

Safe environment?

Investigating the use of temporary accommodation to house asylum seekers during the Covid-19 outbreak



An interim report

This report presents interim findings of the research project: [Investigating the use of temporary accommodation to house asylum seekers during the Covid-19 outbreak](#). The project explores the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on asylum seekers living in Glasgow, by focusing on those individuals placed in temporary accommodations. It aims to capture the everyday experiences of asylum seekers living in these accommodations by adopting a digital ethnographic method, which is co-produced with Migrants Organising for Rights and Empowerment (MORE), a grassroots organisation based in Glasgow advocating for human rights and dignity for asylum seekers and refugees.

Project team/authors:

Dr Taulant Guma, Dr Gavin Maclean, Dr Kirsten MacLeod, Dr Kiril Sharapov, (Edinburgh Napier University)

Yvonne Blake, Robert Makutsa, (Migrants Organising for Rights and Empowerment – MORE)

Further information, contact
T.Guma@napier.ac.uk
tempacco.wordpress.com

The project is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) as part of UK Research and Innovation's (UKRI) rapid response to Covid-19.

Contents

Executive Summary	3
1. Background	4
1.1. Local context	5
1.2. Methodology	6
2. Policy context	7
3. Findings - asylum accommodation during Covid-19	10
3.1. ‘Like you've been beaten in the prison’	10
3.2. ‘Sitting here wondering’	12
3.3. ‘Are we criminals?’	13
3.4. ‘They just come in any time’	15
3.5. Dreaming of cooking.....	16
4. Conclusions and recommendations	18
5. References	21

Executive Summary

The main interim findings of our analysis to date are:

- Housing provided to asylum seekers was often substandard and, in some cases, unsafe. The introduction of a new Asylum Accommodation and Support Services Contract (AASC) in 2019, which required providers to improve their service and have a more proactive approach in terms of property maintenance, appeared to have made little positive change in practice.
- The relocation of our participants to hotel-type accommodation during the pandemic had a negative impact on their health and wellbeing, as individuals were faced with a number of restrictions such as losing their cash payments, being unable to cook their own food, having their mobility restricted, being unable to visit friends or have visitors.
- Far from offering a 'safe environment' during Covid-19, our participants experienced these forms of temporary accommodation as unsafe and often as detention-like spaces.
- The relocation of more than 20 asylum-seeking mothers to a specially repurposed facility called 'Mothers and Baby Unit' had an adverse effect on their lives and their children, leaving the participants shocked and devastated at the lack of space and cramped living conditions that they were moved into.
- Relocations to temporary or contingency forms of accommodation took place with little consideration of people's needs and with no consultation with asylum seekers themselves. In some cases, individuals were even threatened with deportation by the accommodation provider's staff if they resisted the move.
- While the AASC contract requires the accommodation providers to treat service users/asylum seekers with care, compassion and respect, our participants' accounts pointed to a service provision that was inattentive towards their needs, vulnerability and wellbeing.
- Rather than being treated as a group of vulnerable individuals in need of support and protection, the encounters between our participants and service provider staff often reflected and reproduced the ongoing stigmatisation that asylum seekers face in British society.

1. Background

At the start of Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, private housing providers began to relocate many asylum seekers to temporary or contingency forms of accommodation throughout the UK, leading to a substantial increase in the number of asylum seekers living in hotel-type accommodation in the country (from 1,200 in March to 9,500 in October 2020). These firms who are contracted by the Home Office to provide asylum accommodation in the UK described such actions as necessary and protective measures, aimed at reducing the spread of Covid-19 among asylum seekers and create a ‘safe environment’ for them.

These moves have attracted a great deal of media and public attention in the UK. On the one hand, there has been negative media coverage regarding these relocations, with some national newspapers known for their anti-immigration views accusing asylum seekers of living in so-called ‘luxury’ or ‘four-star’ hotels, thus ‘burdening’ the public purse and ‘preventing’ British citizens from using hotels around the country (Mail on Sunday 2021). In some cases, these temporary accommodations have also been a target of attacks by far right groups and activists (Taylor 2020). These incidents and the general negative coverage in the UK media have led to a great deal of misinformation about the actual conditions of these temporary asylum accommodations and contributed to further demonisation of asylum seekers living in the UK.

On the other hand, there has also been a great deal of media coverage that has been critical of the moves by private sector firms to relocate asylum seekers into hotel-type and other contingency accommodation during the pandemic. As well as the inadequate provision offered to asylum seekers, various media reports have shown how far from creating a safe environment, these relocations have made it difficult for asylum seekers to maintain physical distancing in new crowded, shared spaces thus increasing the risks of exposure to Covid-19 (BBC News, 2020). These issues and concerns have also been reported by organisations and stakeholders representing asylum seekers, who have also noted that the re-housing of asylum seekers during pandemic made it difficult for charities to provide support to affected individuals.

Most notably, the focus of much criticism regarding temporary asylum accommodation during the pandemic has been on the use of military facilities such as Napier Barracks in Kent and Penally Barracks in Pembrokeshire. The sites have been criticised for the unsuitability of housing people, especially in the context of Covid-19, where social distancing can be difficult to maintain, and thus the safety of residents cannot be guaranteed. A recent inspection (March 2021) by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration confirmed that both facilities are unsuitable, highlighting their ‘filthy and run-down’ conditions (BBC 2021).

While the issues around asylum housing have received a significant amount of media and public attention during the pandemic, we know little about the experiences and perspectives of asylum seekers themselves, who are directly and mostly affected by these housing arrangements. Media reports often contain accounts of asylum seekers who live in these accommodations but these are often snapshots that offer little insight and understanding into the day-to-day realities of their housing experiences and how the pandemic has affected their lives over time. Moreover, as individuals with fewer rights and heavily restricted access

to wider society, asylum seekers occupy a precarious socio-economic position in the British society. Their lives are largely regulated by the state, which is increasingly working in partnership with private firms to control their mobility and housing, including during the pandemic. Yet little attention has been paid to the workings of this dynamic between state and non-state actors and how it impacts on the lives of asylum seekers in the context of Covid-19. This research project addresses the above gaps in our knowledge. It aims:

- To document the housing conditions and understand the impact of relocation from the perspectives and experiences of asylum seekers themselves
- To identify factors and mechanisms which have placed asylum seekers living in temporary accommodation at greater risk of Covid-19
- To work with grassroots community groups to influence government policies and practices on asylum accommodation in order to address the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on those seeking asylum
- To influence media and public debate and raise awareness about the issues and challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees living in the UK

1.1. Local context

The project focuses on Glasgow as the local authority with the most dispersed asylum seekers in the UK (Sturge 2020, 14) and also housing a significant number of asylum seekers in temporary or hotel-type accommodation (BBC 2020). Moves by accommodation providers to relocate asylum seekers to hotels following the first Covid-19 lockdown ‘took place at scale in Glasgow because the initial accommodation there was deemed unsuitable for social distancing’ (Sturge and Gower 2020, 24). Around 350 asylum seekers were moved from their apartments to the various hotels in the city centre following the outbreak of Covid-19 in March 2020. Several months later, in July 2020, the Scottish Refugee Council reported that there were around 300 people living in hotels in Glasgow (Brooks 2020). Yet in August 2020, a month later, this number was noted to be 188, indicating significant levels of variation.

One factor that might have contributed to this fluctuation was the widely-reported tragic incident that happened at the end of June 2020 in one of the hotels, Park Inn, where one asylum seeker was killed and three others were injured (Glasgow Live 2020). As a result of this incident, many of the asylum seekers (around 100) residing there were moved to alternative, dispersed accommodation around the city. This incident and the tragic death in May 2020 of an asylum seeker living in another hotel in the city, generated a significant amount of media attention to issues around hotel-type accommodation within Glasgow and placed the decisions of accommodation provider, Mears, under intense scrutiny. Indeed, in July 2020 Glasgow city council issued a temporary ban on new asylum seekers arriving in the city so as to ‘ease pressures’ and help the accommodation provider to find appropriate accommodation for those residing in hotels (Findlay 2020)

In this context, local charity organisations have argued that far from creating a ‘safe environment’ the actions of private sector firms have worsened situation that charities have already labelled a ‘humanitarian crisis’ in the city (PAIH 2020). They have particularly

criticised the complete lack of care shown by private providers towards asylum seekers, placing the latter in crowded and cramped places, removing their personal allowances and only providing them with bare necessities such as food. This project is interested in understanding asylum seekers' experiences of this 'crisis', how they were affected by these events and what was happening in the city during the pandemic.

1.2. Methodology

The project adopts an ethnographic approach to capture the everyday experiences of asylum seekers living in temporary accommodation in Glasgow and their housing conditions amid the context of Covid-19 restrictions. Such approach involves intense and long-term engagement with participants, immersing into their everyday lives and documenting their experiences as they happen over time and from their perspectives. To enable this engagement, the research was co-designed and co-produced with Migrants Organising for Rights and Empowerment (MORE), a grassroots organisation based in Glasgow advocating for human rights and dignity for asylum seekers and refugees living in the UK. As well as being a grassroots organisation, MORE's work is led by migrants with experiences of asylum seeking themselves, individuals 'who possess grounded, nuanced knowledge of the areas in which they live and work, often generated over many years' (Berg and Nowicka 2019, 5). Run by a core group of dedicated volunteers, MORE is currently offering advice and support to those asylum seekers and refugees who are living in several temporary accommodations around Glasgow.

MORE helped with the recruitment of participants for the project as well as being directly involved in the research process. Two of its volunteers/members, Yvonne Blake and Robert Makutsa, worked as community researchers to carry out regular online ethnographic interviews with participants, to record their experiences of housing during the pandemic. 14 key informants were recruited as part of the research. Their lives were followed through mediated and sustained contact over a six-month period from December 2020 to June 2021 during the 'second wave' of Covid-19 in the UK. This involved regular (weekly) online meetings between the community researchers and the participants, using various softwares Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, etc. Interviews were conducted mainly in English; interpreters were used for three participants who spoke limited English: a French, a Spanish and an Arabic speaker. Participants were a diverse group of individuals; 8 men and 6 women, ranging from 18 to 72 years old, and coming from different countries in the Global South. Their length of residence in the UK also varied significantly from those who had arrived in the country a few months ago to some who had spent more than a year in the UK, with one participant having lived in the country for more than 20 years. All participants had experiences of living in hotel-type accommodation during the pandemic, with some still residing there at the time of writing, while others were moved out either prior to or during the research.

To capture their experiences during Covid-19 times, participants were provided with laptops to connect and communicate with community researchers. We chose to use laptops in this project (as opposed to other devices such as mobile phones) because MORE, the partner

organisation, identified that laptops will, firstly, help vulnerable participants to cope with social isolation during the pandemic, and secondly, laptops will also be useful for educational purposes. This is because many asylum seekers are either currently enrolled in courses or hope to pursue education but lack access, and having a laptop will enable them to carry on with their learning during the pandemic.

As well as holding regular ethnographic interviews with the researchers, the participants were also asked to produce visual diaries, which included photos and videos of daily life over the period of six months. These visual data would feed into a documentary which will be produced as part of this research project. The documentary will present asylum seekers in their own words and environments, using their visual diaries to capture their experiences of everyday life in Glasgow during the pandemic.

Alongside interviews and visual diaries, the project also carried out several group discussions with asylum seekers residing in temporary accommodation around the city, including with a group of mothers living in the ‘Mothers and Baby Unit’, the latter being a specially repurposed facility that opened in October 2020. Through these meetings and in course of our project, we spoke to more than 50 asylum seekers living in Glasgow. Other data produced in this research included fieldnotes taken from various meetings related to issues faced by asylum seekers in Glasgow involving key stakeholders and organisations in the city as well as other relevant materials (e.g., posters, leaflets, emails, social media posts, etc). We also collected media stories from local and national newspapers focusing on asylum housing issues in the UK during the pandemic.

2. Policy context

In our review of the policy context regarding asylum accommodation in the UK, a number of policy developments and practices emerged as significant in recent years and in the context of Covid-19. Amongst those was the increase in the use of temporary accommodation for asylum seekers. More specifically, September 2019 marked a turning point regarding the rise in hotel-type accommodation, a period that coincided with the transfer of asylum contracts from COMPASS to AASC, causing a great deal of disruption for asylum seekers (Asylum Matters/Refugee Action 2020). Moreover, the use of hotels rose sharply following the start of the pandemic in March 2020, with the number of asylum seekers increasing from 1,200 to 9,500 in October 2020 (Sturge and Gower 2020).¹ This was partly due to the introduction of a pause by the Home Office on moving asylum seekers out of accommodation once their case was completed, in order to make space available for new claimants.

At the same time, following the announcement of the first Covid-19 lockdown some asylum seekers were relocated to hotels as a way of providing accommodation that was ‘Covid safe’. The Mears group which is the accommodation provider contracted to cover Scotland stated their reasons for relocation as below:

¹ The overall number of people who claimed asylum in the first six months of 2020 was 16,358.

To reduce the need for both asylum-seekers and Mears staff to make regular journeys to and from multiple accommodation locations we considered, in discussions with the Home Office and with Glasgow City Council, providing fully serviced support in good quality hotel accommodation where we could arrange regular access to health workers and implement all guidance on COVID-19. The aim was to create a safe environment to greatly reduce the spread of Covid-19 among asylum seekers in Glasgow. Health authorities are fully aware of all measures Mears are taking (Mears 2020).

A major issue, however, regarding these relocations was that they were often not accompanied by clear policy and support regarding Covid-19. For example, there was no policy in terms of Covid testing available for asylum seekers during the pandemic, even though individuals were moved around and lived in shared accommodation, thus increasing the risk of contact with other people and catching Covid-19 (Home Affairs Select Committee 2020). Such conditions made social distancing almost impossible, and Covid outbreaks were not uncommon in asylum accommodation across the UK. Evidence submitted to the Home Affairs Select Committee notes that coupled with issues with access to testing were problems attached to the related public health messaging. Changes in the timeline for self-isolation or the public health guidance on symptoms were not available in any language other than English until the 20th March (Doctors of the World 2020) - 8 days after the government had moved from a contain phase to a delay phase.

The provision of appropriate laundry facilities and cleaning products to asylum seekers such as soap was also found to be inadequate, thus adding further to the risk of Covid infections (Home Affairs Select Committee 2020). The restricted financial means of those seeking asylum has seen them being priced out of provisions such as soap or hand sanitiser within the first wave of the pandemic.² Moreover, access to communication for asylum seekers was another area whether there was a lack of policy or support. The use of temporary/contingency accommodations has had a detrimental effect on access to communications technology for those seeking asylum. The Home Affairs Select Committee was given evidence to suggest advice given to asylum seekers was to seek out public free Wi-Fi spots rather than improve provision within the accommodations. This has resulted in asylum seekers having less social contact, being able to draw upon less forms of welfare support and limited access to GP consultations which have moved online due to the pandemic (Home Affairs Select Committee 2020). Furthermore, the suggestion of public free Wifi spots increases the risk of exposure to Covid-19.

A more recent policy development regarding asylum accommodation has seen the repurposing of new facilities such as military barracks for use as contingency housing. Notably, since September 2020 two large military facilities in the UK, Napier Barracks in Kent and Penally Barracks in Pembrokeshire, have been used for accommodating more than 600 asylum seekers at their peak (Grierson 2020). The Government deemed the introduction of these new facilities as necessary due to the pressure on asylum accommodation brought about by the Covid-19 crisis and rise in the number of new asylum seekers. Yet as noted above, this form of housing has been widely criticised for its unsuitability and lack of safety vis-à-vis Covid-19 (BBC 2021). Indeed, the High Court passed a judgement on 3 June 2021,

² See House of Commons debate titled: *Covid-19: Asylum Seeker Services in Glasgow*, Wednesday 17 June 2020.

ruling that accommodating asylum seekers in these barracks ‘was and is flawed and unlawful, both in relation to (a) the initial decision to transfer asylum seekers to the Barracks, and (b) the monitoring or review of suitability post transfer.’³

While these military barracks have been at the centre of national media and public debates during the pandemic, more locally, in Glasgow, another type of contingency housing for asylum seekers has generated a great deal of interest. This is the so called ‘Mothers and Baby Unit’, which was opened in October 2020. In January 2021, the Unit housed around 25 asylum-seeking women with babies or who were pregnant. Previously used for accommodating young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, the facility was refurbished by Mears in 2020, turning it into 37 self-contained bedsits. While in the past the facility was used to provide transitional accommodation for single occupants, Mears turned it into long-term accommodation for asylum-seeking mothers and their children from pregnancy up until the child is two years old. What is more, the mothers were moved to this place during the pandemic, relocated during January 2021, at the heart for the Covid-19 ‘second wave’. Mears’ decision to open the Unit has come under criticism from local charities, media and politicians for its unsuitability and cramped conditions, especially in the context of Covid-19, which are having a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of mothers and their children. Its creation has galvanised the support of different actors in the city who are increasingly campaigning for change to the facility and even its closure.⁴

Along with the rise in the use of temporary or contingency forms of accommodation, our policy review also found that the time that asylum seekers spent in these accommodations has increased, too. Within the policy documents and government reports, the expectation is that asylum seekers will be moved out of ‘initial accommodation’ or temporary accommodation,⁵ and into ‘dispersed accommodation’ within 35 days. Between September 2019 and February 2020, the average stay in initial accommodation reported by the National Audit Office was 26 days. Yet, even before Covid restrictions emerged, asylum seekers were experiencing stays of at least 86 days (Home Affairs Select Committee 2020). During the first Covid outbreak, average stays had increased to stays of at least 115 days. The National Audit Office (2020) recommended that providers focus on reducing the amount of time asylum seekers spend within initial accommodation, questioning whether providers were properly incentivised to move people into dispersed accommodation quickly enough.

Another key policy change that took place during the pandemic was the withdrawal of financial support for those asylum seekers living in hotel-type accommodation throughout the UK. While asylum seekers usually receive £39.63 per week, the financial support was stopped for those who were moved to hotels during the pandemic. This was based on the grounds that for those moving to full-board accommodation, the basic necessities such as food and toiletries would be provided so there was no need to give cash payments. Such

³ [High Court Judgement, 3 June 2021. Case Nos: CO/312/329/354/397 & 402/2021](#)

⁴ More recently, a group of organisations launched the Freedom to Crawl campaign (<https://www.freedomtocrawl.org/>) calling for the closure of the Unit. This is addition to the ongoing work and campaign of various local grassroots groups like MORE to close the facility down.

⁵ In official discourse, temporary accommodation is known as ‘initial accommodation’ and long-term housing as ‘dispersed accommodation’.

policy decision was widely criticised for leading to the deterioration of asylum seekers' mental health and wellbeing, and its lawfulness was challenged in court by legal firms representing asylum seekers (Kelly 2020). In September 2020, the High Court ordered the Home Office to review the policy and make sure that financial support is provided to meet the basic needs of asylum seekers. Following this, the Home Office announced via a letter sent to charities by the Immigration minister Chris Philp (Bulman 2020) that a payment of £8 would be provided to support those who have been put in contingency accommodation. It was also announced that backdated payments of £3 per week for clothing and £4.70 per week for travel will be further made as part of the new measures. Yet, months after these announcements were made the media reported that these payments had yet to reach the affected individuals, despite the court order (Kelly 2020).

3. Findings - asylum accommodation during Covid-19

3.1. 'Like you've been beaten in the prison'

While the primary aim of this research is to explore the role of Covid-19 on the experience of asylum housing, what is clear in this research is the failure of asylum accommodation to meet the contracted minimum standards regardless of the pandemic. This is somewhat ironic given the fact that the new Asylum Accommodation and Support Services Contract (AASC) which replaced the previous arrangement in 2019 was created with a particular focus on improving the existing conditions and assisting individuals through the asylum system, ensuring that vulnerable asylum seekers have access to the support they need and set clear requirements on the standard and condition of accommodation. The contract states, for example, that providers will be required to have proactive maintenance plans, to make sure that they regularly inspect properties and report back to the Home Office on the findings of this inspections. Yet the accounts of our participants paint a very contrasting picture, attesting to the poor living conditions in their accommodation that are against or in breach of the specified terms of the accommodation contract. Interviews have reflected issues with the contract-specified terms of 'safe', 'habitable' and 'fit for purpose'.

Safety

In terms of violations of the 'safe' terms of the contract, one of our research informants experienced a burglary at their accommodation. The informant lost several possessions and the burglars entered the property by breaking in. The informant recounted that, despite several interactions with the housing officer from Mears, the glass on the building was not repaired, only boarded up. This led to the property being cold during the winter months, leaving the participant frustrated and angry with the service provided:

'And I'm just some, how do I call them, the Mears and the home office, trust me, they says that, they said we are helping people, put people in the right direction, they are evil. I'm sorry. They are not, they are not. They're not helping people, you know. Just like, when was this, was it not a last week, I got a letter, the one you showed me.' (The General, 6th interview)⁶

⁶ For ethical reasons, all names in this report have been anonymised. Instead, we use pseudonyms or nicknames chosen by participants themselves.

Broken glazing which puts the property at risk to intruders is a violation of the accommodation contract and requires a repair within 4 hours or ‘the immediate vacation of the service user’ (term B.2.1.8 of Asylum Accommodation and Support Services Contract).

Fit for purpose

If a property is considered ‘unfit for purpose’ then the providers have 21 working days in order to resolve the faults. These requirements cover issues from lighting, ventilation, weatherproofing to the requirements around kitchens, bathrooms, bedrooms and pests. These standards do extend to the accommodation’s decor, with the contract specifying that ‘accommodation will not be regarded as fit for purpose if the internal and external aspects of the Accommodation are not in good decorative order’ (subsection B. 4.3 in the Statement of Requirements to the Asylum Support and Accommodation Contract). Some of our participants spoke at great length about this issue and how unfit for purpose their dwelling was in reference to the contracted standards.

‘It is something that I’ve been talking about since the first day I moved in here, because the room was just randomly painted. And the paint was really stinking, it was smelly. And there are rats in this building, there still some rats eating my food every time. And now, I was just falling from the bed every time the bed was little, like very tiny in the spot that the mattress was very, very hard. When you sleep, when you sleep on it and you wake up, it’s like you’ve been beaten in the prison. So, it’s just actually, you know, in addition the shower is not working. And I told them about the shower, and they say they will fix it. It is almost more than seven months. The shower has not been fixed now. And that’s it.’ (Jerry, interview 3)

Jerry’s description above points to a property that is clearly ‘unfit for purpose’, with many issues going unresolved for months. As someone suffering with mental health problems, such conditions contributed further to his health woes. Reflective of the various reports and submissions of evidence to parliamentary committees, our research found that service provision was not attentive towards the needs, vulnerability and wellbeing of asylum seekers. The issue of unsuitability was particularly evident in the case of ‘Mothers and Baby Unit’. As noted above, around 25 asylum-seeking mothers were moved into this ‘Unit’ in mid-January 2021. The facility was repurposed by Mears to provide accommodation for asylum seeking mothers and their children from pregnancy up until the child is two years old. Many mothers spoke repeatedly about the cramped living conditions at the new facility, listing a number of issues and concerns:

- The rooms are very small and have little space for children to play. There is no way to baby-proof the kitchenette for crawling and walking babies.
- Beds are too small and some mothers who prefer to have baby sleep with them, are unable to do so.
- There is no bath or sink large enough to bathe a baby - instead, baby baths were bent to fit into the shower.
- Suitable furniture, such as armchairs, for women to perform breastfeeding were unavailable, apart from a fold-out metal chair or their bed.
- Accommodation is noisy, with doors (fire doors) frequently banging; doors are heavy and not easy to open for mothers carrying their babies.
- There is frequent knocking on doors from staff – and residents’ privacy is not respected.
- Washing machine facilities are inadequate for the number of families.
- There is one chest of drawers for both mother and baby possessions and apparel.
- Room ventilations are insufficient – there is no space within the rooms to dry clothes

One participant recalled how she initially thought they there were brought to the ‘Unit’ for ‘reporting’, rather than it being a place to stay. This was due to the institutional-like nature of the facilities, having been used previously to house young homeless people, rather than families. Finding out that this would be her new accommodation left the participant in profound shock:

‘So, when they brought me to this place, I was I was shocked at first, I thought maybe this place is where maybe it will give me the paper and later on, they will take me to the apartment. So, I asked the lady that is it here that I’m going to stay? She said yes and I asked her how long she say she said I after I give birth and I was so so angry and I was crying because the room is small the window the window opens small and the water at times it will cold at times it will be hot and my bed is close to the kitchen the bed, I’m even taller than the bed and I have to squeeze myself so that I can sleep’ (Participant in the Mother & Baby Unit focus group)

Another participant said that she had a panic attack when she arrived at the unit. She suffered with mental health issues and was told the move was for the better, but her condition worsened, as she was now unable to sleep and was feeling a crisis of anxiety. The partner organisation has noted that in a meeting held on 21st January 2021 between Mears representatives and grassroots organisations working with asylum seekers in Glasgow, it was confirmed that health assessments for asylum-seeking women were not carried out prior to their move to the unit. The representatives noted that assessments are performed retrospectively and may lead to some women being relocated to other, more suitable accommodation.

It is in this context that together with MORE, our partner organisation, in June we arranged for the Scotland Children and Young People's Commissioner to meet the mothers and pay a visit to the place, to assess the building. Following the visit, the Commissioner concluded that the building was not suitable for mothers and babies and that no children should be accommodated there. As mentioned earlier, the ‘Unit’ has generated a great deal of local media attention in Glasgow and galvanised the support of charity organisations and grassroots groups who are increasingly campaigning for its closure. The facilities continue to remain open at the time of writing.

3.2. ‘Sitting here wondering’

Our research participants spoke extensively about a lack of communication and transparency from both the Home Office and the accommodation service provider when being moved to hotels or other temporary forms of accommodation such as the ‘Mothers and Baby Unit’. Many were not told explicitly that they would be moved into hotel-type accommodation and participants only found out about their accommodation when they arrived at the destination. They were not informed about the move in advance; rather participants spoke about how Mears, the accommodation provider, staff often would turn up unannounced and give individuals little time, in some cases less than 15 minutes, to get ready for their move. This lack of communication left many frustrated and angry with the accommodation service provider. It was also traumatising as some feared that they were being moved to a detention centre.

Poor communication regarding the length of stay in hotels, be it initial or contingency form of accommodation, was another major concern raised by the research participants. When participants were moved in, they were told by Mears staff that they will be staying for a short period of time, up to three weeks, but in reality, many participants ended up spending months in hotel, with one participant having stayed 9 months before being moved to a dispersed accommodation. Participants felt that they were not being informed regularly about their length of stay and found this uncertainty really stressful and impacting on their mental health and wellbeing.

There also appeared to be a lack of clarification about the criteria for moving people out of hotel-type accommodation. In communication with Mears and Migrant Help, participants were told that delays occurred due to certain categories of people being given priority, such as families, couples, etc., but in practice other people were also moved out including singles and newer arrivals. In their report, *Asylum Accommodation and Support*, the National Audit Office highlighted another reason as to why asylum seekers may spend lengthy periods when in initial accommodation, noting that providers were not ‘incentivised to move people into dispersed accommodation when they have already been in initial accommodation for longer than the [Home Office] Department’s expected 35 days (NAO 2020, 33). Our participants’ length of stays in hotels varied from 4 to 9 months.

The uncertainty around the length of stay in hotels left many confused and frustrated about their situation, leading to talk of unfairness and being ‘deceived’:

‘When we came in, we were told by the Mears guy, “no, in three days, [housing officer] will give you accommodation”... [but] three days turned into three months, three months is now five months... you just sitting here wondering... every time we call Migrant Help, it is the same situation, “No, it’s Covid, nobody is moving”, but people are moving... “No, it’s Covid, there is no accommodation”, but how are the other people getting into accommodation?!. So it is so frustrating that they are not clearly communicating to us... So that actually frustrates us or makes us even more... it completely shuts us down just because of the fact that we gain information that it is not true.’ (Participant in group discussion with individuals living in a city centre hotel).

Moreover, participants were not told by either the Home Office or Mears that their financial support would be withdrawn once they were moved to hotel-type accommodation. The allowance received by asylum seekers is small (a weekly payment of £39.63 as of October 2020) but the impact of withdrawing it can be significant for asylum seekers both financially and psychologically because it reduces their ability to make even small choices in their everyday lives such as purchasing basic items. As noted earlier, the decision to stop cash payment was challenged in the court and the Home Office was asked to review its policy and introduce £8 as weekly cash payment for asylum seekers living in these types of accommodation, but there has been delays in implementing this policy change, and one of our participants did not receive any cash payments despite living in a hotel for 9 months.

3.3. ‘Are we criminals?’

One participant told the story of how she was given only 15 minutes to get her belongings and move out of her flat. The Mears staff told her that she had to choose which belongings to

take quickly, as she was only allowed two items/bags. When she arrived at the unit, she had no food and was told she should go to the shop to buy it, but she had no money. Although some of the rest of her belongings were delivered the next day, she did not receive all of them, including pillows and blankets. She was told by the housing officer that she would get the rest, but she never received it. One of the mothers was moved into the ‘Mothers and Baby Unit’ only days after giving birth, while another was relocated to the ‘Unit’ less than six weeks before her due date.

Another research informant spoke of the humiliation she suffered during her move to the Mothers and Baby unit. She too was not able to take all her belongings on the day of her move. In her desperate attempt to convince the driver to take more of her stuff, she took her belongings to the street and went through it outside to reduce the amount – including food. The driver told her that it was ‘too much’ for someone who was a ‘destitute’:

“‘You are a destitute, you an asylum seeker. You’re not supposed to have all these things”. So, I’m like, what am I supposed to have? He said “you’re only supposed to have the essential things”. And I’m like, “give me the list of the essential things”. So, if I’m an asylum seeker, I’m not supposed to have any belongings or what do you mean? Then he said “yeah, basically that’s it”. And then I said no, “what if I refuse to go” in [he] said “it’s your right if you can refuse, you can refuse. But you should know that if you refuse [the] Home Office can also decide to deport you”. (Miriam, resident in Mother & Baby Unit, group interview)

Miriam continued:

‘That [threat] felt quite harsh... all my food and everything else that I really used, even my winter clothes and underwear, everything [was left behind]... My underwear and stuff were in the drawer that I didn’t touch because I wanted to take that last... because I thought I remember where I put it because moving in is quite hard, so I totally forgot about that, I didn’t take that... even my jacket were [hanged] behind the door... and then I sent him [the driver] a text when I got here, “I want those things, my jacket and underwear, I forgot them there, can you please help me and bring them? Or I don’t know, can I go and get it?” He said that I can’t go and get it but they will bring it the next day. But when he brought it, he only brought a few underwear... I am sorry I had to ask him but I didn’t know who else to ask because he had the key.’

Such treatment clearly goes against the requirements and principles set out in the Statement of Requirements to the Asylum Support and Accommodation Contract (AASC), which states that the ‘provider acknowledges and agrees that Service Users will need to be managed with sensitivity, compassion and respect.’⁷ It is difficult to see in this and other cases highlighted above how these individuals were treated with compassion and respect. In fact, as of the examples above illustrates in some cases mothers were even threatened with deportation by the accommodation provider’s staff.

While some mothers were relocated to the ‘Mothers and Baby Unit’ due to having previously resided in incompatible accommodation such as hotels, others were moved from settled accommodation and from areas where they had built connections with the local community, organisations and charities. No consideration was given to the social and

⁷ See p. 4, subsection 1.2.1 ‘Service Users: Background Information’ in the Statement of Requirements to the Asylum Support and Accommodation Contract (AASC). Available at: http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2018-1112/AASC_-_Schedule_2_-_Statement_of_Requirements.pdf.

supporting networks that mothers had established before moving them to a location that they were unfamiliar with and where they would be unable to call on these important networks and resources.

Another factor that impacted on the wellbeing of participants was restrictions around their mobility. These limitations existed in both types of accommodation: hotels and the specially repurposed unit. Those residing in the hotel were told that they cannot spend nights away from the accommodation, e.g., sleeping at their friends. Participants felt that spending time away from a confined place like a hotel, even for a few hours or a night, was important for their mental wellbeing:

‘When I was having therapy session online with my counsellor, I think she noticed a big difference with me. So when I would go out and sleep at the friend’s place, for a couple of days, and then we will have a therapy session, she will see the difference between outside and me at the hotel. She mentioned that to me a couple of times because... when you are of hotel, yes your case is still pending but at least you have... your mind is calm... I think you are different really. Really different. She mentioned to me a couple of times, ‘Look, you look more refreshed when we have a therapy session on a Monday when you spent the weekend at the friend’s place’.... I was on medication medication all the time, but look it doesn’t really help. How long are you going to be on medication? Are you going to be on medication for a year? You can’t. If you take medication for a year but you don’t change the conditions, the environment, and what you eat even, nothing is going to change.’ (Eric, 1st interview)

Women residing at the ‘mothers and baby’ unit were not allowed to have partners or visitors in their room. They had no key to the main entrance, and to access the building they would need to be buzzed in. In addition, they said that doors were locked at 8pm and they could not access the building after this time. It was in the context of all the restrictions highlighted above that our participants spoke about being trapped and held captive in their accommodation, rather than being supported or cared for. One of the participants wondered whether the facilities offered and the restrictions on entry and exit felt like she was being treated like a criminal:

‘I was saying I don't know what this building was used for but in front of the building it says criminal detention. So, for us mentally when you think of that it’s like what have I done? Like, are we having some criminal records? Or what is it cause already that is messing us up? And then we have to sign in and sign out and you're coming in this place? Sometimes we are locked outside sometimes the guard is not there. Maybe she's wherever you know’ (Participant in the Mother & Baby Unit focus group).

3.4. ‘They just come in any time’

When announcing the relocation of asylum seekers to hotel-type accommodation during the first Covid lockdown, Mears stated that ‘these arrangements are to protect service users during COVID-19 [...] to ensure the safety and well-being of asylum-seekers in our care, as well as our staff, and our role in helping to limit community transmission by maintaining social distancing’ (Mears 2020). For our participants, however, the idea that they would be more protected by being moved from their existing accommodation to hotels made little sense. They mentioned that social distancing was difficult or impossible to observe within the hotels; whether queuing for food together, meeting at reception, touching the same door handles, these were all happenings that made the place feel Covid unsafe.

One mother living in the ‘Baby and Mothers Unit’ described the difficulties of maintaining social distance in a communal space with cramped conditions:

‘So, we are forced to sit outside here by the couch and all of us you find us here there's no social distancing, is nothing because that is what they want to put us “Oh, young moms in the same place”. How can they say that it's... they're going to prevent Corona or how if they're putting us together, there is no way we will be apart from each other... And kids are kids, of course she end up going to a different mom to end up going from... it's just like that you cannot stop that. You can't stop that.’

The participants also noted that ventilation was inadequate, the places were usually crowded, with lots of movement of people, with new residents being moved in and out frequently, so as a result it was difficult to form social bubbles. The way cleaning was carried out within the hotel was another reason that people felt unsafe with regard to Covid-19:

‘One thing that really troubles me is the cleaners...the ladies who come to clean the [room]. I am not saying that they have got Covid or anything, but when we are talking about Covid and social distancing... being...what you call it ... maintaining the social distance... they just come any time, when you are sleeping, they just come to clean your room and you have to leave your room, they are wearing gloves, they are touching everything that belongs to you, with gloves, and they leave your room going to the next room wearing the gloves. I have been watching them and just noticing them... I never observed changing those gloves. So if you are saying it's about Covid? [actually] for me it's better if someone didn't come to clean my room. (Evoque Diva, 1st interview)

3.5. Dreaming of cooking

One of the more emotive discussions to emerge from the research was to the discussions of food. These discussions illustrated the lack of choice in the lives of those claiming asylum, the stigma of claiming asylum and the unjustness of a system that allows people claiming asylum to go hungry.

Whether living in hotels or in the repurposed ‘Mothers and Baby Unit’, our participants spoke of the impact that their relocation has had on their health and wellbeing. All those residing in hotels raised the issue of poor food quality being served. As a result many did not eat well and felt unwell or sick. Three of our participants had stopped eating the food served in hotels and relied on little snacks that they could afford. A participant in their 50s was receiving medical treatment for iron deficiency due to lack of food/poor diet; a condition that started while living in the hotel. Also, it was noted that the food served did not take into account religious and cultural observances (e.g., being halal), which was another reason not to consume it. The meals offered were the same and living in places with no access to cooking facilities for months clearly had taken its toll, both physically and mentally, as participants reported being malnourished and ill.

‘It was actually tough. You know, we try to find another way for making food. So, we just we have kettle to warm water and we try to talk with Mears and other staff that would allow us to cook our own meal, but they say no, you're not allowed. We're not allowed to go to kitchen, and you try to make it improve the food a little bit to make it like it was nice, but It was no respond no helpful any from Mears or from staff of hotel. Yeah, until we went on refuse eating, strike for a months a week, two weeks I think everything changed.’ (Tiger, 1st interview)

Those housed on a ‘full board’ basis - generally those in initial accommodation claimed under Section 4 or Section 98 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 99 - are required to be

provided with all three meals. The contract is very detailed in specifying the range of dietary requirements to be catered for including ‘special dietary, cultural or religious requirements (including, without limitation, gluten free and diabetic options where necessary)’⁸ Babies and small children are required to have access to appropriate food whenever necessary. The contract also specifies that menus need to be validated by a qualified nutritionist or suitable health professional. The contract specifies these requirements as performance standards and asserts that accurate and auditable records of the food provision needs to be maintained to assure varied and nutritionally appropriate menus have been provided.

Firstly, with the Covid pandemic, many of the participants recounted the amount of movements they had between accommodation sites. Many of these moves, as discussed above, have occurred with very little notice and involved being moved from flat-style accommodation into hotels and thus removing the ability to prepare their own food:

‘I would prefer, I would prefer the first one, the initial accommodation because it has the kitchen, it has the fridge. Though the other one too had televisions, all these things and then that you can see again to the first one but those two key things that I've mentioned, the kitchen and the fridge is more important so we can be able to prepare the stuff, the good the food that you want all these things and then so you see, so I more prefer the first one than the second one.’ (Idris, 1st interview)

The moves themselves were particularly challenging, with the lack of consideration directly affecting their subsistence:

‘On that day [of the move] in the morning, I had just been to the supermarket when they came in. I said they will have to collect me to go with me to another accommodation, so all those foods were spoiled just like that. The food that I... was just from the supermarket, did in my shopping so when I came, I would just pack them up so I thought maybe there were gonna give me another flat again where I can be able, where I can have kitchen, all these things to prepare, not knowing that they will go... they are taking me to a hotel where there is no kitchen. So, the food, two three days the foods were destroyed because no fridge for me to put them [in the hotel].’ (Idris, 2nd interview)

Issues with eating were also reported by women living in the ‘Mothers and Baby Unit’. Within this unit individuals lived in bedsits and had access to a kitchenette/cooking facilities, but these were cramped conditions and mothers were worried about the safety of their children when cooking inside the room. One participant who was a mother of a newborn said explicitly that she had stopped cooking in her room as the cooker was too close to the cot and she was scared for the baby. She said that she would go for days without eating. Another reason that made women reluctant to cook in their rooms was that cookers regularly set off the fire alarms in the building - which meant all residents had to go outside in the cold/rain with their babies.

⁸ [Asylum Accommodation and Support Statement of Requirements](#), p46

4. Conclusions and recommendations

While the findings presented here are based on preliminary analysis of our data, a number of key concluding points can be highlighted. Firstly, as we noted earlier, the findings lend weight to the existing evidence showing that housing provided to asylum seekers is often substandard and, in some cases, unsafe. As a report by Asylum Matters and Refugee Council (2020) has noted, issues around housing conditions experienced by asylum seekers are not new and predate the introduction of a new asylum contract, Asylum Accommodation and Support Services Contract, in 2019. While the new contract required providers to improve their service and have a more proactive approach in terms of property inspection and maintenance, our participants' accounts show that, in practice, there has been little positive change regarding provision of asylum accommodation by private contractors.

Secondly, the relocations of our participants to hotel-type accommodation during the pandemic were experienced in a negative way. They were described as having a significant impact on their health and wellbeing, as individuals were faced with a number of restrictions such as losing their cash payments, being unable to cook their own food, having their mobility restricted, being unable to visit friends or have visitors, etc. Far from offering a 'safe environment' during Covid-19, our participants spoke of hotel-type accommodations as being like detention facilities. The idea they would be more protected by being moved from their existing accommodation to hotels made little sense to them, as social distancing was almost impossible to observe in the new settings and they were provided with little access to Covid testing. Our participants' experiences of living in hotels during the pandemic thus point to a reality that is a far cry from the 'luxurious' and 'comfortable' conditions reported in some of the British media.

Thirdly, our research also confirms the negative impact that relocations of more than 20 asylum-seeking mothers to the 'Mothers and Baby Unit' has had on these individuals and their children. The findings have shown how such a move left our participants shocked and devastated at the lack of space and cramped living conditions that they were moved into. Be it the small size of the rooms, tiny beds, lack of space for children, unsuitable furniture, inadequate washing facility, insufficient ventilation, noisy accommodation, inability to social distance, the list of issues that our participants reported was endless and clearly pointed to the unsuitability of these facilities for housing mothers with their children and pregnant women. What was of particular concern was that amongst those who were moved to the 'Unit' included extremely vulnerable individuals such as a pregnant woman who had mental health issues.

Finally, the treatment of our participants during their relocations emerged as a key issue. Our participants spoke at length about a lack of communication and transparency from both the Home Office and the accommodation service provider when they were being moved to hotels or other temporary forms of accommodation such as the 'Mothers and Baby Unit'. Many were not told explicitly that they would be moved into new settings and only found out about their accommodation when they arrived at the destination. While the AASC contract requires the accommodation provider to treat service users/asylum seekers with care, compassion and respect, our participants' accounts pointed to a service provision that was

inattentive towards their needs, vulnerability and wellbeing. Relocations took place with little consideration of people's needs and with no consultation with asylum seekers themselves. In some cases, individuals were even threatened with deportation by the accommodation provider's staff if they resisted the move, thus making it difficult for asylum seekers to challenge relocations to unsuitable accommodation. Such threats reflect practices of everyday 'bordering' (Yuval-Davis et al 2019), practices which have become common in the context of 'hostile environment' policies (Goodfellow 2020) where employers and non-immigration actors are increasingly performing the work of border guards.

Rather than being treated as a group of vulnerable individuals in need of international protection, the encounters between our participants and service provider staff often reflected and reproduced the ongoing stigmatisation that asylum seekers face in British society. This was evident, for example, in one of the encounters shown above, where the participant was reminded of being 'a destitute', and made to feel 'grateful' by the staff for the minimal support they were receiving. The participant, in other words, was constructed as being 'less deserving' of basic dignity and respect. Our research thus shows that the reconstruction of asylum seekers as 'undeserving' takes place not only through current UK government policies and media discourses but also in everyday encounters with accommodation providers, where boundaries between 'us' and 'them', 'deserving citizens' and 'undeserving migrants' are being drawn.

In the context of the above findings, we suggest the following recommendations:

- Participants should be treated with **respect and dignity** and as people with social needs. They should be given **advance notice** and kept **well informed and consulted** of any moves in order to adequately prepare for them.
- It is essential that all asylum seekers have access to **suitable food** in terms of nutritional content, variety, as well as cultural and religious observances. No one seeking asylum should be **going hungry** for days.
- We note the unsuitability of the 'Mother and Baby' accommodation and recommend that an **independent assessment** of this facility is carried out as a matter of urgency. Given the health and safety issues highlighted above, there should be a **halt** to relocating more families to this unit until such assessment has taken place.
- Risk assessments for individuals being relocated should be conducted in advance of any move and the use of **retrospective assessments should end**.
- Staying in hotel-type accommodation for lengthy periods has **significant impact on the health and wellbeing** of asylum seekers and thus should be minimised and relocation to dispersal housing should be made a matter of priority.

- Participants should **independently access the buildings** where they reside at any time of day and **restrictions** requiring them to stay ‘on-site overnight’ **should be lifted**.
- The two pieces of luggage per person limit regarding transportation of asylum seekers as set out in Section 3.5 in the Statement of Requirements to the Asylum Support and Accommodation Contract (AASC) 11 can be restrictive and thus **requires reviewing** as it can lead to humiliating practices such as mentioned above and for asylum seekers to **lose their personal belongings**, which they cannot easily replace given their financial position.

5. References

- Asylum Matters/Refugee Action 2020. Wake-up call: How government contracts fail people seeking asylum, *Refugee Action/Asylum Matters*, July 2020. Available at: <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Wake-Up-Call-2020.pdf>.
- BBC 2020. Glasgow stabbings: Concerns over asylum hotel plan ahead of incident. *BBC News*, 27 June, August. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-53205396>.
- BBC 2021. *Asylum seekers: Napier Barracks and Penally camp 'filthy and run-down'*, BBC News, 8 March. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-56325360>.
- Berg, L. M and M. Nowicka 2019. *Studying diversity, migration and urban multiculturalism: convivial tools for research practice*. UCL Press. London: University College London.
- Brooks, L. 2020 Hundreds of Glasgow asylum seekers still in 'untenable' hotel accommodation, *The Guardian*, 26 July. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jul/26/hundreds-glasgow-asylum-seekers-untenable-hotel-accommodation>.
- Bulman, M. 2020. Home Office admits asylum seekers in hotels should be getting cash support - but new payments 'not enough', *The Independent*, 31 October. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/asylum-seekers-hotels-cash-support-home-office-coronavirus-pandemic-b1446025.html>.
- Doctors of the World 2020. *Written evidence submitted by Doctors of the World UK (COR0017) Lack of translated COVID-19 guidance*, March 2020. Available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/1018/pdf/>
- Findlay, K. 2020. Glasgow issues temporary pause on asylum seekers as humanitarian concerns deepen, *Scottish Housing News*, 7 July. Available at: <https://www.scotishhousingnews.com/article/glasgow-issues-temporary-pause-on-asylum-seekers-as-humanitarian-concerns-deepen>.
- Glasgow Live 2020. Full investigation demand after Glasgow MPs walk out of refugee 'deadly accommodation' crisis meeting. *Glasgow Live*, 24 August. Available at: <https://www.glasgowlive.co.uk/news/glasgow-news/full-investigation-demand-after-glasgow-18818194>.
- Goodfellow, M. 2020. *The hostile environment: How immigrants became scapegoats*. Verso Books.
- Grierson, J. 2020. End housing of asylum seekers in old army barracks, UK ministers urged, *The Guardian*, 8 December. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/dec/08/end-housing-asylum-seekers-old-army-barracks-uk-ministers-urged>.
- Home Affairs Committee. 2020. Home Office preparedness for COVID-19 (Coronavirus): institutional accommodation. *Fourth Report of Session 2019–21*. House of Commons, 23 July 2020.
- Kelly, N. 2020. Home Office faces legal challenge over asylum seeker payments during Covid, *The Guardian*, 1 December. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/dec/01/home-office-faces-legal-challenge-over-asylum-seeker-payments-during-covid>.

- Mail on Sunday, 2021. Dozens of migrants are living in a plush hotel close to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridges' home in Kensington Palace - with 55 asylum seekers put up for as long as nine months, *Mail on Sunday*, 1 August. Available at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9848203/Dozens-migrants-living-hotel-55-asylum-seekers-long-nine-months.html>.
- Mayblin, L. (2017) *Asylum after Empire: Colonial Legacies in the Politics of Asylum Seeking*. London: Rowman and Littlefield International.
- Mears 2020. Statement by Mears in response to the Scottish Refugee Council, *Mears group*, 21 May. Available at: <https://www.mearsgroup.co.uk/news/statement-by-mears-in-response-to-the-scottish-refugee-council>.
- National Audit Office 2020. *Asylum accommodation and support*. Available at: <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Asylum-accommodation-and-support.pdf>
- Positive Action in Housing 2020. Timeline of Glasgow's deadly accommodation crisis, 30 June. *Positive Action in Housing news*. Available at: <https://www.paih.org/timeline-humanitarian-crisis-glasgow/>.
- Sturge, G and Gower, M. 2020 Asylum accommodation: the use of hotels and military barracks. *Briefing Paper, Number 8990*. House of Commons Library, 24 November 2020.
Sturge, G. 2020. Asylum Statistics. *Briefing Paper, Number SN01403*. House of Commons Library, 17 March 2020.
- Taylor, D. 2020. Far-right activists filmed hassling asylum seekers in hotels. *The Guardian*, 28 August. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/28/far-right-activists-filmed-hassling-asylum-seekers-in-hotels>.
- Yuval-Davis, N., Wemyss, G. and K. Cassidy. 2019. *Bordering*. Polity Press.