**‘Everyone Out?’- preventing migrant homelessness during & beyond Covid-19 (Sept 2020)**

**Overview**

Destitution and homelessness have been built in features of the UK immigration system for some time. However, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, many migrants were temporarily protected from homelessness due to two key measures**:** a suspension of evictions from asylum accommodation and the continuation of financial support by the Home Office; and the ‘Everyone In’ policy directive from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) which, alongside equivalent measures from devolved governments, allowed Local Authorities to accommodate everyone at risk of homelessness, regardless of immigration status or No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) conditions. **As these emergency measures end, people with NRPF, alongside those who have been recently granted asylum, are acutely at risk of homelessness.**

This uncertainty for individuals at an already stressful time is unnecessary, and the prospect of withdrawing support during a deadly pandemic is unacceptable, especially given the well evidenced [disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on people from Black and Minority Ethnic](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/892376/COVID_stakeholder_engagement_synthesis_beyond_the_data.pdf) (BAME) communities. One person supported by an organisation in the NACCOM network who was at risk of street homelessness explains how before he had temporary accommodation; *“I was panicking, when I heard if you have an underlying health condition you are more likely to die. So I thought I was going to die, it was very worrying, very dangerous.”*

**The present situation**

* Evictions for people with a negative asylum decision [began from the 15th September](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/asylum-seekers-evictions-home-office-coronavirus-second-wave-b486062.html), with no clarity about what will happen to people who cannot leave the UK after the 21 day notice period. **This decision will force thousands of people into destitution and risk the creation of a significant newly street homeless population.**
* Evictions began [from the 11th August for people with a positive asylum decision](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/latest/news/changes-to-home-office-asylum-resettlement-policy-and-practice-in-response-to-covid-19/). This decision was out of step with the stay on bringing court proceedings in the first step of the eviction process from the Private Rental Sector (extended until the 20th September), and **there are concerns about availability of housing stock for newly homeless people due to increased numbers of people in need.**
* The Home Affairs Select Committee [report into Home Office preparedness for COVID-19 institutional accommodation](https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/2171/documents/20088/default/) recommended that ‘*Before taking any final decision to remove temporary support for asylum seekers, the Home Office and its accommodation providers must engage and consult closely with Public Health England, devolved governments, Strategic Migration Partnerships, asylum dispersal councils and local public health units to ensure that any changes do not place individuals at any risk or overwhelm other statutory support services.’* **It is not clear what engagement with these stakeholders has been undertaken or how these decisions have been reached in a way that ensures individuals are not at risk.**
* There remains significant uncertainty about Local Authority provision for people with NRPF. In England, ‘Everyone In’ funding ended in June, with additional funding available through the [Next Steps Accommodation Programme](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/next-steps-accommodation-programme-guidance-and-proposal-templates?utm_campaign=1946852_Move%20on%20funding%20update%20July%202020&utm_medium=email&utm_source=dotmailer&dm_i=3R33,15Q78,52OD3O,43WII,1) **though it is not clear how much of this will be available for people with NRPF**. Meanwhile, whilst governments in Wales and Scotland have continued to show support to people with NRPF throughout the pandemic, there is a risk that **Home Office policy will undermine efforts in the devolved nations to maintain homelessness provision and public health protections.**
* Charities that provide temporary housing to people with NRPF and refugees who would otherwise be homeless report reduced capacity, uncertainty about how services can open safely and concerns about the impact of restrictions and rising cases of Covid-19 in dispersal areas. **These factors make it extremely difficult for local organisations to respond and adapt to the needs of people that may be requiring emergency support in the months ahead.** There are related widespread concerns that people who are evicted will find themselves reliant on the support of other people in their local BAME communities in order to avoid street homelessness.

**What needs to happen**

To continue to protect everyone from COVID-19, the following measures must be implemented immediately by the Home Office, and the housing departments for all constituent nations of the UK:

* **The Home Office must halt their plans to resume evictions for people who have been refused asylum, and further extend protections from evictions in the devolved nations.** There must be no evictions into homelessness from asylum accommodation for people with NRPF for at least the next 12 months or longer while COVID-19 poses a public health risk;
* An end to No Recourse to Public Funds conditions, including those without leave to remain;
* A fully funded duty for Local Authorities to provide emergency accommodation to all those with nowhere safe to stay, regardless of their immigration status;
* Increasing the move on period for people recently granted refugee status to at least 56 days.

**For further information:**

For more on the impact of Covid on different ethnic groups, see Public Health England report ‘[Beyond the Data: Understanding the Impact of COVID-19 on BAME Communities’](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/892376/COVID_stakeholder_engagement_synthesis_beyond_the_data.pdf) (June 2020)

For more on the needs faced by people with NRPF, see Citizens Advice Bureau report [‘Nowhere to Turn’](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/policy/policy-research-topics/welfare-policy-research-surveys-and-consultation-responses/welfare-policy-research/nowhere-to-turn-how-immigration-rules-are-preventing-people-from-getting-support-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/) (June 2020)

For more on calls for a duty on Local Authorities and suspension of NRPF conditions, see Crisis’ [Emergency Legislation](https://www.crisis.org.uk/get-involved/home-for-all/noticeboard/home-for-all-emergency-legislation/) campaign.

For more on the risks of homelessness amongst people with a positive asylum decision, see NACCOM’s [Mind the Gap (One Year On)](https://naccom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/NACCOM-Homelessnesss-Report_2019-06-18_DIGITAL.pdf) report (June 2019), and for detailed cost-benefit analysis of improvements to the move on period, see [The British Red Cross, Costs of Destitution](https://www.redcross.org.uk/.../the-costs-of-destitution.pdf%20%C2%B7%20PDF%20file) (Feb 2020).