

Navigate

A guide to asylum life in Scotland





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We are Laura, Menesia, Mohammed and Samira, and we are volunteers with **Weaving Threads for Wellbeing**, a Mental Health Foundation project.

We have created the podcast **Navigate: A guide to asylum life in Scotland.**

In this podcast, we explore life in Scotland for people seeking asylum. The episodes are in English, but we know that not everyone who arrives in Scotland to seek asylum speaks English. That's why we've taken the most important information from the episodes and put it into this resource in other languages.

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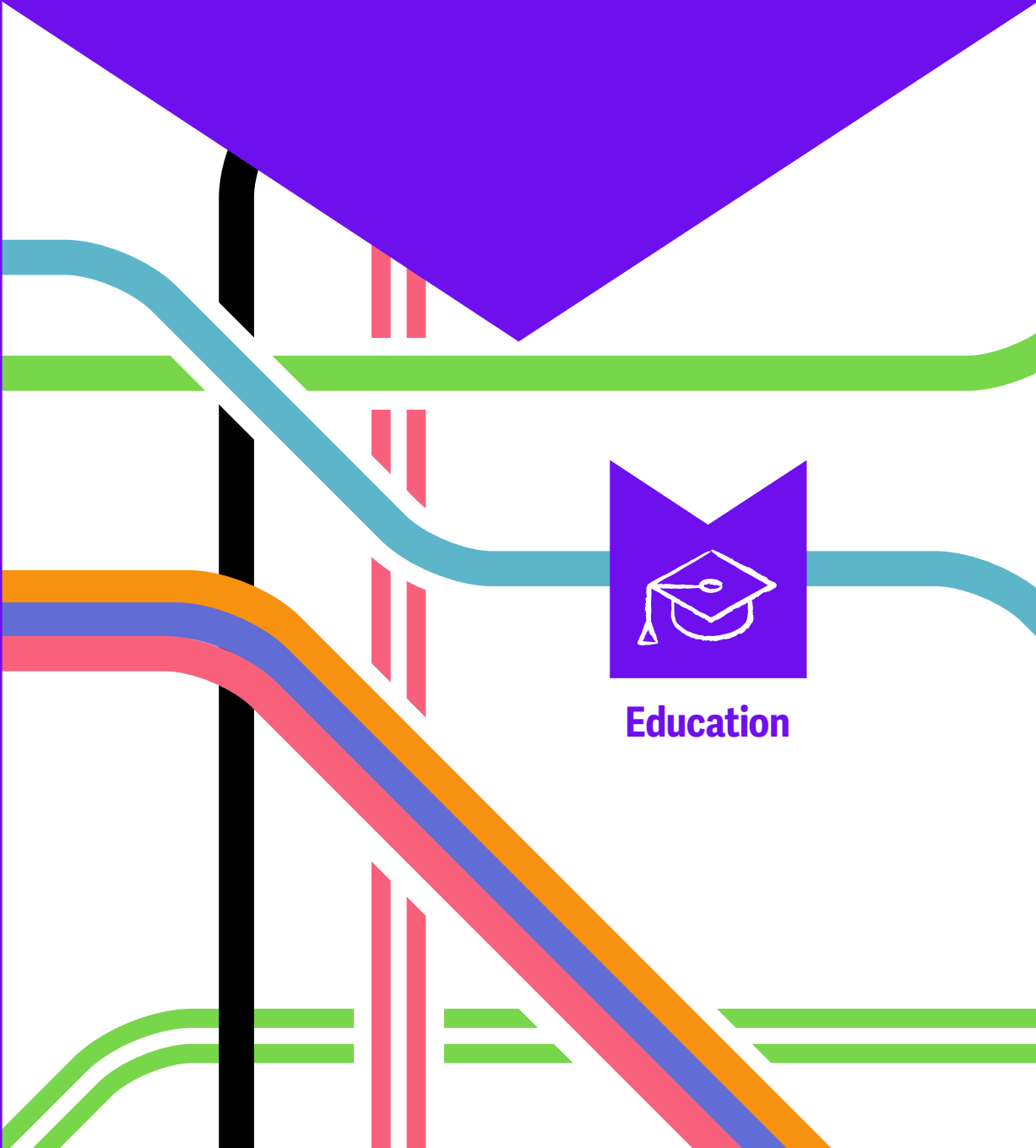
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Education



“Knowledge is light, ignorance is dark.”

Being in education can help you feel part of your community and make friends. In our experience, it has helped us feel a sense of purpose.

School: Children aged 5 to 16 who are seeking asylum can attend primary and secondary school. They do not need to pay fees to go to school.

Learning English: When people arrive in the UK to seek asylum, they often start studying ESOL. This stands for English for Speakers of Other Languages.

You can study ESOL at college full-time or part-time. College applications open when there are spaces available. There are also many opportunities to learn English in the community. For example, libraries, community centres, churches, and mosques often run ESOL classes.

Other college courses: If you already speak English when you arrive, you do not need to study ESOL. You can apply to study another course. If you are an asylum seeker and you are studying a course that is not ESOL, you can study part-time. Part-time usually means anything up to 16 hours a week.

University: Asylum seekers are usually allowed to study at university while their claim is being processed, unless you have “no study” immigration bail conditions is explicitly imposed. If you are allowed to study at university as an asylum seeker, you are unlikely to be eligible for student funding.

Many universities now offer Sanctuary Scholarships for forced migrants which cover tuition fees, help with study costs, and can offer accommodation. You don’t need to pay a scholarship back.

More information

- ESOL information for people living in Glasgow: learnesolglasgow.com
- BBC Learning English resources: bbc.co.uk/learningenglish
- Information about scholarships and support for people seeking asylum to go to university in the UK: displacedstudent.org.uk



Volunteering



All people seeking asylum can volunteer. Volunteering won't affect your asylum support payments. It is one of the best ways to prepare for working in the UK.

Volunteering has helped us practice English, understand Scottish culture, and make new friends.

You can volunteer at all kinds of different places. Places of worship, charity shops, community gardens, and food banks often take volunteers. Volunteering roles include catering, tutoring, fundraising, social media, befriending, and more.

To decide what kind of volunteering is for you, think about what you enjoy or if you have any special skills you'd like to share.

Not all voluntary roles will require references. If you do need a reference, you could ask your lawyer, doctor, support worker, caseworker.

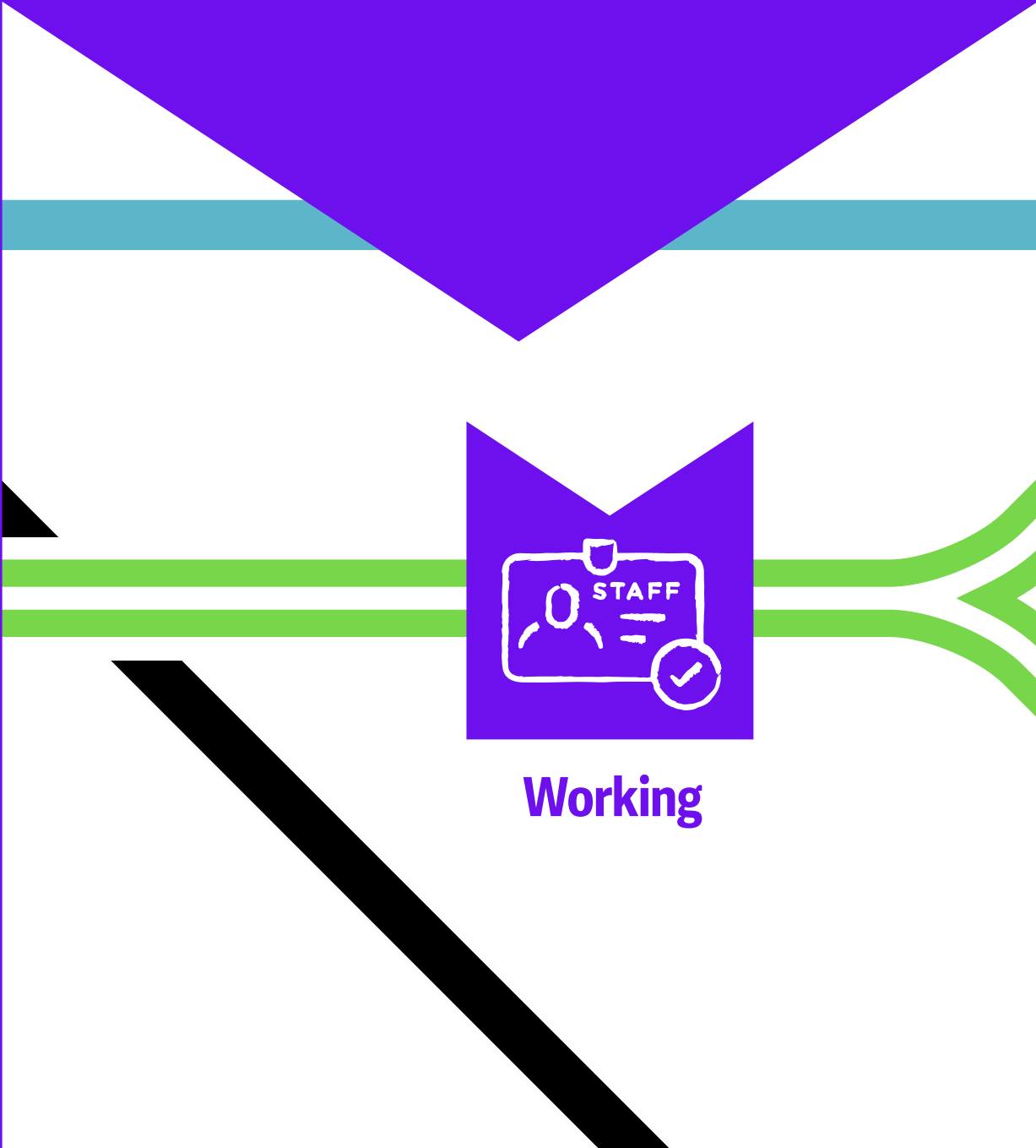
In a new volunteering role, you should have an induction where you find out more about the organisation and the role.

You should also be given a main contact who is the person you should go to with questions or concerns. You should also be given the training you need to carry out your role.

If you take public transport to get to volunteering, you should be offered travel expenses. If you are volunteering for a full day, you may be provided with lunch or money to buy lunch.

More information

- Volunteer Glasgow: volunteerglasgow.org
- Volunteer Glasgow's volunteering drop-in: volunteerglasgow.org/volunteer/cometoourvolunteeringdrop-in
- Scottish Refugee Council's volunteering drop-in for refugees and people seeking asylum: scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer/want-to-volunteer
- UK Government information about volunteering as an asylum seeker: assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66057d8b91a320001a82b1de/Permission+to+work+and+volunteer.pdf



Working

Working while seeking asylum



Most people who claim asylum in the UK are not allowed to work right away. Not having permission to work can be damaging to your mental health as you cannot earn your own money. Sometimes, it can feel like you are not contributing to society in the way that you would like to.

If you haven't received a decision on your asylum claim after 12 months in the UK, you can apply for the right to work. You should apply through your solicitor

and ask for a National Insurance Number. If you are granted permission to work, you can apply for jobs on the Immigration Salary List.

While you wait, there are things you can do to prepare for work. We recommend improving your English, volunteering, and learning about working culture in the UK.

There are organisations to support you with CV building, job applications, and practice interviews.

More information

- Right to Remain – info about applying for permission to work: righttoremain.org.uk/applying-for-permission-to-work-asylum
- Bridges Programmes: bridgesprogrammes.org.uk
- Breaking Barriers: breaking-barriers.co.uk
- UK Government advice: gov.uk/government/publications/handling-applications-for-permission-to-take-employment-instruction/permission-to-work-and-volunteering-for-asylum-seekers-accessible



Banking and finances



If you are seeking asylum in the UK, you will receive weekly asylum support payments from the government. How much you receive will depend on whether you live in catered accommodation (such as a hotel) or uncatered accommodation (such as a flat). Visit the Asylum Support page on the UK government website for updated figures.

Your asylum support payments will be loaded onto a card called an ASPEN card every week.

An ASPEN card has limitations on it. It cannot be used for online shopping or for making contactless payments in shops. You can use it to withdraw

cash from cash machines. However, it is not a bank account, which means you cannot add money to it or transfer funds into it from other accounts.

If you lose your ASPEN card, you need to call Migrant Help. They should send you a new card within a few days. It is important to ask the Home Office for emergency cash payments until you get a new card.

Typically, people seeking asylum do not have bank accounts. However, if you get work permission while you are seeking asylum, you will need a bank account. Organisations can support you to set up your bank account.

More information

- Aspen card information and advice from Migrant Help: migranthehelpuk.org/pages/faqs/category/aspen
- Right to Remain information on asylum support: righttoremain.org.uk/toolkit/asylum-support
- Positive Action in Housing advice for setting up a bank account: paih.org/resources/asylum-seekers-in-the-uk-how-to-get-a-bank-account
- Up to date figures on asylum support payments: gov.uk/asylum-support/what-youll-get



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