

A Site of Resistance



An evaluation of the Stop Lock Change Evictions Coalition

Helen Baillot, January 2020



Executive summary

From 2012 to 2019, the UK Home Office contracted Serco, a multinational private company, to provide accommodation to people in the asylum system living in Glasgow.

In July 2018, Serco announced a new summary evictions policy, which put more than 300 people at risk of immediate street homelessness. Anticipating a large scale humanitarian crisis, a group of charities, lawyers and campaigners came together to resist and overturn this policy and to support the men and women at risk. This group became the Stop Lock Change Evictions coalition.

Today, the coalition remains resolute that people seeking asylum should never be subject to summary eviction, destitution and street homelessness by lock change. We continue to work with individuals at risk of lock change evictions, to make sure people understand and are able to access their rights. We believe the UK asylum support system needs fundamental reform to uphold people's rights and to make sure people are treated with fairness and dignity throughout the asylum process.



Ten-point plan to end evictions by way of lock changes and destitution

1. **The Mears Group**, now providing accommodation on behalf of the Home Office in Scotland, must introduce a policy on how they will deal with people refused asylum and asylum support. This must include a commitment to seek a court order to effect an eviction and not to evict by way of lock changes. This should be adopted by other providers across the UK.
2. **The Home Office** must place a requirement on all accommodation providers to never conduct summary lock change evictions. The Scottish Government should amend existing housing legislation to ensure lock changes are unlawful.
3. **The UK Government** must cease to use destitution as a policy tool and instead ensure that all people seeking asylum can access financial support and accommodation so that they can meet their essential living needs until they return to their country of origin or are given leave to stay in the UK.
4. **The UK Government** must grant temporary protection to people who face barriers to return which are beyond their control; and
5. **The UK Government** must restore people seeking asylum the right to work, so they can be independent and reduce the cost of asylum support. This should remain in place until people have either been granted leave to remain or returned to their country.
6. **The Scottish Government and COSLA** must ensure that its forthcoming strategy to prevent and mitigate migrant destitution includes asylum and refugee destitution; upholds rights in housing, health, social care, anti-poverty and human trafficking exploitation; and the strategy funds interventions so those at risk of asylum homelessness are not on the streets.
7. **Scottish local authorities** must have policies and processes in place to ensure that all vulnerable people can access community care protection under existing legislation regardless of immigration status.
8. **The Scottish Government** should review the adequacy of the Community Care legislative framework.
9. **Glasgow City Council**, third sector partners and those with lived experience introduce a locally designed end of asylum process safety net in Glasgow.
10. **The Law Society of Scotland, Scottish Legal Aid Board and Scottish Government** should address the very limited pool of social justice lawyers with capacity and expertise to work across housing, community care, asylum support, and asylum and immigration laws.

Read the full report at:

www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/working-for-change/campaigns-appeals/stoplockchangeevictions

The report was commissioned by Scottish Refugee Council, JustRight Scotland and Shelter Scotland on behalf of the coalition and written by independent researcher Helen Baillot.

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#StopLockChangeEvictions campaign partners and supporters



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