

A Shelter guide

Updated July 2013

Asylum seekers and refugees

Accessing accommodation
and housing support

Shelter

Asylum seekers and refugees

This guide explains the general help and housing support you are entitled to if you are:

- an asylum seeker
- a refugee, or
- a failed asylum seeker.

This guide is only an introduction to the law in England. It is only about your right to support and accommodation. If you intend to apply for asylum in the UK but have not done so, your application must be made to the UK Border Agency (UKBA) as soon as possible (see page 25). For advice about your asylum claim or any appeal you need to contact an immigration adviser (see page 19).

If you need more detailed information, you should get advice from a Shelter advice service or citizens advice bureau, or call Shelter's free housing advice helpline **0808 800 4444** (open 8am to 8pm Mon to Fri and 8am to 5pm on weekends. Calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks).

Shelter's free online housing information

shelter.org.uk/advice

If you live in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland you can contact Shelter Cymru, Shelter Scotland or the Housing Rights Service (see pages 23–24 for contact details).

Names or terms highlighted in **bold** throughout the text are explained fully in the Glossary on pages 20–22.

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An **asylum seeker** is someone who has made an application to the **UK Border Agency (UKBA)** for **refugee status** and whose application has not yet been decided. It also includes someone who claims they will be subject to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment if they have to leave the UK.

What support do asylum seekers get?

If you are an **asylum seeker** you may be entitled to housing and/or money from the Government, depending on your circumstances. This is called 'asylum support' and is usually arranged by the **UKBA**.

The **One Stop Service** can help you apply for support and with any problems getting the support you need (for further information see tinyurl.com/one-stop-services).

Asylum seekers are entitled to health care from the National Health Service (NHS) and can see a doctor or receive hospital treatment free of charge. If you are receiving asylum support you need a HC2 certificate which enables you and your **dependents** to get free prescriptions for medicines, free dental care, eye tests and spectacles. You need to complete form HC1, which is available from Jobcentre Plus offices, most NHS hospitals, doctors, dentists or opticians. You can also get an HC1 form by calling 0845 610 1112.

Your children should have a school place between the ages of 5 and 16, and you must make sure that they go to school.

If you, or one of your family, has a disability or a health problem you may get extra support from social services – a department of the local council. If you are a child and have no family in the UK or you are an adult with substantial disabilities it is social services and not the **UKBA** who should give you accommodation and support (see page 17).

If your asylum claim is successful, you can apply for most of the same benefits as British citizens, for more information see page 13.

Am I entitled to asylum support from the UKBA?

- Are you 18 years of age or older?
- Have you applied for asylum in the UK?
- Are you still waiting for a decision on your asylum claim?
- Do you need help with your living costs or somewhere to live?

If you can answer **'yes'** to all four questions you may be entitled to asylum support. If you didn't apply for asylum at your port of entry into the UK, you may have to prove your arrival date in the UK. This could affect your support entitlements (see page 10 for more information).

I am under 18 years of age

If you are an **asylum seeker** under 18, and have arrived in the UK without an adult, you can get help from the local council's social services department. It will provide you with somewhere to stay, food and clothing. As an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child you should contact the Refugee Council's Children's Panel on 0808 808 0500 or visit tinyurl.com/childrens-panel

If your asylum claim has not been decided by your 18th birthday, the **UKBA** and social services should work together to make sure you can stay in the same area so that social services can continue to support you.

I have a disability or other special needs

If your disability is significant you should be provided with somewhere to stay and support by your local council's social services department. If you are already being supported by the **UKBA** you may be able to get extra support from your local council's social services department (see page 17).

What if I have somewhere to stay?

If you have somewhere to stay but no money to support yourself, you can apply to the **UKBA** for financial support to pay for food and other basic costs. The **UKBA** will not pay your rent or utility bills, such as

gas and electricity. If you have to leave your accommodation, you can reapply to the **UKBA** for both accommodation and support.

What if I have some money?

If you have access to money or property that you could sell, you may not be eligible for asylum support. The **UKBA** will take into account any assets that you have, including:

- money in the form of cash, savings, or investments
- valuable possessions, including cars
- property or land.

If you have any of the above, but you cannot access them (because they are abroad, for example), you will have to explain this in the form. The **UKBA** should still help you in these circumstances.

How do I apply for asylum support from the UKBA?

The **UKBA** will allocate a ‘case owner’ to deal with all aspects of your asylum claim. This is a **UKBA** officer who will deal with your claim from the first interview until the final decision. S/he will also be responsible for helping you to apply for asylum support for yourself and your family.

When do I apply?

Most asylum seekers apply for asylum support when they make their asylum application. However, you can apply for asylum support at any time before your asylum claim is finally decided. The **One Stop Service** (see tinyurl.com/one-stop-services) in your area can help you to fill in the application form.

What else do I need to do?

There are conditions that you must agree to when you apply for asylum support. You will have to sign an agreement that sets out these conditions. For example, you must tell whoever provides support if you are going to be away from the accommodation provided. You must

also tell the **UKBA** about any changes in your situation, such as someone joining or leaving your household.

It is very important that you understand the conditions because if you break any of them without good reason the **UKBA** can stop supporting you. If this happens you can appeal against the decision to stop your support (see page 10).

What kind of support will I get from the UKBA?

Asylum support usually means being provided with somewhere to live and a weekly cash allowance.

Money

You will get a standard weekly allowance to pay for the essentials for you and your family. This is less than ordinary benefits because you do not have to pay any bills in your accommodation. Pregnant women and mothers with children under three years old get a slightly higher amount.

Also, you are entitled to £300 if you have a baby. This is not paid automatically – you must apply for it and no later than six weeks after the baby is born (see tinyurl.com/cash-allowance). In exceptional circumstances, the **UKBA** may decide you need help with other costs. This is known as an ‘exceptional payment’.

Accommodation

If you have nowhere to stay, the **UKBA** must provide somewhere you can live with your family (if they are with you in the UK). This will usually be outside London and the South East.

The accommodation could be a self-contained house or flat, or in a hostel or bed and breakfast hotel. You may have cooking facilities or may get some, or all, meals provided. You will not get a choice about what kind of accommodation you get or where it is. However, the **UKBA** must take account of your needs and in very exceptional cases may agree to provide a specific kind of place in a particular area, for example, if you need to attend a special hospital on a regular basis.

The **UKBA** will only make one offer of accommodation and you will be expected to accept it, even if it is in an area you do not want to live in. The **UKBA** will make the arrangements for your travel to the accommodation. If you refuse the accommodation or fail to travel, without a good reason, the **UKBA** will stop supporting you.

What standards should I expect?

Any accommodation provided by the **UKBA** should meet minimum quality and safety standards, which include:

- if you have children, the accommodation must be suitable for them
- there should be smoke alarms and clear escape routes – there should be no furniture or rubbish in the corridors
- all gas and electrical appliances should be tested yearly. This includes your boiler, cooker, and any gas fires. If you think any appliances are unsafe, contact the local council's environmental health officer (see below).

If you are living in a house which is shared by other families, special rules apply. Some of these houses must be licensed by the council, and the minimum standards include:

- there should be at least one toilet and one bath or shower for every five people who have to share.
- If the kitchens are shared there must be enough facilities (sinks, fridges, cookers) for the number of people who share them.

If you think your **UKBA** accommodation does not meet these standards, you can complain to your landlord or accommodation provider. Making a complaint will not affect your asylum application as your landlord does not work for the **Home Office**.

If no action is taken you can contact an **environmental health officer (EHO)** at the local council. The **EHO** should then inspect your house. You can ask to remain anonymous, in which case the **EHO** will tell the landlord that they are making a routine visit. If the landlord does not act on the **EHO's** recommendations, s/he can be prosecuted and fined.

When will I get support?

If you apply when you make your asylum claim you should be given emergency support and accommodation immediately. Otherwise, **UKBA** applications are expected to take between seven and 10 days to process, but in many cases it takes longer.

While the **UKBA** process your application you should be placed in emergency accommodation which will usually be a hotel or hostel where your meals will be provided. If your application is accepted you will usually be given accommodation outside London and the South East and arrangements will be made for you to travel to the accommodation.

If you do not travel, the **UKBA** will terminate your accommodation and support. You can appeal against this decision but you will need to have exceptional reasons for not accepting the accommodation. See *Appealing to the Asylum Support Tribunal (AST)* on page 10.

If you can find somewhere to stay in London or the South East you could reapply for financial support only.

What if the UKBA refuses or terminates my support?

There are a number of reasons why the **UKBA** may refuse to support you or stop supporting you. In most cases, but not all, you can appeal to the **Asylum Support Tribunal (AST)**, see page 10 and visit www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/asylum-support

The UKBA says I delayed in making my asylum claim

The **UKBA** expect you to claim asylum as soon as you can after you arrive in the UK, or as soon as you realise that you may have problems if you have to return to your home country. If the **UKBA** says that you did not make your asylum claim as soon as you could have done, they may refuse to provide asylum support. If this happens get advice as soon as possible.

These decisions (known as ‘section 55’ decisions) cannot be appealed but can be challenged in the courts. You may be able to show that the **UKBA** are wrong or have acted unfairly. Even if the **UKBA** are right that you could have claimed asylum sooner, they must provide support if there would be a breach of your human rights. This is a complicated area of law so you will need help to challenge the **UKBA**.

Contact the Refugee Council’s advice line on 0808 808 2255 for general advice, call Civil Legal Advice on 0845 345 4345 to help you find a legal adviser, or visit www.gov.uk/find-a-legal-adviser

The UKBA say I don’t need support

The **UKBA** may decide that you don’t need support because you have somewhere to stay and have people who can support you. If this happens and you disagree, you can appeal to the **Asylum Support Tribunal (AST)**, see below.

The UKBA say I breached the conditions of support

When you are offered support you will have to sign an agreement which should set out the conditions. If you breach any of the conditions without a good reason the **UKBA** may terminate your support. If this happens and you disagree, you can appeal to the **Asylum Support Tribunal (AST)**, see below.

Appealing to the Asylum Support Tribunal (AST)

Most disputes about asylum support are dealt with by the **Asylum Support Tribunal (AST)**. The full name is the First-tier Tribunal (Asylum Support), see www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/asylum-support. It only deals with asylum support and not your asylum claim.

You can appeal to the AST about the following decisions:

- The **UKBA** has refused support because it says you don’t need it.
- You asked for extra support and the **UKBA** refused.
- The **UKBA** stopped supporting you because you breached the conditions of support.

- The **UKBA** stopped supporting you because you failed to travel to where your accommodation is/was.

You cannot appeal against a refusal of support under section 55, which is where the **UKBA** say you did not claim asylum as soon as you should have done. These decisions can only be challenged in the courts under a procedure called **judicial review** – you will need help from a solicitor to do this (see page 18).

How do I appeal?

When the **UKBA** makes a decision about your asylum support it will send you a decision letter and the letter will tell whether you can appeal and the deadline for sending in your appeal. The deadline is three working days from the date you received the decision. The **AST** can allow you to appeal after this time if you had a good reason for not being able to put in the appeal in time.

Filling in the appeal form

The Notice of Appeal form and guidance can be downloaded from tinyurl.com/Form-E09. You can get help from the **One Stop Service** to complete and send off the appeal form.

The form must:

- be completed in English
- be signed by you (or your representative)
- state the date of the decision you are appealing against or you can attach a copy of the decision.

If the form is not filled in properly your appeal will be rejected by the **AST**.

The hearing

If there is a hearing it will be at one of the Tribunal hearing centres which are in different parts of the country. The **UKBA** will pay for you to travel to the hearing and, if necessary, for accommodation the night before the hearing. Interpreters will be arranged by the **AST** if you need one.

If you and the **UKBA** agree, the appeal can be decided without a hearing.

There is no **legal aid** (government money that can pay for your legal costs) for representation at the **AST**. The **Asylum Support Appeals Project** (ASAP) gives free advice and may be able to represent you at the hearing (see page 24). You will need an adviser to contact ASAP about representation as they do not deal directly with people who are appealing.

What happens if my asylum claim is successful?

If a decision is made on your asylum application and you are given **refugee status** and leave to remain, your asylum support will stop 28 days after you receive the decision. You will then have to leave your **UKBA** accommodation. You will be entitled to get a job and to apply for welfare benefits. If you need help with rent, you can claim **housing benefit** from the local council. However, before applying for **housing benefit**, you have to find accommodation. For more information read Shelter's free guide *Finding a place to live*.

To claim benefits or to work you will need a **National Insurance Number** (NINO). To apply for a **NINO** call Jobcentre Plus on 0300 200 3505. You can start working before you have a **NINO** but must apply for one immediately (see www.gov.uk/national-insurance).

To claim most benefits call Jobcentre Plus on the freephone number 0800 055 6688 or visit www.gov.uk/browse/benefits

You should apply for a **NINO** and benefits as soon as you receive your status letter because applications can take time to process.

You can't get **housing benefit** until you have a place to live but the local council housing benefit office can tell you how much **housing benefit** you will get, which will help you decide where to live. For more information see Shelter's free guide *Housing benefit*.

What if I am homeless?

If you don't have anywhere to live, you can apply to the homelessness unit or housing options team of your local council for help. The rules on what sort of help the council has to give you are complicated, and your rights will depend on your personal circumstances. At the very least, the council has to look into your situation and give you advice to help you find a home. Depending on your circumstances, you may also be entitled to accommodation provided by the council.

You should apply to the local council in the area where you were living when you were receiving asylum support. If the council refuses to help you, see page 18 or see Shelter's free guide, *Homeless? Read this* for more information.

Can I apply for council housing?

You will be eligible for council housing but will have to put your name on the waiting list. Permanent council housing is a good option, as council tenants have stronger rights and lower rents than most other tenants. However, there are a lot of people waiting for council housing, so it could be a long time before you get an offer.

If the **UKBA** does not recognise you as a refugee but accepts you need to stay in the UK for another reason you will be usually be given **Humanitarian Protection** or **discretionary leave** for a limited period of time. Until your leave expires you will have the same rights as refugees – the right to work, claim benefits and to apply for housing.

The **UKBA** gives **refugee status** and **Humanitarian Protection** for an initial period of five years. **Discretionary leave** will usually will be for a shorter period. Those with **refugee status** or **Humanitarian Protection** will usually be granted **Indefinite Leave to Remain** after the initial five years (see tinyurl.com/discretionary-leave for more information).

What if the leave I have expires?

Whatever kind of leave to remain in the UK you have, you must apply to extend or vary it before it expires. It often takes the **UKBA** a long time to make decisions. If you apply before your leave expires, you will be treated as still having leave and will be entitled to work, to claim

benefits and help with your housing. This will be the case until the **UKBA** make a decision on your application.

If you do not apply until after your leave has expired you will lose all of those rights. You will become an 'overstayer' with no right to housing or benefits until the **UKBA** makes a decision.

What happens if my asylum claim is unsuccessful?

If your asylum claim is unsuccessful, your asylum support will usually stop 21 days after you receive the decision (unless you appeal, see below). However, if you have children under 18 living with you, your asylum support will continue until you leave the UK or your youngest child reaches the age of 18.

What happens if I am appealing the asylum decision?

If you appeal against the decision to refuse your asylum claim you will continue to receive asylum support until your appeal is decided. You will need to contact an immigration adviser as soon as you receive the decision refusing your asylum claim. You must not delay as there is a deadline for making an appeal. The appeal must be received by the Immigration and Asylum Tribunal within 10 working days of the decision (or five if you are in detention). Although you can apply to have your appeal dealt with out of time you will not be entitled to asylum support while the **UKBA** decides whether to accept your appeal. For more information see www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/immigration-asylum

To find an immigration adviser, call Civil Legal Advice on 0845 345 4345. For general advice, visit www.refugeecouncil.org.uk or contact the Refugee Council's advice line on 0808 808 2255.

What if my asylum appeal is refused?

If the **UKBA** does not recognise you as a refugee and refuses to grant you any other kind of leave to remain you are expected to leave the UK. You can get help to return to your country of origin from the **International Organisation for Migration**, see www.imo.int

If you stay in the UK you will not be entitled to asylum support, welfare benefits or housing and you are not allowed to work.

If you are willing to leave the UK but cannot do so immediately you may be able to get support and accommodation from the **UKBA** under **section 4** (see below). You may also be able to get **section 4 support** if you are challenging the **UKBA** by way of **judicial review**, even if your asylum appeal has failed (see tinyurl.com/section4support).

If you have some other reason for staying in the UK, for example if you have family here or have had a child who has been brought up here, you may be able to get either **section 4 support** or help from social services until your new application to the **UKBA** is decided.

Section 4 support

Section 4 support is a form of asylum support provided by the **UKBA** to failed asylum seekers who are unable to leave the UK. It is sometime called ‘hard cases’ support. It is usually in accommodation outside of London and the South East where meals are provided rather than a weekly cash allowance (see tinyurl.com/section4support).

You may get **section 4 support** if one or more of the following applies to you:

- you are trying to leave the UK but cannot do so because you cannot get travel documents from your embassy
- you temporarily cannot travel because of ill-health or because you are in the late stages of pregnancy
- a refusal to provide accommodation would mean that your human rights would be breached – this may be the case if you have made a new application for permission to remain in the UK on different grounds, have made a fresh claim for asylum or have put in a late appeal against the refusal of asylum
- you have applied for **judicial review** to challenge a decision made by the **UKBA** and the court has given permission to proceed with your claim

- although the **UKBA** have decided you would be safe in your home country they accept that there is no safe route for you to travel there.

You can get help to make an application for **section 4 support** from the **One Stop Service**, a Shelter advice service, or citizens advice bureau (see page 18). There are often delays in dealing with applications for **section 4 support** so you may also need help in making sure your application is decided within a reasonable time.

Can I get help from social services?

Most **asylum seekers** and some **failed asylum seekers** are provided with accommodation and support by the **UKBA**, but in some cases the social services department of local councils are under a duty to help.

This is a very complicated area of law and if you think you need help from social services, you should get advice as soon as possible (see page 18).

For **asylum seekers** whose claims have not been decided, social services are responsible for providing accommodation and support to the following:

- adults with disabilities or significant ill health, and
- children who are ‘unaccompanied’ asylum seekers – that is in the UK without an adult. A child is a person aged under 18.

Also, where a family is receiving support and accommodation from the **UKBA** but there are children with special needs, social services may have a duty to provide extra support, for example with special equipment or adaptations.

If you are a failed **asylum seeker** social services should report any request for help to the **UKBA**.

Services for adults

For adults who are seeking help from social services, the first step is always to request an assessment of your needs. It is often hard to persuade social services to do an assessment even though the law

says they must do this if there are services that you might be entitled to. You will probably need help from an adviser to make sure that social services carry out an assessment. They will then decide if you are entitled to help and, if so, what services you need.

Services for children

If you are an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child, you will usually be referred by the **UKBA** to social services who must provide accommodation and financial support. This may be in semi-independent accommodation, or with a foster family. This will usually depend on your age, but social services should take account of your wishes and feelings.

Social services' duties apply to all children and do not depend on there being an assessment of need. However, the **UKBA** and/or social services may not agree that you are a child. If you have no papers to prove your identity and age, it will be up to social workers to decide how old they think you are. They will usually arrange to interview you to make a decision. You are entitled to have an adult present during the interview. The Refugee Council Children's Panel will be able to help you with this. They can be contacted on 0808 808 0500.

If social services say that you are older than you say you are, you can challenge this decision. You will need help from a solicitor. The Refugee Council Children's Panel can usually help you to find one.

If social services accepts that you are a child they must provide support and accommodation and support until you are 18. Even after you reach 18 they must continue to support and help with things like education, training and finding work, as long as they were accommodating you for at least 13 weeks before you were 18. This lasts until you are 21, or if you are in full-time education, until you are 25. You will be entitled to this help as long as you are still an **asylum seeker** or if you are given some kind of leave to stay in the UK. If your asylum claim is refused and you don't have leave to stay, the duties are more limited (see page 18).

Help for failed asylum seekers

Where a person is in the UK in breach of immigration law, there is a limit on the help that social services can give. This includes failed **asylum seekers** who did not claim asylum at the port of entry.

In most cases the only help available if you are a failed **asylum seeker** will be **section 4 support**, see page 15. However, in the following cases it may be that social services have a duty to provide you with accommodation and support:

- you have a disability which means that you need 'looking after'.
- Social services previously provided you with accommodation, for at least 13 weeks, before you reached the age of 18. You must be under the age of 21 or, if in full-time education, under the age of 25.

To get support from social services you will also have to show that your human rights would be breached if you are refused support. This may be the case if you have made an application to the **UKBA** that has not yet been decided. This could include a fresh asylum claim, an out of time appeal against the refusal of asylum or a new application for leave on different human rights grounds. For example if you have had children who are settled in the UK or you have formed important relationships with people based in the UK.

If you have not made any new application to the **UKBA** and have no grounds to do so, social services are likely to say that there will be no breach of your human rights if they refuse support as you can return to your own country. In some cases they may offer help to pay for your trip.

In practice, many social services departments simply refuse any application for help from failed **asylum seekers**. You will usually need advice and assistance from a housing or community care adviser to get the help you need (see page 18 and pages 23–25).

Getting help and advice

The **UKBA** funds a number of voluntary organisations across the UK to help **asylum seekers**. These organisations run **One Stop Services** where you can get help and advice about your claim for asylum support.

They can help you to apply for support and chase the **UKBA** if your support is delayed or stopped. They can also help you to appeal if your support is suspended or refused. For details of the **One Stop Services** in your part of the country visit tinyurl.com/one-stop-services. **Please note** – they do not give immigration advice.

If you are a destitute **asylum seeker** you will also be entitled to free legal advice from a solicitor about your asylum claim – this is called **legal aid**. You can ask the **One Stop Service** to help you find a legal aid solicitor, or visit www.gov.uk/find-a-legal-adviser, or call Civil Legal Advice on 0845 345 4345. Not all solicitors offer legal aid but they must tell you about legal aid and if they have advised you that you can get free advice and representation from a legal aid solicitor, they should not charge you money.

Legal aid solicitors may also be able to help if you:

- have problems with your asylum support from the **UKBA**
- need help from social services
- need help with housing and benefits after your asylum claim has been decided.

You can also get housing advice from a Shelter housing advice service or citizens advice bureau; or by contacting Shelter's free housing advice helpline on **0808 800 4444**; or by visiting shelter.org.uk/advice

Glossary

Accommodation providers

The UKBA has contracts with a number of accommodation providers that manage landlords or provide accommodation in different regions.

Asylum seeker

A person seeking refugee status in the UK because s/he claims that s/he will be at risk of persecution if returned to her/his home country. It also includes someone who claims they will be subject to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment if they have to leave the UK.

Asylum support tribunal (AST)

The court that deals with most disputes about asylum support. Its full name is the First-tier Tribunal (Asylum Support).

Dependent

A dependent generally means the husband, wife, partner, or child of the asylum applicant. However, it can also mean children living as part of the asylum applicant's household.

Discretionary leave

A status which the Home Office can grant an asylum seeker who does not qualify for refugee status. Asylum seeking children will usually be granted discretionary leave until six months before they turn 18.

Emergency accommodation

Temporary housing provided by the UKBA while your UKBA application is being processed. Emergency accommodation is not the same as UKBA accommodation. It is provided while you're waiting for your asylum application to be processed.

Environmental health officer (EHO)

S/he is responsible for protecting public health, including carrying out and enforcing laws related to environmental health, and provides

support to minimise health and safety hazards. S/he is involved in a number of activities, such as investigating public health nuisances and inspecting housing.

EHOs focus on prevention, investigation, and education of the community regarding health risks and maintaining a safe environment.

Home Office

This is the government department that deals with justice and home affairs, including asylum and immigration.

Housing benefit

This is money paid by local councils to help people, who are not working or have a low incomes, with their rent payments. It usually only covers rent, not any other costs. Asylum seekers are not eligible for housing benefit but those with refugee status, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave are.

Humanitarian protection

This is a temporary protection for asylum seekers who do not meet the requirements of being classed as refugees, but who are allowed to remain in the UK on human rights grounds.

Indefinite leave to remain

This status is given when you have been granted leave to remain in the UK but are not subject under immigration law to any conditions or restrictions on your period of stay.

Induction centre

A residential centre where asylum seekers are briefed and assisted, while their UKBA applications are being processed.

Judicial review

This is where the High Court examines whether a public body has correctly applied the law in reaching their decision. This includes some immigration decisions, where there is no right of appeal, and some decisions by local councils.

National insurance number (NINO)

This is a personal reference number used by the Government to identify you for benefit and tax purposes. You will only be given a NINO when you are entitled to work or claim benefits.

One Stop Service

A service for asylum seekers run by voluntary organisations, such as the Refugee Council, which can help you with your UKBA application and any queries you have about the asylum process.

Refugee status

A status given to an asylum seeker who is considered by the Home Office to come within the definition of refugee, as described in the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees. A person with refugee status is initially given five years leave to remain in the UK. Before the end of the five years they can apply for indefinite leave to remain and this will usually be granted unless there has been a change in their situation, for example, the Government in their home country has changed or civil war has ended.

Section 4 support (sometimes called ‘hard cases support’)

This is a special form of support for people whose asylum applications have failed and they’ve reached the end of the application process but cannot be returned to their country of origin.

Social services

A local council department that deals with issues of care and welfare.

UK Border Agency (UKBA)

The Home Office department responsible for all immigration and asylum issues (previously the Immigration and Nationality Directorate). The UKBA provides asylum support to destitute asylum seekers and administers the asylum support system. Asylum support was previously provided by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) and may still often referred to as ‘NASS support’.

Contact Shelter

You can call our free housing advice helpline. Calls to Shelter and Shelter Scotland are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks. We can provide minicom or interpreting services.

The cost of calling Shelter Cymru will depend on your landline and mobile provider and your contract with them.

Shelter

 **0808 800 4444**

Mondays–Fridays: 8am–8pm
Weekends: 8am–5pm

Shelter Cymru

 **0845 075 5005**

Mondays–Fridays: 9am–5pm

Shelter Scotland

 **0808 800 4444**

Mondays–Fridays: 9am–5pm

For online information about your housing rights and details of local advice services, visit:

- shelter.org.uk/advice
- sheltercymru.org.uk
- shelterscotland.org

Useful organisations

Advice UK

☎ 0300 777 0107
www.adviceuk.org.uk

Asylum Aid

☎ 020 7354 9264
www.asylumaid.org.uk

Asylum Support Appeals Project (ASAP)

☎ 020 7729 3042
www.asaproject.org

Asylum Support Tribunal

☎ 0800 389 7913
www.justice.gov.uk/contacts/hmcts/tribunals/asylum-support

Citizens Advice

☎ 08454 04 05 06
www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Civil Legal Advice

☎ 0845 345 4345
emailhelp@civillegaladvice.org.uk
<https://claonlineadvice.justice.gov.uk>

Equality and Human Rights Commission

☎ 0808 800 0082
www.equalityhumanrights.com

Gov.uk (the Government's public services website)

www.gov.uk
Find a legal adviser:
www.gov.uk/find-a-legal-adviser
Eligibility for legal aid:
www.gov.uk/check-legal-aid

Housing Rights Service

(Northern Ireland)
☎ 028 9024 5640
www.housing-rights.org.uk

International Organisation for Migration

www.iom.int

Jobcentre Plus

To make a claim for benefits.
☎ 0800 055 6688
www.gov.uk/browse/benefits
To apply for a NI number
☎ 0300 200 3505
www.gov.uk/national-insurance

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants

www.jcwi.org.uk

Medical Foundation for the care of victims of torture

☎ 020 7697 7777
www.freedomfromtorture.org

Migrant Helpline

☎ 01304 203 977
www.migranthelpline.org

Refugee Action

www.refugee-action.org.uk

Refugee Council

☎ 0808 808 2255
www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

UK Border Agency (UKBA)

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/asylum

We help over a million people a year struggling with bad housing or homelessness – and we campaign to prevent it in the first place.

We're here so no-one has to fight bad housing or homelessness on their own.

Please support us at **shelter.org.uk**

Until there's a home for everyone

88 Old Street
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shelter.org.uk

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Shelter