



‘Top tips’ for using the NRPF Connect Database

The NRPF Network has worked with the Home Office to provide local authorities with a comprehensive guide to getting the most out of using the NRPF Connect database. The ‘Top tips’ guide provides greater clarity about Home Office work practices and how information provided is used to prioritise and decide cases. The guide also advises on best practice for local authorities when resolving common scenarios that arise when working with NRPF cases. Being familiar with the guide will increase insight into the system and facilitate more efficient use of the database.

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For detailed instructions about using NRPF Connect please see the user guide:
<https://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/-/media/microsites/nrpf/documents/nrpf-connect/nrpf-connect-user-guide.pdf>

1. Home Office Teams using NRPF Connect

Intervention & Sanctions Directorate (ISD)

ISD undertake all immigration status-checking processes as outlined under the [Service Level Agreement](#) and are responsible for the following:

- Flagging local authority involvement on Home Office systems when finance information is added to NRPF Connect so the case can be prioritised.
- Liaising with other Home Office departments on the local authority's behalf to ensure that case resolution is expedited where possible.
- Running weekly outcome reports from Home Office systems to account for cases granted leave to remain (LTR) or removed and updating NRPF Connect accordingly.
- Informing local authorities of appeal rights exhausted (ARE) decisions reported over Home Office systems, thereby allowing local authorities to consider the exclusions to support under Schedule 3 Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- Addressing the 'long standing' cases on NRPF Connect, the agreed definition being those financially supported by a local authority for over 1000 days.

To make the most of the available resources, much depends on local authority data being accurate to avoid delays in processing cases or working on cases that are in fact closed.

NRPF Returns Preparation Team (formerly Removals Casework)

The NRPF Returns Preparation Team's workflow comprises of cases that meet the following criteria:

- all appeal rights exhausted
- no outstanding admin or judicial reviews
- no outstanding applications for LTR
- not a criminal deportation case

The team are also responsible for deciding applications for LTR for cases allocated by ISD and are reliant on two key local authority activities:

1. Allocating cases – All cases should be allocated on NRPF Connect, by allocating cases – contact details of the LA caseworker are readily available.
2. Responding to Home Office Queries – Home Office Queries must be answered within 10 working days; failure to respond inhibits active case-resolution.

TMT19 – Responsible for fee waiver / change of circumstance considerations.

TMT19 will regularly contact local authorities to establish whether support continues and also raise concerns regarding fraudulent activity. Where it is difficult to reach the appropriate department Connect provides a useful interface for this purpose.

The NRPF Network will keep a full list of Home Office teams with direct access to NRPF Connect on our [website](#).

2. Value of maintaining accurate records on NRPF Connect

Task	Value
Add Principal Applicant <u>and dependant</u> details, including <u>Date of Birth</u> .	Makes it quicker for the Home Office (HO) to find the case on HO systems and return immigration status information.
Maintain accurate addresses	HO correspondence will get sent to the right address, avoiding unnecessary delays in resolving cases.
Maintain an accurate finance page	<p>Only cases <u>recorded as financially supported</u> are flagged by the Home Office as a priority.</p> <p><u>HO has read-access to the finance page</u>; missing information will raise questions as to whether the family are in receipt of other means of income.</p>
Use the 'Notes' function to record additional information	Evidences LA decision-making – such as where a statutory duty to provide financial support arises or reasons for when a case is closed.
Upload identity documents and decision/support letters	<p>Identity documents help verify personal details and nationality of claimants.</p> <p>Proof of support / decision letters builds the evidence base of LA involvement.</p>
Close cases	Recording case closures on NRPF Connect ensures accurate performance monitoring and keeps HO efforts focused on prioritising financially supported cases.
Allocate cases to the right user on Connect	Full contact details of staff are available when further investigations are required.

3. Processes relating to Alerts, Queries and the monitoring of caseload

Activity	Process
Creating new cases on NRPF Connect.	<p>The HO is automatically notified via the 'New Case Alert' and has <u>5 working days</u> to check the case. <u>Please do not also raise a Query.</u></p> <p>A same day request for urgent cases only can be made using the HO duty number (available from Help button). Routine requests will be declined – the Connect ID number of the case must be provided.</p>
Receiving Immigration Update alerts.	Review the information provided, update the case where necessary and close the alert from the <u>Immigration Page of the person's record.</u>
Requesting updates after first status-check undertaken.	A LA must make use of the Query function to request updates on immigration status or to raise a particular concern / or question about a case. The HO has <u>10 working days</u> to reply.
Receiving Home Office responses to Local Authority queries.	<p>Please either <u>complete</u> the query chain <u>or reply</u> if further information is required.</p> <p>Please ensure <u>at least 4 weeks</u> from the last HO response before requesting updates on the same case.</p>
Responding to Home Office queries.	<u>The LA must reply to the information requested by the HO within 10 working days.</u> Delayed responses undermine efforts to expedite the resolution of cases.
Responding to an active Closure Required alert.	The closure required alert is triggered when the Home Office updates the 'reason case concluded' field. The alert will be active <u>until the case is closed on the closure page.</u>
Producing a list of cases for monitoring purposes.	<p><u>Excel reports</u> are provided – the 'Immigration and Case Resolution Report' and 'Referral' reports are used by the Home Office for monitoring purposes.</p> <p><u>Search page</u> - The new search page makes it easy for lists of cases to be displayed and helps the LA to ensure that their caseload is accurately represented.</p>
Please note response times are governed by the NRPF Connect Service Level Agreement .	

4. Using Queries to request updates from the Home Office

When the local authority creates a case on NRPF Connect for the first time, a 'New Case' alert is triggered to the Home Office who then complete the first immigration status check – an 'Immigration Update' alert is then displayed on the local authority view of the record.

After the first immigration status check, future interaction will be undertaken via the query function. Local authorities should ensure that queries are raised on a regular basis to obtain the latest information on a case; the 'date of last immigration status check' on the immigration page of a record corresponds to when the immigration page was last updated. The Immigration and Case Resolution Report can be used to filter cases by 'date of last immigration status check' to ascertain records where an update may need to be requested.

As there can be delays in Home Office systems updating, local authorities are also encouraged to use the query function if information provided by the Home Office needs further clarifying, or if there is a discrepancy with what has been reported by the service user.

The following points will help in using this function:

- The query should be as specific as possible to help guide the Home Office users to the assistance required; 'Please can I have an update' may be less effective than clearer expressions of what the issue being encountered is:

'We have been supporting this case for 3 years at considerable expense to our local authority, we understand that a new Article 8 application has now been submitted by the family's legal representatives, please can you ensure the case is brought to the attention of the correct case working team so a decision can be expedited?'

Or

'The Home Office have confirmed that the most recent applicant for LTR has now been refused, we are undertaking a Human Rights and Child in Need assessment with a view to offering support to the family in returning home. Please could you raise this case with the family returns team as we believe it would be beneficial to have assistance in discussing return and subsequent enforcement action with the family?'

- Current immigration status is the most relevant factor for a local authority when considering whether Schedule 3 Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act (NIAA) 2002 applies and then whether there are any legal barriers preventing return to country of origin. If a full immigration history is required, the local authority must state for what purpose such additional information is required before it will be considered.

5. Fee Waivers

An applicant should apply for a fee waiver where they meet the definition of destitution covered by the Home Office's guidance for assessing Fee Waivers:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/applications-for-a-fee-waiver-and-refunds>

Where an applicant does not apply to obtain a fee waiver an NHS surcharge will be applicable in addition to the fee. Applying for a fee waiver must be done by a suitably qualified legal adviser, please refer to the [OISC's guidance](#) on change of conditions forms and fee waiver applications for more information.

Where local authority duties are engaged through the provision of financial support because a family / single adult are destitute, it is very likely that a fee waiver will be applied for as part of the application process to the Home Office. Updating NRPF Connect will inform the Home Office of the level and nature of support being provided (i.e. finance page updated, note added and supporting letters uploaded); missing information can negatively impact on the processing of a fee waiver.

The majority of the NRPF case fee waiver rejections are due to the non-submission of evidence, i.e. no bank statement provided as supporting evidence. The fee waiver guidance specifies that the Home Office are required to make their own assessment and the presence of local authority support in itself is not sufficient to qualify for a fee waiver. Cases should only be escalated where all evidence was submitted, but the Home Office reached a different conclusion on the applicant's destitution status. In these instances;

1. Raise a Query to the Home Office to clarify how the information on NRPF Connect was taken into consideration by the Home Office at the time of the rejection;
2. Notify the NRPF Network of the refusal, citing the NRPF Connect ID reference number of the case

The NRPF Network will work with ISD to ascertain the most expedient way to resolve the issue.

6. LTR with NRPF – Cases already receiving local authority support

The Office of Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) has confirmed that making an application to remove the NRPF condition is regulated immigration advice. Where finance information is added to a person's record on NRPF Connect, Home Office systems are updated to reflect local authority support. A system is therefore in place to ensure that local authority involvement is recorded and then considered when a case is granted LTR.

As it is likely that a number of families / adults may become destitute and approach a local authority some-point after paying for legal advice / application fees (i.e. no fee waiver exemption and no evidence of destitution at point of application) it remains advisable for local authority teams to raise a query to the Home Office to clarify the change of circumstances with respect to financial self-sufficiency. Applicants must also ensure they inform their legal representatives about the changes to their circumstances which have given rise due to becoming destitute.

If LTR with NRPF for a case in receipt of financial support is granted, immediate action is required, as outlined below:

1. Raise a query on Connect, outlining why the local authority believes the person to be destitute and for immediate re-consideration of the NRPF condition.
2. Email the NRPF Network with the Connect ID of the record so that the NRPF Network is aware of the case.

The ISD/Casework team will enquire as to why LTR with NRPF was granted and, in some cases, the decision to grant LTR with NRPF may be reversed before the status papers are issued.

7. LTR with NRPF – Change of Conditions (COC) processes

Where LTR with NRPF has been granted (e.g. a family approaching the LA for support having become destitute post-grant of status), applying for recourse requires the completion of a COC form by a qualified legal adviser. Please refer to the [OISC's guidance](#) for further information.

The Home Office TMT19 team processes COC applications as quickly as possible dedicating resources and prioritising cases where safeguarding issues have been identified. Due to the volume of cases and to ensure fairness amongst LA supported cases and cases being supported by NGO's, TMT19 will consider cases in order in which they are received.

To limit the need for COC applications ISD have worked closely with TMT19 to create processes whereby applications are routed to a dedicated team with specialist NRPF knowledge who also have access to Connect. Keeping NRPF Connect updated therefore helps to ensure that correct decisions with the appropriate condition codes are made first time.

When COC forms are submitted, please consider the following steps:

1. Work with the service user to ensure that supporting evidence of destitution is provided to their legal representatives in support of their request to access public funds.
2. Upload relevant supporting letters onto NRPF Connect and ensure the finance page is accurate, with the notes provided outlining the level of support provided by the local authority and the family's circumstances.
3. Only contact the TMT19 inbox with supporting evidence **if** there are urgent safeguarding concerns, (such as imminent health issues, inadequate accommodation) or if the case has not been responded to whilst others submitted around the same time have (which may indicate there's a problem with the application).
4. TMT19 can request further information from the LA over NRPF Connect or directly to the local authority caseworker.
5. If further complications are encountered, please raise a query for assistance from ISD and also email the NRPF Network with the Connect ID; the NRPF Network and ISD will investigate the case on behalf of the local authority and provide advice on next steps.

8. Accessing Asylum Support

A significant number of cases transition from social services to asylum support and it is important for local authorities that the process of accessing asylum support is not unnecessarily delayed. If difficulties do arise in accessing asylum support, the following steps will be of assistance:

1. Check details of the cases are accurate on NRPF Connect, with the finance page updated and notes explaining local authority involvement added.
2. Upload any correspondence from the Home Office that may have been received detailing why a case may not be eligible for asylum support.
3. Raise a query on NRPF Connect requesting assistance in accessing asylum support, outlining the difficulties so far encountered.
4. Notify the NRPF Network of the case, providing the Connect ID reference number.
5. ISD and the NRPF Network will investigate the case on behalf of the local authority and work with the relevant Home Office asylum teams to resolve the issues being encountered.

In addition to the above, the Home Office have provided a new email enquiry service for Local Authorities to help expedite applications for asylum support:

LocalAuthorityAsylumSupportEnquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk

9. Family Returns

Where the exclusions under Schedule 3 Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 apply, a local authority should consider what support is necessary for the purposes of avoiding a breach of Human Rights through the Human Rights Assessment. Where a case appears to be appropriate for return and Child In Need and HRA assessments have been started to that affect, please consider undertaking the following:

- Ensure the record of the case on NRPF Connect is accurate
- Raise a query on NRPF Connect outlining the current situation with regards to the assessment process and why support from the family returns team would be appropriate

ISD will then work together to ensure all actions have been completed to ensure a case is ready to progress to removal before submitting to the family returns team.