

Asylum Seeker Support Fund Round 5: December 2024 to May 2025

Support for Asylum Seekers in Croydon and in Home Office Accommodation: Signposting and Support Before and After the Discontinuation of Asylum Support

The purpose of this funding is to:

- provide support to individuals and families who have been placed in Croydon by the Home Office while their asylum claim is processed.
- provide information, advice and guidance to individuals and families who have received their asylum decision and are faced with making decisions on their next steps, including housing applications and preparing for employment.

Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) organisations are well placed to provide accessible activities, opportunities for connection, social contacts and learning to support the wellbeing of adults and children who are required to stay in Home Office accommodation and those who are starting their life in the UK.

Newly recognised refugees can access Migrant Help Move On support (<https://www.migranthehelpuk.org/pages/faqs/category/positive-asylum-decision>)

Receiving a positive asylum decision enables people to begin building their lives in the UK, however there are important actions that need to be taken swiftly, and these can be bewildering and a challenge to negotiate. The funding will support projects that can provide immediate information, advice and guidance and securing onward support through local partners.

Asylum Seeker Support Context

Displaced people enter the UK through visa schemes and asylum routes. Those seeking asylum are placed in Home Office accommodation for extended periods of time whilst their claims are assessed.

Home Office accommodation in Croydon comprises of 5 hotels, where over 1000 people live, half of the population are children. In addition, asylum seekers are placed in self-catering dispersed accommodation, with 146 spaces across Croydon.

Many asylum seekers experience several accommodation moves and services are meeting and supporting newly arrived asylum seekers, those who have been in these types of accommodation for many months and who now are moving on from Home Office accommodation. Currently 33% of people in hotel accommodation have been there for less than 6 months

All individuals who are granted leave to remain, or a positive asylum decision should currently be receiving a minimum of 28 days on asylum support after they have been issued a digital BRP card. From 1 November 2024, the Home Office will be issuing

digital BRP cards and E visa accounts will be set up for newly recognised refugees to access.

Individuals are notified of the prescribed period in their grant letter issued by the Home Office. It is vital that individuals are taking note of this crucial point and acting swiftly upon receipt of the letter. Confirmation of the exact date an individual's support and accommodation is due to end will be issued in a separate 'notice to quit' (NTQ) or 'notice to vacate' (NTV) letter from their accommodation provider. This will either be at least 7 days from when the notice is issued, or the date on which the 28-day grace period ends, whichever is the longest in date. An NTQ will only be issued once a person has been issued a digital BRP. An individual's support and accommodation will not end unless they have been issued with a digital BRP and an NTQ.

There continues to be a need for immediate signposting support to ensure understanding of correspondence from the Home Office, timescales for applying for housing and benefit support, access to community support through VCFS partners and ensuring individuals are aware and able to access Migrant Help Move On support. In addition, there is a need to support asylum seekers with the preparation of an outcome and planning before they receive their asylum decision.

In Croydon social housing is particularly challenging, with demand for emergency accommodation far outstripping the supply. Advice and signposting on housing applications is the most pressing issue for people given leave to remain in the UK.

This grant funding is two-fold

1. provide support to individuals and families who have been placed in Croydon by the Home Office while their asylum claim is processed.
2. provide information, advice and guidance within the hotels and the community to signpost asylum seeking people in Home Office accommodation that have recently received a decision on their asylum claim*.

*This information, advice and guidance must NOT be used to provide advice on immigration claims. It is a criminal offence for a person to provide immigration advice or services in the UK unless their organisation is regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) or is otherwise covered by the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Activities funded through the grant may include,

- Providing social and support groups where people can meet to access help and/or social activities, in turn helping to reduce isolation.
- Providing support to link people to existing activities and groups in the borough.
- Educational activities for families outside of school times including weekends.
- Cultural enrichment activities including linking with existing VSCF organisations.
- Signposting and support to access community resources and education settings including children's centres, early years, colleges, CALAT.
- Activities that support family life and introduction to local community resources.
- Support to apply for nursery and school places.
- Transport to and from activities, encouraging independent travel where possible.

- Provision of onsite support and signposting surgeries to asylum seekers who have or have not received a decision letter regarding their asylum claim.
- Provision of practical support arranging appointments and support to attend appointments where necessary.
- Signposting individuals and families in a timely manner to information, advice, and guidance on resources within the community that can provide emotional and practical support. This can include signposting to support from statutory services including housing, health, and education and to accredited support for immigration advice.

Our expectations of delivery include:

- Working in partnership with Croydon Council's Asylum Seekers and Displaced people service, health navigators, housing intervention officers and health teams, using live data to ensure services are available in a timely way to prevent additional stress and enable individuals to plan their next steps.
- Working within best practice guidelines and in line with government advice.
- Ensuring safeguarding arrangements, policies and procedures are in place.
- Providing monthly reports of activities undertaken.
- Providing a dynamic and flexible response, ensuring availability both on site and by phone / text, and other means.
- Liaising and engaging with Migrant Help, and organisations commissioned to provide move-on support by the Home Office.
- Adhering to evaluation expectations, providing clear updates to the funded activities and information sharing between partners.

Who can apply?

Voluntary Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) organisations able to aid asylum seekers who have newly arrived or currently placed in Croydon hotels and hostels by the Home Office, supporting both/either individual awaiting their asylum decision and those who have received notification of the outcome of their asylum claim are invited to apply.

Eligible organisations need to be a non-profit and be at least informally constituted, which means having a bank account in the name of the group with a minimum of 2 signatories.

The project funding will be up to £15,000 for 6 months. VCFS organisations are invited to advise how they will meet the grant purposes 1 and/or 2 as set out above. Partnerships between organisations to enable integrated support are also encouraged.

Bidders should note that whilst most of the people served by these grants are based in the North of the Borough, there is a growing number of people placed across the borough in dispersal accommodation. People seeking asylum have limited funds to pay for travel.

This funding is to be used between December 2024 to May 2025. Start dates will be confirmed with successful organisations.

Funding may be used to provide management and safeguarding oversight of projects; it cannot be used to pay mortgage arrears or funding of premises.

Organisations must have appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place and will be required to complete a Memorandum of Understanding, administered by accommodation providers, to be able to visit and deliver support and signposting within Home Office accommodation.

People engaging directly with service users will be required to have a valid DBS check.

Timetable

This fund is open from **Monday 18 November 2024 to midnight on Sunday 1 December 2024** for VCFS organisations to apply.

Applications will be evaluated and confirmed by email with decisions in principle by **16 December 2024**.

Mobilisation and start dates will be confirmed with individual projects, please consider how you will be able to mobilise in your response.

How to Apply

To apply please download and complete the **Asylum Seeker Support Fund Round 5, Post Decision Signposting and Support, application form** and email back to displacedpeoplesupport@croydon.gov.uk by midnight on Sunday 24 March 2024.

Evaluation

For all awards, a monthly snapshot of activities will be required that provides a summary of how many families and individuals were assisted. Short weekly virtual network meetings will be held to share intelligence and issues as required.