

Please see below a number of updates relating to Covid-19 and its impact on asylum and migration put together by [Asylum Matters](#).

1. Ongoing advocacy

Home Office preparedness for Covid-19

The Home Affairs Select Committee this week took oral evidence from ILPA, Free Movement, Refugee Council, JCWI and Detention Action on preparedness in the immigration and asylum system, on the situation of people in detention and people with no recourse to public funds. The session can be watched [here](#). The Home Secretary will appear before the Committee to answer questions on these and other matters on 29 April.

Written submissions to the inquiry have now been published [online](#).

Access to healthcare

Following work by health advocates, 60 cross-party MPs [wrote](#) this week to Health Secretary Matt Hancock, calling for the immediate suspension of charging for migrants and associated data-sharing and immigration checks. The [letter](#), coordinated by Apsana Begum MP, Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP and Zarah Sultana MP, cited the case of Elvis, a Philipino migrant who died from Covid-19 after fearing he would be charged for treatment. Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government was subsequently questioned on this and the Government's enquiry on the effect of COVID-19 on BAME communities at the daily update of 18 April ([here](#) from 48.40).

The BMJ Paediatrics Open Journal reported findings from a survey completed by members of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. Results described that fear of charging and deportation, and confusion around entitlements, are leading to delays seeking care. The findings are [here](#) and related coverage [here](#). Medact has produced [graphics and videos](#) to help disseminate key findings on social media.

Concerns raised about social distancing in asylum accommodation

Advocates in Glasgow [are to meet](#) with the accommodation provider, Mears, and the Home Office to discuss solutions for people seeking asylum housed in hotels. This follows reports of movement of hundreds of people seeking asylum to [hotel provision in Glasgow](#), where there are concerns that social distancing is impossible and [reports](#) of destitute asylum seekers being accommodated in hotels and having financial support withdrawn.

Calls to suspend NRPF conditions

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) have published a [press release](#) calling on the UK Government to lift all NRPF conditions and stating "The rules are undermining the response to COVID-19, adding to the complexity and pressure on services and leaving people highly vulnerable during the crisis". COSLA have also published [guidance for local authorities](#) in Scotland on how to support people with NRPF conditions during COVID-19.

Holly Lynch MP, Shadow Immigration Minister, has [written to the Government](#) calling

for suspension of NRPF status for migrants as a condition of their immigration status. Coverage of the letter is [here](#) . Elsewhere, in direct testimony 'Victoria' wrote powerfully on the [need to suspend NRPF](#) in its entirety and Coventry Asylum and Refugee Group (CARAG) [made the case for an immigration amnesty](#).

Court of Appeal Ruling on Right to Rent

The Court of Appeal has confirmed that the government's Right to Rent scheme causes racial discrimination. The Appeal Court upheld an [earlier finding](#) by the High Court that, as a result of right to rent checks, landlords were discriminating against people of migrant or ethnic minority backgrounds, but also found this discrimination was not sufficiently disproportionate as to create a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. JCWI is preparing to appeal this judgement at the Supreme Court and further coverage of the ruling is [here](#) .

2. Ongoing surveys and research

The Institute for Community Research and Development at the University of Wolverhampton, ASIRT, Migrants' Rights Network, Project 17 and Public Interest Law Centre are asking frontline organisations in England working with people with no recourse to public funds to complete a short survey on local authority responses to the pandemic, to be used to support advocacy. It should take no longer than 15 minutes. The link is [here](#), deadline Wednesday 29th April.

Privacy International and Open Rights Group have created a joint [survey](#) which aims to better understand the capacity and needs of organisations in the migration and refugee sector to respond to the growing importance of technologies and data governance. The survey is [here](#) and will be open until 4 May 2020.

A group of academics across Europe coordinated by Ghent University are distributing a [survey](#) focused on asylum applicants, undocumented migrants and recently arrived newcomers, to better understand the impact of Covid-19 on their lives. Details of the Apart Together initiative are [here](#) and accompanying multilingual resources on the virus in European and other languages [here](#).

The deadline on the 'Patients Not Passports' [survey](#) on migrants' access to healthcare during coronavirus has now been extended to noon on Tuesday 28 April.

3. Home Office and Government Developments

Newly granted refugees - asylum support continuation for people granted refugee status

The [Refugee Council reported this week](#) confirmation from the Home Office that newly granted refugees will be able to continue to receive asylum support payments until their first Universal Credit payment is received. This extension has been introduced because of the impact of COVID-19 and will apply until the end of June, when the Home Office will review the situation.

This comes after organisations asked for further clarity on move-on arrangements for

newly granted refugees in the context of COVID-19. Communication with the Home Office now confirms that although newly granted refugees will still be expected to apply for Universal Credit, asylum support payments will continue until Universal Credit is received. To date, the Home Office has only confirmed this verbally in meetings with third sector and local authority stakeholders. Further written details are awaited from the Home Office, however this is extremely welcome news.

We are keen to better understand how this is operating in practice and how newly granted refugees are navigating this new system, so please do get in touch!

Additional Temporary Locations for the Registration of Asylum Claims

The Home Office has circulated new instructions on the introduction of additional temporary locations for the registration of asylum claims. As well as the Asylum Intake Unit in Croydon, limited operations will be put in place in Glasgow, Belfast, Liverpool, Leeds, Solihull and Cardiff. These will not be a five day service. Detailed instructions on how appointments can be made are included in the attached communication from the Home Office.

Extension of eligibility for free school meals

In response to action by [Matthew Gold solicitors](#), the UK Government has now published [new guidance](#) temporarily extending free school meal eligibility in England to include some children of groups who have no recourse to public funds. The groups are 1) children of Zambrano carers 2) children of families with NRPf with a right to remain in the UK on grounds of private and family life under Article 8 of ECHR 3) children of families receiving support under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 who are also subject to an NRPf restriction. All of these groups are subject to a maximum household earnings threshold of £7,400 per annum. In addition, there is a temporary extension of to children of asylum seekers supported under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. The guidance is [here](#) and the general guidance for schools on how the scheme works is [here](#). Whilst these are welcome changes, many children of families with no recourse to public funds outside these groups will not benefit, as the Independent reports [here](#).

Enquiries re ARC cards

The Government has put up a web page with instructions on what to do for enquiries related to Asylum Registration Cards (ARC cards). The [website](#) has an enquiry form which should be used to deal with instances where an ARC card has been lost or stolen; never received; is "old style"; has expired; where a change of circumstances (including right to work status) has been reported but the ARC has not been changed, and where the wrong photograph is on a card. For other issues with ARC cards, [Migrant Help](#) should be contacted, or in the case of unaccompanied minors, the Refugee Council.

Package to support online learning.

The Department for Education [has announced](#) that disadvantaged children across England are set to receive laptops and tablets as part of a push to make remote education accessible during the coronavirus outbreak. The groups mentioned are "children in the most vital stages of their education, those who receive support from a social worker and care leavers." Further details are awaited on how the scheme will be implemented in practice. The announcement also gives details of online learning

resources from the [Oak National Academy](#) and the [BBC](#).

4. Resources

UNHCR's Europe Bureau have published a paper covering [Practical Recommendations and Good Practice to address Protection Concerns in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic](#). It includes guidance to and good practice from states in Europe on areas such as: ensuring access to territory whilst protecting public health; maintaining basic registration and documentation; preventing transmission and community engagement and risk education.

Migration Exchange have commissioned a review of the UK migration and refugee sector, including an analysis of the sector's income, resource allocation, capacity, financial resilience, geographical spread, and focus of work. It is intended for a wide audience including foundations who are interested in supporting the sector as well as organisations working in this field, and can be accessed [here](#).

[Odils Learning Foundation in Plymouth](#) have published videos in a wealth of languages on how to use Zoom from your mobile, how to open gmail accounts, and on how to follow social distancing and protect yourself from Coronavirus which can be found [here](#).

50 humanitarian organisations, including the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have [produced a children's storybook](#) to help children aged 6-11 cope with coronavirus. The book is available online and as an audiobook and is available in 24 languages [here](#).