

The Rt. Honourable Boris Johnson
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

CC: Home Secretary, Work and Pensions Secretary, Health Secretary and Secretary for Housing, Communities and Local Government

RE: Coronavirus - policy recommendations to protect people who are experiencing homelessness and insecure migration statuses:

In light of UK Government guidance on combatting Covid-19, organisations which provide essential services for people who are destitute and homeless because of their migration status have come together to consider how we can support the effort to minimise risks around the spread of the virus. We recognised that a concerted cross-departmental approach is needed and we are writing to you with clear recommendations that should be immediately implemented.

Many of the people we work with are unable to access healthcare or housing because of No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) conditions. This includes; people who are appeals rights exhausted, EU and EEA migrants, people with existing visas, those whose status is not regularised, domestic workers and other migrant workers, and victims of trafficking.

The challenge is pressing, but one we think that can be met if the Government makes some pragmatic policy changes to enable people who are destitute to self-isolate, seek healthcare and buy basic provisions. Emergency public health measures do not work unless they apply to everyone living in our communities. Our suggestions to mitigate these risks are listed below;

Enabling social distancing and self-isolation

- Everyone should be able to access self-contained accommodation and self-isolate safely, regardless of immigration status.
 - Hotel spaces should be block booked so that people who are rough sleeping or sofa surfing can access safe accommodation. These spaces should be open to all and should be available with light-touch engagement.
- All evictions from Home Office asylum support accommodation should be stopped. This includes the evictions of people who are appeals rights exhausted and of those who have recently been granted their refugee status.

Accessing healthcare

- All NHS charges should be abolished and a public communication campaign launched to ensure that everyone is aware of their rights to access healthcare.

- No one recovering from Covid-19 should be discharged from NHS care to rough sleep, sofa surf or to stay in accommodation in which maintaining self-isolation and good hygiene is not possible.

Providing financial support for all

- NRPF conditions should be removed, enabling everyone to access Universal Credit and Statutory Sick Pay.
 - Emergency cash support must be made available to people without access to bank accounts.
 - All information and documents required for applications should be accepted via online communication or telephone appointments.
- All applicants for section 95, section 4 or schedule 10 support should be automatically and appropriately accommodated within the Home Office asylum support system while applications are being processed. Any decision that someone is not, in fact, eligible for support should not be actioned until after the current health emergency has passed.
 - As above all information and documents required for applications should be accepted via online communication or telephone appointments.
- Any introduction of a Universal Basic Income, Universal Self-Isolation Pay or Universal Sick Pay should be available for everyone, including those with NRPF.

Community reassurance:

In order for people to protect themselves and others by accessing healthcare and housing, we must have assurance that any data collected should not be shared with the Home Office for the purpose of immigration enforcement.

The voluntary sector stands ready to play its part in preventing the spread of Covid-19 by supporting groups in vulnerable situations, and the changes above will enable us to do this better.

Yours Sincerely,