

# Homelessness at the intersection of complex systems: using institutional ethnography to understand refugee homelessness prevention



References

## Aims of the study

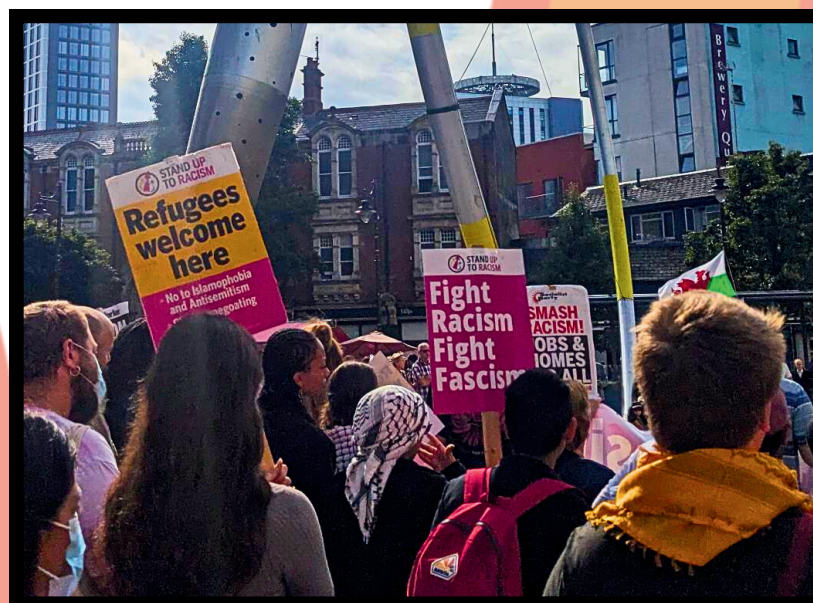
- 1 To trace the recognised and unrecognised work of asylum seekers and refugees to find, secure and sustain housing as they navigate their pathways to settlement in Wales.
- 2 To map the web of policies, legislation, guidance and processes that are used to coordinate institutional responses to homelessness among newly granted refugees in Wales.
- 3 To use this data to explain why there is widespread homelessness and housing precarity among refugees in Wales, despite formal recognition of the importance of adequate housing for their long-term settlement and 'integration'.
- 4 To begin developing evidence-based recommendations for and with asylum seekers and refugees living in Wales to improve their long-term housing outcomes.

## Approach: Institutional Ethnography (IE)

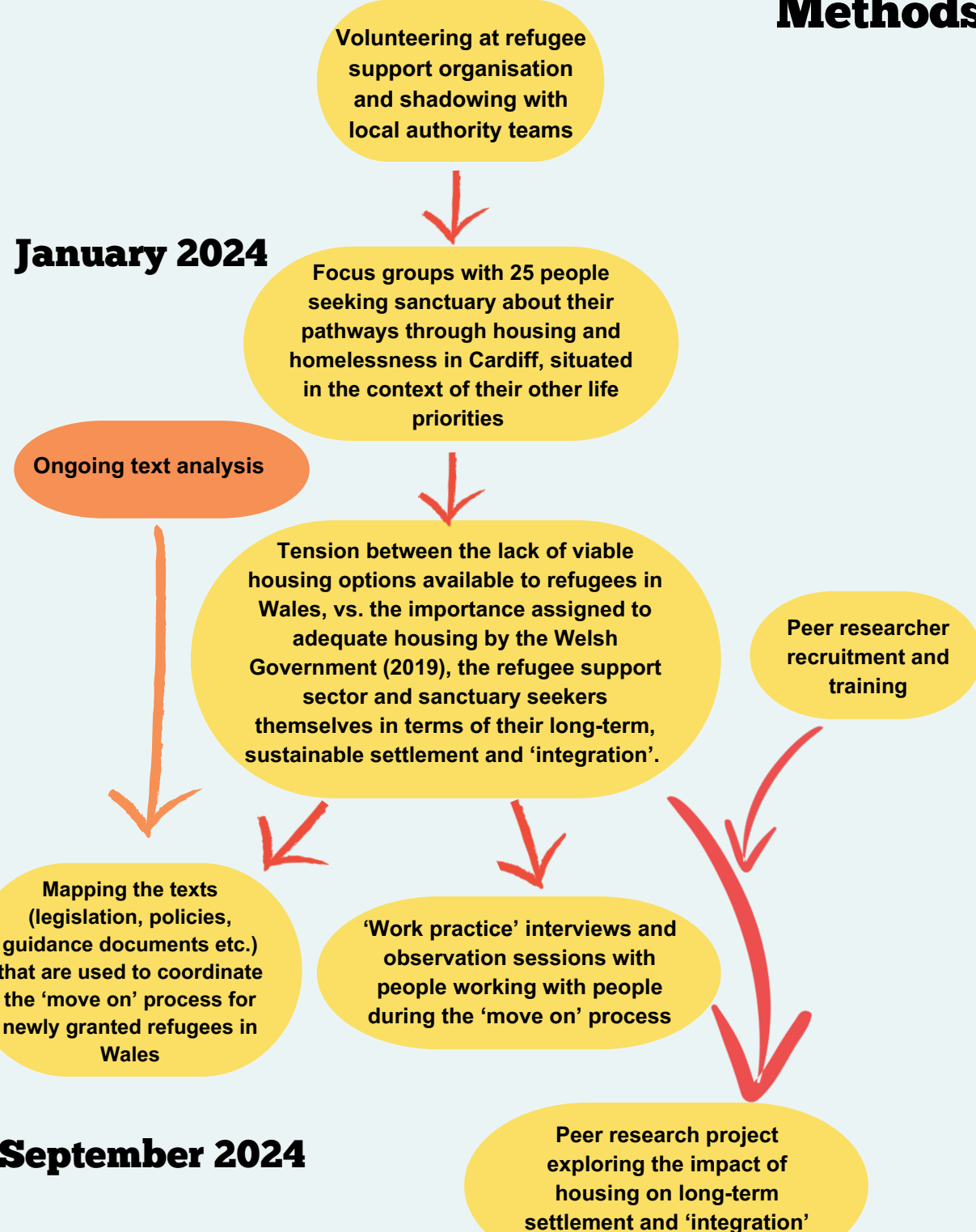
IE is a research approach that aims to investigate how an institution functions for a particular group of people, grounded in the sociological thinking of Dorothy E. Smith (2005).

IE begins in the standpoint of people and the actions they take in their everyday lives (McCoy 2021). People's knowledge from actually 'being there' provides an entry point into learning about how their experiences are institutionally organised, in a way that might otherwise be misrepresented or hidden.

The goal is to empirically explain why there is a gap between what is *supposed to happen* - what appears formally in the texts, policies and processes of an institution - and what is *actually happening* for the group of people you are working with and for.



## Methods



## Emergent findings

Prevention in this context almost exclusively consists of crisis management during and immediately following the 28-day 'move on' period from UK government-funded dispersal accommodation following a grant of refugee status.

The 'move on' process is intensely complicated and disjointed. Administrative delays, bureaucratic errors, language barriers, and/or a limited awareness of individual rights and entitlements can be hugely consequential during this period.

There is a systemic dependence on accommodation made available through the private rented sector (PRS) to respond to housing need among people seeking sanctuary in Wales.

Due to a lack of alternatives, many newly granted refugees end up sofa surfing under the radar with friends or acquaintances in their old dispersal accommodation, which can lead to multiple homeless presentations to the local authority when this person receives their status and is also evicted.

There is very little consideration for, or understanding of, the impact that a complex migration journey and months (or years) spent in UK government-funded dispersal accommodation can have on a person's long-term housing pathways following a grant of refugee status.