

Statement of Greater Manchester Asylum Seekers and Refugees Together re government proposals on settlement and asylum

We are a group of people in Greater Manchester with lived experience of the UK asylum system. We are shocked and very upset by the proposals that the Government has put forward about reforming waits and criteria for settlement and changing the asylum system in the UK. These proposals will cause harm to us, our family and friends and most people who have migrated in the last years to the UK. We want to let our neighbours in Greater Manchester and people in power know what we are going through.

The Government wants to make nearly everyone who has migrated to this country wait much longer for settlement, which is the only time in our journey when we get to feel some safety and security. For refugees, this wait will be as long as twenty years. **This will mean very many years of living in limbo and not feeling like we belong.** It will be impossible for people to put down roots, feel safe, build stability and start to thrive and grow. It will affect our ability to bring everything to our communities and neighbours, knowing we are never secure. **We want to live alongside our neighbours like we are family.**

The only people who will be exempt are people who have migrated who are rich. So the proposals will mean more people going through poverty and destitution in our communities. They will affect people who have lower paid jobs and people who care for others, like parents and care workers. **They do not recognise the vital contribution these people make.**

We know our communities are built on family and love - we are not strangers to each other. But these proposals will try and make us strangers. If people don't see people who have sought protection or migrated here as neighbours or as equal people that will create racism and division. It will pull us apart, and damage everybody's children and future.

The Government wants to apply these proposals to all the people who are already here, even those who are coming up to settlement in the next year. This is very wrong and unfair and a breach of trust. We know it is not in line with British values to break your word once you have given it, and to turn very many people's lives upside down. No matter what country you are in, laws should not be applied from before they are passed (retrospectively). No country should change a regulation and then punish people for breaching it previously, before it existed. To change this and cause upheaval to everything about lots of people's lives is like taking the ground from under them. The Government should understand this. It is not kind or decent or fair, it is cruel and wrong.

Not only this. At the same time the **Government wants to make it very much harder for refugees to reunite with our families**: we cannot explain the pain this will cause. Imagine what it is to be separated from your family by war or persecution, and to know you can not be with them? It wants to **stop its duty to support people who are destitute** - this is not human or kind. It wants to **punish people** for the way they entered the UK even though there is no safe

route to protection here, and to take away the ability to look at asylum cases from judges, even though the Home Office often gets things wrong.

We feel like we and all our brothers and sisters who want to give our talents and futures to our communities are being kicked around, just like a football. Politicians talk about us like we don't have feelings or talents or dreams. We know this is not who our communities are in Greater Manchester. **We ask all our neighbours to stand together with us in Greater Manchester and fight these proposals.**