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Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP
Chair, Work and Pensions Committee
House of Commons
London
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Rt Hon. Yvette Cooper MP
Chair, Home Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
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28 April 2020

Dear Chair,

Thank you for your recent interest on the impact of Covid-19 on individuals who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF). I have addressed each of your questions below.

1. **When do you expect your consideration of how to best support this group to conclude? Is this likely to result in a suspension of the 'no recourse to public funds' condition?**
 - a. **If not, what other forms of support are your Departments providing to those with no recourse to public funds?**

The public interest in migrants being financially independent and not being a burden on the State is long established. However, you will be aware that this Government has acted decisively to ensure that we support individuals through this crisis.

Many of the support measures the Government has put in place can be accessed by individuals with no recourse to public funds. This includes mortgage holidays, changes to statutory sick pay, and the measures we have introduced to protect renters from eviction. Additionally, migrants with leave under the Family and Human Rights routes can already apply to have the restriction lifted by making a 'change of conditions' application if there has been a change in their financial circumstances. My department has recently digitised the application form, to make sure it is accessible for those who need to remain at home, and applications are being dealt with swiftly and compassionately. However, you will appreciate that the situation is changing rapidly, and so the Home Office is keeping the situation under review and making changes should these be necessary and appropriate.

2. Will those with no recourse to public funds be able to access support from their employer under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, or the Self Employed Income Support Scheme?

The range of financial measures we have introduced will support people in need in the UK including migrants with no recourse to public funds as long as they meet the other eligibility criteria. The assistance being given under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme or the Self-employed Income Support Scheme is not classed as a public fund and will be available to all those in work or self-employment respectively, including those who on zero-hour contracts and those with NRPF status if they meet the other eligibility criteria. Statutory sick pay and some other work-related benefits are also not classed as public funds and so are available to workers.

a. How are you ensuring that those with no recourse to public funds receive clear communications about what support they are and are not entitled to?

The government has published guidance on the support available for individuals who are affected by the covid-19 here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19>.

We are looking at what more we can do to make sure those with no recourse to public funds are aware of the support available to them. This includes further communications with local authorities and organisations working with migrants.

3. Can you provide any assurances that non-UK nationals who receive public funds in breach of their visa conditions due to the outbreak will not have this held against them when making future visa applications?

Many of the Covid-19 support measures put in place by the Government are not public funds; therefore, there should not be a situation in which non-UK nationals are accessing public funds in breach of their visa conditions.

4. How are your departments ensuring that people whose immigration status is insecure are able to access support?

In January, Covid-19 was added to the list of infectious diseases; this ensures that anyone experiencing symptoms, regardless of their immigration status, will be treated for Covid-19 by the NHS for free. NHS trusts have been advised that no immigration checks are required for overseas visitors that are known to be only undergoing testing or treatment for COVID-19.

Local authorities may provide basic safety net support, regardless of immigration status, if it is established that there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution, for example, where there are community care needs, migrants with serious health problems or family cases. Additional funding has been provided to local authorities.

a. Many in this group face difficulties accessing accommodation due to their immigration status. What steps are you taking to ensure that these people can be housed safely during the outbreak?

The Home Office and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) are taking a compassionate and pragmatic approach to an unprecedented situation.

More than £3.2 billion has been allocated to local authorities in England and additional funding has been provided to the Devolved Administrations to help them respond to Covid-19 pressures across all the services they deliver. This includes increasing support for the adult social care workforce and for services helping the most vulnerable.

In light of the pandemic, anyone who would normally cease to be eligible for accommodation because their asylum claim and any appeal has been resolved, is being allowed to remain in their current accommodation for at least the next three months. This applies both to those who have been refused asylum and granted asylum.

I trust this provides the reassurance you were seeking.

Yours sincerely

With all good wishes


Rt Hon Priti Patel MP