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11/5/2020

Dear Secretary of State

Re: Suspending the No Recourse to Public Funds Condition

Councils are on the frontline of fighting coronavirus and supporting vulnerable people during the pandemic. While we welcome the measures the Government has taken in response to the outbreak, there is one particular group in our society that we are concerned is excluded from support and therefore risks falling into poverty.

Many migrants, including key workers keeping all of us safe, have a No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) condition attached to their immigration status. This means that individuals and their families, including their children, are unable to access vital benefits. We are therefore urging you to suspend the NRPF condition during the current pandemic emergency.

Lewisham is one of the most diverse boroughs in the country and we are stronger for it, as we have seen over the past few weeks, with people of all backgrounds and faiths coming together to support their community. As a Council we are working incredibly hard to support residents with NRPF affected by the pandemic, including housing rough sleepers with NRPF. However, demand for our services by people with NRPF is rising and the Government does not fund local authorities to support them. Temporarily suspending the NRPF condition would enable us to continue to focus on critical services and support the most vulnerable in our community.

At a time of national unity, and with the impact of coronavirus set to be felt for months if not years, it is wrong that migrant families are disproportionately at risk. We therefore urge you to suspend the NRPF condition.

Yours sincerely

Damien Egan
Mayor of Lewisham

Cllr Chris Barnham
Cabinet Member for
School Performance
and Children's Services

Cllr Kevin Bonavia
Cabinet Member for
Democracy, Refugees
and Accountability