

Date published: 11 January, 2024

Date last updated: 11 January, 2024

Guidance to support HC2 application for asylum seekers

[Publication \(/publication\)](#)

Content

- [1. Aim of this guidance and background](#)
- [2. Asylum seekers and HC2 certificate access](#)
- [3. If treatment is needed before receiving a HC2 certificate](#)
- [4. Renewing a HC2 certificate](#)

1. Aim of this guidance and background

This guidance has been produced by a national working group that was established to improve the process for issuing HC2 certificates to people seeking asylum. The group had representation from the Home Office, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, NHS England, Doctors of the World UK, Bevan Healthcare, NHS Business Services Authority (BSA) and City of Sanctuary UK.

It is aimed at professionals supporting asylum seekers around access to healthcare and prescriptions. No one organisation is commissioned to specifically support individuals seeking asylum to complete the HC1 forms, however, often support is needed, and this guidance has been produced to assist those professionals who are providing this.

For further information please contact:

BSA: [0300 330 1343](tel:03003301343) or via the [online form \(https://faq.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/contact-us/\)](https://faq.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/contact-us/).

Migrant Help helpline: [0808 8010 503](tel:08088010503)

A [HC2 certificate](https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-low-income-scheme/hc2-certificates-full-help-health-costs) (<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-low-income-scheme/hc2-certificates-full-help-health-costs>) entitles individuals to free NHS prescriptions, dental treatment, wigs and fabric support, sight tests, vouchers towards the cost of glasses or contact lenses, and necessary travel costs to and from hospital for NHS treatment under the care of a consultant.

It is normal in the UK for those under the age of 60 to have to pay for prescriptions, eye tests and dental care. However, those who have low or no income are eligible to apply for an HC2 certificate by completing a HC1 form. Anyone, regardless of their immigration status, can apply for this.

2. Asylum seekers and HC2 certificate access

Asylum seekers in receipt of section 95 support will automatically receive a HC2 certificate and do not need to apply. Once they have received their section 95 grant letter from the Home Office, information will be sent to the NHS, and they should receive their HC2 certificate within 21 days. If they haven't received it by then, they can contact the [Migrant Help helpline](https://www.migranthelpuk.org/Pages/Category/asylum?msclkid=c4e3f3d1b67f11ecb561ad370471e260) (<https://www.migranthelpuk.org/Pages/Category/asylum?msclkid=c4e3f3d1b67f11ecb561ad370471e260>) for it to be followed up.

Those on section 98 or 4 support will need to complete a HC1 form. However, those receiving section 98 support should be encouraged to make their asylum support claim as soon as possible as. If this is granted (this will be assessed by the Home Office within 10 days of receiving the application) they will automatically be sent their HC2 certificate (within 21 days).

If there is a delay in applying for asylum support and the asylum seeker needs to apply for a HC2 certificate, or if the person is receiving section 4 support, this can be done using a HC1 form online or paper (it is recommended that it is done online where possible).

The HC1 form can be accessed in two ways by:

- [completing the online HC1 form](https://services.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/apply-for-help-with-nhs-costs/apply-online) (<https://services.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/apply-for-help-with-nhs-costs/apply-online>)
- [ordering a paper HC1 form](https://applications.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/LISWebAppStaticData/begin.do) (<https://applications.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/LISWebAppStaticData/begin.do>).

Couples applying together will need to complete a paper form. Sixteen and seventeen-year-olds who are dependant and do not live on their own should already be covered by virtue of their parent/guardian having a HC2. If they are not, they will need to apply for one. They may not be named on one as children are not named if there are ever any issues around penalty charges as a result, they can have these cancelled through the BSA.

NHS BSA has interpreters who can facilitate the conversation between the person calling and the NHS BSA advisor. More information is available on the [NHS BSA website](https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/advice-other-languages) (<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/advice-other-languages>).

2a. Notes for completing the online form

- The online form is quicker and simpler to complete than the paper form.
- For the question which asks if the individual is supported by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), if you tick 'yes' it will say that this form is not appropriate as this considers that all supported by UKVI are under section 95 and should have an automatic issued HC2 certificate. **Tick 'no' to this section if the individual is on section 98 or section 4.**

2b. Notes for completing the paper form

- Complete every section of this form and use an interpreter with the individual if needed.
- If they are living in a hotel/hostel **for part 3.1 you can tick 'no'** that no one else lives in their home as they are not linked to the other residents.
- The majority of the form is tick box 'yes/no'. Section 9 at the end asks you to explain how the individual is supported. In this section you will need to explain how the person receives food, clothing, toiletries, phone credit and transport. For the majority of asylum seekers this section is simple. Ideally, if they can write in English they should write this themselves but if they cannot you may need to write the following for them: **I am an asylum seeker living in home office accommodation and I am dependant on the home office for all of my needs. I am not in receipt of section 95 support.**
- The form is signed at the back by the individual.
- Any evidence around income needs to be included and the package needs to be taken to a post office for weighing and appropriate postage paid. If the form is posted without postage, it may still be received by the BSA, but this may cause delays in the application.

Once the forms are completed and sent it can take 4 to 6 weeks for the application to be processed, the HC2 certificate to be issued and posted to the address on the application form.

3. If treatment is needed before receiving a HC2 certificate

If the individual seeking asylum requires an urgent prescription or dental care, the NHS BSA can be contacted on 0300 330 1343. If the application has been processed, then a certificate number will be available which can be used to obtain a free prescription or

dental care prior to actually having the paper certificate. This has to be done by the individual themselves for confidentiality.

If a HC2 application has not been made or has not been received or processed, the individual should tick the 'L' box on the back of the prescription (HC2 full help certificate). For dental charge exemptions the dental provider should put an X against the 'no' option in the evidence of remission seen box on the FP17 PR form and dental activity claim and ask the patient to sign the declaration on that form.

They should be encouraged to apply for a HC2 as soon as possible.

Individual asylum seekers cannot be refused the service/medications by the provider (eg pharmacy (<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/2021-09/Patient%20exemption%20checking%20guide%20-%20pharmacy%20%28V3%29%20-%202008.2021.pdf>) or dental practice). The NHS BSA do however routinely undertake checks to verify that people are exempt from payment of NHS prescriptions charges to prevent and detect fraud or error. It is for the NHS BSA to decide whether or not individual cases should be investigated.

4. Renewing a HC2 certificate

HC2 certificates for asylum seekers normally last for 6 months (the expiry date is on the certificate) and a new application will need to be made at this point by filling in another HC1 form in advance of this date. If the asylum seeker is in receipt of section 95, the HC2 certificate will automatically be sent.

Publication reference: PAR1883

Date published: 11 January, 2024

Date last updated: 11 January, 2024

▲Back to top