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THE NO ACCOMMODATION NETWORK



Together  
we will end  
homelessness

**asylum matters**

## Homelessness amongst Refugees – Briefing for Westminster Hall Debate- 17<sup>th</sup> July 2018, 2.30pm

### Key Recommendations

1. The move-on period for people granted status should be extended from 28 days to at least 56 days to reduce risks of homelessness amongst refugees and bring Home Office policy in line with changes recently introduced under the Homelessness Reduction Act.
2. The impact of procedural adjustments within the move on period introduced in recent months are unclear so a full evaluation of the Post Grant Appointment Service and the pilot that preceded it should be published urgently. Learning from this should shape the support that refugees receive around housing and benefits across various government departments.
3. Integration Loans should be adjusted and monitored to more accurately reflect the private rental market. Communication about the availability of, and criteria for, loans should be more readily available to refugees and support services to encourage take up of loans.
4. Asylum accommodation providers should be listed as a 'public body with a duty to refer' refugees to Local Housing Authorities under new Homelessness Reduction Act regulations. This will ensure that people receive the support they need to prevent homelessness.

***This briefing was compiled by several charities campaigning for better rights for refugees:***

***The Refugee Council*** is a national charity working to ensure that refugees are given the protection they need and the same rights and opportunities as other members of society.

***Crisis*** is a national charity helping people out of homelessness and campaigning for social change to end homelessness.

***NACCOM, the No Accommodation Network***, is a national charity made up of member organisations preventing homelessness amongst refugees, asylum seekers and migrants through accommodation and advocacy.

***Asylum Matters*** is a national advocacy and campaigns project working in partnership to improve the lives of refugees and people seeking asylum through social and political change.

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### Homelessness Amongst Refugees- Statistics

- In the year up to March 2018, approximately 10,000 people were granted refugee status in the UK.<sup>1</sup>
- A report by Crisis, '[Everybody In: How To End Homelessness in Great Britain](#)' (June 2018) found that in 2016-17, 478 people (7% of the new clients who approached Crisis for help that year) did so because they had nowhere to live after leaving asylum accommodation, a figure that has more than doubled since 2014-15.<sup>2</sup>
- A report by NACCOM, '[Mind the Gap](#)' (May 2018) found that 48 of 169 people requiring emergency accommodation in a sample of night shelters over the winter of 2017-18 were refugees. In one shelter, 50% of the refugee guests had left asylum accommodation in the last 6 months.<sup>3</sup>
- A report by Refugee Council, '[Refugees without Refuge](#)' (September 2017) interviewed 54 refugees and found that none had found secure accommodation by the time they left asylum accommodation and more than half (31) had slept rough or in a hostel or night shelter after being granted status.<sup>4</sup>
- In [2016-17](#), NACCOM members accommodated 824 refugees who faced significant obstacles to accessing mainstream housing after leaving asylum accommodation.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UKVI Asylum Data Tables (Volumes 1 and 4); <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-march-2018-data-tables>.

<sup>2</sup> Crisis, 'Everybody In: How To End Homelessness in Great Britain', June 2018, p.342.

<sup>3</sup> NACCOM, 'Mind The Gap: Homelessness Amongst Newly Recognised Refugees', May 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Refugee Council, 'Refugees Without Refuge', p.4.

<sup>5</sup> NACCOM, '2016-17 Annual Report'.

## Homelessness Amongst Refugees- Reasons

- Refugees are given 28 days to leave Home Office accommodation and find housing, benefits and employment. In this time, people are expected to either apply for social housing (although single adults are rarely found to be 'priority need' and there is a shortage of social housing) or find private rental accommodation. In reality they may have less than 28 days to arrange this, for instance if there is a delay with their notification of status.
- People who have been financially supported by the Home Office on £37.70 per week during their asylum claim, and who have not been permitted to work, will have been unable to save the funds needed to access private rented housing in advance. Having been placed in no choice accommodation during the asylum process, they will also often have limited networks to rely on after move on.
- There are significant obstacles to accessing essential support such as benefits/Universal Credit and Integration Loans, often caused by delays with documentation from the Home Office, problems setting up bank accounts (in many cases due to not having proof of address) and incorrect advice from the JobCentre and other services.

## Existing Policy and Practice and Areas for Development

- From April 2018 in England, changes to services for people at risk of homelessness have come in under the Homelessness Reduction Act, which extends the period that someone can be deemed 'threatened with homelessness' from 28 to 56 days. This reflects a consensus among Local Authorities and homelessness specialists that 28 days does not allow enough time to carry out meaningful prevention work. Yet refugees cannot benefit from the change because of the 28 day move on period.
- Since 2017, the Post Grant Appointment Service (PGAS), a joint initiative between the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Home Office, has been rolled out nationally. This is supposed to speed up refugees' access to benefits on being granted status. However, no evaluation of this service has been made public nor have the findings of the pilot that preceded it, so it is unclear how successful it is. Regardless, the PGAS is not set up to provide housing advice.
- Integration Loans, which are available to assist refugees with basic needs after move on (such as rent deposits) are not accessible for everyone and are often only up to £500, so are generally inadequate for accessing secure private tenancies.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore the process of applying is highly problematic within 28 days.
- Under Homelessness Reduction Act regulations, some public bodies are required to refer people at risk of homelessness to Local Housing Authorities. Asylum accommodation providers are not currently included in these regulations but if listed this could reduce risks of homelessness and ensure local support for refugees.
- The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government has funded the appointment of 35 Local Authority Asylum Support Liaison Officers. Their remit includes supporting refugees into housing, however more detail is needed to ensure the roles will in practice prevent homelessness after move on. As part of this, the evaluation of the new roles (as with the PGAS) must be publicly available within a meaningful timeframe.
- The government's plans to learn from the successes of the Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme in its services for all refugees were outlined recently in the Integrated Communities Green Paper.<sup>7</sup> However, given the urgent action required to prevent homelessness amongst refugees, more detail about the steps that will be taken to implement this learning are needed.

## Homelessness Amongst Refugees- Wider Context

- There are almost 160,000 households experiencing homelessness across Britain. This includes more than 9,000 people sleeping rough on any given night, and almost 42,000 living in emergency accommodation like hostels, refuges and night shelters.<sup>8</sup> Crisis have set out exact government policies needed to end homelessness for good in their report '[Everybody In: How to end homelessness in Great Britain](#)'.
- It is not possible to end homelessness without taking action to prevent homelessness amongst refugees. A key way to do this is to increase the move on period from 28 days to at least 56 days.

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<sup>6</sup> APPG on Refugees, 'Refugees Welcome?', April 2017, p.21.

<sup>7</sup> Integrated Communities Strategy; <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/integrated-communities-strategy-green-paper>, March 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Crisis, 'Everybody In: How To End Homelessness in Great Britain', June 2018.