

Updated evidence briefing: Poverty among children affected by UK government asylum and immigration policy

By Ilona Pinter & Lucy Leon
June 2025¹

Key messages

- Children in migrant and asylum-seeking families living in the UK are at a disproportionately high risk of poverty and destitution. Among the factors driving child poverty are government immigration and asylum policies restricting household income, increasing essential costs and limiting families' opportunities to mitigate the effects of poverty and material deprivation.
- The 'no recourse to public funds' (NRPF) policy restricts access to most income-based welfare benefits, contributing to poverty, destitution and social exclusion among children in resident migrant families. In 2024, over half a million (578,954) children (under 18s) were recorded as having a visa or leave to remain in the UK, which generally comes with an NRPF condition. Although not all will be in poverty, face financial hardship or meet existing benefits criteria, NRPF restrictions mean that families cannot access any benefits regardless of need, including Child Benefit, Universal Credit, Housing Benefit, disability-related benefits, most childcare-related support and passported provisions.
- In addition, British citizen children and children in families with irregular immigration status, such as EEA nationals who have not secured EU Settled Status, families who have overstayed their visas or those awaiting their status determination, are also subject to the NRPF policy by default. Whilst there are no estimates of the number of British children affected by NRPF restrictions, research commissioned by the Greater London Authority estimated that 215,000 undocumented children were living in the UK in 2017.
- Asylum-seeking families with children are unable to access welfare benefits, while parents generally have no right to work in the UK. Families instead rely on below-poverty level subsistence payments from the Home Office under the Asylum Support system. This affected over 15,500 children receiving Asylum Support at the end of 2022.
- An estimated 10,500 children in 5,400 families who were restricted by NRPF and facing destitution received local authority support at an estimated cost of £65 million in 2021/22, as they were locked out of the mainstream welfare safety net. However, these estimates do not accurately represent the levels of need or numbers of children facing poverty due to the significant gaps in data collated and recorded

¹ This evidence briefing was originally published in January 2025 and submitted to the Child Poverty Strategy review. It has been updated with some new figures on costs for local authorities, updated Migrant Journey data for 2024 and Asylum Support poverty rates for 2023-24 based on the most recent Households Below Average Income statistics.

by local authorities. In addition, many families remain locked out of local authority support as the threshold for accessing support is highly conditional; many families often experience robust gatekeeping from local authorities, and others are too fearful of the repercussions of seeking support. The financial support provided by local authorities is often aligned to Asylum Support rates or less. While this 'parallel safety net' is a lifeline to some families, it comes at a significant and unfunded cost to local authorities who struggle to provide adequate support for the increasing numbers of migrant families facing poverty and destitution, in particular in the context of crisis in the provision of Temporary Accommodation for many councils.

- Lifting NRPF visa conditions from resident households would bring parity to families with children so that they could access support under the same conditions as their peers, resulting in a positive net present value of £872 million over a 10-year period. The main costs of lifting conditions would be for Universal Credit and Child Benefit, but this would provide substantial gains to improvements in children's education and development.
- Immigration and asylum policy is a key lever for the government in tackling child poverty because of the role these restrictions play in driving and sustaining poverty among children in migrant and asylum-seeking families. In developing its 10-year Child Poverty Strategy, the government must consider the impact of the NRPF restrictions, the severe limitations of the parallel social care safety net provided by local authorities and the Home Office Asylum Support system, if it wishes to tackle child poverty for all children, including those in resident migrant families.

This briefing draws primarily on research and analysis in relation to children in the asylum and immigration context conducted by researchers based at the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE), London School of Economics and Political Science and at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), University of Oxford. The authors draw on their expertise and research on child poverty and inequality in the context of UK asylum and immigration policy, from projects they led or were involved in such as the [Understanding Migrant Destitution](#) project, the [Lifeline for All](#) report, the [Social Cost Benefit Analysis of Lifting NRPF conditions](#) report, [research on children and parents' experiences of Asylum Support](#), and other studies. The briefing also includes some new analysis of Home Office Migrant Journey and other administrative data.

For more information, please contact the authors, Dr Ilona Pinter, CASE, LSE, at i.pinter@lse.ac.uk and Lucy Leon, COMPAS, University of Oxford, at lucy.leon@compas.ox.ac.uk.

Increasing incomes

The government's Child Poverty Strategy aims to increase household income, which has important implications for children's educational, health and developmental outcomes.² For migrant families residing in the UK, household incomes are affected by many factors, including government immigration and asylum policies, which restrict families' access to employment and social security benefits, especially those aimed at reducing

² Cooper, K., & Stewart, K. (2021). [Does household income affect children's outcomes? A systematic review of the evidence](#). *Child Indicators Research*, 14(3), 981-1005.

childhood poverty and meeting children's and families' needs.

Children affected by 'no recourse to public funds' restrictions

Successive governments have maintained policies to restrict access to social security benefits for migrants coming to the UK, including child dependents. The 'no recourse to public funds' (NRPF) restrictions impose a 'blanket ban' on social security benefits so that families cannot access support even when they are at risk of poverty, financial hardship or destitution.³ 'Public funds' are defined in immigration legislation and include most income-based, in- and out-of-work benefits like Child Benefit, Universal Credit, Housing Benefit, disability-related benefits and discretionary payments provided via local authorities as well as most passported benefits. Immigration policies implemented in recent years have increasingly restricted routes to regularisation and settlement through increased financial burdens, leaving more families residing in the UK on a time-limited visa or leave to remain and without recourse to social security.⁴

The pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, during which time the social security system provided vital protections to eligible families, have also shone a light on the dangerous effects of such statutory exclusions. During the pandemic, there was a shift moving towards more inclusionary policy making focusing on universality of support rather than exclusion based on immigration status, with public health being prioritised over migration governance and people subject to the NRPF visa condition were entitled to some of the emergency measures, including the furlough and 'Everyone In' schemes.⁵ However, families restricted by NRPF were unable to access most of the government provisions introduced particularly those for low-income households. For example, families who lost their jobs could not access Universal Credit during the pandemic, and as prices increased, families could not access additional support, such as the Cost-of-Living Payments, which were passported through existing benefit entitlements, in turn increasing inequalities for low-income families restricted by NRPF who remained ineligible.⁶

It is Home Office policy to apply these restrictions to most visa holders. According to Home Office data, there were **a 3.67 million individuals, including over half a million (578,954) children (under 18s),**⁷ who at the end of 2024, had a type of visa or leave to remain – permission to reside in the UK, which normally restricts access to all income-based benefits. Of these children, the **vast majority - 86% or 498,871 children - were on a visa route that allows for settlement.**⁸ Separately, of the 3.62m individuals of all ages likely to have NRPF as a condition of their visa or leave to remain in the year ending 2024, for which data are available, around **a quarter (27% or 960,050) had been living in the UK for three years or more.**⁹

³ Pinter, I. (2024) [Statutory exclusion from social security: experiences of migrants in the UK](#). In: Gregory, Lee and Iafrafi, Steve, (eds.) *Diversity and Welfare Provision: Tension and Discrimination in 21st Century Britain*. Policy Press, Bristol, UK, 97 - 116.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Leon, L. (2023) [Understanding Migrant Destitution in the UK: Literature Review](#). Centre on Migration Policy & Society (COMPAS), University of Oxford.

⁶ Pinter, I. (forthcoming) 'Cost-of-living crisis' for all, help only for some'.

⁷ Author's analysis of Home Office [Migrant Journey 2024 data](#) using the data from the summary table (MJ_07). According to Home Office data tables, the age is taken at the time of the initial visa grant but there is no further information on the age of individuals at the year of reporting.

⁸ For example, family, work or other routes that enable families to acquire settlement. This does not include those on student visas or some temporary workers who cannot apply for settlement directly.

⁹ This is based on the author's analysis of detailed data tables (Migrant Journey 2024 – MJ_D01) using the 'Years into

It is important to note that not all children subject to the NRPF condition will be in poverty or experience financial hardship. Indeed, not all would be eligible for social security benefits under existing criteria. There is no comprehensive data on how many children are subject to NRPF restrictions and/or are in poverty. However, these estimates indicate the number of children whose families are restricted from accessing social security benefits that their peers would be entitled to, even if they are on low-income (Universal Credit, Housing Benefit) or have additional needs (e.g. Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments etc). As a result, children and their families cannot access mainstream safety net measures throughout their childhood, while the NRPF restrictions apply to their parents' status. In these cases, families cannot supplement low earnings with in-work benefits and are ineligible for Child Benefit, which recognises families' additional needs when they have children. These restrictions drive and sustain poverty among children in migrant families living in the UK.¹⁰

As NRPF restrictions are effectively indefinite, they are applied each time a family renews their time-limited visa or leave to remain, until such time as they can make an application for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) – referred to as settlement. However, as the process of settlement has become increasingly expensive in recent years, these restrictions do not only apply to 'temporary migrants'; they also increasingly apply to families whose long-term future is in the UK, including those with British-born children who have never lived elsewhere and whose homes are here.

NRPF restrictions also affect British children with migrant parents or children whose status is irregular or still unresolved. Whilst there are no estimates of the number of British children affected by NRPF restrictions, research commissioned by the Greater London Authority estimated that 215,000 undocumented children were living in the UK in 2017, which includes UK-born children of undocumented migrant parents.¹¹

High risks of poverty

Although there are various limitations in the availability of precise and accurate data, particularly what proportion of children are in poverty as a result of NRPF restrictions, we know from the existing analysis of national survey data that children with foreign-born parents are at a higher risk of poverty and material deprivation. For example, CASE analysis of government Family Resources Survey (FRS) data has highlighted that children with non-UK-born parents are at a higher risk of poverty than their peers with UK-born parents: in 2019/20, relative poverty rates for children with foreign-born parents who had been in the UK for 10 years or less, and those who had been in the UK for over 11 years were estimated to be 49.6% and 47%, respectively compared to 25.8% for children with UK-born parents (after housing costs). Children with foreign-born parents were also three times more likely to be in severe poverty (10%) as compared to their peers with UK-born parents (3.1%).¹² An earlier separate analysis of FRS data for 2011-

journey' variable to estimate how many of those with valid leave to remain in 2024 from an initial leave in 2005 had been in the UK for 3 years or more. This data is not disaggregated by age; therefore, unlike the summary statistics used above, it is not possible to isolate these figures for children (under 18) only.

¹⁰ Pinter, I., Compton, S., Parhar, R. & Majid, H (2020) [A Lifeline for All: Children and families with no recourse to public funds](#). The Children's Society, London.

¹¹ Jolly, A., Thomas, S., & Stanyer, J. (2020). [London's children and young people who are not British citizens: A profile](#). Greater London Authority, London.

¹² Vizard, P., Obolenskaya, P., & Treebhohun, K. (2023). [Going backwards? The slowdown, stalling and reversal of progress in reducing child poverty in Britain during the second decade of the 21st century, and the groups of children that were affected](#). Social Policies and Distributional Outcomes Research Papers (SPDORP 14). Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, London, UK.

14, which compared poverty rates among foreign-born individuals living in the UK across different age groups, showed that foreign-born children faced both higher rates of poverty than working-age adults and pensioners who were foreign-born as well as a bigger poverty gap to their UK-born peers.¹³ This study showed that of the 3.6 million children estimated to be in relative poverty at the time, a third (33%) were living with at least one foreign-born parent. This was still the case in 2022/23¹⁴. Although FRS data do not provide information on individuals' immigration status, the findings nevertheless show that children living in migrant families in the UK are disproportionately affected by poverty and this warrants further focused attention.

These disparities are also reflected in destitution research. Recent JRF research found that children from migrant households were more likely to experience destitution than their peers: of the one million children estimated to have experienced destitution in 2022, a third (34% - 355,900) were migrant children. This represented a 155% increase for migrant children (with no complex needs) since a similar survey was conducted in 2019.¹⁵

Local authority support

Some families who are affected by NRPF restrictions and have children in the households can access statutory support from local authorities under the Children Act 1989 and equivalent devolved provisions. However, local authority support is often only provided when families are at imminent risk of destitution, not for children living in poverty. Indeed, this type of support was not designed as a system of poverty alleviation and as a substitute for social security provision. Local authorities do not generally provide financial support to families in lieu of Child Benefit ineligibility or other benefits, including non-means-tested benefits for those with a disability or long-term health issue that might otherwise entitle a family to additional support.

COMPAS research on Understanding Migrant Destitution found that in 2021/22, 142 UK local authorities reported providing financial support to **10,640 destitute migrant people who are excluded from the mainstream welfare safety net due to their immigration status**.¹⁶ This number includes 3,108 families and 5,831 children. The data reported is likely to be a significant underestimate as many local authorities were unable to supply accurate data; COMPAS estimates that if all UK local authorities recorded data, the total number of people supported was likely to be c.18,000 people in 2021/2022, including 5,400 families and 10,500 children. The estimated numbers of families receiving local authority support in England and Wales have risen by over 150% since 2012/13, with costs for local authorities rising by almost 230%. COMPAS estimates that children's social care teams in England, Scotland and Wales spent around £65 million on supporting families with NRPF in 2021/22¹⁷.

However, as outlined, these figures do not account for the number of children facing poverty or material deprivation, as local authority support is only available to families who are destitute or at imminent risk of destitution. Moreover, many families who face

¹³ Hughes, C., & Kenway, P. (2016). [Foreign-born people and poverty in the UK](#). Joseph Rowntree Foundation, UK.

¹⁴ Qureshi, A. & Morris, M. (2025) [Hidden hardships: The immigration system and child poverty](#). IPPR, UK.

¹⁵ Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Treanor, M., Blenkinsopp, J., McIntyre, J., Johnsen, S., & McMordie, L. (2023). [Destitution in the UK 2023](#). Joseph Rowntree Foundation, UK.

¹⁶ Leon, L. and Broadhead, J. (2024) [Understanding Migrant Destitution in the UK](#). COMPAS, University of Oxford

¹⁷ This briefing was revised on 3rd June 2025 to include new data analysis providing an estimate of the annual local authority expenditure on supporting families with NRPF in England, Scotland and Wales.

financial hardship but cannot access Universal Credit because of NRPF restrictions face robust gatekeeping from local authorities, remaining locked out of all welfare safety nets, while others are too fearful to present in case of potential repercussions on their immigration status. The availability of statutory local authority duties to children and families is often cited as a safeguard for families affected by NRPF. However, as the COMPAS research highlights, local authorities are already operating on overstretched social care budgets and often lack the training, infrastructure or investment to meet the need and to provide adequate support that meets people's needs. Despite pockets of good practice within some local authorities, the system overall is dysfunctional, under-resourced, and lacks effective leadership. Most importantly, families told us about how humiliating, distressing and intrusive this process can be to navigate, only to get the support that families are legally entitled to. Additionally, there is no clear right to appeal negative decisions or challenge the level of financial support provided, which is often well below poverty levels or pegged to Asylum Support levels (see below).

'Change of Conditions' process

An additional safeguard in place for some migrant households is to apply to have the NRPF condition lifted through the 'Change of Conditions' application process. As with local authority support, this is not intended to protect children and families from poverty and also has a very high threshold, different to that of most mainstream benefits. For example, in order to have NRPF conditions lifted, households are required to show they are destitute or at risk of imminent destitution or that there are some exceptional circumstances affecting their income or expenditure. Families with children are not automatically granted recourse to public funds but must show that there are additional reasons relating to the welfare of a child. In this way, the Home Office engages in its own 'means testing' of all welfare benefits with far higher thresholds than those in the social security system, including those benefits that are not themselves means tested or are partially means-tested like Child Benefit. The process also does not currently accept social worker assessments of destitution.

As research has highlighted, applying for a change of conditions is only an option for some visa holders with NRPF conditions, and is further limited because families face a high evidential burden as part of the application process.¹⁸ Many families are unaware of their rights to apply, to challenge a negative decision, or may have limited access to legal advice and support with the application. Others are reluctant to apply due to fear of the repercussions on their future immigration applications.¹⁹ The numbers of applications indicate that only a small percentage of people holding visas where NRPF can be lifted successfully do so.²⁰ The process itself has been found to be unlawful in the High Court on numerous occasions in recent years,²¹ most recently because of the lengthy delays in how decisions are processed.²² In 2023, it took an average of 47 days for a 'Change of Conditions' decision to be made. Of those decisions, two-thirds (66%) were granted

¹⁸ Leon, L. (2024) [Beyond the headlines: why rising migrant destitution in the UK needs an urgent policy response](#).

COMPAS Blog 7 June 2024; Pinter, I. & Leon, L. (2020) [Keeping safe without a safety net: How are children faring when families have no access to mainstream benefits?](#) LSE Social Policy Blog 17 December 2020.

¹⁹ Pinter et al (2020) [A Lifeline for All](#).

²⁰ Cuibus, M. & Fernández-Reino, M. (2023) [Deprivation and the no recourse to public funds \(NRPF\) condition](#). Migration Observatory briefing. COMPAS, University of Oxford

²¹ Summaries of the various High Court judgements can be found on The Unity Project's website: <https://www.unity-project.org.uk/suspend-nrpf>

²² SAG & Ors v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2024] EWHC 2984 (Admin) (21 November 2024)

recourse to public funds²³. However, households would then have had to wait a further five weeks for Universal Credit payments. This is impossible to do if you are already destitute or facing extreme financial hardship. As such, the 'Change of Conditions' process does not offer an effective safeguard for most families facing poverty and financial hardship.

Children in asylum-seeking families: Right to work and 'Asylum Support'

Immigration policies also restrict parental access to earned income by limiting access to employment altogether, limiting the professions they can work in, the number of hours they can work and restricting the employers they are tied to. For children and families seeking asylum in the UK, for example, parents are generally not permitted to work. If their claim has not been resolved within 12 months, the main applicant only can apply for permission to work. However, work is limited to 23 highly specialised occupations on the Immigration Salary List, and salaries can be paid at 80% of market rates.²⁴ In practice, as families are ineligible for in- and out-of-work benefits and most childcare support, and are unable to access paid employment or sufficient resources from earned income, they are reliant on subsistence and accommodation provided via the Home Office's Asylum Support system. However, this provides families with below-poverty levels of support. **In 2023, the weekly per person 'flat rate' of support was £47.39²⁵. A family with two adults and two children (over 5 years old) would have received £189.56 per week, equivalent to 35% of the relative poverty threshold for that family size after housing costs or 21% of median income.²⁶ This means that the family would be £357.19 below the relative poverty threshold.** While utility bills are normally covered as part of the accommodation provision, which is an important safeguard protecting families from 'energy poverty' and related debts, these levels of subsistence place families well below the poverty threshold. Support rates have deteriorated significantly since 2008 due to a lack of effective uprating in line with inflation and targeted cuts to support for children and single parents in 2015; the introduction of the 'flat rate' in 2015 saw the weekly support for children cut by 30%.²⁷

Children and families, who make up about two-thirds of Asylum Support recipients, typically remain on this type of support for several years, while parents are barred from employment and families are placed into deep, persistent poverty during a critical time in children's lives. Between 2016-20, there were, on average, over 16,500 children receiving Asylum Support at the end of each year. At the end of 2022, families with children had been receiving Section 95 Asylum Support (the main form of support for those awaiting their claim) for an average of 3.24 years – and 20% had been on this support for five years or more. This increased by 11 months from the same time in 2017.²⁸

²³ Authors' analysis of published 'Change of Conditions' Migration transparency data: Immigration and protection data: Q3 2024 – [Table CoC_01](#).

²⁴ Gower, M., McKinney, C.J., & Oxley, G. (2024) [Asylum seekers: the permission to work policy](#). House of Commons Library, London.

²⁵ The flat rate was initially £45 per person per week from January 2023 but increased in July 2023 to £47.39 pending the 2023 support rates review. New rates only came into force in January 2024 – £49.18 - so we have taken this level which covered most of this financial year. More information on the government's 2023 review:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-on-review-of-cash-allowance-paid-to-asylum-seekers/report-on-review-of-weekly-allowances-paid-to-asylum-seekers-and-failed-asylum-seekers-2023>

²⁶ This is based on a relative poverty threshold at 60% of median equivalised income after housing costs, according to the [Households Below Average Income](#) (HBAI) data.

²⁷ Pinter, I. (2024) [Living a differentiated childhood: children and families' experiences of poverty and material deprivation within the UK's Asylum Support system](#). PhD thesis, LSE.

²⁸ Pinter, I. (2024) [Unseen Children: The hidden lives of children in families seeking asylum in the UK](#). CASE Working paper

Costs and gains of lifting NRPF restrictions

Analysis by CASE and other LSE researchers commissioned by the Greater London Authority on the social costs and benefits of lifting NRPF conditions for those on a visa or with limited leave to remain who were residing in the UK, found that this reform would bring parity so that families would be eligible for benefits under the same criteria as their peers. Our analysis found that lifting NRPF conditions for families with children with limited leave to remain would result in a positive net present value of £872 million over a 10-year period.

The main costs of lifting conditions would be for Universal Credit and Child Benefit, while the biggest gains would come from enabling better housing stability and improvements to children's education and development. Using Home Office Migrant Journey 2019 data and other sources, we estimated that 106,000 households with dependent children would benefit if NRPF conditions were lifted. We assumed that most households with children (96,713 or 91%) would become eligible for and would take up Child Benefit given it is currently available to most children, but that only 9,000 households would receive Universal Credit based on current eligibility criteria and existing take-up patterns. Better housing stability and improvements to children's education and development are key drivers of health and wellbeing. Even short periods of poverty and insecurity can severely negatively affect children's life chances. There would also be high gains from access to better-quality, less crowded, or more affordable housing, and from relief of problem debt²⁹. As our analysis highlighted, unsuitable housing can have long-term effects on health, and the financial burden of high housing costs can push families into poverty. We also noted that problem debt has profound social, emotional and productivity impacts, as well as effects on physical and mental health. As well as the financial protection of social security, lifting NRPF conditions would enable families to access employment-related support, such as work coaches, and childcare provision, most of which is currently restricted for those who are subject to immigration control, even when they are working.³⁰ This could enable families, particularly migrant women whose employment rates tend to be lower,³¹ to increase earned income.

Reducing essential costs

Our research has also highlighted the significant, increasing costs that families subject to immigration control must contend with to maintain their immigration status and to acquire settlement. While the NRPF policy is long-standing, the increases in regularisation and settlement costs for those already living in the UK and policy reforms, which have increased the length of residence required before settlement, have led to increased financial burdens on families.³² This is particularly true for families more likely to be on a low income on the ten-year route to settlement who need to pay Home Office application fees, legal fees and the Immigration Health Surcharge introduced in 2015. Families on the ten-year route must apply for leave to remain four times every 2.5 years before they are permitted to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain. Our analysis in 2020

237, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, LSE.

²⁹ Benton et al (2022) [Social Cost Benefit Analysis of the no recourse to public funds \(NRPF\) policy in London](#).

³⁰ Pinter, I. (2023) [On the Outside: Enabling parents from migrant backgrounds to access childcare provisions could help address existing inequalities](#). Coram Family and Childcare blog.

³¹ Fernández-Reino, M., & Brindle, B. (2024). [Migrants in the UK labour market: An overview](#). Migration Observatory, University of Oxford.

³² Pinter, I. (2024) [Statutory exclusion from social security: experiences of migrants in the UK](#).

found that a single parent with two children starting their settlement journey in 2012 would have had to pay £23,375 over a ten-year-period on this route in order to acquire Indefinite Leave to Remain. A family of two adults and three children would have had to pay £39,180 over a ten-year period.³³ Had these families started their journey five years later in 2017, these overall fees would have increased to £27,182 and £45,560, respectively, given increases to both Home Office application costs and the Immigration Health Surcharge (assuming no further increases after 2024).³⁴ These are essential costs for families because if they are unable to pay, their status becomes irregular. The pressure of having to save up and pay visa renewal application fees every 2.5 years to comply with UK immigration policy can take its toll on migrant families. Families often risk accumulating debt to stay afloat, with some parents having to take multiple loans to cover Home Office fees.³⁵ Other families have had to prioritise only renewing visas for some of the family as they could not afford the fees for the whole family, leaving some family members falling into irregularity.³⁶ Research by IPPR, Praxis and the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit found that 46% of survey respondents on the ten-year route to settlement had allowed their visa or the visa of a family member to lapse because of the costs of renewals³⁷. In addition, these costs take away resources from other children's needs to maintain their status.

Implications for the Child Poverty Strategy

Removing the NRPF restriction for families with children under 18 years old would, at a stroke, lift significant numbers of children out of poverty and reduce the detrimental impact the policy has on children in migrant households, including those facing the most extreme forms of poverty, destitution and homelessness. It would also drastically reduce the need for a parallel welfare safety net provided via local authorities and the Home Office. There is widespread concern about this area of policy, including from cross-parliamentary committees³⁸, local government³⁹, think tanks⁴⁰ and child poverty campaigners⁴¹. There is also considerable evidence of the damaging effects of NRPF restrictions from families with lived experience⁴². All highlight a need for fundamental policy reforms, and a key recommendation from many experts and campaigners is ending the use of NRPF restrictions for resident families. Our research also raises other policy implications for central government that should be considered as part of the forthcoming Child Poverty Strategy. COMPAS has suggested additional implications for local government as part of the 'Understanding Migrant Destitution in the UK' research

³³ Pg 56 in Pinter et al (2020) [A Lifeline for All](#).

³⁴ These costs do not include citizenship costs – for more information on additional fees including citizenship for different family types, see: [Migration Observatory - Fees](#)

³⁵ Pinter, I., et al (2020) [A Lifeline for All](#).

³⁶ Leon, L. & Broadhead, J. (2024) [Understanding Migrant Destitution in the UK](#). COMPAS, University of Oxford.

³⁷ Mort, L., Whitaker-Yilmaz, J., Morris, M. & Shah, A. (2023) [A Punishing Process: Experiences of People on the 10-Year Route to Settlement](#). IPPR, Praxis and Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit.

³⁸ APPGs on Migration and Poverty (2024) [The Effects of UK Immigration, Asylum and Refugee Policy on Poverty: A Joint Inquiry by the APPG on Migration and the APPG on Poverty](#); House of Commons Work & Pensions Committee (2022) [Children in poverty: No recourse to public funds Seventh Report of Session 2021–22](#).

³⁹ NRPF Network (2024) [Ending homelessness and child poverty: Government policy changes needed to end homelessness and eradicate child poverty](#); See also [Written Evidence to the Work & Pensions Committee Inquiry on Children in poverty: No recourse to public funds in 2021-22](#).

⁴⁰ Morris, M., & Qureshi, A. (2021). [Locked out of a livelihood: The case for reforming 'no recourse to public funds'](#). Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), September.

⁴¹ End Child Poverty Coalition (2024) [Eight Tests for the government's Child Poverty Strategy](#).

⁴² Ann, Geo, Imran, Kas, Khurram, Shamim, Tatiana and Yasna (Experts by Experience Advisory Board) 'Foreword' in Leon, L. & Broadhead, J. (2024) [Understanding Migrant Destitution in the UK](#); United Impact, Together in Unity and RAMFEL's Experts By Experience (2023) [Submission to the Women & Equalities Committee](#), November 2023.

project.

NRPF policy:

- NRPF conditions should not be applied to subsequent grants of leave to remain or visa extensions where there are children in the family.

Right to work:

- Individuals and families seeking asylum in the UK should have the right to work automatically after six months of waiting for their asylum determination without occupational or other restrictions.
- Permission to work should be granted to main applicants and dependents, including young people who want to get involved in part-time work, apprenticeships or paid work experience.

Asylum Support:

- Families with children receiving Asylum Support should also have access to equal levels of financial support as their peers, including all passported, child-related and disability benefits, and be provided with poverty protection.

Children's benefits:

- Families with children should be granted access to mainstream social security benefits and passported benefits intended to support children, like Child Benefit, to ensure equal access to all children, regardless of their or their parent's immigration status. Families should be granted equal access to childcare support.

Local authority support:

- The Home Office should remove all discretionary welfare funds, including those designed by devolved administrations, from the list of public funds. This would allow local government to provide discretionary cost of living and emergency support to all families in need, regardless of their immigration status.
- If local authorities are expected to provide a basic safety net for vulnerable people, this needs to be resourced by central government with clear statutory guidance on minimum acceptable subsistence rates that meet children's welfare needs, building in the flexibility to adapt to individuals' needs, drawing on recent case law and guidance.⁴³
- Statutory guidance for local authorities in Scotland and Wales needs to be reviewed and better implemented, and guidance should be drafted for England and Northern Ireland.

Routes to settlement:

- In line with other settlement routes like the EU Settlement Scheme, the Home Office should look to reduce the ten-year route to settlement to enable families to access settlement after five years or less.

Change of conditions:

- The Home Office should improve the Change of Conditions process to make it transparent, accessible and efficient. The application threshold should be means-tested in line with existing social security benefits and not subject to the destitution test to ensure low-income families and those with additional health and disability needs are not excluded from getting adequate support.

Fees:

- The Home Office should reduce fees to cost price for children and families on a path to settlement, including for citizenship and settlement applications. Fee waivers

⁴³ See for example [NRPF Network guidance](#)

should be provided for families who are below the relative poverty threshold and are making in-country applications, including settlement applications.

Data:

- The Department for Work and Pensions should integrate new variables into its poverty statistics⁴⁴ to allow for better monitoring of poverty levels among children with non-UK-born parents.
- The Home Office should publish data on the number of children and households subject to NRPF conditions on their visa, by length of settlement route, and those they believe are likely to be undocumented. It should also publish estimates on the number of British children affected by NRPF conditions.
- The Home Office should incorporate disaggregated demographic data on children and family members applying for and receiving Asylum Support, and individuals applying for and being granted the right to work, into its quarterly statistics.

⁴⁴ The annual Households Below Average Income statistics