ASYLUM (as of 30th Mar) IN A SENTENCE – The COVID Changes.

Warning – Things change daily. Check current situations before offering guidance to service users.

Mostly from <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/latest/news/changes-to-home-office-asylum-resettlement-policy-and-practice-in-response-to-covid-19/>

* Asylum Screening Unit (ASU) is closed for interviews for new arrivals until a remote interview system can be developed.
* Reporting to Sheffield has been temporarily suspended for those asylum seekers that are required to do so.
* Substantive asylum interviews are on hold until a new system can be developed.
* Asylum support – accommodation– will continue till at least the end of June, ie no one will be asked to move on.
* Anyone receiving or with a discontinuation of support letter should ring Migrant Help.
* Asylum support – financial – will continue till at least the end of June but there has been no indication yet that the no cash restriction has been removed from Section 4 ASPEN cards.
* In court Asylum Appeals and Judicial Reviews will cease until at least the end of April. Decisions made “on the papers” will proceed and eventually video hearings.
* Further Submissions Unit in Liverpool is closed and the need to attend in person is cancelled but submissions can be sent by post or email.
* Assisted Voluntary Returns (AVR) are paused but requests can be registered and interim support offered.
* Many in detention are being released as detention is for administrative convenience before deportation and there can be no deportations at the moment.
* Stateless Applications are on hold.
* Resettlement is on hold as there is little international travel.
* Welfare benefits and claim procedures have been temporarily changed.
* Tenancy regulations have been changed to defer evictions.
* NHS. People with illnesses which make them particularly vulnerable can register ( <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable>) and receive extra help.
* Local Authorities are asked to house and feed all rough sleepers, even if they have no recourse to public funds.
* Solicitors, if they are working, are doing so remotely and most can still be contacted by phone or email.
* All issues of hardship due to the virus (self-isolating, etc) should be reported to Migrant Help 0808 801 0503.
* Health problems ring 111. Do not visit your surgery.
* Health costs. As yet here has been no withdrawal of the requirement for the NHS to charge NRPF people for secondary medical care.
* Information in different languages [https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/#](https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/)

Be careful. I have yet to see confirmation that information collected by the NHS and Local Authorities will not be used later to trace people who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

The HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT is thawing. Let us hope and pray it is the start ~~global~~ migrant warming!