

**Resolution Date: 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

**Resolution Title: Stop the Home Office deporting homeless migrants**

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*This motion and attached draft charter have been produced by the Unite Housing Workers Branch, Haringey Unison Branch, Labour Homelessness Campaign and the Public Interest Law Centre. They have been written as a response to the new Home Office ruling foreign nationals who are found homeless will have their visas revoked or future applications refused. It follows statements by the GLA, Islington and Haringey council to not cooperate with the Home Office under this new rule.*

**This branch notes:**

While thousands of rough sleepers, including migrants with 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF), were given shelter during the first wave of Covid-19 under the 'Everyone In' programme, this funding has not been extended. Councils and homelessness organisations expect homelessness to dramatically worsen this winter, as an eviction crisis and continuing austerity drive people onto the streets, while much of the normal network of winter night shelters is unable to open because of Covid-19.

The government announced new changes to Home Office immigration rules impacting many migrants, to take effect from 1 December, which state that:

“9.21.1. Permission to stay may be refused where the decision maker is satisfied that a person has been rough sleeping in the UK.”

“9.21.2. Where the decision maker is satisfied that a person has been rough sleeping in the UK any permission held by the person may be cancelled. “

London Mayor Sadiq Khan condemned these new rules as '*strengthening the already cruel hostile environment*', and major homelessness charities including Crisis, Shelter, St Mungo's, and Homeless Link have said they will '*punish people for being homeless and take them further away from seeking support*', as well as endanger human trafficking victims and domestic abuse survivors.

The Home Office has previously been found to be using 'immigration surgeries' in homeless services to gather information about migrant rough sleepers, and homeless outreach services such as St Mungo's collaborated directly with the Home Office, which was condemned by Unite's Housing Workers branch.

**Website** [www.housingworkers.org.uk](http://www.housingworkers.org.uk)

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In 2017 the High Court ruled that previous Home Office actions to deport EU migrant rough sleepers were unlawful and discriminatory.

**We believe:**

These new rules represent a dramatic escalation of the racist hostile environment in homelessness services, and will lead to fearful migrant rough sleepers avoiding engaging with support because of the risk of deportation.

The trade union movement stands with migrants and the most vulnerable; people are rough sleeping because they have been let down by years of austerity economics, an unjust housing market and the government's lack of adequate support during a global pandemic, and it is reprehensible that the government are punishing the most vulnerable for their failures.

Our jobs require gaining the trust of people in the most vulnerable and precarious times of their lives, and unless we have the funding to help those who need it and the guarantee that nobody will be victimised for seeking support, our work will be effectively impossible.

**Our members congratulate:**

The GLA on denying The Home Office access to the CHAIN database and advising GLA commissioned services to not share information with The Home Office or facilitate deportations.

**This branch calls on Unite to:**

- Support the GLA in preventing the Home Office from using CHAIN or its commissioned services to facilitate the deportation of rough sleepers.
- Use the Labour Link to campaign for Labour local authorities and all commissioned housing and homelessness services, to refuse to work with or share data with the Home Office, and remove all embedded Home Office officials, while the government continues to hold this threat of deportation over those we seek to help.
- To campaign for homeless organisations to refuse to carry out any action which could facilitate the removal of migrant rough sleepers from the UK or

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share their data with the Home Office, without their express and informed consent.

- To campaign for organisations and workplaces to sign a 'support not deport' charter (see appendix) committing them to not facilitate home office deportations.

This motion, if passed, will be forwarded through the relevant bodies of Unite up to the Executive Council.

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