



## UK Visas & Immigration

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6<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Dear Alice,

Thank you for your letter of 29<sup>th</sup> July 2021 addressing your concerns regarding the Home Office reclaiming overpayments made during the ASPEN card transition period. Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in response.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate further how grateful the Home Office is for the Asylum Support Appeal Project's (ASAP) commitment to refugees and asylum seekers. Organisations like ASAP and others are playing a vital role as we turn the strong offers of support and assistance from the UK into long lasting and life changing guarantees.

I appreciate the concerns raised by NASF regarding the Aspen Card transition period and the prospect of reclaiming overpayments made during this period. We are currently gathering full data about the numbers of supported people who received an overpayment during the transition to the new Aspen system and the amounts of these overpayments. Once this work is complete, we will begin to consider action to recover overpayments ("claw-back") on a case by case basis. It is not possible to set out the appropriate course of action in every conceivable case, as the circumstances are likely to be different. However, in many cases it appears that any overpayments have been minor - most usually because accommodation providers have issued an emergency payment that overlapped with a payment made on the individual's Aspen card. In these circumstances we do not intend to pursue claw-back.

If a supported person receives an overpayment notification, they should not generally have to pay the whole amount back at once, especially if the excess payment they received has been spent in good faith. The person should be informed that they have received an overpayment and have the opportunity to make representations before any reductions in their weekly support begin. Unless there are exceptional circumstances the normal rates of reduction are:

- 15% for the payment provided to each adult in the household
- 5% for the payment for each child aged under 16 in the household

The maximum rates of reduction are 15% for adults and this rate is often reduced if there are any particular vulnerabilities to consider.

I hope this response addresses your concerns.

Yours Sincerely,

**Sean Palmer**