The Diocese of Southwark

A COMPANION GUIDE TO POST ASYLUM SUPPORT

Christ Centred I Outward Focused

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"The King will reply, '...I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.'

Matthew 25:35

Preface

The Home Office gives people seeking asylum who receive refugee status 56 days to move on. This means leaving asylum support and housing to find their own accommodation, find employment or access benefits. This would be hard for someone more familiar with the systems, let alone someone who has never had to engage with them before.

This has encouraged us to create a simple support guide to help navigate this process. This is not intended to replace other support that may be provided or that from support workers in this field. We hope this guide will help those who have received their refugee status in their next steps and provide a useful tool to those who support refugees in many ways, including empowering refugees to fulfil their potential.

Please note this is a working document which we hope to regularly update. Please be aware that some of these policies and information are likely to change. Organisations may change the focus of their work or close. The move on process and guidelines may also change.

We are aware that there are many of organisations, charities and projects working to support individuals and families who are affected by the refugee move on process and cannot list them all, and so we have tried to highlight the steps and processes in this time of transition. We hope this support guide can be of help and we thank those who have supported in the process.

The Justice, Peace and The Integrity of Creation Team
Diocese of Southwark

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MANN

TOGETHER SOUTHWARK

Caritas Westminster

Praxis for migrants and refugees

LewCAS Lewisham Churches for Asylum Seekers

Introduction

You have been granted asylum with leave to remain as a refugee or on humanitarian grounds. If you ask yourself: what next? Then this booklet is for you.

It provides information you can use after you have been granted asylum and explains the next steps to think about after receiving a positive decision.

Moving on from asylum support housing

If you are granted refugee status or humanitarian protection, you can:

- ask for homeless help from the council
- open a bank account
- apply for benefits
- work legally in the UK
- rent from a private landlord

This resource is intended to be a introductory guide only. For more detailed instruction, Right to Remain Toolkit offers an in-depth step-by-step guide with links (available online at https://righttoremain.org.uk/toolkit/what-happens-when-you-get-refugee-status).

Moving on
from asylum support

Your residence permit

If you have received refugee status after 31st October 2024, you will be issued an eVisa. This is an online record of your immigration status and conditions of your permission to stay in the UK. Your eVisa will include a 'share code' which is a 9 digit number which can be shared with the Department of Work and Pensions, landlords, banks and employers to confirm your immigration status.

The Home Office will create a UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) account for you when they grant you refugee status. You will be sent instructions for how to sign into your account and access your eVisa, within 14 days of receiving a positive decision on your asylum claim.

You should sign into your UKVI account as soon as you are able. Any problems with your eVisa must be reported within 10 days.

If you received refugee status **before 31st October 2024,** you may have received an immigration card with your photo on it by post approximately a week after the Home Office writes to you. The card is called a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). If you have a BRP, you will need to apply for a UKVI account and an eVisa. You can do that via gov.uk/get-access-evisa.

Source: Citizens Advice and GOV.UK

Moving on

from asylum support (cont.)

Housing

Complete an application at your council as soon as you receive your Home Office decision letter granting you asylum with leave to remain as a refugee or on humanitarian grounds. You will have 56 days on receiving this letter to find alternative housing. Do not wait until you receive a notice to leave asylum housing, but act as soon as you receive this letter.

Contact the council again as soon as you have logged into your UKVI account, checked that your eVisa is correct, and once you have notice to leave asylum housing (a asylum discontinuation of support letter: also known as an ADSL).

Any homelessness application is usually made to the council in the area where you were living when you were granted refugee status. However, they can decide to refer you to another council in some circumstances including:

- if you have lived there in asylum housing
- have found a job or have close relatives there
- you receive specialist medical treatment in that area
- or you lived there by choice for 6 months in the year before making your homeless application,
- or you have lived there by choice for 3 years in the last 5 years.

If you live in London, try to contact StreetLink at the address below for support to make your homelessness application.
StreetLink: Tel: 0300 500 0914
E: enquiries@thestreetlink.org.uk

Temporary accommodation

Emergency housing

You can apply for emergency housing from the council if you are homeless when you are requested to leave asylum housing if:

- children live with you
- you are pregnant
- you are at risk of domestic abuse
- you are under 21 and were looked after by social services when you were 16 or 17.

These things usually give a 'priority need'. That means that the council must provide emergency housing if you become homeless. Ask to speak to the “Homelessness or Housing Options Service.”
If your situation is different, you can still contact your council which will be able to discuss with you your options for accommodation.

Emergency help

Contact the Salvation Army or Shelter charities, if you are at risk of sleeping rough and have still not been given emergency accommodation. The Salvation Army runs several life houses which offer emergency accommodation on a *night-by-night basis* to people who have nowhere else to stay. Shelter can offer you advice, support and guidance with housing and benefits on its telephone advice lines.
Sadly, the demand is very high at both charities.

Salvation Army
Tel: 0207 367 4500

Shelter
Tel: 0344 515 1540
Monday to Friday
(9.30am-5pm)

Source: Shelter and Salvation Army

Opening a bank account

On receiving your initial confirmation that you have been granted refugee status, you will need to open a bank account. This will enable you to receive payments when you start working or claim benefits.

If you have been receiving asylum support payments, these will stop 28 days after you receive an asylum discontinuation of support letter (ADSL). The ADSL will be sent from the Home Office and will arrive after the letter which grants you refugee status.

You will need a form of identification (ID) to open a bank account. You may also need proof of address. It is worth going into the bank in person to explain your situation, as they will be able to advise on what forms of ID they require.

The Refugee Council have published a guide for opening and using bank accounts. It can be accessed via the following link: https://www-media.refugeecouncil.org.uk/media/documents/Banking-Guide-for-Refugees-English.pdf

Welfare benefits

and support

What you are entitled to

A person who has refugee status or has been granted permission to remain in the UK on Humanitarian grounds also has access to public funds. If you do not have a job or are not ready to work yet you will be able to claim welfare benefits.

Usually, you are required to provide a home address to do so. The type of welfare benefits you will probably apply for is Universal Credit (UC). Please be aware that it usually takes around five weeks to receive your first UC payment.

Help and advice to apply for Universal Credit

You can apply for Universal Credit Online. However, you may find it more helpful to be guided by an adviser in the early stages of the claim process.

Citizens Advice is a charity which can help you claim welfare benefits. To contact them, call 0800 1448 444 and ask for a “Help to Claim Adviser.” Ask them what documents you will need to provide. You can also ask Citizens Advice for a “translator” if you need advice in another language.

All numbers starting with 0800 are free to call on a landline and mobile phone.

Welfare benefits

and support (cont.)

Help and advice to apply for Universal Credit

There are also other advice services available. You can check The Pavement, an online magazine which offers information to people who are homeless. You can find out more information by visiting www.thepavement.org.uk/and clicking on “Services” on top of the page.

If you do not have Internet access on your phone, you can go to a library. Public libraries offer free access to computers and the Internet for two hours a day.

If you have no money to live on when you are waiting for your first Universal Credit payment, you can get some assistance by applying for an advance payment in your online account or through your Jobcentre Plus work coach. Please be aware that this is a loan which you must pay back.

If you do not have enough money to buy food, if you ask at a local church or your faith organisation, they would be able to guide you. A number of faith organisations run a food bank or support one in their area. Food banks provide emergency food and advice. People can receive a food package to live on for three days. In addition, the people you would talk to may know other places that offer help in your area.

National Insurance Number

and support

What you are entitled to

If you do want to work, then you must have a National Insurance number. Sometimes you will also hear or see words such as NI and NINO being used to refer to National Insurance number. It is made up of 2 letters, 6 numbers and a final letter, for example, QQ123456A. It is unique to you and remains the same for the rest of your life.

If you have an eVisa, then you might already have a NI number already. You will be able to view it by logging into your UKVI account.

If you do not see a NI number listed then you will need to apply for one. You can apply online via the gov.uk website. You will need certain ID documents to apply online. You can still apply if you do not have these documents, but may need to attend an in-person appointment.

To get help with your application for NI number, call 0800 141 2079.

Note: do not delay claiming benefits. If you do not have a NI number, you need to tell the Department for Work and Pensions(DWP) at the start of your claim. DWP will tell you how to apply for a NI number as part of your claim for benefits.

Source: GOV.UK, Low Income Tax Reform and Entitledto

Looking for Work

Jobcentre Plus

What you are entitled to

After applying for Universal Credit, you will be advised to register with your nearest Jobcentre Plus. A Jobcentre is a government office that helps people with information and advice about jobs. It is also involved in the administration of benefits.

What to expect

The Jobcentre Plus will allocate you an Adviser who will explain what you need to do to prepare for and look for work or increase your wages if you have already found work. You will be asked to accept an agreement called Claimant Commitment which lists everything you agreed to do. Please take it seriously.

Terms and conditions

The Jobcentre will be checking your progress. You may lose your Universal Credit if it is believed that you have not done what you agreed to do. If you face any problem, please communicate with your Adviser so they are aware of it.
You can ask your Jobcentre Adviser if they could recommend you some employment support services that could support you with your job search and interview skills.

Finding a room or a home *for rent*

Support to find a room or a home

The demand for council housing is very high, especially in London. It may take a few years to be allocated a home. Contact your council which will be able to discuss with you your options for accommodation.

While you are in contact with your local council or housing office, it would be useful to also contact the charity Refugee Council for help to find an accommodation. Sadly, the demand on Refugee Council is very high, and so they may not be able to help everyone.

To contact Refugee Council for advice and assistance in finding accommodation, please email the address below or visit its website.

E: refugeeadvice@refugeecouncil.org.uk
W: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/

The Pavement magazine also publishes information on support to find a home. Visit the website below and click on “Services” at the top of the page for more information.

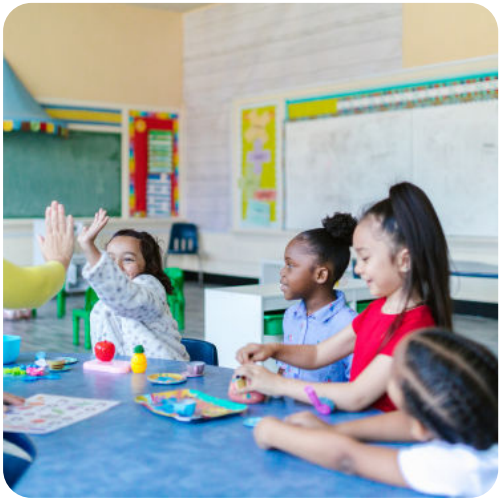
W: www.thepavement.org.uk/

Source: Refugee Council

School places
for children

Essential information

If you are a parent or guardian and have your children with you, you will need to contact your council to find a state funded school in your area. All children between the ages of 5 and 11 years old must attend primary education. Primary education is obligatory and is free of charge.
All children between the ages of 11 and 16 years old must attend secondary school. Secondary education is obligatory and is free of charge. That is regardless of the immigration status of the child or their parent(s). It is obligatory for children to be in education or training until the age of 18.



English as an additional language (EAL) support is available in primary and secondary school for children who are learning English.

In addition, you might qualify for a grant (non-repayable money) to buy school uniforms for your children. However, this is at the discretion of each school. Another option is to enquire at the school if they have a second-hand-uniform scheme or may refer you to a charity that offers second-hand school uniforms free of charge.

Register
with a doctor (GP)

Looking after your health

GP and nurse consultation in primary care services are free of charge to all. Normally, you do not need an ID, National Health Service (NHS) number or proof of address to register with a GP. However, sometime it can be difficult to be registered without these proofs. Call the reception of the GP surgery first, or go in person to find out if it is taking new registrations. If it is not, check the next nearest practice, and so on.

Telephone 111 if you need medical advice before you are registered with a GP or if your GP practice is closed. In an emergency, call 999.

Check with your local Citizens Advice if you might qualify for help such as free NHS dental treatment, NHS eye test and/or prescription.

Talk to your GP if you are struggling to sleep or get out of bed or feel like you can't stop worrying something bad will happen. If you would prefer to talk to someone else, contact the charity Mind on the number below to ask for help.

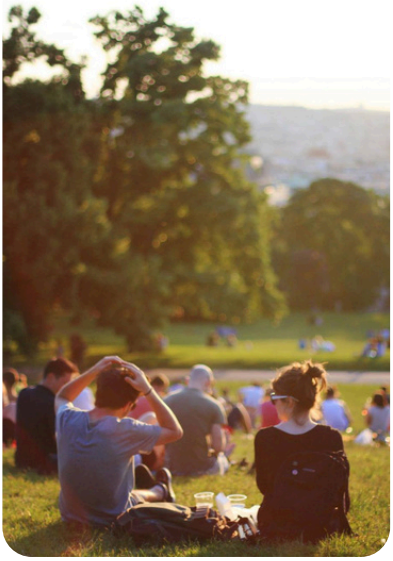
Mind Infoline: 0300 123 3393

Settling in

your new community

Integrating into the community

Being far from your home country and everything you are accustomed to can make you feel isolated and perplexed on what to do about it. If you feel that way, there are various ways you can try to integrate in your local community and groups ready to welcome you.



Some of the best ways to integrate are through accessing community spaces running activities in your area. You can find that out by asking in places such as your local faith organisation, library and Citizens Advice. You may also want to join an English for Speakers of Other Languages(ESOL) class and get involved in volunteering to build new skills that could help you find work, build confidence and friendships. If you are a parent, joining a local parents group or parents-and-toddler group can also help to support your children better and build new connections.

In summary

As soon as you receive a Home Office letter granting you refugee status:

- Contact your council and Streetlinks to apply for accommodation when you receive your decision letter.
- Contact the council again as soon as you have your eVisa details and receive notice to leave asylum housing.
- Request emergency housing if you become homeless while waiting for a decision.
- Open a bank account.
- Contact Citizens Advice and other advice services for help to claim welfare benefits, such as Universal Credit.
- Register with your nearest Job Centre Plus to look for work after submitting your claim.
- Settling in and integrating in the community: it may help to ask about activities you could join in locally.

Best of luck to you

We understand that it can take some time to settle in and restart your life in a new country. Do not hesitate to telephone support organisations if you require further help after settling in.

Annex: Useful contacts

Croydon Refugee Day Centre
West Croydon Baptist Church, Whitehorse Road, CR0 2JH
Tel: 020 8689 4527
E: admin@croydonrefugeedaycentre.co.uk
W: croydonrefugeedaycentre.co.uk

Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network
The Sayes Court, 341 Evelyn St, London SE8 5QX
Tel: 020 8694 0323
W: www.lrmn.org.uk

Manna Day Centre
12 Melior Street, London SE1 3QP
Tel: 0207 357 9363
E: mail@mannasociety.org.uk
W: www.mannasociety.org.uk

Praxis
Pott Street, London E2 0EF
Tel: 020 7749 7605
W: www.praxis.org.uk

Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers
Copleston Centre, Copleston Road, London SE15 4AN
Tel: 020 7732 0505
W: sdcas.org.uk

West London Welcome
E: hello@westlondonwelcome.com
W: www.westlondonwelcome.com/

Appendix: Useful links

Other charities that can offer employment support

Breaking Barriers
W: breaking-barriers.co.uk

Refugee Employment Network (REN)
W: refugeeemploymentnetwork.co.uk

TERN
W: wearetern.org

For additional organisations offering support, please check below

Signposting People in Your Parish
Signposting People in Your Parish is a resource that was produced for churches and community partners but is available to use. It has information on advice services. Many of those services support people who live in South London and part of East Surrey, which is the area covered by the Diocese of Southwark. However, there is also a good number of them which support people across London and the UK. You can download the resource by following the link below or typing it in your Internet browser, then scrolling down to the middle of the page.

W: https://bit.ly/togethersouthwark

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