



THE JOINT COUNCIL
for THE WELFARE
OF IMMIGRANTS

— THE —
UNITY
PROJECT

Rt Hon Boris Johnson, MP

Prime Minister

Office of the Prime Minister

10 Downing Street

SW1A 2AA

Date: 28 May 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: No Recourse to Public Funds

Following your appearance at the Liaison Committee on 27 May 2020, we are writing to welcome your commitment to ensuring that those without recourse to public funds are given support.

During the sitting, and in response to Stephen Timms MP, you stated:

“Clearly people who have worked hard for this country, who live and work here should have support of one kind or another. But you have raised a very very important point. The condition of their leave to remain is that they should have no recourse to public funds.

I will find out how many there are in that position and **we will see what we can do to help.**”

We are pleased to see you recognise that more support is needed for those who live and work in the UK, regardless of their immigration status. As you will be aware, since 2012, a ‘NRPf condition’ has been imposed on all migrants granted the legal right to live and work in the UK. They are required to pay taxes, but they are not permitted to avail themselves of the safety net those taxes fund.

Earlier this year, in a challenge brought by an 8-year-old British boy and supported by The Unity Project, the High Court ruled that the policy is unlawful. Previously, in response to public pressure and earlier litigation, the government had placed the policy under a lengthy, resource-intensive review for over a year, but the latest court hearing very clearly demonstrates that the policy is still in breach of basic human

rights. Another lengthy review will not provide the urgent solutions that communities desperately need and that the public expect.

Long before the pandemic, NRPF restrictions have been pushing working families into abject poverty, forcing them into unsustainable debt and into homelessness or unsafe, overcrowded, insecure housing. Since the Covid-19 outbreak, this situation has considerably worsened. UK guidance has been clear on the need to “stay home, save lives and protect the NHS” but NRPF conditions have made this impossible for most migrants and their families. Without support, people are forced to work in unsafe conditions, cannot remove themselves from unsafe housing, and are unable to both effectively self-isolate and feed their families. Many of those in this situation are the essential workers on whom we all depend. Now, more than ever, it is vital that no one living in the UK is compelled to take on unnecessary, unsafe work at risk to their own or to the public’s health, and it is indefensible for essential workers to be left unsupported and unable to make ends meet.

The current policy, in theory, allows a limited number of people to apply, on an individual basis, to have their NRPF condition removed, but the recent court case highlighted that this is incredibly difficult in practice and does not prevent the kind of abject poverty that Stephen Timms MP highlighted. It is very difficult for families to make the application, and if they do so, they are punished by being moved onto a 10 year visa route with thousands of pounds owed in additional fees. NRPF is only lifted in exceptional circumstances, leaving most people with no such option. Our organisations are inundated by requests for support with the application - hundreds of families without income are unable to make the application, or have been waiting weeks or months for a decision.

We urge you to lift NRPF restrictions swiftly and completely. This is the only way to ensure that people do not have to choose between their and the public health and being able to feed and house their families. Everyone living in the UK, whatever their immigration or employment status must have access to public funds, and to any new funds that are made available to ensure that people can weather this crisis. We are all in this together, but we are only as protected as the least protected amongst us and it is vital that urgent steps are taken to protect and support migrants and their families. We are happy to provide any advice or guidance you or your colleagues may need as you continue to consider this matter.

We look forward to working with you.

Yours sincerely,

Satbir Singh, Chief Executive, **JCWI**

Caz Hattam, Project Co-ordinator, **The Unity Project**

Abi Brunswick, Director, **Project 17**

Ali McGinley, Director, **Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees**

Bella Sankey, Director, **Detention Action**

Celia Clarke, Director, **Bail for Immigration Detainees**

Claudia Holmes, Founder, **UKCEN**

Dr Edie Friedman, Executive Director, **The Jewish Council for Racial Equality (JCORE)**

Dr Rhetta Moran, Chair, **Refugee and Asylum Seeker Participatory Action Research**

Dr Zubaida Haque, Interim Director, **Runnymede Trust**

Ellen Waters, Director of Development, **Doctors of the World UK**

Fizza Qureshi, CEO, **Migrants' Rights Network**

Hazel Williams, Director, **NACCOM**

Indre Lechimiakyte, Immigration Adviser, **Samphire**

Joanne MacInnes, Director West, **London Welcome Centre for Refugees and Migrants**

Josh Hallam, Field Manager, **Help Refugees**

Lorraine Masiya Mponela, Chairperson, **Coventry Asylum and Refugee Action Group**

Luljeta Nuzi, Shpresa Programme, **Citizens UK**

Marianne Lagrue, Policy Manager, **Coram Children's Legal Centre**

Mark Russell, Chief Executive, **The Children's Society**

Michael Collins, Coordinator, **Right to Remain**

Nazek Ramadan, Director, **Migrant Voice**

Nicolas Hatton, CEO, **The 3Million**

Paul Hook, Director, **Asylum Matters**

Razia Shariff, CEO, **Kent Refugee Action Network**

Sabir Zazai, Chief Executive, **Scottish Refugee Council**

Sally Daghlian OBE, CEO, **Praxis**

Sarah Teather, Director, **Jesuit Refugee Service**

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

Sophie Neuburg, Executive Director, **MedAct**

Stephen Hale, CEO, **Refugee Action**

Sunder Katwala, Director, **British Future**

Tamsyn Brewster, Co-Founder, **RefuAid**

cc. Secretary of State for the Home Office, Secretary of State for DWP