



Home Office

A Home Office Guide to

---

# Living in Initial Accommodation

---

English



# Purpose of this guide

**This guide is primarily for asylum seekers staying in Initial Accommodation, while their application for Section 95 support is assessed, where they have been granted Section 95 support and are waiting to be dispersed or are on Section 4 support.**

## **It contains valuable information about:**

- 1.** The accommodation and services you can expect to receive from us
- 2.** The organisations that provide and deliver these services
- 3.** What we expect from you
- 4.** Where to report problems, concerns, and changes in circumstances

## **How should I use this booklet?**

Please read this booklet carefully. Keep note of any information important to you and your family. There is a lot of information in this booklet so please keep it in a safe place, so you can refer to it later.

## **What will I be told about when I arrive at the accommodation?**

**When you arrive in Initial Accommodation, the person providing your accommodation will give you information that may be useful for you about:**

- 1.** The accommodation provided.
- 2.** Individual safety and wellbeing, including access to urgent or emergency healthcare.
- 3.** The lay-out and routine of the Initial Accommodation site and available services.
- 4.** The operating instructions for equipment, facilities and installed items provided for comfort and general living (where applicable).
- 5.** The process for accessing health screening and related services.

## **You will also get:**

- 1.** Information about your accommodation provider and what to expect from them.
- 2.** Information about Migrant Help and what to expect from them; and

3. The 'Home Office Guide to Rights and Expectations in the UK' booklet, which includes information on UK culture and services available to you while in the UK. If you do not have this, you can ask your accommodation provider for a copy.

**If you have not had an introductory briefing or received these resources, please ask your accommodation provider for them. Keep booklets in a safe place to read again later. You can access the information in this booklet online as well on:**

**<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/living-in-initial-accommodation>**

**Please Note:** This document is for guidance only and does not replace or act as any form of published policy. The guide is designed primarily for those in receipt of Section 98 support who are awaiting a decision on their application for Section 95 support. This guide is also applicable to those who have been granted Section 95 support but who remain in Initial Accommodation whilst awaiting dispersal. Where different arrangements apply to Section 4(2) claimants (failed asylum seekers supported under section 4(2) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999) this has been reflected.

Please contact Migrant Help if you have any issues with your accommodation or support, or if you believe that the accommodation isn't adequate for your (or your dependants') needs, for example, a need due to a disability. They will ask the Home Office and the accommodation provider to investigate the issue and resolve it. Migrant Help can be contacted by:

**Webchat** at [https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat\\_launch](https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat_launch)




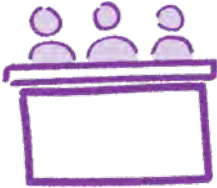
**Raise an Issue** via their website:

(<https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/ask/session>)

**Freephone helpline** on 0808 8010503.

If you have contacted Migrant Help about your accommodation issues, and the issues have not been resolved, you can make a formal complaint against your provider, the Home Office, or Migrant Help. Sometimes people worry that if they complain the Home Office will refuse their asylum claim or will stop giving them financial support or accommodation. This is not true. Complaints about accommodation have no impact at all on the outcome of your asylum claim or on your eligibility for support and accommodation.

## Who are the important organisations involved in providing me with accommodation and support?

 <p>Home Office</p>	<p><b>The Home Office</b> is responsible for providing the asylum accommodation you are living in and your financial support.</p>
	<p><b>Migrant Help</b> are a charity, independent from the Home Office, who have been appointed to give you advice, information about your support, to report an issue, or to tell the Home Office about a change in your circumstances, you should contact Migrant Help by phone on <b>0808 8010 503</b>, webchat at <a href="https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat_launch">https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat_launch</a> or Raise an Issue at <a href="https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/ask">https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/ask</a></p>
	<p><b>Your accommodation provider.</b> The Home Office uses private companies to provide accommodation for you. When moving in you will be assigned a housing officer who will welcome you into your accommodation and answer any questions</p>
	<p><b>Local authorities</b>, also known as councils, are the part of government that provide public services and facilities in a local area, such as schools and social services. The local services provided and who provides them depends on where you live.</p> <p>You can find your local council using your postcode at this address: <a href="http://www.gov.uk">Find your local council - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a> Through your local council's website you can find detail on local services such as libraries and support groups.</p>

## What to do in an emergency

In the event of an urgent medical emergency requiring immediate treatment, you should call 999 straight away and tell the service operator what service you need – Fire, Police or Ambulance. It is important that you only dial these numbers in emergencies.

If you do not speak English, you should say the name of the language you wish to speak when you first call 999. An interpreter will be provided for you if one is available. Calls to 999 are free.

**Police:** If someone is being violent or threatening violence, or if you witness a crime being committed, you should call 999 and ask for the police. If you want to report a crime or have been a victim of a crime which does not need an emergency response, you should call **101**. Please be reassured that contacting the Police will not affect your asylum claim in any way.

**Fire:** if you see a fire or signs of a fire such as smoke, you should set off the nearest fire alarm before approaching staff at your accommodation to prompt a call to 999 to ask for the fire service. You should not approach or try to put out a fire.

**Ambulance:** if there is an urgent medical emergency when someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk, you should call **999** and ask for an ambulance. For general medical concerns that do not need an ambulance, you should call **111** for advice. You can approach the staff at your accommodation for support with this.

**Utilities:** If you smell gas, you should call the National Grid Gas emergency number immediately on **0800 111 999** for England, Scotland, and Wales or **0800 002 001** for Northern Ireland and then report the issue to Migrant Help straight after.



**Have a question?**

- > Look in your induction and information booklets
- > Visit [www.gov.uk/browse/Mastercards-immigration/asylum](http://www.gov.uk/browse/Mastercards-immigration/asylum) or [www.migranthelpuk.org](http://www.migranthelpuk.org)
- > Call Migrant Help on **0808 8010 503**, webchat at [https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat\\_launch](https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat_launch) or Raise an Issue at <https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/ask>

# Contents

<b>SECTION 1 ASYLUM ACCOMMODATION TYPES AND JOURNEY</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>CONDITIONS OF SUPPORT</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>APPEALING AN ASYLUM SUPPORT DECISION</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>SECTION 2 IMPORTANT ORGANISATIONS</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>HOME OFFICE</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>YOUR ACCOMMODATION PROVIDER?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>MIGRANT HELP</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>SECTION 3 ISSUE REPORTING AND COMPLAINTS</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>SECTION 4 ACCOMMODATION INFORMATION AND STANDARDS</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>RULES AND GUIDELINES</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>FACILITIES TO EXPECT IN THE ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>PROPERTY INSPECTIONS</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>ACCESS TO ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>EXTRA ACCOMMODATION INFORMATION</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>SECTION 5 MONEY AND SUPPORT PAYMENTS</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>SECTION 6 MOVING ON FOLLOWING AN ASYLUM CLAIM DECISION</b>	<b>48</b>



# Section 1

## Asylum accommodation types and journey



**The amount of time it takes to process an asylum claim can vary. It can depend on how complex your case is and how long it takes to receive evidence and documents.**

Asylum support, including accommodation, is provided to asylum seekers who do not have any other way of supporting themselves. Asylum accommodation is provided on a 'no choice' basis so you cannot choose where you live. However, if you have a particular reason to need to be housed in a specific area, the Home Office will consider this – guidance on the allocation of accommodation can be found here: [Asylum accommodation requests: caseworker guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/asylum-accommodation-requests-caseworker-guidance). Your accommodation provider must make sure the accommodation meets any specific needs you may have.

There are two main types of accommodation – **Initial Accommodation**, and **Dispersal Accommodation**.

### 1. Initial accommodation

**You are currently residing in Initial Accommodation.** Initial accommodation is housing that can be full-board, half-board, or self-catering. It is usually shared accommodation in a hostel-type environment or hotel but may be something else. It is for asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute and need accommodation urgently before their Section 95 support applications have been determined. It is also provided to asylum seekers who have been granted Section 95 support (or Section 4) whilst they wait to be moved to longer-term temporary accommodation (i.e., dispersal accommodation). Asylum seekers who have been granted support from the Home Office may remain in initial accommodation until there is space in dispersal accommodation.

The amount of time people stay in initial accommodation can vary before moving onto dispersal accommodation, however currently waiting times are long. There is a shortage of local housing accommodation for all due to the significant increase in those arriving in the UK seeking protection, alongside the need to meet the existing needs of those already within the UK who have been on housing waiting lists for considerable periods of time. This means that you may be in Initial Accommodation for an extended period, however, your provider and the Home Office will ensure that your needs are met during this time. If you consider that your needs are not being met, you should ask this with Migrant Help to look at how changes can be made to your accommodation, including the option of expedited speeding up the process of

being moved to longer term accommodation if the need is evidenced and appropriate.

## 2. Dispersal accommodation

Dispersal accommodation is longer-term temporary accommodation managed by accommodation providers on behalf of the Home Office. You will normally be able to stay in dispersal accommodation until your asylum claim has been fully determined. It is not always possible to stay in the same property.



## 3. Moving on following an asylum claim decision

When your asylum claim (including any appeals) has been fully determined you will need to leave asylum accommodation and your Home Office support will stop. If you are granted leave to remain, you will be eligible to work, have recourse to public funds, look for housing and get help with this in the same ways as other UK residents. Be aware that, because there is a housing shortage in the UK, it can take time to find your own accommodation. Although the Local Authority will give you information or advice, you may need to find your own private housing. Advice and guidance will be provided as part of your 'Move-On' appointment with Migrant Help or can be obtained by contacting your Local Authority.



However, if your claim is unsuccessful and there are no other temporary barriers, you will be expected to leave the UK. Advice and guidance will be provided by Migrant Help soon after receiving your decision from the Home Office. If you would like some more information on this option, the Voluntary Returns Service are available Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm telephone: 0300 004 0202.

## Expectations

You will always be treated with respect, fairness, and impartiality.

Equally, we expect you to treat all staff and the people you live with the same way. You should report any issues with your accommodation or support as soon as you notice them, by contacting Migrant Help. **Your asylum claim or entitlement to asylum support will not be affected by reporting an issue or problem.**

## Confidentiality and data sharing

The Home Office and our providers will protect and keep your personal information confidential. There are some circumstances where we may need to share your information with other agencies. These include:

- Sharing information with local councils so that social care, specialist housing or property adaptations are made for you
- Sharing information with health services to make sure the right healthcare provisions are in place for your general health needs and any medical conditions
- Sharing information to protect or 'safeguard' you and your family, especially children and vulnerable adults
- Sharing relevant information with education authorities so that they can provide their services
- Reporting criminal matters to the police and to help keep you safe in the community
- Sharing of information to combat fraud
- Disclosing information in connection with court proceedings

Any agency that your data is shared with will also need to respect the confidentiality of your information. You may ask the Home Office or other organisations to show you the information they hold about you through a "[subject access request](#)"



# Conditions of Support

- **You must follow the travel arrangements made for you.** For example, moving to another property. You must tell the Home Office in advance if there is any reason you will be unable to follow the travel arrangements.
- **You must live at the authorised address.** You will need to get permission from the Home Office by contacting Migrant Help if you plan to be away for more than 7 days continuously. You must not be absent more than 14 days or nights in any 6-month period.
- **You must follow the rules of the accommodation you are staying in.** Your accommodation provider will tell you the rules.
- **You must not behave in a violent manner or be verbally or physically abusive.** Violent behaviour may result in criminal prosecution as well as risking losing your accommodation and financial support.
- **You should access your financial support regularly.** Once you are granted Section 95/Section 4 support, you are given a weekly amount to cover any additional expenses whilst you remain in Initial Accommodation. Essential living needs are met in Initial Accommodation by your accommodation provider (i.e., food, access to toiletries, baby products etc). If you reside in self-catered accommodation, you will be given a weekly allowance to purchase food to cook for yourself, instead of being given meals.
- **You must reply to Home Office requests.** This includes requests for:
  - information relating to your asylum claim
  - information relating to your asylum support and
  - your attendance at any interviews

If you do not keep to the conditions of your support, you risk losing your support.

# Changes in circumstances

**Whilst you are in receipt of asylum accommodation and support, you must immediately tell the Home Office if there are any changes to your circumstances.** The easiest way to do this is through Migrant Help. If you no longer need accommodation, you could still get financial support, but you must ask first (however this is not true of those who are provided with support under Section 4 or Schedule 10).

## **The changes in circumstances that you must tell the Home Office about are:**

- If you receive or gain access to money or financial assets
- If you get a job (you must check whether you have permission to work before getting a job)
- If you move to a different address without your providers knowledge, or decide to live with family, friends, or a partner
- If you get married, separated, divorced, or form a civil partnership
- If you are hospitalised or imprisoned
- If you (or your partner) become pregnant or have a child
- If any of your children leave school or leave home
- If any other family members join you in the UK or leave the UK
- If anyone else joins or leaves your household
- You change your name
- You plan to leave the UK and return home

## **If you do not tell us about a change in your circumstances, you may:**

- Lose your support from the Home Office
- have to pay back any support that you have received, to which you were not entitled
- Be guilty of an offence under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

# Appealing an asylum support decision

## You can usually appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (Asylum Support) if:

- Your application for asylum support and/or accommodation has been refused
- You were receiving asylum support under section 4, and it has been stopped
- You were receiving asylum support under section 95, and it has been stopped before that support would otherwise have come to an end.

You will receive a letter from the Home Office if your application has been refused or your support has been stopped explaining why the decision has been made. The letter will also tell you if you can appeal and how to appeal. The tribunal is independent of government. A judge will listen to both sides of the argument before making a decision. If your support has been stopped, and you appeal against this, your support should usually continue until the date of the appeal. Appeal Forms can be found on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

## You can get help and advice before you appeal:

- You can contact the Asylum Support Appeals Project (ASAP) for free legal representation if you have sent in your appeal form to the First-tier Tribunal (Asylum Support). [www.asaproject.org](http://www.asaproject.org)
- You can contact Refugee Action <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/our-services/increasing-justice-tackling-poverty/> (operating in specific regions in England) and Refugee Council [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk) (England and Wales) for advice and support - they may be able to find another organisation to help you.
- You can also get other legal advice, including from a lawyer. For more information go to [www.gov.uk/find-a-legal-adviser](http://www.gov.uk/find-a-legal-adviser)

More information can be found on [www.gov.uk/appeal-first-tier-asylum-support-tribunal](http://www.gov.uk/appeal-first-tier-asylum-support-tribunal)



# Section 2

## Important organisations



Home Office

## Home Office

### What is the Home Office?

The Home Office plays a fundamental role in the security and economic prosperity of the UK. The Home Office is the lead government department for immigration and passports, drugs policy, crime, fire, counterterrorism, and police. The area of the Home Office that you will be directly dealing with is called Asylum and Protection.

### What can I expect from the Home Office?

Your asylum claim will be processed and assessed by the Customer Service Directorate's Asylum Operations teams. This is a department of the Home Office. Whether your asylum claim is successful will depend on their assessment, and they will be in contact with you about the decision that is made.

Asylum Support teams within the Home Office are responsible for deciding what support you should get and for overseeing the providers that deliver this support. Asylum Support teams will also make sure that services provided by our accommodation providers meet expectations set out in this booklet.

### What does the Home Office expect from me?

The Home Office expects that you keep to all the conditions of your support, and that you tell us about any changes in your circumstances. If you do not, your continued entitlement to support is likely to be affected.

Do not ignore any letters sent to you by the Home Office as this could potentially result in your support being refused or discontinued. If you are not sure what a letter means, contact Migrant Help for advice and guidance.

You can find out more information about the services provided by the government by visiting [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

# Your accommodation provider?

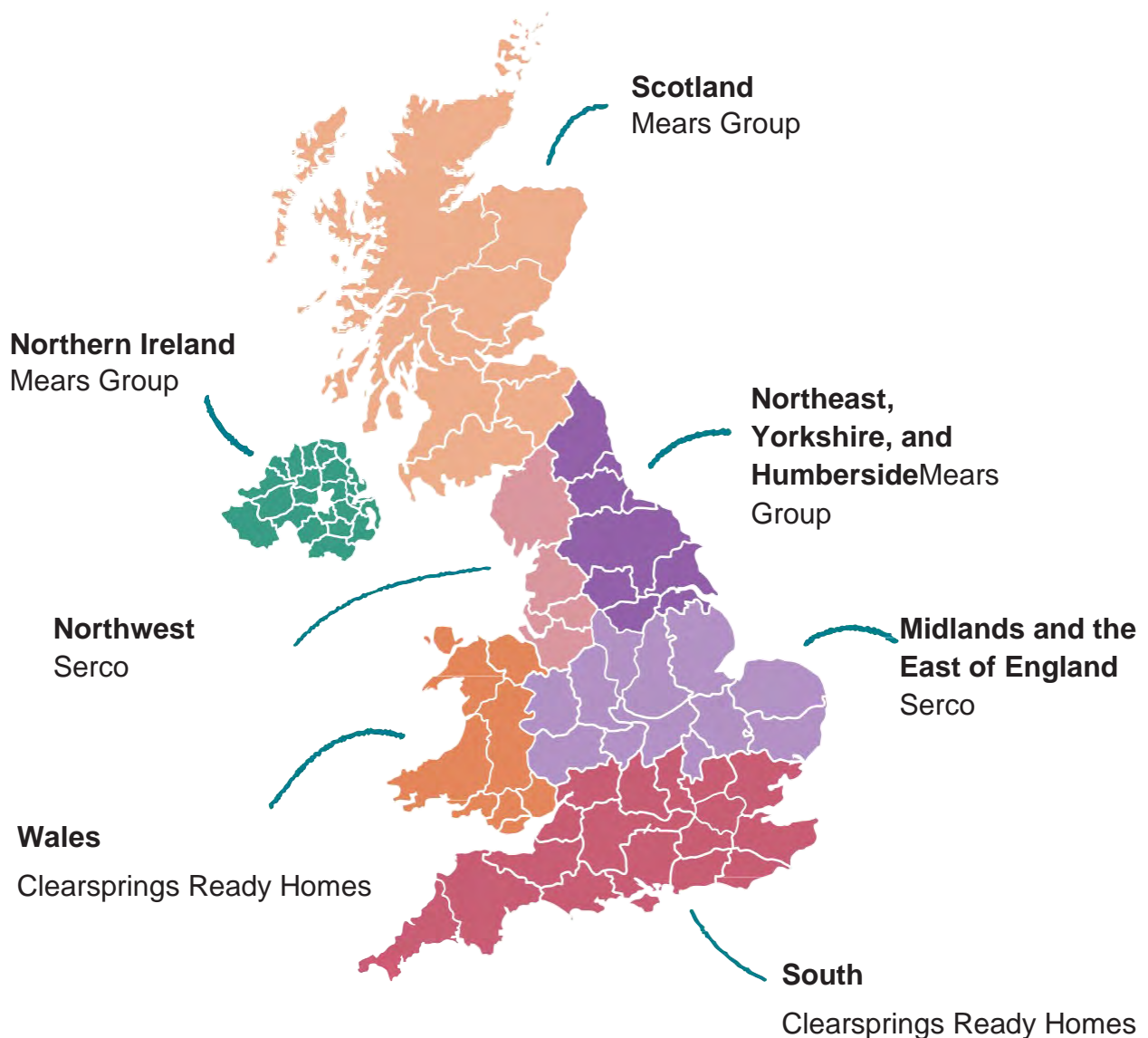
## What is an accommodation provider?

An accommodation provider is a company contracted by the Home Office to provide asylum seekers accommodation and to maintain the accommodation. Accommodation providers vary depending on location.

**MEARS**

**READY  
HOMES**

**serco**





## What can I expect from my accommodation provider?

The services that an accommodation provider will deliver includes:

- Providing and maintaining clean, safe, and habitable accommodation, furniture, equipment, and utilities
- An introduction to the accommodation when you arrive, including information about the services available to you
- Supplying a catered accommodation food service comprised of three meals a day and access to essential personal hygiene items and toiletries (or alternatively for those in self-catering accommodation, cash to cover the cost of these to enable these needs to be met NB: *those on Section 4 support are not entitled to cash support and will be provided monies credited to an Aspen card if applicable*). Pregnant women and infants are entitled to additional provision to meet their additional nutritional and living needs (access to nappies, formula, milk, increased food provision, baby bottle sterilisation equipment etc), whilst in full or half board accommodation. Families with new babies and pregnant women can apply for a Maternity Grant whilst in Initial Accommodation. For those pregnant women and new mothers in self-catering accommodation, a supplement will be added to the weekly provision of financial support you receive.
- Promoting your wellbeing, including making referrals to relevant agencies where this would help
- Providing translation and interpreting services where necessary when communicating with you
- Explaining feedback and complaints processes to you and resolving any complaints within 5 working days wherever possible
- Managing anti-social or disruptive behaviour that may occur in the accommodation
- Informing you where the nearest available GP (doctors) surgery is or helping you to register with a GP if you have a pre-existing medical condition (unless there is an on-site Nurse Practitioner available)
- helping you to access healthcare if you need it when you arrive, or during your time at the accommodation (this could be organised through the Resident Welfare Managers, Safeguarding Teams, or Housing Managers)
- Providing Service Users in receipt of Section 4 and Section 98 and schedule 10 support with travel assistance - either by providing transport or giving public transport tickets – for doctor, dentist, and hospital appointments, antenatal or postnatal appointments, or for travel to register the births or deaths of family members. *Please note that you should use local services nearby wherever possible, and you should provide evidence of any appointment (e.g., an appointment letter) and give as much notice as possible to your provider to ensure that this can be arranged in good time. For any issues involving transport, please contact Migrant Help.*

If you have any issues with your accommodation during your stay in initial accommodation you should raise them through Migrant Help by telephone on **0808 8010 503**, via **webchat** at [https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat\\_launch](https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat_launch) or through **Raise an Issue** (<https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/ask/session>)

Calling their freephone helpline on 0808 8010503.

. They will then raise the issue with your accommodation provider on your behalf. See ['Issue Reporting and Complaints'](#) for more information.

## What does my accommodation provider expect from me?

You should treat the accommodation respectfully. This includes keeping it clean and being careful not to damage fixtures and fittings within the property.

You should also be respectful to anybody you share the accommodation with and any staff you meet.



# Migrant Help

## What is Migrant Help?

Migrant Help is a charitable organisation operating a national service called Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) separate from the Home Office. Migrant Help can provide you with independent advice and guidance on the asylum process and your rights. They can also direct you to other services available in the UK.



## What can I expect from Migrant Help?

Migrant Help will help you to access financial support, accommodation, legal advice, and other services that you are entitled to by law. They will provide information to help you understand the asylum process, your support entitlements and how you can access other essential services (including health care and legal advice) before your asylum interview. You will be able to access an interpreter if required, and this should be requested at the start of the call.

Migrant Help's free helpline can advise you in your language. The topics they can assist with include:

- How to claim asylum
- Financial support
- Finding legal representation
- The asylum processes
- Accessing healthcare
- Accommodation support

You can raise a complaint about the Home Office through Migrant Help; however, this must relate to asylum accommodation or support. You must first raise any concerns via Migrant Help in the first instance, before proceeding to any other form of action or complaint.

Complaints about Asylum Claims or Appeals against your asylum claim will not be accepted, and you should follow instructions provided in the relevant letters to progress these.

Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs), Application Registration Card (ARC) errors, and issues with Permission to Work (PTW) **should not** be raised with Migrant Help. Instead, you can report issues with these services online at:

- BRP - [Biometric residence permits \(BRPs\): Getting your BRP if you applied from inside the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- ARC - [Application registration card \(ARC\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-registration-card-arc>
- PTW - [Permission to work and volunteering for asylum seekers \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

-

Their helpline assists a large number of asylum seekers, and the phone lines can get busy which may cause a delay in answering your call. Please be patient and your call will be answered as quickly as possible. Where possible, please consider using the **Webchat** and **Raise an Issue** functions for non-urgent queries.

Migrant Help can also help you fill in the application form for financial support and accommodation (asylum support) (ASF1) or an application for additional asylum support (ASF2). They will also help if you need to tell the Home Office about a change of circumstance.

Migrant Help cannot provide legal advice or representation. They can provide information on how to access legal services. You can also search for a legal adviser on [www.gov.uk/find-a-legal-adviser](http://www.gov.uk/find-a-legal-adviser)

Migrant Help should also be contacted if you would like to make a complaint about your accommodation provider, the payment provider, Home Office, or Migrant Help themselves. If you have any issues with your accommodation, you should also contact Migrant Help. More information on how to do this can be found in '[Issue Reporting and Complaints](#).' Complaints about accommodation have no impact at all on the outcome of your asylum claim or on your eligibility for support and accommodation.

## What does Migrant Help expect from me?

- When you communicate with Migrant Help, please have any reference numbers from your Home Office documents available.
- Attend any appointments that are made for you. Take any information or documents related to your claim.
- Speak to Migrant Help yourself whenever possible rather than asking friends or family to speak to Migrant Help on your behalf. Don't worry if you don't speak English, interpreters will be available.
- Make notes before you call Migrant Help or attend a meeting, so all your queries can be dealt with efficiently.
- Answer their advisers' questions as fully as possible. They are trained in questions they need to ask to help with your enquiry.
- Keep them updated with any change in contact details such as phone number and email address.
- Migrant Help will always confirm your identity and will never disclose personal information to other parties. If you would like another individual or organisation to act on your behalf, you will need to sign a **Letter of Authority**, or give **consent verbally** when you speak to Migrant Help, to facilitate this. For more advice on how to do this, contact Migrant Help.
- Migrant Help will not accept abusive, threatening, or aggressive behaviour. Their staff will treat you with courtesy and respect. Please do the same towards them.

## Contacting Migrant Help

You can contact Migrant Help via:

**Webchat:** [https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat\\_launch](https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat_launch)

**Raise an Issue** via their website: (<https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/ask/session>)

Calling their **freephone helpline on 0808 8010503**.

These services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and offer full interpreting service. Please note: If you reside at Napier, Migrant Help personnel are available on site.

More information and translated advice in 10 languages is available on Migrant Help's website **[www.migranthehelpuk.org](http://www.migranthehelpuk.org)**.



# Section 3

## Issue reporting and complaints



If you have a problem with your accommodation or support or would like to make a complaint about any of the organisations in this pack, you should do this through Migrant Help as soon as you can.

Please note that those service users accommodated on vessels (barges), maintenance issues should be raised with staff on the vessel directly and not through Migrant Help.

Any complaints or issues raised will not affect your asylum claim or your continued entitlement to support. You should feel comfortable knowing that any complaints received are taken seriously and investigated by the relevant organisations. Faults reported will be dealt with in a certain timeframe depending on the category of the fault. Examples can be found in the section ‘[Repairs and Maintenance](#).’ If the fault isn’t fixed within this timeframe, you should contact **Migrant Help** again and they will escalate the problem.

It is important that if you want to make a complaint about any aspect of your accommodation or support, to make it as soon as possible. Feedback and complaints are welcomed as they help improve the services that are provided. The complaints process should be followed prior to taking any further formal action regarding an issue to allow the accommodation provider and/or Home Office the opportunity to investigate your concerns.

### You should contact Migrant Help regarding:

**Maintenance issues** – to report problems with your asylum accommodation. They will talk with the accommodation provider on your behalf to address these (see “Repairs and maintenance” at page 24 below).

**Requests for assistance** – if you feel there is a risk to your or your family’s health and wellbeing. This can be to report suspected child neglect, domestic violence, sexual harassment or exploitation, anti-social behaviour, destitution or homelessness or suspected extremism or radicalisation.

Migrant Help will refer the request or report to your Provider, who is then responsible for

taking any action it considers necessary to assure your safety and wellbeing including informing the Home Office and, where appropriate, the Police.

**Complaints** – if you wish to make a complaint regarding services provided by Migrant Help, your accommodation provider, the asylum support payments provider, or the Home Office, you should contact Migrant Help and ask to make a complaint for investigation and response prior to taking any further formal action.

**Feedback** – to continuously improve the support available throughout your asylum claim journey. You can tell them about your experience of services delivered by Migrant Help, your accommodation provider, the asylum support payments provider, or the Home Office. They will pass your comments onto the appropriate organisation.

To do this, call **0808 8010 503**, access **webchat** at [https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat\\_launch](https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat_launch) or Raise an Issue at <https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/ask>.

Access to a telephone should be made available to you within your accommodation. If you are having difficulty locating this, please approach a member of staff at your accommodation. You will also be able to access a computer and the internet in your local library.

The issue will be raised with Migrant Help directly or they will make sure that the relevant provider deals with it. Their advisers will give you a timeline of how fast you can expect the issue to be addressed.

Although you are able to approach staff at your accommodation for any issues relating directly to your experience in your accommodation (e.g. regarding food, access to toiletries and essentials, information about facilities such as laundry etc), please do not raise maintenance issues or issues with your financial support this way (unless this relates to maintenance issues onboard a vessel). Instead, please call Migrant Help to formally report these issues. This ensures that your issue is formally recorded and monitored for an effective resolution.

### **Aspen and Payment Issues**

If you require assistance in connection with your Aspen card, you can contact the support provider **PFS by telephone on 0800 246 1327**. Once connected, support can be provided on the three options below:

- PIN Reveal
- Balance enquiry
- Lost and stolen - card block

This service is available in 10 languages, plus English. Currently the following language options are available: Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Chinese, Persian, Kurdish, Pashto, Punjabi, Tigrinya and Urdu.

Should you have any other issues relating to your Aspen Card or Asylum Payment, you



should contact Migrant Help who will raise the issue with the appropriate party on your behalf.

## Complaints about providers

Complaints relating to the service received from your accommodation provider, support payments provider or Migrant Help should be made through Migrant Help by calling **0808 8010 503**, or alternatively by Webchat:

[https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat\\_launch](https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat_launch) or via Raise an Issue:  
<https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/ask>

Once received, the relevant provider will aim to resolve and respond to your complaint within 5 working days. If it can't be resolved by the relevant provider, or you are unhappy with the response, Migrant Help will send your complaint to the Home Office.

Once a complaint against a provider is sent to the Home Office, the department will aim to reply within 20 working days. If you are unhappy with our response, you can escalate your complaint to the Independent Examiner of Complaints (IEC) within three months of the date of the response by: e-mailing [iec@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:iec@homeoffice.gov.uk) or writing to PO BOX 6147, SHEFFIELD, S2 9JD. Please note, however, that whilst the IEC can examine the way in which your complaint is dealt with, they cannot look at complaints about services for which there is no contractual requirement.

If you decide to escalate your complaint to the IEC, you will need to provide them with a copy of the Home Office's response to your initial complaint alongside any evidence you provided.

Further information about the Independent Examiner of Complaints and guidance upon making a complaint to the IEC can be found upon the Gov.uk website <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/make-a-complaint-to-the-independent-examiner-of-complaints>

If you are still unhappy with the IEC response to your complaint, this can be raised with the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. The Ombudsman makes final decisions on complaints that have not been resolved by the NHS, government departments and some other public organisations. Their service is free for everyone. Please note, to make a complaint to the Ombudsman, you will need to contact your local MP who may refer this on your behalf. For more information, please visit [www.ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman.org.uk) or call 0345 015 4033.

## Complaints about your support

Once a complaint is raised with Migrant Help about the Home Office, this will be shared with the relevant team for investigation and response within 20 working days. If you remain unhappy with the department's response, you have the right to escalate this to the Central Complaints Team (CCT) for review. Details on how to do this will be provided in the response.

## How else can I make a complaint to the Home Office?

You can make a complaint directly to the Home Office if:

- You have already made a complaint through Migrant Help, have reported your dissatisfaction with the response to Migrant Help and are still not satisfied with the outcome, or
- You have a complaint that you do not consider it appropriate for Migrant Help to resolve

**If the Home Office receive a complaint that should have been directed to Migrant Help, it will be sent to Migrant Help.**

To make a complaint to the Home Office:

Email your complaint to [complaints@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@homeoffice.gov.uk) or write to us at:

Complaints Allocation Hub  
Customer Correspondence Hub  
7th Floor Lunar House  
40 Wellesley Road Croydon  
CR9 2BY

# Section 4

## Accommodation information and standards



**Our providers have several types of accommodation. You may be staying in:**

### **Hotel**

This type of accommodation is usually occupied by single service users and families and is provided on a catered accommodation basis. Accommodation is offered on a no choice basis and single service users may need to share a room. Room sharing with friends or family is encouraged if they are of the same gender. Every effort will be made to ensure that service users speak the same language as the person they are sharing a room with. Where shared facilities are in place, there will be access to gender specific washrooms.

### **Initial Accommodation**

This type of accommodation is usually occupied by single service users and families and is provided on a catered accommodation basis (ie with 3 meals per day provided). There are gender specific wash facilities and there may be shared sleeping quarters that consider the Home Office's sharing rules.

### **Other (including vessels and larger communal living settings such as Halls of Residence or ex-Military Bases)**

Large-scale sites – such as Wethersfield and Scampton Military Bases - offer basic and functional accommodation with comprehensive healthcare provisions in place to reduce pressure on local GP and NHS services, catering facilities on site and with 24/7 security. These sites will accommodate non-detained, single adult male asylum seekers only.

In vessel accommodation, all cabins have windows, air conditioning, heating units, storage and the vessel is WIFI enabled. All rooms have bathroom facilities and there are multiple communal spaces, a canteen and laundry facilities. Transport to and from the Port is provided.



# Rules and guidelines

To help you settle into the accommodation you are staying in and minimise disruption to others, you should:

## Do:

- Be mindful of your health and safety and handle all appliances with care
- Treat any fellow occupants respectfully regardless of sex, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, language, nationality, religion, disability, sexual orientation
- Act in a courteous and respectful manner to other occupants and staff
- Report repairs or maintenance issues to Migrant Help as soon as you notice them
- If sharing sleeping, living or communal quarters, keep any personal belongings safely stored
- Flush the toilet after every use, but do not flush items such as baby wipes or sanitary products
- Clean the accommodation on a regular basis, or where cleaning services are provided, floors and surfaces to facilitate this
- Open the windows regularly to prevent mould or dampness occurring
- Make sure that doors are locked, and windows are closed at night and while you are out



## Do not:

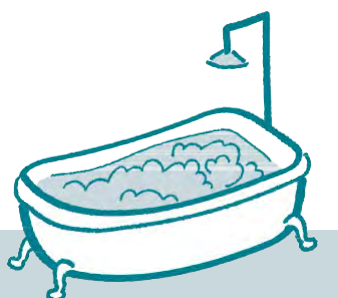
- Make too much noise, especially between 11pm and 8am
- Smoke inside the accommodation
- Keep pets or animals in the property
- Allow visitors to stay overnight
- Damage the property
- Take food from the designated dining areas to your room (*unless your accommodation advises this is accepted*)
- Carry out any changes or repairs to the property or electrics
- Disable the smoke alarms
- Keep or use unauthorised drugs on the premises
- Disturb other occupants on purpose



- Use inappropriate behaviour or language to anyone
- Open other people's letters

# Facilities to expect in the accommodation

The following items are required to be provided within initial accommodation. If anything from these lists is not provided, or any item of inventory missing or broken, please contact Migrant Help.



## Wash facilities

An en-suite, or access to at least 1 gender-specific bathroom per 5 single service users composed of:

- Bath and/or shower including a waterproof covering if appropriate (e.g., shower curtain)
- Wash basin
- Toilet

## Dining

In catered accommodation:

- Access to at least **3 meals per day** (breakfast, lunch and evening meal), with a choice of at least one hot, one cold selection and one vegetarian option at each meal alongside a **beverage service** (*access to drinking water should be available at all times and can include the availability of tap water, which is treated and safe to consume in the UK*)
- Please note that when catering for large numbers of people, it is difficult to satisfy all tastes and preferences. If you would like to provide feedback on the food offering to influence the creation of menus at your accommodation, please do so via Migrant Help or inform the staff at the location
- A food service for babies and small children with appropriate foodstuffs, with additional foodstuffs or meals as required to meet the nutritional needs of children and pregnant women
- Options which cater for special dietary, cultural or religious requirements, and additional foodstuffs for service users for whom three daily meals may be insufficient. Please note that evidence will need to be supplied from a GP or medical professional detailing any specific medical dietary requirements to ensure that your provider can accommodate appropriately.
- Where you will be unavailable for the planned lunch service (e.g., due to volunteering, schooling, medical appointments) please

inform your provider as soon as possible so alternative arrangements can be made



### **In self-catering accommodation:**

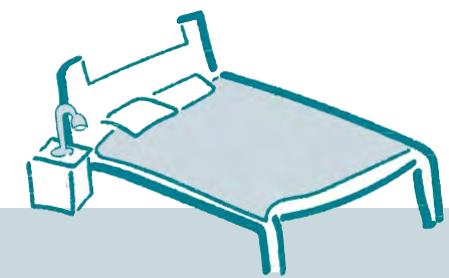
- Access to at least 1 kitchen per every 5 people including access to:
  - ✓ Cookware and utensils
  - ✓ Refrigerator and freezer, Cooker or oven and hob
  - ✓ Food preparation area with hygienic worktops
  - ✓ Sink
  - ✓ Cleaning supplies
- Weekly cash payments to enable purchase of items to meet your essential living needs such as food. Please note that cash payments are not provided to those receiving Section 4(2) or Schedule 10 support and those service users will receive an Aspen Card topped up with their support entitlement weekly.

Any issues relating to health and safety concerns should be raised with Migrant Help in the first instance so that your provider can be notified, and an investigation commence.

## **Bedrooms**

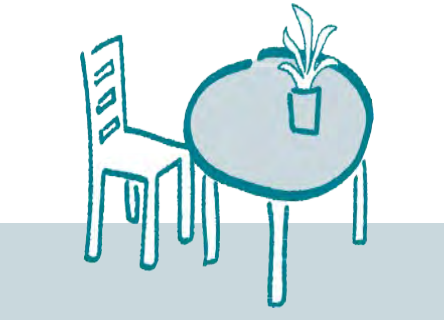
### **All initial accommodation:**

- Beds appropriate to the people being accommodated (single or double beds) and cots for babies and young children
- 1 wardrobe or other solution for hanging clothes per room or 1 per single person when the room is shared by unrelated adults
- 1 chest of drawers or other solution to storage shelving per room or 1 per single person when the room is shared by unrelated adults
- Curtains or blinds installed over windows



## **Living and communal areas**





**In catered accommodation:**

- Adequate dining facilities and soft seating to cater for the numbers of service users accommodated

**In self-catering accommodation:**

- Access to a table, 1 dining chair per person and 1 armchair per person

**In all initial accommodation:**

- Reasonable access to tables and comfortable chairs for recreational activities

## Facilities

### In all initial accommodation:

- Reasonable access to fresh drinking water (please note that tap water is safe to drink in the UK and bottled water does not need to be provided)
- Reasonable access to laundry facilities (e.g., laundry service or washing machine)
- Access to a clothes airer to dry any laundry (on request)
- Ironing board and clothes iron
- Childcare equipment if applicable, including cots and highchairs and both facilities and sterilisation equipment for children under the age of 1 year (as well as nappies)
- Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors:  
all accommodations must have working smoke alarms (on every floor used as living accommodation) and a carbon monoxide alarm (in properties with solid fuel or gas)
- Televisions and access to Wi-Fi are **not** contractual requirements and do not need to be supplied, however Data Only SIMs may be available on request whilst stocks last (ask at Reception)



The accommodation provider is also required to provide you with fresh personal linen when you move into your accommodation.

**Bath Towel**



2 (per person)

**Face Flannels**



2 (per person)

**Sheets**



2 (per person)

**Blankets and Duvet**



2 / 1 (per person)

**Hand Towels**



2 (per person)

**Tea Towels**  
(self-catering IA only)



1 (per person)

**Pillows and Pillowcases**



2 of each (per person)

**Duvet Covers**



2 (per person)

## Extra items

Extra items and belongings you take to the accommodation are your own responsibility. Your accommodation provider will not accept liability or responsibility for these items. You will not be allowed portable heaters and you will be asked to dispose of any unsafe or dangerous materials or items.

Some common items which providers **do not** need to supply:

- A personal telephone (however shared telephone facilities should be made available to you)
- Broadband/Wi-Fi connection
- Television/TV
- Vacuum cleaner (however a dustpan and brush must be made available to you)

If you have exceptional circumstances that create significant costs which are more than the standard support levels cover, you may be eligible for extra. For more information, please call Migrant Help.

## Utilities

Gas, water, and electricity are provided for you. Be aware of the environment and keep an eye on the usage of these utilities. You have guidance from your housing officer about how to use utilities, such as how to operate the heating and where the electric trip switches are located. You must not change the supplier of your utilities.



## Health Certificate (HC2)

Once granted Section 95 support, you will be entitled to a HC2 certificate (or for those on Section 4, a HC1 certificate). This can be used to access:

- NHS dental treatment
- NHS wigs and fabric supports
- Sight tests, glasses and contact lenses; or
- Travel to receive NHS treatment if referred by a doctor (GP or hospital doctor), optician or dentist.

This should be issued automatically when you are granted Section 95 support and renewed automatically every 6 months thereafter. However, if you do not receive your HC2 within 3 weeks of receiving your grant letter, you can contact the NHS directly for further advice by phone at the number 0300 330 1343. Lines are open from Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm and Saturday, 9am to 3pm. This should also be raised with Migrant Help.

If you are on Section 4 support, a HC1 form needs to be completed. This can be obtained through the local pharmacy or via the NHS website/contact centre where

you can request assistance in completing an HC1 form. Apply online at [nhsbsa.nhs.uk](https://nhsbsa.nhs.uk). If you require urgent treatment or medicine, the NHSBSA advice is to tick the exemption box on the back of any prescription, and to call the helpline if the pharmacy refused to dispense without evidence.

# Property inspections

## Self-contained Initial Accommodation

**Property inspections take place in self-contained initial accommodation (accommodation occupied by only you and your family) only to make sure the accommodation is suitable and safe for you.** Your accommodation provider is required to inspect the accommodation at least once a month to identify and fix any defects.

You will be given at least 5 days' notice of the date and time of inspections so that you can be present at the property. The provider will still inspect the property even if you are not there.

### **What happens during an inspection?**

The inspector should always knock on the door and wait for you to answer. They should not just open the door without waiting. They should not use their own key when you are in the room. They will talk to you about the property and check for any faults. If any faults are found, they will be reported for repair. Any faults that might not be clear to the inspector should be pointed out.

Providers, nor Home Office staff, have the right to search your personal possessions. If, however, you leave the property and personal items are left behind, these will be bagged up by your provider and placed into short-term storage for up to 28 days, and if not collected during this time, they will be disposed of.

### **Who carries out the inspection?**

Property inspections will be carried out at least monthly by your accommodation provider. Someone from the Home Office or a local council may also carry out an inspection to make sure that your accommodation provider is meeting the required standards.



### **What if I reside in a hotel/ IA accommodation?**

Initial Accommodation has several forms, including catered accommodation, hotels, and hostels. These sites are inspected every 6 months by the Home Office.

### **How do I report a fault?**

Property defects should be reported to Migrant Help so that they can be recorded and fixed. Accommodation providers work to fix faults within set timescales (see "Repairs and maintenance"). If you are affected by a fault, you should not wait until the scheduled inspection to report it.

# Access to accommodation

Your accommodation provider holds a duplicate or passkey to the property which is stored securely. Usually, access to living quarters for repairs and inspections will be made while you are present.

if essential work is needed at short notice, your provider will contact you to tell you when they are coming to the property. If you are not able to be in at that time, the provider may use their key to enter the property.

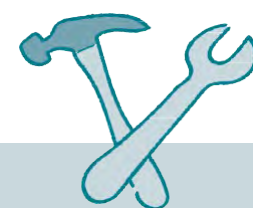
If you are unable to be in at the time of the appointment the provider may gain access to the living quarters, anyway, using a duplicate key.

Visitors are permitted to Initial Accommodation, however, please provide notice of any visitors arrival date and time to your accommodation reception staff to enable swift entry to the premises. Please also note that visitors are not allowed to stay on the premises overnight.



# Repairs and maintenance

Accommodation providers work to fix any defects within set timescales depending on the type of issue. The table below explains the different classifications of defects, the response times, and some examples of faults. If you are unsure of the maintenance classification, or if the reported fault isn't fixed within the given time frame, you should contact Migrant Help.



Maintenance classification	Meaning	Response time	Example of fault
----------------------------	---------	---------------	------------------

<p><b>Category 1</b></p>	<p>A defect which has, or is likely to cause, a risk to your health, safety, or security, or disruption or loss of an essential service of the accommodation</p>	<p>Call out facility is available 24/7 to allow issues to be investigated and fixed (or for you to be provided temporary alternative accommodation) <b>within 4 hours</b> of the provider becoming aware of the maintenance issue</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gas leak</li> <li>• Flooding</li> <li>• Structural instability</li> <li>• No mains water supplied</li> <li>• Fire damage</li> </ul>
<p><b>Category 2</b></p>	<p>A defect that may cause an adverse effect on your health, safety, or security or which has a significant impact on the property or your quality of life</p>	<p><b>24 hours to make safe, 5 working days</b> to make a permanent repair. If the provider cannot make the accommodation safe within 24 hours, temporary alternative accommodation must be provided</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No hot water supplies</li> <li>• Heating not working</li> <li>• No electrical power supplied</li> <li>• No operational smoke or fire alarms</li> <li>• Pest infestation which represents serious hazard to health and safety</li> </ul>
<p><b>Category 3</b></p>	<p>A defect which has or is likely to cause an adverse effect on your comfort and convenience, or the potential to lead to further damage to the property if not addressed</p>	<p><b>21 working days</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peeling paint</li> <li>• Significant signs of dampness and mould growth</li> <li>• Significantly damaged wall and floor tiles</li> <li>• Other pest infestations</li> </ul>



# Extra accommodation Information

## Fire safety

All accommodation utilised by our providers must be fitted with a smoke alarm. If there is a fire in the accommodation, the smoke will set off the alarm and it will make a loud continuous 'beeping' noise.

On discovering a fire, you and your family must:

- > Activate the nearest fire alarm
- > leave the premises immediately following instructions set out by premises the and go to the designated meeting point
- > not stop to collect personal belongings
- > leave the building by the nearest safe exit
- > call the Fire and Rescue Service on 999 and inform your accommodation provider

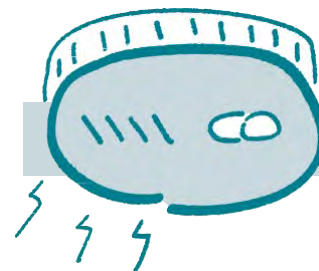
Do not remove the battery, obscure or tamper with the smoke alarm as this could endanger life. Please inform a member of staff as soon as possible if there is any known issue with a fire alarm.

If you reside in self-catering Initial Accommodation, your smoke detector will be tested each month when the property is inspected. If the alarm starts to make an intermittent 'beeping' noise, this means that the battery needs to be changed. Contact Migrant Help and ask for the battery to be replaced.

## Cleaning

It is important to keep accommodation clean and tidy. Some forms of initial accommodation (such as hotels and hostels) provide weekly cleaning services of sleeping quarters and communal areas; however it is your responsibility to maintain the cleanliness of your surroundings in between. If accommodation isn't kept clean, pests can be attracted, putting people's safety at risk. You are responsible for maintaining the standards of cleanliness within your own accommodation.

If you live in a hostel or self-catering accommodation, your accommodation provider is responsible for cleaning the communal areas regularly, although you and other residents should still look after these areas. Access to appropriate



cleaning materials and consumables for communal areas, including, but not limited to bleach, floor cleaner, washing up liquid and worktop cleaner, will be provided to support with this.

## Bin collection (self-catering accommodation)

Rubbish should be put into the correct general waste bin or recycling bin. The local council empty these on a regular basis, so make sure that you put your bins out for collection on the right day.

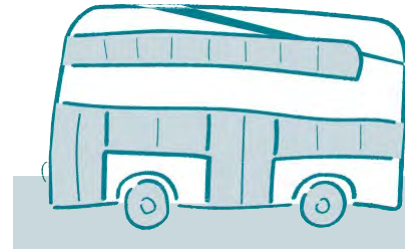
It is illegal to dispose of waste on streets or in other public areas. This is known as fly-tipping. If you are found guilty of fly-tipping, you could be fined or imprisoned.



## Travel

All service users in receipt of Section 98 and Section 4 support are entitled to travel assistance by way of the arranging of transport, access to public transport tickets or one-off payments to cover the cost of travel in certain circumstances. These can include travel to:

- the Registrar of Births and Deaths office to register the birth of a child or death of a relative.
- a doctor, dentist, or hospital appointment; and/or
- an antenatal or postnatal appointment.

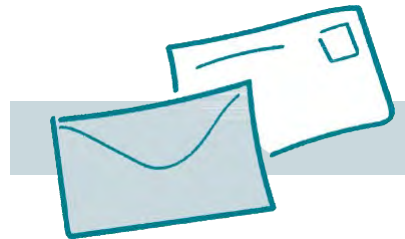


Travel costs are covered in the financial support level received by those in receipt of Section 95, therefore further assistance as above will not be provided.

## Post

Your post is personal to you. It is a criminal offence to interfere with another person's post. If you receive post addressed to someone not living at the property, please give it to your housing officer.

Most of the correspondence from the Home Office will be by post, so it is important that you regularly check with reception staff in a hotel, or your mailbox if in self-contained accommodation and that you keep the Home Office updated with any changes of address.



## Accommodation moves and relocation requests

You may be asked to move accommodation from time to time. For example, if you are being moved to dispersal accommodation, the proprietor of your accommodation wishes to have their accommodation back, if there is concern around compliance with legal health and safety requirements, or to enable a service user with specialist needs to be accommodated or if significant maintenance work is required to a property. The Home Office and your accommodation provider will ensure that your needs continue to be met wherever you are accommodated, however accommodation is provided on a no-choice basis, so it is not always possible to ensure you remain in the same area. If you are needed to be moved, a letter will be sent to you confirming the arrangements. This will be sent to you via email where one is held on file, or in the post. As a general rule, the provider will provide 5 days' notice wherever possible, however this may not always be possible where a move needs to take place at short notice (e.g., when dispersal

accommodation has become available or where there is a health and safety issue at your current accommodation).

Although you will not be provided an exact address of where you will be moving to in advance, you will be advised of the location (e.g., town or city) and provider transport will be arranged for you to take you to your accommodation. The luggage allowance is **two pieces of luggage per person**, in addition to children's toys and other effects, baby care items, medical equipment, buggies and/or prams and disability aids as applicable.

However, the Home Office must consider requests for accommodation in a specific location – guidance on the allocation of accommodation can be found here: [Asylum accommodation requests: caseworker guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/asylum-accommodation-requests-caseworker-guidance). If you feel that your current or proposed accommodation is inadequate or does not meet your individual needs, please provide supporting evidence to Migrant Help, who will share this with the Home Office for consideration. However, where there are no agreed restrictions in place, you will be expected to take up the offer of accommodation as it is made.

# Section 5

## Money and support payments

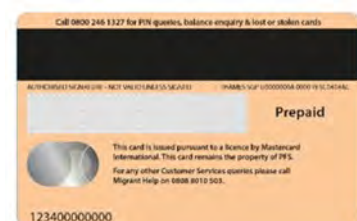
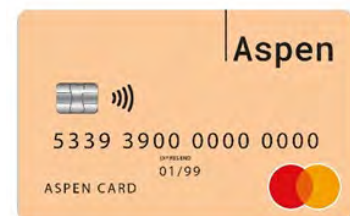


If you are in Initial Accommodation, your essential living needs will be met by your accommodation provider through the provision of catered accommodation, with access to other items to meet essential living needs (such as toiletries, cleaning, or feminine hygiene products). If you are granted Section 95 support/Section 4, if you still reside in catered Initial Accommodation whilst awaiting dispersal, you will receive a weekly pre-dispersal payment of £9.58 per week (accurate as of August 2023) until you are provided with self-catered accommodation. You will be issued with an Aspen Card once granted with Section 95 support, and this will be posted to you at your address. If you do not receive a card after receiving your Section 95 Grant letter, please contact Migrant Help to inform them, but please be assured that any support you are entitled to will be credited to the card regardless ready for you to access once you receive your card. You should contact Migrant Help if you have any issues or questions about your financial support level, or if you lose your Aspen card once it has been issued. Your Aspen card uses Chip-and-Pin and looks like the image below.

Once you are dispersed to a self-catered property, your financial support rate will increase to £47.39 per week (accurate as of August 2023), to enable you to cover your own basic living expenses, along with those of any dependant family members. On Section 95 support, your cash payments will be accessed through an 'Aspen card' to enable you to buy food and other items to cover your essential living needs. Equally, if you reside in self-catered Initial Accommodation, you will receive a greater financial support rate to enable you to cover the costs of purchasing your own food.

### Information about your Aspen card

- It is not a credit card and does not create a bank account. Only the Home Office can put money onto your card, so you cannot use it to receive payments from others.
- The Home Office will notify you of the amount of financial support you are entitled to get, and this will be made available on your card each week. Your balance will carry over from week to week.
- You can only spend the funds available on the card. You will need to know you have enough funds available before buying



things, or payment may be declined.

- The card is to be used by only the person who has been assigned the PIN. It is your responsibility to make sure that the card is kept securely. If your family is receiving support, the main applicant (person who applied for support) will hold the Aspen card for the family.
- The Home Office can review card use to protect against fraud and to help safeguard our service users.
- The expiry date on the card does not mean that is the date the support will end. If you are still getting financial support when the card expires it will be renewed.
- You will not be able to make contactless, telephone or internet payments or use your card overseas.
- You may be restricted from using your card to buy certain goods and services. For example, you will not be able to use your card for bus/train journeys. Please contact Migrant Help if you need advice on additional payments to get to a healthcare provider.

## You will be able to use your Aspen card to:

- pay for retail transactions at most shops displaying the Mastercard logo, up to the value of your available balance
- check your remaining balance at an ATM, which is also called a cash machine
- withdraw cash from a cash machine, up to the value of £200 but be careful as some cash machines charge for this
- get cash back when you buy something at Mastercard participating shops

**However, if you have been refused asylum and are on section 4 support, you will not be able to withdraw cash from a machine or get cashback from shops.**

Contact Migrant Help on **0808 8010 503** as soon as possible if:

- a payment you expect is not received, or you receive a wrong amount
- your card becomes lost, damaged, or stolen (to cancel it and get a replacement)

## Extra payments

**If you think you might be eligible for any extra payments, contact Migrant Help on 0808 8010 503.** The information below explains some of the cases where you may be eligible:

### Pregnancy

- If you are pregnant and supported under Section 95 or 98 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, you may be eligible for a single one-off payment of £300 to help with the costs arising from the birth of a new baby. If you are supported under Section 4 this will be a one-off

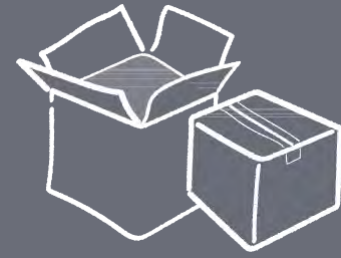
payment of £250.

- You must apply for this grant in writing between 8 weeks before your baby is due and 6 weeks after the birth. To apply before your baby is born, you will need to show Migrant Help formal medical evidence of the estimated date of delivery such as your original MATB1 certificate or other medical proof of your pregnancy.
- You can also apply if your baby was born outside the UK and your baby is less than 3 months old or in other exceptional cases. You would need to show credible evidence of the age of the child which would normally be the baby's original long birth certificate.
- While in dispersed accommodation you are also entitled to receive £3 extra per week during your pregnancy. This is known as a Pregnancy Payment, and it is provided to buy extra nutritional healthy food.
- Pregnancy Payments can be applied for in writing through Migrant Help at any time prior to the birth of a child. You will need to supply medical evidence confirming the pregnancy such as your original MATB1 certificate or a letter from a Community Midwife or a letter from a GP.
- Once your baby is born you can apply for a further £5 per week on top of your normal payments, up to its first birthday, and £3 for any other children aged 1 to 3 years old if residing in dispersal or self-catered accommodation. In being considered for this funding you will need to supply the original long birth certificate medical evidence confirming your child's birth and do so within 6 weeks of the birth. You should apply through Migrant Help Exceptional circumstances
- Those on Section 4 support are eligible for £3 weekly for the duration of any pregnancy.
- If you have exceptional circumstances that create significant costs which are more than the standard support levels cover, you may be eligible for extra payments (this is known as **Section 96** payments). For example, if you must travel a long distance to medical appointments (this must be applied for before travel) or have a medical condition requiring a special diet. Please contact Migrant Help and complete an [ASF2 application form](#).



# Section 6

## Moving on following an asylum claim decision



When your asylum claim (including any appeals) has been decided, you will usually stop being entitled to Home Office support. If this is the case, you will be given notice that your financial support will stop and that you must leave your accommodation (initial or dispersal).

What you need to do next will depend on whether your claim for asylum was successful. Migrant Help will contact you soon after you receive your decision and provide advice on next steps. You can also contact your Local Authority Homelessness Team for further advice.

Once you have received your decision, you will have 28 days to leave the accommodation if you have been granted Leave to Remain (LTR), and 21 days if you have had a negative decision. Before you leave the accommodation, please make sure that all your personal belongings are packed, the accommodation is clean and tidy and that no personal belongings are left behind. Any items that remain once you leave will be kept in storage for 28 days before they are disposed of.

### Successful claims

If you are granted leave to remain in the UK – either refugee status, discretionary leave, or humanitarian protection - you will then be eligible to work, claim mainstream benefits, and look for private housing (although you may be eligible for council housing support) and to get help with these in the same ways as other UK residents. You will receive a Biometric Residence Permit, which you can use to show that you are eligible.

Your entitlement to asylum support ends 28 days after the date you are granted leave (allowing an addition 2 days to allow for delays incurred through postal service which should cover the gap in issue to receipt). You will receive a letter confirming the exact date that your asylum support will end. It is particularly important that you start making future arrangements as soon as you receive your letter, as it can take time to move on from asylum support. The Home Office will be unable to extend your support beyond 28 days.

### Getting a job or claiming benefits



You will need to seek employment and/or claim benefits. Jobcentre Plus is the government office which deals with these. Migrant Help can support you with this and will contact you to help you make your first appointment with Jobcentre Plus. It is important to do this as soon as possible.



## Finding alternative accommodation

You will need to find your own accommodation. This could be rented accommodation, a live-in job, hostel, flat, or house-share that you source yourself. As well as Migrant Help, your local council's housing department can provide advice and assistance. However, please be aware that it is likely you will need to find your own private accommodation and may only expect to be accommodated by the Local Authority if you have additional needs e.g., if you are particularly vulnerable or have children.

## Opening a bank account

You will need to open a bank account (if you do not already have one) so that you can receive any benefits payments and pay your rent if appropriate. Different banks ask for different information to open an account, but they will all need to see proof of your ID, such as your Biometric Residence Permit.

## Unsuccessful claims

If you do not have children in your household, your entitlement to asylum support will stop after 21 days. You will receive a letter that tells you the exact date when you must move out of your accommodation. It will also advise you how to apply for further support if you are taking steps to leave the UK but do not believe that you can depart within 21 days. This form of support is known as 'section 4 support' and may also be available in some other circumstances, which will be explained in the letter you will receive. You can also get advice from Migrant Help about Section 4 support.

If you have children aged under 18 in your household at the time your claim and any appeals have been refused, your asylum support will not automatically stop.

If your claim (including any appeals) has been refused, you will be expected to make arrangements to leave the UK. The Home Office provides a voluntary return service, which can help you make any necessary arrangements. For more information on this you can visit [www.gov.uk/return-home-voluntarily](http://www.gov.uk/return-home-voluntarily) or call the Voluntary Returns Service: **0300 004 0202**.

Migrant Help UK will contact you soon after you receive your decision and provide advice on next steps, including information and benefits of the Voluntary Return Service.

**If you require more information about the asylum application process, support services available to you or information on rights and responsibilities whilst in the UK you can find this here: [Information booklet about your asylum application - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)**

# Section 7 Useful contacts



## Emergency contacts:

Emergency Services (Fire/Police/Ambulance): **999**

Non-Emergency Police: **101**

Non-Emergency NHS: **111**

## National Grid Gas:

England, Scotland, and Wales: **0800 111 999**

Northern Ireland: **0800 002 001**

## Migrant Help:

Webchat: [https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat\\_launch](https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat_launch)

Raise an Issue: (<https://ellis.custhelp.com/app/ask/session>)

Freephone helpline: **0808 8010503**

These services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and offer full interpreting service.

[www.migranthelpuk.org](http://www.migranthelpuk.org)

## Home Office:

Information on applying for asylum and asylum support:

[www.gov.uk/browse/Mastercards-immigration/asylum](http://www.gov.uk/browse/Mastercards-immigration/asylum)

## Asylum Support Appeals:

[www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-tribunal-asylum-support](http://www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-tribunal-asylum-support)

## Find a legal adviser:

[www.gov.uk/find-a-legal-adviser](http://www.gov.uk/find-a-legal-adviser)

## Voluntary Returns Service:

Website: [www.gov.uk/return-home-voluntarily](http://www.gov.uk/return-home-voluntarily)

Phone: **0300 004 0202**

## Charitable organisations:

Refugee Action: [www.refugee-action.org.uk](http://www.refugee-action.org.uk)

Refugee Council: [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)

Asylum Support Appeals Project: [www.asaproject.org](http://www.asaproject.org)

Childline (Offers free, confidential advice and support to under 18's) Freephone: 0800 1111

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

**OGI**

© Crown copyright 2022

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3)

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

V