



ASPEN Post Go-Live Q&A

This document aims to respond to the frequently asked questions we have been receiving since go-live. The relevant Home Office teams including the operational business and the Asylum Support Payments project team are proactively working with Migrant Help, Accommodation Providers and PFS to provide resolutions for any issues faced during the transition to the new payment card/service.

What do service users do if they have not received a card?

We acknowledge that some cards have not reached service users since they were dispatched. We are proactively working to arrange replacement cards to be sent to service users. If a service user is eligible for asylum support and a payment card but has not received their card, we advise them to report this to Migrant Help; who will forward the concern onto the relevant operational team to action a replacement card, as well as issue an Emergency Cash Payment (ECP) to cover the period until the card arrives.

The escalation point for the voluntary sector/service user representatives is to contact the Aspen PFS inbox ASPENPFS@homeoffice.gov.uk. In this email, the concern should be outlined as well as:

- The service user's full name
- Date of birth,
- Address and
- AS reference number.

The relevant team will check against the cards to ensure the service user is included in replacement card dispatches.

What if I don't receive a response to my query to the inbox?

Please note that we are currently not providing holding responses to each query. However, we want to reassure you that all questions/issues have been picked up and are being investigated. Resources are currently deployed to resolve issues as soon as possible, and thus a holding response may not be sent to you.

When will a replacement card arrive?

Replacement cards are being dispatched to service users as soon as possible with many landing throughout this week. Due to the bank holiday most replacement cards should arrive on or by Tuesday 1st June. In the interim, ECPs will be available to support service users whilst waiting for their new card.

An Emergency Cash Payment (ECP) has been requested but it has not yet been issued to the service user.

All ECP requests are being handled by our operational teams and being shared with our accommodation providers to be issued. Our operational teams will continue to work closely with accommodation providers to ensure the swift issuance of ECPs should service users not have the card and ensure their critical needs are met as an emergency if required.

The service user has received their new Aspen card but cannot activate (IVR usage).

Please follow the below steps;

- 1) To activate the card - call the automated IVR helpline on 0800 246 1327 and choose the relevant language.
- 2) Choose option 1: "To retrieve your pin". This covers initial activation of cards as well as a PIN retrieval.
- 3) For this, service users will need the 16-digit card number on the front of their new card and their date of birth in the format DDMMYY. If, for example, their date of birth is 6th January 1965, they should enter the numbers on their keypad in this format: 060165 (e.g. image below). To note: we are receiving queries in relation to service users inputting their DoB and that it still does not work. **We ask that service users ensure they are using the DoB stated in any previous Home Office correspondence they are in possession of.**
- 4) The card is activated on completion of these steps. Once the back of the card is signed, it is ready for use.



<<Address Line 1>>
<<Address Line 2>>
<<Address Line 3>>
<<City>>
<<State>><<Postcode>>
<<Country>>

Date of Birth: 06/01/1965

A service user has received their new ASPEN card and activated it, but the balance on the card is incorrect.

The service user should contact Migrant Help to log this discrepancy. This will be forwarded to a caseworker to investigate.

It is important to note that whilst balances as of 5pm on Friday 21st May were migrated over to the new card provided, some cards transactions would not have been completed prior to 5pm and will have been completed on Sodexo's side since. We are currently in the process of reconciling such transactions with both providers and these will be available for service users after that reconciliation.

Service users are calling Migrant Help but they are not answering their phone line.

We understand that this is challenging and potentially frustrating for individuals. Following the recent transition to the new service, Migrant Help lines are understandably experiencing increased call volumes presently. Their lines are operating as usual with additional staff taking calls thus we ask that service users follow the usual process and continue to be persistent and stay on the line and/or try to call back at another time to report any issues to Migrant Help.

Service user has activated their card but unable to withdraw funds.

Eligible service users can withdraw cash from a cash machine, up to the value of £100 daily. The cash withdrawal limit does not affect purchases at point of sale (POS) and they will continue to be available if the cash withdrawal limits are reached. Please note, - if a service user is a failed asylum seeker on Section 4 support, they will not be able to withdraw cash from a cash machine. If service users are eligible to withdraw cash (S95 and S98) and still cannot, they should contact Migrant Help and report this for further investigation into the issue

Can ECPs be issued via self-authorisation by accommodation providers?

Providers have been asked to self-authorise when requests for ECPs become known to them. The operational Home Office team will also continue to follow the established ECP processes and issue where needed.

How long does it take for an ECP to be made and how much will be received?

Once the action is processed, we aim for ECPs to be issued within the next 24 hours. ECPs have been increased from £20 to £40 whilst we work on the current issues being experienced by service users. Additional resources have been allocated to process requests and manage card issues reported by service users and their representatives.