

Report Summary:

The effects of UK immigration, asylum, and refugee policy on poverty

A joint inquiry by the APPG on Migration and the APPG on Poverty

Nobody in the UK should face destitution, and destitution should be designed out of social security and immigration systems. There is a shared interest in ensuring people who settle in the UK can thrive. However, we have found that the UK's migration policy causes destitution by design, leaves people vulnerable to exploitation and crime, and increases the costs paid by society. All of us would benefit from changing this approach; ending destitution by design and creating a fairer, more effective immigration system.

Our inquiry received almost 200 submissions from experts with professional or lived experience of the immigration system. This testimony was crucial to our findings and recommendations.

Findings & Recommendations

- **Immigration controls are a major cause of destitution**, isolation, and poor integration. We should clear backlogs and halve the time people are subject to immigration control from 10 to 5 years.
- **Fees and charges** for immigration, nationality, and health are well above cost and a direct cause of poverty. They should be reduced.
- Preventing people from supporting themselves is costing society as well as migrants, leaving them reliant on insufficient support payments and vulnerable to exploitation. **People seeking asylum should have the right to work** after 6 months.
- **The level of asylum support is not enough** to live on. It should be reviewed and updated in line with inflation.
- **No Recourse To Public Funds is a huge contributor to destitution**, child poverty, isolation, and vulnerability. It should be strictly time-limited and more support exempted from it, such as Child Benefit or emergency welfare.
- 45% of children of foreign-born parents are in poverty, but denied access to services despite 70% of them being born in the UK. **Services and support for children and young people should be provided** regardless of immigration status.
- Migrants are at much higher risk of homelessness, but are barred from safety nets and cannot access much of the private rented sector. Asylum seekers and refugees are not given enough time to find housing in these conditions, and we **recommend the move-on period be extended to 56 days**.
- Integration benefits all parts of society, but **work on migration and poverty is deeply fragmented** across government. National, devolved, regional, and local governments should work together on a refugee integration strategy.
- **Expertise and lived experience is crucial** to creating better policies in this area, but is not acted-on enough. The Windrush Lessons Learned Review called for a Migrants Commissioner to fix this, and this should be implemented along with the Review's other recommendations.

"[We should] allow people to use their talents, support themselves and their families, contribute to the local economy and put down roots in their local communities. It could also decrease the risks of exploitation, forced labour and modern slavery."

- JRF Submission

"I have £9 a week from the government. I eat in a hotel. I have a mental problem... I lost consciousness twice from nervousness and lack of food."

- Response to survey

"Putting this kind of restriction on people leads to homelessness and destitution. And that is ... violating a human right. You have to have some sort of income to live. But some people such as myself, I don't have any of these benefits. So that's why people lead into homelessness."

- Response to survey

"With the visa fee especially... [It] means people are going to go and borrow money. It could be most of the time from unsafe sources. Which is really is like pushing them to towards that, which is quite horrible."

- Response to survey