



**SUPPORTING AND
EMPOWERING
REFUGEES**

Rt Hon Suella Braverman MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up,
Housing and Communities
Department for Levelling up, Housing
and Communities
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Enver Solomon
CEO, Refugee Council
PO Box 68614
London
E15 9DQ
07939221381

Enver.solomon@refugeecouncil.org.uk

5 September 2023

Dear Home Secretary and Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities,

RE: Changes to the move-on period for newly recognised refugees

We are writing as organisations representing refugees or concerned with homelessness to urge you to reverse the recent changes to the process for people who have been recognised as refugees and are obliged to leave asylum support accommodation. These changes are already driving people who have recently received their refugee status into destitution and homelessness, instead of getting the support and protection they are entitled to.

As a result of the changes, many refugees who have been granted refugee status in recent months are now being given just seven days' notice that they need to leave their accommodation. This is causing severe hardship for refugees, as well as placing unnecessary pressures on local authorities who are already facing challenges finding accommodation for other groups. We are finding that local authorities have not been told of the new arrangements, meaning that they are not ready to respond quickly.

The significant number of refugees already made homeless by this change is also placing huge pressures on the voluntary sector, including refugee hosting and housing schemes, and mainstream homelessness services.

The demands are quickly becoming unsustainable. It is already inevitably leading to increased rough sleeping, undermining government targets to end it.

For many years the Home Office has recognised that it is impossible for someone to secure alternative accommodation, find employment, open a bank account or apply for welfare benefits until they receive their Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). That is why the department's policy has been that the 28-day "move-on" period starts when a person receives their BRP – indeed several Home Office ministers have relied on that policy when arguing against calls to extend the move-on period.

Even with that policy in place, it is extremely difficult for refugees to find housing and get financial support within the 28 days. Over many years civil society organisations have collected and published evidence that 28 days simply isn't sufficient for newly recognised refugees to navigate the various complex processes they encounter.

Among other things, that evidence has highlighted how the government's Homelessness Reduction Act recognises that at least 56 days are usually needed to find accommodation for those at risk of homelessness. Additionally, Universal Credit has a built-in 35 day delay before a first payment is made. These processes are incompatible with the 28 day move-on period.

The recent changes worsen this situation by starting the 28 days when someone receives a grant letter telling them their protection claim has been accepted, instead of when they receive their BRP. There is usually a minimum delay of between 7 and 10 days between the receipt of the grant letter and a BRP being delivered, meaning someone will already be well into the 28 days before they can even start to engage with the processes that are vital for them to avoid homelessness and destitution. Many local authorities will also only begin to provide homelessness prevention services once someone has received a discontinuation letter informing them their asylum support will end or the notice to quit.

This situation will only get worse if, as the government intends, the backlog of asylum claims is processed more quickly and therefore more people become eligible for homelessness assistance.

Receiving refugee status should be a time of celebration, but these changes are leaving individuals, including children, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and survivors of human trafficking, facing a huge crisis just when their status is finally clarified.

We urge you to abandon these changes to the move-on period and instead work with local authorities and voluntary sector organisations to ensure people are able to access the services they need. To do this, the government should:

- Commit to immediately reversing the changes so all refugees have a minimum of 28 days before they're required to leave their accommodation.
- Ensure that refugees receive all their documentation at one time. Specifically, someone should receive their refugee grant letter, their BRP, the letter containing the date when their asylum support will end, and the notice to quit their accommodation on the same day. In line with recent Home Office policy, the 28 day notice period should never begin before someone has received their BRP.
- Issue clear guidance to local authorities that a newly recognised refugee is at risk of homelessness from the moment they receive notification of the decision on their asylum claim and so are eligible for homelessness prevention support from that time. Local authorities should not require the notice to quit or the letter stating someone's entitlement to asylum support will end before providing assistance.

- Provide devolved governments, local authorities and support organisations with the guidance and data necessary to enable them to fully support people so that they can successfully navigate the move-on period.
- Ensure accommodation providers adhere to the two working day notification period to inform the local authority that they have been notified by the Home Office that it is ceasing support for any service user following a positive decision to their asylum application.
- Stagger the 7 day notices to quit that people are now receiving and work with statutory services and civil society organisations to manage the increase in demand for support.

Finally, we urge you to commit to working towards extending the move-on period to at least 56 days, in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act and the application for Universal Credit.

We would be very happy to meet with you or your officials to discuss the matter in more detail.

Yours sincerely,

Enver Solomon, CEO, Refugee Council

Polly Neate, CEO, Shelter

Bridget Young, Director, NACCOM (the No Accommodation Network)

Kat Lorenz, Director, Asylum Support Appeals Project

Paul Hook, Director, Asylum Matters

Mike Adamson, Chief Executive, British Red Cross

Matt Downie, CEO, Crisis

Kerry Smith, CEO, Helen Bamber Foundation

Gavin Smart, Chief Executive, Chartered Institute of Housing

Sonya Sceats, CEO, Freedom from Torture

Kate Shurety, Interim CEO, Hibiscus Initiatives

Eiri Ohtani, Director, Right to Remain

Sally Daghlian OBE, CEO, Praxis

Sian Summers-Rees, Chief Officer, City of Sanctuary UK

Alex Vessis, CEO, Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support

Carly Whyborn, Interim Executive Director, Refugees at Home

Mark Courtice, Chair of Trustees, Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group (SWVG)

Ewan Roberts, CEO, Asylum Link Merseyside

Dania Thomas, Director, Ubuntu Women Shelter

Salma Ravat, CEO, One Roof Leicester

Seana Roberts, Manager, Merseyside Refugee Support Network

Annika Joy, Director, Simon Community Scotland

Anna Lewis, CEO, Open Door North East

Dr Sarah Crowther, CEO, Refugees in Effective and Active Partnership (REAP)

Phil Davis, Director, Hope Projects

Sebastian Rocca, CEO, Micro Rainbow

Sarah Teather, Director, Jesuit Refugee Service UK

Jared Hodgson, CEO, Hope at Home

Will Sutcliffe, Chair, Bradford City of Sanctuary

Rosie MacPherson, Artistic Director & Joint CEO, Stand and Be Counted Theatre

British Refugee Council, (commonly called the Refugee Council) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales, [No 2727514] and a registered charity, [No 1014576].
Registered office: Gredley House, 11 Broadway, Stratford, E15 4BQ, United Kingdom.
VAT registration no: 936 519 988



George Reiss, Vice Chairman of Trustees, Wolverhampton City of Sanctuary
Janice Lynne, Foster Trustee, Doncaster Conversation Club
Barbara Forbes, Coordinator, Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary
Dr David Brown, Chair, Birmingham City of Sanctuary
Charlotte Zosseder, Director, Samphire Project
Debbie Royle, Deputy Director, Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum (NNRF)
Felix Kupay, CEO, Entraide
Nikki Walters, Chair, Southampton Action
Mauricio Silva, Inter Religious Dialogue Coordinator, Columbans in Britain
Mary Solomon, Founder, Humans of Wolverhampton
Andrew Harwood, Project Manager, Welcome Group Halesowen
Joan Hoult, CEO, Walking With in North Tyneside
Pete White, Project Manager, CLEAR Project
Duncan McAuley, CEO, Action Foundation
David Tomlinson, the Vicar, St Paul's Church, Birmingham
Ros Bragg, Director, Maternity Action
Sara Robinson, Centre Director, St Augustines Centre
Dr Mohamed Nasreldin, Director, North of England Refugee Service
Joanne MacInnes, Director, West London Welcome
Carmen Clarke, Founding Director, Khai Tzedek CIC
Steph Neville, Project Manager, Stories of Hope and Home
Richard Good, Chairperson, 2dales Action for refugees Yorkshire Dales in PM's Constituency
Paula Maines, Cabinet member for Resilient City, Newcastle City Council
David Newall, Project Manager, Brushstrokes Community Project
Abigail Martin, Manager, St Chad's Sanctuary
Mel Steel, Director, Voices in Exile
Karen Pearce, Director, Positive Action For Refugees And Asylum Seekers (PAFRAS)
Charles Dobson, Chair, Skipton Refugee Support Group
Stuart Crosthwaite, Secretary, South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group
Ros Gowers, Coordinator, Evesham Vale Welcomes Refugees
Rick Henderson, CEO, Homeless Link
Dr Chris Wooff, Joint Leader, ACAP (Ashton Churches Asylum Project)
Penny Henry, Tynemouth Together with Refugees
Amanda Finlay CBE, Chair, Law for Life
Anna Pincus, Director, Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group
Dr Kate Smith, Senior Research Fellow, Just Futures Research Centre, University of Huddersfield
Lara Bundock, CEO, The Snowdrop Project
Lorna Gray, Fundraising and Communications Manager, RETAS Leeds
Peter Noble, Chief Executive, West End Refugee Service
Amy Bond, Chief Operating Officer, Causeway
Sepideh Sahar, One Strong Voice Coordinator, One Strong Voice
Nadine Tunasi, SSO Coordinator, Survivors Speak OUT
John McKernaghan, CEO, The Brunswick Centre
Sarah Methven, Coordinator, Bristol Reporting Solidarity
Jon Beech, Director, Leeds Asylum Seekers Support Network (LASSN)

British Refugee Council, (commonly called the Refugee Council) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales, [No 2727514] and a registered charity, [No 1014576].
Registered office: Gredley House, 11 Broadway, Stratford, E15 4BQ, United Kingdom.
VAT registration no: 936 519 988



Qerim Nuredini, CEO, Bristol Refugee Rights
Madeleine Evans, Manager, Haringey Migrant Support Centre
Sandra Watt, Manager, FODI Friends of the Drop in for Asylum Seekers and Refugees
Dr. Helen Groom, Chairperson, No To Hassockfield
Ros Holland, CEO, Boaz Trust
Ruth Long, Project Manager, Derby Refugee Advice Centre
Nic Burne, Chair of Doncaster Conversation Club Trustees, Doncaster Conversation Club
Yvonne Rendell, Chair, Bromsgrove and Redditch Welcome Refugees
Sarah Frost, Lead Coordinator for Asylum Seekers, Wyre Forest Supports Asylum Seekers
Ted Britton, Chair of Trustees, West Yorkshire Destitute Asylum Network (WYDAN)
Riffat Hussain, Director, IBSA Legal Ltd
Adam Farah, Asylum support Line Manager, North of England refugee service
Kathryn Ashworth CEO, Solace Surviving Exile and Persecution
Anna Rudd, Director, ASSIST Sheffield
Toni Soni, Centre Director, Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre
Sara Robinson, Centre Director, St Augustine's Centre
Alex Sutton, Director of Grants, Trust for London
Rose McCarthy, Coordinator, Yorkshire and Humber Maternity Stream of Sanctuary
Pat Martin, Chair of Trustees, Methodist Asylum Project (Middlesbrough)
Billy Barnes, Project Manager MAP Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland, Methodist Asylum Project Middlesbrough.
Gary Bell, Chair of Trustees, South Yorkshire Refugee Law & Justice
Thomas Martin, Director, City of Sanctuary Sheffield
Angela Murden, Trustee, Hull Afro Caribbean Association
Pete Widlinski, Chair, Mary Thompson Fund
Jane Wood, Project Coordinator, Shared Goods
D A Archibald, Chair of Steering Group DHN, Justice and Peace Refugee Project
Ali Mahgoub, CEO, Leeds Refugee Forum
Azizzum Akhtar, CEO, Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance
Wafa Shaheen, Head of Integration, Asylum & Resettlement, Scottish Refugee Council
Andrea Cleaver, CEO, Welsh Refugee Council
Margaret Bond, Chair of Trustees, Harrogate District of Sanctuary
Andrea Freeman and Helen Meads, Co-Clerks, Huddersfield Quaker Meeting
Umme Imam, Executive Director, The Angelou Centre
Siobhan Taylor-Ward, Solicitor, Vauxhall Community Law and Information Centre
Satinder Collins, Chair, Tees Valley of Sanctuary
Jo Cobby, CEO, Young Roots
Robina Qureshi- Director, Positive Action in Housing
Sarah Jemison, Chair of BEACON Trustees, BEACON (Bradford Ecumenical Asylum Concern)
Alex Wilson, CEO, Tyneside and Northumberland Mind
Ernie Whalley, Chair, Reach Project, Huddersfield
D Curran, Secretary, Newcastle Local group AIUK
Mark Goldring, Director, Asylum Welcome
Ashley Horsey, Chief Executive, Commonweal Housing
Yolande Burns, Chair, Bentham Refugee Support Group

British Refugee Council, (commonly called the Refugee Council) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales, [No 2727514] and a registered charity, [No 1014576].
 Registered office: Gredley House, 11 Broadway, Stratford, E15 4BQ, United Kingdom.
 VAT registration no: 936 519 988



Ben Gilchrist, CEO, Caritas Shrewsbury
Steve Cooke, Chair and Treasurer, Derbyshire Refugee Solidarity
Dr Jane Krishnadas, Senior Lecturer and Director of CLOCK, CLOCK Community Legal Outreach Collaboration, Keele
Sarah Munro, Director, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art
Margaret Bond, CEO, Harrogate District of Sanctuary
Jane Scullion, Leader of Calderdale Council, Calderdale Council
Andy Quinn, CEO, Father Hudson's Care
Liz Hibberd, Strategic and Partnership Lead, Manchester City of Sanctuary
Sean Gilligan, Chair of Trustees, The Good Shepherd Centre, Keighley
Euphrasia Makaure, CEO, One Community Link
Emma Hawthorne, Chair, BIRCH Birmingham Community Hosting Network
Simon Harris, Citizens Advice Staffordshire North and Stoke-on-Trent.
Sheila Rushforth, Journey LGBT+ Asylum Group
Dan Pooley, Hope into Action: Southampton (a City Life project)
Pat Bond, Chair of Steering Group, New to the UK, North Shields
Beatrice Giaquinto, Director, Nottingham Arimathea Trust
Chris Rose, Chair, Craven District of Sanctuary
Angie Pedley, Treasurer, Settle Area Refugee Support group
Maria Wilby, Operational Lead, Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Migrant Action
Lisa Norcross, Project Manager, Kairos Housing
Rob Hooper, Minister, Oasis church inner Birmingham
Bill Dennis, Chair, Multi Agency Forum of all the voluntary group working with migrants in Kirklees
Pete Spence, Secretary of Refugee and Asylum Seeker Project Stockton, Refugee and Asylum Seeker Project Stockton
Sarah Hughes, Assistant Professor, Geography and Environmental Sciences, Northumbria University
University Of Sanctuary Society, Northumbria Student Union
Southwark Law Centre
Leeds Anti-Raids Action
Amnesty International, North Lincs Local group and collaboration with our Area of Sanctuary.
TSL Kirklees