



A Migrant's Guide

An interactive guide to support you through your immigration journey in the UK.

For migrants, by migrants.

Introduction

The aim of this guide is to help you access services, build community, and take care of yourself before and after securing immigration status. It has been co-produced by people who have lived experience of navigating the complex immigration system in the UK.

This guide works best when you have the support of a **mentor, professional, family member, or friend**. There will be opportunities to reflect on your understanding of your situation with 'check ins' and pages for note taking. Some of the guidance requires access to the internet. If you don't have a smartphone or have limited mobile data, visit your local library and use the computers there. You may also be able to get free SIM cards with preloaded data from day centres, local charities and foodbanks.

The guide encourages you to research and find out about what support exists and help you to access it. The information and services/organisations mentioned throughout are simply suggestions and examples. For more information you can search the internet or use the QR code to go to our website for more resources.



Contents

Part One Getting started: A guide to services and community building before securing immigration status	4-5
Top tips	6-7
Finding immigration advice	8-11
LGBTQI+ support	12-13
Domestic abuse, torture, trafficking & modern slavery support	14-15
Immigration raids	16
Notes & planning	17
Wellbeing & mental health	18-21
Where can you find support?	22-23
Where are you at now?	24-25
Things to do while waiting for a decision	26-27
Mindfulness activities	28-29
Register for GP & care needs	30-31
Homelessness support if you have children	32
Homelessness support for asylum seekers	33
Free activities	34-35
Part Two Moving on: A guide for after you have secured immigration status	36-37
Receiving a decision	38-39
Types of immigration status & NRPF	40-41
To do list	42-43
Opening a bank account	44
Universal credit	45
Homelessness & housing	46-48
Activity	49
Housing benefit & council tax	50-51
Council tax support & other bills	52-53
What's next?	54-55
Testimonies from people with lived experience	56-59

Part One

Getting started:

A guide to services, your rights, and community building before securing immigration status.

Find happiness in small stuff.



This book was created to help you find your way, just as I found mine. If you follow its guidance, and hold on to hope, I know you'll get there too. There is help, there is support, and there is a happy ending waiting for you.

Respect

Blessings

E K A A B O

Top tips

From people with lived experience:

1. **Collecting evidence.** You may need to prove how long you have been in the UK. Keep all important documentation and contact information for people who have helped you or accommodated you, and make a note of the dates you stayed there. **Any documents might end up being useful for your immigration application.**
2. **Keep all letters and envelopes** from the GP, hospital, school, from charities or places that you attend regularly, along with any bills, letters from the council, tenancy agreements, and contracts.
3. **Seek professional help** as soon as possible and double-check any information or advice from non-professionals/friends/family.
4. Write down the name and contact details of anyone who helps you or supports you. This could be a professional or a friend.
5. **Use a translation app** on your phone – Google Lens can translate written documents and Google Translate can help with conversations and writing. Check out <https://www.tarjimly.org/> for free interpreting from volunteers.
6. Always ask lots of **questions** and ask for a copy of advice in writing.
7. **Learn your rights** – there are lots of online guides and resources that you can use.
8. Don't fear the unknown and **remember, you are not alone.**

Top tips

From professionals:

- a. Be as precise as possible when explaining what you need. The advisors will ask more questions if they need other information.
- b. Bring all of your documents with you.
- c. Buy a cheap folder to keep all your letters and documents safe.
- d. Keep a record of your full address history and the dates that you lived there so that when you make an application it is easily accessible.
- e. Create an email address, save your password, and email yourself documents so that if you lose physical letters, you have an electronic backup.
- f. Ask for a copy of your solicitor's file if you have a representative. Write down all of your questions.
- g. Make sure to scan your documents before sending them to the Home Office and keep records of any post in case the Home Office loses your documents.
- h. Register with a GP as soon as possible.
- i. If you leave your GP and register at another, make sure you request a copy of your medical records before you go.

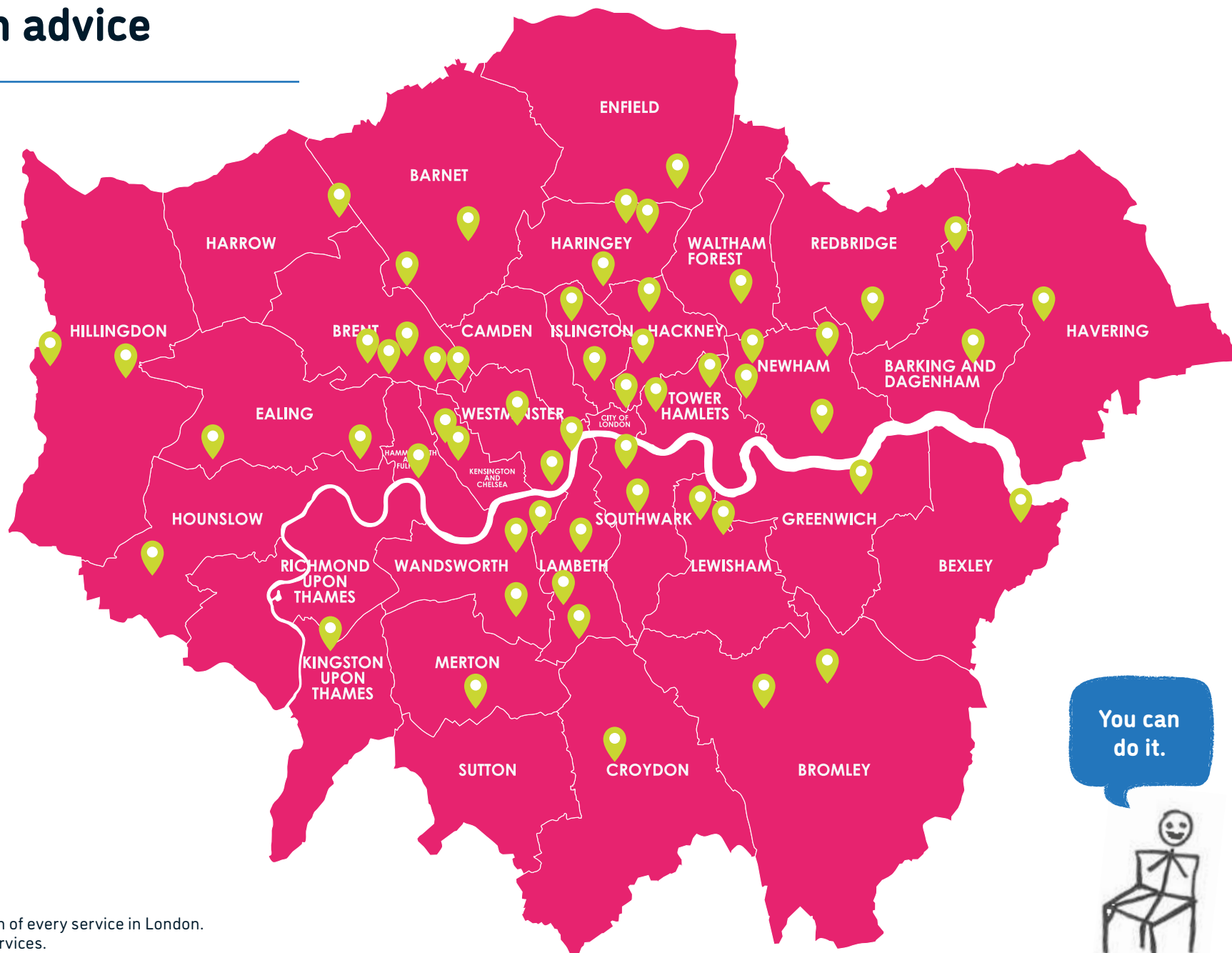
**Don't give up
– know that
someone else
has been there
before.**



Finding your way to good immigration advice

You need professional immigration advice to understand your options. You can use this map and the internet to find your closest immigration advice charity.

For more information about services and organisations scan the QR code or go to www.praxis.org.uk/migrants-guide.



You can do it.



*This is not a true representation of every service in London. Please go online to find more services.

Solicitors and immigration advice centres

Struggling financially?

Look for a law centre or immigration advice charity. You may be entitled to free advice and representation. Only take advice from a professional from an accredited organisation which is regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) or the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA).

Have a read through the Citizens Advice information page <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/immigration/get-help/get-immigration-advice/> and check whether a specialist is registered with the OISC using this site <https://portal.oisc.gov.uk/s/adviser-finder>.

Not all solicitors are trustworthy, so choose carefully. Even if they are recommended by someone that you think is trustworthy e.g. someone from your faith group or community, make sure that you check that they are regulated first. If they demand a lot of money, consider seeking help from a charity instead. Make sure that you ask for a written copy of any advice that they are giving you and ask them to confirm in writing what they are going to do with your case and when.

1. Open the internet on your phone.
2. Use the search bar to type the area you live in and 'immigration advice charity'. For example: 'Camden immigration advice charity' or 'East London migrant support' or 'Croydon free immigration advice'.

Search...



You may be eligible for a fee waiver (to pay no application fees) for your immigration application. If you're facing financial difficulties, ask an immigration adviser if you can apply for one. Free legal representation can be difficult to get as lots of charities and law firms are at capacity and won't be able to take on new cases.

Not struggling financially?

Find a solicitor here: <https://solicitors.lawsociety.org.uk/>.

Look for Legal Aid law firms as they are often the best for immigration advice (legal aid = government funded legal advice if you have low income).

Here is a list of helpful information guides and toolkits, often available in many languages.

Right to Remain Toolkit – Asylum and Immigration Guide
<https://righttoremain.org.uk/toolkit/>.

Migrant Rights Network – Know Your Rights
<https://migrantsrights.org.uk/resources/know-your-rights/>.

The Migrant Workers Guide –
<https://iwgb.org.uk/en/page/mwg/>.

Migrant Help – Asylum Advice and Guidance
<https://www.migranthehelpuk.org/advice-and-guidance>.

Rainbow Migration – How to Apply for Asylum Guide
<https://www.rainbowmigration.org.uk/how-to-apply-for-asylum/>.



My belief is stronger than my doubt.

Welcome!

Do you identify as LGBTQI+?

There are lots of organisations that can support you. Try searching on the internet on your phone, just type in 'LGBTQI+ migrant support' plus the area that you are staying in. For example, search 'LGBT asylum seeker support North London' or 'LGBTQI+ support for migrants Ealing'.

Search...



Email or call the organisations or ask a friend, or a professional such as your immigration adviser or GP, to help you. A professional might also be able to directly refer you to organisations or services.

Support organisations and services may offer socials, group support, counselling, activities, ESOL classes, group or individual therapy, advice, and more.

It's important to build up your support network and connections.

Welcome

KARIBU

Bienvenue

स्वागत

Καλώς ήρθες

Have a look through this guide of resources and organisations: AKT www.akt.org.uk/resources/resources-for-lgbtq-asylum-seekers-refugees/.

Find more information and guidance: Rainbow Migration, www.rainbowmigration.org.uk.

For finding social activities or groups: Meetup <https://www.meetup.com/>.

Are you experiencing abuse or violence? Get in contact with Galop through their helpline <https://galop.org.uk/get-help/helplines/>.

London's LGBTQ+ Community Shelter, Centre and Domestic Abuse Refuge: The Outside Project <https://lgbtqoutside.org/>.

Go and Visit The London LGBTQ+ Community Centre <https://londonlgbtqcentre.org/the-project/>.

Are you a survivor of domestic abuse?

You are not alone, there is support available to you.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse or know someone who is, then it is very important to try and get help as soon as possible.

Look through the information and list of organisations on the **Right to Remain Toolkit** or type into the internet 'domestic abuse support for migrants London': <https://righttoremain.org.uk/toolkit/migrants-affected-by-domestic-abuse/>.

Is your immigration status linked to your partner?

Seek immigration advice as soon as possible. There may be options for you. Go to the **pages 8-9** and look for immigration advice charities.

If you feel as though you are in danger and it is an emergency then you can call the police on **999**. If it is not an emergency you can still get advice from the police by calling **101**. You can also visit a police station if you wish to report something.

There is a risk that the police may check the immigration status of the people arrested, the victim or witness of a crime. If you are worried about this try to contact an immigration advice charity or domestic abuse support charity as soon as possible.

The Freephone National Domestic Abuse Helpline, is run by Refuge on 0808 2000 247 for free at any time, day or night.

Men's Advice Line on 0808 8010 327 (Monday to Friday 10 am to 8 pm), **ManKind** on 0182 3334 244 (Monday to Friday, 10 am to 4 pm).

Get in touch with **Solace** for free advice and support for women and children in London www.solacewomensaid.org.

欢迎

È KÁÀBÒ

Are you a Survivor of Trafficking or Torture? Have you been a victim of Modern Slavery?

There are charities and support services which specialise in providing the support you need. Speak to your GP, an adviser, or any professional and ask them to help you find support.

Look on the internet for support services by typing into the search 'get help trafficking London' or 'victim of torture support East London'.

For more information about services and organisations scan the QR code or go to www.praxis.org.uk/migrants-guide.



IMMIGRATION RAIDS

If immigration officers come to your home or work...



YOU DO NOT HAVE TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS



YOU DO NOT HAVE TO LET THEM IN

THEY CAN ONLY ENTER WITH YOUR CONSENT, A WARRANT, OR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S LETTER

UNLESS THE BUSINESS IS LICENSED TO SELL ALCOHOL OR LATE-NIGHT FOOD/DRINK



TRY TO LEAVE IF YOU ARE NOT UNDER ARREST



ANTIRAIDS@RISEUP.NET



@ANTIRAIDS



ANTIRAIDS.NET

DON'T STOP & TALK — JUST GO

✂ ——— IF SOMEONE IS DETAINED GIVE THEM THESE NUMBERS ——— ✂

BAIL FOR IMMIGRATION DETAINEES
02074569750

SOAS DETAINEE SUPPORT
07438407570

To read more information about what to do during an immigration raid look at the Anti Raid website which has flyers and information available in many languages <https://antiraid.net/english/>.

Top tip: Make a note of any information, people and places that may be helpful.

Start to make a plan of your next steps:

What organisations have you contacted?

Which organisations do you plan to call?

Step 1: _____

Step 2: _____

Step 3: _____

Remember to TAKE A BREAK and look after yourself

What kind of things do you do when you feel low to make yourself feel better?

Here are some things that you could try doing...

Activities listed in circles:

- Call a friend
- Drink water/eat
- Do some exercise
- Watch a movie
- Drawing
- Listen to music
- Talk to someone
- Go for a walk
- Dance
- Meditate
- Go out in nature
- Have a cup of tea
- Paint
- Sit down and breathe
- Speak to self and try to find solution
- Sleep
- Sit outside
- Find a quiet place
- Knitting/weaving
- Bake

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) often have social spaces, group activities, events, craft clubs, and opportunities to focus on different hobbies. Find them by searching for groups on the internet or go to **pages 22-23**. Some useful sites for finding groups are [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com), [Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com) and [Discord.com](https://discord.com).

Some affirmations from others who have been through the difficult and complex immigration system and experienced hardship. Here's what they would recommend you keep telling yourself.

Affirmations listed in rounded rectangles:

- You're ok.
- You are more than that problem.
- Don't take it too seriously.
- Don't give up – know that someone else has been there before.
- It's not the end of the world.
- You are capable.
- Believe in yourself.
- Stay focused.
- Find happiness in small stuff.
- You can do it.
- Everything will be fine, I don't need to stress.
- It's a bad day not a bad life.
- The world is an oyster, explore!
- You are good enough.
- I am powerful, I am resilient.
- Nothing is wrong with me, just fix this/the situation.
- Be grateful for what you have because not everyone has what you have.
- My belief is stronger than my doubt.
- You've accomplished so much already.
- I will do my best!
- Never give up.

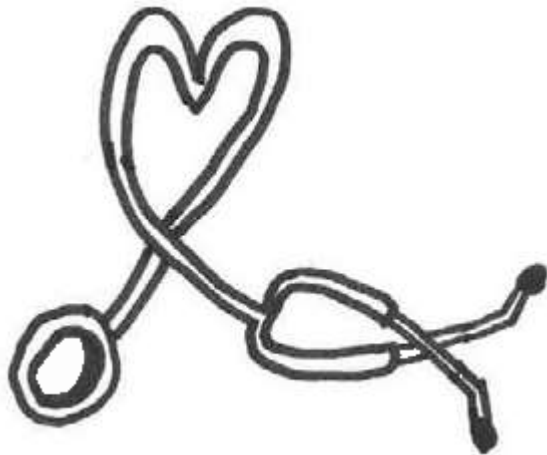
Mental health

If you're feeling very low, speak to your GP as soon as possible and consider reaching out to these helplines. **Support is available.** Request a double face-to-face GP appointment for more time to discuss your needs, and ask for a referral to a Social Prescriber while waiting for NHS counselling.

'Find your local 'Together café' or in-person walk-in emergency/ crisis support centre – these are emergency mental health spaces that you can visit to speak directly to someone if you are feeling very low. The café provides care and support from trained support workers, peer support workers, and healthcare professionals. Type 'Together café near me' or 'emergency mental health walk-in' into the internet and find out if there is one near you.

If you need urgent mental health support you can call 111 to get advice from the NHS.

If you are feeling suicidal please call 111 or 999 or visit your closest Accident and Emergency department at the hospital closest to you. You could also contact Samaritans, SHOUT or SOS Silence of Suicide <https://sossilenceofsuicide.org/get-help/>.



NHS 111 Mental Health Help, www.111.nhs.uk/guided-entry/mental-health-help.

Look on the **Hub of Hope** for mental health services near you <https://hubofhope.co.uk> Select the concerns that you have e.g. addiction, perinatal support, trauma.

You can also look through **Mind's** web page that has many helplines listed <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/seeking-help-for-a-mental-health-problem/mental-health-helplines/>.

If English isn't your first language then search for 'mental health support for non-English speaker' on the internet or look through some of these translated guides <https://giveusashout.org/get-help/resources/mental-health-resources-non-english-speakers/>.

Call **Samaritans** to speak to someone directly or use their webchat service www.samaritanshope.org/our-services/24-7-helpline/. Call 116 123 to talk to **Samaritans**, or email: jo@samaritans.org for a reply within 24 hours.

If you are under 35 and thinking about suicide, or you know someone else who is, you can contact **Hope247** – Find the helpline number and text number here: <https://www.papyrus-uk.org/>.

If you're under 19 – Text "SHOUT" to 85258 to contact the **Shout Crisis Text Line**, or text "YM".



I am powerful, I am resilient.

Where can you find support?

Visit your local place of worship

Seek local groups

Find and visit your local Family and Children's centre

Foodbanks

Homeless Day Centres

If you are an asylum seeker call Migrant Help

Local Migrant support centres

Google charities that support migrants

Visit local community centres

Ask the teacher at your children's school

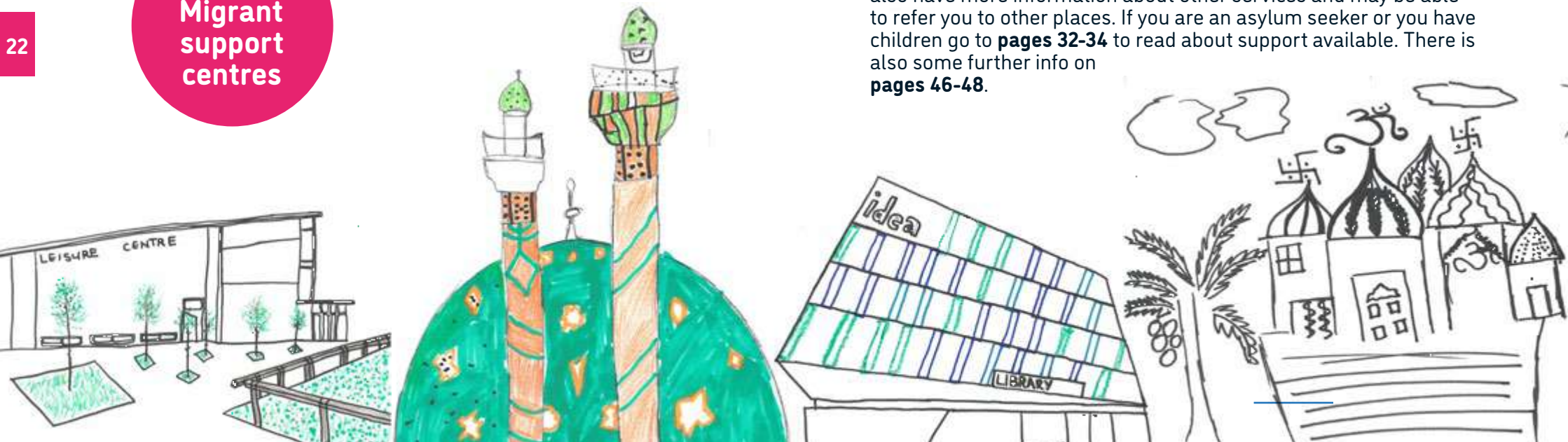
Go to your local library

Register and ask your GP

Are you Homeless?

For support with homelessness, (finding a night shelter or day centre; getting hot meals, prepaid SIM cards, food, clothes, children's items, toiletries and/or non-food items) go to foodbanks, homeless day centres and local charities/services and ask for help. Try searching for the 'Homeless Link' website to find support services that are available in London or go 'the Pavement' website and search there.

Foodbanks, homeless day centres, GPs, local charities/services will also have more information about other services and may be able to refer you to other places. If you are an asylum seeker or you have children go to **pages 32-34** to read about support available. There is also some further info on **pages 46-48**.



Where are you at now?

Do you have an understanding of your situation?

Do you know your immigration status?

Do you know what type of application you need to make and to who?

Who has helped you so far?

Name of Service: _____

Contact details : _____

Name of Service: _____

Contact details: _____

What are your plans going forward?

Start preparing for when you receive a decision by going to pages **40-43**.

Notes

Even without secure immigration status in the UK, you still have many rights and entitlements. Professional support and helpful online resources can guide you in understanding them.

Have you read through the online guides on pages **10-11**? Have you found some professional help? Have you visited all of the places on pages **22-23**?

What to do while waiting for a decision?

Here are some motivational thoughts from others who have been through similar experiences:

Ask lots of questions.

Try to avoid falling into the dark pit and feeling like a 'victim'.

Try not to fear the unknown.

It is your life now, get up and take charge.

Accept yourself and get out to look for information. Find your motivation.

Take time to explore and understand the situation, and work towards accepting it.

What are you interested or passionate about?

Try to find a support system/network – contact and visit organisations and services.

Know that you are not alone.

What would you like to learn more about?

What are your experiences and skills?

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

Here are some ideas of activities and things you can do while waiting for a decision to keep yourself busy, gain experience, and boost your mental health.

- 1. Volunteering.** You can still volunteer if you are seeking asylum or have insecure immigration status. Check out your local Volunteer Centre or look online. You can use the internet to search 'volunteering near me' or 'volunteer in east London'. You can also use <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/getinvolved/volunteering/volunteering-opportunities/>.
- 2. Groups.** Join some local groups. There are community groups, parent groups, support groups, art groups, theatre groups, music groups, choirs, faith groups, and more! Go to **pages 22-23** to find them.
- 3. Build community.** Join some local groups, go to the community centre, place of worship, visit the library.
- 4. Educational Courses.** There are lots of free classes available including ESOL classes, gardening, sewing, English, Maths, digital skills, functional skills, cycling, singing, dancing, drama, and loads more! There are restrictions on full-time courses, but most colleges offer part-time ESOL classes to everyone and there are many other courses available online.
- 5. Connect with Mentors, Befrienders, Social Prescribers.** For further mental health support go to **pages 20-21**.
- 6. Campaigning.** Use your knowledge and experience to campaign to make change and improve systems. Approach migrant support organisations and community groups to ask them if you can get involved in campaigning. Search on the internet for 'migrant justice campaigning near me'.

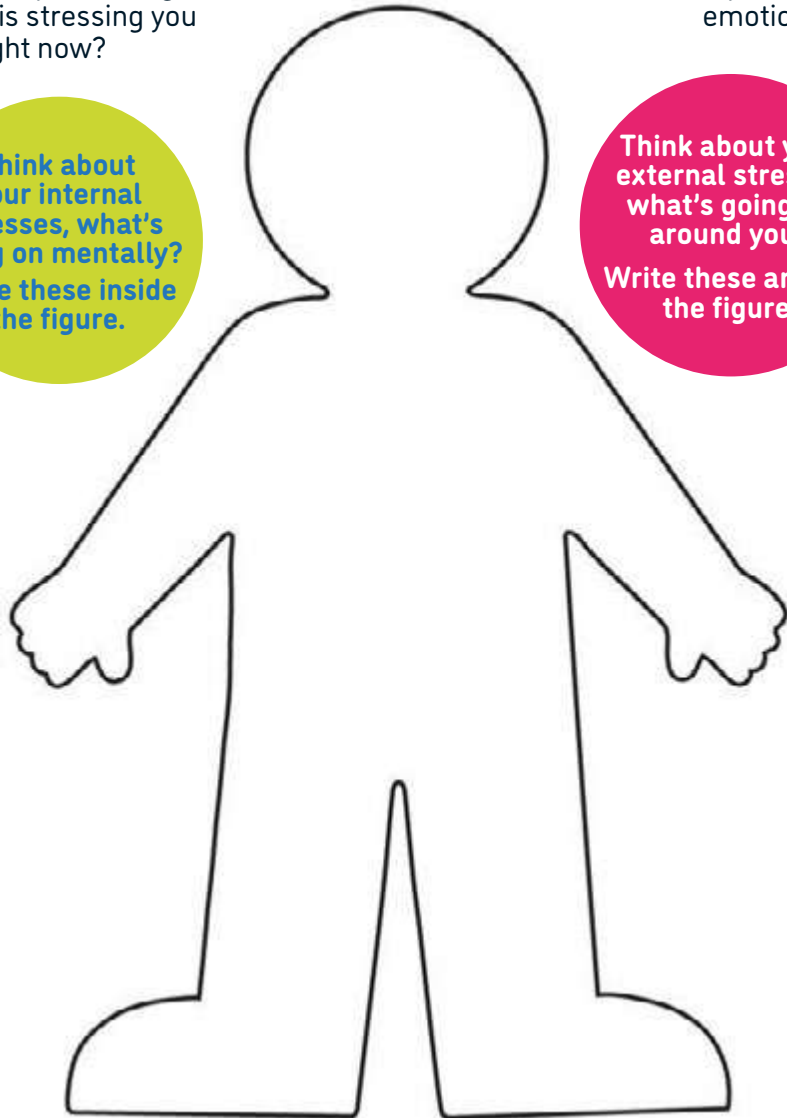
Take a minute to have a think

How are you feeling?
What is stressing you out right now?

How are you feeling emotionally?

Think about your internal stresses, what's going on mentally?
Write these inside the figure.

Think about your external stresses what's going on around you?
Write these around the figure.



What are the outside factors which are causing you stress?

Here are some suggestions for ways that you might be able to calm some of that stress...

Do some mindfulness activities and take some time for your mental health.

Activity Idea 1:

Go outside – what can you see, smell and hear? Find something that smells nice, look for something green and pretty, touch something soft, close your eyes, and listen to all the sounds, can you hear birds? Get some paper and a pen and draw what you saw.

Activity Idea 2:

Body scan. Sit down or lie down and close your eyes. Focus on how your body feels and move your attention slowly through different parts of your body. Start from the top of your head and move all the way down to the end of your toes. You could focus on feelings of warmth, tension, tingling, or relaxation in different parts of your body.

Activity Idea 3:

Mindful meditation. This involves sitting quietly to focus on your breathing, thoughts, sensations in your body, or things you can sense around you. Try to bring your attention back to the present if your mind starts to wander. Many people also find that yoga helps them to concentrate on their breathing and focus on the present moment. You can search for free meditation or yoga videos on the internet on your phone.



Have you registered with your GP?

Everyone has the right to register with a GP and receive free 'primary care' regardless of immigration status or homelessness. Primary care also includes dentists, pharmacies, and optometrists (where you can get your eyesight tested). If you need help with this, contact Doctors of the World. <https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/patient-clinic/>.

Are you struggling to pay for your prescriptions?

You can fill in a HC1 application form to get free dental care, free prescriptions and free eye tests <https://apply-for-help-with-nhs-costs.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/apply-online>.

Refugees and asylum seekers are entitled to free hospital care, but refused asylum seekers and undocumented migrants may be charged.

See Migrant Rights Network information for more guidance – <https://migrantsrights.org.uk/resources/know-your-rights/health/>.

The Patients not Passports Toolkit is also a useful resource <https://patientsnotpassports.co.uk/nhs-charging-toolkit>.



Do you have a long-term health condition or a disability?

Does your health affect you every day and impact your wellbeing? You may be eligible to get support from Adult Social Care. This can be in the form of 1:1 care, accommodation, and/or subsistence payments.

Try and speak to a professional as soon as possible to figure out whether you would be eligible for a Care Act Assessment from your Local Authority (council). You will need to self-refer or be referred by a professional to ask for an assessment to be completed, look on the adult social care page of your local council website. Getting an assessment can be complicated and takes time; you will need to supply a lot of evidence of your medical conditions and how they impact you on a daily basis.

There is lots of guidance available online:

The Care Rights Project Resource Page

<https://www.thecarerightsproject.org/resources>.

What are Care Needs?

<https://www.thecarerightsproject.org/care-needs>.

You are more than that problem.



For more information about services and organisations scan the QR code or go to www.praxis.org.uk/migrants-guide.



Are you homeless or at risk of homelessness and have children?

Learn about the rights of children – Social Services Section 17 support.

The law says that local councils must protect the welfare of 'children in need' in their area. Your child will almost certainly be 'in need' if:

- Your family is homeless; or
- Your family does not have enough money to meet basic needs (for example, food and clothing).

Your local council may have a duty to provide your family with accommodation and/or financial support.

Know Your Rights:

Local authorities cannot advise your family to return to your country of origin if there is a legal or practical barrier to your return (e.g. your family is waiting for the Home Office to make a decision on an application for leave to remain).

Even if you don't have secure immigration status and/or have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) social services have a duty to help children who are homeless. Go to your local council and present as homeless with your child or ask a professional to make a social services referral to the NRPF team for you.

For more information about what NRPF is check out Migrants Rights Network Guide <https://migrantsrights.org.uk/resources/know-your-rights/no-recourse-to-public-funds/>.

Are you seeking asylum?

Find out your rights. Use the Right to Remain Toolkit to explore any questions around your rights – it is online and available in many different languages <https://righttoremain.org.uk/toolkit/>.

Are you homeless; at risk of homelessness, and/or struggling financially or to get food?

Contact Migrant Help. There is accommodation and payments that are available for asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers. You can also go to foodbanks and faith groups or check through the list of places that can provide support on **pages 22-23**.

There are also many charities, NGOs, and support services which can help.

Right to work as an asylum seeker: you can apply for permission to work if you have been seeking asylum for 1 year. Have a read of this guide <https://migrantsrights.org.uk/resources/know-your-rights/employment/>.

But you are only able to work jobs which are on the Shortage Occupation List: SOL

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skilled-worker-visa-immigration-salary-list/skilled-worker-visa-immigration-salary-list>.

People seeking asylum always have the right to volunteer <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules>.



It's a bad day not a bad life.

Free activities and places to visit:

If you want to find more then you can search for 'free things to do in London' on the internet and go back to pages **22-23**. Some useful sites for finding groups/activities are [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com), [Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com) and [Discord.com](https://discord.com).

ESOL classes

Places of Worship

City farms

Markets

Local groups

Find out about these from a Social Prescriber through your GP, go to a community centre near you and ask, ask at a foodbank, look at notice boards at your local place of worship.

Local Parks

Check on maps what is near you.

Libraries

Family and children's hubs

In London:

Museums

For example: Natural History Museum, Science Museum, Museum of London Docklands, British Museum, Imperial War Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, The Museum of Childhood.

Art galleries

For example: The National Gallery, Tate Modern, Tate Britain, Guildhall Art Gallery, Serpentine Gallery, Whitechapel Gallery.

Visit the Barbican centre

Walk the Line Art Trail

From Stratford to Greenwich.

Walk the Thames Path

Visit the Sky Garden

Free on certain days, book online (ID needed for under 25s).



Part Two

Moving on:
A guide for after
you have secured
immigration status

CONGRATS!



GLÜCKWUNSCH!

Congratulations!

The next part of this resource aims to guide you through your next steps and what you'll need to do now that you have secured immigration status.

Make sure that you have received your decision letter and that you keep it safe. You will need to register online for a UKVI account to prove your immigration status.

<https://www.gov.uk/get-access-evisa>.

Struggling to create an online account? Speak to a professional or ask one of your friends/family to help you.

Write down your application reference number and keep any documentation that the Home Office or your adviser/solicitor sent you. You may need this if you will need to make another application in the future.

The date that my current leave expires...

Have you received all of your original documents back from the Home Office or your adviser/solicitor? If not, make sure you ask them as soon as possible.

Keep your decision letter and scan it or take a photo. This is the one that says when your leave expires.

Make a note of the expiry date of your leave and make sure that you start thinking about your next application at least six months before that date. Put a note in your calendar and keep it safe.

Has your application been refused? Have you received a negative decision?

Speak with your adviser, solicitor or representative as soon as possible as you might have the right to appeal, to make a fresh claim or make a different type of application. If they will not help you then seek further immigration advice – go back to pages **8-11** to find immigration advice services.



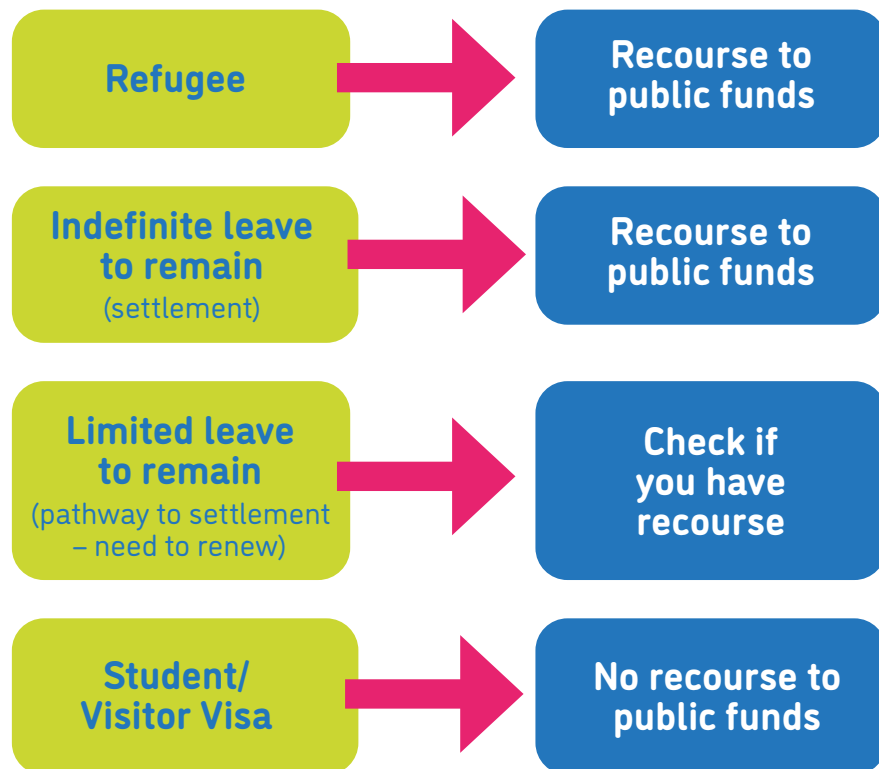
Never
give up.

What type of leave to remain have you been granted?

Does it say no recourse to public funds anywhere?

If you have been granted refugee status or indefinite leave to remain you will automatically have recourse to public funds.

40



If it says **No Recourse to Public Funds** then you will be unable to apply for benefits such as Universal Credit or housing support. Read about NRPF on the NRPF Network website <https://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/information-and-resources/rights-and-entitlements>.

You may be able to apply to get recourse to public funds (a change of conditions application) if you have children or are experiencing financial hardship. Speak with a professional as soon as you can; an immigration adviser, a solicitor or your representative. If you feel confident with English, you can apply for a change of conditions yourself using this guide from Project 17 <https://www.project17.org.uk/resources/immigration-and-change-of-conditions/>.

<https://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/information-and-resources/rights-and-entitlements/support-options-for-people-with-nrpf>.

<https://www.unity-project.org.uk/contact-us>.

Information on funds that you can still access even if you have No Recourse To Public Funds:

Even if you have NRPF you can still access these: free school meals for children, some funded childcare hours, primary healthcare, foodbanks, change of conditions, Section 17 accommodation (housing for homeless families).



For more information about services and organisations scan the QR code or go to www.praxis.org.uk/migrants-guide.



41

To Do List:

Open a bank account. _____

If you are an asylum seeker you may have done this already.

Apply for Universal Credit. _____

Apply for an advance payment once made claim.

Apply for child benefit if you have children. _____

Request for back payment since arrival if you are a refugee.

Apply for housing support from local council if homeless or being evicted from current accommodation. _____

Complete homelessness application or present as homeless to local authority.

Do a benefits calculator. _____

<https://www.turn2us.org.uk/get-support/information-for-your-situation/claiming-benefits/checking-benefit-entitlement>.

Apply for any other benefits. _____

e.g. Personal Independence Payments, Disability Living Allowance, Pension Credit, Council Tax Reduction/Support.

In temporary accommodation or privately renting?

Register to pay council tax. _____

Apply for Housing benefit or the Housing element of Universal Credit. _____

Apply for council tax reduction. _____

Register with energy providers. _____

Register with water provider. _____

Register to vote locally. _____

Get connected to employment support/ educational support organisations to get ready for work or school. _____



Opening a bank account

Opening a bank account is very important if you don't have one already. You will need to have one to receive benefit payments, your salary, to pay rent, bills and more.

We recommend that you only open one bank account as you often have to provide bank statements and having one account will make this much easier. Some banks are only online and others have in person branches.

1. Find a bank near you and walk into the branch to see if you can get help to set up an account.
2. If you feel confident using apps on your phone then look at some of the online bank options such as Monzo to avoid having to go into a bank branch. They will require proof of ID and in some cases proof of address.
3. Once you've set up your account you should receive your bank card soon after.
4. Make sure to keep your bank updated if you change your address.
5. For more information about services and organisations scan the QR code or go to www.praxis.org.uk/migrants-guide.



You've accomplished so much already.



Are you working or do you need to apply for Universal Credit?

Applying for Universal Credit

You can apply for Universal Credit online if you are not working, have recourse to public funds and secure immigration status. You need to create an account to make a claim. Your claim starts on the date you submit it in your account and your first payment will usually be at least 5 weeks after you've claimed. They will organise an appointment to verify your identity and then book you an appointment at the Job Centre with your work coach.

<https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/how-to-claim>.

If you need help with claiming you can contact the UC helplines <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/contact-universal-credit-credit> Or Citizens Advice Bureau – <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/universal-credit/claiming/helptoclaim/>.

Apply for an advance payment

Once you have claimed UC you will have the option on your account to apply for an 'advance payment' to help you before your first payment. You can choose how much you claim but you will have to pay it back. This is a loan and once your payments start you will begin to pay it back through deductions from your pay.

For more information read the Citizens Advice page – <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/universal-credit/claiming/get-advance-payment/>.

Do you have children?

Claim Child Benefit by using the online form and then post it along with the evidence needed to the child benefit office.

<https://www.gov.uk/child-benefit/how-to-claim>.

If you still need help then you can search on the internet for 'benefits advice near me' or 'help with benefits East London'. You could also ask at the library or the GP if they can recommend somewhere that could help you.

What is your current housing situation?

46 What type of accommodation do you currently live in? Are you being accommodated by the Home Office or by social services? Have you received an eviction notice? If you have been granted secure immigration status with recourse to public funds, then you are now eligible for housing support from your local council.

Important note: look out for an eviction notice from your housing provider and if you receive one make sure to read it carefully. The eviction notice will say how many days (it is often 21 or 28 days), from the date of the letter that you have to find alternative accommodation and will contain instructions on what to do next.

If you are homeless or about to become homeless, find out what borough you are living in by searching your postcode followed by 'borough' on the internet. Go to your local borough council offices/resident's hub or call that borough's housing options/homeless helpline and ask to make a homelessness application. You will need to provide proof of your homelessness for example: your eviction notice or a letter from the person you are staying with explaining why you can no longer stay there and the date that you will have to leave by.

Speak to a professional, for example your social worker or support worker. Search on the internet 'Hackney homelessness get help' or 'Tower Hamlets Council Homelessness'.

After you've made an application for housing the local authority will assess your current situation and decide whether you are in 'priority need' (have a vulnerability e.g. a disability or children). They will also consider your 'local connection' to the area (how long you've lived in the borough, whether you have family in the area, work or school commitments). You should receive a personal housing plan (PHP) explaining the steps that you and the council agree to take to secure you accommodation.

If your local authority offers you some accommodation after you make a homeless application, it is important that you are aware that if you refuse this offer, they may decide that you are intentionally

homeless and no longer support you. After you have accepted an offer, you will have the option to challenge the suitability of the accommodation (location, condition, size). Keep any letters from your housing provider regarding your homelessness decision, rent account info and tenancy agreement as you may need them at a later date.

Go to foodbanks, homeless day centres or local charities to ask for help with finding night shelters and homelessness/housing advice. You will often need to be referred by a professional to use these services.

SHELTER is a housing advice organisation and they have lots of resources on their website. They also offer a telephone advice service and a webchat along with letter templates and guidance on how to communicate with local authorities. See these links to different parts of their website:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/get_help/helpline.

https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/legal/homelessness_applications/local_connection_and_referrals/local_connection_in_homelessness_applications.

https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness/priority_need.

Are you sleeping outside or on the streets?

Make an alert on Streetlink by filling in the form on their website or by calling the helpline. It is a busy line so you may have to wait. If you are struggling to do this then ask someone if they can help you <https://thestreetlink.org.uk/location>.

If you contact Streetlink they will try to send an outreach worker to the location where you put the alert in the next few days so they advise that you remain near that area.

For more information about services and organisations scan the QR code or go to www.praxis.org.uk/migrants-guide.



Finding homeless support services

48

Use **The Pavement** for searching for day centres, free hot food, foodbanks, clothes banks, baby banks and more <https://www.thepavement.org.uk/services?service=4>.

Use **Homeless Link** to identify support services offered around London as well as day centres. Use their search function to define what location, service required and eligibility criteria to locate services <https://homeless.org.uk/homeless-england/>.

You can also check out some support services on the **SHELTER** website https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness/refugee_and_migrant_charities.

If you are 16-24 and homeless you can visit the New Horizons Youth Centre <https://nhyouthcentre.org.uk/get-help/>.

Another service for young people is Depaul (young people) <https://www.depaul.org.uk/get-help/>.

If you have a secure/stable place to stay and/or are employed then you can check out private renting and use some of the sites below to explore available rentals.

Zoopla for finding rooms and places to rent <https://www.zoopla.co.uk/to-rent/>.

For finding rooms to rent in shared housing you can look online <https://www.spareroom.co.uk/> but also check in local shops, newsagents, post offices for adverts. Ask around your networks and friends for recommendations.

Nothing is wrong with me, I just need to fix the situation.



Notes

Moved into housing?

Now you have a few more things to do...



Are you living in Temporary Accommodation?

Do you need help with paying your rent? Apply for housing benefit. Housing benefit only covers temporary accommodation and you apply through the borough that is housing you e.g. if Newham provides you with accommodation in Barking you would still apply to Newham for housing benefit.

You will have to provide evidence of your ID, your current income/benefits, your children's information, tenancy agreement, rent amount, bank statements. If you have been provided hotel accommodation you still need to apply for housing benefit.

There is lots of information and guidance around TA and your rights online, have a look through these resources <https://www.advicenow.org.uk/know-hows/what-you-need-know-about-emergency-and-temporary-accommodation>.



Long term accommodation or privately renting?

If you are not in temporary accommodation or are privately renting you will need to update Universal Credit on your new housing costs and they will pay your rent through the 'housing element'.

If you need help with this contact a benefits advice agency near you or your local Citizens Advice bureau for help. If you have a social worker you can also ask them or if you have children you can visit your local Family and Children's Hub to ask for help.

If the tenancy agreement started earlier but you moved in after, you should still claim from when the agreement started as they will charge you rent from that date.

Make sure that you are given a tenancy agreement as you will need this as evidence of your address. Keep any documentation that you are given regarding your housing. Contact your housing officer, landlord or housing provider if you have any questions.

Libraries will often help with filling in forms, scanning, photos and printing.

Are you paying council tax?

You need to find out if you should be paying council tax by speaking to your landlord or housing provider. If you do register for council tax, find out which borough you live in and go online to the council website or call the local council helpline to register that you have moved into the borough. If you are being provided temporary accommodation by Southwark but living in Lewisham, for example, you will pay council tax to Lewisham council. You should then receive a bill for the next year.

Start paying Council Tax – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

You have to pay council tax every month. Set up a direct debit (automatic payments) or pay at the Post Office; online on the council's website; by post or over the phone.

If you are struggling to pay your bill, go to page 52 for help.

Other bills and benefits

Council tax support/reduction

You can apply for support with council tax bills if you are a single person, a student, in receipt of income support benefits and/or if you are struggling financially. It is quite a long application form which can usually be found on the council's website. It is a benefit and is often found near the housing benefit section of the site. Again, if you are being accommodated by Southwark but living in Lewisham, you will apply to Lewisham council for council tax support/reduction. The council will work out your basic weekly income and then calculate what amount of discount you will get. You will have to provide evidence of your ID, your current income/benefits, your children's information, tenancy agreement, rent amount, bank statements. Seek support from a professional, visit your local library or get help from Citizens Advice if you are unsure or if you disagree with the decision that they make.

Do you need to pay for your electricity, gas and water?



Contact your housing provider/agency or housing officer to find out if they know who your current provider is.

Look out for any letters that say 'To the Occupier'. These letters might tell you who provides the electricity, gas and water for your house. If you are staying in a hotel it is likely that these bills are paid by the council/hotel already and you may not need to pay them.

1. Find your gas and electricity meters in the house.
2. Compare energy provider prices online by searching 'compare energy providers'. Set up an account by calling the energy company or going online to their website.
3. You can set up a direct debit to avoid forgetting to pay.



Have you registered to vote?

You will be able to vote in local elections if you join the electoral register. You can join the register to vote here <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>. You'll be asked for your National Insurance number (but you can still register if you do not have one).

You can watch video tutorials on how to register to vote on YouTube, just type in 'how to register to vote UK'.

Contact your local council for more help or go to electoralcommission.org.uk/voter.

Do you have a long term health condition or a disability?

Are you caring for someone?

Do you have a child with a disability or long term health condition?

You may be eligible for Personal Independence Payments or Disability Living Allowance (Under age 16).

Go online and use a 'benefits calculator' to check what benefits you are entitled to. Visit the benefits department at your local council and ask. Search on the internet for 'welfare benefits advice near me', ask at the GP, at your children's school, at your place of worship or at the community centre for support.

<https://benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk/>

<https://moneysavingexpert.entitledto.co.uk/home/start>

TV Licences

You don't need a TV Licence to own a TV. But, if you watch or record live TV shows or watch live on an online TV service such as BBC iPlayer, Channel 4, Amazon Prime Video, Now or Sky Go then you need a TV Licence. Go online and search for TV licence to find out more.

What's next? Employment or education?

Speak with your work coach via your Universal Credit journal or at the Job Centre, or seek alternative professional help. Find organisations, colleges, and charities that specialise in employment support and development for migrants and refugees.

Start thinking about your CV/Resume and the experience that you already have.

Search on Google for 'employment support near me' or 'refugee employment support London'.

Find job vacancies: **National Careers Service** – <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/advertised-job-vacancies>

Indeed – <https://uk.indeed.com>

Where do you see yourself in 3 months? _____

Where do you see yourself in 6 months? _____

Where do you see yourself in a year? _____

Where do you see yourself in 5 years? _____

Notes

For more information about services and organisations scan the QR code or go to www.praxis.org.uk/migrants-guide.



Here is a collection of testimonies from people with lived experience of navigating the complex immigration system in the UK. Their challenges, the support they received, and a look at where they are at now.

All of these testimonies were written by people who inspired the creation of this resource and who contributed their own experiences and knowledge to shape the contents.

Testimony 1

“Having a child in the UK was incredibly challenging for me as a victim of modern-day slavery. I struggled with both my mental and physical health, and I had no support until I was eventually moved to safe house accommodation. There, I was provided with a support worker and the chance to connect with other mums and various organisations. It was through these connections that I began attending sessions, which became a crucial part of my journey.

Despite this, I continued to battle with my mental health, developing depression and anxiety that I still live with to this day. I’ve always had a passion for higher education and dreamed of earning a degree, but my immigration status initially made that impossible. During the two years I waited for my status to be resolved, I focused on taking free courses, though sharing accommodation during this time was a significant struggle.

When I finally received my status, I found it difficult to move forward, unsure of what steps to take next. However, with the support of organisations like the Refugee Council and Praxis, I managed to persevere. I am proud to say that I was able to achieve my dream—today, I am a graduate with a BSc degree. This was no easy feat, especially with a child who always had to come first, but it is proof that with the right information and support, you can overcome challenges and achieve your goals too.”

Testimony 2

Summary of experience. Challenges you faced.

The first challenge I faced in the UK was bullying and racism. I didn't experience this in Nigeria because I was surrounded by people of the same colour as myself, and as a child, I didn't understand the meaning of bullying or why people chose to engage in it. It was difficult for me to deal with then, and it still is, because it created a negative impact on my life; it made me more conscious, alert, and careful around people I don't know. I also isolated myself from making friends, felt inferior to others, and became a fearful person. Dealing with that, combined with finding out at a later age that I had an insecure status, made it worse because I couldn't determine whom to trust, and I always had my guard up.

What helped?

Music is something I always preach about. It heals the soul; it may not fix all the broken pieces, but it can help you build something new from them. Other things I found helpful were having a good support system, like my mum, friends, and Praxis. Additionally, trying to maintain a positive mindset is key. Although it is a daily struggle, it's worth it to remain sane with all the challenges I face.

What support did you access?

Getting introduced to Praxis was one thing that changed my life. I was at a point where I had completely given up on making something out of my life because everything felt hopeless. I joined Brighter Future, a young migrant group, and they have been immensely helpful to the growth and success I have achieved today. I went from having no friends and isolating myself to being comfortable and confident speaking at summits, being open to exploring what life has to offer, and looking forward to what the future holds.

Where are you at now?

With all I have achieved so far, I am confident that my future is on the right path. One thing I always say is that challenges can sometimes make you feel like there is no light at the end of the tunnel, but if you just keep walking, you will eventually see the light, no matter how faint it may seem from where you are.

Testimony 3

"I moved to England from Ghana in 2017 with my wife, seeking new opportunities and a fresh start. For eight years, I successfully managed a freight forwarding company in Ghana. However, upon relocating, I faced significant personal and cultural challenges that strained my marriage. In England, I supported my wife and her family, hoping to start our own family. Despite my efforts, our plans were repeatedly delayed. My wife insisted on renovating her family home, which led me to borrow money. After the renovations, she wanted to purchase the house, a decision I opposed. This disagreement resulted in abuse from her and her family. The financial stress and constant arguments during the lockdown further strained our relationship, making it feel solely based on money.

I ended up in debt to family and friends due to the financial burdens imposed by my ex-partner and her family. I am still paying monthly fees for electronics purchased for the home, even after being kicked out. I had to borrow money to keep up with these payments and to manage my credit and debit card debts.

Returning to Ghana is not an option for me, as my business and partnerships there have dissolved. The pandemic has made restarting impossible. Since moving, my business back home has struggled without my presence, and my clients have turned to other providers. I brought all my savings to England to start a married life, but now I have nothing left.

I had a permanent job working for the NHS at the Royal Free London Trust. This permanent employment significantly improved my mental health and eased my depression and anxiety. It gave me a new outlook on life, allowing me to contribute to the community by helping patients receive treatment. I was dismissed from the NHS due to right-to-work issues, despite informing my managers of the abuse I had suffered, which led to the cancellation of my working visa. I became homeless and unemployed. I stayed with friends throughout London just to have somewhere to lay my head, as most shelters are only offered to migrants with valid status. With no one to turn to, I opened to a former work colleague who advised me to report the historical domestic violence by my ex-wife to the police. They took my statement and referred me

to the Domestic Support Unit, who spent over two hours on the phone assessing the situation and gathering evidence. Due to the number of offences perpetrated against me, the Domestic Support Unit referred me to Praxis, Christians Against Poverty, Walthamstow Talking Therapy, and my GP, who supported me in their various fields of operation.

I have been granted settlement and currently established a freight forwarding company and building it with a very diverse team."

Testimony 4

Testimony of Resilience and Hope

"I am living proof that no matter how dark or painful your journey may seem, there is always hope and a path to healing. I moved from Mauritius when I was just 14 years old, and I faced unimaginable hardships, including being trafficked and enduring the horrors of modern slavery. The scars of those days remain with me, but I stand before you today not as a victim, but as a survivor. I am healing, and I want to tell you that you can heal too.

Through faith, perseverance, and support, I've transformed my life. I now have a beautiful daughter, a supportive husband, and a dream job helping young migrants who, like me, are searching for hope and a better life. My journey wasn't easy, but every struggle has shaped me into the person I am today.

This book was created to help you find your way, just as I found mine. If you follow its guidance, and hold on to hope, I know you'll get there too. There is help, there is support, and there is a happy ending waiting for you."



to

HAPPY PLACE

wildest adventures

Soulful deeps

SUMMER READY

up your world view

EXPRESS

Let's. E
Live Happy and

