

Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

CC: Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP,
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Home Secretary,

We write jointly as members of the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network, which includes over 180 councils, some of whom are accredited Councils of Sanctuary committed to supporting the integration of forcibly displaced people and their successful settlement in local communities. **This letter responds to the Home Office update of 5 March regarding further changes to the asylum move-on period.**

As local authorities responsible for supporting all residents, maintaining community cohesion and responding to homelessness, we are concerned about the implications of a shortened move-on period for individuals, communities and local services. The move-on period plays a critical role in enabling people who have been granted protection in the United Kingdom to secure accommodation, access employment and begin rebuilding their lives. A system that grants protection while creating a high risk of homelessness undermines both humanitarian commitments and effective public administration.

We recognise the Government's objective of decreasing the use of asylum hotels and the financial pressures associated with accommodation contracts. However, the impact on street homelessness and local authority services of reducing the move-on period to 42 days from the date of decision cannot be overstated.

In its National Plan to End Homelessness for England, Government rightly recognises the need to strengthen systems-wide collaboration on homelessness prevention and emphasises that public bodies should not take actions that result in people being discharged into homelessness, including Home Office-procured asylum accommodation.

People leaving the asylum system **now represent the second largest group of people sleeping rough after leaving a public institution.** Over the last four years there has been a five-fold increase in the number of refugee households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

This de facto return to the pre-pilot position, whereby refugees were given 28 days' notice of the ending of their support from receipt of their discontinuation letter, undermines the targets set out in the National Plan to End Homelessness. It also brings the time afforded to recognised refugees before they are required to leave their accommodation out of step with the notice periods generally afforded to tenants across the UK housing system and those leaving other public institutions.

It is our experience that the shortened notice period, (i.e.: 28 days from 'discontinuation letter'), does not provide enough time for newly granted refugees to:

- receive and evidence their immigration status documentation
- complete benefit claims and receive first payments
- open bank accounts
- access employment or employment support
- secure accommodation in extremely constrained local housing markets

The consequences are predictable. Newly recognised refugees often present to councils with little or no time remaining, triggering emergency prevention or relief duties and, in some cases, immediate rough sleeping.

Short move-on timeframes shift costs and responsibility onto local authority homelessness services, increase reliance on temporary accommodation, and place additional strain on already stretched budgets. There are currently 132,000 households in temporary accommodation, including 172,000 children, a crisis in its own right, and according to LGA analysis, the 'Temporary Accommodation Subsidy Funding Gap' is set to balloon to £4 billion by 2030.

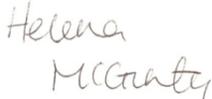
For these reasons, we urge Government to:

- **Reinstate the 56-day move-on period on a permanent basis for all newly recognised refugees.** Where the notice period runs from the date of decision rather than from the date on which the 'notice to quit' is issued, the time available in practice is reduced further. We therefore ask that, in any future policy, the notice period should run from the date the notice is issued rather than the date of the decision.
- **Limit frequent, short-notice changes to move-on policy.** Such changes make it difficult for councils and our partners to plan and deliver effective homelessness prevention, create confusion for services and those affected, and undermine coordinated local efforts to support people into stable accommodation. We ask that future policy changes are developed and communicated with sufficient notice and consultation with local authorities to enable effective planning and delivery of prevention support.
- **Publish the evidence base underpinning the current policy.** We note the commitment to publish the final evaluation report of the 56-day pilot on GOV.UK in the spring. In the interest of transparency and evidence-based policymaking, we also respectfully request the publication of the wider evidence that informed the decision to introduce the 42-day move-on period from the date of decision, including the operational

data, analysis, forecasted impacts on the asylum accommodation estate, and any stakeholder representations considered in reaching this decision

We would welcome the opportunity to engage constructively with Government and partners on how to ensure the move-on process works effectively for individuals, communities and public services alike, consistent with the Governments' plans to end homelessness and its emphasis on collaboration across public bodies to prevent homelessness.

Yours sincerely,



Helena McGinty
Chair, City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network