



St Vincent
de Paul Society

England and Wales

Turning Concern into Action

SVP Policy Briefing

The refugee move-on period

March 2025

WHAT IS THE MOVE-ON PERIOD?

The term 'move-on period' refers to the time newly recognised refugees have before they stop receiving financial support and have to move from asylum accommodation to their own private accommodation. Until recently, the move-on period refugees had to move to their private accommodation was 56 days. That period of time was reduced by the Home Office in recent years from 56 to 28 days. In August 2023 that period of time was subsequently reduced to a minimum of 7 days.

In many cases, refugees have very little time to find their own accommodation as the time they have starts from the day they are notified of the decision of their claim. This often means that if a letter is sent to the wrong address, someone may have only 7 days to find their own accommodation, or they might find themselves homeless.

Receiving refugee status is a joyous moment for people as it grants them protection and more rights, including the right to work, however it is for many also a moment of great worry. This is because they have a limited amount of time to find accommodation and an income, or they may find themselves suddenly without a home nor financial support.

Many volunteer members of the SVP support newly recognised refugees during this transition process. They have told us about the many cases in which people including women are finding themselves with nowhere to go and the Local Council unable to help them. In one case, our members supported a woman who was sent documents to the wrong address, and because of that was left with only 5 days to find her own accommodation. Inevitably this was not enough time, so she asked for help from the SVP to avoid becoming homeless.

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WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM?

The Standard recently reported how newly recognised refugees are the fastest rising sub-group of homeless people⁽¹⁾. Local authorities in England reported a 253% rise in refugee households requiring homelessness support after being “moved on” from Home Office accommodation.

We know that 28 days is simply not enough time to find private accommodation. Research from the United High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)⁽²⁾, The British Red Cross⁽³⁾, and our own experience at the SVP shows that refugees need more time to find accommodation. This can be because of barriers navigating the system such as a language barrier, or because many landlords will not rent their property to someone in receipt of benefits. Other issues they face include a lack of references or guarantors, which prevents refugees from being able to rent a property. All of these barriers leave newly recognised refugees vulnerable to becoming homeless.

Research consistently shows that 28 days or less is not long enough for refugees to secure housing and financial security. Our own experience at the SVP of supporting newly recognised refugees tells us that people are at high risk of homelessness, and potentially exploitation by being left without housing.

In addition to the risk of homelessness, an extended move-on period works better with the welfare system. Newly recognised refugees often initially rely on Universal Credit when transitioning away from asylum accommodation. Because the first Universal Credit payment takes a minimum of 35 days, it means that with only 28 days' notice, people are left with no financial support at all, in addition to potentially being homeless. In many cases, including many cases supported by SVP members, people were left with no financial support for a period of 7-10 days, and in some cases this affected families with children.

Refugees also need time to find work and earn an income as they are not legally allowed to work while being an asylum seeker.

1 - <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/winter-appeal/london-standard-winter-appeal-a-place-to-call-home-homelessness-refugees-b1193838.html>

2- <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/publications/uncertain-future-journey-through-move-period> -

3- <https://www.redcross.org.uk/stories/migration-and-displacement/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/move-on-period-more-than-50000-refugees-could-be-homeless-by-end-of-year>

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WHAT ARE THE RECENT CHANGES TO THE MOVE-ON PERIOD POLICY?

In late 2024, the Home Office temporarily changed this policy and increased the amount of time refugees have to move to their own accommodation from 28 days to 56 days. This has brought the length of time in line with the 56 days mandated by the Homelessness Reduction Act for all other vulnerable members of society. **This change however was introduced as a pilot until June 2025. Beyond this date, it's unclear whether the policy will revert to offering only a 28-day notice.**

Additionally, from Autumn 2024, the Home Office has stopped issuing physical cards called Biometric Residence Permits (BRP), which are physical cards refugees can use to prove their status. Instead, the Home Office has moved to a fully digital system of "e-Visas". This complicates the situation further as refugees will only be able to prove their status (for example to landlords or potential employers) online.

WHAT DO WE WANT TO SEE?

This temporary change, set for review in June 2025, is a positive step toward reducing the risk of homelessness for refugees. **We want to see the policy permanently extended to give newly recognised refugees at least 56 days to find their own accommodation.**

Local Authorities are being faced with an increasing number of refugees presenting as homeless because they were not given enough time to find accommodation. This is not a good situation for anyone. Local Authorities should be given enough time and guidance to enable them to support newly recognised refugees so they can easily transition during the move-on period.

We want to see a system which supports refugees to integrate and become part of their local community. Giving them enough time to move out of asylum accommodation and avoid homelessness is a crucial step. **Alongside this change, we would also like to see other policies which can support the successful integration of refugees, such as giving people seeking asylum the right to work.**

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