



BY EMAIL ONLY

27 October 2020

Dear Chief Executives

The 2020 review of the asylum support allowance

I wrote to you on 8 June to set out some preliminary findings of our 2020 review of the appropriate level of cash support provided to asylum seekers and failed asylum seekers supported under section 95 and 4(2) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. On the basis of those findings, I instructed the Home Office to implement an immediate and exceptional increase to the standard weekly asylum support allowance provided to those in dispersal accommodation (generally flats and houses) to £39.60 per week, this being our best assessment of the amount of cash the average supported person requires to meet their essential living needs based on the information available at the time.

The Home Office has now completed the review by conducting the necessary market research about the actual costs of the relevant items we accept are essential (excluding food which continues to be assessed by Office for National Statistics data in the way described in my previous letter). This has confirmed that our assessment in June was accurate, as the total assessed cost of meeting all needs came in at £39.63. The table in Annex A gives the precise costings of each item and we shall also be sharing some further details on the findings with members of the National Asylum Stakeholders Forum in the normal way.

In due course we will arrange an appropriate amendment to the Asylum Support Regulations 2000 to reflect the fact that an asylum seeker supported under section 95 of the 1999 Act would “as a general rule” be provided with £39.63 per week (rather than £37.75 per week as now stated).

Asylum support allowance for those in full-board accommodation facilities

I have also reflected on the support provided to those in full-board accommodation facilities, including hotels, who have been assessed as eligible to receive section 95 or 4(2) support. These facilities have in the past only usually been used as a short-term arrangement for those with an immediate accommodation need, usually coinciding with the period during which individuals are supported under section 98 of the 1999 Act (temporary support provided pending the determination of an application for section 95 support).

However, as a result of the necessary decision of 27 March to suspend cessations of support due to the impact of Covid, there has been a lack of flow through the asylum support system; this has resulted in many individuals remaining in these facilities for longer periods. We have now resumed cessations where appropriate and I would welcome your support for this work; in particular by encouraging and enabling failed asylum seekers to

return to their own countries with the assistance available them, so freeing up scarce dispersal accommodation for others.

In order to ensure that those accommodated in the facilities who have been assessed as eligible to receive section 95 or 4(2) support are provided with sufficient assistance to cover their full essential living needs, I have decided to make some changes to their support arrangements. Needs related to food and toiletries will continue to be met by the accommodation provider under existing contractual arrangements. However, we will provide those individuals with a weekly cash payment of £8, which reflects our assessment of costs for buying items to meet needs related to clothes, non-prescription medicines and travel. In addition, my officials will continue the on-going work to ensure there are adequate ways of meeting communication needs across all of the relevant accommodation sites.

In addition, some further payments will be backdated in this way:

- A sum of £3 per week to reflect clothing needs will generally be backdated to either 27 March (if the person had been granted section 95 or 4(2) support by that time) or to the actual later date when they were granted section 95 or 4(2) support.
- A further sum of £4.70 per week to reflect the travel needs will be backdated to either 1 July 2020 (if the person had been granted section 95 or 4(2) support by that time) or to the later date when they were granted section 95 or 4(2) support. I do not consider backdating for travel costs before 1 July to be appropriate in light of the Covid restrictions in place nationally during the period.

The backpayments do not include the sum allocated for non-prescription generic medication as information provided confirms that this need was in general being met during the period in question.

These amounts will be subject to reduction to take account of cases where the accommodation provider has been providing cash payments to cover any needs at a level above our assessment of the amount necessary to meet the particular need. Over time, however, we will work with providers to ensure these payments are set at the correct level required to meet the need.

I hope you appreciate that it will be logistically challenging to make these changes and my officials are working up an implementation plan.

I trust this letter is helpful in setting out the Government's position. The changes I have described represent a fair and generous settlement of the key outstanding issues relating to the 2020 review. The standard living allowance of those in dispersal allowance has been raised by around 5%, which is considerably more the current rates of inflation. The change that is being introduced for those in other sorts of accommodation will ensure they receive a package of cash and "in kind" support of equivalent value.

With Best Wishes,



Chris Philp MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Immigration Compliance and the Courts

MAKE OF THE ASYLUM SUPPORT ALLOWANCE 2020

Make up of the section 95 weekly cash allowance for a single able-bodied adult:

Categories of “need”	ONS Expenditure data from 2018/19 (adjusted for single person) / 2020 market research	After Home Office adjustment and inflation
Food and non-alcoholic drinks	£25.23	£26.49
Adjusted for inflation since the data was collected - CPI as at March 2020 (1.5%)		£26.89
Toiletries	2020 Market Research	£0.69
Non-prescription medicines	2020 Market Research	£0.35
Laundry/toilet paper	2020 Market Research	£0.43
Clothing and footwear	2020 Market Research	£3.01
Travel	2020 Market Research	£4.70
Communications	2020 Market Research	£3.56
Subtotal		£12.74
Total		£39.63

The base amount for food and non-alcoholic drink, later adjusted by the Home Office, is taken from data in Table A6 from Workbook 1, published in the Office for National Statistics report “Family Spending in the UK: April 2018 – March 2019” which can be found at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/expenditure/bulletins/familyspendingintheuk/april2018tomarch2019>.