

Moving on from Asylum Accommodation

A Leicester guide for people with refugee status

Introduction

This document aims to help and advise people who have recently received refugee status on the next steps of resettlement. You will be required to leave your Home Office accommodation within 28 days of receiving status. We recognise this does not give you much time, so it is very important that you start planning for what to do after you leave the accommodation provided for you.

Your next steps should be:

1. Open a bank account: you need to do this to receive Universal Credit, get paid for work and/or pay your rent.
2. Claim Universal Credit: this is a monthly payment from the government for people with no or low income. You can get help on how to claim this from the Job Centre.
3. Look for a job: you can get support from the Job Centre and from Leicester Employment Hub.
4. Search for housing: this will probably be a room in a flat/house you share with others.

Housing is very difficult to find in Leicester. Rents are high, the waiting time for council accommodation is very long, due to the lack of affordable housing, and there are many people looking for somewhere to stay.

The council may not be able to find you accommodation, and it is important that you start looking for your own accommodation. You may have to consider staying with friends or family in the short-term. Remember, you can always move again once you are settled and have more money and time to find somewhere to live long-term.

IMPORTANT

If you have not received your BRP (Bio-Metric Residence Permit) card or there is an error with your BRP card, you must contact Migrant Help as soon as possible, as they can seek permission for you to stay in your current accommodation, until this is sorted.

If you follow the above process, you should not be evicted from your accommodation until you have a BRP with the correct details.

Set up a bank account

You should set up a bank account as soon as possible before you leave your NASS Accommodation. This will be how you receive Universal Credit and/or your salary/wages when you start working.

There are many different banks. An account with a digital bank is the easiest to set up.

You will need to provide your telephone number and email address as well as proof of your identity and your address.

Identity document could be a:

- Passport
- Biometric residence permit
- Immigration status document

Proof of address documents could be a:

- Letter from the Home Office
- A recent bill

The Refugee Council has produced a detailed guidance document in English and other languages:

<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/latest/news/refugee-council-launches-new-guide-to-help-refugees-open-a-bank-account/>

If you still don't have a bank account and you no longer have an address, there are some banks that will still allow you to open an account. You can search for options on the internet, or ask for advice about this from Migrant Help.

Claim Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a monthly payment from the government for people who are out of work, cannot work or on low income. It is important you apply as soon as possible as this will be used to pay your rent and expenses prior to finding a job.

How to claim

You need to make an account online: <https://www.universal-credit.service.gov.uk/start>

Before receiving Universal Credit, you will need to have set up a bank account.

What you will need to make your application

- Your bank account details
- An email address
- Access to a phone

You will need to prove your identity. Examples include (not all required)

- Biometric residence permit (BRP)
- Driving licence
- Passport
- Debit or credit card
- Payslip or P60

You will need to provide information on which of the following (if it applies to you)

- Your housing (how much rent you pay)
- Your earnings (payslips)
- Any disability or health condition that affects your ability to work
- Any savings you may have

Help with your claim

If you need help with your claim or cannot claim online, you can claim by phone through the Universal Credit helpline: 0800 328 5644 (this phone number is free to call).

Find a job

It is very difficult to cover all of your expenses with Universal Credit, so it is really important you find a job to help you support yourself.

Job Centre

The Job Centre can help you prepare, search and progress in work. You can find your local Job Centre at:

<https://find-your-nearest-jobcentre.dwp.gov.uk/search.php>

Leicester Employment Hub

Leicester Employment Hub also advertises local vacancies

<https://www.leicesteremploymenthub.co.uk/> (click Job Seeker)

TWIN Employment and Training

2nd Floor, 60 Charles St, Leicester LE1 1FB

Training and services for jobseekers, employers and young people throughout the UK

Phone: 020 8269 5695

St Mungo's, Employment Services

St Mungo's offer 1-2-1 sessions for those seeking work. The team offer support with job searching and applications. They will help you get 'work ready' by offering interview practice, work placements and visits to potential employers. St Mungo's can also provide some financial support around travel to work and any work clothing, if required, to help you over the first couple of weeks. The team are also trained to give you clear advice and guidance around benefits and the impact that working may have on any you receive.

Potential clients with St Mungo's need to have the right to work in the UK and provide details on their key worker/supporter for reference.

For further queries or request for support email recoverycollegeleicester@mungos.org

Search for housing

There is a housing crisis in the UK. Rents are the highest on record and there is a shortage of affordable housing. Leicester City Council have declared a Housing Crisis locally.

If you are homeless and need housing quickly, it is highly unlikely you will get a council or housing association home.

It is really difficult - almost impossible – to find a Council home in Leicester in a short space of time. You can find out more information about waiting times for social housing in Leicester FAQs about what happens after your housing application is registered: <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-community/housing/apply-for-housing/guidance-and-faqs/faqs-about-what-happens-after-your-housing-application-is-registered/>

This means you need to find a settled home another way.

This will normally be in the private rented sector (with an Estate Agent, or a private landlord), but it could also be with family, friends, or supported accommodation, as long as it's suitable. Please read the next section for more information on this.

Private rented accommodation

Your best and fastest option for recovering from homelessness is a private rented sector home.

Private rented accommodation is a tenancy with a landlord who owns the property; they lease it to you for a period of time, and you pay your rent directly to the landlord. This is most likely going to be the fastest route and the housing option that will apply to you. The benefits of renting privately include properties usually being available immediately, as well as giving you greater choice over where you live.

The Local Housing Allowance (housing benefit) rates in Leicester are lower than the average rent, so you need to be ready to do a lot of searching to find a home, although we can assist with making homes more affordable in many cases.

Where to find private rented accommodation

- Letting agents in the city.
- Local newspapers such as the Leicester Mercury and community centres, libraries, or shops.
- Look online – popular websites include Zoopla, Rightmove and Spareroom.

It is useful to look for multiple properties at the same time because properties get rented out quickly, and some advertised properties might not be available.

It is good to look with friends or people you know as this will make the search process easier.

We know that the private rented sector can be expensive, but we have several schemes available to help you in finding a home that you can afford and live in happily. We will always make sure the property is affordable, big enough for you, and in good condition.

We can help remove barriers such as:

- Unaffordable accommodation.
- Raising money for a deposit.
- Landlords accepting benefit income as rent.

How we can help to remove these barriers:

- Providing incentives to landlords in various ways.
- Providing advance rent or a deposit.
- Bridging the gap if the rent is a little higher than your local housing allowance.
- Providing tenancy support to both you and the landlord to make sure things work.

Budgeting

If you are single and under 35 with no children, the amount of housing money you will get from Universal Credit will be the 'shared accommodation rate'.

This means you will most likely only have the budget for a room in a shared house/flat.

The amount you receive is based on the Local Housing Allowance. To find what this is in different areas, visit <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/> and search 'Local Housing Allowance'.

What do I need to do?

If you are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, follow these three first steps:

- Contact the Housing Options service, on 0116 4541008 to make a homeless persons application and receive advice about your housing options.
- Look for a property in Leicester within the price range that we can help you with:
 - Shared or single room (under 35 years of age) - maximum rent of £455
 - 1 bedroom home - maximum rent of £605
 - 2 bedroom home - maximum rent of £760
 - 3 bedroom home - maximum rent of £910
 - 4 bedroom home - maximum rent of £1,200
- Once you have viewed the property and the landlord/agent is happy to move forward, contact the Housing Options service, on 0116 4541008 or contact your caseworker. We can then speak to the landlord on your behalf and talk to him about the Schemes we offer.

Street homeless support

If you know of someone who is sleeping on the streets, call Streetlink on 0300 500 0914 or make a referral on their website: www.thestreetlink.org.uk

If you or someone you know is on the verge of homelessness, you can call Leicester's Homelessness Prevention Service on 0116 454 1008.

If you are street homeless, you can get advice and support by calling 0116 2212770. This number is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Warm spaces and day centres

There are places that can support you by offering advice, food, and showers:

The Bridge – Homelessness to Hope, Hope Centre 43 Melton Street, Leicester.

Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays 9.30am-2.30pm. Saturdays 9am-1pm

The Y Advice and Support Centre (YASC), 165 Granby Street, Leicester.

Monday to Friday 8-10am

Help the Homeless, 9 Abbey Street, Leicester.

Thursdays 12noon-4pm

The Centre Project, 1 Alfred Place, Leicester.

Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays 10am-4pm

A list of food services available can be found www.leicesterhomelesscharter.co.uk/news/meals-for-people-experiencing-homelessness

Other organisations that can offer support

Leicester City of Sanctuary, 43 Melton Street, Leicester.

Email: contactus@leicester.cityofsanctuary.org

British Red Cross Refugee Service, 27 East Street Leicester.

Email: RefugeeSupportWY@redcross.org.uk

The Race Equality Centre, 1st Floor, Highfields Centre, 96 Melbourne Road, Leicester, LE2 0DS

Phone: 0116 204 2797

The Race Equality Centre offers support with housing, benefits and general wellbeing. They have a chill 'n' chat group that meets weekly and offer various voluntary roles on an allotment or in the centre's 'Karabunui' café. The centre also offers an immigration service at reduced rates for travel visas, passport completion, etc.