

Asylum Accommodation and Support Contracts (AASC):

Summary of the contractual requirements for initial and contingency accommodation for people seeking asylum

Over the past 12 months, there has been an increase in the UK in the use of 'contingency' accommodation (additional accommodation intended to be for temporary use) to house destitute people seeking asylum. Such provision currently includes hotels, as well as two disused Ministry of Defence sites.

The Asylum Accommodation and Support Contracts (AASC) are clear that the use of contingency accommodation should in no circumstances vary the AASC contract in respect of the provision of services by accommodation providers (Schedule 5 para 5.4.7.c). Our understanding is therefore that **all** contingency accommodation should meet the standards set out in the Asylum Accommodation and Support [Statement of Requirements](#) for initial or full board accommodation. ***To date, there has not been any detailed guidance distributed publicly by the Home Office on this point.***

What is this document for?

This document is a **summary** of the contractual requirements in the AASC contract for initial and full board accommodation. Additional to this summary, we have produced a more **detailed guide** to the contractual requirements for full board accommodation. It is intended to be an easily accessible guide for advocates to better understand the specifications of the contract, and to enable them to use the contract to challenge inadequate provision.

This document is based on contractual standards agreed between the Home Office and its accommodation providers and set out in the AASC [Statement of Requirements](#). The language used and standards agreed are not reflective of the views of Asylum Matters.

Who are Asylum Matters?

Asylum Matters is an advocacy project that works in partnership locally and nationally to improve the lives of people seeking asylum through social and political change. We have Campaigns Project Managers in the North West, West Midlands, Yorkshire and Humber, the North East, and Wales.

In 2019, Asylum Matters produced full guides on the AASC and AIRE contract requirements, as well as posters outlining key information. These resources can be accessed [on our website](#). You can also write to us at info@asylummatters.org for more information.

We are always interested to know if you are seeing systemic problems in asylum accommodation. Contact your regional campaign manager (if applicable) or info@asylummatters.org.

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This summary section provides top line information on basic contractual standards for initial and full board accommodation.

The **Asylum Accommodation and Support Contracts (AASC)** govern the relationship between the Home Office and the three companies contracted to provide asylum accommodation in the UK: Clearsprings, Mears and Serco. Detailed specifications on services to be provided are set out in the Statement of Requirements for the contracts, which can be found online [here](#).

The **Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility Contract (AIRE)** governs the relationship between the Home Office and its contracted advice provider, Migrant Help. The AIRE Statement of Requirements can be found at online [here](#).

There is a close relationship between the two sets of contracts in the framework of support to people seeking asylum.

GENERAL STANDARDS AND MULTI AGENCY WORKING

- The Asylum Accommodation and Support Contracts (AASC) are clear that the use of contingency accommodation should in no circumstances vary the AASC contract in respect of the provision of services by accommodation providers.
- There is an obligation in the contracts for accommodation providers to liaise and cooperate with other actors, including the voluntary sector and including through participation in multi-agency forums;
- All asylum accommodation is always required to be safe, habitable, fit for purpose and correctly equipped;
- Accommodation for disabled Service Users, or Service Users with specific needs, should be fit for purpose and able to be used in compliance with relevant legislation;
- Accommodation providers [committed before the Home Affairs Select Committee](#) in May not to move newly arrived unrelated adults entering initial or contingency accommodation into shared bedrooms;

FOOD AND DRINK

- Fresh drinking water should always be provided;
- Breakfast, lunch, evening meals should be provided. For lunch and evening meals: at least one hot and one cold selection, a vegetarian option and a drinks service;
- A food service for babies and small children, enabling them to be fed whenever necessary, should be provided;
- Special dietary, cultural or religious requirements (including, without limitation, gluten free and diabetic options where necessary) should be met;
- Additional foodstuffs or meals should be provided as required to meet the nutritional needs of Service Users for whom three daily meals may be insufficient;
- The food service should meet appropriate nutritional standards for each varied menu and satisfy cultural, religious, health or other specific requirements;
- Providers must clearly advertise the availability of religious or culturally sensitive meals to relevant Service Users, where appropriate;
- The Provider shall ensure that each varied menu is validated by a suitably qualified nutritionist or health professional as being appropriate to the dietary needs of Service Users.

PERSONAL CLEANLINESS AND HYGIENE

- New personal linen for each service user;
- Reasonable access to laundry facilities;

- Personal toiletries to be provided, including feminine hygiene products.

BABIES AND CHILDREN

- Baby care equipment and disposable nappies must be provided;
- Facilities to allow sterilisation of equipment for babies and children must be provided;
- Where applicable, childcare equipment including cots and high chairs should be provided.

CASH SUPPORT

- The provision of cash support to people seeking asylum is not governed by the AASC contract. Up until November 2020, there had not been standard provision in respect of cash support provided to people in contingency accommodation. In some cases, where additional support items (baby care equipment, disposable nappies, personal toiletries and feminine hygiene products) have not been provided by accommodation providers, we are aware that a small amount of cash has been provided to residents in lieu of these items. This has not been consistent across facilities.
- At the end of October, a Ministerial letter reported on [here](#) set out proposed changes to asylum support: including plans for an allowance for people in full board accommodation facilities. It committed to a weekly cash payment of £8 for people in full board, and some further backdated payments to cover clothing (£3 a week backdated until March) and travel (£4.70 a week backdated until July). *There is as yet no public information on how these payments will be administered / implemented.*

INDUCTIONS

- Inductions should be provided within one calendar day by the accommodation provider. This should include orientation in the accommodation, signposting to AIRE (Migrant Help), but also to local VCS services and legal advice, and information on how to make complaints;
- Migrant Help, the advice provider, also have an obligation to provide an induction within one calendar day. This is happening by telephone in most contingency sites. It should assist the person to apply for asylum support and give information on relevant local support networks and voluntary sector and community-based organisations which are available to offer assistance in the local area.

STAFF TRAINING AND BEHAVIOUR

- Accommodation providers have an obligation to treat all Service Users and their dependents in a polite and courteous manner which recognises their rights as individuals;
- All staff in contact with service users (including volunteers and sub-contractor agents) must be adequately trained.

RELOCATION AND DISPERSAL

- Service users should not be moved more than once whilst they are in initial accommodation, except for health and safety reasons;
- Accommodation providers should be providing further briefings to Service Users at least five days before dispersal.

HEALTHCARE AND MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19

- Providers are required to agree and acknowledge that the safety and security of the Service Users in their care is of absolute importance and must not be jeopardised, and that they are responsible for the general welfare of Service Users in their care;

- Providers have an obligation to liaise with the Home Office, Migrant Help, relevant health authorities, including contacts from Public Health, in the management of infectious or contagious diseases;
- Providers must take necessary action to protect the welfare of a Service User with an infectious or contagious disease, as well as other Service Users, their staff and members of the public, seeking guidance from relevant medical or public health professionals if necessary;
- The provision of healthcare services specific to asylum accommodation is not a requirement under the AASC contracts, and it is our understanding that it is for specific Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to consider how to configure services if contingency accommodation is procured within their area.

ADULTS AT RISK

- The Accommodation Providers are required to be proactive in monitoring and identifying people with specific needs or at-risk Service Users within their care;
- The Providers also must be proactive in making referrals to relevant statutory and/or voluntary services for an assessment of Service User needs, where appropriate.

COMPLAINTS

- Accommodation Providers are to encourage Service Users to make complaints through Migrant Help;
- Accommodation Providers have five working days to respond to and resolve Service User's complaints after a referral from Migrant Help;
- Migrant Help are also responsible for escalating complaints if a Service User informs them that a complaint has not been resolved to their satisfaction;
- Where the Accommodation Providers are informed of a complaint directly by Service Users during property visits, the accommodation providers are required to notify Migrant Help of the complaint on the same day, including the substance of the complaint and the name and contact details of the Service User making the complaint, where known. They are then responsible for responding to and resolving the Service User's complaint within five working days.
- Migrant Help's complaints procedure is [here](#).

ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO ESCALATE ISSUES:

- Contact [Migrant Help](#) to make sure that concerns around asylum accommodation are put on the record, not lost in the system, and fed into performance management information collated by the Home Office. If an individual wishes to make a complaint, this can be done [via Migrant Help](#) and accommodation providers should deal with it within five working days;
- Work with multi-agency groups, other advocates and organisations such as Local Authorities and Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships to make sure concerns are escalated with the accommodation providers. Both the accommodation providers and [Migrant Help](#) have partnership teams who should engage with local organisations seeking to point out issues or better provision;
- Work together with local Councillors and MPs to bring issues to their attention and get them to take action or use the media to get issues heard. Organisations like [Imix](#) work to support groups looking to make media approaches.

We are always interested to know if you are seeing systemic problems in asylum accommodation and if you have been in touch with your elected representatives or the media: contact your regional campaign manager (if applicable) or info@asylummatters.org.