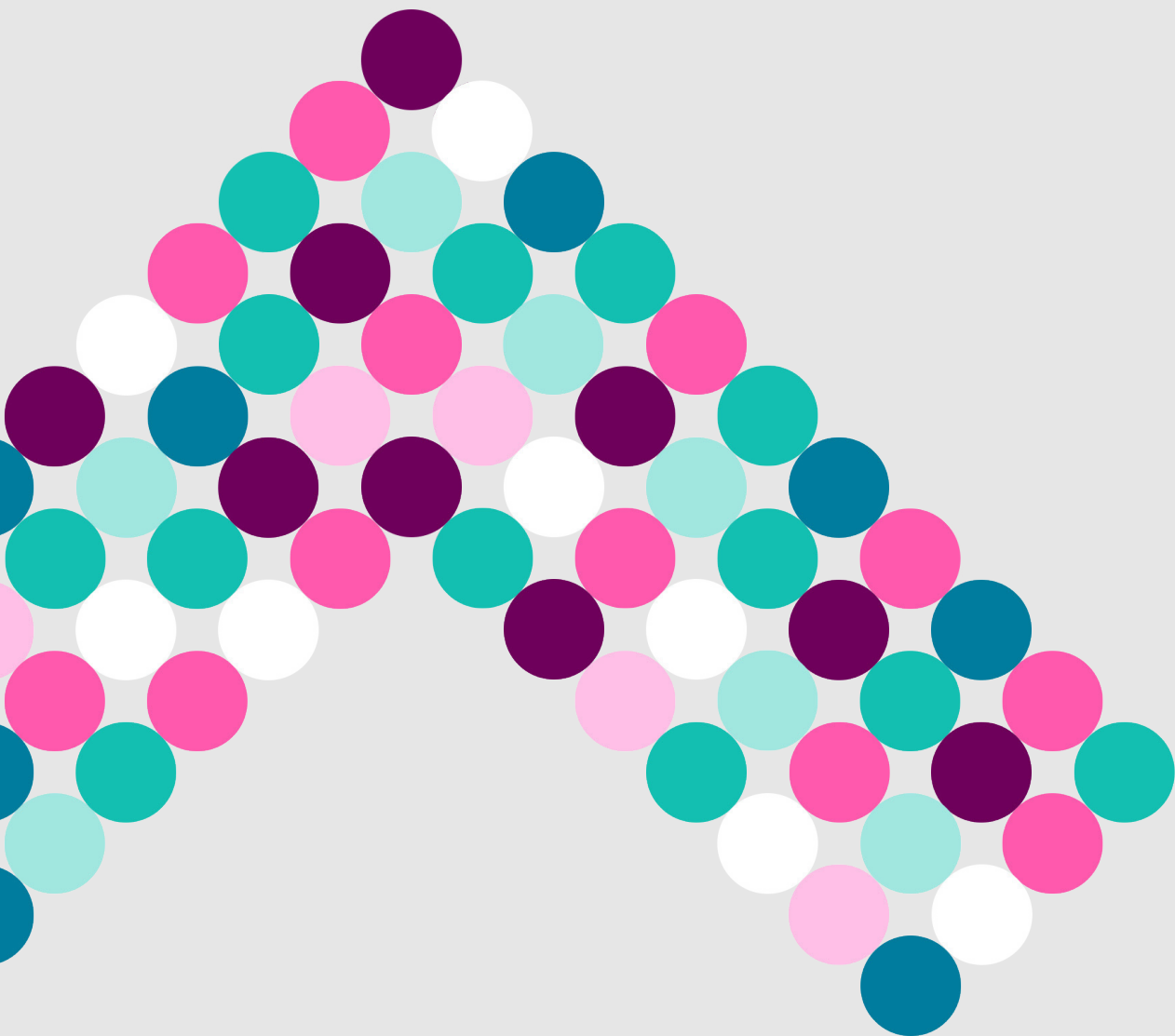


# **Vital solutions to ending migrant homelessness**

Executive summary



## **Homelessness amongst migrants**

Homelessness has a devastating impact on people and communities. For individuals, homelessness damages physical and mental health, causes and exacerbates trauma, and pushes people into vulnerable and exploitative situations, further away from opportunities to build healthy, fulfilled lives.

Whilst homelessness affects households across the country, migrants are more vulnerable to homelessness, and those with restricted or No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and/or unsettled immigration status even more so. For example, in 2022 alone, there were an estimated 488,600 destitute migrant households in the UK containing 1,318,000 people, including 355,900 children. This was a 95% increase since 2019, the largest increase seen across all destitute populations in the country.

## **‘Destitution by design’: how immigration policy drives homelessness**

Due to the asylum and immigration system, many migrants face additional barriers which make it impossible to move on from homelessness as they are limited from accessing vital services that exist to help people transition from homelessness support including housing and the necessary immigration advice needed to move forward.

Instead, migrants are exposed to the administrative barriers, stigma, indignity and volatility of living within the immigration system as they either fall between systems and services, or become trapped in costly, unsuitable temporary accommodation.

## **Building an inclusive system to end homelessness for all**

No one should become, or remain, homeless because of their immigration status. Preventing homelessness must be considered an essential part of the asylum and immigration system, alongside greater collaboration with housing, welfare, voluntary and statutory services, and improved recourse to justice through our legal systems.

The Government must commit to ensuring that the immigration and asylum systems are not drivers of homelessness, otherwise we will fail to address the needs of some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged people in our society, whilst also neglecting to address the pressure that sustained homelessness places on other public services.

## Recommendations

Together, the Government, alongside charities and people with lived experience, can deliver both the immediate and long-term changes needed to ensure the asylum and immigration system no longer drive migrants into homelessness, and instead contribute to preventing and ending homelessness for everyone, irrespective of their immigration status. We can do this together by:

### **Ensuring that changes to the immigration and asylum system do not actively contribute to an increase in migrant homelessness by:**

- allowing those who have arrived since the introduction of the Illegal Migration Act 2023 to enter the asylum system and have their claims processed accordingly;
- repealing the Illegal Migration Act 2023.

### **Recognising and addressing the impact that restrictions on public funds have on homelessness:**

- reviewing and monitoring all immigration-based restrictions on public funds to mitigate their role in driving homelessness;
- clarifying the legal powers and expectations on local authorities to accommodate and support migrants with restricted eligibility to public funds;
- ensuring sufficient funding from central Government to allow local authorities to ensure a minimum level of suitable accommodation provision, regardless of immigration status.

### **Stopping the flow of homelessness from the asylum system by:**

- allowing 56 days following an asylum decision before the cessation of asylum support, in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA);
- extending the HRA Duty to Refer to the Home Office;
- working with local authorities, migrant sector and homelessness sector providers to develop a co-ordinated and integrated move-on process that looks to prevent homelessness wherever possible;
- granting people seeking asylum the right to work after six months.

### **Expanding access to quality legal advice through improving access to free immigration and welfare benefits advice by:**

- funding and promoting the expansion of embedded advice provision in homelessness and homelessness prevention settings;

- restoring legal aid for early legal advice to pre-Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 levels for immigration, welfare benefits and housing law;
- committing to wider reform of the legal aid system, to end the existence of immigration and asylum legal aid deserts and ensure advice is available to anyone who needs it.

**Developing a cross-departmental approach to tackling rough sleeping and homelessness by:**

- Government creating a cross-Governmental strategy to tackling homelessness, led by a homelessness task force directed by the Cabinet Office, with representatives from the Home Office, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Ministry of Justice, Department for Education, Department for Work and Pensions, Department of Health and Social Care, and Ministry of Defence;
- requiring the Home Office to be a key and accountable part of the cross-Governmental strategy and task force.

## **About Homeless Link**

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness services. We work to improve services through research, guidance and learning, and campaign for policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.

## **About NACCOM**

The No Accommodation Network (NACCOM) is a UK-wide network of 140+ frontline organisations and charities that work together to end homelessness and destitution amongst people seeking asylum, refugees and other migrants going through the UK asylum and immigration system.

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