

# A Migrant's Guide to **MANCHESTER**

**Some useful advice for people starting a new life in Manchester**

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# Introduction

Starting a new life in the UK can be intimidating. Many things are different to how they were at home. Most things are expensive, and some things are just plain difficult. This pamphlet provides basic advice on some of the things that you will have to sort out when you arrive here and on troubles you're likely to get into.

Some of this advice will apply to everyone. Most will assume that, although you are a migrant, you have a legal right to live and work in the UK, most likely because you are an EU citizen. If that's not the case for you then things may be more complex and you may need more in depth information than this small pamphlet can provide.

## Transport

### **Buses**

There are a number of bus companies in Manchester; the biggest are First Manchester and Stagecoach. You can only travel on buses run by the company you buy your tickets from. Most bus tickets can be bought from the bus driver when you get on the bus. If you intend to use the bus often it is cheapest to buy weekly tickets. Daily tickets allow unlimited travel on buses belonging to one company for one day; if you travel more than three days a week a weekly ticket is cheaper. A day ticket from Stagecoach, for example, currently costs £4.10, and a weekly ticket £13.50 (you can also use Stagecoach tickets on MagicBus). There are also various family tickets which will save money if you are travelling with children.

If you get caught traveling with an invalid ticket or without a ticket, there is an on the spot fine of £50 or more.

## **Trams (Metrolink)**

The cheapest time to travel on the tram is between 9:30am and midnight, Monday to Friday, and at any time during the weekend. Weekend travel tickets allow you to travel on any tram from after 6:00pm on Friday to midnight on Sunday and are good value. The weekend family ticket, which allows two adults and two children to travel, is a cheaper option. A day travel card costs £5 and allows you to travel on any tram between 9.30am and midnight. There is also a family day travelcard. Ticket machines at each tram stop sell single, return and daily tickets, but not weekly tickets, which are on sale at Transport for Greater Manchester Travelshops and website.

People traveling without a ticket or with an invalid ticket are fined £100. Unlike the buses, ticket inspectors frequently inspect tickets on trams.

The ***Transport for Greater Manchester*** website can help you find how to travel from one place to another using public transport:

**[www.tfgm.com](http://www.tfgm.com)**

## **Trains And Coaches**

If travelling long distance it is often cheaper to buy a ticket in advance, but beware that advance tickets are not flexible.

***National Rail Enquiries*** will help you find times and prices:

**[www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk)  
08457 48 49 50**

Coaches are often cheaper than trains, especially the budget ones like Megabus:

**uk.megabus.com**  
**0141 332 9644**

You can find the exact location of any UK address by typing the post code into the search box on Google Maps or Bing

## Internet & Phones

Internet access in an internet cafe is around £1/hour. They also have photocopying and cheap international phone calls. You can access the internet for free in libraries. Libraries will usually require you to register. It's free but you will need proof that you live in the area. Some libraries allow access without registering, so it's worth asking at the counter.

Libraries also have newspapers, magazines, resources for learning English, and many have books in different languages. They are good places for getting information on local community resources, events, education, housing, etc.

A mobile phone without a contract is called 'prepaid', 'pay as you go' or 'PAYG'. There are networks such as Lebara, Lycatel or Giffgaff which offer very good SIM card only deals. You can get a pre-paid SIM with 250 minutes, unlimited SMS messages (texts) and 1GB of internet data for £10 a month. Small mobile phone shops in local markets are the best place to get a cheap SIM and a cheap handset. Argos and large supermarkets also sell cheap handsets.

# Cheap Food & Other Stuff

The cheapest supermarkets are Lidl, Aldi or Morrisons. Sometimes you can get food that expires on the day very cheap if you come late in the evening. Food is often cheaper in markets than in shops. Skipping (taking food from bins) is a crime but prosecutions are not common. You are likely to get trouble from security guards if you get caught. Be careful as sometimes bleach is poured over food and there may be rats in the bin.

Places that give out free food:

**Wednesdays 7:30pm at The Roby, 307 Dickenson Rd, Manchester M13 0NG:  
[foodcycle.org.uk/location/manchester](http://foodcycle.org.uk/location/manchester)  
[manchester@foodcycle.org.uk](mailto:manchester@foodcycle.org.uk)**

The most expensive way to shop is at local independent shops. The large supermarket chains are cheaper with Lidl and Aldi being the cheapest. Using 'pound' shops is a cheap alternative, as are local markets. There are a number of cheap shops selling a wide variety of fruit & vegetables. Local charity shops sell cheap second hand clothes and goods. And there are a number of charity shops that sell second hand furniture. Avoid places offering credit at high interest which will result in you paying thousands of pounds. For a list of cheap pound shops:

**[www.yelp.co.uk/manchester](http://www.yelp.co.uk/manchester)**  
type: 'pound shops'

For a list of charity and other shops selling second hand furniture:

**[www.yelp.co.uk/manchester](http://www.yelp.co.uk/manchester)**  
type: 'second hand furniture' or 'discount furniture'

Primark is the cheapest clothes store. Argos is a cheap for household goods, electrical items and electronics. Charities such as Oxfam, Marie Curie, Mind, run charity shops where you can buy second hand clothes, books, and household goods cheap.

For a list of charity shops:

**[www.yelp.co.uk/manchester](http://www.yelp.co.uk/manchester)**

type: 'charity shops'

Freecycle is an internet forum where people give away stuff for free:

**[uk.freecycle.org](http://uk.freecycle.org)**

Gumtree has a section for free stuff:

**[gumtree.com/freebies/manchester/freebies](http://gumtree.com/freebies/manchester/freebies)**

You need a lot of patience and luck with those as good quality things are snapped up fast.

## Bank Accounts

Opening a bank account is difficult if you have just started living in the UK. Banks will often ask you for documents to open an account and in order to get those documents you may need a bank account already. You need two documents: a proof of identity, such as passport or national identity card, and a proof of address, which may be more difficult to get. Keep all official letters with your name on them for a few months, because they may be useful for that, or for similar purposes. You will often need a history of your addresses with dates when you lived there. Write that down each time you move.

A tenancy agreement is a proof of address, but it's unlikely you will have one at the beginning. A utility bill such as gas, electricity or landline phone bills, but not a mobile phone bill, will work. You need to ask your landlord and the utility company to change the bill to your name, and wait until the end of the month when the next bill comes. They don't often agree to do that. If you are on any bills, remember to inform the utility company when you move out, otherwise you may be liable for unpaid bills of other tenants.

A valid UK driving license is a proof of address. You can exchange an EU driving license for a UK one at a £50 fee. You can apply for a provisional driving license, meant for people who are learning to drive, and some banks accept that.

**[www.co-operativebank.co.uk](http://www.co-operativebank.co.uk)**

choose: 'Help and info for customers'

Your employer may write a letter confirming your address. It has to be on the company headed paper and signed by someone in a position of authority. Some banks accept that or the letter from the Job Centre confirming your National Insurance number.

**[http://www.hsbc.co.uk/1/2/current-accounts/  
basic-bank-account/open-bank-account](http://www.hsbc.co.uk/1/2/current-accounts/basic-bank-account/open-bank-account)**

scroll down to: 'Eligibility requirements'

choose the link: 'identification and proof of your address'

Some banks offer accounts for people newly arrived to the UK, where only a passport and no proof of address is required.

**[lloydsbank.com/banking-with-us/joining-lloyds/  
new-to-the-uk.asp](http://lloydsbank.com/banking-with-us/joining-lloyds-new-to-the-uk.asp)**

click: 'Proof of identity' at bottom of page



Or a recent statement from an account in your home country will be accepted as proof of address.

**[barclays.co.uk/Helpsupport/  
ComingtoworkintheUK/P1242601780771](https://www.barclays.co.uk/Helpsupport/ComingtoworkintheUK/P1242601780771)**

Credit unions are small community banking organisations and can be more flexible when opening a new account. You can find your local credit union here:

**[findyourcreditunion.co.uk/home](https://findyourcreditunion.co.uk/home)**

Collect as many relevant documents as you can, go to a bank in person, and try in several different banks as you may be lucky and be served by a person who won't be as diligent with their checks as the rules require.

## Learning English

Greater Manchester has several colleges for adult education. These are called a further education (FE) or community colleges. They provide courses in a range of subjects, including English language classes (sometimes called ESOL), which are affordable and sometimes free, especially if you receive state benefits. Some local councils, libraries, churches and community centres provide free English classes too. Ask in the local library for advice.

***Migrants Supporting Migrants*** holds regular language classes and workshops on necessary skills.

**[www.migrantsupport.org.uk](http://www.migrantsupport.org.uk)**

***Salford Unemployment and Community Resource Centre*** provides courses in English and other useful skills:

**[www.salforducrc.co.uk](http://www.salforducrc.co.uk)**

**0161 789 2999**  
**84-86 Liverpool Street, Eccles, M30 0WZ**

# Healthcare

If you need emergency medical help, call 999. If you need medical help fast but it's not an emergency, call 111. You can also go to the accident and emergency unit, or 'the A&E', which is usually in a hospital.

The NHS, or National Health Service, provides public health care in the UK. You can find hospitals, clinics, dentists, sexual health clinics, and other health services that are local to you by using this website:

**[www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search)**

Basic health services, such as a visit to a doctor or an emergency treatment, are free no matter what your immigration status. You may be charged for specialist appointments and hospital stays. If you have a right to stay in the UK, those are free too. Dentist or optician appointments, and prescription medicines, always cost money.

Your first point of contact is a doctor called a GP, or a general practitioner. They usually work in a 'surgery', but this has nothing to do with surgical procedures. You need to register with a GP near where you live, and make an appointment each time you want to see a doctor. If you have an illness or injury which is not an emergency, but you can't wait for the appointment, you can go to a walk-in clinic where a nurse will see you. Be prepared to wait for several hours.

You need to register with, and make an appointment with a dentist. A check-up currently costs £18.50 and a procedure, such as a filling or removing a tooth, costs £51.30. You only pay a single fee for the most expensive treatment, and if you need to come back again within two months it will be free.

**NHS Choices** is a website with information about health and the health service:

**[www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search)**

Abortion is legal up to 24 weeks and is available free in the UK. You need a referral from your doctor, or from the **British Pregnancy Advisory Service:**

**[www.bpas.org](http://www.bpas.org)  
03457 30 40 30**

Abortion is also available through private clinics where you have to pay £450-£750.

Everyone can get condoms for free, even if you are under 16. They are available from contraception clinics, sexual health clinics, some GP surgeries and some young people's services.

You can get the 'morning after pill' free of charge from contraception clinics, Brook centres, some pharmacies, most sexual health clinics, most NHS walk-in centres and GP surgeries and some hospital accident and emergency departments. You can also buy the morning after pill over the counter for about £26 in a pharmacy, including pharmacies inside Boots, Superdrug and similar stores.

There are many sexual health clinics in Manchester, often near hospitals:

**[www.manchester.gov.uk/health](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/health)**  
choose: 'Sexual health advice'.

## Home

### Finding A Place

Rents in Manchester can be quite high and finding a decent place is difficult and takes time, but some areas are significantly cheaper than others. Before choosing, look at several places, ask people living in the area how much rent they pay, search on different websites and ask in estate agents. Some newsagents shops have adverts on notice boards or in the window, and you can also ask in places like launderettes, pubs, barber shops, cafés and social centres. Gumtree is the most popular website for rooms and flats:

**[www.gumtree.com/manchester](http://www.gumtree.com/manchester)**

### Renting A Room

The cheapest way to find somewhere to live is to rent a room in a shared house. Basically, you rent the room and share the kitchen, toilet and bathroom with the other people living in the house. In some cases, the cost of renting the room may also include monthly bills, such as gas, electricity and water and extras, such as phone, internet and satellite or cable television. The cost of renting a room may also include the tax paid to the local government (council tax), which is usually the highest bill. So if you want to rent a room, always check if any of these other costs is included in the rent. It may also be possible to rent a room for two people but you should always check if this is allowed. You can rent a room for as little as £260 per month, though normally it is more expensive.

There are numerous web sites advertising rooms to rent in Manchester; for example:

**[www.gumtree.com/flatshare/manchester](http://www.gumtree.com/flatshare/manchester)**  
**[manchester.letshelpyou.co.uk/lets](http://manchester.letshelpyou.co.uk/lets)**

## **Renting From Housing Associations Or The Local Authority**

If you want to rent a house or a flat, a good place to start is the local government web site which provides basic information about renting a place to live in Manchester and the site can be translated into more than 100 languages:

**[www.manchestermove.co.uk](http://www.manchestermove.co.uk)**

choose: 'Council and Housing Association'

choose: 'Register for Manchester Move'

It is possible to rent a flat or house from the local council or a housing association. These homes are cheaper and in better condition than many private properties. These types of landlords usually act within the law, have more secure tenancies, and are much more sympathetic if you have problems with paying your rent. They are also quicker than many private sector landlords to make repairs. However there is a shortage of this type of home in Manchester, so they are hard to obtain.

Because of this, housing associations and councils have a complex system of allocating their homes. The system gives points for being threatened with homelessness, being overcrowded, having health problems etc., and allocates homes on the basis of need. If you want to rent a home from a local council or a housing association the first thing to do is register at

**[www.manchestermove.co.uk](http://www.manchestermove.co.uk)**.

When you have registered you can apply, or 'bid', for any

housing association or council homes in the Manchester. You can view the number of homes available and the number of people applying for each property.

Homes rented from the council come without furniture but there are organisations that offer free or cheap second hand furniture, domestic appliances and other household goods:

**[www.thewesley.org.uk](http://www.thewesley.org.uk)**  
**[www.treeoflifecentre.org.uk](http://www.treeoflifecentre.org.uk)**

In the Greater Manchester area, outside of Manchester itself, there are many housing association and council homes available, which are allocated on a 'first come, first served' basis. In effect, this means you can move into them immediately, no matter what your personal circumstances. You can view the homes available at:

**[www.pinpoint.org.uk](http://www.pinpoint.org.uk)**  
Choose: 'Property search'

It is easy to travel to Manchester from many of these areas, so it is worth checking these homes even if you are hoping to find work in Manchester.

## **Renting A Flat Or House From A Private Sector Landlord**

Private sector landlords rent out homes as a business and their primary aim is to make a profit. Although there are many decent landlords, there are also many bad ones, who will try to scam you. Therefore, when renting from a private landlord, you need to be more careful and know your basic rights as a tenant before entering any agreement with a private landlord. There is a basic guide to tenants' rights below.

It also pays to carefully check out any flat or house you are

thinking of renting. Scams are very common. Do not pay money in advance for anything you have not seen. If the deal looks too good to be true, then it probably is not true. People sometimes get you to pay a large deposit and rent in advance, then disappear with the money. You are then at risk of summary eviction. Unfortunately, this is very difficult to fight or guard against. Try to keep copies of anything you agree in writing, ideally in a formal contract.

Always view a property before renting it and, when viewing the property, always have a good look round. Remember, Manchester's climate is cold and damp, and living in a cold and damp home is bad for your health, expensive to heat and can make your life miserable. So, always look for signs of damp, black mould on the walls, or patches of wall that have been newly painted to conceal mould. Also, check out the heating system to make sure it looks adequate and is well maintained. Ask to see a copy of the Energy Performance Certificate, which will show how well the property has been insulated. Remember, electric is far more expensive in Britain than gas. If viewing a property in summer think about what it will be like to live in during the winter months.

If you have concerns about your landlord, ask questions while you are viewing the house or flat to judge what kind of response they give. For example:

Ask where your deposit will it be protected? Most deposits taken from tenants by landlords have to be registered by law with one of the three government schemes (see below).

Ask to see the gas safety certificate? If the property has gas appliances or heating, the landlord must be able to show you a copy of a certificate that shows the annual gas safety check has been done.

Ask if the landlord is a member of the NLA, or of a landlord

accreditation scheme? These are voluntary schemes that regulate landlords.

You can also find a home to rent through a letting agency but they will charge you an additional fee. If you are using a letting agency, first find out what fees (and costs) you will be charged and when you need to pay them. By law, a breakdown of all fees should be clearly visible to you in the agent's office and on their website. You should also check out which independent complaints scheme the agency is a member of.

## **Tenants' Rights**

There are different types of tenancy contracts. Your rights depend on which one you have. An 'assured shorthold tenancy', which is the most common, gives you some rights and protection. As an excluded occupier, for example a lodger, you have very few rights. Even if you have no written contract you still have rights as long as you can prove you have paid the landlord. Ask for receipts when you pay rent and ideally pay by bank transfer so that there is proof of payment.

Basic rights are implied by law. You have them even if they are not written in your contract. If the contract contains clauses that are contrary to the law, the law comes first. Some of the most important rights are:

- Your landlord must carry out basic repairs (damage is called disrepair).
- Your landlord must keep the installations for the supply of water, gas, electricity, sanitation, space heating and heating water in good working order.
- You have the right to live peacefully in the accommodation without nuisance from your landlord (your



landlord must give you 24 hrs' notice in advance of any visit, with the possible exception of emergencies).

In most cases, your landlord must not discriminate against you. There may be some exceptions, for example, if you live in the same accommodation as your landlord.

Rent can only be increased by formal application. If your contract has the procedure for increasing rent, your landlord must follow it. Otherwise, it [s no more than once a year with a month's notice for periodic (month-by-month or week-by-week) tenancies, and only with your consent on fixed-term ones until the fixed term runs out.

## **Landlord Harassment**

Harassment by a landlord is a criminal offence and if your landlord is harassing you, you can speak to an independent organisation such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

Harassment can take different forms, for example:

- Removing or restricting access to services such as gas, electricity or water, or failing to pay the bills so that these services are cut off
- Visiting your home regularly without warning, especially late at night
- Interfering with your mail
- Threatening you
- Sending builders around without notice
- Entering your home when you are not there, without your permission
- Allowing your home to get into such a bad state of repair that it is dangerous for you to stay
- Beginning disruptive repair works and not finishing them

- Harassing you because of your gender, race or sexuality.

## **Deposits And Tenancy Deposit Scheme**

When you move in to accommodation, you pay a deposit in case you cause damage to the house or fall behind with rent. Getting the deposit returned to you is a common problem. Remember to get a receipt when you pay the deposit. Take photos of the house, especially any damage or disrepair, when you move in and email them to someone. This will be a dated proof of the state of the house which you can use in case the landlord accuses you of causing damage. If your landlord withholds all or part of the deposit, they have to provide an itemised invoice of the costs deducted from it, including receipts for any repairs or cleaning work.

The landlord is required to put your deposit into a government-approved tenancy deposit scheme. They can be fined for not returning the deposit when you move out. If they refuse, you can appeal to the scheme. The list of approved schemes and other information is on a government website:

**[www.gov.uk/tenancy-deposit-protection](http://www.gov.uk/tenancy-deposit-protection)**

## **Eviction**

Your landlord needs 'grounds' (a reason) to evict you before the end of the contract. This could be due to breaking a term of your tenancy agreement or falling behind with rent. Your landlord has to give you a written notice that complies with the law first. You do not have to leave at this point. Your landlord then needs to get a court order saying when you should leave the property. You can explain your situation to the court in writing and by going to the court hearing in person.

You can stay in your home until court officials (bailiffs) come to your house. You do not have to let bailiffs into your home unless their visit is related to criminal fines or tax. They are banned from breaking in. If you let them in, they will be able to take your things. Police officers are not allowed to break in for them either, unless they have a warrant showing that they suspect you of a criminal offence.

Remember, a notice given by the landlord is not enough to evict you; they need a court order. If anyone tries to evict you without following the correct procedure, they are committing the criminal offence of unlawful eviction. Speak to an independent organisation such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau. You are legally allowed to change the locks to protect yourself from harassment, as long as you change it back to the original lock when you leave.

## **Disputes**

Any dispute with your landlord needs to be carefully considered. Here are some things you can do to help you through:

- Read your tenancy agreement to find out your contract rights and responsibilities
- Research your housing rights and get legal advice wherever possible
- Record and copy any and all proofs of payment, correspondence, and photographic evidence sent to your landlord in case of dispute.

**Shelter** is a charity providing advice about housing and homelessness. You can call them or use the website to find information:

**england.shelter.org.uk**  
**0808 800 4444**

**Manchester Council** has a section on its website:  
**[www.manchester.gov.uk/homes](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/homes)**

**Housing Rights** Info's website contains a lot of information about housing rights and a section dedicated to rights of newly arrived migrants:

**[www.housing-rights.info](http://www.housing-rights.info)**

The Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) also gives advice on housing:

**[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/housing](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/housing)**  
**03444 111 444**

## **Homelessness**

A significant number of homeless people are recent migrants, especially from Central and Eastern Europe. People do not realise how expensive it is to live here and how difficult it is to find work; then something bad happens and they end up on the streets. If you become homeless you will not be eligible for any help if you are not from an EU country, or even if you are from the EU but have been in UK for less than three months. Even if you are eligible, services for the homeless are overstretched and it is difficult to get help.

Some organisations that provide advice and support for homeless include:

### **Shelter:**

**[england.shelter.org.uk](http://england.shelter.org.uk)**  
**0808 800 4444**

**Manchester Homelessness Advice and Assessment Service:****[www.manchester.gov.uk/homes](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/homes)****0161 234 4692** (9:00am - 4.30pm)**[haasdutyofficer@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:haasdutyofficer@manchester.gov.uk)****0161 234 5001** (4:30pm - 9:00am)**[mcsreply@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:mcsreply@manchester.gov.uk)**

choose: 'Advice about homelessness'

choose: 'An emergency? Contact our homelessness team'.

**The Wellspring** is a charity that supports rough sleepers in the Stockport area.

**[www.thewellspring.co.uk/](http://www.thewellspring.co.uk/)****0161 477 6344****Squatting**

Squatting in residential properties is a criminal offence and people have been prosecuted and sentenced to prison.

Squatting in other properties is not illegal but it is difficult to stay in one place for long.

**The Advisory Service for Squatters** provide advice on squatting:

**[www.squatter.org.uk](http://www.squatter.org.uk)****[advice@squatter.org.uk](mailto:advice@squatter.org.uk)****020 3216 0099**

# Work

**National Insurance**

National Insurance is a tax deducted from your salary to fund unemployment, sickness and retirement benefits. You

need to have a National Insurance (NI) number to work in the UK. You can start work without one but you should get one as soon as possible. You need to attend an interview and bring a proof of identity (for example a passport or driving licence).

Call **Jobcentre Plus** to book an interview:

**0345 600 0643**

## **Pay, Minimum Wages, Taxes**

Your boss should give you a written contract of employment. They do not have to give you a full contract, but they have to specify the basic conditions in writing, such as pay. Always ask for a contract anyway. If you do not get one, it may be a warning sign that you will have trouble in the future. Try to get someone to check your contract for questionable or dubious terms.

It is illegal for the boss to pay you below the National Minimum Wage. This is currently (for 2015-2016) £7.20 per hour if you are 25 or older, or £6.70 if you are 21 to 24, or £5.30 if you are 18 to 20, or £3.87 if you are under 18. The National Minimum Wage usually changes in October each year. Pay is usually advertised per hour or for the whole year (per annum or pa). Full time work (40 hours a week) on an hourly wage of £6.70 amounts to roughly £13,936 a year.

Example break down of taxes and National Insurance on a full-time job at minimum wage (21 to 24 years rate):

Pay before tax: £13,963 a year

National Insurance £705 a year

Income Tax: £587 a year

Take-home pay: £ 12,644 a year, around £1,054 a month; this will vary depending on the length of the month.

Keep pay slips and records of working hours and holidays. This will help you identify if you are being underpaid, not given enough holiday pay etc. Keep notes about any incidents, arguments etc., that occur at work, along with names of who witnessed them. Notes from the time of the incident will help you if a manager tries to bully, fine or sack you later.

If you have an employment contract, the employer should pay all taxes you owe and you should not need to do any tax-related paperwork at the end of the tax year. If you start working without an NI number you will be paying additional 'emergency tax' which you can claim back as soon as you get your NI number. Do not panic if you overpay your tax. You can get it back by completing a tax self-assessment at the end of the tax year. The tax year ends on 5 April and you have until October to do the self-assessment.

**HMRC (*Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs*)**, who collect all taxes, will often help if you have problems. They have a number of phone lines providing advice related to specific taxes. You can find the numbers here:

**[www.gov.uk/contact-hmrc](http://www.gov.uk/contact-hmrc)**

**Tax Aid** is a charity that helps people on low incomes with tax problems that HMRC cannot resolve:

**[www.taxaid.org.uk/pages/contact-us](http://www.taxaid.org.uk/pages/contact-us)  
0345 120 3779 (Mon-Fri 10am to 12 midday)**

## **Key Rights At Work**

No matter if you are working temporarily or permanently, full or part-time, or if you are directly employed or employed via an agency, you have certain basic rights:

- The right to at least 5.6 weeks of paid holiday

(leave or time off) per year. This amounts to 28 days for a normal working week if you work full time. That includes public holidays such as Christmas and bank holidays. Your contract can give you more than 28 days, but not less. For part-time workers, multiply the number of days you work in a week on average by 5.6. The rule applies to all jobs from the day you start – on day one you get two days' leave, then after six months that rises to 14 days.

- The right to sick pay. You get statutory sick pay when you have been off work due to sickness for four days in a row. You have to earn more than £111 a week before tax and have been working for more than three months (or have been in continuous employment for 13 weeks).
- The right to maternity / paternity leave when you have new born children. Most mothers are allowed 26 weeks' paid maternity leave plus 26 weeks' unpaid leave. To get maternity pay you must earn over £111 per week and have been working continuously for more than 26 weeks by 15 weeks before the baby's due date. For the first six weeks you should be paid 90% of average earnings, then a constant rate of £138.18 for 33 weeks. If the boss does not or cannot pay, the Department of Work and Pensions has to. Fathers / male partners get two weeks' paid paternity leave.
- The right to defend yourself. You have the right to protection from being sacked (fired, "let go") for using your legal employment rights. You have the right to join with your fellow workers and organise yourselves collectively, and to join a trade union.
- The right to equal treatment. You have the right not to be discriminated against at work because of your age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. These are called protected characteristics.



## **Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination**

Remember, bullying or harassment is not your fault. You do not have to put up with it.

Bullying and harassment involve behaviour which harms, intimidates, threatens, victimises, undermines, offends, degrades or humiliates. Your employer has to ensure the workplace is free of bullying and harassment. Bullying is repeated behaviour that undermines your personal dignity. Harassment is a single incident or a series of incidents related to the protected characteristics mentioned above. Serious incidents of sexual harassment, such as those involving touching, and other physical threats, are criminal offences.

## **The Working Time Regulations**

When it comes to working time your basic rights are:

- No more than 13 hours' work in a day.
- One day off in any given week.
- Breaks of at least 20 minutes after each 6 hours of work, and at least 11 hours' rest in every 24 hours. Rest breaks for under-18s are a minimum of 30 minutes every 4½ hours.
- You can refuse to work more than 48 hours a week. This is worked out by averaging a 17-week period, so you can be forced to do more in a single week. You can agree in writing to give up this right (opt out) and employers sometimes try to sneak this in as a clause in your contract.
- At night, work can't take up more than an average of eight hours per day. Night workers have the right to free health checks.

## **Health And Safety**

You have the right to refuse to work if the working

conditions are unsafe or put you in danger. The employer has to give you proper training, and is not allowed to ask you to do jobs for which you are not qualified.

The employer has to provide decent working conditions including enough toilets, washing facilities and drinking water. There must be procedures (instructions about what to do) for dealing with risks at work. The employer has to have a health and safety plan. Health and safety agreements, policies and practices have to be explained to all workers before they start work, and workers have to be consulted about health and safety matters.

Health and safety at work costs money and time, so bosses often try to avoid doing it. By law they must provide healthy and safe conditions for everyone they employ.

Remember, you can legally walk out if you feel in instant danger.

## **Self-Employment**

Self-employment is earning money from working for yourself rather than for a wage from an employer. When you are self-employed, you are responsible for your NI and income tax payments and paperwork. National Insurance is paid monthly, and income tax at the end of the tax year, and both can be a substantial amount. You will probably need help from a professional accountant. Rights, such as the minimum wage, working hours, sick and holiday pay are only applicable to employees, not to self-employed people.

Some bosses try to force workers to become self-employed to save on taxes and to take their rights away. This is called false self-employment. It is very common in certain sectors

such as construction. It is illegal but the government does nothing about it.

You can use this website to check if you are an employee or self-employed:

**[www.gov.uk/employment-status](http://www.gov.uk/employment-status)**

## **Zero-Hours Contracts**

A zero hours contract is an employment contract which does not give you guaranteed working hours. It may not say 'zero hours', but may say that the employer has no obligation to provide work. It may also contain an exclusivity clause, which prevents you from taking on other work. Both of these things are legal.

On a zero hours contract you have the same rights to holiday, sick pay and maternity leave as other workers. The bosses sometimes refuse these rights illegally. They may never give you enough work to qualify for the rights where there is an income threshold.

Zero hours contracts are very common in retail, hospitality, agency work and other low paid jobs. You will not have guaranteed hours each week, you may not get a rota, and you may be asked to come to work at very short notice, often only a few hours before the start time.

If you have any issues with your managers, no matter if they are work related or personal, they can just stop giving you work hours. If they want to get rid of you, they do not need to terminate the contract, but just stop giving you shifts permanently.

Both self-employment and zero hours contracts put you in a very weak position at work. If you are mistreated in any way

and try to fight back, either individually or collectively, the boss can just cut your hours and income. There is not much you can do when you start a job where self-employment and zero hours contracts are already in use. If the boss is trying to change your existing contracts to zero hours or trying to force you to become self-employed, organising with your workmates to collectively refuse signing the new contracts is difficult but is the only option available.

## **Grievance And Disciplinary Procedures**

A disciplinary is a procedure for the boss to use when you have done something wrong at work. A grievance is when you have a complaint. ACAS, an organisation which mediates workplace disputes, has a Code of Practice which describes what disciplinary and grievance procedures should look like. The employer should follow this code, but it is only guidance, not law.

Employees who face a disciplinary procedure should be given enough time to prepare a defence. You should be able to give evidence and to call witnesses. You have the right to be accompanied by someone. You can choose either someone who is trained by a union for that purpose or another union official (it does not matter if the boss 'recognised' that union) or a work colleague. You, and whoever accompanies you, are protected against any disciplinary procedure or dismissal in connection with using this right to be accompanied. Disciplinary hearings must take place within a reasonable time period.

If you cannot resolve the case within the workplace, or if you have been dismissed (sacked), you can go to a specialist employment court, the Employment Tribunal. You will have to pay a fee of £390 or more, depending on the type of

case. If you lose and the tribunal decides your case had no chance of success, they may ask you to pay the employer's legal costs. You may represent yourself, or a union official may represent you, but if you need a legal professional to represent you, you will have to pay their fees. If you win, you will get monetary compensation.

The trade unions (TUC) have a website with information about your rights at work:

**[www.worksmart.org.uk/work-rights](http://www.worksmart.org.uk/work-rights)**

**ACAS** also has a website with this information:

**[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)**

**Citizen's Advice Bureau** can give you advice on work-related issues:

**[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/work](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/work)**

## Benefits

The benefits system in the UK is very complicated. There are different benefits and your individual circumstance dictate which ones you can claim and how much you will be paid. Payments are usually low and are paid for a limited period of time. You have to meet various conditions, not only to start claiming a benefit, but also to continue being paid. You have to claim different benefits separately. An ongoing reform process to introduce a single 'super-benefit' called Universal Credit will make things even worse.

If you are an EU citizen, you have to work for three months in the UK to be entitled to benefits. If you are from outside

the EU, you may be able to claim some benefits, but the rules are extremely complicated. Claiming benefits as a non-EU citizen may negatively impact your right to remain in the UK.

You can use one of these calculators to estimate what benefits you could receive:

**[www.entitledto.co.uk/benefits-calculator](http://www.entitledto.co.uk/benefits-calculator)**

**[www.turn2us.org.uk/Find-Benefits-Grants](http://www.turn2us.org.uk/Find-Benefits-Grants)**

Benefit fraud, deliberately or dishonestly claiming more than you are entitled to, is an offence in the UK and may result in a prison sentence.

The actual amount you may be paid will depend on your circumstances and you should seek qualified advice before claiming.

***The Citizens Advice Bureau*** is a good place to seek help:

**03444 111 444**

**[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits)**

***Salford Unemployment and Community Resource Centre*** gives advice on welfare benefits, as well as on employment law, debt management, and offers free English language and other classes:

**0161 789 2999**

**[www.salforducrc.co.uk](http://www.salforducrc.co.uk)**

**84-86 Liverpool Street, Eccles, M30 0WZ**

## **Main Benefits**

Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) is a payment you can get if you have worked but have lost your job. You will get £57.50 per week if you are 24 or younger, £72.40 if you are over

24 or are a lone parent over 18, and £113.70 if you are a couple. You will have to continuously supply a lot of proof that you are looking for work and the Job Centre will make it extremely difficult for you to claim it for more than a few months.

Housing Benefit is money to help you pay the rent if you have a low income or are receiving other benefits. The amount depends on where you live, and on the type of accommodation you live in, such as a room, a flat etc. It will never be more than the actual rent you that you pay and is usually not be enough to cover all of it. Many landlords do not want to take tenants who are on benefits.

Child Benefit is a payment you get if you are a parent of or are responsible for a child under 16. You get £20.50 a week for the oldest child, and £13.55 for other children. Working Tax Credits is a benefit in the form of reduction of your income tax for those who are in work but have low pay. You can check the amount of tax credit you could get using this calculator:

**[www.gov.uk/tax-credits-calculator](http://www.gov.uk/tax-credits-calculator)**

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) are two benefits you can receive if you suffer from long term illness or disability. You need to have lived in the UK for long time to be eligible. You have to undergo an assessment to prove your condition is so bad you cannot work. This assessment is known to be very distressing and even people suffering from serious conditions are often classed as able to work.

# Legal Issues

## The Police And Courts

Police are racist and xenophobic. As a migrant, the police are less likely to investigate if you are the victim of a crime, and they are more likely to presume you are guilty. They deal really badly with crimes affecting women, such as domestic violence and sexual assault. It is often difficult to report such incidents, because the police are unwilling to take them seriously and are horrible to the victims. If you decide to go to a police station take a friend to support you and write down what they say to you. If they refuse to record your complaint, you can go to another police station and try again. If you are reporting a sexual assault, domestic violence or a hate crime (for example, a racist or homophobic attack) it is often easier to use the **Manchester Community Safety Partnership** and first as they are less likely to be prejudiced:

**[www.manchester.gov.uk/crime](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/crime)  
[crime&disorder@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:crime&disorder@manchester.gov.uk)  
0161 856 9268**

If you are stopped by the police in the street, try to stay calm. They can stop you and question you but you do not have to answer. They should only search you if they have reasonable grounds to suspect you of committing a crime, but in practice they do what they want. They have the right to make you remove your jacket and gloves. You have the right to a record of the arrest, which should have the ID number of the police officer on it. A useful guide to 'stop and search' can be found at:

**[londonagainstopliceviolence.wordpress.com/  
guide-to-stop-search](http://londonagainstopliceviolence.wordpress.com/guide-to-stop-search)**



If you are arrested you have to give the police your name, address and date of birth. Do not answer any questions without speaking to a solicitor. You have a right to a solicitor free of charge for the police interview. Do not accept a solicitor recommended by the police (a duty solicitor), but try to find someone recommended by people you know. You have a right to a phone call and a right to a translator for you if you do not speak English.

If the police think you are guilty, they may offer you a 'caution'. This means you accept guilt but you will not be taken to court and will not get a fine or a sentence. A caution stays on your criminal record. Get advice from the solicitor before accepting a caution. If you committed a crime but you do not want to plead guilty, do not tell the lawyer as they would have to report you.

If you are beaten up by the police you need a medical report as soon as possible. Making complaints against the police is possible but difficult.

Depending on your income, you may get a free solicitor if you are taken to court. If you earn less than £12,475 the solicitor will be free; if you earn more you will have to go through full means test, and if you earn above £22,325 you will have to pay yourself. This is for criminal cases only. In civil cases, such as debt, family or housing problems, you will most likely to have to pay yourself. You can use this calculator to check

**[www.gov.uk/check-legal-aid](http://www.gov.uk/check-legal-aid)**

## **Immigration**

The immigration police are called the Immigration

Enforcement (you may sometimes hear them called by their old name: UK Border Agency or UKBA). They regularly raid markets, shops, public transport stations and homes within migrant communities. Even though EU citizens have a right to live in the UK, the police and Immigration Enforcement have deported people back to EU countries in the past. This is more likely to happen if you are long term unemployed or homeless.

If Immigration Enforcement or police stop you in the street and ask about your immigration status, you do not have to answer any questions. You do not have to tell them your name and address. Tell them that you do not want to talk to them, stay polite but confident and walk away. They are not allowed to stop you just because of your race. If they stop you just because of how you look, or the language you speak, tell them: 'This is racist. This is illegal. I will make a complaint.'

If you or anyone you know is detained, contact Bail for Immigration Detainees:

**020 7247 3590**

(Monday to Thursday, 10am to 12midday)

**[www.biduk.org](http://www.biduk.org)  
[enquiries@biduk.org](mailto:enquiries@biduk.org)**

There is a lot of advice and information on the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit website. The organisation holds a drop in on Tuesdays

**<http://gmiau.org/>  
**0161 741 2658****

There are immigration advice sessions at Inspire in Levenshume on Fridays, call 0124 323333 for info.

**747 Stockport Rd, Manchester, M19 3AR**

# Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

## Support For Women

**Women's Aid** and **Refuge** jointly operate a free 24 hour domestic violence hotline, and you can ask for an interpreter in your first language:

**0808 2000 247**

**Women's Aid** have a handbook for survivors of domestic violence and domestic abuse:

**[www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook)**

**Rape Crisis Manchester** offer confidential help, information and support to women and girls who have experienced sexual violence of any kind:

**0161 273 4500**

(Monday to Friday 10am-4pm; Wed, Thurs 6pm-9pm)

**[www.manchesterrapecrisis.co.uk](http://www.manchesterrapecrisis.co.uk)**

**Women's Rights** provide free legal advice on several phone advice lines, find the numbers for specific areas of law on the website

**[www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/get-advice](http://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/get-advice)**

## Support For Men

**Men's domestic violence and abuse helpline:**

**0808 801 0327**

**[www.mensadvice.org.uk](http://www.mensadvice.org.uk)**

**Survivors Manchester** supports male survivors of sexual

abuse:

**support@survivorsmanchester.org.uk**  
**www.survivorsmanchester.org.uk**  
**0161 236 2182**

**Survivors UK** confidential helpline for men who have experienced sexual violence:

**0845 122 1201**  
**www.survivorsuk.org**

## LGBT\* (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans\*)

It can be hard to find other LGBT people when you are new to the city, and gay bars are increasingly expensive. There is a concentration of gay bars around Canal St (Manchester, M1 3HE) where it is possible to find information.

**LGBT Foundation** is a Manchester based LGBT charity that has an information helpline:

**lgbt.foundation**  
**0345 3 30 30 30**

**The Jarman Clinic** for gay and bisexual men offers full sexual health screening, hepatitis B testing and vaccination, pre- and post-test counselling, free condoms and lube, safer sex advice, counselling on sexual health issues, and HIV prevention work with male sex workers:

**The Jarman Clinic, Withington Community Hospital,  
Neil Lane, West Didsbury, Manchester M20 2LR**  
**0161 217 4939**

## Other Useful Contacts

**GOV.UK** is a government run website explaining the law in an easy to understand way. It covers various areas including things covered by this guide:

**gov.uk**

**Manchester Migrant Solidarity** is a self-help group set up as a convergence space for all migrants including asylum seekers offering practical and social activities for mutual support, empowerment and solidarity with non-migrants to build a powerful political voice against the systematic mistreatment of migrants in the UK:

**<https://manchestermigrantsolidarity.org/>**

**Migrants Supporting Migrants**, based in Manchester, runs workshops and events for migrants, details can be found on their website:

**[www.migrantsupport.org.uk](http://www.migrantsupport.org.uk)**

**Citizens Advice** is a charity that provides advice to people in need. They run local centres which you can visit to get advice in person. Find your local centre using the website:

**[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)**

**03444 111 444**

**Community Law Centres** give qualified legal advice to people who cannot afford a lawyer. You can find one in your area here:

**[www.lawcentres.org.uk](http://www.lawcentres.org.uk)**

**National Debt Line** gives advice about debt:

**[www.gov.uk/national-debtline](http://www.gov.uk/national-debtline)**

**0808 808 4000**





# Who are we and why do we care?

**The Solidarity Federation** is a union that encourages peoples' self-organisation and collective action. Besides organising in our own workplaces and communities, we are happy to support anyone facing problems with their boss or their landlord. So if you are looking to get organised, contact us!

**solfed.org.uk**  
**manchestersf@solfed.org.uk**  
**07521940492**



Digital copies of this guide can be found at:  
**<http://www.manchestermigrantsguide.org.uk/>**