

## PRESS RELEASE

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**Headline: XXX Council warns of impending winter homeless refugee emergency**

**XXX Council is preparing itself for a grim winter as the effects of government asylum policy are putting huge pressure on already over-stretched resources that will ultimately force thousands of refugees into homelessness.**

The Home Office has reduced the time a successful asylum seeker is given to leave their accommodation once they have been granted refugee status from 28 days to just 7 days.

There simply is not time for people to obtain the official documentation they need to open a bank account, their application for benefits can take over a month and yet they are expected to find a place to live.

There is already huge pressure on homelessness prevention services, so unreasonable move-on period leaves councils on their knees and unable to help.

### Quotes

**Name, Local Council said:**

“Let’s be clear, this is not a housing crisis, it’s a housing emergency. It’s not a matter of *if* refugees will be forced into living tents on our city’s streets, it’s *when*.”

“We should not turn our back on people who have come here to find safety. Making sure that everyone has safe, stable housing benefits us all by creating a stronger, more productive society where everyone can participate, and we all benefit.”

**Name, Refugee Organisation said:**

“Seven-day evictions are bad for refugees and bad for the communities they live in. We urge this government to rethink its policy of chaos and let refugees rebuild their lives. Support should be available to help newly recognised refugees navigate the move-on period and access housing, education, employment and welfare benefits.”

**Name, Refugee said:** Talk about what it feels like to be evicted and terrified about living on the streets...

**Name, local organisation said:** “People are desperate. They’re coming to our drop-in etc....

Refugees want to work, pay their own rent and live independently, but they need more than a week's notice. No one could find a home in seven days. It doesn't make sense to offer someone a chance of a new life, and then set them up to fail. A job interview is scary enough without having to prepare in a tent. And how can you pay rent if you don't even have a bank account?

**Dr Sarah Hughes, Assistant Professor of Human Geography at Northumbria University, said:** "The move-on period should be extended to at least 56 days in line with the Homeless Reduction Act in England and Housing Act in Wales. This reflects the time it actually takes for refugees to access accommodation and financial support and ensure newly recognised refugees are not plunged into destitution."

**Matt Downie, Chief Executive of Crisis, said:** "It's frankly inhumane to expect people who have just been granted refugee status to leave their asylum accommodation within seven days. In the vast majority of cases, it's obvious to all of us that this can only lead to one outcome - homelessness and destitution. This is no way to start a new life in a country with a proud history of supporting people fleeing war and persecution."

"We've seen through our own services the unsustainable pressures this is placing on local authorities, who are already struggling to find affordable homes for the growing numbers of people facing homelessness. We stand alongside refugees and organisations supporting them in calling on the Government to abandon these changes and work with people affected to offer the right care and support."

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### Available interviewees:

- Name, Position, Organisation
- Name, came to the UK in XXXX from XXXX

### Filming opportunities

### Location/event/etc

### For more information please contact:

Name

Organisation

Phone number

Email

### Briefing Notes

#### Background

- [The Home Office has reduced](#) the notice period a successful asylum seeker is given to leave their asylum accommodation once they have been granted refugee status. In

effect, it has been reduced from 28 days to just 7 days – and in some cases reportedly 4 days.

- This just isn't enough time for refugees to get a job or access benefits, as [previous research](#) has conclusively shown. In 2018, the Red Cross proposed *increasing* the period to 56 days to reduce the risk of homelessness for newly recognised refugees. [The government's own guidance to local authorities on homelessness](#) outlines a duty to work with people threatened with homelessness within 56 days.
- Previously after receiving their biometric residence permit a person would usually be issued with the discontinuation letter giving 21 or 28 days' notice that they will be evicted. There is not much a person can do without their biometric residence permit, which is also used to issue their national insurance number.
- It appears that the Home Office is now treating the asylum decision letter as the start point for the 28-day period until the asylum claim is ended. However, many people do not receive their permit within 28 days of the decision. This means that as their asylum claim is already deemed ended (as the 28 days from the asylum decision letter has passed), the minimum legal period for the notice to quit is seven days. This is what now is happening in practice.
- Refugee homeless people face all the dangers that homeless people from the UK face and more. On a daily basis, they must contend with suspicion about their motives, being excluded from almost all support services, and experience a constant threat of removal from the country.
- Refugees may have specific needs that a homeless person from the UK is less likely to have. For example, these can include language barriers and experience of trauma.
- [Risk of homelessness](#): While councils have an obligation to provide emergency accommodation to families with children, adults who do not have children may not be eligible for that support and are at risk of finding themselves homeless.