



**“The aim is to create, here in Britain, a really hostile environment for illegal migration”**

**Theresa May, 2012**

# **‘Hostile environment’ vs healthy environment**

On ‘internal borders’, Brexit and the NHS

Dr Veronika Wagner, Doctors in Unite  
Unite HQ, London, Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> March  
2018

In the UK  
illegally?



106  
ARRESTS  
LAST WEEK  
IN YOUR AREA



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# Women caught up in the hostile environment

- Undocumented migrants include trafficked and abused women, women fleeing abusive relationships, modern slavery victims
- Women are affected by the government tearing apart families
- Women make up the majority of the NHS and care workforce, many of us are migrants ourselves
- Women NHS workers as proxy border guards

# Background

- “The hostile environment is intended to reduce inward migration and increase outward emigration”.
- “It’s designed to make life so difficult for individuals without permission to remain that they will not seek to enter the UK to begin with or if already present will leave voluntarily”
- “It includes measures to limit access to work, housing, health care, bank accounts and to reduce and restrict rights of appeal against Home Office decisions”
- Significant invasion of digital and health privacy
- This affects >1m people in UK (or many more if factoring in 10% government error rate) eg British people without passports or without fixed abode

# Areas of Life affected:

- Renting a home
- Education
- Working or studying
- Access to benefits
- Access to the NHS
- Getting a bank account
- Family life
- Immigration detention and deportation

# Renting a home

- Landlords are legally obliged to check ID and immigration status of prospective tenants
- Following the EU referendum, more EU citizens have been refused tenancies
- ‘Right to rent’- landlords do not understand the rules and their obligations and advertise rentals for British citizens only
- Landlords who get it wrong can be fined up to £1,000 the first time, and £3,000 subsequently, or, from December 2016, receive a criminal sentence.

# Education

- Schools are now asking parents where their children were born (but don't tell the parents that they don't have to provide this information)
- Details of up to 1500 children per month can be passed to immigration authorities
- Plans to make school nurses exclude 'illegal' migrant children have been dropped after a fight back

# Working or studying

- Amber Rudd in 2016: “Foreign workers should not be able to take the jobs that British people should do”
- Unlawful job adverts for UK passport holders only
- “EU citizen was refused a test drive at a car dealership because her driving licence was European. She was told that ‘due to Brexit [it is] no longer valid’ – which means the person would struggle to get to work
- Police stop and search, revocation of driving licences
- Employment contract clauses specifying that the loss of right to work will result in immediate dismissal. Plans (repeatedly denied) to make employers publish lists of foreign workers

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**IMPORTANT NOTICE  
CONCERNING YOUR DRIVING LICENCE**

Please do not ignore

MR MOSHEN DANAIE



Dear MR MOSHEN DANAIE,

**You are at risk of losing your driving licence**

According to our records you have no lawful basis to be in the UK. The Home Office is working with other organisations, including the NHS, banks and DVLA to stop access to benefits and services for those with no lawful basis to be in the UK. This includes you.

As you have no lawful basis to be in the UK we are requesting that the Secretary of State for Transport revokes your driving licence under Section 99 (3ZA) of the Road Traffic Act 1988.

# Access to benefits

- British born children punished for parents' immigration status, no recourse to public funds, families becoming street homeless
- Councils do not get financial help to house such families in an emergency
- “childhood destitution caused by central government”
- “ The government’s immigration policies are creating a new and growing underclass. By making it increasingly difficult for undocumented migrants to access accommodation, employment or any kind of financial assistance, families are being forced so far off the radar that estimating actual numbers is difficult”
- “Successive governments have been trying to starve people out of the UK” (quotes: Guardian 2017)

# Access to the NHS

- **“The whole agitation [against visitors] has a nasty taste. Instead of rejoicing at the opportunity to practice a civilised principle, Conservatives have tried to exploit the most disreputable emotions in this among many other attempts to discredit socialised medicine”** (Bevan 1952)
- ‘Health Tourism’ is used as a smokescreen
- Unregistered/ undocumented patients too scared to access the NHS including refugees, pregnant women, then presenting late
- This policy has already cost lives

# NHS- ID checks on patients

- ID checks for most planned NHS care
- Home Office and NHS Digital have just renewed a Memorandum of Understanding to share “non- clinical” data on ‘immigration offenders’
- NHS Digital’s ‘Non-clinical data’ are not what clinicians understand them to be

# NHS- charging patients

- Current policies will lead to 'Normalising' NHS charges for all
- Migrants can be asked to pay 150% of the cost of an NHS procedure– childbirth can cost up to £9000 depending on complications
- This includes maternity/ante-natal care, children and cancer treatment
- Failure to pay can be used against the person in asylum claims

# NHS – migrants' mental health

- Undocumented migrants may be very traumatised (eg. war, trafficking, abuse)
- Between 20 -40% of refugees suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Rise in mental health issues among EU citizens in UK, increased need for service provision
- Suicides in immigration detention

# NHS- Other Aspects

- Euratom (nuclear medicine and radiation protection)
- European Medicines Agency
- Most mental health research funding comes from the EU
- EHIC
- European research grants and projects

# Getting a bank account

- EU citizens being turned down for mortgages and loans
- Banks to check 70 million bank accounts to identify very few 'illegal' migrants
- Banks to refuse to open accounts for British passport holders if they appear on Home Office immigration blacklist (HO office error rate 10%)
- Wrong HO action is account holder's problem

# Family Life

- Women and men in UK for decades are threatened with deportation
- Families are being torn apart
- Children are prevented from joining their parents in UK, and vice versa
- Non- British spouses caring for British partner being threatened with deportation
- An estimated 140- 180,000 people are affected (i.e. at least half a million including family members)

# Immigration detention and deportation cont'd

- Five-fold rise in deportations of EU nationals since 2010. Almost 5,000 EU citizens deported from Britain in 2017: the highest since current records began
- Deportations of EU citizens up 26% in Q1 2017 compared to Q1 2016
- Deportation of homeless EU citizens recently ruled unlawful
- 100 EU citizens and UK residents were sent letters by Home Office threatening them with deportation. Home office gave very lukewarm apology
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# Impact of Brexit on NHS workforce

- In 2016, Theresa May was forced to row back on suggestions that foreign doctors could be forced to leave the UK once there are enough British doctors to make the NHS "self-sufficient"
- 10.000 EU NHS workers have left the UK since referendum,
- 90% drop of EU nurse applications to work in NHS since referendum
- Anecdotal increased racism towards EU NHS staff

# Impact of Brexit on NHS staff cont'd

- London and some 'unpopular' specialties and areas eg inner city A&E or psychiatry particularly dependent on migrant workers incl. EU staff (13% EU senior Drs in psychiatry, up to 20% EU staff in some London hospitals)
- Risk of worsening Ts&Cs with exit from EWTD and new free trade deals
- Likely more de- regulation and casualisation

# How we can fight back

- Join local NHS/ migrants' rights/ anti-racism campaigns
- Do not 'shop' migrants to the Home Office
- Support NHS workers who refuse to collect patient data on immigration or collaborate with charging patients
- Speaking up when encountering racist remarks is good for our mental health

# I call on Unite to..

- Work across Unite and other trade unions to call out and fight against ‘internal borders’
- Recruit migrant workers as shop stewards irrespective of their immigration status and pay for their rep training directly
- Unconditionally support NHS staff who are penalised for refusing to cooperate with patient ID checks

I WENT TO A&E  
AND IT WAS FULL  
OF IMMIGRANTS  
ONE BANDAGED  
MY ARM ANOTHER  
GAVE ME  
AN X-RAY

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