



Home Office

ASYLUM

POINT OF CLAIM INFORMATION BOOKLET

You should keep this booklet for your own information so you can refer to it during the asylum process.

March 2021

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SECTION 1

Explanation of this booklet

Asylum and Protection is part of the Home Office. The Home Office is responsible for considering asylum claims as well as claims from visitors to come to the United Kingdom, or who wish to remain in the United Kingdom. **We are committed to delivering a service in a way that promotes inclusion and respects diversity, to provide equality of opportunity and access to our services.**

We will treat you with respect, dignity and fairness regardless of your age, disability, ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief.

This booklet contains important information about claiming asylum in the United Kingdom (UK) and explains what to expect during the asylum Registration process and afterwards. Asylum 'Registration' or 'Screening' is the terminology used to describe the process where we gather a range of information, in order to record your asylum claim.

It also will explain:

- How to claim asylum during Covid-19/lockdown
- Where to claim asylum and what to expect during the asylum Registration process
- Where you can find help and advice
- Things you need to know
- Claiming as a child
- What to expect after claiming asylum
- Asylum Support
- Your responsibilities and rights as an asylum claimant

Inadmissible claims

If you have travelled through a safe country on your way to the UK, or have a connection to a safe country, your asylum claim may not be admitted to the UK asylum process will make arrangements to find a safe country that will admit you there country

of removal may be a safe third country in which you were present before claiming asylum in the UK, one with which you have some other connection, or any other safe third country that will accept you.

If we decline to consider your claim, as there is a safe third country you are being removed to, we will inform you of this and any appeal rights you may have.

If you are an EU national, then the UK will not substantively consider your claim, except in exceptional circumstances.

(Please, note that from January 2021 onwards some of the processes outlined in this booklet may change. Please check our website for any updates on our processes on www.gov.uk).

Where to claim asylum and what to expect during the asylum Registration process

Is making an asylum claim in the UK the right course of action in my individual circumstances?

You should only make a claim for asylum (international protection) if you fear return to your country of origin/nationality.

To be recognised as a refugee under the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, you must have left your country and be unable to go back because you have a well-founded fear of persecution based on one of the following reasons:

- Race
- Religion
- Nationality
- Political opinion; or
- Membership of a particular social group*

(*a group sharing a common characteristic that cannot be changed)

If it is decided that you are not a refugee because your claim is not based on one of the five reasons listed above, but there are substantial grounds for believing that you would face a real risk of suffering serious harm if returned to your country, you may qualify for

Humanitarian Protection.

If you do not require international protection (asylum or Humanitarian Protection) but would still like to remain in the UK for other reasons you should seek legal advice.

If your claim for international protection is refused, it may affect any further claims you may have to stay or to visit the UK.

Where to claim asylum

We expect you to claim asylum at the earliest possible opportunity. Failure to do so may be taken into account and affect the credibility of your claim. For most people this should be immediately on arrival to the UK at an airport or seaport.

If you are not detained you should contact the Asylum Intake Unit (AIU) in Croydon (South London). The AIU has an appointment system for those who have somewhere they can stay until their appointment. It also has a non appointment 'walk-in' service for people who do not have anywhere to stay or who have exceptional needs. Where possible, you should book an appointment by telephone, which will guarantee the date and time you will be seen.

Asylum Intake Unit (AIU)

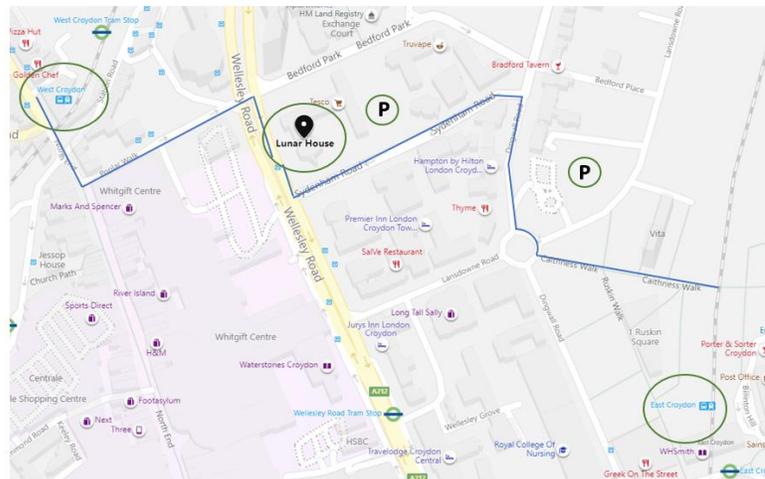
Lunar House

40 Wellesley Road

Croydon CR9 2BY

Telephone 0300 123 4193 for appointments

If you are delayed or are unable to attend your appointment, please notify us as soon as possible by calling **0300 123 4193**. If you need to change or cancel your appointment, please call to let us know as soon as possible.



How to find us

By Road

See the map above. You can park in one of the car parks in central Croydon, which are also shown on this map (marked with **P**) (Sat Nav CR0 1UP) & 2 (Sat Nav CR0 0XH).

By Train

There are trains to East and West Croydon stations from London Victoria and London Bridge. If you are travelling to West Croydon, please use the available underpass to get to Lunar House. Both stations are in Travelcard zone 5. To plan your journey please visit [**www.nationalrail.co.uk**](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk)

By Bus

There are buses to Croydon from locations including Brixton, Bromley, Crystal Palace, Heathrow, Streatham and Tottenham Court Road. To plan your journey please visit [**www.tfl.gov.uk**](http://www.tfl.gov.uk)

By Tram

Tramlink is a light railway linking Croydon with Wimbledon, Beckenham and New Addington. To plan your journey please visit [**www.tfl.gov.uk**](http://www.tfl.gov.uk)

Do I have to travel to Croydon to claim asylum?

If you are unable to travel to Croydon due to:

- A health condition
- A disability
- An exceptional circumstance or
- Being an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC)

we may be able to offer you an appointment closer to your home.

If you are an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child based in London and the South East, please contact us on the number below or email [**Child.ASUappointment@homeoffice.gov.uk**](mailto:Child.ASUappointment@homeoffice.gov.uk).

If you are an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child based elsewhere in the UK please

contact MIUminor@homeoffice.gov.uk.

We may be able offer you an appointment in alternative locations throughout the UK. If you feel that you qualify for an appointment at an alternative location, please let the Asylum Intake Unit know when booking your appointment on **0300 123 4193**.

Where to claim during Covid-19/lockdown

You can still claim asylum during the coronavirus pandemic. Social distancing and protective measures are in place. **If you think you may have coronavirus, please tell us.**

When you call the Asylum Intake Unit (see below) they will tell you which Registration location you should go to; it may not be the Asylum Intake Unit in Croydon. **(Please. note this is subject to change according to any lockdown measures).**

Aspects of the asylum process and processes referred to in this leaflet may be subject to temporary changes to reduce the potential spread of coronavirus. For latest information, check with your Decision Making Unit (once registered) or Migrant Help or www.gov.uk

During the coronavirus pandemic, you may be able to claim asylum at one of the Regional Intake Locations elsewhere within the UK.

For bookings and queries please call **0300 123 4193**

Monday-Thursday 9am-16:45, Friday 9am-16:30

What to bring with you and what happens when you claim asylum

When making your asylum claim it is essential that you bring with you:

- Your passport and the passport(s) of your spouse and any dependents in the UK that you wish to be part of your claim;
- It is important that you attend your appointment with any dependents who are

present in the UK that you wish to be part of your asylum claim. By dependent we mean your spouse or common law partner and your child/children (under 18);

- Other identification documents which will help us to establish your identity and nationality – these may include, Birth Certificates, Driving License, Marriage Certificates and any other national identity documents;
- Any other documents that will support your claim;
- Any medication you or your dependents are currently taking;
- Nappies and food for your children due to the possible long waiting time;
- Evidence of your accommodation - if you are living in the UK please provide documentary evidence of your accommodation, such as a tenancy agreement or recent utility bill for example gas, electricity, etc. showing your full name and UK address.

If you are living in someone else's house, please bring:

- a letter (no older than three months) from the householder which says you can stay in their house and documentary evidence such as a utility bill showing the householder's full name and address.
- Any other documents - Please note that it is your duty to provide us with **all available documentation** to substantiate your claim as soon as possible. You should bring this evidence to your Registration appointment or if you are not able to do this, you should provide this evidence at your Substantive Asylum Interview.
- If you are not able to do so, you should provide us with any additional documentation within the timescale provided to you at your asylum interview.
- If your asylum claim is not being made at the AIU, but instead you are making your asylum claim elsewhere, (e.g. at an airport, seaport, reporting centre, Immigration Removal Centre, or if you have been arrested by the police and an Immigration Officer has been called) and you do not have with you the documents listed above,

you should give them to your asylum casework team as soon as possible following Registration.

What if I am disabled or have other special needs or requirements?

Please tell us as soon as possible about any special needs or requirements for the Registration interview. This may be when you are booking an appointment or as soon as possible afterwards by calling us back.

Examples of special needs are: mobility difficulties or whether you would prefer to be interviewed by a male or female Registration officer. You should also inform us of any special needs on the day that you are making your asylum claim. Where feasible, we will try to accommodate any requirements you tell us about.

What to expect at the Registration interview

- **Security Check:** Every member of the public who enters the building must undergo a series of security checks including on your baggage.
- **Reception Desk:** You will be greeted at the reception desk and asked some questions and to show your verification form.
- **Fingerprinting:** Everybody that makes a claim for asylum must have their photograph and fingerprints taken.
- **Registration Interview:** You will be called to an interview and have your Registration interview completed.
- **Possible Second Interview:** You may have a second interview with an officer.
- **Your Documentation:** When all actions are completed on your case you will be called by an officer and your documentation will be issued to you.
- **Accommodation:** If you have requested accommodation, you may have to wait for transportation. Please don't leave until you have been issued your documents.

How long is the Registration process?

We aim to complete your Registration within **four hours**, however there are occasions where it will take longer. If you require accommodation and need transport to take you to Initial Accommodation, your wait is likely to be longer. In the waiting area, please listen for announcements that will keep you informed of any change to the waiting times during the day.

Preliminary Interview Questionnaire (PIQ)

During your Registration interview, you will be given a form called a “Preliminary Information Questionnaire”, which is also known as a “PIQ”. The PIQ is designed to help you provide information about the reasons why you need protection in the UK and setting out your claim. It may also help you to prepare for your Substantive (main) Asylum Interview. The information you provide in your PIQ will give the Home Office a better understanding of your asylum claim and it could also help us to make any reasonable adjustments that you may require when attending your interview.

You do not need to complete the PIQ during your Registration interview. The date by which we would like you to return your PIQ will be recorded on the document.

If you do not feel able to complete this form yourself, you can seek assistance from your legal representative or from organisations such as Migrant Help. Further details about where you can obtain advice and assistance can be found in Section 3 of this booklet.

An electronic copy of the Preliminary Information Questionnaire can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preliminary-information-questionnaire-for-asylum-claims>

Claiming with or as a Dependent

What happens if I have dependents, or I am a dependent of someone else claiming asylum?

If you are claiming asylum at the AIU and you want any of your dependents (such as a spouse or children under 18 years old) to be part of your asylum claim, you must bring them with you.

You have the right to apply for asylum as a dependent, but you may also submit your own individual claim for asylum if you have separate information you wish to be taken into account. If you are claiming asylum as part of someone else's claim (for example, you are claiming as a dependent of your husband), you will also be asked in private (by a Registration officer) whether you would like to claim for asylum in your own right.

What happens to my asylum claim and that of my dependents, if I have made an asylum claim somewhere other than the Asylum Intake Unit?

You will have a Registration interview and should follow any requests to provide additional information about yourself or your dependents. If you are unclear about anything you may ask questions. Dependents can be added to your claim after it is submitted, but not once a decision has been made.

What if I don't have evidence to prove my age?

If you claim to be under eighteen years of age and your physical appearance and/or demeanour very strongly suggest you are aged twenty-five or over, we will consider your asylum claim under adult procedures until there is credible documentary or other persuasive evidence to demonstrate your age. If we do not think that you are over twenty-five but we believe that you are over eighteen years, we may ask Social Services to conduct an independent Age Assessment to determine whether you are a minor as claimed.

If you disagree with our decision to treat you as an adult, you may approach your Local Authority's Children's Services Department with a view to them undertaking their own assessment of your age. All other claimants will be afforded the benefit of the doubt and treated as children until a professional Age Assessment has been completed.

SECTION 2

Other things to expect or need to know

The asylum Registration process is divided into several parts:

- Basic questions about your identity and details of your family;
- How you travelled to the United Kingdom;
- Whether you have any medical conditions;
- Why you left your country (giving just a brief explanation);
- Questions relating to any criminal offences and national security;
- If you booked an appointment you will be asked to confirm your personal details, family details, any medical conditions and other information gathered during the telephone booking;
- If you are unable to provide reliable evidence of your country or place of origin, or we have reason to doubt your claimed nationality, we may ask you to undergo **Language Analysis** testing during Registration or when you are invited to your substantive interview. If you agree to this, you will be interviewed by a language expert over the telephone to help determine your country or region of origin, who will produce a report to help us establish your country of nationality.
- If you are an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC) you will not undergo the full Registration process. The focus of the initial appointment is to ensure the welfare of the child.

Will I be detained?

If it is decided that the UK is not obliged to decide your claim, because another country has responsibility for considering it, you may be detained pending removal to that country.

We may detain you if we decide that you are suitable for detention and your claim can be considered whilst you are detained.

You will be asked if there are any reasons why you should not be detained. If you are detained, we will explain the detention processes to you in more detail and regularly review your suitability for detention.

If you are not detained, we will allocate your case to an asylum Decision Making Unit. You will be able to contact this team if you have questions about the asylum process. If there is a change in circumstances, we may review at a later date whether you are

suitable for detention.

It is **not** an identity card, but it will contain your personal details including your name, date of birth and nationality, as well as your photograph. Each of your dependants will have their own card.

You may be asked for it when you access some services, such as registering with a doctor and interacting with the Home Office.

ARC Cards, BRP Cards, Permission to Work, Accommodation and Support

What is an Application Registration Card and when will I receive it?

The Application Registration Card (ARC) is evidence that you have submitted an asylum claim in the UK.

Once your asylum claim has been registered and your biometrics taken, we will send you an ARC. If you are detained you will not be sent your ARC.

It is **not** an identity card, but it will contain your personal details including your name, date of birth and nationality, as well as your photograph. Each of your dependants will have their own card.

You may be asked for it when you access some services, such as registering with a doctor, and interacting with the Home Office.

Biometric Residence Permit Application

If you are granted status (permission) to remain in the UK you will be issued with a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). When you claim asylum it is a legal requirement that you also apply for a BRP, you do this by confirming your personal details.

We will also need to take your fingerprints again - we will inform you at a later date when we will do this, it is normally when you have your asylum interview.

Will I be given Permission to Work in the UK?

You are generally **not** allowed to work while your claim for asylum is being considered. If you have valid leave and have been given Permission to Work in the UK, you should

contact the asylum team considering your case to clarify whether you still have the right to work and whether there are any restrictions.

If we have not made a decision on your initial asylum claim after one year (and this delay is not attributed to you), you may request Permission to Work. This right will cease if your claim for asylum is finally determined as unsuccessful.

Will I be able to undertake any voluntary work?

You may undertake voluntary activity for a registered charity or voluntary organisation. However you should check with the asylum team considering your case before you volunteer, as there are exceptions to this position. Also, the activity must not amount to unpaid employment or payment in kind (such as you are being given something other than money in exchange for working, including for example, accommodation).

Can I make an accommodation and Asylum Support application?

For information about whether you are entitled to accommodation and support and assistance completing the support form, please see the attached leaflet entitled **“Asylum support in section 5”**.

I am a child (under 18 years old). How will my claim be treated?

Claims from those under 18 years of age are considered under a different process from adult claims due to the specific needs and requirements of children. We will, when considering claims from children, take into account the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the UK. We will contact your Local Authority’s Children’s Services Department on your behalf if you are not already known to them.

They will also be responsible for looking after you and giving you accommodation if you are not accompanied by an adult.

If you are an unaccompanied child, we will also give your details to an organisation independent from the Home Office called the Children’s Panel, who will advise and assist you in your contact with the Home Office and Local Government Agencies.

SECTION 3

Getting advice and assistance

Migrant Help Asylum Services are available 24 hours a day 365 days a year.

Please feel free to contact them for assistance -

- 0808 8010 503 8am-8pm Monday—Friday
- as@migranthehelpuk.org
- www.migranthehelpuk.org

For advice and information, including their translated advice, you can use their Service User Portal to find your language.

www.migranthehelpuk.org/su-portal.

They provide free independent advice, guidance and information on:

- The Asylum Process
- Accommodation (somewhere to stay)
- Financial Support and Queries (money)
- Finding Legal Representation (lawyers)
- Accessing Healthcare (doctors/nurses)
- Support during and post your asylum decision
- Complaints
- Other asylum matters

Other helpful resources

- **Refugee Action** (England and Wales)

www.refugee-action.org.uk

- **The Refugee Council** (England and Wales)

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

- **Bryson Intercultral** (Northern Ireland)

028 9244 8447 www.brysonintercultral.org

- **Scottish Refugee Council** (Scotland)

0141 223 7979

Tracing family

If you have family that you have lost contact with, the Red Cross may be able to assist you to get a message to them. We can refer you to the Red Cross who will contact you to arrange an appointment. They have offices throughout the UK which can be found at: <http://www.redcross.org.uk>.

Getting Legal Help

As well as Migrant Help you might want to contact the following organisations for help:

- <https://www.gov.uk/find-an-immigration-adviser>
- **Civil Legal Advice CLA** (England and Wales)
0845 345 4345 www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice
- **Scottish Legal Aid Board** (Scotland)
0845 122 8686 www.slab.org.uk
- **The Law Society of Scotland** (Scotland)
0131 226 7411 www.lawscot.org.uk

Other Support Services

Modern Slavery

“Modern slavery” is a term that covers human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour.

To be considered a victim of human trafficking there must have been **action** (recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt) achieved by a **means** (threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability) for the and purpose of **exploitation** (e.g. sexual exploitation, forced labour or domestic servitude, slavery, financial exploitation, illegal adoption, removal of organs).

For example, you may have been told you were coming to the UK to work legally but once in the UK you have been forced to work as a domestic servant or as a prostitute, with threats of violence if you refused.

For a person to have been a victim of slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour there must have been a **means** (being held through, either physically or through threat of penalty – e.g. threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability) and a **service** (as a result of the means an individual provides a service for benefit, e.g. begging, sexual services, manual labour, domestic service).

National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

The National Referral Mechanism (known as the NRM) is the process by which people who may have been victims of modern slavery are identified, referred, assessed and supported in the United Kingdom.

The Salvation Army provides specialist support for all adult victims of modern slavery in England and Wales through a government contract.

The confidential Referral Helpline **0800 808 3733** is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to anyone who suspects that they, or someone they have come across, might be a victim of modern slavery in need of help.

You can also visit their website for further information:

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/modern-slavery/supporting-adult-victims>

Help groups can be found at:

- www.modernslaveryhelpline.org
0800 0121 700
- **Victim Support** www.victimsupport.org.uk
0808 1689 111
- **The Salvation Army** www.salvationarmy.org.uk
0800 808 3733

- **The Tara Project (Scotland)** www.tarascotland.org.uk
0141 276 7724

Victim of Torture

If you have been the victim of torture, you may need support from specialist organisations that work with torture victims. Freedom from Torture and the Helen Bamber Foundation are two charities, independent of the Home Office, that can provide medical and social care, practical assistance and psychological and physical therapy.

- **Freedom From Torture** www.freedomfromtorture.org
- **Helen Bamber Foundation** www.helenbamber.org

If you feel you are in need of assistance from one of these organisations, your legal representative, your doctor (GP) or voluntary sector organisations can refer you to them. **If you feel able to do so, you should also inform the officer who interviews you either at your asylum Registration interview or at your full asylum interview.**

Gender based violence and abuse

You may have suffered gender-based violence in your home country, in transit to the UK or whilst in the UK. This can include acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion (threats made against you made you feel like you had choice) and other deprivations of liberty.

If you have experienced this type of violence you should disclose such information as soon as possible. We want you to feel safe so that you can tell us about any rape, sexual violence or other harm that you have suffered either in your country of origin or here in the UK. If you feel unable to tell a Home Office official, please speak to your legal representative. If the violence has taken place in the UK you should contact the police. You can also contact one of the specialist organisations below for independent advice and support:

- **Rape Crisis** (England and Wales) www.rapecrisis.org.uk 0808 802 9999
- **Rape Crisis** (Scotland) www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk 0808 801 0302

- **Survivors Trust** www.thesurvivorstrust.org
- **Women's Aid** www.womensaid.org.uk 0808 2000 247
- **The Men's Advice Line Respect** www.mensadvice.org.uk 0808 801 0327
- **Galop** (for LGBT) experiencing abuse. www.galop.org.uk 0800 999 5428 (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender).

FGM (Female Genital Mutilation)

FGM is the mutilation of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It is sometimes known as female circumcision, cutting or 'sunna'.

FGM is illegal in the UK. It is also illegal to arrange for a child to be taken abroad for FGM. Offenders face a large fine and a prison sentence of up to 14 years.

What can you do?

If you are worried about someone who is at risk of FGM or has had FGM after coming to the UK, you must share this information with the police or with Social Services. It is their responsibility to investigate and protect any girls or women involved.

If you have been affected by FGM you can contact **Forward** for information on the services available including one-to-one support.

- **Forward** (Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development) www.forward.org.uk 0208 960 4000
- **The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)** has a FGM helpline which is free, anonymous, 24-hour service. You can call the FGM helpline if you're worried a child is at risk of, or has had, FGM.
FGM helpline – 0800 028 3550 www.nspcc.org.uk

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity support

For advice, information and support if you identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or another minority orientation or gender identity please contact:

- **UK Lesbian Gay Immigration Group** www.uklgig.org.uk 0207 922 7811

SECTION 4

What to expect after claiming asylum (Registration) and Frequently Asked Questions

How long will it take to make a decision after my asylum claim is made?

We will aim to make a decision on your claims within 6 months, but this is not always possible and there may sometimes be delays on occasions. We will however seek to prioritise claims based on individual circumstances.

What happens to my asylum claim if I travel abroad?

Your asylum claim will normally be considered as withdrawn if you leave the UK without first seeking our agreement.

How do I keep in contact with the Home Office?

We will give you contact numbers and addresses at which you can contact us. You are also required to keep us informed of your address and of any changes of address.

Unless you have already been given permission to be in the UK (for example you were given Leave to Enter as a student), or are detained, you will be given Immigration Bail. This does not mean that you have the right to remain in the UK or that you can stay permanently. However, it does allow you to stay in the UK whilst your asylum claim is being considered.

You will be given an Immigration Bail form, which will inform you of the conditions attached to your Immigration Bail, you must make sure you follow any conditions you are given, you may be committing an offence if you do not and you may be detained.

If you still have Leave to Remain when you claimed asylum, your conditions will be stated on the form IS248, if you do not follow these conditions you may be detained.

What if I don't understand the documents the Home Office send me?

We will send you various letters during the asylum process. Most of these will be in English. If you do not understand what a letter says, you should ask your legal representative, without delay, to explain the letter to you.

If you do not have a legal representative you should contact the team that sent you the letter, or a friend/ family member, or use the independent Asylum Helpline (Advice) whose contact details can be found in the attached leaflet entitled “**Legal advice, additional help and assistance in section 3.**”

What can I expect at my asylum interview?

We will send you information about the date of your asylum interview in a letter. Your asylum interview will be conducted in private. If you have asked for either a male or female interviewing officer, we will arrange this for you.

Your asylum interview is your opportunity to speak to us face to face (or via video conferencing). It is very important that you attend the interview. We will make it as sensitive and reassuring as possible. This is your opportunity to give a full account of all the reasons you left your country and why you are afraid of returning home. It is very important that you give as much detail as possible.

We will interview you in your first language or a language that you are reasonably able to understand. You can ask for the interview to be recorded and for a copy of the recording to take away with you. It is very important that you give us any evidence or information you have to support your account at this time (or earlier if possible).

If you have further evidence you wish to submit after your interview, you should do so within the timescale we give you. You should inform us and your legal representative if this will be a problem for you.

If your claim includes gender-based persecution, which is persecution you may have experienced because of your gender for example, domestic violence, forced marriage, 'honour-based' violence, Female Genital Mutilation, rape or other forms of sexual violence, we will ask about your experiences sensitively. You will not be asked for precise details about any sexual assaults. However, you may be asked about the

events leading up to and following the assault if this is relevant to your asylum claim.

We recognise that if you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or another minority orientation or gender identity (or perceived to be), you may have experienced discrimination and/or persecution in your home country. You should be assured that we will treat your claim sensitively and will consider your statements against the objective country information (this is information collated from trusted sources).

If you have children, some offices provide partitioned family rooms or can provide childcare so that your children can be looked after while you are being interviewed. To check if this is available, contact the casework team handling your case.

Can I bring anyone with me to my asylum interview for support?

You can bring your legal representative with you to this interview. If you are receiving free legal advice (Legal Aid), you should check with your legal representative if they will be able to attend or not. You may also wish to bring a friend or other companion with you for emotional or physical support, particularly if you have suffered traumatic experiences or sexual violence.

You should agree this with us before the interview. However, this person will not be able to answer any questions for you.

What if I cannot attend my interview?

Interviews can only be postponed for reasons of ill-health or other exceptional reasons. You should inform the asylum team as soon as possible if you think you may have a problem coming to your interview. You are expected to provide medical evidence of any illness from your doctor (GP).

If you do not come to your asylum interview we will write to you to find out why you did not attend. If you do not reply within five working days, explaining why you could not come to your interview, your asylum claim may be treated by us as withdrawn. If your claim is recorded as withdrawn, we will not consider your asylum claim any further and you will be required to leave the UK.

Non-compliance with the asylum process

You must make every effort to comply with the asylum process. Failure to attend the asylum interview without a good reason may result in your asylum claim being treated as withdrawn. In addition, if you have an appointment, for example, to be fingerprinted and you fail to attend, your claim could be refused. It also could be refused on non-compliance grounds. If you have any problems with regards to attendance or compliance with our requests, you should contact the Decision Making Unit handling your claim and inform them at the first opportunity. If your non-compliance with the process is due to illness or exceptional circumstances, evidence should be provided such as a doctor's letter.

Who will decide my asylum claim?

A caseworker will make a decision on your asylum claim after your Substantive Asylum Interview. We will notify you of this decision in writing. You should note that the person who interviewed you may be different from the person making the decision on your claim.

Possible outcomes

Grant of asylum as a refugee

If you are granted asylum in the UK you are recognised as a refugee under the 1951 Refugee Convention and are allowed to remain in the UK for five years (Limited Leave to Remain). At the end of five years Limited Leave, subject to the outcome of any review and to the policies in place at the time, you will be eligible to seek Indefinite Leave To Remain (ILR). You should do this **one month** before your five years' Limited Leave expires.

During your period of Limited Leave if there is a significant and non-temporary change in country conditions, it may be decided to review grants of refugee status. Your status may also be reviewed if we receive information relating to your actions that may mean you no longer warrant refugee status, such as your refugee status was obtained by a misrepresentation.

Grant of Humanitarian Protection

If you do not qualify as a refugee under the 1951 Refugee Convention, but it is accepted that you have a need for international protection, you will be granted Humanitarian Protection and allowed to remain in the UK for five years.

If there is a significant change of circumstances in the country you fled from during these five years and you no longer require international protection, or if there is other evidence that shows that Humanitarian Protection is no longer appropriate, we may review your status.

If you have Humanitarian Protection status, at the end of your five years' Limited Leave, you will be eligible (subject to the outcome of any review and to the policies in place at the time), to seek Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). You should do this **one month** before your five years' Limited Leave expires.

Grant of Other Leave

If you are not accepted as being in need of international protection, but it is considered that there are reasons for allowing you to stay on a temporary basis, you will be granted Limited Leave to Remain.

One month before your Limited Leave expires, you should contact the Home Office and make arrangements to leave the UK or apply for additional leave.

Integration assistance

If you are recognised as a refugee, granted Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave, you will be entitled to the same social and economic rights as UK citizens and you will be provided with information to help you access your entitlements and assist with your integration into the UK. Migrant Help (contact details in Section 3) will also be able to provide advice and support.

Refusal of asylum claim

If you are refused asylum, you will receive the full reasoning for this decision in a letter. If you disagree with the decision and are entitled to appeal, you will also receive information on how to appeal.

Requirement to leave the UK

If your asylum claim is withdrawn or we refuse your claim and you are at the end of any appeal process (or if you do not submit an appeal), you will be required to leave the UK. It is expected that you should leave the UK within 21 days. If you do not leave voluntarily, the Home Office will enforce your removal.

If your removal is enforced you will be banned from travelling to the UK for 10 years.

What if I want to return home?

There is help available at any stage of the asylum process if you decide you want to return home.

You can make your own arrangements to leave the UK at any time. You will need to inform us of your departure details so any documents can be returned to you and your claim closed. If you do not have the funds to book your travel, arrangements can be made for you.

The **Home Office Voluntary Returns Service** can be contacted for help on returning home.

For more information and how to apply to apply for voluntary return and who cannot use the service visit www.gov.uk/return-home-voluntarily

To apply online for help to return to your home country you'll need:

- your address in the UK
- an email address

If you cannot apply online you can still telephone them on the number below.

Voluntary returns service

Telephone: 0300 004 0202

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

SECTION 5

Asylum Support

Am I entitled to Asylum Support?

When you claim asylum we will ask you if you need accommodation. If you have nowhere to stay, or insufficient funds to provide for your own accommodation, we will firstly accommodate you in what is called 'initial accommodation' (IA).

Migrant Help are an independent charity contracted to provide independent advice to asylum seekers by the Home Office. As well as information and assistance about the asylum process (but not legal advice) they will assist you with support application and any changes in circumstance, such as applying for subsistence only. See section 3 for contact details for Migrant Help Asylum Services.

While you are in IA you will need to complete an Asylum Support application form, which will be assessed to see what support level you need. Migrant Help has offices in all the initial accommodation sites and will assist you in completing the form.

Checks will be made to see if you have your own resources. You will also need to declare your resources that you have in the UK and abroad. A decision will be made to decide whether you should use them to fund your own living expenses.

If we accept that you qualify for housing (and financial support) we will then move you to longer term accommodation in the same region. This will normally happen two to three weeks after you arrive in initial accommodation.

If you need accommodation, it is offered on a no choice basis. We will not accommodate you in London unless we consider you have a compelling or exceptional need.

How long will Asylum Support be provided for?

Support can only be provided until a decision is made on your asylum claim and whilst an in-country appeal is pending. Separate rules apply if you have children.

Can I apply for support if I only need accommodation or only need financial support?

If you have accommodation, for example, with a relative or friend who can provide you with a place to stay, you can stay with them and still apply for financial support for your day-to-day needs. If you have, for example, a regular income but not enough money for your day-to-day needs and accommodation, you can apply for accommodation only.

What if my circumstances change?

You should advise us immediately if your circumstances change. You can notify us directly, or use the independent asylum help in section 3 (support claims) service to notify us. For example, if the relative or friend who you are staying with can no longer provide you with accommodation, you will be able to apply for accommodation and financial support.

What happens if I delay making my asylum claim?

If you delay making your asylum claim, your support application may be refused, so you must make your asylum claim as soon as possible. If you book an appointment to make your claim at the Asylum Intake Unit and you attend your appointment, the time between booking and the appointment will not count as a delay.

Am I liable for prosecution if I fail to disclose that I have funds?

When applying for asylum support you must tell the Home Office about any funds you have, either in the UK or elsewhere. This will be taken into account when we arrange support for you. Failure to disclose this information may result in prosecution. It is an offence to secure support through false or dishonest representations. When you apply for support you will have to agree to a credit check and databases (such as bank databases) will be checked.

Is there any additional Asylum Support available?

If you are pregnant or have children under the age of three and are in receipt of asylum support, you are entitled to receive additional payments for the purchase of supplementary foods.

SECTION 6

Your rights and responsibilities

As a claimant with an asylum claim, we expect you to co-operate with the asylum process and Home Office officials at all times. Any omission or misrepresentation of facts may affect the decision we make on your claim. If you use deception to obtain Leave to Enter or Remain in the UK, any leave you have been granted may be taken away. It is also a criminal offence and you may be prosecuted.

It is your duty to submit all available documentation to substantiate your claim, including your age, your background (including background details of relatives), your identity, your nationality/nationalities), any country/countries) and place(s) of previous residence, any previous asylum claim, your travel routes, your travel documents, any medical evidence and any evidence that may assist in substantiating your asylum claim.

It is also your responsibility to:

- Keep in regular contact with the Home Office;
- Exit the UK if you are not granted leave and any appeal fails;
- Obey the law. If you are in doubt about what the law is it is your responsibility to find out.

For example, the carrying of offensive weapons, such as a knife, may result in a prison sentence. Violence and sexual offences are serious crimes that deeply affect the lives of victims and warrant significant prison sentences. The age of sexual consent in the UK is 16.

Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour is not tolerated in the UK. Action may be taken against you if you are found taking part in, for example:

- Rowdy, nuisance or intimidating behaviour
- Vandalism or graffiti

- Begging, fighting, spitting or anti-social drinking
- Using or selling drugs
- Carrying illegal weapons
- Not following road safety laws
- Dumping rubbish or abandoning cars

Smoking ban

It is illegal to smoke inside public buildings or enclosed public spaces and business premises (this includes restaurants, shops, buses, trams, trains and hospitals). You may be prosecuted and fined for smoking in public places.

Driving laws

Driving laws in the UK may be different from those in your home country. If you have access to a vehicle, you must have:

- A current and valid driving licence
- Insurance for the vehicle
- A current and valid MOT certificate – which means the vehicle is safe to drive
- Current and valid Road Tax
- Abide by UK traffic laws and drive on the left hand side.

Driving without any of the above is against the law. You could also be prosecuted if you drive a vehicle under the influence of alcohol (where over the legal limit) or drugs, or if you use a mobile phone while driving. As an asylum claimant you are not entitled to apply to the DVLA for a UK driving licence and you should **not** send your Application Registration Card (ARC) to the DVLA to obtain a driving licence. Additionally, access to or ownership of a vehicle may affect your asylum support claim or ongoing support payments.

Your rights as an asylum claimant include:

- Remaining in the UK throughout the duration of your asylum claim;

- Having the opportunity to give full account of your reasons for claiming asylum;
- Having your claim considered fairly and accurately;
- To appeal if you are eligible to appeal;
- To be assured of confidentiality concerning your asylum claim (the UK will not inform your country of origin that you have made an claim for asylum);
- Having access to support and accommodation if you are eligible to receive it;
- Having legal representation - free legal advice depends on your financial circumstances.

Complaints about the service the Home Office has provided to you

We take complaints seriously. Our aim is to resolve complaints fairly and quickly; we will take steps to put things right when they have gone wrong, and learn lessons on how to improve our service. If you have a complaint it will **not** affect your asylum claim. The procedure for making a complaint depends on the type of complaint that you want to make.

You can make a complaint in person or in writing. You can pick up a leaflet from one of our public offices or visit our website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration/about/complaints-procedure>

Healthcare

Your asylum claim will not be affected by any illness or treatment you are receiving. You are entitled to see a doctor (GP) and have National Health Service (NHS) provided hospital care without charge. You may also receive free NHS prescriptions, dental and optical care (you should ask about a HC2 certificate).

Please note that if you have resources of your own you may have to contribute to your healthcare costs by paying for your prescription medicines (England only). Prescription medicines in Scotland and Wales are free of charge.

If you think that you may have tuberculosis (TB) or any other contagious disease,

virus or infection you should seek medical assistance straight away.

For information on Covid-19, updates and the health care services available to migrants, including asylum seekers see: www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-entitlements-migrant-health-guide.

Medical emergencies

If you require an ambulance for a medical emergency, that is a serious threat to life, then you should telephone **999 or 112** for the emergency services (ambulance, fire, and police). Calls to emergency services are free of charge from a landline or mobile telephone. Always call 999 or 112 if someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk. Where you need medical help in non-emergency situations, you can call 111.

Disability care needs

If you have a disability or special care need, you can contact your local Social Services to request a Community Care Assessment. The Local Authority may decide to offer you accommodation and support.

Education

If any of your dependants are of compulsory school age they must go to school. The compulsory age for a child to start full time education in the UK is the start of the autumn school term after the child's fifth birthday and continues for most children until they are at least eighteen years old. In England, young people have to be in school or training until they are eighteen. Further information can be obtained from your local council authority or the advisory services for asylum seekers.

Reporting crime and emergency numbers

If you are the victim of, or have witnessed, a crime, it is important that you report it to the police who will provide assistance to you. You can:

Go to your local police station or **telephone 999 or 112 for emergency services and request police assistance for urgent help**.

Harassment

Harassment is any unwelcome or hostile act carried out towards you and includes verbal or physical threats, abuse or violence. If someone threatens you or has harmed you because of your age, a disability, your nationality, race, gender, gender reassignment, religion, belief or sexual orientation, you should report the incident to:

- Your local police station.
- Your accommodation provider (if you are housed by The Home Office).
- Your asylum casework team whom can help you contact the police/ provider.
- You should also inform your legal representative and/or the advisory services for asylum seekers.

Domestic violence and abuse

Domestic violence is an issue taken seriously in the UK. It is defined as any threatening behaviour, violence or abuse – physical, sexual, emotional or financial – between adults who are, or were, in a relationship together; or between family members, regardless of gender, age or sexuality.

If you are the victim of domestic violence, please be aware that it is safe to report it:

- Anything you tell us will not be passed on without your consent.
- Your identity and those of your dependants will be protected.
- You have choices about the types of protection you and your dependants receive.
- We will move you and your dependants into alternative accommodation.

Information can be provided by your accommodation provider (if accommodated by UK Visas and Immigration) and the advisory services for asylum seekers about how to get the support you need.

The following people/organisations will be able to assist you and your dependants to seek help and protection:

- Your local police station.

- Your asylum casework team.
- Your legal representative.
- Refuge: the national domestic abuse 24 hour telephone helpline (0808 2000 247 free call).