



Michael Tomlinson KC MP  
Home Office  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE  
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

11th December 2023

Dear Ministers,

We write to you on behalf of our faith and belief institutions across London who are working to care for and support newly recognised refugees.

We welcome the prospect that the backlog of those waiting for their asylum claim to be decided will reduce, so that refugees can start moving on with their lives. We support the need to move people away from hotels, which are not the most ideal residences for those waiting for asylum or for the local communities in which they are placed.

However, we are concerned at the number who, on receiving their leave to remain, are becoming street homeless.

Many faith and belief organisations work together with those of all faiths, beliefs and none to support refugees and asylum seekers in a number of ways. Across London, churches, mosques, gurdwaras, synagogues and temples open their doors to receive asylum seekers and refugees. We are seeing demand for this support grow, overwhelmingly with the need to help those with new refugee status find accommodation.

Since August we know that in practice refugees are having much less notice that their asylum support will end than the stated policy of 28 days. Some are given seven days or less to leave their accommodation. Many have been in asylum accommodation for months or even years, with no opportunity to work or build networks. They are now being given only days to navigate the various systems and authorities necessary to plan their next steps.

Through relationships with our local councils, we are seeing the unbearable pressures they are facing, with insufficient resources to find emergency accommodation before these people are on the streets. The result is widespread and growing street homelessness.

Homelessness is a huge barrier for a new refugee to seek work, make an application for any benefit, or start to settle in the UK. No-one can build their life like this. We urge that the move to new accommodation needs to be done with careful planning, consultation with civil society partners and local authorities, and over a longer period than a few days.

As faith and belief leaders we want to promote and encourage the integration into society that you have said is vital for those with refugee status.

In the short-term, we call on you to:

- Re-examine Home Office practice, and work to ensure that all refugees have a minimum of 28 days from receiving their Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) before they are required to leave their asylum accommodation in line with Home Office policy.
- Urgently inform all councils and other relevant institutions that the notice of decision for the asylum claim is sufficient evidence for refugees to apply for housing and other support. An eviction letter is not required at this stage.
- Move to extend the eviction notice period to 56 days, given that the 28 day move-on period is incompatible with the application processing time for Universal Credit and other areas of government policy<sup>1</sup> and does not give newly recognised refugees the time to complete either of these processes.

As faith and belief leaders representing communities of faith and belief across our city, we believe that allowing refugees to begin life in the UK sleeping on the streets deeply undermines the core values of welcome, respect and responsibility which characterise our society at its best. We believe that refugees can thrive in and contribute to our communities; most are resourceful and resilient with skills and experience which will benefit the UK.

We urge you to rectify this failure in practice to uphold a 28-day move on period, with the intention of moving to a 56-day period as soon as this is achievable.

Yours sincerely,

*+ Sarah London*

The Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally DBE  
Bishop of London

The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Southwark  
The Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, Bishop of Chelmsford

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<sup>1</sup> Councils have to support anyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness within 56 days (the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 placed new duties on English councils within **56 days** to provide support to anyone who is either homeless or is at risk of becoming homeless). Applying for Universal Credit takes **35 days** at minimum from application to first payment, and requires a fixed address.

The Rt Revd Dr J R Gibbs, Bishop of Rochester  
 His Eminence Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster  
 His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos OBE, Coptic Orthodox Archbishop of London and Papal Legate to the United Kingdom  
 His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas of the Holy Greek Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain  
 The Rt Revd Dr Joanne Grenfell, Bishop of Stepney  
 The Rt Revd Dr Emma Ineson, Bishop of Kensington  
 The Rt Revd Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy, Bishop of Willesden  
 The Rt Revd Dr Ric Thorpe, Bishop of Islington  
 The Rt Revd Jonathan Baker, Bishop of Fulham  
 The Rt Revd Dr. Rosemarie Mallett, Bishop of Croydon  
 The Rt Revd Dr Martin Gainsborough, Bishop of Kingston  
 The Rt Revd Lynne Cullens, Bishop of Barking  
 The Rt Revd Simon Burton-Jones, Bishop of Tonbridge  
 Rt. Rev. Paul McAleenan, Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster  
 Fr Dominic Robinson SJ Chair of Justice and Peace, Roman Catholic Dioceses of Westminster  
 Fr Dominic Howarth Episcopal Vicar for Youth Ministry and Pastoral Care, Roman Catholic Diocese of Brentwood  
 Major Stephen White and Major Amanda White, Divisional Leaders for the London Division of The Salvation Army  
 The Revd Phil Bernard, Regional Leader of the London Baptists  
 The Revd George D Watt, Moderator of Thames North Synod of the United Reformed Church  
 Fred Ashmore and Leasa Lambert Co Clerks, London Quakers  
 Fred Ashmore on behalf of the Steering Group of Quaker Asylum Seeker and Refugee Network (QARN)  
 Bishop Tedroy Powell, National Presiding Bishop, Church of God of Prophecy Trust (U.K.)  
 The Revd Canon Les Isaac OBE (President of Ascension Trust)  
 The Reverend Jonathan Aptin Samadi, The Leader of Persian Anglican Community of London  
 Rabbi Baroness Julia Neuberger, Senior Rabbi Emerita, West London Synagogue  
 Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, Senior Rabbi, Masorti Judaism  
 Rabbi Dr Helen Freeman, Co-Senior Rabbi, West London Synagogue of British Jews  
 Rabbi David Mitchell, Co-Senior Rabbi, West London Synagogue of British Jews  
 Alexandra Wright, Senior Rabbi at The Liberal Jewish Synagogue, London  
 Lord Singh of Wimbledon CBE, Director Network of Sikh Organisations UK  
 Harmeet Singh Gill, General Secretary of Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall  
 Mr Jasvir Singh CBE, City Sikhs  
 Zara Mohammed, Secretary-General, Muslim Council of Britain  
 Sh Dr Faid Mohammed Said, Imam of London Central Mosque, Secretary General of the Commission of Fatwa and Sharia Affairs  
 Mohammed Kozbar, Chairman, Finsbury Park Mosque  
 Sufia Alam, Head of Programmes and Maryam Centre, East London Mosque and Chair of Tower Hamlets Interfaith Forum  
 Bibi Khan MBE DL, President of London Islamic Cultural Society, Chair of the North London Council of Mosques  
 Rajnish Kashyap, General Secretary/Director of the Hindu Council UK

Dr Deesha Chadha OBE, Co-chair Faiths Forum for London, National Executive Committee member Hindu Forum of Britain

Maureen Goodman, Programme Director, Brahma Kumaris, UK

Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala, Head of the London Buddhist Vihara & Chief Sangha Nayaka of Great Britain

Andrew Copson, Chief Executive of Humanists UK

Malcolm M Deboo, President Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe