

Short Guide for Practitioners: Immigration, Asylum and No Recourse to Public Funds

The UK asylum and immigration system can often appear complex and difficult to navigate. It is therefore essential that practitioners have the knowledge, confidence, and understanding needed to support individuals and families affected by asylum and immigration legislation effectively and compassionately.

This guide has been produced in *Autumn 2026* to help practitioners working with citizens who may be non-UK nationals. It provides an overview of the key Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 legislation and signposts to further resources.

To live in the UK, all non-UK nationals must successfully apply to enter or remain in the UK, unless they have the right of abode or are exempt from immigration control.

When a person is allowed to enter or remain in the UK for a limited period, the government sets certain conditions relating to employment and access to public funds. Different conditions apply depending on the type of leave that the person has been granted, for example 'limited leave to enter' or 'indefinite leave to remain'.

When limited leave to enter is granted to someone to visit, study, or work in the UK, they will have a condition of 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF) imposed. This means they will not be able to access certain welfare benefits; Homelessness assistance under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996; and local authority allocation of social housing under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996.

When a person is granted indefinite leave to remain or settled status, they will not be subject to any restrictions relating to work or access to public funds.

Understanding the Different Terms

Asylum

Asylum is the name given to the international protection granted to someone who has left their home country and made an application to get refugee status in another country. An individual applying for refugee status needs to meet specific requirements in order to have their asylum claim accepted. Whilst someone is seeking asylum, they have a condition applied of 'No Recourse to Public Funds'. Asylum seekers may have an [Asylum Registration Card](#) that provides details of their name, age, nationality and any rights to work in the UK.

UK Immigration

Immigration is the process through which individuals move to live permanently or become a

citizen of another country, such as the UK. The immigration status of a person who is not a British citizen (non-UK national) will determine whether they are able to work and access public funds.

Refugee Status

If someone is successful in their claim for asylum in the UK, the government will grant refugee status for a period of five years. Refugee status is a form of immigration status in the UK. Refugees are not (yet) citizens in the UK, but they do have access to a number of rights such as benefits, housing and employment.

Once someone has refugee status, they can apply for an eVisa (replacing the former Biometric Residence Card) via the government website. The eVisa provides an online record of a person's immigration status and right to remain UK and can also be used as proof of their identity. By logging into the government website to access the eVisa, individuals can request a Share Code which is essential for those wanting to find housing, claim benefits or access employment opportunities.

Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)

ILR means that the person has been granted permanent right to live in the UK, rather than being on a temporary visa. This gives the person the right to live, work, and study in the UK without a time limit, and means they are allowed to apply for mainstream benefits such as Universal Credit and housing support as well as health services.

No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

NRPF is a condition placed on a visa which limits a person's ability to access certain benefits and other types of financial support. Most people seeking asylum or with temporary leave will have an NRPF condition on their visa.

Who has NRPF?

A person will have NRPF when they are a national of a non-European Economic Area (EEA) country and have:

- Leave to remain with the NRPF condition e.g. spousal visa, student visa, partner of a British citizen or those with limited leave granted under family or private life rules
- Leave to remain subject to a maintenance undertaking e.g. adult dependent relative of a person with settled status
- No current immigration permission e.g. a visa overstayer, illegal entrant, refused asylum seekers.

Asylum seekers also have NRPF but may be able to get help with accommodation and financial support from the Home Office if they are destitute. In the North West region Home Office accommodation is provided by Serco.

For all people with NRPF, claiming a public fund when their immigration conditions prohibit this could affect their current immigration status

Website: www.OldhamSafeguarding.org

Email: OldhamSafeguardingAdultsBoard@Oldham.gov.uk



and any future immigration applications. EEA nationals and their family members are not subject to the NRPF condition but may be unable to claim benefits and housing assistance if they have not obtained settled status (indefinite leave to remain) under the EU Settlement Scheme and are not economically active.

Some British citizens may also be restricted in terms of their access to certain welfare benefits and housing assistance if they fail the Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) Habitual Residence Test (HRT) where they are determined to be not habitually resident in the UK (their usual residence is in another country). This can apply to people who have spent as little as three months or more living or working abroad.

Many migrants in the UK have an NRPF condition on their visa. It can cause financial hardship for the people it affects and can make some people vulnerable to exploitation and homelessness. The NRPF condition also affects family members and children whose parents have a NRPF condition on their visa.

Access to Healthcare

NHS treatment is not classed as a public fund for immigration purposes and can be accessed by individuals regardless of their immigration status, including those who are subject to the NRPF condition. However, a person's immigration status may affect whether they have to pay for some types of treatment. Different rules apply depending on the type of care. Primary care, such as GP services, pharmacies and accident and emergency treatment, is generally free for everyone. Secondary care, including most hospital treatment and some community healthcare services, may be chargeable for people who are classed as overseas visitors, unless an exemption applies or they have paid the Immigration Health Surcharge. When treatment is chargeable to a person, it must be paid for up front, unless the treatment is deemed to be urgent or immediately necessary. If a person is unable to pay, they may be denied treatment. The [NHS Leaflet – Asylum Seekers and Refugees How to register with a doctor \(GP\)](#) includes more information and the [NRPF Network](#) provides an overview.

Oldham Council NRPF Team

Oldham Council have a NRPF team who can be contacted via: NRPF@oldham.gov.uk. Please note, the team can offer support and advice to multi-agency practitioners but cannot take or hold cases.

More Information

More support, advice, and information about the legislation can be found via the [NRPF Network](#).

Family Asylum Claims and Homelessness

Where the asylum claim involves parent(s) and their children they can be considered as part of a Family Asylum Claims. This means that the family is assessed together and leads to a single collective decision.

Where a parent cannot access benefits or if they become homeless and have NRPF status, the local council may have a duty to provide accommodation and financial support if their child is assessed as being in need by social services. In these cases, Children's Social Care will conduct an assessment and, if eligible, provide accommodation and support.

Illegal Migration Act 2023

The Illegal Migration Act 2023 sets out requirements to detain and remove people who have arrived in the UK through irregular routes. As a result, many migrants who are victims of trafficking and modern slavery and who enter the UK irregularly may face restrictions on access to support and limitations on their ability to challenge immigration decisions through the appeals process.

Home Office Homelessness Support

In most cases, the Home Office is responsible for providing support to people who have claimed asylum, including those who are destitute and, in some circumstances, individuals whose asylum applications have been refused, their status is considered 'Appeal Rights Exhausted' (ARE), and they have no remaining rights of appeal against that decision.

There are two types of support available. Section 95 covers asylum seekers deemed to be destitute (more information available via [the NRPF Network](#)). Section 4 covers asylum seekers classed as ARE. There may be some instances when asylum seekers and those with ARE status may be provided with accommodation and financial support by social services instead of the Home Office.

Home Office support is also available to people who are subject to immigration bail and who are destitute, either on release from their detention or whilst living in the community.

Safeguarding

Adults and children may be at high risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, trafficking and modern slavery before and after migration. Safeguarding referrals must follow the local processes irrespective of immigration status:

- Greater Manchester [Safeguarding Children Procedures](#)
- Oldham Safeguarding Adults Board Multi-Agency Safeguarding Adults [Policy](#) and [Procedures](#).

For further information, please refer to the [Oldham Practitioner Modern Slavery Toolkit](#).

Website: www.OldhamSafeguarding.org

Email: OldhamSafeguardingAdultsBoard@Oldham.gov.uk



Determining Immigration Status

When working with individuals and their families to access the right information and support, it may be necessary to determine their immigration status. Many people have an eVisa which shows their identity and immigration status and the rights they are entitled to in the UK. Practitioners can check someone's residency status in the UK through their Universal Credit Account, by asking if they have a National Insurance Number, or by checking their details on the Home Office Recourse to Public Funds Checker.

Home Office Recourse to Public Funds Checker

To check someone's immigration status, their full name, date of birth and their 'share code' are needed. The service will show if they have the right to live in the UK, and any restrictions on their rights or access to benefits and services. A 'share code' is issued by the government and expires after 90 days, after which a new share code [can be requested](#). When enquiring about a family, separate checks are required for each member unless they have submitted a Family Asylum Claim.

Claiming Asylum in the UK

Any person who presents to services claiming asylum in the UK should immediately be signposted to the Home Office procedures: [Claim asylum in the UK: Overview](#). These procedures include the person registering and having a screening at an asylum intake unit. They should call the asylum intake unit appointments line to make an appointment: 0300 123 4193.

Asylum Helplines

People can get help by phone if they are an asylum applicant or refugee and they need advice about the asylum process or adapting to life in the UK.

The helplines can be used if someone is an asylum seeker and have just arrived in the UK; has just received the decision on their asylum application; or has been successful in their asylum application and are building a new life in the UK.

The asylum helplines can help with:

- housing problems
- questions about financial support
- dealing with agencies, such as social services
- finding schools or English language classes
- questions about asylum support
- getting legal representation
- building a life in the UK if they are given permission to stay
- returning home.

They may also be able to help if someone is threatened or harmed by someone because of their race; threatened or harmed by a member of

their family; the victim of a crime; or a witness to a crime.

Contact Details

[Migrant Help UK](#) can be contacted by adult asylum seekers or dependants of an adult asylum seeker: Telephone Free: 0808 801 0503, Monday to Friday, 8:00 to 20:00 (24-hour service for emergencies)

The [Refugee Council](#) can be contacted by children in England if they are on their own and applying for asylum: Telephone Free: 0808 175 349/WhatsApp: 07888 866615 (messaging only), Monday to Friday, 8:30 to 17:30.

Services Offering Help/Support to Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The following contact details are for some services offering immigration and asylum support. For more services and information, access the [Oldham Council NRPF Information Directory](#).

Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit is a voluntary organisation supporting people applying for asylum in the UK. They offer free legal advice, representation and support services to refugees, children, and vulnerable adults. Advice line: 0161 740 7722 - Mondays and Fridays 9:30am to 1pm, and Wednesdays 1:30pm to 4:30pm. Website: [Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit](#)

The Boaz Trust is a Manchester charity supporting people who have become homeless after claiming asylum. Telephone: 0161 202 1056 - Mondays to Fridays 10:00am to 4pm. Website: [Boaz Trust](#)

Revive is an independent community project in Greater Manchester offering specialist advocacy, advice and support services for refugees and people seeking asylum, including those with complex lives and multiple needs. It also provides a [regular drop-in service](#). Telephone: 0161 223 5668. Referral Form: [Download Referral Form](#) Website: [Revive UK Immigration Advice](#)

Refugee Action offers help and advice for asylum seekers, refugee resettlement projects, and employability support. Their 'Greater Manchester Asylum Crisis Project' supports those who are waiting for a decision on their asylum claim and those who have had their first asylum claim rejected but are unable to return to their home country. Telephone: 0161 515 3149 - Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays 9:45am to 1pm. Contact Form: [Online Contact Form](#). Website: [Asylum Crisis Project](#)

Rainbow Migration supports LGBTQI+ people through the asylum and immigration system including practical and social support to improve self-esteem, reduce isolation, and help to access health services and housing. They also offer legal information and advice to those seeking asylum or making partnership applications to live in the UK with their partners. Telephone: 0203 752 5801. Website: [Rainbow Migration](#)