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## PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### HOME OFFICE CUTS TO REFUGEE LIFELINE

In response to the government proposals to slash funding to the refugee charity sector, the Asylum Support Partnership said in a joint statement:

"Savage cuts by the Home Office to the refugee charity sector will force people who have already fled torture, conflict and persecution in their own countries to suffer even further while seeking safety in the UK.

"This is unacceptable. Asylum seekers and refugees depend on the specialist services and expertise of refugee charities to enable them to rebuild their lives.

Daoud Zaaroura, the Chief Executive of the North of England Refugee Service, a north east charity and member of the partnership, said "Despite urging the government to reduce the unprecedented scale of these cuts, and to give us more time to implement the changes, we are extremely disappointed that A 60% cut in funding for our One Stop Service for people seeking asylum, will nevertheless go ahead as planned at the beginning of April this year. We are also concerned that the Refugee Integration and Employment Service contract is not to be renewed after this September."

NERS believes that advice and help with the integration process for refugees fleeing persecution and danger is not only essential for the wellbeing and settlement of its client group, but just as importantly, integration is a vital element towards community cohesion and a harmonious society.

"We understand these are challenging times", added Mr Zaaroura, "But we are gravely concerned that cuts this deep will not only devastate our services that provides asylum seekers and refugees with a lifeline, but will also have a serious and lasting impact on the voluntary and public sectors, and the wider north east communities.

"Sixty years on from the UN Convention for Refugees, which has saved countless lives, it is imperative our government continues to protect those seeking refuge in the UK today. They must do this by ensuring the organisations that support them can carry on with their life-changing work."

For further details and to interview Daoud Zaaroura, please call Pete Widlinski on 07932 605 966

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