Action For Refugees In Lewisham

Asylum Support Hotel Closure Resident Support Guide

This sheet has been produced by Action for Refugees in Lewisham (AFRIL), a small, independent, charity supporting asylum seekers, refugees and vulnerable migrants in South East London. **The information contained in this fact sheet is not legal advice.**

This guide outlines some basic information to support those living in Asylum Support hotels that are closing; what to expect; reasons why you might be able to make requests for specific accommodation, and how to do this.

Asylum Support Hotel Closures

The Home Office policy of accommodating asylum seekers is now focused on housing families in houses and flats in the community, this is called 'Dispersal Accommodation'. Under Home Office policy, some single men may be moved to large accommodation sites such as RAF Wethersfield or Crowborough. As a result of these policy changes, a large number of hotels are now being closed.

Unless you have received a decision on your asylum claim and have been provided with a 'Notice to Quit' with a date to leave the hotel, you will be provided with alternative accommodation before your hotel is closed. You should be notified of your move at least 5 days in advance. Often residents of Asylum Support Hotels will not receive an alternative address until very close to their move date, often the day before they are due to move. Residents may also receive dispersal notices prior to 5 days. This can be worrying and stressful, but you should be prepared to move with little notice.

Residents housed in Asylum Support only have a **licence**, and therefore the Home Office has discretion to move those in receipt of Asylum Support Accommodation with **short notice**.

Staff from the accommodation provider (Clearsprings Ready Homes, Serco or Mears) should be at the hotel before it closes to assess resident's accommodation needs. Often these staff are on site for a very short time. You should tell hotel staff that you would like to see the 'Housing Manager' from the accommodation provider to make it more likely that you are assessed. If you need an interpreter, this should be provided so please make this clear to staff. **It is important to engage with Hotel and Clearsprings staff as soon as possible** and tell them about your concerns,

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any health issues, or any other reasons as to why you may need special accommodation, or accommodation in a particular area.

Due to the small amount of asylum accommodation in London, it is likely that residents in London hotels will be given addresses outside of London.. The following information provides guidance on reasons, under the Home Office Policy (*Allocation of Asylum Accommodation Policy, March 2026*), that you may be able to use to request a specific type of accommodation or accommodation in a specific area.

It is important to know that unless one of these applies to you, that asylum support accommodation is provided by the Home Office on a **no choice basis** and that depending on the nature of your needs, **you may be required to move to alternate accommodation and continue to make representations from there.**

Asylum Support Accommodation

Asylum Seekers and refused asylum seekers in receipt of S.98, S.95 or S.4 Asylum Support are not entitled to housing assistance from the Local Authority (the Council) other than if they have care needs (need daily help to look after themselves). **Therefore, unless you have been granted refugee status, if you refuse the accommodation offered to you following the closure of your hotel, the Local Authority will not be able to house you and you may be made homeless.**

Asylum Support accommodation is allocated on a **'no choice basis'** and is usually outside London and the South East. It is often in the North West and Scotland.

However, the Home Office has a legal duty to provide **'adequate'** accommodation. This means that for people with 'grounds' (special circumstances or requirements) that they may need a specific type of accommodation, or accommodation in a specific area (such as London). There is more information on what 'grounds' you may need to remain in an area, or request a specific type of accommodation, below.

Grounds to request specific Asylum Support Accommodation

Below are some examples of the most common reasons you may be able to request specific Asylum Support Accommodation. Further information on these grounds can be located in the *Allocation of Asylum Accommodation Policy, March 2026* and the *Healthcare Needs and Pregnancy Dispersal Policy*.

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Medical treatment:

The Home Office considers that most medical care can be obtained anywhere in the UK, in order to remain in an area your medical treatment must be specialist, such as ongoing hospital treatment or support from a psychiatrist. It is unlikely that you will be kept in an area if your only medical treatment is a GP, or a one off hospital appointment. **If you are receiving support or awaiting support from the Helen Bamber Foundation or Freedom from Torture, you will *normally* be entitled to remain in London. If you are currently receiving HIV treatment in London you are *likely* entitled to remain in London.**

Disability:

If you have a disability and need a special type of accommodation, or adapted accommodation, the Home Office may have a legal duty to provide this. You may also have grounds to be located in a specific area to continue with ongoing medical treatment or manage your disability. **If your disability is severe, the Local Authority may also have a responsibility to support you, you should seek advice from a charity or solicitor.**

Family Ties:

If you have close family members (for example, a spouse or children) you may have Article 8 ECHR rights to be located in an area close to your family.

Education:

An adult attending a college course is **not** grounds to remain in a specific area, even if you want to finish the course.

Education is often only a ground to remain in an area if a child is undertaking GCSE or A-Level exams, or a child with Special Educational Needs is enrolled in specialist education.

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How to request specific accommodation for your needs

You should make a request describing what type of accommodation or what area you require accommodation in, with reasons and **as much evidence as possible** to Migrant Help by emailing s95supportingdocuments@migranthelpuk.org, or by calling **0808 8010 503**.

If you make representations to Migrant Help or Clearsprings, you may not receive a response by the closure date. You should call Migrant Help to chase your request. On the day, you may have to move and continue to challenge the accommodation where you are, to prevent your Asylum Support from stopping. If your new Asylum Support accommodation is unsuitable you should approach a local charity or public law solicitor.

Maximisation (Room Sharing) and Ex-Military Sites (Wethersfield, Crowborough and Cameron Barracks)

As Asylum Support Accommodation is provided on a no-choice basis, the Home Office often has a presumption that single asylum seekers can share rooms (this is referred to as 'Maximisation') and that single asylum seeking men can be placed at large ex-military accommodation sites (these sites are currently Wethersfield, Crowborough and Cameron Barracks).

There is a Suitability Criteria which provides guidance on who may not be suitable for maximisation or ex-military sites. It is important to note that if you are not suitable under the criteria **you will need to provide evidence**. The Home Office policy requires evidence from a 'professional', in order to make the strongest case for your needs. It can be challenging to obtain evidence from doctors, however, you should try to ensure your evidence is as personal and specific to your needs as possible.

Those who have been recognised as survivors of trafficking or Modern Slavery and have received Positive Reasonable Grounds in the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), and people who have cases under the Foreign National Offenders Team, **are not suitable for maximisation or ex-military sites**.

There is a further list of people who are considered that **may** not be suitable for maximisation or ex-military sites, depending on their needs**. These people are: those who are disabled; elderly or survivors of torture rape or violence; people with Tuberculosis; people with HIV; people with infectious diseases; or people with serious mental health issues (for example people receiving treatment for PTSD).** This group of people need to evidence why, as a result of their needs, they

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would not be suitable for maximisation or ex-military sites. This can be challenging and you should contact a local charity who support asylum seekers, or a Public Law solicitor for further advice and support if you are able.

You have received Refugee Status

If you have received refugee status, you have an eVisa, and you have an eviction notice to vacate your hotel before the closure date, you should make a **homeless application to your Local Authority** as soon as possible by contacting their Housing and Homelessness Team. You can find your Local Authority using this link: https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council.

If you have received your Refugee Status and have your eVisa then you can request an eviction notice from the Home Office to show the Local Authority that you are homeless by contacting positivemoveon@migranthelpuk.org.

PLEASE NOTE: If you do not have evidenced medical issues, dependent children under 18, or other vulnerabilities, a Local Authority may not have a legal duty to provide you with accommodation after you leave Asylum Support Accommodation. Whilst the Local Authority has a responsibility to provide you with housing advice and options, those without 'Priority Need' under the Housing Act 1996 could face street homelessness. In this case you will need to look for private accommodation. The Council and local charities can advise you on this.

An asylum seeker should approach the Local Authority of the place **where you were last in Asylum Support**, for help. If you have received refugee status but do not have an eviction notice, and following the closure of your hotel you are moved to S.95 or S.4 in a different area, you will need to make a homeless application to the **Local Authority of your new Asylum Support address**.

This guidance is up to date as of 6th October 2026.