



## UK Visas & Immigration

Resettlement, Asylum  
Support and Integration  
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[www.gov.uk/ukvi](http://www.gov.uk/ukvi)

Councillor Judith Blake CBE  
Leader of Leeds City Council  
Civic Hall  
Leeds  
LS1 1UR

Your Reference: SH\JB\BU\PATEL

01 December 2020

Dear Councilor Blake

Thank you for your letter of 23 October about support arrangements for failed asylum seekers, which has been passed to me as the Deputy Director of Asylum Support. I am sorry for the delay in responding.

I should make it clear that at the outset Home Office support is always available for all failed asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute provided they are taking 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. The Home Office Voluntary Returns Scheme pays for the flight to the home country and provides reintegration assistance.

We consider that the system I have described is rational and fair. An alternative approach that continues to provide accommodation and other support from public funds unconditionally, regardless that the courts have decided the individuals are able to safely return to their own countries but choose not to, risks undermining public confidence in the asylum system. It also means that scarce asylum accommodation is unavailable for new asylum seekers entering the UK.

Currently, decisions to stop providing accommodation for those who refuse to take reasonable steps to leave the UK have been paused whilst consideration is given to the impact of the current Covid national restrictions and of the local restrictions that will replace these arrangements from 2 December. When they resume, it is proposed that officials would of course work with their established contacts in local authorities, so that you are aware of the numbers and we can work together to manage any impacts on the local community which you describe in your letter. I hope you agree that the best solution all round is that the individuals accept that they need to leave the UK and are encouraged and enabled to access the voluntary returns service and can therefore be accommodated safely until the practical arrangements to return them to their own countries are complete.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Kelly', with a stylized, cursive script.

Andrew Kelly

Deputy Director - Resettlement, Asylum Support & Integration. UK Visas and Immigration.

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