

No Recourse to Public Funds: data and developments

December 2020 update

The logo for Citizens Advice, featuring the text "citizens advice" in a dark blue, sans-serif font, centered within a white speech bubble shape that has a small tail pointing towards the bottom right.

**citizens
advice**



What's No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)?

Most migrants who are non-EEA nationals and have been in the UK for less than 5 years will have No Recourse to Public Funds attached to their visa. It means they're not entitled to most welfare benefits, including Universal Credit, Child Benefit and Council Tax Reduction.



7,700

The number of NRPF issues we've advised on since coronavirus was declared a global pandemic in March 2020. In the 9 months since the pandemic began, we've seen a **91%** year-on-year increase in NRPF issues.

What are some of the key NRPF issues our advisers have seen during the pandemic?

- People unable to afford to self-isolate or shield
- Debt - especially rent arrears
- Redundancy: people with NRPF are disproportionately likely to work in sectors worst affected by the economic crisis
- People finding it difficult or impossible to make a change of conditions application to have NRPF lifted, as evidence is even harder to gather due to lockdowns and social distancing

Who is coming to us for support with NRPF?

④ in ⑤

people who have come to us with an NRPF issue since the pandemic began have been from a Black, Asian or ethnic minority background. 33% were Asian and 32% were Black. In comparison, 4 in 5 people we've supported with any advice issue since the pandemic began have been white.

It's clear that NRPF issues are primarily affecting Black and Asian people.



The Home Office's evaluation of the hostile/compliant environment policy and measures, as recommended by the Williams Review, is ongoing.

Our data suggests a highly disproportionate impact of NRPF on people from Black, Asian and minoritised backgrounds - supporting existing findings from organisations such as The Unity Project* and The Children's Society**. **This should be looked at urgently in light of the public sector equality duty - with the Home Office's findings made public.**

* The Unity Project (2019) [Access Denied](#)

** The Children's Society (2020) [A Lifeline for All](#)

What have we seen during the pandemic?



11 minutes

We've advised on an NRPF issue every **11 minutes** since March.



What have we seen during the second lockdown?

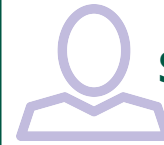
The number of NRPF issues we're seeing compared with the same period during the first lockdown has risen **8%**. This shows that the level of need has increased, despite support that some local authorities have been providing to people with NRPF.



157%

Views of our webpage on 'accessing UK benefits if you are subject to immigration control' have increased by 157% if we compare November 2019 with November 2020.

We've had more than **50,000** visits to this webpage since the pandemic began.



Sarita's story

Sarita works in administrative support in an NHS hospital. She's on a zero-hours contract and has NRPF attached to her visa. Both her children are under ten.

She had to self-isolate for four weeks, as she and her children had coronavirus symptoms at different times.

During this time, she didn't receive SSP from her employer as she was told this was unavailable for staff on zero-hours contracts.

She spent four weeks with no income, and contacted Citizens Advice for support.

Homelessness risk for those with NRPF



Rent arrears and evictions issues have increased significantly among people we have advised about NRPF during the pandemic:

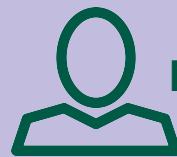
29 out of a sample of 50 evidence forms* from the pandemic period mention rent arrears, evictions or homelessness

3 out of a sample of 50 evidence forms from 2019 mention rent arrears, evictions or homelessness

* Write-ups of case notes submitted by our advisers to highlight key problems faced by people they're supporting



Evidence in this area is growing - early indications prior to the lifting of the eviction ban in January suggest a risk of significant levels of evictions and homelessness for people with NRPF in 2021.



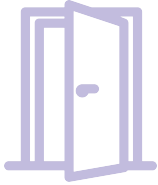
Marlene's story

Marlene came to the UK from Jamaica nearly 20 years ago. She has NRPF attached to her leave to remain. Prior to the pandemic she had been working in a nursery for several years. She was initially furloughed by her employer on 80% pay and then made redundant in July 2020.

Marlene could no longer afford her rent and became homeless.

She contacted Citizens Advice to request a food bank referral and explore a change of conditions application.

Why are people with NRPF often renters?



People with NRPF are prohibited from accessing any allocation of social housing or housing association tenancies through the council register. They often don't have the means, or security that they'll be able to remain in the UK, to buy a property.

We know **1.2 million people** are in rent arrears worth around **£900 million** due to the pandemic. While most people in the UK can claim Universal Credit (UC) to have at least some income for rent, people with NRPF are ineligible for UC.



Impact of the pandemic on rent arrears

Homelessness



While evictions have been repeatedly paused during the pandemic, we know that illegal evictions have been occurring. We saw a **60%** year-on-year increase in illegal eviction issues between September to November 2019 vs. 2020. Many of the people with NRPF we are seeing who have rent arrears are becoming homeless or face homelessness.

Homelessness as a ground for deportation

As of 1 December 2020, the Immigration Rules changes mean rough sleeping is a ground for refusal or cancellation of permission to stay in the UK. If someone is found sleeping rough (including in a shed or a building 'not designed for habitation') - for a single night - they can be deported. If they're not deported but have their permission to remain cancelled, they will become undocumented. They won't be able to work or to access most forms of support.



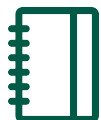
Who will be affected?

- Those on work, visitor and student visas
- EU citizens who don't apply to the EU Settlement Scheme before 30 June 2021
- Several other groups of migrants, including people with UK ancestry visas

1.376 million people in the UK are estimated to have NRPF. This includes:



More than **488,200** people on work visas



More than **545,800** people on study visas



1 million



More than a million people with NRPF are in the group of those who can be deported or have their permission to stay cancelled for rough sleeping.