



Home Office

Permission to work and volunteering for asylum seekers

Version 14.0

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About this guidance

This guidance tells you about handling requests for permission to work from asylum seekers, failed asylum seekers, and those who have submitted protection based further submissions. It applies to applications which fall to be considered under Part 11B, paragraphs 360 to 360E of the Immigration Rules and it explains the policy, process and procedure which must be followed when considering such applications. It also covers volunteering.

Employers should consult [Home Office guidance](#) before employing a foreign national who is not settled in the UK to establish whether that person is allowed to work here and whether there are any restrictions or conditions on the type of employment the person is legally entitled to undertake.

Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors, then email the Asylum Policy team.

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email the Guidance Rules and Forms team.

Publication

Below is information on when this version of the guidance was published:

- version **14.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **25 January 2024**

Changes from last version of this guidance

This guidance has been updated to add a new paragraph under [Revocation](#) to tell caseworkers to use template letter Asylum – Revocation of Permission to Work when revoking permission to work.

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Introduction

Purpose of instruction

This guidance explains how caseworkers must consider applications under Part 11B, paragraphs 360 to 360E of the Immigration Rules for permission to work from those who have lodged an asylum claim or further submission which remains outstanding. It also provides guidance on the fact that asylum seekers can undertake volunteering at any stage of the asylum process.

Background

Those who claim asylum in the UK are not normally allowed to work whilst their claim is being considered. They are instead provided with accommodation and support to meet their essential living needs if they would otherwise be destitute. The policy outlining when permission to work will be granted to those who claim asylum is set out in the Immigration Rules. This makes clear that the Home Office may grant permission to work to asylum seekers whose claim has been outstanding for more than 12 months through no fault of their own. Under this policy, those who are allowed to work are restricted to jobs on the shortage occupation list published by the Home Office. Any permission to work granted will come to an end if their claim is refused and any appeals rights are exhausted because at that point, they are expected to leave the UK. Those who are granted leave have unrestricted access to the labour market.

Asylum seekers are encouraged to volunteer whilst their claim is being considered. Volunteering involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. By volunteering for a charity or public sector organisation, asylum seekers can support their local community, and this will also assist with their integration if they are granted leave to remain in the UK.

Policy intention

The policy objectives in restricting permission to work for asylum seekers and failed asylum seekers whilst their claim is considered are to:

- ensure a clear distinction between economic migration and asylum that discourages those who do not need protection from claiming asylum to benefit from economic opportunities they would not otherwise be eligible for
- prevent illegal migration for economic reasons and protect the integrity of the asylum system so that we can more quickly offer protection to those who really need it
- be clear that asylum seekers can undertake volunteering as this provides a valuable contribution to the wider community and may help those who qualify for leave to remain here to integrate into society

Application in respect of children

Considering an application for permission to work is an immigration function and as such must take into account the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the UK. This is in accordance with requirements under Section 55 of the [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009](#). This means caseworkers must have regard to the best interests of any child when making a decision on any aspect of a permission to work application.

If any delay in reaching a decision can be attributed to the applicant (for example, where the applicant does not cooperate with the asylum process and is responsible for the delay in considering their claim), permission to work should be refused in line with paragraphs 360 and 360C of the Immigration Rules. Those who do not meet the requirements of paragraphs 360 and 360C of the Immigration Rules should not be granted permission to work, unless there are exceptional circumstances raised by the applicant so as to justify departure from the Immigration Rules.

It may be argued that refusing permission to work or granting restricted permission to work in line with paragraphs 360A and 360C of the Immigration Rules is not in the best interests of a child. Caseworkers should consider the best interests of the child carefully, including all relevant facts put forward by the applicant, and balance these against the policy objectives and public interest considerations. A decision to refuse permission to work or grant restricted permission to work in line with paragraphs 360A and 360C of the Immigration Rules for an adult could adversely impact on a child; however, the child's interests are not necessarily determinative and can be outweighed by public interest considerations.

Although the child's interests are a primary consideration, they are not the only consideration and will have to be sufficiently compelling so as to outweigh the public interest considerations. Where relevant, caseworkers should also consider the [Application of Discretion](#) when deciding applications for permission to work outside of the Immigration Rules where a child may be impacted by that decision.

[Paragraph 360](#) of the Immigration Rules only applies to the principal applicant in an asylum claim and there is no provision to grant permission to work to dependants on the claim.

Children under the age of 18 should not be given permission to take employment. However, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children or children dependent on their parents are entitled to access the education system until they reach 18 years of age whilst their claim is being considered. They are also able to take part in work experience placements or training if that forms part of their education.

For further information on the key principles to take into account, see: [Section 55 Children's Duty Guidance](#).

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Relevant legislation

Domestic legislation

For the purposes of this guidance the terms ‘employee’ and ‘worker’ are defined in statutory provisions, in particular:

- Section 230 of the [Employment Rights Act 1996](#) defines the terms ‘employee’ and ‘worker’

Further information on [employment status](#) and [volunteer placements, rights and expenses](#) is available on GOV.UK.

The Immigration Rules

[Part 11B of the Immigration Rules](#) sets out the policy criteria for granting asylum seekers permission to take up employment. In particular:

- paragraph 360 sets out that asylum seekers may apply for permission to work if they have not received an initial decision on their claim within 12 months but this will only be considered if that delay was through no fault of the applicant
- paragraph 360A sets out the restrictions on employment for those granted permission to work under paragraph 360 and refers to the [Shortage Occupation List](#) published by the Home Office
- paragraph 360B makes clear that any permission to work granted will only be valid until the claim has been determined and any appeal rights are exhausted

Paragraphs 360C to 360E mirror the provisions set out above for failed asylum seekers who have lodged protection based further submissions and were introduced on 9 September 2010 following the Supreme Court judgment in [ZO \(Somalia\) \[2010\] UKSC 36](#)

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Permission to work application process

All applications for permission to work from asylum seekers or failed asylum seekers should be made by writing to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and should include the following information:

- full name of the applicant, date of birth and nationality
- Home Office reference number
- a statement setting out the request for permission to work
- contact details for the applicant and legal representative (if they have one)

Applications must be sent to the one of the following teams:

Asylum Casework Teams

Asylum seekers awaiting an initial decision on their claim or failed asylum seekers who have outstanding further submissions should submit any request for permission to work by post to:

Permission to Work Team
Level 0
Capital Building
Old Hall Street
Liverpool
L3 9PP

They should make it clear whether the application relates to an asylum claim or further submissions.

Alternatively, they can email the application to AomPTW@homeoffice.gov.uk for asylum claims or ACSCPTW@homeoffice.gov.uk for further submissions.

Any decision to grant permission to work must not be taken without first reviewing the asylum claim or further submission to assess why a decision has been delayed. Requests must be dealt with as soon as possible and without unnecessary delay.

Contacting Asylum Children and Secondary Casework

Any queries relating to outstanding further submissions should be emailed to CSUpostteam@homeoffice.gov.uk

Applications for permission to work at reporting centres

If a request for permission to work is made at a reporting centre, staff should advise the -applicant to write to the Asylum Casework Team at the above address. Reporting centre staff must not take a decision to grant permission to work.

Applications for permission to work in litigation

Where a request for permission to work is submitted as part of a pre-action

protocol letter or judicial review application relating to another matter, the - applicant must be advised that they need to make a formal application in writing to UKVI in order for their request to be considered. A request for permission to work will not be considered unless it is made in accordance with the process set out above.

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Considering permission to work applications

Excluding [exceptional circumstances](#), applications for permission to work by asylum seekers awaiting an initial decision only need to be considered where a decision by the Home Office on their asylum claim is still pending and has been outstanding for more than 12 months. This requirement is set out in [Part 11 B of the Immigration Rules](#) in Paragraph 360.

Following the Supreme Court judgment in [ZO \(Somalia\) \[2010\] UKSC 36](#) the Rules were amended on 9 September 2010 so that failed asylum seekers whose further submissions have been outstanding for more than 12 months can also apply for permission to work.

The following criteria are relevant and must be considered by caseworkers when deciding whether to grant permission to work applications:

Outstanding UKVI decision on protection grounds

To consider any permission to work application there must be an asylum claim or further submission on protection grounds that has not been decided by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and has been outstanding for at least 12 months from the date the claim was lodged. This only applies to UKVI decisions. Where a decision has been made within 12 months but an appeal against that decision is still pending an individual will not be granted permission to work.

Caseworkers dealing with a permission to work application must first review the asylum claim to assess the reason for the delay and ensure that the case is not unnecessarily delayed any further.

Delay

The Home Office must consider applications for permission to work if the delay is not, in the Secretary of State's opinion, the applicant's fault. Caseworkers must take into account how much of the 12 month delay is down to the applicant. This includes considering the reasons behind the applicant's contribution to any delay, such as repeated or long periods of non-compliance with the asylum process. Permission to work must be refused where the delay was their fault.

Where an individual puts forward reasons for failing to comply with required procedures, these must be taken into account when considering whether the delay was their fault. For example, periods of serious illness would be an acceptable reason, a prison sentence would not. If there is evidence that absconder action has been taken at some point and there is no further evidence that the applicant has resumed contact, permission to work must be refused.

Criminality

Asylum seekers or failed asylum seekers who have been convicted of criminal offences must not be granted permission to work if the decision on their asylum claim has been delayed to await the outcome of any prosecution. Any delay on this basis is, at least in part, attributable to the applicant.

Dependants

There is no provision in the [Immigration Rules](#) to grant permission to work to dependants of an asylum seeker or failed seeker even where the claim or further submission has been outstanding for more than 12 months. Where permission to work is granted to the main applicant, caseworkers need to make clear that this permission does not extend to any dependants.

Applications from asylum seekers with existing leave

Those who claim asylum whilst they still have limited leave in another capacity that allows them to work may ask whether they can still work beyond the date on which their leave expires. This will depend on whether they applied for asylum before their current leave expires.

Where an application for asylum was made before the expiry of their current leave, and that leave did not prohibit work, the applicant is able to carry on working on the same conditions as that leave until their asylum claim is finally determined. Section 3C of the [Immigration Act 1971](#) (as amended) automatically extends the leave of a person who applies for further leave to remain (for example, asylum) providing they have existing leave to enter or remain when they lodge the application. The applicant must be informed that they can continue to work on the same terms as their previous visa.

If an asylum application is made out-of-time, then they cannot benefit from Section 3C leave and any conditions attached to that leave, including permission to work, cease from the date the leave expires. If the applicant has not made an application for asylum, or if the application was lodged after their current leave expired, caseworkers should refuse permission to work unless they meet the requirements under [Paragraph 360](#).

Immigration bail conditions

Information on immigration bail conditions regarding permission to work is set out in the published [immigration bail guidance](#) – see the section on work or occupation.

Work that forms part of a further education course

When considering permission to work applications for work that forms part of a further education course, caseworkers must check that the individual meets the requirements under Paragraph 360 or 360C or that the role in question meets the

volunteering requirements set out in this guidance.

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Granting or refusing applications

Granting permission to work

Caseworkers must use the template letter **ASL.4264** and choose option 1 when granting permission to work. This informs the individual of the conditions of their permission to work and advises them to contact Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to be issued with a national insurance number.

Caseworkers should then use the process outlined in [Application Registration Card \(ARC\)](#) guidance (Change of circumstances, Permission to work at p16).

The **ASL.4264** must be retained by -applicants as proof of permission to work for [Job Centre Plus](#) and future employers.

Caseworkers must update the case file and relevant Home Office records when granting permission to work. This allows reporting centre staff and the Croydon Contact Centre to verify that their permission to work is legitimate. The following wording must be used when updating Home Office records:

- permission to work request received in [name of team] on [date]
- request granted on [date]
- permission to work restricted to the Shortage Occupation List (SOL)
- granted on basis of: [further submissions outstanding for more than 12 months / asylum claim outstanding for more than 12 months / other – give detail (delete as applicable)]
- **ASL.4264** sent/handed to the applicant/representative at [address] on [date]
- name of caseworker
- name of team
- telephone number (including external code)

The **ASL.4264** (option 1) informs the individual that they must provide employment details when available, so that a review of their eligibility for and level of asylum support (if any) can be conducted. Failure to do so will result in any support being discontinued. Caseworkers must ensure that a review of support is conducted when employment details are received. See [Assessing eligibility for asylum support](#) for further guidance.

Confirming permission for those with extant leave

Where an applicant has a continuing right to work because they still have extant leave in another capacity, caseworkers must use template letter **ASL.4043** and select 'option 1 – In time option'. When the applicant does not have continuing permission to work, caseworkers should select 'option 2 – Out of time option'. Caseworkers should amend the ARC by following the process outlined in the ARC Guidance.

Travel costs

Caseworkers should arrange for any necessary biometric capture at a suitable location. Caseworkers must arrange and pay for travel to facilitate enrolment from their own local budget.

Shortage Occupation List (SOL)

If an asylum seeker or failed asylum seeker is granted permission to work (subject to the exceptions listed in the section on [Applications from asylum seekers with existing leave](#), or [exceptional circumstances](#)), this must be restricted to jobs on the [Shortage Occupation List](#) (SOL), published by the Home Office.

The Home Office will not routinely review an applicant's qualifications and experience when considering permission to work applications to determine whether they have the necessary skills to obtain employment in a shortage occupation, although we reserve the right to do so if there is particular cause for concern. It is the responsibility of the applicant and potential employer to ensure the job is one which is included on the list of shortage occupations and that the applicant is qualified for the position being offered before taking up the post. Where certain occupations on the SOL require that an applicant must have a specified period of experience, this must not have been gained through working illegally.

The government sets the SOL following recommendations from the [Migration Advisory Committee](#) (MAC). The MAC assesses whether the job is skilled, whether the job is in shortage, and whether it is sensible to fill that shortage with migrant workers.

Refusing permission to work

In cases where it is appropriate to refuse an application for permission to work, caseworkers must use template letter **ASL.4264** and select option 2. Reasons for refusing permission to work might include the following:

- the asylum claim (or further submission) has not been outstanding for 12 months
- the delay is entirely the result of the -applicant's actions or inaction
- the delay is partly due to the applicant's actions or inaction and it is not appropriate to exercise discretion in their favour
- there is evidence of criminality either in the UK or abroad which causes a delay in determining the asylum application - the reasons for delay could be due to Article 1(F) exclusion considerations or because the outcome of any prosecution is awaited
- further submissions are not protection based and are instead based on Article 3 medical grounds or Article 8 family grounds where a valid charged application should have been made

Caseworkers must update the case file and relevant Home Office databases when refusing permission to work. This allows enforcement staff to verify that permission

to work has not been granted. The following wording must be used:

- permission to work request received in [name of team] on [date]
- permission to work refused on [date]
- permission to work refused because: [asylum claim not outstanding for 12 months or more / further subs not outstanding for 12 months or more / further subs not asylum-based / delay is the applicant's fault / other - give detail (delete as applicable)]
- **ASL.4264** sent/handed to the applicant /representative at [address] on [date]
- name of caseworker
- name of team
- telephone number (including external code)

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Application of discretion

Where the Immigration Rules are not met, it will be justifiable to refuse an application for permission to work made by an asylum seeker or failed asylum seeker unless there are exceptional circumstances raised by the applicant so as to justify departure from the Immigration Rules. If caseworkers consider that the circumstances of an application are exceptional and merit a grant of permission to work outside of the Immigration Rules, they should refer the matter to a technical specialist to review that decision and whether the matter should be considered on a discretionary basis (under our residual discretion flowing from Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1971). In any case in which it is decided that there are exceptional circumstances, our discretion would allow a grant of permission to work, notwithstanding the requirements of the Immigration Rules. What amounts to exceptional circumstances will depend upon the particular facts of each case. A grant of permission to work on a discretionary basis is expected to be rare and only in exceptional circumstances.

In cases involving applicants with dependent children included on the asylum claim, the caseworker should consider the need under section 55 of the Borders Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the UK. The best interests of any relevant child should be taken into account as a primary consideration but will not necessarily be determinative. Consideration should also be given to the Section 55 guidance, [Every child matters](#).

In cases involving victims and potential victims of trafficking the primary objectives of the [Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings](#) (ECAT) will be a relevant consideration, particularly with regards to their physical, psychological and social recovery. The caseworker should consider all the factual information and evidence submitted ensuring it is fully addressed particularly where a decision has been taken to consider the application on a discretionary basis.

Official – sensitive: start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use only.

Official – sensitive: end of section

Revoking permission to work

Where an asylum seeker or failed asylum seeker is granted permission to work because their claim has not been decided, this will come to an end when the asylum claim or further submission has been refused and any appeal rights against refusal are exhausted.

Caseworkers should monitor their caseload and once the asylum claim has been finally determined, or the further submissions have been concluded, must clearly update Home Office records to reflect that the individual's permission to work has ceased.

From 1 October 2023, caseworkers must use template letter **Asylum – Revocation of Permission to Work** when revoking permission to work. This informs the individual that they no longer have the right to work in the UK and that they should return their ARC to the Home Office.

The ARC will then need to be amended as soon as possible to reflect the fact the permission to work is once again prohibited.

There is no need to take any action to revoke permission to work where an asylum seeker is granted refugee status, humanitarian protection, leave under the family rules or discretionary leave because following the grant they will have full access to the labour market.

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Volunteering

Volunteers are those who give their time for free to charitable or public sector organisations without any contractual obligation or entitlement. They are not [employees](#) or [workers](#) as defined by various statutory provisions.

Volunteering can be undertaken at any stage of the asylum process, but such activities must not interfere with scheduled events such as a substantive asylum interview, regular reporting event or re-documentation interview. These events will not be rescheduled to accommodate volunteering. Organisations offering such opportunities will need to allow some flexibility so that volunteers can attend interviews or appointments around their volunteering. Volunteering must also not undermine the effective removal of those who do not need protection and do not qualify to remain in the UK on any other basis.

Asylum seekers can volunteer whilst their claim is considered without being granted permission to work. It is Home Office policy to support asylum seekers volunteering for charities or public sector organisations. However, this must not amount to engagement as an 'employee' or a 'worker' and it is the responsibility of the individual and the organisation they are volunteering for to check that such activity does not mean they are working in breach of conditions. The organisation should also undertake all relevant safeguarding checks required. Any personal details provided by the -applicant as part of the immigration process cannot be confirmed by the Home Office for use in any other context other than immigration matters.

Key elements in establishing whether someone is a volunteer rather than an employee or worker are whether there is an obligation on the individual to perform the work, and an obligation on the organisation to provide it; and whether the individual is rewarded for the work, through money or benefits in kind. Volunteers may be reimbursed for expenses incurred whilst volunteering, for example, for travel and food but should not receive any other payment. If any other payment is received the role may be classed as an employee or worker. Working or being employed by a charity or voluntary organisation is subject to the same restrictions as employment in other sectors. Genuine volunteering roles are not subject to these restrictions.

To summarise, the principal difference is that volunteering must not amount to unpaid work, or job substitution. In particular:

- there should be no payment, other than reasonable travel and meals expenditure actually incurred (not an allowance for the same)
- there should be no contractual obligations on the volunteer and they should not enjoy any contractual entitlement to any work or benefits
- the volunteer is helping a registered voluntary or charitable organisation, an organisation that raises funds for either of these, or a public sector organisation
- volunteering is not a substitute for employment, that is fulfilling a role that a salaried worker would normally fulfil

Organisations need to be clear about the legal status of volunteering roles

they create before they recruit people to such roles. The guidance above is to help organisations understand the distinctions. However, if in doubt about whether a specific opportunity constitutes engagement as an employee or worker or volunteering, organisations should seek independent legal advice before taking on volunteers who are asylum seekers and who do not have permission to work.

Working for a charity

Asylum seekers or failed asylum seekers awaiting the outcome of an asylum claim or further submission cannot work as an employee or a worker, even for a voluntary organisation, unless they have been granted permission to work under [Paragraph 360 or 360C of the Immigration Rules](#).

Further information is available on GOV.UK: [Preventing Illegal Working](#).

Enquiries from employers and voluntary organisations

Caseworkers must be aware that under no circumstances must they reply directly to enquiries by employers on a particular case without first seeking the permission of the applicant, as this may contravene our obligations under the [Data Protection Act 1998](#).

Further advice for employers can be found on the [Employers and educational providers](#) page on GOV.UK.

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Related external links

[Volunteer placements, rights and expenses](#)

[The National Council for Volunteering \(NCVO\) – volunteering page](#)