



UK Visas  
& Immigration

# Contingency Asylum Accommodation Ministry of Defence sites Factsheet

October 2020

# Factsheet

In recent months we have faced additional challenges which have required the Home Office in some instances to use temporary accommodation, including hotels, and more recently Ministry of Defence (MOD) sites in Kent and Pembrokeshire, to ensure we continue to fulfil statutory obligations to support and accommodate destitute asylum seekers whilst their claims are examined.

You can find detailed information on the asylum seeking process on Gov.uk: <https://www.gov.uk/claim-asylum> and more information on why and how we use contingency asylum accommodation on Gov.uk: <https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/07/03/factsheet-asylum-accommodation-and-applications/>

This factsheet provides some key information about our use of MOD sites.

## **Why are we using MOD sites?**

The Home Office has a statutory obligation to provide support including accommodation to destitute asylum seekers whilst their claims are being considered.

In recent months, the asylum system has faced significant pressures and it has become necessary to source, and use, additional temporary accommodation, such as hotels, to ensure the Home Office can continue to meet its statutory obligations towards destitute asylum seekers.

In the urgent situation we are in, we have had to identify further suitable and available accommodation and put it to use quickly. This now includes the use of two MOD sites in Kent and Pembrokeshire. The sites are being run by Clearsprings Ready Homes, one of the Home Office's Accommodation Providers under our Asylum Accommodation and Support contracts.

## **Who will be using the sites?**

The sites are being used to accommodate single, adult male asylum seekers. These are people who have claimed asylum in the United Kingdom, and whose asylum claims are under consideration. They are not being detained and so are free to come and go but are expected to be on site overnight.

All asylum seekers are subject to an initial screening process by UK Visas and Immigration, which includes security and safeguarding checks. All those using the accommodation will have already been in the United Kingdom for at least 14 days and completed the necessary period of self-isolation before being moved to the sites.

Further checks are made, to confirm suitability for transfer to the contingency accommodation, before individuals are moved to different sites and asylum seekers are fully briefed by Clearsprings Ready Homes in advance of their move.

We are not using the sites to accommodate women or children, or vulnerable adult males, and we will not be moving anyone onto the sites who is showing Covid-19 symptoms.

### **Are the sites suitable to be used for accommodation?**

The sites were until recently used by the MOD for accommodation. The accommodation is safe, habitable, fit for purpose and correctly equipped in line with existing asylum accommodation standards contractual requirements.

The MOD has given permission to use the site for 12 months, but the use of this facility will be temporary, and will be discontinued as soon as the Home Office is able to do so.

Taking account of the need to ensure the site is Covid-safe and social distancing can be maintained, current plans are that the sites will accommodate a maximum of 234 asylum seekers in Pembrokeshire and 431 in Kent.

### **What is being provided for the asylum seekers on site?**

All the basic needs of residents will be met on site, a comprehensive induction process including accommodation, food, entertainment and pastoral support arranged by Clearsprings Ready Homes.

The MOD sites will be fully catered (three meals per day) so asylum seekers will not receive a weekly support allowance or vouchers. Options will be provided which cater for special dietary, cultural or religious requirements and additional meals will be provided as required. Additional support items such as toiletries are being provided, along with access to laundry facilities.

Televisions are available at the site and wi-fi will also be provided allowing for internet access. Mobile telephones are provided if asylum seekers do not have one to ensure that contact can be made.

All asylum seekers have access to a 24/7 AIRE (Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility) service provided for the Home Office by Migrant Help where they can raise any concerns regarding accommodation or support services.

Clearsprings Ready Homes, Migrant Help and the Home Office are working with a range of stakeholders which include national non-governmental and charitable organisations to provide support to asylum seekers, for example, English lessons or volunteering opportunities. Any offers of support can be emailed directly to: [Penally@migranthehelpuk.org](mailto:Penally@migranthehelpuk.org) and [Folkestone@migranthehelpuk.org](mailto:Folkestone@migranthehelpuk.org).

### **What information is provided to the asylum seekers on arrival?**

Information about what asylum seekers can expect from asylum accommodation is primarily given through a comprehensive induction process. This includes information

relating to adherence to local social distancing and Covid-19 regulations. Home Office information on rights and entitlements is also provided.

The induction process is supplemented the information provided online by Home Office:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/living-in-asylum-accommodation>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asylum-support-uk-rights-and-expectations>

and Migrant Help:

- <https://www.migranthelpuk.org/about-asylum-services>.

Induction material is provided in the language of the country of origin or language of choice. Interpreters are available 24/7 when speaking with Migrant Help.

### **What healthcare is being provided?**

Healthcare arrangements are in place at both sites, and have been subject of discussion between the Home Office and the relevant Clinical Commissioning Group in Kent and Local Health Board in Pembrokeshire.

The Home Office has funded a private nurse at both sites.

### **What safeguarding measures are in place?**

Using information from Home Office's screening processes and safeguarding teams, asylum seeker's cases are pre-checked and only allocated accommodation at the site if there are no indicators of vulnerability, modern slavery or exploitation in their case history.

Asylum seekers are able to contact Migrant Help 24 hours a day, 365 days a year if they need help, advice or guidance, that includes raising issues relating to safeguarding.

There are Clearsprings Ready Homes staff on site 24/7 to deal with any issues raised by the residents and to ensure that their safeguarding requirements are met.

If Clearsprings Ready Homes staff have reasonable grounds to suspect that the safety and wellbeing of asylum seekers, staff, or members of the community are at risk, they are obliged to take appropriate action including contacting the police, ambulance or local authority services or making an onward referral to the Home Office safeguarding team.

### **What Covid-19 guidance and measures are in place?**

Measures are kept under review to ensure compliance with the law and all public health advice in England and Wales is taken into account. These measures include:

- Written guidance in respect of self-hygiene, social distancing and self-isolation is issued to all service users;
- Hand sanitisation stations are in place around both sites with pictorial guidance on COVID and social distancing requirements;
- Mealtimes are staggered to enable social distancing at meal times;
- A track and trace system is in place at both sites. Service users are reminded of the current local social distancing requirements in place when they leave the sites;

- Any asylum seeker user who develops symptoms of COVID-19 will be instructed to self-isolate and provided with suitable accommodation to enable them to do so. Daily welfare checks will be made on individuals isolating;
- Asylum seekers will have the same access to testing as the general population.

### **What security arrangements are in place?**

A security risk assessment has been conducted for both sites. Local authorities and police forces have been and will continue to be consulted on matters relating to security, safety and community cohesion, to minimise the risk to any individuals that are accommodated on the sites as well as members of the community.

Both sites have a security presence 24/7. The Home Office and Clearsprings Ready Homes keep security under review.

All incidents are reported to the Home Office immediately by Clearsprings. The Home Office then work with the Clearsprings Ready Homes to put additional measures in place, if required.

### **What about the impacts on the local community?**

The Home Office recognises that there have been concerns raised by local communities regarding both sites and continues work closely with the local authority and other partners to understand and address those concerns. This includes working closely with the police and other agencies in matters relating to the operation of the sites, safety and security and the handling of any protests.

The safety and security of the local community, asylum seekers, staff and visitors to the sites is of paramount importance. The Home Office is committed to open and transparent engagement and has attended online local community engagement events to understand and address concerns raised by local residents.

Clearsprings Ready Homes is an experienced provider who have all the required policies and procedures in place around security, safeguarding, critical incident management and health and safety.

It is important to remember that the asylum seekers on site are seeking protection in the United Kingdom, and awaiting the outcome of their claims. They are not being detained, are free to come and go and are subject to the same laws and protections as any other member of society.

The Home Office will continue to work with the police, local authorities and other partners who are involved in managing community relations locally to ensure that any issues that may arise are handled appropriately and concerns addressed.

### **How is this being funded, including unexpected pressures on local services?**

The Home Office is funding the operation of the sites, which are designed to meet the basic needs of asylum seekers. In addition, the Home Office will pay full Local Authority business rate charges, and a private nurse is being provided at both sites.