

Supporting citizens arriving from Afghanistan

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Introduction

The schemes that support Afghan citizens arriving in the UK are:

- Afghan Relocation Assistance Policy (ARAP scheme)
- Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)
- Afghan Locally Employed Staff (ALES)

Afghan citizens who are subject to Afghan Relocation Assistance Policy (ARAP scheme) or the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) are not technically members of HM Forces so would not be classed as service leavers. They will not have access to the various provisions put in place by DWP for ex-serving personnel, such as early access to the Work and Health Programme. A check must be made to ensure the UK Armed Forces Service states 'no' and amended if necessary to this.

Afghan Relocation Assistance Policy formerly known as Afghan Locally Employed Staff

The UK has been running a scheme to support Afghan citizens and their family members. This is in recognition of their commitment and bravery shown supporting UK forces since 2013.

The scheme has two elements:

- the ex-gratia scheme (also known as the Afghan Locally Employed Staff scheme) closed in November 2022
- the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) launched in April 2021

Both elements are intended to support current and former ARAP who have worked for British Forces. The schemes provide a range of in-country packages of assistance in Afghanistan and for those who meet the criteria, relocation to the UK with their dependants.

Those who qualify and choose to relocate to the UK with their families are not expected to return to Afghanistan.

Under the scheme, individuals were initially granted 5 years Limited Leave to Enter with recourse to public funds. The Government has announced that this will be upgraded to Indefinite Leave to Remain with recourse to public funds which will enable Day 1 access.

They will be able to work straight away if they choose to seek employment.

These individuals are not categorised as refugees and will have (or be given) a Biometric residence permit (BRP) by the Home Office. However, this will not include a National Insurance number.

Arrival information

The individuals and their families began arriving in the UK on 22 June 2021.

Those who arrived in the early part of this scheme have been allocated to local authority social housing. Those who have arrived later in this scheme are currently in 'Bridging hotels'.

Afghan Relocation Assistance Policy, citizen supported by a local authority and in local authority social housing

Once allocated to a local authority (LA), individuals or families will be offered the following support:

- appropriate accommodation to meet the needs of the family
- a package of advice and assistance covering employment, welfare benefits, housing, health, education and utility supply
- introduction to jobcentre offices including support to attend Universal Credit and work-related interventions
- assistance in securing school places for school-aged children
- ESOL English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) support where necessary
- weekly cash support - please note this weekly cash support will end when any of the following occurs:
 - the individual leaves the local authority provided accommodation
 - the individual or partner secures employment
 - the individual claims and starts to receive Universal Credit

Welfare entitlement

For this group of citizens:

- they are expected to be supported by local authorities for the first 3 months of their stay in the UK but can make a claim to Universal Credit during that time (once Universal Credit is in payment, Local Authority financial support will terminate)
- Afghan ARAP are exempt from the habitual residence element of the Habitual Residence Test (HRT) when applying for Universal Credit and will automatically satisfy the right to reside once evidence of their Indefinite Leave to Remain under this scheme has been confirmed by decision makers

- following decision maker action on HRT, National Insurance numbers will be allocated as per business as usual (eDCI1) process

Afghan Relocation Assistance Policy, citizen supported by the Home Office and in a bridging hotel

These citizens and their families have not yet been allocated to a supporting local authority (LA), so have been placed in a 'Bridging Hotel' and are currently being supported by the Home Office. This support includes:

- accommodation
- food and meals
- living expenses

These citizens will not be in the right local authority area to which they will eventually live and will therefore be moving around the country.

Welfare entitlement

For this group of citizens:

- they are expected to move onto Universal Credit as quickly as possible (with expected support from locally deployed DWP agents in the bridging hotels and jobcentres)
- Afghan Relocation Assistance Policy (ARAP) are exempt from the habitual residence element of the Habitual Residence Test (HRT) when applying for Universal Credit and will automatically satisfy the right to reside once evidence of their Indefinite Leave to Remain under this scheme has been confirmed by decision makers
- following decision maker action on HRT, National Insurance numbers will be allocated by a centralised team
- any Home Office cash payments are disregarded and will end when the citizen receives their first Universal Credit payment.
- Home Office financial support will end for citizens not in receipt of Universal Credit when they leave the bridging Hotel for local authority accommodation the local authority will provide financial support until receipt of the first Universal Credit payment and these payments are disregarded)
- for claimants who are living in hotels, any claim to Universal Credit will only cover the personal allowance elements and not the Housing element.

Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme citizen supported by the Home Office

This group of citizens are those who have left Afghanistan and whose exit was not planned but was the result of the associated risk to them and their families.

This group of citizens will also be moved to bridging hotels and will initially be given financial support by the Home Office. This support includes:

- accommodation
- food and meals
- living expenses

These citizens will not be in the right local authority area to which they will eventually live and will therefore be moving around the country.

Initial arrivals under Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) were granted 6 months discretionary Leave Outside the Rules (LOTR) with recourse to public funds which exempt them from the habitual residence element of Habitual Residence Test (HRT) when applying for Universal Credit. They will automatically satisfy the right to reside once evidence of their 6 months discretionary Leave Outside the Rules (LOTR) under this scheme has been confirmed by decision makers. The Government has announced that this will be upgraded to Indefinite Leave to Remain in due course.

Future arrivals under ACRS will be granted Indefinite Leave to Remain with recourse to public funds which will enable Day 1 access. This will exempt them from the habitual residence element of HRT when applying for Universal Credit and will automatically satisfy the right to reside once evidence of their Indefinite leave to Remain under this scheme has been confirmed by decision makers.

Welfare entitlement

For this group of citizens:

- are expected to move onto Universal Credit as quickly as possible (with expected support from locally deployed DWP agents)
- Afghan ACRS are exempt from the habitual residence element of Habitual Residence Test (HRT) when applying for Universal Credit and will automatically satisfy the right to reside once evidence of their immigration status under this scheme has been confirmed by decision makers
- following decision maker action on HRT, National Insurance numbers will be allocated by a centralised team
- any Home Office cash payments are disregarded and will end when the citizen receives their first Universal Credit payment.
- Home Office financial support will end for citizens not in receipt of Universal Credit when they leave the bridging hotel for local authority accommodation (the local authority will provide financial support until receipt of first Universal Credit payment and these payments are disregarded)
- Universal Credit will only cover the personal allowance elements and not the Housing element unless there is a liability to pay rent.