

The National Asylum Support Service (NASS) administers the support provided to eligible asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute. Asylum seekers can apply for accommodation and financial assistance, accommodation only or financial assistance only. NASS do not provide accommodation or support to other migrants and, generally speaking, people from abroad wishing to live in this country are expected to be able to maintain and accommodate themselves without recourse to public funds. In effect migrants are not eligible for social housing, although the provision of this is of course the responsibility of local authorities.

Eligible asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute may be provided with support from NASS. This support can include the provision of accommodation. To ensure a ready supply of accommodation NASS has contracted with the private and public sector to provide housing. The agreed contract price for this accommodation includes payment for utility bills, including council tax, and household goods. It is not possible to separate out the specific amount paid to cover utilities, council tax and household goods but the following table shows overall NASS support costs and the costs of providing accommodation to asylum seekers supported directly by NASS:

	Total spend on asylum support costs by IND, £m;	Amount spent on dispersal accommodation
2000/2001	747	115
2001/02	1046	247
2002/03	1070	319
2003/04	1008	343
2004/05	No figure available	No figure available

Similarly it is not possible to say how much is paid to private sector companies or local authorities.

The level of financial assistance paid to asylum seekers and their dependants is set out in the Asylum Support Regulations. The amounts currently payable are as follows:

Person aged 18 – 24	£31.15
Person aged 25 or over	£39.34
Couple	£61.71
Lone parent	£39.34
Child under 16	£43.88
Child aged 16 or 17	£33.85

The National Asylum Support Service (NASS) is not responsible for meeting the costs of legal fees, medical or dental charges for asylum seekers it is supporting. Supported asylum seekers and their dependants are eligible to receive NHS medical treatment. The Department of Health is unable to separate out the specific costs of providing NHS treatment for asylum seekers from the total spent. Supported asylum seekers are also able to access free legal advice. The Legal Services Commission has entered into contracts with solicitors and other legal representatives. The Legal Services Commission can be contacted at 86 Grays Inn Road, London WC1N 8TX.