



WANDSWORTH
BOROUGH OF
SANCTUARY



Wandsworth Welcome Pack

Guidance for new arrivals



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“ Everyone is welcome here. We respect and celebrate the diversity of our community and value the many cultures, backgrounds and experiences of those who make the UK their home. ”

1 Introduction

This welcome pack has been designed specifically for sanctuary seekers who have arrived in Wandsworth to help access both council services and those offered by voluntary and community groups to make the most of opportunities in the borough. This welcome pack should be read alongside the official government guidance for new refugees: [Welcome: a guide for new refugees - GOV.UK](#)



2 Overview of Refugee Services Team

Our Refugee Services Team in Wandsworth is dedicated to supporting Sanctuary Seekers, resettled families, and guests arriving in the borough. We work across multiple services to ensure individuals and families feel supported to rebuild their lives in our communities.





4 Homes for Ukraine Scheme

Homes for Ukraine Support

Wandsworth Council's Homes for Ukraine team helps deliver the UK's sponsorship scheme. We carry out pre- and post-arrival checks (including DBS and property visits), and welcome guests with an initial visit to explain local services and ensure safe arrangements. We also manage thank you payments for eligible hosts. Ongoing support is available to both guests and sponsors, including quarterly e-bulletins with updates, social events, and news from borough-wide groups that reflect the interests of our sponsors and guests.

Contact the team on: homesforukraine@wandsworth.gov.uk

Welcome Payments

If you have arrived through the **Homes for Ukraine Scheme**, you will have been matched with a Wandsworth resident who is your sponsor. While you are staying with your sponsor, you should not be charged rent.

As part of the scheme, Ukrainian guests are entitled to a **one-off £200 payment** to help with immediate costs. This is issued as a voucher, which can be collected and redeemed at your local Post Office.

To collect your voucher, you must:

- Book an appointment at the **Wandsworth Customer Centre**, Wandsworth Town Hall, Wandsworth High Street, SW18 2PU.
Appointments are available Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm (excluding bank holidays).
- Bring your **passport and visa** with you to the appointment.
- [Book an appointment here.](#)



Contribution to Bills: While sponsors cannot charge rent, they may ask guests to make a reasonable and proportionate contribution towards household expenses such as food and utility bills (water, gas, electricity). The agreement for this contribution should be discussed transparently.

Extending your stay in the UK

The Homes for Ukraine team is here to assist with any questions you may have and can signpost you to local support services, such as Citizens Advice, for further guidance.

Contact us: homesforukraine@wandsworth.gov.uk

End of Sponsorship and Rematching

Most sponsorships last at least six months, but in some cases this may not be possible. Rematching is only available to guests who arrived through the **Homes for Ukraine visa route** and should only take place if the arrangement is no longer viable or safe.

If your sponsor can no longer host you, or you wish to move to a new host, please email homesforukraine@wandsworth.gov.uk as soon as possible with:

- Sponsor's full name and address
- Guests' full names and dates of birth
- A brief explanation of the situation

The Council must complete Government-required checks before you can move in with a new host, so early contact is important.

If you are planning to move into private rented accommodation, please let us know so we can support you. You may also be eligible for a resettlement payment. You can find more information on housing options in the 'Finding a place to live' section of this pack.

Government Guidance

The Government has also produced some key information and guidance about the Homes for Ukraine scheme. This includes:

- Guidance for sponsors:
www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-sponsor-guidance
- Frequently Asked Questions about the scheme: www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-scheme-frequently-asked-questions
- A welcome guide for Ukrainians which is also translated into Ukrainian. This includes information about how to apply for benefits and open a bank account. www.gov.uk/government/publications/welcome-a-guide-for-ukrainians-arriving-in-the-uk





5 Money

5.1 Bank account

When you arrive in the UK, it is important to open a bank account as soon as possible. A bank account allows you to safely store money, receive wages and benefit payments, and pay bills through direct debit. Banks will require proof of identity, such as your passport or eVisa, and proof of address, such as a tenancy agreement or utility bill.

When opening an account, ask the bank about fees, services, and whether the account includes a debit card. Many debit cards are contactless, allowing you to pay for travel or shopping quickly. Digital-only banks are also an option and may be easier to set up if you do not yet have proof of address. For guidance on opening an account, as well as debt and money advice, you can contact Citizens Advice:

[Citizens Advice Wandsworth](#)



5.2 Benefits

The UK has a welfare system which is designed to help those who face financial hardship, or who have specific needs. Your local Job Centre Plus will be able to help you find out which benefits you may be able to access. This may include Universal Credit, Pension Credit, Disability benefits, Carer's Allowance and Child Benefit.

It's important to apply for benefits as soon as possible. You'll need access to your **e-visa**, which is a digital record of your immigration status. This is accessible through your **UKVI account**. Your **National Insurance number** should be included in your immigration documents or sent separately.

Citizens Advice can provide guidance on eligibility, help you complete applications, and explain how benefits are paid. They can also help with budgeting, managing debt, and understanding your rights.

5.3 Employment Support

If you have Refugee status or leave to remain, you are allowed to work in the UK without any restrictions.

To work, you will need your National Insurance (NI) number. This number is unique to you and is required by employers. When you get a job, you will need to prove your right to work to your employer. This is done by requesting a share code from your eVisa account.

Some jobs in the UK – such as those in education, healthcare, law, and other regulated professions – require your qualifications to be formally recognised or registered before you can work in that role.

You can get help with finding a job and preparing for work by contacting your local Jobcentre Plus. You can find your nearest Jobcentre here:

find-your-nearest-jobcentre.dwp.gov.uk/search.php



Wandsworth Work Match is the Council's employment service that can offer access to local jobs and training and can help match you to a job with a local employer. If you are looking for work, you can call them on +44 (0)20 8871 5191 to register. You can register by emailing wandsworthworkmatch@wandsworth.gov.uk. For more information visit wandsworthworkmatch.org.



There are also several local organisations that can support you in finding employment. You can find more details in the External Support section of this pack.

5.4 State Pension

The State Pension age is currently 66 but depends on your date of birth. You can check your eligibility date at [GOV.UK](https://gov.uk). If you are of State Pension age, you are not required to look for work. For advice and information on Pension Credit and other entitlements, contact the Pension Service.





6 Health

The National Health Service (NHS) provides health services to people living in the UK. Most of these services are free. For more information on how the NHS works, please visit: [How the NHS works infographic ENGLISH FV](#)



6.1 GP

Doctors that work in local surgeries are called General Practitioners (GPs). GPs will usually be your first point of contact if you are feeling unwell. You should register with your local GP surgery as soon as you arrive in the UK. Everyone is entitled to see a GP, free of charge. You will need to fill out a registration form and **should not be refused if you cannot provide proof of immigration status or home address.**

- [Click here to find your local GP](#)

You are entitled to have an interpreter at your GP appointment. You should request this at the time of booking your appointment.



6.2 111 Support

If you are unwell and need to speak to someone urgently, you can seek medical advice by contacting NHS 111 or by visiting your local pharmacy.

111 can direct you to the best place to get help if you cannot contact your GP during the day, or when your GP is closed.

6.3 Mental Health Support

There is lots of support available free of charge in the UK for those experiencing any worries, feelings of sadness, not being able to sleep or struggling with day-to-day routines. If you are worried about your mental health, you can speak to your local GP.

There are also a range of initiatives designed to support those struggling with their mental health. For more information please visit:

[Mental health services in Wandsworth](#)



In the case of a mental health emergency, please go to A&E or **call 999 immediately.**

6.4 Dental Care

Dental care in the UK is available through the National Health Service (NHS) or privately. NHS dental treatment is more affordable than private care, but not all dentists accept NHS patients. For more information on how to find a dentist near you:

- [How to find an NHS dentist - NHS](#)

Children under 18 and some adults may be entitled to free NHS dental care. Emergency dental treatment is also available through NHS 111.



6.5 A&E and 999

In case of emergency, please go to your nearest accident and emergency (A&E) hospital department. If you need help immediately or unable to get to A&E yourself, call **999** as soon as possible.

- [You can find your nearest A&E hospital here](#)



6.6 Other support

If you are pregnant or have children, you can find advice on a range of common conditions on the [South West London Healthier Together Homepage](#), developed by NHS healthcare professionals.





7 Education

7.1 Education in the UK

All children between the ages of 5 and 16 are entitled to free and compulsory education in the UK. You should apply for a school place as soon as possible after arriving in the UK.

Early Years Education (Under 5 Years Old)

Children under 5 can access early years education through nurseries, childminders, and pre-schools. All 3 and 4-year-olds are entitled to 15 hours of free childcare per week during term time (38 weeks per year). Some 2-year-olds may also qualify for 15 free hours per week, depending on family circumstances.

If both parents are in work, children from nine months old are eligible for 30 hours of free childcare per week during term time.

You can check your eligibility and how your benefits may entitle you to support here:

www.gov.uk/free-childcare-if-working/check-youre-eligible.



Primary and Secondary Education (Ages 5–16)

Children must be in education from age 5 to 16. School places are managed by the local council. You must apply for a place through the admissions team, who will help you find a suitable local school. For more details, including the application process, deadlines, waiting lists, and appeals, visit the [Wandsworth School Admissions pages](#). You can also find information on financial support and on the Wandsworth Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) offer here.



School Meals

Children in Reception, Year 1, and Year 2 at state schools in England are entitled to free school meals. For older children, free school meals may still be available depending on your household income or if you receive certain benefits.

For more information on what you are eligible for, please visit:

- [Apply for free school meals](#)



Post-16 Options (Ages 16–18)

After age 16, young people can continue their education through sixth form, college, or apprenticeships. Education or training is compulsory until age 18. Support is available to help explore pathways, including English language and vocational courses.

7.2 English Language Classes and other Additional Training

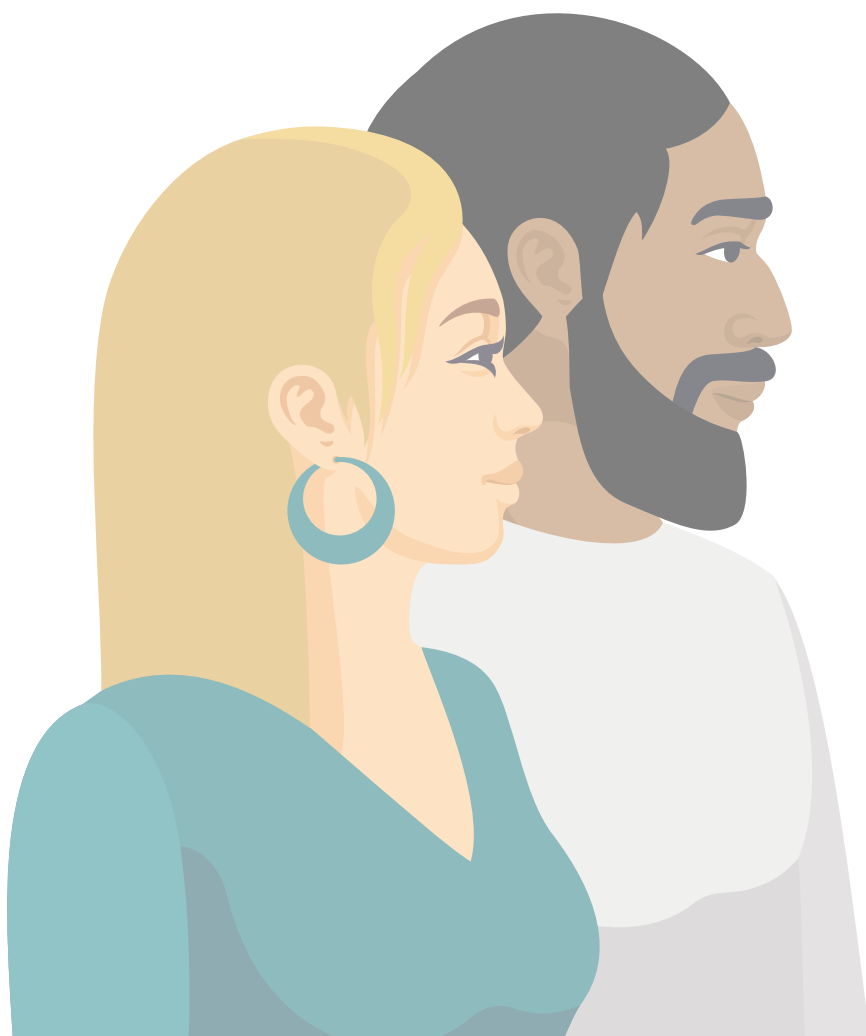
Wandsworth Lifelong Learning:

Lifelong Learning offers free training for adults which includes English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and a range of other courses, as well as one-to-one information, advice and guidance with qualified careers guidance advisors.

Eligibility usually requires living in the borough, being over 19, and having permission to stay in the UK for the duration of the course.

More information on all courses is available on Wandsworth Lifelong Learning's website, or you can call **+44 (0)20 8871 8055** or email edlifelong@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk

There are also other options offered by local charities, which you can find in the External Support section of this pack.





8 Children Services

Children's Services have a wide range of services available to support children and families.

8.1 Children's Centres and Family Hubs

Children's centres provide a welcoming space where you and your child aged 0 – 5 years old can have fun and learn. They offer a range of courses and activities. Most sessions will be free of charge, but some will require booking and a small fee.

Family Hubs also offer a wide range of services and support for you and your family. Services and support are offered to parents and children aged 0-19 years old.

Wandsworth has hubs grouped into three local clusters:

- **Battersea:** Yvonne Carr Family Hub, Somerset Children's Centre, York Gardens Children's Centre
- **Roehampton:** Roehampton Family Hub, Granard Children's Centre, West Hill in the Park Children's Centre
- **Tooting:** Tooting Family Hub, Balham Children's Centre, Fayland Children's Centre, Franciscan Children's Centre, Smallwood Children's Centre

To join, fill out a Family Registration Form online or at your local centre, then check the timetable and come along. For more information, please visit:

[Wandsworth Family Information Service](#)



8.2 Protecting Children in Wandsworth

If you are worried about a child's safety or wellbeing, it is important to share your concerns – keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility. Many people worry that contacting Children's Services will mean a child is taken into care, but unless a child is at risk of significant harm, the council will work with parents to provide help and support so that the family can stay together.

- If you have any concerns about a child in Wandsworth, contact the **Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH):**
- Telephone: **020 8871 6622** (Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm) or **020 8871 6000** for the Out of Hours service.
- Email: mash@wandsworth.gov.uk
- More information: [Report a concern about a child](#)
- In an emergency, always call **999**.





9 Adult Services

9.1 Adult Social Care

Wandsworth Adult Social Care provides support for adults with mental or physical disabilities, or those who are elderly and frail, to help them stay independent and live fulfilling lives. It also supports people who care for vulnerable adults.

When you contact Adult Social Care, they will carry out an assessment to understand your needs. A financial assessment will also be carried out to decide if you need to contribute towards the cost of care.

- To find out more about Adult Social Care visit www.wandsworth.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/adult-social-care



You can contact Adult Social Care from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, by:

- Telephone: **020 8871 7707**
- SMS Phone: **07860 034722** (for deaf or hard of hearing only)
- Email: adultsocialcare@wandsworth.gov.uk
- Out of Hours support: **020 8871 8999**

9.2 Domestic Abuse and Support Services

Domestic abuse can take many forms including physical, sexual, emotional, or economic abuse. If you are in danger, call **999**. For urgent but non-emergency concerns, call **101**.

Local support:

- **Refuge IDVA Service:** free, confidential service with interpreters available.
0203 879 3544
Richmondwandsworth@refuge.org.uk
- **Wandsworth One Stop Shops – drop in service**
 - Battersea: St. Mark's, Battersea Rise, SW11 1EJ. Mondays, 10am–12pm
 - Roehampton: 166 Roehampton Lane, Roehampton, SW15 4HR. Wednesdays, 10am–12:30pm

For more information and wider support please visit the [Council Website](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk)



- **National support: 0808 2000 247** (Freephone, 24/7)
www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk



Your immigration status will not affect your ability to seek domestic abuse support services.

9.3 Hate Crime

A hate crime is a criminal offence motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone's protected characteristics. A hate crime or hate incident occurs when somebody is harassed or attacked because of who they are.

- More information on victim support and reporting a hate crime can be found here: [Hate crime](#)
- If you are in danger, call **999**. For urgent but non-emergency concerns, call **101**.





10 Finding a place to live

10.1 Renting a Home Privately

Renting a home in the private sector gives you flexibility in choosing the type, size, and location of your accommodation. You can search for properties through websites like Zoopla, Gumtree, or local estate agents.

Before renting, consider:

- Whether you need a furnished or unfurnished home
- Accessibility and transport links
- If you're eligible for housing support like Housing Benefit or Universal Credit

Most landlords will require a deposit and rent in advance. Renting in London is expensive, so to give yourself the best chance of affording somewhere, it is important to be in employment. If you're on a low income or receiving benefits, most housing costs are covered through the Universal Credit Housing Element. If you are of pension age, you may be eligible for Housing Benefit instead. Additional help may also be available through a Budgeting Loan or Budgeting Advance from the government.

[Finding a place to rent](#) - here you can find more information on renting privately, as well as advice services and deposit protection information.



10.2 Local Housing Allowance (LHA)

If you are entitled to housing benefits, how much you receive is based on Local Housing Allowance, which depends on your household size and location. You can find out how much support you may get at: [LHA Direct](#)



10.3 At Risk of Homelessness?

If you are currently homeless or worried about becoming homeless, please contact the Homelessness Prevention Team immediately. They can provide support and help you explore your options.

- [If you are homeless or worried about losing your home](#)

You can find more information about the homelessness application process, including the documents that may be required, here:

[Homelessness application process.](#)





11 External Support

11.1 Support from Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice is a free, confidential, and independent service that offers help on a wide range of everyday issues. Their trained advisers can support you with:

- Understanding your rights and navigating UK systems
- Accessing benefits and financial support, including help with applications
- Debt and money advice to help you manage bills or rent
- Employment support, including understanding your rights at work
- Housing advice, including issues with landlords or tenancy
- Immigration and asylum support, where applicable
- Help accessing legal advice and signposting to other support services

You do not need to be a British citizen to get help from Citizens Advice. They will not share your information without your permission.

For more information on the support they offer please visit:

[Citizens Advice Wandsworth](#)



11.2 Voluntary and Community Support:

Wandsworth and nearby boroughs have many local organisations offering support to residents, including specialist help for Sanctuary Seekers. These groups provide:

- Legal advice
- Education services
- Food support
- Cost of living guidance
- And much more

- **Community Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (CARAS).**

They provide activities that promote connection and wellbeing. They have provision for young people and adults. caras.org.uk

Email: Info@caras.org.uk

Telephone: **020 8767 5378**



- **Katherine Low Settlement**

They free English classes and community clubs on drama, arts, music, dance, films and more. www.klsettlement.org.uk

Email: info@klsettlement.org.uk

Telephone: **020 7223 2845**



- **Southwest London Law Centres**

They provide free or low-cost expert advice to help local people understand and uphold their legal rights. <https://swllc.org>

Telephone: **020 8767 2777** (9:30am - 4:30pm Monday - Friday)

Email: enquiries@swllc.org



- **Wandsworth Welcomes Refugees**

Dedicated to supporting those seeking sanctuary in Wandsworth;

www.wandsworthwelcomesrefugees.org

Email: wandsworthwelcomesrefugees@gmail.com



- **Youth Legal**

Immigration advice for families and UASC; community care, housing, welfare, debt. www.youthlegal.org.uk

Telephone: **020 3195 1906**

Email: info@youthlegal.org.uk



- **Signpost**

Free service providing supportive information on wellbeing, health services, and practical skills for living in the UK. All that is needed is an email address to sign up. [Signpost – your guide to life in the UK - Thrive LDN.](#)





12 Travel, Culture, Religion and Leisure

12.1 Getting Around – Transport in London

To travel around London, you'll need a contactless bank card or an Oyster card. Oyster cards can be bought at most stations, in some shops, or online.

You must tap the same card when you start and end your journey. This helps make sure you pay the correct fare. TfL (Transport for London) will automatically charge you the lowest daily price for your travel.

You may be entitled to free or discounted travel. This could include free travel passes or reduced fares.

For more information on public transport, please visit: [Public transport](#)



12.2 Access for All

Access for All is an initiative from Wandsworth Council to make sure everyone can enjoy the leisure, cultural, and wellbeing opportunities that the borough has to offer.

The scheme offers eligible residents 100% to 50% discounts on a range of services, including £3 tickets for London Borough of Culture events.

All asylum seekers and refugees living in Wandsworth are eligible for Access for All. To find out more and apply, visit: www.wandsworth.gov.uk/access-for-all



12.3 Places of Worship

Wandsworth is full of safe spaces where you can worship and practice your religion.

To look up your local place of worship, please visit: [Places of worship](#)



12.4 Libraries

Wandsworth is home to several local libraries where everyone can read, learn, and connect. Many libraries offer dual language books, as well as:

- Access to computers and help using them
- Employment, skills, and business support
- Reliable health information and wellbeing resources
- After-school support and activities
- Free Wi-Fi

More information is available at: www.wandsworth.gov.uk/libraries

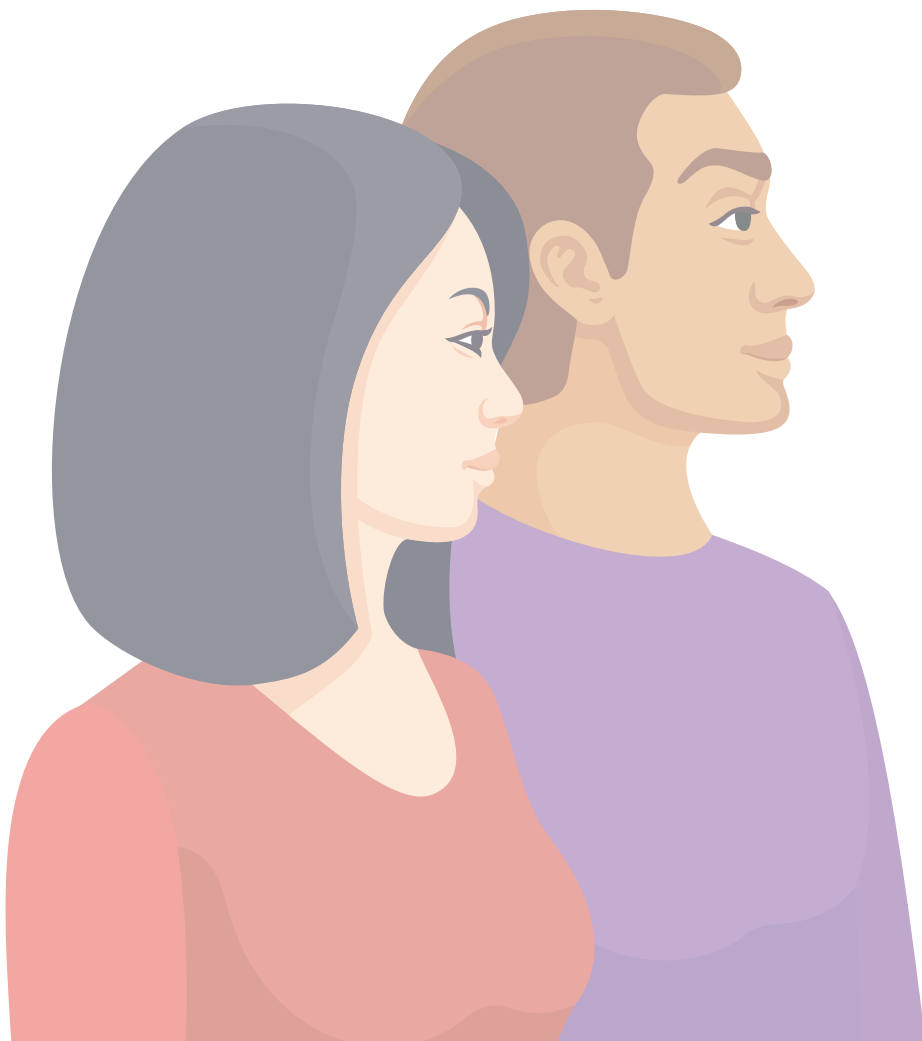


12.5. Things to Do in Wandsworth

Wandsworth has a variety of parks, leisure facilities, cultural venues, local markets, events and attractions. For further information on leisure and culture in the borough, visit: [Leisure and culture](#)



Wandsworth Refugee Services produce a quarterly newsletter which includes additional information on local support offers, activities and upcoming events. You can sign up to the newsletter here: [Sign Up for Refugee Services Updates](#)





13 Support for those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)

A person with **No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)** is restricted from claiming benefits that are classed as 'public funds' because of their immigration status.

For more detailed information about what counts as public funds and who can access them, visit the www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk



Although NRPF limits access to public funds, there are exceptions. You may be able to claim certain benefits or receive temporary support if you meet specific qualifying requirements. We may be able to support you if you are:

- **A family that is destitute** (lacking food, clothing, or shelter), or at risk of becoming destitute
- **A single adult with care needs**
- **A young person leaving care**

For more information and support, please contact:

[Support for those with no recourse to public funds \(NRPF\)](#)

The Resettlement team may also be able to signpost you to support. Please contact RefugeeResettlement@wandsworth.gov.uk





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