

Moving on from Asylum Accommodation – An Islington guide for people with refugee status

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Version 2, Last updated 03 November 2023

Introduction

This document aims to help and advise refugees 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 hotel.

This guide outlines what 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 JobCentre and Islington's Council's Income Maximisation Service (iMAX).
3. **Look for a job:** you can get support from the JobCentre and from Islington Council's dedicated team (iWork).
4. **Search for housing:** this will probably be a room in a flat/house you share with others.

In addition, if you recently received your refugee status whilst living in asylum accommodation in Islington, you may be eligible for a £200 New Refugee Grant.

Housing is very difficult to find in London. Rents are high and there are many people are 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 look in outer-London or outside of London to find somewhere you can afford. Staying with friends or family may be your best option 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.

Please note

- If you have a medical condition and are at risk of homelessness, please notify Islington Council's housing officers as soon as possible.
- If you have not received your BRP card or there is an error with your BRP card, contact Migrant Help as soon as possible. You should not be evicted from your hotel until you have a BRP with the correct details.

Receive your New Refugee Grant payment

If you have recently received a positive decision on your asylum claim whilst staying in an Asylum Contingency Hotel or Dispersal Accommodation in Islington, you may be eligible for a £200 grant from Islington Council to help while you are moving out of your accommodation.

You must have:

- Been granted refugee status after 01/08/23 and;
- Been living in an Asylum Contingency Hotel or Dispersal Accommodation in Islington when you received refugee status.

To collect the card:

- Email refugee.grant@islington.gov.uk with the subject “New Refugee Grant Request” and your name
- Wait for an email with an appointment time to collect your card from 222 Upper Street (Monday to Thursday)

At the appointment you must bring:

- Photographic ID (e.g. ARC, BRP, Passport, Driver’s License)
- An eviction letter addressed to you at an Asylum Contingency Hotel or Dispersal Accommodation in Islington

The cards:

- The pre-paid cards contain £200 and will be closed once all money is used. They are not a bank account.
- The card can be used to withdraw cash and pay via contactless payment or chip and pin.
- There may be a delay between receipt of the card and the card being available for online use.

The scheme will continue until the end of 2023.

Set up a bank account

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

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

- Revolut
- Starling
- Monzo

If you want a bank you can visit, we recommend Lloyds Bank.

You will need to provide your telephone number and email address as well as proof of identity. This could be a:

- Passport
- Biometric residence permit
- Immigration status document

If the application requires you to provide an address other than your hotel, you can use a website such as Proxy Address.

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: www.universal-credit.service.gov.uk/start

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

What you will need

- 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
- Driving licence
- Passport
- Debit or credit card
- Payslip or P60

You will need to provide information on which of the following 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).

You can also get help applying for Universal Credit and other government benefits (if you have medical conditions or other needs) from Islington's Income Maximisation Service (iMAX).

Telephone: **0207 527 8600**

Email: claimit@islington.gov.uk

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.

iWork

Islington's iWork team can help you to find a job and has a specialist team for asylum seekers and refugees. They can help you to find an apprenticeship, training or education as well as matching your skills to job or training opportunities.

Telephone: **020 7527 2706**

Email: islingtonworking@islington.gov.uk

JobCentre

The JobCentre can help you prepare, search and progress in work. You can find your local JobCentre at <https://find-your-nearest-jobcentre.dwp.gov.uk/search.php>.

Search for housing

For advice and support from housing solution officers, you can choose from the options below. Tell them you are a refugee who was living in an asylum hotel.

- Attend the drop-in sessions at **Vibast Community Centre, Old Street on Mondays from 3 – 5pm,**
- Contact via email at Advice.Housing@islington.gov.uk
- Speak to them at the council offices at 222 Upper Street

Islington Council can help cover your deposit and rent in advance. This does not have to be repaid. Once you find a landlord, email Cynthia.Latibeaudiere@islington.gov.uk with the landlord's details and the address of the property. The council will then negotiate the amount of incentive to be paid to your landlord.

Private rented accommodation

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 the housing option that will apply to you.

Location

There is a housing crisis in the UK. Rents are the highest on record and there is a shortage of affordable housing. It is especially bad in London; the average room in shared accommodation is £971 a month.

Housing in Islington and central London is especially expensive as the borough is in very high demand.

For your first property, it is best to look outside of Islington or London for the most affordable properties.

On the next page is a list of the cheapest areas to live in London:

Location area/Postcode	Average monthly rent for a room Q2 2023	Location area/Postcode	Average monthly rent for a room Q2 2023
<u>E12 (Manor Park)</u>	£714	<u>E13 (Plaistow)</u>	£759
<u>SE28 (Thamesmead)</u>	£741	<u>SE12 (Lee)</u>	£761
<u>E7 (Forest Gate)</u>	£753	<u>SE25 (Norwood)</u>	£763
<u>SE26 (Sydenham)</u>	£756	<u>N22 (Wood Green)</u>	£767
<u>E6 (East Ham)</u>	£759	<u>SE20 (Penge)</u>	£768

Below is a table of the areas with the lowest average rent for a studio:

Location	Monthly price of a studio	Location	Monthly price of a studio
Havering	£669	Barking and Dagenham	£729
Croydon	£762	Bexley	£688
Sutton	£776		

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, search **'Local Housing Allowance'**.

The Benefit Cap limits how much working age people can get from benefits (including Universal Credit). Use the **'Turn2us'** benefit calculator to find out how much benefit you will receive.

You can search **'The Mayor of London's rent map'** to see what you can get for your budget around London.

Finding a property

Not all properties accept payment from Universal Credit. Properties that do can be found on the following websites:

- www.spareroom.co.uk/dss-rooms-to-rent
- www.lettingaproperty.com/private-landlords-accept-dss
- www.dssmove.co.uk
- www.nuroa.co.uk/rent/dss-welcome-london
- www.gumtree.com/flats-houses/property-to-rent/uk/london/srpsearch+dss
- <https://www.newsnow.co.uk/classifieds/houses-flats-for-rent/dss-properties-to-rent-in-london.html>
- <https://dsslocal.com/>
- <https://movingsoon.co.uk/dss-accepted/>

On the websites, you can filter your search by area, price and number of bedrooms.

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. Renting is more enjoyable if you live with people you know.

Housing through word of mouth will be easiest to acquire; do you have any friends or family who know of a room that is available? Is there anyone you could stay with while you look for your own place?

Social housing

This is housing that is truly affordable because the rents are tied to local incomes and provided by housing associations and the local council.

Unfortunately, it is extremely unlikely that you will be offered a council home. There is a nationwide shortage of social housing, and in Islington there are 15,000 households on the waiting list. It can take years to be allocated social housing, and it will not be an option for your first home after leaving asylum accommodation.

Anyone can register, but your application will be assessed by a points-based system. If you do not receive any points, you will not be able to bid on anything.

If you would like more information, go to <https://www.islington.gov.uk/housing/finding-a-home/council-housing>.

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 Islington's homelessness advice service: **020 7527 6371**.

If you are street homeless, you can get support by calling **020 7527 2000**. This number is available all day.

Warm spaces and day centres

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

- North London Action for the Homeless
St Pauls Church Hall, N16 7UE
Monday 12:00 – 1.30pm and Wednesday 7 – 8:30pm
- The Soup Kitchen at American International Church
79A Tottenham Court Rd, W1T 4TD
Monday to Saturday 10am – 12 noon; and Monday, Tuesday and Friday 6 – 7pm
- The Manna
17 Canonbury Rd, N1 2DF
Tuesday 2 – 7pm, Thursday 10am – 4pm, Friday 10am – 4pm
- The Margins Project at Union Chapel
19b Compton terrace, N1 2UN
Monday and Wednesday 11am – 1pm
- Streets Kitchen at the Solidarity Hub
48 Seven Sisters Road, N7 6AA
Friday 12 – 4pm
- Thames Reach (Camden Spectrum)
6-8 Greenland Street, NW1 0ND
Monday – Friday 9:30am – 7pm