

Submission to the Home Affairs Select Committee Routes to Settlement Inquiry on behalf of Project 17 and United Impact.

December 2025

Project 17 is a charitable organisation working to end destitution among migrant families. We believe that all children have the right to a home and enough to eat, regardless of their parents' immigration status. Project 17 campaigns for an end to "no recourse to public funds" (NRPF). Until this can be achieved, Project 17 works with families living in extreme poverty, who are unable to access most mainstream welfare provision, because they have NRPF or because they are undocumented, to access support from local authorities under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. The organisation provides advice, advocacy and support for individuals as well as working to ensure that local authorities across England comply with their statutory duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in need in their area. In addition, we work to build capacity in other organisations through training and an advice line for professionals. Project 17 works predominantly with undocumented families and families who have 'limited leave to remain' on family/private life grounds (and who are on the 10-year route to settlement) but are subject to an NRPF condition.

United Impact is a group of around sixty people with personal experience of no recourse to public funds, supported by Project 17. Their aim is to raise awareness of the extremely difficult conditions that families with NRPF are forced to endure. This includes homelessness, hunger, poor housing conditions and many other detrimental effects on the wellbeing of families. United Impact members are extremely passionate about their work with decision makers, local authorities and campaigners, to collectively fight against NRPF and ensure that all families in the UK are given equal rights and entitlements, and supported to thrive.

Summary

The changes to the routes to settlement were first proposed in the government's White Paper on Immigration - 'Restoring Control over the Immigration system' - on 12 May, 2025. This was followed by the 17 November 2025 announcement of a widespread reform of the asylum system - 'Restoring Order and Control - A statement on the government asylum and returns policy'. Further details of the planned changes to the immigration system were laid out in the 20 November 2025 consultation document entitled 'A Fairer Pathway to Settlement. A statement and accompanying consultation on earned settlement'. Together these documents represent a radical overhaul of the asylum and immigration system - resulting in longer pathways to settlement and stricter criteria for attaining settlement. The documents also bring into question to what extent the proposed changes should apply to those already in the UK on pathways to settlement - and whether further restrictions should apply upon obtaining settlement - eg. reserving recourse to public funds only for those who have British Citizenship.

Project 17 and United Impact find the proposals to be unfair, unjustified and cruel. We are opposed to extending routes to settlement and to introducing stricter criteria for attaining settlement. We are extremely concerned about the proposal that these changes may be applied to people already in the UK on pathways to settlement. We believe the planned changes will lead to more people living with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) for longer periods of

time, we believe the changes will increase destitution, increase child poverty and negatively impact integration. We set out the reasons in detail in the answers below.

Questions

What evidence is there on the effect that pathways to settlement have on immigration and rates of settlement?

Project 17 and United Impact do not hold evidence on the impact on the effects of pathways to settlement has on immigration and rates of settlement.

In the announcement to the changes to the routes to settlement for refugees and asylum seekers the government explicitly stated the intention to reduce so called ‘pull factors’. However, the Home Office’s own research found no evidence that welfare policies and labour market access impacted on migrant decision making to come to the UK. Instead, they found that social networks, shared languages and ex colonial diaspora communities were more likely to motivate asylum seekers to come to the UK. See further details in the Home Office report ‘Sovereign Borders: International Asylum Comparisons Report Section 1: Drivers and impact on asylum migration journeys Migration and Border Analysis September 2020’.¹

What is the likely impact of longer routes to settlement on businesses and employers, including international recruitment of higher-skilled workers?

Project 17 and United Impact do not hold direct evidence on the impact on business and employers. However, we are aware that many sectors rely on migrant labour to address staff shortages in the labour force. Making rules stricter and settlement routes longer could lead to staff shortages in crucial sectors - already the Royal College of Nursing² has warned that the new rules could lead to 50,000 nursing staff leaving the UK creating extreme staff shortages in an already overstretched health and care sector. This is particularly important as the proposals seem to be targeting those who came to the UK on Skilled Worker, Health and Care visas between 2021-2024.

What is the likely impact of longer routes and stricter requirements for settlement on migrant households already in the UK?

The impact of longer routes and stricter requirements for settlement on migrant households already in the UK is likely to be devastating - financially, socially, personally - as well as increasing precarity and isolation with long term negative impacts on integration.

¹<https://freemovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Annex-A-Sovereign-Borders-International-Asylum-Comparisons-Report-Section-1-Drivers-and-impact-on-asylum-migration-journeys.pdf>

²<https://www.rcn.org.uk/news-and-events/news/uk-almost-50000-nursing-staff-could-leave-uk-under-proposed-new-visa-rules-rcn-warns-201125>

Most settlement routes include the need for repeated visa applications - usually every 30 months. The exorbitant fees³ means that whilst most families in the UK save for holidays, christmas presents and other extras - many migrant families find that funds not allocated to covering day-to-day life essentials must be put aside for ongoing visa and immigration fees. This often requires considerable sacrifices from families - particularly those on lower incomes. The impact of this over 5 -10 year settlement routes can already be severe - lengthening settlement routes has the potential for negative long term impacts on the health and wellbeing of the whole family and their ability to integrate and participate in society on an equal footing.

The lack of access to public funds further compounds this issue. Those subject to NRPF are excluded from accessing much support aimed at supporting people during difficult times and avoiding families falling into deep poverty. This would include many public funds such as universal credit, social housing and in work benefits. Many migrants also lack family support networks for informal support. This means that unforeseen life circumstances may threaten saved funds intended to cover immigration fees. If a family is unable to pay immigration fees at the set time they risk 'falling off' the route to settlement which means they have to start the whole journey over again.

Section 3C Leave

The prolonged pathways means many more potential such 'cliff edges' with more people facing impossibly long pathways to settlement, living in limbo, facing precarity and destitution. In addition, when someone has made an application to extend their leave but this application is still unresolved at the point that the previous leave was due to expire - a person holds what is known as 'Section 3C leave'. Under section 3C of the Immigration Act 1971 the leave is automatically extended until the Home Office has either granted further leave, or any appeal rights have been exhausted against a refusal. The Home Office does not provide digital evidence of 3C leave which causes issues for individuals required to prove their leave to remain - this is increasingly common as a result of the hostile environment policies introduced in the last decade - with people required to prove their leave to access work; rent a home; access the NHS; open bank accounts; renew driving licences; student loans to mention a few. Because there is no indication of how long the section 3C leave will last or whether the outstanding application will be granted, employers and landlords are very reluctant to take on anyone with this uncertain status. *"(...) In response to a Freedom of Information request, the Home Office said that in 2019 there were 370,015 people with this status. The Home Secretary's proposals to increase the paths to settlement in both asylum and immigration routes will mean a dramatic increase in these figures, meaning a lot more people forced into precarious situations".*⁴

The financial and economic impact, including access to benefits

No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF):

³ [The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford have set up a very helpful calculator to help estimate the cumulative immigration fees for common migratory routes - the calculator can be accessed here - <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/commentaries/qa-immigration-fees-in-the-uk/>]

This does not include the cost of legal advice and the cost implications for those who find themselves unable to renew a visa in time who then subsequently have to restart their journey from the beginning.

⁴ <https://freemovement.org.uk/section-3c-leave-challenge-adjourned-for-further-consideration-of-impact-on-children/>

The routes to settlement will lead to more people being subject to NRPF for longer periods of time - even into settlement.

NRPF is an immigration condition imposed on people 'subject to immigration control'. The NRPF policy is applied to most forms of temporary leave to remain. The Migration Observatory estimated that, at the end of 2022, approximately 2.6 million people in the UK currently have NRPF as a condition of their leave⁵. This does not include those living in the UK who do not have a settled immigration status, with best estimates suggesting there were 674,000 people without a settled immigration status living in the UK in 2017⁶ - this is likely to be a significant underestimation.

A person with NRPF cannot access benefits and services classed as public funds as set out in an exhaustive list in s115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and at paragraph 6 of the Immigration Rules. In practice, this means that individuals, and their children, are denied access to a safety net and prevented from accessing support through in-work and out-of-work benefits such as Child Benefit, Tax Credits, Universal Credit, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Local Welfare Provision, Housing Benefit and social housing. In addition to the exhaustive list, many financial support schemes are only accessible if one is in receipt of a qualifying benefit included on the list of public funds – so called 'passported benefits'.

The reason the NRPF policy must be considered such a significant contributor to poverty amongst migrants and migrant led households is that the policy removes access to the safety net which is specifically intended to stop individuals and families sliding into poverty. Those working cannot access in-work benefits and other top-up benefits intended to ensure that those engaged in low paid employment can still make enough to cover essential living needs and thrive. In addition to the NRPF policy many migrants are subject to wider structural injustices in society.

The result of this exclusion is that a person with NRPF cannot access the welfare safety net should they need it. However, the circumstances and challenges facing families affected by NRPF are the same as those affecting other families - this might be loss of employment, relationship breakdown, bereavement, pregnancy, poverty caused by precarious or low paid employment or exploitation, disability and illness, accommodation disputes, debt, etc. What sets families with NRPF apart is that they cannot access help or assistance to cope with these difficult circumstances.

NRPF is the primary underlying factor driving children in families with NRPF into situations of poverty. Without this restriction families would be able to access the support they need to address their situation and help the family out of poverty. Without access to the welfare safety net families often end up living in situations of deep poverty for extended periods of time with long term negative impact on children's health and development.

⁵[https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/deprivation-and-the-no-recourse-to-public-funds-nrpf-condition/#:~:text=At%20the%20end%20of%202022,substantially%20up%20from%20previous%20years.&text=At%20the%20end%20of%202022%2C%20the%20top%20nationalities%20in%20visa,and%20Hong%20Kong%20\(121%2C000\).](https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/deprivation-and-the-no-recourse-to-public-funds-nrpf-condition/#:~:text=At%20the%20end%20of%202022,substantially%20up%20from%20previous%20years.&text=At%20the%20end%20of%202022%2C%20the%20top%20nationalities%20in%20visa,and%20Hong%20Kong%20(121%2C000).)

⁶ https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/final_londons_children_and_young_people_who_are_not_british_citizens.pdf

Impact on children:

In 2019, Project 17 produced 'Not Seen, Not Heard'⁷, a report on children's experiences of NRPF. We found that the barriers to accessing local authority support, and the failure to meet children's essential needs, had a significant emotional and physical impact on young people. The children we spoke to had been left street homeless, in inadequate or unsafe accommodation, and without enough money to eat. They told us that they were left feeling socially isolated, distressed, ashamed and unsafe. Six years later, in 2025, we revisited this research with researchers from University College London. Again we found that NRPF produced destitution amongst those already socio-economically marginalised and racially minoritised⁸. Children affected by NRPF are some of the most impoverished children in the UK who are effectively being punished for the poverty they are forced to endure⁹.

Estimates suggest that today around 382,000 children affected by the NRPF in the UK are living in poverty¹⁰ - this number is likely to be an underestimation. The proposal to significantly lengthen the pathways to settlement will directly lead to an increase in the number of children affected by NRPF, the length of time they are affected by NRPF, and an increase in British and other children living in destitution.

The NRPF policy was designed with adult migrants in mind yet research demonstrates that children are disproportionately affected¹¹. Children are more likely to be in poverty than other age groups and it is families that often need additional support such as child benefit, universal credit, in-work benefits, child care support etc. However, all this support is unavailable under the NRPF policy and associated passported benefits. Thus, the brunt of the system is borne by children. Despite this the government has not agreed to carry out a child rights impact assessment of the proposed changes to routes to settlement.

In addition to the lengthening of the pathways, the proposal to apply the changes retrospectively - to punish people who have applied and had the no recourse to public funds restrictions condition lifted from their leave by the Home Office's Change of Condition procedure - seems particularly cruel and will disproportionately affect parents of British children on the 10 year route to settlement. The proposal will likely discourage people from seeking a Change of Condition even when they are destitute or face imminent destitution because of the associated punishment for accessing benefits. The risk is that a few years in poverty may seem preferable to adding 10 years to the route to settlement with all associated stress, instability and cost. This will likely affect mainly families with children and lead to more children living in destitution.

The likely negative impact on children has also been recognised by major children's charities. Barnardo's said *"These new proposals mean that a family could come to the UK and work for 15 years or more, but be left with no right to claim benefits or social housing if they were to lose*

⁷ <https://www.project17.org.uk/media/8d982740699b302/not-seen-not-heard-1.pdf>

⁸ Rosen R and Dickson E (2025). *Bordering Social Reproduction: Migrant Mothers and children making lives in the shadows*. Manchester: Manchester University Press

⁹ <https://www.project17.org.uk/media/8de2c3ce864bab7/policy-briefing-child-poverty-strategy.pdf>

¹⁰ NRPF Partnership (2025). 'Lifting children affected by No Recourse to Public Funds Restrictions out of Poverty'.

¹¹ <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025-b-Joint-CASE-COMPAS-Poverty-Among-Children.pdf>

their job. This could result in children living in poverty with a huge impact on their future life chances.”¹² Whilst Coram said “We remain concerned by the number of children in poverty whose families have no recourse to public funds. The IPPR estimates that more than a third of the total number of children in poverty are children with migrant parents, a problem only set to increase as a result of the longer routes to settlement announced last week by the Home Office.”¹³

Inadequate safeguards

The NRPF policy and its impacts is frequently defended and minimised through reference to individuals ability to make “Change of Condition” (CoC) applications to have the NRPF condition lifted or for families with children to approach local authorities seeking support under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Both the Change of Conditions¹⁴ process and Section 17¹⁵ support has been demonstrated to be inadequate to protect families and children from destitution and precarity.

The new routes to settlement propose a time penalty for those on routes to settlement who rely on benefits - an addition of 5 years for those who access benefits for less than 12 months and 10 year addition for those who access benefits for more than a year. This is likely to discourage many from applying for a change in condition despite being destitute or facing imminent destitution. We know from the Home Office statistics on Change of Condition application that this will be mainly women with children - many of these with British children on the 10 year route to settlement. This will almost certainly lead to an increase in poverty, instability and precarity for children in these families.

Section 17 of the Children’s Act 1989⁴⁵ 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. From Project 17’s casework we see how the inadequacy of section 17 support as a safety net leads many of the children in such families to grow up in exceptional poverty, at high risk of homelessness, exploitation and abuse. 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. The evidence from our casework clearly demonstrates the inadequacy of local authority support as a safety net for those with NRPF as well as the

¹² <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/news/barnardos-response-immigration-announcements>

¹³ <https://www.coram.org.uk/news/coram-responds-to-the-budget/>

¹⁴ <https://unity-project.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/AccessDenied-theCostoftheNoRecourseToPublicFundsPolicy.TheUnityProject.June2019.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.project17.org.uk/media/8d982740699b302/not-seen-not-heard-1.pdf>

devastating impact this can have on the health and development of the children in these families⁴⁷.

The Care Act: In theory, adults with care needs in families with NRPF and pregnant women may be able to access support under the Care Act. However, this is often very difficult to access with individuals facing significant barriers to care.

Support under the Children Act or the Care Act are not public funds so should not be counted as a benefit for the purposes of adding extra time. However, it is likely that many will be fearful of approaching local authorities for the support they need out of fear of negative impact on their route to settlement.

Impact on wider society:

- *Reducing child poverty and inequalities* - The Child Poverty Strategy announced last week recognises that hundreds of thousands of children in poverty are outside mainstream systems of support yet offers few concrete measures to address this. This is particularly concerning in light of the increase in numbers and duration of children living with NRPF following these proposals. This has a devastating impact on individual children and their future but it also impacts wider society. *We cannot effectively address child poverty without addressing poverty amongst migrant children.* It has been estimated that 1/3 of all children living in poverty have migrant parents. Many children in migrant families are also affected by structural injustices which are associated with health and developmental inequalities - we cannot effectively address child poverty and inequality without addressing the situation for migrant children.
- *Cost shift onto local authorities* - Proposals to lengthen the pathway to settlement will likely hugely increase the *cost shifting onto local authorities* - with no indication that ringfenced budgets will be made available for this purpose. The proposal to withdraw section 95 support from appeal rights exhausted families and enact the provisions in Immigration and Asylum Act 2016 is likely to involve a massive cost shift onto local authorities who will have to deal with destitute and desperate families facing potential breaches of Article 3. There are also further cost implications of the prolonged poverty many children with NRPF will end up enduring - with long term negative health and development implications - which will then have to be addressed by local schools, GP surgeries, community services etc
- *Home Office Capacity.* Already the Home Office is struggling with huge backlogs, long delays, poor casehandling and decision making as well as problems with staff retention. Making routes to settlement longer, having more stringent criteria and more renewals will put unreasonable strain on the Home Office's ability to handle the sheer bureaucratic burden of implementing the proposed system. There is no evidence that the Home Office can adequately and competently manage the system as it stands today - let alone deal with the kind of increase implied by the proposed system. This is not feasible and will put people and their routes to settlement at risk.

Unequal impact

The proposals specifically targets low income earners - many of who work long hours to cover essential living costs, plus cost of visa renewals and health surcharge, plus additional expenditures such as university financing for dependents who are often excluded from accessing student finances. These proposals argue that this, and only this income bracket should demonstrate commitment to their community through volunteering (higher earners have already accessed shorter routes as a result of their income so will not be expected to volunteer). This seems particularly unfair and does seem to have anything to do with demonstrating commitment to the local community or integration.

Policies that target low income earners often have a differential or disproportionate impact in women who are disproportionately low income earners..

Policy may also have a differential or disproportionate impact on people with disabilities as they may be fearful of accessing disability benefits out of fear of being penalised with longer routes to settlement.

Transitional arrangements and retroactive impact

The government has failed to make it clear whether the proposed changes will have retroactive effect on households already in the UK, who are (or could be) on a pathway to settlement. The government has made any potential transitional arrangements subject to the consultation period and say that therefore they cannot clarify who will be impacted by these changes until the results of the consultation have become clear.

This is simply not good enough. Millions of people already in the UK stand to be affected by these changes and they cannot wait until next year to know how this will affect their lives. People are contacting support organisations expressing great fear, confusion, and stress around the uncertainty of their future. Those who have accessed benefits in the past are terrified this will negatively impact their pathway to settlement - those who may be facing a personal crisis and would otherwise be seeking to access benefits to help them out of their immediate situation are reluctant to do so in light of the possible ramifications - in the meantime children in these families continue to suffer poverty and deprivation detrimental to their health and development whilst the government tries to work out what to do. This is not good enough! People are experiencing extreme stress, worry and hardship as a result of this lack of clarity - support organisations find it impossible to advise people on their personal circumstances when there is no clarity on how decisions taken today may be affected by these new rules which have not come into effect. Yet the worry, stress and anxiety is very much immediate and present. People must have clarity in order to be able to make informed decisions about their lives and the lives of their dependents.

These changes must not be allowed to have a retroactive impact and transitional arrangements must be put in place for those already in the UK. Those who are already on a pathway to settlement have undertaken this journey with an understanding of presumed shared ground

rules of this process, whether they are here on a skilled worker visa, the 10 year route to settlement under Appendix FM, or other - these have been undertaken with a presumed shared understanding of the requirements in order for these individuals to gain settlement - e.g. work and fulfil the requirements stipulated in your visa for 5 years and you would be able to gain settlement. For many this has involved personal sacrifices and hardships which these individuals have chosen to undertake in order to achieve Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) - settlement - at the end of a 5 year journey. The government's proposed changes could extend this period to 15 years or more. Fundamentally changing the premise of the agreed process after the fact.

Another example - those on the 10 year route to settlement under Appendix FM - most often as the parent of a British child - were required to demonstrate intention to settle through completing four visa cycles of 30 months subject to No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) conditions - adding up to 10 years - at which point the person would be eligible to apply for ILR/settlement on the condition they fulfilled certain criteria. During the 10 year process the Home Office had established certain 'safeguards' to help people who became destitute or at risk of imminent destitution but cannot access mainstream benefits due to having NRPF. The Home Office allowed individuals on family or humanitarian protection visas to apply for what is called a Change of Conditions application in order to have the NRPF restriction lifted thus enabling them to access mainstream benefits.

The proposed changes, if they have a retroactive effect would now punish people who were legally in the country, fulfilling all the provision of their route to settlement - who for some reason had fallen on hard times and therefore availed themselves of the very legal and available help through the Change of Condition mechanisms - applications reviewed and granted by the Home Office - would now stand to have 5 or 10 years added to their settlement route as a result of accessing benefits to which they had been granted access by this very government and which they had accessed under the understanding that this would not negatively impact on their immigration journey.

It is morally, legally and socially indefensible to punish people for accessing support - retroactively - changing the rules of the journey mid way through. The rule which applied at the time of accessing such support must be the only criteria for judging such factors.

The personal and social impact

In this section we wish to foreground the voices of members of United Impact - we gathered the views of members in a workshop with individuals who are currently on routes to settlement to try to understand both how the announcements have impacted them but also how they think that the proposed changes would impact on them and people they know directly.

Felicity

"For me, In fact, this, what we are talking about is... In fact, this really, really affects me. I'm on the 10 years route. When I get my whole first two and a half. I bring my son. So, I... when I want to put another application here, I need to put in the money. So, it depends on me. To put application in that time. And when I want to renew, I need to pay double. But the two and a half

years they gave me and gave my son, he can't have access to student loans. So, he can't go to uni. That one is fact, it won't affect him, like, you know, like a mental attack, because he was telling me that: 'Why did you bring me here? When... when I can't... go together with my age group, with my friends. He isolates himself in the house. So, now... I'm in it now, because I just need to squeeze myself to say that 'go and apply for the study you want to do in the uni. When they give you admission, we don't have access to the student loans, no. So, I need to... that's why I'm working. I'm doing double work, you know? Now, I'm paying for a school. The money, in fact, I don't even want to think about it, because it's giving me high blood pressure, because I... I just pay for the renewal. Now I need to pay for the school, too, also. But I need to be strong for him, because I don't want them to see what I'm going through, because it's affecting everybody around me..... My daughter that came here with Care worker visa, Settlement. After 5 years. Now when they say they are going to increase – she is crying, lamenting to me. She wants to study, change out of healthcare because you cannot work. But now. What will she do, it is like being in prison. You can't do anything you want to do. And the money to pay for the visa renewal. It's too much. It's like you just come to England, and you are in a cage.(...) This law, they bring, if it affects me that we are in the 10 years, or the report that's just come... I don't even understand. It's too... it's really too much, it's too much...both financial and emotional, it is too much...It makes somebody feel bad, feel depressed. In fact, sometimes you don't want to listen to the news because you scare me. a lot of things that... a lot of selflessness, a lot of scaring, a lot of... it's too... it's depressing.”

Kendra

“Because already, 10 years is tiring. The whole thing just looks like, an advanced slavery. They're now extending it to 15 years. There's one that's saying 30 years and all that. It's... it's really, really heartbreaking, Because if they actually reduced it, the 10 year route to 5 years - there would be less people on benefits. Because everyone wants to put their life together. Everyone wants to move forward, everyone wants to give back to the community. (...) But even when I'm there, they are limited to, you know, things you can do, things you cannot do. So you just be like, okay, let me just be in a fixed box, because the immigration routes to 10, whatever, 15 years. It's already putting us in a box. There are limitations to things we can do. Some people, even in some community, you don't even get that respect, maybe because you don't have a settled immigration status, people don't... some people don't even respect you, they look at you like, you know... But the road to this new rule is very, very, very, very heartbreaking, because my two older children, too they are on that route, and I'm just thinking... my son...he's finished with his college now, and I am telling him to go to work. It's just 2 years more to your settlement, then after that, you can go to the uni. So now, I'm thinking. When will he go to uni? If this thing is being extended like this. But now, if we're adding extra 5 years, I promise you, by that time will he even be willing to do it again?, the boy would just be like, Mom. School is not what is on my mind anymore. And that way, that is just gone and, you know? So, it's scary. It's scary more than it's at breaking, because the thought of the impact that it's going to make on people's life already is really, really scary. ...It needs to be shorter. Because everybody will just want to go through it and get it done, and just, you know, start a permanent life, start a proper life. When you are

settled you're done, you're settled, you can make it, you can go to school, you can go into whatever field you want to go to. If you're thinking of owning a business, you know, you can start that another,... 10 years is a lot to waste in life, is a lot. It is a lot, it is a lot. And now they want to make it longer. That's why I said it's really scary."

Annie

"...someone that is in the country for, like, 19 years. And you have to wait for your child to be 10, Before you can post an application in. And you did put application in, you have to wait for maybe, like, 3 years before they can accept your application. You are not working, you don't have any paper to work, you have been in this country for 19 years, and immediately you've tried to extend, you have no money to put your application in. So, definitely, you're gonna go for fee waiver, because you don't have money to pay for solicitor, maybe [someone] helps you to get a solicitor. Now, you have to wait for another 2-3 years before they can approve your fee waiver. And after that, Now, they gave you a paper, which is two and a half years. And you have to wait another 1 year. to get another free waiver approver, because you have a case... I don't know, I'm losing my mind... But when you have child in this country, you have no help! It's all by yourself. And people want the children to be better. But how are your children gonna be better when you are not available for your children? Look at it! So many, so many parents, they're giving up, they're tired... You want us to be paid all this money for application, you don't want people to be on benefits, that's why you're making everything so hard for them? What about the children? So it's gonna affect a lot of things. We are still managing to make life... because we don't want our children to be asking us so many questions, we are putting a smile on our face, like everything is alright... or they want to destroy people?... now, look at this woman now. She has a lot of... a lot of things to do. She needs to pay for her, son uni. Her daughter is crying, she needs to pay for another money. How many jobs can she do that can cover all this...Because when we are talking about of University here, we are not talking about of, £10,000 in a year. We are talking about 20-something thousand pounds in a year. So tell me the job that he's gonna do with the kids that he has. How is she gonna pay the childcare? Can she even cover the money for the childcare? So they need to think about all these things they are doing that... they're destroying people's lives. I've been in this country for a... for a long time. For them to settle me, they're giving me two and a half, I have to wait it for another one, another one, and even though I work, how many work can I do that I'm going to have available for my children? Even the work that I do, I'm still not feeling it. I'm still not feeling the time for them. I'm still thinking, like, something is missing, something is missing. But now, they are adding more...We need somebody to tell these people that. They need to come out, come out, come out, see what is going. Come to the streets, come to the community, come to everywhere, see how people are losing it. Look at them, look at the mothers, look at the parents, look at everybody. It's not even one lip, everybody is losing it...It's heartbreaking. Look at these new carer people, they just come, using them like hell, you know? Some... I met a one lady, she was crying in the bar, I said, are you okay? Oh, she said, oh, I'm just coming from the work. The woman I'm working with, I only do 30 minutes with her, and she told me to be scrubbing the rug with a brush. And I said, no, that's not part of my job. And they said, oh, I am gonna call the [company]...Do you get it? And she doesn't want to lose the job, and that is the only place that she got the sponsorship from. If she doesn't do what they want, they have to suffer, not to work in which it's going to affect immigration and everything..."

What potential effect could changes to eligibility for settlement have on integration?

At Project 17 we see in our daily work how the NRPF policy drives families to destitution, exploitation and precarity¹⁶. We see the significant emotional and physical impact this has on young people, many of whom have experienced street homelessness, in inadequate or unsafe accommodation, and living without enough money to eat. The children told us living with NRPF made them feel socially isolated, distressed, ashamed and unsafe. They were unable to participate in society on an equal footing with their peers. Many could not take part in school trips, extracurricular activities or even invite friends over due to the state of their accommodation and lack of space¹⁷. This seriously impeded the health and development of children. Purposefully keeping people separate from mainstream support and mainstream society does not aid integration - under these proposals families and children could be forced to lead separate lives for extended periods of time - as long as 30 years - a lifetime and certainly a whole childhood.

In addition to the extended periods the consultation also asks if the no recourse to public funds condition should be extended into settlement and people would only be able to access public funds once they have obtained British Citizenship. This would seem to be an additional punishment with no clear justification as people have already demonstrated their intention to settle, by settling. It is also unclear what would happen if a person with settlement needed access to public funds in order to avoid destitution.

How the new earned settlement rules could work?

We do not believe the new settlement rules could work. We believe it would lead to prolonged instability, to an increased number of children living in poverty, to isolation, precarity and ultimately people being vulnerable to exploitation.

We believe that routes to settlement should not be extended - but rather shortened - in order to aid integration, encourage financial contribution and protect the health and wellbeing of children.

¹⁶ <https://www.project17.org.uk/media/8d982740699b302/not-seen-not-heard-1.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://www.project17.org.uk/media/8de2c3ce864bab7/policy-briefing-child-poverty-strategy.pdf>