concept' should be taken 'as an incitement to experiment rather than as a definition to be abided by' (Coleman and Grove, 2009: p. 490). While these are sensible precautions, Foucault's 'experiment' has a few discernible boundaries, which should serve to shape the appropriate use of his ideas. The key features that will be addressed in relation to asylum research are: 1) the role of power as life-affirming rather than life threatening; 2) the non-repressive expressions of power; 3) the immanence of power within populations; 4) the management of populations through surveillance and statistics; and 5) the 'killing' of the other through established state racism. The ultimate objective in extrapolating the concept of biopower onto the field of asylum research is to highlight the inadequacy of the Agambenian approach to power, as it neglects the important capacity for resistance that exists within populations. The development of asylum policy and the transformation of the asylum service sector cannot be viewed exclusively through the lens of oppressiveness

and totalitarianism when the state is bound by its own international agreements and consistently held to account by civil society and legal advocates for its persistent inattention to human rights considerations.

At its core, biopower features the promotion of life within given populations. Foucault explains that the key difference between the disciplinary societies prior to the eighteenth century and the securitised societies that emerged afterward is the emphasis on the management, administration and development of life rather than the incessant threat of death (Foucault, 1998: pp. 136-137; Foucault, 2003: p. 240). This proposition seems antithetical to the experience of the Jews during the Second World War, but Foucault reasons that violence is now justified in terms of safeguarding 'entire populations' rather than defending 'the name of a sovereign' (Foucault, 1998: p. 137). Whether or not biopower can be utilised as a blanket explanation for the type of racism exhibited by the Third Reich is a debatable matter (see: Bernasconi, 2010). However, biopower is a helpful way of tracking the development of immigration policy within the United Kingdom over the last three centuries, as much of the rhetoric surrounding the need to tighten the borders has been shaped around a need to protect the British population from foreign 'invasion'.

Given Foucault's genealogy of biopower, it is little surprise that Britain's first major piece of immigration legislation arrived in 1793 with the introduction of the Aliens Act. At the time, some feared that foreign interests would inculcate a sense of rebelliousness into British national identity and weaken British character. Edmund Burke warned that the French Revolution would introduce doctrinal transformation resembling the Reformation (Armitage, 2000: p. 632). In an animated scene within the House of Commons in December 1792, Burke zealously announced that he wanted 'to keep the French infection from this country; their principals from our minds, and their daggers from our hearts' (Cobbett, 1806-1820 cited in Russell, 1997: p. 2). The 1793 Aliens Act promised to keep this contagion out by limiting foreign entry into the country (Saunders, 2003: p. 25). Similar motivations prompted supporters of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, a piece of legislation that introduced mandatory work permits as a way of limiting Commonwealth immigration into the country. In a memorandum by the Home Secretary issued in October 1961, the reasons for controls were made clear:

The case for control by Her Majesty's Government rests mainly upon two considerations - the strain imposed by coloured immigration on the housing resources of certain local authorities and the dangers of social tension inherent in the existence of large unassimilated coloured communities.

(CAB, 129/107, 1961: para. 2)

Concern over limited resources, such as housing and welfare services, have long dominated the rhetoric surrounding the need for greater controls. Those advocating firmer restrictions on the entry of foreigners point to the long waiting lists for council houses as a reason 'native' Britons should be prioritised over outsiders. Emotive accounts of British residents who have had to wait years or be placed in inappropriate accommodation while asylum seekers and other migrants continue to be housed are common (see: Green, 2009; Salkeld, 2011). In 2010, this belief precipitated the Birmingham City Council's decision to end its contract with the UKBA to house asylum seekers. In addition, those asylum seekers Birmingham still had a duty to house under the terms of the previous contract were placed last on housing lists with preference given instead to 'citizens of [the] city'. The city's councillor for housing, John Lines, stated that the decision was 'in the interests of local people' (BBC News, 2010; Doyle, 2010). Councillor Lines further articulated his views about unwanted residents, stating: 'The asylum seekers arrive here, they have a blooming family and they keep having children - it's a burden on the system' (Bloxham, 2010). Similar sentiments shaped the debate about the introduction of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act. In February 1961, Sir John Smyth called for a dispersal system not unlike the one introduced nearly forty years later in an effort to alleviate the burden on London authorities. During a House of Commons debate, Smyth lamented the fact that immigrants could be housed on a needs basis:

[I]t does not make sense to me that thousands and thousands more people should be allowed to come in every year and to have priority over persons who have been living in the area for a long time.

(Hansard, 1961: c1956)

These attitudes, which are reflexive of the views held by many constituents, indicate that 'techniques and tactics of domination' (Foucault, 2003: p. 34) manifest themselves at the lowest level of society and work their way up to the state level rather than necessarily being imposed from above. Agamben's 'ban' on the sacred man becomes an action of the population as much as it does of the sovereign, though this is not always clearly communicated in his writing. Invoking Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Agamben declares that the creation of bare life is the 'original activity of sovereign power' (Agamben, 1998: p. 6). He writes that 'the foundation of sovereign power is to be sought ... in the sovereign's preservation of his natural right to do anything to anyone, which now appears as the right to punish', in this case, the unwanted migrant - 'a new living dead man' (ibid., p. 106, p. 131). For Foucault, however, this preoccupation with sovereignty clouds a more nuanced reality, which includes apparatuses of power arising from individual subjectivities that comprise 'local tactics of domination' (Foucault, 2003: p.

46). Just as restrictive policies arise from a variety of subjectivities, so too does the potential for resistance.

Crucial to Foucault's development of biopower, and largely absent from the Agambenian explanation, is that power is not always repressive. In fact, Agamben directly opposed Foucault on the critical issue of sovereign power as an expression of the exception. Foucault stresses the importance of being able to 'rid ourselves of a juridical and negative representation of power' and to 'cease to conceive of it in terms of law, prohibition, liberty, and sovereignty' (Agamben, 1998: p. 90). Power, inasmuch as it exists as a latticework of technologies and techniques of control, is impartial. The discriminatory nature of power, or power as it is expressed through particular institutions, is dependent upon a 'political rationality', which Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller (2010) describe as stemming from constructed moralities like 'freedom, justice' and 'citizenship' (Rose and Miller, 2010: pp. 276-277). This rationality is the basis upon which states justify their use of specific apparatuses of power, but opposing rationalities exist both within and outside government that challenge the narrative of the asylum seeker as interloper. This is perhaps most evident in high profile court rulings that have gone against Home Office decisions and reversed standing immigration rules that were at odds with the United Kingdom's international human rights commitments. In very limited instances, the government is challenged on policies that threaten rights, but as these rights are themselves much disputed, asylum seekers invariably inhabit the murky space between recognition and exclusion. Legislation ensures that rights are distributed asymmetrically based on immigration category with all persons subject to immigration control (PSICs) lacking the full set of rights available to UK citizens. However, legal advocates and civil society can oppose restrictive policies, and successful resistances are often attributable to the work of small but highly mobilised organisations and activist groups and their proponents within government.

Mole and Meredith (2010) state that '[a] key attribute of national sovereignty is the right of states to admit or exclude aliens from their territory' (Mole and Meredith, 2010: p. 10). Rarely is such sovereignty ceded willingly; the 1950 Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) and the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (CSR) are significant exceptions. The United Kingdom's ECHR obligations represent one of its greatest challenges in securing 'Fortress Britain' from the claims of asylum seekers. Following the European community's decision to effectively abandon its humanitarian responsibilities to Jewish refugees at the Evian Conference in July 1938 and the 1948 adoption of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the UK government joined with other Council of Europe nations in rebranding itself as a nation committed to human rights. However, despite the fact that Great Britain entered freely into the agreement, the ECHR has remained a proverbial

thorn in the side of consecutive British governments for decades, particularly in relation to Article 3, which prohibits signatories from subjecting anyone to 'inhuman or degrading treatment', and Article 8, which ensures the 'right to respect' one's 'private and family life'.

Home Secretary David Blunkett declared in January 2003 that any efforts to curb asylum claims would stop short of abandoning the United Kingdom's ECHR obligations, but Tony Blair was more elusive. Bracing against the potential ineffectiveness of the 2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act in stemming the flow of asylum seekers into the country, Blair warned that the Labour government would consider 'fundamentally looking at the obligations [the UK government has] under the convention on human rights' (Wintour, 2003). In 2005, David Cameron proposed leaving the ECHR altogether and as Prime Minister, he suggested that the European court be reformed to prevent it from becoming little more than a 'small claims court' (Landale, 2012; Watt, 2012). Theresa May advocated the abandonment of the Human Rights Act and she condemned Article 8 ECHR for its potential for 'misinterpretation' and implied that British courts have continually allowed asylum seekers to 'drive a coach and horses through [Britain's] immigration system' (Easton, 2011; Hennessy, 2011).

By limiting access to welfare and housing benefits, the British government can effectively manoeuvre around human rights obligations while appearing to adhere to its international commitments. However, the negative impact its policies of deterrence have had on asylum seekers have brought the state's ability to abide by international agreements into question. With the introduction of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, destitute asylum seekers' level of income support was reduced to 70 per cent of that of British citizens. According to a report conducted by the Children's Society, in 2012 a single asylum seeker was likely to receive slightly more than half the income support of a UK citizen (Ramesh, 2012). Rosemary Sales (2002) has stated that the 1999 Act's introduction of a voucher system and the practice of mandatory dispersal 'serve[d] to isolate [asylum seekers] from society and promote intense social exclusion' (Sales, 2002: p. 456). Despite the relative freedom British lawmakers have in ensuring asylum seekers' continued destitution, there are times when the government's active eschewal of human rights is plainly exposed and legally challenged. Furthermore, the deliberate removal of legal aid from all but a small number of asylum matters has made it impossible for destitute asylum seekers to use the law; exclusion is reinforced by denying asylum seekers access to lawyers and also denying funding to the lawyers who are prepared to take on this work.

Challenges to Section 55 of the 2002 Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act and the Court of Appeal's ultimate ruling against the government highlight the potential for resistance from below using the tools of state. Section 55 is often cited as an example of the state's efforts to enforce destitution amongst asylum seekers with the ultimate aim of

dissuading others from making the journey to Britain. The controversial provision denied destitute asylum seekers all housing and financial support if they failed to announce their asylum claim 'as soon as reasonably practicable' upon entry into the United Kingdom (HM Government 2002: s55(1); Stewart, 2005: p. 502). Many considered the move to be a deliberate act of institutionalised destitution in which the state sought to delegitimise asylum seekers' presence in the country. The director of Shelter, Adam Sampson, offered his damning rebuke of Section 55, stating that the provision 'made a mockery of the notion of human rights' (Local Government Chronicle, 2004; Shelter, 2004 in Cunningham and Tomlinson, 2005: p. 254). Indeed, the case for Section 55 was reinforced emphatically within Parliament. Peter Lilley, MP for Hitchin and Harpenden, warned that '[asylum seekers] prefer, and are advised, to make their claim for asylum once they have entered the country rather than at a port, as it then becomes more difficult to deport them' (Hansard, 2003: c73WH). However, not everyone within government was as convinced of the necessity of such a provision. Karen Buck confronted Lilley directly, asking if he was aware that the Home Office conducted a research project (see: Robinson and Segrott, 2002) that concluded asylum seekers are largely unaware of the benefits available to them in Britain prior to arriving (Hansard, 2003: 75WH). Neil Gerrard, MP for Walthamstow, openly challenged proponents of the 'late claimants' provision, stating that little evidence existed to support the view that in-country applicants were any less likely to be genuine than those claiming asylum immediately upon arrival. During a House of Commons sitting in 2003, he expressed his doubts:

The rationale presented for each of the past four [Immigration] Acts - the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993, the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, and the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 - is that benefit support acts as a draw and that cash in asylum seekers' hands leads to more applications. It is assumed that genuine asylum applicants would apply at the port of entry the minute that they stepped off the boat or plane and would not apply in-country. No hard evidence has ever been produced that backs up those claims.

(Hansard, 2003: c78WH)

The legality of Section 55 came under further scrutiny in a series of court cases that questioned the Home Office's ability to adhere to Article 3 of the ECHR. In the *Limbuella*, *Tesema* and *Adam* cases, the courts determined that rough sleeping and even the potential of destitution resulting from the Home Office's refusal of support amounted to a breach of Article 3 (Donald and Mottershaw, 2009: p. 12; Morris, 2010: pp. 59-61). Upon the Court of Appeal's review of these cases in 2005, it found that Section 55 was 'unlawful



in violating article 3' (*Limbuela*, EWCA, para 149 in Morris, 2010: pp. 63-64). Later, the House of Lords rejected a Home Office appeal and ultimately sided with the Court of Appeal's finding that Section 55 was incompatible with the United Kingdom's commitment to the ECHR (Morris, 2010: pp. 65-66). In his concluding remarks, Lord Brown thought it fruitless to judge the 'state's conduct as active or passive', but affirmed that 'street homelessness would cross the threshold into article 3 degrading treatment' (*Regina v. Secretary of State for the Home Department*, UKHL 66 2005: para 92, 101).

If, as Agamben tirelessly asserts, the state of exception is increasingly becoming the norm, one would expect that the state would exercise its sovereignty in all instances and operate exclusively outside the rule of law every time its interests were compromised. If international agreements and declarations of human rights are simply mechanisms that reaffirm the pre-eminence of the state as sovereign (Agamben, 1998: p. 128), it is unclear why the state inhibits itself by ever ceding its authority in the first place. Perhaps such a consideration spurred David Cameron's wilful declaration that 'the right to a family life is not an inalienable right', as he responded to the British courts' commitment to Article 8 of the ECHR (Press Association, 2011a). However, the state does not operate as a hive mind; its trajectory is rarely fixed and the motivations of its actors seldom uniform. For instance, Cameron's comments contrast greatly to those of Emrys Roberts, the MP for Merionethshire, who stated in 1950:

With all our faults, the rule of law is the most precious part of our European heritage, and in a world where the great struggle emerges more and more clearly as one between tyranny and freedom, the adoption in Europe of a Convention of Human Rights binding on all Governments would uplift the hearts of men and women everywhere.

(Hansard 1950: c207)

What is revealed in cases like the successful appeals against Section 55 and the victory in overturning the artificial age limits placed on spousal visas is that the executive state is not the sole retainer of power. Power permeates all forms of societal organisation and is present as much *within* the population as it is above it. Foucault articulates this clearly, stating:

Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere [...] power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society.

(Foucault, 1998: p. 93)

This observation has been perhaps most clearly illustrated by the significant success individuals, small organisations and activist lawyers have achieved in challenging the state on legal grounds. As Morris (2010) states, the courts are reliant on the whole of civil society 'in identifying cases, furnishing evidence, and shaping the judgements' (Morris, 2010: p. 67). While the exploration of theories of biopower help articulate the path for resistance within the 'society of control', it remains important to acknowledge the ways in which biopower can also be expressed through forms of subjugation. The same immanence of power that allows for resistance can also provide the conduit through which populations are exposed to abject conditions on the part of the state or those it employs to carry out its social control agendas.

In the context of this research, biopower is an expression of relationships between individuals and institutions. Therefore, asylum seekers living in COMPASS housing may exhibit features of 'bare life' even if a capacity for combatting their treatment exists within individual action or appeals to support organisations and legal apparatuses. The coercive power of the state can operate through its contractual agreements with third parties, such as G4S, Serco and their subcontractors on the COMPASS housing project. Both positive and negative experiences within dispersed housing can shape the relationship and therefore power outcomes between asylum seekers and the staff tasked with overseeing their accommodation environment. I return to a specific discussion of asylum seekers' living conditions within COMPASS housing and their interactions with housing agency staff in chapter 6. In the following chapter, I return to a more traditional view of the state and highlight the ways in which the treatment of asylum seekers in the twenty-first century has been shaped and articulated through immigration policies spanning one thousand years. State objectives of isolating and excluding foreigners and refugees have a long history in Britain, and it is important to go back further than the 1905 Aliens Act to view the routes of exclusionary logics.

## Chapter 2: Patterns of Exclusion: A History of UK Immigration Control

In this chapter, I explore the historical use of state legislation as a method of building and protecting national identity through the labelling of the 'other' and through the implementation of explicit policies of exclusion. I argue that the strategies implemented to control immigrant populations and regulate their inflow are examples of Foucault's 'state racism', which Mark Duffield (2006) describes as 'a counter-historical means of defending and reasserting sovereign power' and a 'strategization of power that allows a society dedicated to life to reclaim death, in all its physical and social forms, in order to protect life itself' (Duffield, 2006: pp. 69-70). The purpose here is to express how the migrant (and, in later years, the asylum seeker) is presented as illegitimate and undeserving of legal protection and welfare provision, and how, upon these grounds, the need for surveillance and containment is articulated. Increasingly restrictive immigration control practices, such as detention and dispersal, have reinforced the narrative of the parasitic and criminal 'other' and have contributed to the perpetuation of these assumptions within the media and amongst the British citizenry.

Berkeley *et al.* (2005) write that '[t]he frequency of immigration reportage ... marked by a general tone of crisis and negativity, contributes to a receiving social context where constructive debate is difficult' (Berkeley *et al.*, 2005: p. 24). As a result, resistances against the state based on altruistic or humanitarian grounds are strained as the migrant is continually divorced from her or his humanity; it is perhaps within the level of policy that Agamben's *homo sacer* is the most closely realised.

Reviews of immigration policies alone can suggest a unanimity amongst state actors that rarely exists. When successive legislation is represented merely as an intensification of sovereign exclusionary practices, traces of dissent within government and individual parties are sometimes lost. For instance, Studlar (1978) suggests that the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act represented a willingness by the Labour Party to 'put stringent controls on immigration' (Studlar, 1978: p. 56). However, this observation ignores opposition such as Ben Whitaker's (MP for Hampstead), who in February 1968 believed the proposed bill amounted to racial discrimination. Speaking during parliamentary debates, Whitaker declared:

[E]very hon. Member knows that, if the impending influx of people had been white, the Bill would never have appeared ... If the Labour Party is to mirror the prejudice of right hon. and hon. Gentlemen opposite, why should there be a Labour Party?

(Hansard, 1968: c1341)

Whilst the presentation of state power within this chapter will at times more closely reflect Agamben's depiction of the sovereign, it is done with consideration of the opposition present both within government and amongst civil society. In addition, rather than simply presenting contemporary immigration legislation as the most exclusionary to date, I situate current policies within their historical context, showing that justifications for exclusion have remained a feature of immigration policy for decades, even centuries.

Within literature describing the development of British immigration policy over the last twenty years, authors have emphasised the unprecedented restrictiveness of recent policies. Speaking of legislation introduced after 1993, Beth Humphries (2004) highlights the proliferation of 'increasingly repressive and punitive measures [intended] to discourage groups affected from coming to Britain' (Humphries, 2004: p. 100). Similarly, Liza Schuster (2005) states that the policies of Britain, France, Germany and Italy 'all have in common the increasingly draconian response to asylum-seekers since the 1990s' (Schuster, 2005: p. 606). The post-1951 Geneva Convention era has been described as essentially 'benign', during which period the British government adopted 'an essentially laissez faire' approach toward refugee immigration with an emphasis on integration that was uniquely 'British' (Zetter, Griffiths *et al.* 2005: p. 171). Within this context, the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act represented a 'radical point of departure in British asylum policy' (*ibid.*, p. 171). These representations of Britain's past can highlight the intensification of exclusionary policies over time, but as Kushner (2010) explains, they also threaten to 'distort' the true history of migrant and refugee experiences in Britain, which have been marked by repeated subjugation and, at times, violence (Kushner, 2010: 275).

Enoch Powell stated in 1968: 'To be integrated into a population means to become for all practical purposes indistinguishable from its other members'. For Powell, this was all but impossible due to 'marked physical differences' between the New Commonwealth immigrant and 'native' Britons (Powell, 2007). British immigration policy has, in many instances, reinforced Powell's view and exacerbated the issue through the institutionalisation of segregation by limiting migrants' working hours, limiting their access to public funds and requiring those from certain countries to register with the police. Still, Prime Minister David Cameron cites immigrants' own inability to integrate as the leading contribution to the failure of state multiculturalism (BBC News, 2011), and efforts to limit immigration remain a legislative priority. In the words of Home Secretary Theresa May, current policy is designed to admit only those 'who benefit Britain, the brightest and best [...] [and] the gifted who entertain [British citizens]'; the aim of the government is to reduce the number of immigrants attempting to enter the country and to incentivise the retreat of those already here (May, 2012). While modern legislation has indeed introduced

increasingly restrictive rules upon migrants' entry and residency in the UK, they follow a long history of exclusionary practices.

The control of immigration and the exclusion of specific populations is a recurring theme in the development of British identity. Agamben posits that the sovereign's differentiation between who should belong politically and who should be excluded has been identified as one of the core functions of the state (Agamben, 1998b: p. 8). As the distinction between the deserving and undeserving of state recognition has become increasingly more acute over the last one hundred years, it is useful to identify periods in British history during which this separation of the 'other' from the citizen was refined and articulated. The purpose of this chapter is not to highlight the many similarities found in immigration legislation introduced over the last millennium, though parallels do emerge, but to suggest that the impetus behind modern immigration controls is deeply rooted in British history, which problematises efforts of reforming policy on humanitarian grounds. Human rights approaches to securing the state's recognition of refugees and asylum seekers is difficult, as migrant communities have historically been viewed as tangential publics that are not entitled to the same rights as those of state citizens. From a nationalist standpoint, the very existence of migrant groups presents a threat to national order, and the ultimate aim of immigration controls often appears to be the 'elimination of the biological threat' of the foreigner to protect the population within (Foucault, 2003: p. 256). Agamben suggests that even human rights laws must be considered in relation to this national biopolitical agenda, as they are ultimately the design of the state seeking to protect its population (Sieyès, 1985 and Sewell, 1988 in Agamben, 1998: pp. 130-131). The state can therefore maintain its duty to protect its citizens by applying exceptional rules to migrant groups, effectively fulfilling the state's political aims, while maintaining harmony with 'universal' human rights legislation.

Kushner argues that members of both the Labour and Conservative Parties fear 'national culture' is in danger of dilution and that an emphasis of inherent cultural difference is used as a tactic to maintain separation between 'natives' and outsiders (Kushner, 2010: p. 260). British immigration policies are aimed at confining migrants to the social periphery long enough for them to return to their countries of origin without having altered the British complexion. For instance, the British government discontinued the Post-Study Work visa to prohibit students from staying in the country following the completion of their degrees (Gower, 2012). In addition, foreign workers may only remain in the country for up to six years as temporary migrants, and they may only settle in the UK if they earn £35,000 or more (Home Office, 2012e: para. 245HF d(ii)(2)). It is within the area of asylum policy, however, that the government's biopolitical aims are most acute, as it actively attempts to deter migrants from staying by prohibiting them from working for at

least twelve months after claiming asylum and by removing most avenues of support beyond that which the state directly controls.

In this chapter, I argue that successive governments' use of biopolitical techniques to manage migrant populations represent attempts to 'protect' British society from the threat of the foreigner and to maintain a narrative of immigrants' illegitimacy. Initially, the development of these controls required justification through the declaration of states of emergency, such as the temporary need to protect against the revolutionary spirit of French refugees in the late 18th century or the poverty and disease of Jews entering Britain from Russia in the early 1900s. Throughout the course of the 20th century, however, the exception became the rule and the powers of detention, dispersal and deportation were consolidated into the hands of the executive arm of the British state, providing the Home Secretary with virtually full discretionary powers over migrant populations. Again, it is here where Agamben's 'state of exception' model is effective where 'bare life' is not.

## *2.1 Exclusionary precedence: a history of immigration controls from 1290 to 1920*

[Areas of Great Britain] are already undergoing the total transformation to which there is no parallel in a thousand years of English history.

(Enoch Powell, speech, 20 April 1968)

### *2.1.1 1290: Edward I's Expulsion of the Jews*

Edward I's writs of July 1290, which ordered the expulsion of England's Jewish community were not border controls in the strictest sense, as they did not bar the entry of specific populations in the manner that more modern legislation has restricted the entry of persons subject to immigration control. However, throughout the thirteenth century, England's Jewish community was exposed to a series of population controls similar to those affecting modern migrants, such as restrictions on where they could live and the type of employment they could pursue. The Crown also maintained surveillance over their movements and earnings. For years, the Jewish community provided an important source of revenue for English monarchs. Richard I and Henry III offered Jewish moneylenders protection from the violence of indebted barons and knights in return for the ability to extract exorbitant amounts of money from the Jewish community (Abrahams, 1894: pp. 87, 91). The monarchy soon learned that incentives were inadequate, and sought to tighten its grip on the Jewish community. Following massacres instigated by indebted knights and barons against Jews in York and other English cities in 1190, King Richard instituted new financial policies, which safeguarded records and made Jewish finances

completely transparent to the Crown. In 1219, a royal edict disallowed Jews from leaving the country, due in large part to wealth they commanded, which the King needed to fund his crusades and which the Church required for its vast building projects (Abrahams, 1894: pp. 84-85; *Letters of John Peckham* in *ibid.*, p. 96). In 1245, Henry III decreed that Jews could only settle in those towns where their 'co-religionists had hitherto been accustomed to live' (Prynne; Madox in Abrahams, 1894, p. 90). The Crown maintained strict control over financial transactions; records of the debts managed by Jewish usurers had to be held in chests (*archae*) that the King's officers could inspect at any time (Abrahams, 1895b: p. 250). Jews were forbidden to engage socially with Christians and in 1275, Edward I denied them the opportunity to work as money lenders (Singer, 1964: p. 134; Ovrut 1977: p. 228). In addition to lacking the skills to take up other lucrative work, Jews were excluded from other employment areas and left to fall into poverty or continue working as usurers illegally. Conditions were compounded at various points throughout the thirteenth century, as barons, knights and other debtors sought to destroy evidence of the debts owed to Jewish collectors. These attacks, along with the king's exploitive taxation and the severe limitations placed on their activities, left England's Jews virtually destitute at the time of the 1290 expulsion.

There is general agreement amongst historians of this period that the decision to remove the Jews was based upon prejudice, economic exploitation and an English fear of cultural annihilation. Abrahams writes that the Jews were portrayed as 'peculiar' (Abrahams, 1895a: p. 455); they 'remained far more alien to the masses of people around them than even the Normans, in whose train they had come to England' (Abrahams, 1894: pp. 76-78). According to Robert Stacey (2003), in some accounts, Jews were associated with child killing and excrement (Stacey, 2003: p. 52). Robin Mundill (2010) speaks of a 'common belief that before selling meat to Christians the Jews had their children urinate on it to induce sickness and death', which resulted in the 'prohibitions against Christians buying food from Jews' (Trachtenberg, 1943 in Mundill, 2010: p. 71). While Stacey criticises Mundill for using outdated material in describing hostile publics and Mundill has himself attempted to downplay the significance of racist nationalism in the expulsion of 1290 (Mundill, 1998: pp. 252, 260; Stacey, 2011), there is little disagreement that the Jewish community was being discriminated against. It was at the request of Edward's mother, Eleanor of Provence, that Jews were forced to vacate her 'dower towns' of Gloucester, Worcester and Cambridge in 1275 (Abrahams, 1895a: p. 444; Mundill, 2003: p. 57). A steady wave of public animosity toward the Jews since the first waves of immigrants arrived from France during the 11th century resulted in the continued disparagement and vilification of their community.

Singer (1964) highlights the economic motivations behind the expulsion, suggesting that the Jews' declining fortunes by the end of the thirteenth century made the

king less dependent upon them. He states: '[W]ith a change in their financial fortunes, Jews were no longer welcome' (Singer, 1964: p. 117). Stacey proposes that the real financial incentive for the expulsion was the promise of taxes from England's Christian subjects upon the Jews' removal. English knights had refused to pay taxes while Jews operated as moneylenders, resulting in Edward I's statute prohibiting them from employment as usurers. When they were finally ejected, Stacey suggests that Edward benefited from 'the largest single grant of taxation in the history of medieval England' following the Jews' expulsion in 1290 (Stacey, 2003: pp. 53-4).

The Jews' removal can also be seen as a result of a crisis of national identity in England. England's Christian public sought protection from the threat of a foreign contagion and Edward I acquiesced by restricting Jews' movements and then ultimately drove them out altogether. Henry III's 1245 decree and Edward I's 1275 Statute of the Jewry can be viewed in biopolitical terms when considering the rhetoric used in protecting the native population, which English monarchs pursued long before Foucault's 'birth of biopolitics' in the 18th century. When Pope Gregory IX wrote to the archbishop of Canterbury in 1229 (see: Vincent, 1996), it was not Jews' wealth that concerned him, but the possibility of intermarriage between Christians and Jews; he also feared that Jews' hiring of Christian servants would lead to the defilement of Christian women. In his letter, Gregory appealed for stricter enforcement of an earlier policy, which required Jews to wear badges (*signa*) distinguishing them from Christians. It would take another quarter century and further pressure from the Church before Henry III would finally follow through with Gregory's request to rigorously impose the wearing of badges (Vincent, 1996: p. 219). Edward followed suit and continued the enforcement of the policy throughout the 1270s and beyond (Mundill, 2003: p. 59). This emphasis on the protection of life, or at least English life, suggests that elements of Foucault's 'biopower' predate his 'birth of biopolitics' in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (see: Foucault, 1998: p. 141). The technologies of power adopted to manage immigration and the justifications made for their implementation therefore come to represent one of the earliest transitions from the disciplinary society to the control society.

In the context of modern immigration legislation, the policies of Henry III and Edward I seem strikingly contemporary. English monarchs succeeded in debasing the Jews from their position of economic predominance through excessive taxation and by instituting a series of controls that both isolated and stigmatised them. The 1275 Statute of Jewry can be viewed as an early example of a policy intended to make a minority community destitute, as it prohibited Jews from money lending, which, as Stacey suggests, had become the 'economic backbone of English Jewish life' (Stacey, 2003: p. 41). In 1962, the government of the United Kingdom instituted a work voucher scheme that limited Commonwealth immigrants' ability to access employment in the country. Forty



years later, asylum seekers in the United Kingdom faced destitution when they were prohibited from working pending a decision on their applications (Lee, 2007: p. 4). Despite the former Labour Minister of Immigration, Beverley Hughes' protestation in 2003 that the UK government was not intentionally impoverishing people, Section 9 of the 2004 Immigration and Asylum (Treatment of Claimants) Act empowered the Home Office to withdraw welfare provision for failed asylum seekers, leaving them with little to no form of income (Cunningham and Tomlinson, 2005: p. 253; Hughes, 2003 in *ibid.*, p. 257).

The legacy of medieval population controls extends even further into the modern institutionalisation of registration and dispersal practices. Under Henry III, Jews admitted into England were expected to register with the Justices of the Jewish Exchequer (Patent Rolls, 1216-1225 in Stacey, 2003). Centuries later, the 1914 Aliens Restriction Act required non-British citizens to register with the police, a practice continued today for persons subject to immigration control from specific countries whose leave to remain in the UK exceeds six months (Page, 1915 in Reinecke, 2009: pp. 325-6; Home Office, 2012e: Part 10, para. 326(2)(i)). Henry III's 1245 decree that Jews be restricted to living in specific towns throughout England can be viewed as an early iteration of the dispersal policies introduced in the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act. Throughout the thirteenth century, resentment of the Jews led to their expulsion from English towns. In order to alleviate tensions, and to bring the Jews and their finances under tighter surveillance, Henry III and Edward I restricted Jews to specific towns within Britain (Singer, 1964: p. 129; Mundill, 2003: pp. 57-58). Abrahams describes the situation as one in which Jews were:

[...] [c]rowded as unwelcome intruders into a small and decreasing number of towns, without legal standing or industrial skill, hated by the people and declared accursed by the Church, they were bidden to support themselves under conditions which made the task impossible.

(Abrahams, 1895b: p. 253)

The expulsion of the Jews from thirteenth century towns represented an attempt to 'protect' the townspeople of England from the menace of the foreigner (Singer, 1964: p. 129). Today, dispersal policies are intended to alleviate the 'burden' on local authorities in London and the South East, as a reduction in the concentration of asylum seekers in these areas is believed to diminish cultural tensions and prevent the development of 'refugee ghettos' in British cities (Boswell, 2001: p. 1; Diken, 2004: p. 91). However, Britain's dispersal policy comes at a human cost; many dispersal areas lack strong community support networks and are devoid of the essential services asylum seekers depend upon. Asylum seekers have suffered racist abuse and low incomes in dispersal

areas where unemployment is high and residents are predominantly white (Hayter, 2003: p. 11; Spicer, 2008: p. 496). The government's decision to abandon housing contracts with local authorities and voluntary organisations in favour of deals with private security giants G4S and Serco has resulted in diminished conditions for many asylum seekers, a subject I return to in subsequent chapters.

When members of the English Jewish community were expelled in 1290, ship commanders were sourced for carrying out deportation. After departing London, one ship's master instructed his Jewish passengers to disembark on a sandbar. When the tide came in, he left them to drown and seized all of their possessions. Following the incident, the master of the vessel was hanged for his actions (Abrahams, 1895a: p. 446). In 2011, G4S was fined \$285,000 Australian dollars for the 2008 death of an Aboriginal man in its custody (Perth Now, 2011; Sambrook, 2011). After a deportee died in 2010 while being restrained by G4S guards on a flight from Heathrow, the private security officers were initially not charged with any crime and subsequently found not guilty of manslaughter (Lewis and Taylor, 2012b; Taylor and Booth, 2014). Agamben's proposal that the sovereign creates categories of 'bare life' and prolongs the subjugation of *zoē* must be adapted to emphasise the role of the population in carrying out society's biopolitical functions. In 1290 a medieval ship's master plundered destitute Jews of their worldly belongings before leaving them for dead. Today, asylum housing providers have an opportunity to extract surplus value out of the detention, transportation and housing of asylum seekers in Britain.

### *2.1.2 1793: The Enemy Within*

The 1793 Act was introduced on the eve of war with France; it limited the entry of French foreigners and restricted their movements once they were in the country. The policy was intended to prevent the spread of revolution to Britain. For some in Parliament, immigration was the channel through which the seeds of rebellion flowed, as if the transference of dissent from one society to another depended on a physical conduit: the immigrant. When a remedy was sought in days leading to war with France, the 1793 Act empowered the state to remove the migrant element. William Walters (2002) explains that the 'targets' of deportation and population controls are the 'political enemies of the state - agitators, subversives, revolutionaries - who undermined its authority.' The 1793 Act was no exception as it represented a 'direct response to fears of revolution' (Walters, 2002: p. 278). For Edmund Burke, a fierce opponent of the French Revolution, French Jacobins posed a threat to the fabric of the British state. He warned that 'France [had] endeavoured [...] to sew the seeds of enmity among nations, and destroy all local attachments, calling them narrow and illiberal' (Speeches, Vol. IV in Stanlis, 1953: p. 405). Pre-dating Enoch

Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech by 175 years, Edmund Burke evoked violent imagery to emphasise the immigrant threat. During the second reading of the proposed Aliens Act on 28 December 1792, Burke claimed that thousands of knives were being fashioned in Birmingham and he asserted that it was becoming increasingly necessary 'to keep the French infection from [Britain],' because where the French travelled, bloodshed was sure to follow. At the climax of his histrionic oration, Burke flung a dagger to the floor of the House of Commons to depict the tangible threat the British state faced (Roscoe 1930: 67; Russell 1997: 2). It is perhaps no surprise that Edmund Burke also advocated an alternative approach to human rights laws, believing that different rights should apply to British citizen to those from without. The rights of the Englishman, Burke believed, were more 'secure and definite' than the rights of other men (Agamben, 1998: p. 127; Isin and Turner, 2007: p. 13). While fellow Members of Parliament Charles James Fox and Richard B. Sheridan openly criticised Burke, the Pitt Government nevertheless passed the Aliens Bill, which went into effect on 10 January 1793 (Russell, 1997: pp. 11-12; Fehlings, 2002: p. 66).

The effect of the legislation on the French migrant in 18th century was extreme. Aliens were required to register upon their arrival into Britain and Parliament was given the power to deport people deemed to be a threat to the state; anyone failing to comply with a deportation order faced capital punishment (Sibley, 1906b: pp. 408-409; Fehlings 2002: p. 70). During a sitting of the House of Lords in 1858, Lord Brougham recalled:

[T]he old Alien Act was attended with many abuses and grievances, one of which was the sending parties abroad to the very places from which they had escaped, so that they were hurled, as it were, into the lion's mouth.

(Hansard, 04 February 1858 in Thornberry, 1963: p. 417)

While the Act was intended to stave off an influx of French immigrants ostensibly for the purpose of preventing revolution in Britain, Roscoe (1930) and Russell (1997) advance two theories that suggest the Aliens Act served purposes beyond those articulated publicly. For Roscoe, the ultimate aim of the legislation was to limit foreign immigrants' ability to seek refuge in Great Britain. He cites a letter from the king to Lord Grenville, which states: '[M]y own inclination would tend to oblige every one of that perfidious nation [France] here, either to go into [military service against France] or, by the Aliens Act, be removed from this country' (Roscoe, 1930: p. 67). Alternatively, Russell suggests that the British government was 'capitalising on the unrest elsewhere in the country in order to suppress radical activity within London' after food shortages had given rise to riots (Russell, 1997: p. 1). Elizabeth Sparrow (1998) states that immigration controls were justified on the grounds that they would prevent the development of a

French-inspired revolution, though they were in fact an 'extraordinary extension of policy powers' (Sparrow, 1998: pp. 281-282): it was the former lieutenant-general of Lyon, Claude Antoine Rey, who drafted the 1793 Act. Sparrow suggests that the bill's renewal three years later went seamlessly because it was grounded in the need to protect British subjects; however, the real result was the government's deployment of police officers to conduct surveillance on 'both foreigners and British nationals' (Sparrow, 1998: pp. 282-283). The 1793 Aliens Act was therefore as much an exercise in domestic policing as it was a check on immigrant numbers. The passage of the bill represents an early demonstration of the state's ability to legitimise its use of force over both the native population and migrant communities through means of legislation. Indeed, it is perhaps more useful to view the 1793 Act as a 'tactic', rather than a law, as it symbolised the 'very specific' use of power with 'population as its target' (Foucault, 2007: p. 108).

### *2.1.3 The Aliens Act, 1905*

The 1905 Aliens Act has often been identified as a significant milestone in British immigration policy, particularly for the powers it vested in the Secretary of State, many of which still remain with the Home Office and individual immigration officers. Jill Pellew (1989) writes that the 1905 Act represents the 'first modern act to regulate alien immigration into Britain' (Pellew, 1989: p. 369). For Steve Cohen (2002), the Aliens Act set the baseline for '[t]he dominant ideological position prevailing today in respect to controls' (Cohen, 2002: pp. 519-520). The period leading up to 1905 was marked by the large migration of Jewish refugees from Russia and other European states following pogroms and revolutionary strife in their homelands. After a Polish student murdered the Czar of Russia in 1881, the Russian government struck back at Jews with the introduction of the 'May Laws', which severely limited the Jewish community's ability to trade and acquire property (Gainer, 1972: p. 1). Between 1870 and the early 1900s, Jews were reported to have 'migrated by the million' (Gartner, 1960 in Jones, 1977: p. 78). While most Jewish migrants that entered Britain during this period were continuing on to America, a number remained within the country and their presence led to increased tensions among local populations (Pellew, 1989: p. 370). By the turn of the century, Britain was home to more Eastern European immigrants than any other country aside from the United States (Jones, 1977: p. 69). Gainer (1972) writes that the arrival of so many Jewish refugees and economic migrants during this period meant that the lines of distinction between 'immigrants' and 'Jews' were blurred, so they were often accepted as analogous terms (Gainer, 1972 in Jones, 1977: p. 68).

The official response to Jewish immigration was mixed. Jones (1977) writes that Britain was considered to be a country with a rich 'tradition of asylum' that was 'hallowed'

and 'entrenched' (Jones, 1977: p. 69). A number of people in government, particularly Socialists and members of the Liberal Party, viewed asylum from oppression as a basic human right. It was considered a moral imperative to support a man fleeing from persecution. In a letter to the *Times* in 1904, Winston Churchill wrote that nothing worthwhile could come from abandoning 'the old tolerant and generous practice of free entry and asylum to which this country has so long adhered and from which it has so greatly gained' (Winder in Wray, 2006: p. 304). Others were less concerned with humanitarian concerns and were more apprehensive about the possible negative economic impact a decline in immigration would bring. The Liberal Party MP, Herbert Samuel, declared that the government had 'no right to shut out oppressed people merely because they are poor', but placed emphasis on the disruption to free trade that would correspond with reduced migration. (Gainer, 1972: pp. 144, 149).

Arnold White, a journalist staunchly opposed to open borders, wrote that 'Free Trade is a fetish' and warned that the right of asylum would eventually lead to the demise of the English working class (White in Gainer, 1972: p. 154). White further accused migrants of carrying with them a societal disease, and the point was raised during Parliamentary Debates in 1890 that a solution was needed 'to prevent [Britain] from becoming the dust heap of Europe' (Jones, 1977: p. 77). Llewellyn Atherley-Jones attempted to counter claims of immigrants' propensity to carry disease by reminding the House of Commons that the London Medical Officer of Health found the 'standard of health among the foreign labourers [to be] higher than amongst the [British] working classes' (Hansard, 1905a: cc791-2). Still, the image of the disease-ridden migrant proved difficult to shake, and it was thought that immigrants contributed to the perpetuation of sweatshops in Britain, because they guaranteed a source of cheap labour. As a result, native workers were also exploited. An economist wrote that poor immigrants possessed 'a natural aptitude' for low-paid, degrading work and that their 'presence in our large cities furnishes the corner-stone of the vicious system' (Hobson, 1891 in Gainer, 1972: pp. 84-85).

Despite public pressures to stem the tide of migration into Britain, some politicians feared that vocal condemnation of Jewish immigrants would be viewed as anti-Semitic. Public officials had to choose their words carefully in order to avoid sounding bigoted (Jones, 1977: p. 72). Sir Charles Dilke criticised proponents of anti-immigration legislation stating that refusing Jewish asylum seekers could be considered anti-Semitic and might undermine the long-standing tradition of asylum in the UK (Gainer, 1972: p. 151). Those officials that did support protectionist legislation approached the matter obliquely, all the while stating their respect for the Jewish people (Garrard; Dummett and Nicol in Wray, 2006: p. 310). Public opinion encouraged the development of immigration controls, but few wanted to be perceived as racist or exclusionary. Politicians had to therefore couch

their policy aims in amorphous phraseology that both condemned and praised migrants at the same time. Helena Wray (2006) writes that governments 'rationalise anti-immigration measures in terms that both minimize the moral claim of the immigrant and maximise the humanitarian aspect of the policy' (Wray, 2006: pp. 305-306).

The Government initially reacted to the influx of Jewish immigrants by accepting them into the country with the expectation that the voluntary sector would support those that were destitute, a policy which very closely mirrors current trends in modern Britain. Catherine Jones (1977) suggests that, because the Poor Law had no provision for assisting Jewish immigrants, the responsibility of ensuring their wellbeing fell upon the Jewish Board of Guardians and other voluntary agencies. This allowed the Government to avoid having to publicly support immigrants (Jones, 1977: p. 115). However, the public and the more vocal opponents of the Government's *laissez-faire* immigration control practices were pushing for a more restrictive approach. Arnold White continued to lambast the Government's methods and as a member of Earl Compton's Committee, a body that set out to tackle unemployment, White and fellow Committee members submitted a resolution to the Prime Minister 'condemning unrestricted immigration' (Gainer, 1972: p. 81). As such pressures continued to mount, the Government began taking the first steps toward placing limits upon the types of people allowed to enter the country.

The Aliens Act was designed to serve two primary functions: the restriction of immigration to certain ports of call and the deportation of 'undesirable' migrants. The Act characterised an 'undesirable immigrant' as one that either could not produce evidence that he was capable of 'decently supporting himself and his dependents', was a 'lunatic or an idiot' that might become a 'charge' on public coffers, was a criminal, or was already under an expulsion order under the terms of the Act (Aliens Act, 1905: s1(3:a-d)). This applied to 'alien steerage passenger[s]' that had no intention to proceed 'to some destination out of the United Kingdom'. The Act also limited the vessels considered to be 'immigrant ships' to those carrying 'more than twenty alien steerage passengers' (ibid., s8(1:a-b)(2)). This restricted the effectiveness of the Act, as persons arriving on smaller vessels with fewer migrants aboard were not even screened (Pellew, 1989: pp. 382-384).

The Aliens Act features some rudimentary guidelines for determining which immigrants should be allowed into the country, and which ones should be refused. While the Act was mainly concerned with keeping criminals and destitute migrants from entering Britain, it was not intended to exclude people that identified themselves as political or religious refugees (Instruction to Immigration Officers, 1906 in Wray, 2006: p. 312). This was met with ire in the House of Commons when Claude Hay, MP for Shoreditch Hoxton, appealed to the Home Secretary for greater restrictions:

I beg to ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in view of his intention to extend the hospitality of these shores to all foreign persons who allege they are suffering from religious or political persecution, he will take the necessary measures to prevent such persons from becoming a burden upon the poor districts of the great cities of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and to prevent the hospitality extended to foreigners who allege they are distressed becoming a charge upon the national funds.

(Hansard, 1906: c1241)

Immigration officers were instructed to give people making claims of asylum under these grounds the benefit of the doubt (Gladstone letter, 1906 in Pellew, 1989: p. 377). Wray suggests that this instruction may in fact be illegal as Section 7(5) of the Act states that the 'onus of proving that that person is not an alien shall lie on that person' (Wray, 2006: p. 313; *Aliens Act, 1905: s7(5)*). However, this stipulation distinguishes between aliens and non-aliens, not between aliens and asylum seekers. An asylum seeker is an alien by the very fact that he is a foreign national seeking refuge in another state, so Wray's observation may be in error. In any case, it appears that border officials' dedication to the dictates of the Aliens Act was often casual, and decisions were made at the level of personal mood or bias.

The Home Office response to its immigration duties correlated closely with those by the Government. The Aliens Act was a product of a Conservative government that had very little life left in it. By December 1905, Liberals came into office and were left with managing a policy that had never been popular amid their ranks. They were, however, powerless to repeal the Act, because a suggestion of ending entry limitations would have been political suicide (Wray, 2006: p. 319). As Home Secretary, Winston Churchill unsuccessfully pushed for an alteration to the appeals process to be decided by third-party courts as opposed to immigration boards managed by the Home Office (Pellew, 1989: p. 376). Churchill continued to fight the Act's expansion, rejecting a bill that proposed that each alien would be required to notify the state every time he left one residence for another (*Jewish Chronicle*, 5 May 1911 in Wray, 2006: p. 319). The ceaseless discordance in the execution of the law left the Aliens Act largely ineffectual. In 1906, border staff inspected roughly 70 per cent of the immigrants arriving to the country; this number dropped to under 60 per cent by 1913 (Pellew, 1989: p. 384).

General fears for Britain's economic health and the individual worker's concern for job security meant that focus turned toward the stream of foreigners entering the country, who were perceived to be stealing employment positions from British nationals. This notion was challenged in 1903 when the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration said that it could find no evidence that immigrants were supplanting natives in British jobs (Wray,

2006: p. 309). When Rowland Hunt, MP for Ludlow, suggested that the presence of foreigners was suppressing British wages, Under Secretary Ellis Griffith replied: 'It is possible that the immigration of aliens may tend to lower wages in certain industries, but I have no definite evidence to support this view' (Hansard, 1913b: c2257). After announcing that British jobs were safe from alien incursion, the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration recommended that the Government establish an Immigration Department consisting of officers that would weed out 'undesirable' immigrants and those 'likely to become a charge upon public funds' (Gainer, 1972: pp. 159-160). In a move strikingly similar to more modern legislation that penalises airline companies for carrying 'illegitimate' asylum seekers to Britain (Willman and Knafler, 2009: p. 18), the Royal Commission recommended that shipping companies that delivered immigrants of 'bad character' to Britain's shores were to be made responsible for covering the expenses relating to their deportation (Gainer, 1972: p. 160).

Concerns about joblessness were compounded by the state of the British economy in the early twentieth century. Rising rates of unemployment and a decrease in British exports likely led to increased wariness toward the entry of skilled and unskilled migrants. According to Aldcroft and Richardson (1969), the degeneration of Britain's economy prior to the Second World War was 'most pronounced before 1913'; its rate of growth lagged behind the US, Russia and Japan (Aldcroft and Richardson, 1969: p. 8). Sidney Pollard writes, 'highly fluctuating unemployment was a most obtrusive characteristic of the age' (Pollard, 1989: p. 84). Britain's inability to carry its success forward from the late industrial period has been attributed to a number of factors, such as a lack of entrepreneurial spirit amongst British businessmen, a maintenance of antiquated manufacturing techniques and an educational establishment that focused more on classical instruction than science (Aldcroft and Richardson, 1969: p. 16; Elbaum and Lazonick, 1984: pp. 568-572; Pollard, 1989: p. 169). However, immigrants often became the preferred target of blame for the state of the British economy. Stricter legislation was seen as a way to protect British workers from the onslaught of cheap, foreign labour during a time when Britain's economic growth had flatlined.

The Aliens Act marked the beginning of institutionalised immigration control under the purview of the British government. It established the Home Office as the central body responsible for officially monitoring Britain's borders, which before had mainly focused on ensuring the nation's security from criminality and other threats to the state. Today, the popular press has a tendency to place asylum seekers in the same category as criminals. Indeed, the Government's policy of detaining some asylum seekers in facilities that share a striking resemblance to prisons is likely rooted back to a point when the same government body responsible for monitoring criminality in Britain was made responsible for enacting the Government's anti-immigration policies. On 5 December 1905, a Liberal



government inherited a policy it initially opposed and only half-heartedly carried out, leading to mistakes and the interjection of personal bias on the part of immigration officers. But, however enfeebled the Aliens Act may have been, it was not abandoned. It set a precedent that was to be expanded upon and intensified in subsequent years. By 1914, the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act was established, which further limited the freedoms of immigrants and citizens by declaring that a British woman who married an alien was subsequently an alien herself (Baldwin, 2001: p. 522). The 1905 Aliens Act laid the groundwork for an official policy toward immigration that became ever more exclusionary and it legitimised the public perception of aliens as a threat to Britain's social and economic security.

#### *2.1.4 Aliens Restriction Act 1914*

With the outbreak of war with Germany in 1914 and the ever mounting fear that German spies were running amok in the United Kingdom, the British government sought to intensify its surveillance of foreigners wishing to enter the country and those already present within. For some within the Liberal Government, the 1905 Act was seen as woefully inadequate to deal with the threat of enemy aliens, and it was decided that more restrictive measures were needed. In his appeal to the War Cabinet for an extension of the provisions of the 1914 Act into peacetime, Home Secretary Edward Shortt described the deficiencies of the 1905 Aliens Act and the benefits gained from introducing wartime legislation:

The powers [introduced in the 1905 Aliens Act] were very incomplete and there can be no doubt that they failed to prevent the immigration of a number of undesirable aliens and also that many undesirables were left in this country owing to the reluctance of Courts to recommend expulsion [...].

At the outbreak of War, as the Committee pointed out, "a much more drastic control of aliens immediately became necessary, and the day after the declaration of War the Aliens Registration Act, 1914, was passed [...] [introducing] measures of exclusion, deportation, arrest, and generally drastic supervision and control.

(CAB 24/76 1919)

When the Act was passed on 5 August, it introduced provisions that limited the movements of aliens within the UK and prohibited them from living in specific areas of the country, particularly near coasts or military establishments (Hansard, 1914b: c589;

French, 1978: p. 366). Expanding upon the powers granted to the Home Secretary in the 1905 Act, enemies remaining in the country had to join a police register and the Home Office was empowered to inter and expel those it deemed to be a threat (Morgenstern, 1949: p. 346; French, 1978: p. 366). Home Secretary Reginald McKenna stated that the intention of the Act was to 'remove any ground whatever for public apprehension' (Hansard 1914a: c565). In order to achieve this, the police were authorised to investigate any suspected cases of espionage and were expected to arrest and detain aliens regarded as spies. Under the 1911 Official Secrets Act, those found to be 'prejudicial to the safety or interests of the State' who had either committed or were 'about to commit' an offence against the British state could be 'apprehended and detained in the same manner as a person who [was] found guilty of committing a felony' (Official Secrets Act, 1911: ch. 28 s1(1), s6). Within a month of the introduction of the 1914 Act, the Commissioner of Police reported that officers had 'thoroughly investigated all cases where they had reason to suspect espionage, as well as some 8,000 or 9,000 reported to them by members of the public' (Hansard, 1914a: c564). However, of all those investigated, only 90 were detained (ibid., c564). Still, the Home Office continued to arrest Germans civilians and over ten thousand of them were placed in custody by mid-September 1914; the scope of the internment programme was so large and the availability of detention facilities so limited that the Home Secretary 'had to agree to the release of over 1,000 prisoners on parole' (French, 1978: p. 638).

Due to the vast discretionary powers made available to the Secretary of State within the bill, the 1914 Aliens Registration Act is perhaps the best example within early UK immigration policy of the juridical 'exception' being instituted in response to a perceived state of emergency; rights typically guaranteed were suspended for the 'good' of the nation. In effect, as Carl Schmitt states, the capacity to suspend the law was built into the juridical order itself (Schmitt, 1985 in Sartori, 1989: p. 68). While an argument might be made that the 1793 Aliens Act was itself a response to a state of emergency, it was different from the 1914 Act in one crucial respect: Parliament retained the power of deportation. Once the government had reserved itself the right to detain and deport, the next logical step was to extend this power into peacetime.

### *2.1.5 Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act 1919 & Aliens Order 1920*

As the First World War drew to a close, it became clear to lawmakers that an extension of the provisions of the 1914 Aliens Restriction Act might be desirable following an end to hostilities. In July 1919, Mr Doyle asked the Home Secretary if the Home Office would make 'any discrimination between German and other alien immigrants' and if the conditions of the Aliens Act would continue 'after the signing of Peace and after the

ratification of the terms of Peace' (Hansard, 1919a: c1143). At the time, new immigration legislation was already being proposed, and the Home Secretary was on course to gain even greater control over the admission of foreigners into the country. For instance, the amount of officers monitoring borders was to be increased and they were to be made answerable directly to the Home Office (Hansard, 1919b: c544).

When the new immigration bill was signed into law, it significantly expanded the powers of the Home Secretary. Under Section 1, the powers granted to the state by the 1914 Act were exercisable not only during a state of war or when danger was imminent, but 'at any time' (Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act, 1919: s1(1)). Similar to current border officials' discretionary power in determining asylum seekers' ages in the absence of appropriate identification, in 1919, the state could determine 'what nationality [was] to be ascribed to aliens in doubtful circumstances' (ibid., s2(1)(I)). Those found 'likely to cause sedition or disaffection' could be imprisoned (ibid., s3(1-2)) and, under Section 10(1), all 'former enemy aliens' were barred from entering the United Kingdom for a total of three years following the introduction of the Act. Crucially, the 1919 Act extended the state of emergency into peacetime, and while it was intended to expire one year after ratification, the act was in fact renewed annually until the introduction of the 1971 Immigration Act that replaced it (Coleman, 1987: p. 1145).

From an Agambenian perspective, the 1919 Act represents the moment in British history when the exceptional approach to immigration control became normalised and the foreigner became subject to the authority of the Home Secretary. Roscoe writes of the introduction of the Act:

[I]t places a foreigner outside the protection of the law, entirely in the power of the Secretary of State ... and under the supervision of the police, and curtails his liberty; he has not the rights of a British subject which was the legal position of the friendly alien.

(Roscoe, 1930: p. 70)

When the 1920 Aliens Order was released the following year, aliens seeking work were required to register with the police (Panayi, 1991 in Saunders, 2003b: pp. 31-32) and all aliens wishing to land in the United Kingdom were required to fill in landing cards and undergo inspection by an immigration officer; those failing to comply could be detained and deported by the Home Secretary (Aliens Order, 1920 s1(1)(a) in Steiner, 1951: p. 362; Coleman, 1987: p. 1146; Solomos, 2003 in Bloch and Schuster, 2005b: p. 494; Welch and Schuster, 2005: p. 337). With the introduction of the Acts of 1919 and 1920, the seeds of modern immigration legislation were fully sewn. When the 1971 Act appeared half a century later, the precedence of exclusion was ingrained in British policy.

## 2.2 'We have been here before' - constructing the 'undeserving'

As seen with the development of immigration control from 1793 to the early 20th century, the classification of migrants as criminal and deviant has been an important method for proponents of stricter regulations to elicit support for their efforts to purge Britain of its unwanted alien presence. Following the unrest that spread throughout London, Birmingham, Manchester and other cities throughout Britain in August 2011, historian David Starkey announced on *Newsnight* that 'whites have become black', seemingly suggesting that lawlessness on the streets was something foreign and unattributable to a more reserved and previously unadulterated white British culture (Quinn, 2011). Writing for *The Daily Mail*, Melanie Phillips blamed a 'victim' culture for creating a class of immigrants whose attitudes and practices were leading British heritage into a state of structural and moral decay (Phillips, 2011). While these views were by no means universal, and were subsequently criticised (see: Jones 2011a; Jones 2011b; Quinn, 2011), they reflected a common anxiety that foreigners represent a threat to security and national identity. In analysing data gathered in two YouGov polls before and after the 2011 unrest, Matthew Goodwin and colleagues at Nottingham University concluded that there had been a 'statistically significant' rise in respondents' prejudices toward foreigners in the aftermath of the disturbances (Taylor, 2011).

The demonisation of the 'other' and the creation of what Stanley Cohen (2002) refers to as 'folk devils' is instrumental in developing a narrative of the asylum seeker that is both exploitive and destructive. As a result, policies of deterrence no longer have to appeal to humanitarian sentiments as immigrants' humanity is stripped away through descriptions of migrant barbarity and brutishness. During periods of unrest in 1958 and 1981, for instance, accounts of immigrants' lawlessness were used to push for more restrictive controls; while these descriptions cannot be said to causally relate to the introduction of stricter policies, they were certainly effective in evoking emotive responses and played into popular feelings of discontent regarding cultural intrusions into the 'British way of life'. Few people were as adept at constructing the image of the perfidious and aggressive foreigner as Enoch Powell, a man Roy Lewis (1979) has credited with defining the ideology of British Conservatism in the twentieth century (Lewis, 1979: p. ix).

While many of Powell's contemporaries would likely have disagreed with Lewis's claim, including perhaps Edward Heath, Powell's bold, public outcries against unfettered immigration allowances enjoyed extensive popular support. His stance on the migration of New Commonwealth immigrants, while initially rebuked by Conservatives, soon became a cornerstone of party objectives in the early 1970s. Layton-Henry (1992) suggests that the Conservatives owed Powell a debt of gratitude for their 1970 general election victory; it

was his speeches that prompted the party's movement toward stricter immigration policies, an approach that seemed to resound with the public (Layton-Henry, 1992: p. 83). Powell's influence on policy should not be over-exaggerated: he was not universally popular amongst his peers and was becoming progressively more marginalised by his own party by the early 1970s. Nevertheless, elements of his stance on immigration did make their way into official policy in the 1971 Immigration Act, such as his notion that immigrants should be offered a degree of monetary support to be 're-patriated' to their countries of origin.

Powell drew a clear distinction between immigrants and British 'natives', and suggested that a distinction be made between 'coloured' migrants and those arriving from Ireland or other Western nations. In a BBC interview in September 1969, Trevor Huddleston asked Powell 'why the presence of a coloured immigrant group is objectionable, when the presence of a non-coloured immigrant is not'. Powell responded by stating that 'the reason why the whole debate in this country on immigration is related to coloured immigration, is because there has been no net immigration of white Commonwealth citizens' (Powell, 1992: p. 186). Moreover in his famous speech in Birmingham, Powell stated that because of 'marked' differences of 'colour', the integration of ethnic migrants would be 'difficult' (ibid., p. 167). Powell's obsession with emphasising the massive influx of New Commonwealth migrants into the UK is evidenced in his painstaking analyses of immigration statistics, as well as the numerous letters he sent to statisticians and other politicians warning of the imminent threat that ethnic minority migrants posed to the British economy and way of life. Powell collected printouts featuring the net balances of foreign nationals moving into and out of the UK under the 1971 Immigration Act. On one such document, he placed tick marks next to the figures for Canada, Australia and New Zealand and conspicuously omitted their numbers from his tally of migrants entering and exiting Britain (POLL 8/2/2: Immigration Act 1971 statistics, Net Balances Jan-Mar 1973). It is hard not to form the impression that Powell is making an exception for white migrants and focusing instead on the 'coloureds' he believed would be unable to adequately integrate into British culture.

From Powell's perspective, the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act and the 1965 legislation that followed had done nothing substantially to quell the amount of immigrants coming to Britain. The Labour Party was so fearful of losing political ground to the Conservatives that it took an increasingly restrictionist approach to immigration policy, which gave 'supporters of immigration control' like Enoch Powell the knowledge that they 'had the upper hand and that they could dictate the political agenda' (Layton-Henry, 1992: p. 79). Empowered by the surprise success of Peter Griffith's electoral campaign in Smethwick while pursuing an 'openly anti-immigration' stance (Hartley-Brewer, 1965 in

ibid., p. 77), Powell sought to give a voice to the 'silent majority' that wanted to see an end to black and Asian migration into Britain.

At a Conservative Association meeting on 20 April 1968, Powell gave his now infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech. In it, Powell states that, as a Member of Parliament, it is his duty to bring to light controversial matters that affect 'ordinary' citizens (Powell, 1992: p. 162). Using anecdotal stories from constituents, Powell displays the immigrant as a disrupter of the peace and as someone who would take advantage of an old, unassuming British widow. It is not the immigrant who suffers, Powell states, but the native Briton. 'The discrimination and the deprivation, the sense of alarm and of resentment, lies not with the immigrant population but with those among whom they have come and are still coming' (ibid., p. 165). Immigrants, Powell claims, are such a strain on resources that native British women cannot find hospital beds upon which to give birth and British children are unable to pursue an education because immigrant children have overrun schools (ibid., p. 166). Powell claims that he wants no special treatment for immigrants or citizens, but declares that a citizen should have the 'right to discriminate in the management of his own affairs' (ibid., p. 164). Powell makes a few Conservative policy suggestions including dropping support for the Race Relations Bill, bringing the net migration of New Commonwealth migrants down to zero and offering a stipend to those immigrants wishing to return to their countries of origin (ibid., p. 164). In closing, Powell warns that race relations are in danger of becoming as bad in the UK as they are in the US. Likening Britain to ancient Rome, Powell declares that he sees 'the River Tiber foaming with much blood'. The only solution, he warns, is the cessation of immigration (ibid., pp. 168-169).

The immediate reaction to Powell's speech was varied. Before the full public response had been heard, Edward Heath ousted Powell from the Shadow Cabinet fearing his words to be a political liability for the Conservatives (Spencer 1997: p. 143). Labour and Conservatives alike condemned Powell's racist overtones and the press watched closely to see what the future would bring for Powell's career. To the surprise of many, but perhaps not to Powell himself, his speech became the rallying cry for a significant portion of the public that perceived a similar 'coloured' migrant 'problem', and to whom his proposed solutions appealed. Gallup poll results between 1964 and 1969 highlight a significant increase in Powell's popularity following his speech. Respondents were asked to select whom they thought should replace Edward Heath if he were to retire. In April 1968, prior to Powell's speech, only 1 per cent of respondents favoured Powell. A month later, the results from the same poll had Powell ranked first amongst his rivals and enjoying 24 per cent of respondents' preferences (Gallup, 1968 in Studlar, 1974: p. 379). Powell received thousands of letters supporting his stance, many providing anecdotal stories to support his claims. A Conservative MP who wished to remain anonymous wrote

a letter of particular interest, stating that the old-age pensioners in his constituency, who comprised 40 per cent of its population, were 'almost without exception,' behind Enoch Powell (POLL 8/1/8: MP's letter to Powell, 19 November 1968). As Powell's popularity increased, his fellow Conservatives began changing tack. In a speech in York on 20 September 1968, Edward Heath declared, 'The time has come when the legislation relating to the entry of aliens ... should be brought together with the law relating to Commonwealth immigrants and be placed on the basis of permanent legislation' (POLL 8/2/2: Conservative Research Department, 'Notes on current politics, Home Office affairs', 4 August 1969, p. 40).

It is important not to exaggerate Powell's ability to sway public opinion. Powell's ability to sway public opinion and the decisions of the Conservative Party were limited: he was in near constant conflict with his peers, and the elements of his ideology that did make their way into policy were significantly watered down. For instance, when the 1971 Immigration Act finally came into law, the amount of money allotted for the purpose of repatriating immigrants was negligible (Spencer, 1997: p. 144). Powell's impact on public opinion regarding this specific matter is unclear. In Studlar's analysis of Powell's impact on public attitudes about 'colour issues', he finds that prior to Powell's speech, 'public opinion had strongly endorsed the Government's action in passing the 1968 Immigrant Act' (Studlar, 1974: 376). In a Gallup Poll conducted in March 1968, 59 per cent of respondents stated that the repatriation of immigrants should be encouraged. In May, following Powell's speech, this level rose only slightly to 63 per cent (Gallup, 1968 in Studlar, 1974: 377).

Powell's popularity amongst his fellow MPs was variable. Conservatives tended to avoid backing his pronouncements outright because of their extremity. Labour MPs outwardly castigated Powell, but quietly backed anti-immigration policies due to their electoral promise. Some, however, were not afraid to express themselves. Labour MP David Ennals spoke to a congregation of immigrants outside a Sikh temple at Gravesend, declaring:

[Enoch Powell] made his speech not in Parliament but with the calculated intention of getting as much space as possible in the Sunday Press. I view with revulsion the way he must have sat gloating over the inches devoted to

his speech, and I hope that many will speak out against the philosophy advocated in that speech ... [Powell] gravely misjudged and underestimated [British tolerance].

(POLL, 8/1/8: 'Space Calculation', Daily Telegraph clipping, 15 November 1968)

Some Conservatives were similarly critical. In his semi-autobiographical account of Britain's economic decline, Conservative MP Aubrey Jones of Birmingham criticised Powell's desire to cut spending on social services and referred to him as 'hopelessly wrong' (Jones, 1985: p. 12). Unlike Powell, Jones believed immigration would boost Britain's economy, not hamper it, and believed it would enhance the productivity of the domestic labour force (Jones, 1985: p. 16-17). Over time, Powell's relationship with the Conservative Party diminished further; in a series of correspondence with fellow Conservative MP, Reginald Maudling, Powell expresses concern regarding the number of students and visitors entering Britain whose settlement was not being recorded in immigration statistics. At first, Maudling affirms that 'while some Commonwealth citizens admitted as visitors and students are allowed to stay permanently, others admitted for settlement decide to leave'. The only way to get an accurate representation of net migration figures, Maudling suggests, would be to have the Home Office 'interview everyone who leaves the country as well as those who enter', something he deems impractical (POLL, 8/2/2: Maudling, letter to Powell, 24 September 1970). When Powell further pursues the matter in a subsequent letter, Maudling offers a curt reply that the comment 'will be of interest to the Office of Population, Censuses, and Surveys [...]. I am therefore passing a copy of the correspondence to Keith Joseph [Conservative MP, Secretary of State for Social Services]' (POLL, 8/2/2: Maudling, letter to Powell, 8 October 1970). When Powell was later distressed by the 'under-numeration' of immigration figures in the 1971 census, he proposed to David Owen, MP of the Department of Health and Social Security, that the Census data be compared to figures produced by the Department of Education and Sciences. In a response letter, Owen critiques Powell's methods stating that his findings suggest an 'element of doubt' and that his calculations are 'most hazardous' (POLL, 8/2/2: Owen, letter to Powell, 14 October 1975). A 1973 Times article announced that the Census office disagreed with Powell's figures and an office official reported that 'independent checks ... don't support any significant under-enumeration in the census' (POLL, 8/2/2: 'Census office challenges Mr Powell's figures', The Times clipping, 26 November 1973).

Taking into account Powell's alienation from the Conservative Party and his personal decision to break away from it in the early 1970s, much can still be said about the lasting influence of his ideology on the future course of the Conservative Party and the



stance both major parties took toward immigration. By the late 1990s, New Labour and Conservative views on immigration were almost indistinguishable. In response to Conservative criticism of Labour's approach to immigration, Tony Blair responded that Conservatives 'know perfectly well that we have been legislating on it, from 1998 onwards, and tightening the system – often in the face of their opposition' (Blair, 2005). In January 2010, David Cameron declared that net immigration of around 200,000 was 'too much'. He preferred to 'see net immigration in the tens of thousands rather than the hundreds of thousands' (Prince, 2010). Indeed, the fact that the coalition government has been unable to meet its target of reducing immigration to a level below 100,000 people - net migration to the UK increased to 243,000 by August 2014 - was criticised by the opposition leader, Ed Miliband, as a sign of political weakness (Travis, 2014; BBC News, 2015).

The combined legacy of 1960s legislation and Powell's mustering of anti-migrant sentiment was the development of consensus between the Labour and Conservative Parties on immigration objectives. With the introduction of the 1971 Immigration Act, 'patrials', or those Commonwealth migrants who could claim hereditary links to a parent or grandparent born in Britain, were eligible for citizenship while 'non-patrials' were not. As Lisa Hassan (2000) suggests, patrials were 'usually white' (Hassan, 2000: p. 187). Powell's omission of citizens of Australia, New Zealand and Canada from his calculations of net Commonwealth migration was a practice adopted in official policy. The 1971 legislation also introduced the power to detain migrants, a practice heavily adopted throughout the 1990s and expanded through to the present period. In 2013, 30,400 immigrants entered detention up from 27,000 in 2011 (UK Home Office, 2014 in Silverman and Hajela, 2015: p. 3). All but four detention facilities in the United Kingdom are operated by private companies, including G4S and Serco (ibid., p. 3).

The connection between immigration and criminality has a long heritage in Britain. The denouncement of immigration on the grounds that it introduces criminal elements into Britain has been perpetuated for hundreds of years. During the seventeenth century, French Huguenots escaping persecution in France arrived in England to accusations of being Catholic spies seeking to undermine the English way of life (Hintermaier, 2000: p. 440). Wray (2006) and Greenslade (2005) describe the manner in which Jewish immigrants arriving in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were cast as criminals in both the press and amongst politicians (Wray, 2006: p. 9; Greenslade, 2005: p. 314). David French (1978) examines the effect of 'spy fever' on debates surrounding British immigration policy in 1905 and beyond (French, 1978). Negative positions on immigration were far from unanimous in each of these instances, and significant opposition remained at least early on in the development of British immigration policy. For instance, in response to the presence of German nationals living in Britain in the early

1900s, the War Office sought to register all foreign nationals living in Britain during peacetime, but this was met with heavy opposition from the Labour Party (ibid., p. 359). Even Winston Churchill, who in 1911 proposed an immigration bill that aimed to further penalise those protecting illegal immigrants and empower the government to deport foreigners found guilty of a crime (Wrigley, 2002: p. 305), was forced to concede that the presence of foreigners did not appreciably affect crime rates. When asked whether rising crime levels were directly attributable to the increase in immigration between 1909 and 1910, Churchill replied that the proportion of foreigners in prison in England and Wales had decreased by fifty per cent in the years between 1904 and 1910. '[I]t is clear', he stated, 'that the number of aliens who come to this country does not sensibly affect the matter, if the point is tested by comparing the number of aliens received in prison on conviction with the number of all convicted prisoners in England and Wales' (Hansard, 1911: cc277). However, the construction of migrants as criminal persisted, and continues to in the present era.

When Enoch Powell stood before the Conservative Association meeting in April 1968, he was careful to stress more than immigration reform; his sense of 'foreboding' extended to those migrants already present in the United Kingdom whose 'colour' made integration 'difficult' and who, in Powell's opinion, had no intention to integrate in the first place. He recommended re-emigration for those migrants already present, as such a solution would be the only way to avert disaster:

If all immigration ended tomorrow, the rate of growth of the immigrant and immigrant-descended population would be substantially reduced, but the prospective size of this element in the population would still leave the basic character of the national danger unaffected. [...] Hence the urgency of implementing now the second element of the Conservative Party's policy: the encouragement of re-emigration.

(Powell, 2007)

Powell's descriptions of migrants' deviance and criminality accentuated the extent of the problem and his lurid account of a pensioner being 'abused' by 'two Negroes' served to reinforce his point. Predating Wilson and Kelling's infamous 1982 *Atlantic Weekly* article by nearly 15 years, Powell used the imagery of broken windows to warn of more serious crime to come. He described the shoving of faeces through a letter box as if it were a metaphor for the entire British experience.

Powell's representations have been channeled into more modern reactions to migrant presences in the United Kingdom, and asylum seekers in particular have been portrayed with a similar sense of ominousness. Nigel Farage, leader of the UK

Independence Party, has said that the 'basic principle' of Powell's speech was sound and remarked that '[h]ad we listened to [Powell], we would have much better race relations than we have got' (Mason, 2014). UKIP's rise in popularity has corresponded with suggestions that the Conservative Party is attempting to retain supporters by taking a firmer stand on immigration (Watt, 2013). Business Secretary Vince Cable has intimated that contemporary panic surrounding immigration is comparable to the fervour that Powell incited over four decades ago (Wintour, 2013b). Today, migrants continue to be associated with criminality. Examples abound in *Daily Mail* headlines, and the fervour surrounding the presence of foreign 'criminals' like Abu Qatada coupled with fears of 'swamping' by asylum seekers, has resulted in the coalition government's condemnation of immigration judges and its denouncement of the Human Rights Act and Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which protects migrants' rights to private and family life (Hennessy, 2012). Home Secretary Theresa May's resolve to abandon the ECHR was seemingly strengthened following the government's difficulty in deporting Qatada, as she stated that 'all options - including withdrawal from the convention altogether - should remain on the table' (Travis, 2013). Official antipathy toward immigrants, particularly asylum seekers, stands at odds with the government's formal obligations to honour the spirit of international human rights agreements dating back to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1950 signing of the ECHR and the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

The immigration policies developed throughout the 1990s and 2000s, which I detail further in chapters 3 and 4, reveal the extent to which the Labour Party viewed immigration as a political problem. With the issue of Commonwealth migration effectively controlled after the 1981 Nationality Act abolished birthright citizenship, new populations were singled out for control. Given the steep rise in the number of refugees seeking asylum in the United Kingdom throughout the late 1990s,<sup>2</sup> asylum seekers became a primary target for control. In 1995, the year before the introduction of the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act, principal asylum applicants accounted for 34.3 per cent of all net migration into the United Kingdom. By 1999, the percentage rose to 59.8 per cent before eventually dropping to its 2013 level of 12.6 per cent (ONS, Long-Term International Migration, 2013). While White Papers including 1998's *Fairer, Faster and Firmer* and 2002's *Secure Borders, Safe Havens* delineated the Labour government's attitudes toward the perceived influx of asylum seekers, the following statement from a personal interview with the former Home Secretary, David Blunkett, illuminates the logic underpinning the Blair government's use of detention as a social control measure and its

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<sup>2</sup> In 1987, the United Kingdom received 4,256 asylum applications. The number of applications hit a total of 84,130 in 2003 and following a reduction to just under 18,000 in 2010 rose to 23,507 in 2013 (Blinder, 2014: p. 2).

aims to incorporate civil society in the management of destitute asylum seekers and their dependents:

I didn't come into politics to have a major part of my time as it was when I was Home Secretary dealing with heart-rending asylum cases - people who didn't want to return to their home country - not least to do with children, but we had to. And we had to, because if people weren't cooperating on removal and they absconded when you freed them from secure centres, then you have no choice but to do something [...].

The other thing I said was: 'Well the people who are campaigning so vigorously and are so hurt and upset - why don't we agree that they have the families in their homes and they act as guarantor for them?' I didn't get any takers. This has to be a civil society as well as a governmental issue. Fortunately for the current coalition, the number of asylum seekers coming to this country [...] partly because of the measures we took (the closure of Sangatte, the liaison offices in airports, the security immigration offices on northern European coasts), all measures we had taken over the last decade - have resulted in asylum claims being something like 20 per cent of those I was dealing with in 2001/2. Unfortunately, they've taken a very illiberal line on economic migration and work permits [...].

(Rt Hon David Blunkett MP, Interview, 02 November 2012)

Reference to human rights or the state's humanitarian duties are conspicuously absent from Blunkett's assessments of how asylum seekers should be managed within securitised environments. Though he later credited Britain's role in the establishment of human rights law - 'those basic agreed international rights we [Britain] were instrumental in developing in the first place back in 1951' (ibid.) - Blunkett's language centres more on the state's need to control asylum seekers under the assumption that if not in detention, they would 'abscond'. Secondly, his comments reflect the neoliberal logic upon which the distinctions between deserving and undeserving migrants are founded: those who can contribute to the economy of the United Kingdom are deemed acceptable while those seeking to enter the country on humanitarian grounds - no matter their *potential* for economic contribution - are presented as a population that requires management, incarceration and, ultimately, removal.

In charting the course of English and British immigration policies from the 13th century to the 1960s, it is evident that exclusionary tactics are embedded within the country's legislative culture. While the specific populations targeted for exclusion and

removal have changed over time, from the Jews of the 1200s to the French Huguenots of the 18th century and the West Indian migrants of the 1960s, the practice and *governance* of exclusion remain central to the state's defence of society through biopolitical mechanisms of control and restrictionism. The establishment and reinforcement of 'Britishness' has depended upon the identification of an alien 'other' whose presence defines the boundaries of belonging. Refinements to the definition of citizenship through the 1960s, with the introduction of the 1971 Immigration Act and finally, the 1981 British Nationality Act, served to delimit the boundaries of legitimacy. To exist outside the category of citizen is to remain subject to increasingly discretionary immigration rules. In the following chapter, I expand on notions of identity and employ various theoretical approaches to help develop an understanding of the logics underpinning current policies and practices concerning asylum seekers within the United Kingdom.

### **Chapter 3: The governance of exclusion: sovereignty, immunity and the securitisation of home**

In this chapter, I turn briefly to interpretations of British legislative history that present restrictions as methods of population management intended to demarcate the boundaries between the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ of state recognition and support (Sales, 2002). This is followed by a consideration of the debates surrounding state sovereignty and the British state’s obligations under international human rights agreements. I demonstrate that the UK government does not operate within a legislative vacuum; appeals to Articles 3 and 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), for instance, are important avenues of resistance against efforts to deny the rights of refugees. Coupled with the actions of charities, voluntary organisations, lawyers and activists from a variety of disciplines, legislative duties remain the primary method of combatting restrictionist policies. Executive responses to these forms of resistance have been manifest in cuts to legal aid, the defunding of charitable organisations and one-stop services and the regular denunciation of international human rights law by prominent members of the coalition government.<sup>3</sup> The admission of small numbers of refugees in one-off displays of British magnanimity, such as the acceptance of 4,000 Kosovan Albanians in the late 1990s and the coalition government’s January 2014 commitment to admit 500 Syrians have resulted in a varied public response. However, as many authors have previously indicated, reactions to the arrival and continued presence of asylum seekers in the United Kingdom are generally and increasingly negative (see: Welch and Schuster, 2005; Statham, 2003; Greenslade, 2005; Hubbard, 2005). In this chapter, I demonstrate that the construction of asylum seekers is linked to fears of racial incursion and the criminality viewed to be inherent to non-white British residents and foreigners. Responses to the 2011 British riots, such as those by David Starkey and Melanie Phillips, illustrate the degree to which societal disorder is linked to the presence and continued influx of non-white migrants. I argue that a culture of securitisation has arisen to rein in the

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<sup>3</sup> Conservative politicians including David Cameron, Theresa May and Chris Grayling have advocated for the abandonment of the 1998 Human Rights Act and the UK’s eventual withdrawal from the European Convention on Human Rights (Travis, 2013). Attorney General Dominic Grieve warned against a British withdrawal from the ECHR, as it would undermine an ‘international order’ that Britain has played an important role in developing (Brogan, 2013), and Nick Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister, has expressed his intent to challenge Conservatives’ attempts to abandon the Human Rights Act (Stratton, 2011). Citing public views on immigration between 1997 and 2001, Mulvey (2010) writes that the acceptance of Kosovan refugees did not engender ‘widespread hostility’ (Mulvey, 2010: p. 450). A YouGov/Times poll conducted in late January 2014 revealed that 47 per cent of respondents did not support Britain’s admission of a few hundred Syrian refugees as compared to 39 per cent that supported the move and 14 per cent that reported that they did not know (Jordan, 2014).

'foreign' element already present within the United Kingdom and to channel new arrivals into a carceral system of perpetual precariousness. Drawing and extending on the work of Bülent Diken (2004), I consider the extent to which immigration arrival and removal centres can be likened to the 'camp', a space of exception where asylum seekers are relegated to a position of bare life. I close with a brief consideration of governmentality and the tactics of exclusion employed in the governance of asylum policies and question whether the entry of private security into the management of asylum housing represents an extension of the state of exception.

### *3.1 Forging Britishness: Explanations of Identity Construction*

Multiple interpretations of the United Kingdom's exclusionary immigration practices position controls within the frameworks of identity construction, cultural protectionism and biopolitical responses to the introduction of foreign bodies. For instance, Jock Young (2003) suggests that the insecurities arising out of a perceived loss of community in the era of late modernity has led people to seek out a 'firm identity' in 'nationalism, fundamentalism [and] racism' (Young, 2003: p. 457). Through his discussion of immunity, Roberto Esposito (2013) implies that the creation and perpetuation of community is dependent upon a negation; commonality amongst diverse people is established through their mutual rejection of their obligations toward foreigners (Esposito, 2013: pp. 45, 59). These explanations go beyond simple denouncements of inherently racist publics and instead situate social exclusion within a more Foucauldian perspective in which state expressions of power give way to goals of societal preservation.

As popular views of asylum seekers are moulded and amplified in news reports highlighting the threat they pose to 'native' citizens, these explanations are useful in understanding why policies of restrictionism and securitisation are a prevalent feature of modern controls. They help provide insight into why successive UK governments have pursued what the Joint Committee on Human Rights describes as a 'deliberate policy' of 'destitution' (Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2007: p. 24). The reasoning behind measures like Section 55 of the 2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act, which denied support to asylum seekers who did not claim asylum within a reasonably practicable period, is rendered less arbitrary when viewed through the lens of nationalist paternalism and societal protectionism. Likewise, the privatisation of asylum housing can be seen as both a product of neoliberal marketisation and an indirect attempt to render asylum seekers' living experiences so uncomfortable that voluntary return becomes a more attractive prospect to them (see: Bigo, 2002 and Darling, 2011), an impression confirmed by an associate of a former interview subject who explained that the interviewee in question had decided to return to her country of origin for this very reason

(WY-L-05, Interview, 06 September 2013). Nevertheless, despite the efforts of successive Home Secretaries to make destitution a negative incentive for attempting to sustain a refused asylum claim, figures from agencies contracted to provide assisted voluntary return show that despite often very severe privations, a very small percentage of asylum seekers are prepared to return to their countries of origin or transit countries for a complex variety of reasons that differ according to each individual circumstance (Giner, 2007: p. 254; Quinn, 2013: p. 11). Crawley, Hemmings and Price (2011) explain that the number of asylum seekers choosing voluntary return in 2009 was less than two per cent of the total number living in the UK. They surmise that '[t]he low level of voluntary return is indicative of the clear decision of refused asylum seekers to choose a life of destitution rather than accept state support on the condition of returning to their country of origin' (Crawley, Hemmings and Price, 2011: p. 61).

The goals of privatisation and restriction are not always complementary; the creation of a housing market dependent upon asylum seekers as residents is not necessarily compatible with government aims to reduce the number of asylum applicants seeking state-contracted housing support. Private firms like Serco and G4S profit from the maintenance of populations in perpetual states of indeterminacy. The companies' contracts in the United Kingdom, Israel, Australia, South Africa and elsewhere are testament to this reality. However, such organisations also serve an expulsive function in carrying out transportation and escort services. Once again, superficial explanations of state sovereignty and the inevitable reduction of asylum seekers to a status of 'bare life' are contrasted with a more nuanced manifestation of power, in which asylum seekers exist at the nexus between commodification, exclusion and resistance. This is reflected most acutely in the housing experiences of asylum seekers within the COMPASS programme who carry with them an aggregate of experiences ranging from destitution and detention to moments of agency and defiance. These experiences exist within a continuum in which the separation between state surveillance and private provision is sometimes difficult to discern; matters are made more complicated given the fact that former public officials have transitioned into prominent positions within private security companies.

For example, G4S hired former Home Secretary, John Reid, as a Group Consultant in 2008 (Syal, 2009). Michael Hickley, writing for the *Mail Online*, criticised the appointment as it was shortly followed by G4S's successful acquisition of a four-year contract providing security guards at military locations across the country (Hickley, 2009). In early 2011, Phil Wheatley, former Director General of HM Prison Service, was hired as a consultant to G4S. The managing director of the firm's care and justice services declared that Wheatley's experience would 'be of enormous benefit as we seek to develop our care and justice portfolio around the world' (Banks quoted in Doward, 2010). Despite



resistance from the Prison Officers' Association, in March of the same year, G4S was awarded a fifteen-year contract to operate prisons in Wolverhampton and Birmingham for £750 million (Sambrook, 2013).

As I detail in chapter 6, a number of asylum seekers housed by G4S, Serco and their subcontractors had prior knowledge of these firms and strongly believed that the companies' primary goals were profit-seeking. Further support to this interpretation was provided when Jeremy Stafford of Serco and Stephen Small of G4S confirmed during a Home Affairs Select Committee meeting on asylum that they were, in the words of MP David Winnick, 'in the business [...] to make a profit' (House of Commons, 2013b). Representatives of G4S and Serco are clear that the firms aim to enter into new markets and assimilate services previously provided through the state. From G4S's acquisition of the Department for Work and Pensions' 'Welfare to Work' scheme in 2011 to recent revelations that the Department of Education is seeking to outsource children's social services to Serco and G4S, the precedent for such expansion already exists (Parker, 2013; Butler, 2014). The extent to which G4S and Serco play a role in the governance of state surveillance practices is an issue explored in later chapters, though critics of these companies' entry into the asylum housing market emphasise their administration of the state's deliberate policies of destitution and exclusion. John Grayson (2014) writes that 'asylum housing managed by G4S and Serco has exposed [asylum seekers to] the everyday abuse and disrespect [...] by the Home Office and their contractors' (Grayson, 2014). In this view, asylum seekers serve a dual role as units of value production and bodies marked for banishment. In academic literature, particularly that which emphasises the state's role in isolating and ostracising unwanted groups, asylum seekers have often been represented solely in the latter capacity. While I argue that this is an insufficient construction of asylum seekers' experiences, it remains important to explore the interpretations of the state's basis for exclusion, as these factors remain significant features of asylum seekers' lives.

The existence of the COMPASS project reveals a connection between two hitherto largely discrete and non-conversing literatures; there is a wide range of literature on issues of state racism and exclusionary imagined communities, while another body of work addresses the neoliberal marketisation of state services, in particular the state's delegation of its monopoly on the use of force to private actors. Within the exclusionary logics of state policy aiming to ban and remove asylum seekers and the neoliberal phenomenon of ever-expanding marketised services lies a fundamental paradox: asylum seekers are 'bad', but asylum markets are 'good'. However, one cannot exist without the other; the system then becomes one of a perpetual performative punishment rather than one of direct expulsion. Agamben's 'camp' - or more broadly, spaces of exception - are central for symbolic reasons of visual containment as well as the function they serve in

maintaining an ever-growing asylum market. Agamben is partially correct in describing the 'ban' and the creation of 'bare life', but he misses a critical element beyond the agency of those banned: the need to sustain the very profitable *industry* of death (and life) as much as the state must sustain bare life and the perpetuation of a state of exception. It is a global industry and one that states arguably rely on in order to maintain their other two objectives.

The literature on this industry is broad in scope, particularly in reference to the detention estates of the United States and Australia. Indeed, Anne McNevin (2007) addresses Hollifield's 'liberal paradox' with specific reference to the detention of asylum seekers in Australia through the use of private security firms, stating that this paradox can be understood as 'the trend amongst contemporary states towards greater transnational open-ness in the economic arena alongside growing pressure for domestic political closure' (McNevin, 2007: p. 611). Evans (2003) employs the notions of the camp and exceptional spaces in her description of the Australian detention estate, which in 2003, was entirely 'operated by Australasian Correctional Management (AC), a wholly owned subsidiary of U.S. private prison giant, Wackenden Inc.' (Evans, 2003: p. 164). Mukhopadhyay (2009) describes the United States' use of private firms in maintaining a market for the detention of bodies: the United States 'has implemented a system that targets the immigrant community and burdens taxpayers by facilitating profit for the private corporations who run detention facilities' (Mukhopadhyay, 2009: p. 701).

Writing from a Canadian perspective, where this practice is still in its early stages of expansion relative to the maturely developed detention estates in the US, Australia and the UK, Tamara Vukov (2003) refers to national borders as the sites at which 'imagined communities are generated in part through state policies, particularly immigration polices' (Vukov, 2003: p. 335). For Vukov, the maintenance of borders is associated with 'an institutionalised state project' of reaffirming citizens' right to live through outsiders' exposure to death; state racism represents a return of 'the sovereign right' in the management of foreign bodies (*ibid.*, pp. 337-338). In Vukov's estimation, the state's role in securing the population is associated with the 'sense of threat or panic' generated through 'media spectacles and governmental polices' (*ibid.*, pp. 338, 340). She highlights the way in which anti-immigrant sentiment in Canada is perpetuated through 'racialised and sexualised' representations of societal threats within the media; she notes the well-established association of asylum seekers with criminality (*ibid.*, pp. 340, 344).

I return to the criminalisation and demonisation of asylum seekers as a method of identity construction later in this chapter, but Vukov's depiction of the Canadian experience is supported in similar literature outlining the construction of national identity through the identification of the 'other' as an articulation of difference. Jock Young (2003) explains that the development of national identity is made possible through the

'designation of the immigrant as an Other, an alien group as opposed to the supposed cultural normality of the indigenous population' (Young, 2003: p. 455). Young states that this process is particularly pronounced in the era of late modernity in which 'economic insecurity and uncertainty of identity' demand 'a fixed identity based on the notion of a cultural essence which is reaffirmed, rediscovered and elaborated upon'. He writes: 'This essentializing of the self, the allocation of oneself and one's kith and kin, firm virtues rooted in the culture is inevitably accompanied by the essentializing and denigration of the other' (ibid., pp. 456-457).

Similarly, Roxanne Doty (1996) states that 'national identity is constructed *vis-à-vis* the representation of the "other"' (Doty, 1996: p. 236). Reiterating Hobsbawm's observation, Doty explains: 'Nations do not make states, but rather states make nations' (Hobsbawm, 1992 in Doty, 1996: pp. 240-241). National identity formation, Doty explains, is closely tied to an identification of difference on the basis of race. To demonstrate this, she describes the trajectory of British immigration legislation from the introduction of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act to the establishment of separate levels of citizenship within the 1981 British Nationality Act. The 1962 Act, which introduced employment vouchers for Commonwealth immigrants, was racist in concept and execution. Doty highlights the Labour Party's opposition to the Act on the grounds that it was 'bare-faced, open race discrimination' (Patrick Gordon Walker, 1961 quoted in Doty, 1996: p. 245). There are clear limitations to Doty's estimation of the expansion of racist immigration policies. As I explained in the previous chapter, exclusionary immigration policies have been defended on the grounds of racial purification since the 1905 Aliens Act and beyond. Arguably, state racism is a feature of a much earlier era; for Foucault (2004), it 'has been in existence for a very long time' before the 'emergence of [...] biopower that inscribes it in the mechanisms of the State. [...] As a result, the modern State can scarcely function without becoming involved with racism at some point, within certain limits and subject to certain conditions' (Foucault, 2004: p. 254). For Bauman (2004), the creation of 'wasted lives', or those lives that 'either could not or were not wished to be recognized or allowed to stay' is a feature of modernity and thus, an outcome of trajectories toward mass literacy and urbanisation (Bauman, 2004: p. 5).

So, while events surrounding the introduction of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act serve to confirm Doty's estimation that it was pivotal in the establishment of a racially exclusionary precedent within British immigration policy, Doty does not extend her development of state racism to the formative development of the modern state, and therefore does not fully address the degree to which this phenomenon is entrenched within the functioning of the state. However, if we expand on Doty's perspective while considering that the foundations of state racism stretch much further back in time, then we can begin to discuss the post-war period within a broader context. It was a reactionary

response to heightened immigration from the Commonwealth in the early 1960s and the perceived tensions between West Indian and Pakistani migrants and the white communities they were seen to have overrun. Media representations of West Indian and Pakistani involvement in the 1958 riots in Nottingham and Notting Hill centred on racial tensions, though actual involvement of ethnic minority groups was limited. Nevertheless, Conservative MPs like Peter Griffiths gained electoral traction by representing the disturbances as 'race riots' (see: Hirschler, 2012). Coupled with an increase in the rate of Commonwealth immigration into Britain, which rose from 21,600 in 1959 to 136,400 by the end of 1961 (CAB 129/121, 1965: Annex C, s(1-2)), the perception that Commonwealth citizens presented a threat to the British culture and population gave rise to calls for further controls. Cyril Osborne and Norman Pannell were perhaps the most vocal advocates. Osborne once challenged a fellow MP: 'Does the unrestricted immigration of coloured people into this country cause my right hon. Friend no anxieties at all?' (Hansard, 1961b: c1392). Pannell asserted that 'Commonwealth immigrants are responsible for practically the whole of the drug traffic in this country' (Hansard, 1961a: c1967). Home Secretary R.A. Butler eliminated any illusion that proposed legislation was race neutral when praising the virtues of the proposed voucher scheme planned for the 1962 Act:

The great merit of this scheme is that it can be presented as making no distinction on grounds of race or colour. [...] We must recognise that, although the scheme purports to relate solely to employment and to be non discriminatory, its aim is primarily social and its restrictive effect is intended to, and would in fact, operate on coloured people almost exclusively. This will be [...] laboured by some of our critics but there is no escape from it and at least such critics will not be able to sustain any suggestion that the scheme is inherently discriminatory.

(CAB 129/107, 06 October 1961: s.4)

Such views, however, stood in stark contrast with the lingering myth of the British Commonwealth, which many still clung to out of a sense of paternal obligation or imperialist nostalgia. The perception that citizens of the Commonwealth were citizens of Britain ran deep. Nevertheless, with the passage of the 1962 Act, the Commonwealth's demise was finally secured with the introduction of patriality in the 1971 Immigration Act and the removal of British birthright in the 1981 British Nationality Act. Tyler (2010) highlights the significance of the latter with a quote from Enoch Powell, marking the 1981 Act as 'the end of our brief imperial episode ... and the laying of that ghost, the Commonwealth' (quoted in Dixon, 1983 in Tyler, 2010: p. 64).

There exists a parallel between the repulsion of Commonwealth citizens during the 1960s and the restrictions placed on asylum seekers throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Where once the existence of the Commonwealth was largely viewed as sacrosanct and unquestionable, fears of racial incursion and the exploitative nature of foreigners lead to the constriction of British citizens' entry into the United Kingdom and eventually their outright rejection. Similarly, prior to 1993, no law existed that separated asylum seekers from other migrants in Britain (Bloch, 2000: p. 30) and the right to seek asylum remained enshrined within the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights and its 1967 protocol. This supposed dedication to the rights of refugees was undermined with the passage of the 1993 Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act, which marked the first in a recurring series of policies designed to restrict asylum seekers' entry and delimit their access to employment, benefits and housing. According to Alice Bloch (2000), this new emphasis on reining in asylum applications was a response to the significant rise in claims during the early 1990s. The 26,205 applications received in 1990 compared to 11,640 the year before and only 3,998 in 1988. By 1991, the rate increased to 44,840, a 71 per cent rise over the previous year (Bloch, 2000: p. 30). This frequency of arrivals contrasted greatly with that of previous years; the number of asylum applications received between 1980 and 1984 averaged just under 3,500 per year (UNHCR, 2001: p. 16). This concern with numbers - specifically numbers of non-white migrants - was precisely what preoccupied Enoch Powell when he estimated that the number of Commonwealth immigrants and their descendants living in Britain in 2000 would account for 'one-tenth of the total population' (Powell, 2007). It disturbed Margaret Thatcher, who in 1978 declared that British residents feared being 'swamped by people with a different culture' (Bourne, 2013: p. 88). It remains implicit in the Conservative Party's foundering goal of reducing net immigration to below 100,000 per year (BBC, 2014). The basis for inclusion in British society rests on the upholding of a racial and cultural ideal and the persistence of an imagined 'Golden Age' in which Britain was untarnished by the malignancy of foreignness. However, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, such a 'Golden Age' never existed.

### *3.2 Immunisation and Domopolitics*

Two theoretical approaches help explain the processes involved in the expulsion of foreignness from the 'body' of the British state: Roberto Esposito's exposition of the relationship between *community* and *immunity* and William Walters' concept of 'domopolitics', which likens state governance to that of the home. These provide important launching points for the subsequent discussion of biopolitical tactics intended to disincentivise asylum seekers from entering the country; they also allow room for a

conception of power that extends beyond the state and is manifested in the relationship between states, contractors and non-state organisations. In other words, the work of Esposito and Walters remains firmly wedded to the idea of governmentality, which Foucault defines as:

[...] the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument.

(Foucault, 2007: p. 108)

In introducing the concept of biopower at the outset of *Bíos* (2008), Esposito explains that the term likely originated with Rudolph Kjellén, the Swedish political scientist who conceptualised the state as a living body and described *bíos* as comprising ‘not only natural and physical life, but perhaps just as significantly cultural life’ (Kjellén, 1920 quoted in Esposito, 2008: pp. 16-17). Foucault too maintains life ‘at the centre of the frame’, but for Esposito, Foucault remains ambiguous in his representation of biopolitics, because he does not clearly explain whether it represents a power of life or a power over life (*ibid.*, pp. 29, 32). This acknowledgment goes some way in explaining why such differing interpretations of biopower exist; it might also account for Agamben’s reinstitution of sovereignty in his determination that ‘the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power’ (Agamben, 1998: p. 6). Nevertheless, Esposito believes he can fill in the gaps left by Foucault by introducing his concept of *immunity*, which can be understood in the biomedical sense as the introduction of a ‘tolerable portion of [disease]’ in order to inoculate the body against a full fledged infection (Esposito, 2013: p. 61). The coalition government’s agreement to admit 500 Syrian refugees as a token of its commitment to addressing human rights grievances serves as a useful example of this form of immunity in action (Wintour, 2014). Whereas allowing greater numbers through might be construed as threatening to British culture, the government’s admittance of such a small number of refugees can allow politicians to appear magnanimous while maintaining a commitment to British self-interest. Immunity can also be interpreted, Esposito explains, in ‘political-juridical language’ as ‘a temporary or definitive exemption on the part of subject with regard to concrete obligations or responsibilities that under normal circumstances would bind one to others’ (Esposito, 2008: p. 45). The *community*, which is defined by its internal obligations to ‘care for the other’ is exempted from having to protect those that exist outside; immunity is the antithesis of community and it offers individuals a freedom from their responsibilities to others (Esposito, 2013: p. 59; Esposito,

2008: p. 50). In Agambenian terms, the exception is incorporated into the rule of law, so that life deemed outside the *bíos* can be abandoned; the rule of law remains unbroken as the allowance for abandonment is included within. Similarly, immunity allows for the abandonment of some life on the basis that it is preserving the life and well-being of the community.

Biopolitics exists at the juncture between the preservation of life and its abandonment, and the *dispositifs* of security, or rather the 'apparatuses, institutions, and rules' (Foucault, 2004: p. 27) that ensure the defence of the population, are the tools of immunisation. In relation to the governance of asylum in the UK, *dispositifs* entail the Home Office and its subsidiary departments, detention facilities, initial accommodation centres, specific legislation and immigration rules, and organisations the government enters into contractual agreements with to oversee the management and oversight of asylum seekers. *Dispositifs* might also include the processes by which individual data is collected, such as the issuing of biometric residents permits and the expectation that asylum seekers regularly check in with reporting centres. The term captures the essence of biopower - the *how* of biopower - that illustrates not only the relationships of power between individuals and organisations, but the way in which that power is demonstrated and reaffirmed.

This dissertation is chiefly concerned with the question of *how* biopower is exercised within the housing of asylum seekers. Asylum seekers' experiences living in COMPASS housing provide insight into how the relations of power play out in the management of the COMPASS contracts and the treatment of those living in houses provided through G4S, Serco and their subcontractors. For instance, the transplantation of asylum seekers from city centres where support networks and community ties are strong to distant locations where services are piecemeal and integration less advanced, is an example of biopolitical *dispositifs* in operation. Furthermore, the fact that these regions tend to be areas of preexisting deprivation, asylum seekers' exposure to uncertainty and extremity serves to further isolate them from hospitable environments. From the individual subcontractors, such as Jomast in the North East, to housing officers, transportation providers and tenancy agreements, these apparatuses of security and population management reflect a diffuse but ubiquitous biopower in operation. Esposito introduces the concept of immunity to show that the *dispositifs* of security now exist in 'all sectors and languages of our lives' (Esposito, 2013: p. 59). However, 'immunity' and marketisation are at odds; the warehousing economy of asylum markets has taken on its own neoliberal imperative and the grounds upon which the state aims at immunising itself against foreign elements has arguably been superseded by the dictates of the market economy. The entry of G4S and Serco into the asylum housing market raises questions as to whether that market expansion will eventually extend to social housing more generally. Indeed, Jeremy

Stafford, former CEO for Serco in the UK and Europe alluded to this when he responded to MP Keith Vaz's question as to whether or not the relatively small returns on investment in the asylum housing sector were worth Serco's effort. Stafford said:

We are very focused on building an accommodation business, and we believe that by taking on regions of the COMPASS service, we could establish the right team to do that and we felt that we could establish the platform that we felt was scalable ... and take [it] to other geographies.

(Jeremy Stafford quoted in House of Commons, 2013b)

The perception that G4S and Serco are part of the extension of the detention industry model to asylum housing is reflected in the concerns of asylum support staff and asylum seekers living within COMPASS accommodation. A resident of COMPASS housing in West Yorkshire reflected on his belief that G4S was an inhumane company and felt that the Home Office's decision to enter into a contract with the firm amounted to an 'abuse of human rights' (Jabril, Interview, 22 August 2013). In an interview with Emma Crossley, Project Manager of Meeting Point, a Leeds-based refugee and asylum support charity, she stated that she and others were filled with 'complete dread' when they first discovered that G4S was going to take over the housing of asylum seekers in Yorkshire (Crossley, Interview, 22 July 2013). Crossley explained that prior knowledge of G4S's 'involvement with removals' left her worried about the experiences of asylum seekers housed under the firm's watch. The position of G4S as a component of the immunising apparatuses of securitisation are reflected in her observation that a culture of deterrence is 'embedded' in the practices of the firm:

Before, when it was the local authority, I guess I had more faith in a local housing support officer than I do in a G4S security officer. You know, it's embedded in a sort of G4S firm; it's about deterrence, that these people shouldn't be here, and it just creates that culture of resentment, which is so unwelcoming to our clients. I guess as an advisor, you fear what goes on when [G4S] do turn up at the door and ring [asylum seekers] to ask questions - you know, harassment and intimidation - because you know what they're thinking about them. They're not a sympathetic firm.

(Crossley, Interview, 22 July 2013)

This perception that G4S is involved in the exposure of unqualified life to torment and abandonment demonstrates a concern that Foucault's 'racism', the establishment of 'the break between what must live and what must die' and the creation of 'a biological-type



caesura within a population' (Foucault, 2004: pp. 254-255), is a chief propellant behind the securitisation of destitute asylum seekers. Esposito writes that 'a truly fatal leap occurs when [an] immunitary turn in biopolitics intersects with the trajectory of nationalism, and then racism' (Esposito, 2013: p. 71). Migrants' subjection to oversight and surveillance, he states, 'marks an additional step in the biopolitical' (Esposito, 2013: p. 75). However, again, it is necessary to expand Esposito's formulation to a degree that allows for the inclusion of market imperatives in this immunising process; for the 'disease' to be entirely irradiated would then destroy the whole of the market built upon and profiting from the containment of these foreign antigens. I turn now to another concept, which adopts much of the spirit of Esposito's immunisation in its focus on security and the protection of the population from the vulnerabilities that make it susceptible to invasion: William Walters' notion of 'domopolitics'.

Walters (2004) adopts the term 'domopolitics' to highlight multiple elements of the state's approach to governance (Walters, 2004: p. 241). He adopts *domus* as an allusion to the home and *domo* as a reference to the state's repression of populations within its boundaries. 'At its heart', he writes of domopolitics, 'is a fateful conjunction of home, land and security'; it also evokes the sense of 'home as hearth, a refuge or a sanctuary in a heartless world' (ibid., p. 241). Domopolitics contrasts 'community, trust, and citizenship, with [...] a chaotic outside - illegals, traffickers, terrorists' (ibid., p. 241). Here we can see the parallels with Esposito's concepts of immunity and community in which the latter is inoculated against the harmful effects of foreign bodies through a process of exemption and exception. Like immunity, domopolitics is concerned with the 'technologies of "managed" borders, identity checks, and its archipelagos of detention' - *dispositifs* - which are instrumental in 'defining who we are, what kind of state it is that governs us, how we are to be governed (ibid., p. 243). Jonathan Darling employs the concept of domopolitics in relation to the housing of asylum seekers within Britain prior to the introduction of the COMPASS project. He demonstrates that the housing policies introduced in the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, which brought support for asylum seekers under the purview of the central government, provided the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) 'significant power in disciplining and controlling lives' both at the national level and locally (Darling, 2011: p. 268). Domopolitics, Darling explains, 'acts as a mode of governmentality which produces, delineates and defines a population to which its power is applied' (ibid., p. 266).

With Esposito's immunitary model, the community is freed from its obligation of reciprocity with those on the outside. Similarly, domopolitics relieves the *oikos*, or household, from its duty of *xenia*, or 'guest-friendship' (Walters, 2004: p. 241). The perceived need to securitise and protect the population supersedes the state's obligations to protect those fleeing from their country of origin to a host state. The introduction of a

'safe countries' list in Section 94A of the 2002 Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act, for instance, allowed Britain to reconfigure the nature of its adherence to Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which states that 'everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.' This is now a qualified right if a discretionary determination is made on the part of an immigration officer that an asylum applicant is from a country where potential exposure to harm is limited.

### *3.3 Uncoupling sovereignty from the human rights debate*

In charting the development of immigration legislation over time, representations of the state and sovereignty are occasionally substituted for totalising terms that are used to encompass the entirety of government action and reaction. If weaknesses can be identified in the models of domopolitics and immunity, it is that Walters and Esposito default to a representation of the state as a totalising force; they have left little room for the agency of the excluded, the organisations advocating for minorities' rights or the national and international legal institutions consistently challenging the state's treatment of asylum seekers and other vulnerable groups. Darling reinstates state sovereignty in his representation of domopolitics; he declares that domopolitics has led to the 'production of sovereign power through the creation of subjects of such a power' (Darling, 2011: p. 268). Once again, asylum seekers are relegated to the level of *zoē*. This remains a particular difficulty when developing genealogies of British immigration policy, as the state assumes the default role of an implacable monolith moving toward an ever more exclusionary agenda. Foucault shuns the pervasive conceptualisation of the state as a 'cold monster' and 'totalizing institution' (Foucault, 2004: pp. 109, 119). The "governmentalization" of the state', he explains, is expressed through tactics and the distinction between what is located inside and outside 'the state's domain'. When Foucault entertains the notion of the state as a 'mythicized abstraction' and declares that the 'importance' of the state is perhaps 'less than we think', he is not suggesting that the state is in retreat or curtailed by the rising strength of a supranational order or multinational organisations (ibid., p. 109). Rather, he is suggesting that employing the state as a frame of analysis is less productive than focusing on governmentality (ibid., p. 108). When British immigration policy is considered within the context of these targets, the institutions and tactics of government reveal a commitment to marketisation and the deployment of security as both a form of social control and an extension of population management. However, the proliferation of globalisation literature over the last two decades has reframed the state and sovereignty into parcelled units of debate that diminish the complexity of both. In these renditions of sovereignty, human rights protections become antagonisms against the state and immigration controls are positioned as desperate expressions of state resistance to the

protections afforded to refugees and asylum claimants within international agreements like the European Convention on Human Rights.

In the globalisation literature, governments' immigration policies represent one of the few remaining forms of sovereign expression left to states in the face of globalisation, which includes the rise of international regimes and the proliferation of non-governmental organisations. While such arguments help qualify the claim that the state is in retreat or has lost a great deal of sovereignty to the market and international organisations, they unhelpfully frame the state as a single operating unit rather than address the push and pull factors operating within the state that both reinforce and resist modes of governance employed by state and non-state actors. Anthony Giddens' (2000) prominence as both a globalisation theorist and the author of New Labour's Third Way agenda places his work in a unique position in relation to the development of government responses to immigration and the management of asylum seekers. Giddens does not dethrone states from their position as 'the most important agents on the international scene', but he questions the resilience of state sovereignty in the face of 'globalization from below' and a 'growing number of non-governmental organisations' (Giddens, 2000: pp. 122-123). His stance on the corporatisation of state services is tepid, as he is unwilling to fully commit to a marketisation of state services, but also declares that the sometimes requisite 'reinventing of government [...] sometimes means adopting market-based solutions' (Giddens, 1998: p. 75).

The United Kingdom's obligations to recognise refugees' human rights are associated with its adoption of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Under Article 13, anyone has the right to leave his or her own country, and while the UDHR is not a binding document, it reflects a formal acceptance of the view that refugees are a political and global reality. Article 14 of the UDHR, which guarantees the right to seek asylum, became the foundation of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (Edwards, 2005: p. 296). It is within the 1951 Convention and subsequent 1967 Protocol that Britain's formal obligations to refugees are established (Fekete, 2005: p. 65); when asylum seekers are granted asylum in Britain, they are admitted as 'either Convention refugees or under the discretionary category of "exceptional leave to remain"' (Hatton, 2005: p. 726). Article 33 disallows 'Contracting State[s]' from returning a refugee to a location where his or her 'life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion'.

While the right to seek asylum is established within these agreements, significant latitude is afforded to individual states and their sovereign 'right' to manage their borders independently. While the UDHR asserts refugees' right to leave their country of origin, Article 13 does not include a 'corresponding right to immigrate' (Billings, 1998: p. 36). In a

sense, states that adopted the UDHR were under no obligation to *accept* refugees that presented at their borders; they simply were expected to acknowledge refugees' right to exist as such. More binding legislation, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention, also provides states with considerable discretion when deciding suitable candidates for entry or removal. Though Section 1 of Article 33 binds states to a non-refoulement agreement, Section 2 leaves it up to states to decide the 'reasonable grounds' for which refugees might be removed from the state if they are perceived to be a 'danger to the security of the country' or have 'been convicted [...] of a particularly serious crime' (UN General Assembly, 1951). The major caveat included in Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which ensures that everyone has the right to 'his private and family life', is a state's authority to disregard this right under certain subjective conditions. An exception is therefore incorporated directly into the rule:

There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

(ECHR, Article 8(2))

The determination as to what is lawful and what constitutes a danger to the state is left largely in the hands of state governments. As Morris (2010) explains, Article 8 must be viewed as a 'qualified right', and she cites the position taken by the UK's Immigration Advisory Service to reinforce this point: '[T]here isn't currently a right to family life conferred by primary legislation. It is granted under the immigration rules' (Immigration Advisory Service quoted in Morris, 2010: p. 413).

It is within this context of qualified rights that Agamben's critique of international human rights agreements is perhaps most compelling. For Agamben, the development of human rights represents the complete transition from monarchical to national sovereignty as states establish the distinction between bare life and political life. In so doing, the state further consolidates its position of 'legitimacy and sovereignty' while differentiating between the rights for citizens and the qualified rights of foreigners (Agamben, 1998: pp. 127-130). Agamben problematizes human rights, because he interprets them as products of the sovereign state of exception, in which the divide between citizen and outsider is sustained through an inclusive exclusion within the rule of law. However, as Gündoğdu (2012) indicates, Agamben's misrepresentation of biopower and his insistence upon the reemergence of sovereignty is less nuanced than a Foucauldian perspective, which

positions human rights laws as ‘tactics of governmentality’ that are ‘used in the regulation and management of populations’ (Gündoğdu, 2012: p. 10). For Agamben, international human rights agreements are developed by states and therefore primarily serve to reinforce state sovereignty. However, this notion is challenged as human rights laws, including Article 8 of the ECHR, have been employed in *opposition* to state tactics with varying degrees of success. Common grievances levelled against the use of Article 3 and Article 8 of the ECHR would be inexplicable if states’ establishment of human rights represented the source of their sovereignty rather than an obstacle to it.

This distinction between formal acknowledgement of refugees and tailored state responses to their entry has remained a mainstay of successive British governments’ application of human rights commitments when deciding asylum applications; it has afforded the state the discretion to deny entry and respond with exceptional powers to those it deems to be living in the United Kingdom unlawfully. Some of the offences itemised in Section 72 of the 2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act (2002 NIA) are directly related to the discretion afforded the state in Article 33 of the 1951 Refugee Convention. Refugees exempt from protection include those convicted of an offence within or outside the United Kingdom who have received sentences of two years or more; anyone convicted by the Secretary of State and sentenced similarly is also excluded from protection of the Act (*ibid.*, s72(1-5)). The language of ‘offender’ and ‘criminal’ therefore is embedded in state immigration policy and frames asylum seeking within a presumption of deviance and deception.

While the construction of asylum seekers as criminal is seemingly widespread within media accounts, counter representations do exist. An array of integration networks in Glasgow have sought to offer support for asylum seekers as well as foster communication and tolerance within local communities (see: chapter 7; Wren, 2004; Wren, 2007), and drop-ins located in dispersal cities invite local volunteers and community representatives to engage with and support asylum seekers living in the area. Traditional news outlets do report on some of the critical positions taken against the treatment of asylum seekers within the immigration, housing and detention processes. *The Guardian* reported on the Home Affairs select committee finding that asylum seekers are kept in “appalling” housing conditions’ (Press Association, 2013) and highlighted the poor conditions some female asylum seekers are exposed to within privately contracted housing within the UK (Williams, 2012). Merrill (2014) featured a Syrian refugee’s experience as a detainee in Britain who felt as if he was being ‘treated like a criminal’ (Merrill, 2014), while Morrison (2014) reported on the Women for Refugee Women charity’s investigation into female asylum seekers’ experiences of rape and torture prior to their arrival in Britain and subsequent detention within asylum removal centres (Morrison, 2014). Also writing for *The Independent*, Cahal Milmo (2014) stated

that migrants were 'needed to fuel a fragile [UK] economy' (Milmo, 2014). These stand in stark contrast to headlines like those in the *Daily Mail*, which lament 'soft-touch Britain' (Kelly, 2012) and the cost to the taxpayer for supporting failed asylum seekers (Gye, 2014). The entrenched construction of asylum seekers as benefits scroungers and strains on the public purse remain key elements of popular representations within media. The perception that failed asylum seekers remain in the United Kingdom to reap the financial rewards of the state tend to neglect other factors prohibiting their return, such as a receiving state's unwillingness to permit their re-entry or the British government's inability to pursue a safe route of return for failed asylum seekers. Negative representations of asylum seekers also serve to reinforce official efforts to exclude them from access to state welfare provision. For instance, Home Secretary Theresa May's declaration in October 2015 that asylum seekers who have 'spurned the chance to seek protection elsewhere' have forfeited their right to settle in Britain was criticised by the Institute of Directors on the grounds that she was 'pandering to anti-immigration sentiment' (Wilkinson, 2015), a sentiment largely reinforced through provocative headlines and articles (for examples, see: Hall, 2015; Parfitt, 2015).

In this chapter, I have proposed different theoretical approaches for conceptualising the state's apparatuses and practices of inclusive exclusion. Foucault's description of 'state racism' provides a useful framework in understanding the imperatives informing societal identity construction through the identification of the outsider. Indeed, this may be considered one of the first political actions of the state, as it delimits the boundaries of belonging. Esposito's concept of 'immunity' and Walters' likening of state action to a form of 'domopolitics', or a politics of the home, highlight the exclusionary aspects of state policy, but they do not adequately address the reasons for which asylum seekers' presence within the United Kingdom remains essential to the state's promotion of neoliberal agendas. It is necessary, then, to recognise the inherent 'paradox' of the state's commitments to neoliberalism while at the same time maintaining its outward commitment to exclusionary tactics. In the following chapter, I demonstrate how this dual-purpose approach is being achieved in the context of asylum accommodation provision through the promotion of a securitised - and privatised - housing strategy.

## **Chapter 4: Asylum service provision and the consolidation of securitised (and marketised) mechanisms of social control**

In its 1998 White Paper, *Fairer, Faster, Firmer*, the Home Office outlined the problems it perceived within the asylum system. Three primary areas of concern included the large backlog of undecided cases, the pervasiveness of 'bogus' asylum claims, and the pressures local authorities in London faced in continuing to support asylum seekers under current legislation. In the preface, the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, suggested that a more careful distinction between asylum seekers and 'economic migrants' needed to be made in the interest of 'fairness', and the illegitimacy of asylum claims remained a consistent theme. Section 1.14 states simply: 'Many claims are simply a tissue of lies' (Home Office, 1998). Straw viewed the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act as an ineffectual effort to bring about reform to the asylum system that resulted in greater delays and loopholes for fraudulent claimants. Following his announcement of the publication of the White Paper, Straw stated that the 1996 Act left 'genuine asylum seekers [...] in limbo for years while their applications were considered, while the very delays that the Bills had established enabled bogus asylum seekers to come, claim benefit, work and carry on ripping off the system' (Hansard, 1998: c40). Justifications for a centrally administered asylum support service rested on the need to 'relieve the burden on provision in London' (Home Office, 1998: s8.22). This document also reveals early aims to coordinate with third parties and the private sector in the provision of accommodation. Section 8.23 reads:

The Government envisages that this will involve contracting with a range of providers to secure accommodation, including voluntary bodies, housing associations, local authorities and the private sector. The Government is particularly concerned to explore the ways of harnessing the energy and expertise of voluntary and independent sector bodies in providing the safety net.

The White Paper reflects a commingling of neoliberal logics and retaliatory attitudes toward perceived abuses of the asylum system, principles that formed the bedrock of subsequent immigration policies and asylum support strategies. The creation of the National Asylum Support Service and the implementation of the dispersal policy introduced in the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act went beyond streamlining state oversight of asylum seekers; they constituted a punitive containment agenda designed to free the City from its social welfare responsibilities to give way for free-market expansion.

During a third reading of the Immigration Bill in November 1999, Lord Warner advocated housing asylum seekers in cheaper accommodation stating that a 'concern is whether we should end up spending money from the public purse on keeping asylum seekers in very high-cost accommodation areas in London and the south east when there is perfectly satisfactory, lower-cost accommodation elsewhere' (Hansard, 1999: c833). Attempts to challenge the logic of dispersal ultimately failed, though some efforts were made to do so. Neil Gerrard, the MP for Walthamstow questioned whether chasing cheap and available housing best served the interests of asylum seekers:

If we are to disperse to places where there is no shortage of housing, it is almost inevitable that those places will be deprived areas which are suffering unemployment and economic problems; that is why there is empty housing. We must look at how we provide support, legal advice, education and medical help, and at whether £7 a week [...] is sufficient to maintain any dignity for someone living on vouchers.

(Hansard, 1999, c86)

The policies advanced in the 1998 White Paper, which also promoted a greater role for detention and an expansion of immigration officers' discretionary power, represented exclusion by design, a point affirmed by Malloch and Stanley (2005) who write: 'The emphasis on separating asylum seekers from local communities, was initially signalled in the White Paper [...]. This policy document represented a firm attempt to increase the use of detention, particularly in terms of asylum 'reception' to deter future applications' (Malloch and Stanley, 2005: p. 62). Underlying the proposals of *Fairer, Faster and Firmer* were designs of discomfort and disembeddedness; the penalty for being a destitute asylum seeker was a life of unease and insecurity. This is reflected in the proposed no-choice housing policy later adopted in the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act: 'Asylum seekers would be expected to take what was available, and would not be able to pick and choose where they are accommodated' (Home Office, 1998: s8.22). A retributive management system was intended to affect all destitute asylum seekers rather than only those guilty of exploiting the state's support system. Justifications for cashless support were informed by the assumption that the whole of the asylum seeking community was prone to abusing state generosity: 'The Government intends to explore further the extent to which support of this kind [cashless support] might be provided through vouchers or other non-cash means, so as further to reduce the incentive to abuse of the asylum system' (Home Office, 1998: s8.21). In centralising asylum support the state was able to intensify its management and oversight of asylum seekers and further segregate illegitimate residents from those whose presence was accepted. Rosemary Sales writes



that the operation of a centralised support agency, formerly NASS, is founded upon ‘the presumption that the majority of asylum seekers are “bogus” and “undeserving”, while the minority granted Convention status are the “deserving”’ (Sales, 2002: p. 463). Employing Walters’ concept of domopolitics, the governing of the state ‘like a home’ (Walters, 2004: p. 237), Darling (2011) highlights the distinctly biopolitical nature of the government’s asylum management agenda. The inclusion of private firms, local authorities and housing associations in the administration of the centralised support system represented a broadening of state oversight. Immigration control did not begin and end with Home Office representatives, but individual housing officers and anyone tasked with supporting asylum seekers. Addressing the White Paper’s proposal for a national asylum support system, Darling writes:

A biopolitical machinery of welfare provision and the maintenance of a population is thus merged with a filtering and discretionary machinery of border control. Accommodation becomes articulated as both a hospitable and humanitarian provision to those ‘in need’ and a device for managing, monitoring and ‘warehousing’ (Fekete, 2005), those under review by domopolitics. The machinery of NASS thus acts as a mechanism of assignment, of positioning asylum seekers within the nation.

(Darling, 2011: p. 267)

With the introduction of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, much of the proposed ‘machinery’ within the White Paper was enshrined in law. Under Section 95, the Home Office is empowered to provide support for destitute asylum seekers during the period in which an asylum seeker’s application is being decided. Support may be in the form of financial assistance to meet essential living needs or housing if the applicant cannot secure adequate accommodation, or both. The restriction on an asylum seeker’s choice of accommodation is found in Section 97, which states that the Secretary of State may ‘not have regard to [...] any preference that the supported person or his dependents (if any) may have as to the locality in which the accommodation is to be provided’ (IAA 1999, s97(a)). Section 101 introduces ‘reception zones’, otherwise known as dispersal regions, and the delegation of accommodation provision to local authorities, registered social landlords and housing associations is established in Section 100. A number of the interviews that feature in subsequent chapters were with asylum seekers whose asylum claims were rejected or were pending appeal. These individuals may have previously been supported under Section 95, but were receiving assistance under Section 4 at the time of their interviews. Section 4 grants the Home Office the discretion to provide

accommodation support for those released from detention or those temporarily admitted into the UK without necessarily being detained (IA 1971, Sch. 2 s.21).

The 1999 Act extended the biopolitical framework of population management and securitisation to the administration of refugee populations. Among the restrictions placed on asylum support, the 1999 Act also expanded Home Office powers of detention and the liabilities carriers faced for facilitating 'illegal' entry into the country. Responsibility for the oversight of asylum seekers rested with the state, given the consolidation of service provision under NASS, but it further extended the policing of asylum seekers to those agencies and organisations contracted to carry out state policy. Restricted access to support that was both contingent on an asylum seeker's acceptance of no-choice housing and continual occupation of the accommodation provided served to reinforce assumptions of asylum seekers' deviance, an representation often promoted through local and national media reporting (see: Finney and Robinson, 2008; Ferguson and Walters, 2005; Banks, 2008; and Coole, 2002).

#### *4.1: Dispersal and its effects*

Since its inception, the UK government's dispersal policy has incited criticism amongst researchers and advocates within the asylum support community, while some service agencies have simultaneously played a crucial role in ensuring the continued operation of the dispersal programme through government contracts. In this section, I examine literature highlighting asylum seekers' experiences of dispersal prior to the introduction of the COMPASS housing programme and acknowledge the conditions under former dispersal regimes. An engagement with this research allows for some points of comparison to be made between the experiences of asylum seekers living under COMPASS and those living under the previous contracts with local authorities, housing associations and private landlords. It also aids in evidencing state tactics of discomfort, which employ the services of third-party providers in carrying out the segmentation and isolation of asylum seeking communities.

Kissoon (2010) describes Britain's asylum support strategy as 'operating within a larger political objective of appearing in control and not a "soft touch"', which 'has institutionalised the difference between citizens and "others," while the asylum process and welfare policies punish choice as "asylum shopping" and "benefit scrounging"' (Kissoon, 2010: p. 22). Some of those interviewed for the purposes of this project lived in Home Office-allocated housing prior to the awarding of the COMPASS contracts to G4S and Serco in 2012; these respondents' views on conditions before and after COMPASS often reinforced general assumptions that life under COMPASS had worsened, but at times challenged such perceptions. For instance, in response to a

question regarding prior housing experiences, a woman living with her family in Glasgow stated: 'NASS accommodation was very, very good. They repair[ed] when something was wrong. NASS was good for us' (Falis, Interview, 12 June 2013(a)). She went on to state that the home she occupied for two years was located near important services and resources and that NASS provided her with enough money for bus fare. Others highlighted some of the poor conditions in government-contracted accommodation prior to COMPASS. A man living in Leeds described his experience in a local authority property as very poor: 'It [had] old carpets. No one was listening about changing the carpet. There was no shower. For more than a year, we had cockroaches - they're still there' (Mehdi, Interview, 29 July 2013). Observations such as these help supplement prior research and serve as a launching point for a discussion of COMPASS and the subsequent experiences of those living within housing subcontracted by G4S and Serco.

The dispersal programme introduced in the 1999 Immigration Act established twelve regions around the UK as reception areas for asylum seekers granted accommodation support while their applications were decided. The rationale for the scheme was to ease the 'burden' asylum seekers were placing on local authorities in London and the South East (Phillips, 2006: p. 542). The responsibility for housing asylum seekers rested with regional consortia, which often involved partnerships between local authorities, housing authorities and private landlords. While the intention was to disperse asylum seekers to areas where connections could be made with people who shared a common language or ethnic background (IAA explanatory notes, 1999 cited in Dawson, 2002: p. 10), the reality was that asylum seekers were often isolated in areas lacking in ethnic diversity with few pre-existing support networks (Strang and Ager, 2010: p. 597). There was, perhaps, greater emphasis placed on the availability of accommodation in places where 'social housing stock had diminished' (Robinson *et al*, 2003 cited in Dwyer and Brown, 2008: p. 205). The House of Commons Public Accounts Committee declared in its 2009 report on the management of asylum applications that the Home Office 'does not have a set formula for dispersing asylum applicants around the United Kingdom. The primary criterion is the availability of accommodation, which can result in individuals becoming isolated' (House of Commons, 2009: Conclusions and recommendations, para. 9). The introduction of asylum seeking populations with specific support needs presented a challenge to some of the dispersal regions that had little prior experience hosting immigrant communities. Dawson (2002) cites the readily available accommodation in Hull as a primary reason for the city's involvement in the dispersal programme, but notes that the areas designated for dispersed asylum seekers suffered from economic deprivation and remained largely 'monocultural' (Dawson, 2002: p. 10). He writes that '[t]he possibility of asylum-seekers establishing significant networks of extended family, friends and religious, ethnic or national groups is limited. The potential for social tensions, and in

particular racial tension to emerge through dispersal is high' (ibid., pp. 10-11). In Glasgow, ten integration networks were established to coordinate service provision between statutory and voluntary agencies to assist asylum seekers following their arrival to the city. As the only city in Scotland to have entered a NASS contract in 2000 (Netto and Fraser, 2009: p. 13) and with no prior history of receiving large numbers of asylum seekers, the voluntary sector had to mobilise quickly in order to address the needs of incoming residents. While there now exists an established support network in Glasgow, at the outset of dispersal, there was little adequate service provision. Karen Wren (2004) writes:

The [integration networks] were not in place when the dispersal policy was first implemented as there was no city-wide strategy to facilitate a co-ordinated response from the voluntary sector. When dispersal began, many areas lacked any structure or forum for the voluntary sector to address the needs of asylum seekers (Scottish Refugee Council, 2001). The networks have therefore developed locally in a piecemeal fashion across the city during the period 2000-2002.

(Wren, 2004: p. 23)

Supporting Wren's assessment of the lack of robust support in Glasgow immediately following dispersal, an organiser within the voluntary support community explained in an interview that support networks were non-existent in 2000. She criticised some of the voluntary organisations existing at the time for excusing their non-action in regards to refugees and asylum seekers by asserting that they were not funded for that purpose. Some of the earliest support, she explained, came from residents' associations (Sahla, Interview, 17 May 2013). The lack of established support strategies and unified responses from the voluntary sector was not unique to Glasgow during the initial stages of dispersal. The concentration of asylum seekers in London was due in part to the mature support networks that existed in the capital; the forwarding of asylum seekers to new areas before agencies could respond in a concerted way led to strains and gaps in service provision. Kissoon writes that 'organisations to help refugees did not necessarily have the same level of expertise that could be found in larger urban centres with larger and more established RCO-NGO networks (Zetter, Griffiths, Sigona, 2005 cited in Kissoon, 2010: p. 19). Assistance was often provided on an ad-hoc basis before more advanced service strategies had the opportunity to develop.

As dispersal regions have remained the same following the transition to the COMPASS programme, some points of comparison can be made with dispersal patterns of previous years. Since 2001, the number of asylum seekers receiving accommodation support under Section 95 of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act has generally trended

Figure 1.1: Number of dispersed asylum seekers under Section 95 (1999 IAA) from Q4 2001-Q4 2013

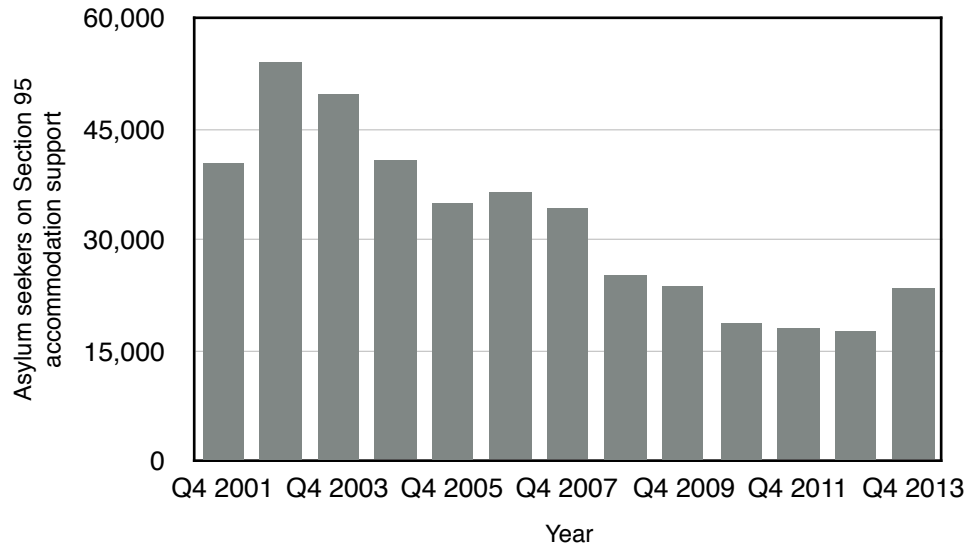
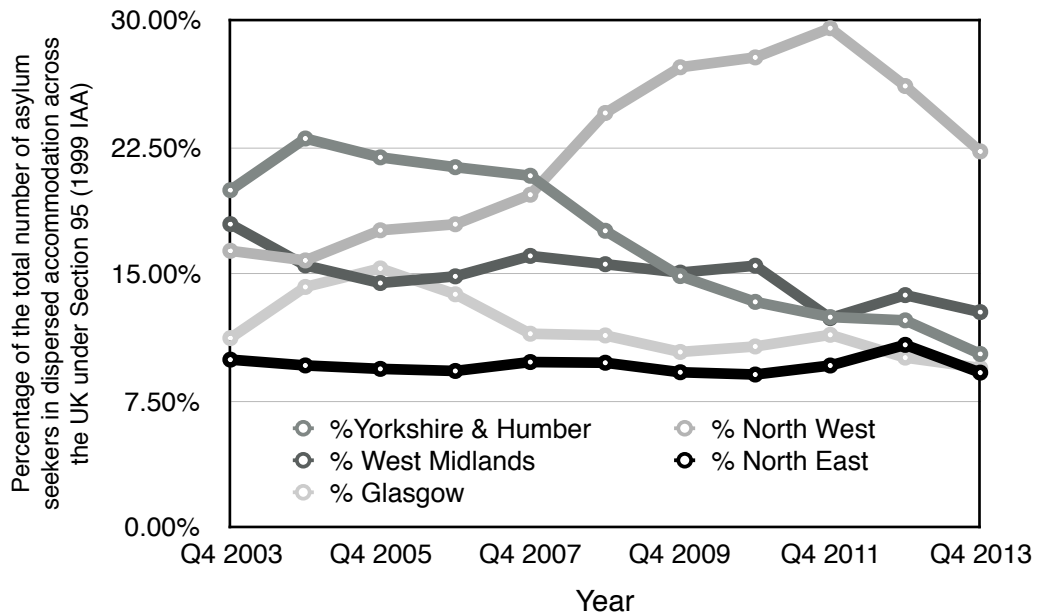


Figure 1.2: Percentage of total number of asylum seekers in receipt of accommodation support under Section 95 Support (1999 IAA) by region: Q4 2003 through Q4 2013



Sources: Home Office (2002), *Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom, 2001*; Home Office (2003), *Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom, 2002*; Home Office (2004), *Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom, 2003*; Home Office (2005), *Control of Immigration Statistics, United Kingdom, 2004*; Home Office (2014a), *Asylum data tables immigration statistics, July to September 2014 volume 1 and 2*.

downward. Figure 1.1 illustrates that in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2002, the number of asylum seekers housed under Section 95 peaked at 54,045. By Q4 2006, that number decreased by about one third to 36,363; following a decrease of nearly 9,000 in the year between Q4 2007 and Q4 2008, the number dropped to its lowest point, 17,594 asylum seekers, in Q4 2012 before increasing to 23,459 the following year. The distribution of asylum seekers to different regions of the United Kingdom has not remained consistently even, though a number of regions have regularly received a greater number of dispersed

asylum seekers than others. The three regions with consistently high reception rates include: the North West region, which has on average received 21.8 per cent of the total number of accommodated asylum seekers across the UK under Section 95 per year from 2001 to 2013; Yorkshire and the Humber averaged 17.5 per cent and the West Midlands averaged 15.4 per cent. During the same period, Glasgow received an average of 11.6 per cent of per cent of dispersed asylum seekers receiving accommodation support per year. From 2003 through 2013, the North East region received an average of 9.6 per cent of the total. The variation in dispersal patterns across these regions in the ten years between 2003 and 2013 is reflected in Figure 1.2.

Asylum seekers' experiences within dispersal accommodation are by no means uniform and are often contingent upon dispersal location, housing conditions and the support networks available to them. The expectation that asylum seekers accept accommodation on a no-choice basis has led to a variety of consequences. Experiences of isolation, depression, deprivation and racism have all been cited as outcomes of the government's dispersal policy (see: Silove *et al*, 2000; Phillips, 2006; Bowes *et al*, 2009; Mynott, 2000; Spicer, 2008 and Netto, 2011). Athwal and Bourne (2007) write:

[Dispersal] took asylum seekers away from communities where they had kith and kin and access to support structures, including legal advice, and deposited them in poor, often all-white neighbourhoods where resentment was keen and legal advice often non-existent.

(Athwal and Bourne, 2007: p. 108)

Warfa *et al* (2006) conducted a series of qualitative interviews with Somali refugees living in social housing within the United Kingdom; while their research was not on the dispersal of asylum seekers within the Home Office's dispersal programme, the findings are illustrative of the psychological impacts refugees and asylum seekers endure under uncertain housing conditions. The disparity in respondents' experiences reflected a 'chaotic' existence and constant moves were associated with feelings of "stress', 'distress', 'worry' and 'anxiety'" (Warfa *et al*, 2006: p. 510). This research project revealed the incongruity of the housing experiences of single people compared to those of families; single refugees were more likely to face sudden accommodation transfers (*ibid.*, p. 508). This selected quote from an interviewee demonstrates the impact these moves had on her state of mind:

Everything turns upside down when you change your current accommodation. It is not an easy thing. When you know one area very well, when you know a lot of people in that area, who could help you with your problems and all of a

sudden, you go to another area that puts on you a lot of pressure and this pressure brings stress with it. Going to a new area is not an easy thing.

(female interviewee quoted in *ibid.*, p. 511)

In addition to the anxiety induced as a response to housing conditions, many refugees and asylum seekers enter 'host' countries with histories of emotional and physical trauma. Poor housing conditions or strained community relations may exacerbate preexisting stress, a point that Silove *et al* (2000) address in an article on the mental health conditions of asylum seekers in Australia. Citing previous research, the authors highlight the impact of 'premigration trauma' on Tamil asylum seekers, which was linked to symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Silove *et al*, p. 606). They write that Begley *et al*'s 1999 study 'found that 20 of 40 asylum seekers in Ireland had symptoms consistent with major depression and 23 suffered significant levels of anxiety' associated with prior and existing traumatic experiences (Begley *et al*, 1999 cited in Silove *et al*, 2000: p. 606).

Dispersal policies result in similar feelings of unease and depression; many asylum seekers interviewed for this research explained that unexpected or frequent moves resulted in heightened levels of psychological stress. Between March 2010 and March 2011, for instance, the Home Office was notified of asylum seekers' attempts at suicide on four occasions in Glasgow alone (House of Commons, Written Answers, 7 March 2011). In the case of families, this concern extended from parents to children and were exhibited by the children themselves. A woman living in Serco-contracted accommodation in Glasgow explained that her family had been moved twice in nine months. Her children, she stated, were particularly affected as a result of the moves. She described her younger son as 'very depressed' and her older son as 'all the time, crying'. Serco allegedly refused the woman's transfer request; the Home Office intervened and the family was moved, though this led to new stresses, as her sons faced another school transfer (Sahla, Interview, 29 May 2013). The experiences of asylum seekers under previous housing regimes were similar in regards to their expected acceptance of no-choice housing, though as Grayson (2012) explains, forced moves within the COMPASS programme may have escalated due to the market-driven nature of the contracts. Grayson states that '[m]oving house is reckoned to be one of the most stressful events in the life of the average British family'; for the 182 asylum seekers rehoused to substandard housing during the transition to COMPASS, 'the abstract concept of asylum housing privatisation' results in further traumatising 'in the lives of already traumatised asylum seekers and their families' (Grayson, 2012).

The placement of asylum seekers in economically deprived areas throughout Britain has been cited as contributing to community strain as well as feelings of further isolation and abandonment on the part of asylum seekers. Pointing to prior research,

Deborah Phillips (2006) suggests that '[e]vidence not only indicates that community tensions may arise when asylum seekers arrive in an area unannounced, but that the newcomers feel forced to move elsewhere if they face hostility (Phillips, 2006: p. 546). While one must be cautious in suggesting that a move to an economically depressed area will *necessarily* result in strained community relations - at times solidarity amongst migrants and 'native' residents is stronger when both groups share in their adversity, as I will later highlight - dispersal has nevertheless resulted in troubling encounters between some residents and newly arriving asylum seekers. Rosemary Sales's 2002 *Critical Social Policy* article, 'The deserving and the undeserving? Refugees, asylum seekers and welfare in Britain', is a cornerstone in academic writing on the British asylum experience, given its reflections on the early years of dispersal. Sales describes UK asylum legislation as representative of a 'punitive system' that is 'preoccupied with control' (Sales, 2002: p. 456). The effects of dispersal, she writes, 'have separated asylum seekers from mainstream society' (ibid., p. 457). This isolation has resulted in exposure to racist abuse (ibid., p. 457) and the casting of asylum seekers as "bogus" and "undeserving" (ibid., p. 463).

Experiences of racism and bigotry have often marked asylum seekers' experiences in the post-dispersal environment. The widely publicised murder of a Kurdish asylum seeker, Firzat Dag, highlighted apparent racial tensions in Sighthill, an impoverished area of Glasgow in 2001. Accommodation in the area was difficult to let and Glasgow City Council decided to house over three thousand asylum seekers in Sighthill properties. Hill (2001) suggests that residents in the area felt sidestepped in favour of foreigners as homes were outfitted with new materials for the incoming asylum seekers. Whether such discontent was causally related to the stabbing of Dag by two white males is debatable, but cultural tensions are often cited as contributing factors to racist violence. Athwal and Bourne (2007) affix a number to the instances of racist murders since dispersal, stating: 'Eighteen asylum seekers have died at the hands of racists, many in the areas to which they had been "dispersed"' (Athwal and Bourne, 2007: p. 108). They include both Firzat Dag and Wei Wang, an asylum seeker murdered in Sighthill in 2006, in that number. Elinor Kelly (2002) suggests that racist tension is fuelled through negative representations of asylum seekers in the media and through the continued stigmatisation of asylum seekers as a matter of policy. Critical of the Labour government's 'dangerous experiment', Kelly suggests that the lack of adequate financial support, a voucher scheme offering 70 per cent of income support levels to asylum seekers, and the government's lack of consideration for asylum seekers' appropriate placement throughout the country have resulted in a volatile environment for vulnerable migrants. Kelly apportions much of the blame to Home Secretary, Jack Straw, stating:



[Straw] took no responsibility for the fact that if large numbers of foreigners are moved (under conditions that resemble influx) into neighbourhoods where no community development has been undertaken to prepare the way, there would be a reaction of a kind that was shaped by the negative propaganda and stigmatising that he had initiated.

(Kelly, 2002: p. 3)

Invoking the language of the 1998 White Paper, Kelly continued: 'Jack Straw's new regime is undoubtedly "firmer", and soon became "faster", but it is not "fairer" because he exposed asylum seekers to unacceptable levels of risk' (ibid., p. 4). Violence is not always perpetrated from the British population; it can come from others within the asylum-seeking community due to insensitivities in the placement of asylum seekers from different religious or cultural backgrounds. The Home Office has at times transferred asylum seekers away from areas of racist violence, but this often comes after much effort and endurance on the part of individuals or their representatives. An asylum seeker interviewed in Sunderland described his experiences of religious violence while living in Halifax in early 2012. As a practising Christian, Jahan wore a cross around his neck and was once attacked on the basis of his faith by a number of men, one of whom used a hammer. He attempted to defend himself and following the assault, the police escorted him home. Jahan contacted the then UKBA and requested a transfer, which was granted; he was sent to Wakefield where he felt welcomed and supported by the community and found happiness in attending church. He described his baptism there as 'the best experience' of his life, and was 'grateful' for the relationship he formed with the church minister (Jahan, Interview, 06 February 2013). While Jahan's experience shows the Home Office's acknowledgement of the danger he faced, it also reflects the potential outcomes of its relative disregard when initially dispersing asylum seekers to areas around the country primarily on the bases of availability and cost effectiveness.

The quality of dispersed accommodation has been a perennial concern for asylum seekers and their advocates since the programme's inception. The focus on sourcing inexpensive and available housing has resulted in significant disparities in the conditions of specific properties alongside relative poverty in the areas the accommodation is located. In 2010, the *Daily Mail*, *Telegraph* and other news outlets reported that a family had been issued a £2 million privately rented house in Notting Hill by the Kensington and Chelsea Council. Much emphasis was placed on the fact that the family had once been asylum seekers. The *Sun* went as far as to state in its headline: 'Asylum seekers get £2.1m pad' (Phillips, 2010). Abdi and Sayruq Nur were not asylum seekers when they were moved from their property in Brent to Notting Hill; under current legislation, asylum seekers do not have access to mainstream housing benefits and are not housed under

homelessness legislation. The image of Somali foreigners living lavishly in an upscale London borough at the taxpayer's expense reinforced a popular representation of asylum seekers as liars and 'scroungers'; the latter was the word the *Express* used to describe the Nurs and the 'hundreds of other[s]' like them (Hall, 2012). Housing conditions for asylum seekers supported under 1999 IAA are perhaps best marked by a lack of uniformity in quality, though accommodation is often substandard for a variety of reasons; key issues include structural degradation, lack of maintenance, the presence of mould or infestations, overcrowding, presence in poor or deprived locations, and distance from support networks, schools, markets and key services. The often unsuitable state of asylum housing has been associated with government strategies to disincentivise asylum seekers from wanting to remain in the United Kingdom. Phillips (2006) writes that '[t]he housing conditions and experiences of refugees clearly play an important role in shaping their sense of security and belonging, and have a bearing on their access to healthcare, education and employment (Phillips, 2006: p. 539). As part of a 'deterrence-based UK immigration regime' (Hintjens, 2012: p. 88), dispersal to challenging locations reflects an attempt to undermine asylum seekers' sense of security and home within the United Kingdom. For Darling, this practice is indicative of the state's attempt at 'producing discomfort' (Darling, 2011: p. 268). Employing an Agambenian notion of sovereignty, Darling argues that accommodation 'forms part of what Bigo (2002) terms the "governmentality of unease", through which an image of the nation as a *domos* is managed via the shifting convergence of governmental, disciplinary and sovereign modes of power' (ibid., p. 268). The tactics of 'unease' are demonstrated in the living conditions asylum seekers are expected to endure; their exposure to various forms of extremity are features of the dispersal regime rather than anomalies. Ed Mynott (2000) states that initial concerns surrounding dispersal was that it would, in practice, result in the "dumping" [of] people in areas where they would be isolated from the specialist legal advice and support (such as that for victims of torture) they needed' (Mynott, 2000: p. 318). He continues:

There was a suspicion that [dispersal] was a deliberate ploy to make it harder for asylum seekers to make their claim and that they would in fact be dumped in areas where other people chose not to live, such as run-down council estates and blocks which were hard to let.

(ibid., p. 318)

Research into the experiences of those living within asylum housing illustrates the extent of asylum seekers' exposure to extreme environments, both in regards to community responses to their presence and the nature of the housing they are expected to occupy on a no-choice basis. For instance, Sales points to research conducted by the

National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (2001), which illuminated the racial abuse and substandard living conditions asylum seekers faced in areas of Liverpool following dispersal (Sales, 2002: p. 465). Citing early research into the dispersal experiences of asylum seekers throughout the country, Phillips (2006) explains that housing has often been marked by overcrowding and poor conditions (Garvie, 2001 and Wilson, 2001 in Phillips, 2006: p. 545). The Shelter research document Phillips cites, *Far From Home*, provides an analysis of asylum seekers' experiences within the private rented sector. Garvie (2001) uses the 1996 English House Condition Survey to address the general unsuitability of private rented housing across the United Kingdom, explaining that '30 per cent of private tenants live in housing conditions which are unfit, in substantial disrepair or lack modern facilities' (Garvie, 2001: p. 31). The impact on asylum seekers, Garvie states, is substantial due to preexisting physical or psychological harms many have endured prior to arrival. She also indicates that asylum seekers may not know the 'standards of accommodation they should expect' (ibid., p. 32). These sorts of issues highlight problems of the Home Office's dispersed housing programme under a previous regime. Following the cessation of contracts between the Home Office and regional consortia providing housing for destitute asylum seekers, a new model was adopted, which placed significant emphasis on corporate competition and competing firms' ability to deliver cost-savings to the delivery of housing services. By early 2012, the 'preferred bidders' for the COMPASS programme included G4S and Serco, two private security firms with no history of housing provision that had each established themselves as providers of detention and transportation services in separate contracts with the UK government. The degree to which the humanitarian concerns related to the dispersal programme would decrease, remain or intensify would not be fully apparent until after the transition to COMPASS was complete nearly a year later.

#### *4.2 COMPASS: Securitising and marketising asylum service provision*

The asylum housing contracts between the Home Office, local authorities, housing associations and private landlords first established in 2000 were fixed-term. After the first five years, new contracts were agreed with many of the same providers, though rates were lowered. In 2005, the Labour government renegotiated the contracts on the basis that fewer asylum seekers were entering the country and that the Home Office was coming to initial decisions more speedily. Tony McNulty, then Minister of State for Immigration, Citizenship and Nationality, said:

'As as a result of these achievement we are renegotiating contracts, saving £37m in 2004/2005 and remain on track to cut asylum support costs by a third by the end of 2005.'

(Tony McNulty, quoted in BBC News, 2005).

The reduction in funding for asylum housing was also justified on the grounds that some private landlords were receiving money even when rooms were empty. In 2005, a Home Office investigation into the contracts was launched following allegations that one of the providers, Angel Group, was receiving money for the same properties from the Home Office and as subcontractors to Leeds city council (Pallister and Bowcott, 2005). The executive summary of the 2005 National Audit Office report analysing NASS provision for asylum seekers declared that 'the contracts [NASS] let originally with accommodation providers in 2000-1 have not always proved to be value for money'; NASS aimed to achieve savings of '£37 million in payments in 2004-05' (NAO, 2005: p. 2). While these circumstances provided the basis for renegotiating the contracts, the extended effects of reduced funding was increased strain on providers and local authorities already providing support. Shifts in providers also introduced concerns and stresses for asylum seekers who faced moves. For instance, the Home Office's decision to end its contract with Safe Haven in Yorkshire and Humberside led to uncertain outcomes for nearly 1,500 asylum seekers dispersed in the region. In addition to redundancies, workers feared that the new contracts would lead to social instability and troubling experiences for asylum seekers. The manager of the North East Consortium of Asylum and Refugee Support Services expressed concern about 'moving families that might have been in accommodation for as long as 10, 12 or 15 years' and a director for the West Midlands Consortium described the adoption of new contracts as a 'doomsday scenario' (Ricketts, 2005).

The asylum housing landscape changed considerably in the lead-up to the 2010 contract negotiations. Given the reduced rates introduced in 2005, a number of local authorities sought sustained or increased funding in order to continue their asylum services. This was at odds with the government's attempts to further reduce costs within the system and agreements began to deteriorate. In 2010, for instance, Birmingham City Council ended its contract with the Home Office expressing an interest to offload housing to private sector organisations. A rhetorical acknowledgement that the needs of British people should outweigh those of asylum seekers was also used to justify the abandonment of the contracts. A cabinet member for housing, John Lines, stated that the city needed to reserve its housing stock 'for our own people' (BBC News, 2010). The Home Office and Glasgow City Council could not agree to a deal when negotiating the contracts in 2010; a spokesperson claimed that the reduction in the number of asylum seekers to the city resulted in its inability to sustain its housing obligations at competitive

rates (Twinch, 2010). The renegotiation was part of a contractual agreement, which required UK Border Agency and Glasgow City Council to reexamine the contracts terms if the numbers of dispersed asylum seekers dropped below 3,198. As the terms could not be agreed, the contract was terminated effective 02 February 2011. The government stated that 'contingency plans' were arranged to negotiate with another provider in Glasgow, Ypeople (formerly YMCA), to carry on housing asylum seekers (Scottish Affairs Committee meeting, 2011). From 2010 to 2012, Ypeople continued accommodating asylum seekers until the COMPASS programme was finalised and implemented. In the North East of England, subcontractors carried the bulk of the housing provision through 2012. Jomast Developments, which defines itself as an 'investment and regeneration specialist' on its website (Jomast website 2015), continued housing asylum seekers in the interim period; they were subsequently subcontracted by G4S under COMPASS.

By 2011, the Home Office was accepting bids from new prospective accommodation providers under a new project title: the Commercial and Operational Managers Procuring Asylum Support Services (COMPASS). One of the aims of the new programme was to reduce the number of providers to reduce the 22 separate contracts in place with a total of thirteen suppliers across a variety of public and private sectors. It was a decision that the Public Accounts Committee later determined was 'at variance with wider Government efforts to increase the use of small and medium size enterprise (SMEs) and to reduce dependency on a handful of larger suppliers' (House of Commons, Public Accounts Committee Fifty-Fourth Report, 2014: s1(3)). In addition, the Public Accounts Committee suggested that excessive dependency on a small number of providers might result in greater risk for the government and the asylum seekers in its care. In the conclusion to its report, the committee declared:

[The Home Office] no longer has the diversity of provision it once had, nor the specialist providers, and has fewer alternative options available if a contractor fails. Any failures by a single contractor under COMPASS would impact on a greater number of asylum seekers.

(*ibid.*, Conclusions and recommendations, s2)

These observations had the benefit of hindsight. By October 2013, the Home Affairs Committee on Asylum were 'very concerned' and 'unimpressed' with the conduct of COMPASS providers G4S and Serco (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee on Asylum, 2013a: para. 93). It is perhaps more significant that any dissenting voices that may have existed in 2010 and 2011 were not able to alter the trajectory of future asylum housing contracts. Instead, by December 2011, three private security firms - G4S, Serco and Reliance - were the 'preferred bidders' for the COMPASS contracts. During a 'due

diligence' period in which the UKBA assessed if there were any risks with awarding G4S with the asylum housing contract, the UKBA and representatives from G4S met with community members and academics in Sheffield to discuss concerns that a private security firm responsible for detaining and transporting asylum seekers was to be awarded a multi-million pound contract to house them. During this meeting on 24 February 2012 at the city's Northern Refugee Centre, Stephen Small, Managing Director of Immigration & Borders at G4S, explained that the bidding process was comprised of two different sets of criteria: technical and financial. A 60 per cent weighting was attributed to the technical offerings of bidders, while 40 per cent was aimed at the financial competitiveness of the offers. Small stated that G4S was not the lowest bidder financially, but that it was seen as the most technically capable of reducing costs, such as utilities costs. As a large corporation, Small argued, G4S could exercise extensive purchasing power and leverage (Meeting, Sheffield Northern Refugee Centre, 24 February 2012).

During this meeting, I asked the G4S representatives how they might respond to perceptions that the company was acting as an arm of the UK government's immigration strategy given its presence in other areas of immigration control. Stephen Small objected to any links made between the UKBA and G4S stating that the security firm was not in any way responsible for immigration decisions. He further explained that G4S was sensitive to asylum seekers' perceptions and indicated that the firm had made efforts to minimise its visibility; G4S employees in direct contact with asylum seekers in COMPASS accommodation would not be wearing G4S uniforms, only ties bearing the company's logo. Responding to another participant's questions about the potential moves families would be expected to make during the transition to the COMPASS project and whether any risk assessments had been conducted with Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs), Andrew Gray, an accommodation manager with G4S, stated that special consideration would be given to families with children to limit moves where possible. However, both G4S and UKBA representatives stated that there existed no duty to consult with LSCBs and that any formal duties had been addressed within the terms of the contract.<sup>4</sup> The meeting also revealed the neoliberal logic underpinning the decision to extend offers to three private security firms.

While previous asylum housing agreements included contractors within the private sector, there remained a social welfare element to the provision, particularly with the inclusion of local authorities who had historically been the bodies responsible for providing accommodation prior to the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act. In excluding local

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<sup>4</sup> Of the statutory requirements listed within Schedule 2 of the COMPASS project, section 1.1.3 states that '[t]he Provider shall comply with the duties imposed on them by section 55 of the Border, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009, and the children's duty, to safeguard children from harm and promote their welfare' (COMPASS Project, Schedule 2, Accommodation & Transport - Statement of Requirements: s1.1.3, p. 4).

authorities altogether from the contracts, the Home Office effectively provided a point of entry for the privatisation of social housing more generally. The first evidence of this was revealed in Stephen Small's passing reference to an emerging 'asylum market' during the meeting. John Grayson, who was also in attendance, has referred to Small's comment as a reflection of a multifaceted strategy on the part of the government to expose asylum seekers to an increasingly securitised environment while supporting the expansion of private sector control over abject communities. Grayson states that Small's reference to 'asylum markets' reinforced 'the view already held by some analysts that it is G4S's intention to continue expanding its management of prisons, criminal justice and immigration "estates", while managing a housing contract (with effectively no legal rights for tenants), and to use this dubious base to expand into the wider privatised housing market' (Grayson, 2012). Further evidence supporting Grayson's observation was revealed during oral evidence given in a Home Affairs Committee meeting on asylum housing. Stephen Small of G4S and Jeremy Stafford, former Serco Chief Executive of UK and Europe, were interviewed as part of the Home Affairs Committee on Asylum's investigation into the COMPASS contracts on 25 June 2013. The committee chair, Keith Vaz, asked Stafford why Serco would 'bother' contracting its services under the terms of the COMPASS project if the firm was receiving just 21 pence in profits per asylum seeker per night, a claim Stafford made in an earlier response. Stafford replied:

Because we are very focused on building an accommodation business and we believe that by taking on regions of the COMPASS service we could establish the right team to do that. We felt that we could establish a very good platform that we felt was scalable. You are probably aware that some of the services we develop in the United Kingdom we then go and take to other geographies. For example, the court escorting service we operate in London and the South East is operated in Western Australia. For us, we felt accommodation management was an important development area.

(Stafford, quoted in House of Commons, 2013b)

There are two notable aspects to this response. The first is a conspicuous absence: Stafford does not suggest any possible corporate objective for the care and wellbeing of asylum seekers. In fact, asylum seekers are not even mentioned. Second, the expansionist neoliberal logic is clearly evident, but it is telling that Stafford referred only to 'accommodation management' rather than 'asylum accommodation management' or indeed 'prisoner accommodation management'. If asylum housing is to be the stepping stone for expansion into social housing more broadly, then concerns about the quality,

management and underlying ethic of something like the COMPASS programme has implications for citizens and non-citizens alike. In any case, it is worth exploring some of the initial trepidations asylum seekers and their advocates had in the period before transitioning to new providers and some of the possible foundations for those concerns.

Initial alarm expressed within the asylum support community following the announcement of G4S and Serco as preferred bidders on the COMPASS contracts centred largely on four concerns: 1) the companies' current contracts with the government to detain and transport asylum seekers; 2) perceived human rights abuses by representatives from both firms; 3) both companies' inexperience in delivering large-scale housing provision; and 4) the market-driven (rather than socially focused) motivations for each firm's entry into the COMPASS contracts. A fifth issue, incompetency, was a concern that existed prior to COMPASS, but was more defined following contractual failings and other public displays of ineptitude and fraud, such as G4S's inability to meet its contractual obligations during the 2012 London Olympics and both firms' cases of defrauding the government in overcharging for prisoner tracking tags. These are issues I will return to, but I will first address the concerns as they existed prior to the transition to COMPASS.

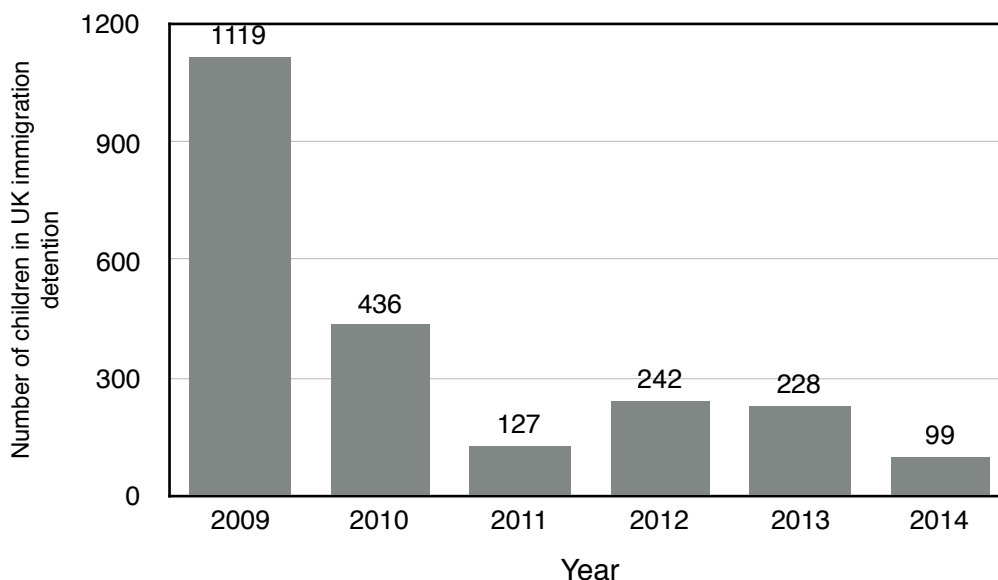
G4S and Serco are each contracted by the government to carry out the management of detention facilities around the United Kingdom and have both been involved in the transport of asylum seekers to and from detention upon arrival and to their deportations. The 1971 Immigration Act established detention as a key element to the management of immigrant populations. Discretion is afforded to individual immigration officers in the decision to grant or refuse entry and no 'upper time limit on detention' is specified (Silverman, 2012: p. 1138). As part of its delivery strategy, the Home Office extended the opportunity to manage these facilities to private firms as well as HM Prison Service. Of the twelve immigration removal centres in the United Kingdom operating at the time of writing, nine are privately operated. G4S manages two, Tinsley House and Brook House; Serco manages another two, Colnbrook and Yarl's Wood. HM Prison Service operates three centres: Dover, Haslar and Morton Hall. Asylum seekers' experiences in these facilities have been the focus of many research projects, academic analyses and advocacy efforts (see: Jackson, 2003; Silverman, 2012; Welch and Schuster, 2005; Weber, 2012; Tyler, 2006; Keller *et al*, 2003; Hassan, 2000; Freedman, 2010; Webber, 2011; Bosworth, 2008; Tyler, 2010; Stewart, 2005; Nandy, 2006; Giner, 2007; Athwal, 2010; Sales, 2002; Hintjens, 2012; Menz, 2009). In their cross-sectional questionnaire study of 67 asylum seekers living in UK detention facilities, Robjant, Robbins and Senior (2009) found 'high levels of anxiety, depression, and PTSD symptoms' amongst asylum seekers in immigration detention (Robjant *et al*, 2009: p. 275). Malloch and Stanley (2005) have highlighted the vulnerabilities of women living in mixed environments, given possible



prior histories of sexual violence (Amnesty International, 1999 in Malloch and Stanley, 2005: p. 62).

The incarceration of children in detention facilities has been particularly problematised. In her study of work conducted by the charity, Bail for Immigration Detainees, Anna Jackson (2003) provides examples of children's experiences within

Figure 1.3: Children in UK immigration removal centres from 2009 to 2014



Source: Detention data tables immigration statistics October to December 2014 (Home Office, 2014b).

detention; in one case, a woman and toddler were held for four months before being released following the medical examiner's determination that the child faced a 'failure to thrive' (Jackson, 2003: p. 120). The work of nation-wide advocacy groups, such as the End Child Detention Now (ECDN) campaign, have achieved some successes in illuminating the issue and in impacting policy. Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg declared in December 2010 that the practice of detaining children would end by May 2011. ECDN has also garnered the support of notable celebrities including Colin Firth and Russell Brand in calling for an end to child detention (ECDN website, 2015). Since 2009, there has been a significant reduction in the number of children in immigration detention. From its height of 1,119 children in detention in 2009, in 2015, the number had fallen to 99 (Home Office, 2014a; see Figure 1.3). Limitations to the amount of time children can be detained within pre-departure centres were introduced in the 2014 Immigration Act. Section 5 limits the individual detainment period of unaccompanied children to 24 hours and Section 6 restricts the detainment of families with children to a maximum of 72 hours or seven days. In her general observations of the conditions asylum seekers face in detention, Bosworth (2008) questions whether 'it is fair or justifiable to utilise detention as

a means of border control, when, particularly given the complexities in determining asylum cases, such a strategy must perforce result in some innocent and even victimised parties being incarcerated' (Gibney, 2004 cited in Bosworth, 2008: p. 207).

It remains necessary to distinguish between detention, dispersal and, to a lesser extent, deportation. Detention is ostensibly a statutory control on migrants deemed to be in the United Kingdom illegally. It represents a technique of state power that actively excludes migrants from society and operates as a key component of the state's deportation regime. This is evident in the language of the 1971 Immigration Act, which explicitly outlines the appropriate use of detention as it relates to deportation: 'Where a deportation order is in force against any person, he may be detained under the authority of the Secretary of State pending his removal or departure from the United Kingdom' (Sch. 3, para. 2(3)). However, this basis for the continued use and development of detention facilities is challenged by the fact that many asylum seekers detained are never deported. As, Welch and Schuster (2005) explain:

[T]he majority of detainees in those facilities are eventually released, either because they cannot be removed because of the conditions in the country of origin, because travel documents for the persons to be removed cannot be issued, because they are allowed to appeal, because they are released on bail, because they are granted leave to remain on compassionate grounds or because their claim for asylum is eventually allowed.

(p. 403)

The extent to which detention serves its intended purpose is questionable given the high numbers of asylum seekers that leave removal centres without being deported. Other functions of detention must therefore be considered. The containment of asylum seekers within detention facilities and their transfer between removal centres represent, according to Nicholas Gill (2009), deliberate efforts to represent asylum seekers as an ungrounded, temporary population. Detention serves to reinforce perceptions that asylum seekers are 'transitory, fleeting and depersonalised' (p. 186). The effect of this construction, Gill argues, is that objectivity is more difficult to achieve in relationships between detention centre staff and the asylum seekers they oversee; 'the construction of actors who hold influence over asylum seekers is [...] achieved through the presentational effect arising from detainees' mobility' (ibid: p. 195). Within this context, the value of asylum seekers' individual identities are secondary to the imperatives of managing a large, mobile population. This administrative approach is normalised and the reduction of asylum seekers' humanity becomes a feature of a management regime. Additionally, the undermining of asylum seekers' sense of belonging facilitates government strategies of

unease. Bosworth (2012) explains that detention serves to remind asylum seekers that they remain outsiders, an illegitimate population marked by their 'absence of citizenship' (p. 134). The logics of surveillance and exclusion permeate throughout the asylum experience; they are not sealed hermetically within the detention estate. Therefore, while it is imperative to distinguish between detention and dispersal, it is also necessary to regard these techniques of control as related and mutually informing.

In addressing private security firms' role in the delivery of the state's asylum detention programme, Gill (2009) highlights the fact that privatisation has resulted in the normalisation of detention through the bureaucratic mundanity of market imperatives. He writes that the 'legacy of immigrant incarceration facilities, coupled with the layers of private accountability to public bureaucracy that surround it, serves to normalise and routinise the incarceration of immigrants' and that the 'practice has become banal, with a focus more upon its operationalisation than upon its justification' (Sidaway, 2003 in Gill, 2009: p. 187). As this bureaucratic tradition is brought into the realm of asylum housing, the focus on 'operationalisation' has become increasingly evident. Indeed, much of the criticism levelled against G4S and Serco in the National Audit Office's report on the status of COMPASS housing included problems related to 'organisational change' and the firms' inability to meet 'key performance indicators'; data from interviews and focus groups with 'service users' were conspicuously absent (NAO, 2014: pp. 5, 23 & 37). Similarities between detention experiences and those within COMPASS are also evident in asylum seekers' interactions with housing staff and in the conditions faced within dispersed accommodation. Describing the conditions that led to disturbances at Yarl's Wood detention centre in early 2002, Molenaar and Neufeld (2003) address the enmity arising between Group 4<sup>5</sup> staff and detainees within the facility:

[D]etainees complained that they were being treated without respect, like prisoners, and that they often had to wait for health care and other services. Staff were concerned about lack of appropriate training, low salaries and inadequate staffing levels.

(p. 134)

Following the transition to the COMPASS programme, asylum seekers have had more direct interaction with representatives of the project's subcontractors rather than those of the main contractors, G4S and Serco. However, similar concerns and anxieties exist about employees' lack of concern for the asylum seekers they oversee. The fear of having

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<sup>5</sup> Group 4 was one of two companies that eventually merged to become G4S in 2004. In the context of Molenaar and Neufeld's (2003) writing, 'Group 4' was likely a shortened version of Group 4 Falck, a combination of Group 4 and Falck, two security firms that merged in 1999. In 2004, Group 4 Falck and Securicor merged to create Group 4 Securicor, or G4S (G4S website, 2015).

private security personnel directly responsible for asylum seekers' housing is captured in one asylum seeker's response to the news that G4S was a preferred bidder on the COMPASS contract: 'I do not want a prison guard as my landlord' (quoted in Grayson, 2012).

The basis for this concern goes beyond the fact that G4S and Serco manage detention centres; both companies have been implicated in the ill treatment of asylum seekers under their care. An inquest into the 2011 death of an asylum seeker in Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre, which was under the management of Serco, determined that 'neglect by immigration detention centre staff' in not immediately contacting emergency services contributed to his death (Taylor, 2012). Serco was again implicated in the questionable treatment of a detainee in 2013 when Khalid Shahzad died within a few hours of his release from Colnbrook. Given his health problems while in detention, Shahzad's death so soon after being discharged raised questions as to whether his release was 'an abdication of Serco's responsibility for his welfare' (Coles cited in Allison, 2013). G4S has also been associated with the mistreatment of asylum seekers, perhaps most publicly following the death of an Angolan asylum seeker during his deportation from the United Kingdom. Three G4S security guards constrained Jimmy Mubenga on a flight in October 2010. Despite his pleas to be released, Mubenga continued to be held until he died of 'cardiorespiratory collapse' (Ullah, 2015). Though the guards were charged with manslaughter, they were ultimately acquitted of criminal wrongdoing. Frances Webber (2014) writes that the judge's decision to omit racist texts found on defendants' phones suggests that institutional racism is both embedded in the state's asylum regime and that the private actors carrying out its detention and deportation services, in this case G4S, enjoy a degree of immunity from prosecution. Extreme events, such as the death of Mubenga during his deportation and the death of detainees within immigration removal centres, reveal a blurring of lines between the branches of the UK government's asylum regime, as each sector is dominated by the same firms - each contracted to carry out the state's programmes of surveillance and removal.

Detention, deportation and now dispersal have to be understood as existing on part of the same continuum, though they remain differentiated by unique experiences within each programme. The fact that the same contractors operate on all three levels of the state's asylum management system problematise attempts to depict these programmes as separate and distinct. In the conclusion of a Home Affairs Committee report titled 'Rules governing enforced removals from the UK', the committee suggested that the relationship between the Home Office and its contractors might indeed be harmful to asylum seekers under their supervision. Citing the comfort with which private security employees used racist language in the presence of UK Border Agency staff and representatives of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, the committee posited that '[i]t is

possibly the result of a relationship between the Agency [UKBA] and its contractors which had become too cosy' (HM Government, 2012: para. 32). Given the extent to which the UK government has aligned itself with the business interests of the private security sector in all three areas of asylum management, associations between the detention, deportation and dispersal experiences may be expected. For those asylum seekers with prior knowledge of companies like G4S and Serco or for those who have spent time under their surveillance, the firms' broader reputations challenge attempts to differentiate between the services for which each is contracted to deliver. Jabril, an asylum seeker dispersed to West Yorkshire, recounted his view of G4S and its relationship with the Home Office:

'I heard about G4S before, because - obviously - G4S is a security firm, as I used to know. I'm not sure what happened - [how] they end up being a housing provider. I understand how abusive G4S has been. When this project was won by G4S, before they started moving people, there were [...] many campaigns about G4S [being] incapable of treating people with dignity. But, the Home Office, for them, they feel they are always right even if they are wrong, which is out of ethics [unethical]. It is an abuse of human rights, anyway.

(Jabril, Interview, 22 August 2013)

#### *4.3 Introducing selected dispersal regions*

As with the previous dispersal programme, asylum seekers housed under Section 95 and Section 4 of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act are widely dispersed across the United Kingdom under the terms of the COMPASS housing project. The current major dispersal regions include: London and South; Wales; Midlands and East of England; North East, Yorkshire and Humberside; North West; Scotland and Northern Ireland. By the end of 2013, 20,687 asylum seekers were housed within dispersed accommodation under Section 95 and a further 4,831 were supported under Section 4. For the purposes of this doctoral research project, practical limitations and a qualitative research agenda necessitated the purposive selection of regions of study. Establishing the criteria for a dispersal region's inclusion in the study involved determining the time and cost of travel, the representativeness of potential interview data, the willingness of research participants and the prospect of developing comparative data between regions. It was important that experiences under at least two of the firms contracted under the COMPASS agreement were represented within the research, as I wished to reflect asylum seekers' experiences within G4S-managed housing as well as accommodation subcontracted by Serco.

Random sampling was not a preferred method of gaining access to asylum seekers for the purpose of in-depth semi-structured interviews, as such engagement

depended upon the establishment of trust through gatekeepers' facilitation. The selection of Glasgow, the North East of England and West Yorkshire was therefore purposive, but intended to provide a diversity of experiences within the practical limits of finite resources and research strategies. Ritchie *et al* (2003) explain that ensuring diversity in samples - even those selected purposively - is important, as it 'optimises the chances of identifying the full range of factors or features that are associated with a phenomenon' and 'it allows some investigation of interdependency between variables such that those that are most relevant can be disengaged from those of lesser import' (p. 83). With an aim toward allowing for natural comparisons to arise from the interview data, I selected Glasgow, the North East of England and West Yorkshire as my primary research regions. Glasgow is unique given its series of integration networks, which serve a welcoming and support function for refugees and asylum seekers. As the primary site of dispersal in Scotland in which Serco is the sole contractor for asylum housing, the city serves as an important region in the study of COMPASS housing. In the North East of England, dispersal trends are moving away from the urban centre of Newcastle into outlying areas including Sunderland and Middlesbrough. Discussions with asylum seekers and charity workers in these regions helped develop a clearer understanding of the effects of geographical and social marginalisation from the city centre where fewer or less developed support networks exist. As in the North East, G4S is the primary contractor in West Yorkshire, though the main subcontractor in the region during the period of study was Cascade Housing rather than Jomast, as it was in the North East. The inclusion of Leeds, which is within the West Yorkshire dispersal region, widened the geographical scope of the project and provided further evidence of asylum seekers' experiences within G4S-contracted housing.

In this section, I provide an outline of current dispersal data as it pertains to each of the dispersal regions included in this research. The size of current asylum-seeking populations as well as their percentage of the total population of asylum seekers within the United Kingdom are presented alongside descriptions of subregional populations. Within each overview, I explore longitudinal trends of dispersal within the regions and discuss developments within housing, and refugee and asylum support in these areas subsequent to the introduction of dispersal. I address a number of social and historical features of each location and draw on interview data from workers within the field of asylum support in order to develop an overview of past and current migrant experiences within the dispersal regions. Finally, I present demographic features of my sample of interviews with asylum seekers to draw some comparative elements of the regional data.

#### *4.3.1 COMPASS and dispersal trends*

Asylum seekers' distribution around the country has altered since the introduction of the COMPASS programme; the initial stages of this movement were apparent during the period of transition to COMPASS from previous asylum housing contracts. The National Audit Office report on asylum housing published in January 2014 cites housing availability as a major contributing factor to the movement of over 2,000 asylum seekers during the transition to COMPASS. The disruption in the North East, for instance, is attributed to a failed 'late stage' agreement between United Property Management (UPM) and G4S leaving the security firm in a position in which it 'had to look for alternative housing stock at short notice' (NAO, 2014: s. 28, p. 20). What is not reflected adequately in this report is the fact that UPM was already performing a sub-contractual function with G4S subsequent to the introduction of COMPASS, but the company was dropped as an accommodation provider due to major contractual failings relating to substandard housing (Salsbury, 2012). Disturbances between G4S and its subcontractors continued beyond the transitional phase. In a leaked letter from G4S's Stephen Small to the company's shareholders, Small explained that relations with subcontractors were tenuous and he stated that an accommodation provider, Mantel, had withdrawn its agreement with G4S to house asylum seekers. Small continued, stating: 'It has become increasingly evident over the past few months that a number of our accommodation partners are finding it difficult to manage aspects of this contract, for example their ability to address the high number of property defects' (Small quoted in Rawlinson, 2013). Small acknowledged that subcontractors Cascade and Live 'have also expressed similar concerns to Mantel' (Sambrook, 2013). Contractual upheaval partially explains the disruption to the implementation of the COMPASS contract, but the substandard conditions of asylum housing as described within the NAO report are better understood as symptomatic of attempts to marketise asylum welfare provision.

The promise of profitability and an aim to extend housing provision to new markets create an environment in which undesirable - or unliveable - conditions may be expected as a possible outcome of marketisation. Such developments are prevalent in the wider social housing environment as well. In the decades since massive privatisation of social housing commenced in the late 1980s, individual tenant experiences have not been universally positive. In Ginsburg's (2005) analysis of the privatisation of council housing, she writes that fewer than half of those responding to a government review of tenant satisfaction during the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer process believed 'that their landlord had met all of their promises' (DETR, 2000 in Ginsburg, 2005: p. 126). Additionally, black and minority ethnic communities' access to social housing diminished following privatisation (Mullins and Simmons, 2001 in *ibid*: p. 127). Disparities in tenant experiences within privatised housing suggests that the lack of uniformity of care provided by local authorities was not ameliorated through privatisation. In the case of asylum housing in

each of the three regions studied, inequality in provision marks individual asylum seekers' experiences and is reflected in the observations of those working closely with asylum seekers in a support capacity. These views will be considered in further detail later in this chapter and subsequent chapters, however it is worth detailing the current size of the asylum seeker population and their distribution across the three primary dispersal regions investigated in this study.

#### *4.3.2 Glasgow*

Much of the support infrastructure that currently exists for asylum seekers in Glasgow was fledgling to non-existent in the early years of the dispersal programme. The speed and degree to which the city's 'integration networks' developed in the decade and a half following the introduction of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act are unique, given the relative cohesiveness of Glasgow's support environment and its networks' concerted integration objective. This is due in part to the devolved powers of the Scottish Executive and Scottish Parliament, which include their discretionary delivery of asylum services, despite the fact that dispersal remains within the remit of Her Majesty's Government. Bowes et al (2009) describe the Scottish Executive's 'approach to asylum seekers and refugees' as 'somewhat different from that of the prevailing UK public discourse [...] whereby asylum seekers in particular are seen as a threat to society' (p. 28). In the initial stages of dispersal, the Scottish Executive placed particular emphasis on integration and service delivery (ibid, p. 28). The creation of specific avenues of support, such as the integration networks, was a fundamental strategy within the integration agenda.

During the networks' early development, Karen Wren (2004) observed that the rapid rate of change in Glasgow challenged the networks' ability to 'meet the needs of a maturing asylum seeker population', a population that had risen to 10,000 asylum seekers since 2000 (pp. 1-2). The level of growth strained both housing agencies' ability to deliver their statutory duties and gave rise to tensions in areas around the city (Scottish Executive, 2003 in Phillips, 2006: p. 543). As statutory agencies and voluntary organisations were establishing a network of services to facilitate asylum seekers' integration into their new communities, instances of racial violence were negatively impacting Glasgow's welcoming image in the media. The 2001 murder of Firsat Yildiz Dag, a dispersed asylum seeker living in Sighthill, illuminated levels of extreme hostility asylum seekers sometimes faced in dispersal areas. In response to this violence, advocates of asylum seekers engaged in a series of marches to develop community awareness and promote mutual respect (Malloch and Stanley, 2005: p. 65). Smith and Bowes (2007) describe the death of Dag - and the publicity that followed - as a 'catalyst' that spurred locals into challenging media portrayals of Glasgow as a hostile environment



Figure 1.4: Number of Dispersed Asylum Seekers in Glasgow by Year

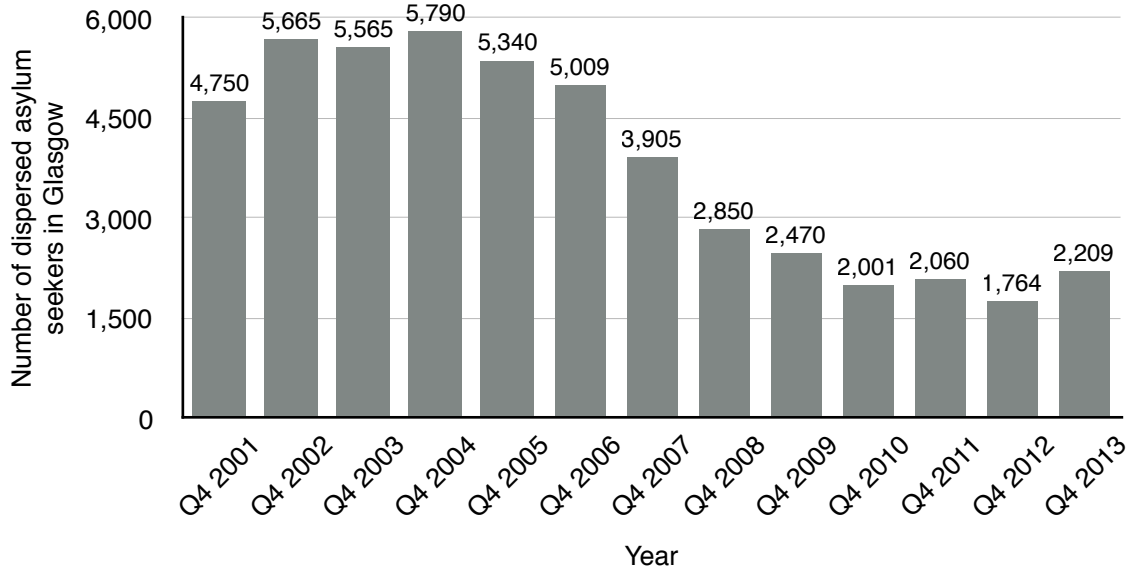
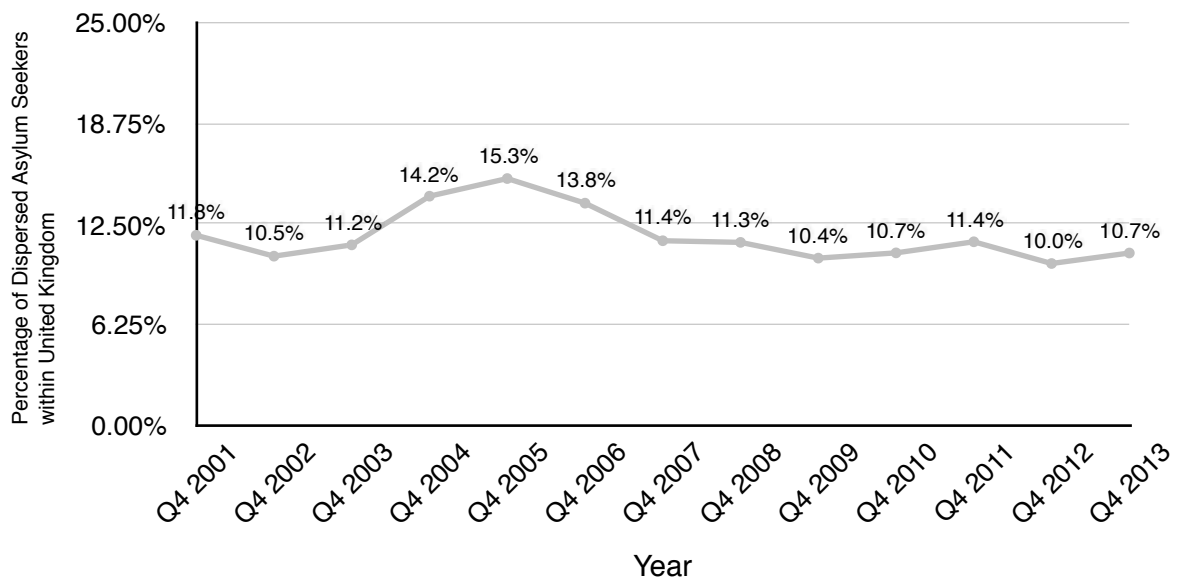


Figure 1.5: Percentage of Total UK Dispersed Asylum Seekers in Glasgow by year



Home Office, 2004. *Control of Immigration Statistics, United Kingdom 2003*; Home Office 2005. *Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom 2004*; Home Office 2014. *Immigration Statistics, July to September 2014 (Asylum data tables immigration statistics July to September 2014 vols. 1 & 2 available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-july-to-september-2014-data-tables>).*

to those dispersed to the city on a no-choice basis (p. 735).

Rachel (Interview, 17 May 2013), a woman active in asylum advocacy since the beginning of the dispersal programme, described the conditions in Sighthill as tumultuous prior to dispersal; she stated that the British National Party was responsible for fomenting anti-migrant sentiment, which explained some of the added tension in the region. Rachel became very involved in a fledgling organisation called Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees (GCtWR), which developed in direct response to the BNP's negative depictions

of asylum seekers. GCtWR participated in one of the demonstrations against the vilification of asylum seekers following Firsat Dag's death. According to Rachel, the responses of other voluntary organisations were ambivalent to outright resistant at this time. She said that support networks akin to those now operating in Glasgow were simply non-existent and that other voluntary organisations defended their inaction through assertions that refugee support was not within their funding remit. Signs of progressive community action were evident early on, though, as Rachel explained that the first support for asylum seekers dispersed to Glasgow arose out of residents' associations. Subsequent to an emergent, localised structure of informal support, ten integration networks were developed to provide a level of assistance to asylum seekers not offered by the local authority. Some networks' development was facilitated by the Scottish Refugee Council, and out of the initial ten, nine networks continue to operate throughout the city. Their aim, according to Wren (2004), is:

[...] to facilitate joint working across both statutory and voluntary sectors and to co-ordinate and, in some cases, to provide services for asylum seekers and refugees at a local level. They also seek to build bridges between asylum seeker and host communities through various community development initiatives and social and cultural events. The networks have supported the development of drop-ins, language teaching and other services, and have also initiated various projects designed to bring together asylum seekers and host communities at a local level.

(Wren, 2004: p. 25)

As Wren (2007) later observed, the integration networks developed primarily in response to specific needs within local communities; drop-ins provided asylum seekers with the 'first point of contact with the host community' (p. 403). These objectives remain core strategies in the networks' current support approach. For instance, the Greater Pollock Integration Network offers activity space for children while parents access support or English language training. Computers with internet access are available for service users so they can keep in touch with friends and family and make appointments. The Maryhill Integration Network conducts engagement programmes designed to raise asylum seekers' awareness of their options and to strengthen trust and community cohesion. One of the aspects Wren observed about the integration networks that was noticeable within the context of the interviews for this thesis was the fact the integration networks were mostly accessed by women (Wren, 2004: p. 2). This is significant, because my dependence upon integration network staff as 'gatekeepers' facilitating contact with asylum seekers resulted in a sample of respondents that was almost entirely comprised of

females. One possible explanation for the higher proportion of female service users was due to the nature of services offered by the integration networks, including child care and organised women's groups.

The capacity for integration networks to deliver a fairly standardised service to asylum seekers since 2000 is perhaps due in part to the fact that the dispersal rate to Glasgow has been reasonably steady during that period, though funding challenges in recent years have contributed to a greater sense of insecurity, as I detail in Section 5.1.1. While numbers have fluctuated over time, Glasgow's dispersal rates as an overall percentage of asylum seekers dispersed nationwide have remained relatively static. Between 2004 and 2006, Glasgow received its highest proportion of dispersed asylum seekers, averaging 14.4 percent over three years. Alongside decreased numbers of dispersed asylum seekers across the UK, the percentage dispersed to Glasgow dropped to between 10 and 11 per cent from 2007 onward. The numbers of asylum seekers dispersed to Glasgow fell from a high of 5,790 in Q4 2004 to 2,209 in Q4 2013, a small increase from the number of 1,764 dispersed asylum seekers in the city in Q4 2012. Figures 1.4 and 1.5 illustrate these trends.

These figures alone do not fully highlight the level of change that has occurred in Glasgow following the introduction of the COMPASS project. At first glance, it would seem that the 'burden' of service on Glasgow's voluntary sector is waning, given the general fall in numbers of asylum seekers and Glasgow's receipt of a relatively level proportion of the nation's dispersed asylum seekers over time. However, developments within the city following the privatisation of asylum housing and a political will to demolish the city's famous Red Road high-rises have resulted in shifting geographies; increasingly, asylum seekers are being moved to peripheral regions of the city where cheap housing is more readily available for Serco's subcontractor, Orchard and Shipman. This has led to new challenges for asylum-seeking residents, as essential services are more distant, travel times longer and more expensive, and children's schooling disrupted through moves.

#### *4.3.3 North East of England, Yorkshire and Humber*

The development of asylum support strategies in the North East of England and Yorkshire and Humber varied from those in Glasgow. This was in part due to the size of the regions. The dispersal areas are geographically large and span a number of urban centres, such as Sheffield, Newcastle and Leeds. Another factor affecting dispersal patterns in these regions is the population shift to new geographies as accommodation is allocated in cheaper, readily available properties. Support networks that were once locally accessible in urban centres are now further afield for asylum seekers dispersed to peripheral regions. While this is occurring in Glasgow with asylum seekers being moved to

areas like Easterhouse, the distances are greater for those dispersed, say, to the North East; dispersal rates to Newcastle and Sunderland are falling while the rate of dispersal to Middlesbrough is increasing. In researching asylum seekers' experiences in Middlesbrough and Sunderland in the North East and Leeds in Yorkshire, I aim to highlight conditions within COMPASS housing managed by G4S and subcontracted by Jomast in the North East and Cascade in Leeds.

The number of asylum seekers dispersed to the North East of England was highest in the years immediately after the introduction of the dispersal policy. In the ten years between 2003 and 2013, the population of dispersed asylum seekers was 4,930 in Q4 2003, remained over 3,000 through 2007 and dropped to its lowest number in 2010 at 1,690. By Q4 2013, the number of asylum seekers in the region rose to 2,144 (see Figure 1.6). As a percentage of the overall asylum seeking population, the rate of dispersal to the North East of England remained relatively static through 2011. By the end of 2012, the rate rose to 10.8 per cent from 9.6 per cent the year before (Figure 1.7). As the transition to COMPASS occurred between Spring and Winter 2012, the corresponding increase in the dispersal rate in this region may reflect the movement of asylum seekers into areas where Jomast, a subcontractor to G4S, has available properties. This is further illustrated through an analysis of the dispersal rates to individual localities within the region. Figure 1.8 reveals the rate of asylum seekers dispersed to Newcastle, Sunderland and Middlesbrough as a percentage of the total rate of asylum seekers dispersed to the North East of England. Between 2011 and 2012, the rate of asylum seekers dispersed to Newcastle and Sunderland fell while the rate dispersed to Middlesbrough rose precipitously during the same period and through 2013. The availability of low cost housing in Middlesbrough has been identified as a contributing factor of the rise.

Richard Horniman, a representative of Middlesbrough Council, stated in 2014 that the rise in the rate of dispersal to the city is attributable to 'Government-funded regional contracts' (Jeeves, 2014). In a *Mirror* article citing Middlesbrough as 'England's asylum seeker capital', the Middlesbrough Council is reported as stating that "lower value housing" made it cheaper for asylum seekers [to be housed]' (Armstrong, 2014). These statements alongside government statistics on dispersal rates reveal that the pursuit of cheap, available housing has resulted in pockets of extreme increases in dispersal rates in areas that do not have the support infrastructure to accommodate high numbers of asylum seekers arriving in a relatively short span of time. A recent Home Office report outlining current housing and financial support strategies for asylum seekers reiterates the policy aim that the asylum population in dispersal areas does not exceed one in 200 residents (Gower, 2015: p. 6). The proportion of asylum seekers in Middlesbrough exceeds this limit by nearly 1.5 times (Armstrong, 2014). Therefore, the ostensible aim of 'burden sharing', which underpins the logic behind the dispersal programme is undone

Figure 1.6: Number of dispersed asylum seekers in the North East of England by year

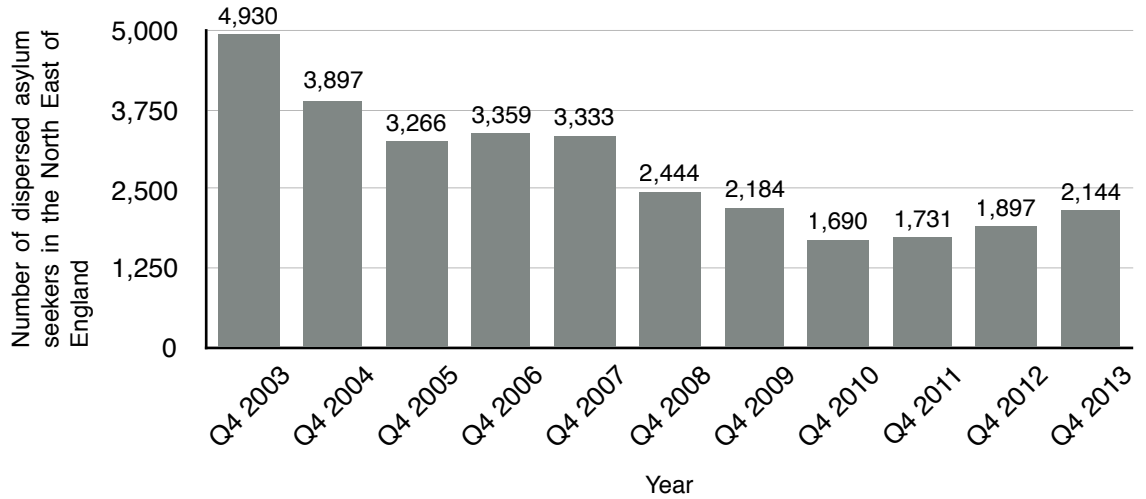


Figure 1.7: Percentage of Total UK Dispersed Asylum Seekers in the North East of England by year

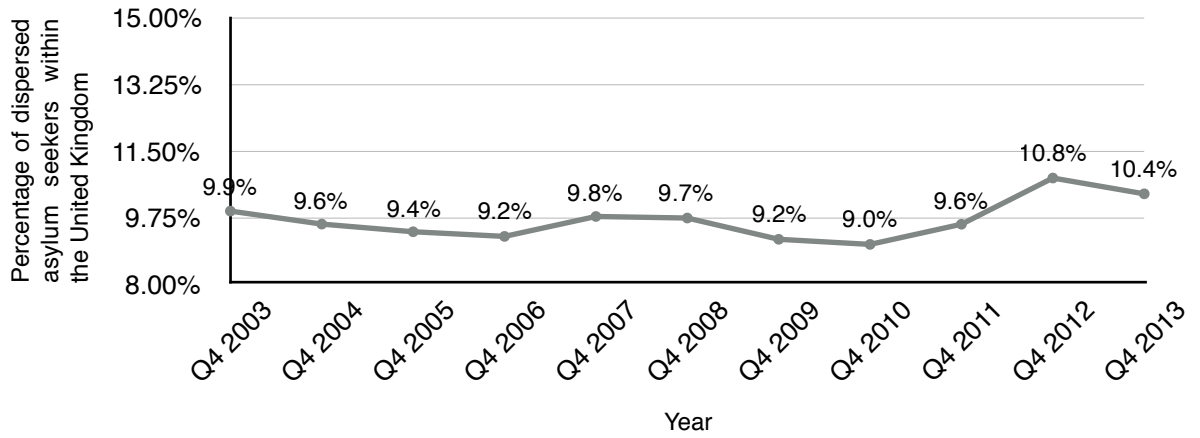
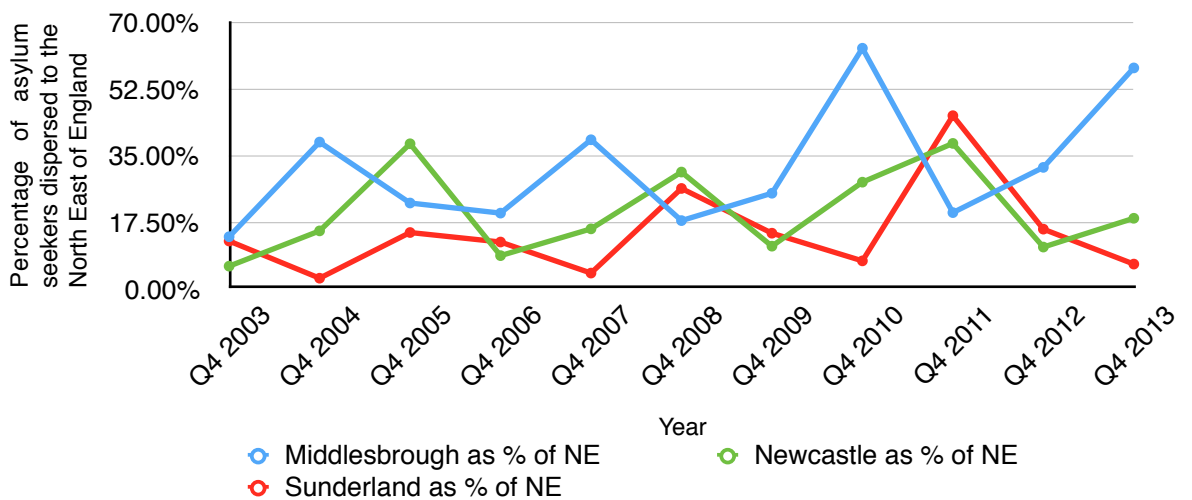


Figure 1.8: Rate of asylum seekers dispersed to Middlesbrough, Newcastle and Sunderland as percentages of the overall dispersal rate to the North East of England by year



Home Office, 2004. Control of Immigration Statistics, United Kingdom 2003; Home Office 2005. Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom 2004; Home Office 2014. Immigration Statistics, July to September 2014 (Asylum data tables immigration statistics July to September 2014 vols. 1 & 2 available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-july-to-september-2014-data-tables>).

through a marketised approach toward asylum housing. In addition, support organisations in Middlesbrough have had to respond to a rapid rise in service users accessing advice and support services. Unlike Newcastle, and to a lesser extent, Sunderland, Middlesbrough does not have a robust asylum support network; support is limited to local charities and churches providing basic assistance, such as a food bank and donated clothing.

While asylum seekers dispersed to Glasgow or Newcastle can count on a series of agencies dedicated to servicing refugees and other migrants, the same is not necessarily as true in areas like Middlesbrough and Sunderland. The impact this has on individual asylum seekers is revealed in interview respondents' references to emotional strain. What is notable about the sample of respondents living in the North East was that all were single adult males. Whereas in Glasgow, integration networks were predominantly accessed by women, the drop-ins in Sunderland and Middlesbrough were largely comprised of men. As drop-in services were limited in scope by virtue of limited resources and high numbers of service users, the ability to cater to specialist needs was correspondingly limited. The degree to which this affected the following outcomes was beyond the scope of the research, but there were some conditions largely unique to the experiences of asylum seekers dispersed to the North East. For instance, of the interviewees that explicitly described a sense of depression, half (6) of these respondents were living in the North East of England. Like others in COMPASS housing, asylum seekers dispersed to Middlesbrough cited feelings of stress, isolation and fear. The impact of shared housing felt uniquely acute for respondents in the North East; over 60 per cent of respondents reporting problems with housemates were residents in Middlesbrough or Sunderland. Two respondents explained that they felt that the managers of the COMPASS programme were insensitive to the cultural and religious differences of residents, and that it seemed as if no consideration was made for such factors when dispersing people to individual properties.

The experiences in West Yorkshire were similar in some respects to those in the North East of England, but whereas access to larger charitable organisations was limited for those dispersed to Sunderland and Middlesbrough, asylum seekers living in Leeds had access to drop-ins, the Red Cross and PAFRAS, a charity that provides access to mental health support, casework support and general advice. In the early days of dispersal, the Yorkshire and Humber region received the largest proportion of dispersed asylum seekers (21 per cent). However, the rate steadily declined through the 2000s and the region now hosts just over 11 per cent of asylum seekers dispersed across the UK (Home Office, 2001; Home Office, 2014a). Leeds has historically received a relatively low number of asylum seekers compared to surrounding cities. For instance, Bradford and Barnsley have typically received far greater numbers, though since the introduction of COMPASS,

Bradford has seen a precipitous rise in the number of asylum seekers dispersed to the city. Between Q4 2012 and Q4 2013, the dispersed asylum seeker population in Bradford increased by over 250 per cent from 742 in 2012 to 2,034 in 2013 (Home Office, 2014a). Similar to the experience in the North East of England, this is largely explained by the fact that subcontractors in the region pursued readily available, cheap housing. The interview data presented in chapters 5 through 8 are limited to asylum seekers' living in Leeds, though future research warrants an exploration of dispersed residents' experiences in Bradford and elsewhere. With the broad trends of the studied dispersal regions now explored, I turn to more specific accounts within each region, relying on interview data from workers within the field of asylum and refugee support. Their views articulate some of the distinctions between regions and also illuminate the extent to which the delivery of the COMPASS contract differs on the bases of housing availability, the attitudes of housing provider staff and the support of other statutory and voluntary agencies.

## Chapter 5: Views of COMPASS from the asylum service sector

As the field of asylum support is broad, the delivery of asylum and refugee services is largely varied; the nature and degree of support are contingent upon factors such as location, staff expertise, funding dependencies, agency objectives and levels of affiliation with the Home Office. Referring to the asylum support ‘sector’ in general terms runs the risk of conflating a multitude of organisations’ diverse aims and motives. The Scottish Refugee Council (2014) states on its website that it views Scotland as a place ‘in which all people seeking refuge are welcome’ and until April 2014 the charity received money from the government to assist asylum seekers with advice and information. The City of Sanctuary movement, which aims to ‘build a culture of hospitality’ for asylum seekers through awareness-building activities with communities, schools and local government, nominally supports campaigns against deportation and child detention, but stops short of offering its own brand of activism. Squire and Darling (2013) suggest that the movement, which began in Sheffield in 2005, may serve to legitimate government constructions of asylum seekers rather than challenge them:

City of Sanctuary may formally call for an expansion of the remit of hospitality, and it may accept the need to be responsive to intertwined histories of injustice, but this in itself does not disrupt a statist account of politics and sanctuary. [...] City of Sanctuary stretches the limits of hospitality, but does not exceed its limitations in any disruptive sense.

(Squire and Darling, 2013: p. 69)

Other organisations have been implicated in directly facilitating a punitive approach toward suspected immigration offenders, such as the children’s charity Barnardo’s, which operates a childcare facility at Cedars pre-departure centre near Gatwick Airport. The chief executive of Barnardo’s, Anne Marie Carrie, backed the British government’s deportation efforts stating in 2011 that ‘enforced departure’ was necessary, as was Barnardo’s involvement in offering services at the centre (Scammell, 2011). Francis Webber writes that despite the charity’s purported efforts to improve conditions within Cedars, its presence within the centre legitimates the practice of child detention, a policy the coalition government pledged in 2010 that it would end (Webber, 2014; Dugan, 2014). Refugee Action is similarly scrutinised for administering the government’s voluntary returns programme, which includes the Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP), through its Choices scheme. Suggesting that the contract between Refugee Action and the Home Office challenges the charity’s ability to remain impartial and best serve the interests of its service users, Webber (2012) states that ‘a contract with



the Home Office means you are acting to legitimise and to enforce Home Office policy, which is fundamentally at odds with what [human rights advocates] are about' (Webber, 2012: p. 97). In Written Evidence submitted to the House of Commons Select Committee on Asylum, Refugee Action advised the government of ways in which it might increase the number of asylum seekers leaving the country, stating that the Home Office needed to acknowledge the 'many barriers' keeping people from opting for Assisted Voluntary Return and suggested that the government use Refugee Action 'key workers' to discuss the option of voluntary return with asylum seekers early in the asylum application process (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee on Asylum, 2013: Ev w64-65).

Nevertheless, Refugee Action reports that it held 10,000 individual advice sessions with refugees and asylum seekers accessing its One Stop Service from April 2012 to March 2013 and continues to offer integration support to vulnerable refugees through its Gateway Protection Programme (Refugee Action, 2013: pp. 5-6). Larger charities face criticism, because their autonomy is viewed as contingent upon their contractual obligations to the state. As major programmes like the One Stop Service are transitioned to other providers, there is always the possibility that these views may change. The Refugee Council, which lost its bid to offer support and assistance to adult asylum seekers in England, seems committed to its advocacy work; its CEO, Maurice Wren states that despite losing the contract, the organisation 'remains resolute in its commitment to defend and promote the rights of refugees in the UK and will continue to work with the Government to convince it that fairness and the respectful treatment of people [...] are essential prerequisites for an efficient, cost effective and credible asylum system' (Refugee Council, 2014).

A number of organisations and movements have remained critical of government policy while maintaining a degree of independence from the state allowing them to engage in more active dissent. Stephanie Silverman (2012) highlights a few of these, which include No One is Illegal, Medical Justice and Student Action for Refugees; Silverman explains that the net effect of each NGO's campaign against immigration policies and practices that are 'complementary to immigration detention - including dispersal and the destitution of failed asylum seekers' is to 'help fuel the moral outrage toward the practice in the United Kingdom' (Silverman, 2012: p. 1145). The Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees (GCtWR), which like City of Sanctuary aims to change public attitudes toward asylum seekers, also participates in direct action and protests. When asylum seekers housed by Ypeople, the primary accommodation provider in Glasgow prior to COMPASS, were threatened with eviction, the GCtWR partnered with other organisations to ensure that many were rehoused. (Burnett, 2012). Similar organisations in England, like the South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group (SYMAAG), have contributed evidence to parliamentary committees to demonstrate asylum seekers' experiences with

dispersal and living in destitution. Later in this chapter, I discuss how some of the organisations contacted as part of this dissertation approach the issue of advocacy and dissent in various ways. A full list of respondents interviewed in order to develop the perspectives presented in this chapter can be found in Appendix 4.

### *5.1 The role of the refugee and asylum support sector in Britain*

Charities dedicated to providing assistance to asylum seekers and refugees largely vary in their support capacities. In Glasgow, refugee and asylum support agencies constitute a collaborative integration network and receive continued, though diminishing, financial support from the Glasgow City Council. In other cities, particularly areas in which COMPASS housing providers have expanded their accommodation provision into the fringes of dispersal areas, such as Stockton, Sunderland and Middlesbrough, support is limited to individual 'drop-ins', which cater to a variety of needs including the provision of clothing, food, English language learning, guidance and signposting to other services. Steady funding is not always a guarantee for these agencies, which Zetter *et al* (2005) suggest limited many from gaining charity status in the years immediately following the dispersal programme (Zetter *et al*, 2005: p. 174).

One of the immediate effects of the deployment of the UKBA's dispersal programme was that asylum seekers arriving in newly formed dispersal areas found themselves devoid of significant support networks of the type and variety that had been established in London and the South East. Many of the locations selected as dispersal areas were not necessarily prime destinations for asylum seekers in the past. Wren (2004) explains that as the availability of housing was the 'primary criterion' in the selection of dispersal areas, the placement of asylum seekers has been in poorer areas and has 'generally occurred (with some exceptions) in areas with no pre-existing BME [black and minority ethnic] communities' (Wren, 2004: pp. 19-20). As a result, local authorities' capacity to respond to the specific needs of a destitute asylum-seeking population were limited. In response to the perceived needs of the asylum-seeking communities dispersed to these new areas, small voluntary entities quickly mobilised in an effort to offer support for asylum seekers who could no longer rely upon the extended friendship and support networks of London and the South East. The expansion of voluntary upstart agencies varied from region to region, and levels of support were not uniform across all dispersal areas.

The dispersal of asylum seekers to Glasgow gave rise to the creation of integration networks, which aimed to support asylum seekers, build awareness and foster community fellowship in reception areas (*ibid.*, p. 5). The dearth of refugee support options in the city meant that the development of a city-wide strategy was a gradual process with many services initially serving basic functions. Citing a 2001 Scottish Refugee Council report,

Wren writes that the networks 'were not in place when the dispersal policy was first implemented as there was no city-wide strategy to facilitate a co-ordinated response from the voluntary sector. When dispersal began, many areas lacked any structure or forum for the voluntary sector to address the needs of asylum seekers' (ibid., p. 23). Those working within Glasgow's reflected on their organisations' histories and their rapid maturation:

The [Maryhill Integration Network] was established in 2002 due to the lack of support [for] integration after the scheme [established] by the UKBA to disperse asylum seekers to Scotland, particularly Glasgow as the main city. So, people found at that time that there were no groups - community groups - for refugees available to them or no support available to them to help them to integrate into Scottish society. And, at that time, it was found that it is important to have charity organisations or registered groups established to be available for these people. That is the reason our organisation was established - as a result of the situation of asylum seekers who were really struggling.

(Souidi, Interview, 17 May 2013)

[The] Govan and Craigton Integration Network [has] been a registered charity since 2010, but it has existed since 2001 after Glasgow became a city of dispersal. A lot of the people that were being dispersed in Glasgow were being housed in areas such as Govan and Craigton and so really, this was set up by local people and community organisations and also the local government just to try and provide some initial support and a kind of welcome space for people coming to Glasgow and to Govan and Craigton especially. [...] When we were established officially as a charity, the organisation's role went from being something that was more informal in terms of having a sort of drop-in with food, tea and coffee to something actually more concrete in terms of service provision.

(Harland, Interview, 10 June 2013)

Greater Pollok Integration Network started in 2001 as a response to the Home Office dispersal through the UK. It tended to be kind of grassroots organisations and concerned individuals that got together as people or organisations to provide services to asylum seekers to help them "integrate into the community". [...] In 2007, the kind of committee got together and constituted and became a charity at that point. We also got funding and community flats downstairs. That's when we started with an administrator, a project coordinator and a part-time volunteer development worker.

(McWilliam, Interview, 13 June 2013)

Some preexisting organisations had to be repurposed in order to meet the needs of new arrivals. The Kingsway Health and Wellbeing Centre, which operates out of a group of tower flats four miles northwest of Glasgow city centre, was not initially established for asylum seekers. A support worker for the project, Jassim Johe, explains that the organisation was founded in 2000 as a health project focusing on issues of 'inclusion, deprivation, alcoholism [and] drug mistreatment' within the local community (Johe, Interview, 19 July 2013). When asylum seekers began arriving in the region following dispersal, it became clear that the organisation would need to be adapted to address the needs of a broader community. Johe describes the sudden impact of dispersal on the organisation:

One night, two buses full of people were dropped in this area with no prior knowledge or information. [The workers] were swamped, as the asylum seekers coming here didn't know where the shops were or what's what. So, they started coming to the centre. The management committee were helping as much as they could. They found that there were a lot of asylum seekers and refugees with lots of different issues and they never dealt with asylum seekers or refugees. They decided that they needed a specialised service to deal with the issues of asylum seekers and refugees.

(Johe, Interview, 19 July 2013)

## *5.2 The impact of financial cuts and funding dependencies*

Charities and non-profit organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom depend on funding from a variety of sources including lottery funds, charitable trusts, banks, faith-based organisations and individual donations. Grant money is often distributed on a conditional basis for a specific project or allocated for a finite period. Government contracts account for another important source of income, as such funding has traditionally supported country-wide refugee and asylum advice services. The Scottish Refugee Council, the North of England Refugee Service (NERS), the West End Refugee Service (WERS), Justice First and Solace have received funding from charitable bodies like the Big Lottery Fund, Comic Relief, Northern Rock Foundation, Greggs Foundation and the J. Paul Getty Junior Charitable Trust. In the 2012 financial year, Refugee Action received funding from the government, public authorities, the Refugee Council, the Sigrid Rausing Trust, Comic Relief, Trust for London and others (Refugee Action, 2013: p. 21). The Asylum Support Partnership, which consists of the Refugee Council, Refugee Action, the North of England Refugee Service, the Scottish Refugee

Council and the Welsh Refugee Council, was formerly responsible for operating a 'One Stop Service' providing advice and support to asylum seekers and refugees within the organisations' respective regions. In Autumn 2013, the Asylum Support Partnership lost its bid to continue with the One Stop Service and the management of the service was transferred to Migrant Help, a charity that G4S subcontracted in 2012 as a 'strategic partner' from the voluntary sector to aid in its delivery of the COMPASS housing project (Scottish Refugee Council, 2013; Grayson, 2012; G4S, 2012). Critics of the new programme warn that it will diminish asylum seekers' support offerings, as Migrant Help will no longer provide advocacy support for asylum seekers and will transition from a customer-facing service to one based on telephone and web-based access (Duffy, 2014; Molloy: 2014).

There exist concerns that the encroaching state presence in the voluntary sector and the government's abandonment of the current refugee support infrastructure represents a consolidation of social control techniques through cost-saving measures and the co-option of voluntary agencies. Such was the view promoted amongst the asylum and refugee support community following revelations that Barnardo's had entered into a contract with G4S to provide family support services at Cedars pre-departure accommodation centre in 2011. Ahlam Souidi, an employee at the Maryhill Integration Network, voiced her frustration with Barnardo's involvement at Cedars:

'Why is Barnardo's charity involved in this way? Why is a charity to support families [...] making sure that people are going to be deported?' The UKBA said: 'No, no, no, no. Their job is for the welfare of the people and children there. They are going to support them there at the pre-departure centre.' But it is a detention centre. The Scottish Refugee Council went [to inspect a pre-departure centre] and they saw the [conditions]. They said: 'It is detention. Why is it called pre-departure?' [The UKBA] said: 'No, it's [Barnardo's] role to make sure that the children are okay in the pre-departure centre and the family are all right.' But no. To be honest, I was so disappointed. I used to support Barnardo's, but not anymore. I was so disappointed. Many people were disappointed and said: 'We don't support Barnardo's anymore'. They should never have been involved. They are a charity supporting vulnerable people. It means that you can no longer trust any charity organisations in this case.

(Souidi, Interview, 17 May 2013)

Charities' implication in propping up the government's immigration policies and practices is also extended to those receiving funds to offer advice and support services. For

instance, the Refugee Council and Refugee Action have received additional support from the Home Office to offer specialist advice services to refugees and asylum seekers. From April 2011, Refugee Action provided repatriation assistance under its 'Choices' scheme, which was previously titled the 'Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP) when it was overseen by the International Organization for Migration (Blinder, 2012: 5). Refugee Action has faced criticism from others in the asylum and refugee support community due to the fact that its desire for a 'better, fairer asylum system' is at odds with its facilitation of the government's removal of unwanted migrants. Webber (2012), a retired barrister of immigration and human rights law, explains that the use of the word 'voluntary' is a misnomer. She states:

There is a more fundamental objection with the 'assisted voluntary returns' programmes, which is that they are not genuinely voluntary. [...] The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), in its guidelines on voluntary repatriation, states that the 'principle of voluntariness is the cornerstone of international protection with respect to the return of refugees', and it must be viewed in relation to both (a) conditions in the country of origin (calling for an informed choice) and (b) the situation in the country of asylum (permitting a free choice). Virtually none of these schemes currently operating as 'voluntary return programs' from the UK meets these criteria for voluntariness. Voluntary return is frequently offered as a less painful alternative to continued destitution followed by (inevitable) compulsory return, and it is generally impossible for the returnee to have an informed choice about the country they are returning to.

(Webber, 2012)

Webber's observation highlights the sometimes duplicitous nature of mainstream asylum and refugee support offerings. Organisations like Refugee Action, which are financially beholden to the state, exist as both agents of complicity and instruments of resistance; in addition to providing voluntary returns assistance, Refugee Action campaigns to 'bring back dignity' to asylum seekers (Refugee Action website, 2014). Refugee Action's activism in challenging perceived injustices within the asylum system is perhaps undermined by its acceptance of grant money from the very institutions it seeks to contend with. In an ongoing research project, Anderson and McGhee question this role of non-governmental organisations in the provision of voluntary returns and explore the blurred distinction between 'facilitation' and 'encouragement' of repatriation (COMPASS website, 2014).

The contracts between the Home Office and regional consortia comprised of local authorities, housing associations and private landlords were criticised for providing substandard housing for asylum seekers in receipt of NASS support. Robinson *et al* (2003) referred to the dispersal programme as 'little more than a scramble to locate vacant and reasonably priced accommodation' (Robinson *et al*, 2003 quoted in Dwyer and Brown, 2008: 204), and in their study of asylum housing in Leeds, Dwyer and Brown (2008) found that much of the available accommodation was provided by private contractors including Angel Group and Clearsprings (Dwyer and Brown, 2008: p. 208). Fifty per cent of the respondents in their research, which included asylum seekers living in NASS accommodation, reported 'serious shortcomings' in the delivery of NASS housing and the research findings suggested that those in private accommodation perceived their experiences more negatively than those in local authority accommodation (*ibid.*, pp. 209-210). Beth Humphries (2004) describes Steve Cohen's vision of the NASS dispersal program as one that reflected a 'modern poor law, based on coercion, without choices or protection against eviction' (Cohen, 2003 in Humphries, 2004: p. 101). The role of statutory agencies and charities in the implementation of state policy remains complicated; charities that are dependent upon government funding for their continued operation may find their values compromised in the interest of retaining financial support. Arthur Carr, a former support worker for the North of England Refugee Service (NERS) and a current volunteer at its satellite drop-in service in Sunderland, explained that the organisation was in a troubling position given its dependency on central government funding. He explained that there remained pressure to 'toe the party line' and follow government agendas in relation to the management of refugees and asylum seekers; Carr believed this situation would intensify as the fear of cuts increased (Carr, Interview, 30 January 2013).

Beyond contracting asylum service and housing provision to agencies outside of the asylum support sector, state funding cuts to statutory and charitable services have introduced new challenges to asylum service organisations, even those that receive funding from sources outside the state. Two trends arising out of interviews with workers within these organisations included the perception that service quality and capacity has diminished due to funding cuts and a belief that the voluntary sector has become the primary (and often only) service provider for asylum seekers, particularly 'failed' asylum seekers. Grants have become more difficult to secure, as a greater number of organisations are applying for smaller amounts of money. Emma Crossley, Project Manager of the support charity Meeting Point in Leeds, explained that the demands on the voluntary sector cannot keep up with the funding available. Speaking of statutory agencies' dependence on the voluntary sector, she stated:

You will get people referred to us by the Job Centre, by the local authority, for huge needs and it's expected that we'll pick it up. And we just don't have the resources or capacity to do that. So, there's definitely an expectation. The expectation has increased, but what we actually have to work with is decreasing. The level of need is increasing, the expectation is increasing, but our capacity to be able to deliver is decreasing. I think people are very stretched. It's very stretched, and agencies are struggling to continue or having to combine resources and [form] partnerships, either formerly or not, just to try to keep doors open.

(Crossley, Interview, 22 July 2013)

Meeting Point volunteers serve a variety of purposes at the drop-in including collecting food donated by local stores, assisting with paperwork, signposting other support organisations, providing advocacy support, organising activities, and cooking meals for those accessing the drop-in. Much of the subsistence-level support, particularly for 'failed' asylum seekers, is not offered elsewhere. As the Asylum Support Partnership no longer provides face-to-face advice and information to asylum seekers and refugees, smaller charities, which are primarily involved in offering support and signposting, are likely to become the first point of direct contact for refugees and asylum seekers on Section 95 and Section 4 support. As Crossley suggests in the quote above, this outsourcing of advanced advice functions to small voluntary services has already begun. While volunteers from a variety of professional backgrounds provide expertise with which to assist asylum seekers in managing casework documentation and interpreting letters sent by the Home Office and housing providers, the capacity for providing a sustained level of quality service is uncertain, as funding for continued training is increasingly unavailable. Carr highlights his concerns for the future of the voluntary sector (notably prior to NERS losing the One Stop Services contract):

With the cuts that are being imposed now and the obvious reduction in support staff numbers, [NERS workers] cannot really afford to give the same amount of time that they could previously, because they have that and a lot of other things to deal with. Therefore, there has to be a deterioration in the amount of assistance that can be given to the appellant in these cases. [...] To a certain extent, especially now that resources are stretched, for people who are actually paid to do the work, there's no way they could do everything. [...] What Sunderland is dealing with is that [the drop-in is operating] without the benefit of paid employees. [Support work] is left to volunteers like myself and others. Even within the refugee service, volunteers are becoming more and



more necessary to provide a service. They've always been there, and they've always provided a brilliant service. The need for them has increased - I would say exponentially - because of the way things are. [...] In Sunderland, asylum seekers 'don't have the same level of support, because - there's myself who's trained to a certain extent, but my training is not ongoing. Therefore, there will be a stage where I have to say: 'Sorry, I don't know enough about this to assist you'. If we get involved in something that is termed 'casework', [...] we would have to refer that to Newcastle, for instance. Because that's the only place where the expertise is available.

(Carr, Interview, 30 January 2013)

After the introduction of the COMPASS housing contract, local authorities' responsibilities to asylum seekers are now limited to assisting those eligible under Section 21 of the 1948 National Assistance Act and Section 20 of the 1989 Children Act (Burgess, 2010: pp. 129-130). As few asylum seekers meet the stringent criteria for this support, dedicated asylum support teams within local authorities have diminished over the last decade. These departments are expected to all but disappear in the wake of the COMPASS contracts as housing stock and service users are moved on to the private sector. Rosanna Longley, Service Manager for the Red Cross Refugee Services across Yorkshire, explained that charities' reduced funding coupled with a move away from local authority housing provision has resulted in a significantly altered support landscape:

A lot of organisations have lost their funding and it's been really, really tough for a lot of charities, as well as in the statutory sector; it's not a good time [...]. The asylum team in the local authority in Leeds is gone now. It just doesn't exist anymore. That's definitely changed. I can't really comment on where it's been picked up, but it's something that does concern me. When the local authority was providing housing, they were quite proactive in their approach. They organised the multiagency meetings, for example. They really encouraged collaborative working, I'd say. And they had expertise in that area, working with refugees and asylum seekers. It was a shame when that was lost.

(Longley, Interview, 12 August 2013)

### 5.3 Comparing social welfare considerations before and after COMPASS

With the creation of dispersal regions following the introduction of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, local authorities partnered with housing associations and private housing providers to carry out the government's dispersal policy; these Regional Consortia were funded by the National Asylum Support Service (Zetter *et al*, 2005: p. 171). As asylum seekers were deposited in areas with little prior experience of receiving refugee communities, the arrival of dispersed asylum seekers challenged local authorities; these authorities were expected to promote integration and inclusion while attempting to mitigate the negative effects of discrimination and social exclusion. Local authorities were also faced with the task of coming up with adequate accommodation. A 1999 National Audit Office report estimated that the first year of NASS funded dispersal accommodation would require '37,120 units of accommodation' and it sought to source 40 per cent of its accommodation from consortia partnerships and 60 per cent from its contracts with private landlords and social housing providers (Audit Commission, 2000: p. 47). Balancing out the immediate need to source properties quickly and the statutory duty to ensure that housing was 'appropriate for the accommodation of persons supported under [the 1999 Act]' proved difficult (1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, s101(8)(c)). Results varied between areas and asylum seekers' experiences were hardly uniform. Aims at clustering migrant groups within communities with shared heritage were, as Dawson (2002) explains, 'undermined when dispersal [was] carried out under contract between NASS and private accommodation providers, and between the local authorities at points of origin and private accommodation providers at sites of dispersal' (Dawson, 2002: p. 11). A fragmented approach resulted in a 'dispersal programme [that] was, by and large, disorderly, authoritarian, involving minimal consultation with local communities in dispersal sites and seriously under-resourced (Fekete, 2000 in *ibid.*, p. 11).

For some, the dispersal policy was closely linked to the expansion of deterrence tactics that marked the UK government's aims to disincentivise refugees from making asylum claims in the country. Bloch and Schuster (2005) explain that dispersal, like detention and deportation, is an act of exclusion. It 'takes away asylum seekers' freedom to choose where they settle in Britain and so doing it removes them from kinship and other social networks as well as community organisations that are known to be crucial in the early stages of settlement' (Carey Wood *et al*, 1995; Bloch, 2002; Robinson *et al.*, 2003 in Bloch and Schuster, 2005: p. 493). Disparities in the quality of housing provision led, at times, to inadequate conditions. Dwyer and Brown (2008) highlight the observations of a manager at a charity in Leeds, who explained that the quality of local authority accommodation under the original dispersal contracts was generally of an acceptable standard, but the multitudinous levels of subcontracting with little oversight that occurred

amongst private providers resulted in 'conditions [that] were pretty much appalling' (Dwyer and Brown, 2008: p. 210). Dwyer and Brown cite NASS's 'inexperience in managing housing, and its willingness to devolve power to individual private contractors (who then subcontract to others)' as contributory factors that 'led to variable and, on occasions, sub-standard provisions' (ibid., p. 210).

While the Home Office remained nominally committed to housing asylum seekers in groups in order to mitigate experiences of isolation and social exclusion, Kissoon (2010) writes that, in practice, dispersal locations were determined primarily by housing availability. She describes the effects of dispersal on those made to live in far-flung locations:

Asylum seekers were made to occupy undesirable units in areas away from close social ties for the duration of their claim, which could take years. The uncertainties of being dispersed to a strange area away from one's networks made people feel powerless, afraid, and isolated, and these feelings were compounded by rising local tensions as the look of neighbourhoods changed.

(Kissoon, 2010: p. 19)

The movement of asylum seekers into deprived areas of Britain also gave rise to concerns of racism and discrimination. Spicer (2008) explains that racial discrimination was 'compounded by the public's negative attitudes to asylum-seekers and refugees, reproduced by hostile media coverage' (Spicer, 2008: p. 493). He describes interviewees' assessments of their experiences in discriminatory environments. In one instance, a respondent reported that her children were subjected to physical and verbal abuse while in public; another mother described her children's apprehension of going outside because of their fear of abuse (ibid., p. 496). Asylum seekers' exposure as outsiders, identified as conspicuous minorities in economically disadvantaged communities and initially marked by their receipt of vouchers rather than cash support,<sup>6</sup> resulted in 'social exclusion and stigmatisation' which, according to Sales 'damage[d] their chances of settling' (Sales, 2002: p. 474).

Those interviewed for this dissertation noted that dispersal had continuously been a source of concern regarding the wellbeing of asylum seekers and refugees, but they suggested that some of the most negative aspects of dispersal, such as isolation and stigmatisation, were exacerbated by the move toward the COMPASS contracts. Beyond assumptions that G4S and Serco were seeking cost-cutting strategies by moving asylum seekers into substandard housing on the outskirts of dispersal areas, respondents

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<sup>6</sup> The voucher scheme was terminated in 2002, but asylum seekers on Section 4 support still receive cashless support on an Azure card (Bloch and Schuster, 2005: p. 506; Reynolds, 2010).

suggested that a breakdown in interagency communication following the COMPASS transition led to a deterioration in the housing service. Arthur Carr of NERS explained that he had more faith in previous contracts with regional consortia and the primary subcontractor, Jomast, because regular meetings were held between the UK Border Agency, housing service providers, victim support representatives and children's services workers. These meetings, he suggested, helped improve transparency and ensured that concerns regarding issues related to discrimination and housing conditions were addressed more holistically; he suggested that these meetings were no longer occurring since the COMPASS transition, despite the retention of Jomast as a subcontractor (Carr, Interview, 30 January 2013).

Kath Sainsbury, Project Manager for Justice First, an advocacy and support charity located in Stockton, explained that the involvement of local authorities in the previous contracts meant that those in the refugee services sector received regular updates on policy changes and accommodation provision was more focused on individual service users rather than 'statistics' alone; she implied that the transition to COMPASS resulted in a more impersonal approach (Sainsbury, Interview, 06 June 2013). Pete Widlinski, the Information and Communications Manager for the North of England Refugee Service, explained that the first five-year contract following the launch of the dispersal programme provided enough funding for regular outreach and was managed through various multi-agency meetings. He explained that the second five-year contract resulted in less money and included fewer local authorities in the North East than the previous contract. Widlinski viewed the involvement of private providers during this period as superior to public offerings in some respects, as providers like the Kimberley Group allowed residents to remain in properties during transition periods or immediately following a negative decision. The local authorities, he stated, were much less flexible in this regard (Widlinski, Interview, 26 June 2013). A director for another refugee service in the North East of England expressed a similar view, stating that Newcastle and surrounding regions were unique in the fact that private providers were quicker to get on board with the dispersal programme than local authorities, but the respondent acknowledged that the initial implementation of the dispersal programme was marked by 'a lot of trouble' (Interview, 18 June 13).

### *5.3.1 The changing nature of inter-agency collaboration*

In its 2000 report on dispersal, the Audit Commission detailed the expectations of the regional consortia tasked with housing dispersed asylum seekers across the country. Central to the implementation of dispersal, the Audit Commission argued, was an attention to asylum seekers' needs beyond the 'provision of shelter and subsistence', which it viewed as 'necessary, but not sufficient' (Audit Commission, 2000: p. 20). The Audit

Commission recognised that asylum seekers' experiences would vary across regions and communities and sought to mitigate the possible negative effects of exclusion and 'hostility towards the new arrivals' through the promotion of inter-agency cooperation between local authorities, schools, charitable organisations, health services and housing providers; a portion of grant money distributed to regional consortia was intended to 'facilitate liaison and joint working between local agencies providing support' (ibid., pp. 20-21). By extension, inter-agency collaboration ensured that accommodation was suitable and the possibility for discrimination minimised through regular communication and cooperation. Government targets aimed at safeguarding the welfare of children (See Children Act, 2004: S. 10) and reinforcing public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010 could be addressed through information sharing amongst statutory and charitable organisations.

During the years prior to the COMPASS housing programme, local authorities often liaised with other local services including the police, health services and housing associations to ensure that asylum seekers' placement within designated accommodation was appropriate and adequate. In addition, some authorities monitored their adherence to the Equality Act by conducting Equality Impact Assessments prior to depositing asylum seekers in dispersal housing. The degree to which these considerations protected vulnerable people from discrimination or social harm is debatable, as housing conditions and asylum seekers' placement in certain communities have been criticised as unsuitable and exclusionary in their own right (see: Cohen, 2002: p. 534; Sales, 2002: p. 465). The practice of conducting collaborative meetings did not necessarily result in improved conditions; Dawson (2002) states that 'despite regular "inter-agency" meetings' during the initial stages of dispersal, 'poor channels of communication within the [Regional Asylum Consortia] and between different departments within the local authority [...] led to considerable uncertainty concerning responsibility for asylum-seeker affairs' (Dawson, 2002: p. 12). Still, respondents from the refugee and asylum service sector suggested that the frequency and representativeness of inter-agency meetings had declined following the COMPASS transition, leaving asylum seekers more exposed to discrimination and the effects of poor housing conditions.

Respondents in all three case study regions suggested that multi-agency meetings were still occurring to their knowledge, but that the nature and frequency of those meetings had altered since the transition to the COMPASS programme. In his observation of the situation in Sunderland, Carr suggested that since G4S took over the asylum housing contract in early 2012, there had been a steady decline in inter-agency communication with the police. In addition, Carr stated that the standard procedure of notifying Children's Services when moving families into new areas was no longer being regularly practiced (Carr, 30 January 2013). Sainsbury observed that some agencies in

Stockton were still involved in collaborative meetings that occurred once every six weeks, but she stated that the 'dynamic has changed':

When [inter-agency meetings] were chaired by the local authority, [...] it was more holistic, I think. There was a lot more updating of information; policy changes [...] were always shared and we were all kind of kept on top. When the local authority lost the contract, the focus is much more on housing. Within that, it's very statistical. We work with human beings; they work with 'X' number of people arriving each week going into 'X' number of houses.

(Sainsbury, Interview, 06 June 2013)

A project manager for a refugee support agency in the North East explained that in multi-agency discussions conducted prior to the COMPASS contract, police, health care representatives, and local authorities 'were all around the table' and that the process was 'quite good' in identifying 'patterns and trends'. The respondent suggested that the proactivity of previous years had diminished over time, but that 'links with police and health [representatives]' had been retained following the initiation of the COMPASS contract (Melanie, Interview, 18 June 2013).

Widlinski noted significant changes in the conduct of inter-agency meetings following the transition to G4S-managed asylum housing in the North East of England (Widlinski, Interview, 26 June 2013). Prior to COMPASS, he explained, multi-agency meetings were regular and well-attended. The inclusion of police in these meetings was relevant, he stated, because 'issues were being raised that they needed to know about.' The police were in a position to inform housing providers of areas where asylum seekers would, for instance, be more vulnerable to discrimination and could offer alternative recommendations. For Widlinski, meetings were 'much better' during the period when local authorities held the asylum housing contract. In the two-year period between the end of the contract with the local authority and the start of the COMPASS contracts, the housing subcontractor in the region, Jomast, continued the multi-agency meetings, though local authorities and the police attended less often. Widlinski noted that a city-wide group functioning more broadly, which includes G4S, Jomast and the police still exists, but explained that Jomast seeks to exclude voluntary organisations from these discussions. According to Widlinski, Jomast has rebuffed his requests for basic information, such as the number of residents being housed in Newcastle, stating that it would need permission from the Home Office before releasing such data. In Widlinski's words, the state of inter-agency cooperation since the transition to the COMPASS contract 'is certainly not as good as it was' (Widlinski, Interview, 26 June 2013).

Crossley asserted that multi-agency meetings were still occurring in the Leeds area and, to her knowledge, included G4S and Cascade, the subcontractor in the region, although acknowledged that she had not been to one of the meetings herself (Crossley, Interview, 22 July 2014). Longley explained that local authorities were regularly present at inter-agency meetings prior to COMPASS, and specifically cited Huddersfield as being 'very proactive in terms of ensuring that we had a multi-agency approach to helping refugees and asylum seekers' (Longley, Interview, 12 August 2013). While multi-agency meetings were still occurring in Leeds following the COMPASS transition, the dissolution of dedicated refugee and asylum teams had resulted in diminished participation on the part of local authority representatives during multi-agency meetings. When asked if G4S or subcontractors to the COMPASS programme attended the meetings, Longley replied: 'At the last multi-agency meeting in Leeds, there wasn't a G4S representative or housing providers and I have yet to see one at any meeting I have attended, but that's not to say they're not there, it's just the meetings I've been to' (Longley, Interview, 12 August 2013). In Glasgow, there was some evidence of participation on the part of Serco and its subcontractor, Orchard and Shipman, in meetings organised by the integration networks in the region (Harland, Interview, 10 June 2013), but few respondents acknowledged whether regular inter-agency meetings were taking place. In one instance, an interviewee suggested that meetings were still conducted following the transition to COMPASS, but she doubted the usefulness of them (Anonymous, Interview, 17 May 2013).

The implications of a breakdown in inter-agency collaboration in the delivery of asylum and refugee services include the possibility of asylum seekers' further marginality and increased vulnerability. Zetter and Pearl (1999) highlight the need for cooperation between agencies in ensuring the well-being of asylum seekers, stating that 'partnership and collaboration offer the best way through the legislative and procedural maze which now characterises the social housing sector for refugees and asylum seekers' (British Refugee Council, 1987 and Refugee Council, 1997 cited in Zetter and Pearl, 1999: pp. 250-251). In Diamond's (2010) review of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's 2008 report on community cohesion, he explains that collaboration between organisations is dependent upon the establishment of trust and that alliances between agencies may rely on promoting solutions based on only a small number of shared principles (Diamond, 2010: p. 13). Reduced collaboration between agencies responsible for ensuring the well-being of asylum seekers may diminish the perceived value of shared ideologies.

Aims of reducing discrimination and ensuring the protection of vulnerable populations are difficult to achieve if the precise nature and degree of vulnerability remains unknown due to a lack of communication. Interview respondents' views of the COMPASS programme suggest that cost-savings and a culture of deterrence may be contributing factors to the reduced engagement between housing contractors and refugee

and asylum welfare agencies. A former employee of a housing subcontractor on the COMPASS project explained that the programme was dominated by a desire to reduce costs; capitalistic 'attitudes and values' resulted in the programme operating more as 'a business rather than a service' (Katherine, Interview, 10 June 2013). Crossley stated that an ideology of 'deterrence' is embedded within the operating ethos of G4S; the move to privatised asylum housing was, in her view, an 'intentional move by the government to create a deterrence culture' (Crossley, Interview, 22 July 2013). Such an aim is undermined within a robust and communicative support environment; diminished inter-agency collaboration is likely to result in a reduction in shared knowledge across organisational boundaries leading to possible redundancy of services and diminished specialised support.

### *5.3.2 Assessing equality impact in a post-COMPASS environment*

The Equality Act 2010 consolidates previous UK anti-discrimination legislation and four EU Directives into a single policy. Hepple (2010) explains that 'the overriding aim of the Equality Act 2010 is to achieve harmonisation, simplification, and modernisation of equality law' (Hepple, 2010: p. 14). Section 4 itemises nine 'protected characteristics' including age, sex, disability, race and religion or belief; subsequent sections describe prohibited discriminatory conduct, the duties of employers and the responsibilities of schools in enforcing non-discriminatory policies. Particularly important to the discussion of asylum housing policy is Section 149, the 'public sector equality duty'. This section dictates that a 'public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to [...] eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation' and any other prohibited conduct, 'advance equality of opportunity' and 'foster good relations' between those with protected characteristics and those without (Equality Act 2010, Section 149(1) (a-c)). Critically, subsection 2 extends this duty to 'a person who is not a public authority but who exercises public functions' (ibid., Section 149(2)).

When asylum housing was administered through contracts with regional consortia, which included local authorities, it was clear that, as public authorities, city councils had a duty to ensure that 'due regard' was given prior to accommodating asylum seekers in certain residences or areas to avoid discrimination, harassment and all other forms of victimisation covered within the Act. Local authorities are expected to conduct equality impact assessments (EIAs) when making a decision in which an individual or group may face an equality concern. EIAs may take the form of a written document or checklist, but assessments can also extend to the general process of decision-making. EIAs are described on the Sheffield City Council website as 'a way of systematically assessing the effects that a policy, project or decision is likely to have on different people within the city';



they 'are intended to aid good decision making and ensure that the services we provide are fair and accessible to all. They are also a legal requirement under equality law' (Sheffield City Council website, 2014).

While the responsibilities of local authorities are explicit, the specific duties relating to non-public bodies are less readily apparent. For instance, in observing the deployment of the COMPASS contracts, it is not immediately clear whether contractors and subcontractors are legally required to administer EIAs or if that responsibility rests solely with the Home Office as the public authority overseeing the contracts. Subsection 2 of Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 suggests that contractors carrying out government work may indeed be expected to give due regard to equality issues. Schedule 2 of the COMPASS project contract (Home Office, 2012c) makes such considerations binding contractual obligations. Section 1.1 states that '[t]he Provider in delivering all the services defined within this Schedule 2 shall ensure that it complies with all relevant mandatory and statutory requirements [...] including but not limited to housing' and 'equal opportunities'. Section 1.2.1.1 further details the duties of the contract holder:

The Provider shall understand the background and needs of the Service User and understand that some Service Users will have particular characteristics and special needs that require the provision of particular accommodation or accommodation in a specific locality, and/or the provision of transport that is suitable for their needs.

(Home Office, COMPASS contract, Sch. 2, 2012)

There exists a clear reference to the language of the Equality Act 2010 in the use of the word 'characteristics', which alludes to Section 4's 'protected characteristics' highlighted earlier. In addition, Clause 33.1 prohibits contractors' unlawful discrimination as defined within the Equality Act, and Clause 33.3 states clearly:

The Provider shall comply with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 as if it were listed as a public authority under Schedule 19 of that Act.

(Home Office, COMPASS contract, Sch. 1, 2012)

In response to a Freedom of Information request I placed with the Home Office in November 2013, Mark Addison, a business manager for the COMPASS programme, indicates that the newly formed UK Visas and Immigration division is 'responsible for providing accommodation, transport and related services through its outsourced providers via the COMPASS contract' and 'ensuring housing decisions are made with regard to the public sector Equality Duty, detailed in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010' (Addison, FOI

29588, 2013). Addison reaffirms contract holders' duties to operate as if they are a public authority under Schedule 19 of the Equality Act. These statements do not suggest that contractors *are* the equivalent of public authorities in relation to the Equality Act, but only that they operate *as if* they are equal in order to remain compliant with the terms of the contract. The duty under the Equality Act remains with the public authority: the Home Office. This raises questions as to the extent to which the Home Office can be held liable for private firms' contractual noncompliance on the COMPASS project. In addition, there is no explicit expectation that contractors carry out written EIAs, a point that Addison again confirms:

The COMPASS contract does not require a specific paper-based assessment to be made in relation to every dispersal, but it expects these to work with agreements made with local authorities. Accommodation requests that cover the individual needs of an applicant are formally issued to providers by the Home Office on a secure system. Providers are made aware that asylum seekers have a range of individual needs and may be vulnerable. They must take account of all those matters in delivery of the services and observe all discrimination legislation whilst doing so.

(Addison, FOI 29588, 2013)

#### *5.4 Agency of the excluded? Asylum Seekers and Refugees as volunteers*

Volunteering can afford asylum seekers the opportunity to engage in some form of active work despite being disallowed from seeking paid employment. Darling explores the effects in his observations of a drop-in centre in Sheffield, explaining that 'a life lived in limbo and with no right to work, boredom naturally became a factor in the lives of many asylum seekers' (Darling, 2011: p. 413). Volunteering is sometimes presented as a preferred method of enhancing English language skills, boosting confidence and mitigating the effects of boredom due to asylum seekers' prohibition from paid employment. Tomlinson (2010) writes that 'refugees are encouraged to become volunteers or to undertake unpaid work placements instead. Voluntary work is advocated as a means for refugees to gain UK work experience, improve their use of the English language and gain skills and confidence' (Tomlinson, 2010: p. 279).

The role asylum seekers played in the direct operations of the charities and non-governmental associations varied in relation to location and the nature of the service. While participation was generally encouraged within the organisations approached for this thesis, some respondents acknowledged that there existed room for growth in this area. In Glasgow, participation of asylum seekers varied across networks and other service and

advocacy groups. Community InfoSource, a non-profit consultancy agency designed to assist migrant communities and organisations in developing service strategies, counted four asylum seekers amongst its initial six directors (Anonymous, Interview, 17 May 2013). The charity Positive Action in Housing, which provides advice and economic support to destitute minority groups within Glasgow, involves volunteers in the operation of its service and includes former refugees on its staff, but its executive director, Robina Qureshi, acknowledged that there was more that could be done in terms of sourcing asylum seekers' perspectives on service strategies. She stated that the organisation aimed to improve its consultations with its service users:

At the moment, a lot of the work that we've done in terms of campaigning - in terms of speaking out on certain issues - has come from our case work. [...] We're also wanting to make it so we can have user groups who will more regularly inform the perspective of the organisation in a more structured manner. [We aim to] track people's experiences along the life of a project, during the life of the project, and kind of use that to gauge how we deliver the services that we do.

(Qureshi, Interview, 21 March 2013)

Respondents from Glasgow's integration networks suggested that participation of service users increased as the services expanded into new areas of advice and support. Jassim Johe of the Kingsway Court Health and Wellbeing Centre described asylum seekers' expanded role in the operation of the service:

In the beginning, [service users] were not [involved]. As the years went on, a lot of asylum seekers and refugees became involved in the management committee and as board members. There are quite a few of them. In one year, in fact half of them were from the BME community - some of them were asylum seekers, some of them were refugees and some of them were from the BME community. We still have a few on the board of directors.

(Johe, Interview, 19 July 2013)

Diane McWilliam, the project coordinator for the Greater Pollok Integration Network in Glasgow, acknowledged that asylum seekers' direct involvement with the network had diminished following reductions in the numbers of asylum seekers dispersed to the area. McWilliam also explained the engagement of some current and former service users decreased as they moved on with their lives:

They're probably less involved than they used to be. In terms of the kind of volunteers, I think we're less dependent now than we used to be, and that's probably a reflection of the fact that our client group as a whole - that the proportion of asylum seekers and refugees - has dropped.

(McWilliam, Interview, 13 June 2013)

Asylum seekers' involvement in the operations of service organisations range from contributing toward the cooking of weekly meals to holding positions on charities' board of directors. Respondents from refugee and asylum service organisations highlighted the fact that current asylum seekers' participation on the board of directors was important for representative purposes and for legitimising the service offered. McWilliam initially responded to the question of service users' involvement in the operation of the network by stating: 'Well, we have an asylum seeker and a refugee on our board, so that's two out of five' (McWilliam, Interview, 13 June 2013). Margaret Sweeney, a volunteer with the Govan and Craigton Integration Network, viewed membership on the board of directors as an important signal of the network's inclusiveness: 'The chairperson of our organisation is one of the current asylum seekers, so there is a clear participation by asylum seekers in the operation of that service' (Sweeney, Interview, 18 May 2013). Kath Sainsbury of Justice First suggested that the involvement of past and present service users was essential to the successful operation of the organisation. She explained that a former asylum-seeker was a current board member and that this inclusion was indicative of the charity's aims to 'get that balance on the level of the board of directors and at the volunteer level. We could not operate without volunteers' (Sainsbury, Interview, 06 June 2013).

Not all organisations had an established target for service user inclusion in the administration of each service, but the participation of current and former asylum seekers and refugees was widely viewed as valuable. Within drop-ins, asylum seekers and refugees contributed to the cooking of meals, the distribution of food packs and the organisation of activities. Their work was at times so fundamental to the operation of each service, particularly within the drop-ins, that it seemed appropriate to view the charities and organisations as services *of* asylum seekers and refugees as much as services *for* them. However, direct input by service users was typically limited to basic service functions rather than more complicated matters, such as the delivery of English language teaching or the interpretation of documents related to individuals' casework. This is reflected in Isobel Harland's observation of service users' work within the Govan and Craigton Integration Network in Glasgow:

A lot of it is just setting up, welcoming people, helping with clearing up or serving or cooking - a lot of our volunteers cook as well. So, again, bringing in different kinds of cuisine and people like that, because they get to taste dishes from all over the world.

(Harland, Interview, 10 June 2013)

In my observation of drop-ins, asylum seekers took on similar roles helping in logging visitors' arrivals, distributing donated clothes and other goods, and preparing and serving food. Sometimes service users contributed to more advanced service functions, such as the provision of language interpreting and activity planning. McWilliam noted that the men's and women's support groups were operated almost entirely by the service users themselves, stating that 'the refugees and asylum seekers kind of set their own agendas' (McWilliam, Interview, 13 June 2013). Service users were involved in signposting other support services and assisting in the supervision of various activities. For instance, an asylum seeker was tasked with organising a fundraising event centred around teaching Scottish dancing and another served as a football coach for an informal team (Sweeney, Interview, 18 May 2013; Harland, Interview, 10 June 2013).

Workers within the charity and non-profit service sector generally viewed volunteering as an important element in service users' experiences within the asylum process; it was seen as aiding in the development of skills while mitigating the negative effects of forced unemployment. It was also suggested that volunteering provided a sense of purpose and facilitated integration and socialisation. Harland stated that the participation of service users in the operations of the service:

[It] is really important for us and it's kind of part of our objectives as to [integration]. It builds community as well. What's kind of happened is, for example, people have been coming to the drop-in for years and they may not stay in Govan and Craigton anymore. They might have their status and they've moved elsewhere, but they still see it as their community. Because they are a volunteer, they see it as their responsibility as well to encourage people to come along and to involve them. So, I think it works for everyone.

(Harland, Interview, 10 June 2013)

Crossley explained that former service users' continued volunteering at the drop-in was testament to the community solidarity fostered by the organisation's members and volunteers. She also revealed the importance of work to people whose lives had been placed on hold and self-worth devalued due to their prohibition from employment:

Last month, there was a guy who had only been coming a couple of weeks. He saw someone cooking and he said: "Can I do that next week?" I said: "Yes, of course." He didn't have anything else to do with his time, so he was trying to find something that he could [do]. [The drop-in] is very much about involving everybody - not "us" and "them". That's why we have quite a lot of refugees still coming, even though they don't need a food parcel, they don't need clothes, they don't necessarily need a hot meal, because they have that at home, but they want to come because it's a nice place for them to come. It's like a big family.

(Crossley, Interview, 22 July 2013)

Longley indicated that the involvement of asylum seekers and refugees in the functions of the advice and support service was an objective of the charity. She stated that current and former service users bring with them a unique set of experiences, which they can then apply to their work:

[T]hey understand the process and know what it's been like. They've been through it themselves, so they can really relate to the service users. They have the skills and expertise in that area. Also, we want to help refugees build their skills so they can, once they have their status, access jobs. It's good for them. Volunteering is a two-way process, basically.

(Longley, Interview, 12 August 2013)

While it was common for respondents to speak of the benefits of volunteering, there was less acknowledgement of the possible drawbacks of service users' participation in the operation of each organisation. This is perhaps due to the seemingly unproblematic nature of tasks like distributing food and taking attendance. As the responsibilities of participants were considered to be more involved, concerns for service users' perceptions of their work became more acute. A staff member working for a charity specialising in offering psychological support for refugees and asylum seekers explained that service users' involvement in the operation of the service was difficult, because most service users were accessing the charity for assistance with their own mental health needs. Despite acknowledging that one of the organisation's volunteers was also a service user, the staff member stated:

The kind of work we do - I guess it's difficult for current service users to get involved in volunteering, because it's sensitive and [there are] confidentiality

issues, and people that are currently accessing the service are experiencing so many traumas in their own lives.

(Allison, Interview, 13 August 2013)

The danger of re-traumatisation through volunteering was a central concern for the project director of a charity in the North East of England, who explained that the inclusion of service users as volunteers was complicated due to the possibility of exposing them to potentially destabilising experiences. The respondent explained that sourcing refugees and asylum seekers for awareness-building events was an important, but equally delicate endeavour:

We have a lot of volunteers. About twenty-seven or twenty-eight per cent of our volunteers are clients or ex-clients, which is really important. [...] We are developing the awareness-raising programme with - not necessarily getting refugee speakers - if we find some, that's great, but you have to be so careful of people being re-traumatised. It has to be very finely judged. But getting their input in the preparation of material and stuff like that.

(Melanie, Interview, 18 June 2013)

Sainsbury provided an example of a volunteer whose initial experience in her role at the charity was marked by unease:

We did have a volunteer who came to us primarily because she needed the therapeutic effect of feeling valued. [Volunteering] helped with her English and it got her out of the house and it gave her some structure. However, in her early days, if somebody came to the door who was also very distressed or had suffered, she couldn't deal with that at all. It was too much and too [reflective] of her own experience, but gradually, she built her confidence and her resilience and she became an amazing volunteer.

(Sainsbury, Interview, 06 June 2013)

While this concern for service users' wellbeing is considerate of the potential dangers of volunteering for those at risk of re-traumatisation, it does not address the barriers to inclusion, such as lack of English language proficiency or issues of self confidence. Harland acknowledged that some of the tasks available to asylum seekers and refugees within the organisation were limited to those 'whose level of English is quite strong', such as signposting services to other users (Harland, Interview, 10 June 2013). In the accounts above, volunteering is seen as a way of increasing confidence and

enhancing English language skills, but the lack of either may be a barrier for entry at the outset. In addition, the benefits of volunteering can at times overshadow the fact that asylum seekers are not being remunerated for their efforts, and remain prohibited from accessing paid work.<sup>7</sup> The statutory reliance on the charity and non-profit sector extends to the service users themselves whose free labour continues to bolster a support environment increasingly atrophied through budget cuts and contract variations. An asylum seeker dispersed in the North East expressed his frustration with the assumption that volunteering was inherently rewarding in its own right: 'It's not necessarily people's desire to do volunteering work - they are forced [to] by circumstances' (Benjamin, Interview, 21 August 2013a).

### *5.5 'Shadow State' or opportunities for resistance? Refugee agencies, activism and the risks of co-optation*

The support work provided through charities and non-profit organisations remains an integral part of the asylum process. These agencies bolster the state's asylum programme by filling in gaps in service provision. The distribution of clothing, food parcels and emergency accommodation addresses the immediate needs of asylum seekers and is often the primary source of support for those asylum seekers who have received negative decisions. Interviewees working within local refugee agencies viewed the support of the voluntary and charitable sector as indispensable. Carr explained that the services of the local NERS drop-in in Sunderland were necessary, but undervalued by the Home Office:

It's not a matter of the work that the UKBA refuses to do - they've always refused to do it. This is work which is necessary but not recognised.

(Carr, Interview, 30 January 2013)

Sainsbury explained that local authorities' diminished role in providing support for asylum seekers had resulted in an extended reliance on the voluntary sector (Sainsbury, Interview, 06 June 2013). This was corroborated Crossley, though she also felt it necessary to distinguish between agencies receiving government contracts and smaller charitable organisations funded independently. The latter, she argued, were tackling the most immediate needs of asylum seekers:

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<sup>7</sup> Under Paragraph 360 of the 2012 Immigration Rules, asylum seekers may apply for permission to seek paid work if they have waited beyond 12 months for an initial decision on their application (Home Office, 2012e).



[Statutory agencies] are completely reliant on the voluntary sector. Completely. The Refugee Council and Refugee Action [are] both funded by the government. Every single other agency or charity is in the refugee sector and, for the most part, doing everything. We're housing, we're feeding, we're clothing and we're supporting both emotionally, practically and financially in some cases. I think without that, I think there's a lot [of people] that might be dead, or there would be a lot more homelessness in Leeds. I think the reliance on the voluntary sector is certainly increasing in the last few years. There's almost an expectation by the local authority now that we're there to support people rather than something on the side. We're now the main source of support and that's [viewed as] completely acceptable.

(Crossley, Interview, 22 July 2013)

When asked whether or not statutory agencies in Glasgow were dependent upon the charitable and voluntary sector, Harland responded frankly: 'Completely. It's increasingly so, and they try and fob everything off on us as much as they can get away with' (Harland, Interview, 10 June 2013). These observations suggest a resignation to the current state of asylum support in the United Kingdom, but they also indicate a belief that statutory responsibilities are being increasingly shouldered by the voluntary sector. Whereas organisations like Refugee Action are implicated in the implementation of state immigration control practices due to the contracts they hold with the government, smaller organisations might be equally culpable as they prop up the statutory support framework. While at once these agencies are forces of resistance to the state by aiding asylum seekers with appeals documentation, building community bonds, and mitigating the effects of destitution by providing subsistence support, the government benefits from the labor of refugee agency workers and volunteers without the need to fund the services directly.

Gill *et al* (2013) highlight some of the strategies used by migrant and asylum support groups to challenge British immigration detention practices through direct action and the maintenance of a physical presence at deportation sites and court hearings (Gill *et al*, 2013: pp. 375-376). These efforts, they explain, 'do not explicitly challenge the political ideologies and systems of border controls that have led to the abjection of asylum seekers and migrants' (*ibid.*, p. 379). Rather than actively challenging state approaches toward asylum seeker management, the actions of migrant and asylum support groups threaten

[...] the possibility of being coopted by states. For example, providing welfare to destitute migrants arguably enables governments to diminish welfare

support. These kinds of “humanitarian” tactics arguably reduce “protest to a contest over ‘the possible’ which can only ever mean, at a fundamental level, a conservative acceptance of the existing framework for grasping problems and their solutions”

(Rigby and Schlembach, 2013 and Tyler, 2013 in Gill *et al*, 2013: p 379)

Jennifer Wolch (1990) uses the concept of the ‘shadow state’ to demonstrate that the restructuring of the welfare state throughout the 1980s was dependent upon an outsourcing of labour to the voluntary sector. The neoliberal policies of Reagan and Thatcher were legitimated through the rhetoric of a “mythical Golden Age of voluntary sector purity” uncontaminated by government funding’ (Salamon, 1987 quoted in Wolch, 1990: p. 200). Under the guise of expanded individual choice and the benefits of localised expertise, voluntarism fills the gaps left by a diminished welfare state and gives rise to a shadow state, which Wolch describes as a ‘para-state apparatus with collective service responsibilities previously shouldered by the public sector, administered outside traditional democratic politics, but yet controlled in both formal and informal ways by the state’ (Wolch, 1990: pp. 199, 201). In July 2010, David Cameron extolled the virtues of voluntarism, stating that a move toward a ‘Big Society’ less reliant on ‘local authorities or central government’ signalled a ‘liberation’ allowing for the ‘most dramatic redistribution of power from elites in Whitehall to the man and woman on the street’ (Cameron, 2010).

The ‘Big Society’ has been criticised on the grounds that it was a thinly veiled attempt to mask the reality of the coalition government’s austerity measures, with local governments suffering the brunt of the cuts. Lowndes and Pratchett (2012) explain that the ‘Big Society’ is founded on the principle that civil society and the state are mutual exclusive. They caution that the push for increased voluntarism ‘may be as much the corollary of savage public spending cuts and the need to externalise responsibility for performance failure as the outcome of a principled commitment to more autonomous local governance’ (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012: pp. 32, 38). The expansion of the charitable sector in the wake of the government’s dispersal policy and restrictions on asylum seekers’ right to work might suggest that refugee organisations are, in effect, reinforcing policies and practices they seek to challenge by supplementing state support offerings. Squire and Darling (2013) argue that it may not be necessary to challenge through ‘major’ political acts, but organisations can do so through minor efforts, such as reframing asylum seekers’ ‘rightful presence’ within the state. However, they acknowledge that movements like City of Sanctuary remain bounded by ‘statist rationalities’ (Squire and Darling, 2013: p. 71). A break from such bonds may involve a more active form of resistance.

I explored the notion of active resistance with workers within asylum support agencies to determine if their support offerings were accompanied by attempts to critique

current asylum practices or encourage new or expanded avenues of support. Generally, campaigning was not a priority for many of the agencies I engaged with. Common reasons given for a lack of involvement in demonstrations or other active resistance included the need to maintain an image of impartiality and to avoid upsetting funders whose grant money had been secured on the basis of service provision rather than activism.

While the name of the Stockton organisation, Justice First, implies a degree of campaigning alongside service provision, Sainsbury explained that the agency is not involved in activism in an overt sense. Her justification signalled a consideration for funding commitments and the need to remain politically neutral:

We are not overtly political. We need to retain impartiality, and also because we don't receive any government money; we have to apply to charitable trusts for our funding in addition to what we can raise through our own fundraising efforts. If you actually submit a funding application saying that your primary aims are A, B and C, [...] it's quite a dishonest position to suddenly go off on a tangent with campaigning activity, for example. That's not what we're funded for. However, we do believe that if we identify a pattern of need or a pattern of injustice amongst groups of asylum seekers, it would be unhelpful to our clients not to flag that up.

(Sainsbury, Interview, 06 June 2013)

A similar sentiment was expressed by Diane McWilliam at the Greater Pollok Integration Network, although she suggested that other integration networks in Glasgow were more active in their campaign efforts. She stated:

[Campaigning] is probably one of the areas we're weakest in, to be honest. I look at some of the others - Govan [and Craigton Integration Network] and others in the North are much more organised in terms of campaigning. Part of that is because when I started, the board was quite antsy about charitable status and what we were going to do and what we weren't going to do and I probably kind of picked that up a wee bit. So, some of those kind of online campaigns and postcard campaigns and stuff - we've done stuff in here, but we've not made a huge song and dance. We will have picked it up with women's group and that kind of thing - signing postcards and sending them off.

(McWilliam, Interview, 13 June 2013)

McWilliam's colleague, Yvonne Docherty, explained that she initially struggled with the fact that the organisation was not very involved with campaigning and other forms of activism. For Docherty, the neutral approach did not fit with her personal affinity towards direct advocacy. She described the ways in which she encouraged resistance by directing people interested in campaigning to services with a greater focus on activism:

I came here when I was a second year student. I was aware of the fact that I couldn't push the boundaries, but for the sake of university, I had to look for ways of challenging policies or supporting people to take a stand. My way of doing that was signposting. So, I signposted a few people to the Glasgow Welcomes Refugees Campaign and Poverty Alliance.

(Docherty, Interview, 13 June 2013)

While Docherty's personal view was to embrace activism, Sweeney explained that she had become disillusioned with campaigning, as her prior attempts to raise awareness for the needs of asylum seekers had been ignored. When I asked about the degree to which campaigning played a role in the operation of the Govan and Craigton Integration Network, she replied:

[Activism is not] not something I've been heavily involved in. I'm very practical rather than political or philosophical. There is a little element of [campaigning] happening through these organisations, but it's not been my main involvement. In fact, I've given up on that. I found that I was wasting effort - I was trying to get letters published frequently in newspapers like the *Herald*, which is the big Glasgow newspaper. I never succeeded, so I've given up.

(Sweeney, Interview, 18 May 2013)

Refugee and asylum support agencies remain an important conduit for asylum seekers to express their complaints to G4S, Serco and the Home Office, but their ability to actively resist state immigration policies is constrained by their commitments to political neutrality. The limits of refugee organisations' advocacy are clearly detailed in the responses above, though some activities demonstrate that resistance remains possible, albeit limited, and often within a framework of official discourse. For instance, while many of the agencies I engaged with were not involved in explicit campaigning, some had forwarded their observations and concerns to the Home Office and provided written evidence for parliamentary committee meetings. Ahlam Souidi at the Maryhill Integration Network explained that the network developed a document on housing and support in partnership with the Refugee Women's Strategy Group, which was backed by the Scottish

Refugee Council. The submission of the document prompted an invitation to Westminster, where she and other members 'gave evidence' describing how the current asylum support and housing model 'is degrading and how it is not meeting their needs' (Souidi, Interview, 07 May 2013). While Kath Sainsbury of Justice First stated that the charity sought 'to retain impartiality', she explained that one of the organisation's trustees, Catherine Ramos, developed a report in 2011 which challenged the government's position on returning asylum seekers to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Sainsbury explained:

The idea behind [the report] is to say to the government: 'Stop removing people to the Congo. Review your policy. It's not safe.' Because it's been launched into the public forum and we've also circulated it to MPs, the House of Lords, faith groups, and it's got quite a lot of growing support and also barristers have used it in asylum hearings, she's now been invited to attend the Home Affairs Select Committee, which is meeting next week [...]. Catherine Ramos has, herself, been asked to give evidence to the committee.

(Sainsbury, Interview, 06 May 2013)

Many charities and refugee agencies provided written evidence detailing asylum seekers' experiences to the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee on Asylum, which was printed alongside the committee's report in October 2013. Ramos' research on 'unsafe returns' was the third listed piece of written evidence; it was accompanied by statements from the Refugee Council, the British Red Cross, Refugee Action, Still Human Still Here and Serco. Amongst the additional written evidence were reports from Tiffy Allen, the national co-ordinator of City of Sanctuary, Dorothy Ismail and Arthur Carr from the Sunderland drop-in, Justice First, Medical Justice, the Scottish Refugee Council and Positive Action in Housing (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee on Asylum, 2013a: pp. 51-53). Recommendations ranged from specific appeals - the Refugee Council sought cash support for pregnant asylum seekers on Section 4 support (ibid., Ev 120) - to more general recommendations. The Red Cross stated that it sought a 'fair, effective and efficient asylum system that treats people with respect and dignity and upholds the UK's responsibilities to provide safety for refugees' (ibid., Ev 125). Representatives from the Sunderland drop-in and the North of England Refugee Service declared that the Azure card support system was detrimental to asylum seekers' experiences; they stated that '[t]he refusal to give cash support is unnecessary and causes hardships' (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee on Asylum. 2013a: Ev w44). Criticism for the cashless Azure card system is extensive within the asylum and refugee support sector; in 2010, the Asylum Support Partnership, which previously held the 'One Stop Services' contract with the Home Office, explained that the Azure card left people with inadequate means of

subsistence support and unable to purchase essential items while contributing to stigmatisation (Refugee Council, 2010: p. 2).

While public campaigns do not always feature heavily in the support agendas of refugee agencies and small drop-in services, the experiences and grievances of asylum seekers are reflected through agencies' involvement in enquiries and committee meetings. Alternative constructions of asylum seekers are made possible through the participation of these agencies in official discourses; this engagement 'allow[s] for creative human capacity and a multiplicity of subverting projects to resist dominating constitutions of power-relations' (Stierl, 2012: p. 429). An ethos of inclusiveness can therefore challenge the policies of deterrence and destitution the government is sometimes criticised of pursuing (Morris, 1998: p. 969; JCHR, 2007: p. 17). Stierl explains that while 'sovereign governmentality seems at times all-encompassing, there remains room for revolt' (Stierl, 2012: p. 432). The participation of refugee agencies in providing feedback to government enquiries may not be considered 'revolt', as responding to a call for evidence is hardly a revolutionary action, but it does signal the possibility for limited feedback and critique. Sometimes this results in re-evaluation of current practices. Following a review of the written evidence criticising cashless support for 'failed' asylum seekers, the Home Affairs Committee on Asylum, the committee reported:

We are not convinced that a separate support system for failed asylum seekers, whom the Government recognised as being unable to return to their country of origin, is necessary; Section 4 is not the solution for people who have been refused but cannot be returned and we call on the Government to find a better way forward.

(House of Commons Home Affairs Committee on Asylum, 2013b: p. 36)

In reflecting the views of asylum and refugee support workers within the context of this chapter, it has been possible to develop a broad overview of the conditions of the COMPASS housing programme while also illustrating region-specific challenges to addressing the needs of asylum seekers. Support organisations differ in both their capacity to deliver assistance to asylum seekers and their willingness to engage in direct political advocacy. However, aims of individual betterment and integration are largely apparent across all services. In the next chapter, asylum seekers respond directly to questions of their accommodation experiences within the COMPASS housing programme.

## **Chapter 6: The context of asylum housing: past trauma and the transition to COMPASS**

Asylum seekers' experiences in dispersed accommodation cannot be viewed as existing within a context-independent environment. The stresses and strains many endure as a result of living in unsuitable housing or far from adequate support networks are compounded by the emotional and physical trauma they may have experienced elsewhere in the United Kingdom, during their initial journey and within the country they originally departed from. Refugees come from all socio-economic backgrounds; there is no 'model' refugee, and as such there is perhaps little utility in treating every refugee the same. However, the dispersal programme has largely resulted in a blanket approach toward refugee housing. Fixed support payment amounts and no-choice accommodation has arguably led to insensitivities to asylum seekers' past experiences.

In a marketised support environment, there is often a limited degree to which individual circumstances are considered prior to housing placement. Past traumas and specific vulnerabilities, such as those experienced by the elderly or women and men with histories of sexual abuse, can - and have - at times been neglected, as housing availability and decreased costs remain primary objectives. John Grayson of the South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group (SYMAAG) has illustrated this in his many articles about the unsuitability of accommodation for asylum seekers with specific needs. Describing conditions he observed within a hostel opened in Stockton for the purpose of housing asylum seekers, Grayson writes that 'oppressively small' rooms and a lack of facilities for children to play illustrates the fact that 'no thought or respect seems to have been given in UKBA inspections to the reality of the lived traumatic experience of women and children housed there' (Grayson, 2012). In written evidence submitted to the Home Affairs Committee on Asylum, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Housing and Migration Network criticised the Home Office and its major contractors for their handling of the transition to COMPASS and for favouring cost-savings over attention to specific needs, stating: 'In practice, the imperative for contractors was to secure accommodation quickly at the lowest possible cost. [...] Knock-down prices inevitably produced a low-grade service. Little consideration was given to asylum-seekers' wider needs beyond accommodation' (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee on Asylum, 2013b: Ev w208).

Within Schedule 2 of the COMPASS contracts, service providers are expected to 'acknowledge and agree' that asylum seekers may have experienced adverse conditions prior to their being accommodated in dispersed housing. Section 1.2.1.2 states that 'service users' '[n]eed to be managed with sensitivity. They may have suffered trauma, be suspicious or frightened of authority figures and/or be afraid of other Service Users and

strangers' (COMPASS contract, North East, 2012: s1.2.1.2). The extent to which an acknowledgement and agreement of these imperatives have been demonstrated in *practice* is a subject I address in Section 6.4 of the current chapter. It is worth highlighting here that a contractual obligation exists, which suggests that the Home Office at the very least maintains a superficial consideration for asylum seekers' past experiences. There is, however, little acknowledgement that the suspicions or fears of 'authority figures' may largely relate to asylum seekers' experiences with Home Office officials or indeed, with private security officers - perhaps from the very firms now tasked with accommodating them - in detention facilities.

In this chapter, I explore asylum seekers' views of life before COMPASS and during the transition into the new asylum housing programme. Dispersal represents one element of the asylum experience, albeit a very significant one. For many asylum seekers, the dispersal experience exists within a continuum of events that shape and contextualise their perceptions of the asylum process as a whole and the degree to which they have been able to settle and integrate within receiving areas. These perspectives matter within the context of the thesis, because they illuminate the extent to which surveillance and social control strategies serve to dehumanise or, at the very least, depersonalise those awaiting asylum decisions or the outcome of an appeal. For instance, in section 6.2, asylum seekers' experiences within detention are perhaps best described in Agambenian terms. Foucault's 'state racism' helps articulate the logics of exclusion operating within the detention estate and, perhaps, informing deliberate policies and practices of deterrence. Asylum seekers' reports on the transition experience reveal the degree to which respondents had prior knowledge of the firms tasked with accommodating them under the terms of the COMPASS contract; they also reveal some of the outcomes of a marketised approach to asylum housing, which do not always coalesce with humanitarian considerations. Before delving directly into an analysis of interview data, the next section is intended to provide a detailed overview of the anonymised demographic features of the sample. I also address the coding strategies employed in my thematic analysis of the interview data.

As discussed within the methodology section of the introduction to this thesis, the interviews conducted with 26 asylum seekers were semi-structured in format. As the thesis has specific aims, such as an analysis of asylum seekers' reported experiences within COMPASS housing, it was important that questions about COMPASS experiences were explicitly asked. In total, interviews consisted of the following eight themes: arrival and post-arrival experiences; housing experiences prior to COMPASS; current housing experiences; understanding and knowledge of COMPASS and its contractors; community experiences; conditions of COMPASS housing; relations with housing providers; and views on levels of support within dispersal areas. Each theme was divided into a series of



questions and sub-questions specific to each topic area. For example, within the theme 'conditions of COMPASS housing', prompts included:

b) Please describe the condition of the property when you moved into it (i.e. state of repair, cleanliness, availability of working facilities, etc.).

c) Please describe the size of the property and the room you have available to you. In your view, do you believe that you have enough room for yourself and any family members?

As these questions were presented within conversational conditions and not delivered to respondents prior to the interview, it was sometimes necessary to adjust the wording of each question, particularly in situations in which a respondent's English language acquisition was relatively recent or still being developed. While it remained important that all major themes were explored, it was sometimes more appropriate to allow a respondent to provide a detailed response following an initial prompting; I would then follow up with clarification questions where needed.

Following the transcription of interview data, I used NVivo Version 10 for Windows, a software suite designed for the analysis of qualitative data, to code the interview documents and develop themes based on the questions initially developed and themes arising in a more emergent fashion throughout the course of each interview. In NVivo, these themes are called 'nodes'. I have adopted this terminology to refer to individual themes; broader topics comprising a number of nodes are referred to as 'clusters' (see: Marshall and Rossman, 2011: p. 213). By the end of the coding process, I identified fifteen clusters, which were subdivided into a multitude of nodes. For instance, within the cluster 'COMPASS Experiences' were seven nodes including: CHLDRN, CMPSXP+, CMPSXP-, CULT-RELIG-SENSITIVITY, MOVESEF, PRISON-LIKE, and TRANSXP. A full list of the clusters, nodes and their descriptions can be found in Appendix 3. By the end of the coding process, there were a total of 15 clusters and 79 nodes. Some nodes were closely related. For instance, CMPSXP+ was attributed to statements in which a respondent viewed their overall experience in COMPASS housing as generally favourable; CMPSXP- represented respondents' views that found their experiences within COMPASS accommodation to be unfavourable. An analysis of these nodes forms the basis for the subjects explored in the following chapters. Some nodes were selected due to the frequency with which they arose from the interview data. For instance, 19 out of 26 respondents (73 per cent) reported poor housing conditions (HSNGCON-) and 21 respondents (80 per cent) suggested that they had had negative experiences with staff of either G4S, Serco or one of their subcontractors (RELSTAF-). I discuss other themes

Figure 1.9: Demographic data of interview participants (asylum seekers)

Name (anonymised)	Sex	Declared Age Range	Dispersal Area	Declared Country of Origin	Marital Status	Children in UK	Time in UK (years)	Time since 1st Asylum Claim (years)	Housing Provider	Subcontractor
Khalil	Male	35-39	North East	Algeria	Single	No	1-3	1-3	G4S	Jomast
Mahmoud	Male	30-34	North East	Libya	Single	No	<1	7-9	G4S	Jomast
Hassan	Male	50-54	North East	Pakistan	Single	No	7-9	1-3	G4S	Jomast
Ibrahim	Male	30-34	North East	Sudan	Single	No	<1	<1	G4S	Jomast
Jahan	Male	25-29	North East	Iran	Single	No	1-3	1-3	G4S	Jomast
Benjamin	Male	35-39	North East	Kenya	Single	No	1-3	1-3	G4S	Jomast
Arif	Male	30-34	North East	Lebanon	Single	No	<1	<1	G4S	Jomast
Alexander	Male	35-39	North East	Liberia	Single	No	4-6	1-3	G4S	Jomast
Sahir	Male	25-29	North East	Syria	Single	No	<1	<1	G4S	Jomast
Cassandra	Female	25-29	Scotland	China	Married	Yes	7-9	1-3	Serco	Orchard & Shipman
Fimi	Female	25-29	Scotland	Congo	Single	Yes	4-6	Undisclosed	Serco	Orchard & Shipman
Beatrice	Female	30-34	Scotland	Ghana	Single	Yes	7-9	1-3	Serco	Orchard & Shipman
Sahla	Female	40-44	Scotland	Pakistan	Married	Yes	4-6	Undisclosed	Serco	Orchard & Shipman
Mubin	Female	25-29	Scotland	Pakistan	Single	Yes	7-9	4-6	Serco	Orchard & Shipman
Lucy	Female	45-49	Scotland	Sierra Leone	Single	No	4-6	<1	Serco	Orchard & Shipman
Falis	Female	30-34	Scotland	Somalia	Single	Yes	1-3	1-3	Serco	Orchard & Shipman
Jonathan	Male	50-54	Scotland	Uganda	Single	No	7-9	1-3	Serco	Orchard & Shipman
Daya	Female	45-49	Scotland	Zimbabwe	Single	No	4-6	1-3	Serco	Orchard & Shipman
Mary	Female	45-49	Scotland	Zimbabwe	Single	No	4-6	4-6	Serco	Orchard & Shipman
Jabril	Male	40-44	West Yorkshire	Gambia	Married	Yes	4-6	1-3	G4S	Jomast
Jacqueline	Female	20-24	West Yorkshire	Guinea	Single	No	4-6	4-6	G4S	Jomast
Mehdi	Male	35-39	West Yorkshire	Iran	Single	No	10-12	10-12	G4S	Jomast
Gabrielle	Female	30-34	West Yorkshire	Kenya	Single	No	7-9	7-9	G4S	Jomast
Olufemi	Female	35-39	West Yorkshire	Nigeria	Single	Yes	13-15	1-3	G4S	Jomast
Tariq	Male	45-49	West Yorkshire	Pakistan	Single	No	7-9	7-9	G4S	Jomast
Joseph	Male	20-24	West Yorkshire	Rwanda	Single	No	1-3	1-3	G4S	Jomast

arising from the interviews that were not as widely distributed within the interview data, but facilitate an understanding of the transition process and the degree to which asylum seekers felt supported and informed during their move into COMPASS housing. For example, at the end of the present chapter, I illustrate the constraints asylum seekers face in accessing local facilities in dispersal regions due to the incompleteness of welcome packs provided through COMPASS contractors. Thematic coding also provides the possibility for comparisons of asylum seekers' reported experiences across different

regions of study. Where appropriate, I address the varied experiences of respondents' living in each of the dispersal areas.

The analyses of interview data within this chapter are based upon four different themes or nodes. In Section 6.1, asylum seekers' past traumas (PRTRAUM) are addressed in an effort to highlight some of the unique psychological and sometimes physical stresses destitute asylum seekers carry with them into their dispersal experience. The following section chronicles some respondents' previous experiences within detention and develops some of the associations they make, if any, with private security firms in the capacities of both prison management and housing provision. Section 6.3 and its subsections develop an overview of asylum seekers' transition into the COMPASS housing programme, particularly their views on the transition experience (TRANSXP) and the extent with which they found informational material (WLCMPAK) provided through housing providers as useful, inappropriate or incomplete.

Of the 26 asylum seekers interviewed for this project, 10 were living in dispersed housing in Glasgow, 9 in the North East and 7 in West Yorkshire. Ninety per cent of respondents in Glasgow were female, whereas respondents in the North East were exclusively male; in West Yorkshire, females comprised just under half of the respondents (3), and males just over half (4). As explained in Chapter 5, there were possibly more female respondents than male respondents in Glasgow, because women were more likely to access the drop-ins provided through integration networks (Wren, 2004: p. 2). In Sunderland, most of the asylum seekers accessing the local drop-in were male, while in Middlesbrough, there was a greater distribution of males and females. Respondents' countries of origin varied significantly; aside from one person from China, the remainder originally departed from states in Africa and the Middle East. The vast majority of respondents were in the UK as single persons (88 per cent), though eight respondents had children living with them in the UK and a further four had left children in their country of origin. Respondents ranged between 22 years of age and 52 with an average age of 36. Further demographic information about the sample can be found in Figure 1.9, which is ordered by dispersal area. Some information has been generalised to ensure greater anonymity for respondents.

### *6.1 Pre-migration trauma*

The memory and relived traumas of past experiences shape and impact asylum seekers' interpretation of their contemporary condition within a 'host' country. In their study of the psychiatric symptoms displayed amongst Somali refugees in the United Kingdom, Bhui *et al* (2003) stress the need to acknowledge the personal histories asylum seekers carry with them throughout the asylum process. These can be as unique and

individualised as the asylum seekers themselves, or they can be traumas shared by whole communities and populations. At the outset of their research, Bhui *et al* state that '[c]are should be taken not to generalise because of great variation in cultural backgrounds, degree of persecution and conditions of exile. [...] Torture and civil wars before migration, and the experience of poverty, displacement, unemployment and racism in a host country may each contribute to the risk for developing psychiatric disorders' (Lavik *et al*, 1995; Burnett and Peel, 2001 and Health of Londoners Project, 1999 cited in Bhui *et al*, 2003: p. 35). The results of interviews conducted with 180 Somali refugees living in Greenwich suggested that 'pre-migration trauma is an independent risk factor for anxiety and depressive states' (*ibid.*, p. 41). In earlier research consisting of interviews with 40 asylum seekers in Sydney, Australia, Sinnerbrink *et al* (1997), 78 per cent of respondents 'reported exposure to a major trauma related to persecution or organised violence in their countries of origin', including the murder of a friend or family member, separation from family, and exposure to near-death conditions (Sinnerbrink, 1997: pp. 466-468). Faze, Wheeler and Danesh (2005) conducted a systematic review of 20 interview-based studies covering nearly 7000 refugees living in seven countries, including the United Kingdom; following a meta-analysis of aggregated details from each study, the authors determined that 'about one in ten adult refugees in western countries has post-traumatic stress disorder, about one in 20 has major depression, and about one in 25 has a generalised anxiety disorder, with the probability that these disorders overlap in many people (Brady *et al* (2000) cited in Faze, Wheeler and Danesh, 2005: p. 1312).

An engagement with prior research helps situate UK asylum seekers' experiences within broader international trends. It also highlights the realities of pre-migration trauma, which contribute to compounding discomfort and ontological insecurity for those living in adverse conditions within dispersed housing. I turn now to some of the past experiences described to me during interviews with asylum seekers in COMPASS housing. It is worth noting that not every interviewee was forthcoming with discussions of their pre-arrival experiences; it was a subject I left up to the discretion of respondents, as I wished to avoid conflating pre-migration experiences with current views on the COMPASS housing experience, though some interviewees made the links themselves. While most respondents described troublesome conditions in their country of origin as the reason they sought refuge in the United Kingdom, four respondents (three from Glasgow and one from the North East of England) provided specific details of their experiences prior to arriving in the United Kingdom. I coded these reflections under the node 'PRTRAUM', which indicated that the accounts were about experiences occurring prior to their arrival in the United Kingdom or entry into the COMPASS housing programme.

For some recent arrivals, stories of pre-migration trauma were very fresh and visually affected respondents' moods and demeanours. For Sahir, a Syrian asylum seeker

living in the North East of England, reflections on violence in his country of origin informed much of our discussion (Sahir, Interview, 06 June 2013). His description of experiences living within Jomast housing, a subcontractor to G4S in the region, were interspersed with autobiographical details about his departure from Syria and the conditions many of his friends and family faced who were still living there. Sahir explained that his family raised thousands of pounds to send him to the United Kingdom to avoid military duty that would likely have resulted in his having to kill someone, something he objected to as a principle of his faith and personal character. He was eager to show me photos of Aleppo before and after attacks on the city by President al-Assad's military. In one image, a marketplace Sahir had once frequented was a pile of rubble. In another, he stood with a family member in front of the Citadel of Aleppo and explained that the architecture in the background - intact in the photo - was now in ruins.

For Sahir, concern for family, friends and culture was very acute and incorporated into his daily routine; he explained that he maintained communication with those in Syria via Skype, a voice-over-IP (internet protocol) communication service, on a daily basis. His laptop, one of his few possessions, held all of his photos and was his primary means of maintaining contact with friends and family. Evidence of these experiences was invisible in the confines of his sparsely furnished room, which he described as 'very clean and spacious'. He seemed generally pleased with the items issued to him by Jomast, which included a duvet, towels, utensils and 'two times new of everything'. Sahir acknowledged that his experience might be unique in that the furnishings and overall state of his room were in good repair. However, he explained that he had no contact from Jomast or G4S since moving in.

To demonstrate the general lack of support he had received upon entering the property or, indeed, general advice as to where to access essential services, Sahir produced a document titled: 'G4S Dispersed Accommodation Briefing Pack'. The booklet serves as a general reference guide for new residents within G4S accommodation. Information is offered in English and another language, ostensibly that spoken by the resident. General advice and expectations of service users are detailed in full. Information specific to the communities asylum seekers are dispersed in, such as the location of the local post office or advice services, are left blank for a staff member to fill in. In Sahir's copy of the pack, each of these editable fields were left blank. There was no information pertaining to the location of 'Local Health Services', 'Walk-in Centres', 'Local Immigration Advice', 'Places of Worship', 'Advice and Support' or 'Local Supermarkets and Halal Shops'. The only populated field was that of the 'housing manager'; Sahir explained that this was the man who had provided him with the keys to the property. He stated that no information had been given about the rubbish collection dates, so he called the G4S helpline. The staff member did not know the answer, so Sahir asked a neighbour. Sahir

noted that the person who moved him in indicated that he would be visited once or twice a week; Sahir stated that he had not been visited once in the four months he had been in the property. He summed up his support experience by stating: 'If I need help, I do it myself' (ibid.). What is revealed in Sahir's situation is not necessarily the ways in which his pre-migration experiences have shaped his perceptions of dispersed housing. Instead, Sahir's living conditions illustrate his anonymity within the COMPASS housing system; considerations of his specific needs are simply overlooked or left unacknowledged.

While Sahir's pre-migration experiences preceded his time in COMPASS housing by a matter of months, the persistent memories of traumatic events continued to plague some respondents years after arriving in the United Kingdom. At an integration network in Glasgow, Lucy, originally from West Africa, explained that she traveled to the United Kingdom in 2007 under extreme duress following a prolonged sexual assault by a number of officers of her state's security service and a received a direct threat against her life (Lucy, Interview, 19 July 2013). Lucy stated that she did not know about asylum procedures before arriving in the UK and upon arrival lived with a family member.<sup>8</sup> After several months of maltreatment and exploitation by her relative, Lucy began living sporadically at friends' homes until she was eventually approached by UK Border Agency officers in the street some years later and taken into detention. When she was ultimately dispersed to Glasgow, Lucy explained that she was relieved to finally have a place of constant residence; when she first saw the house, she was 'happy, because I thought of how I was straining in London, going from one friend one week to another friend another week' (ibid.). Lucy declared that she had never experienced outward discrimination in Glasgow and found it nice to be able to talk with her roommate. She said, however, that she struggles at times when she's faced with being alone: 'I make sure I occupy myself in various ways. If I stay at home, my blood pressure was rising. [...] If people are experiencing bad things, they have to share, [otherwise] it will affect them' (ibid.). Lucy filled her week visiting the YWCA, attending the 'Women's Library' and volunteering at

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<sup>8</sup> Lucy's claim of not knowing UK asylum legislation and practice before her arrival is consistent with research conducted on the subject of asylum seekers' knowledge of the UK asylum system prior to their entry into the United Kingdom. For instance, in their survey of 87 asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Columbia, Kosovo and Somalia, Gilbert and Koser (2006) found that 'respondents knew virtually nothing about official policies towards asylum-seekers and few appear to have abused them' (Gilbert and Koser, 2006: p. 1214). In Robinson and Segrott's 2002 Home Office research report, 'Understanding the decision-making of asylum seekers', their interviews with 65 asylum seekers revealed that '[m]any of those in the sample were fleeing persecution, violence or threats of violence. They were therefore more concerned about escaping from their country of origin than they were about which country they would eventually seek refuge in' (Robinson and Segrott, 2002: p. vii). The decision to select one country over another, as Gilbert and Koser suggest, can be down to multiple considerations and may not always be the asylum seeker's choice at all. 43 per cent of the respondents in their survey reported that it was the smuggler's decision as to where they would be transported. Another 21 per cent were motivated by friend or family connections in the United Kingdom (Gilbert and Koser, 2006: p. 1215).

Barnardo's. Other asylum seekers, she suggested, were not as fortunate in their selection of activities to occupy their time: 'Some friends have problems where they stay' (ibid.).

The implications of moving into areas with few support options or a lack of free and accessible activities can limit an individual's ability to cope with past and current hardships. The placement of asylum seekers increasingly far from city centres to areas removed from established support networks, for instance to Easterhouse outside Glasgow or Middlesbrough and Stockton rather than Newcastle, increases pressures on small community-based drop-ins, which do not necessarily have the capacity to address some of the emotional support needs of those living within the area. In addition, as drop-ins may occur only once to a few times per week, the availability of places or activities that can serve to distract asylum seekers from memories of past traumas is critical to their wellbeing, particularly given their prohibition from taking up employment. In an Oxfam Research Report, Crawley *et al* (2011) investigate the different coping strategies destitute refused asylum seekers adopted to help manage the situations they found themselves in. Among the strategies described, access to 'human resources' remained critical. The research suggests that access to enrichment activities was a key determinate in establishing general wellbeing. Crawley *et al* state:

'Although many of the research participants talked about the importance of "luck" and "fate" in determining outcomes, it is clear that opportunities are structurally determined, and arise from being well-connected, educated, experienced, and having a grasp of the English language. "Luck" and "fate" are not opportunities that can be seized if individuals do not have these human resources or are experiencing poor mental health, trauma or depression.'

(Crawley *et al*, 2011: p. 51)

As is clear from Lucy's revelation of her own needs - the desire to distract her mind from the trauma of past events - support networks, volunteering activities and entertainment options remain important for those on Section 95 support as well as 'refused' asylum seekers on Section 4 or those receiving no support at all.

## *6.2 Experiences within the 'detention estate'*

The use of detention as a means of managing asylum populations remains one of the UK government's primary tools for controlling asylum seekers and is often associated with aims of deterrence and punishment for unwanted populations. Following hunger strikes at Harmondsworth detention centre in early 2014, a Home Office spokesperson

stated that '[d]etention remains an essential element in protecting the UK's borders and maintaining an effective immigration control' (quoted in Dutta, 2014). In their briefing on immigration detention in the United Kingdom, Silverman and Hajela (2015) explain that '[t]he UK immigration detention estate is one of the largest in Europe. From 2009 until the end of 2013, between 2,000 and 3,500 migrants have been in detention at any given time. [...] The single most common category of immigration detainees is people who have sought asylum in the UK at some point' (Silverman and Hajela, 2015: p. 2). From 2009 to 2013, roughly half of the immigrants in detention were asylum seekers and the average number of adult asylum seekers in detention per year during the same period was 13,671. While the detention of child immigrants has decreased over time from 1,119 in 2009 to 228 in 2013, child asylum seekers have accounted for 75 per cent of the average number of children in detention over that period (Home Office, 2014a). Liza Schuster (2003) indicates that immigration in the United Kingdom is unique when compared to other European states in that there is 'no legal limit to the time a person may be held' (Schuster, 2003: p. 249). In addition, she highlights the fact that the 'majority of those held in detention centres [...] are eventually released'; in Schuster's estimation, the practice of detention can only be based on an arbitrary expression of state power or 'the unacceptable [goal] of deterring potential asylum-seekers from entering EU states to seek refuge' (ibid, p. 249). Detention is also notable for its exclusionary function; it serves as a literal demarcation of the boundary between those who belong and those who do not. In the case of asylum seekers, while deportation might represent a literal removal or exclusion, detention is an exclusion from within.

It is illustrative to employ Agamben's description of 'bare life' to demonstrate the manner in which asylum seekers lives are controlled through an included exclusion by way of detention. For Agamben, 'one of the essential characteristics of modern biopolitics is its constant need to redefine the threshold in life that distinguishes and separates what is inside from what is outside' (Agamben, 1998: p. 131). Refugees in their contingent status as asylum seekers represent a threat to state order; 'by breaking the continuity between man and citizen, *nativity* and *nationality*, they put the original fiction of modern sovereignty into crisis' (ibid, p. 131). It is this need to exclude, or separate out political life from 'life that does not deserve to live', that an internal exclusion arises. Agamben uses the notion of the 'camp' as a way of describing the ways in which populations have been subjected to an existence outside of the 'normal juridical order' despite being held within state boundaries where the rule of law otherwise operates (ibid, p. 169-170). While I later problematise the use of the 'camp' as a model that accurately reflects asylum seekers' experiences in detention and within dispersed accommodation, it is helpful in initially highlighting the abject existence of those held within the detention estate. Jonathan Darling has employed the concept of the 'camp' to demonstrate the UK government's use



of exceptional powers to deprive populations of destitute, 'failed' asylum seekers of protection under the 'normal remit of rights and responsibilities, and crucially of a political voice' (Darling, 2009: p. 652). He suggests that detention is a method of dehumanising asylum seekers: 'for bare life the predominant relation is one either of the *inhospitable*, of confinement, refusal, and rejection, or of a conditioned temporary refuge centred almost exclusively around the need to not be "too welcoming"' (Malkki, 1996 and Pugliese, 2002 cited in Darling, 2009: p. 656). In this context, detention serves an important function, a function that both isolates asylum seekers through an exclusionary function but also displays to the outside the fact that an 'illegitimate' community has been punished for its presence, even though the majority of asylum seekers are 'eventually released', due to an inability to send them back to their country of origin, their initiation of an appeal against an immigration decision or because their asylum claim has been legitimated and they have been granted temporary or permanent leave to remain (Schuster, 2003: p. 249). Imogen Tyler (2010) describes the demonstrative function of asylum detention in the following way:

'[D]etention centres have a visible and instrumental existence; they physically separate citizens and non-citizens, keeping apart those who deserve to be protected by the British state from the abject - those who do not'.

(Tyler, 2010: p. 69).

The management of asylum seekers is very much embedded within a carceral logic; their identity is framed around subjects of illegality and criminality. The concern for security and the preservation of national identity informs the practices operating to exclude asylum seekers from the normal protections of the state. Aims at securitising the state against foreign intrusion form the bedrock of detention practices, a point Malloch and Stanley (2005) make in their discussion of the threat or 'risk' asylum seekers are seen to pose to the state. Detention, they write, is used as a form of deterrence, but it is also 'a fundamentally punitive method to assuage public fears concerning supposed "risk" and potential dangers to "security"' (Malloch and Stanley, 2005: p. 53). The fact that detention centres, or in the parlance of the British government, 'immigration removal centres', function and are managed in a manner similar to prisons suggests a conflation of the 'immigrant' with the 'criminal'. In his brief article, 'The criminalisation of diversity', Jon Burnett discusses the process of articulating migrants and asylum seekers as criminal. '[T]he increased criminalisation of those seeking asylum', he writes, 'has been fostered through a rising tide of "xeno-racism"' (Burnett, 2008: p. 27). The use of 'criminal law' has become a tactic of state in order to "'manage" global movements of people' during a time when an 'attack on multiculturalism' is becoming 'synonymous with the instigation of the

“war on terror” (ibid, p. 27). Using Foucault’s concept of ‘state racism’ to frame citizenship within a biopolitical context, Tyler writes that British citizenship has been ‘*designed to fail*’ specific groups and populations. Failure [...] is a design principle of British citizenship, in the most active and violent sense of the verb *to design: to mark out, to indicate, to designate*’ (original emphasis in Tyler, 2010: p. 62).

Detention, in its capacity to physically remove asylum seekers from the ‘legitimate’ community further entrenches their position as outsiders and, through a process of securitisation, their identification as threats to state security. In Agambenian terms, the management of asylum seekers is representative of a ‘politics of exception’, which Huysmans and Buonfino (2008) describe as a process that ‘focuses on the state of threat to the life of the nation, the legitimacy of exceptional policies justified by this threat and the ensuing trade-off between security and liberty that it produces’ (Huysmans and Buonfino, 2008: p. 767). The governance of asylum seekers insofar as it both excludes and controls through a set of rules applying specifically to them, such as indefinite detention, can therefore be likened to zones of exception where the rule of law is, if not suspended, certainly in stasis. For Agamben, this *state* of exception ‘no longer appears as the threshold that guarantees the articulation between an inside and an outside, or between anomie and the juridical context, by virtue of a law that is in force in its suspension; it is rather, a zone of absolute indeterminacy between anomie and the law, in which the sphere of creatures and the juridical order are caught up in a single catastrophe’ (Agamben, 2005: p. 57). To perceive asylum detention in such absolute terms is perhaps not entirely useful given avenues of resistance and forms of external support sometimes available to asylum seekers. The work of activist lawyers and organisations like Movement for Justice in advocating and acting on behalf of detainees undermine a purely Agambenian view of detention as one in which asylum seekers’ political lives are laid entirely bare. Asylum seekers, too, have taken measures to raise political voices in response to their conditions in detention, though the methods available to them are limited. For example, in January 2015, asylum seekers detained in Papua New Guinea at an Australian facility sewed their lips shut as a response to their treatment; the year before, detainees staged riots in a detention centre on Manus Island (Siegel, 2015). In the UK, asylum seekers have employed the use of hunger strikes to draw attention to their experiences in detention. As recently as March 2015, hunger strikers at Harmondsworth protested their lack of freedom and the prospect of indefinite detention (Gelblum, 2015). These types of demonstrations reveal a political voice amongst lives that have been ‘banned’; it is for this reason that Agamben’s use of *zoē* (bare life) and *bios* (political life) is not necessarily reflective of the conditions asylum seekers face, though there is perhaps little doubt about the abject conditions asylum seekers face in the United Kingdom’s detention estate.

A recent Channel 4 exposé on the experiences of asylum seekers in one of the UK's immigration removal centres, Yarl's Wood, offered some substantiation to asylum seekers' claims of abuse by the institution's staff. The television investigation highlighted levels of negligence and ill treatment on the part of Serco employees, who staff the facility as part of a contracting deal between Serco and the Home Office. Some of the staff members filmed during the production of the programme referred to detainees as 'animals' and 'bitches' and in one instance, the medical needs of a woman suffering from a miscarriage were reportedly neglected by Serco staff and the G4S employees working at the centre's healthcare facility (Channel 4, 2015). The treatment of asylum seekers in Yarl's Wood and other detention centres around the United Kingdom - many of which are managed by G4S and Serco - has featured in other reports as well. In a September 2013 article in the *Observer*, a former detainee at Yarl's Wood claimed that Serco guards had targeted female detainees for 'unwanted sexual advances and abuse' (Townsend, 2013). Conditions of Yarl's Wood were the subject of scrutiny in an investigation led by Women for Refugee Women, which cited that over 85 per cent of the 46 women interviewed for the research project 'had been raped or tortured before reaching Britain' (Morrison, 2014). Speaking of the desperation of women who had attempted suicide within Yarl's Wood, one of the respondents stated: 'I would honestly die rather than go back to Yarl's Wood' (ibid.). An investigation into the death of Muhammed Shukat in Colnbrook resulted in the determination that Serco staff's neglect of his health needs had contributed to his death (Taylor, 2012).

Concerns about the treatment of asylum seekers is not limited to conditions under Serco's management alone; G4S has been implicated in a number of human rights concerns, perhaps most notably in recent years, the death of Jimmy Mubenga, an Angolan asylum seeker, during his deportation flight on 12 October 2010. Witnesses on the flight reported that during Mubenga's restraint by G4S guards, he complained about not being able to breathe and subsequently lost consciousness and died. The Crown Prosecution Service initially determined that the three guards involved in the incident would not face charges (Lewis and Taylor, 2012). Subsequent charges brought against the G4S officers ultimately resulted in a jury's decision to clear them of manslaughter in Mubenga's death (Taylor and Booth, 2014). A judge in that trial disallowed a series of text messages to be used as evidence against the accused guards, though the messages reflected a frame of mind governing the G4S officers' views of the people they were responsible for overseeing. One text read: 'Fuck off and go home you free-loading, benefit grabbing, kid producing, violent, non-English speaking cock suckers and take those hairy faced, sandal wearing, bomb making, goat fucking, smelly rag head bastards with you' (cited in Booth, 2014). Given its extensive presence as a global security firm, G4S has faced further scrutiny for perceived human rights abuses elsewhere; in 2008, an

Australian Aborigine man died of exposure due to extreme temperatures in the back of a G4S van during his transport across Western Australia (Sambrook, 2011). With the growing exposure of each firm's maltreatment of asylum seekers and other detainees, reactions to the announcement that G4S and Serco were preferred bidders on the COMPASS housing contracts included speculation about their suitability to run an accommodation service given their inexperience in housing provision; other concerns centred around the firms' reputations of abuse. John Grayson, a researcher and campaigner for asylum seekers' welfare, wrote in April 2012:

Private security firms with records of abuse in managing detention centres and escorting asylum seekers are about to take over as asylum housing landlords and disperse asylum seeker tenants into poor quality private rented housing. This is just part of the relentless rise of the private security company and their networks of privatised taxpayer-funded prison and welfare contracts.

(Grayson, 2012)

In his article, Grayson draws attention to the 'campaign' of Yorkshire asylum organisations involved in protesting a 'moral outrage', fuelled in part by a sentiment expressed by a Zimbabwean asylum seeker who, upon learning of the potential deal between the Home Office and G4S, stated: 'I do not want a prison guard as my landlord' (Grayson, 2012).

One of the initial objectives of this thesis was to determine how reflective this statement was of widespread views or the degree to which asylum seekers living in COMPASS housing had prior knowledge of G4S, Serco and their respective reputations. The extent of concern that already existed about these firms' practices or, indeed, asylum seekers' first-hand experiences within detention facilities managed by G4S or Serco, may have influenced their initial views about the COMPASS transition. Two trends emerged in the responses to my questions about asylum seekers' knowledge of G4S and Serco prior to their being housed by each company: 1) prior knowledge of the security firms and their activities was limited to nine respondents and eight stated that they had not heard of the firms before, and 2) most respondents' individual interaction with housing officers was with representatives from companies subcontracted to provide accommodation under the COMPASS agreements. In total, three respondents confirmed having been detained at least one time within an immigration removal centre. The emotions asylum seekers described upon learning that G4S and Serco were going to be responsible for their housing ranged from disappointment due to the companies' public failures to fear stemming from knowledge of the firms' questionable human rights histories or their relationship with the Home Office. Olufemi, an asylum seeker living in West Yorkshire,

specifically cited the death of Jimmy Mubenga and G4S's transportation and detention contracts with the Home Office as reasons she feared being housed by the security firm.

I got a letter from the Home Office - UKBA - saying that G4S were taking over [asylum housing]. That really, really scared me to death, because, why would a prison company be my landlord? What does that say? That we're going to be watched every now and then or, probably, to make it easier for the UKBA to get me arrested? Since G4S is my landlord, it can bring in a prison van and come and get me out of the house. So, I felt like I'm in prison. None of us were actually happy, to be fair, because every asylum seeker knows that G4S is a prison guard company. [...] Especially with what happened to Jimmy Mubenga. That really worries me, because if I'm having G4S as my landlord, what's going to happen to me or other people if we didn't do what they wanted us to do? Probably they will just come and, you know, bundle us into a prison van. At the end of the day, they are our landlord. Why did the UKBA give G4S that contract to be our landlord? Are they trying to make it easier on them and make it harder for us? To get locked up? Because when a prison guard [company] is your landlord, it makes it very easy for them to just come and get you in your house.

(Olufemi, Interview, 22 August 2013a)

Olufemi's statement reveals the extent to which some asylum seekers and their advocates view G4S as an extension of the Home Office. It was precisely this perception that G4S's Stephen Small countered during a meeting with academics and the Home Office in March 2012, which I detailed in chapter 4. Olufemi's comments were very similar to those expressed by the Zimbabwean asylum seeker Grayson (2012) cited in his article describing some of the fundamental concerns surrounding a housing service operated by a security firm whose reputation in the United Kingdom was partly built upon its contracts with the Home Office to manage asylum seeker populations within detention centres, transport them to and from detention and accompany them during their deportation. What emerges from Olufemi's response is an apprehensiveness to the panoptic gaze of the state and the possibility of its full knowledge of asylum seekers' whereabouts and actions through the use of G4S and its subcontractors as surrogate border officials. In effect, it is a fear of what Foucault calls the 'mechanism of security': the 'maintenance of the relation of forces and development of the internal forces of each element, linking them together' (Foucault, 2007: p. 296). From this perspective, the agreement between G4S and the Home Office to house asylum seekers is interpreted as a unification of securitised practices in the management of asylum-seeking populations with the ultimate aim of

securing and protecting 'legitimate' populations from the 'threat' of asylum seekers. The following statement from another asylum seeker in West Yorkshire, Jabril, captures the degree to which this state strategy is interpreted as a deliberate objective:

I heard about G4S before, because obviously, G4S is a security firm - as I used to know. I'm not sure what happened [for G4S] to end up being a housing provider. Obviously, I understand how abusive G4S have been. When this project was won by G4S, before they started moving people, there were many campaigns about G4S [being] capable of hassling people with their dignity and all that. You know what I mean? You know, Home Office - for them - they feel that they are always right even if they are wrong. So, it is obviously out of ethics. It is an abuse of human rights. So, again, they contacted us to say that we are going to move. They contacted us a day before to say that the next day that we are going to move.

(Jabril, Interview, 22 August 2013b)

For Jabril, the Home Office's capacity for human rights abuses is an inevitability. The Home Office is viewed as maintaining a singular objective, which is to employ a security firm to physically manoeuvre object populations in an effort to unsettle them; there is little recourse available once the Home Office has made a decision in this regard. Jabril's resignation to the fact that he and fellow asylum seekers were to be moved with little notice reflects an expectation of a particular outcome: as an asylum seeker, a person is at the whim of the Home Office and its aims are achievable through the use of companies like G4S. It was G4S's methods in carrying out its agreement with the Home Office that respondents were particularly concerned about. Gabrielle, living in Leeds, explained her shock upon learning that G4S was going to be responsible for managing the COMPASS contract in the region:

A case worker told me - even though they were not supposed to tell me: 'Oh, you guys are going to be moved, because a contract has been [agreed] with G4S. I said, 'G4S? No way! Because I know about them, because I have spent time in a detention centre. I knew about G4S! I knew they were a security firm. When you are going to go to 'wherever', they are the one who take you, and things like that. I saw how they were beating people. The council wrote to me and say that you are going to move, but we don't know when, so you just prepare yourself that G4S are taking over.

(Gabrielle, 06 September 2013)

Respondents' concerns about the prospect of being housed by G4S or Serco extended beyond the companies' practices of monitoring asylum seekers within the detention estate; some were aware of the firms' missteps in other contexts. For instance G4S's failings during the 2012 London Olympic Games were viewed as evidence of the potential for incompetence in carrying out the COMPASS contracts. G4S was unable to fulfil the conditions of its contract with the government to provide security at the Olympics. Despite being awarded a £236m contract, G4S faced staffing difficulties and relied upon support from 3,500 military troops to fill personnel gaps. G4S's losses amounted to about £70m and market confidence in the firm dipped in response to the affair (Chan, 2013 and BBC News, 2013). The chairman of the Olympics, Lord Coe, stated that G4S 'failed to understand the size and complexity' of its agreement with the government (Travis and Gibson, 2012). In addition, asylum seekers expressed reservations regarding the fact that the companies had no established expertise in housing or housing support led to questions as to why G4S and Serco the Home Office selected them as preferred bidders. This lack of confidence in G4S is illustrated with Khalil's (Interview, 26 June 2013b) comment:

The first time when I heard about [G4S] was in when they failed in the Olympics - their contract. This is when I first heard about G4S. While I was still in the process, I saw that and thought: 'Welcome to [my] troubles!'. [...] After that, they told me about G4S. I didn't know that they did this housing; I knew them as private security. I knew that they ran prisons. I don't know what they [are doing] with housing. [...] I know that they do transport as well.

(Khalil, Interview, 26 June 2013b)

The uncertainty about G4S's abilities in managing a housing programme is compounded by the perception that its motivations are solely economic. Amongst asylum seekers in their care, G4S is not viewed as a particularly social-conscious organisation. This perception is amplified by the conditions asylum seekers find themselves living in, whether in relation to the quality of their housing, the relative poverty of the area they are dispersed or the distance they are from city centres. The fact that G4S and its subcontracts may be pursuing cost-savings strategies is not lost on those within their care. For instance, Jomast, G4S's subcontractor in the North East of England houses asylum seekers in properties in Middlesbrough and Stockton that are located in impoverished areas. In Leeds and West Yorkshire, the subcontractor in the region, Cascade, places asylum seekers in accommodation in areas that would otherwise be difficult to let due to the condition of the properties and their location in deprived areas. Jahan, who was living in Sunderland at the time of our interview, suggested that G4S and

Jomast were involved in the COMPASS programme for ‘the money - and [did not intend] to spend any of it on asylum seekers’ [welfare]’ (Interview, 06 February 2013). I visited Tariq at his property outside Leeds city centre; his assessment of G4S and Cascade was that each company was more concerned about profits than the welfare of those within its care. Throughout the course of the interview, he reflected on his prior knowledge of G4S and the economic logic he felt underpinned its decision to enter the COMPASS contract:

Things have been getting worse with the other companies and this [G4S] is the last [latest] company we are experiencing now. [...] G4S - we used to have a negative perception of G4S from media [reports], such as the mishandling of Olympics security and there are public opinions about their political affiliations with the politicians of our government, so most of the contracts they get, you could say, are on political grounds. Then there are other, you can say, opinions that say that [G4S] have offered the lowest price to the Home Office and that’s why they have been granted this contract. This is where I am concerned. If this contract is based on the lowest bid, and they have handed us over to another company [subcontractor]. So, two companies making profit out of one deal and not providing any property facility or basic, you can say, requirements of their housing. We are the people who suffer. Not Cascade, not G4S. G4S is definitely making some money - that’s why they have the contracts. And Cascade are making a lot of money as well. Most of their properties are in slum areas. This is the most deprived area - where we are housed. [It is] a very antisocial environment here. People are mostly, you know, alcoholics, drug users; [it’s] a high crime rate area, low-price rent and cheap properties.

(Tariq, Interview, 07 September 2013)

Tariq’s assessment of the COMPASS experience suggests a commingling of market-driven practices (i.e. the placement of asylum seekers in low-cost accommodation) alongside politically-motivated securitisation practices. The decision to use G4S as a primary housing provider on the COMPASS programme is, in this view, not limited to reasons of cost-savings alone, but of delivering a service that promises to reinforce the public-facing government agenda of appearing tough on immigrants, especially those so often portrayed in the popular media as ‘bogus’ and ‘undeserving’. Tariq’s perception of COMPASS and the operation of the service is complex; it reflects many of the primary criticisms of the COMPASS programme levelled against G4S and Serco. For instance, in written evidence provided as part of the Home Affairs Committee report on asylum, Ismail, Carr and Nikoloyorakis (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee on Asylum, 2013b)



addressed some of the effects the movement of asylum seekers into impoverished areas was having on residents' ability to access necessary resources:

The provision of housing is part of the support offered to asylum seekers. We find that people are being moved round the country to suit the housing providers' search for profit maximisation via cost reduction, with little or no regard for the extra pressures this brings to bear; pressures caused by, for example, having to find and start again with new solicitors (because it's too expensive to keep travelling to the old ones), new medical support and the process of having to start again trying to build whatever fragile social support networks they can find.

(Ismail, Carr and Nikolyorakis in House of Commons Home Affairs Committee on Asylum, 2013b: Ev w44)

The period of transition into the COMPASS contracts, a span of about nine months between Spring and Autumn 2012, resulted in an outcome quite different to the one intended as part of the initial agreement. Disruptions, which were supposed to have been minimised, were frequent; moves were more the mainstay than the exception. The Home Affairs Committee on Asylum addressed a number of the problems of transition in its 2013 report, stating that G4S failed to re-house asylum seekers in Yorkshire leaving hundreds in local authority housing far longer than it had agreed to (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee on Asylum, 2013a: para. 91). The 12 November 2012 deadline G4S was meant to have met in rehousing asylum seekers passed with 339 asylum seekers still accommodated by local authorities in Kirklees, Leeds and Barnsley (Twinch, 2012). The Home Affairs Committee noted that G4S faced no financial penalty for its inability to meet a contractual commitment (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee on Asylum, 2013a: para. 91). In the next section, I address asylum seekers' experiences throughout the transition process. Moving from perceptions of G4S, Serco and their subcontractors to the lived experiences of those involved in the transition from the older Target contracts to COMPASS helps develop an image of the transition period from individual perspectives rather than macroscopic overviews of the 'effects' of the transition.

### *6.3 Life in transition*

The inclusion of private security firms in the management and oversight of asylum seeking populations presents a possible challenge to the state's obligations under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which states that '[e]veryone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence' (ECHR,

Article 8(1)). If the contractors on the COMPASS project provided an informal surveillance function for the Home Office, as Olufemi (cited above) feared, then the intrusion of a private security firm into the lives of destitute asylum seekers *not* in detention might represent a breach of one's right to a private life. In order to remain eligible for housing support, destitute asylum seekers must not abandon the property designated to them. In practice, determining what institution - either the Home Office or one of its contractors - is *functionally* involved in ensuring asylum seekers are in their allocated accommodation may prove difficult to determine. Equally, forms of institutional surveillance are not limited to organisations serving an explicit social control function, as Foucault elucidates in his description of disciplinary power, which depends on both formal and informal institutions in conducting surveillance and performing a systematic pursuit of population management (see: Foucault, 1995). Concern about the role of local authorities, private landlords and housing associations in acting as an 'arm of the state' during previous dispersal housing contracts was a concern as well. Steve Cohen (2002) problematised local authorities' role in carrying out the state's dispersal strategy, and suggested that local governments involvement represented a 'Big Brother-type surveillance and control over accommodated asylum seekers' (Cohen, 2002: p. 534). Cohen explains that it is effectively the local authority's task to ensure asylum seekers are not 'absent for more than seven consecutive days and nights or no more than at total of 14 days and nights in any six-month period', as stipulated within the Asylum Support Regulations 2000 (*ibid.*, p. 534). For Cohen,

[T]he forced dispersal of asylum seekers and the linking of essential local authority administered welfare services to immigration status represent the integration of the local state into internal immigration controls and the transformation of local government into an arm of the Home Office.

(Cohen, 2002: p. 518)

Cohen concludes, stating that 'the central role of local authorities in arguing for and implementing the dispersal scheme has become immune from criticism. [...] [T]he active involvement by local authorities in an involuntary dispersal scheme is highly problematical' (Cohen, 2002: p. 541).

Much of the academic literature about asylum housing and the dispersal programme produced throughout the 2000s demonstrates how this 'problematical' relationship between local authorities and the Home Office resulted in negative outcomes for the asylum seekers living within NASS accommodation. In Dwyer and Brown's 2008 study of asylum seekers living in NASS accommodation in Leeds, five of six respondents viewed their accommodation unfavourably. A further 50 per cent of respondents that had

left NASS accommodation found accommodation to be poor or lacking (Dwyer and Brown, 2008: p. 209). The research outcomes suggested that experiences were worse with private firms than they were under local authorities. Citing these companies' lack of expertise in housing, Dwyer and Brown explain that 'complaints were more prevalent among those migrants that were housed by private companies rather than the local authority' (ibid, p. 210). Further problems with the dispersal system were noted by Lisa Hunt in her analysis of interviews carried out with 21 asylum seekers living in dispersed accommodation in West Yorkshire. For respondents in her study, dispersal meant separation from support and family networks and some accommodation was deemed 'inappropriate' based on asylum seekers' specific needs, particularly women with children (Hunt, 2008: p. 286). In Sim and Bowes' study of asylum seekers living in dispersed accommodation in Glasgow, a service provider in the region acknowledged that 'the dispersal pattern for refugees has been determined by the location of void housing stock. This stock is generally within communities of multiple deprivation' (quoted in Sim and Bowes, 2007: pp. 734-735). These studies provide a sample of the significant amount of work performed in the research of asylum housing experiences; they reveal the extent to which the quality of accommodation and effects of dispersal under pre-COMPASS conditions perhaps failed to best serve those within the care of the state, local authorities and other agencies contracted to house them.

To condemn COMPASS providers in normative terms without recognition of the problems asylum seekers faced under previous dispersal regimes would be inappropriate. However, the question of whether or not conditions have worsened or improved since the transition to COMPASS remains. As the transition occurred during the research process for the current study, an opportunity arose to speak to asylum seekers who had previous experience in housing not provided through G4S, Serco or one of their subcontractors. Their descriptions of life before and after COMPASS help reveal asylum seekers' perspectives on the transition experience and their assessments of life under current and former dispersal environments. In the following section I will discuss some of these perspectives through respondents' views of the transition process. These observances are separated into three categories: 1) comparisons between COMPASS experiences and those of previous providers; 2) reflections on the degree of notice asylum seekers received prior to being rehoused and the information they were provided; and 3) assessments of their treatment by housing staff. These accounts provide an insight into how housing conditions have changed since the introduction of the COMPASS programme and provide a foundation for a more detailed investigation into living conditions in chapter 7.

#### *6.4 The beginning of 'all of the chaos': experiences during the transition to COMPASS*

Of the 26 asylum seekers interviewed as part of this dissertation, 25 were current residents within dispersal accommodation provided through one of the subcontractors to G4S and Serco. Respondents living in Glasgow were housed by Orchard and Shipman, while respondents in West Yorkshire and the North East of England were housed by Cascade Homes and Jomast respectively. One respondent was a current resident in a Home Office-allocated property, but had vacated the property. Another respondent had received refugee status and no longer lived in COMPASS accommodation, but offered perspectives on the time he spent in a Cascade property. It is worth noting that at the time the interviews were conducted, between May and September 2013, Cascade was still a primary service provider in West Yorkshire. However, due to Cascade's failings under the terms of the COMPASS contract, G4S took over all management and support functions of Cascade's 370 properties across Yorkshire and Humber in February 2014 (Spurr, 2014). Respondents interviewed were either on Section 95 support following an initial asylum claim or were receiving Section 4 support as they had been initially refused asylum and were awaiting an appeal or were unable to return to their country of origin.

The period of time each respondent had been in the United Kingdom varied greatly, as had the amount of time that had passed since their first asylum claim, with one respondent having claimed as recently as two months prior to the interview date and another who first claimed asylum 12 years prior to the interview. Eight respondents made initial claims within 12 months of the interview and five made claims within seven months or fewer; as result, these participants could compare experiences in COMPASS housing with those in initial accommodation, but were not in a position to compare the conditions of their housing or the location of their placement with conditions under the former asylum housing regime. The remaining 18 respondents had been in dispersed housing for a year or more and were therefore able to comment on the transition period and make comparisons between COMPASS and previous housing experiences.

At the outset of the interviews, participants discussed the conditions of their accommodation before being transitioned or transferred into housing provided through subcontractors on the COMPASS contract. Respondents broadly favoured the accommodation experience provided through local authorities or other providers over that of COMPASS, though that did not translate into universal praise for local authority provision. Eighteen respondents responded to questions about experiences living in dispersed accommodation prior to the transition to the COMPASS contract. Their comments were coded to reflect a generally positive view (PRECMP+) or a generally negative opinion (PRECMP-). While scope was allowed for neutral views, all respondents expressed an opinion that could be categorised within either node. A greater number of

respondents (10) regarded their pre-COMPASS housing experience as negative, while eight respondents used positive descriptions of their previous accommodation experiences. However, in all instances in which an asylum seeker compared their COMPASS experience to local authority accommodation, COMPASS was considered inferior. If a respondent had been previously housed by a private agency, opinions were not as clearly dichotomous, as is evidenced in Jacqueline's response below. Preference for local authority housing over COMPASS extended from the quality of housing, location, and community experience to their interaction with housing officers and the quality of service they felt they received. Though there were a few exceptions to these trends, nearly all respondents in a position to compare COMPASS with previous contracts felt that there was an overall degradation of quality to the service; many felt mentally and physically strained during the transition period. While interview participants with children experienced specific stresses related to moving schools or having to provide emotional support to dependents, single asylum seekers also experienced feelings of abandonment and isolation. This often contrasted with their memories of conditions prior to COMPASS.

Benjamin, a single asylum seeker living in Sunderland at the time of our interview, stated that his accommodation experience with the local council was 'very good'. He noted that local authority (LA) representatives visited often and were quick to respond to repair requests and performed maintenance tasks shortly after being notified. Benjamin stated that it was a 'very nice, nice environment' and that 'there was nothing to complain about'; the experience was 'impressive' (Interview, 21 August 2013). According to Benjamin, his time in LA accommodation compared favourably to his time in initial accommodation at Angel Lodge in Wakefield, which he described as 'the worst situation one can imagine - it was like a prison'. He reflected on what it was like to live under constant surveillance, stating that his 'movement was always being monitored'. Benjamin stated, however, that it was the transition from LA accommodation to Jomast that marked the point at which 'all of the chaos' began. Benjamin suffers from a medical affliction and it was on the basis of this medical need that he was housed with the local authority. When he was moved into a Jomast property, he reported that his medical health was greatly affected. He was concerned about hygienic conditions in a property occupied by others, but stated that his complaints to Jomast went unanswered. He contacted the Home Office and was told that he could move, but that it would be 'anywhere', as it was on a no-choice basis. It was at that point that he was moved to Sunderland to a property that lacked a reliable boiler or a working oven and grill. He exclaimed: 'I suffered a lot! I was recovering from an operation, and I had to use a metal pot to wash - to clean myself!'

Jacqueline, a woman living in Leeds described her initial housing experience living with Angel Group in West Yorkshire as 'really horrible', as there were multiple occupants per room. When she complained to staff about her inability to wash her clothes due to the

lack of a washing machine at one of the properties she was housed in, she was told that she could 'use my hands' to wash my clothes. Under Angel Group, Jacqueline was moved around a 'number of times' until the firm lost its contract with the Home Office. She described her subsequent experience living in a property operated by Leeds City Council as 'quite good', emphasising the fact that she was housed in a self-contained flat. This was crucial, Jacqueline explained, because she needed to sleep with the lights on due to the nightmares she suffered from about past traumas. From her perspective, the local authority considered her mental needs whereas Angel Group did not. She reported that the council was also very good about initiating repairs as soon as they were needed. Following the transition to G4S and Cascade, Jacqueline's circumstances altered significantly. She claimed that Cascade staff refused to help her take her belongings to her room in a shared property, so they were left in the sitting room; they were then stolen by a housemate. A friend of Jacqueline's working for the Refugee Council exclaimed that the area she was being moved into was 'the worst - it is horrible'. Jacqueline then visited the property on her own prior to being housed there and stated that the 'stories about [G4S's accommodation practices] were true'. When she told Cascade staff of her concerns and that she could not share a property due to her specific medical needs, she was made to sign the housing agreement and told that the Home Office would be notified if she refused. The explicit threat, she explained, was that her support would be dropped if she refused to accept her accommodation:

I told them that I cannot move into that property, but they forced me - threatened me to sign. If not [they said], they would stop my voucher - my support.

(Interview, 06 September 2013)

Jacqueline's description of her treatment by Cascade staff at first appears to lend support to the view that G4S and its subcontractors operate as a limb of the state, that the asylum housing programme exists as a mechanism of control ensuring the enforcement of the Home Office's immigration policies. However, the lines between formal, informal and unsanctioned delegations of state authority are blurred; it would be difficult to determine if, for instance, the Cascade housing officer was granted the authority to make such a threat or was acting entirely discretionarily. Nevertheless, the effect is the same: Jacqueline felt coerced into signing a tenancy agreement for a property that was, in her view, unsuitable for her needs.

What can I do? In the end, I have no choice. If I maybe got my status, I will find a nice place to live, but because I don't have my status, I have no choice.

I have to stay wherever they dump me. Do you know what is 'dump'? They just take us [asylum seekers] and dump us wherever they feel like. It's like ... we died, but they didn't bury us yet. I am struggling inside.

[Jacqueline, Interview, 06 September 2013)

Jacqueline's words echo Agamben's formulation of 'bare life' in which he describes *zoē* as 'a living dead man' (Agamben, 1998: p. 131). From her perspective, the transition to COMPASS-managed accommodation resulted in her being 'dumped' like a form of human detritus. It is a condition Jacqueline acknowledges other asylum seekers share with her and one that operates exclusively against them; to be granted refugee status is to be reanimated, to once again be allowed to live.

As is clear from the Home Affairs Committee's determination that G4S failed in achieving its re-housing target, the transition to COMPASS from previous providers was not a smooth process. What is not as immediately evident in the discussions of 'contractual failures' is the lived effects of contractual mismanagement. This is something John Grayson attempts to address in his articles about individual asylum seekers' experiences during the transition process. For instance, Grayson describes an instance in which a woman was moved into a Cascade property infested with cockroaches, one of which ended up inside her baby's milk bottle (Grayson, 2012b). The observations of asylum support agencies also provide an insight into the experiences during transition. An employee of the Maryhill Integration Network in Glasgow explained that the transition to COMPASS housing under Serco and its subcontractor in the region, Orchard and Shipman, resulted in asylum seekers being moved into 'harsh' areas and at a great distance from schools and GPs. She explained that the moves were particularly difficult for families with children and that consideration for the mental health needs for asylum seekers was evidently neglected. The representative explained that in one instance a family was forced to move after establishing itself in the community over the course of six years (Interview, 17 May 2013).

### *6.5 'Welcome Packs' and Information about Dispersal Areas*

The transition into COMPASS housing often corresponded with asylum seekers moving location or, at the least, a turn-over in housing providers. Exceptions included some instances where the provider in the region, for instance Jomast in the North East of England, was already contracted to house asylum seekers and continued to do so as subcontractors to G4S. In Glasgow, most asylum seekers lived under the support of Ypeople before the switch to Serco and its subcontractor, Orchard and Shipman. One of the elements marking asylum seekers' transition to COMPASS was that they were to be

provided with welcome packs that provided information about the area and offered important contact information for housing providers or emergency services. In many instances, these packs were either incomplete or absent altogether, leading to asylum seekers reporting that they did not have a good understanding of the services available to them; they often had to seek this information out on their own or through asylum and refugee support agencies. Asylum seekers' comments about welcome packs were coded under the cluster 'Contract Compliance' under the node, WLCMPAK. Thirty-eight per cent of respondents mentioned welcome packs in their descriptions of the transition experience into COMPASS accommodation. Seven respondents described the welcome packs as unhelpful or incomplete (WLCMPAK-), while two believed that they were useful for the purposes of orientation (WLCMPAK+).

Some respondents noted a significant difference between the move-in experience under local authority management and the experience following the COMPASS transition; whereas under the old contracts a housing officer would drive residents around the area to point out basic services, such as their local GP or post office, this was largely not occurring under the COMPASS contract. For instance, Tariq (Interview, 07 September 2013) stated that a local authority social worker showed him around the community, but when he moved into a Cascade-managed property in West Yorkshire, he was only provided a welcome pack, which contained basic information. Hassan, living in the North East of England, explained that while he and his family were given a brief tour of the surrounding area, the G4S welcome pack he received from Jomast was provided in English. He observed that 'not everybody speaks English' and the welcome pack was not further explained to him (Interview, 26 June 2013). In Glasgow, the situation was somewhat different. Falis explained that the information pack she received from Ypeople, the previous provider, was very helpful and that she was given the opportunity to attend an induction session, which provided further information about the community (Falis, Interview, 12 June 2013b). Mubin, too, found the information pack to be 'useful'; he was able to use the pack to contact an Orchard and Shipman employee to take him to the local post office (Interview, 16 June 2013). In responding to her views on the information provided within the welcome pack she received from Orchard and Shipman, Lucy acknowledged that it contained some practical information, but she felt that it put too much emphasis on what was expected out of the resident and not enough on the provisions the resident might expect from the housing provider (Interview, 17 June 2013).

From the perspective of Katherine, a former Orchard and Shipman employee, the information pack was problematic. Katherine, who had worked with Orchard and Shipman from the beginning of the COMPASS programme, felt that the main reason the company was awarded the contract was because of the cost-savings it could promise to the Home Office. Katherine felt that Orchard and Shipman's experience with private sector housing



may have contributed to its acquisition of the contract, but that it had no previous experience housing asylum seekers. The welcome pack they provided was, in Katherine's eyes, 'very poor'. She stated that the packs often didn't include a translation in the resident's preferred language and she sometimes 'felt embarrassed' about giving them to residents. Katherine said that the packs lacked detail or information specific to the local area asylum seekers were dispersed in and found the 'local map' to be 'utterly useless' (Interview, 10 June 2013). At this point in the interview, she searched in a drawer full of documents and produced a copy of the welcome pack. The map she described was a grainy, black and white map of the whole of Glasgow; no streets were discernible and neither was there any evidence of key information like the location of shops, post offices or GP practices. This lack of attention to the prospective needs of asylum seekers moved into an unfamiliar area without a support network suggests that the wellbeing of residents is largely a secondary concern for the firms currently operating the COMPASS contract. It perhaps also reflects that cost-savings objectives have also led to a deterioration in the overall quality of housing and support provided to asylum seekers moved into dispersal areas, a subject I return to in the next chapter. When assessing the conditions of Orchard and Shipman housing and the corporate ethos driving the firm as a housing provider, Katherine said:

I was quite optimistic [...] at the start and that I could just play a role in the service, but it just never happened like that, to be honest. Because I've always come from the voluntary sector, I think there is quite a difference in people's attitudes and values. They [O&S] took people on who didn't have experience with asylum [seekers] and vulnerable people. [...] It was very much a business rather than a service. A lot of stuff around appearance, and I played into that a wee bit, because I wanted to have a job. [...] I think the people I moved in and the people I went to see - I hope that I gave them - I was courteous and understanding. I think I helped them rather than...[ends].

(Katherine, Interview, 10 June 2013)

In this chapter, the breadth of experiences asylum seekers face within the asylum system have been explored in an effort to represent the cross-cutting nature of emotional and physical duress experienced before and during asylum seekers' entry into the UK asylum system. Past traumas and the strain of transition experiences are not isolated events within asylum seekers' lives and therefore impact their abilities to cope with the sometimes extreme conditions of their dispersed housing. In the following chapter, the details of those accommodation conditions are explored, specifically within the context of COMPASS housing in Glasgow, the North East of England and West Yorkshire.

## Chapter 7: Experiences within the asylum housing 'estate'

The historical context of British immigration controls reveals an official objective of exclusion and disruption that aims to deter future migrants from entering the United Kingdom and incentivise the departure of those migrants already living within the country. In addition, the governmentality of securitisation has framed both the logic behind immigration control and the tactics employed in its implementation. These objectives have faced resistance, either in the form of dissenting voices within government or in judicial rulings and international criticism, but the policies ultimately adopted have largely restricted access to entry, benefits, housing, health care, freedom of movement and have introduced a host of other limitations and prohibitions. Asylum seekers are specific targets for these restrictions; their prohibition from seeking paid work, the limitations placed on the level of support they are able to receive, the prospect of detention and their expectation to accept accommodation on a no-choice basis demonstrate an entrenchment of tactics of insecurity. Explicit actions, such as the government's 'Go Home' campaign, have presented asylum seekers and other migrants with a clear message - a message painted on the side of a lorry billboard: 'Go home or face arrest'. (Sparrow, 2013). These strategies appear at odds with integration efforts and purported commitments to building social solidarity within communities. Instead, migrants are blamed for creating a 'kind of discomfort and disjointedness' if they have not mastered English or have not adopted the cultural norms of 'British' society (David Cameron quoted in Watt and Mulholland, 2011). The move toward the use of private security in the management of asylum seeker populations, whether in the areas of detention, transportation or housing can be seen as a method for controlling against cultural intrusion. By separating asylum seekers from communities and limiting their opportunities to integrate due to their placement outside of metropolitan or urban centres, they can be sequestered into deprived areas away from full view.

There are, perhaps, neoliberal logics at work beyond the marketisation of asylum services that include the protection of spaces of capital accumulation from the 'discomfort' of the realities of enforced destitution and abject poverty. It is a point Coleman (2004) makes in his analysis of social control tactics in urban centres, which place greater emphasis on isolating and excluding undesirable populations in order to 'forge a distinctive image ... to create an atmosphere of place and tradition that will act as a lure to both capital and people "of the right sort"' (Harvey, 1990 quoted in Coleman, 2004: p. 24). Within the context of maintaining an attractiveness for capital investment, exclusionary practices are double-edged; they serve to disincentivise building social solidarity and feelings of home while concealing neoliberalism's attendant inequalities. The shift to the use of Serco and G4S in the management of asylum dispersal achieved both of these

aims. Increasingly, asylum seekers were moved outside of city centres to deprived areas where community solidarity remained tenuous. In addition, they were further away from market centres and exposed to housing experiences that produced feelings of helplessness and psychological insecurity. The extent to which a full exposure to abject conditions was possible was limited by interjections from the asylum support community and official inquiries into the conduct of G4S, Serco and their subcontractors. However, in analysing asylum seekers' observations of their living conditions within COMPASS housing and their community experiences, it is possible to draw some conclusions about the impact of the government's current dispersal programme.

In this chapter, I refer to the work of Bigo (2002), Darling (2011) and Bagelman (2013) in developing an analysis of state-produced policies of 'discomfort'. Each writer interprets 'discomfort' in different ways; Bagelman believes that we must move beyond descriptions of state tactics as producing 'discomfort' and instead consider how advocacy programmes like 'City of Sanctuary' create a politics of 'ease', which enable the state to keep asylum seekers in a state of limbo. I then address respondents' interpretations of their housing experiences covering their observations on the conditions of their housing and their community experiences to determine the extent to which 'discomfort' is the end result if not an explicit aim of the current UK dispersal programme. This discussion is reinforced with reference to academic interpretations of the impact quality of housing has on mental and physical health. In Section 7.5, I address some of the other observed struggles asylum seekers reported as a result of being moved outside of urban centres, such as the impact such moves have had on children's schooling, individuals' ability to access food to meet dietary or cultural requirements and diminished availability of support networks.

### *7.1 Zones of discomfort*

In his 2002 article, *Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease*, Didier Bigo develops an image of state apparatuses that capitalise on conditions of risk and uncertainty to fuel a securitisation agenda and reinforce politicians' mandate for maintaining the cultural sanctity of the national population. The reinforcement of the concept of the state as a single bodily unit is important within this process. Bigo states that '[s]ecuritisation of the immigrant as a risk is based on our conception of the state as a body or a container for the polity.' The language of insecurity helps reproduce a manufactured need for security, because it is a 'structure of unease in a "risk society" framed by neoliberal discourses in which freedom is always associated with its limits with danger and (in)security' (Bigo, 2002: p. 65). In other words, the independence and freedom of citizens is contingent; freedom is not a guarantee and it

is the state's role to manipulate this fear to make itself appear indispensable to its domestic population. The construction of the citizen - or those who belong - is dependent upon the identification of the 'outsider' and the fabrication of the 'immigrant' on the basis of different norms and values that run counter to those of the 'national standard' (ibid., p. 67). Bigo asserts that the securitisation of immigrants is made possible through the use of 'everyday technologies, through the effects of power that are continuous rather than exceptional, through political struggles, and especially through institutional competition within the professional security field' (ibid, p. 73).

Elements of Beck's 'risk society', Bauman's 'liquid modernity' and Agamben's 'state of exception' can be discerned in Bigo's development of the securitised environment operating in the control of migrant populations. The uncertainty and 'incompleteness' of identity and the 'in-built transience [...] of power relationships' (Bauman, 2001: pp. 138, 140) marks the contemporary period and has culminated in cultural insecurity in the face of globalisation phenomena. The risks attendant in this 'liquid' environment are difficult to discern; their scale is beyond traditional (local) forms of measurement. This environment is marked by the confrontation between the local and the 'outside' or, in Beck's estimation: 'The experience of global risks is an occurrence of abrupt and fully conscious confrontation with the apparently excluded other. Global risks tear down national boundaries and jumble together the native with the foreign' (Beck, 2006: p. 331).

Bigo suggests that the conditions of 'risk' provide politicians with an exploitable tool; they are not burdened by the onus of having to produce evidence for the types of existential threats societies face. They are therefore able to make claims and institute policies without the same degree of scrutiny they may otherwise be subjected to; immigration is framed as a loosely defined threat 'considered as invisible and diffuse' (Bigo, 2002: p. 74, 78). The control of immigration then becomes a testing ground for new security strategies and methods of population control.

Bigo states: 'For the managers of unease, immigration is immediately seen as a useful target for the use and experimentation of their technologies, and only secondarily as an aggression toward a boundary they need to protect' (ibid., p. 77). In this model, the management of asylum seekers, is conducted within a hermetic arena where techniques of social control can be tested without significant oversight in a zone of exception. Indeed, the structure of responsibility within the COMPASS housing programme is a self-contained loop with subcontractors answering to primary contractors and those contractors to the Home Office. In effect, the Home Office has full discretionary power over the conditions of asylum seekers' housing. External scrutiny on the part of the Home Affairs Select Committee on Asylum or the National Audit Office's report on the failings of COMPASS prove an exception to this rule, but it is notable that, to date, G4S and Serco have not faced financial penalties for their contractual noncompliance.

Jonathan Darling (2011) expands on Bigo's 'politics of unease' by linking it to Walters' concept of 'domopolitics' - the framing of state governance through the model of the home - where security is used as a justification for maintaining the wellbeing of the domestic population (Walters, 2004 in Darling, 2011: p. 264). However, Darling's employment of the term 'unease' differs from Bigo's. While in Bigo's writing, 'unease' refers to the ontological insecurity affecting whole populations, in the context of Darling's article, 'unease' (or 'discomfort') is a political stratagem aimed at undermining asylum seekers' sense of belonging within the United Kingdom. The 'politics of discomfort' is thus the 'affective positioning of asylum seekers as those forever at the border' (ibid., p. 264). Discomfort is, in Darling's use of the term, a deliberate condition of asylum seekers' accommodation experience. He writes: '[A]ccommodation itself [is] a form of governance through which modes of sovereign power are reinserted into a regime of governmentality to forge an affective politics of discomfort' (ibid., p. 268). Finally, Darling describes 'discomfort' as a tactic of separating legitimate citizens from illegitimate interlopers, stating that '[t]he discomfort and marginality of those seeking sanctuary in the UK might thus be seen as a product of governmental configurations of domopolitics, as discomfort is practiced as a marker of those not yet admitted to the nation' (ibid., p. 269).

The use of discomfort as a tool implicates the Home Office and those responsible for carrying out its dispersal policies in actively promoting deliberate policies of unease rather than insecurity simply existing as an outcome of negligence or contractual mismanagement. The placement of asylum seekers in substandard housing or inhospitable neighbourhoods therefore serves a disembedding function; the 'welcoming' they may receive from local drop-ins or community organisations is challenged by their situation in unbearable conditions or hostile neighbourhoods.

Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I will address asylum seekers' estimations of their living conditions within COMPASS accommodation and some of their views of the areas they have been dispersed to in an effort to further reflect the outcomes of active policies of discomfort. I will also address some of the struggles many respondents reported resulted from their placement far from support networks. However, I first address a third and final perspective on the 'politics of unease', which approaches the subject from a different angle and challenges some of the support apparatuses purporting to offer asylum seekers 'sanctuary' from interminable periods of unpredictability while reinforcing state practices of 'discomfort'. In my estimation, Jennifer Bagelman's (2013) 'politics of ease' offers greater critical analyses of asylum seekers' experience within dispersed housing and problematises the role of support organisations that are effectively co-opted into state control agendas through their attempts at ameliorating the negative effects of insecure and inhospitable living.

Departing from Darling's reinterpretation of 'unease', Bagelman returns to Bigo's development of the 'politics of unease' before countering it with an altogether different perspective. She addresses the popularity of Bigo's concept in framing asylum seekers' immigration experiences, describing Bigo's as a 'politics of preemptive prediction, whereby [...] control is normalised, and indeed rendered necessary, through the projection of migrants as would-be criminals' (Bagelman, 2013: p. 50). From her interactions with asylum seekers living in Glasgow, Bagelman contends that what in fact marks asylum seekers' experiences is a 'power of *unpredictability*: where the future is suspended and deferred, continually unknown' (original emphasis, *ibid.* p. 50).

Bagelman describes a play organised and performed by asylum seekers at the Govan Integration Network drop-in called 'the Roundabout', which portrayed asylum seekers' experiences as an unending cycle between the drop-in centre and the Home Office punctuated by periods of 'uncertain waiting'. For those Bagelman interviewed, the dependence on the drop-in is frustrating (*ibid.* p. 51). From this point, Bagelman launches her analysis of the practice of 'sanctuary' and the consequences of promising hope and a certain promise of an improved future. Bagelman acknowledges assessments of efforts, such as the City of Sanctuary movement, that present sanctuary in a positive light, as they can provide 'connection and reprieve from an otherwise bureaucratic and marginalising experience of waiting' (*ibid.* p. 54). She explains, however, that a secondary effect of sanctuary and, the one more impactful on asylum seekers' experiences, is a process of '*easing*, or domesticating, of the problems tied to waiting'; she describes the opportunities offered through the City of Sanctuary as 'a myriad of internship positions' (original emphasis, *ibid.* pp. 55-56). Bagelman cites an asylum seeker who described his participation in support activities as 'just little hopes, little things that keep me busy, keep me from making some really different life' (Jamal, 2012 quoted in Bagelman, 2013: p. 56). Bagelman concludes, stating: 'While the City of Sanctuary may extend a particular kind of hope, in so doing it risks sustaining a state of deferral, troublingly rendering it more durable and paralysing' (*ibid.* p. 58). Bagelman's 'politics of ease' allows for greater critical reflection on the convoluted dynamics of social control and the extent to which discomfort is reinforced through methods of distraction.

Some responses from participants in the current research project contrasted with Bagelman's assessment of 'sanctuary', particularly in the value they found in organisations that provided a function beyond simply welcoming outsiders. For instance, Jacqueline (Interview, 06 June 2013) described Solace, a Leeds-based charity offering psychological support for people suffering from prior trauma, as 'very important to me'. She stated: 'If I didn't have [Solace] here, I would have already died. [...] Solace helped me to be alive again'. Joseph, an asylum seeker living in West Yorkshire, stated that local organisations including PAFRAS, RETAS and Meeting Point, were all 'really important,

because they are keeping me busy'. He also noted that he was learning and practicing valuable life skills by participating in each organisation (Interview, 13 August 2013). However, a minority of responses reflected precisely the type of dissatisfaction with waiting that Bagelman describes in her article. For instance, when I asked Benjamin about his views on the support networks available to him in the North East of England and the opportunities some of the organisations in the area offered in relation to volunteering or activities, he replied: 'It's not necessarily people's desire to do volunteering work - they are forced to [volunteer] because of circumstance' (Interview, 21 August 2013). Jabril resented the idea that he should consider volunteering when he was capable of performing paid work:

I do volunteering, but [...] the problem about the volunteering... I've been doing volunteering - and I left it - because I feel angry. Sometimes I will leave my house, want to go to do something, for example go and volunteer, but when I just leave my house and walk a little distance, I will feel angry and come back, because why should I volunteer? If I'm strong enough to work as a volunteer, why wouldn't I be strong enough to do a paid work? I don't need their benefits. It's silly for the Home Office to tell me that I have no right to take any paid employment, but I can do a voluntary job! I think if it is illegal for me to do any paid work, it must be illegal for me to do any kind of job, no matter if it is voluntary or whatever!

(Jabril, Interview 22 August 2013)

While throughout the remainder of this chapter, I will be focusing primarily on examples of the 'politics of unease' as it is experienced by asylum seekers living in COMPASS housing, Bagelman's perspective on the secondary consequences of Home Office practices also include the co-option of support structures ostensibly aimed at shielding asylum seekers from the worst effects of deprivation and isolation.

## *7.2 Quality of COMPASS accommodation*

For respondents living in COMPASS housing, a primary source of discomfort was the condition of the accommodation they were dispersed to. While many issues, such as community experience, distance from support networks and interaction with housing officers compounded the largely negative experiences asylum seekers reported, the one area in which there was significant consensus amongst respondents was their belief that they were placed in substandard housing. The physical and emotional impacts of asylum seekers' experiences in distressing living environments became a central feature of the

interviews; the inaction of subcontractors in carrying out necessary repairs or ensuring living conditions were sanitary proved major sources of frustration. Here, the 'politics of unease' was at its most visual, and for many, its most impactful. While asylum seekers cited friendships, involvement in support networks and participation in volunteering opportunities as positive experiences counteracting some of the worst elements of life within the asylum system, the issue of housing remained a source of consistent grief. Given their disallowance from seeking paid work and the fact that drop-ins and other activities only occurred a few times a week, respondents reported that they spent a significant amount of time in their allocated properties; this was particularly the case for single adult males. Complaints about housing quality crossed all geographic boundaries, though respondents in Glasgow focused more heavily on the location of housing (i.e. its distance from the city centre) than on problems associated with the physical condition of the properties or the level of repair of facilities within them. However, general disrepair and health and safety concerns were considerable sources of angst for some respondents.

A number of codes were used to develop an overview of people's experiences within COMPASS accommodation. To develop a broad representation of respondents' views, I coded explicit statements of dissatisfaction with the COMPASS experience with the node, CMPSXP-. Likewise, positive views were given the node, CMPSXP+. Eleven respondents clearly defined their COMPASS experiences as negative, while only one stated that they viewed their experience as positive. There were no neutral views on the housing experience, given that satisfaction or dissatisfaction with COMPASS housing was also measured in a variety of other ways. For instance, six respondents explained that they believed the management of COMPASS lacked an awareness to cultural or religious sensitivities - a mandate of the COMPASS contract. Twelve asylum seekers described feelings of depression and fear linked to their housing experiences and four likened the current dispersal regime as prison-like. Fifteen respondents described complaints made about their living conditions and 16 stated that necessary repairs were needed within their properties. There was general parity across the three main regions of study. The one declaration of explicit satisfaction with COMPASS accommodation came from a respondent in Leeds.

Daya, a resident in an Orchard and Shipman property in Glasgow explained that when she was initially moved into the property following the transition to COMPASS, it was very clean and she considered it to be habitable. However, one night while she was sleeping, the ceiling over her bed collapsed. She exclaimed: 'I had to jump on the bed and was screaming! I thought somebody had [broken] into the house.' Daya called Orchard and Shipman the same night to report the incident and was told that no one was available at that hour and that someone would come by the property in the morning. According to Daya, no one arrived the next morning. She made continuous efforts to get somebody to



come to the house - 'I phoned, and I phoned and I phoned, and nobody came.' It was only after she went to the Unity Centre, an agency providing support for asylum seekers in Glasgow, that she felt that her situation was being adequately considered. One of the Unity representatives came by the house and took pictures and contacted Orchard and Shipman. When an Orchard and Shipman staff member arrived, Daya was told that it was a job for the landlord. She continued living in the house for two weeks and was moved to temporary accommodation for a further four weeks before she was able to return to the property. When she returned, it was evident that the workers who fixed the ceiling did not clean up after themselves and Daya stated that she cleaned everything and that all of her belongings had been covered in dust. In the entire time she had been at the property, there were no curtains installed and she reported that her bed was broken and a source of discomfort (Interview, 28 May 2013).

Another Orchard and Shipman resident, Falis, explained that a damaged door and broken intercom were the source of concern for Falis and her family (Interview, 12 June 2013b). Shortly after moving into the property, at that time under the management of Ypeople, somebody set fire to her neighbours' recycle bin. Falis's front door and the intercom into the property were both damaged as a result of the fire. However, according to Falis, Ypeople refused to repair the damage, because they were in the process of handing over management responsibility to Orchard and Shipman; representatives described it as a 'housing problem' and one that Orchard and Shipman should take care of as the new providers. Falis stated that Orchard and Shipman believed it was still the responsibility of Ypeople, as the event happened before the transition to the new contract. Ultimately, Ypeople replaced her door, but Falis stated that the maintenance staff did not include the peephole, which she had in the previous fitting. Falis explained that this was distressing, because she relied on the peephole to determine who was coming to the door and is afraid to open it to anybody due to concerns for her children's safety. As the lower level intercom was also broken and never fixed, Falis lost the ability to screen entrants using the intercom making her more reliant upon a peephole that was not replaced along with the door. She stated that it was very common for other residents to simply let people into the building without knowing who is entering. While the lack of peepholes and intercoms may at first appear trivial, to those asylum seekers fleeing violence, such security measures can affect their sense of safety in the accommodation they have been made to live in. For Falis, the lack of these facilities was particularly distressing due to her wariness of other residents and the questionable activities she witnessed them engaging in.

Other accommodation experiences in Glasgow were generally positive and contrasted favourably to experiences in initial accommodation and detention. Mubin, a woman in her mid-twenties with a young child spent time in Yarl's Wood, which is

managed by Serco, and described the experience as 'like prison' (Interview, 19 July 2013a).

They took me and put me into a detention centre for two weeks. It was a horrible experience being in detention. [...] It's like prison, I would say. You get a certain time, and certain food, and you get to go out at a certain time and that. It's similar, but it's more horrible than prison. Women [don't] have any rights. However, they do come and check rooms. So, if I'm lying or sleeping or something - in some rooms, there may be two girls - they just come and open the door. Anybody. They have no respect for the women that are there.

(Mubin, Interview, 19 July 2013a)

Mubin's experience on Section 4 support after her time in detention was, in her view, chaotic. Following a fresh claim in 2012, she was unable to secure housing and spent two nights with her newborn baby sleeping on the street. Mubin attributed some of her struggle to the inexperience of Glasgow City Council (GCC) staff, stating that 'they are not trained enough' and 'don't take anything very seriously'. Mubin was told that she should seek accommodation in Lanarkshire, because she had once stayed with friends there. While she was still in the hospital following the birth of her child, a social worker called the Home Office on her behalf and Mubin explained that the Home Office was immediate in their response to secure her accommodation. She described the Home Office as having a 'kind of fair policy - they don't accept anything over the phone - if you have paperwork - "this is the proof" - they will give [accommodation] to you straight away.' Mubin's observation of the Home Office's 'fairness' is notable given her experiences within the asylum system, but it demonstrates her satisfaction in achieving a desirable result. When she was finally housed in Orchard and Shipman accommodation, Mubin found the housing provider to be 'kind of nice. [...] The housing provider [employee] took my stuff with me and took me in a taxi and dropped me off my house. And he gave me [...] £120 in vouchers straightaway. The house is fine. Everything is fine. They come and check [on me] every four weeks' (Interview, 19 July 2013a).

Jonathan, a male resident in the United Kingdom for nearly a decade who made an initial asylum claim within a couple years prior to our interview, described his Orchard and Shipman accommodation as liveable and did not have any major complaints about the quality of his housing, particularly as it related to his experience in a number of detention facilities. Jonathan described his experience living in Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Experience as 'claustrophobic' (Interview, 14 June 2013). 'I am asking myself, "if a fire broke out now, what would I do if there was a fire? How do we all get rescued if we are all locked within these iron doors?" You can't break them down.'

Jonathan's views of Harmondsworth mirrored those expressed in the HM Chief Inspector of Prisons' report on the conditions within the facility. That report found that '[s]tandards of repair and cleanliness were variable across the establishment. Some accommodation was overcrowded' (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2013: s15, p. 15). It also described the site as 'divided between austere prison-like accommodation and run-down accommodation. [...] Double rooms were used to house three men but contained insufficient furniture' (ibid., s17, p. 15). When Jonathan was released from Harmondsworth and arrived in Glasgow, he was moved into a Ypeople property before management switched over to Orchard and Shipman. In comparison to his experience in detention, Jonathan presented the conditions within his accommodation as adequate:

I wouldn't say that [the property] was in the best condition, but it was in a workable [state], where everything was working. The sinks were clean, the kitchen was okay. The toilet was flushing properly. The showers and everything in the bathroom was working. There was no problem with that.

(Jonathan, Interview, 14 June 2013)

These comparatively positive descriptions of conditions within Orchard and Shipman properties belie the full extent of asylum seekers' experiences within O&S accommodation. As I address in section 7.5, the relative comfort of some O&S facilities are coupled with great geographical distance from support and social networks, which respondents described as distressing. Jonathan and Mubin lived in relatively close proximity to Glasgow city centre and were able to access many of the same services and facilities they had available to them prior to the O&S takeover. Others that were moved further afield found the distance to be difficult to cope with. Also, the physical condition of a property was not always the basis for residents' interpretation of their housing experience. For instance, Sahla (Interview, 28 May 2013c) described her O&S property as 'very clean, very nice', particularly as it compared to the accommodation experience she had in an Angel Group property, which she stated was 'very dirty' and 'unhygienic'. However, Sahla also stated that the surrounding environment at her current O&S property was 'not very nice'. She described it as 'full of junkies', indicating that there was a significant amount of illicit drug use in the area. The strains of being housed at a distance were likely to affect more people living in Glasgow following the interviews due to ongoing demolitions and greater pressure for Orchard and Shipman to move people out of accommodation managed by Angel Group. A local asylum project organiser explained that the main reasons asylum seekers were being moved were because of the demolition of the Red Road flats and the move away from Angel housing (Interview, 17 May 2013).

Shortages in staffing at Orchard and Shipman, she explained, were resulting in increased wait times for home repairs and the replacement of furnishings.

In preparation for our interview (18 May 2013), Margaret Sweeney, a volunteer with the Govan and Craigton Integration Network and founder of Glasgow Night Shelter, asked a number of asylum seekers she worked with to comment on their Orchard and Housing experience so she could relay that information on to me. One out of seven of those respondents had 'no complaints'. Three respondents stated that problems with essential facilities including a heater, gas cooker and washing machine went unresolved for weeks. In one case, a respondent had waited six months for a repair despite repeated phone calls and in-person complaints to Orchard and Shipman. Two women cited overcrowding as particularly distressing, as both shared accommodation with another woman and her children; this led to constant arguments and feuds between children over toys and other items. These kinds of conditions have led to sustained discomfort for many living in Orchard and Shipman properties and with the difficulties in persuading staff to acknowledge such issues in a timely fashion has led to greater insecurity for residents. During a meeting with the recently established Scottish Asylum Seekers Residents Association (SASRA) held on 17 May 2013 at the Unite union's main offices in Glasgow, attendees discussed the need to develop an organised reporting scheme for asylum seekers to discuss their housing experiences for the purposes of seeking action on a number of common grievances. As recently as February 2015, a non-profit company, Community InfoSource, teamed with SASRA to develop the Asylum Seeker Housing Project (ASHP). This project, which is run by volunteer asylum seekers, has stated aims of assisting asylum seekers to report common housing problems and identifying 'gaps in service provision' (ASHP information leaflet, 2015). Given that the transition to COMPASS housing completed in late 2013, the current need for an organisation such as ASHP suggests that discomfort or discontent with the living conditions within Orchard and Shipman properties remains for destitute asylum seekers housed in Glasgow.

In responses to questions about their housing experience, asylum seekers living in West Yorkshire and the North East of England cited their living conditions to be a significant source of discomfort. Asylum seekers living in West Yorkshire were housed by Cascade Homes Group Limited, a Leeds-based accommodation provider. In the North East of England, respondents were housed by Jomast. Asylum service workers described these companies in largely negative terms. For instance, Emma Crossley, the project manager at Meeting Point in Leeds, described the conditions within CASCADE properties to be unsuitable and 'extremely poor' for a variety of reasons:

The contract was far too far too big for [Cascade]. The houses that they *did* have were obviously the cheapest, because they were the worst. It's very clear

that they don't have the manpower for this contract. [...] [Housing conditions] are extremely poor, extremely poor accommodation either in unsuitable areas that are, you know, very white and working class. Therefore, racism and abuse is a lot higher. Unsuitable for the people being housed there, so perhaps children being on a main road, or steep drops or steep steps without gates. It's sort of not thought through about who is going into each property. Sometimes, they clump people together, so you'll have an entire street filled with NASS accommodation and that can create problems as well, and can create resentment from the local population. But the conditions in [the properties] - they're damp, they're drafty, bedbugs - you know, dirty. When people are moving in - pests - [there are] a lot of pest control issues even when children are concerned.

(Crossley, Interview, 22 July 2013)

Similarly, asylum support workers in the North East of England described Jomast accommodation to be inappropriate and cited poor housing conditions as a chief complaint amongst asylum seekers accessing their services. Arthur Carr, an organiser of the Sunderland branch of the North of England Refugee Service (NERS) believed that this was in part due to the fact that Jomast was looking to cut costs in order to make a profit in the COMPASS contract. As Jomast was a provider throughout the transition period and had provided asylum housing before as part of the previous housing contract with the Home Office, many asylum seekers remained within the same properties, but according to Carr, the 'level of maintenance' had worsened:

It's the level of maintenance that raises my concern. Quite a lot of the properties are the same. Therefore, you can't say that the housing has deteriorated, but by the same token, the upkeep of the properties is deteriorating. Therefore, the property itself is deteriorating. In that respect, it's worse, obviously. There's also, as always, the cost element. Properties that [Jomast] was willing to pay for before, they are no longer willing to pay for. So, although I don't have any figures or any way of actually comparing [conditions before and after the COMPASS transition], I would suspect properties asylum seekers are getting now are not as good as the ones they were getting before.

(Carr, Interview, 30 January 2013)

Carr explained that this change was perhaps most apparent in Tees Valley, where Jomast is based and where the company 'owns the most properties'. He stated that G4S provided money for Jomast to buy properties in the Sunderland area, but in his view the amount

was insufficient for buying a 'decent home'. For Carr, the focus on cost-savings within the COMPASS contract had resulted in a diminished service for dispersed asylum seekers. The results of these changing conditions are reflected in responses by asylum seekers living within Jomast properties in the North East of England.

For Benjamin, a single male living in Sunderland, broken appliances and inadequate facilities contributed to added stress during his asylum experience (Interview, 21 August 2013a). Benjamin lived in a shared house in which he was the only male, a fact he suggested may have been inappropriate in itself. A broken washing machine took 'months' to be repaired and Benjamin resorted to washing his clothes in a sink, which he described as 'too small to do the washing'. He said that Jomast did not provide him with any bedding or cutlery; the cupboards in the kitchen were falling apart. There was no dining table upon which to eat meals and Benjamin stated that old paint was peeling off the walls in the bathroom, which 'fell on top of [residents]' while they bathed. Benjamin was visibly fatigued in recounting these conditions and stated: 'Once they put you in the house, that's it. You get old with the house. I never saw Jomast anymore' (Interview, 21 August 2013a).

Alexander, another Jomast resident, described his reaction upon arriving at his accommodation in Sunderland: 'They dumped me in a rubbish house. It wasn't a house - it was garbage' (Interview, 21 August 2013b). Alexander said that he used nearly the entire £90 he was allotted in an initial support payment on cleaning the property. The room was 'so stinky', he exclaimed, 'I couldn't breathe'. Alexander stated that he cleaned the house so thoroughly that a Jomast employee commented on how improved it was and promised to reimburse Alexander for the money he spent on cleaning materials. According to Alexander, he never received reimbursement.

Schedule 2 of the COMPASS contract requires service providers to 'provide safe, habitable, fit for purpose and correctly equipped accommodation' (Home Office, 2012c: s2.1.1, p. 14). In addition, providers are required to 'ensure that accommodation is maintained and serviced to the required standards' (ibid., s2.1.3, p. 14). These accounts of conditions within COMPASS housing in the North East of England raise questions about contractors' compliance with Home Office requirements. In its January 2014 report on the state of the COMPASS contracts, the National Audit Office stated that during the transition, 'Serco and G4S took on housing stock without inspecting it, and subsequently found that many of the properties they had taken on did not meet the contractual quality standards' (NAO, 2014: s2.16, p. 22). Evidence of each firm's negligence in this area is further demonstrated in the views of asylum seekers living in West Yorkshire, where Cascade Homes was contracted to procure and manage asylum accommodation. When Joseph arrived at his Cascade house, it was in a state of disrepair (Interview, 13 August 2013). Old carpet had been removed without being replaced and he described one room

in particular as 'very dirty - very bad'. The shower was broken when he moved in and in the nine months between Joseph's entry into the property and the date our interview, the shower had not been repaired. During that time, Cascade inspected the property two times and on both occasions assured Joseph that the shower would be repaired. Joseph's bed was broken upon arrival. He explained that this made it extremely difficult to sleep: 'Every time, I [woke] up in pain.' Joseph used the little money allocated to him in his Home Office support stipend to buy himself a new bed and mattress.

Beyond the discomfort associated with dilapidated homes and broken or nonexistent furnishings, building architecture and other features of the home led to distressing outcomes for some respondents. For instance, in describing her property, Olufemi cited barred windows and security gates as sources of concern for her welfare and reminded her of prison-like conditions. She stated:

The property - I was concerned, because the windows - you [could not] properly open [them]. There was a chain, so when you opened it, you could only open it a certain extent. So I asked [Cascade staff]: 'Why do you have this chain?' They didn't give me a good answer. They said: 'Oh, you know, it's just there.' It's because they didn't want to tell me that it is a rough area! That's why it's got a chain. And there were like gates, iron gates, to the entrance. So, that got me worried. So that's why I thought: 'G4S - they are a prison company.' So, it felt like I was in prison. And there were like [bars] on the windows as well. Those chains got me worried, like, if there was a fire in the house, for example [...]. Even the environmental [officer], when they came, they were like: 'This is not right. This is a health hazard. Why do you have chains on the window you can't even open?' It's all the windows. Not just one.

(Interview, 22 August 2013)

For Olufemi, the similarities between prison and the securitised features of her Cascade property signified the housing provider's lack of consideration for her past experiences and exposed her to abuse and a sensation of incarceration. Given the racist discrimination and violence she also described, which was instigated by other minority groups living in the same area, Olufemi felt insecure and vulnerable: 'That really got me worried, especially where I'm coming from and what has happened to me before. So I got really, really scared.' Beyond concerns for her safety, Olufemi described other conditions of the house, which she referred to as 'disgusting':

The house was damp as well, which is not good for human health - living with a baby in a really damp house. And there were cockroaches, slugs, rats. There

were heaps of rubbish at the back, where it's supposed to be like the garden area. [...] I complained and complained and complained. All they said to me was that they were going to get the pest control guy to come and fumigate the house. [...] The pest control guy came and he just put, like, boxes out. He said: 'Those boxes will trap the cockroaches.' I said: 'I'm talking about thousands of cockroaches in this house!' He said: 'Oh, if you have any problems, speak to Cascade.'

(ibid.)

Olufemi stated that acknowledgement of her living conditions and action in response to her complaints were contingent upon the involvement of a third party outside of COMPASS partners; in her case it was a health officer from the local authority:

When the City Council got involved, and the environmental health [officer] that came there and saw it with their own eyes, they said: 'It's not fit for human beings to live in this sort of property.' It was a 'Category 1 Hazard', which is not fit for human beings. [...] My baby had just started crawling and wanted to be on the floor, but I was too scared to leave him on the floor because of the cockroaches and slugs. [...] When I complained, the staff from G4S came and said: 'Even if your baby eats slugs, it's not going to harm him.' He thought he could get away with that because I am an asylum seeker. If I was English, he wouldn't say that to me.

(ibid.)

Others living in COMPASS housing cited similar health concerns upon moving into their dispersed accommodation. Khalil, an asylum seeker living in Middlesbrough described the unhygienic conditions of his accommodation when he moved in, stating that the refrigerator contained, mouldy, 'nasty' food. He also found a 'little mouse', which he tried to trap but was unsuccessful (Interview, 26 June 2013b). Khalil explained that he did not have a frying pan, just a single sauce pan for the three residents living in the house. He noted that having only a single pan was difficult, due to the residents having different religious requirements:

We all got different people from different religions. They don't eat the meat that I eat, because my meat is not halal and I eat pork. Them, they won't eat pork. So, they prefer to have their own utensils.

(Khalil, Interview, 26 June 2013b)



On his first night in the house, Khalil explained that he was 'scared' as a freight train travelled past his window, which opened about thirty metres from the railway tracks: 'The merchandise train run [after 10PM]. All the house was shaking. I thought it was the end of the world! [laughs]' (ibid.). Jacqueline explained that her home in Leeds was infested with mice and said that the day before our interview, she and her housemate had 'killed four' mice that they found inside the house (Interview, 06 September 2013b). The lack of appropriate cleaning materials, such as vacuum cleaners, which are not provided under the conditions of the COMPASS contract, was a source of distress and discomfort for some. Tariq (Interview, 07 July 2013) explained that as a result of not being able to properly clean his property, he suffered from dust allergies that led to further 'difficulties'. Of Cascade's lack of acknowledgement of his health concerns, Tariq said that asylum seekers are 'seen as less than human, [...] they are just numbers'. When Fimi complained to her housing provider about the lack of a Hoover, she states that she was told: 'Buy one yourself' (Interview, 12 June 2013a). These sorts of accounts suggest an antagonistic relationship between housing providers and residents within the COMPASS estate - a relationship that, for some, resulted in a greater sense of anxiety and diminished self-worth.

### *7.3 The biopolitics of staff/resident relations*

Asylum seekers' exposure to unhygienic environments, uncomfortable conditions and frequent placement in unwelcoming areas can be viewed as a perpetuation of a 'politics of discomfort' either through negligence or through a deliberate attempt to incentivise their departure. Claims that a 'politics of discomfort' is a deliberate strategy by the state or its business partners may be difficult to validate, particularly as market-driven incentives toward cost-savings may equally impact asylum seekers' living conditions. However, evidence of hostile treatment by housing providers' agents may reflect a 'politics of discomfort' in *practice* if not necessarily through clear institutional *intent*. Indeed, maintaining a distinction between practice and intent - even if one does not exist - serves the state in presenting itself as hospitable while simultaneously allowing for the ill treatment of unwanted populations. In its role as the 'protector' of society, adherence to humanitarian objectives are at times secondary to securitisation aims. As Dunne and Wheeler (2004) address in their review of security and human rights practice, 'national security and humanitarianism uneasily coexist in practice' (Dunne and Wheeler, 2004: p. 10). The state can be both humanitarian and exclusionary based on a divide between policy and practice, though in the relation to asylum and immigration control, this divide is perhaps not very pronounced. Further, to adopt a Foucauldian perspective is to eschew the image of the state as a leviathan with its own will and purpose. The conflict between

collective security and attention to humanitarian concerns is then easier to reconcile when power is viewed not only as a repressive mechanism, but as an expression of networks and relationships that 'passes through individuals' (Foucault, 2004: p. 29).

The 'tactics of domination' (ibid., p. 34) do not need to be delineated through stated aims of exclusion or repression; they can be expressed through the interaction between individuals. It is possible for Home Office to declare within the COMPASS contracts that '[s]taff (including volunteers and sub-contractor agents) shall be adequately trained in customer care, cultural awareness and conduct themselves in a polite, sensitive and orderly manner' Home Office, 2012c: s1.2.3.4, p. 7), while leaving the oversight of housing employees to the internal review mechanisms of the agencies themselves: 'The Provider shall [...] [m]anage and administer the quality and level of service delivery and its own performance relating to the delivery of all services' (ibid., s1.2.4, p. 7). Here, the 'tactic' of domination is left to the discretion of the organisations tasked with carrying out the Home Office's asylum housing programme. While oversight exists, and indeed the ultimate removal of United Property Management (UPM) in 2012 as a subcontractor to G4S was due in part to its failure to adhere to contractual requirements - the firm placed a mother and newborn daughter in a flat the Home Office deemed unsuitable 'for mothers and babies' - external, public pressure from media outlets and the South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Group (SYMAAG) moved G4S to action (Salsbury, 2012). If biopower is understood as emergent through individual interaction, then a useful continuing point is to address the relationships between asylum seekers and those they were likely to be in direct contact with: the employees of firms subcontracted to G4S and Serco. In these interactions, the 'politics of discomfort' is perhaps better described as a 'politics of disregard', as the most common complaint amongst respondents was that housing staff made empty promises in relation to repair tasks and did not initiate repairs in a timely fashion if at all. Aside from a few exceptions, complaints made to the primary contractors, G4S and Serco, went unanswered or responsibility was circulated between the contractor and subcontractor often with no practical result. In addition, some respondents felt that they were being patronised or treated dismissively.

It is worth noting that out of 26 interviews with asylum seekers living in dispersed properties, there were five examples of positive interactions between asylum seekers and staff working with subcontractors on the COMPASS project; these five were all living in Orchard and Shipman accommodation in Glasgow. I will address a few of these initially before moving on to the more dominant theme of discontent expressed by all respondents living in the North East of England and West Yorkshire and the remaining three living in Glasgow. One possible explanation for the variation in experience for residents in Glasgow is that many Ypeople employees transferred to Orchard and Shipman at the start of the COMPASS contract. Generally, if an asylum seeker had a positive experience with

a member of Ypeople staff and that particular staff member remained the resident's primary contact at Orchard and Shipman, the relationship remained positive. Here, I am defining 'positive' as an experience that an interview respondent used descriptors such as 'good' or 'nice' in their accounts of agency staff members' attitudes or approaches. Commonalities for the five asylum seekers reporting a positive experience with Orchard and Shipman employees included remarks on staff members' friendliness and expediency in resolving housing issues. For instance, Lucy (Interview, 19 July 2013) stated that she had a 'good relationship' with the O&S staff member assigned to her. She referred to a time when the cooker was not functioning: 'One time, the cooker wasn't working and my housemate called. [O&S staff] told when they were coming and they [quickly] changed it'. She cited another instance when a door handle had broken. She notified Orchard and Shipman and it was fixed within days. Mary (Interview, 12 June 2013) explained that O&S staff members were 'nice', particularly compared to Ypeople employees, which she described could sometimes be 'harsh'. Sahla (Interview, 28 May 2013) spoke positively of O&S employees' quickness in responding to repair requests, though she added that the vacuum cleaner was not functioning and no one on the O&S helpline had responded to any of her phone calls for over a week. For Jonathan, visits from O&S staff were helpful and informative:

I never felt like I had a bad experience with [Orchard and Shipman staff]. First of all, I knew they had a right to come and check. [...] Their coming - I had no problem with it, because they would come to check on you as well. [...] For them coming, if I needed something - although they were not part of the Home Office - they would explain that: 'Okay, we don't deal with this. I would advise you to do this or do that.' If you asked them. And they were kind of a go-between in a situation where you wanted to know anything. So, yeah, I never had a problem at all with them.

(Jonathan, Interview, 14 June 2013)

While these types of observations reflected respondents' beliefs that their interaction with staff was positive on the whole, satisfaction with the conduct of O&S staff did not necessarily relate to full levels of satisfaction with the allocated property. The broader trend amongst the remaining 21 respondents were feelings of dissatisfaction with subcontractors' response times, frustration with insincere and unfulfilled promises of repair action and disappointment with rude comments directed at residents.

In the North East of England, where all respondents had experienced living within Jomast accommodation, relationships between residents and staff members were markedly strained. Often asylum seekers expressed frustration about the fact that repairs

and property maintenance occurred rarely if at all; their complaints to Jomast or G4S frequently went unanswered. Mahmoud described his decision to go straight to the Refugee Council, as he was not able to get a response from Jomast following his complaints of not having any cooking utensils:

[I] go to the Refugee Council [to complain]. I haven't [got materials] for cooking. I have been three or four times there with my friend, in Refugee Council. [Refugee Council staff] faxed to Jomast. [...] No answer. No coming. Jomast house people. Just, that's it. Paid. G4S pay Jomast for what? Really!

(Mahmoud, Interview, 06 June 2013)

Mahmoud explained that on a separate occasion, he attempted to make a complaint about the discomfort he was experiencing sleeping with a thin duvet in cold weather with inadequate heating. His friend took a picture of the thermostat as evidence of the cold temperatures within the house, which they sent to Jomast. When Mahmoud received no reply, he again went to the Refugee Council. According to Mahmoud, despite the Refugee Council's numerous attempts to contact Jomast, they received no response. Hassan, living in Middlesbrough, described a similar experience with Jomast. In the few visits Jomast employees made to his residence, Hassan stated that they seemed to have no time to hear his concerns about the property:

They don't come regularly. I am in this house since January - almost six months. Nobody came as a regular check. They are incompetent, they are irresponsible, they are careless. [The staff] is not good [to me]. Most of the people, when they come, they are in such a hurry, they don't want to talk.

(Hassan, Interview, 26 June 2013a)

In Benjamin's experience with Jomast in Sunderland, he found that no action was ever taken on matters that he felt impaired his well-being. During a visit by a Jomast employee, Benjamin pointed out that the cooker was not working. The response, he said, was one of insincere placation: 'They [wrote] it down, but no action would be taken' (Interview, 21 August 2013).

Respondents' estimations of Cascade, the primary subcontractor to G4S in the region prior to G4S's management takeover, described similar scenarios when attempting to make complaints about the conditions of their housing. Tariq, a middle-aged asylum seeker living in a small room at the top of a terraced house, felt overlooked and ignored by Cascade staff, stating that 'they have been in this property twice in the last [year]. That's it. [...] If we complain about something that we need, sometimes they promise, and

sometimes they say that “we are not supposed to provide that” (Interview, 07 September 2013). Tariq continued, saying that he made complaints directly to G4S by telephone and fax. He stated:

This has not been effective. This can only be effective with the involvement of a third party. Whenever there is a request or complaint through any advocacy organisation like Refugee Council or Solace or other, you can say, organisations - that is given some attention, otherwise not.

(ibid.)

Respondents' issues with housing staff were not limited to the inaction of employees, but also included incidents of verbal and emotional abuse. Gabrielle, an asylum seeker in her 30s who had previously in Leeds, explained that she had been notified that she would be moved into a house in Bradford, which was confirmed by G4S, but on the day that she was due to be transferred, the Cascade employee said that she would be moved to a different property in Leeds:

They said: ‘Oh, no, no, no. You have a different address.’ We are taking you to Leeds. They showed me the list. Now the address was Leeds. I said: ‘No. I’m not going to Leeds. My address is Bradford.’ I had it - I had the letter with me. But who am I going to complain to? I don’t know anybody in G4S, I don’t know anyone in Cascade. But they just said I don’t even have a choice. A [female employee] even said that ‘I’m a destitute’, so I didn’t want to argue with her, and I became very stressed, because I didn’t even know where they were taking me.

(Gabrielle, Interview, 06 September 2013)

General discontent or unease about staff treatment of residents dominated respondents' narratives. A total of 21 interviewees described their experience with staff as negative. This theme was coded with the node RELSTAF-. Six respondents spoke of their experience with COMPASS staff - specifically employees of subcontractors - in positive terms (RELSTAF+); five of those respondents lived in Orchard and Shipman properties in Glasgow. One possible explanation for this, was that Orchard and Shipman took on some of the employees that had worked for Ypeople, the charity that had previously been responsible for accommodating dispersed asylum seekers; interviewees held generally positive views of their interaction with Ypeople staff members. Sixty per cent of respondents reported that they felt that their complaints or repair requests went ignored or unacknowledged (NONRESPONSIVE) and six respondents stated that housing

employees had arrived at their home unannounced. The disharmony associated with asylum seekers' relationships with COMPASS staff underscores the disregard with which some residents are treated. Through either deliberate tactics of unease or as a secondary effect of an increasingly marketised form of service provision, the COMPASS programme reveals some of the consequences of shifting focus from welfare to profit.

#### *7.4 Experiences of discrimination*

Another element of the COMPASS housing experience some respondents found troubling was the racial tensions in dispersal areas. Respondents cited examples of racial and cultural discrimination from British residents in the community and residents from other cultural backgrounds. Incidents included street confrontations or verbal abuse directed at the asylum seeker, often addressing the individual's race or cultural heritage. In reproducing conditions of discomfort and unease, these experiences undermined asylum seekers' feelings of welcoming and safety in the areas they were dispersed to on a no-choice basis. Liz Fekete (2001) suggests that racism is a feature of the British asylum policy, stating that a form of 'xeno-racism became fully incorporated' in asylum law following New Labour's entry into power in 1998 (Fekete, 2001: p. 24). What marks the current period as different than previous eras, Fekete argues, is that 'the national state is not [state racism's] primary originator; rather, state racism is derived from a globalised racism which is designed to supranational bodies, incorporated into EU programmes and transmitted to the member states for inclusion in their domestic asylum and immigration laws' (ibid., p. 29). This racism is manifest in the manner in which asylum populations are managed through the use of detention, the earlier issuance of vouchers and through dispersal policies; this xeno-racism is 'legitimis[ed] even further [through] its populist and inflammatory expression in the press' (ibid., p. 38).

In asylum seekers' responses about their community experiences, it was more common for them to describe the poor conditions in their dispersal area and their perceptions of some of the people that loitered around buildings or on streets. On three occasions, respondents mentioned that drug use was a problem in their region. While there were reports of some racial discrimination in all three dispersal areas, these were largely described as one-off encounters and respondents seemed compelled to stress that many within the community were 'nice' or welcoming. In an interview in the North East of England, a respondent stated that she felt that her region was represented poorly in the media; she had always felt welcomed in the community. Speaking from her experience living in Glasgow, Lucy (Interview, 19 July 2013b) stated succinctly: 'I've never experienced discrimination in Glasgow'. These sorts of descriptions counter other reports about asylum seekers' treatment in dispersal areas, particularly in those regions, like Glasgow, which have received negative media attention about racially-motivated violence

in the past. However, there were a few reports of direct discrimination experienced elsewhere. In our interview, Benjamin (Interview, 21 August 2013) explained that discrimination was not always latent in Sunderland; it occasionally became very overt. He said: 'Some people spit on the ground at us. This is not normal. They give you a message.'

### *7.5 Life on the periphery: Experiences living outside support*

Following the transition to the COMPASS housing programme, the movement of asylum seekers to cheaper properties on the periphery of urban areas became more routine. It was a phenomenon support agency staff confirmed when describing the differences in the accommodation environments before and after G4S and Serco took over the asylum housing contracts. In Glasgow, newly arrived asylum seekers and those being transferred out of former Ypeople properties and buildings due for demolition were increasingly being moved to Easterhouse, an area outside of the city centre that had not developed a support infrastructure and was considered to be very isolating for residents. In addition, when an asylum seeker needed to sign with the Home Office - a routine requirement to ensure their compliance with immigration rules - they often had to travel using the limited income allocated to them; in the case of individual asylum seekers on Section 4 support, this amounted to a total of £36 per week. According to respondents, the Home Office institutes a three-mile rule, which means that they will fund travel to and from the Home Office building for the purpose of an asylum seeker's signing if that distance is greater than three miles; apparently, this was strictly enforced and those living just inside the three-mile radius were ineligible for this financial assistance. Any travel to and from the city centre for other needs, including accessing GPs or one of the city's integration networks for support and assistance, also required asylum seekers to dip into this small stipend of money, which was intended for food and other necessities. The integration networks often attempted to offer travel expenses where possible, but moves to the periphery of Glasgow introduced further hardship and feelings of isolation for asylum seekers dispersed to the area. Cassandra, a resident of Orchard and Shipman in Glasgow described the effort involved in accessing culturally specific foods. She explained that she had to walk 25 minutes to the bus stop. When the bus arrived, she remained on it for 45 minutes before transferring to a train for a further 10 minutes (Cassandra, Interview, 13 June 2013). This, she explained, made it very difficult to perform regular shopping trips. Cassandra's experience was shared by others as well; respondents' comments on the distance of their accommodation were coded using the node (HSNGDIST). In total, 58 per cent of respondents (15) explained that their lives were negatively impacted by the distance they had to travel from their housing to places of essential need, such as a

market where their Azure card was accepted or to the Home Office for signing. Only three respondents - one in Glasgow and two in the North East of England - confirmed that their housing was adequately situated for their needs.

As asylum seekers are moved further from city centres and established support networks to areas where inexpensive housing is more abundant, they are distanced from access to other necessities, such as dietary requirements as part of cultural practice or religious faith. Sixteen respondents cited a lack of easy access to stores that catered to a particular dietary need as a distressing feature of their COMPASS housing experiences. These responses were evenly distributed across all areas of study with five asylum seekers in Glasgow, five in West Yorkshire and six in the North East of England stating that travel to and from such stores was taxing physically and difficult given monetary constraints. This was compounded by the fact that many stores do not accept an Azure card, the cashless payment method given to asylum seekers on Section 4 support. Whether the decision to house asylum seekers further afield is based solely on economic imperatives or a deeper desire to create a 'hostile environment' (Home Secretary Theresa May quoted in Travis, 2013) for asylum claimants, the result reveals that little consideration is given toward asylum seekers' religious and cultural needs.

Asylum seekers' destitution remains a feature of the state's current asylum regime. The Joint Committee on Human Rights (2007) condemned the government's deliberate attempts to ensure asylum seekers felt unsettled through an imposition of financial insecurity (pp. 40-42). Dwyer and Brown (2005) describe destitution amongst asylum seekers as a 'real, if largely hidden, problem' (p. 376). The support funds asylum seekers receive rests at 70 per cent of typical income support values, and further restrictions on asylum support are likely under new Home Office plans to reduce payments to asylum seekers with children by up to 30 per cent (Travis, 2015). For those awaiting decisions, subsistence is a relative luxury; for those who have exhausted their appeals, it is a tenuous hope. In interviews with those in COMPASS housing, respondents regularly brought up the hardships of being disallowed from paid work and having to rely on a very small sum to see them through each week. Fourteen interviewees explained that the cost of everyday living was prohibitive with the small amount of income they were receiving in Home Office support payments.

For many asylum seekers receiving Section 4 support due to receiving a negative decision on an asylum claim, their dependence on the Home Office-issued 'Azure' card represented a particular hardship. Current support payments amount to about £35 per week for individual asylum seekers. These are provided on an Azure card, which is limited to use in 'specific shops to buy essential food and toiletries' (Mullin, 2015). Two respondents living in Glasgow suggested that using the card was stigmatising, because store employees would immediately gauge that the customer was an asylum seeker.



Another common complaint about the Azure card was that it was limited to use on specific items and in certain stores. Things like mobile phone top-ups were not covered by the card, and as it was the only means of support for destitute asylum seekers on Section 4 support, they found this very limiting. The second issue - limited access to specific shops - was exacerbated by the distances required to access stores pre-approved with the Home Office to accept them. One respondent explained that while one branch of Sainsbury's may accept the Azure card, another may not. Another explained that employees who were unaware of their store policies would sometimes reject the card even if that establishment was listed as a partner on the Azure card scheme. Speaking of the difficulties in having to use the Azure card in Leeds, Jabril explained:

The problem is: we are close to normal shops. The problem is, we are given cards, Azure cards. So, those Azure cards - they're not cash. You can use it for shopping. Where you can use it for shopping is far away from our house. And the funniest thing is, we are not allowed to buy certain stuff or get cash from these cards. So, how do you do to leave the house to the city centre, which is about half an hour bus drive. Get on the bus to go for the shopping in the city centre, to access shops way out, so you can use this card. [...] As Muslims, it's our culture to eat halal food. Most of this halal food cannot be bought through that card, because the shops that sell [halal food] don't take those cards, the Azure card.

(Jabril, Interview, 22 August 2013)

What arises out of asylum seekers' experiences with COMPASS housing staff, in some of their community experiences and in the isolating effects of being moved to areas outside urban centres is an exposure to the 'politics of discomfort', of strategies aimed at limiting individuals' sense of belonging in the areas they are dispersed to. However, there still exists the opportunity for resistance to these experiences and through individual agency and accessing a variety of support networks, asylum seekers can also initiate a change to their conditions; this is explored in chapter 8.

## **Chapter 8 and Conclusions: Challenging ‘bare life’: struggle and resistance within the securitised home**

The experiences of asylum seekers living in dispersed housing thus far addressed seem to validate Agamben’s formulation of ‘bare life’ rather than challenge it, as was my theoretical objective in chapter 1. The isolation of being moved out of metropolitan centres far from support, the emotional and developmental ramifications of constant moves for children in school, the unsanitary conditions in dispersed properties, feelings of being ‘dumped’ and ignored by housing staff - these endurances suggest a life exposed to death, a ‘living dead man’ (Agamben, 1998: p. 131). It is reflected in respondents’ assessments of their time in COMPASS properties; of her experience in Cascade housing, Olufemi stated: ‘It’s a continuous mental torture’ (Interview, 22 August 2013a). Jabril said: ‘This life, seriously, it is not worth living for me’ (Interview, 22 August 2013b). Speaking of the unhygienic conditions her two children were exposed to in an Orchard and Shipman property, Fimi declared: ‘We know we are in the process of immigration, but we are human ... we are not animals’ (Interview, 12 June 2013). In these examples, there exists a hint of desperation - even resignation - at the fact that each individual’s position as an asylum seeker exposed them to inhumane treatment. In Jabril’s case, he was adamant that the conditions he was faced with in Cascade housing represented an illegal act on the part of the Home Office and its contractors on the COMPASS project:

It’s all an abuse of my human rights. [...] No one cares what the Home Office is doing to me and my family. Where is that problem from? Who caused it? People will not be honest enough to [say] that it is the fault of the Home Office. Instead, they’ll say it’s my fault. But I don’t care what they say.

(Jabril, 22 August 2013b)

As Imogen Tyler (2006) demonstrates, the ‘abuse’ Jabril describes is not illegal, because it has been enshrined in law. The state has written itself out of its humanitarian obligations to asylum seekers: ‘Inscribing the category of asylum-seeker in British law through the enactment of a series of punitive asylum laws has enabled the British Government to manoeuvre around the rights of the refugee as prescribed by international law’ (Tyler, 2006: p. 189). It is possible to say, then, that the category of asylum seeker is itself representative of a ‘state of exception’ - a state that still exists in a ‘juridical context’ despite its appearance of existing outside the law (Agamben, 2005: p. 32). It is therefore also possible to use the law - the laws of asylum and immigration - to generate and perpetuate the included exclusion. The tactics or techniques of the state are then understood as the ways in which this included exclusion is realised, i.e. through securitised environments and the use of contracted security companies for the

management of asylum-seeking populations. The demands of the market reinforce the maintenance of the interstitial space between belonging and full exclusion in which asylum seekers occupy. What is still missing from this framework, however, is the element of biopower Agamben overlooks or neglects in order to develop an image of the state as a monopolistic, punitive force: the capacity for resistance.

For Foucault, resistance was a central component of power, or rather, of a power-effect. In describing biopower, Foucault's more nuanced understanding of power relations better reflects asylum seekers' experiences within a society of control; they are not devoid of agency, though their ability to exercise that agency may be hindered by the tactics of governmentality the state and its partners utilise in managing populations. The individual is, however, still a site of power. On this subject, Foucault explains:

One of the first effects of power is that it allows bodies, gestures, discourses, and desires to be identified and constituted as something individual. The individual is not, in other words, power's opposite number; the individual is one of power's first effects. The individual is in fact a power-effect, and at the same time, and to the extent that he is a power-effect, the individual is a relay: power passes through the individuals it has constituted.

(Foucault, 2004: pp. 29-30)

It is on the subject of relays of power that I focus in this eighth and final chapter. To fully reflect asylum seekers' experiences within dispersed housing, it is necessary to reattribute agency to asylum-seeking residents as individual sites of power and to address the role of other 'individuals' or organisations acting as relays of power resisting the seemingly dominant logics of control, containment and included exclusion. These secondary actors include individuals, charities, churches, support organisations, advocacy groups and legal representatives that use the law and other methods to challenge the 'power-apparatuses' (Foucault, 2004: p. 13) employed in the attempted subjugation of bodies, specifically those of asylum seekers. To demonstrate this narrative of the asylum seeker as agent, I explore three themes emerging from the interview data: 1) asylum seekers' active involvement in available personal development activities; 2) their estimation of the importance of third-party agencies as advocate and support options; and 3) examples of direct resistance on the part of individuals.

### *8.1 Avoiding stagnation: asylum seekers' involvement in self-enrichment and entertainment activities*

The use of coping strategies has been addressed in research investigating asylum seekers' means of dealing the psychological and physiological effects of living in destitution and isolation. Ruth Healey (2006) situates her analysis of asylum seeker's experiences within the United Kingdom between agency and structure, explaining: 'Structural forces are the underlying structures of society which produce or shape human actions; whereas human agency is defined as "the capabilities of human beings"' (Gregory, 2000 quoted in Healey, 2006: p. 258). Healey adopts Bloch's (2000) 'structural and attitudinal factors' in addressing the ways in which structural elements, such as state policies, affect refugees' 'aspirations and feelings' about their immigration experience (Bloch, 2000a: p. 75). Healey focuses her analysis of asylum agency within the limitations of structural constraints, acknowledging that the impacts of structural constraints vary between individuals: 'Asylum seekers and refugees respond in different ways to the opportunities and constraints available to them within the structures that they face' (Healey, 2006: p. 260). It is worth adding that in each individual's experience, the structural elements themselves can be considerably different. If structural effects are extended beyond the role of policy and are taken to also mean practical limitations induced by asylum seekers' geographical placement, the conditions of their accommodation, and the degree of social cohesion and support within dispersal areas, then the divide between individual experiences can be significant.

In their study of Sudanese refugees living in Australia, Schweitzer *et al* (2007) highlight the importance of personal beliefs, familial and community support and individual attitudes as central to the degree to which refugees' were able to cope with the memories of past experiences and hardships faced in their host country. Askland (2007) interviewed twelve young East Timorese asylum seekers in her study of their expressions of agency in response to the 'structural circumstances and objective conditions of the host country' (Askland, 2007: p. 242). Askland suggests that younger asylum seekers of school age were in a better position to adapt to their asylum experience, because 'school provided access to a particular social field, which offered, although in varying degrees, socialisation and education in accordance with a standardised, institutionalised and gradual process (Bourdieu, 1995 cited in Askland, 2007: p. 244). Closely linked to schooling was the importance of the development of language acquisition. Given that language barriers are often 'one of the major challenges facing newly arrived refugees', Askland explains:

Language is paramount for inclusion in and participation within the new society. Enhanced language proficiency inaugurates social fields for

interaction and contributes to increased self-confidence and security, positively affecting general interaction with the community and feelings of belonging.

(Hyman et al. 2000 cited in Askland, 2007: p. 245)

With older respondents, Askland found that the ability to access language acquisition opportunities was more limited due to the need to seek income and university fees were often prohibitively expensive (Askland, 2007: p. 246). In this section, I present some of the experiences of asylum seekers seeking to acquire skills-based training in order to improve their conditions and their ability to communicate and integrate within dispersal areas. Many asylum seekers participated in a range of activities that went beyond language training and included the development of other practical skills. As I addressed in the previous chapter, a small number of asylum seekers questioned the utility of volunteering, since it did not afford them remuneration for their work. Jabril was resistant to volunteering, because he was disallowed from accessing paid work (Interview, 22 August 2013b). However, others viewed volunteering and involvement in support agencies' development opportunities as an important way to improve their overall asylum experience. In total, eight asylum seekers indicated that they had current or previous experience with volunteering. Three respondents regarded the experience as positive, as it provided essential skills and an escape from the tedium of life within dispersed accommodation. Three others problematised volunteering, suggesting that it was exploitative or a weak substitute for paid work.

Joseph, a recently refused asylum seeker in his 20s, explained that he involved himself in a number of activities in West Yorkshire, which included studying English, participating twice a week at RETAS (Refugee Education Training Advice Service) to improve his computer and language skills, playing sports, attending church and accessing the weekly drop-in sessions at PAFRAS (Positive Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers). In addition, he volunteered for another drop-in, Meeting Point, and at a local charity shop. Given his sports skills, he was also invited to teach volleyball at a local high school. In assessing the value of these activities, Joseph explained that 'these are all really important to me. They are keeping me busy. I improve some skills because of these organisations' and 'I like to help people'. He also noted the increased importance of the organisations he was involved with following the refusal of his asylum application: 'Now that I am refused, I can go to these organisations for help' (Joseph, Interview, 13 August 2013). For Joseph, keeping active was an important part of his coping experience, as it provided him access to social connections and avenues of support. His comment about enjoying helping people reflected a personal motivation beyond developmental aims to engage in voluntary support work. Sahla addressed a similar motivation behind her preferred activity. She explained that she spent time volunteering at a charity that provided

support for destitute people and met with other asylum seekers and refugees to organise visits from community members and local police (Sahla, Interview, 28 May 2013).

## *8.2 The role of support organisations in challenging the conditions of 'bare life'*

For many respondents living in COMPASS housing, various organisations including support agencies, charities, churches and drop-ins served two roles: support and advocacy. I have included a discussion of asylum support organisations in this section, because asylum seekers' agency was often facilitated *through* these organisations. For instance, if a resident had a problem with their dispersal property and could not manage to convince their housing provider, G4S or Serco to take action either because calls to support numbers went unanswered or due to unfulfilled promises that action would be carried out, many respondents reported that they then went to their local drop-in or other refugee organisation for assistance in achieving a desirable result. These agencies would place calls to housing providers urging for repairs or other problems to be resolved. At times, these organisations were successful in spurring housing providers into dealing with asylum seekers' complaints, though a number of agency respondents explained that they found the process frustrating; they also explained that making numerous phone calls to housing providers on behalf of asylum seekers consumed the time they would otherwise have spent offering crucial support in other areas. Nevertheless, the position of these organisations in acting as a relay for asylum seekers' complaints allowed asylum seekers a voice that was otherwise ignored. Examples of COMPASS residents' use of these agencies in making complaints demonstrates that, despite their increasingly tenuous financial positions due to budget cuts and reduced access to charity grants, refugee and asylum support organisations fulfil an important role in providing asylum seekers a degree of agency and resistance to models of exclusion and isolation that exist within the COMPASS programme.

While support organisations were sometimes able to act on behalf of asylum seekers, having a third party involved in complaints procedures did not always result in a desired outcome, or indeed a response, from housing providers. Ahlam Souidi with Maryhill Integration Network in Glasgow explained that asylum seekers' would often initiate complaints to Orchard and Shipman through the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) rather than attempt to call the provider directly, as they believed their calls would likely go unanswered. However, Souidi explained that this was not often successful either:

If [asylum seekers] complain by themselves, first, they go to the Scottish Refugee Council. Scottish Refugee Council put in this request on behalf of the client, but normally they don't get a response to the request. They are just

ignored. Not until there was massive support - when politicians were involved. You need to have a fight. It is not easy to get to them. [...] It is a nightmare to get things done. It is getting worse with Serco now.

(Souidi, Interview, 17 May 2013)

This account differed from those of a Scottish Refugee Council representative who wished to remain anonymous. In our interview, that representative explained that the number of complaints the SRC was receiving from asylum seekers regarding the conditions of their housing was *decreasing* since Serco's take-over of the asylum housing contract. The employee followed with: 'At least people's ceilings aren't falling in' (SRC employee, Interview, 30 May 2013). It was only two days before (28 May 2013), in my interview with Daya, that she described her ceiling collapsing while she was sleeping; Daya lived in an Orchard and Shipman property subcontracted by Serco. Nevertheless, the SRC representative surmised that the reason the organisation received complaints from asylum seekers about their dispersed housing was that they did not know they could complain elsewhere. Isabel Harland with the Govan and Craigton Integration Network, described another reason asylum seekers may not be aware of the complaints procedures, or unwilling to approach Orchard and Shipman or G4S directly. The most effective way of voicing a complaint, Harland stated, was:

[...] going through a separate agency, such as ourselves [Govan and Craigton Integration Network] that are going to do the legwork to chase Orchard and Shipman up about it. Most people don't even know anyway. So, it's only if they're people who regularly come to drop-ins, say, and are told that they can do that or that that's a possibility. What we find is that most people don't even try, because of their past experience or because the kind of perception they get when they receive [housing] inspections or when people come along, so they just think, 'they're not going to do anything' by default because of negative past experience. I work hard with people to try and phone [Orchard and Shipman] and don't really get very far. So, it kind of depends on the individual, I guess, how confident they are, how much they know or how kind of aware [they are] of their rights or how - language as well - all of these things have an influence. Generally, we find that those who are more willing to fight and sort of put their foot down about it will get something done if they go through an external agency. What we've done on a couple occasions like that is gone via the e-mail route via individuals [at Orchard and Shipman] who we've maybe had some contact with in the past. [...] Persistence seems to be the key. We kept pestering them until they get fed up with us!

Harland's account of typical complaints proceedings reveal a number of features of the Scottish COMPASS housing experience. Like the Scottish Refugee Council employee, Harland suggests that many individual asylum seekers do not know about the complaints procedures in place. However, Harland is referring to residents' lack of knowledge about the opportunity of support from the Govan and Craigton Integration Network rather than suggesting that asylum seekers are not aware of a complaints facility, i.e. a telephone number, through which residents can make a complaint directly to Serco about the conditions of their property or a broken appliance. This indicates that only those asylum seekers aware of the existence of the integration networks in Glasgow and who have the initiative, confidence or capability to access those services will be in a position to make use of the organisations' offer of assistance in putting complaints forward to Orchard and Shipman or Serco. What is also revealed in Harland's observation is the concern some residents have in directly contacting their housing providers about problems with their accommodation out of fear that such a complaint might negatively impact their asylum applications. This was precisely the concern Mary, an asylum seeker living in Glasgow, addressed when explaining why she had not made a formal complaint to Orchard and Shipman about the poor conditions of her housing, even with the assistance of a support agency:

My consultant wrote me a supporting letter [to Orchard and Shipman]. I haven't delivered the letter. I'm scared of the repercussions. These days, it's a bit dodgy, you know? Also, you don't know how they [Orchard and Shipman] work with the Home Office. It's like you're in a cocoon. You're afraid to speak out your mind.

(Mary, Interview, 12 June 2013b)

In other accounts, asylum seekers who were more comfortable with making complaints to their housing provider or directly to Serco and G4S explained that the role of support organisations was crucial for in achieving desired outcomes. For Jacqueline, the presence of support organisations in West Yorkshire meant the difference between hope and helplessness. In describing the importance of agencies, such as Solace, she stated:

They are always there for me, supporting and standing with me. If I didn't have them in my life here, I would have already died. Because when I first came here, I [had] died already. Solace helped me to be alive again.

(Jacqueline, Interview, 06 September 2013)



Beyond the emotional support provided through such agencies, Jacqueline also mentioned the 'empowering' nature of the support she received. She explained that whereas the Refugee Council had once arranged legal representation for her and assistance with her housing, that ended. It was Solace that ultimately came to her aid and helped her find another lawyer: 'Solace gives the right advice. [...] I think Solace is more helpful than [the Refugee Council]' (ibid.). Alexander focused on the sense of cohesiveness involvement in support organisations provided; he felt that participation within these organisations helped in building solidarity with other people going through similar experiences. He stated that the organisations were 'extremely' important, because they 'make you feel like a family, [which] makes you feel better' (21 August 2013b). Benjamin noted that the absence of support agencies present a challenge; 'life would be very difficult'. He stated that these agencies also represented a gateway to health care support and education. Without these organisations, 'opportunities would be limited to locals [citizens]' (Benjamin, Interview, 21 August 2013a).

### *8.3 Examples of agency and resistance within the society of control*

Individual empowerment was not necessarily dependent upon the support networks one accessed, though those networks often facilitated respondents' own initiatives in seeking to bring about changes to their circumstances. While Mary acknowledged that many may not speak up due to fear of reprisals that would either threaten their housing situations or adversely affect their asylum applications, she affirmed the importance of 'getting involved' and expressing one's dissatisfaction. She stated: 'It's the only way you can air your grievances. Sending out the message as well. [...] When things are getting out of hand. My [activism] gives me more strength' (Mary, Interview, 12 June 2013c). Mary had been involved in a local campaign against Serco prior to its acquisition of the COMPASS contract. While it may be common for asylum seekers to want to avoid unnecessary exposure to the Home Office, Beatrice was adamant about meeting with Home Office representatives at every opportunity. She explained that she was a member of a women's strategy group at refugee organisation in Glasgow. The group, she said, was involved in arranging activities and inviting speakers from the community to present to asylum seekers and refugees accessing the service. Each service user can opt to be part of a 'group' that is allocated one of these organisational tasks. When given the opportunity, Beatrice volunteered to be part of the delegation that went to the Home Office to express concerns on behalf of others in the community. She stated:

When I go to the [Women's Strategy Group] meeting, they ask you: 'What part of the group do you want to go to? Do you want to meet the UK Border Agency at the Home Office? Do you want to meet the police? Do you want to meet the fire [services]? Do you want to meet the housing [representatives]?' I said, 'I would like to meet the UK Border Agency.' To sit there and tell them my feelings, and tell them what I want! So they put me in [that group].

(Beatrice, Interview, 28 May 2013b)

Others acknowledged some of the potential concerns with being outspoken. Jonathan explained that many people are 'afraid to speak out'. He said that they may feel 'suppressed' or believe that by voicing a complaint, they might 'negatively impact [their] claim' for asylum. Jonathan understood these reservations, but felt that it was personally important to him to help 'build awareness' of people's experiences in order to bring about changes in asylum seekers' conditions within the asylum 'system' (Jonathan, Interview, 14 June 2013). Gabrielle discussed her coping strategies upon arriving in a new area and described her decision to overcome initial fears about actively pursuing complaints and getting involved in the community. She felt duty-bound to educate others in the community about asylum seekers' experiences and to help transform common perceptions of asylum seekers that are promulgated in the popular press. When asked about her motivations in engaging in community awareness, Gabrielle stated:

Every time I go somewhere, I try to find as many organisations as I can and I try to join them. I was involved in so many. [...] Because, I realised that many people, they don't know - because there is a assumption about asylum seekers - it's all about what you read in the papers. So, with these organisations, we start to go to schools speaking about our experiences, the reality, you know? Things like that. Raise awareness.

(Gabrielle, 06 September 2013a)

### *Concluding Remarks*

Residents' experiences within the COMPASS housing estate reveal a series of conditions and responses that do not entirely fit within a construction of asylum seekers as wholly subjected bodies. From the interviews collected in support of this doctoral thesis, common trends can be identified that seem to support an Agambenian construction of *bare life*. Residents' exposure to adverse conditions, including the mental and physiological strain of living in unhygienic environments or dilapidated housing, the psychological and economic burden of being moved to areas lacking established support

networks or culturally specific food options, and the inability to easily bring about a change to their experience all appear to suggest that a 'politics of discomfort' and exclusionary tactics are governing the housing of asylum seekers in the UK. The inclusion of two global private security firms in the delivery of the Home Office's dispersal programme, each with prior histories of detaining and transporting asylum seekers, may indeed reflect a 'shifting away from an explicit concern with the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees and toward a primary concern with security and protecting the "nation"' (Lynn and Lea, 2003 and Moore, 2005; 2007 cited in Moore and Clifford, 2007: p. 462). Arguments employing rhetorical allusions to the population as a biological organism (Esposito, 2008; 2013) or home (Walters, 2004; Darling, 2011), which state defends against the onslaught of foreign 'others' help provide a theoretical basis for legislative practices and border control aims. However, none of these approaches adequately reflect the processes and logics underpinning the introduction of a marketised dispersed housing programme. They also fail in appropriately acknowledging the capacity for agency, contingent though it may be, of asylum seekers in resisting total subjugation through individual action or accessing support services.

In this thesis, I have argued for a return to an understanding of power that both incorporates individual agency and is capable of including within its definition Hollifield's 'liberal paradox', which acknowledges the inherent conflict between the state's aim to secure its borders and the neoliberal imperative of maintaining market openness (Hollifield, 2004: p. 885). Through a detailed historical analysis of English and British immigration legislation and population control practices dating to back to the thirteenth century, I have demonstrated that it is Foucault's concept of biopower that remains the most appropriate frame within which to demonstrate the dynamic power interplay between the state, its agents, asylum seekers and the support and advocacy networks providing their support. Interviews with asylum seekers and support agency staff have elucidated residents' experiences within COMPASS housing. While we might isolate out many of the deleterious effects of the COMPASS programme for scrutiny at a contractual and humanitarian level, the what is clear from the interview data, is that Agamben's notion of 'encampment' does not adequately reflect experiences within the asylum housing estate. The 'camp' is a zone of exception, a 'space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule' (Agamben, 1998: p. 169). However, this thesis has demonstrated the continuing incursion and disruption of totalising 'exceptional state' logics by advocacy groups, committed human rights and immigration lawyers and at times the judiciary acting as a countervailing state power - as well as (it is important to insist) - the agency and resistance of those who despite being subject to often dehumanising immigration control experiences nevertheless succeed in asserting their humanity and right to remain.

While successive UK policies have allowed for increased discretionary control over migrants, avenues of resistance still exist both at the individual level and through the facilitating efforts of support agencies; these challenge the construction of asylum seekers as beings devoid of political worth and the apparatuses of power governing their subjection. However, a recognition of agency cannot correspond with complacency. The budgetary cuts and limited funding options described in chapter 5 threaten asylum support organisations' ability to continue providing asylum seekers with the same level of service they may have come to rely upon for advisory, social and emotional support. From an analysis of data collected through interviews with asylum seekers, it is evident that each resident's ability to affect change when dealing directly with COMPASS housing providers is limited due to institutionalised neglectfulness or overextended market ambitions. Therefore, the reliance on organisations to help facilitate in the issuance of complaints or mitigate the emotional effects of poor housing conditions is greater at time when these agencies' resources are stretched thin. Attention must be paid to the fact that while asylum seekers may not represent *bare life* in the strictly theoretical sense, the conditions of their experience may, in a practical sense, be largely indistinguishable from it (or perceived as such by the asylum seekers themselves).

Current and past dispersal regimes are established upon legislation designed to ensure that the government's commitments to international human rights agreements are met in limited terms. Consecutive policies have introduced increasingly restrictive controls both upon asylum seekers' ability to claim asylum and the conditions with which they are supported within the United Kingdom. Asylum seekers' destitution remains a key feature of the state's current asylum regime. As explained in Chapter 3, the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) report on the treatment of asylum seekers (2007) established that the committee was 'convinced that destitution is a deliberate tool in the operation of immigration policy.' Continuing, the members stated:

We have been persuaded by the evidence that the Government has indeed been practicing a deliberate policy of destitution of this highly vulnerable group. We believe that the deliberate use of inhumane treatment is unacceptable. We have instances in all cases where the Government's treatment of asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers falls below the requirements of the common law of humanity and of international human rights law.

(Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2007: para. 120, p. 41)

Current plans to further cut destitute asylum seekers' support funding by up to 30 per cent (Travis, 2015) suggest that the UK government is responding to popular representations

of asylum seekers as a public strain rather than acknowledging the criticisms levelled against it by the JCHR. Equally, the government's decision to outsource its dispersal programme to private security firms highlights a lack of concern for the emotional and physical well-being of asylum seekers, given the firms' previous histories of abuse and neglect, as outlined in chapters 4 and 6.

In itself, the dispersal programme is an exclusionary project, designed to undermine asylum seekers' sense of security and belonging. Hynes and Sales (2009: p. 53) refer to the dispersal experience as 'policy-imposed liminality'. In their examination of asylum seekers' experiences within dispersed accommodation prior to the introduction of the COMPASS programme, Hynes and Sales write that 'the main experience of dispersal was a loss of control over their lives, creating a sense of liminality, or limbo' (ibid: p. 53). However, crucially, Hynes and Sales also acknowledge the fact that this loss of control was not entirely concurrent with a loss of all agency, citing asylum seekers' limited, though expressive forms of resistance, such as an abandonment of their dispersed property. In more indirect ways, Hynes and Sales' respondents 'resisted the dehumanising impact of the system' through other strategies: '[t]hey learned the language, made friends from the "settled" population and participated in volunteering schemes when unable to take up paid employment' (ibid: p. 54). Similar responses were observed in the interviews for this project. For instance, 15 respondents (58 per cent) described various enrichment activities they were involved in, which included participation in specialist groups like women's groups, volunteering, and educational courses. Six respondents referenced their involvement in educational development and eight respondents described the importance of English language acquisition in building relationships within the United Kingdom and strengthening their ability to articulate concerns and interests. These acts are significant, because they challenge the valued depictions of asylum seekers as perpetual victims, which are reinforced through theoretical concepts like Agamben's 'bare life'. As I have advocated from the outset, a more nuanced view of power and resistance is required to reflect asylum seekers' dispersal experiences.

In the introduction, I determined to qualify sovereign explanations of power through an inclusion of Foucault's allowance for resistance within a biopolitical framework and an engagement with Hollifield's 'liberal paradox', which better reflects the competing objectives of market liberalism and border restrictionism. The history of immigration legislation presented in chapters 2 and 3 maps a policy environment designed to disrupt migrants' and asylum seekers' sense of belonging within the United Kingdom. The effects of these policy endeavours are apparent in asylum seekers' descriptions of their COMPASS housing experiences; the emotional and physical strain brought about by distance from support networks, living in destitution and exposure to poor housing conditions reaffirms representations of the UK's asylum policy as one of deliberate

destitution and exclusion. However, the objectives of the COMPASS housing programme are not solely realised through state action alone, as they are also determined by the continued profitability of the dispersal contracts. The motivations of G4S and Serco to expand the 'asylum market' by first developing their accommodation experience within the realm of dispersed housing reveals the complexity of the state's response to its population management agenda (see chapter 4). The UK government has embedded itself within two conflicting agendas; the government must appeal to political pressures seeking reassurance that the state is protecting the identity of the British population while at the same time must continue to promote the neoliberal vision of marketisation and privatisation.

In reviewing the data collected from interviews with asylum seekers and asylum and refugee support workers, it is apparent that asylum experiences within different regions of the UK vary based upon the support networks available and the conditions and placement of asylum seekers' dispersed housing. This lack of uniformity in provision is reflective of government policies designed to undermine asylum seekers' confidence and sense of belonging within the communities they are dispersed to. However, these agendas are challenged by the actions of asylum seekers themselves, the efforts of the charity and voluntary support sector, and the assistance and advocacy of legal practitioners and activist groups. If further challenges to government policy and its privatised accommodation regime are to be made, they will need to incorporate the direct participation of asylum seekers and those willing to support them in resisting state efforts to silence appeals to human rights and demands for a more humanitarian approach to refugee reception.

## Appendix 1: Information Sheet for Asylum Seeker

### *For Your Information*

#### **You are invited to take part in a study about your experiences living under the new COMPASS housing project.**

##### **What is the study about?**

This study seeks to gain an understanding of asylum seekers' experiences living under the management of new housing providers within Britain. Early last year, asylum housing support across the country became the responsibility of three of the country's largest private security firms – Serco, Clearel Ltd. and G4S. Before this, local authorities, private landlords and housing associations housed dispersed asylum seekers. Over the last six months, many asylum seekers have been moved from one home to another. If you have been asked to move or have already moved, it would be good to hear about your experience.

##### **Why have I been invited to participate?**

You have been invited to participate in this research project, because your experience being housed by one of the new contract holders is important to this research. You might be able to share your thoughts on a recent move and whether your experience has been good, bad or remained the same.

we could record our conversation so the researcher can make sure he takes accurate notes.

##### **What will happen with my information?**

The researcher will keep all of your personal information completely confidential, including your name. Your name and no other details that might be used to identify you will be made publicly available. Once the research project is complete, all recordings and notes that we create in our interviews will be confidentially destroyed.

The information you provide will be for use toward a PhD research project, which will include data by other people willing to participate in the study. Information published in this project may be used in other publications to highlight the experiences of asylum seekers living under the new COMPASS contracts. If you would like, you can have a summary of the research project once it is complete or a copy of the full report.

##### **Who will be asking me questions?**

Steven Hirschler is a PhD student at the University of York carrying out a study for his doctoral dissertation. He has experience volunteering for a local asylum seeker support service and is mindful of the need for anonymity. If you would like to contact Steven about any part of this research, feel free to do so (telephone: 01904 324 397, e-mail: [steven.hirschler@york.ac.uk](mailto:steven.hirschler@york.ac.uk)).

##### **Do I have to participate?**

No. Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary, meaning that you can decide to stop at any time and the researcher will honour this request. As your inclusion in this interview is voluntary, you will not receive payment for participating, but the researcher will make ensure that the interview is conducted at a convenient time and location.

##### **How will the interview work?**

If you agree to be interviewed, we will arrange a time and place to meet that is best for you and you will be asked questions regarding your experience being moved from your old home to your new one. Even if you have not been moved, you are invited to share your thoughts about the place you live and the level of support you have access to. If you have children, you might discuss whether or not they have had to move school recently and what affect that has had on their mood, if any.

It is possible that our discussion may bring up difficult subjects and if you are uncomfortable discussing your experiences, you can end the interview at any time. The interview will last about an hour and a half, but it might be shorter. You will be asked to sign a consent form prior to the interview. If you would rather not sign the form, you will have the option to do so, but we will need to have a witness present to confirm that you are happy to continue with the interview. If you would like to have a translator present, that can be arranged. It would be helpful if

##### **What if I have any further concerns?**

This research project is intended to be of very little risk to both you and the researcher asking the questions. Your responses will be considered respectfully and with full confidence. If you would like to know what other ethical considerations the researcher is obliged to adhere to, feel free to contact the Chair of the Ethics Committee at the University of York, Caroline Hunter (telephone: 01904 325 806, e-mail: [caroline.hunter@york.ac.uk](mailto:caroline.hunter@york.ac.uk)).

##### **For further information:**

If you have any further questions, you may also contact Dr Simon Parker, Steven's PhD supervisor (telephone: 01904 323 557, e-mail: [simon.parker@york.ac.uk](mailto:simon.parker@york.ac.uk)).

Department of Politics, University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD

## Appendix 2: Information Sheet for Service Worker

### Interview

#### Information Sheet for Interview Participant

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. Please remember that you can choose to end the interview at any time and that your participation is optional.

#### Researcher Information

This self-funded PhD research project is being conducted by Steven Hirschler, a third-year doctoral candidate within the Department of Politics and the Centre for Applied Human Rights at the University of York.

#### Research

This PhD research project arose in response to developments occurring within the United Kingdom's asylum support sector, particularly the increasing privatisation of asylum housing services following the discontinuation of contracts between the Home Office and local authority consortia. Many of these contracts have been agreed to between the UK Boarder Agency and three of the country's most prominent private security firms: Serco, Reliance and G4S. The UKBA refers to these companies as 'preferred bidders' within its COMPASS project,<sup>1</sup> and all have previously been involved in the transportation or detention of asylum seekers either in the United Kingdom or abroad.<sup>2</sup> The response to this development has been mixed, with a number of activist organisations around the country engaged in campaigns to resist the privatisation of asylum support services. Concerns exist that companies that have come under criticism for questionable human rights practices, either directly or indirectly through subcontractors, present a threat to asylum seekers' mental and physical wellbeing at both the individual and collective level.

The aim of this research is to determine the perceived and actual affects of privatising asylum housing services and to represent the different narratives surrounding asylum seekers' legitimate or illegitimate presence in the country. The project will involve interviews with local authority officials, local service organisation volunteers, private security firm personnel and key government officials involved in the development of asylum policy and the management of asylum support services. The research has the following aims:

- 1) To develop a chronology of immigration policies that have led to varying degrees of inclusion for persons subject to immigration control, including asylum seekers;
- 2) To chronicle the role of local and voluntary services in providing support services for asylum seekers either alongside or in lieu of government programs;
- 3) To determine the extent to which judicial rulings and the activities of civil society organisations represent a resistance to what the Joint Committee on Human Rights identified in 2007 as the state's 'deliberate' policy of exclusion and destitution of asylum seekers.<sup>3</sup>

#### Your role

You have been approached about participating in this research because of your unique role in providing essential services to asylum seekers. Your views will be very important in informing this

<sup>1</sup> UKBA. (2012). *COMPASS*. See: <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/aboutus/workingwithus/workingwithasylum/compassprogramme/> [Accessed 03 August 2012].

<sup>2</sup> Townsend, M. and Grandjean, G. (2012). *Reliance under scrutiny after deportees report injuries while being restrained by guards*. The Guardian. See: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/jul/22/reliance-scrutiny-injuries> [Accessed 04 August 2012]; Silverman, S. and Hajela, R. (2012). *Briefing: Immigration Detention in the UK*. The Migration Observatory, University of Oxford. See Page 3: [http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/migobs/Immigration%20Detention%20Briefing%20v2\\_0.pdf](http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/migobs/Immigration%20Detention%20Briefing%20v2_0.pdf) [Accessed 11 August 2012].

<sup>3</sup> Home Office. (2007). *The Treatment of Asylum Seekers*. The Stationery Office Ltd: London. See: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/it200607/itselect/trights/81/81i.pdf> [Accessed 03 August 2012].



research project. Following our review of the consent form, you will be given the opportunity to sign and date it. In addition, you will have the option to record your vocal consent. It would be helpful if the interview could be digitally recorded in part or in its entirety in order to reflect your responses as comprehensively as possible. You will have the option to participate in such a recording fully or in part; you may also decline. If you decide against any form of recording, handwritten notes will be used exclusively.

#### **The use of your information**

In order to accurately represent your responses, I will take detailed handwritten notes during the interview and will keep them as anonymised as possible until they are transcribed in a secure digital format. The original notes will then be shredded. As mentioned, a digital recording is desirable, but you may opt out of this in part or entirely. Such a recording would be deleted from the recording device immediately following the interview's transcription into a word processor. You are welcome to a copy of my transcribed handwritten notes and the notes taken from any recordings. I am also happy to provide you an encrypted copy of the digital recording if you desire it. All data, including digitised notes and recordings, will eventually be securely deleted following the completion of the research project and any related publications. If you decide to withdraw from the interview at any point, I will respect any explicit request to confidentially destroy or delete my notes and/or recordings prior to their use in my research project.

All of the information you provide is intended for use in this single PhD research project. In the future, part or all of my PhD research project may appear in published form. You are free to declare what portion, if any, of your responses may appear within subsequent publications relating to my research. You have the option to have any amount of the information you provide remain confidential and anonymised, though attributable quotes and comments are preferred given the high-profile nature of your experiences, and the importance of those experiences to the development of this research. A copy of my research project can be made available to you upon request if and when it is completed.

#### **Contacts**

If you have any further questions regarding your participation in this research project, please feel free to contact Steven Hirschler (e-mail: [steven.hirschler@york.ac.uk](mailto:steven.hirschler@york.ac.uk)) at the Department of Sociology, Wentworth College, University of York, York YO10 5DD, telephone: 07932 739 664.

You may contact Dr Simon Parker, my PhD supervisor (e-mail: [simon.parker@york.ac.uk](mailto:simon.parker@york.ac.uk)) at the Department of Politics, Derwent College, University of York, York, YO10 5DD, telephone: 01904 323 577.

You may also contact the Chair of the Economics, Law, Management, Politics and Sociology departmental ethics committee, Caroline Hunter (e-mail: [caroline.hunter@york.ac.uk](mailto:caroline.hunter@york.ac.uk)), at York Law School, University of York, York, YO10 5DD, telephone: 01904 325 806.

### Appendix 3: Interview Coding Scheme (Asylum Seekers)

CLUSTERS & NODES	DESCRIPTION
<b><i>Agency and Self-Support</i></b>	Expressions of individual agency and self-support
CLEANING	Respondents' reports of having to invest individual time and/or money in maintaining COMPASS properties
SELSUS	Self-sustaining activities and actions (i.e. pursuing complaints, seeking assistance, etc.)
<b><i>Agency Support</i></b>	Reliance upon and assistance received from voluntary and charity-sector agencies
AGNYACVSM	Activism endeavours on the part of support organisations to promote asylum welfare
AGNYHLP	Assistance and advice provided through various support agencies
AGNYOP	Respondents' opinions of the level and quality of support received through support agencies
LEGAL	Details regarding legal assistance, reliance on legal support and engagement with solicitors
<b><i>Area Conditions</i></b>	Descriptions of conditions within dispersal areas
AREACON	Observations of the conditions within dispersal areas, including perceived safety levels, quality of life, etc.
COMYXP-	Generally negative views of community experiences within dispersal areas
COMYXP+	Generally positive views of community experiences within dispersal areas
DISCRM	Reports of discrimination within dispersal areas
DRUGS	Reports of drug use within dispersal areas
NODISCRM	Explicit responses indicating that no discrimination was suffered in dispersal areas
STIGMA	Stigmatisation experienced or perceived within dispersal areas
<b><i>Asylum Experience</i></b>	General views on the asylum experience overall
AZURE	Experiences using the Azure card (i.e. limitations, stigma, impracticalities, etc.)
COST	Cost of living and the limits of support for destitute asylum seekers
DETXP	Experiences within detention
INITIALACCOMXP	General views on the initial accommodation experience
INITIALACCOM-	Generally negative views of the initial accommodation experience
INITIALACCOM+	Generally positive views of the initial accommodation experience
MEDIAREPRESENTATIONS	Reflections on media representations of asylum seekers
PRTRAUM	Experiences of trauma before arriving in the UK and/or during the asylum process
SECTN4	Self-described as an asylum seeker receiving Section 4 (1999 IAA) support
SECTN95	Self-described as an asylum seeker receiving Section 95 (1999 IAA) support
<b><i>Comparisons</i></b>	Points of comparison between different COMPASS experiences
<b><i>COMPASS Experiences</i></b>	Respondents' descriptions of experiences within COMPASS housing
CHLDRN	Parents' reflections and reports of children's experiences within COMPASS housing and during transition
CMPSXP-	Generally negative views about the COMPASS experience
CMPSXP+	Generally positive views about the COMPASS experience
CULT-RELIG-SENSITIVITY	Reflections on the level of cultural, religious (etc.) sensitivity of the COMPASS programme

MOVESEF	Observations on the emotional and practical effects subsequent to being moved by a COMPASS contractor
PRISON-LIKE	Descriptions of COMPASS accommodation as prison-like
TRANSXP	Experiences during the transition into COMPASS housing
<b>COMPASS Knowledge</b>	Level of knowledge and awareness of COMPASS and its contractors
PREKNOW(N)	Respondent did not have prior knowledge of COMPASS or its contractors (G4S or Serco) and subcontractors
PREKNOW(Y)	Respondent had prior knowledge of COMPASS and the programme's contractors; opinions
<b>COMPASS Opinions</b>	Individual perspective on the COMPASS programme
BARELF	Descriptions (and terminology) of experiences resembling Agamben's 'bare life'
MARKET	Recognition and/or perception of asylum housing as driven by market imperatives
<b>Contract Compliance</b>	Examples in which providers' contract compliance may be in question
COMPLNT	Explanation of complaints procedures; perception that complaints were left unresolved
REPAIRS	Description of repairs frequency
WLCMPAK	General observations regarding the Welcome Packs provided by contractors and/or subcontractors
WLCMPAK-	Belief that welcome packs were unhelpful or lacked important information
WLCMPAK+	Belief that welcome packs were useful and helped with orientation in new dispersal environment
<b>Emotions</b>	Respondents described feelings and emotions regarding housing experiences
DEPRESSION	Feelings of depression
FEAR	Expressions of fear
FRUSTRATION	Frustration
ISOLATE	Feelings of isolation
LIMBO	Respondents' representation of lives in limbo; unsettled
STRESS	Stress as a response to conditions, treatment, etc.
SATISFACTION	Feelings of general satisfaction
<b>Enrichment Activities</b>	Activities, education and pastimes of asylum seekers
EDUCTN	Education and learning
ENGLANG	Formal and informal English language acquisition and perceptions of its value
ENRICH	Enrichment activities
ENTRTN	Entertainment activities
VOLUNTEERINGXP	Descriptions of volunteering experience
VOLUNTEERING-	Views of volunteering as negative and/or unfulfilling
VOLUNTEERING+	Views of volunteering as useful and constructive
<b>Housing Conditions (COMPASS)</b>	Specific housing conditions within COMPASS accommodation
DIRTY	General dirtiness and poor upkeep
FACILITIES-	View that facilities are inadequate, broken or otherwise unsatisfactory
FACILITIES+	View that facilities are adequate and satisfactory
FOODNDS	Description of specific food needs; views that dietary needs are not being met or difficult to access

HLTHCON	Concerns surrounding individual or family health due to specific housing conditions
HSNGCON-	General view that housing conditions are unsatisfactory or harmful
HSNGCON+	General view that housing conditions are satisfactory
HSNGDIST-	Distance of dispersed accommodation too far from essential services, stores, etc.
HSNGDIST+	Distance of dispersed accommodation adequate for respondent's needs
INSECTSVVERMIN	Reports of insect and vermin infestations within dispersed accommodation
OVERCROWDING	Views and descriptions of life within overcrowded accommodation
SHAREDACCOMM	Experiences and/or struggles observed in shared accommodation
<b>Inspection Frequency</b>	Degree to which regular inspections of COMPASS properties were occurring
INSPECT-	Inspections occurring irregularly or not at all
INSPECT+	Inspections occurring at regular intervals; adequate
<b>Pre-COMPASS Experiences</b>	Reflections and observations of housing experience prior to COMPASS programme
COMMS_LA-	Poor communication with local authority representatives
PRECMP-	Generally negative views of the pre-COMPASS dispersal experience
PRECMP+	Generally positive views of the pre-COMPASS dispersal experience
PRECOMPSTAFF-	Negative experiences with housing staff prior to COMPASS transition
PRECOMPSTAFF+	Positive experiences with housing staff prior to COMPASS transition
<b>Relationships with COMPASS Staff</b>	Descriptions of staff/resident relations within COMPASS accommodation
EMPTYPROMISES	Perception that promises made by housing staff are baseless and/or not followed through on
NONRESPONSIVE	Housing staff does not respond to repairs requests and/or complaints
PROVCOM	Reflections on general communication with housing providers (contractors and subcontractors)
RELSTAF-	Generally negative view of relations with COMPASS housing staff
RELSTAF+	Generally positive view of relations with COMPASS housing staff
SHORTNOTICE	Experiences of being given short notice before being moved to a different COMPASS property
UNANNCD	Reports of staff arriving unannounced at COMPASS properties

## Appendix 4: Interviewed Asylum and Refugee Support Workers

Region	Representative	Role	Organisation
Glasgow	Robina Qureshi	Director	Positive Action in Housing
Glasgow	Ahlam Souidi	Community Support and Advice Worker	Maryhill Integration Network
Glasgow	Rachel (anon)	Volunteer	Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees
Glasgow	Margaret Sweeney	Volunteer	Govan and Craigton Integration Network
Glasgow	Janice (anon)	Employee	Scottish Refugee Council
Glasgow	Katherine (anon)	Former Employee	Orchard and Shipman
Glasgow	Isabel Harland	Project Development Worker	Govan and Craigton Integration Network
Glasgow	Diane McWilliam	Project Coordinator	Greater Pollock Integration Network
Glasgow	Yvonne Docherty	Community Development Worker	Greater Pollock Integration Network
Glasgow	Jassim Johe	Welfare Advice and Support Worker	Kingsway Court Health and Wellbeing Centre
North East of England	Norman Arthur Carr	Volunteer	North of England Refugee Service (Sunderland Drop-In)
North East of England	Kath Sainsbury	Project Manager	Justice First
North East of England	Melanie (anon)	Employee	West End Refugee Service
North East of England	Pete Widlinski	Information and Communications Manager	North of England Refugee Service
North East of England	George (anon)	Employee	West End Refugee Service
Yorkshire and Humber	Emma Crossley	Project Manager	Meeting Point
Yorkshire and Humber	Rosanna Longley	Service Manager	Red Cross - Refugee Services Yorkshire
Yorkshire and Humber	Allison (anon)	Employee	Solace
Yorkshire and Humber	Max Farrar	Secretary	David Oluwale Memorial Association

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