

## **MP intervenes as disabled asylum-seeker faces ‘life-threatening’ destitution**

[Karin Goodwin](#) on [February 23, 2017](#)[February 24, 2017](#)

**A seriously ill and disabled asylum-seeker is facing destitution and potential homelessness after the [Home Office](#) took the decision to stop her support.**

The woman is from Zambia and narrowly missed being evicted after the intervention of her MP on 17 February. She had been due to be kicked out of her home by multinational [Serco](#), which provides housing to asylum seekers in Glasgow, the next day.

The 55-year-old woman – who is too scared to allow us to use her name – had received notice from the Home Office earlier in February stating that they were stopping her Section 4 emergency cashless support, paid after a claim has been refused. She had been gathering evidence for fresh submissions.

The notice said medical advisors, who had not met her, assessed her as fit to fly to her country of origin despite repeated submissions from her own GP, Dr Fiona Kinnon, stating she was at risk of sudden death due to thrombosis.

The GP’s submissions, seen by The Ferret and confirmed by Dr Kinnon, were also backed up with “sub normal” blood test results provided to the Home Office last month, which showed she was at risk of developing a blood clot. The woman has a range of other serious health conditions.

Following intervention from her local [SNP MP Carol Monaghan](#), the Home Office agreed to extend her support until Monday, 27 February. She now has been granted a court hearing for the same date as part an appeal she has lodged against the decision to stop support.

She fears for the future as she claims she has received no confirmation of the extension from the Home Office or Serco to date. Under current rules, the woman would be still be subject to eviction if her appeal is not upheld.

Serco said that there was no outstanding eviction notice, despite its initial plans to evict on 18 February outlined in a hand delivered letter dated 3 February. The company’s [eviction notice](#), the Home Office [notice to terminate support](#) and the GP [submissions](#) are all being published by The Ferret.

Serco, which has a £145m contract to house asylum seekers, was found to be providing living conditions that were a “disgrace” according to a [Home Affairs Select Committee report](#) published last month. It claimed to have dealt with problems by taking over Orchard and Shipman, the housing provider it sub-contracted.

The woman said: “I am living here in fear and am very unsure what will happen. I still have nothing in writing and I was very worried that they could go ahead and stop my support, or put me out of the house on Monday.

“I take morphine and other strong drugs just to get around. Without that I am in so much pain. I have been told I need to be on Warfarin [an anti-clotting drug for thrombosis] for life.”

She fled Zambia for the UK nine years ago after being attacked and gang raped but did not initially disclose this as she was with her son. “I did talk to my psychologist

and to Rape Crisis,” she added. “But they [the Home Office officials] have always said they don’t believe me. That is very hard. This situation is very stressful.”

John Wilkes, chief executive of [Scottish Refugee Council](#), said that it was imperative that Home Office decisions on support were evidence-based and drew on the expertise of doctors and other professionals. “The consequences of ending support – and of destitution – can be just too severe for anything less,” he added.

“Where there is a question of someone’s fitness to fly it is ethical as well as common sense to ensure the medical opinion from the doctors and psychologists are followed. Paper-based assessments are simply not appropriate where the decision can mean the difference between life and death.”

Pol Yates, a friend who has been helping the woman, added: “She has suffered from persecution and is very unwell and disabled.

“I really fear for her health – she simply would not survive the streets. The idea that she is fit to fly is simply untrue – doctors have examined her and fear that she would die on the plane. It is a very serious case and should have been sorted out years ago.”

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Mia Light, who has supported the woman at [Unity](#) – a volunteer-run advice service for asylum seekers in Glasgow – in recent years, added: “The medical evidence in her case is so overwhelming that I just don’t understand how they can dispute it. She has a catalogue of health problems, but this is not simply a case where the doctor is saying she is too physically unwell to be sent back. It is a clear case in which her thrombosis puts her at risk of sudden death.”

Carol Monaghan, MP for Glasgow North West, said she had been working to support her constituent since August 2015. At that time the woman was also under threat of eviction.

“It was quite clear that she had some very complex medical needs and was fragile,” she said. “Having been contacted by a friend of hers on 9 February, I was alarmed to hear that, once again, the Home Office had taken the decision to end support and to evict her.

“I remain very concerned about her health. There is no doubt that, were her support to be ended, she would be left destitute or be faced with the prospect of detention.

“I am urging the Home Office to reverse their decision and fully reinstate her support and to then see what can be done to regularise her stay so she is no longer left in the limbo that she has faced for the past number of years.”

A Serco spokesman said: “Serco is very aware of this individual’s circumstances and our housing officer has gone out of his way to provide her with extra support. We have no current plans to discontinue her support.”

A Home Office spokesperson said: “Asylum seekers receive support while their claim for protection is being considered.

“If someone is found not to need the UK’s protection, we expect them to leave the country voluntarily and provide assistance to help people return to their home country.”