

For the benefit of people across Scotland, COSLA expects a UK government, working with their devolved governments, to respect the democratic mandate of Councillors and put the **LOCAL** back into Local Government by:

Protecting the human rights of all those seeking sanctuary in the UK and addressing the risks migrants face of exclusion and destitution

● **Here's why and what it would mean for communities**

A human rights-based approach to asylum and immigration would ensure all migrants are treated with dignity and would have their rights and entitlements protected.

The UK's future approach to asylum and immigration must uphold and protect the human rights of all those seeking sanctuary in this country. People seeking protection should be supported to integrate into communities from the first day of arrival – this is a complex, long-term process that needs to involve individuals, communities, institutions and both local and national governments. Doing so would enable all people to be included in and contribute to society and to their communities.

● **This approach would also ensure that:**

- People can access information about their rights and entitlements, that they understand them and that they are empowered to exercise them to fully participate and contribute to society; and
- the many different cultures which make up our society speak to each other and that everyone within our communities is included in processes of integration.

● **Failure to take this approach will result in a range of harms across our communities including:**

- An increased number of people unable to secure settled status in the UK including the inability to contribute to society e.g. working and paying taxes;
- An increase in the number of people with 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF) visa conditions who are most at risk of rough sleeping, destitution and exploitation. COSLA data shows that between 2020/21 and 2022/23, the number of NRPF referrals increased by 174%, while the number of supported cases increased by 260%. Alongside increasing case numbers, the complexity of cases has increased as the legislative landscape continues to change at pace;
- An increased risk of human trafficking and sexual exploitation which particularly affects women and children; and
- Ongoing unfunded costs for councils, putting pressure on already strained budgets.

● **A human rights-based approach will require the costs incurred by Local Government to be fully funded by central government.**

To ensure New Scots arriving in Scotland can successfully integrate and flourish, future policies in this area must fully recognise the cost-of-service delivery, and importantly, the very real human costs of not supporting people - destitution, rough sleeping; exploitation, mental and physical health issues; and child poverty.