



Introduction

Praxis was established in 1983 and has been providing support and welcome to migrant communities for over 35 years. Whilst Praxis has evolved to meet changing circumstances and needs, we have always championed the human rights and humanity of people who have migrated.

Working with people, supporting their agency and ability to have a voice has always been a key part of that work. Challenging discrimination and creating systemic change are at the core of what Praxis does.

People have always migrated, whether for work, love, adventure or finding safety and many people are able to adjust and build new lives without specialist support. Some people are - or become - more vulnerable because of the circumstances of their flight, reception or treatment on arrival. This includes people without family support or with an insecure immigration status, refugees, people seeking asylum and survivors of violence, exploitation or trafficking. Praxis works with people who are marginalised, at-risk or in crisis because they are excluded from the welfare safety net by the 'no recourse to public funds' condition or by the complexity of the immigration system and exclusion from wider services due to 'hostile' or 'compliant environment' policies.



Our vision

People who have migrated to the UK will not be marginalised or mistreated because of their immigration status.

They will live safely, free from poverty, discrimination, and exclusion, and be treated with compassion and respect.



Our impact 2018 - 2021

In 2018, we designed a three-year strategy which outlined our plans to:

- Increase access to advice and holistic services that recognised people's human rights and needs.
- Develop and promote innovative solutions to homelessness.
- Use experience and evidence from our service delivery to create change at a local and national level.
- Support people with lived experience to have a strengthened voice, and improved wellbeing.

We are very proud of what we have achieved. Since 2018 we have:

- Expanded our Advice Services from nine to twenty-one immigration advisers and solicitors, delivering expert legal advice and specialist information and guidance to support nearly 5,000 people.
- Developed innovative new partnerships and service models with homelessness organizations including Shelter, Crisis, The Connection at St Martin's and St Mungo's. These new cross-sector approaches increased access to vital immigration advice, supporting people experiencing homelessness to secure long-term pathways out of destitution.



- > Designed and implemented an award-winning Housing Project, providing sustainable routes out of homelessness for single women and families. This project won a Homeless Link Innovation Award and was a finalist in the World Habitat Awards and Guardian Public Service Awards.
- > Contributed to significant policy change for the Windrush generation, using evidence from our frontline services to uncover injustice and campaign for change. We were shortlisted for a Third Sector Partnership award and highly commended by PR Week Award for our work unveiling the scandal.
- > Delivered training to 1,500 people, using our expertise to increase knowledge and capacity in order to enable others to better identify and address the barriers faced by people who have migrated.
- > Delivered four user-led groups, tackling isolation, building resilience, and providing platforms to amplify the voices of migrant women, men, and young people.



"My immigration issue was solved; my homelessness was solved. Because the outcome was so good, my crying days and nights turned to laughter."

Current context

It is an extremely challenging time for many people who have come to live in the UK, whether by choice or through the need to seek humanitarian protection.

Thousands have found themselves trapped in the immigration system and the hostile policy environment because of their family background or changes in immigration policy. This was demonstrated most clearly in the Windrush scandal where long-term legal residents and British citizens were denied their rights, pushed out of employment, made destitute, denied healthcare, called illegal immigrants and criminalised, all because of deliberate policies pursued by the government.

This hostile policy environment has led to increased hardship and institutionalised discrimination at the same time as the availability of free, expert advice has shrunk. Substantial cuts to legal aid, culminating with Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (2013), has meant that most immigration advice is out of the scope of legal aid, leading to a severe reduction in the availability of free advice and representation. As a result, thousands of people fall into needless homelessness, ill health, and crisis, unable to access the support and advice they need to resolve their situations.



Covid-19 exposed and exacerbated existing issues.

Migrant workers have been at the front-line of the crisis, working in essential services, including the NHS, often risking their own lives and health. Many have insecure immigration status, insecure employment, and no welfare safety net if they become ill or lose their jobs. People have presented to Praxis facing increased destitution and homelessness, vulnerability to declining health and severe safeguarding issues. Evidence has shown that migrant homelessness is rising steeply across the UK - in London almost 70% of those housed in emergency temporary accommodation during the pandemic had unclear or insecure immigration status. As economic and social disruption caused by Covid-19 continues through 2021 and beyond, the acute needs of those we exist to support are likely to become further entrenched.

Brexit means the end of freedom of movement and the end of shared rights to residence, employment, and services. Millions of EU citizens must register under the Government's EU Settlement Scheme before the end of June 2021, after this time they will become undocumented and criminalised, losing their rights to live and work in the UK, despite long-residence. Many thousands of people are unaware that they need to register, or have problems in doing so, and there is already confusion and discrimination as service providers demand documents that EU citizens do not have.



In 2021 we will see the introduction of a new immigration system and likely changes to the Human Rights Act, both of which will impact negatively on the people we support. Influencing national political agendas has become harder. Far right extremism is on the rise. Public discourse on migrants, refugees and race issues is becoming ever more hostile with political rhetoric around 'activist lawyers', 'culture wars' and unprecedented attempts to prevent people seeking asylum reaching the UK.

Embedding Anti-Racism in Praxis

Our work over many years has placed us at the centre of the struggle for human rights in the face of racism and xenophobia and these struggles will continue to be at the forefront of our work. On a daily basis we face the damaging impact of hostile and prejudicial immigration policies, the stereotyping of our service users and gatekeeping of public services. The Windrush scandal highlighted this starkly. Covid-19 has had a differential impact on black, Asian and minority ethnic communities from a health, economic and social welfare perspective. The harrowing and public killing of George Floyd in the US and the exposure of the violent and deep-rooted nature of racism that sparked the Black Lives Matter movement in the US, the UK and across the world, requires us all to examine our obligations and behaviours, personal and organisational. This new strategy is rooted in a commitment to address the injustices of racism and the structures and thinking that perpetuate it, so that we can contribute to building a fairer society.

Our mission

Our mission is to create positive change for and with individuals and communities who are marginalised because of their immigration status. We deliver our vision by working on three levels.

- > **Delivering direct services:** providing specialist legal advice and holistic welfare support to help people live securely and safely.
- > **Building the capacity of other services across the UK:** using our expertise to provide innovative solutions and sharing our knowledge through training and partnership working.
- > **Campaigning for systemic change:** building alliances and working in partnership with experts by experience to create positive, long-term changes to the policy and practice that cause exclusion and destitution.



Praxis 2021 - 2026 strategic plan

It is against this challenging backdrop, that Praxis has developed its five-year strategy, outlining our commitment to act as a catalyst for national, systemic change to create the greatest impact for marginalised migrants facing crisis across the UK.

Frontline services and community building are core to Praxis. Under this new strategy, we will continue to deliver vital face-to-face holistic services to meet the complex needs of our service users. We will expand our geographic and numeric reach, building on the learnings of Covid-19 and harnessing technology to design and deliver digital services accessible from across the UK. We will expand our training programme, using digital tools to equip hundreds of grassroots, frontline and non-OISC regulated organisations nationwide to build their skills and capacity to support people to escape destitution and crisis.



Over the last five years, our pioneering partnerships with charities and statutory bodies in the homelessness sector have modelled cross-sector good practice, while providing legal lifelines to those most in need and living in homelessness. In this new strategy, we will maintain our expertise in homelessness and housing, taking a leadership role in the sector in relation to strategic partnerships and alliances, building the capacity of others to support migrants in crisis in all aspects of their lives.

We are clear that to create long-term change for those we support, we must achieve changes to national policy and practice. To power this change, we will invest in our campaigning work, drawing on our experience and evidence base to inform policy, influencing and strategic litigation. We will collaborate with law firms, universities, and allies in the sector to maximise resources, expertise and impact. We will build our digital communication infrastructure to increase engagement with this work and to mobilise public support for change. People with lived experience of the immigration system will be the driving force, and at the heart of this work, and we will continue to take an approach that recognises that people have both needs and aspirations and can be leading agents for change.



Objective 1

People navigating the immigration system or subject to immigration controls have access to the support they need to live safely and escape poverty.

Praxis will increase access to support by delivering frontline services which provide the legal advice, and holistic support and guidance people need to leave crisis and begin to live safely. We will work in partnership to increase access to support for those most in need, and champion user-led work to build community and strengthen lived experience voices. We will:

- > Deliver specialist advice and complex casework on immigration, housing, welfare, family, and benefit issues, supporting people to navigate the UK's immigration and support systems.
- > Build strong referral pathways with other service providers to enable holistic support, including specialist employment, trauma, and mental health services.
- > Provide opportunities to build community through user-led group work to reduce isolation, increase resilience and improve wellbeing.
- > Design and deliver innovative projects in partnership with the homelessness sector, ensuring that people who are at risk of, or living in homelessness have access to the immigration advice and support they need to secure pathways out of destitution.



Objective 2

Statutory and voluntary service providers are better able to identify and address the needs of people who have migrated or have family migration histories.

Praxis will expand our training and capacity building programme, supporting good practice, and enabling others to respond positively to the needs of people who have migrated. We will:

- > Launch a national, digital service to expand the reach of our highly regarded second-tier advice training.
- > Deliver a coordinated pan-London training project for non-OISC regulated organisations to increase capacity and knowledge to support people with immigration issues.
- > Share and model good practice, feeding evidence and learning into local, regional, and national networks, partnerships and events to contribute to joined up, cross sector approaches.
- > Consolidate our work with local authorities and statutory services; training staff and supporting improvements in service provision.



Objective 3

Positive changes in national policy and practice are secured through public campaigning, influencing, advocacy and strategic litigation.

Praxis will advocate with and on behalf of people who have migrated, creating systemic improvements, and acting as a catalyst for long-term change. We will:

- > Build our analytic capability, providing a robust evidence base to inform policy, influencing, campaigning and strategic litigation work.
- > Provide evidence-based recommendations to inform local and national responses, using research, resources, and expertise from across the organisation.
- > Lead campaigns with experts by experience at their heart, raising awareness of the experiences of people with insecure immigration status or affected by immigration controls and supporting them to campaign on the issues that affect them.
- > Collaborate with partners to drive positive change by developing and mobilising local and national support of policymakers, politicians, the public and the media.



Objective 4

Praxis will be a resilient, agile, flexible organisation that can respond effectively to changing needs and circumstances.

Praxis will build on the learning from Covid-19 to ensure that we remain an organisation which can flex and adapt quickly, while continuing to meet the needs of staff and service users. We will:

- > Develop a flexible operating model and identify new premises that support us to deliver our mission in the best way possible.
- > Invest in our infrastructure and support services to ensure effective systems, processes and support for good governance.
- > Deliver a digital transformation programme, continuing to embrace technological advances to support our work and benefit staff and service users.
- > Strengthen our fundraising capacity to ensure a sustainable, diverse income strategy and secure the funds the charity needs to deliver this strategy.

This strategy will be reviewed on a rolling basis, as circumstances change.

Theory of change





Thank you to all the partners and funders who will make our work possible.

To find out more about our services and campaigns, or to support us, please visit our website:

www.praxis.org.uk

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