



Home Office

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Dear Rabbi Charley Baginsky

Thank you for your letter of 1 October to the Home Secretary about individuals who have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). Please note you are receiving a reply from an official. I am sorry for the delay in responding.

The Government remains committed to protecting vulnerable people and has acted decisively to ensure that we support everyone through this pandemic. Many of the wide-ranging COVID-19 measures the Government has put in place have been made available to migrants with NRPF.

The assistance being given under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-employed Income Support Scheme are not classed as public funds and are available to all those in work or self-employment respectively, including those with NRPF status and those on zero-hour contracts. Statutory sick pay and some other contribution-based benefits, such as contributory employment support allowance, are also not classed as public funds and are available to all who are eligible and unable to work during this difficult time.

You have expressed concerns about the decision taken by the Home Office on evictions. All asylum seekers in the UK are eligible to apply for accommodation and other support to cover their essential living needs if they would otherwise be destitute. This support usually stops if the individual's asylum claim and any appeal is finally rejected, but in cases where there are children in the household it continues until the family leaves the UK or the youngest child reaches 18 years of age.

Automatic access to support for other failed asylum seekers stops shortly after they have

exhausted all appeals against the rejection of their asylum claim, but it continues to be made available provided the individuals take reasonable steps to leave the UK or where they are unable to leave immediately due to circumstances beyond their control, for example because they are unable to travel for a medical reason. As set out above, the Home Office Voluntary Returns Scheme pays for the flight to the home country and provides reintegration assistance.

Any asylum seeker or failed asylum seeker who requires assistance can contact Migrant Help and make an application for support from the Home Office. This can be done via email on ASCorrespondence@MigrantHelpUK.org, or via telephone on 0808 8010 503.

Local authorities may also provide basic safety net support, regardless of immigration status, if it is established that there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution, for example, where there are community care needs, migrants with serious health problems or family cases where the wellbeing of a child is in question. The Government has also launched a new scheme in England, through which local authorities can make a £500 discretionary payment to individuals who have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for COVID-19 or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive. This is available to those who are employed or self-employed who are unable to work from home and will, therefore, lose income as a result. Those with NRPF are eligible for this scheme.

Furthermore, the Rough Sleeping Support Service (RSSS) offers an enhanced service for Local Authorities and registered charities to establish whether a rough sleeper has access to public funds. Part of this service includes the RSSS expediting cases where there is an open application due to the risk presented by the individual's situation.

Migrants with leave under the Family and Human Rights routes can apply to have their NRPF condition lifted by making a 'change of conditions' application if they are destitute or at risk of destitution, if the welfare of their child is at risk due to their low income, or where there are other exceptional financial circumstances. Since the onset of the pandemic, we have continued to prioritise NRPF 'change of conditions' applications and deal with them compassionately. To support the swifter processing of applications, we have introduced evidential flexibility so that caseworkers can make a decision without requiring every piece of information.

In light of all the support that is currently available for people in the UK, including those with a NRPF condition, we have no plans to suspend NRPF.

We have published guidance and support for migrants affected by COVID-19, which can be found on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-get-support-if-youre-a-migrant-living-in-the-uk>.

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