

**Joint submission to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care from families with lived experience of engaging with children's social services whilst having no recourse to public funds.**

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of September we convened a workshop of parents with lived experience of engaging with Children's Social Services whilst having no recourse to public funds (NRPF). The Workshop brought together members of three separate groups with the aim of feeding into the ongoing Independent Review of Children's Social Care.

The aim of the independent review is to build a better understanding of the needs, experiences and outcomes of the children supported by, or engaging with, social care to make sure children and young people get the support they need. Children's social care is a very broad topic that affects children from many different circumstances and backgrounds. We wanted to ensure that the review would hear the voices of families with different immigration statuses in order to build an understanding of how immigration status – and in particular NRPF – affects children's needs, experiences of and level of support they receive from children's social services.

The Workshop lasted two hours and was attended by 31 families from three groups:

*United Impact* is a group of families with dependent children affected by the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) policy. The group is convened and supported by Project 17, an organisation working with families with NRPF who are experiencing exceptional poverty to improve their access to local authority support. The group brings together people with lived experience of the NRPF policy with an aim to provide a platform for the voices of people with lived experience and to provide solidarity and peer support. United Impact currently has 35 members.

*Together With Migrant Children* provides support primarily to migrant and refugee children, young people and families across the UK. We aim to empower and support individuals, families and communities through advocacy, specialist assessment, family and youth work, social work and mentoring. We forge close working links with other organisations to ensure everyone we work with is well supported. Central to our work is rights based and democratic practice. We believe that everyone has a right to an identity, belonging and safety and these are the core values that we work towards. Our work includes working with families with no recourse to public funds, specialist family work and safeguarding, youth work and parenting, assessment work for immigration and public law and the provision of activities and therapeutic support to migrant children and young people. Together with Migrant Children organises two parent community groups, established at the beginning of the pandemic to help mitigate against isolation and provide solidarity and support for families subject to immigration control. Our groups were founded on principles of co-production and are peer led, in the form of weekly online chat groups, as well as regular meet ups for days out, art and textile projects, yoga, wellbeing, parenting support, and activism and campaign work.

*Praxis* is a charity for migrants and refugees. Our direct services support people in London, and our training and campaign work has national and international impact. Our core purpose is to help migrants in crisis or at risk, ensuring they can live in safety, overcome the barriers they face, and take control of their own destinies. From our east London base, we strive for a world where people are not defined by their immigration status, and everyone is treated with dignity and respect. Praxis runs peer-led groups where people with lived experience of migration can seek support and campaign to get their voices heard on issues that affect them. The WINGS group is for mothers with young children, many of whom have NRPF.

We acknowledge that the views expressed in this workshop are not representative of all families with experience of engaging with children's social services whilst having NRPF. Many of those who have been through this process are too traumatised to speak out or do not have access to means of getting their voice heard. All the families who took part in this event are being supported by NGOs and are part of a peer groups which provide support. All three organisations are committed to ending child destitution and ensuring all families, regardless of the parents' immigration status are able to access the welfare safety net. We all have experience of working directly with families affected by the no recourse to public funds policy and supporting families to access support from local authorities.

### **Background:**

#### *What is NRPF:*

Under the UK's immigration system, many people are subject to the NRPF policy. This means they are barred from accessing mainstream benefits and social housing because of their immigration status. People who have NRPF fall into two main categories, those who have time limited leave to remain with an NRPF condition attached to it and those who currently have no leave to remain in the UK. NRPF affects a great number of children and families, including many British children who live in families with mixed immigration status. People subject to the NRPF condition will be turned away if they try to approach the authorities to access public funds. The main rules governing NRPF are set out in section 115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and Paragraph 6 of the immigration rules. This is an exhaustive list so payments or services that are not on that list are not public funds. Public funds include most of the main welfare benefits and social housing, but not those that are based on national insurance contributions (contribution-based) or most of the benefits that rely on past work.

#### *What is Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989:*

Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989<sup>1</sup> imposes a statutory duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of 'children in need' in their area. This applies to children in families with NRPF where the child cannot achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without such support. Some adults will be ineligible for such support, unless the situation is so serious that a failure to provide support would breach human rights<sup>2</sup>. Project 17's casework demonstrates how the inadequacy of Section 17 support leads many of the children in such families grow up in exceptional poverty, at high risk of homelessness, exploitation and abuse<sup>3</sup>. Many of our clients are unaware of section 17 support, do not understand how to access it or have attempted to access support and been wrongly refused. Many experience hostile 'gatekeeping' practices by local authorities including: being turned away, being refused due to their immigration status; being told to rely on other support networks, and threats to take children into care. Even when section 17 is provided the financial support often falls below the minimum amount required for survival and people experience considerable delays (many waiting weeks or months) before receiving subsistence payments. Accommodation provided is frequently 'temporary', overcrowded and unsafe for children.

### **From our collective casework all three organisations have witnessed how:**

#### *Having NRPF contributes to driving families into contact with children's social services:*

We see that many of the families we support are single-parent families from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds and are often employed in informal, precarious and low-paid types of employment. Research has highlighted the high risk of poverty among children with foreign-born

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>

<sup>2</sup> schedule 3 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/41/contents>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.project17.org.uk/media/70571/Not-seen-not-heard-1-.pdf>

parents with almost half of children in migrant families (who have been in the UK for 10 years or less) on relative low income after housing costs<sup>4</sup> and almost 4 in 10 BAME workers (whose characteristics mean they are likely to be subject to 'No Recourse to Public Funds') paying unaffordable housing costs compared to 1 in 10 White workers<sup>5</sup>. In addition, people with NRPF attached to their immigration status also face exorbitant immigration charges in the form of immigration application fees and the Immigration Health Surcharge<sup>6</sup>. Despite this families with NRPF do not have access to the welfare safety net in the form of in work benefits or other support which may help prevent the family becoming destitute. As set out above, families with NRPF are barred from accessing 'public funds' but in addition many other forms of support - including free school meals, healthy start vouchers, sure start grant, pupil premium, extended nursery places for 3-year-olds etc – are dependent on receiving qualifying benefits which families with NRPF cannot access. In light of the pandemic free school meals and pupil premium have been temporarily extended to some groups of children with NRPF and healthy start vouchers have been extended to eligible British children regardless of their parent's immigration status following litigation. Despite these recent concessions the support remains woefully inadequate. All of these factors contribute to families with NRPF becoming destitute and approaching children's social services for support under Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989.

*NRPF affects how families are treated by children's social services and the level of support they receive:*

Many of the families we support report being treated poorly by children's social services when they approach for support. Families often report that their interactions with children's social services are marred by their immigration status and they feel that Children's Social Services only want to get 'them off their books' as soon as possible rather than being genuinely concerned about the health and wellbeing of their children. This may be due a lack of training of staff, poor knowledge of immigration issues and perhaps a lack of empathy and sympathy for those seeking support. Local authorities operate in a challenging landscape facing funding cuts and enormous caseloads. However, this is still no excuse for not treating people with dignity and respect. Many families experience hostile gatekeeping practices including being told they are not entitled to support due to their immigration status, threats to take children into care and simply being turned away. Many are subject to very limited destitution assessments, rather than the full child in need assessment, which do not consider the wider needs of children. Support under Section 17 most frequently comes in the form of accommodation and/or subsistence payments. We frequently see families housed in shared accommodation, unsuitable accommodation and accommodation situated very far from schools and other support networks. Where subsistence is provided these are often provided at around 50% of mainstream benefits (in line with Asylum Support rates or even lower). Families often report that this falls far short of meeting the needs of their children.

*There is inadequate support to assist those who have gained recourse to public funds transition to mainstream benefits:*

Some families who are in the UK on time limited visas subject to an NRPF condition (including those on the family route to settlement) may be able to make an application to have the NRPF condition lifted if they can evidence that they are at risk of destitution. This is only available to certain categories of migrants but those who are successful in their applications can then access mainstream benefits. The lifting of the NRPF condition only applies to the remained of the current leave to remain (most leave last for 2.5 years) and the NRPF condition will be reimposed when the family applies for the next round of leave, potentially plunging them back into destitution. However, even

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation 'Foreign-born people and poverty in the UK' (<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/foreign-born-people-and-poverty-uk>) & Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, London School of Economics and Political Science, Annual Report 2019 (<https://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/cr/casereport129.pdf>)

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation 'New research highlights 'shameful' racial disparities in housing system' (<https://www.jrf.org.uk/press/new-research-highlights-%E2%80%99shameful%E2%80%99-racial-disparities-housing-system>)

<sup>6</sup> The Children's Society report 'A Lifeline for All', calculated if families were on the 10-year route to settlement (a route which requires them to reapply every 2.5 years) in 2012, assuming they were not successful in getting fee waivers and fees did not increase again, a single parent with two children, would be expected to pay over £23,000 for the family to settle in 10 years. A family of five – a couple with three children – would be expected to pay over £39,000 to settle in the UK.

where a family has been successful in gaining recourse to public funds, they report that there is no 'move on' help from children's social services to help them transition into mainstream benefits. Many are simply served with a notice of discontinuation of support and end up being shunted between services, often followed by a period of disruption of support altogether. This can be a very difficult time for families.

*Existing mechanisms are not an adequate safety net to prevent families with NRPF experiencing destitution:*

Section 17 support and Change of Condition applications are often presented as safeguards against destitution. However, ample research<sup>7</sup> demonstrates that both of these are completely inadequate and document the negative impact this has on children, including potential breaches of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Project 17 sees families who are denied support by local authorities, are driven away by hostile gatekeeping tactics or face significant delays in accessing support even in situations where the family are street homeless or unable to meet their most basic needs.

The above serves as a useful introduction. However, rather than relying on the second-tier evidence of NGOs we wanted to ensure families who have lived experience of engaging with children's social services whilst having NRPF could respond directly. During the workshop we asked the participants 3 questions. The responses shared have been anonymised and are rendered below. The views and experiences expressed remain those of the individuals who attended the workshop:

### **1) What role does NRPF and immigration status take in people's need to engage with Children's Social Services?**

*"I had to access children social services' help when I faced being made homeless because my application to the Home Office was not coming back. We made the application in July 2019 and the Home Office wasn't contacting me back. And in February 2020, because the council was my landlord, so they contacted me and said since I was now subject to immigration control and I wouldn't be able to live in their housing anymore. As they contacted me, they also contacted children's social services. But children's social services weren't ready to engage with me. Rather they contacted the children's father – to ask if he could house the children. But this was a relationship that had ended. So, instead of offering help to myself and my children [children's social services] went to the father and it was like they were taking the children away from me. They had no empathy for me and all they were interested in was making sure the children were not homeless so that they did not need to support us. On the day we were to be evicted I managed to find a place for me and the children to sleep. I struggled to find a hotel because I have six children and no hotel would give a room to a woman with six children. So, I had to tell the hotel I had three children even though I had six. We managed to stay the first night. I kept on calling children's social services but they said the children could stay with the father and that he had agreed. So, it was a battle that kept going on because they just weren't willing to engage. And I had to keep moving from one hotel to another until we found a place in a guest house. I just kept on talking to them. And up until the point where they realised that I wasn't going to let them take my children away from me. I got in touch with Project 17. At that time some of the children were taken away for me – some had to go back to the father due to a court order. And, so, the children were separated and it was a very trying time for the children and me. Just because the children's social services did not engage with me."*

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<sup>7</sup> E.g. <https://www.project17.org.uk/media/70571/Not-seen-not-heard-1-.pdf> and <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/590060b0893fc01f949b1c8a/t/5d021ada54e8ee00013fe5b9/1560419116745/Access+Denied+-+V12+%281%29.pdf>

*“At the moment I don’t have settlement but one of my children is 7 and we are trying to put in an application which the solicitor has started. We were almost getting evicted from our house as we had NRPF and no right to work. Together with Migrant Children helped us to make a section 17 application and we were given a place. Though they provided us with a place the subsistence was not enough. They believed that providing us with a place is key and they were not even looking at the needs of our children. And it is affecting the children and me too. Because the subsistence is not enough and it is really affecting us. They say they are following their policy. But we have told them it is not enough and they never did a proper need assessment. Even 6 months after we were given support, they had not done a child in need assessment. We had to go to a community care solicitor and go to court. First time I saw my social worker was at this point, was after 9 months.”*

*“I was staying with my sister as I didn’t have my status. and it became like the house was too small. After I had my son. There was no space. When you are staying with people and you have no status then you are like a big burden and you become a big liability to people around. When they get frustrated with you then they pour this frustration out on you and your child. I wasn’t able to feed my son. Then I came in contact with a charity who referred them to children social services and that is how they came into contact with children’s social services.”*

*“NRPF is a good idea. In the sense that when I came to this country then the money was there to finance everything. But along the line, when my visa expired, I had two children and I was in a relationship. But the I started notice my partner changing. We were fighting, arguing and there was domestic violence. I decided to seek the help of police and social service. NRPF is a good idea when you are alone. But it is a bad idea when the visa is expired and you have two children and you find yourself in a domestic violence situation. That is when NRPF is an abomination. I have not gotten the full assistance I need yet but I’m ok as I need some more papers to get where I need to go. Social services are really good. But we cannot stay in a hostel for ever. And sometimes my children ask, mummy are we going to stay in one room for ever and it is so hard (...)”*

*“My own issue was that my nationality was revoked (...) I had a son here in UK and I became a person without nationality. I did not know where to go or who to contact. I went to the local council and explained that I don’t have any papers anymore and I don’t have right to work and I don’t have anywhere to stay. They said ‘ok, you are a homeless person without any papers so you need to make an application to the Home Office. So, then we had to give up our flat as we could not pay rent anymore. I went to the local council on the day that we had to give up the flat. At this point the relationship had gotten really toxic with my partner. They said you have to give your kids to your partner (...). This went on for weeks until the point where I became a vampire to them and they had to help me....”*

*“I came into contact with social services because I was going through domestic violence – bit from my sister’s side and a bit from my partner side. I used to live with my sister before I moved in with my partner. We stayed together for a year and I got pregnant. When I got pregnant then his behaviour changed. I had NRPF. Before we met, I was ok, I was working and living my life. But if you have NRPF then you cannot be able to house yourself then you cannot be able to do other things. So, I moved in with him because that is what he wanted. Then he started being violent, threatening me and beating me up. So, I moved back to my sister’s house. I was pregnant. Then it was the same thing there. My sister’s husband did not want me here. Kept saying ‘what are you doing here, we thought you had gone to live with your partner? Who is going to look after your child...?’ I had nowhere to go. I was stressed out. I did not know what to do. I met an organisation called Doctors of the World who helped me register with a GP. I was desperate and I was pregnant and I was facing violence and cannot go to my partner’s house or my sister’s house. So, I didn’t know what to do. That is when Doctors of the World contacted a Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) organisation. Before*

*then they had contacted many other organisations but because I had NRPF they said they could not support me or help me. It was only VAWG who would help me. So, they said they would contact social services as they are the only ones who could help me in this situation. And social services started to talk to me and helping me and doing an assessment.”*

*“I came into this country during the Covid. I am living with my sister. At that time, I got pregnant. My sister said I could not stay there. I had nowhere to stay. I stayed with a friend. I was 8 months pregnant and had nowhere to go. He threw me out. I got in touch with Together with Migrant Children. I had nowhere to live and nothing to eat. I was desperate. Together with Migrant Children called [children’s social services], even the hospital called them. It took a month. They said I was not entitled to anything as I had no status. As my status had not changed. But they could not help as I was pregnant. I even went to the council when I gave birth. I told them I was sleeping on couch with my baby and I did not want my baby to die there. They did not help. Even the health visitor did not help. Only after Together with Migrant Children put pressure on them did I got some help.”*

*“I don’t have any status. I approached the social services. I did not approach them directly. I was referred to them by the hospital when I had my first child. I was referred to social workers to support me on section 17. They said I wasn’t entitled because I didn’t have a visa in the country. And I was referred to social workers but they said they could take the child off me and give me a ticket back home to Nigeria. I was actually in the hospital when the representative came down. I was in the mother and baby unit because I had post-natal depression. And saying that, right at that moment, when you know someone is going through a tough time! They took the case up and they came back a couple of months later and accepted my case and started supporting me and my son. I think we approached them in September but they did not start supporting me until the next year, in April. It was a struggle before then. So, I had to stay in the hospital until they found someone. Because I said I wasn’t going to go because they said they wanted to take my child off me! It was a really crazy time. All because I did not have my immigration status and had NRPF”*

*“When I came to this country, I didn’t have anything and the place where I was living just threw me out so I had to go to the church and stay there for three months. But there was no light and it was cold. Me and my children were sleeping in there but there was no bed or nowhere to cook. At the end of the journey – a person said you can come and stay with me. 5 people in a small room. Everyone sleeping in one bed. But then I got pregnant and there was nowhere for the baby to sleep. Midwife helped me. They referred me to group who referred me to children social services. But children’s social services said they could not support me since I had no status. The midwife wrote to them. On the day that I gave birth they came to my house to do an inspection – and they saw that there was nowhere to put your leg. And thank God they gave me a place to stay.”*

**2) Whilst thinking about both positive and negative experiences, what is your experience of approaching and dealing/contacting social services? How is your experience of working with your social worker? Was there anything in the way that you were/are treated which you feel was caused by having NRPF/insecure immigration status?**

*“In 2019 my daughter had issue in school because I was staying with another family. And I have three children and who we were staying with also have three children. And my daughter was going to school so dirty. And school was giving vouchers etc. and then the people we were staying with said we had to leave. On the day we were homeless we went to council. But they said we had NRPF they could not help us. Then we were just staying there. Then we had to go to mosque. (...) But they said we could not stay there. I can’t behave, the stress is too much for me. Then they supported me finally.”*

*“When I came home from hospital with my child the house was crowded and I had to move. The experience we had was more like a threat – I am here with my child and you are saying you are going to send me back to Argentina. But you can’t tell me that. Because of the Covid my child was premature and I had an operation and there was a pandemic going on. Me, myself, I was in shock. Everything was happening. But they did not help. They did not even try to calm me down or anything like that. They were just threatened. Until they found out my child was British and then they started calming down. After that they helped my child. The first part when they met me was not that good because I was not feeling good. I had just given birth and they were just saying things I did not want to hear. Because I want to stay here and take care of my child. Now they are helping my child but when they first met me my experience was really not good. So, I would say my experience with them was maybe 50% bad.”*

*“The good side of social services is that they gave me a place finally. But the bad side is it took them a long time. It took until the ceiling fell into the flat. I sent them pictures of the water leaking through the ceiling, pictures of my boiler with boiling water coming down like a fountain. Nobody bothered. They said you have to wait for your landlord to evict you. They didn’t do anything. So, one day my son was just going to the bathroom and the ceiling fell in, then I took a video. I called them up and screamed like nobody’s business. Within one hour they found me a place but it had been going on for three months like that. Also, maybe two weeks ago, I called my social worker to ask him to remind school that kids were entitled to free school meals. But he said no, just cook for them. He just kept saying it. Three times he said it. and called me a disgusting woman. They say horrible things to us just because we are in this situation. They should not speak to us in this way. But they do, because they can...”*

*“According to me, the social services are doing really well because they are supporting us and providing us with what they can. At the end of the day, they don’t get much funding from government to be able to offer us. But at the same time, they are pretty bad because of our vulnerability. I went to the social worker because I had nowhere to go and was thinking of going to stay on the street even when I was pregnant. They went to my partner and asked him what had happened - and he lied of course. They [children’s social services] told him everything I told them – which I thought would be private and confidential. But instead of keeping it private they went to my sister and partner and told them what I had said to them – and then it became a very big thing situation for me. It left me to be nowhere. Because my sister and everyone turned against me. They lied to social services and said they were supporting me and everything. And social services believed them. So, I ended going back to my partners house again. What could I do? I was pregnant and nowhere to go. So, I went back to face the domestic violence. And I could not get out of this domestic violence situation again. I was stuck. I was lost. I used to say to social services that everything is fine. Even when it was not. Because. What else could I do? Then, after giving birth, a friend told me to go talk to a migrant centre because if you continue like this you don’t know what is going to happen. After the social workers took the referral and assessment and everything. Then they used to send me here there and everywhere. My child ended up catching colds and catching asthma from being in the cold. I waited and waited all day. For someone to come and tell me where to go and what to eat. In the end they got me a hotel where I could stay. From Friday to Monday. Then on Monday the hotel person told me to pack my things and get out. I called social service and they said go sit and wait for them in reception. I was waiting there and I was hungry and my child was hungry and in the pram. I had no food. Then at 7 at night they said oh sorry we have paid the room for the night.”*

*“I fell out with my partner. And there was more threatening and everything and I needed social services to help. And I was told to give them a ring and I did. The positive side is they promised to help. But the negative side is they asked what my immigration status was. And they kept calling my*

solicitor. Even when the application was not a good one, we just put it in to make something in the system. I sat there and waited and I was just crying and crying etc. In the end they sent me to a Travelodge. And finally gave me a place that had bedbugs. But it took 2 months before they gave us any subsistence money. It took 2 months and they turned us into beggars. We had to go to church and ask for food and help. But in London it is not so easy. My son and I were turned into beggars. It is hard to talk about. It is hard to talk about. The whole time they kept saying 'we can give you money so you can go back to your country. You are not supposed to be here'. The whole time they are letting you know that you do not belong. This is the limit. You are not supposed to be here. There is a way in which they communicate: 'You. How can you ask for this? You don't have status. Just shut your mouth and don't ask for things you're not entitled to'. This immigration thing, it makes you not free. You don't know what can come out of their mouth if you ask for something. There were holiday vouchers and I asked if my son could have some. And they said 'no no no. You are not entitled to this. That is for other people'. They should help people who actually need it."

"My experience is that children services do not really want to engage with any family with no recourse to public funds and needed the intervention of organisations like Project 17 to get them to offer help. Also, some of their workers don't know or pretend not to know about section 17 support which is a leeway to support families subject to immigration control while the home office deal with their applications."

"My first experience with social services was in march 2018 when myself and family were homeless and the social service didn't help us because our recent family application with the Home Office have been refused and because of that we have no recourse to public and didn't offer any help at all. That particular social worker was mean and the experience was horrible."

"The night they sent me to a hotel they told the hotel that it was just one mum and one kid. (...) So I had to separate from my child. You don't do that. No human being does that. Finding myself with no nappies, no money. To tell you the truth, I wanted to kill everyone. You have to go through that to understand the feeling mentally and physically. When the Home Office refused my first application the social services told me that what they can do is to take the children away from me and they can place the children somewhere and help them to get British citizenship. I had never heard such a thing in my life. They said the government do not give us enough money. It made me to go into depression and I did not know what was going on around me. Praxis helped me. And in the end, I found a social worker who was really good and everything went smoothly after that."

"My experienced with social worker is bad. Firstly, she bullying me, told me I have to go back to Africa. That she can't help me, if not for [Together with Migrant Children] that came to our rescue myself and my children will sleep out. Secondly, most of the things she has to provide for the children she will tell me to meet [through] family friends or Together with Migrant Children, that we are not entitled to public funds. Concerned to my son school before the social worker could help it take 3-4 weeks if not for [Together with Migrant Children]. I complained to my case worker she said must of the things social worker should be the one to help with it, most of the things my son needs like oyster card, cash free lunch meal and school uniform. All this she didn't attend to it. I have to use the children subsistence allowance to do it. I told her about me taking my son to school to and from 4 time a day the money we spent on traveling to school and [local authority] subsistence allowance is much. The good side is she introduces some charity to give my daughter toys, clothes, stroller and food but the distance for the foods is much. There is a lot I can't [describe]. Thanks for this opportunity."



**3) If anyone has had a change of immigration status whilst receiving support from social services, how did that change your interaction with the local authority? Did you see any difference in their interaction with you? (e.g. a change in attitude)**

*"I got my papers in January. And [children's social services] said to me – 'now that your papers are out you need to go to the council for everything'. I did not get that help from them. The council is another difficult place – you think NRPF is hard but they give you ears to listen to your situation – but the council does not listen, they don't care about your situation. I did not get help with that transition. It was Together with Migrant Children who helped me with the transition. Because of my children's free school meals and getting accommodation. They gave me temporary accommodation but it was dead -there was no bed or chair or even a curtain rail or anything. So, for me the NRPF was so much better and I did not get any help with the transition"*

*"The experience I had when I was working with children's social care was absolutely terrible. But then when I had my papers. Then the woman was very helpful and called the council for me and passed me on. I was really surprised. I don't know if it was because my status changed or if it was because I was out of their care. But I was very surprised."*

*"Before my status changed, they did not really want to help. Project 17 was asking them to help but they did not want to. When eventually my circumstances changed. And they said 'ok you have recourse now please get ready to pack your things.' And they gave me a date when we had to leave the accommodation provided by no recourse to public funds team. But we wrote a letter to say that everything has to be in place before they can send me out with my child. Otherwise, I will have no place to go. If it was not for Project 17 telling them what they had to do they would have sent me out with my child. Then the way they were talking, the way they were sending letters. It stopped. And they said you are no longer under our care. Then the council gave us where we are now. They did not change even when my circumstances changed. They are not ready to help until they get pushed- it was only with help of charity P17 they helped."*

*"Through my immigration status hasn't changed [still have NRPF]. I remember that before my solicitor put in the fee waiver. The social worker did not pick up my calls or responding. But when they discovered that the fee waiver had been put in then I noticed a change in them. [The social worker] replied to my calls and would respond to messages. They are really pushing me so I would go out of their hands. She came and told me the fee waiver had been granted. Even when the solicitor had not yet told me. She is saying that we really have to push Home Office to make decision now. Social worker trying to be there for me now, to get me out of their care."*

*"Of course they change their attitude. Because you get your paper and everyone has different immigration case. In my case they were like- 'now that you have got your papers you will have to go to council and they will deal with you and give your kids clothes etc.' But I said - maybe you have to come with you?'. But they said 'no no. We have already referred you'. When I went to the council they said 'no, this is not our job. You have to go back to social services'. So, I was shifted between the two. Then we went to stay with my partner and the kids were sleeping in the kitchen. Then the social worker came and inspected everything and said 'you cannot stay like this. You need to go back to social services'. But they said 'you are no longer with social services'. So, you have to apply for housing and make applications etc It all depends on the social services you have when you get your papers. Some may do it nice to the end but some may not and that is not good."*

*"The woman who called me she was very rude to me. I did not even know that my status has changed. They said you need to collect everything. Then all of a sudden she was very friendly to me."*

*“My social worker from the beginning she was a good woman. After I put my application in everything, I requested for they have given it. She is the one giving me the things that I have to do so that they can help me. They listen to more better than before when they had not done anything for us. When they see the application in, they do listen to us they respond to us better, they want to help. Even though they haven’t done it you can see that they want to. Not like before when they don’t take your call or answer.”*

*“When my status changed. The story changed. Because they know that I have already got what they need. So, they said we have to transfer you to the council. And I said you need to give me the number I don’t know who to call. And they gave me a number – but they gave me the number for the place where I was being housed but they said I had to go back to the place where I had been staying. So, they gave me a place but it was very far away.”*

*“My experience with the social workers was bad before I met another social worker who was a good one. My status was granted about two weeks ago, but with NRPF. So, they sent it back and the Home Office have changed it to give me recourse. If I contacted her, she would totally ignore me and would never get back to me. It is less than a week since they gave me the status. I emailed her to tell her and all she could say was ‘now you have to go to the council’ and I have to leave where I am staying. But the Home Office have only given me a letter and have not given me a biometric card so I didn’t know what to do. I was totally shocked and did not know what to do. We need social workers to show dignity and respect when treating with clients.”*

*“When I got my visa I did not get any response. I just got an email saying I had 28 days to leave the property. I am the kind of person who reads a lot about immigration stuff. I feel like social services only want to get you out of the accommodation they provide. We only get help from charities for the ‘graduation’ process. They did not even tell me what to do or who to call. I did not know what to do. I only got help from charity. On the day I just waited for the council to call me and tell me where I was going now. They don’t communicate between themselves very well. When you go from NRPF accommodation to council accommodation then they tell you you have to go to the council where you are staying. It was so stressful. I was depressed. I got tired and even said I wanted to go private. Listen, I have my papers and why would I take more of this stress. I was tired and didn’t know how to go forward. The charity explained and helped me to access help. [Children’s social services] need to have a team – it is huge – but they need a team that helps people to graduate. They need graduation officers that work with people who have status to help them to the next stage. Because these people are telling us nothing, they are not even getting us prepared. Because then we would not be so stressed about council issues. And there are children involved and they don’t care about the children. It is affecting them physically and socially. And they don’t even care.”*

Please don’t hesitate to get in touch should you want more information

**London, September 2021**