

Country Report: United Kingdom



2020
Update



Acknowledgements & Methodology

The preparation of the first report and subsequent four updates was prepared by Gina Clayton on a consultancy basis, under the coordination of Asylum Aid. The 2016-2020 updates were prepared by Judith Dennis of the Refugee Council, and edited by ECRE.

Information was obtained through a combination of desk-based research and consultation with relevant stakeholders. The author relied heavily on information and analysis provided by a variety of sources, in particular the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA), Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees (AVID) and Asylum Support Appeals Project.

The information in this report is up-to-date as of 31 December 2020, unless otherwise stated.

The Asylum Information Database (AIDA)

The Asylum Information Database (AIDA) is coordinated by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). It aims to provide up-to date information on asylum practice in 23 countries. This includes 19 EU Member States (AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, ES, FR, GR, HR, HU, IE, IT, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI) and 4 non-EU countries (UK, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey) which is accessible to researchers, advocates, legal practitioners and the general public through the dedicated website www.asylumineurope.org. The database also seeks to promote the implementation and transposition of EU asylum legislation reflecting the highest possible standards of protection in line with international refugee and human rights law and based on best practice.



This report is part of the Asylum Information Database (AIDA), funded by the European Programme for Integration and Migration (EPIM), a collaborative initiative by the Network of European Foundations, and the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of ECRE and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of EPIM or the European Commission.



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Glossary

| | |
|--|---|
| Country guidance case | Decision by the Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) on a specific country, with binding effect on other cases |
| Discretionary leave to enter/remain | Residence granted on humanitarian grounds |
| Dubs amendment | Section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 introduced obligations on the Secretary of State for the Home Department to make arrangements to relocate a specified number of unaccompanied children to the UK from other European countries. Named after a peer, Lord Dubs, who first introduced the amendment to the then Immigration Bill. |
| Humanitarian protection | Subsidiary protection in the meaning of the Qualification Directive. |
| Immigration Bail | An alternative to detention granted to people who are in the UK without leave, including people seeking asylum. It replaced the previous term of 'temporary admission' as well as Immigration Bail which was previously only applied to those people who had been detained. |
| Judicial Review | A specific legal challenge to the legality of a decision, act or failure to act made by a statutory authority. This process is separate for the appeal process. Judicial review proceedings do not consider the merits of a decision, but only whether the decision maker has approached the matter in the correct way. A request to have a decision judicially reviewed will be made to the High Court (England and Wales), the Court of Session (Scotland) and High Court (Northern Ireland). If the decision challenged was immigration related the case may be heard in the Tribunal but the process is the same as if it were heard in the High Court or Court of Session. |
| Rule 35 report | Relevant to Detention . Rule 35 of the Detention Centre Rules provides that, where there is evidence that a detainee has been tortured, or for any other reason their health would be injuriously affected by detention, a report should be made to the caseworker for release to be considered |
| Section 4 support | Relevant to Reception Conditions . Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 provides support to a former asylum seeker, now appeal rights exhausted, on the basis that the individual (and their dependants) have a temporary legal or medical reason for being unable to return to their country of origin. Conditions are set out in regulations (secondary legislation). |
| Section 95 support | Relevant to Reception Conditions . Section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 provides that support is given to adults and their dependants with an outstanding asylum claim or appeal and who are accepted to be destitute or will be destitute within the next 14 days. |
| Section 98 support | Relevant to Reception Conditions . Section 98 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 provides mainly for non-cash assistance to applicants during the asylum procedure. |

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|------------------|--|
| AIRE | Advice, Issue reporting and Eligibility Service |
| APPG | All Party Parliamentary Group/s |
| ARE | Appeal Rights Exhausted |
| ASAP | Asylum Support Appeals Project |
| AIU | Asylum Intake Unit |
| ASU | Asylum Screening Unit |
| AVID | Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees |
| BID | Bail for Immigration Detainees |
| BRP | Biometric Residence Permit |
| CIO | Chief Immigration Officer |
| CJEU | Court of Justice of the European Union |
| DFT | Detained Fast Track System |
| EASO | European Asylum Support Office |
| ECHR | European Convention on Human Rights |
| ECtHR | European Court of Human Rights |
| EWCA | England and Wales Court of Appeal |
| EWHC | England and Wales High Court |
| FOI | Freedom of Information |
| FFT | Freedom From Torture |
| FTT (IAC) | First-Tier Tribunal Immigration and Asylum Chamber |
| IMB | Independent Monitoring Board |
| ILR | Indefinite Leave to Remain |
| IRC | Immigration Removal Centre |
| JCWI | Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants |
| NAAU | National Asylum Allocation Unit |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NHS | National Health Service |
| NSA | Non-Suspensive Appeal |
| OLCU | Older Live Cases Unit |
| OSS | One Stop Services |
| PTSD | Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder |
| SSC | Service Support Centres |
| STHF | Short-Term Holding Facility |
| TP | Transition Period (after the UK left the EU) |
| UKBF | United Kingdom Border Force |

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| UKCISA | United Kingdom Council for International Student Affairs |
| UKHL | United Kingdom House of Lords (highest appellate court, now UKSC) |
| UKRP | United Kingdom Resident Permit |
| UKSC | United Kingdom Supreme Court |
| UKVI | United Kingdom Visas and Immigration |
| UT (IAC) | Upper Tribunal Immigration and Asylum Chamber |
| VPR/VPRS | Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme (previously known as Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme) |

Statistics

Overview of statistical practice

Statistics on asylum are published as part of a package of immigration statistics on a quarterly basis by the National Statistics authority,¹ using Home Office administrative sources. Where statistics are not made available, they are requested directly from the Home Office using a Parliamentary Question.² Difficulties have also been encountered with regard to Home Office responses to freedom of information (FOI) requests.³ The numbers include dependants.

Applications and granting of protection status at first instance: 2020

| | First time Applicants ⁴ | Pending (and pending appeal) at end of 2020 ⁵ | Refugee status | Subsidiary protection | Rejection | Refugee rate ⁶ | Sub. Prot. rate | Rejection rate |
|--------------|------------------------------------|--|----------------|-----------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Total | 36,041 | 64,895 | 7,546 | 1,012 | 6,675 | 34% | 5% | 30% |

Breakdown by countries of origin of the total numbers

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|----|-----|-----|------|-----|
| Iran | 4,199 | 6,056 (333) | 1,363 | 3 | 364 | 78% | 0.2% | 21% |
| Iraq | 3,281 | 5,244 (846) | 356 | 91 | 871 | 25% | 6% | 62% |
| Albania | 3,071 | 8,163 (328) | 395 | 4 | 540 | 40% | 0.4% | 55% |
| Eritrea | 2,604 | 3,044 (67) | 827 | 1 | 46 | 95% | 0.1% | 5% |
| Sudan | 2,153 | 2,215 (65) | 817 | 2 | 56 | 93% | 0.1% | 6% |
| Syria | 1,746 | 2,205 (26) | 551 | 6 | 19 | 95% | 1% | 3% |
| Afghanistan | 1,546 | 2,894 (333) | 554 | 10 | 336 | 61% | 1% | 37% |
| Pakistan | 1,525 | 3,889 (352) | 268 | 1 | 540 | 30% | 0.1% | 61% |
| India | 1,046 | 2,119 (158) | 6 | 1 | 547 | 1% | 0.2% | 94% |
| Vietnam | 2,818 | 982 (128) | 313 | 9 | 148 | 64% | 2% | 30% |

Source: National Statistics Authority; Home Office. All percentages are calculated from total decisions omitting inadmissibility decisions and withdrawn claims.

¹ National Statistics Authority, available at: <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>. See also Home Office, *Immigration Statistics*, available at: <https://bit.ly/3awmb90>.

² Parliament, *Parliamentary Questions*, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kL0oIB>.

³ See e.g. Information Commissioner, Decision FS50646722, 12 January 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kQ5TIU>.

⁴ No information on subsequent applicants is available.

⁵ Pending initial decisions. Number in brackets is number of additional cases pending an appeal

⁶ All percentages are calculated from total decisions omitting inadmissibility decisions and withdrawn claims.

Gender/age breakdown of the total number of applicants: 2020

| | Number | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|--------|------------|
| Total number of applicants | 36,041 | - |
| Men | 20,671 | 57 |
| Women | 7,707 | 21 |
| Children | 5,348 | 15 |
| Unaccompanied children | 2,291 | 5 |

Source: UK government statistical data release February 2021.

Comparison between first instance and appeal decision rates: 2020

| | First instance | | Appeal | |
|--|----------------|------------|--------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Total number of decisions⁷ | 15,788 | - | 3,784 | |
| Positive decisions ⁸ | 9,048 | 57% | | |
| • <i>Refugee status</i> | 7,546 | 48% | 1,481 | 39% |
| • <i>Humanitarian protection</i> | 1,012 | 6% | | |
| • <i>Discretionary leave</i> | 92 | 0.6% | | |
| Negative decisions ⁹ | 6,750 | 43% | 1,882 | 50% |

Source: UK government statistical data release February 2021. The figures relating to appeal refer to number of cases, not individuals (i.e. they do not include dependants), while the percentage of appeals does not include withdrawn appeals.

⁷ Excludes withdrawn claims and inadmissibility decisions

⁸ Includes grants of other leave.

⁹ The total of refusals and grants of UASC leave.

Overview of the legal framework

Main legislative acts relevant to asylum procedures, reception conditions, detention and content of protection

| Title (EN) | Abbreviation | Web Link |
|--|--------------|---|
| Immigration Act 1971 | IA 1971 | http://bit.ly/1JKaigx |
| Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 | IAA 1999 | http://bit.ly/1C2MkVQ |
| Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 | NIAA 2002 | http://bit.ly/1Sat0PR |
| Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants etc.) Act 2004 | AITOCA 2004 | http://bit.ly/1Sat3Lt |
| Borders Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 | BCIA 2009 | http://bit.ly/1L4XIOC |
| Immigration Act 2014 | IA 2014 | http://bit.ly/1cPORMc |
| Immigration Act 2016 | IA 2016 | http://bit.ly/2jqhiEv |
| Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Act 2020 | | https://bit.ly/2M7jiFO |

Main implementing decrees and administrative guidelines and regulations relevant to asylum procedures, reception conditions, detention and content of protection

| Title (EN) | Abbreviation | Web Link |
|--|--------------------------------|---|
| Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules HC 395 Part 11 | Immigration Rules | http://bit.ly/1FY1JYi |
| Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules HC 395 Part 11B | Immigration Rules | http://bit.ly/1KKr1zi |
| Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules HC 395 Part 12 | Immigration Rules | http://bit.ly/1MOpgjX |
| Asylum Seekers (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2005 SI 7 | Reception Conditions Regs 2005 | http://bit.ly/1L52LsU |
| Asylum Support Regulations 2000 SI 704 | Asylum Support Regs 2000 | http://bit.ly/1C2R7GQ |
| Asylum Support (Amendment) Regulations 2005 SI 11 | Asylum Support Regs 2005 | http://bit.ly/1Fd2wUj |
| Transfer for Determination of an Application for International Protection (Detention) (Significant Risk of Absconding Criteria) Regulations 2017 | Dublin Retention Regs 2017 | http://bit.ly/2jTZ6lr |
| The Detention Centre Rules 2001 SI 238 | Detention Centre Rules | http://bit.ly/1GBXGY2 |
| Detention Service Orders | DSOs | http://bit.ly/1MOpYr7 |
| Asylum Process Guidance and Asylum Policy Instructions | APG/API | http://bit.ly/1BaVlvv |

| | | |
|---|-------------------|---|
| The Tribunal Procedure (First-tier Tribunal) (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) Rules 2014 (S.I. 2014 No.2604 (L.31)) | Procedural Rules | http://bit.ly/1eawcw7 |
| Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules 2018 | Immigration Rules | https://bit.ly/2weGiYf |
| Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules 2019 | Immigration Rules | https://bit.ly/2tkZNQL |
| Statement of Changes to Immigration Rules October 2020 | Immigration Rules | https://bit.ly/3iCSM2P |
| Statement of Changes to Immigration Rules December 2020 | Immigration Rules | https://bit.ly/2LVidRp |

Overview of the main changes since the previous update

The report was previously updated in **March 2020**.

During 2020 the United Kingdom (UK) government passed legislation and began to reveal its plans for its Immigration system to be brought in at the end of the EU transition period. Some guidance has been changed simply to remove reference to EU law and processes but some are more substantial.

Asylum procedure

- ❖ **Impact of COVID-19 on the asylum procedure:** Access to registration and the asylum procedure remained open throughout the COVID-19 pandemic including the national lockdowns. In April 2020 six Home Office premises were made available for people to claim asylum without having to travel to the national centre. At the time of writing these remained open but only on a temporary basis. Substantive interviews were paused between mid-March and the end of June 2020. When they resumed they mainly take place via video link; the asylum seeker is invited to the usual Home Office premises but the interviewing officer may be working from home or in a different office. Some face-to-face interviews have resumed.
- ❖ **Extended scope of the admissibility procedure (post-Dublin):** The UK is no longer part of the Dublin regulation and associated processes so the guidance on Dublin III has been removed. A new instruction was introduced to deal with transfers already in process on 31 December 2020. For applications after that date, the guidance on inadmissible claims and the screening and routing guidance were amended in December 2020 to reflect that the UK will change its approach to inadmissibility. The scope of inadmissibility is widened to any country that would agree to take responsibility for the person's asylum claim, even if there is no connection with that country. The rules allow an inadmissibility decision to be taken on the basis of a person's earlier presence in or connection to a safe third country, even if that particular country will not immediately agree to the persons return.
- ❖ **Lodging an application for international protection:** people are not permitted to claim asylum in UK territorial waters.

Reception

- ❖ **Reception conditions:** There were some changes to reception conditions due to the restrictions on movement brought in through the Coronavirus regulations and through announcements by Ministers and officials. These are detailed below but included a temporary pause of evictions and cessation of asylum support.
- ❖ **Reception capacity:** The accommodation estate suffered severe pressure, in part as a result of the decision not to evict anyone when they received a decision on their claim. The accommodation providers procured contingency accommodation: some hotels were repurposed for use as Initial Accommodation and several former military barracks were rapidly repurposed, which has resulted in media attention. The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration released in March 2021 some key findings following the team's visit to both sites formerly used as military barracks. It reported issues in management and leadership, mental health problems among residents, an impoverished, run-down and unsuitable environment for long-term accommodation. Cleanliness at both sites was variable at best and cleaning was made difficult by the age of the buildings. Some areas were filthy.

- ❖ People entitled to 'section 95' support were not always moved to more independent accommodation. Late in 2020 the government agreed to pay a small amount of cash to such people when they were living in full board accommodation.

Detention of asylum seekers

- ❖ **Decreased detention:** Given the prevalence of Covid-19 cases in detention and the lack of opportunity for the Home Office to remove people from the UK there were calls throughout the year to release everyone from immigration detention. Whilst this call was not heeded, i.e. there was no change in law and policy, the use of detention fell during 2020. Guidance was issued to Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs) and Short-Term Holding Facilities (STHF) for how to manage detention during Covid-19 including responding to outbreaks, preventative measures including cohorting and controlling of visits.

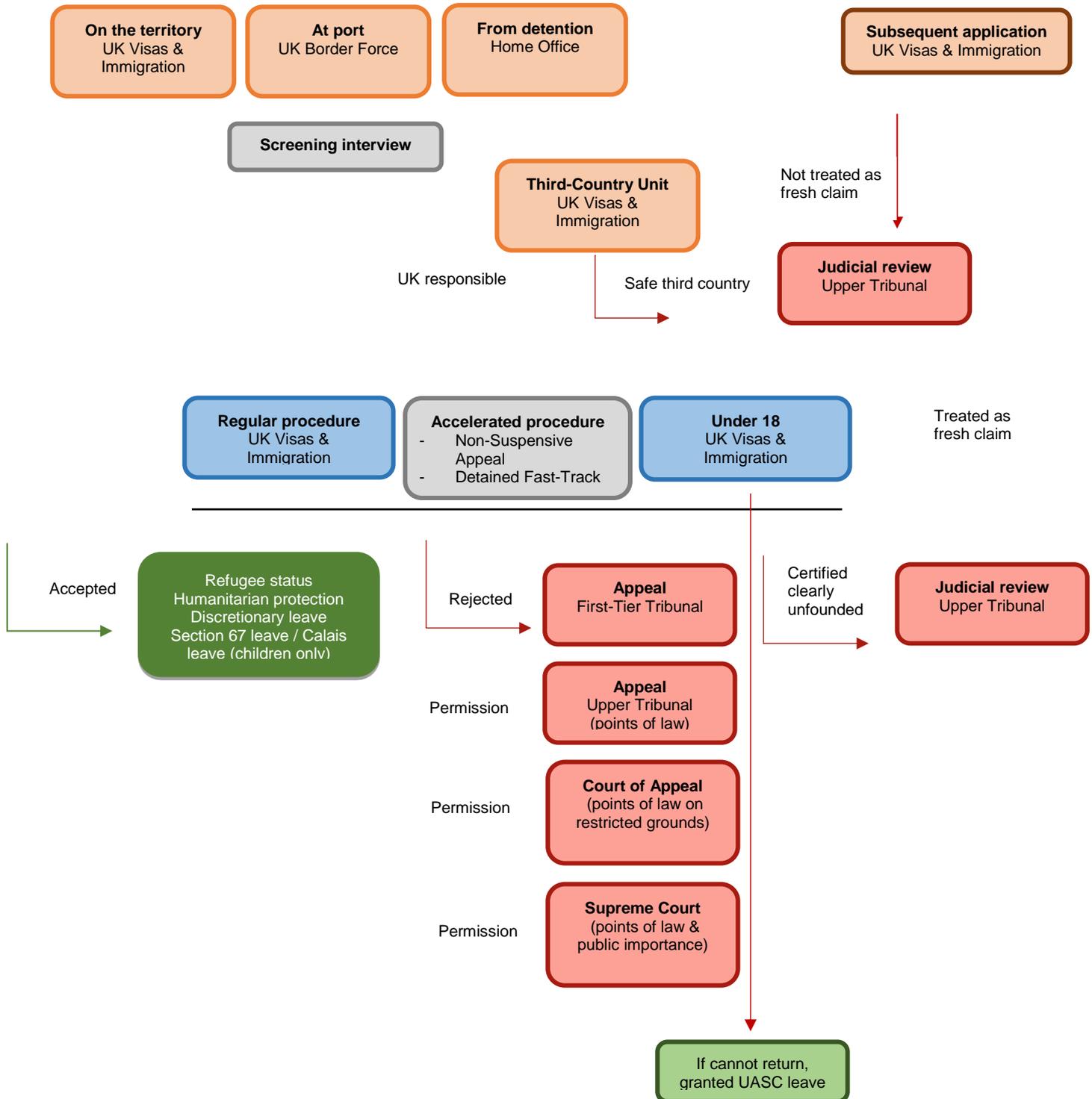
Content of international protection

- ❖ **Registration:** Applicants for visas and extensions of permission to stay, including refugees applying for Indefinite Leave following five years refugee leave, are required to re-register their biometrics at a Service and Support Centre run by a private company. Whilst they are required to provide free appointments to those who make free applications (including refugees) there are very few centres with free appointments available. The Independent Chief Inspector has begun an inspection into this issue.

Asylum Procedure

A. General

1. Flow chart



2. Types of procedures

Indicators: Types of Procedures

Which types of procedures exist in your country?

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| ❖ Regular procedure: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ▪ Prioritised examination: ¹⁰ | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| ▪ Fast-track processing: ¹¹ | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Dublin procedure: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Admissibility procedure: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Border procedure: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Accelerated procedure: ¹² | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Other: | | |

Are any of the procedures that are foreseen in the law, not being applied in practice? Yes No

The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020 but has remained subject to the Dublin Regulation during the Transition Period (TP). The UK issued guidance explaining how to process cases where a Dublin Regulation responsibility request was made by a Dublin State to the UK prior to the end of the TP at 23h 00 on 31 December 2020 but either no decision has been made in relation to that request or a decision has been made but the transfer has not taken place before the end of the TP (see [Dublin](#)).

3. List of authorities intervening in each stage of the procedure

| Stage of the procedure | Competent authority (EN) |
|---|--|
| Application at the border <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ At the border ❖ On the territory | Home Office UK Border Force (UKBF) Home Office UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) |
| Dublin and safe third country (responsibility assessment) | Home Office UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), Third Country Unit |
| Refugee status determination | Home Office UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) |
| Appeal procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ First appeal ❖ Second (onward) appeal | First Tier Tribunal, Immigration and Asylum Chamber (FTT (IAC)) Upper Tribunal, Immigration and Asylum Chamber (UKUT (IAC)) |
| Subsequent application (admissibility) | Home Office UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) |

4. Number of staff and nature of the determining authority

| Name | Number of staff | Ministry responsible | Is there any political interference possible by the responsible Minister with the decision making in individual cases by the determining authority? |
|---|-----------------|----------------------|---|
| Home Office Visas and Immigration (UKVI), Asylum Casework Directorate | 597 | Home Office | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

Source: Home Office. The number of staff is valid as of March 2020.

Responsibility for the asylum process rests with the Secretary of State for the Home Department, who is a government minister (the Home Secretary). Within the Home Office, asylum decision-making is

¹⁰ For applications likely to be well-founded or made by vulnerable applicants.

¹¹ Accelerating the processing of specific caseloads as part of the regular procedure.

¹² Labelled as “accelerated procedure” in national law.

allocated to a department called UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and within this to the Asylum Intake and Casework Directorate. The Home Office is responsible for all aspects of immigration and asylum: entry, in-country applications for leave to remain, monitoring compliance with immigration conditions, and enforcement including detention and removal.

The operational guidance of the UKVI is available online. It includes *inter alia* asylum instructions on the decision-making process, on screening asylum seekers and routing them to regional asylum teams; as well as on asylum applications involving children or how to make decisions about detention of asylum seekers. Moreover, country of origin information (COI) reports are also made available online and are frequently quoted by other countries' authorities.

5. Short overview of the asylum procedure

A first application for asylum in the UK can be made either on arrival at the border, or at the Asylum Screening Unit (ASU) in **Croydon** (South of London), or, where a person is already detained it may be made from the detention centre. The ASU has been renamed the Asylum Intake Unit (AIU), but this name is not yet used in all guidance.

The centre remained open throughout the Covid-19 pandemic including the national lockdowns. In April 2020 six Home Office premises were made available for people to claim asylum without having to travel to the national centre. At the time of writing these remained open but only on a temporary basis.¹³

First instance procedure

In most cases the application is first screened, which involves an interview in which biometric data is taken, health and family information, details of the route of travel, and the broad outline of the reasons for claiming asylum. Children making a claim in their own right are not screened; if they are already in the care of the local authority their claim is registered with the Home Office at a scheduled interview. If the Home Office encounters them first, the child will be subject to a 'welfare interview'.

On the basis of the screening interview the National Asylum Allocation Unit (NAAU) of the Home Office decides which route the application will follow. The alternatives are: unaccompanied children – referred to a specially trained decision maker; accelerated procedure (Detained Fast Track¹⁴ or clearly unfounded with Non-Suspensive Appeal); safe third country procedure or general casework, which is the regular procedure. In all cases the procedure deals with both refugee status and subsidiary protection.

Potential safe third country cases are referred to the third country unit of the Home Office, which decides whether to refuse to consider the claim on the basis that the person can be removed to another country, including EU Member states (this policy does not apply to claims made from EEA nationals). Such inadmissibility decisions may be certified in which case appeal is limited and the right to appeal non-suspensive. The decisions to declare an asylum claim as inadmissible, to remove an appeal right (in the case of asylum inadmissibility decision certificates) or to make an appeal right exercisable only from abroad (in the case of a human rights claim certified as clearly unfounded), may be challenged in the UK only through judicial review. An application made to the Upper Tribunal can only be made with permission of that tribunal.¹⁵ Judicial review proceedings do not consider the merits of a decision, but only whether the decision maker has approached the matter in the correct way.

¹³ Correspondence with stakeholders, reflected on the Refugee Council website, available at: <https://bit.ly/39WSwrC>.

¹⁴ Currently suspended but remains in the description of the procedure.

¹⁵ Section 16 Tribunals Courts and Enforcement Act 2007.

The UK operated Detained Fast Track (DFT) procedures where Home Office officials considered that the case could be decided quickly. Following a series of legal challenges, the DFT policy is currently suspended.¹⁶ The current guidance for applications considered whilst the applicant is detained was revised in March 2019.¹⁷ The main change is to separate the casework on the asylum claim from the management of the decision to continue detention; decisions in each are handled by different sections of the Home Office.

In the regular procedure, decisions are made by a regional office of the Home Office. There is no time limit for making a first decision and a previous policy to apply service standards in terms of specific lengths of time has now been abandoned.¹⁸ A replacement standard has not been announced. Information for applicants still states that decisions will usually be made within six months.¹⁹ Reasoned decisions are normally sent by post, although they may be delivered to the asylum seeker in person when they attend the Home Office reporting centre.

Appeal

Appeal is to the First Tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber), an independent judicial body which is part of the unified tribunal structure in the Ministry of Justice. The appeal is suspensive unless certified otherwise and must be lodged within 14 days of the asylum refusal being sent. The tribunal proceedings are broadly adversarial, with the Home Office represented by a presenting officer.

A further appeal on a point of law may be made to the Upper Tribunal with permission of the First Tier Tribunal, or, if refused, of the Upper Tribunal. Application for permission to appeal must be made within 14 days of deemed receipt of the First Tier Tribunal decision. Asylum appeals before the First Tier and Upper Tribunals are heard by a specialist Immigration and Asylum Chamber.

Appeal from the Upper Tribunal to the Court of Appeal on a point of law may only be made with permission of the Upper Tribunal or the Court of Appeal. A final appeal to the Supreme Court may only be made on a point of law of public importance, certified by the Court of Appeal or Supreme Court. The Court of Appeal and Supreme Court are superior courts with a general jurisdiction.

Rules and guidance

Immigration Rules and guidance govern the day-to-day operation of immigration and asylum decision-making. Immigration Rules are made by the Home Secretary and are laid before Parliament in a procedure that does not routinely involve scrutiny. In relation to asylum most of the rules are concerned with the process rather than the substance of the decision, but they do include, for instance, factors relevant to credibility. A breach of the rules is grounds for an appeal, although this is rarely relevant in asylum cases.

The Home Office also issues detailed practical guidance for asylum decision-making. Guidance deals with a wide range of issues including how to conduct interviews, how to apply some legal rules, country of origin information, and detailed procedural and administrative matters. Guidance is not directly binding, but should be followed, and failure to do so can be grounds for an application for judicial review.

¹⁶ House of Commons, Written Statement made by The Minister of State for Immigration (James Brokenshire), HCWS83, 2 July 2015.

¹⁷ Home Office, Detained Asylum Casework- asylum casework, March 2019, available at <https://bit.ly/36UrFtv>.

¹⁸ Clarified in parliament in response to a Parliamentary Question, 18 February 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2NvXkJU>.

¹⁹ UK Government, Claim asylum in the UK (Information on government website for people making an asylum claim), available at: <https://bit.ly/2FTbxMO>.

The Immigration Rules and guidance are available on the government website, www.gov.uk, including information about countries of origin used in asylum decision-making and guidance for staff on how to make asylum decisions.

B. Access to the procedure and registration

1. Access to the territory and push backs

Indicators: Access to the Territory

1. Are there any reports (NGO reports, media, testimonies, etc.) of people refused entry at the border and returned without examination of their protection needs? Yes No
2. Is there a border monitoring system in place? Yes No
 - ❖ If so, who is responsible for border monitoring? National authorities NGOs Other
 - ❖ If so, how often is border monitoring carried out? Frequently Rarely Never

Juxtaposed border controls in France and Belgium allow the UK to limit access to the territory. On 18 January 2018 the two governments reiterated their commitment to juxtaposed controls in the Sandhurst Agreement, although no new measures were introduced relating to the operation of those controls.²⁰

Since 2018, possibly as a result of the increased security measures in the Sandhurst agreement the number of people attempting to cross the channel in small boats increased, with much media attention.²¹ The government responded with statements condemning the actions and pledging both to return those who travel from France and promising to treat such people in the criminal justice system as well as making agreements with the French government to prevent people from leaving in this manner.²² The Home Secretary appointed a Clandestine Channel Threat Commander in August 2020.²³ In September 2020 a parliamentary committee opened a new inquiry on the issue of channel crossings and asylum-seeking routes thought the EU and has taken written and oral evidence.²⁴ At her political party's annual conference the Home Secretary pledged to amend the system; giving the message that the mode of arrival is relevant to the way someone's claim should be dealt with.²⁵ In the autumn the government increased the transfers under the Dublin Regulation, apparently as the deadline for such transfers was approaching. It began tweeting this information from the Home Office's account on a regular basis, usually conflating the transfers with removal of former offenders.²⁶ The Clandestine Threat Commander stated that this was part of a deterrent measure.²⁷ These transfers, often using charter flights, were widely criticised,²⁸ particularly as it was revealed that people arriving irregularly from France, primarily in small boats, were subject to superficial questioning to ascertain little more than their recent journey and failure to identify

²⁰ Secretary of State for the Home Department, 'Statement to Parliament', HCWS415, 19 January 2018, available at: <http://bit.ly/2DokzPb>.

²¹ Skynews, Desperate migrants cheer 'UK' as several boats cross English Channel in one morning, 11 August 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2KQ5YoJ>; BBC, Home Office seeks military help over migrant crossings, 8 August 2020, available at: <https://bbc.in/3a9E2EM>.

²² Tweet from official Home Office twitter account stating that in 2020 116 arrests were made. See for example: <https://bit.ly/2LUM5xq>

²³ Government announcement: Home Secretary appoints small boats commander, August 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2Nr9F50>

²⁴ Home Affairs Select Committee, at: <https://bit.ly/3iMHjhu>

²⁵ Home Secretary's speech to the Conservative Party conference, October 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/39e7Z7o>

²⁶ Tweets from the Home Office account at: <https://bit.ly/3iOJb9t>

²⁷ Dan Mahoney twitter, at: <https://bit.ly/2M5s4UO>

²⁸ Media report with Freedom of Information data, Deportation Flights to the EU Have Increased Threefold, As the UK Rushes to Return Asylum Seekers Before Brexit, 20 November 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2YdDusc>

vulnerabilities. This practice had to cease when it was challenged legally; the Home Office was ordered to conduct the interviews according to its regular procedure.²⁹

2. Registration of the asylum application

Indicators: Registration

1. Are specific time limits laid down in law for making an application? Yes No
 - ❖ If so, what is the time limit for making an application?
2. Are specific time limits laid down in law for lodging an application? Yes No
 - ❖ If so, what is the time limit for lodging an application?
3. Are registration and lodging distinct stages in the law or in practice? Yes No
4. Is the authority with which the application is lodged also the authority responsible for its examination? Yes No
5. Can an application be lodged at embassies, consulates or other external representations? Yes No

The Secretary of State for the Home Department is responsible in law for registering asylum applications.³⁰ This responsibility is carried out by civil servants in the UK Visas and Immigration Section (UKVI) of the Home Office. If a person claims asylum on entry to the UK, immigration officers at the port have no power to take a decision on the claim, and must refer it to UKVI.³¹

Where a couple or family claim asylum, the children normally apply as dependants on the claim of one of their parents. Also one partner may apply as the dependant of the other. This means that the outcome of their claim will depend upon that of the main applicant. It is policy to inform women separately that they may claim separately from their partner,³² although there is no recent research or regular auditing to check that this is routinely done.

There is no specific time limit for asylum seekers to lodge their application. A claim may be refused if the applicant 'fails, without reasonable explanation, to make a prompt and full disclosure of material facts.'³³ However, 'applications for asylum shall be neither rejected nor excluded from examination on the sole ground that they have not been made as soon as possible.'³⁴ In practice, where someone is present in the UK in another capacity, e.g. as a student or worker, and then claims asylum after some years, whether or not they have overstayed their immigration leave, this may be treated as evidence that they are not in fear. Financial support and accommodation can be refused if the person did not claim 'as soon as reasonably practicable',³⁵ but not if this would entail a breach of human rights (see [Reception Conditions](#)).³⁶

First applications made from inside the UK must be registered by appointment at the Asylum Intake Unit (AIU) – formerly Asylum Screening Unit (ASU) – in **Croydon** in the South East of England unless the asylum seeker is in detention or unless an applicant successfully argues that they cannot be expected to

²⁹ Case note and link to judgment *Da and Ors*, available at: <https://bit.ly/3iRG1BF>

³⁰ Section 113 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act (NIAA) 2002.

³¹ Para 328 Immigration Rules Part 11.

³² Home Office, *Gender issues in the asylum claim*, September 2010, available at: <http://bit.ly/1CbiHBK>, para 7.1; Home Office, *Dependants and former Dependants*, May 2014, available at: <http://bit.ly/2Bjz5G8>.

³³ Para 339M Immigration Rules Part 11.

³⁴ Para 339MA Immigration Rules Part 11.

³⁵ Section 55 NIAA 2002.

³⁶ House of Lords, *Limbuela v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2005] UKHL 66.

travel to the AIU.³⁷ This includes all applications not made at the port of entry, even if only hours after arrival and where the asylum seeker has left the port. New rules were laid in 2020, coming into force on 31 December 2020, to designate the place of claim. It has been explained that this is to make clear that claims cannot be made in territorial waters and that anyone attempting to do so will be brought to the UK to make their claim.³⁸

There is no government funding for fares to the AIU. Particularly where asylum seekers are newly arrived in the UK, and may be confused, disoriented and understanding little English, making this journey successfully is very problematic.

Applicants are required to telephone the AIU before they can apply in person, and give some basic personal details over the phone, but not details of their asylum claim. They are then given an appointment to attend and register their claim. In the meantime they are unable to access financial support or government-provided accommodation. In exceptional circumstances – destitution or extreme vulnerability – the Home Office can accept walk-in applications or offer a same or next-day appointment. In practice, it is hard to prove that the applicant is destitute or sufficiently vulnerable and applicants are advised that they may need to advocate for their need to be seen without an appointment.³⁹ Temporary facilities were opened in April 2020 at six additional Home Office premises, to reduce the need for travel during the pandemic. These remain in place at the time of writing.

There is no rule laying down a maximum period within which an asylum claim must be registered, after the authority has first been notified of the claim. Appointments for the screening interview are usually fixed within one or two weeks after the telephone call, but a 2017 inspection showed that screening officers struggle to meet their targets.⁴⁰ A person who claims asylum on being arrested or detained or during detention is not taken to the AIU but may be screened in detention or at a regional office or even in a police station. The screening interview in such a case is carried out by an immigration official, not a police officer, but information disclosed during a police interview under caution may be disclosed to the asylum authorities.

At the screening interview, fingerprints are taken for comparison with databases including Eurodac and the route of travel is inquired into. As from 2021 access to Eurodac is limited to transfer requests made prior to the beginning of 2021. The asylum seeker is asked basic details of their claim. Although confidential space is now provided for interviewing at the **Croydon** screening unit, there is no supervised childcare for this first stage of the process.⁴¹ The lack of child care provision at the AIU remains an obstacle to disclosure of sensitive information such as an experience of torture or rape since children may be in the same room as the parent while information on the basis of the claim is taken.

The government published new guidance relating to this stage of the process in 2018 and this was revised in 2020.⁴² Although details of the asylum claim should not be required at this stage, a decision will be made as to which kind of procedure the application will be routed through, including inadmissibility (on [Safe Third Country](#) grounds) and suitability for detention.

There is no provision for publicly funded legal assistance at the screening interview except for unaccompanied children. Applicants who have applied from within the UK may have had legal advice

³⁷ Home Office, *Asylum Process Guidance: Registering an asylum application in the UK*, available at: <http://bit.ly/1BkfXXq>, para 7.1.

³⁸ Statement of changes to Immigration rules December 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3cclw00>

³⁹ Right to Remain, Toolkit (information for people making an asylum claim), available at: <https://bit.ly/2tnulfld>.

⁴⁰ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, *An inspection of asylum intake and casework*, November 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2hZAIBC>.

⁴¹ See Joint Committee on Human Rights, *Violence against Women and Girls Sixth report of session 2014-15*, HL Paper 106 HC 594, recommendation 37.

⁴² Home Office, *Asylum Screening and Routing*, December 2020 available at: <https://bit.ly/2sAbGC4>

prior to screening, but those applying at a port will not have had that opportunity. The Screening Unit does not have direct access to appointments for legal representatives, but officers can use a public access part of the government website called ‘[Find a Legal Adviser](#)’ which enables a search for contact details of legal representatives listed by subject matter and by region. The officer can search in the region where the asylum seeker is going to be sent for initial accommodation (see [Reception Conditions](#)). There is no obligation on screening offices to help in finding legal representation.

Registration of unaccompanied children

The policy is to treat unaccompanied children differently and this system is now the norm.⁴³ The policy guidance, first issued in July 2016 and updated, most recently in December 2020 reflects the practice that had emerged following a report by the Office of the Children’s Commissioner for England,⁴⁴ and a judgment of the Court of Appeal.⁴⁵ Children encountered prior to them being cared for by a local authority are interviewed by an immigration officer in a ‘welfare interview’ which is designed to elicit information about the safety of the child and enable a referral to be made. If the child is already in the care of the local authority the appointment with an immigration officer is to register the claim. At both types of interview the child’s biometrics are taken. If under 16, the process requires a responsible adult (independent of the Home Office) to be present for the biometrics.

C. Procedures

1. Regular procedure

1.1. General (scope, time limits)

Indicators: Regular Procedure: General

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Time limit set in law for the determining authority to make a decision on the asylum application at first instance: | None |
| 2. Are detailed reasons for the rejection at first instance of an asylum application shared with the applicant in writing? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3. Backlog of pending cases at first instance as of 31 December 2020: | 51,321 |

As mentioned in [Number of staff and nature of the determining authority](#), the Home Office has responsibility for all aspects of immigration, and is directly responsible for policy development. The department dealing with the processing of asylum claims is the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). Within the UKVI the directorate dealing with asylum claims is known as the Immigration and Protection Directorate; Asylum Intake and Casework is within that directorate. Responsibility for border control lies with the UK Border Force, an executive agency of the Home Office which combines immigration, policing and customs functions. Subjects covered by the publicly available guidance for case workers include making an asylum decision.⁴⁶

There is no enforceable time limit for deciding asylum applications, but the immigration rules say that the decision must be taken ‘as soon as possible’.⁴⁷ The target to deal with ‘straightforward’ applications was six months, or 182 days, although in February 2019 the government announced that this strict target had

⁴³ Home Office, *Processing children’s asylum claims*, December 2020, available at: <http://bit.ly/2jz4uD>.

⁴⁴ Adrian Matthews, Office of the Children’s Commissioner, *Landing in Dover: The Immigration process undergone by unaccompanied children arriving in Kent*, 2012, available at: <http://bit.ly/1MljwYn>.

⁴⁵ Court of Appeal, *R (AN and FA) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2012] EWCA Civ 1636.

⁴⁶ Home Office, *Asylum decision making guidance (asylum instructions)*, available at: <http://bit.ly/1Q7pK5Z>.

⁴⁷ Para 333A Immigration Rules Part 11.

been abandoned,⁴⁸ no replacement has yet been agreed, although discussions between UKVI colleagues and NGOs took place in early 2019. Statistics were regularly published as to the performance of the UKVI against the six month target and how many cases were pending after being in the system for more than six months. At the end of December 2020, it had reached a record level of 36,679 cases.

If a decision is not taken within six months, a caseworker should inform the applicant of the delay. This is common in cases designated as 'non-straightforward'; in 2017 the internal guidance on non-straightforward cases was contained in a report by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration and much criticism made of the processing of such claims.⁴⁹ Criticisms included lack of attention to a case once it has been designated 'non-straightforward' and some reports of designation as 'non-straightforward' simply on the basis that the 182-day deadline was fast approaching. Most legal challenges relating to delays, even of unaccompanied minors,⁵⁰ do not succeed unless it can be shown that the delay was deliberate, which was the case in one case, *TM v Secretary of State for Home Department*, during 2018 where it was found that the case was unlawfully put on hold.⁵¹

It is not possible to say how many applicants have been waiting for an initial decision for over a year, because the published figures are of decisions pending for less than six months – 14,642 at the end of 2020 – and for more than six months – 36,679 at the end of 2020. Adding the two figures indicates that the total number of pending cases at first instance reached 51,321 as of 31 December 2020.

A 2019 report entitled "Lessons not Learned: the failures of asylum decision-making in the UK" documents flawed credibility assessments and finds that the current system places an unrealistic and unlawful evidential burden on asylum applicants. It compiles findings from over 50 publications issued over the last fifteen years on the quality of decision-making processes in the UK Home Office. Built on an analysis of over 1,800 asylum cases and 140 interviews, the report charts the consistent failure of the Home Office to implement recommendations to improve procedures.⁵²

1.2. Prioritised examination and fast-track processing

There is no established system in the UK for prioritising the cases of people who are particularly vulnerable or whose case appears at first sight well-founded, although since the abandonment of the six-month target the Home Office claims that vulnerable clients (undefined publicly) are prioritised.⁵³ The only system for expediting decisions was the Detained Fast Track, which has been suspended since 2015.

⁴⁸ Immigration Minister, Reply to Asylum: Applications: Written question – 220305, 18 February 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2VBYXre>.

⁴⁹ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, *An inspection of asylum intake and casework*, November 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2hZAIBC>.

⁵⁰ Including in December 2019, see for example: England and Wales High Court (Administrative Court) Decisions, [2019] EWHC 3573 (Admin), Case No: CO/3942/2018, 20 December 2019 available at: <https://bit.ly/2FUcxR9>.

⁵¹ Upper Tribunal, *TM v Secretary of State for Home Department* [2018] UKUT 299 (IAC), 23 August 2018, available at <https://bit.ly/2SUhU6R>.

⁵² FFT, *Lessons not Learned; The failures of asylum decision-making in the UK*, September 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/36ee2UH>.

⁵³ UK Parliament, Answer to written parliamentary question, February 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2VBYXre>.

1.3. Personal interview

Indicators: Regular Procedure: Personal Interview

1. Is a personal interview of the asylum seeker in most cases conducted in practice in the regular procedure?
❖ If so, are interpreters available in practice, for interviews? Yes No Yes No
2. In the regular procedure, is the interview conducted by the authority responsible for taking the decision? Yes No
3. Are interviews conducted through video conferencing? Frequently Rarely Never
4. Can the asylum seeker request the interviewer and the interpreter to be of a specific gender?
❖ If so, is this applied in practice, for interviews? Yes No Yes No

Applicants are entitled to a personal interview,⁵⁴ and this is standard practice. There is an initial screening interview before the substantive interview. Most applicants are given a questionnaire to complete and return prior to the substantive interview. This is not universal and no additional legal help is afforded to those who are required to complete it. This form is now available to download.⁵⁵

Interviews may be dispensed with in defined circumstances including where:

- a positive decision can be taken on the basis of the evidence available;
- the facts given in the application only raise issues of minimal relevance or which are clearly improbable or insufficient or designed to frustrate removal;
- or the applicant is unfit or unable to be interviewed owing to enduring circumstances beyond his control.

Where a refused asylum seeker returns to the UK and wishes to claim asylum again, guidance to Home Office officers is that this should be treated as a further submission.⁵⁶ In this case they may be refused an interview. Applicants under 12 years old are not normally interviewed, though they can be if they are willing and it is deemed appropriate.⁵⁷ In summary, it is very rare for an asylum applicant over 12 years of age on their first application in the regular procedure not to have an interview.

Personal interviews are usually conducted by the authority responsible for taking the decisions, i.e. by the Home Office caseworkers, although it will not always be the same individual. In 2020 the Home Office trialled the use of external Agency staff to assist with interviews but no information is publicly available in this regard.⁵⁸ Asylum seekers are entitled to have a legal representative with them at the personal interview, but there is no public funding for this for adult claimants, save in the case of lack of mental capacity,⁵⁹ and so few are able to do so in practice. Where there is a legal representative present, their role is not to put the asylum seeker's case, but to ensure that their client is able to participate fully and properly in the interview.

The guidelines on gender issues require provision of child care so that parents do not have to have their children present while being interviewed about possibly traumatic experiences.⁶⁰ This is now formally in place in every location (other than offices with no interview facility) although different arrangements are in place at each venue and there have been some gaps due to a change of provider or location.

⁵⁴ Para 339NA Immigration Rules Part 11.

⁵⁵ Preliminary Information Form available at: <https://bit.ly/3piXiGs>

⁵⁶ Home Office, *Asylum Process Guidance: Routing Asylum Applications*, para.3.9.

⁵⁷ Home Office, *Children's Asylum Claims*, available at <http://bit.ly/2Bcs1Le>.

⁵⁸ Discussions with stakeholder organisations and reported in the media, available at: <https://bit.ly/2Yfk4D3>

⁵⁹ The Civil Legal Aid (Immigration Interviews) (Exceptions) Regulations 2012, available at: <http://bit.ly/2BbxjH6>.

⁶⁰ Home Office, *Asylum Policy Instruction, Gender issues in the asylum claim*, para 7.1.

Videoconferencing

Increasingly, substantive interviews may take place through video conferencing facilities, to accommodate an interviewing officer or interpreter being located in a different area from the applicant. The guidance has been revised to reflect this.⁶¹ Substantive interviews were paused between mid-March and the end of June 2020. When they resumed they mainly take place via video link; the asylum seeker is invited to the usual Home Office premises but the interviewing officer may be working from home or in a different office. Some face-to-face interviews have resumed.⁶²

Interpretation

Interpreters are required by the Immigration Rules and are provided by the Home Office. There is a code of conduct for these interpreters, which was revised in 2020,⁶³ but in practice asylum seekers are unaware of it and of what to expect from their interpreter unless they have a legal adviser who has informed them about this beforehand. Since inconsistencies on matters of detail in the asylum interview are a common reason for refusing asylum, problems with interpreting can have a significant impact. If the asylum seeker has a representative present, best practice, and guidance issued to Home Office caseworkers, in the case of interpreting problems, suggests that the representative is permitted to interrupt the interview to raise the problem.⁶⁴ Home Office caseworkers are not always familiar with this, and it can be difficult for problems of interpretation to be raised and rectified at the time they occur. Asylum seekers are allowed to take an interpreter of their own choosing to the interview, but there is no public funding for this in most adult cases, so taking one's own interpreter is unusual. The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration published its report into the use of language services, including interpreters, in 2020.⁶⁵ It recommends that the Home Office should:

- ❖ Appoint a Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System (BICS) 'owner' for language services, with accountability across BICS for the formulation and implementation of policies and processes, collection of data and performance monitoring, planning and delivery of the required resources and capabilities, risk management, internal and external communications, monitoring and management of contracted out services, and stakeholder engagement.
- ❖ Create, publish and resource a comprehensive programme of improvements to the provision and use of language services, with clear timelines and deliverables. This should include the identification of urgent tasks and 'easy wins' as well as longer-term projects.
- ❖ Ensure that the risks and issues in relation to language services are fully and accurately reflected in the Risk Registers, and that mitigations and actions are regularly reviewed.⁶⁶

Normal good practice is that asylum seekers are asked at the screening interview whether they wish to be interviewed by a man or a woman, and the policy and practice is to respect this preference, subject to availability of staff.⁶⁷ This policy also applies to interpreters although no monitoring is conducted relating to adherence to this policy.

Recording and transcript

⁶¹ Home Office, Asylum Policy Instruction *Asylum Interviews*, 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/36dLJps>.

⁶² The resumption of substantive asylum interviews, Home Office, August 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3cfexVf>

⁶³ Home Office, *Asylum Policy Instruction: Asylum Interviews Section 8: Interpreters*, available at: <https://bit.ly/36dLJps>.

⁶⁴ Interpreters code of conduct, available at: <https://bit.ly/3t0vYig>

⁶⁵ Inspection report on the use of language services in the asylum process *Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration* 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2LY8zh2>

⁶⁶ Inspection report on the use of language services in the asylum process *Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration* 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2LY8zh2>

⁶⁷ Home Office, *Asylum Policy Instruction, Gender issues in the asylum claim*, para 7.1, available at: <http://bit.ly/1CbiHBK>.

Audio-recording of interviews is permitted and should be arranged as a matter of routine where the equipment is available, unless a request has been made in advance by the asylum seeker for the interview not to be recorded. The recording must be provided to the applicant after the interview. Five working days are allowed to make comments or corrections before the first instance decision is taken. In 2020 the NGO Freedom From Torture published research based on interview transcripts and testimonies from survivors of torture and their experiences of being interviewed in relation to their asylum claim. The criticisms and recommendations have wider applicability than the subject of the research.⁶⁸

1.4. Appeal

Indicators: Regular Procedure: Appeal

1. Does the law provide for an appeal against the first instance decision in the regular procedure?

| | | |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| ❖ If yes, is it | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ If yes, is it suspensive | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Judicial | <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Some grounds <input type="checkbox"/> No |

2. Average processing time for the appeal body to make a decision: 40 weeks⁶⁹

1.4.1. Appeal to the First Tier Tribunal

There is a right to appeal against an initial asylum decision under the regular procedure. Appeals are made to the Immigration and Asylum Chamber of the First Tier Tribunal (FTT (IAC)) on both facts and law. This is a judicial body, composed of immigration judges and sometimes non-legal members. The Tribunal can assess and make findings of fact on the basis of the evidence presented including evidence, which was not before the Home Office decision-maker. The time limit for appealing is 14 days from the date that the Home Office 'sent' the decision.⁷⁰ Lodging an appeal suspends removal from the UK, unless the case is certified as 'clearly unfounded'.

Given the limited availability of publicly funded representation in practice, these time limits are short and asylum seekers may resort to sending in the appeal forms without legal representation. The blank appeal forms which also inform asylum seekers about their right to appeal are sent by the Home Office with the refusal letter, however, administrative mistakes made by an unrepresented asylum seeker in lodging an appeal can result in the appeal not being accepted by the Tribunal office.

A fee of £140 (€158) is required for an oral hearing of an asylum appeal in the regular procedure. Applicants do not need to pay if they are receiving asylum support (see [Reception Conditions](#)) or if they have public funding to be represented.⁷¹ It is also possible to apply to have the fee waived, and destitute asylum seekers without asylum support would qualify for this, but may not have the advice or information to make the application. In practice most asylum seekers are not liable to pay the fee because most are receiving asylum support at this stage of the process.

The complexity of the law and procedure and the barrier of language make it extremely difficult for asylum seekers to represent themselves. Several research reports refer to the variance in quality and availability of legal advice and this area.⁷² Tribunal rules require all evidence to be translated into English where

⁶⁸ Beyond Belief; How the Home Office fails survivors of torture at the asylum interview, *Freedom from Torture* 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3tGxJRk>

⁶⁹ For the period July to September 2020, appeals relating to asylum/protection, see: <https://bit.ly/389ossO>

⁷⁰ Rule 19 The Tribunal Procedure (First-tier Tribunal) (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) Rules 2014.

⁷¹ HM Courts and Tribunals Service, *Immigration and Appeals Tribunal Fees Guidance*, available at: <http://bit.ly/1d19Fk0>.

⁷² Refugee Action and NACCOM, *Tipping the Scales*, 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/30LaMiM>; Dr Jo Wilding, *Droughts and Deserts*, 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2NGOGIY>

relevant and sent to all parties in advance of the hearing.⁷³ It is difficult for an unrepresented asylum seeker to know what is required, or to get access to resources and advice to prepare papers for a hearing.

The BBC used Freedom of Information Act requests to reveal the variance in appeal success rates by hearing centre,⁷⁴ although other factors may influence the outcome of appeals.

Research by Asylum Aid and the National Centre for Social Research in 2017 looked at the way women experienced the asylum appeals process, what are the factors contributing to successful cases at appeal and how the guidance for Immigration Judges is implemented in practice.⁷⁵ In 2020 a report was published following a research project involving observations and interviews with appellants, representatives and staff. It concluded that asylum seekers at their appeal hearings are hampered by six factors; confusion, anxiety, mistrust, disrespect, communication difficulties and distraction and 34 recommendations are made.⁷⁶

Asylum seekers give evidence in person at the appeal hearing, and the Tribunal provides interpreters on request. Hearings are public. Decisions are in theory public documents, but decisions of the FTT (IAC) are not usually published.

1.4.2. Onward appeal to the Upper Tribunal

There is an onward appeal to the Immigration and Asylum Chamber of the Upper Tribunal (UT) (IAC) on a point of law. This is with permission of the FTT (IAC). Application must be made within 14 days of receiving the refusal.⁷⁷ If the FTT (IAC) refuses permission, an application for permission may be made to the UT (IAC). If this is refused, there is no appeal, but application may be made to the High Court, or in Scotland the Court of Session, for permission to apply for judicial review within a specially shortened time limit of 16 calendar days (as compared with three months for a usual judicial review application).

Permission will only be granted on grounds:

1. that there is an arguable case, which has a reasonable prospect of success, that both the decision of the UT (IAC) refusing permission to appeal and the decision of the FTT (IAC) against which permission to appeal was sought are wrong in law; and
2. that either:
 - a. the claim raises an important point of principle or practice; or
 - b. that there is some other compelling reason to hear it.⁷⁸

Lodging an appeal or an application for permission to appeal against an asylum refusal suspends removal from the UK, unless the case has been certified under Section 94 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act (NIAA) as clearly unfounded.⁷⁹

If permission is granted to appeal to the UT (IAC), the UT (IAC)'s decision may be appealed again with permission on the same limited grounds on a point of law only to the Court of Appeal. In rare cases permission may be given for a final appeal to the Supreme Court where the Court of Appeal or Supreme Court certifies that the case concerns a question of law, which is of public importance.

⁷³ Rule 12 The Tribunal Procedure (First-tier Tribunal) (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) Rules 2014.

⁷⁴ BBC, 'Asylum seekers face appeals "lottery"', 29 November 2017, available at: <http://bbc.in/2AiFm66>.

⁷⁵ Asylum Aid and NatCen, *Through her eyes; enabling women's best evidence in asylum appeals*, 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2BpN0KN>.

⁷⁶ Experiencing Asylum Appeal Hearings: 34 ways to improve access to justice at the First Tier Tribunal, *University of Exeter and Public Law Project 2020*, available at: <https://bit.ly/3qWJO3h>

⁷⁷ Rule 33 Procedure Rules.

⁷⁸ Rule 54.7A Civil Procedure Rules.

⁷⁹ Home Office, *Section 94 guidance*, 12 April 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2DfyJIK>.

Although the asylum decision is appealable in the regular procedure, there are many decisions affecting asylum seekers against which there is no right of appeal: e.g. a decision to detain, or giving directions for removal, or the refusal to treat further submissions as a fresh claim (subsequent asylum application), or a decision to remove to a safe third country. Where there is no right to appeal the only recourse is to judicial review. This is a procedure which does not examine the merits of the complaint, but only whether the decision maker has acted correctly, for instance by taking into account relevant considerations and not being influenced by irrelevant considerations.

Where the only remedy is judicial review, this is only available with the permission of the reviewing court. Judicial review is now in the Upper Tribunal's jurisdiction.

1.5. Legal assistance

Indicators: Regular Procedure: Legal Assistance

1. Do asylum seekers have access to free legal assistance at first instance in practice?
 - Yes With difficulty No
 - ❖ Does free legal assistance cover:
 - Representation in interview
 - Legal advice

2. Do asylum seekers have access to free legal assistance on appeal against a negative decision in practice?
 - Yes With difficulty No
 - ❖ Does free legal assistance cover
 - Representation in courts
 - Legal advice

Free legal assistance is available to asylum seekers as part of the state funded scheme of free legal aid in restricted areas of legal practice for people who do not have sufficient resources. Although the Immigration Rules provide that asylum seekers shall be allowed 'an effective opportunity' to obtain legal advice,⁸⁰ access to this is not guaranteed. Statistics on applications for legal aid at first instance were not made available by the Home Office in response to parliamentary questions.⁸¹

Legal aid is available for appeals, subject to a means test and in England and Wales a merits test, and availability of a representative. This means some appellants appear unrepresented.⁸²

Few asylum seekers obtain advice before their screening interview.

In **England and Wales**, legal aid for legal advice and representation for the initial stage of an asylum case, from claim, through interview up to decision, is paid as a fixed fee of £413 (€477).⁸³ Exceptions include unaccompanied children applicants, and where the representative can evidence that they have undertaken work that equates to over 3 times the value of the fixed fee. An hourly rate can then be paid if the Legal Aid Agency, which assesses the claim for costs, accepts that 3 times the level of work was done and warranted.⁸⁴

The low fixed fee and the significant jump to achieve an hourly rate both put pressure on conscientious representatives. The low fixed fee at these pre-appeal stages also makes it difficult to conduct a thorough examination of a complex case. The grant of legal aid for appeal depends on this assessment by the lawyer, and the award of legal aid contracts by the Legal Aid Agency depends on performance indicators including success at appeals. While dedicated lawyers continue to do high quality work, the system

⁸⁰ Para 333B Immigration Rules Part 11.

⁸¹ Wendy Morton answer to written question on Legal Aid Scheme, available at <https://bit.ly/2InOdbp>.

⁸² UK government, Guidance Unrepresented appellants - Immigration and Asylum Tribunal, available at: <https://bit.ly/38sKSTE>

⁸³ Schedule 1, Table 4(a) Civil Legal Aid (Remuneration) Regulations 2013, available at: <http://bit.ly/1fiODPA>.

⁸⁴ Immigration Specification to the 2013 Standard Civil Contract, available at: <http://bit.ly/1QFm9jO>.

operates to discourage less scrupulous lawyers from granting legal aid at appeal and makes it difficult for quality representatives to stay in business with high standards.⁸⁵

Legal assistance is not provided at the AIU or at the port of entry. Free legal assistance (funded as described above) is limited to advising the asylum seeker before and immediately after their asylum interview. This may include making additional written representations to the Home Office, which as a matter of usual policy are only allowed within five days after the interview. With some exceptions (including unaccompanied children and people who lack capacity), there is no public funding for a legal representative to attend the asylum interview.⁸⁶

The legal aid fixed fee for appeals was changed in 2020;⁸⁷ whilst it was raised lawyers were required to conduct more work and the complex fee structure meant that in fact lawyers lost money in the new system.⁸⁸ Following a successful challenge,⁸⁹ the new regulations were revoked and until a full consultation is completed, the rates have been amended.⁹⁰

The pressures described above do not apply in **Scotland**, where fees are not fixed, and there is no merits test for representing at a first appeal. For an appeal to the UT (IAC) where the FTT (IAC) has not given permission to appeal, a lawyer in Scotland must assess the merits of the case, and payment may be disallowed if the Scottish Legal Aid Board takes a different view.

The amount that is payable per case in **England and Wales** has been reduced steadily over a period of years. The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) 2012 took immigration advice out of scope for all except asylum and trafficking. A legal challenge in regulation to children in immigration proceedings was settled before it reached the court and the law in relation to this was changed as a consequence; the Immigration Rules were changed to this effect on 25th October 2019.⁹¹ The difficulties and constrictions applied by the system of contracted providers by region, based on historical data, result in a general feeling that there is insufficient supply to meet the demand. The 'market' approach to the provision of legally aided immigration advice has been criticised in a key academic study.⁹²

In 2014 legal aid was abolished for civil court cases where the merits are assessed as 'borderline', i.e. over 50% but not more than 60%.⁹³ Further cuts to legal aid in 2014 entailed that legal aid would not be granted for judicial review applications unless the court granted permission for the judicial review to go ahead. This meant that solicitors must do the preparatory work including the application at their own financial risk. Given that success in judicial review is anyway difficult to achieve, it is increasingly difficult for asylum seekers to find a lawyer who will apply for judicial review. Following a post-implementation review published in 2019, the government considers that this change has reached its policy aim of reducing unmeritorious judicial reviews, although acknowledges that this change was not the only factor.⁹⁴

⁸⁵ Julie Gibbs and Deri Hughes-Roberts, *Justice at Risk: Quality and Value for Money in Asylum Legal Aid*, Runnymede Trust, 2012, and see Christel Querton, *I feel like as a woman I'm not welcome: a gender analysis of UK law, policy and practice*, Asylum Aid 2012.

⁸⁶ Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, Schedule 1 Part 1 (30), available at: <http://bit.ly/1J5vmy0>.

⁸⁷ Civil Legal Aid (Remuneration) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) regulations 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/36ehce7>

⁸⁸ Government criticised over new fixed fee, *Law Society Gazette*, May 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2YhLesU>

⁸⁹ Statement by legal team following consent order between the parties.

⁹⁰ Changes to fee payments for immigration work; Government announcement, 7 October 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3belFzn>

⁹¹ Government announcement *Separated children given better access to legal aid* 25th October 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2sJlrN3>.

⁹² Droughts and deserts; a report on the immigration legal aid market, Dr Jo Wilding 2019 <https://bit.ly/3t0yDII>

⁹³ The Civil Legal Aid (Merits Criteria), (Amendment) Regulations 2014 No. 131, available at: <http://bit.ly/1epJg0S>.

⁹⁴ Ministry of Justice, *Post-implementation review of Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO)*, February 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2UoIk8v>.

2. Dublin

The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020 but has remained subject to the Dublin Regulation during the Transition Period (TP). The UK issued guidance explaining how to process cases where a Dublin Regulation responsibility request was made by a Dublin State to the UK prior to the end of the TP at 23h 00 on 31 December 2020 but either no decision has been made in relation to that request or a decision has been made but the transfer has not taken place before the end of the TP.

Cases introduced after the Transition period can be treated under the new inadmissibility rules on safe third countries. “The rules allow an inadmissibility decision to be taken on the basis of a person’s earlier presence in or connection to a safe third country, even if that particular country will not immediately agree to the persons return.” The guidance on inadmissibility of asylum claims explains that: “the safe countries most likely to be identified in asylum claims will be the UK’s near neighbours in the EU. Other EU member states, the wider EEA countries (**Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway**) and **Switzerland** may also be identified, as may country such as the **United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand**” (see further under [Admissibility procedure](#)).

2.1. General

Dublin statistics: 2020

| Outgoing procedure | | | Incoming procedure | | |
|--------------------|----------|-----------|--------------------|----------|-----------|
| | Requests | Transfers | | Requests | Transfers |
| Total | 8,502 | 105 | Total | 2,331 | 882 |
| Germany | 2,084 | 43 | Greece | 1,146 | 551 |
| France | 1,197 | 25 | France | 461 | 90 |
| Spain | 268 | 10 | Ireland | 228 | 17 |

Source: Home Office, available at: <https://bit.ly/39sFbWD>.

In February 2018, the government published up-to-date Dublin statistics for the first time, having previously referred enquirers to Eurostat figures, even as recently as in responses to parliamentary questions in January 2018.⁹⁵ These statistics are produced annually.

The UK issued outgoing 8,502 requests and received 2,331 on the following grounds in 2020:

| Outgoing and incoming Dublin requests by criterion: 2020 | | |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| Dublin III Regulation criterion | Outgoing | Incoming |
| Family provisions: Articles 8-11 | 106 | 933 |
| Regular entry: Articles 12 and 14 | 72 | 184 |
| Irregular entry: Article 13 | 824 | 9 |
| Dependent persons: Article 16 | | 9 |
| Humanitarian clause: Article 17(2) | 2 | 724 |
| “Take back”: Articles 18 and 20(5) | 7,498 | 472 |
| Total outgoing and incoming requests | 8,502 | 2,331 |

⁹⁵ See e.g. Minister for Immigration, Reply, Asylum: Written question, 121419, 11 January 2018, available at: <http://bit.ly/2FDVnGs>.

Source: Home Office.

The Home Office finally issued guidance in November 2017 on the operation of the Dublin III Regulation,⁹⁶ following a consultation period with key stakeholders in September 2016. It has been amended several times during 2020 initially to reflect changes in approach to DNA evidence, subsequently to change guidance relating to the transfer of unaccompanied children.⁹⁷ As the UK is no longer part of the Dublin Regulation new guidance was issued to inform Home Office staff how to deal with the remaining requests made prior to 31 December 2020.⁹⁸

The majority of requests to third countries were based on Eurodac hits, as these are objective and easy to identify for the authorities. If the applicant wished to be transferred out of the UK, a referral was made to the Third Country Unit (TCU) and the Home Office would not normally object. However, if the applicant wished to have his or her claim substantively considered in the UK, it was the obligation of the applicant or their legal representative to submit documentary evidence such as status papers, passports, asylum interview records etc. of family members, as well as representations explaining why the UK should consider the claim.

The family criteria

The Upper Tribunal detailed in the case of *MS* the state's duty to "act reasonably" and to take "reasonable steps" in discharging the duty to investigate the basis of a "take charge" request sent by another country. This includes the option of DNA testing in the sending country or, if not, in the UK.⁹⁹

DNA tests were not routinely carried out. This would only be necessary if there is no other way to prove relationship. If the applicant fails to declare he or she has family members in the UK at an early stage, normally the Home Office attempt to proceed with removal. However, a judicial review challenge can be brought if there is a good reason for the lack of disclosure; for example the applicant only found out later the whereabouts of his family.

With regard to Article 9, the Upper Tribunal clarified in April 2018 that a family member acquiring citizenship in the UK after having received international protection remains a "family member who is a beneficiary of international protection" for the purposes of the Dublin III Regulation.¹⁰⁰

Statistics show that in 2020, 724 requests were made for the UK to take in an applicant under the humanitarian clause, while 321 people were transferred under this article in the same period. Two requests but no transfers were made by the UK under that clause.

In addition to the rise in transfers out of the UK some unaccompanied children were reunited with family members. The government drew attention to this¹⁰¹ during the same period as publicising the returns of asylum seekers under the Dublin Regulation.

During 2020 there were many efforts by campaigners to force the government to negotiate 'replacements' for the family unity clauses of Dublin III. The UK government published draft agreements, which were not reciprocated by the EU. The two proposals related to general returns agreement and a specific measure to allow unaccompanied children to unite with family members. The UK has indicated it will attempt to

⁹⁶ Home Office, *Dublin III Regulation*, April 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2wBbuE0>.

⁹⁷ Dublin Regulation guidance v 4 August 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3ojHQZh>

⁹⁸ Requests made to the UK under the Dublin III Regulation prior to the end of the transition period, available at: <https://bit.ly/39hMp1S>

⁹⁹ Upper Tribunal, *MS v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2019] UKUT 9 (IAC), 19 July 2018.

¹⁰⁰ Upper Tribunal, *HA v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2018] UKUT 297 (IAC), 19 April 2018.

¹⁰¹ Government news story <https://bit.ly/2Yd1U53>

negotiate returns agreements with individual EU member states.¹⁰² The revised inadmissibility guidance advises that if a person can be removed to another country, including a Dublin III state, the claim should be refused as inadmissible in the UK.

During the passage of the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Act 2020,¹⁰³ the government agreed to publish the existing routes for family reunification in the UK. This was fulfilled on 31st December with a document outlining existing routes (most not specific to refugee or people seeking asylum).¹⁰⁴ The government also committed to a review of safe and legal routes to the UK; in February 2021 it fulfilled its obligation to update parliament with routes available to reunite families, which was a reiteration of the December 2020 document.¹⁰⁵

2.2. Procedure

Indicators: Dublin: Procedure

1. Is the Dublin procedure applied by the authority responsible for examining asylum applications?
 Yes No
2. On average, how long does a transfer take after the responsible Member State has accepted responsibility?
Not available

UK legislation provides for different lists of 'safe third countries' to which an asylum seeker can be returned without their asylum claim being considered in the UK. They are called 'third' countries because they are not the UK and not the country of origin.

The First List is set out in the statute and consists of EU member states (except Croatia), Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. There is no reference to the Dublin III Regulation, but the legislation states that the listed countries are to be treated as places in which a person will not be at risk of persecution contrary to the Refugee Convention, and from which they will not be sent in breach of the Refugee Convention or European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).¹⁰⁶

Whether the person can be removed to one of these countries is determined in the first instance by whether they can be shown to have travelled through that country. During 2020 the UK had access to the Eurodac system but from 2021 access is limited to transfer requests made prior to the beginning of 2021.

Enquiries as to the route of travel are also a routine part of the screening process in all cases. The asylum seeker's account of their route of travel and other evidence of the person having lived in or travelled through a country will influence whether the application is referred to the Third Country Unit¹⁰⁷.

On the Second List, see the section on [Admissibility Procedure](#).

Individualised guarantees

The UK did not formally recognise any requirement to request individual guarantees of adequate reception facilities. The judgment of the High Court in *MS* [2015] EWHC 1095 (Admin),¹⁰⁸ referring to the ECtHR case of *Tarakhel*, maintained that there was no such general requirement where children were not involved, even where applicants have experienced trauma and have mental health difficulties. This did

¹⁰² A summary of these proposals and of commitments made to review the routes available to families is provided in the House of Commons library note.

¹⁰³ Legislation available at: <https://bit.ly/3oiCJsF>

¹⁰⁴ Overview of family reunion options in the Immigration Rules: see: <https://bit.ly/36fdReH>

¹⁰⁵ Statement on gov.uk, available at: <https://bit.ly/3qqmp9P>

¹⁰⁶ Schedule 3 Part 2, First List AITOCA.

¹⁰⁷ Inadmissibility guidance December 2020, see: <https://bit.ly/3qUdPki>

¹⁰⁸ High Court, *R (NA) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2015] EWHC 1095 (Admin), 22 April 2015, available at: <http://bit.ly/2jqTmFD>.

not mean that guarantees are never sought in individual cases, since officers in UKVI may do so, but it meant that the UK did not seek guarantees as a matter of routine practice or policy.

The Court of Appeal judgment on the case, referred to as *NA (Sudan)*,¹⁰⁹ broadly maintained this position. It decided that *Tarakhel* did not extend to other vulnerable persons and was only ever intended to apply to families with children. And the two appellants in *NA (Sudan)* were extremely vulnerable, suffering a range of health problems including severe depressive disorder, and the risk of suicide, with one appellant suffering a history of rape and sexual abuse in Italy.

In coming to this conclusion, the Court relied on the decision of several cases decided since *Tarakhel* involving individuals suffering from serious PTSD, health problems, and the risk of suicide. In some, children were involved, and it decided that general, rather than specific, assurances were sufficient, representing a further rollback of *Tarakhel*.

In line with the Supreme Court's ruling in *EM (Eritrea)*,¹¹⁰ the Court of Appeal reaffirmed the fundamental question as being whether, in assessing all the circumstances of an individual's case, substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned faces a real risk of being subjected to treatment meeting the Article 3 threshold. But the starting point is always going to be the presumption, labelled as a 'significant evidential presumption' by the Court, that Member States will comply with their obligations.¹¹¹ The Court decided in the case of Italy that the presumption was not rebutted, taking the opportunity to remind us all that: 'the situation in Italy is in no way comparable to that in Greece and that a general ban on returns to Italy cannot be justified'.¹¹²

Transfers

Once the EU Member State or Schengen Associated State took or was deemed to take responsibility for examining the asylum application on the basis of the Dublin III Regulation, the claim was refused as inadmissible on third country grounds without its substance being considered in the UK.

Regulations laid in 2017 provided a list of criteria to consider prior to deciding to detain but give wide discretion e.g. whether there are reasonable grounds to believe that a person is unlikely to return voluntarily to any other participating State determined to be responsible for consideration of their application for international protection under the Dublin III Regulation.¹¹³

The Home Office was not able to provide figures on the average duration of the Dublin procedure in recent parliamentary questions.¹¹⁴ Anecdotal evidence from NGOs and legal reps is that particularly during the period September to November transfers of people who had arrived in small boats were processed very quickly after arrival, with minimal checks conducted to ascertain whether or not transfer is appropriate.

¹⁰⁹ Court of Appeal, *NA (Sudan) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2016] EWCA Civ 1060, 1 November 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kLNdAY>.

¹¹⁰ Supreme Court, *EM (Eritrea) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2014] UKSC 12, 19 February 2014, available at: <http://bit.ly/1dM83eJ>.

¹¹¹ Court of Appeal, *NA (Sudan) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2016] EWCA Civ 1060, paras 107 and 156.

¹¹² *Ibid*, para 110.

¹¹³ UK Legislation, The transfer for determination of an application for international protection (detention) regulations 2017, available at: <https://bit.ly/2RG35q2>.

¹¹⁴ Minister for Immigration, Reply, Asylum: EU Countries: Written question, 202853, 25 January 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2S0vCt3>.

2.3. Personal interview

Indicators: Dublin: Personal Interview

Same as regular procedure

1. Is a specific personal interview of the asylum seeker in most cases conducted in practice in the Dublin procedure? Yes No

No personal interview took place specifically relating to the Dublin procedure.

Information obtained in the screening interview, particularly about route of travel, is used to make a decision that the case should be referred to the Third Country Unit. The standard information read out from the screening form includes the following:

“It is possible that the United Kingdom may not be the state responsible for considering your asylum application. You will be informed of any application or decision to transfer your case to another country.”

The screening process was criticised and legally challenged in 2020 after it was revealed that some questions were not being asked of asylum seekers; the omitted questions related to the identification of characteristics that may have resulted in them not being transferred under the Dublin Regulation. An order in relation to the challenge forced the Home Office to ensure these questions would be asked.¹¹⁵

2.4. Appeal

Indicators: Dublin: Appeal

Same as regular procedure

1. Does the law provide for an appeal against the decision in the Dublin procedure? Yes No

There was no appeal on *asylum grounds* against a decision that a person may be returned to another country on the First List – i.e. through the Dublin III Regulation, and no appeal against a decision in the Dublin procedure could be made on the grounds that the asylum seeker would be sent to another country in breach of their rights under the ECHR or in breach of the Refugee Convention.¹¹⁶ The one ground of appeal available against a Dublin removal (i.e. a removal to a First List country) was that the person's ECHR rights would be breached *in* the receiving country.¹¹⁷ A human rights appeal of this kind may only be brought *in* the UK if the Home Office does not certify that the human rights claim is clearly unfounded. The Home Office, however, is required to certify that it is clearly unfounded unless there is evidence to the contrary.¹¹⁸ The two Dublin states that fall outside of the First List are **Croatia** and **Liechtenstein**; in these cases if an appeal is made under the ECHR as outlined above, the case must be discussed with a senior caseworker to establish if it is appropriate to certify as clearly unfounded.¹¹⁹

In cases where an appeal is available, an out of country appeal must be brought within 28 calendar days (where the human rights appeal is certified clearly unfounded); an in-country appeal (where the human rights appeal is not certified) must be brought within 14 days. There are very few appeals of this kind. Normally any challenge to removal based on breach of human rights in the receiving country is made by judicial review application challenging the Secretary of State's certificate that the human rights claim is

¹¹⁵ DA ad Ors v Secretary of State for the Home Department, 13 November 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3ol8llq>
¹¹⁶ Schedule 3, Part 2 AITOCA.

¹¹⁷ Para 5, Schedule 3 Part 2 AITOCA.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Home Office, *Dublin III Regulation Guidance*, available at: <http://bit.ly/2rmazo9>.

unfounded. The result is that the only suspensive appeal against a Dublin removal would be the rare case of a human rights claim, which is not certified by the Home Office as clearly unfounded. Otherwise, the decision to remove under the Dublin Regulation can only be challenged by judicial review.

On the Second List, see section on [Admissibility Procedure](#).

With regard to judicial review against the refusal to accept a “take charge” request, the Upper Tribunal held in 2018 that the principle of fairness requires the applicant to be given an opportunity to know the ‘gist’ of what is submitted against him or her in respect of the application of the Dublin criteria. Therefore in judicial review against the rejection of a “take charge” request by the UK, it is for the court or tribunal to decide whether the Dublin criteria have been correctly applied.¹²⁰

2.5. Legal assistance

Indicators: Dublin: Legal Assistance

Same as regular procedure

1. Do asylum seekers have access to free legal assistance at first instance in practice?
 - Yes With difficulty No
 - ❖ Does free legal assistance cover:
 - Representation in interview
 - Legal advice

2. Do asylum seekers have access to free legal assistance in judicial review against a Dublin decision in practice?¹²¹
 - Yes With difficulty No
 - ❖ Does free legal assistance cover
 - Representation in courts
 - Legal advice

Before a Dublin certificate was issued, an asylum seeker had the same opportunity as any other asylum seeker to obtain access to free legal representation. They were affected by the limited resources and the lack of incentive for legal representatives to advise before the screening interview (see [Regular Procedure: Legal Assistance](#)). Once the Dublin decision was issued they were likely to be detained. If they already had a legal representative that person could continue to represent them. If not, they could, again subject to resources, obtain access to representation in detention (see section on [Legal Assistance for Review of Detention](#)). There were no special restrictions on legal aid in Dublin cases (see section on [Regular Procedure: Legal Assistance](#)) and judicial review was funded by legal aid, although only if the merits were considered strong, and if the Court granted permission for the case to go ahead. In practice that is likely to restrict any legal challenge.

2.6. Suspension of transfers

Indicators: Dublin: Suspension of Transfers

1. Are Dublin transfers systematically suspended as a matter of policy or jurisprudence to one or more countries?
 - Yes No
 - ❖ If yes, to which country or countries? Greece, Hungary

Greece: Transfers to Greece were generally suspended as a matter of practice following the European Court on Human Rights (ECtHR) judgment in *M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece*,¹²² and in anticipation of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) decision in *NS*.¹²³ This was an executive decision applying

¹²⁰ Upper Tribunal, *MS v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2019] UKUT 9 (IAC), 19 July 2018.

¹²¹ The ticked box concerning appeals refers to judicial review since there is no appeal.

¹²² ECtHR, *M.S.S. v Belgium and Greece*, Application No. 30696/09, Judgment of 21 January 2011.

¹²³ The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office House of Lords, 25 Oct 2011: Column WA121, available at: <http://bit.ly/1LkBdg0>.

to all potential transfers to Greece, and is kept under review in conjunction with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and UNHCR.¹²⁴ However, decisions can still be made to return asylum seekers to Greece under the Dublin procedure, even if they are not implemented. There is no automatic legal mechanism to prevent such returns actually being carried out. Challenges must be made in individual cases, and practitioners say that some returns to Greece have been made since the decisions in *M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece*.

Hungary: In the case of *Ibrahimi and Abasi*,¹²⁵ two Iranians challenged their removal to Hungary on the basis that they were at risk of *refoulement*, referred to in the case as ‘chain *refoulement*’ i.e. along a succession of unsafe countries including Serbia, Macedonia, Greece and Turkey. The High Court, in its ruling of 5 August 2016, referred to AIDA and UNHCR reports in its judgment and criticised the UK government for its “broad and sweeping generalisations about presumptions of compliance”.¹²⁶ Transfers are still being suspended.

Italy: In the *NA (Sudan)* ruling of 1 November 2016, the Court of Appeal upheld a transfer to Italy on the basis that no risk of treatment contrary to Article 3 ECHR was demonstrated. The High Court has also dismissed appeals challenging transfers to Italy earlier in the year.¹²⁷ In *SM*, however, the Upper Tribunal found that the circumstances before it, relating to a vulnerable person, were “markedly different” from established High Court case law on transfers to Italy.¹²⁸

Bulgaria: The High Court found in *Khaled (No 1)* that the deficiencies of the Bulgarian asylum system were not such as to warrant a suspension of Dublin transfers.¹²⁹ In its assessment, the Court took into consideration elements such as the fact that UNHCR has not issued any position relating to returns to Bulgaria.¹³⁰ Despite the Court of Appeal’s dismissal of the appeal in *HK (Iraq)*,¹³¹ all Dublin transfers to Bulgaria were suspended until 15 July 2018, stayed behind a case known as *JA (Iraq)*, heard in June 2018. Transfers have not resumed since then.

Austria: In *Abdulkadir and Mohammed*, the High Court decided on 28 June 2016 that a transfer to Austria was lawful, on the ground that there was no evidence of ‘systemic failure’ in the Austrian legal system to amount to an Article 3 ECHR violation or infringe upon Article 18 of the EU Charter. Although transfers have resumed only three people were transferred to Austria in 2019.

The UK does not automatically assume responsibility for examining asylum applications where transfers are suspended. If discussions with the receiving country become protracted so that it appears there is no realistic prospect of the transfer taking place, the asylum seeker may be released from detention. Once released from detention in these circumstances, asylum seekers may be granted accommodation and cash support. An asylum seeker who is the subject of a Dublin decision qualifies for reception conditions on the same conditions as those in the regular procedure.¹³²

¹²⁴ Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Home Office, House of Lords, 23 January 2013, col. WA 209, available at: <http://bit.ly/1fjjeFT>.

¹²⁵ High Court, *Ibrahimi and Abasi v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2016] EWHC 2049 (Admin), 5 August 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2bbliWq>.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, para 16.

¹²⁷ High Court, *R (BG) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2016] EWHC 786 (Admin), 12 April 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/1NooJV8>; *R (Adam) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2016] EWHC 1352 (Admin), 9 June 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2jQTq07>.

¹²⁸ Upper Tribunal, *R (SM) v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Dublin Regulation – Italy)* [2018] UKUT 429 (IAC), 4 December 2018.

¹²⁹ High Court, *Khaled (No 1) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2016] EWHC 857 (Admin), 18 April 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2jr7pLv>.

¹³⁰ *Khaled (No 1)*, para 94.

¹³¹ Court of Appeal, *R (HK) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2017] EWCA Civ 1871, 23 November 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2sZu7PV>.

¹³² Information provided by ASAP. See also CJEU, Case 179/11 *Cimade & GISTI v Ministre de l’interieur*, 27 September 2012.

2.7. The situation of Dublin returnees

There are no reported issues regarding the situation of adults returned to the UK under the Dublin regulation. Children reunited with family under Article 8 are not considered to be unaccompanied even if they are not dependants on a family member's asylum claim. Concerns have been raised about the support they receive and the difficulties arising from them being part of families e.g. many do not qualify for legal aid and are not routinely assisted through the asylum procedure.¹³³

3. Admissibility procedure

3.1. General (scope, criteria, time limits)

During 2020 the policy declared that an asylum application was to be declared inadmissible where the applicant:¹³⁴

1. Has been granted refugee status in another EU Member State;
2. Comes from a [First Country of Asylum](#);
3. Comes from a [Safe Third Country](#);
4. Has been granted a status equivalent to refugee status in the UK; or
5. Is allowed to remain in the UK and is protected from *refoulement* pending the outcome of a safe third country procedure.

UK law also reflects the Protocol on Asylum for Nationals of the EU and in December 2015 the policy guidance was issued stating that applications from such nationals are to be treated as inadmissible save in exceptional circumstances.¹³⁵

The only admissibility procedure in the UK strictly speaking is the safe third country procedure, either removal to an EU country using the [Dublin](#) Regulation or another [Safe Third Country](#). There is no screening for admissibility on the basis of the merits of the case (see [Dublin: Procedure](#)). During 2020 the policy and process was separate for Dublin transfers and other safe third country returns. In December 2020 Immigration Rules were changed so that from 1 January 2021 the applicant, if there is evidence that he/she has a connection with or travelled through another 'safe' country prior to his/her claim in the UK, may be transferred to any 'safe' country that will accept the applicant. At the time of writing no return agreements had been reached to this effect. It is understood that individual casework will include attempts to return applicants under this policy.

As described in the context of the Dublin procedure, in effect the Dublin Regulation countries constitute the First List. Legislation gives a power to create a Second List. A country on the Second List is treated as a place to which non-nationals can be returned without a breach of the Refugee Convention, either in that country or through risk of being sent elsewhere (see [Safe Third Country](#)).¹³⁶ Additionally, there is a presumption that claims from non-nationals to be removed to the same list of countries will be unfounded, unless stated otherwise, meaning a human rights claim against removal to that country would usually be non-suspensive.¹³⁷

Presently no countries are listed in the Second List, and non-Dublin safe third country returns take place on a case-by-case basis.

¹³³ Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, *Briefing paper on the experiences of children from the Calais camp in the north west of England*, March 2017, available at: <https://bit.ly/2rWEiD8>.

¹³⁴ Immigration Rules applicable during 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/39iikz7>

¹³⁵ Home Office, *Asylum Policy Instruction: EU/EEA Asylum Claims*, 9 December 2015, available at: <https://bit.ly/30HmEC9>.

¹³⁶ Parts 3 and 4 Schedule 3 AITOCA.

¹³⁷ Part 3 Schedule 3 AITOCA.

New Immigration Rules were laid in December 2020, in part to replace the Dublin procedure but widened the scope of inadmissibility to any country that would agree to take responsibility for the person's asylum claim, even if there is no connection with that country.¹³⁸ The explanatory notes state that the purpose of the change is to *enhance our capacity to treat as inadmissible to the UK asylum system asylum claims made by those who have passed through or have connections with a safe third country*.¹³⁹ But the guidance explains that *the Rules allow an inadmissibility decision to be taken on the basis of a person's earlier presence in or connection to a safe third country, even if that particular country will not immediately agree to the person's return. More significantly, if someone is inadmissible, the new provisions permit their removal to any safe third country that will take them (not just the specific country or countries through which they travelled or have a connection)*¹⁴⁰

There is no time limit in the rules for taking a decision but the guidance states that general if no return is agreed six months after the asylum claim was made the applicant should be admitted into the UK asylum system. If a third country has agreed to admit an inadmissible claimant, the removal should be processed without undue delay. The new guidance also states that inadmissibility decisions will generally not be taken on unaccompanied children's claims although the rules are silent on this matter.

The Home Office dismissed 3,303 asylum applications on third country grounds in 2020.

3.2. Personal interview

Indicators: Admissibility Procedure: Personal Interview

Same as regular procedure

1. Is a personal interview of the asylum seeker in most cases conducted in practice in the admissibility procedure? Yes No

As stated in relation to [Dublin: Personal Interview](#), there is no provision for a specific, separate personal interview in safe third country cases; information is taken from the screening interview.

3.3. Appeal

Indicators: Admissibility Procedure: Appeal

Same as regular procedure

1. Does the law provide for an appeal against the decision in the admissibility procedure? Yes No

Similarly to the Dublin procedure there is no appeal on asylum grounds against a safe third country decision. However, an appeal may be made on the grounds that the person would be sent by that third country to another country in breach of their rights under the ECHR (e.g. indirect *refoulement* on human rights grounds) or that their ECHR rights would be breached in the receiving country. These human rights appeals may only be brought in the UK if the Home Office does not certify that they are clearly unfounded. In the case of the 'second list' there is an obligation to certify human rights claims as clearly unfounded unless the decision maker is satisfied that they are not unfounded.¹⁴¹ Where an appeal is available an out of country appeal must be brought within 28 calendar days; an in-country appeal must be brought within 14 days. The same problems may arise as with the 14 day limit in the regular procedure (see section on [Regular Procedure: Appeal](#)).

¹³⁸ Statement of changes to the Immigration Rules, available at: <https://bit.ly/36eKxVG>

¹³⁹ Explanatory memorandum, available at: <https://bit.ly/3iO8SGV>

¹⁴⁰ Inadmissibility guidance, December 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2LXZKUs>

¹⁴¹ Parts 3 and 4 Schedule 3 AITOCA.

The result is that the only suspensive appeal against a third country removal would be where a human rights claim is not certified as clearly unfounded. When a decision is made that the person can be returned to a safe third country, a certificate is issued to that effect, and the decision can only be challenged by judicial review. The certificate that the case is unfounded can also only be challenged by judicial review. The scope of judicial review is described above in relation to the regular procedure, but in the case of a judicial review based on human rights, the court looks more closely at the substance of the decision.¹⁴²

3.4. Legal assistance

Indicators: Admissibility Procedure: Legal Assistance

Same as regular procedure

1. Do asylum seekers have access to free legal assistance at first instance in practice?

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> With difficulty | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|

 - ❖ Does free legal assistance cover:

| | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Representation in interview | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Legal advice |
|--|--|

2. Do asylum seekers have access to free legal assistance on appeal against an inadmissibility decision in practice?

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> With difficulty | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|

 - ❖ Does free legal assistance cover

| | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Representation in courts | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Legal advice |
|--|--|

There are no special rules or restrictions applying to legal assistance in the safe third country procedure. As with applicants who are subject to the Dublin procedure (see section on [Dublin: Legal Assistance](#)), in principle an asylum seeker subject to a third country decision has the same opportunity as any other asylum seeker to obtain access to free legal representation. However, for both Dublin and other third country procedures, once the decision to use a third country procedure has been made, the person is likely to be detained. If they already have a legal representative that person may continue to represent them. If not, they may, again subject to resources, obtain access to representation in detention (see section on [Legal Assistance for Review of Detention](#)).

Judicial review is funded by legal aid, subject to the means of the asylum seeker and the merits of the case. However, as in all judicial reviews, this is broadly speaking only if the court grants permission for the judicial review.

4. Border procedure (border and transit zones)

In the UK there is no provision for asylum decisions to be taken at the border. An application for asylum may be made at the port of arrival, and immigration officers from the UK Border Force may carry out the screening interview, but then refer the claim to UKVI (see [Regular Procedure](#)). The substance of the claim is not examined at the border.

If a person claims asylum, immigration officers grant temporary admission or, since January 2018, immigration bail,¹⁴³ to enable the claim to be made. It is not an immigration status and therefore there are no rights attached to the admission. It is analogous to release from detention on licence. Detention in an airport is limited to relatively short periods (less than 24 hours). Short-term holding facilities (STHF) in airports are not subject to the usual rules, which govern immigration detention, but are inspected by the government's Prison Inspectorate.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² House of Lords, *R v Secretary of State for the Home Department ex p Daly* [2001] UKHL 26, available at: <http://bit.ly/1lbyKpJ>.

¹⁴³ Immigration Bail replaced temporary admission on 15 January 2018 (see Home Office guidance document, available at: <http://bit.ly/2FTmf50>). Many guidance and policy documents still refer to Temporary Admission.

¹⁴⁴ See reports from the HM Inspectorate of Prisons on the Ministry of Justice, available at: <http://bit.ly/1Blx77p>.

The Equality Act 2010 permits immigration officers to discriminate on grounds of nationality if they do so in accordance with the authorisation of a minister.¹⁴⁵ This discrimination may include subjecting certain groups of passengers to a more rigorous examination. Ministerial authorisations are made on the basis of statistical information of a higher number of breaches of immigration law or of adverse decisions in relation to people of that nationality. The statistical basis is not published. Immigration officers have the power to refuse entry at the border unless the passenger has a valid entry clearance or claims asylum. It is not known whether and if so how many people sent back from the border wished to claim asylum but did not say so to immigration officers or were *de facto* not given an opportunity to do so. In 2020, 13,072 people were refused entry at the UK port of whom 6,112 were at the juxtaposed controls (see below) and were denied access to the UK.¹⁴⁶ The information states that these are non-asylum cases, although it is now known how many wished to claim asylum.

The UK also operates juxtaposed controls in France and Belgium. In the control zones in France and Belgium, no asylum claim can be made to UK authorities,¹⁴⁷ and the acknowledged purpose of these agreements with France and Belgium was to stop people travelling to the UK to claim asylum.¹⁴⁸ This was reiterated by the statement from the Home Secretary following talks between the leaders of France and the UK on 18 January 2018.¹⁴⁹ Of the 6,112 people turned back in control zones in 2019,¹⁵⁰ it is not known how many wished to claim asylum. There is little or no information about any attempted claims, and whether those who attempt to claim are referred to the authorities of the state of departure, as the regulations require.

During an investigation by the Children's Commissioner for England in 2012, the Home Office officials disclosed the 'Gentleman's Agreement'.¹⁵¹ This operates in relation to people intercepted on landing in the UK who are considered to have made an illegal entry and who do not say that they wish to claim asylum. The agreement is between the UK and France and obliges France to accept the return of such passengers if this can be effected within 24 hours. Returns under the Gentleman's Agreement are carried out without a formal refusal of leave to enter. Following the Commissioner's discovery that this was being applied to young people, the practice was stopped in relation to acknowledged children. This agreement still applies to adults and those who appear to be adults. The 2003 Le Touquet Treaty, which is still applicable, states that anyone claiming asylum at the juxtaposed controls will be dealt with by the French authorities.¹⁵²

The ministerial authorisation to discriminate in refusing leave to enter also takes effect in control zones.¹⁵³

Therefore, although there is little or no substantiated evidence of *refoulement* taking place at the border, current UK policy and practice creates a risk of this occurring. However, further research would be required in order to assess this accurately.

¹⁴⁵ Section 29 and Schedule 3, Part 4 Equality Act 2010.

¹⁴⁶ Home Office, *Immigration Statistics admission tables, Quarter 4 2019*.

¹⁴⁷ In the case of France, this is stated in Article 4 of the Additional Protocol CM 5015 to the Protocol between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the French Republic concerning Frontier Controls and Policing, Co-operation in Criminal Justice, Public Safety and Mutual Assistance relating to the Channel Fixed Link, Cm 2366, signed at Sangatte on 25 November 1991. It is not explicit in the Belgian agreement.

¹⁴⁸ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, *An Inspection of Juxtaposed Controls*, 2013, available at: <http://bit.ly/1ImrYsF>.

¹⁴⁹ Secretary of State for the Home Department, 'Statement to Parliament', 19 January 2018, available at: <http://bit.ly/2DokzPb>.

¹⁵⁰ Home Office, *Immigration Statistics*.

¹⁵¹ Article 9 Le Touquet Treaty, available at: <http://bit.ly/2BSdpVx>.

¹⁵² Article 9 Le Touquet Treaty, available at: <http://bit.ly/2BSdpVx>.

¹⁵³ Para 17(4)(A) Ministerial Authorisation, para 4; Schedule 3, Part 4 Equality Act 2010.

5. Accelerated procedure

5.1. General (scope, grounds for accelerated procedures, time limits)

There are two kinds of accelerated procedures: the non-suspensive appeal procedure (NSA) and the detained fast-track procedure (DFT). The Detained Fast Track Procedure is currently suspended rather than ceased.

Non-Suspensive Appeal (NSA)

Firstly where the claim is certified by the Home Office as clearly unfounded, there is no in-country appeal. These are called Non-Suspensive Appeal (NSA) cases. The majority of cases certified in this way are of applicants from a deemed safe country of origin, but cases are also certified as clearly unfounded on an individual basis. The applicant may often be detained, though not always, and guidance to Home Office decision makers refers to the procedure as a Detained Non-Suspensive Appeal (DNSA). 659 claims¹⁵⁴, about 8% of the total, were certified clearly unfounded in 2020.¹⁵⁵ **India, Albania, Nigeria and Brazil** were the most common nationalities, between them accounting for around 80% of those people whose claims were certified unfounded during 2020.¹⁵⁶

The most common reason for a claim to be certified as clearly unfounded and thus routed through the NSA procedure is that the asylum seeker comes from a country, which is considered to be safe. Countries are treated as safe if they are designated as such in binding orders made under Section 94 NIAA or in the Act itself (see [Safe Country of Origin](#)).¹⁵⁷

There is no time limit for a decision to be made in such a case, although the Home Office guidance states that the aim is to decide within 14 calendar days. The Home Office is responsible for making the decision. The policy is that all decisions on a potential NSA case must be made by a caseworker who is trained to make NSA decisions, and must be looked at by a second 'accredited determining officer' who decides whether to accept the first officer's recommendation.¹⁵⁸ The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration noted a lack of objective standards in accrediting this officer, and of consistent understanding of this role and its remit.¹⁵⁹ Guidance to decision makers advises that where the claim is for asylum and human rights protection, both or neither should be certified as unfounded, since any appeals of the two issues must be heard together. The guidance also states that when the asylum seeker comes from a designated state the refusal should not normally be based on the credibility of the individual applicant but on objective country material.¹⁶⁰ This is general practice and is unlike the regular procedure where no such guidance is given and refusal is commonly based on credibility. The guidance on certification of claims under Section 94 NIAA has been amended and reissued to reflect the necessity to distinguish the decision to certify from the decision to refuse and to underline the need to explain both decisions. This was done following a case in the Upper Tribunal known as *FR and KL*.¹⁶¹ In 2018 the Tribunal determined

¹⁵⁴ Total number subject to certification was 755 (including dependants)

¹⁵⁵ Home Office, *Immigration Statistics*.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Section 94 NIAA.

¹⁵⁸ Home Office, *Asylum decision-making guidance: Non-Suspensive Appeals (NSA): Certification under s.94*, October 2014, available at: <https://bit.ly/3awaYqr>.

¹⁵⁹ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration: *An Inspection of the Non-Suspensive Appeals process for 'clearly unfounded' asylum and human rights claims* July 2014, available at: <http://bit.ly/1Bq4LIW>.

¹⁶⁰ Home Office, *Asylum decision-making guidance: Non-Suspensive Appeals (NSA): Certification under s.94*, para. 2.2.

¹⁶¹ Court of Appeal, *FR and KL v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2016] EWCA Civ 605, 26 June 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2mRtYs6>.

that individualised decisions must be made as to the necessity in out of country appeal hearings of hearing directly from the applicant.¹⁶²

A claim may also be certified clearly unfounded and routed through the NSA on an assessment of the individual merits of the case, not only on the basis of a deemed safe country of origin. This should only be done where the caseworker considers that the claim is incapable of succeeding before an independent tribunal.¹⁶³ On that basis, 74 cases were individually certified in 2020.¹⁶⁴

Detained-Fast Track (DFT) – currently suspended

The DFT procedure was suspended in July 2015, following a series of successful legal challenges relating to the safety and fairness of the procedure, but hasn't been formally abandoned.¹⁶⁵ The Detained Fast Track procedure (DFT) applied where the Home Office considered that the claim could be decided quickly. In theory the two procedures are very different in that NSA implies that there is no merit, whereas DFT is based on speed. However, informally the DFT also appeared to operate as an 'unfounded' procedure.

The defining characteristics of the DFT procedure were speed and detention throughout the decision process. The criteria for being routed into the DFT only required that the case was considered after the screening interview to be capable of being decided quickly and that the asylum seeker was not excluded from the DFT.

The DFT has not been reinstated nor abandoned. The final 'nail in the coffin' leading to the suspension was the appeals part of the process.¹⁶⁶ The Ministry of Justice consulted on the Tribunal Procedure Rules for the DFT in autumn 2016 proposing that new rules be laid to enable these expedited appeals to comply with the law.¹⁶⁷ Plans were then outlined in April 2017,¹⁶⁸ but the new procedure has not yet been approved by the Tribunal Procedure Committee. No new developments have taken place since then.

5.2. Personal interview

Indicators: Accelerated Procedure: Personal Interview

Same as regular procedure

1. Is a personal interview of the asylum seeker in most cases conducted in practice in the accelerated procedure?
❖ If so, are questions limited to nationality, identity, travel route?
❖ If so, are interpreters available in practice, for interviews?
 Yes No
 Yes No
 Yes No
2. Are interviews conducted through video conferencing? Frequently Rarely Never

There are no grounds in the accelerated procedure to omit a personal interview.

¹⁶² Upper Tribunal, *AJ (s. 94B Kiarie and Byndloss questions) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2018] UKUT 115 (IAC), 28 February 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2HiNEQV>.

¹⁶³ Court of Appeal, *NA (Iran) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2011] EWCA Civ 1172.

¹⁶⁴ Home Office, *Immigration Statistics*.

¹⁶⁵ House of Commons, Written Statement (HCWS83) Home Office Written Statement made by: The Minister of State for Immigration, 2 July 2015, available at: <http://bit.ly/1H3ig0l>.

¹⁶⁶ Detention Action, 'The legal challenge', available at: <http://bit.ly/2jlTAYA>.

¹⁶⁷ Ministry of Justice, *Expedited immigration and asylum appeals for detained appellants*, available at: <http://bit.ly/2l7kEBS>.

¹⁶⁸ Ministry of Justice, *Expedited immigration and asylum appeals for detained appellants*, 18 April 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2l7kEBS>.

Non-Suspensive Appeal Procedure

The same immigration rules apply to the interview as in the regular procedure (see [Regular Procedure: Personal Interview](#)) but they must be conducted by NSA trained caseworkers in the NSA procedure.

Detained-Fast Track Procedure

In the DFT procedure the interview was required to take place on the day after arrival. In practice asylum seekers in the DFT could wait on average 11 days for an interview.¹⁶⁹ The interview was conducted by a Home Office case worker. Unlike the regular procedure, the interview takes place in detention. No study has been done on the impact of personal interviews taking place in detention. Lawyers said that the quality of interviewing in the DFT was less skilful, tending to focus extensively on detail and not on the major issues in the claim.

Transcripts and tape recordings were provided of interviews in the DFT as in the regular procedure. Interpreters were available as in the regular procedure.

5.3. Appeal

Indicators: Accelerated Procedure: Appeal

Same as regular procedure

1. Does the law provide for an appeal against the decision in the accelerated procedure?

- | | | |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| ❖ If yes, is it | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ If yes, is it suspensive | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Judicial | <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative |
| NSA | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| DFT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Non-Suspensive Appeal Procedure

In the NSA the appeal is non-suspensive, i.e. it may not be made from within the UK. Appeals must be made within 28 calendar days of leaving the UK.¹⁷⁰ The scope of the appeal is the same as for in-country appeals, but in practice it is very difficult to appeal from outside the UK as people will not have ready access to their legal representative and obviously would not be able to participate in proceedings so easily, depending on their circumstance.

Detained-Fast Track Procedure

The DFT is currently not operational.

In the DFT no removal would take place until the appeal had been decided, but the appeals took place in a building adjoining the detention centre, and detention was maintained until the case was concluded or removed from the DFT. There have been two different challenges to the lawfulness of detained fast track appeal process. These have resulted in the suspension of the operation of the DFT.

Firstly, detention pending appeal in the DFT was held by the Court of Appeal to be unlawful unless it is justified on normal detention grounds, i.e. with regard particularly to risk of absconding and imminence of removal. The Court found that the practice which had developed in the DFT was to detain people pending

¹⁶⁹ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, *Asylum: A Thematic Inspection of the Detained Fast Track*, ICIBI, 2012, available at: <http://bit.ly/1JXaARf>.

¹⁷⁰ The Tribunal Procedure (First-tier Tribunal) (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) Rules 2014 SI 2604 rule 19.

appeal in the DFT purely based on the criteria of speed and convenience without considering whether they were at risk of absconding. This was unlawful.¹⁷¹

In a second case, *Detention Action* challenged the lawfulness of the rules governing the fast track appeals.¹⁷²

The Court of Appeal held that:

“[T]he time limits are so tight as to make it impossible for there to be a fair hearing of appeals in a significant number of cases...The system is therefore structurally unfair and unjust. The scheme does not adequately take account of the complexity and difficulty of many asylum appeals, the gravity of the issues that are raised by them and the measure of the task that faces legal representatives in taking instructions from their clients who are in detention.”¹⁷³

In a judgment that was promulgated on 20 January 2017,¹⁷⁴ the High Court found that the unlawful policy had been in operation from 2005 to 2014, affecting many more asylum seekers. However, it refused to quash the appeals. This decision was upheld by the Court of Appeal in December 2018.¹⁷⁵

5.4. Legal assistance

Indicators: Accelerated Procedure: Legal Assistance

Same as regular procedure

1. Do asylum seekers have access to free legal assistance at first instance in practice?
 Yes With difficulty No
❖ Does free legal assistance cover:
 Representation in interview (in the DFT only)
 Legal advice

2. Do asylum seekers have access to free legal assistance on appeal against a negative decision in practice?
 Yes With difficulty No
❖ Does free legal assistance cover:
 Representation in courts
 Legal advice

The following information relates to the Detained Fast Track Procedure as it operated immediately prior to its suspension in 2015. Unlike in the regular procedure, fast track detainees were entitled to have a publicly funded legal adviser present at their initial interview. However, the judge commented in the 2014 *Detention Action* case that:

¹⁷¹ Court of Appeal, *R (on the application of Detention Action) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2014] EWCA Civ 1634.

¹⁷² The Tribunal Procedure (First-tier Tribunal) (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) Rules 2014 SI 2406 Schedule rule 5; The Tribunal Procedure (First-tier Tribunal) (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) Rules 2014 SI 2406 Schedule rules 7 and 8; The Tribunal Procedure (First-tier Tribunal) (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) Rules 2014 SI 2406 rule 10. For more detailed information on the applicable time limits during that time consult: AIDA, Country report: United Kingdom, Update 2018, available at www.asylumineurope.be.

¹⁷³ Court of Appeal, *The Lord Chancellor v Detention Action* [2015] EWCA Civ 840, para 45.

¹⁷⁴ High Court, *R (TN) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2017] EWHC 59 (Admin), 20 January 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kPYike>. See also *Detention Action*, ‘High Court rules asylum-seekers denied justice in detention for 10 years’, 20 January 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kfJNGQ>.

¹⁷⁵ Court of Appeal, *TN (Vietnam) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2018] EWCA Civ 2838, 19 December 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2RzKtKP>.

“Legal representatives are not excluded from the interview, if the applicant already has a representative, but where the applicant does not have one, the presence of a lawyer is not facilitated.”¹⁷⁶

Asylum seekers in the DFT were not guaranteed legal representation before the tribunal. Research in 2011 revealed that 63% of asylum seekers were unrepresented at their DFT appeal,¹⁷⁷ and Freedom of Information requests showed that in 2012, 59% asylum-seekers in **Harmondsworth** were unrepresented at the first appeal. 1% won their appeals, compared to 20% of those with a representative.¹⁷⁸

To obtain publicly funded legal advice in making their claim they were limited to a representative from a solicitors firm with a contract to do DFT work and who was available. There is substantial dissatisfaction among asylum seekers with the quality of legal representation available in detention. Lawyers who work in the DFT say that it is very difficult to do the work effectively. They may have no opportunity to take instructions or meet the client before the asylum interview. This was endorsed by the High Court in the 2014 *Detention Action* judgment.

D. Guarantees for vulnerable groups

1. Identification

Indicators: Identification

1. Is there a specific identification mechanism in place to systematically identify vulnerable asylum seekers? Yes For certain categories No
❖ If for certain categories, specify which: Unaccompanied children
2. Does the law provide for an identification mechanism for unaccompanied children? Yes No

1.1. Screening of vulnerability

There is no specific mechanism to identify adult asylum seekers who need specific procedural guarantees. The inadequacy of the screening interview to identify such vulnerabilities is discussed in [Registration](#) and [Accelerated Procedure](#). The standard questionnaire used asks only basic questions about health. As previously stated reports on the DFT procedure agree that torture survivors were placed in the DFT, against policy, partly because there was no effective mechanism to identify them.¹⁷⁹ The concern remains regarding the use of detention, albeit not in an accelerated procedure, and the lack of safeguards. Of particular concern has been the definition used by the Adults at Risk policy, which is a more restricted definition of torture than was previously stated. This is explained more fully in a report by the charity Medical Justice.¹⁸⁰ This definition was ruled unlawful and amended. In light of this and ongoing discussions, the charity agreed not to proceed with its second challenge to the definition, although it had been given permission to proceed.¹⁸¹ Draft policy has been issued to bring victims of modern slavery into

¹⁷⁶ High Court, *Detention Action v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2014] EWHC 2245 (Admin), para 96.

¹⁷⁷ Tamsin Alger and Jerome Phelps, *Fast Track to Despair*, Detention Action, 2011, available at: <http://bit.ly/1Lhrll6>.

¹⁷⁸ Detention Action, *DFT Briefing*, 2013, available at: <http://bit.ly/1JX05NV>.

¹⁷⁹ See e.g. Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, *Asylum: A Thematic Inspection of the Detained Fast Track*, ICIBI, 2012; Tamsin Alger and Jerome Phelps, *Fast Track to Despair*, Detention Action, 2011.

¹⁸⁰ Medical Justice, *Putting Adults at Risk*, 2017, available at <https://bit.ly/2NNBLVp>.

¹⁸¹ Medical Justice, Press release: ‘Home Office revises definition of torture after Medical Justice highlights problems’, 23 September 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/36aZDc9>.

the remit of the adults at risk policy. Subject to Parliamentary approval this will come into force in May 2021.¹⁸²

1.2. Age assessment of unaccompanied children

The procedure for identifying unaccompanied children is governed by guidance and case law. At the screening stage, where a person appears to an Immigration Officer or the Home Office caseworker to be under 18, policy guidance is that they are to be treated as a child. In case of doubt, the person should be treated as though they are under 18 until there is sufficient evidence to the contrary.¹⁸³ Where their appearance strongly suggests to the officer that they are over 25, a second opinion must be sought from a senior officer. If they agree that the person appears to be over 25, the asylum seeker is treated as an adult. In this case, an age assessment can be triggered by the young person or any third party referring to the local authority for an age assessment. However, the result of immediate treatment as an adult while this process is ongoing means that people who are in fact under 18 will be treated as adult in the asylum and support processes.

In June 2016 the High Court ruled that the Home Office had acted unlawfully in detaining a young asylum applicant under this policy without establishing as a matter of fact whether his claim was true i.e. the decision to detain cannot be based on an officer's 'reasonable belief' that the claimant was adult.¹⁸⁴ This decision was upheld in the Court of Appeal in February 2017.¹⁸⁵ The Home Office policy guidance on assessing age was amended on 26 February 2018 to reflect this judgment.

The revised guidance also contains changes that NGOs have called for in recent years; unless the claimant is being treated as adult under the 'over 25 policy outlined above (now amended, see below), the authorities are required to record the stated age given by the child until a final assessment has concluded differently; also clearer guidance on how a decision on age affects credibility in an asylum claim.

In 2019, the Home Office issued interim guidance on age assessment of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children,¹⁸⁶ following a successful challenge of its policy in the case of BF (Eritrea) before the Court of Appeal. In its ruling of 23 May 2019,¹⁸⁷ the Court of Appeal held that the Home Office policy on age assessment, which gave Immigration Officers the power to decide an applicant is adult if their appearance and demeanour very strongly suggest the person is "significantly over 18", was not sufficiently precise as to avoid huge differences in how it was applied, giving rise to the risk that children would be wrongly deemed adults and treated as such in the asylum system.

According to the new guidance, first published on 29 May 2019, "for a person to be assessed as an adult in these circumstances, their physical appearance and demeanour must very strongly suggest that they are 25 years of age or over". The guidance was updated in December 2020, along with many other pieces of guidance, to reflect the end of the transition period for the UK to leave the EU.

If the Home Office has referred to a local authority because they felt there was doubt about the claimed age, the social worker responsible for an assessment must assure the Home Office that they have considered the age and this would usually be communicated a child through an agreed template.¹⁸⁸ A

¹⁸² Adults at risk in Immigration detention February 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3quhapP>

¹⁸³ Home Office, *Processing children's asylum, claims*, 12 July 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2iO8XKe>.

¹⁸⁴ High Court, *R (AA) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2016] EWHC 1453 (Admin), 20 June 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/29enloB>.

¹⁸⁵ Court of Appeal, *Awed Ali v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2017] EWCA Civ 138, 9 March 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2mScM67>.

¹⁸⁶ Home Office, *Assessing age*, May 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2JeXtP1>.

¹⁸⁷ EWCA Civ 872, Case No: C2/2017/2550, 23 May 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/38vOxQw>.

¹⁸⁸ ADCS, *Age assessment guidance and information sharing guidance*, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kpC77s>.

stand-alone assessment is not necessary but the Home Office must be satisfied that the areas listed on the template have been considered by the social worker. The Home Office must also be satisfied that any assessment complies with case law – often referred to as ‘Merton compliant’ as *Merton* was the first piece of case law dealing with the lawful procedure for age assessments. It would then be usual for the Home Office to adopt the age decided by the social worker but more detail is given in guidance.¹⁸⁹

Social workers conducting age assessments must comply with all case law which includes the need to be registered social workers, trained in conducting age assessments, adhere to correct procedures including taking into account all relevant information. Assessments must be conducted in the presence of an ‘appropriate adult’ and a written record made. Guidance issued by the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) in October 2015 gives more detail about lawful procedure and good practice.¹⁹⁰

It remains the case that judicial review is the sole remedy to resolve a complaint that the age assessment was conducted unlawfully or failed to reach the correct conclusion.¹⁹¹ The quality of age assessments has been heavily criticised for several years.¹⁹² It is not easy to determine whether or not practice is improving although judicial reviews still take place and result in some social work decisions being overturned.¹⁹³ Many such decisions are not reported and many do not have a bearing on other cases, as they are finding of fact cases. A summary of some key cases in 2020 was published by lawyers in December.

Concerns were raised about the practice of local authorities following the judgment in *BF (Eritrea)* as the resultant increase in referrals to local authorities (due to the new guidance binding on Immigration Officers) led to some local authorities making very brief decisions apparently based on appearance rather than professional assessments.

In January 2020 a judge ruled that although the local authority was not legally bound by the ‘over 25’ threshold as the Home Office was due to *BF (Eritrea)* nevertheless the abbreviated assessment in this case was judged to be unlawful as it failed to adequately acknowledge the potential margin for error.¹⁹⁴ Concerns continue to be raised, not least because in 2020 the Home Office employed social workers at the Intake Unit in Kent to assist in making these short assessments of age.¹⁹⁵

Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit assisted some young people affected by age assessments to issue guidance to social workers undertaking the process and young people affected.¹⁹⁶

¹⁸⁹ Home Office and ADCS, *Age assessment: Joint working guidance*, June 2015, available at: <http://bit.ly/2k7FIHt>.

¹⁹⁰ ADCS, *Age assessment guidance*, October 2015, available at: <http://bit.ly/1MUduDi>.

¹⁹¹ Supreme Court, *R (on the application of A) v London Borough of Croydon and R (on the application of M) v London Borough of Lambeth* [2009] UKSC 8, 26 November 2009.

¹⁹² Coram Children’s Legal Centre, *Happy Birthday*, 2013, available at: <http://bzfd.it/2jcSct3> and UK section of Maria Antonia Di Maio, *Review of current laws, policies and practices relating to age assessment in sixteen European Countries*, Separated Children in Europe Programme, Thematic Group on Age Assessment, 2011, available at: <http://bit.ly/1lohB7T>; Refugee Council, *Age disputed young people in the asylum system*, June 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2vqWfgh>.

¹⁹³ Peter Yeung, ‘Wrongly Classifying Child Asylum-Seekers as Adults Has Cost UK Millions of Pounds’, 18 January 2017, available at: <http://bzfd.it/2jcSct3>.

¹⁹⁴ *AB v Kent County Council* EWHC [2020] 109 (Admin), available at: <https://bit.ly/3cvpfoa>.

¹⁹⁵ Home Office, Kent Intake Unit social worker guidance, December 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3pxDK0Q>

¹⁹⁶ Age Assessments, GMAIU 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/36h1Wxb>

The Strategic Migration Partnership in **Wales** issued its own guidance in 2015.¹⁹⁷ In **Scotland**, the Scottish Refugee Council and Glasgow City Council have collaborated to produce a good practice guide as an aid to achieving consistency of practice.¹⁹⁸ Both of these pieces of guidance are still in use.

A tribunal is also entitled to decide a person's age as a question of fact in the context of an asylum claim, where age is relevant to the claim, for instance because it has a bearing on other findings such as the credibility of the asylum seeker, but the age found is not binding outside that context, and does not bind a local authority. Since the Supreme Court decision, the child is able to obtain a binding finding of fact from the court. This is important because previously a young person could be in the position where the tribunal, and thus the Home Office, accepted that they were under 18, but the local authority did not. The Home Office has no power to support a child, and the local authority in that situation would not do so, yet the child had no power to obtain a resolution.¹⁹⁹ This judicial review power transferred to the Upper Tribunal.²⁰⁰ A summary of some of the key age related Judicial Reviews of 2020 was published in December.²⁰¹

Statistics are available for age assessments ordered by the Home Office, which do not include age assessments ordered by local authorities. In 2020 there were 732 of these. The initial decisions from local authorities (598) were that 232 were children and 366 adult. Some of these decisions will be subject to challenge and no information is given on the final resolution of these.

2. Special procedural guarantees

Indicators: Special Procedural Guarantees

1. Are there special procedural arrangements/guarantees for vulnerable people?

- ❖ If for certain categories, specify which: Yes For certain categories No
People for whom detention is accepted to be damaging; unaccompanied children, torture survivors

The Home Office has introduced the notion of “safeguarding leads”, supervised by a senior official as head of the “safeguarding hub”. There is limited information on the work of these hubs, however, as the safeguarding policy is an internal document, although limited detail is available through the funding document.²⁰² More information about the safeguarding hubs and the Home Office’s approach to vulnerable adults can be found in the 2019 inspection report from the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration.²⁰³

Guidance on gender issues in the asylum claim sets out good practice in recognising gender-specific forms of persecution and the difficulties that women may face in accessing protection.²⁰⁴ The guidance recognises that discrimination may amount to persecution in countries where serious legal, cultural or social restrictions are placed upon women, and the need to be rigorous in understanding country of origin information when deciding women’s claims.

¹⁹⁷ Wales Strategic Migration Partnership, *Age assessment of unaccompanied asylum seeking children*, June 2015, available at: <http://bit.ly/2jU3Jhb>.

¹⁹⁸ Karen Dyball, Graham McPhie, Clare Tudor, *Age Assessment Practice Guidance: An Age Assessment Pathway for Social Workers in Scotland* Scottish Refugee Council and Glasgow City Council 2012.

¹⁹⁹ Laura Brownlees and Zubier Yazdani, *The Fact of Age*, 2012, Children’s Commissioner.

²⁰⁰ First Tier Tribunal and Upper Tribunal (Chambers) Order 2010, available at: <http://bit.ly/1fm4pJl>.

²⁰¹ Age assessments in 2020; A year in review, *Doughty Street Chambers* <https://bit.ly/3pfLp3X>

²⁰² Home Office, *Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund: List of Actions allocated funding*, July 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2C5Yq9y>.

²⁰³ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, *An inspection of the Home Office’s approach to the identification and safeguarding of vulnerable adults*, January 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2NN8fOC>.

²⁰⁴ Home Office, *Asylum Policy Instruction: Gender Issues in the Asylum Claim: process*, 2018, Available at <https://bit.ly/2NPSqYr>

Guidance on the substantive interview was revised in 2019 and addresses issues of disclosure, gender based violence as well as experiences of torture.²⁰⁵

There are limited concessions to the requirement to make an asylum claim in person. Discretion is afforded to UKVI staff to allow someone to register a claim more locally if they are unable to travel to the Asylum Intake Unit due to severe health or disability issues or, with the agreement of an NGO in Scotland.

People with mental illness severe enough to affect their mental capacity may have a publicly funded representative at their asylum interview.

Exemption from detention and special procedures

There are no other procedural guarantees in law for vulnerable adult applicants relating to decision-making or application process, except that they should not, according to policy, be detained. Rule 35 of the Detention Centre Rules provides that where there is evidence that a detainee has been tortured, or for any other reason their health would be injuriously affected by detention, a report should be made to the caseworker for release to be considered. Rule 35 guidance was updated in 2019.²⁰⁶

However, the detention of people with mental illness remains a major source of concern and is covered further in the section on [Detention of Vulnerable Applicants](#). A case in 2019 confirmed that the Home Office need not introduce a process equivalent to Rule 35 for immigration detainees held in prisons.²⁰⁷

There are no other published criteria which would prevent someone who had suffered torture or other extreme violence from being routed into the NSA procedure. The policies about vulnerable applicants, although they are unevenly applied, concern suitability for detention, not for a non-suspensive appeal.

Guidance to officers making a decision after the screening interview also advises that where a person through illness has a need for care and attention over and above destitution, they should be referred to a Local Authority for a needs assessment.²⁰⁸ In practice, local authority support is difficult to obtain, and policies vary in different local authority areas.

3. Use of medical reports

Indicators: Use of Medical Reports

1. Does the law provide for the possibility of a medical report in support of the applicant's statements regarding past persecution or serious harm?
 Yes In some cases No
2. Are medical reports taken into account when assessing the credibility of the applicant's statements?
 Yes No

Medical evidence may be submitted but the initiative for obtaining a report comes from the applicant or their lawyer. There is no legal provision which requires the provision of a report for the purposes of the asylum claim.

Asylum Policy Guidance on medical evidence provides for the possibility of delaying an asylum decision pending receipt of a medical report from the NGOs Helen Bamber Foundation (HBF) or Freedom from

²⁰⁵ Home Office, Policy and process guidance: asylum interviews, June 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2G9MQft>.

²⁰⁶ Home Office, Detention services order 09/2016 Detention centre rule 35 and Shortterm Holding Facility rule 32, March 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2RLvoDw>.

²⁰⁷ MA (Pakistan) and AO (Nigeria), EWHC 3567 (Admin), Case No: CO/2701/2018 & CO/4233/2018, 20 December 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/39k30PM>.

²⁰⁸ Home Office, *Guidance: Asylum seekers with care needs*, August 2018, available at: <http://bit.ly/2n6BzU7>.

Torture (FTT).²⁰⁹ FFT and the Helen Bamber Foundation are the most established organisations which prepare medico-legal reports, and their work is widely respected. Referral to obtain an appointment for a Medico-Legal report from FFT can normally only be made by a lawyer, and referrals may be accepted if FFT considers that a medico-legal report has the potential to make a material difference to the outcome of the claim.²¹⁰ If a report from FFT or the Helen Bamber Foundation is received after a refusal of asylum the case must be reviewed.

Home Office caseworkers make this decision and should act reasonably. They are required to take into account whether the applicant declared a medical condition at the screening interview, whether there is written evidence of an appointment with a medical professional, and the length of time the applicant has been in the country and so had the opportunity to consult a medical practitioner. The guidance advises that postponements should be fixed, and preferably only for five to ten days, and that the asylum interview should not be postponed in order to obtain a medical report.²¹¹

Where a solicitor is funded by legal aid they can request authority from the Legal Aid Agency for payment for medical reports, and this may be granted depending on the relevance and importance of the report to the claim. The solicitor has authority to spend £400 (approx. €453) on an expert report without involving the Legal Aid Agency, but this is often not adequate to fund a full expert report.

Where the asylum seeker has an appointment with the NGO Freedom from Torture (FFT) the effect is different, as the decision must be deferred until the report is available unless the caseworker is anyway considering granting leave to remain.²¹²

The Detention Centre rules require that a medical examination should be conducted within 24 hours of arrival in a detention centre, but this must not be used in determining the asylum claim; its purpose is to ascertain fitness for detention.²¹³

Case law requires that medical reports are taken into account in deciding the applicant's credibility.²¹⁴ The courts have also cautioned against tribunal judges reaching their own diagnoses which depart from the medical evidence and discounting psychological evidence on the basis that it is founded in part on what applicant says.²¹⁵ Recommendations from FFT state best practice, which includes that evidence should be considered as a whole, including expert medical evidence, and a conclusion on the overall credibility of a claim not reached before consideration of an expert medical report. FFT also recommends that due consideration must be given to the medical expert's opinion on the degree of consistency between the clinical findings and the account of torture.²¹⁶ The Upper Tribunal endorses this but also says that the clinician's judgement is not to be equated to a judgment made by a Tribunal.²¹⁷ Despite the availability of best practice guidance and the judgments of the higher courts, this guidance is not consistently followed. Examples in case law show that medical reports are still sometimes downgraded or discounted on the

²⁰⁹ Home Office, Asylum Policy Instruction, *Medico-Legal Reports from the Helen Bamber Foundation and the Medical Foundation Medico Legal Report Service*, July 2015, para 2.4. (This is still applicable).

²¹⁰ Freedom from Torture, Make a referral for therapy and practical help (Referrals to The Medical Foundation Medico Legal Report Service), available at: <https://bit.ly/37gvzMA>.

²¹¹ Asylum Policy Instruction (non-Medical Foundation cases).

²¹² *Asylum Policy Instruction Medico-Legal Reports from the Helen Bamber Foundation and the Medical Foundation Medico-Legal Report Service*, July 2015.

²¹³ Rule 34 Detention Centre Rules.

²¹⁴ See e.g. Upper Tribunal, *JL (medical reports – credibility) China* [2013] UKUT 145 (IAC), 8 April 2013, available at: <http://bit.ly/2jUess3>.

²¹⁵ See e.g. Court of Appeal, *Mibanga v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2005] EWCA Civ 367, 17 March 2005, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kpyrCo>.

²¹⁶ Jo Pettit, *Body of Evidence – Treatment of Medico-Legal Reports for Survivors of Torture in the UK Asylum Tribunal*, 2011, Freedom from Torture.

²¹⁷ Upper Tribunal, *KV (scarring - medical evidence) Sri Lanka* [2014] UKUT 230 (IAC), 23 May 2014, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kU9Hil>.

basis that the decision maker does not believe the applicant, rather than using the report as evidence which contributes to assessing the applicant's case.²¹⁸ Research by Freedom from Torture in 2016 showed evidence of errors by decision makers in deciding claims where there was a FFT medico-legal report. Errors identified included failing to apply the correct legal test and failing to recognise the expertise of those who prepared the reports.²¹⁹ This remains a concern and is listed amongst concerns raised in a 2019 report, named '*Lessons not Learned; The failures of asylum decision-making in the UK*', relating to the standard of proof in asylum decision making published by FFT and seven other NGOs.²²⁰

Medical reports may be prepared based on the Istanbul Protocol, and this is regarded as best practice and is standard for experienced practitioners.²²¹

The long running case of *KV (Sri Lanka)* progressed to the Supreme Court and judgment was handed down in March 2019.²²² The case concerned the question of the extent to which a medical expert could comment on the likelihood of torture being self-inflicted by proxy, that is, by another person at his invitation. Whilst the Supreme Court remits the case to the Upper Tribunal to reconsider, it invites the Upper Tribunal to note that very considerable weight should be given to the fact that injuries which are self-inflicted by proxy are likely to be extremely rare.

4. Legal representation of unaccompanied children

Indicators: Unaccompanied Children

1. Does the law provide for an identification mechanism for unaccompanied children?
 Yes No
2. Does the law provide for the appointment of a representative to all unaccompanied children?
 Yes No

In addition to the social work duty, the Immigration Rules require that the Home Office caseworker takes steps to ensure that an unaccompanied child has a legal representative.²²³ The Refugee Council should be notified within 24 hours.

This duty applies to a person who is under 18 or who is being given the benefit of the doubt for the time being. There is no stated exception, and the duty accrues as soon as an asylum application has been made, which therefore includes a child who is subject to a Dublin procedure.

Unlike the case of adults, the representative is publicly funded to be present in the asylum interview, and the asylum interview of a child may not take place without a responsible adult present who is not representing the Home Office.

The Home Office has a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the UK who are subject to its procedures.²²⁴ The duty of a representative of a child includes ensuring that this duty is

²¹⁸ See e.g. High Court, *R (Kakar) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2015] EWHC 1479 (Admin), 22 May 2015.

²¹⁹ Freedom from Torture, *Proving torture: Demanding the Impossible*, November 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2gjb2OM>.

²²⁰ FFT, *Lessons not Learned; The failures of asylum decision-making in the UK*, September 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/36ee2UH>.

²²¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Manual on the effective investigation and documentation of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, 'Istanbul Protocol'*, 2004, available at: <http://bit.ly/1DVAApu>.

²²² Supreme Court, *KB (Sri Lanka) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2019] UKSC 10, 6 March 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2SOVG6a>.

²²³ Para 352ZA Immigration Rules, Part 11, available at: <http://bit.ly/1JRSeKu>.

²²⁴ Section 55 BCIA 2009, available at: <http://bit.ly/1L4XIOC>.

complied with at all stages of the asylum process and to challenge where it is not. The code of practice for implementing Section 55 of the Borders Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009, 'Every Child Matters', which is binding on Home Office officers, requires that the voice of the child is heard in the proceedings, and this was reiterated by the Supreme Court, affirming that the wishes and feelings of the child must be taken properly into account by decision makers.²²⁵ The representative accordingly has a duty to ensure that they take the child's own independent instructions and that these form the basis of their representations.

The Immigration Law Practitioners Association (ILPA) produced a good practice guide,²²⁶ but use of the guide is not mandatory. In order to receive public funding for representing a refugee child, a solicitor must be accredited at Level 2 of the Immigration and Asylum Accreditation Scheme. The Legal Aid Agency framework for authorising legal aid payment requires that work with refugee children is carried out by a senior caseworker at level 2 or above, who has had an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (often referred to as DBS) check in the previous two years. A publicly funded immigration adviser of a child asylum seeker is under an obligation to refer the child for public law advice where the child has difficulties with the local authority carrying out its duties towards them under the Children Act 1989.²²⁷ A child is entitled to have a publicly funded legal representative at their initial asylum interview, but only where the Home Office does not dispute that the claimant is a child.²²⁸

Difficulties obtaining good quality legal advice (see [Regular Procedure: Legal Assistance](#)) also apply to unaccompanied children. Research conducted by the Children's Society in 2015 showed that the situation had deteriorated since the coming into force of the legal aid restrictions.²²⁹ This research was updated and a new report published in 2017.²³⁰

UASC leave

Unaccompanied children seeking asylum whose claims are refused are very rarely returned to their country of origin unless they are believed to be over 18. It is standard practice to grant periods of limited leave. This leave is referred to as 'UASC leave' – this is granted for 30 months or until the age of 17½, whichever is shorter.²³¹ Leave can be renewed up to age 17½, but if a further application is made at this stage, then there must be an active review in which their need for protection is considered again, and if this is turned down they may be faced with removal.

Discretionary leave

Where asylum claims fail, sometimes a family is given discretionary leave on the basis of Article 8 ECHR. The High Court has held that the practice of giving children this limited leave (3 years was the normal policy at the time of the case) conflicts with the duty in Section 55 of the Borders Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 to have regard to the welfare of children.²³² This does not have a direct impact on

²²⁵ Supreme Court, *ZH (Tanzania) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2011] UKSC 4, 1 February 2011, available at: <http://bit.ly/2juhDe8>.

²²⁶ Heaven Crawley, *Working with Children and Young People Subject to Immigration Control, Guidelines for Best Practice*, 2nd edition 2012, available at: <http://bit.ly/1etJowr>. See also ILPA's *Resources Guide for Legal Practitioners Working with Refugee Children* Shauna Gillan with Sarah Myerscough and Alison Harvey Fourth Edition March 2014.

²²⁷ The Civil Specification 2010, section 8, Immigration, paragraph 8.

²²⁸ The Civil Legal Aid (Immigration Interviews) (Exceptions) Regulations 2012 SI No. 2683, available at: <http://bit.ly/1Bs5dX3>.

²²⁹ The Children's Society, *Cut off from Justice*, June 2015, available at: <http://bit.ly/2jw8U7K>.

²³⁰ The Children's Society, *Cut off from Justice* August 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2Gbx9TE>.

²³¹ Para 352ZE Immigration Rules.

²³² High Court, *R (SM, TM JD and others) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2013] EWHC 1144 (Admin), 8 May 2013, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kQ6lgW>.

the normal practice in the case of unaccompanied children, which is to grant leave until they are 17.5 years, but is an important statement of the impact on children of insecurity of status.

Two new forms of leave were introduced in 2018 relating solely to specific groups of unaccompanied children transferred to the UK from elsewhere in Europe. Those children transferred under section 67 (Dubs' amendment) who do not qualify for leave as a refugee or subsidiary protection are granted 'section 67 leave',²³³ initially for five years. A change to the Immigration Rules was made in October 2019 so that these children are granted section 67b leave automatically although they are able to apply for asylum in the usual way.²³⁴ The guidance associated with this change was updated in February 2020. It is described as non-protection based leave but envisaged that a beneficiary will be entitled to settlement after five years.

Children transferred to the UK from **Calais** to join family members under the Dublin III Regulation, if the transfer took place between 17 October 2016 and 13 July 2017, have similarly been provided with non-protection-based leave if they did not qualify for leave as a refugee or for subsidiary protection. Beneficiaries will be entitled to apply for settlement after ten years.²³⁵ Most of the guidance relating to unaccompanied children's claims was revised in December 2020 to reflect the change in relationship between the UK and EU as the transition period ended.²³⁶ References to EU law, including processes relating to Eurodac and Dublin III were removed but no other material changes made.

Policy allows for children's claims to be certified so it is possible that a child's appeal is non-suspensive; however, the general policy applies regarding removal of children, so that a certified claim will only result in a non-suspensive appeal if adequate reception arrangements are in place in the child's country of origin.²³⁷

2,291 unaccompanied children sought asylum in the UK in 2020.²³⁸

E. Subsequent applications

Indicators: Subsequent Applications

1. Does the law provide for a specific procedure for subsequent applications? Yes No
2. Is a removal order suspended during the examination of a first subsequent application?
 - ❖ At first instance Yes No
 - ❖ At the appeal stage Yes No
3. Is a removal order suspended during the examination of a second, third, subsequent application?
 - ❖ At first instance Yes No
 - ❖ At the appeal stage Yes No

Provision for a subsequent claim is made in the Immigration Rules.²³⁹ Where an asylum seeker makes further representations that are sufficiently different from previous submissions in that the content has not previously been considered, and which, taken together with previously submitted material create a realistic prospect of success, these submissions can be treated as a 'fresh claim'. If they are treated as a fresh claim then a refusal attracts a right of appeal to the FTT (IAC), and all provisions are the same as for an appeal regarding a first asylum application (see section on [Regular Procedure: Appeal](#)).

²³³ Home Office, *Section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 leave*, July 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2u3v5bL>.

²³⁴ Statement of change of Immigration Rules, September 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2tkZNLQ>.

²³⁵ Home Office, *Calais Leave*, November 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2Ulczag>.

²³⁶ Children (asylum policy guidance), available at: <https://bit.ly/3t4u00C>

²³⁷ Processing children's asylum claims, August 2019, available at: <http://bit.ly/2Bcs1Le>.

²³⁸ Home Office, *Asylum Statistics Q4 2019*.

²³⁹ Para 353 Immigration Rules Part 12.

Case law provides that the threshold to be passed for submissions to be treated as a fresh claim is a 'relatively modest' one.²⁴⁰ In practice, lawyers and NGOs say that the threshold employed is very high. The majority of cases are not treated as a fresh claim and given a right of appeal.

A small percentage of further submissions are treated as fresh claims by the Home Office. Judicial review is the only means to challenge refusal to treat submissions as a fresh claim, and it is only available with the permission of the tribunal. In such a challenge the Court must consider whether the Home Office considered the right question, namely, not whether the caseworker thinks it is a strong case, but whether there is a realistic prospect of an immigration judge, applying 'anxious scrutiny', thinking that the applicant will be exposed to a real risk of persecution or serious harm on return. In so doing, the Home Office caseworker themselves must also use 'anxious scrutiny'. Whether this has been done is a question the court can consider for itself on the basis of the evidence that the Home Office caseworker had.²⁴¹

In practice, the shortage of publicly funded legal advice and the limitations of judicial review as a remedy mean that poorly based refusals may go unchallenged, with the asylum seeker resorting instead to making another set of further submissions. The Home office does not publish the number of fresh claims but in answer to a parliamentary question the Minister stated that in 2020, 7,341 further submissions were made in support of fresh claims.²⁴²

Further representations must be made to the Home Office in **Liverpool**. Where the claimant is over 18, this must be done in person unless there are exceptional circumstances such as disability or severe illness or the best interests of a child require an exception to be made.²⁴³ There is no fixed limit to the number of further submissions that can be made. The response to further submissions is decided on the basis of written submissions and without an interview, but the submissions must be delivered in person at an appointment. This was changed in March due to the Covid restrictions and although other Home Office appointments have resumed it remains the case that further submissions are currently accepted by email or post.

Once they have an appointment (usually 3 to 10 days after it is arranged), applicants need to have the means to travel to lodge their further submissions. This is problematic as the Home Office will not pay travel expenses, and most refused asylum seekers who have further submissions to make are destitute. **Liverpool** is more than a day's round trip by cheapest transport methods (usually bus) from many parts of the UK. Although destitute applicants should be eligible for Section 4 support (see section on [Reception Conditions: Criteria and Restrictions](#)) as soon as they have alerted the Home Office to the existence of further submissions,²⁴⁴ in practice, it is extremely difficult to access support while waiting for an appointment, and any support is unlikely to materialise before the appointment. It may also be difficult to access Section 4 support while waiting for a decision on whether those further submissions constitute a fresh claim.²⁴⁵ In effect, this means that people with further submissions may be left destitute.

A person may not be removed before a decision is taken on any submissions they have outstanding.²⁴⁶ Removal directions (the order to a carrier to take the person on a particular flight or crossing) may remain in place while further submissions are being considered, only to be cancelled if the claimant is successful

²⁴⁰ Court of Appeal, *WM (DRC) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2006] EWCA Civ 1495, 9 November 2006, available at: <http://bit.ly/2jVIRJ5>.

²⁴¹ Court of Appeal, *R (on the application of YH) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2010] EWCA Civ 116.

²⁴² Chris Philip Question for Home Office and response, March 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3vqhtFZ>.

²⁴³ Home Office, *Asylum Policy Instruction: Further Submissions* February 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2jweaZ5>.

²⁴⁴ High Court, *MK and AH v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2012] EWHC 1896 (Admin).

²⁴⁵ ASAP, Section 4 Support – Factsheet 2 (Breach of Human Rights), October 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2GbzAa4>.

²⁴⁶ Para 353A Immigration Rules.

or if the Home Office decides they need more time to decide. Further submissions may be allowed or refused at any time until the asylum seeker is actually removed. A last-minute refusal may leave no time for any further legal challenge, and there is no obligation for the Home Office to respond in time for the asylum seeker to take advice or challenge a refusal.

Preparation of further submissions is funded under a limited form of legal aid (Legal Help). Again this puts pressure on lawyers, challenging conscientious representatives to maintain quality work. Funding for expert reports can be obtained from the Legal Aid Agency, though the representative will usually have to argue for this.

The procedure for further submissions is different for unaccompanied children who are still under the age of 18 when any leave they have expires. The decision maker must make enquiries as to the situation of the child to ascertain if it has changed since the original grant of leave and conduct a best interest assessment.²⁴⁷

F. The safe country concepts

| Indicators: Safe Country Concepts | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Does national legislation allow for the use of "safe country of origin" concept? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Is there a national list of safe countries of origin? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Is the safe country of origin concept used in practice? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. Does national legislation allow for the use of "safe third country" concept? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Is the safe third country concept used in practice? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3. Does national legislation allow for the use of "first country of asylum" concept? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

1. Safe country of origin

Legislation allows for a safe country of origin concept.²⁴⁸ States are designated safe by order of the Secretary of State for the Home Office. The Secretary of State may make such an order where they are satisfied that 'there is in general in that State or part no serious risk of persecution of persons entitled to reside' there, and that removal there 'will not in general contravene' the European Convention on Human Rights. In making the order, the statute requires the Home Secretary to have regard to information 'from any appropriate source (including other member states and international organisations)'.

Orders are in force in relation to: Albania, Macedonia, Moldova, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, South Africa, Ukraine, Kosovo, India, Mongolia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Mauritius, Montenegro, Peru, South Korea and Serbia. The section also allows partial designation, and currently designated as safe for men are: Ghana, Nigeria, Gambia, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali and Sierra Leone. There is no appeal against designations. Designation may be challenged by judicial review. After successful challenges Bangladesh and Jamaica were removed from the list of designated countries.²⁴⁹

Where an asylum claimant comes from a designated country, the UKVI caseworker is obliged to certify the case as clearly unfounded unless satisfied that the individual case is not clearly unfounded. The consequence of the certificate is that an appeal against refusal may only be made from outside the UK (see [Accelerated Procedure: Appeal](#)).

²⁴⁷ Home Office, *Processing children's asylum claims*, August 2019, available at: <http://bit.ly/2jtz4uD>.

²⁴⁸ Section 94 NIAA.

²⁴⁹ High Court, *R (on the application of Zakir Husain) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2005] EWHC 189 (Admin); Supreme Court, *R (on the application of Brown) Jamaica* [2015] UKSC 8, para 36.

Challenges by judicial review to safe country of origin decisions are also difficult to establish on a case by case basis, but some do succeed. For instance, in a case in which the Court of Appeal held that it was not irrational to treat Gambia as safe in general, the court still held that the applicant’s asylum claim was not bound to fail. He had already been ill-treated in detention because of his politics, and faced a possible trial for sedition.²⁵⁰ The general designation as safe is often perceived to be very risky for particular groups who have not been taken into account in the assessment of the country as safe, as illustrated in the Supreme Court case of *Brown* mentioned above. In particular, the safety of women has been shown to have been left out of account. Lesbians, trafficked women, single women who are outside the accepted family structure may all be at risk in some countries designated as safe. Designation is also not reviewed routinely and there is no automatic review in response to changes in country conditions.

Asylum applicants in 2020 from countries designated as safe were as follows:

| Country of origin | Asylum applicants |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Albania | 3,071 |
| India | 1,046 |
| Nigeria (men) | 484 |
| Brazil | 205 |
| Ukraine | 113 |
| Ghana (men) | 91 |
| Gambia (men) | 83 |
| Sierra Leone (men) | 79 |
| South Africa | 66 |
| Kenya (men) | 56 |
| Mali (men) | 38 |
| Mauritius | 32 |
| Mongolia | 25 |
| Kosovo | 15 |
| Malawi (men) | 12 |
| Bolivia | 10 |
| Peru | 7 |
| Ecuador | 6 |
| Liberia (men) | 5 |
| South Korea | 2 |
| Serbia | 1 |

It appears from this that there is no consistent pattern in terms of the relevance of designation to the numbers of asylum seekers coming from these countries to the UK.

2. Safe third country

Where it is certified by the Third Country Unit that an asylum claimant comes from a safe third country, their asylum claim will not be decided in the UK. For different kinds of safe third country decisions, and

²⁵⁰ Court of Appeal, *MD (Gambia) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2011] EWCA Civ 121.

for challenges to them by judicial review see section on [Admissibility Procedure](#). The concept is used widely in practice.

Until the end of 2020 the Immigration Rules defined a “safe third country” a country where:²⁵¹

- (1) the applicant’s life and liberty will not be threatened on account of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion in that country;
- (2) the principle of non-refoulement will be respected in that country in accordance with the Refugee Convention;
- (3) the prohibition of removal, in violation of the right to freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment as laid down in international law, is respected in that country;
- (4) the possibility exists to request refugee status and, if found to be a refugee, to receive protection in accordance with the Refugee Convention in that country;
- (5) there is a sufficient degree of connection between the person seeking asylum and that country on the basis of which it would be reasonable for them to go there; and
- (6) the applicant will be admitted to that country

The rules were amended in December 2020, to come into force at the exact time the UK left the transition period of exit from the EU. The new rules make no distinction between EU and non-EU states. The new rules remove the requirement for the individual to have a connection to the country to which it is proposed they be returned. The rules explicitly state that “*When an application is treated as inadmissible, the Secretary of State will attempt to remove the applicant to the safe third country in which they were previously present or to which they have a connection, or to any other safe third country which may agree to their entry.*”

The Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants etc.) Act 2004 (AITOCA) provides for the use of a safe third country concept. All EU Member states (except Croatia) as well as Norway, Iceland and Switzerland are listed in the statute. There is a power to add further countries by order of the Secretary of State. The only one to have been added is Switzerland. There is no obligation to review the lists, and there is no appeal against the inclusion of a country on the list.

Safe third country removals may take place on an individual basis to other countries.

2.1. Safety criteria

As regards the required level of protection available in a third country, the High Court assessed the ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention in *Ibrahimi and Abasi*, although the case concerned a Dublin transfer to Hungary. The applicants complained that their transfer to Hungary would subject them to “chain refoulement” as the applicants would risk removal to Iran along a chain of unsafe States, including Serbia, Macedonia, Greece and Turkey. The Court found that Turkey ‘is considered to be an unsafe country’, *inter alia* since it retains discretion to provide asylum seekers with ‘limited residence but with a status short of refugee status.’²⁵²

2.2. Connection criteria relevant to claims made prior to 31/12/20

The Immigration Rules relevant to claims in 2020 set out a number of non-exhaustive criteria for establishing a connection between the individual applicant and a safe third country.²⁵³ These include:

- a. Time spent in the country;

²⁵¹ Para 345A-C Immigration Rules.

²⁵² High Court, *Ibrahimi and Abasi v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2016] EWHC 2049 (Admin), paras 136-137 and 176.

²⁵³ Para 345D Immigration Rules Part 11.

- b. Relations with persons in that country, who may be nationals of that country, habitually resident non-nationals, or family members seeking protection there;
- c. Family lineage, regardless of whether family is present in that country; and
- d. Any cultural or ethnic connections.

Since the change in rules it is clear that a case may be considered under the inadmissibility policy if there is evidence that an applicant has spent time in or travelled through a country where it is deemed they could have made a protection claim and benefitted from the principle of non-refoulement. However, the instruction goes on to state that removal can be to any country that will accept them. Whilst no return agreements are in place at the time of writing the stated intention is that people seeking asylum will be returned despite the lack of participation in Dublin III as a mechanism to facilitate that.

3. First country of asylum

The “first country of asylum” concept is defined as a country where an applicant: either (a) has been recognised as a refugee and may still enjoy that protection; or (b) otherwise enjoys sufficient protection including protection from *refoulement*. In both cases, the applicant must be able to be readmitted to that country.²⁵⁴

The policy in force during 2020 (The October 2019 Home Office policy) states that ‘if the individual has not been granted protection, they may nonetheless be removable to the country if it has an organised and functioning asylum system, if it could be expected to make a valid decision regarding protection status in reasonable timescales, and if it applies the principle of *non-refoulement*.’²⁵⁵ This principle still exists in the new rules and guidance i.e. it must be reasonably expected that a claim for protection can be made and decided upon.

G. Information for asylum seekers and access to NGOs and UNHCR

Indicators: Information and Access to NGOs and UNHCR

1. Is sufficient information provided to asylum seekers on the procedures, their rights and obligations in practice? Yes With difficulty No
 - ❖ Is tailored information provided to unaccompanied children? Yes No
2. Do asylum seekers located at the border have effective access to NGOs and UNHCR if they wish so in practice? Yes With difficulty No
3. Do asylum seekers in detention centres have effective access to NGOs and UNHCR if they wish so in practice? Yes With difficulty No
4. Do asylum seekers accommodated in remote locations on the territory (excluding borders) have effective access to NGOs and UNHCR if they wish so in practice? Yes With difficulty No

The Immigration Rules provide that asylum applicants should be informed ‘in a language they may reasonably be supposed to understand and within a reasonable time after their claim for asylum has been recorded of the procedure to be followed, their rights and obligations during the procedure, and the possible consequences of non-compliance and non-co-operation. They shall be informed of the likely

²⁵⁴ Para 345B Immigration Rules Part 11.

²⁵⁵ Home Office, *Inadmissibility; Safe Third Country cases December 2020*, available at: <https://bit.ly/3ccbSM9>.

timeframe for consideration of the application and the means at their disposal for submitting all relevant information'.²⁵⁶

Further, they shall be informed in writing and in a language they may reasonably be supposed to understand 'within a reasonable time not exceeding fifteen days after their claim for asylum has been recorded of the benefits and services that they may be eligible to receive and of the rules and procedures with which they must comply relating to them.'

The Home Office is also required to provide information on non-governmental organisations and persons that provide legal assistance to asylum applicants and which may be able to help or provide information on available benefits and services.²⁵⁷ The charity Migrant Help provides a service, under a contract with the Home Office. This contract was renewed in January 2019, initially for four years but with a possible extension for a total of ten.²⁵⁸

Information on the asylum process is given in the initial accommodation centres, both in person and by video presentation. Information is also available about the asylum process on the Migrant Help website.²⁵⁹ One to one appointments are offered in initial accommodation centres, and at some outreach locations, at which applications for support can be made, and asylum seekers can make appointments with legal representatives. However, these are limited.

At the AIU a Point of Claim leaflet is provided,²⁶⁰ which explains the next steps if the case is put into the regular procedure, and what it means to be granted or refused asylum. Unaccompanied children are also given a leaflet about the Refugee Council Children's Advice Service and a specific Point of Claim leaflet aimed at children is still being developed by the Home Office, in consultation with NGOs.²⁶¹ A letter prior to the screening appointment also gives information and the Home Office website explains what documents the asylum seeker needs to bring to the screening interview, and rights and responsibilities throughout the asylum process in English only.²⁶²

A notice giving the contact details of the AIU and the requirement to claim there for a person already in the UK is linked to the Home Office's website in 15 languages.

There is no provision in the rules for information to be given at later stages. Asylum seekers were not systematically informed about the Dublin procedure and its implications until they were detained for transfer to the responsible EU Member State or Schengen Associated State. It is unclear what information will be provided to applicants regarding the inadmissibility policy, until they are informed they may be treated as inadmissible, through the 'notice of intent'.

²⁵⁶ Para 357A Immigration Rules Part 11B.

²⁵⁷ Para 358 Immigration Rules Part 11B.

²⁵⁸ Home Office, 'New asylum accommodation contracts awarded', 8 January 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2SUJgdM>.

²⁵⁹ Migrant Help advice and guidance, see: <https://bit.ly/2GaXCC2>.

²⁶⁰ Point of claim leaflet, available at: <https://bit.ly/2ve47Su> (English Version; also available in 14 other languages).

²⁶¹ The leaflet is not available online but contains contact details, amongst other information. More information available at: <http://bit.ly/2krGHS7>.

²⁶² Home Office, *How to claim asylum*, available at: <http://bit.ly/1G7rHtp>.

H. Differential treatment of specific nationalities in the procedure

Indicators: Treatment of Specific Nationalities

1. Are applications from specific nationalities considered manifestly well-founded? Yes No
 ❖ If yes, specify which:
2. Are applications from specific nationalities considered manifestly unfounded?²⁶³ Yes No
 ❖ If yes, specify which: Albania, India, Ukraine, South Africa, Mauritius, Mongolia, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Bosnia- Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova, Peru, Serbia, Montenegro.
 For men only: Ghana, Nigeria, Gambia, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali and Sierra Leone.

From time to time the Home Office announces that removals of refused asylum seekers to particular countries are suspended. This is rare and there are no such concessions currently in force. The only one in the last ten years was in relation to **Zimbabwe**, but this is no longer in force. When there is such a concession in force, refused asylum seekers from that country become eligible to apply for a specific form of support, known as “Section 4 support” and which covers accommodation and non-cash support (see section on [Reception Conditions](#)).²⁶⁴

The response to a political / humanitarian crisis can also be through immigration routes. Immigration visa concessions have been authorised by Ministers on an annual basis; although the current guidance states that the concession ends on 29 February 2020 and no new concession has been published at the time of writing.²⁶⁵

The Upper Tribunal (IAC) has the power to make findings of fact which constitute binding ‘country guidance’ for other cases. Depending on whether these issues are brought before the tribunal in a particular case, there may from time to time be binding country guidance about the impact of a crisis. Currently there is a country guidance case which says that, due to the high levels of repression in Syria, any forced returnee from the UK including refused asylum seekers would face a real risk of arrest and detention and of serious mistreatment during that detention.²⁶⁶ This does not result in a proactive grant of status from the asylum authorities but can be relied on by asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers in making representations to the Home Office.

From time to time the Home Office may accept that as a matter of fact there is no safe route of return for certain refused asylum seekers. This may be as a result of country guidance from the Tribunal or as a result of the Home Office’s own factual findings. This qualifies the asylum seekers for a specific form of support (see section on [Reception Conditions](#)) but does not in itself entail a grant of status.

When considering the treatment of particular caseloads at first instance, it is worth noting that the countries with some of the highest success rates at appeal during 2020 were:

| Appeal success rates for key nationalities: 2020 | | |
|--|--------------------|--------------|
| Country of origin | Successful appeals | Success rate |
| Turkey | 43 | 61% |
| Eritrea | 35 | 59% |

²⁶³ Section 94 NIAA.

²⁶⁴ Home Office, *Asylum support, Section 4 policy and support*, available at: <http://bit.ly/1Ht8SBE>.

²⁶⁵ Home Office; *Concessions to the Immigration Rules for Syrian Nationals*, available at: <https://bit.ly/39C5Hww>.

²⁶⁶ Upper Tribunal, *KB (Syria) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2012] UKUT 00426.

| | | |
|-------------|-----|-----|
| Albania | 128 | 50% |
| Afghanistan | 99 | 41% |
| Iran | 171 | 48% |

Source: Home Office.

In 2020, there were 422 grants of refugee status to **Syrians**, and the overall refugee status rate was 95%. Those rejected would normally have a right of appeal, unless the refusal was on the basis that another Dublin state has responsibility for the claim. Although data on disputed nationality are not published, we understand that a proportion of refused applicants from countries with very high refugee recognition rates will include those whose claimed nationality is disputed. Revised guidance on this issue was published in 2017.²⁶⁷

The first specific resettlement programme was announced in January 2014; this had no specific quota. In September 2015 the government committed to resettle 20,000 Syrians by the end of the parliament in 2020. By the end of 2020, 19,776 of these had arrived in the UK. 823 resettled refugees came to the UK in 2020.

In June 2019 the then Home Secretary committed to resettling 5,000 refugees in the year following the end of the current programme (from April 2020).²⁶⁸ The resumption of resettlement arrivals, suspended in March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, has not yet been announced.

In March 2017 the Home Secretary announced that from 1 July 2017 people who have been resettled would be granted Refugee Status and those already here under a resettlement programme would be allowed to convert their status to recognise them as refugees.²⁶⁹ In July 2017 the Home Secretary announced that people of any nationality fleeing Syria would be eligible for resettlement, if they fulfilled the other criteria.²⁷⁰

The government launched a Community Sponsorship scheme as part of the VPRS programme. There are strict criteria for becoming a sponsor, including the type of organisation that can apply and the need to be approved by the local authority before applying to the Home Office. Guidance was issued at the same time as the scheme was launched.²⁷¹

The government has also committed to resettling an additional 3,000 individuals under a 'children at risk' programme. In partnership with UNHCR, the UK will bring children from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region; a minority of whom are expected to be unaccompanied. The government announced the programme in response to calls to bring children from Europe. By the end of December 2020, 1,826 individuals had been resettled under this programme.

²⁶⁷ Home Office, *Nationality; disputed, unknown and other cases*, October 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2F8ky2f>.

²⁶⁸ New global resettlement scheme for refugees announced, June 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2lhUGoe>.

²⁶⁹ Secretary of State for the Home Department, 'Statement to Parliament', 22 March 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2DLo4QG>.

²⁷⁰ Secretary of State for the Home Department, 'Resettlement: Written statement', 3 July 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2DyHeMZ>.

²⁷¹ Home Office, *Community sponsorship*, 19 July 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/29VQxZI>.

Reception Conditions

Short overview of the reception system

First time applicants, that prove to be destitute, are entitled to accommodation and/or a weekly sum of money. Most asylum seekers are provided with initial accommodation (reception centres) designed for two or three weeks, and then further accommodation, if assessed as eligible for longer term support—usually self-contained for families and shared housing for other adults. This further accommodation mainly exists of privately owned flats and houses, managed by the companies contracted to the Home Office, or by their sub-contractors. Those on longer term support are also eligible for a weekly cash allowance. Asylum seekers choosing to live with friends or family are eligible for the cash support but not any contribution to the accommodation costs. Those refused asylum but supported to avoid a breach of their human rights can be moved to specific accommodation.

Those awaiting a decision on the longer term support are not given any cash. As the use of full board accommodation for those on longer term support increased during 2020 (e.g. hotels and repurposed military barracks) a small amount of cash is now given in addition to the full board.

A. Access and forms of reception conditions

1. Criteria and restrictions to access reception conditions

Indicators: Criteria and Restrictions to Reception Conditions

- Does the law make material reception conditions to asylum seekers in the following stages of the asylum procedure?

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|-----------------------------|
| ❖ Regular procedure | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced material conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Dublin procedure | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced material conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Admissibility procedure | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced material conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Accelerated procedure | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced material conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ First appeal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced material conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Onward appeal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced material conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Subsequent application | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reduced material conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
- Is there a requirement in the law that only asylum seekers who lack resources are entitled to material reception conditions?

| | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|---|-----------------------------|

In all procedures for determining a first claim asylum seekers, who can show that otherwise they would be destitute, are entitled to accommodation and/or a weekly sum of money.

Most asylum seekers are provided with initial accommodation (reception centres) for two or three weeks, and then further accommodation which is in the same region of the country as administratively defined by the Home Office. This may be at a considerable distance from where they made their initial claim.

Following a tender process new contracts to provide accommodation were announced in January 2019.²⁷² One of the previous providers did not receive a contract this time. In March 2019 the government responded to the Parliamentary Committee's report about this process and its recommendations for smooth transition.²⁷³ The transition was heavily criticised, and the service provided under the new

²⁷² Home Office, 'New asylum accommodation contracts awarded', 8 January 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2SUJgdM>.

²⁷³ Government response to the Home Affairs Select Committee on asylum accommodation, available at: <https://bit.ly/30M6Yhi>.

contracts continue to receive attention including in a joint report in July 2020.²⁷⁴ The accommodation and support contracts were also investigated by the National Audit Office which has a responsibility to audit the use of public funds.²⁷⁵ Its report, in July 2020, was then, as a matter of protocol, discussed by the parliamentary committee the Public Accounts Committee.²⁷⁶ The theme of all the criticism is that the contractors are not meeting the needs of people in the asylum system. By the time of the Public Accounts Committee inquiry the focus had moved to the increased use of ‘contingency accommodation’; the use of which increased from the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic although had begun before that time. The Home Affairs Select Committee conducted an inquiry specifically into the use of contingency institutional accommodation with a focus on the response the pandemic.²⁷⁷ Its key recommendation to the Home Office was to work on a strategy to end the use of this type of accommodation. The government’s response largely repeated its position in the support and advice provided.²⁷⁸

The assessment of destitution

In practice asylum seekers are required to prove that they are destitute and this is strictly enforced. All assets which are available to them are taken into account, whether in the UK or elsewhere, if they consist of cash, savings, investments, land, cars or other vehicles, and goods held for the purpose of a trade or other business.²⁷⁹ If relevant assets come to light which were not declared, support can be stopped and payments made can be recovered, although it appears that recovery happens infrequently in practice.²⁸⁰ Asylum seekers are expected to use the assets they have before being granted asylum support, but once they are assessed as destitute there is no requirement for contributions from them.

At the point at which an asylum support application is made, the applicant completes the form ASF1; they can get help from the voluntary sector to do this. Applicants have to state that they understand the following as part of the form:

“Failure to disclose all necessary information or to provide false information regarding myself or any of my dependants may lead to information being passed to the police or other agencies for investigation. Note that failure to supply the required information may result in your application for support being refused.”

Specific questions are asked about financial resources available to the applicant, on this form.

Quality of decision making on support applications has been a significant obstacle, particularly in relation to the destitution test. Between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020 the Asylum Support Tribunal allowed 66% of the appeal cases where the client was represented by lawyers from the Asylum Support Appeals Project (ASAP) and remitted a further 9% back to the Home Office to retake the decision.²⁸¹

²⁷⁴ Wake up call; how government contracts fail people seeking asylum, Asylum Matters, Refugee Action and others, July 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/39kS3Ai>

²⁷⁵ Asylum accommodation and support *National Audit Office*, July 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3a7T8L8>

²⁷⁶ Asylum support and accommodation transition programme *Public Accounts Committee*, November 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3ack2wN>

²⁷⁷ Home Office preparedness for coronavirus (Covid 19) institutional accommodation, *Home Affairs Select Committee*, July 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3a6838B>

²⁷⁸ Home Office preparedness for coronavirus (Covid 19) institutional accommodation, government response, November 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2KSVNzD>

²⁷⁹ Reg. 6 Asylum Support Regulations 2000, available at: <http://bit.ly/1C2R7GQ>.

²⁸⁰ Reg. 20 Asylum Support Regulations 2000.

²⁸¹ ASAP, *Bulletins and quarterly stats*, available at: <https://bit.ly/3t6wM4t>.

1.1. Emergency support: Section 98 Support

During the assessment of a person's eligibility for Section 95 support, asylum seekers may receive support on a temporary basis ("Section 98 support").²⁸² This can only be received once the claim is registered and is mainly non-cash assistance. The application must be made on a prescribed form, and this is the only formal requirement.²⁸³ There is a policy that a destitute asylum seeker should be seen the same day so that they can register their asylum claim and claim Section 98 support.

Home Office guidance provides that asylum seekers may stay in initial accommodation for a short time after their initial support under Section 98 has ended.²⁸⁴ Where further support has been refused this can be up to 7 days; where leave has been granted, up to 28 days; where leave has been refused, 21 days. If there are children, support can continue.²⁸⁵ This also continued in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and although the Home office began to cease support to refused applicants in the autumn of 2020, this was legally challenged and an order from the judge ensured that at the time of writing refused applicants support usually continued, although this was not automatic and cessation of support letters had to be appealed.²⁸⁶

1.2. Section 95 Support

Once the destitution assessment is complete, an asylum seeker who is accepted to be destitute receives what is commonly referred to as Section 95 support. They are considered destitute if they do not have adequate accommodation or any means of obtaining it, or else they do have adequate accommodation but no means of meeting their other essential needs, or else they will be in this position within 14 calendar days.²⁸⁷ The entitlement to Section 95 support covers the asylum procedure and continues until 28 calendar days after a form of leave is granted or, if the claim is refused, until 21 calendar days after a non-appealable decision or the expiry of the time allowed to appeal the most recent decision (this is called Appeal Rights Exhausted, ARE). Support is provided using a card (ASPEN) which works on the visa platform; it can be used as a debit card or to withdraw cash from an ATM (cash is available for s95 beneficiaries only).

Once an asylum claim is refused and appeal rights exhausted, Section 95 support stops, except for families with children. In August 2015 the government launched a consultation proposing to stop the support of families also when claims are refused.²⁸⁸ Before the results of the consultation were announced, a Bill was introduced into Parliament to bring these proposals into law. The Immigration Act 2016 outlined the measures,²⁸⁹ although that part of the Act is yet to be enacted and details will not be known until a month prior to the introduction. Asylum seekers then become absolutely destitute, with no entitlement to accommodation or money. People in this position may be reliant on friends, who may themselves be in asylum support accommodation which prohibits guests, and who thus risk losing their support by hosting a friend. Many destitute refused asylum seekers rely on charities for food vouchers, food parcels, sometimes accommodation (mainly through voluntary hosting schemes) or small amounts of money. One reason that the backlog of unresolved asylum cases has caused such public concern is that refused asylum seekers, who may still be trying to establish their claim, may spend years in destitution.

²⁸² Section 98 IAA 1999.

²⁸³ Home Office, *Application for asylum support: Form ASF 1*, 11 January 2016.

²⁸⁴ Para 1.1.2, Asylum Support Policy Bulletins Instructions, available at: <http://bit.ly/1LjSzbh>.

²⁸⁵ Home Office, *Asylum Support Bulletin 73: Access to Support*.

²⁸⁶ High Court Interim relief order in *QBB v Secretary of State and Asylum Support Tribunal* available to download from: <https://bit.ly/2NBeskp>

²⁸⁷ Section 95 IAA 1999.

²⁸⁸ Schedule 11 Immigration Act 2016.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Obstacles to claiming support include that the application form is 33 pages long,²⁹⁰ is in English only and is only available online. A 17-page guidance document gives advice on how to complete it. Telephone advice is also available from the charity Migrant Help under a government contract. The Migrant Help website also has multilingual guides to claiming asylum support, amongst other issues. Any supporting documentation is also handled by Migrant Help; documents can be scanned and communicated to the Home Office via Migrant Help, avoiding the need to submit original documents. Asylum seekers in initial accommodation centres are assisted to make this application and face to face advice is available there.

Where asylum claimants have been in the UK for some time without government assistance, it may be difficult for them, especially without advice, to gather the right evidence for support claims. They may need to get letters from friends / acquaintances they have lost touch with for example, to show what support they have and why this is no longer available to them. Information on Migrant Help's website informs applicants that all information and supporting documents must be provided before the application is submitted to the Home Office. If applicants do not have this information they will experience a delay in their application for support being processed.²⁹¹

The policy of dispersing asylum seekers round the UK and usually away from the south east may also provide a disincentive to ask for accommodation from the Home Office. Asylum seekers may decide to live in poor conditions with friends or relatives in **London** rather than move far away from them and perhaps their legal adviser.

Support may be available (accommodation and subsistence payments, the level determined by need) from local authorities where the person is destitute and in need of care and attention because of physical or mental ill health, but recognition of this statutory provision is very uneven around the country and some local authorities simply do not assess refused asylum seekers, or delay for lengthy periods, despite the statutory duty to do so.²⁹² Where ill health results from destitution, and not from another condition, local authority support is not available. Thus it does not present any solution for the people whose health is ruined by years in destitution. Revised guidance was published in 2018 reflecting the provisions in the Care Act (applying to England) and similar provisions in devolved administrations and the relationship between local authority duties and Home Office asylum support provision.²⁹³

There is a provision for support to be refused if asylum has not been claimed as soon as reasonably practicable, unless to do so would breach the person's human rights.²⁹⁴ This is rarely used for claims made soon after arriving in the UK, but may be used where a person claims asylum after a period of residence in the UK. Human rights protection, following the House of Lords case of *Limbuela*,²⁹⁵ means that a person will not be made street homeless as a result of this provision, but may be denied cash support if they have somewhere to stay.

The levels of asylum support are reviewed on an annual basis. At the beginning of the national lockdown in March 2020 and subsequent to the government's announcement that recipients of the main welfare benefit would receive an increased level of support during the pandemic, ngos wrote to the Immigration minister to ask for a similar measure to be taken with regard to asylum support. Instead the usual review was undertaken; an interim decision in June revised the rate to £39.60 (€44.87) per week and in October the rate increased to £39.63 (€44.90). The rate prior to June was £37.75 (€42.76). This rate also now applies to those on section 4 support.

²⁹⁰ Home Office, *Application for asylum support: form ASF1*, 11 January 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/1RfS1qt>.

²⁹¹ Migrant Help advice, see: <https://bit.ly/2Gg1Qsc>.

²⁹² Section 9 Care Act 2014.

²⁹³ Home Office, *Asylum Seekers with Care Needs*, August 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2DcZBFa>.

²⁹⁴ Section 55 NIAA 2002; House of Lords, *Limbuela v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2005] UKHL 66.

²⁹⁵ House of Lords, *Limbuela* [2005] UKHL 66.

Those asylum seekers supported in full board accommodation do not ordinarily receive any cash payment. However, in October it was confirmed that in recognition of the increased use of such accommodation, those supported under section 95 and section 4 would receive £8 (€9) in cash per week to allow them to pay for essential toiletries and travel²⁹⁶.

1.3. Additional support: Section 96(2) Support

In 2017 the Home Office published guidance on how to make applications under Section 96(2) Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.²⁹⁷ The policy is not new but guidance had never been issued despite the government relying on its existence to ensure that applicants and/or their dependants in particular circumstances would have their needs met. Examples of such circumstances given in the guidance include a person whose medical needs result in higher costs or has their belongings destroyed in a fire.

1.4. Section 4 Support for rejected asylum seekers

A minority of refused asylum seekers qualify for no-choice accommodation and a form of non-cash support from the Home Office (“Section 4 support”) if they meet one of the qualifying conditions set out in the next paragraph.²⁹⁸ During 2017 the delivery of Section 4 support changed to the ASPEN card; whilst cash may not be withdrawn recipients of Section 4 support may now use the card as a debit card at any retailer accepting Visa. This card had a weekly value of £35.39 (approximately €41) per person until June when the rate rose to equal the rate of people supported under section 95. In October this rate was confirmed as £39.63 (€44.90).

Section 4 support is available only if refused asylum seekers can show either that they are not fit to travel, that they have a pending judicial review, that there is no safe and viable route of return, that they are taking all reasonable steps to return to their home country, or that it would be a breach of their human rights not to give this support.²⁹⁹ In practice this latter category is used mostly where the asylum seeker has further representations outstanding. The principle underlying this is that if a person does not meet one of the other conditions, and does not have further representations outstanding, it is not considered a breach of their human rights to leave them destitute; because it is considered that they can return to their home country. The period of Section 4 support is tied to meeting the condition. So people may submit further representations; obtain Section 4 support, move, and a few weeks later receive a refusal of their further representations and so return to destitution. This process may be repeated.

The absence of a safe and viable route of return is rarely accepted unless there is a Home Office policy of non-return in relation to the country in question. Attempting to prove that they have taken all reasonable steps to return is problematic for those who come from countries with which diplomatic relations are suspended, or whose embassies have complex requirements which are difficult to fulfil, or who belong to a group which is denied documents by their country of origin. There are also practical problems, given that they are destitute, in obtaining the fare to visit their embassy, the resources to send faxes, make phone calls, and so on.

Applications for Section 4 support for refused asylum seekers must be made through the online and telephone service, except for vulnerable applicants who can have a face to face appointment at the initial accommodation centres or at an outreach centre where these exist.

²⁹⁶ Letter to ngos from the Immigration Minister, October 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3a60w9T>

²⁹⁷ Home Office, *Applications for additional support*, March 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2G9AD94>.

²⁹⁸ The numbers of refused asylum seekers in the UK are unknown, but the proportion on Section 4 is small.

²⁹⁹ Immigration and Asylum (Provision of Accommodation to Failed Asylum Seekers) Regulations 2005.

For all refused asylum seekers who cannot fulfil the conditions for Section 4 support, with the exception of families who have retained Section 95 support, (see below) there is no support available. If, for whatever reason, they are unable to return to their country of origin, these asylum seekers are left destitute and homeless.

The numbers of refused asylum seekers who are absolutely destitute in the UK is unknown. The British Red Cross used to provide regular updates on its website on the asylum seekers it helps because of destitution. The last time it publicly reported was in 2017 when the charity supported more than 15,000 destitute asylum seekers and refugees.³⁰⁰ In its annual report of 2019 it stated that it had helped 40,500 refugees and asylum seekers, including 14,300 people facing destitution because of their legal status.³⁰¹

2. Forms and levels of material reception conditions

Indicators: Forms and Levels of Material Reception Conditions

1. Amount of the monthly financial allowance/vouchers granted to asylum seekers as of 31 December 2019 (in £ and in €):
 - ❖ Section 95 support per person: £171.73 / €194.52
 - ❖ Section 4 (non-cash) support per person: £171.73 / 191.52
 - ❖ An additional £8 (€9) is paid to those in full board accommodation, if supported under section 95 or section 4.

Section 95 cash support amounts to £171.73 per calendar month per person. There are no different rates, depending on the claimants' ages and household compositions.

The amounts of Section 95 support are set by regulations, while Section 4 rates are a matter of policy.³⁰² Small additional payments are available for pregnant women (£3 per week) if they claim this. They may also claim a maternity allowance of £250 (Section 4) or £300 (Section 95). Home Office guidance makes it explicit that pregnant women can be provided with the cost of a taxi journey when they are or may be in labour.³⁰³ Parents on section 4 support may claim an additional £5 on the card per week for children under 12 months, £3 per week for children between 1 and 3 years, and a clothing allowance for children under 16. None of these payments are made automatically, and if the asylum seeker is not aware of them or has difficulties in applying, the payments are not made. Section 4 support (for rejected asylum seekers) is paid at a flat rate of £ 39.63 per person per week. In practice, families who have dependent children before they have exhausted all appeal rights normally stay on cash support (Section 95) after their claim has been refused for as long as they remain in the UK or until the youngest child turns 18, although this can be removed if they do not abide by conditions.³⁰⁴

The amount of support is not adequate to meet basic living needs. Asylum support under Section 95 is now 52% of the rate of welfare benefit for a UK national. People on Section 4 support receive even less, and the restriction to non-cash support means that they may not be able to take advantage of the cheapest options such as local shops and markets. Applicants for section 4 support are also experiencing delays and difficulties, as outlined in research conducted in 2019.³⁰⁵ Children of families on Section 95 and Section 98 support receive free school meals, but children of families on Section 4 do not.

Before the reduction in asylum support rates the adequacy of Section 95 support was the subject of a court challenge. Judgment was given in the High Court on 9 April 2014, criticising the methodology used

³⁰⁰ British Red Cross, 'Speaking up for ending refugee poverty', 2017, available at: <https://bit.ly/2GsWrOJ>.

³⁰¹ British Red Cross, Annual Review 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/3l98q7p>.

³⁰² Asylum Support (Amendment No.2) Regulations 2015, SI 2015/944.

³⁰³ Home Office, *Asylum Process Guidance – additional services or facilities under the 2007 Regulations*.

³⁰⁴ Melanie Gower, *Asylum: Financial Support for Asylum Seekers*, House of Commons note SN/HA/1909, 2013.

³⁰⁵ Refugee Action and NACCOM, *Missing the Safety Net*, 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/37nC5lB>.

to calculate the rates.³⁰⁶ The Secretary of State was required to remake the decision in the light of the court's guidance. Following review the government concluded 'that families were receiving more cash support to meet their essential living needs than they need, because the existing rates do not reflect the possibility of economies of scale within households'.³⁰⁷ The rates are reviewed annually and consultation is invited.

Further problems come from faults in the operation of the system, particularly when changes occur, such as moving from Section 95 to Section 4, or getting refugee status. Families may be left for weeks without any form of support through administrative delays and mistakes.³⁰⁸

3. Reduction or withdrawal of reception conditions

Indicators: Reduction or Withdrawal of Reception Conditions

1. Does the law provide for the possibility to reduce material reception conditions?
 Yes No
2. Does the legislation provide for the possibility to withdraw material reception conditions?
 Yes No

Legislation does not permit the amount received to be reduced, but support can be withdrawn if the Home Office has reasonable grounds to believe that the supported person or his dependant has:

- a. Committed a serious breach of the rules of their collective accommodation;
- b. Committed an act of seriously violent behaviour whether at the accommodation provided or elsewhere;
- c. Committed an offence relating to obtaining support;
- d. Abandoned the authorised address without first informing the Home Office;
- e. Not complied with requests for information relating to their eligibility for asylum support;
- f. Failed, without reasonable excuse, to attend an interview relating to their eligibility for asylum support;
- g. Not complied within a reasonable period, (no less than 10 working days) with a request for information relating to their claim for asylum;
- h. Concealed financial resources and therefore unduly benefited from the receipt of asylum support;
- i. Not complied with a reporting requirement;
- j. Made or sought to make a further different claim for asylum before their first claim is determined, in the same or a different name; or
- k. Failed without reasonable excuse to comply with a relevant condition of support.³⁰⁹

The credit checks and requirement to show documentary evidence of any other possible forms of financial or in kind support prior to receiving asylum support means it is not common for support to be withdrawn in practice. Where it does happen, the most common reason is as a sanction for breach of conditions of support, for instance being absent from the accommodation or allowing others to stay in it.³¹⁰ New guidance for caseworkers on assessing destitution was issued in 2019.³¹¹

³⁰⁶ High Court, *R (Refugee Action) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2014] EWHC 1033 (Admin), available at: <http://bit.ly/1iweLSx>.

³⁰⁷ House of Commons, *Asylum support: accommodation and financial support for asylum seekers*, Briefing paper no.1909.

³⁰⁸ See e.g. British Red Cross, *Still an ordeal*, December 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2APRYCW>; Refugee Council, *Refugees without refuge: Findings from a survey of newly recognised refugees*, September 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2wNldEz>; *England's forgotten refugees*, May 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/1U4c3VH>. See also Guardian, "Destitution is routine": refugees face homelessness even after gaining asylum", 8 September 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2wOcuAM>.

³⁰⁹ Reg. 20 Asylum Support Regulations 2000, available at: <http://bit.ly/1C2R7GQ>.

³¹⁰ ASAP, *Factsheet 1: Section 95*, available at: <http://bit.ly/2hpcv9s>.

³¹¹ Home Office Assessing Destitution, November 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/37mQILg>

The risk of destitution is assessed when a decision to withdraw asylum support is taken. Destitution is defined as a person ‘not having access to adequate accommodation or unable to meet their essential living needs now or in the next 14 days.’ As described in [Forms and Levels of Material Reception Conditions](#), refused asylum seekers on cashless support (Section 4) are in practice on lesser conditions than those pursuing a first claim who are on Section 95 cash support.

Asylum seekers can appeal to the First Tier Tribunal (Asylum Support) in **London** against a decision to withdraw their support.³¹² On application the Home Office sends travel tickets to attend the hearing.³¹³

No emergency measures have been applied in reception centres due to large numbers of arrivals, though as mentioned in the section on [Types of Accommodation](#), there has been some overcrowding and use of hotels to deal with the oversubscription.

4. Freedom of movement

Indicators: Freedom of Movement

1. Is there a mechanism for the dispersal of applicants across the territory of the country?
 Yes No
2. Does the law provide for restrictions on freedom of movement? Yes No

Movement is not restricted to defined areas, but temporary admission or bail, which is the usual status of asylum seekers, is usually conditional on residence at a particular address, and there is a requirement to keep the Home Office informed of any change of address.

Asylum seekers accommodated by the Home Office are not permitted to stay away from their accommodation, and the Home Office will cease providing accommodation in practice if an asylum seeker stays elsewhere for more than a few days.

Allocation to accommodation is done by the private company, which manages property in the relevant region on the basis of the availability of housing. The initial allocation to a region and to an initial accommodation centre is arranged after the screening interview. The availability of housing in a region depends on procurement by the private company, which is affected by local housing markets, and local authority policy. There has been an increase in the use of institutional accommodation including repurposed military barracks, which has resulted in media attention.³¹⁴ The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration announced an inspection into the use of contingency accommodation and in March 2021 released some key findings following the team’s visit to both sites formerly used as military barracks.³¹⁵ Residents at both sites were normally able to come and go. The exception was during the major COVID-19 outbreak at Napier, when over a hundred people were confined to their billets for approximately four weeks and unable to go outside except to use the mobile toilets or showers. They were warned that they might be arrested if they left the camp. In at least one case, a resident was forcibly returned to the camp by the police.³¹⁶

³¹² Section 103 IAA 1999.

³¹³ ASAP, *Factsheet 3: Appealing to the Support Tribunal*, available at: <http://bit.ly/2wHmyPo>.

³¹⁴ The Guardian, Asylum seeker housing conditions under scrutiny at third ex-military site, 14 January 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/39n1f7m> This report includes links to others and summarises concerns.

³¹⁵ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, An inspection of the use of contingency asylum accommodation – key findings from site visits to Penally Camp and Napier Barracks, March 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3bBqLXz>

³¹⁶ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, An inspection of the use of contingency asylum accommodation – key findings from site visits to Penally Camp and Napier Barracks, March 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3bBqLXz>

The limits on asylum seekers' choice of location have been described in the section on [Criteria and Restrictions to Access Reception Conditions](#). There is no appeal against the location allocated.

Asylum seekers live among the rest of the population and have no restrictions on their freedom of movement except that imposed by lack of resources and the requirement to stay at the allocated address. That they stay at the address is monitored by routine visits by the housing providers, and by the requirement to report regularly (anything from twice weekly to every six months) at a regional Home Office reporting centre.³¹⁷

B. Housing

1. Types of accommodation

Indicators: Types of Accommodation

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Number of reception centres: | 8 ³¹⁸ |
| 2. Total number of places in the reception centres in 2020: | 12,235 |
| 3. Total number of persons in dispersed accommodation in 2020: | 41,302 |
| 4. Type of accommodation most frequently used in a regular procedure: | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reception centre <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hotel or hostel <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency shelter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private housing <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |
| 5. Type of accommodation most frequently used in an accelerated procedure: | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reception centre <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel or hostel <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency shelter <input type="checkbox"/> Private housing <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

1.1. Initial accommodation centres

Reception centres, called initial accommodation, each accommodate around 200 people – fewer in **Glasgow** and **Northern Ireland**. These centres are the usual first accommodation for any asylum seeker who asks for support and is not immediately detained, apart from unaccompanied children. If a place cannot be found on the first night after claim, asylum seekers may be accommodated in an interim hostel in **Croydon** while accommodation is found, or in hotels in any region where the initial accommodation is full. Accommodation in the initial accommodation centres is usually full board with no cash provided.

The short-term use of bed and breakfast accommodation has tended to rise in times of an increase in applications, although in its response to the Home Affairs Select Committee the government stated that the accommodation providers had taken measures to lessen the need for this. The drawback is that people accommodated in a hotel, even if only for one or two nights, have limited or no access to many of the reception-related rights granted to asylum seekers, with reported cases of persons having only restricted access to accommodation. The consequence of such temporary 'emergency' accommodation is that it additionally delays their access to the support system and other welfare services to which they are entitled, as it may take a couple of days before they access advice and complete an application for asylum support.³¹⁹

Asylum seekers should not stay in initial accommodation for any longer than 3-4 weeks³²⁰ days but there can be dispersal backlogs and it is common to find asylum seekers stuck in initial accommodation for over 3 weeks due to a lack of dispersal accommodation.³²¹ There has been a huge increase in the use of hotel and other full-board accommodation during 2020. The Home Office has issued a statement about the use

³¹⁷ A list of Home Office reporting centres is available at: <http://bit.ly/2ryZGPZ>.

³¹⁸ Many more temporary centres were set up in 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic measures.

³¹⁹ Information provided by Refugee Action.

³²⁰ Home Office, A guide to living in asylum accommodation, available at: <https://bit.ly/30qVIHA>

³²¹ Home Affairs Select Committee, *Asylum Accommodation*, January 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2n0KUwl>.

of hotels and other temporary accommodation.³²² A challenge was made by three unaccompanied children who were being accommodated in a hotel by a local authority, which argued that it was appropriate. A judge ordered that the case could be heard and in the meantime ruled that a hotel was not appropriate for unaccompanied children.³²³ A UK charity has written a guide to the 2019 contracts and has details about all types of accommodation and services covered.³²⁴

If the asylum seeker qualifies for Section 95 support he or she is moved into smaller units, mainly flats and shared houses, in the same region, but as regions are large this may not be within travelling distance of their legal representative if they have one. Accommodation is in the **North, Midlands and South West** of England and in **Wales** and **Scotland**, not in the South or in London. Asylum seekers have no choice of location. If asylum seekers are not detained after screening there is no distinction in the initial accommodation based on the claim or its route.

Where a person has family and friends with whom they can live they can claim cash support. There are reports that some asylum seekers take only cash support and continue to 'sofa-hop' i.e. move from one person to another, staying on floors and in shelters, because they do not want to leave **London**. The Home Office may consider a request to be accommodated in **London** or the South East if the applicant is in receipt of therapeutic services from the Helen Bamber Foundation or the NGO Freedom from Torture.

At the end of 2020, Initial accommodation centres, hotels and former military barracks were accommodating people receiving section 98 support. The numbers were much higher than usual as the pandemic resulted in the Home Office providing accommodation to more people seeking asylum; this was due to an agreement (and subsequently a court order) that people would not be evicted to destitution, and also because of an increasing backlog of asylum decisions. It was not due to a rise in the number of people seeking asylum. The number of people supported under section 98 at the end of 2020 was 12,235 (3 times higher than at the end of 2019).

1.2. Dispersed accommodation

All accommodation for asylum seekers is managed by three large private companies under contract to the Home Office, much of which is provided through sub-contracts to smaller companies. The assessment process for eligibility for the accommodation remains with the Home Office, which is ultimately responsible in law for the provision of accommodation. The companies remain responsible to the Home Office under the terms of their contracts to provide and manage the accommodation. New contracts were approved in January 2019 for a ten-year period.³²⁵

The contract between the Home Office and the private companies requires that families shall be housed in self-contained accommodation.³²⁶ In practice there is some use of hostel-type accommodation for families with small children, and some lone parent families are housed with unrelated families, though nuclear families are normally kept together.³²⁷ Accommodation frequently fails to meet the needs of supported persons, particularly those with children or mobility and health needs. Asylum accommodation has been repeatedly criticised for failing to provide security, respect for privacy and basic levels of hygiene and safety, particularly for women; in the media and in the House of Commons Home Affairs Select

³²² Home Office media blog, available at: <https://bit.ly/30rr0OJ>

³²³ The order is not publicly available but is discussed in detail, see: <https://bit.ly/3cf7mwe>

³²⁴ Asylum Matters; The Asylum Accommodation and Support Contracts – a guide, 2019, <https://bit.ly/38vllYs>.

³²⁵ Home Office, 'New asylum accommodation contracts awarded', 8 January 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2SUJgdM>.

³²⁶ Home Office, *Compass Project: Schedule 2, Accommodation and Transport, Statement of Requirements*, B.8.

³²⁷ Evidence given to the Parliamentary Enquiry on Asylum Support for Children and Young People.

Committee report published in December 2018.³²⁸ The same committee looked at the government's Covid-19 preparedness with a focus on Institutional Accommodation in 2020.

The most common form of accommodation after the initial period in the initial accommodation centres is in privately owned flats and houses, managed by the companies contracted to the Home Office, or by their sub-contractors.

Section 4 support can only be provided as a package including accommodation, in a location determined by the Home Office, and 'facilities for accommodation' i.e. the ASPEN card with no facility for cash. Consequently, the recipient cannot choose to receive financial support only (as they can with Section 95) and continue to live with family members who are not included in the support application. This means that the family will be split, possibly over some distance, the person on Section 4 having no cash with which to travel to visit.

2. Conditions in reception facilities

Indicators: Conditions in Reception Facilities

1. Are there instances of asylum seekers not having access to reception accommodation because of a shortage of places? Yes No
2. What is the average length of stay of asylum seekers in the reception centres? Not available
3. Are unaccompanied children ever accommodated with adults in practice?³²⁹ Yes No

The most common form of accommodation is the initial accommodation centres and then privately owned flats and houses.

2.1. Conditions in initial accommodation centres

In the centres food is provided at fixed times. There is little choice but sometimes people who make their needs known will be given food that is more suitable for them. One of the centres, opened in 2017, provides self-catering accommodation with cooking facilities and vouchers for a local supermarket. This system has not been extended to other centres.

Lighting is not always sufficient, since it may in some centres be turned off. Rooms are generally lockable, but the fact of sharing with a stranger removes some of the benefit and practicality of this.

In the initial accommodation centres, there is no guarantee that single people will be accommodated on single sex corridors; this is the practice in some centres but not in others. The Home Affairs select Committee received several reports of women feeling unsafe and made strong recommendations in this regard. It was also critical of the conditions for pregnant women and new born babies.³³⁰

The initial accommodation is for a short stay (government advice is that it should usually be for 3-4 weeks). Asylum seekers are able to go outside at any time.

There has been an increase in the use of institutional accommodation including repurposed military barracks, which has resulted in media attention.³³¹ The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and

³²⁸ House of Commons, *Asylum accommodation: Replacing COMPASS*, December 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2A164kM>.

³²⁹ If the Home Office makes an initial assessment that the unaccompanied child is an adult.

³³⁰ Home Affairs Select Committee, *Asylum Accommodation*, January 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2n0KUwl>.

³³¹ The Guardian, *Asylum seeker housing conditions under scrutiny at third ex-military site*, 14 January 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/39n1f7m> This report includes links to others and summarises concerns.

Immigration announced an inspection into the use of contingency accommodation and in March 2021 released some key findings following the team's visit to both sites formerly used as military barracks.³³² It reported issues in management and leadership, mental health problems among residents. People at high risk of self-harm were located in a decrepit 'isolation block' which the inspection considered unfit for habitation. It also found that residents who may have been children were also housed in the same block pending an age assessment. The environment at both sites was found to be impoverished, run-down and unsuitable for long-term accommodation. Cleanliness at both sites was variable at best and cleaning was made difficult by the age of the buildings. Some areas were filthy.³³³

2.2. Conditions in dispersed accommodation

Dispersed accommodation, in flats and houses among the general population, is where asylum seekers stay for most of the time while their claim is being decided. Basic furniture and cooking equipment is provided. Although nuclear families are housed together, two single parent families may be placed in one house together, and this has caused significant problems. In the north east of England in particular there have been difficulties caused by the new contractor failing to reach an agreement with a former sub-contractor around the provision of housing.³³⁴ The relevant Parliamentary Committee had paid much attention to this issue and questioned the government about arrangements.³³⁵ The increased use of institutional accommodation, as well as the new accommodation contracts, has been the subject of much scrutiny in 2020 and is discussed at the beginning of the accommodation section.

As there is no choice of accommodation, families may be separated if they are not claiming asylum together. For instance, where the father of a child is not an asylum seeker or is not part of the same asylum claim as the mother, mothers are placed in accommodation without their partners. This accommodation is, in most cases, in a different city, and sometimes in a different region, from where the child's father lives. Being close to the child's father is not normally accepted as a reason to be in a particular location. 'The strict rule that no-one else is allowed to stay overnight in accommodation provided by the Home Office deprives the new-born baby, and indeed other children in the family, of the opportunity to build a relationship with their father'.

The impact of living on Section 4 support is discussed in the section [Forms and Levels of Material Reception Conditions](#).

³³² Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, An inspection of the use of contingency asylum accommodation – key findings from site visits to Penally Camp and Napier Barracks, March 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3bBqLXz>

³³³ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, An inspection of the use of contingency asylum accommodation – key findings from site visits to Penally Camp and Napier Barracks, March 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3bBqLXz>

³³⁴ Reported in the local media including: The Chronicle, 'Hundreds of North East asylum seekers could be forced out of their homes at the end of August', 25 August 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2TWfjbl>; Teesside Live, 'Families will be forced to move from their homes as new housing provider takes over', 2 September 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2NQYQH1>.

³³⁵ Home Affairs Committee, Asylum accommodation: replacing COMPASS: Government Response to the Committee's Thirteenth Report of Session 2017–19, 8 March 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/38BM0Ey>.

C. Employment and education

1. Access to the labour market

Indicators: Access to the Labour Market

1. Does the law allow for access to the labour market for asylum seekers? Yes No
❖ If yes, when do asylum seekers have access the labour market? 1 year
2. Does the law allow access to employment only following a labour market test? Yes No
3. Does the law only allow asylum seekers to work in specific sectors? Yes No
❖ If yes, specify which sectors: listed shortage occupations
4. Does the law limit asylum seekers' employment to a maximum working time? Yes No
❖ If yes, specify the number of days per year
5. Are there restrictions to accessing employment in practice? Yes No

Asylum seekers are not generally allowed to do paid work. The limited exception is that they may apply to the Home Office to be given permission to enter employment when their claim has been outstanding for a year.³³⁶ The same applies when further submissions have been outstanding for a year, whether or not they have been recognised as a fresh claim.³³⁷ If permission is granted it is limited to applying for vacancies in listed shortage occupations. These are specialist trades and professions which are in short supply in the UK and are defined very specifically although many medical and teaching occupations have recently been included. Self-employment is prohibited.³³⁸ The lack of discretion in the policy allowing the Home Office to grant permission to take up employment not on the shortage occupation list was challenged successfully at the end of 2020. Two cases, one specifically relating to a refugee who was also a victim of trafficking³³⁹ and a refugee who was not³⁴⁰ successfully challenged the fact that discretion to grant such permission had never been used; therefore the policy was declared unlawful. No change has yet been made.

A campaign was launched in 2018 to Lift the Ban³⁴¹ which refers to the above policy; the main campaign aims are for the government to reduce the waiting time to get permission to work to six months and to allow access to all vacancies, not those on the shortage occupation list. The campaign has many members from refugee and other sectors and has some parliamentary support, leading to debates, a short Bill and an amendment to the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill during 2019.³⁴²

Two legal judgments towards the end of 2020 ruled that the Home Office has the discretion to allow asylum seekers to work in any occupation.³⁴³ One case involved an individual who had been trafficked.³⁴⁴ The policy has not yet been changed.

³³⁶ Para 360 Immigration Rules Part 11 B.

³³⁷ Court of Appeal, *ZO (Somalia) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2009] EWCA Civ 442.

³³⁸ Para 360D Immigration Rules Part 11 B.

³³⁹ LJ (Kosovo), R (On the Application Of) v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2020] EWHC 3487 (Admin) (18 December 2020), available at: <https://bit.ly/3eo5dPV>

³⁴⁰ Garden Court, Home Office work policy declared unlawful, C[^] - judgment reported by legal team, 14 January 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/38o3LJt>

³⁴¹ See: <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/lift-the-ban/>

³⁴² Lift the ban coalition website: <http://lifttheban.co.uk/>.

³⁴³ CG v Secretary of State for the Home Department lawyers note and judgment available at: <https://bit.ly/39lqVKE>

³⁴⁴ LJ (Kosovo) v Secretary of State for the Home Department, available at: <https://bit.ly/3a6wfYt>

The main obstacle is that since these occupations are so narrowly defined, the chances that an asylum seeker will qualify are quite low. The asylum seeker's residence status does not change as a result of obtaining permission to work. They remain on bail and subject to conditions which may include residing at an address that they give. There is no special access to re-training to enable access to the labour market. Any vocational training is subject to the conditions for education set out in the section on [Access to Education](#).

2. Access to education

Indicators: Access to Education

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Does the law provide for access to education for asylum-seeking children? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. Are children able to access education in practice? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Education is compulsory for children from 5 to 16. This includes children seeking asylum, who attend mainstream schools local to where they live under the same conditions, formally, as other children in their area. However, destitution may affect their access to education. For instance, children on Section 4 support are not entitled to free school meals or other benefits and yet have no cash to pay for school meals. There are not generally preparatory classes to facilitate access. If children seeking asylum have special educational needs these may be assessed and met as for other children.

There is no general legal bar to adult asylum seekers entering into education, although specific prohibitions on people claiming asylum can be placed through a bail condition,³⁴⁵ and many people have been affected by it, particularly as the first iteration of the guidance was unclear in the government's position that there should not generally be bar on asylum seekers accessing education until a refusal of asylum.³⁴⁶ The Home Office also conceded a judicial challenge establishing that there should not be a general bar on refused asylum seekers accessing education.³⁴⁷

Whilst children are entitled to access free school education, the barriers for adults in further and higher education are financial since (other than in **Scotland**) in addition to the high fees and lack of access to loans they also have no access to mainstream benefits or work. Indeed, the UK maintains different provisions for 'home' students and 'overseas' students for further and higher education. Regulations permit universities to charge higher fees to overseas students than to home students.³⁴⁸ The regulations do not compel universities to charge these higher fees, but a government subsidy is only paid for home students, and so for economic reasons universities charge the higher fees. Asylum seekers are routinely classed as overseas students, and are thus liable to pay overseas student fees for university education of £8,500 to £29,000 per year (approx. between €10,100 - €34,500). This is prohibitive generally for someone seeking asylum.

In **Scotland**, the child of an asylum seeker or a young asylum seeker (under 25) is treated as a home student if they meet a set of residence conditions including 3 years residence in Scotland.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ Home Office, *Immigration Bail*, August 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2xxxta19>.

³⁴⁶ Refugee Council, *Immigration bail and right to study*, July 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2C8yFWd>.

³⁴⁷ Duncan Lewis Solicitors, News: 'Home Office concedes unlawful imposition of study restriction as a bail condition on individuals who are 'appeals rights exhausted'', November 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/36qhFr3>.

³⁴⁸ Reg. 4 Education (Fees and Awards) (England) Regulations 2007 SI 779; Reg. 4 Education (Fees and Awards) (Wales) Regulations 2007 SI 2310. The residence requirements in England are mitigated by Supreme Court judgment in *R (on the application of Tigere) v Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills* UKSC [2015] 57 which held that the English requirement for the applicant to be settled (i.e. have indefinite leave to remain) was discriminatory and unlawful. Other residence requirements remain in place.

³⁴⁹ Reg. 4 Schedule 1 Higher Education (Fees) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 SI 389.

In **England, Wales** and **Northern Ireland** some universities have agreed to treat asylum seekers (generally on a limited individual basis) as home students. However, there has been a judicial development in relation to education costs for young people who have been in local authority care. The Court of Appeal held that there is a duty on a local authority to make a grant for educational expenses as part of its support to a child leaving its care, to the extent that the child's educational needs require this. The court held that their immigration status was relevant to their need. The resources of the local authority were not relevant.³⁵⁰

If a person is eligible under the regulations to pay 'home' fees, it is worth checking the relevant student support regulations. Student support is governed by ordinary residence in the country where they have been living, not where the educational institution is. So someone could be a 'home' fee payer if studying in Wales, Northern Ireland or Scotland, but if ordinarily resident in England before moving to undertake their course, they would not be eligible for any student support at all when they claim it (from Student Finance England) in England.³⁵¹ Even where a university agrees to treat an asylum seeker as a home student, that person may still need finances to pay the fees. The United Kingdom Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) gives advice and information on student finance and fee status.³⁵²

As explained in **Unaccompanied Children**, young people whose asylum claim is refused are commonly given 'UASC leave'. They may apply to extend this before their 18th birthday, and so may be applying to higher education while still on UASC leave. Young people in this position are also treated as overseas students. This can impose obstacles on young people who have sought asylum and are leaving local authority care.³⁵³

Under certain conditions asylum seekers are treated as home students for the purposes of further education. In **England**, this is the case for those aged 16 to 18, or who have been waiting for a Home Office decision for more than six months, or who are on Section 4 support or other statutory assistance. In Wales those on asylum support are treated as home students. In Northern Ireland asylum seekers and their families are treated as home students.³⁵⁴ In **Scotland**, the conditions are as for higher education, and in addition full-time English courses for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and other part-time courses may be taken by asylum seekers as home students. One effect is that in England there is a six month wait for eligibility for free English classes. Research conducted in 2019 reported upon the practical barriers and provides a summary of the changes in ESOL provision in recent years.³⁵⁵

In addition to financial difficulties, language, interrupted education due to experiences as a refugee, and incompatibility of educational systems and qualifications may all be barriers to access to further and higher education.

³⁵⁰ Court of Appeal, *R (Kebede) v Newcastle City Council* [2013] EWCA Civ 960.

³⁵¹ The residence requirements for access to student loans in England are mitigated by Supreme Court judgment in *R (on the application of Tigere) v Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills* [2015] UKSC 57 which held that the English requirement for the applicant to be settled (i.e. have indefinite leave to remain) was discriminatory and unlawful. Other residence requirements remain in place.

³⁵² UKCISA, *Home or overseas fees: the basics*, available at: <http://bit.ly/1xWsqix>.

³⁵³ STAR, *How to Campaign for Equal Access: a Guide*, available at: <http://bit.ly/1Lv3DUQ>.

³⁵⁴ Circular FE 15/12 of the Department of Employment and Learning.

³⁵⁵ Refugee Action, *Turning words into action*, June 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2RiDynC>.

D. Health care

Indicators: Health Care

1. Is access to emergency healthcare for asylum seekers guaranteed in national legislation?
 Yes No
2. Do asylum seekers have adequate access to health care in practice?
 Yes Limited No
3. Is specialised treatment for victims of torture or traumatised asylum seekers available in practice?
 Yes Limited No
4. If material conditions are reduced or withdrawn, are asylum seekers still given access to health care?
 Yes Limited No

In **England**, there is free hospital treatment to asylum seekers with a current claim, those refused asylum seekers who are receiving Section 95 or Section 4 support and unaccompanied children in the care of the local authority.³⁵⁶ Current asylum seekers are entitled to register with a general doctor although in practice many face barriers in registering. In 2016, for example, Doctors of the World assisted 1,906 people, including asylum seekers, to access the National Health Service (NHS).³⁵⁷ More recent figures are not available although some information in this regard is contained in a study by the same charity reporting on issues related to Covid-19.³⁵⁸ The people who are not registered with a GP are highly likely to be excluded from routine vaccination against Covid-19 as this is being organised through GP practices. Direct access centres will often ask for ID documents that asylum seekers will not have. Although everyone is eligible to receive the vaccine significant barriers exist for many migrants, including some people in the asylum system. A campaign to remove the barriers has received support from over 300 organisations.³⁵⁹

Free hospital treatment is not generally available to asylum seekers who are not on Section 95 or Section 4 support. Hospital doctors should not refuse treatment that is urgently needed for refused asylum seekers who are not receiving Section 95 or Section 4 support, but the hospital is required to charge for it. The hospital also has discretion to write off the charges. Any course of treatment should be continued if it is under way at the time when asylum is refused, and thus when Section 95 support stops for single people.³⁶⁰

Accident and emergency services (but not follow-up in-patient care) and treatment for listed diseases are free to all including refused asylum seekers who are not on asylum support. General doctors have the same discretion to register refused and unsupported asylum seekers that they have for any person living in their area.³⁶¹

In **Scotland** all asylum seekers are entitled to full free health care, including those refused asylum seekers not on Section 4 support and including the spouse/civil partner and any dependent children of any of these people.³⁶²

In **Northern Ireland**, exemptions for refugees and asylum seekers are similar to those in England except that refused asylum seekers are able to obtain free health care while they remain in Northern Ireland.³⁶³

³⁵⁶ Part 4 HM Government National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 2015 No. 238.

³⁵⁷ Doctors of the World, *Our UK clinics*, available at: <http://bit.ly/2IL5nWf>.

³⁵⁸ A rapid needs assessment of excluded people in England during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, available at: <https://bit.ly/2Mc636P>

³⁵⁹ Vaccine for all, campaign website available at: <https://bit.ly/30tgpTt>

³⁶⁰ Department for Health, *Guidance on implementing the Hospital Charging Regulations 2015*, para 7.51.

³⁶¹ British Medical Association, *Access to health care for asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers – guidance for doctors*, April 2012, available at: <http://bit.ly/1CqjDIN>.

³⁶² Scottish Government Healthcare Policy & Strategy Directorate, April 2010, CEL 9 (2010) Overseas Visitors' Liability to Pay Charges for NHS Care and Other Services.

³⁶³ Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 SI No. 27 reg. 9, available at: <http://bit.ly/1PcmHMJ>.

Access to mental health services is not guaranteed, and is often lacking.³⁶⁴

Specialised treatment for victims of torture and traumatised asylum seekers is available, but is in short supply. It is provided by a number of independent charities, the largest being Freedom from Torture, the Helen Bamber Foundation, and the Refugee Therapy Centre. Specialist trauma practitioners, including psychiatrists, psychologists and trauma counsellors and therapists, also work in health authorities and trusts around the country, but they are few and access is extremely limited. Language and cultural barriers also hinder appropriate referrals from workers with initial contact, and impede asylum seekers' own awareness of what is available. Smaller NGOs also specialise in counselling for refugees.³⁶⁵

In practice, inadequate levels of support, destitution and the charging regime impede and discourage access to healthcare. Mothers on asylum support who are required to move during pregnancy usually lose continuity of ante-natal care. Moves during pregnancy may take place including at very late stages of pregnancy, even when doctors and midwives advise against a move, and are thought to contribute to the far higher infant and mother mortality rate which there is among asylum seekers.³⁶⁶ Moves sometimes entail a break of several weeks in antenatal care including monitoring and treatment of conditions such as diabetes or hepatitis, which need to be sustained during pregnancy.³⁶⁷ Moves are not frequent once accommodation is allocated, but can happen for instance when an asylum seeker is allocated Section 95 or Section 4 housing away from the area where she has been previously living.

Charges for those with no leave to remain in the UK were introduced in April 2015.³⁶⁸ Respondents to a government consultation which preceded these charges voiced concerns that to introduce charges for migrants which are not fully understood would result in more loss of care for very vulnerable asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers.³⁶⁹ Guidance was issued by the Government (Department of Health) in April 2016.³⁷⁰ A report from the National Audit office in 2016 reported that the policy has unintended consequences and that some people are wrongly charged.³⁷¹ Similar findings were revealed in a report and review of evidence published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in 2018.³⁷²

In 2017 the government announced its intention to extend charging for many more frontline services (except GPs) and to introduce a duty for health services in England to check a person's immigration status before treating. To enable this to happen regulations were introduced to Parliament; some changes were made in August 2017 and others in October 2017.³⁷³ During a parliamentary debate the government agreed to review the impact of the regulations. There has been a lot of lobbying on the issue.³⁷⁴ A report by Doctors of the World in 2017 concluded that people were being deterred from seeking medical care as

³⁶⁴ Yohannes Fassil and Angela Burnett, *Commissioning mental health services for vulnerable adult migrants* August, 2014, available at: <http://bit.ly/2jHiNle>.

³⁶⁵ Some, such as Nasfiyat intercultural Therapy centre, are long established <https://www.nasfiyat.org.uk/> and some specialise in particular groups e.g. Vietnamese Mental Health Service vmhs.org.uk.

³⁶⁶ Refugee Council and Maternity Action, *When Maternity Doesn't Matter*, 2013.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁸ Section 38 Immigration Act 2014 and National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 2015 No. 238.

³⁶⁹ Department of Health: *Migrant Access to the NHS: Consultation*, July 2013, available at: <http://bit.ly/1JdI3Xw>.

³⁷⁰ Department of Health, *Guidance on overseas visitors hospital charging regulations*, 6 April 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/1mU47FG>.

³⁷¹ National Audit Office, *Recovering the cost of NHS treatment for overseas visitors*, October 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2e4ri6z>.

³⁷² Equality and Human Rights Commission, 'Asylum seekers in Britain unable to access healthcare', 29 November 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2QW9WJe>.

³⁷³ The National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) (Amendment) Regulations 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2tFXxz>.

³⁷⁴ See e.g. Health Stream of Sanctuary, 'Changes to Accessing Healthcare – Impact on Refugees & Asylum-Seekers – Take Action Now!', 31 August 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2wrObsh>.

a result of the charges.³⁷⁵ A scoping study of the impact on maternity services conducted in 2017 showed similar findings.³⁷⁶

E. Special reception needs of vulnerable groups

Indicators: Special Reception Needs

1. Is there an assessment of special reception needs of vulnerable persons in practice?

Yes

No

There is no mechanism laid down by law to identify vulnerable groups or persons with special reception needs, although there is policy that instructs caseworkers to assess whether the asylum seekers have any special medical needs that will affect dispersal.³⁷⁷ This policy was revised in 2016, adding specific instructions to safeguard the continuity of care for pregnant women.

If the asylum seeker has e.g. a medical report, which already shows that they are vulnerable, or has some other individual assessment showing this, the accommodation provider is required to take their vulnerability into account in providing accommodation.³⁷⁸ The arrangements for accommodation of children have been described above (see section on [Types of Accommodation](#)). Aside from this the law provides no specific measures to address the reception needs of vulnerable groups. A challenge to the provision of unsuitable accommodation to pregnant women and mothers of new-borns is ongoing.³⁷⁹

If an asylum seeker discloses a health need during screening (i.e. before dispersal) the Home Office must provide sufficient information to the accommodation provider to ensure that necessary arrangements for dispersal are put in place i.e. appropriate travel, accommodation and location. The accommodation provider is contractually obliged to take an asylum seeker to a General Practitioner within 5 days of dispersal if he or she has a pre-existing condition or is in need of an urgent General Practitioner review.³⁸⁰

Whether needs are addressed in fact is variable according to local practice. Initial accommodation centres are run by private companies under contract to the Home Office. The Initial Accommodation includes a healthcare team who offer a basic screening of the health needs of all residents. In practice, unless vulnerability is identified at one of the initial accommodation centres by a healthcare provider, it is unlikely to be identified until the asylum seeker discloses a problem to a voluntary, community or community advice organisation. The provision of suitable accommodation to people with disabilities, in particular the delays in providing such accommodation was found to be unlawful in a case in December 2020.³⁸¹

The Home Office has a 'protected period' of eight weeks for women not to be moved for four weeks before and after giving birth.³⁸² However, the accommodation allocated during this time is in initial accommodation centres, in which conditions are often not conducive to the care of a new baby.³⁸³ The particular difficulties for pregnant women and new mothers were highlighted in both the 2018 Home Affairs

³⁷⁵ Doctors of the World, *Deterrence, delay and distress*, 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2n5nANs>.
Maternity Action et al, *The impact on health inequalities of charging migrant women for maternity care*, 2017, available at: <https://bit.ly/2GuxCSi>.

³⁷⁷ Home Office, *Healthcare needs and pregnancy dispersal policy*, available at: <http://bit.ly/1Vgcw9H>.

³⁷⁸ Asylum Seeker (Reception Conditions) Regulations SI 2005/7.

³⁷⁹ No.5 Barristers Chambers, Permission to apply for Judicial Review granted in systemic challenge to asylum accommodation for pregnant women and new-born mothers (Note on the case of r(DK) by the legal team), 12 January 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/30v95qi>

³⁸⁰ *Ibid*, Home Office Asylum Process Guidance.

³⁸¹ AA v Home Office, [2020] EWHC 3416 (Admin), 14 December 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3buURvU>

³⁸² Home Office, *Healthcare needs and pregnancy dispersal policy*, available at: <http://bit.ly/1Vgcw9H>.

³⁸³ Home Affairs Select Committee, *Asylum accommodation*, January 2017.

Committee report,³⁸⁴ and the Independent Chief Inspector's report on the same subject. The government issued an assurance action plan with its response to the latter report.³⁸⁵ Research from the Asylum Support Appeals Project, Scottish Refugee Council and Refugee Council revealed the lack of attention to women's safety in asylum support accommodation.³⁸⁶ The government issued revised guidance to caseworkers in 2019 which included provision for refuge spaces to be funded in cases where that is deemed necessary.³⁸⁷

If it comes to light that an asylum seeker has been trafficked, they may be referred to special accommodation run by the Salvation Army where specific support is given and the trafficking case considered. In 2018 the amount of subsistence paid to these individuals was cut to bring it in line with others in the asylum support system. This change was challenged in court and was successful.³⁸⁸ In January 2019 guidance was issued by the government advising affected victims how to claim backdated payments arising from the unlawful cut.³⁸⁹

1. Reception and care of unaccompanied children

Those who are given the benefit of the doubt and those who are accepted as being under the age of 18 are referred to a local authority social services department which becomes responsible for their care.³⁹⁰ They should be looked after according to the same standards as other young people in the care of local authorities. There is little practical guidance for social workers on the specific needs of these children, although statutory guidance for England and Wales was reissued in 2017 and contains more practical guidance.³⁹¹ Some helpful information for local authorities has been provided as a result of the transfer scheme, this guidance was revised in 2018.³⁹² The joint safeguarding strategy published in November 2017 identified future work such as resources for professionals, guidance and training.³⁹³ An update of this work in 2019 shows that much is still to be completed.³⁹⁴ No formal update was given in 2020.

In practice the experience of these children varies; some make good relationships with their carer and feel fully supported. Some are very confused and frightened, are not treated well, and do not have a named social worker responsible for them. The named social worker is responsible for the implementation of the care plan which details how the child should be looked after through the process. This includes helping them to find a legal representative. Many discharge this function through referral to the Refugee Council's Children's Advice Service (formerly named the Panel of Advisers); funded by the Home Office since 1994 to assist unaccompanied children through the asylum process including finding legal representatives for the children.³⁹⁵

Some local authorities, such as those with a port of entry and immigration control within their boundary, have become responsible for a disproportionate number of unaccompanied children, as the responsibility

³⁸⁴ Home Affairs Select Committee, *Asylum accommodation*, December 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2XBNvOh>.

³⁸⁵ Home Office, *Asylum support – Assurance Action Plan*, available at: <https://bit.ly/2NMOTJt>.

³⁸⁶ Helen Baillot and Elaine Connelly, *Women seeking asylum: safe from violence in the UK?*, 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2IWFbFi>.

³⁸⁷ Home Office, *Responding to reports of domestic abuse from asylum seekers*, 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/36ggBpj>.

³⁸⁸ High Court, *R (K and AM) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2018] EWHC 2951 (Admin), 8 November 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2Fy4WJE>.

³⁸⁹ Home Office, *Claim a subsistence rates back payment: victims of modern slavery*, 17 January 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2TnE867>.

³⁹⁰ Home Office, *Asylum Policy Instruction: Processing an Asylum Application from a Child*.

³⁹¹ Department of Education, *Statutory guidance for unaccompanied migrant children and victims of modern slavery*, November 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/1tZSXZv>.

³⁹² National Transfer Scheme Interim Protocol, available at: <http://bit.ly/2l53tMt>.

³⁹³ Government, *Joint Safeguarding Strategy*, November 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2mXriMd>.

³⁹⁴ Letter to the Chair of the Education Select Committee, June 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/37Aj8wg>

³⁹⁵ Refugee Council Children's Section Advice Project, available at: <http://bit.ly/2F9wTmS>.

lies with the local authority where the child is first identified. When numbers started to rise in 2015-2016, particularly around the port of **Dover**, some local authorities, particularly **Kent**, reported that they were finding it difficult to look after them appropriately and asked other local authorities to offer placements for them. The Immigration Act 2016 included provision for the legal transfer of responsibility from the initial local authority to a second local authority that has volunteered to take over the care. Initially possible only in England; in 2018 the government extended it to **Scotland, Wales** and **Northern Ireland**.³⁹⁶ A protocol, along with information and advice for social workers is available on the ADCS website.³⁹⁷ Funding is provided to local authorities for the care of unaccompanied children and those who have left care but are still the responsibility of the local authority.³⁹⁸

The Refugee Children's Consortium produced a briefing note outlining some of its members' concerns about the operation of the transfer scheme, particularly focusing on the difficulties children face when their transfer is uncertain or delayed.³⁹⁹ There had been a drop in the overall numbers transferred since the scheme began; however, the numbers rose in 2020, largely due to the declaration in August that **Kent** County Council (responsible for children arriving at the port of Dover) that they had reached their capacity and would not be taking children into its care. Children were transferred directly from the port into local authorities around the country. A report by the Children's Commissioner for England was critical of the time some children spent at the port awaiting transfer.⁴⁰⁰ 257 children were transferred in total in 2020. The total number of unaccompanied children seeking asylum children cared for by local authorities in England is published regularly. At the end of March 2020 this figure was 5,000, which is 6% of the total population of children cared for by local authorities in England.⁴⁰¹ An additional 80 are in the care of local authorities in Wales.⁴⁰² The governments of Scotland and Northern Ireland do not publish statistics of this kind.

Once appeal rights have been exhausted the care of young people over 18 is often limited to those for whom a withdrawal of support would breach their human rights. This tends to be a more minimal provision than that provided to other young people. Provisions of the Immigration Act 2016 will restrict further the support that local authorities can provide to those over 18 who are appeal rights exhausted but this has not yet been enacted.

F. Information for asylum seekers and access to reception centres

1. Provision of information on reception

Paragraph 358 of the Immigration Rules is the only provision in law on information concerning reception conditions (see section on [Accelerated Procedure](#)). Paragraph 344C requires a person who is granted asylum to be provided with access to information, as soon as possible, in a language that they may reasonably be supposed to understand which sets out the rights and obligations relating to refugee status.⁴⁰³

The charity Migrant Help has been providing the Asylum Support Applications UK and Asylum Advice and Guidance services since 2013. In 2019 they retained the contract under a new tender, called Advice,

³⁹⁶ The Transfer of Responsibility for Relevant Children (Extension to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) Regulations 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2Ry84vl>.

³⁹⁷ National Transfer Scheme Interim Protocol, available at: <http://bit.ly/2l53tMt>.

³⁹⁸ Home Office, *Unaccompanied asylum seeking children and leaving care: funding instructions*, October 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2DfsgHn>.

³⁹⁹ Refugee Children's Consortium 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2DBT2Nv>.

⁴⁰⁰ Children's Commissioner, Detention of unaccompanied children arriving in Kent during 2020, 5 February 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/2OQIPnS>

⁴⁰¹ Department for Education, Statistics, available at: <https://bit.ly/3vikE2b>

⁴⁰² Welsh Government, Statistics, available at: <https://bit.ly/3bGaDEs>

⁴⁰³ Para 344C Immigration Rules Part 11.

Issue Reporting and Eligibility. They provide general information, advice and guidance through a Telephone Advice Centre, or face-to-face appointments at the initial accommodation centres or outreach sessions. In the first few months of the new contract the organisation was heavily criticised for failing to respond to the number of calls they were receiving. A number of NGOs wrote to the government to highlight their concerns in this regard.⁴⁰⁴ Migrant Help's regular newsletters have sought to address concerns with regular updates about what action they are taking to improve the access to the service.⁴⁰⁵ Multilingual information is given via Migrant Help's website in different forms: web/video presentations, audio briefings and written briefings. These are in 15 languages and may be downloaded.

Asylum seekers are asked at the screening interview if they wish to apply for support. Apart from the difficulties in claiming (see section on [Criteria and Restrictions to Access Reception Conditions](#)), there are no other significant reported problems in obtaining access to initial support including s.95. Initial information appears to be adequate.

2. Access to reception centres by third parties

Indicators: Access to Reception Centres

1. Do family members, legal advisers, UNHCR and/or NGOs have access to reception centres?
 Yes With limitations No

Contract terms between the Home Office and the private companies provide that there shall be access and facilities in initial accommodation for nominated third parties, including NGOs, UNHCR and legal advisers. Advice and guidance on the asylum process, asylum support applications, welfare and life in the UK is delivered free by the charity Migrant Help, funded by the Home Office. Advice is generally available in person at the initial accommodation centres. There is usually access to an initial health screening, often provided by a local enhanced primary care service, homeless health service or a General Practitioner. In at least some regions the obligation to give access to legal advisers is met by an electronic appointments system in the initial accommodation centre. Through this, appointments are made with local solicitors or legal representatives who have the legal aid contract and facilities to be able to offer advice in an office that is close enough to the centre to be accessible for the asylum seeker to find their own way there.

G. Differential treatment of specific nationalities in reception

There is no differential treatment relating to nationality.

⁴⁰⁴ Letter to Minister of State, 30 October 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2S072Wv>.

⁴⁰⁵ Migrant Help, AIRE newsletters, <https://bit.ly/2O7m4ZB>.

Detention of Asylum Seekers

A. General

Indicators: General Information on Detention

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. Total number of asylum seekers detained in 2020: | 9,620 ⁴⁰⁶ |
| 2. Number of asylum seekers in detention at the end of 2020: | 438 |
| 3. Number of detention centres: ⁴⁰⁷ | 9 |
| 4. Total capacity of detention centres: ⁴⁰⁸ | 2,671 |

When asylum seekers are detained, they are detained in immigration removal centres (IRC), usually under the same legal regime and in the same premises as other people subject to immigration detention. 65% of immigration detainees in 2020 were asylum seekers. The centres consist of 7 IRC and 2 short-term holding facilities (STHF). The published statistics now include immigration detainees held in prisons; in 2020 there were 2,709 immigration detainees held in prison at some point during the year, but it is not known how many of these claimed asylum either prior to being detained or whilst in detention.

Detention during the asylum decision-making process is not usual. Most asylum seekers whose claim has not yet been decided are at liberty on a status known as immigration bail. The main exception is in accelerated procedures. In Dublin and non-suspensive appeal cases, although the individual is not always detained, detention is more common than in the regular procedure.

If the person is already in immigration detention when they claim asylum, whether they are then released will be determined by whether criteria for detention continue to exist after the asylum claim has been made. These are the criteria set out in the section on [Grounds for Detention](#). Making an asylum claim does not of itself secure release. Alternatively, if in the judgment of the Home Office official who screens the asylum application, the claim is capable of being decided quickly, the applicant may be transferred into fast track detention. This means remaining in immigration detention, but may mean a transfer to a different centre.

Asylum seekers may also be detained after their claim has been refused, in preparation for removal. Most of the content of this section therefore refers to asylum seekers who are detained in preparation for removal, after final refusal of their claim.

The number of people who had sought asylum at some time and have been detained (“asylum detainees”) in recent years is as shown in the table below. Many detainees were released during the period of the Covid-19 restrictions on travel, as the law allows for detention when removal will be possible in a specific time period.

| “Asylum detainees” in the United Kingdom: 2014-2020 | | |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | Detentions throughout the year | Detained at the end of the year |
| 2015 | 14,751 | 1,250 |
| 2016 | 13,230 | 1,626 |
| 2017 | 12,916 | 1,508 |
| 2018 | 12,637 | 1,085 |
| 2019 | 14,086 | 944 |

⁴⁰⁶ This number relates to the number of incidents of people entering detention, as some people are detained more than once it is not possible to say how many different individuals were detained in any specific period.

⁴⁰⁷ Including short-term holding facilities.

⁴⁰⁸ Source; AVID detention. There is an agreement for an additional 600 immigration detention places in prisons.

| | | |
|------|-------|-----|
| 2020 | 9,620 | 438 |
|------|-------|-----|

Source: Home Office, *Immigration statistics, Detention Tables dt1 and dt13*. Note that this does not necessarily mean detention of asylum seekers during the course of the procedure.

Guidance was published in 2017 relating to asylum claims made from detention.⁴⁰⁹ It is aimed at those considering asylum claims from people detained at the point of making their claim, as well as considering the detention of people during their claim. It does not replace or replicate other guidance on consideration of asylum claims; it is complementary to other guidance.

B. Legal framework of detention

1. Grounds of detention

Indicators: Grounds for Detention

1. In practice, are most asylum seekers detained
 - ❖ on the territory: Yes No
 - ❖ at the border: Yes No
2. Are asylum seekers detained in practice during the Dublin procedure?
 - Frequently Rarely Never
3. Are asylum seekers detained during a regular procedure in practice?
 - Frequently Rarely Never

There are no special grounds in legislation for the detention of asylum seekers. They may be detained on the same legal basis as others who are subject to immigration control. There is a power to detain pending a decision as to whether to grant leave to enter or remain; pending a decision as to whether to remove; and pending removal. This power may only be exercised if there is a policy reason to detain this person, and if they have not already been detained for an unreasonable length of time. The policy reasons are that:

- ❖ The person is likely to abscond if released;
- ❖ There is currently insufficient reliable information to decide whether to release them (for instance their identity cannot be verified);
- ❖ Removal from the United Kingdom is imminent;
- ❖ The person needs to be detained whilst alternative arrangements are made for their care;
- ❖ Release is not considered conducive to the public good;
- ❖ The application may be decided quickly using the fast track procedures.⁴¹⁰

Whether a person is likely to abscond is decided on the basis of such factors as whether they have absconded before, whether they have a criminal record, whether they have significant relationships in the UK, whether they have reported regularly to the Home Office if required to do so.

Following the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU)'s ruling in *Al Chodor*, which required Member States to lay down objective criteria for the interpretation of the 'significant risk of absconding' needed in order to impose detention pending a Dublin transfer, the Transfer for Determination of an Application for International Protection (Detention) (Significant Risk of Absconding Criteria) Regulations 2017 were introduced. There is a list of eleven criteria to be considered; some are based on an applicant's immigration history but the criteria include whether there are reasonable grounds to believe that the applicant is likely to fail to comply with any conditions attached to a grant of temporary admission or release or immigration bail; which is subject to interpretation. The regulations were unsuccessfully

⁴⁰⁹ Home Office, *Asylum claims in detention*, September 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2rwD2HN>.

⁴¹⁰ Home Office, *Chapter 55 – Enforcement Instructions and Guidance*, available at: <http://bit.ly/2t3RRCs>.

challenged in a judicial review.⁴¹¹ A challenge to the pre-*Al Chodor* policy ruled that the claimants had been unlawfully detained, as the Enforcement guidance had not been compatible with the Dublin Regulation, specifically Articles 28(2) and 2(n).⁴¹²

Most asylum seekers are not detained before their claim is decided. However, detention in Dublin cases is more frequent. When a take charge or take back request has been accepted or deemed accepted by the prospective receiving country, the asylum seeker will usually be detained prior to removal.

The main development in jurisprudence was the final judgment in the case of applicants detained purely for the purpose of Dublin transfers, from the Supreme Court. On 27 November 2019 the Supreme Court unanimously rejected an appeal by the UK Home Office to overturn a landmark ruling from the Court of Appeal declaring the detention of asylum seekers while their cases were being assessed in the Dublin Procedure unlawful. The case concerns the pre-removal detention of five Iraqi and Afghan nationals during the Dublin procedure. Under the Dublin III regulation only people considered at “significant risk of absconding” can be detained and none of the five people in question were categorized as such by the UK Home Office admission.⁴¹³ The ruling could potentially affect thousands of people unlawfully detained during the period between January 2014 when the Dublin III regulation came into force and March 2017 when the UK regulations were changed.

The initial processes of a case concerning the ‘removal window’ whereby individuals liable for removal or deportation receive notice with no specified date for removal was ruled unlawful.

2. Alternatives to detention

Indicators: Alternatives to Detention

1. Which alternatives to detention have been laid down in the law?
 Reporting duties
 Surrendering documents
 Financial guarantee
 Residence restrictions
 Other: Tagging
2. Are alternatives to detention used in practice?
 Yes No

Alternatives to detention are permitted by legislation but not required. Permitted are:

- (a) Electronic tagging;⁴¹⁴
- (b) Regular reporting;⁴¹⁵
- (c) Bail with sureties;⁴¹⁶
- (d) Residence restrictions.⁴¹⁷

Guidelines say that detention should only be used as a last resort. However, no proof is required that alternatives are not effective. Residence restrictions and regular reporting are routinely applied to all asylum seekers, and bail will always include residence restrictions and reporting. Breach of these conditions may result in detention. Electronic tagging is in frequent use mainly for ex-offenders and may be a bail condition. Numbers of asylum seekers tagged are not available. New guidance relating to

⁴¹¹ Court of Appeal, *Omar v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2019] EWCA Civ 207, 21 February 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2F7kanl>.

⁴¹² Court of Appeal, *Hammati v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2018] EWCA Civ 2122, 4 October 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2S1EtLk>.

⁴¹³ Supreme Court, *R (on the application of Hemmati and others) (AP) (Respondents) v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Appellant)*, [2019] UKSC 56, 27 November 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2Unm2iC>.

⁴¹⁴ Section 36 AITOCA.

⁴¹⁵ Para 21(2) Schedule 2 Immigration Act 1971.

⁴¹⁶ Section 61 Schedule 10 Immigration Act 2016.

⁴¹⁷ Para 21(2) Schedule 2 Immigration Act 1971.

Immigration Bail was issued in August 2018.⁴¹⁸ This guidance includes the process for referring detainees for automatic bail consideration, in most cases, four months after the person was first detained and every four months thereafter.

In September 2016, Detention Action published a report on community-based alternatives to detention, exploring their potential use in the immigration control context and calling for their further development.⁴¹⁹ The Detention Forum has produced a guide to alternatives to detention.⁴²⁰

In response to the second report by Stephen Shaw on the detention of vulnerable people,⁴²¹ the government announced that some specific projects (alternatives) would be developed in partnership with the voluntary sector.⁴²² Details of the first of these was announced in December 2018.⁴²³ Details of progress on this pilot and plans for future pilots were outlined in October 2019 by UNHCR which is evaluating the pilots.⁴²⁴

An inquiry by the parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights published evidence as it was submitted (oral and written), including evidence from the government.⁴²⁵ In evidence to the Committee the Immigration Minister stated that in the 10 months since the automatic bail policy was introduced 10% of automatic bail hearings have resulted in the detainee being granted bail.⁴²⁶

The Committee published its report on 7 February 2019 and made five main recommendations:⁴²⁷

1. The decision to detain should not be made by the Home Office but should be made independently.
2. Introduce a 28-day time limit to end the trauma of indefinite detention.
3. Detainees should have better and more consistent access to legal aid to challenge their detention.
4. More needs to be done to identify vulnerable individuals and treat them appropriately.
5. The Home Office should improve the oversight and assurance mechanism in the immigration detention estate to ensure that any ill-treatment or abuse is found out immediately and action is taken. Concerns over the distressing effect of indeterminate detention.

The government responded in July 2019.⁴²⁸ The response highlighted progress in the areas of transparency of data, vulnerable people in detention and the introduction of a two-month auto referral for bail in February 2019.

⁴¹⁸ Home Office, *Immigration bail*, August 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2xxta19>.

⁴¹⁹ Detention Action, *Without detention: Opportunities for alternatives*, September 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kS7qoR>.

⁴²⁰ Detention Forum, *Alternatives to detention: Frequently asked questions*, July 2018, available at <https://bit.ly/2pDYpmF>.

⁴²¹ Stephen Shaw, *Welfare in detention of vulnerable people review: progress report*, July 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2JQVvmb>.

⁴²² Home Office, 'Home Secretary statement on immigration detention and Shaw report', 24 July 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2uVZdGQ>.

⁴²³ Home Office, 'New pilot schemes to support migrants at risk of detention', 3 December 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2QQEj3X>.

⁴²⁴ UNHCR, Terms of reference: Evaluation of UK Home Office Alternatives to Detention Community Engagement Pilot Series, October 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/36Dtvhp>.

⁴²⁵ Minister of State for Immigration, 'Use of immigration detention: The Government's strategic approach', 3 December 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2DdzNc0>.

⁴²⁶ Joint Committee on Human Rights, Oral evidence session, HC 1484, 5 December 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2TjfsON>.

⁴²⁷ Joint Committee on Human Rights, *Immigration Detention Inquiry*, 7 February 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2HVfZyF>.

⁴²⁸ Letter from the Minister of state for Immigration to the chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, 23 July 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2O7PA1a>.

3. Detention of vulnerable applicants

Indicators: Detention of Vulnerable Applicants

1. Are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children detained in practice?
 Frequently Rarely Never

❖ If frequently or rarely, are they only detained in border/transit zones? Yes No
2. Are asylum seeking children in families detained in practice?
 Frequently Rarely Never

Domestic policy is that vulnerable people are unsuitable for detention, and that they should only be detained exceptionally, or when their care can be satisfactorily managed. Those who, according to policy guidance, should be treated as vulnerable are the same in relation to detention generally as in the Detained Fast Track.⁴²⁹ In practice vulnerable individuals are detained.

Following a review of the treatment of vulnerable people in detention (“the Shaw Review”) in January 2016,⁴³⁰ NGOs expected that guidance would follow the main message of the report – that fewer people should be detained and that better systems need to be designed to reduce the number of vulnerable people detained. However, the policy guidance issued in response to the report, which also fulfilled the requirements of section 59 of the Immigration Act 2016, makes it more difficult to secure release based for example on their experiences of torture or of their deteriorating mental health.⁴³¹ The definition in the Adults at Risk policy was more limited than that provided in the UN Convention against Torture (UNCAT). In a case brought by Medical Justice the definition in this new policy was challenged; the case was heard in March 2017 and judgment delivered in October 2017.⁴³² At an early stage of the case the Home Office was ordered to revert to the more generous UNCAT definition, which as the case was successful, remains the policy.

Stephen Shaw was asked to review the extent to which his recommendations have been met; this review began in autumn 2017 and was published in July 2018,⁴³³ alongside a response from the Home Secretary.⁴³⁴ The response elicited a mixed reaction from stakeholders although in its evidence to the Joint Committee on Human Rights the government laid out details of its strategy. Criticisms of the safeguards introduced as a result of the initial report remain.⁴³⁵ Oversight of the Adults at Risk Policy forms part of the work of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration.⁴³⁶

3.1. Detention of women

Pregnant women may only be detained where (a) they will shortly be removed from the UK; and (b) there are exceptional circumstances justifying detention.⁴³⁷

⁴²⁹ Home Office, *Enforcement Instructions and Guidance – Chapter 55 Detention*, para 55.10

⁴³⁰ Stephen Shaw, *Review into the Welfare in Detention of Vulnerable Persons*, Cm 9186, January 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kqYkln>.

⁴³¹ Home Office, ‘*Adults at Risk*’ in immigration detention, 6 December 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2l4ZXkS>.

⁴³² Medical Justice, available at: <http://bit.ly/2gyl1zM>.

⁴³³ Stephen Shaw, *Welfare in detention of vulnerable people review: progress report*, July 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2JQVvmb>.

⁴³⁴ Home Office, ‘Home Secretary statement on immigration detention and Shaw report’, 24 July 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2uVZdGQ>.

⁴³⁵ See e.g. BID, *Adults at Risk: the ongoing struggle for vulnerable adults in detention*, July 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2AsQbUK>.

⁴³⁶ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, *Call for evidence: ‘Adults at Risk’ in immigration detention*, 25 January 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2ETM5XY>.

⁴³⁷ Section 60 Immigration Act 2016.

During the passage of the Immigration Act 2016, the government announced a time limit for the detention of pregnant women.⁴³⁸ This was in response to amendments proposed to the Bill by various parliamentarians calling for a complete prohibition, a recommendation that had been made in the “Shaw review”, published in January 2016. The Home Office published specific guidance concerning the detention of pregnant women in July 2016.⁴³⁹

The latest inspection of **Yarl’s Wood IRC** in June 2017, the detention centre for women, reported that some conditions had improved since the previous report although:

- 70% of detained women were released into the community, not removed from the UK.
- few women were released on the basis of torture evidence; it was noted that the Home Office were reluctant to see rape as torture;
- Whilst the number of pregnant women detained had reduced, 28 were detained in the six months leading up to the inspection.⁴⁴⁰

Although there were no official reports of the numbers of pregnant women detained the practice continues, as described in a media article.⁴⁴¹ In 2020 the government changed the use of Yarl’s Wood IRC from a women’s removal centre to hold those arriving having crossed the channel in small boats.⁴⁴² The decision to repurpose a prison in Haddockfield to hold women detainees has prompted a campaign to prevent its opening.⁴⁴³

3.2. Detention of children

Where a person is treated after screening as under 18 they are not detained. The published policy of the Home Office is that children may be detained for short periods pending removal if other steps in the family removal procedure do not result in their leaving the UK,⁴⁴⁴ and this is the purpose of the family ‘Pre Departure Accommodation’, which has been located at Tinsley House Removal Centre since May 2017. 23 children entered detention in 2019.

The instances of applicants detained as adults and found to be children has reduced since the case of AA in June 2016,⁴⁴⁵ although they do still occur but are not recorded.

3.3. Detention of seriously ill persons

The High Court has found a number of breaches of Article 3 ECHR in relation to the detention of severely mentally ill people and such detention has also repeatedly been found unlawful under domestic law and

⁴³⁸ Government, ‘New time limit planned for pregnant women in detention’, 18 April 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2lcjhBE>.

⁴³⁹ Home Office, *Enforcement instructions and guidance – Chapter 55a Detention of pregnant women*, 12 July 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2jDmhBK>.

⁴⁴⁰ HM Inspector of Prisons, *Report on the unannounced inspection of Yarl’s Wood*, June 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2iidM16>.

⁴⁴¹ The Guardian, ‘Unlawfully detained woman who miscarried receives £50k payout’, 19 August 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/31N8dx3>.

⁴⁴² BBC report, Women no longer held as Yarl’s Wood repurposed for Channel migrants, 18 August 2020, available at: <https://bbc.in/3qDBJJK>

⁴⁴³ Women for Refugee Women campaign, available at: <https://bit.ly/3vbeAse>

⁴⁴⁴ Home Office, *Enforcement Instructions and Guidance*, Chapter 45 *Families and Children, Family Returns Process operational Guidance*.

⁴⁴⁵ High Court, *AA v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2016] EWHC 1543 (Admin), 20 June 2016.

in the Court of Appeal.⁴⁴⁶ Torture survivors continue to be detained even after Rule 35⁴⁴⁷ reports (see section on [Special Procedural Guarantees](#)).⁴⁴⁸ A report for the Home Office by the Tavistock Institute concluded that vulnerable detainees could deteriorate in detention, partly because of antagonism between different agencies and the conflicted aims of detention. This could only be remedied by a culture change.⁴⁴⁹ Members of Parliament who conducted an inquiry into immigration detention found that people suffering from mental health conditions were detained for prolonged periods and that it was not possible to treat mental health conditions in IRC. They recommended that at the very least the policy around mental health should be changed to that which was in place before August 2010, which stated that individuals with a mental health condition should only be detained under exceptional circumstances.⁴⁵⁰ A report by Amnesty International UK looked into the use of detention and its consequences; in their interviews with detainees and their families the most common consequences reported were damage to mental and physical health and harm for family members, particularly women and children.⁴⁵¹

Following the Shaw Review in January 2016,⁴⁵² NGOs expected that guidance would follow the main message of the report – that fewer people should be detained and that better systems need to be designed to reduce the number of vulnerable people detained. However, the policy guidance issued in response to the report, which also fulfilled the requirements of Section 59 of the Immigration Act 2016, makes it more difficult to secure release based for example on their experiences of torture or of their deteriorating mental health.⁴⁵³ The definition in the Adults at Risk policy was more limited than that provided in the UN Convention against Torture (UNCAT). In a case brought by Medical Justice the definition in this new policy was challenged; the case was heard in March 2017 and judgment delivered in October 2017.⁴⁵⁴ The Immigration Rules were amended to reflect the new definition of torture.⁴⁵⁵ The Adults at Risk policy has also been revised.⁴⁵⁶ The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration is conducting an annual review of adults at risk in Immigration Detention but the government has yet to publish the first year's report.

⁴⁴⁶ For example, *R (S) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2011] EWHC 2120 (Admin); *R (BA) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2011] EWHC 2748 (Admin); *R (HA) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2012] EWHC 979 (Admin); *R (D) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2012] EWHC 2501 (Admin); *R (on the application of Lamari) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2013] EWHC 3130 and *R (on the application of Das) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2014] EWCA Civ 45, *R (on the application of MD) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2014] EWHC 2249 (Admin). See Jed Pennington, 'Deplorable Failure, Bureaucratic Inertia and Callous Indifference: The Immigration Detention of Mentally Ill People by the UK Border Agency' (2013) 27:1 *Journal of Immigration Asylum and Nationality Law* 41-46.

⁴⁴⁷ Rule 35 Detention Centre Rules.

⁴⁴⁸ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration and Chief Inspector of Prisons, *The effectiveness and impact of immigration detention casework*, 2012, available at: <http://bit.ly/1BGKAH8> and Natasha Tsangarides, *The Second Torture: immigration detention of torture survivors*, Medical Justice, 2012, available at: <http://bit.ly/1GC9Yg2>.

⁴⁴⁹ Home Office, *Review of Mental Health Issues in Immigration Removal Centres Immigration & Border Policy Directorate*, 2015.

⁴⁵⁰ All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees & the All Party Parliamentary Group on Migration, *The Report of the Inquiry into the Use of Immigration Detention in the United Kingdom*, 2015, available at: <http://bit.ly/1GLjtbG>.

⁴⁵¹ Amnesty International, *A matter of routine; the use of immigration detention in the UK*, December 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2BoDAPC>.

⁴⁵² Stephen Shaw, *Review into the Welfare in Detention of Vulnerable Persons*, Cm 9186, January 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kqYkln>.

⁴⁵³ Home Office, '*Adults at Risk*' in immigration detention, 6 December 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2l4ZXkS>.

⁴⁵⁴ High Court, *Medical Justice v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2017] EWHC 2461 (Admin), 10 October 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2gy1zM>.

⁴⁵⁵ The Detention Centre (Amendment) Rules 2018, Rule 2, available at: <https://bit.ly/2T5EHh3>.

⁴⁵⁶ Home Office, *Adults at Risk in Immigration Detention*, July 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2TTPfj9>.

4. Duration of detention

Indicators: Duration of Detention

1. What is the maximum detention period set in the law (incl. extensions):
 - ❖ Pregnant women and children 72 hours, or 7 days
 - ❖ Other groups None
2. In practice, how long in average are asylum seekers detained? Not available

The Home Office is responsible for ordering detention of asylum seekers. It is difficult to give meaningful data on the average length of detention of asylum seekers (outside the Detained Fast Track, for which see the section on [Accelerated Procedure](#)). There is no maximum period set in law, with the exception of detention of pregnant women and children which cannot exceed 72 hours, or 7 days with Ministerial approval. While data on length of immigration detention is now available for the last six years, the figures do not distinguish between asylum seekers and other immigration detainees. Periods of immigration detention including asylum seekers and other foreign nationals vary enormously from a few days to several years.

During 2020, 15,449 left immigration detention. Of these:

| Persons released from detention by duration of stay: 2016-2020 | | | | | |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Duration of stay in detention | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
| Less than 29 days | 18,281 | 18,368 | 17,655 | 18,042 | 11,924 |
| From 29 days to 2 months | 5,271 | 4,675 | 3,480 | 3,623 | 1,766 |
| From 2 to 4 months | 3,261 | 3,304 | 2,400 | 1,871 | 1,020 |
| From 4 months to 12 months | | | | 848 | 634 |
| From 1 to 2 years | 179 | 194 | 186 | 122 | 97 |
| At least 2 years | 29 | 31 | 14 | 6 | 8 |

Source: Home Office, *Immigration Statistics, Detention*.

However, there is no cross-referencing of the number of asylum detainees in 2020 and length of detention of those who had sought asylum. The longest periods of detention are usually of people awaiting deportation after having served a criminal sentence.

C. Detention conditions

1. Place of detention

Indicators: Place of Detention

1. Does the law allow for asylum seekers to be detained in prisons for the purpose of the asylum procedure (i.e. not as a result of criminal charges)? Yes No
2. If so, are asylum seekers ever detained in practice in prisons for the purpose of the asylum procedure?⁴⁵⁷ Yes No

⁴⁵⁷ If a person claims asylum from prison, they will be kept there.

1.1. Immigration Removal Centres (IRC)

There are currently 7 Immigration Removal Centres (IRC) where immigration detention is implemented:

| Immigration Removal Centres | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| IRC | Population detained | Capacity | Occupancy end 2018 | Occupancy end 2019 | Occupancy end 2020 |
| Harmondsworth | Men | 615 | 447 | 394 | 478 |
| Yarl's Wood | Women ⁴⁵⁸ | 406 | 159 | 133 | 238 |
| Dungavel House | Men; women | 217 | 61 | 42 | 112 |
| Tinsley House | Men; families | 154 | 57 | 54 | 0 ⁴⁵⁹ |
| Brook House | Men | 448 | 240 | 230 | 304 |
| Morton Hall | Men | 392 | 216 | 232 | 413 |
| Colnbrook | Men; women (limit 8) | 420 | 199 | 169 | 265 |
| Total | | 2,652 | 1,379 | 1,254 | 1,810 ⁴⁶⁰ |

Source: Home Office

1.2. Short-Term Holding Facilities (STHF)

There are currently 3 residential Short-Term Holding Facilities (STHF), which can hold detainees for up to seven days, in addition to a small facility in Yarl's Wood, where some people are detained for screening. Many airports or reporting centres have short term holding facilities where people are held under detention powers for up to 24 hours.

| Short-Term Holding Facilities | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| STHF | Capacity | Occupancy end 2018 | Occupancy end 2019 | Occupancy end 2020 |
| Colnbrook | 8 | 2 | 6 | 16 |
| Larne House | 19 | 3 | 5 | 0 |
| Manchester | 32 | 4 | 13 | 6 |
| Total | 59 | 9 | 24 | 22 |

Source: Home Office, *Immigration statistics: Q4 2020, Detention* (capacity courtesy of AVID detention)

1.3. Prisons

At the end of December 2020, 1,661 359 individuals were detained under Immigration Act powers in prisons in **England** and **Wales**.⁴⁶¹ It is not recorded whether any and if so how many of these people had at any point claimed asylum. Asylum seekers are normally detained in immigration removal centres (IRC) in preparation for removal together with other third-country nationals who are there for immigration reasons. They are not detained in prisons purely in order to process an asylum claim or to remove them after they have been refused asylum.

⁴⁵⁸ The purpose of Yarl's Wood changed during 2020 from holding women to men.

⁴⁵⁹ Tinsley House has temporarily ceased to hold immigration detainees.

⁴⁶⁰ An additional 1,661 held in prisons.

⁴⁶¹ Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees (AVID), *Prison statistics*, available at: <http://bit.ly/1N0tKpz>.

If someone who is serving a prison sentence claims asylum, including if they do so in response to a decision to deport them, they may continue to be detained in prison while their asylum claim is processed. There is no data presently available on the extent of this. The practice of holding immigration detainees in prison is problematic, as detainees in prison experience much greater barriers to accessing legal advice and basic information about their rights, particularly in isolated local prisons. There is no regular advice surgery as there is in the IRC, and detention of a person held under immigration powers in a prison is not governed by the Detention Centre Rules and Orders. This means that the detainee may have legal advice on their asylum claim if they can contact an adviser outside the prison, and if necessary obtain legal aid to fund the advice, but there is no on-site access to asylum advice.

There is an agreement between the National Offender Management Service and the Home Office for immigration detainees up to a specified limit (presently 600) to be held in the prison estate. Detention policy specifies the criteria for detaining a person in a prison for immigration reasons after they have served their criminal sentence, but the policy allows for people to be detained in prison ‘before’ consideration is given to transferring them to an IRC – thus allowing continued detention in prison without an obligation promptly to transfer to an IRC. It also expressly provides that, if prison beds available for immigration detention are not filled by those in the risk categories, those beds should be filled by immigration detainees who do not meet the criteria for detention in prison.⁴⁶²

A court case in 2019 established that it is not necessary for the safeguards for vulnerable immigration detainees in prisons to be equivalent to those in Immigration Removal Centres.⁴⁶³

2. Conditions in detention facilities

Indicators: Conditions in Detention Facilities

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1. Do detainees have access to health care in practice? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ If yes, is it limited to emergency health care? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

2.1. Overall conditions

The purpose built IRC (**Colnbrook**, **Brook House** and the later wings at **Harmondsworth**) are built to ‘Category B’ (high security) prison designs, and are run by private security companies. While some efforts are made by contractors to distinguish regimes from those in prisons, in practice the physical environment means that most detainees experience these centres as prisons.⁴⁶⁴ **Morton Hall** is a converted prison, albeit with lower security and was criticised for its prison-like physical environment.⁴⁶⁵

Women and children are detained separately from men except where there are family units. The **Cedars**, the family facility opened in 2010, was closed in 2016 and a new facility at **Tinsley House** has replaced it.⁴⁶⁶

Other than the family units, there are no special facilities for vulnerable people. In theory health care provided to detainees is not limited to emergency health care; however, in practice detainees have difficulty obtaining access to care. Inspection reports frequently mention issues concerning the care of

⁴⁶² Home Office, *Enforcement Instructions and Guidance*, Chapter 55.10.1.

⁴⁶³ MR (Pakistan) and ors, EWHC 3567 (Admin), Case No: CO/2701/2018 & CO/4233/2018, 20 December 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2UTJPbP>.

⁴⁶⁴ See e.g. Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group (GDWG): *A Prison in the Mind: Mental health implications of detention in Brook House Immigration Removal Centre*, 2012, available at: <http://bit.ly/1THGggs>.

⁴⁶⁵ HM Inspector of Prisons, *Report of an unannounced inspection of Morton Hall*, November 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2F3EGCL>.

⁴⁶⁶ Robert Goodwill MP, ‘Cedars pre-departure accommodation: Written statement’, 21 July 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2jHytVM>.

vulnerable individuals.⁴⁶⁷ A report by the British Medical Association expressed concern at how health needs were met in detention, as well as commenting that some disabilities are not identified.⁴⁶⁸

Provision of showers, laundry facilities, etc. is usually to an adequate level so that detainees have access, but standards of cleanliness and repair are variable, with some detention centres having a much better maintained environment and others poor. In particular some of the older prison buildings can be poorly maintained and drab. A 2019 report of an inspection of Colnbrook described prison like conditions and excessive use of handcuffing.⁴⁶⁹

Detainees normally wear their own clothes. IRC have made attempts through the provision of 'cultural kitchens' where detainees can occasionally cook food of their choice, but the general provision is still considered to be poor.⁴⁷⁰

In 2017 an employee of **Brook House** IRC worked with the BBC to report undercover, resulting in a documentary broadcast in September 2017.⁴⁷¹ The company that runs the IRC suspended staff and began an internal investigation.⁴⁷² The Home Affairs Select Committee opened an Inquiry and took evidence from key individuals.⁴⁷³

On 5 November 2019 the government announced the conversion of the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) investigation of Brook House immigration removal centre to a statutory inquiry, in accordance with the Inquiries Act 2005. This conversion was needed so that the Inquiry would have the statutory powers to compel witnesses and establish the truth of what took place at Brook House.⁴⁷⁴ The government announced this conversion following the High Court findings that the Home Secretary's investigation into immigration detention at Brook House is inadequate.⁴⁷⁵

One HMIP Inspection report was published in relation to an IRC in 2020, following an inspection undertaken in 2019. Morton Hall was reported to have improved since the previous inspection although levels of self-harm remained high and levels of force described as too high. The vulnerability of the population was noted and criticism of the length of time that some detainees had been held; for example one person had been waiting for 11 months for a decision on their asylum claim.⁴⁷⁶

Given the prevalence of Covid-19 cases in detention and the lack of opportunity for the Home Office to remove people from the UK there were calls throughout the year to release everyone from immigration detention.⁴⁷⁷ Whilst this call was not heeded., the use of detention fell during 2020.

Guidance was issued to IRCs and STHF for how to manage detention during Covid-19 including responding to outbreaks, Preventative measures including cohorting and controlling of visits.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁶⁷ HM Inspector of Prisons, *Report on an unaccounted Inspection of Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre*, 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/3b0bi19>.

⁴⁶⁸ British Medical Association, *Locked up, locked out*, 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2n4dmh3>.

⁴⁶⁹ HM Inspector of Prisons, *Report on an unaccounted Inspection of Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre*, 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/3b0bi19>.

⁴⁷⁰ HM Inspector of Prisons, *Report on the unannounced inspection of Yarl's Wood*, June 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2iidM16>.

⁴⁷¹ BBC, 'What I saw when I went undercover', available at: <http://bbc.in/2wyzHsj>.

⁴⁷² The Guardian, 'G4S staff suspended from Brook House immigration centre over abuse claims', 1 September 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2n4x4sV>.

⁴⁷³ House of Commons, *Brook House Immigration Removal Centre inquiry*, available at: <http://bit.ly/2n4ifGO>.

⁴⁷⁴ Written statement Home Secretary to Parliament 5th November 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/3aY6zg7>

⁴⁷⁵ EDAL, 'The United Kingdom: High Court finds Home Secretary's investigation into immigration detention inadequate', 14 June 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2OTYiR5>.

⁴⁷⁶ HMIP inspection of Morton Hall report published March 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3qKsUo1>

⁴⁷⁷ See joint letter "Coronavirus: call to release all people from immigration detention", March 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3s4Pqte>

⁴⁷⁸ Home Office, Guidance for Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs), Residential Short-Term Holding

2.2. Activities

The rules require that each detainee should have the opportunity of at least one hour in the open air every day. This can be withdrawn in exceptional circumstances for safety or security. Most IRCs have a gym or fitness suite and outdoor exercise space. Access is variable, ranging from being generally accessible during daylight hours to restricted access.

The HMIP report into Colnbrook was critical of the policy to remove a detainee's right to work within the IRC if the individual was deemed to be uncooperative with efforts to remove him. At the time of the Inspection 200 detainees had been deprived of the opportunity to work in the first 211 months of 2018.

Detainees have access to the detention centre library and to the internet. Facilities normally include a fax machine. Following a Channel 4 TV programme exposing an abusive culture in **Yarl's Wood** detention centre, detainees reported that access to the website for the NGO Habeas Corpus was blocked, as well as access to other sites.⁴⁷⁹ Access to social media and skype are prevented.⁴⁸⁰ The All Party Parliamentary Group inquiry into detention found that 'in practice, detainees are often blocked from accessing sites that appear to have no security risk. These include the websites of Amnesty International, the BBC, IRC visitors' groups, foreign language newspapers and other NGOs. The panel were particularly alarmed by reports that areas of the inquiry's own website were not accessible in some IRCs.'⁴⁸¹ New guidance was issued by the Home Office in 2016, aiming to make the access in detention centres more consistent and ensure that sites were not inappropriately blocked, although it does not apply to those held in prisons. This guidance was updated in 2019.⁴⁸²

2.3. Health care and special needs in detention

The Detention Centres Rules provide that there must be a medical team in each detention centre, and that each detainee must be medically examined within 24 hours of arrival.⁴⁸³ The only provision in the rules as to what access to the medical team a detainee can expect or request is that where a detainee asks a detention centre officer for medical attention, the officer must record the request and pass it to the medical team, and the medical practitioner must pay special attention to any detainee whose mental condition appears to require it. The charity Medical Justice has documented the denial of crucial medical care.⁴⁸⁴ The All Party Parliamentary Group and the Tavistock Institute are among those who have reported on failings in medical care in detention. In 2017 the British Medical Association published a report raising several concerns, including how doctors deal with the conflict of interest inherent in providing healthcare to people who are detained and made a number of recommendations.⁴⁸⁵ The guidance on 'Rule 35' reports was revised in 2019 although HMIP reports still refer to insufficient safeguards to vulnerable detainees and reports not submitted for suicidal detainees.

Facilities (RSTHFs) and escorts during the COVID-19 pandemic, January 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3extHGD>

⁴⁷⁹ Habeas Corpus Project, 'Yarl's Wood Detention Centre Blocks Detainees from Accessing Our Website', 27 March 2015, available at: <http://bit.ly/1Gw1KEj>.

⁴⁸⁰ HM Inspector of Prisons, *Report on unannounced inspection of Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre*, May 2015, available at: <http://bit.ly/1IQVwQe>; *Report on an unannounced inspection of The Verne Immigration Removal Centre*, March 2015.

⁴⁸¹ The APPG Inquiry into the Use of Immigration Detention in the United Kingdom, 43.

⁴⁸² Home Office, Detention Services Order January 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2UbjB42>.

⁴⁸³ The Detention Centre Rules 2001 SI No. 238, available at: <http://bit.ly/1iFchXN>.

⁴⁸⁴ Medical Justice, *Detained and Denied: the clinical care of detainees living with HIV/AIDS*, 2011, available at: <http://bit.ly/1QLSKoq>.

⁴⁸⁵ British Medical Association, *Locked up, locked out*, 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2n4dmh3>.

Whilst guidance has been produced for those needing to be taken to hospital from detention,⁴⁸⁶ anecdotal reports of last-minute cancellations are common. The follow up Shaw review, published in July 2018,⁴⁸⁷ includes a detailed analysis of healthcare provision and contains concerns as well as remarking on improvements. The report includes a description of healthcare in each centre and comments on the physical environment as well as discussing issues with staff, detainees and NGOs. Some improvement from the previous report was identified but concerns remain that healthcare in detention does not match the standards expected in the community.

Health care in **England** has been transferred to the National Health Service (NHS) commissioning provisions. This was a change which had been argued for by medical professionals, Parliamentarians and others. However, the NHS has contracted the healthcare in IRC to commercial companies which have been running detention and escort services and not to specialist health providers. As a result, staff and facilities for identifying and treating mental illness and distress vary greatly between IRC.⁴⁸⁸ The Home Office does not collect data on the numbers of people with mental illness in immigration detention. NGOs regularly request the numbers of incidents of self-harm in immigration detention which required medical treatment. These were 428 in 2018, with 1,819 individuals at risk.⁴⁸⁹ A charity reported ongoing concerns about this issue in September 2019.⁴⁹⁰

Detention centres have a local group of approved visitors, who provide an external point of reference for detainees and the centre. Visitors increasingly report that detainees are experiencing high levels of anxiety and distress, are self-harming, have symptoms of depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or are suffering from severe and enduring mental illness.⁴⁹¹

3. Access to detention facilities

Indicators: Access to Detention Facilities

1. Is access to detention centres allowed to

- | | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| ❖ Lawyers: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Limited | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ NGOs: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Limited | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ UNHCR: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Limited | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Family members: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Limited | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Detainees may have visits during visiting hours. All visits take place within the sight of a detention centre officer, but not within their hearing. There are no limits on the frequency of visits, but visits are required to take place during visiting hours. As long as visitors provide the requested forms of identification there is no obstacle to their visiting.⁴⁹² Individual visitors may be prohibited for reasons of security but this cannot be applied to a legal adviser. Media and politicians have no special access but may be treated like other visitors. Detainees are issued with a mobile phone that is not capable of taking photographs. Although the signal may be poor in parts of some IRC, it is usually possible for detainees to communicate with people outside.

⁴⁸⁶ Detention Services Order – Medical Appointments outside of the detention estate, available at: <http://bit.ly/2DFbTYa>.

⁴⁸⁷ Stephen Shaw, *Assessment of government progress in implementing the report on the welfare in detention of vulnerable persons*, July 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2LIDG18>.

⁴⁸⁸ Ali McGinley and Adeline Trude, *Positive duty of care? The mental health crisis in immigration detention*, AVID and BID, 2012, available at: <http://bit.ly/1BGukWG>.

⁴⁸⁹ No Deportations (NGO), *Self-Harm in Immigration Detention January through December 2018*, available at: <https://bit.ly/2UoFp9x>.

⁴⁹⁰ Self Harm and Suicide in Immigration detention, Bail for Immigration Detainees, September 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2THa0A9> <https://bit.ly/2THa0A9>.

⁴⁹¹ Ali McGinley and Adeline Trude, *Positive duty of care? The mental health crisis in immigration detention*, AVID and BID, 2012.

⁴⁹² Government information on IRCs and information for visitors, available at: <http://bit.ly/2DA3s0W>.

There are NGOs who provide support to detainees. Each IRC has a visitors' group, which is an organisation of volunteer visitors (AVID) who provide support, practical help and friendship to detainees. Some visitors' groups such as Detention Action engage in policy and advocacy work and research. Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID) provides advice and information for detainees generally including self-help packs to make bail applications. The charity Medical Justice works for good medical care for immigration detainees and to obtain evidence of torture and the release of those who are ill. UNHCR does not have the capacity to represent people in detention and in practice detainees rarely seek help from the UNHCR.

BID has carried out surveys twice a year since 2010 and found that, in relation to immigration detainees held in IRC, usually between 43% and 69% of detainees had legal representatives. The latest figure, published following its survey in spring 2019,⁴⁹³ was 64%. 31% were paying a solicitor privately. One in six at the time of the last survey had never had a legal representative while they were in detention. There are concerns among NGOs about the movement of detainees between different centres, and the resulting disruption in their access to legal advice.

D. Procedural safeguards

1. Judicial review of the detention order

Indicators: Judicial Review of Detention

- | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Is there an automatic review of the lawfulness of detention? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. If yes, at what interval is the detention order reviewed? | 4 months | |

Detainees have a right to be informed of the reason for their detention. This is generally done by ticking a box on a standard list of reasons, and sometimes is inaccurate or omitted. The reasons for detention should be subject to regular monthly reviews by detention officers, and a breach of this requirement can make the detention unlawful if the effect is that the continued legality of the detention has not been effectively considered.⁴⁹⁴

A detainee can apply for bail at any time, although if they are detained while their application is being considered they must have been in the UK for seven calendar days. Applications can be made to the Chief Immigration Officer (CIO),⁴⁹⁵ who is part of the Home Office or to the FTT (IAC). Since the decision to detain was made by the Home Office, it is not common for bail to be granted by the CIO.

A Tribunal is prevented from granting bail if removal directions are in force for a date less than 14 days from the application, unless the Secretary of State consents to bail. The Immigration Act 2014 also prohibits the Tribunal from granting bail at a hearing within 28 days of a previous refusal of bail unless there is a proven change of circumstances.⁴⁹⁶

A bail application to the Tribunal involves a hearing before an immigration judge. The Home Office is required to provide a summary before the hearing of the reasons for opposing bail. Studies of bail hearings show that in practice the summary may occasionally be late, or non-existent, but the most persistent problem is reliance on standard reasons without evidence that they apply to the particular applicant. The hearing may then focus on unsubstantiated risks of absconding or offending but fail to focus on how long the person has been detained and what prospect there is of the Home Office being able to arrange their

⁴⁹³ BID, *Legal Advice Survey*, spring 2019, available at: <https://go.aws/2uVqBrs>.

⁴⁹⁴ Supreme Court, *Kambadzi v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2011] UKSC 23.

⁴⁹⁵ Application form available on the government's website at: <http://bit.ly/2n6OmpA>.

⁴⁹⁶ Schedule 10 Immigration Act 2016.

removal from the UK, matters which are critical to the lawfulness of detention.⁴⁹⁷ First-Tier Tribunal judges hearing bail applications do not have the jurisdiction to consider the lawfulness of detention, and there is no full reasoned decision given by the judge.

Bail hearing centres may be far removed from the detention centre, and the use of video conference systems has become routine. While this avoids long journeys for the detainee, the lack of personal contact with the judge, and problems in quality of sound and visual transmission are also experienced as obstacles to an effective hearing. Detainees in prisons may have video links cut off before the end of the bail hearing if it continues over 60 minutes. Technical problems may compound the difficulty of speaking through an interpreter. In video conferencing cases the lawyer is only allowed 10 minutes to speak with their client before the hearing. This is insufficient.⁴⁹⁸

Bail hearings are timetabled so that several can be heard in one day, and this creates pressure on the proceedings, sometimes with the result that an interpreter is not given time to interpret everything that is said.⁴⁹⁹ BID has reported delays in providing a bail address.⁵⁰⁰

Friends or family can stand as sureties for the applicant, which means that they undertake to ensure that the person reports again when they are required to, and they forfeit a sum of money if this does not happen. Sureties are not essential, but there is a tendency to require them. There is no concept of continuing surety, meaning sureties who wish to continue to stand are required to travel to each hearing, even if bail is refused many times, and even if bail is granted and then applied for again after a further detention without any breach of conditions by the asylum seeker. Repeat detentions can occur for asylum seekers when further submissions are refused, and they are detained with a view to removal, but without giving time for them to challenge the refusal of further submissions, or else when they are detained while further submissions are being prepared but have not yet been made. Removal cannot take place while a challenge or consideration of submissions are pending, and good legal representation can mean that they are released while the challenge or consideration of new submissions takes place, only to be re-detained in the same circumstances if there is a further refusal.

Automatic bail referrals were introduced in 2018. Officials make referrals four months after initial detention started and every four months thereafter. This does not appear to have resulted in many more individuals being released from immigration detention. In February 2018 a pilot began to refer people for automatic bail hearings after two months which aims to run for a limited period (one calendar month). There has been no further announcement relating to the outcome or extension of this pilot and guidance issued in February 2020 only refers to the four month timescale for automatic bail referrals.⁵⁰¹

The lawfulness of detention may be subject to judicial review in the High Court, with the permission of that court. The criteria for lawfulness are, as mentioned above, that it is for a statutory purpose, and for approved policy reasons, and the length of detention must not be unreasonable (see section on [Grounds for Detention](#)). The lack of a statutory limit on the length of detention has consequences for the potential for effective challenge. Case law states that the length of detention must be reasonable to achieve the purpose for which the person is detained.⁵⁰² The usual legal issue which affects the length of detention for refused asylum seekers is whether the Home Office can arrange the detainee's removal within a reasonable period. No clear and coherent case law on reasonable periods has emerged. However, the Home Office's own guidance on whether removal is 'imminent' is that 'removal could be said to be

⁴⁹⁷ Adeline Trude, *The Liberty Deficit, Bail for Immigration Detainees*, 2012, available at: <http://bit.ly/1L2oUai>; Bail Observation Project, Second report, 2013.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁹ Adeline Trude, *The Liberty Deficit, Bail for Immigration Detainees*, 2012, available at: <http://bit.ly/1L2oUai>.

⁵⁰⁰ BID, *No Place to Go: delays in Home Office provision of s.4 (1)(c) bail accommodation*, September 2014, available at: <http://bit.ly/2wlwR5E>.

⁵⁰¹ Immigration Bail; Home Office February 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/32SxyGh>.

⁵⁰² High Court, *R (Hardial Singh) v Governor of Durham Prison* [1983] EWHC 1 (QB) and <https://bit.ly/3cEhuwe>

imminent where a travel document exists, removal directions are set, there are no outstanding legal barriers and removal is likely to take place in the next four weeks'.⁵⁰³ Revised guidance that was issued to Immigration Judges in January 2018 advises that it is generally accepted that detention for three months would be considered a substantial period and six months a long period.⁵⁰⁴

Challenges are also made to the lawfulness of detention in civil proceedings for unlawful imprisonment, when damages may be awarded.

The case law and the legal structure of challenge to immigration detention make no distinction between the detention of asylum seekers and the detention of other foreign nationals.

2. Legal assistance for review of detention

Indicators: Legal Assistance for Review of Detention

1. Does the law provide for access to free legal assistance for the review of detention?
 Yes No
2. Do asylum seekers have effective access to free legal assistance in practice?
 Yes No

Access to legal assistance is subject to the same means test as for immigration and asylum legal aid generally. Detention centres provide legal surgeries run by legal aid providers who have exclusive contracts with the Legal Aid Agency to do immigration and asylum work in IRC. Detainees cannot obtain legal aid to instruct a lawyer other than those with a contract for that centre. Delays in getting an appointment at a legal surgery mean that in practice they may face removal before they can obtain an appointment, although some centres operate a priority system for people who have removal directions. BID's survey showed that 43% had to wait more than a week.⁵⁰⁵ Notice of removal may be as short as 72 hours, and five days is common.

The All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Detention recorded a lot of discontent and distress from detainees about the quality of representation in detention and being left without information.⁵⁰⁶

Discussions with lawyers are held in private. Lawyers can contact their clients by mobile phone or fax, or they may also be able to speak to them on the IRC's phone, or leave a message for them.

In 2020 it was confirmed by the court that detainees held in prisons should have the same access to legal advice as those held in IRCs. This has been a long-standing issue and the government has been ordered to take action to ensure that it facilitates this.⁵⁰⁷

E. Differential treatment of specific nationalities in detention

No differential treatment is reported.

⁵⁰³ Home Office, *Enforcement Instructions and Guidance – Chapter 55*, para 55.3.2.4.

⁵⁰⁴ Tribunals Judiciary, *Guidance on Immigration Bail for Judges of the First-Tier Tribunal*, January 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2suYjzj>.

⁵⁰⁵ BID, *Legal Advice survey* Spring 2019, available at <https://go.aws/2uVqBrs>.

⁵⁰⁶ The APPG Inquiry into the Use of Immigration Detention in the United Kingdom, 46.

⁵⁰⁷ SM, R (On the Application Of) v Bail for Immigration Detainees [2021] EWHC 418 (Admin), 25 February 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3rKlpig>.

A. Status and residence

1. Residence permit

Indicators: Residence Permit

- | | | |
|----|---|---------|
| 1. | What is the duration of residence permits granted to beneficiaries of protection? | |
| | ❖ Refugee status | 5 years |
| | ❖ Subsidiary protection | 5 years |

Beneficiaries of refugee status and subsidiary protection (“humanitarian protection”) receive 5 years’ leave to remain. For most people, applying for settlement, also known as Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR), after the end of the 5 year period of leave is a straightforward process.⁵⁰⁸ Difficulties encountered relate to the length of time it takes for the application to be processed, as all documents must be submitted to the authorities. Therefore, although legally the period of leave is extended by virtue of the new application, this is difficult to prove to employers and or providers of services that may require evidence of leave to access. This is becoming an increasing problem, as the government seeks to deny more services to those who cannot provide evidence of leave.⁵⁰⁹

An additional problem has increased during 2020 although is not specifically a result of travel restrictions due to Covid-19. Applicants for visas and extensions of permission to stay, including refugees applying for Indefinite Leave following five years refugee leave, are required to re-register their biometrics at a Service and Support Centre run by a private company.⁵¹⁰ Whilst they are required to provide free appointments to those who make free applications (including refugees) there are very few centres with free appointments available. The Independent Chief Inspector has begun an inspection into this issue.

This same Home Office policy explains the circumstances in which a person’s application for unlimited leave (“settlement”) is denied.

Applicants must have held a UK Resident Permit (UKRP) for a continuous period of 5 years which must not have been revoked or not renewed. The Rules also enable the Home Office to delay granting settlement to those with a criminal history or where there is any evidence of extremist behaviours that run contrary to British values, either permanently or for set periods of time depending on the severity of the crime or behaviour. In these cases, the application for settlement may be refused but if the applicant is still in need of international protection, additional periods of time limited leave may be granted.⁵¹¹

2. Civil registration

A child born to any person in the UK is expected to be registered in the same way as any other child and must be done within 42 days of the child’s birth in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and within 21 days in Scotland.⁵¹² A child born to a refugee who is settled can be registered as a British citizen. If the

⁵⁰⁸ See Home Office, *Asylum Policy Instruction: Settlement protection*, 2 February 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kSFC3n>.

⁵⁰⁹ See e.g. Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI), *Passport please*, February 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kBLCNw>; Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, *Report on the ‘hostile environment’*, October 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2eeZ7Qw>.

⁵¹⁰ See: Visas and Immigration Service and Support Centres on gov.uk, available at: <https://bit.ly/3chdC6P>

⁵¹¹ Home Office, *Asylum Policy Instruction: Settlement protection*, 2 February 2016, Section 7.

⁵¹² Government website – applies to England, Wales and Northern Ireland, available at: <http://bit.ly/2GcmI2d>. For Scotland, available at: <http://bit.ly/2n8u3au>.

child is born during the five years limited leave as a refugee, they will be granted 'leave in line' to expire on the same date as the parent, and can be included in a subsequent application for settlement.

Beneficiaries are subject to the same rules as UK or EEA nationals if they wish to marry in a register office; notice of the intention to marry must be given at a designated register office.⁵¹³ This also applies to non-EEA nationals who wish to marry in a religious ceremony.

The only difficulties, if both parties are in the UK, would arise if one of the parties did not have a Biometric Residence Permit or who didn't have documentary evidence of a previous divorce, for example.

3. Long-term residence

The UK has not opted into the Long-Term Residence Directive.

4. Naturalisation

| Indicators: Naturalisation | |
|---|---------------|
| 1. What is the waiting period for obtaining citizenship? | 6 years |
| 2. Number of citizenship grants to beneficiaries in 2020: | Not available |

Those with refugee status and subsidiary protection may not apply for naturalisation as a British citizen until they have been in receipt of Indefinite Leave to Remain (settlement leave) for 12 months. They are subject to the same test of 'good character' as other applicants and must pass a 'Life in the UK' test and meet the requirements for English language proficiency. There is also a fee, which can be up to £1,330 (€1,537).⁵¹⁴

The requirements that a person be of good character specifically refer to applicants who previously entered the UK unlawfully i.e. through evading immigration control.⁵¹⁵ This is despite policy that follows Article 31 of the Refugee Convention, acknowledging that sometimes it is necessary to enter a country unlawfully and be recognised as a refugee, and that the Refugee Convention requires signatory states to allow refugees to integrate.

130,568 grants of UK citizenship were made in 2020, of which 89,931 were from non-EU nationals. 67,769 grants of citizenship were made based on residence in the UK in 2020. This figure includes beneficiaries of international protection but also other categories.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹³ A list of designated register offices in England and Wales is available at: <http://bit.ly/2BQUev7> and for Scotland at: <http://bit.ly/2ClgX9D>.

⁵¹⁴ Home Office, Immigration and Nationality fees, available at: <https://bit.ly/2PS2Ub0>.

⁵¹⁵ Annex D: Good character requirement, Section 9, Naturalisation at discretion (nationality instructions), Home Office, September 2019, available at: <http://bit.ly/2jDXJbv>.

⁵¹⁶ Home Office, *Immigration statistics Q4 2019*.

5. Cessation and review of protection status

Indicators: Cessation

1. Is a personal interview of the asylum seeker in most cases conducted in practice in the cessation procedure? Yes No
2. Does the law provide for an appeal against the first instance decision in the cessation procedure? Yes No
3. Do beneficiaries have access to free legal assistance at first instance in practice? Yes With difficulty No

The grounds of cessation are laid out in the Immigration Rules and follow the cessation provisions of the Refugee Convention.⁵¹⁷ The procedure is set out in Home Office guidance.⁵¹⁸

The beginning of the procedure is not the same in all instances. There may be a different trigger, such as the individual travelling back to the country of origin or being convicted of a serious offence which has led to an investigation of the original grounds for asylum. In all cases the applicant is informed of the intention and invited to submit their view to the caseworker. UNHCR will also be consulted, usually after any submissions from the refugee have been received, given 10 days to submit its view, which must be taken into consideration.⁵¹⁹

The applicant would not usually be interviewed, unless there are specific reasons for doing so. Appeal rights are suspensive i.e. the refugee remains in the country whilst the appeal is heard, unless s/he is outside of the UK.

Review of status and consideration of cessation is not a routine consideration, save in criminal cases and those where the refugee has spent more than 2 years out of the UK or where there is evidence he or she has availed themselves of the protection of the country of asylum e.g. by obtaining a national passport.

It is not applied to specific groups as a matter of policy. In policy terms each case is dealt with on its own merit and there are no reported concerns about how it is applied, other than occasionally in individual cases. A case in 2019 confirmed that revocation procedures could not apply to the dependants of refugees unless the dependant had been recognised in his or her own right.⁵²⁰

6. Withdrawal of protection status

Indicators: Withdrawal

1. Is a personal interview of the asylum seeker in most cases conducted in practice in the withdrawal procedure? Yes No
2. Does the law provide for an appeal against the withdrawal decision? Yes No
3. Do beneficiaries have access to free legal assistance at first instance in practice? Yes With difficulty No

The grounds for withdrawal / revocation of international protection are set out in the Immigration Rules and include: (a) the grounds for exclusion in the Refugee Convention; (b) misrepresentation of facts to

⁵¹⁷ Rules 339A to 339AB Immigration Rules.

⁵¹⁸ Home Office, *Asylum policy instruction: Revocation of refugee status*, 19 January 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kkxPvi>.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid*, para 3.6.

⁵²⁰ JS (Uganda), [2019] EWCA Civ 1670, Case No: C5/2018/2614 and C2/2019/1244, 10 October 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2RVyFjm>.

obtain refugee status; and (c) being a danger to the UK.⁵²¹ The procedure is outlined in the section on [Cessation](#).

The legal framework for withdrawal of leave is Section 76 of the NIAA 2002. Indefinite leave (ILR) will be taken from a person or considered to have lapsed when that person:

- ❖ Is liable to deportation or administrative removal but cannot be deported or removed because of the UK's obligations under the Refugee Convention or the ECHR (ILR is revoked);
- ❖ Has obtained leave by deception (ILR is revoked);
- ❖ Is deported from the UK (ILR is invalidated);
- ❖ Ceases to be a refugee because of their own actions (ILR is revoked);
- ❖ Remains outside of the UK for more than two years (ILR lapses).

The only appeal against a decision to take away leave is if that is accompanied by a decision to remove protection status i.e. the appeal is against the refusal of protection status.

B. Family reunification

1. Criteria and conditions

Indicators: Family Reunification

1. Is there a waiting period before a beneficiary can apply for family reunification? Yes No
 - ❖ If yes, what is the waiting period?
2. Does the law set a maximum time limit for submitting a family reunification application? Yes No
 - ❖ If yes, what is the time limit?
3. Does the law set a minimum income requirement? Yes No

The UK has not opted into the Family Reunification Directive.

There is no waiting period for a beneficiary of refugee status or humanitarian protection. Nor is there a maximum time limit after which the beneficiaries are no longer entitled, as long as they do not become UK citizens. There is no charge for the application nor requirement for the sponsor to have an income to support their family members. There is no distinction between refugees and those with humanitarian protection.

Eligibility is restricted to the immediate family as it existed prior to the sponsor's flight and the only people automatically eligible to join the refugee in the UK are:

- Spouse / same sex partner; and
- Dependent children under the age of 18.

Refugee children are not eligible to sponsor their parents and or siblings. In 2016, a child successfully challenged the policy under Article 8 ECHR and his parent and sibling were brought to the UK to join him.⁵²² Whilst the judge was critical of the policy, it has not led to a change. A number of NGOs are collaborating in campaigning for changes to the Immigration Rules on Refugee Family Reunion, including this issue. Two Private Members' Bills have been introduced into Parliament; the first was debated in

⁵²¹ Rules 339A to 339AB Immigration Rules.

⁵²² Upper Tribunal, *AT (Family Reunification: Eritrea)* [2016] UKUT 227 (IAC), 24 March 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kvjm1S>.

December 2017.⁵²³ The second was debated in the House of Commons on 16 March 2018 and passed that stage.⁵²⁴ Due to the lack of parliamentary time made available by government the Bill will not proceed. A report published by Amnesty International UK, Refugee Council and Save the Children in 2019 summarised the criticisms made by external scrutineers and parliamentary Committees, as well as providing evidence of the impact of the current policy position.⁵²⁵

Applications and decisions on family visa are published by the government. The category under which refugee family reunion cases fall may include other types, but is generally relied on by the government to describe a figure for refugee family reunion visa. In 2020, 5,428 family reunion visas were issued; 2,992 of them to children.⁵²⁶

The refugee family reunion process was inspected by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration in 2016.⁵²⁷ The inspection was overall critical of the restrictiveness of the family reunification procedure, and noted that the possibility to examine applications outside the Immigration Rules in 'exceptional circumstances' or where 'compassionate factors' arise is very rarely applied. This was witnessed in none of the 181 applications inspected at the visa sections of the Home Office in Jordan, Turkey and South Africa.⁵²⁸ A re-inspection of the handling of Refugee Family Reunion applications in Amman in 2018 concluded that not all of the previous recommendations had been resolved.⁵²⁹ Since this report the decision making on refugee family reunion applications has largely been moved to the UK although not entirely. It further inspected the system, including progress against previous recommendations, the report of which was finally published by the Home Office in September 2020⁵³⁰, along with its response⁵³¹. The Inspector had invited the government to explain and justify its position on the eligibility criteria in the light of the Private Members Bills and activities of the Families Together coalition.⁵³²

The Home Office also revised its policy and guidance; it was reissued in 2016 although the policy remained the same.⁵³³ Better explanation was given about the circumstances in which extended family members could be admitted but no changes to the criteria were made. It was further revised in December 2020 to reflect the end of the transition period for the UK to leave the EU.

2. Status and rights of family members

Family members do not receive the same status as their sponsor. They receive 'leave in line' i.e. leave to remain to expire at the same time as their sponsor. If the sponsor has limited leave, the family members all apply for settlement at the same time. There are difficulties for estranged partners in these circumstances.

⁵²³ Hansard, Refugees (Family Reunion) Bill [HL], 15 December 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2DBWylq>.

⁵²⁴ Refugee Council, 'MPs vote to reunite refugee families torn apart by conflict', 16 March 2018, available at <https://bit.ly/2RSdVuR>.

⁵²⁵ Amnesty International, *Without my Family; the impact of family separation on separated children in the UK*, 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2GFxM9m>.

⁵²⁶ Home Office, *Immigration statistics Q4 2020*.

⁵²⁷ Independent Chief Inspector on Borders and Immigration, *An inspection of family reunion applications*, January – May 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2khoPav>.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.* See also Refugee Council, 'Watchdog: Government should show more compassion in reuniting refugees', 15 September 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kwbXFX>.

⁵²⁹ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, *A re-inspection of the family reunion process, focusing on applications received at the Amman Entry Clearance Decision Making Centre*, September 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2oK8QVy>.

⁵³⁰ An inspection of family reunion applications *Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration*, available at: <https://bit.ly/3cgh0yN>

⁵³¹ Government response to the Inspection of family reunion applications, available at: <https://bit.ly/36hJLaK>

⁵³² Families Together, see: <https://bit.ly/39puvum>

⁵³³ Home Office, *Family reunion: for refugees and those with humanitarian protection*, December 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/32YpbJp>.

C. Movement and mobility

1. Freedom of movement

There are no restrictions on freedom of movement for refugees, those with humanitarian protection or their family members. Some difficulties arise when people want to move away from where they have been dispersed and relocate to a place where they have no previous connection. New duties in the Homelessness Reduction Act which came into force in April 2018 should alleviate this problem although there is still a high incidence of homelessness amongst newly recognised refugees. New research reports relating to this issue from NGOs in 2018 include *Mind the Gap* from the No Accommodation Network (NACCOM),⁵³⁴ and *Still an Ordeal* from the British Red Cross.⁵³⁵ The government's Integration Action Plan, published in February 2019,⁵³⁶ includes commitments to improve the information provided to new refugees and to better coordinate government departments to improve new refugees' access to existing services. New information was published during 2019, one general document,⁵³⁷ translated into eleven languages and one specifically advising how to claim welfare benefits,⁵³⁸ available in English only.

2. Travel documents

Refugees and their dependants, including those who are united through the refugee family reunion process, can apply for a 'Convention Travel Document'. The cost is the same as a UK national passport. An adult's travel document will expire after 10 years or at the same time as the refugee's limited leave (if during the first 5 years of leave) if that is earlier. A child's travel document will expire after 5 years or at the expiry of their leave.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and other forms of leave, including their dependants, are expected to apply to their national authorities for a passport, unless the humanitarian protection is granted following a refusal of asylum and it is accepted that the beneficiary has a fear of their national authorities.⁵³⁹ This includes those resettled under the Syrian Resettlement Scheme who are granted humanitarian protection. Other than these individuals, including dependants, those with leave following a refusal of asylum, including beneficiaries of subsidiary protection where it is not accepted that the person is in fear of the national authority, are expected to show evidence of refusal to issue a document following contact with their national embassy.

All those who are not entitled to a Convention Travel Document, including all beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, can apply for a certificate of travel, which costs more than three times that of a Convention Travel Document and a maximum validity of 5 years. It will only be issued when the individual has more than 6 months leave remaining.

The procedure for all travel documents is via an online or paper form.⁵⁴⁰ Travel documents that are not CTD, issued by other countries, would often need to be accompanied by a visa.

⁵³⁴ NACCOM, *Mind the Gap*, May 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2H7voKQ>.

⁵³⁵ British Red Cross, *Still an Ordeal*, December 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2APRYCW>.

⁵³⁶ Government, *Integrated communities Action Plan*, February 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2XC9EMe>.

⁵³⁷ Welcome: a guide for new refugees, available at: <https://bit.ly/2SL2UtM>.

⁵³⁸ Claiming Universal Credit and other benefits if you are a refugee, available at: <https://bit.ly/3bxAk7S>.

⁵³⁹ Home Office, *Travel Documents Guidance Notes*, March 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2jGkr2M>.

⁵⁴⁰ Home Office, *Application Form TD11 BRP*, March 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kWsDh4>.

The numbers of travel documents issued are to third party nationals who do not have a passport, so are not exclusively travel documents for beneficiaries of international protection. In 2020, 22,788 of these were issued.

D. Housing

Indicators: Housing

- | | |
|--|---------|
| 1. For how long are beneficiaries entitled to stay in Home Office accommodation? | 28 days |
| 2. Number of beneficiaries staying dispersal accommodation as of 31 December 2020: | 41,302 |

The reception centres are designed for short term support, almost all residents will move to 'dispersal accommodation' in self contained houses or apartments. This is known as 'Section 95' support (see [Reception Conditions: Criteria and Restrictions](#)).

On receipt of a decision to grant asylum or leave that would entitle the individual to work, apply for state welfare benefits and rent, buy or take on a public housing tenancy, that individual and their dependants will only receive Home Office accommodation and funding for a maximum of 28 days. This is often termed the 'move on period'. This is regardless of whether or not any alternative source of income and accommodation has been secured. In practice few refugees find alternative accommodation within this time. The main obstacles they face are the processing times for welfare benefits, the lack of a bank account or online credit history. Public housing is restricted to those with children or who are considered a priority because of ill health or disability and those whose illness is mental rather than physical face particular difficulties. The latter category often finds difficulty persuading the authorities to provide them with public housing. The Refugee Council has written a guide to making and pursuing these applications.⁵⁴¹

This is in stark contrast to those resettled through programmes such as the Gateway Protection Programme and the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Programme. Although individuals will have to open a bank account, sign a tenancy for housing and make a claim for welfare benefits on arrival, support is usually available to assist with this and a small monetary amount is given by the Home Office to ensure that people have some funds on which to live when they first arrive. The Refugee Council has written a policy briefing on this issue.⁵⁴²

The British Red Cross produced a cost benefit analysis of the 28 day 'move-on' period in February 2020, arguing that the UK government could save significant amounts of money including the cost of temporary accommodation, if the 28 days was doubled to 56.⁵⁴³

Despite a wealth of evidence, and efforts through parliamentary means to extend the period,⁵⁴⁴ the issue continues to affect many new refugees and other beneficiaries of leave, resulting in homelessness and destitution.⁵⁴⁵ The reasons for this are outlined in the research; it is acknowledged that many refugees

⁵⁴¹ Refugee Council, *Making homelessness applications for refugees in England*, Refugee Council, March 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2U9CYu9>.

⁵⁴² Refugee Council, *Policy briefing :Support for refugees in England*, December 2019, available at : <https://bit.ly/38oSTsT> .

⁵⁴³ British Red Cross; *The cost of destitution*, February 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2VlwCmx>

⁵⁴⁴ Refugee Council, *Briefing on Asylum Support amendments to the Immigration Bill*, February 2015, available at: <http://bit.ly/2k2u1QU>.

⁵⁴⁵ British Red Cross, *Still an ordeal*, December 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2APRYCW>; Refugee Council, *Refugees without refuge: Findings from a survey of newly recognised refugees*, September 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2wNldEz>; *England's Forgotten Refugees*, May 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/1U4c3VH>; *28 Days Later; the experience of new refugees in the UK*, 2014, available at: <http://bit.ly/1CgV1gE>; British Red Cross, *The move on period: an ordeal for new refugees*, 2014, available at: <http://bit.ly/1sHreYP>.

may not be aware that claims for welfare benefits usually take weeks to process and may not apply as soon as they are eligible, but recent reports show that in many cases the people advising them, employed by the department that processes claims, to advise that refugees are not able to make welfare benefits applications whilst still receiving asylum support. Similar incorrect advice was found to be given regarding eligibility for an advance payment to cover any gap in support. Additional barriers exist for refugees who have not opened a bank account; unable to do this without a regular income, they then face additional delays in welfare benefits payments which are usually made directly into a claimant's bank account.

Unless eligible for public housing, refugees' access to the private rental sector is impeded in practice because of the lack of funds; a refugee will not have been eligible for asylum support payments if s/he has savings but will need a lump sum in order to pay a deposit. Without specific schemes such as one operated by the Refugee Council in **London**, refugees are reliant on family, friends, refugee hosting schemes or members of their community to avoid street homelessness.

E. Employment and education

1. Access to the labour market

The law provides for refugees and beneficiaries of humanitarian protection the same access to the labour market as UK citizens.⁵⁴⁶ In practice, very few individuals will enter the labour market immediately; some will need to ensure their qualifications allow them to practice their profession and may need to retrain or pass exams to allow them to practice e.g. doctors. Many refugees may have had limited language provision when they were seeking asylum so may need to learn English sufficient to access the labour market.

There is little practical support provided by the state although when applying for the main welfare benefit for those fit to work (Job Seekers Allowance) individuals are required to show evidence of applications for jobs they have made and are questioned about this by an adviser.

2. Access to education

Access to compulsory education (up to age 16) is the same for asylum seekers, refugees and UK citizens (see section on [Reception Conditions: Education](#)). Although mid-term admissions may cause additional difficulties, the ease access to school places is related more to the geographical area in which an individual lives than their immigration status.

In **England, Wales** and **Northern Ireland** access to post-18 education is different and one of the distinctions between beneficiaries of refugee status and subsidiary ("humanitarian") protection is that for the purposes of fees and student support, refugees are considered home students once they receive status, whereas recipients of humanitarian protection are considered as overseas students until they have lived in the UK for 3 years. In **Scotland** the only requirement is 3 years residence, rather than status.

F. Social welfare

The law provides access to social welfare for beneficiaries of international protection, although practical difficulties are encountered.

⁵⁴⁶ Paragraph 334B Immigration Rules.

Social welfare is provided to beneficiaries under the same conditions and on the same level as for nationals, although public housing may be restricted to those with a history of living in a particular area, so beneficiaries who move away from dispersal areas may encounter problems. The laws do apply to all. The main authorities responsible for granting social assistance are the Department for Work and Pensions, (national government department) administered by local Job Centres. The provision of social welfare is not tied to a requirement to reside in a specific place or region.

Beneficiaries face various difficulties in accessing social assistance, outlined in research conducted by the Refugee Council and British Red Cross.⁵⁴⁷ These include difficulties in obtaining the necessary documentation, although a change in policy announced in 2017 should alleviate this. From 8 January 2018 the Residence Permit has the National Insurance Number printed on it,⁵⁴⁸ which should reduce delays in making welfare benefit claims. The issues relating to opening bank accounts and finding enough money to secure private rented housing (which require an upfront fee) remain unresolved. A new way of administering welfare benefits is being phased in to all Job Centres across the country. This has inbuilt waiting times and applications can only be made on time, which has resulted in further hardship. There has been a lot of interest from the relevant Parliamentary Committee in recent years⁵⁴⁹; the Committee has scrutinised many aspects of the government's welfare benefits policy, many of which adversely affect refugees. A parliamentary debate in March 2020 discussed many of the key difficulties in general as well as the Red Cross report.⁵⁵⁰

G. Health care

The entitlement to health care is not affected in law for refugees and beneficiaries of humanitarian protection but in practice there can be difficulties. Although not required in law, registering with a GP practice for primary care often asks for proof of address; if a refugee has moved from asylum support accommodation it may be difficult to obtain this.

Specialist medical support for refugees is patchy; waiting list for mental health services in particular can be long. The issues in practice are very similar for refugees to those faced by asylum seekers, despite the difference in status.

⁵⁴⁷ Refugee Council, *Refugees without refuge: Findings from a survey of newly recognised refugees*, September 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2wNldEz>; *England's Forgotten Refugees*, May 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/1U4c3VH>; *28 Days Later; the experience of new refugees in the UK*, 2014, available at: <http://bit.ly/1CgV1gE>; British Red Cross, *The move on period: an ordeal for new refugees*, 2014, available at: <http://bit.ly/1sHreYP>.

⁵⁴⁸ Minister for Immigration, Answer to parliamentary question, 5 December 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2DDIEXL>.

⁵⁴⁹ Work and Pensions Committee reports 2017-19; including Universal Credit, Benefit cap and the two child limit, available at: <https://bit.ly/2VLyJ99>.

⁵⁵⁰ Asylum decisions (support for refugees) debate, 4 March 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2PRcOtj>.