



information sheet

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Zoe Harper, ILPA Legal Officer zoe.harper@ilpa.org.uk

Immigration Law Practitioners' Association www.ilpa.org.uk 020-7251 8383 (t) 020-7251 8384 (f)

Asylum support: Level of support for asylum-seekers

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The Government has reviewed the way it calculates the level of support the Home Office provides for destitute asylum-seekers to live on while their asylum claim is determined in the UK. The changes made reduce the amount of money provided to lone parents and families with children and took effect on 10 August 2015.

Support for asylum seekers

The Home Office provides support to asylum-seekers, and their dependants, while their asylum claims are being determined if they would otherwise be destitute.

Support to asylum-seekers whose initial asylum claim is being considered, or whose fresh application has been accepted as such by the Home Office, is provided under section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 unless they have additional care needs that would make it more appropriate for them to be supported by the local authority under different arrangements.

This 'section 95 support' includes accommodation if the person needs this and a cash payment designed to meet the individual's 'essential living needs'. The Home Office has reviewed the level of the cash payment that it provides to asylum applicants and their dependants under section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

How have the levels of asylum support changed?

The Home Office has introduced a single flat rate payment to all individuals supported under section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

The single payment rate is £36.95 per week for each individual. This is the same as the previous rate for single adults over 18 years old, who will be unaffected by the change.

The income of single parents and families with children, however, will reduce significantly. The table below provides some examples of how families with children will be affected.

Examples of families affected by the changed rate (with children under 16 years)	Previous payment	New payment	% change
Lone parent and 1 child	£96.90	£73.90	-24%
Lone parent and 2 children	£149.86	£110.85	-26%
Couple and 1 child	£125.48	£110.85	-14%
Couple and 2 children	£178.44	£147.00	-18%
Couple and 3 children	£231.40	£184.75	-20%

Whilst the cuts are significant in all of these categories, lone parents and larger families will be particularly affected by the changed rates.

What other support is available for parents and families?

The Home Office has stated that additional payments for families with very young children will continue. Families will therefore continue to be entitled to an additional £5 per week for children aged under one year and an additional £3 per week for children aged between one and three years.

Pregnant women are able to receive an additional £3 per week during their pregnancy and to apply for a maternity grant of £300 to help with the costs arising from the birth of a new baby.

People who are eligible need to make an application for each of these additional payments as their rate of support is not increased automatically.

Exceptional support for asylum-seekers

In the case of *R (Refugee Action) v The Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2014] EWHC 1033 (Admin) (09 April 2014), it was held that the Home Office support rate reflects those needs identified by the Home Office that apply to the general population of asylum seekers. Where individuals have particular needs outside those anticipated for this general population, the Home Office should meet these on a case-by-case basis using its powers under s.96(2) Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. This section provides that:

If the Secretary of State considers that the circumstances of a particular case are exceptional, he may provide support under Section 95 in such other ways as he considers necessary to enable the supported person and his dependants (if any) to be supported.

The Home Office has no policy or process for use by those applying for additional support to meet exceptional needs. Where such needs arise and would not be met by another statutory agency such as a local authority, it will be necessary to make a written request for exceptional support to the asylum support team in the relevant area, providing information and evidence. ILPA will be publishing an information sheet on *Asylum support under s.95 and s.96(2): meeting exceptional needs* with more information.