

Housing Guide

Finding a place to live after you've been granted refugee status

Who is this guide for?

This Guide has been written to help people with new refugee status and those that support them to find somewhere safe to live. It has been created by Boaz Trust, with input from people who have been through the process of trying to find somewhere to live after they were granted refugee status.

Introduction

Once you get a decision on your asylum claim, your asylum accommodation will end and you will need to find somewhere else to stay very quickly. Everyone has their own story of how they found somewhere to live when they got their refugee status. Many single people or couples with no children become homeless after getting their refugee status.

In the UK you are classed as homeless if you do not have a place to call home. You do not have to be sleeping on the streets to be classed as homeless. You might be sleeping outside on the street, or in a tent, or you might be staying in someone else's house or room. Knowing where to go to ask for help is important. It is good to start thinking about this as soon as possible. This Guide offers information on:

1. How local councils can help people who are homeless.
2. What to expect when looking for private rented housing.
3. Other important things to consider when you settle in a new area.

Can the local council help me?

If you are going to be homeless, tell your local council and ask for help. The local council is responsible for an area like a town or a city. You should contact the council responsible for where you live when you receive your asylum decision - you can find your local council here: [gov.uk/find-local-council](https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council)

Once you have leave to remain, you can choose to live anywhere in the UK. If you move to a different area and become homeless, then your new local council will not have a legal duty to help you. They may advise you to return back to the area you were granted refugee status. **You should therefore contact the local council in the place where you were living when you received your status.**

What will happen if I contact my local council?

Your local council should give you a **Homelessness Assessment**. This is when they decide if they have a duty to help you. They will give you an appointment either in person or on the phone, to ask you some questions. You should have some documents ready for this:

- Your eVisa, and any other ID you have,
- Your asylum decision letter,
- Bank statements for any accounts, even if the balance is £0.00,
- Universal Credit details and any other income,
- Medical records and reports or letters,
- Your 'Notice to Quit' from the accommodation provider,
- Details of where you have lived for the last 5 years. If you had no address, write the name of the city or country and how long you think you were staying there.

After your Homelessness Assessment, if the local council confirm that they will help, they will give you a **personalised housing plan**. It will tell you what help they can give you as well as information about private rented accommodation and where you can go for extra help. If you have children living with you, or if you are single but have health conditions and support needs that make you vulnerable, they should offer you accommodation. This might be emergency accommodation or a night shelter.

If you are generally healthy and if you do not have children living with you, the local council will be unlikely to offer you any accommodation. There isn't enough housing in the UK and lots of families and individuals are in homelessness accommodation, waiting for somewhere else to stay. This means that more people are homeless and end up sleeping on the streets. This can be dangerous, but even if you are sleeping on the streets, the council still may not be able to offer you a place to live.

If the local council offer you any accommodation, remember:

- A** – **Accept** what they offer you, you might not get another offer if you say no.
- B** – Next, take time to plan for something that feels **better**. This might be a shared house.
- C** – Work towards a **comfortable** home, somewhere you would like to live for a longer time.

What is social housing?

Local councils used to provide long-term homes for people that were good quality and low cost. Now, this housing (called social housing) is usually provided by Housing Associations.

There are many people waiting for social housing. In some cities, you might have to wait 10 years before you are offered social housing. People can get social housing faster if they have vulnerabilities or for a few different reasons – your nationality will not affect this. You can apply to join the social housing waiting list in the town or city where you were living when you got your refugee status, but in some places you have to wait for a period of time (e.g. 2 years) before you can register.

What to expect from private rented accommodation

In the UK, it is very common for people to rent their home from private landlords who might own lots of houses. Some people live in a shared house where they have their own bedroom but share the living spaces, kitchen and bathroom with other adults. In a shared house, furniture and large electrical items (fridge, washing machine) are usually provided.

When you are looking for a place to rent, you need to think carefully – or get good advice – on what you can afford. You usually pay rent to the landlord in advance every month. If you share the house, this might include bills like electricity, water and gas.

What about paying rent and bills?

If you get Universal Credit you need to tell them when you find a new home.

You can get extra Universal Credit to help with the rent. The amount you can get is limited by the '**Local Housing Allowance**', which is based on where you want to rent, as well as your age and who is in your household. It is not based on the size of the property you want to live in.

- If you are under 35 and single, you are entitled to the Shared Accommodation rate.
- If you are aged 35 or older, you are entitled to the One Bedroom rate.

Couples of any age without children will get the One Bedroom rate to share.

Rent costs can be very different in different areas and Universal Credit is not usually enough to pay the full rent. Rent is usually cheaper in smaller towns or further from the city centre.

Get help

You can apply for a **Refugee Integration Loan** (www.gov.uk/refugee-integration-loan) for between £100-£500 (for a single person) to help pay for a deposit or rent. It takes several weeks to receive the payment.

The local council may also be able to help with deposit or first rent payments.

Scan this QR code to access the website where you can search for the **Local Housing Allowance**. You either need to enter the postcode, or the Local Authority area.



When you have found somewhere to rent, before you move in you will have to:

- Sign a tenancy agreement. This is your legal agreement with your landlord. It's important that you read this carefully to understand it.
- Pay a deposit. This is usually the cost of one month's rent, on top of the first month's rent payment in advance.
- You might need to give references from people who know you, too.

Where do I find a place to rent?

- **Online:** Websites like OpenRent, SpareRoom, Rightmove and Gumtree
- **Estate Agents:** Also check the websites of estate agents like Your Move, Leaders, Purple Bricks to see available properties.
- **Newsagents and local shops:** They might have adverts for rooms to rent.
- **Community Groups:** Local faith and community groups might know options or landlords.
- **Your friends:** Ask your friends if they would like to look for a shared house with you.

Be careful! If you see adverts online for rented accommodation, don't pay any money until you are sure that it is a real offer. **If you are unsure, ask for help.**

Becoming a tenant

There are lots of things to think about when you are starting to rent somewhere to live.

- **Utilities:** Unless the bills are covered in your rent, you will need to set up gas, electricity and water accounts by contacting the supplier.
- **Council Tax:** You will usually need to pay council tax to your local council.
- **Insurance:** You could get contents insurance to protect your belongings.
- **Bills:** You should pay all your bills on time to avoid late fees and a bad credit score. You can set up direct debits so that bills are paid automatically each month.
- **Property maintenance:** It is your responsibility to keep the place clean and tidy - , including any outdoor areas. If you share a house, usually it is still your responsibility to clean shared areas like the kitchen. You should report any repairs needed to your landlord immediately.
- **Respect your neighbours:** Be considerate with noise levels, especially at night.
- **Landlord's expectations:** Follow the rules in your tenancy agreement. Communicate with your landlord if you have any questions or problems. Landlords usually have the right to inspect the property (with notice).
- **Moving out:** If you want to move out, you usually need to give 2 months notice. Make sure the property is clean and in good condition to get your deposit back.

Know your rights! As a private tenant you are protected by law. Your home should be safe, good quality and you should not be evicted without a good reason.

You can find a lot of information about renting privately on the [Shelter charity website](https://www.shelter.org.uk) by scanning this QR code.



What about my family?



The UK Government has temporarily suspended new family reunion applications.

Anyone wishing to bring their family to the UK will now need to apply under a different set of immigration rules. The British Red Cross have more information about this on their website, and may be able to offer support. (www.redcross.org.uk/get-help/family-reunion).

If you applied for Family Reunion before the deadline in September 2025, the local council will not offer you a family home before your family arrive, even if you have children. If your family suddenly arrive in the UK, there is still no guarantee that you will be offered a home together. It is important to think about this, get advice early and to have a realistic plan.

What else do I need to think about?

- **Open a bank account:** Lloyds, HSBC and Nationwide are often helpful: citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/banking/getting-a-bank-account
- **Money:** apply for benefits as soon as you can while you are looking for a job. You can apply for Universal Credit here: gov.uk/universal-credit/how-to-claim
- **Register for healthcare** with a local GP: nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-gp
- **Register for a dentist:** Dental care is not provided by GPs, so you need to register separately for a dentist. There are long waiting lists, but it is possible to get emergency care when you need it. Call 111 for advice if you have a dental emergency.

What can I do to feel settled in my new community?

Greater Manchester is lucky to be home to many diverse communities from all over the world, but it can still take time to feel settled and at home. Luckily, there are lots of things you can do to help with this but if you feel a bit lost, make sure you ask for support.

- **Explore your local area:** visit parks and free museums, find out about local buses.
- **Find your local library:** as well as books, newspapers and a warm quiet space, they have Wi-Fi, computers and useful local information.
- **Practise English:** if you aren't confident speaking English, you can find English classes through your local college, council or community group.
- **Find community and things to do:** look out for local community organisations and charities, especially groups that work with refugees and places where you can volunteer. A local church, mosque or other faith community would also be a good place to start.

Organisations who can help

Kompasi: a directory of local migrant, refugee, and asylum support services in Greater Manchester | kompasi.org

Shelter: national charity with local branches offering advice and support around housing and homelessness | england.shelter.org.uk/get_help

Greater Manchester Law Centre: free independent legal advice on a range of topics including housing | gmlaw.org.uk

We know that this is a lot of information but we hope it is helpful and that you soon feel comfortable in your new home.

This information was updated in September 2026. We will do our best to update this guidance on our website as things can change quickly.