

## **Housing Information Sheet for Newly Recognised Refugees June 2024 (amended Oct 2024 – Refugee Council)**

You are receiving this information sheet because you have been recognised as a Refugee in the UK and are no longer an Asylum Seeker. This means your Asylum Support will come to an end and in 28 days you will be asked to leave your accommodation and you will stop receiving a subsistence allowance.

It is important that you read this letter carefully and complete each of the steps outlined below as soon as possible. This will help you avoid becoming homeless when your accommodation ends. You can check the exact date your Asylum Support is due to end by checking your 'Discontinuation of Support Letter' or by contacting Migrant Help.

If you require a translation of this letter, you should attend a local day centre if you are homeless (you can find one here: <https://homeless.org.uk/homeless-england/>), or visit your nearest Citizens Advice (you can find one here: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>)

### **eVisas**

Please note that the way in which you can prove your status is changing. Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs) will no longer be valid after 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2024, and after 31<sup>st</sup> Oct 2024, the Home Office will no longer be issuing BRPs to newly recognised refugees. You will need to ensure you have a UKVI account to access your eVisa. More information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/online-immigration-status-evisa> If you need any support with your eVisa, you can contact Migrant Help on 07483 170100.

## **Things you should do to find somewhere to live in the UK.**

### **Step 1. Open a bank account**

You should open a UK bank account straight away if you haven't done so already. This will be essential for you to manage your money in the UK. To get a UK bank account you will need:

- ID (passport, biometric residence permit (if still valid), a national identity card, or eVisa)
- A proof of address (this could be a recent bill or a letter from the Home Office).

If you do not have ID you may be able to open a bank account with Monzo here: <https://monzo.com/blog/2018/05/30/getting-bank-account-refugee>.

You can find more information on opening a bank account as a refugee here: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Banking-Guide-for-Refugees-English.pdf>

## Step 2. Make a claim for welfare benefits (Universal Credit) whilst you look for work

### What is Universal Credit?

People with refugee status have the right to work in the UK and the right to claim welfare benefits. You should start looking for work so you can support yourself. Whilst you are looking for work you can apply for Universal Credit. This is a national benefit paid to people who are out of work or on low pay.

Universal Credit can be used to pay for your living expenses, including food, clothing, transport, household bills. Your Universal Credit payment is made up of a standard allowance plus more if you have extra needs, for example, if you have children, a disability, a health condition that prevents you from working, or need help paying your rent. You will be paid monthly into a UK bank account.

You will also receive help from a 'work coach' who will help you find employment. You will need to stay in regular touch with your work coach to continue receiving Universal Credit. If you are unable to work because of your health, you must make this clear when you apply to Universal Credit. You will need to provide medical evidence and depending on your health condition you may be entitled to additional financial support such as Personal Independence Payments.

### How do I apply for Universal Credit?

You can apply for Universal Credit online <https://gov.uk/apply-universal-credit>

To claim Universal Credit you will need the following

- Email address
- UK bank account
- Biometric Residence Permit (if still valid/before 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2024. After this time, eVisas are replacing BRPs and will be a valid form of ID to apply for Universal Credit) *or* your ARC (Application Registration Card) and Home Office Decision Grant Letter.
- National Insurance number which is usually on the back of your Biometric Residence Permit. If your National Insurance number is not on the back of your biometric residence permit you should request your National Insurance Number here: <https://www.gov.uk/find-national-insurance-number>. You will still be able to make a Universal Credit Application without this.
- If you have not received your Biometric Residence Permit or eVisa you can request an extension to remain in the hotel by contacting Migrant Help [positivemoveon@migranthelpuk.org](mailto:positivemoveon@migranthelpuk.org)

You must apply for Universal Credit as soon as you can. A delay in making the application will mean it is more challenging to secure accommodation and increase the risk that you become homeless when your asylum support ends.

## **What happens after I make a Universal Credit Claim?**

You should log into your Universal Credit account to check the progress of your claim and view any actions that have been assigned to you. These will be listed in the 'online journal' section of your account. It is important that you complete these actions as soon as possible to ensure there is no delay in receiving payment.

You will receive your first Universal Credit payment 5 weeks after making the application. If you need money sooner, you can apply for an advance payment. You will need to pay this advance payment back and it will be deducted from future payments. The maximum advance payment you can receive is the full amount of your first estimated payment.

You can apply for an advance payment in your [online account](#) or through your work coach.

You'll need to:

- explain why you need an advance
- Show your identity documents
- provide bank account details for the advance

## **How to get more support with applying for Universal Credit?**

Citizens Advice is a charity that can help you with your Universal Credit claim.

- You can call the Citizens Advice Help to Claim for free on 0800 1448 444 (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday).
- You can get more information on the Citizens Advice Website and ask questions via the web chat <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/>

## **Step 3: Make a homelessness application to your local council**

### **How do I get support with housing?**

Your local council has a legal duty to take reasonable steps to prevent or end your homelessness. It's essential that you tell your local council that your asylum support is ending and you are at risk of homelessness as soon as possible. You can find details of your local council here <https://www.gov.uk/homelessness-help-from-council>

You will need to follow the instructions on the 'homelessness' section of the local council website to make contact. You will likely need to complete an online form and provide your contact details so they can get in touch with you or attend in person at the council office. If you need support to make contact with your local council, then speak to Migrant Help as soon as possible.

Remember, you may come into contact with local charities and support groups who offer advice around housing, but it is really important to make sure you contact your local council as it is the council that has the legal duty to help you find somewhere to live.

## **What will the local council do to help me find somewhere to live?**

The local council will allocate you a Housing Officer and complete an assessment of your needs and the support you will require to find somewhere to live. They will work with you to produce a personal housing plan which will outline the actions that you will be expected to take and the actions that the council agrees to take over the next 56 days.

You must stay in regular contact with your Housing Officer and let them know about your progress in completing the actions assigned to you and any changes in circumstances.

## **What are housing options available to me?**

The housing options available to you will be dependent on your circumstances. It is most likely that this will be support to rent accommodation from a private landlord. The local council will put you in touch with potential landlords and help you with a rent deposit. You will need to attend viewings of potential properties.

If you are a vulnerable person then the councils might provide you with interim accommodation whilst you are securing long term housing. This option is only available for people who meet the legal definition of being in 'priority need.' You are in priority need if:

- you're pregnant
- you are the primary carer for children
- you're under 21 and were in care when you were under 18
- the council decide you're vulnerable.

The council might consider you to be vulnerable because of a disability, health condition or illness which affects your daily life or because of trauma from your experiences in your home country or efforts to reach the UK.

You can find out more about whether you meet the definition of priority need here: [https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice/homelessness/priority\\_need](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness/priority_need)

## **How does the Housing Crisis affect me?**

There is currently a serious shortage of housing in the UK. This means:

1. It is essential to act quickly to secure somewhere to live. There are very often many potential applicants for one property.
2. It is important to be realistic about the type of accommodation available to you. In the UK it is very common to share a house with other people. It is very likely that, to begin with, you will move into a house where you will have your own room and will share a kitchen and bathroom facilities.

People who are under 35 years old can only claim the housing element of Universal Credit to cover the cost of a room in shared house although there are some

exceptions

here: [https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice/benefits/benefits\\_for\\_under\\_35s\\_in\\_shared\\_housing](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/benefits/benefits_for_under_35s_in_shared_housing)

3. The council that is responsible for supporting you with your housing is the council to which you have a local connection. If you are leaving asylum support accommodation, then the area your accommodation is located is very likely to be your 'local connection' and it is this council that is responsible for helping you to find somewhere to live.

In some areas, the lack of available housing means that the local council can only help you find housing in other parts of the UK where this is more housing available.

You might be interested in moving to other parts of the UK, however you should be aware that local councils in other parts of the UK are likely to direct you back to the area where you have a local connection as it is this local council that has the duty to support you with housing. You can find out more about local connection here: [What is a local connection? - Shelter England](#)

Remember, it is important to secure accommodation to avoid becoming homeless. Once you are in employment it may be easier to move to other parts of the UK in a planned way.

You should look for housing using the below websites. If you find accommodation and need support with a rent deposit you should contact your Housing Officer to let them know:

<http://www.dssmove.co.uk>  
<http://www.spareroom.co.uk>  
<http://loot.com/category/property/rooms-shares/>  
<http://www.rightmove.co.uk>  
<http://property.adzuna.co.uk/to-rent>  
<http://www.zoopla.co.uk/to-rent/>  
<https://homes.trovit.co.uk/>  
<http://www.benefithousing.co.uk/london/>  
<https://www.openrent.co.uk/properties-to-rent/>

If you are unable to find accommodation before your asylum support ends you should contact your Housing Officer to ask if they can provide you with emergency accommodation.

**If you are sleeping on the streets**, you should make an alert to StreetLink so that the local outreach team can contact you: <https://thestreetlink.org.uk/>

## How to get additional support with housing?

Shelter is a charity that provides advice to people who are experiencing homelessness. Shelter do not provide accommodation but can help explore your options and identify next steps. You can call free on 0808 800 4444.

### Where can I find additional support?

You can apply for a Refugee Integration Loan to help you settle in the UK. You can use this to cover the cost of education and training or housing. You can apply here: <https://www.gov.uk/refugee-integration-loan>

If you are receiving Universal Credit you can apply for discounted travel. Speak to your work coach about this or write a request in your online journal.

You may be entitled to additional financial support, depending on your circumstances. You can find out more here: <https://www.turn2us.org.uk/>

**If you need emotional support**, you can contact:

Samaritans: Emotional Support: 116 123

Mind: UK-wide mental health support service, 0300 123 3393, [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)

## How can Refugee Council help?

If you are seeking asylum or have been recognised as a refugee and are still in Asylum Support Accommodation, you can contact **Infoline** for signposting, information, and casework support. Please see our webpage with details here: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/get-support/services/infoline/>

If you are a newly recognised refugee within the last 6 months, and homeless or at risk of destitution, our **Refugee Advice Project** can support you on issues relating to housing, welfare benefits, and health support. If you would like to be referred to our service, please see our webpage with details here: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/get-support/services/refugee-advice-service-london/>

If you are currently rough sleeping and have a connection to North-East or South-East London, you may be eligible for our **Private Rented Scheme** which supports newly recognised refugees into private rented housing. We accept referrals from rough sleeping outreach teams, and you can find more information here: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/get-support/services/private-rented-scheme/> If you think you are eligible, please contact your rough sleeping outreach team in the first instance.