

You have Refugee status: What Next?

Here are the **key actions** you should do when you receive your Leave to Remain Letter (ie refugee status) in preparation for being evicted from your government accommodation and starting your new life in the UK.

1. Validate your E-Visa

- The Home Office will automatically generate an E-Visa for you. They will send you a link to it within 14 days of receiving your Leave to Remain Letter.
- Once you have accessed your E-Visa (and provided any additional information the Home Office may require) then you should download your 'share-code'.
- The 'share code' can be used as proof of your legal status with important organisations like your employer, bank (see *below*) etc.

2. Set up a Bank Account

- If not already underway, you should apply for a Bank Account. We would recommend Lloyds Bank in Ealing Broadway Centre. Ask for Romeo. He's very helpful.
- You will need to start your application on-line. The best way to do this is by downloading the Lloyds App. You will need to submit some basic information and then follow-up, in person, at the Bank, with the following information:
 - A *proof of address letter*. You can get this from a) your Solicitor (*for free*); b) often (*but not always*) from your hostel/hotel (*for free*) c) if you're studying, from your college; or d) from your doctor (*they may charge a small fee of around £30*). The Letter will need to include your full name; be addressed to Lloyds/relevant Bank and have a "wet" signature. The name and address on this letter must be identical to the name and address on your online application.
 - Your E-Visa "*share code*" to prove your legal status. If you urgently need to set up a bank account and don't yet have your E-Visa, the Bank *may* accept your Home Office Leave to Remain Letter as proof of your legal status.

3. Apply for Universal Credit

- Once you have a Bank Account, then you can apply for Universal Credit. <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/how-to-claim> If you are eligible for Universal Credit you can also apply for Housing Allowance to help pay housing costs.
- Citizen Advice Bureau "*Help to Claim*" advisers can help with the early stages of a Universal Credit claim by phone or online:
 - By Phone: The "*Help to Claim*" phone service is **free**. Advisers are available 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday on 0800 1448444. You can ask for an interpreter.
 - Online:
<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/universal-credit/claiming/contact-us-about-universal-credit/>
- Once you've submitted your claim, you will need to attend an interview at your local Job Centre to discuss your situation and to agree on a plan for finding or preparing for work.
- You usually receive your 1st payment about 5 weeks after submitting your claim.

4. Explore your housing options

- Before you are evicted from your government accommodation you should register with Ealing Council for "homelessness assistance" <https://live.housingjigsaw.co.uk/> It's a long but straightforward form. You may need to upload some documents.
- The Council *may* allocate you a Housing Case Worker. But unless you're a 'priority' case (i.e. have children or a severe illness/disability) the support they offer will be minimal; you are expected to help yourself, including exploring private landlords.

- Private landlords: all the platforms listed below offer free registration to view properties on their site. Some charge a fee for a 'premium service' offering "early access" to/notification of properties. And some landlords may have their own application processes which may involve a fee.
<http://www.dssmove.co.uk> - £1 a month for their 'premium' service.
<http://www.spareroom.co.uk> – offers 3 "early bird" packages allowing users to contact new listings immediately. 7days=£12.99; 14day=£23.99; 28days=£25.98
<http://loot.com/category/property/rooms-shares/>
<http://www.rightmove.co.uk>
<http://property.adzuna.co.uk/to-rent>
<http://www.zoopla.co.uk/to-rent/>
<https://homes.trovit.co.uk/>
<http://www.benefithousing.co.uk/london/>
<https://www.openrent.co.uk/properties-to-rent/>
- Most private properties will require a deposit. Consider applying for a **Discretionary Housing Payment** (DHP) from Ealing Council – a one-off payment that you don't need to pay back. Ealing's on-line referral can be found here:
https://www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201103/housing_benefit_and_council_tax_support/304/discretionary_housing_payments_and_discretionary_council_tax_discounts
- EASE can refer single people to **Thames Reach**, a charity that finds non-priority people accommodation. We can also discuss other organisations with you. Just ask.
- If your English is good, then you should consider **Refugees At Home**, a charity that connects people with a spare room with refugees (single and couples) in need of somewhere to stay. Your stay will generally be only for one month. You can self-refer on line: <https://rahhub.azurewebsites.net/Registration/GuestSelfRegistration>
- In addition to the above, you should consider visiting **Glass Door**, a charity in Hammersmith, for help with your accommodation search. Specifically, they offer:
 - 1) accommodation advice, Mondays & Thursdays 12noon-3pm;
 - 2) eat-in and take-away meals every day between 4-6pm; and
 - 3) emergency shelter during winter months. It's a 23 minute walk from EASE:

The Upper Room
 Sant Saviour Wendell Park
 Cobbold Road
 Hammersmith, W12 9LN
 Main phone number: 0207 351 4948
- The **Community Hubs** run by Ealing Council can also help with links to benefit support, including housing issues. There are 2 Hubs near St Dunstan's:
 1. Acton Library, Everyone Active, Acton Centre, W3 6NE. *Open Monday to Friday, 10am – 5pm, closed 1-2pm for lunch*
 2. Ealing Central Library, Ealing Broadway Shopping centre, W5 5JY. *Open Monday to Friday, 10am – 5pm, closed 1-2pm for lunch (the busiest hub with a staff of 5-6 people)*

5. Consider applying for a Refugee Integration Loan

- Consider applying for an interest free Refugee Integration Loan for items such as rent or a deposit; house hold items; work related clothing, and education & training for work. Amounts on offer are: Single person: **£100–£500**: Couple: **£100–£780**
- You must be over 18 and either a refugee, have humanitarian protection or be a dependent of someone who is.
- The loan **must be paid back**. Regular payments will begin 6 weeks after your first payment.
 - £25/month if on Universal Credit
 - ~£50/month if working full time
- You can apply online via a **VERY** simple form: www.gov.uk/refugee-integration-loan
- You should get a decision within 4 weeks.