



**DfC**

Department  
for Communities

[www.communities-ni.gov.uk](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)



Help available from the Department  
for Communities for people who  
have been granted leave to  
remain in the United Kingdom

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**Please take this document with you to your Social Security or Jobs and Benefits office appointment.**

This guidance contains important information for people who are granted:

- refugee status
- humanitarian protection status
- discretionary leave status
- indefinite leave to remain
- limited leave to remain

Your asylum support will stop 28 days after you receive your Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). If you need to claim benefits you must contact the Department for Communities as soon as you receive this or you may not get payment of benefits arranged in time.

**Do not wait until your asylum support stops.**

# 1. What to do now you have been granted status

You can get help and financial support through the UK benefits system if you are:

- looking for work
- not well enough to work
- a lone parent (including if you have a partner but they are not living with you)

- on a low income
- have reached the qualifying age for Pension Credit

If any of these apply you should contact the Department for Communities as soon as possible.



## 2. What is the Department for Communities?

The Department for Communities provides help with finding work and claiming benefits for people of working age and benefits for people of pension age.

The main working age benefits are:

- Universal Credit
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support

These benefits are paid by Social Security or Jobs and Benefits offices, which are part of the Department for Communities.

If you are of pension age, the Department for Communities provides help with access to Pension Credit which is a top up to State Pension for those on a low income.

Your State Pension age depends on your date of birth. This is currently anywhere between 60 and 66 years, dependent on the date you were born and whether you are male or female. You can find out more at [www.nidirect.gov.uk/check-your-state-pension-age](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/check-your-state-pension-age).

Pension Credit is paid by the Pension Service, which is also part of the Department for Communities.

## 3. How do I contact the Department for Communities?

If you are of working age, have received your National Insurance number (NINO) and are looking for work you can apply for Jobseeker's Allowance at your nearest Social Security or Jobs and Benefits office.

If you want general advice and information about Jobseekers Allowance or social security benefits:

- get in touch with a Social Security or Jobs and Benefits office on **0800 022 4250**

most calls are free – you will need your postcode

Lines open 9am to 5pm each week day (excluding Public Holidays and Thursdays between 9am and 10am)

- get in touch with an advice centre
- visit **[www.nidirect.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance)**

If you are of State Pension age, contact the Pension Service:

**Telephone Freephone: 0800 587 0892**

**Textphone: 0800 587 0893**

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm (except public holidays)

Calls to the above numbers are free from a land line. The Department for Communities has arrangements in place with most mobile phone companies to ensure 0800 calls are also free from mobiles. Please contact your service provider to check whether they charge for 0800 calls. If your service provider does charge for 0800 calls the Department for Communities can offer a call back.

## 4. Where to get help

The benefit system is changing significantly. A number of different benefit changes are being introduced. Two of the biggest changes are that Disability Living Allowance is being replaced by Personal Independence Payment and that six means tested benefits are being replaced by Universal Credit. These benefits are:

- Income Support (IS)
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA (IB))
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA (IR))
- Housing Benefit (HB)
- Working Tax Credit (WTC)
- Child Tax Credit (CTC)

You will be informed by the Jobs and Benefits office which benefit you should apply for.

Further information can be obtained by contacting the:

- Welfare Changes Helpline **0808 802 0020**
- nidirect website ([www.nidirect.gov.uk/benefits-and-financial-support](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/benefits-and-financial-support))
- Law Centre (NI) Encyclopedia of Rights ([www.lawcentreni.org/EoR](http://www.lawcentreni.org/EoR))
- Citizens Advice Guide ([www.adviceguide.org.uk/nireland](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/nireland))
- Belfast City Council: Refugees Transition guide ([www.belfastcity.gov.uk/community/advice/migrants](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/community/advice/migrants))

## 5. Eligibility and habitual residence test

You have been given leave to remain in the UK. This means that you have permission to work in the UK.

To claim Income-related benefits you must complete the first stage of the habitual residence test. You may have to complete

the second stage of the habitual residence test if you have been granted:

- discretionary leave status
- indefinite leave to remain
- limited leave to remain

## 6. What happens next?

If you are of working age you will be asked to go to the Social Security or Jobs and Benefits office nearest to where you live for an interview with an Work Coach or Adviser. If you change your address make sure that you inform the Social Security or Jobs and Benefits office immediately. If you are asked to go to an interview, you must go on the day and time that this is arranged. When you arrange your interview let the Department for Communities know if you would prefer to speak with a male or female Work Coach or Adviser, where available this will be accommodated.

### **Universal Credit**

You can apply for Universal Credit online at [www.nidirect.gov.uk/universal-credit](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/universal-credit). An email address and bank account is required to make an application.

Help to make an application is available at the Jobs and Benefits Office.

Identification can be verified online or by making an appointment at the Jobs and Benefits office.

An initial interview must be attended in the Jobs and Benefits office to discuss with a Work Coach work-related requirements and agree a commitment.

### **Pension Credit**

If you are claiming Pension Credit then the Department for Communities will write to you with confirmation of any benefits which are due to you. If you prefer to deal with them in person you can contact the Pension Service on **0800 587 0892**.

## 7. What you need to take with you to the interview

When going to the Social Security or Jobs and Benefits office for your interview you must take the following documents if you have them:

- immigration Status Document or Biometric Residence Permit
- your NINO or NINO update letter
- details of your bank account
- photographic identification



## 8. National Insurance number

In some cases your UKVI case owner will have applied for a National Insurance number (NINO) for you and you should have received a letter telling you what it is. It consists of 2 letters followed by 6 numbers and a letter, for example QQ 12 34 56 A.

You do not need a NINO for your benefits claim to be made. However if you do not have a NINO you should tell the Department for

Communities at the start of your claim. The Department for Communities will search their computer system and if your NINO is not found, will apply for a NINO on your behalf as part of your claim to benefit.

You may be asked to go to a separate interview for the NINO. Evidence of your identity and your status in the UK will be required.

## 9. What the Department for Communities will need to know

The Department for Communities will ask questions to decide how much benefit may be due to you. The information you give will help the Department for Communities understand your needs and help prevent unnecessary questions being asked.

You can help by telling the Department for Communities your immigration status straight away and showing them your Home Office letters and identification as well as giving them your NINO if you have one. You should not delay in making a claim to benefit if you do not have a NINO.

## 10. Payments

If you are still receiving asylum support this amount will be subtracted from your benefits payment until the date your asylum support ends. After that, you will receive your full benefits payment. Benefits are usually paid into a bank, building society or Post Office account. If you do not already have an account the Department for Communities can help you to open a Post Office Card Account.

In order to open an account, the bank, building society or Post Office will check your identity and will need proof of your address. They accept a number of documents, including:

- the documents issued by UKVI
- a personal reference from your doctor or solicitor stating your address
- a letter from a government agency with your name and address

Even if you cannot provide any of these, it may still be possible to open an account.

If you are unable to open a bank, building society, or Post Office Card Account, ask your Work Coach or Adviser about payment options.

## 11. Looking for work

Your Work Coach or Adviser will explain the conditions attached to different types of benefit. For example, to claim Jobseeker's Allowance you must show that you are available for and actively seeking work. The Jobs and Benefits office can help you to look for work and give you advice about how to do this. This support is designed around your needs; it is flexible and aims to offer the right help at the right time.

At the first interview you will meet your Work Coach or Adviser who will talk through the

support available. Support may include training programmes to help you find a job.

If a skills need is identified, such as to improve your English language, your Work Coach or Adviser will refer you to an 'English for Speakers of Other Languages' course.

You will have regular appointments with a Work Coach or Adviser where you need to show what you're doing to find work.

## 12. Other benefits

You may also be entitled to other benefits to help you cope with different circumstances, for example, if you have a dependent child, or if someone in your household is disabled. The Department for Communities will be able to discuss this support with you.

If you have a disability or are unfit for work you can claim Employment and Support Allowance. If the Department for Communities believes that you can still look for some work they will interview you regularly to support you in overcoming any barriers that your health places on your ability to go back to work.

If you pay rent or rates you may get help from the local Northern Ireland Housing Executive or Land & Property Services. This help is called Housing Benefit and Rate Rebate. For more information visit [www.nidirect.gov.uk/housing-benefit-and-rate-relief-for-tenants](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/housing-benefit-and-rate-relief-for-tenants) and [www.nidirect.gov.uk/rate-rebate-scheme](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/rate-rebate-scheme).

Access to financial support can continue when you start work, particularly if you are a parent. This is through Tax Credits, which are administered by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC). Find further information at [www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk).



## 13. Summary

Your asylum support will stop 28 days after you receive your Biometric Residence Permit (BRP).

You should contact the Department for Communities as soon as you receive your BRP or you may not get payment of benefits arranged in time.

Do not wait until your asylum support stops and do not wait until you have received your NINO.

You must take all the required documents that you have to your Social Security Office or Jobs and Benefits office interview, including

details of your bank account if you have one. If you do not do this, payment of benefit may be delayed.

Make sure you attend interviews with your Social Security or Jobs and Benefits office on the day and time arranged, otherwise payment of benefit may be affected.

If you change address make sure that you inform your Social Security or Jobs and Benefits office immediately.



