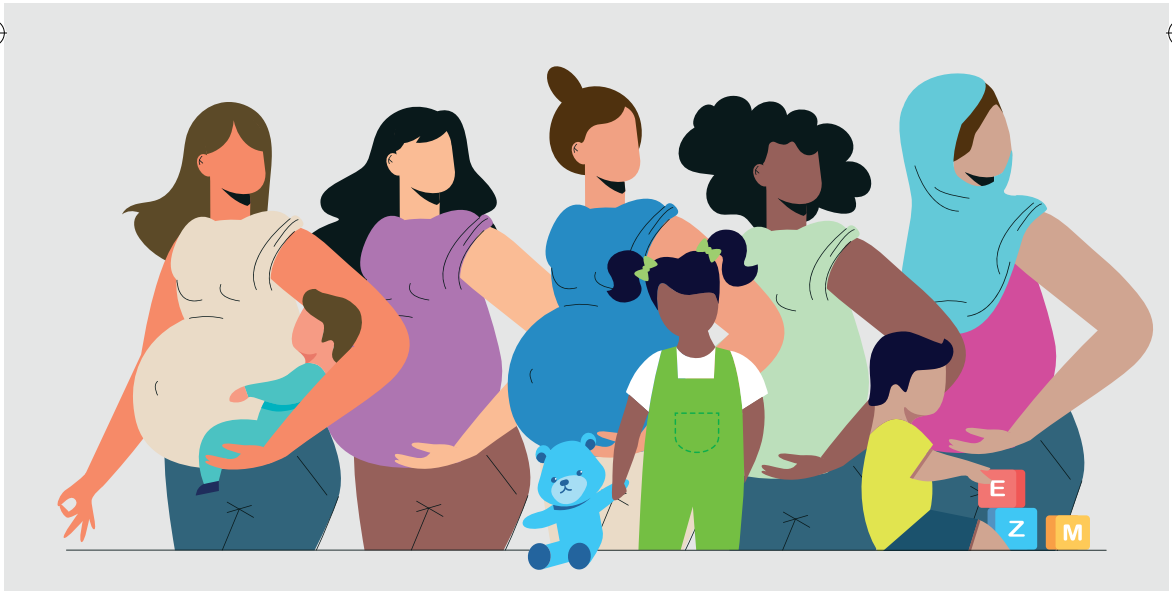




70TH
ANNIVERSARY

**Health Access
for Refugees
Programme
(HARP)**

Maternity Care in the UK for women on asylum support



www.refugeecouncil.org.uk



About this guide

This guide is for pregnant women and new mothers who are receiving asylum support in the UK. It explains the healthcare services and financial support available to you during pregnancy and after you give birth.

It includes:

- Overview of maternity healthcare in the UK
- Your support rights
- How to add your baby to your asylum claim
- Details about additional financial support you can receive

We hope this guide makes accessing the right support easier whilst you are pregnant.

To get more information

or if you are unsure of anything, please speak to The Refugee Council, or other charities and organisations listed in this booklet.



Asylum support

This is the housing and/or financial support the Home Office provides to people who claimed asylum in the UK. Whilst on asylum support, you receive weekly payments of £39.63 on an Aspen card.

To receive asylum support, you must prove you are eligible. This will usually be because you are waiting for a decision on your asylum claim, either one you made yourself or as a dependant of your husband or partner.

If you are pregnant and you have been refused asylum, you could still receive support via **Section 4**. Though you will not have access to cash, you will be able to use an Aspen card. This support is usually available if you have pregnancy complications or are now 34 weeks pregnant. You should seek help to prepare your application (ASF1). The Home Office aims to make a decision on your application for support within 5 working days and **48 hours in urgent cases**, like when you are pregnant.



Maternity care in the UK

All pregnant women can access NHS maternity services. Accessing healthcare early on is very important to avoid any complications for you or your baby. Maternity care is considered urgent and necessary so it will never be refused.

You also have a right to be understood when accessing medical services. You can request an **interpreter** and a **double appointment** to accommodate the extra time you might need.

Maternity care is free for women seeking asylum. However, if you have been refused asylum and are not on Section 4, you may be asked to pay. This decision is made by the Overseas Visitors Team who will consider your circumstances, e.g., your residency status. If you are asked to pay, please speak with your midwife and contact charities who could help you with a **payment plan**.

You can also attend **free antenatal classes** to help prepare for pregnancy, birth and parenting. Here, you learn information and practical skills to help you when you become a parent.



How to access maternity care

You can confirm your pregnancy with a test or by visiting the GP. Once you know you are pregnant, tell your GP who can refer you to a **midwife**. A midwife is a qualified health professional who will care for you during pregnancy, birth, and early motherhood.

It is best to see a midwife before you are 10 weeks pregnant. They can check your and your baby's health, explain the NHS system, and arrange your appointments, e.g., scans.

Anything you tell a midwife is **confidential**. For example, there are experiences you may share to make sure you are getting the right care during pregnancy. Domestic abuse, FGM and having been trafficked or forced to come to the UK, are some examples – these are all **illegal** here. If you do share this type of information, the midwife can arrange appropriate treatment and refer you to organisations which can support you further, if you wish.

For domestic abuse in particular, women eligible for asylum support can be helped to move away, e.g., by being offered a place in a refuge.



How to access financial support

When you are pregnant, you should contact Migrant Help¹ who will inform the Home Office. This will allow you to receive an extra £3 on your weekly asylum payments.

You can then also apply for a **single maternity payment** to help with the costs of having a new baby. You must apply **between eight weeks before you give birth or six weeks after**. If you apply before birth, you must provide **proof of pregnancy**, e.g., MATB1 certificate. You can get this from your midwife.

The amount you receive depends on the type of asylum support you are on. If you are expecting twins, then you receive the payment for each baby:

- **Section 95:** £300
- **Section 4:** £250

You may also be able to apply for the payment if you gave birth to a baby outside the UK who is currently less than 3 months old or in other exceptional cases. You will need the **original birth certificate** to do this.

Whilst on asylum support, you can apply to Migrant Help to request **additional financial support**. This can help you to pay for costs related to pregnancy and / or for services which require cash². This is especially relevant when you need to give birth: you must not call an ambulance unless it is an emergency and arrange alternative transport which may require cash, i.e., taxis.

If your baby unfortunately passes away during pregnancy or at birth, you could receive **financial support for funeral costs** from the Home Office. Please contact Migrant Help for information.

¹ This organisation works with the Home Office to advise people during the asylum process.

² Women on Section 4 do not have access to cash.



How to add your baby to your asylum claim

Once the baby is born, you must contact Migrant Help and send the original birth certificate to the Home Office within six weeks.

Migrant Help will provide an envelope with **pre-paid postage**, so you have a record of when you send it. This means any payments you receive for your new baby will apply from their date of birth, even if there is a delay which is not your fault. If the certificate is sent after six weeks, the payments only start from the date the Home Office receives it.

As a new mother, you will then receive **an additional, weekly asylum support payment** (£39.63) for your baby.

Whilst your baby is under 1 year old, you also receive an **extra £5 per week** in asylum support and an **extra £3** for each child aged 1 to 3.

If you would like to add the father's name to the birth certificate and you are not married, **he must be present** when you register the birth. The baby can be added to either parent's asylum claims as a dependant.



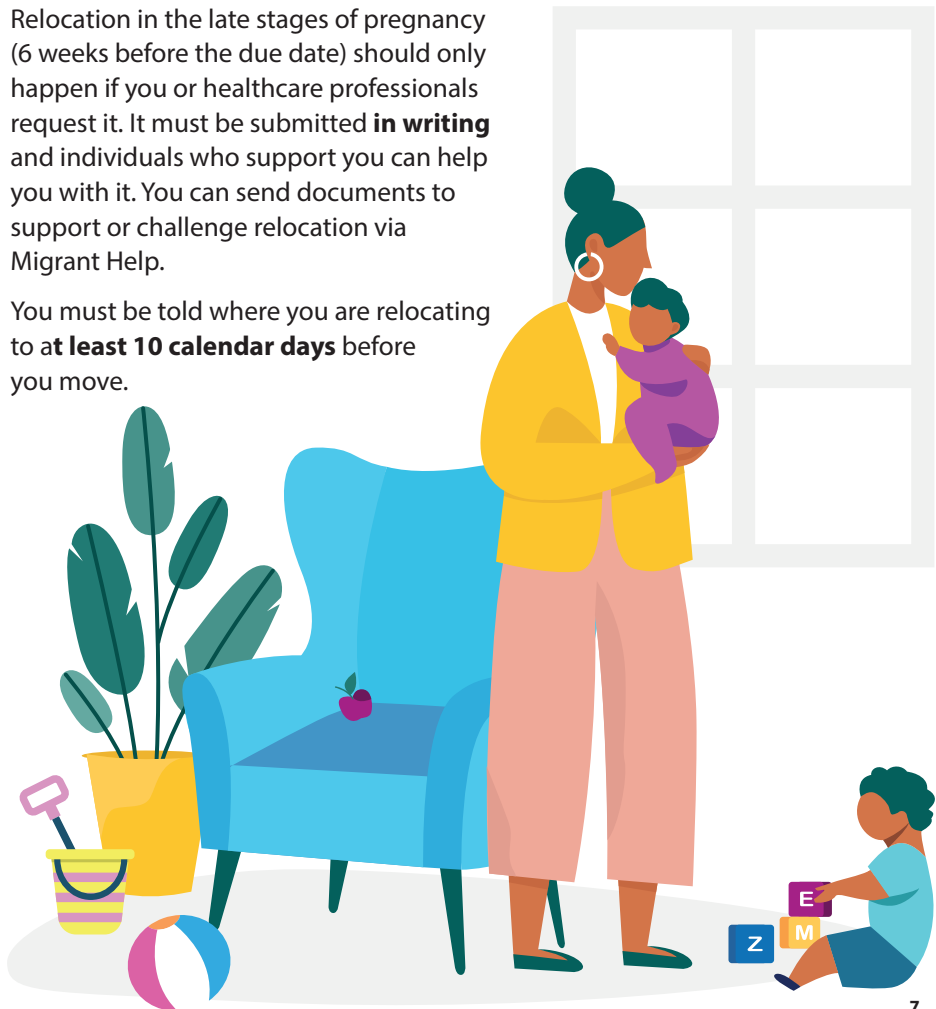
Your support rights

If necessary, any changes to your housing should only happen once during pregnancy, unless you specifically request to be moved more than that. Once you have been given accommodation, it must be suitable for you both before and after the birth and available for this entire period.

There is a **protected period** from **34 weeks of pregnancy until 6 weeks after the birth** when you are on asylum support. During this period, Home Office policy advises **against** moving pregnant women from where they live, receive maternity care, and have social / family support.

Relocation in the late stages of pregnancy (6 weeks before the due date) should only happen if you or healthcare professionals request it. It must be submitted **in writing** and individuals who support you can help you with it. You can send documents to support or challenge relocation via Migrant Help.

You must be told where you are relocating to **at least 10 calendar days** before you move.



About Refugee Council

The Refugee Council is the leading charity dedicated to supporting people seeking asylum and refugees in the UK. We work directly with thousands of refugees each year, supporting them from the moment they arrive in the UK.

We provide crisis advice and practical support, help them to integrate into their new communities and offer mental health counselling to help them come to terms with the trauma so many of them have experienced.

We also speak up for refugees using our direct work as an evidence base, and ensure refugees have a stronger and more influential voice in decisions that will affect them.

This guide was produced by the **Health Access for Refugees Programme (HARP)** at Refugee Council. HARP empowers people seeking asylum and refugees to access the UK health system in an appropriate way and at the appropriate time.

Please visit our **Get support** pages for further information on services we provide.

<https://refugeecouncil.org.uk/get-support>

<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/get-support/services/health-access-for-refugees>

The Refugee Council is a registered charity no. 1014576, and a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales, No. 2727514.



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Other organisations who can help

Migrant Help – provides advice to people going through the asylum system.

<https://www.migranthelpuk.org>

Asylum Support Appeals Project – a legal charity who provide support with appeal representation when your asylum support is refused or stopped.

<https://www.asaproject.org>

British Red Cross – helps people in crisis, wherever and wherever they are.

<https://www.redcross.org.uk>

Refugee Action – offers advice and support to people seeking asylum.

<https://www.refugee-action.org.uk>

Maternity Action – offers advice and support to pregnant women and new mothers.

<https://maternityaction.org.uk>

Maternity Stream of Sanctuary – offers women seeking asylum and refugees support when accessing maternity services.

<https://maternity.cityofsanctuary.org>

Women for Refugee Women – runs empowerment programmes for women seeking asylum and refugees.

<https://www.refugeewomen.co.uk>

Doctors of the World – runs programmes in London that provide medical care, information, and support to people with irregular status.

<https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk>

The UK Lesbian & Gay Immigration Group (UKLGIG) – helps LGBTQI+ people through the asylum and immigration system.

<https://www.rainbowmigration.org.uk>

Micro Rainbow – offers safe, temporary housing for LGBTQI+ people seeking asylum and refugees.

<https://microrainbow.org>

Freedom from Torture – provides specialist therapy for people seeking asylum and refugees.

<https://www.freedomfromtorture.org>

Helen Bamber Foundation – offers support to survivors of torture, including therapy, housing and medical advice.

<https://www.helenbamber.org>

Detention Action – helps people in immigration detention.

<https://detentionaction.org.uk>

Women's Aid – helps women and children who are victims of domestic abuse.

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk>

If you are a victim of FGM, please contact:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/dedicated-helplines>



Notes







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