

Chris Philp MP *Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts)*

Kelly Tolhurst MP *Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government*

DECS Reference: MIN/0121922/20

25 November 2020

Dear Ministers,

RE: Reverse the decision to evict people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) into homelessness

Thank you for your responses to our joint letter to the Prime Minister dated 1st October. We welcome the Government's commitment to protecting and supporting everyone during this pandemic. Following recent developments, as the lead signatories of the first letter we are writing again to outline the further action we believe is needed to ensure that no one is evicted into homelessness this winter.

When the UK introduced initial lockdown measures in March, the Home Office was quick to act to suspend evictions and support people seeking asylum to remain in accommodation. This was the right thing to do, and allowed people seeking asylum to follow public health guidance, stay at home and stay safe.

Since the 5th November, there has been a second lockdown in place in England. We welcome the temporary pause on evictions for people who have been refused asylum; as shown by the order in the recent [High Court ruling](#), and growing evidence of the risks of Covid-19 for people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, this was once again the right thing to do. We also welcome the steps taken by MHCLG since September to provide private renters in England with protections against eviction until March 2021.

However, as England exits lockdown on the 2nd December, we hope the Home Office will be able to provide confirmation that the pause on evictions from asylum accommodation for those who have been refused asylum will remain throughout this fragile recovery stage, to allow individuals and local authorities to continue to keep themselves and their communities safe.

In the response from the Immigration Minister, you state that it is 'only right that [people who have been refused asylum] take steps to leave the UK'. This position incorrectly assumes that every person's protection needs have been accurately and completely considered at the point of refusal. The latest Home Office figures show that [45% of asylum appeals are allowed](#). We also know that many people who have been refused asylum are eventually granted leave to remain; of the 427 people who were appeal rights exhausted and moved on from NACCOM member organisations in 2019/20, [53%](#)

[secured refugee protection or accessed government support](#). To make decisions about their next steps, people need support and legal advice, but this is not achievable without a roof over their head.

Your letters also refer to examples of financial support to prevent homelessness in England that have been welcomed. Yet whilst these funds have saved lives, we [and many others](#) are concerned that current levels being offered do not go far enough to meet the need. [Recent steps outlined by the Minister for Housing](#) do not match the steps taken earlier in the year, yet we are entering winter and capacity and resources are already under significant pressure.

Many Local Authorities have worked hard to make support available to everyone in need, but there has not been a uniform approach to the use of funds for people with NRPF. Therefore, despite your assurance that those who need it can get help, we are worried that without requisite clarity and funding, there remains a real risk that people with insecure immigration statuses will miss out.

It is crucial that the Home Office and other departments commit to meaningful and ongoing partnership working and consultation with Local Authorities and devolved governments, Strategic Migration Partnerships, local Public Health leads and voluntary sector organisations to ensure that shelter is available to all who need it, particularly as we exit lockdown and Covid-19 remains a threat.

We share the government's commitment to ending rough sleeping and homelessness. We stand ready to support you to achieve this ambition and to work together to ensure that no-one is left in the cold this winter.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these issues in more depth.

Yours sincerely,

Asylum Matters (Paul Hook, Project Director)

Migrants' Rights Network (Dorian Leatham, Interim CEO)

NACCOM (Renaë Mann, National Director)