



ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON  
**No Recourse to Public  
Funds**

**APPG NRPF Evidence session:**

***"Domestic abuse & NRPF: how can we increase protections for migrant women?"***

**7 June 2023, 11:15am - 12.00pm**

**Hybrid event - Westminster & online.**

**Event details**

This panel discussion will focus on the experience of women with no recourse to public funds who have endured domestic abuse. The event will chart efforts to place protections for migrant women on a statutory footing in the Victims and Prisoners Bill currently before Parliament.

Speakers include:

Kate Osamor MP (chair of APPG on NRPF)

Apsana Begum MP (Chair of APPG on Domestic Violence and Abuse)

Asmita Sood (Southall Black Sisters)

Elizabeth Jiménez-Yáñez (Latin American Women's Rights Service)

Women with lived experience of domestic violence and NRPF

Minutes from the event:

**Welcome from Kate Osamor**

Welcome to everyone online and in the room.

Thanks to Project 17 and Just Fair for providing the Secretariat to this APPG. We are hoping to be able to show different sides of the issue today, and bring in experiences from everyone - from MPs to people with lived experience. We will also look at Victims and Prisoners Bill currently going through Parliament and how to get protections onto a statutory footing.

**Megan – woman with lived experience of domestic violence and NRPF**

I am one of the people speaking from United Impact. When I experienced domestic abuse, the only hope I had to live with was my brother, but my partner knew where he lived, and it was not safe.

I called lots of organisations but was told I could not be helped because I had no recourse to public funds, I had nowhere to sleep. I had to sleep on the floor of a bus station until a woman found me crying. I told her I was pregnant, and she let me sleep on the floor of her bedroom. I tried contacting the council, but they said they couldn't help me until I was 8 months pregnant. The social workers were unhelpful to me. Imagine the woman in the bus station had not helped me? I would have had to stay on the streets.

I am here to tell everyone about my situation and to let you know that having NRPF makes life so much more difficult for women experiencing domestic violence. If this can be changed, this would make life so much better for others like me.



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**Asmita Sood (Southall Black Sisters)**

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**Elizabeth Jiménez-Yáñez (Latin American Women's Rights Service)**

The meeting is critical as we continue to see increasing numbers of migrant women whose lives are harmed by the No Recourse to Public Funds policy. As well as SBS, at LAWRS, we support migrant women at risk of destitution and further violence due to the barriers placed by this condition. Over 40% of the women we support are NRPF, and the challenges in accessing support and accommodation are significant. However, this situation can be transformed to benefit migrant victims and the wider public.

Let me be clear, no strategy aimed at tackling violence against women and girls will be successful if the most marginalised are not protected without discrimination. For several years, alongside organisations such as SBS, we have campaigned for equal protection for migrant victims and survivors of domestic abuse. And now, as the long-awaited Victims Bill (now Victims and Prisoners Bill) is moving through Parliament, we are calling for the support of MPs to guarantee access to justice and support for migrant women is included in this piece of legislation.

Migrant women are more likely to experience domestic abuse and, at the same time, less likely to be supported when needing help. The government recognises this reality as part of the Domestic Abuse Act statutory guidance stating that victims subjected to the NRPF condition may have increased dependency on abusers making it more challenging to flee abuse. What we see when supporting victims with insecure immigration status is that this vulnerability is the result of hostile immigration policies, including but not limited to the NRPF condition and data-sharing between statutory services, the police and Immigration Enforcement.

As we meet today, migrant victims continue to be reported to the Home Office for immigration control purposes after seeking support or reporting a crime. In several cases, after having experienced extensive abuse for years. Despite the evidence showing the urgent need to improve access to support and redress for migrant women, policies and legislation have left them out of scope.

The primary example is the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which received royal assent without protection for migrant women. Unfortunately, we face the same situation as the Victims and Prisoners Bill, recently introduced to Parliament, is not considering the needs of migrant victims of domestic abuse. To change this, we are working alongside Southall Black Sisters, Safety 4 Sisters and other stakeholders, such as the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's office, to amend the Bill and incorporate two clauses. The first amendment led by SBS is a clause to extend existing provisions of support available for those on spouse and partner visas (Domestic Violence Rule and the Destitute Domestic Violence Concession) to all groups of migrant victims.

For this amendment, there are two key elements to highlight. First, independent evaluations analysing the gains of giving access to public funds to those subjected to NRPF show that victims were enabled to flee abuse, positively impacting their wellbeing and health.

Secondly, research undertaken by the Domestic Abuse Commissioners' office has shown a clear cost/benefit in providing all migrant women access to public funds and status. The second amendment



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we support is introducing a firewall to prevent statutory services, including the police, from sharing migrant victims' data with the Home Office for immigration enforcement purposes.

Our work with the Step Up Migrant Women campaign has highlighted how fear of detention and deportation barres migrant victims from coming forward to be safe and report a crime. This lack of safe reporting mechanisms remains exploited by perpetrators who weaponise women's insecure status with impunity. We also have argued that asking frontline statutory service providers to undertake immigration control tasks puts extreme pressure on them as this is not their job. Enforcing immigration rules comes at a significant cost for these agencies. It is a missed opportunity for these agencies as they lose the trust of migrant women who could, for example, support the police with criminal investigations and help holding perpetrators accountable.

This, as suggested by the data-sharing super-complaint, is harming domestic abuse survivors and the public interest. It is essential to mention that a firewall was recommended by the Select Justice Committee scrutinising the draft Bill. It has also been widely supported by Parliamentarians, independent commissioners and the VAWG sector. On the Victims and Prisoners Bill, I don't want to finish without mentioning that there is consensus amongst the VAWG sector that the Victims and Prisoners Bill needs significant work and scrutiny as, in its current draft, it falls short of achieving an improvement in victims' experiences and their access to support and justice. Additionally, we join concerns and calls to remove part 3 of the Bill on prisoners and parole.

Finally, migrant women deserve to be protected. We need to see protections for them on a statutory footing so the Victims Bill is truly meaningful for all victims of crime. We would welcome your support and help to make the case with your front bench colleagues and other MPs.

**Eniola – woman with lived experience of domestic violence and NRPF**

I am one of the people speaking from United Impact. I was a victim of domestic abuse 5 years ago. I used to live with my brother and his wife since I have NRPF and cannot stay on my own. I used to sleep on the floor because I was too scared to sleep on the bed, his wife would have made life so difficult for me.

We were told that me and my son were not allowed to make any noise in the house, he was not allowed to play or eat any of the food. It made me think I had no one to talk to and was driven to attempting suicide. Now I think about other women who are going through what I had to, it's like they are trying to take our lives away.

**Apsana Begum MP (Chair of APPG on Domestic Violence and Abuse)**

I am the co-chair of the APPG on Domestic Violence and Abuse. Thank you so much to both of the speakers with lived experience for sharing your stories with us. When we do work at our APPG, we are struck by how much the experiences of domestic violence survivors are currently compounded by the cost-of-living crisis. Financial barriers are a major concern, Women's Aid have found 96% of people using their services are experiencing increased rent or increased costs generally. Financial pressures can prolong abuse and keep women trapped in abusive relationships. The APPG has also focussed on mental health and I would encourage people to go to the website and look at the findings of this.

On to the Victims and Prisoners Bill, when it was first proposed it was supposed to just look at the victims of crime but was then expanded to prisoners, which I think means it has lost its focus a little bit. It was



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supposed to centre victims going through the criminal justice system, but most agree it currently falls short of what it should be.

I have concerns about what this Bill will do, particularly for migrant women, or women with NRPF, who are not mentioned in the Bill. There is currently a call out for written evidence but it could close at any moment, so please do consider feeding evidence in. It is due to come back to the House soon, but could be postponed to the next parliamentary term.

One of the things that could be championed is the issue around victims trying to access justice but then coming into contact with the various agencies, that are supposed to be there to protect us, those agencies include immigration enforcement and the police. It is essentially making those victims into criminals. Perpetrators can currently dangle passports in front of victims as a way to control them.

**Follow up**

Apsana and Kate discussed potentially doing a joint call/letter with the APPG on Domestic Violence to the Chair of the Justice Committee to have a meeting about concerns about the Victims and Prisoners Bill. Or could even invite him as a speaker to a meeting.

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