

The information in this document is public and has been provided by members of the Multi Agency Forum Communications Subgroup which includes representation from the Home Office, Portland Port, Dorset Council, Dorset Police and NHS Dorset.

All information correct at 3 July 2023

Information about the Home Office barge for asylum seekers

- The Home Office will be housing asylum seekers on the Bibby Stockholm berthed in Portland Port. The Home Office is working with Corporate Travel Management (CTM) which is responsible for the day-to-day management of the barge.
- The Home Office and Portland Port worked together to agree a commercial arrangement.
- Dorset Council, Dorset Police, NHS Dorset and other agencies have statutory responsibilities to ensure robust arrangements are in place. Agencies in Dorset are working with the Home Office and the Port through a Multi-Agency Forum, preparing for the arrival of the barge and the asylum seekers.
- Agencies in Dorset are working in the best interests of both residents and asylum seekers to make sure arrangements operate smoothly, with minimal impact on local services and communities.
- For further information, please look at the Home Office online factsheet: Factsheet: asylum accommodation on a vessel in Portland Port (accessible) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Further details

Preparations are ongoing for the smooth arrival and operation of the Bibby Stockholm barge to accommodate asylum seekers at Portland Port.

The barge is expected to be in Portland Port for 18 months.

The United Kingdom has a legal obligation to support asylum seekers, who would otherwise be destitute. All occupants of the barge will be provided with basic and functional accommodation.

The Government is using barges and other accommodation options as an alternative to hotels to house asylum seekers, to offer better value for the taxpayer.

There will be a core staff on the Bibby Stockholm barge, from Corporate Travel Management (CTM) which will be responsible for managing the services on the barge. CTM, which managed two Scottish vessels, have experience of managing this type of facility for asylum seekers. A specialist and experienced security provider will also be working on site 24/7.

Once the barge has arrived and been connected to the port's services, the first group of asylum seekers will arrive: around 50 to start with. Over time, this will increase to up to 500 asylum seekers.

Asylum seekers will have been through a 'suitability screening' process that includes physical and mental health checks and security screenings such as identity checks against UK immigration and police data bases. All asylum seekers housed on the barge will have

their fingerprints taken ahead of arrival. Those housed on the barge will be adult males aged between 18 to 65 from various countries, all of whom will have been in the UK for some time.

Asylum seekers will receive cultural awareness advice aimed at ensuring they understand the social norms in the UK. This is a long-standing process used in asylum accommodation across the country to ensure community cohesion. As an example, at Napier, Kent, which has successfully accommodated asylum seekers since 2020, there is an occupancy agreement outlining expectations of behaviour on-site and in the community and an induction process which includes guidance on behaviour.

The process of familiarisation has already begun as the asylum seekers will have been in the country for some time.

The asylum seekers accommodated on the vessel will not be detained and will be free to come and go while adhering to the health and safety regulations of the port itself. The Home Office will provide a bus service to take asylum seekers from the port to destinations agreed with local agencies. The objective is for most of these destinations to be linked to activities for the asylum seekers, arranged through the local community and voluntary sector.

Local partners have a collective responsibility to ensure the safety of people residing in the county and as such, the residents of Bibby Stockholm are entitled to make use of local services including access to secondary healthcare as appropriate and registering with a GP practice.

A Multi-Agency Forum, attended by the Home Office, Portland Port, Dorset Council, Dorset Police and other key partners, meets weekly to oversee arrangements for health provision, policing and community support. The collective aim is to ensure minimal impact on local services, communities and businesses.

For answers to many of the most frequently asked questions about arrangements for the barge, please see the Home Office factsheet: [Factsheet: asylum accommodation on a vessel in Portland Port \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/92424/factsheet-asylum-accommodation-on-a-vessel-in-portland-port-accessible.pdf).