



Asylum Operations

Regional Asylum Intake Units

22/04/2020

As we continue to respond to the fast-moving events linked to COVID-19, we would like to update you on some key changes that have been made to assist those seeking asylum in accessing the services they need during this time.

Background

Asylum in the UK should be sought at the first available opportunity – this means on arrival, at a port of entry.

For those who have failed to claim on arrival, or whose circumstances have changed since arrival, they can lodge a claim at an in-country location, the Asylum Intake Unit (AIU - formerly ASU) in Croydon. The AIU gathers all relevant information about an individual and their journey to the UK. The unit operates an appointment system whereby customers telephone to book an appointment. Alongside this, the AIU operate a walk-in system which accommodates those who do not have an appointment but are deemed to be vulnerable and/or at immediate risk of destitution. All claims for asylum must be made in person, irrespective of nationality. Asylum claimants can attend the AIU between the hours of 08:00 and 16:00, Monday to Friday.

Key changes

Following measures introduced by Her Majesty's Government in response to coronavirus (COVID-19), the Home Office has temporarily introduced additional locations to register asylum claims. These are temporary arrangements which will be kept under review to align with HMG guidance. An overview of key changes and messages are outlined below.

1. Locations have been identified across the UK to facilitate this. The AIU in Croydon will continue to function as normal but will additionally be supported by limited operations in Glasgow, Belfast, Liverpool, Leeds, Solihull and Cardiff. These will be to meet the demands of asylum registrations within the geographical area and will not operate a 5-day service.
2. These changes do not represent a new operating model. They are contingency measures put in place during the COVID-19 epidemic in order to fulfil the UK's statutory requirement to register asylum claims.

Appointments

1. Appointments in Glasgow and Belfast can be booked in the usual way, which is;

Glasgow - customers are still to phone the AIU appointment line on 0300 123 4193, once a call is logged, a member of staff within the Glasgow team will return the call to book an appointment. **The appointment line** operates Monday to Thursday, 9am to 4:45pm; and Friday, 9am to 4:30pm.

Belfast – customers should attend Bryson, who are contracted by Migrant Help, at Stockman House, 39-43 Bedford Street, Belfast, BT2 7FE, where a member of staff will deal with their application. They will then be placed into initial accommodation and a date for their screening interview will follow. Migrant Help are open Monday to Friday 09.00am – 5.00pm.

Out of hours customers will be directed to the local PSNI (Police Service of Northern Ireland) who will liaise with Mears if accommodation is required until the following day when they can attend Bryson.

2. Appointments in Liverpool; Leeds; Solihull; Cardiff; and AIU will be booked through the AIU appointment line on: 0300 123 4193. This operates Monday to Thursday, 9am to 4:45pm; and Friday, 9am to 4:30pm.
3. Walk-in arrangements – customers do not need to make an appointment if they have nowhere to live, however it is strongly advised. It is requested if customers do need to ‘walk-in’, that they contact Asylum Intake Unit appointment line who will be able to advise whether they should attend the Asylum Intake Unit in Croydon or which temporary location they should attend.
4. **Owing to COVID-19 measures if a customer feels unwell, or a member of their household has recently felt unwell, please advise them to check Public Health England advice on when they should stay at home.** Please advise them to access their website for more information <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection> before attending an appointment. If a customer has any of the symptoms mentioned in that guidance, they should not attend their appointment, but please contact us on **0300 123 4193** to make alternative arrangements. Being unable to attend an appointment due to ill health will not affect their immigration status if they inform us.
5. **Appointment letters – Customers must bring their appointment letter with them to their appointment.** It is a necessary requirement to attend a Home Office asylum registration centre to provide your biometrics (fingerprints and facial photograph) when registering an asylum claim. **Travel to the appointment at the asylum registration centre is considered essential.** Please advise customers to bring their appointment confirmation with them when they travel to and from the appointment.

We take the wellbeing of asylum seekers extremely seriously and have already put in place a range of measures to support asylum seekers affected by the coronavirus outbreak, including registering asylum claims in a safe way that adheres to social distancing guidance.

We would appreciate your help in sharing this message with your colleagues and clients as you see appropriate.

These are unprecedented times and we are adjusting processes and procedures where necessary and appropriate to adapt to these changes. We appreciate your continued support and patience during this time, we are making every effort to keep the system moving, as we also seek to protect our customers and our staff.