

# Dignity Not Destitution: Ending Poverty and Homelessness in the Asylum System

## Quick Policy Guide

### What are the issues?

For people seeking protection in the UK the risk of falling into destitution is very real. We are proposing three reforms that would help to reduce that risk. Our priority areas are:

- **Work:** People seeking asylum in the UK are effectively prohibited from working. This forced inactivity is detrimental to self-esteem and mental health, increases the difficulty of integration for those who are eventually permitted to stay, and places an entirely unnecessary cost on the public purse.
- **Support:** The Government's asylum support rates mean that individuals have to meet the costs of food, clothing, toiletries, transport and pursue their asylum application with just £5 per day. Inevitably many struggle to make ends meet and suffer the consequences.
- **Move On:** When asylum is granted, any financial support or accommodation being received from the Home Office is withdrawn after 28 days. Administrative delays, the complexities of accessing the mainstream benefit system and the complex needs of many refugees mean that for many, 28 days is not long enough to make this transition and a growing number of refugees are left destitute.

### What are we proposing and why?

**Permission to work** should be granted to any person seeking asylum waiting for longer than six months for a decision. That permission should no longer be limited to jobs on the Government's restrictive Shortage Occupation List.

This would **provide people with a route out of poverty**, would **reduce the cost of the asylum support system**, and would **help intergration** for those who are eventually permitted to stay. Contrary to Government arguments, there is **no evidence to support the claim that such changes would act as a 'pull factor'** and increase the number of people claiming asylum in the UK.

**Asylum support should be raised from its current level to at least 70% of mainstream income support.**

This would **reduce the number of people forced into poverty** and the **associated negative impacts on health, wellbeing and mental health**. It would also make it **easier for people to fully engage with the legal process** and therefore improve the efficiency of the system. The cost would be **£14.5 million (out of a total benefit spend of £146 billion)** but if combined with giving the right to work to people seeking asylum who have waited for a decision for over six months there would be **no net cost** to this measure.

**The 'move on' period for new refugees should be extended from 28 to 50 days** - reflecting a more reasonable timeframe for refugees to access accommodation and financial support.

This change would **dramatically reduce the incidence of destitution amongst refugees** and **improve the effective integration of refugees by providing a coherent and orderly process**. It would also **free up significant resources for both voluntary and statutory agencies** that are currently used to provide urgent assistance to refugees who are about to have their support cut off or who have already become destitute.

For a full policy briefing see the [City of Sanctuary website](#).

**#dignitynotdestitution**