



Greater Manchester IMMIGRATION AID UNIT

Protecting people subject to immigration control from COVID-19

April 2020

COVID-19 has made it abundantly clear that the divisive politics of austerity and the hostile environment have left us all less safe and more vulnerable. There can be no going back to 'business as usual' after the pandemic: no more good migrant versus bad migrant, benefit claimant versus tax payer.

Change needs to happen – not just because it makes sense if we are to keep healthy, but because it just makes sense.

The commodification of people based on income, job, nationality or immigration status has been exposed for the nonsense it always was. So, while we applaud the rebranding of last month's "low skilled migrants" as this month's "essential key workers", this needs to be matched with a wider understanding that people's rights are not based on their perceived economic or social value. People should not have to be superheroes to be worthy of protection, including protection from COVID-19.

While the pandemic has shown we are all in it together, we are certainly not all experiencing the impact of COVID-19 in the same way. Inequalities and racism have not disappeared. Protections offered to people subject to immigration control have to date been piecemeal and contradictory. At times it seems that public health needs have played second fiddle to politicking about immigration enforcement.

At a minimum we believe it is in all our best interests that during the pandemic

- everyone should be able to access healthcare
- everyone should have a roof over their head and food to eat
- everyone in the UK without permission should have permission granted and be able to access services
- no one should lose their immigration status
- no one should be trapped in immigration detention or situations of domestic violence
- no one should face the hostile environment

At GMIAU we support the campaign to protect migrants' rights during COVID-19 coordinated by [the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, MedAct and Liberty](#), as well as initiatives that focus on particular protections such as an end to [No Recourse to Public Funds](#) (NRPF) conditions, [NHS charging regulations](#) and [immigration detention](#); the need for greater protections for [migrant survivors of domestic violence](#) and people with insecure immigration status experiencing [homelessness](#); as well as the need for an uplift in financial [support for people seeking asylum](#).

COVID-19 must bring about the end of the hostile environment and at GMIAU we re-commit ourselves to making this happen. For more information contact: amanda@gmiau.org

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