

Applicants with special needs - Sweden

Overview

Relevant EU legislation

Sweden is bound by the recast Asylum Procedures Directive and has transposed its provisions through the [Aliens Act](#) (SFS 2005:716 with further amendments), Utlänningslag (2005:716).

Sweden is bound by the recast Reception Conditions Directive and has transposed its provisions through the [Aliens Act](#) (SFS 2005:716 with further amendments), Utlänningslag (2005:716).

National legislation

23/02/2006: [Aliens Regulation](#) (SFS 2006:97 with further amendments), Utlänningsförordning (2006:97)

29/09/2005: [Aliens Act](#) (SFS 2005:716 with further amendments), Utlänningslag (2005:716)

09/06/2005: [Law on Guardians for Unaccompanied Minors](#) (SFS 2005:429), Lag (2005:429) om god man för ensamkommande barn

30/03/1994: [Law on Reception of Asylum Seekers and Others](#) (SFS 1994:137 with further amendments), Lag (1994:137) om mottagande av asylsökande m.fl.

Competent authority and other stakeholders

[Swedish Migration Agency](#) | Migrationsverket

Training initiatives

There is no specialised unit dealing with vulnerable groups at the Swedish Migration Agency (SMA). However, case officers are trained to identify groups that may have special needs, for example

training is provided on interviewing children (based on EUAA training modules).

Special needs in reception

Identification of special needs

There is an identification mechanism to systematically identify applicants with special needs or vulnerabilities. There is a specific procedure for unaccompanied minors.

At the beginning of any process, an official note must be made if an applicant has special needs and what measures need to be taken to provide adequate support. If new information emerges during the process, an official note for support is recorded.

Referral of applicants with special needs

Information provision and proceedings (interviews, interpretation, the choice of premises) are adapted throughout the entire asylum process to the applicant's needs and capabilities. The Swedish Migration Agency provides adapted access to reception facilities for claimed disabilities without requiring medical evidence initially. If required, a guardian will be assigned to the applicant. However, appointing a guardian for an adult with disabilities requires medical evidence.

Unaccompanied minors: The municipality investigates whether there are relatives in Sweden with whom the minor can live and whether the minor needs special care and services. If the minor has relatives in Sweden with whom he/she wants to live, social services must agree that the minor can live there. If the minor does not have relatives in Sweden with whom he/she can live, he/she can live with a foster family or in special accommodation (most municipalities have chosen to operate children's homes for unaccompanied minors according to regulations for 'homes for care or residence', referred to as 'HVB housing'). The minor cannot choose a place and he/she may have to move to another place while he/she waits.

Reception and care of applicants with special needs and vulnerabilities

Applicants with special needs may be entitled to accommodation adapted to their vulnerable situation. The SMA will try to arrange a safe accommodation adapted to the applicant's need or close to the institutions where support can be provided. This may apply, for example, for a disability, a physical or mental illness, or to LGBTIQ, pregnant or elderly persons.

The SMA can arrange for procured institutional accommodations for applicants with extensive nursing needs. In these cases, the individual must be registered in the reception system and may be eligible for financial allowances from the SMA.

A first screening is made at the time of application, but since the conditions may change over time, the identification and facilitation of special needs is made throughout the asylum procedure.

Reception facilities and other housing arrangements

Housing arrangements

Examples of special accommodation include ground-level apartments without thresholds, accommodation in the proximity of sign language interpreters and special schools, in the proximity of necessary specialised care or treatments, or a separate room or apartment due to mental health issues. The SMA continues to work on how best to accommodate applicants with special needs. Current solutions include providing private apartments to foster self-determination and increase privacy.

For applicants who have been subjected to or are at risk of harassment due to any of the grounds of **discrimination** (gender, gender identity and gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, religion or other belief, or age), placement in secure housing is considered. The purpose of safe housing is to offer housing close to identity-creating networks and social contexts. This may, for example, apply to an applicant who is vulnerable due to sexual orientation and needs access to such networks.

For **LGBTIQ applicants**, apartments are usually close to bigger cities where there are NGOs and other support centres for LGBTIQ persons. Applicants who declare their LGBTIQ identity as a reason for asylum are offered a place in the Migration Agency's accommodation. An individual needs assessment is carried out for each person, for example whether they require their own apartment, access to networks or medical care. An LGBTIQ perspective is integrated into the social information that asylum seekers are initially provided in the asylum process.

There are also special flats available to accommodate the needs of persons who have **reduced mobility** (e.g. with wheelchair access). Applicants with various forms of physical disabilities can have their needs assessed by the staff of the local municipality, who base their assessments on the general rules for the population at large. The municipality makes recommendations on an individual's need for special care and the agreed costs are paid by the Migration Agency. There is a cooperation between the SMA and Folks High School in Leksand, Västansviks folkhögskola, to accommodate applicants with a **hearing impairment**.

The SMA can also, in cooperation with the police, arrange safe houses for threatened individuals, who are frequently women. In these situations, even the municipal social welfare authority can be involved. The SMA has developed guidelines for protected housing for applicants who have been subjected to, or threatened with, violence.

Detention of vulnerable persons and applicants with special reception needs

Detention is used only as a last resort and it is rare for vulnerable persons to be detained. If someone is assessed as not suitable for detention, e.g. a woman in the final months of pregnancy and persons with special needs, they may not be detained.

If a detainee requires hospital care, he/she is provided the care.

Reception of unaccompanied minors

While the SMA carries the overall responsibility for unaccompanied minors, daily allowances, accommodation and general welfare is managed by a local municipality. If a municipality does not provide the daily allowance, the SMA will provide it.

After minors apply for international protection, the SMA contacts a municipality that will arrange temporary accommodation for the minor. After a few days, the minor will be informed about which municipality will be responsible while waiting for a decision on the asylum application (Social Services Act, Socialtjänstlag (2001:453) (new law from 1 July 2025 - the Social Services Act, Socialtjänstlag (2025:400) and the [Law on Reception of Asylum Seekers and Others](#) (SFS 1994:137 with further amendments), Lag (1994:137) om mottagande av asylsökande m.fl.).

Reception facilities and other housing arrangements

Housing arrangements

Forms of accommodation can differ. Unaccompanied minors may be allowed to live with relatives or friends, otherwise they will be placed in foster homes or with other young people in an institutional home where there are staff to support them.

When the minor turns 18 years or if the SMA assesses that he/she is over 18 years after the age assessment procedure, the responsibility for arranging accommodation shifts from the municipality to the SMA. This means that he/she may need to move to an accommodation provided by the SMA.

Age assessments

If there are doubts about the age of an applicant, a more in-depth examination is carried out mainly based on the documents submitted (e.g. school certificates), an age assessment interview and a social service assessment (free evidence assessment is applied).

Access to education

All children have the right to go to school, and the municipality where they live is obligated to provide schooling on the same terms as other children who live there. This applies to preschool, elementary school and high school. This poses an obligation on the municipality where the SMA has housing to offer education to these children.

National regulations require that schooling and education are adapted to ensure that all children have access. This includes the provision of extra resources (such as specially-trained teachers, physical or technical aids, etc.) or adapted facilities.

Education should be offered within 30 days after the application was lodged. More information is available [here](#).

Access to healthcare

Minors are entitled to the same healthcare and dental care as other children living in Sweden. Access is free for all children. The regional administrative board receives standard financial support for healthcare and municipalities receive financial support for receiving asylum-seeking children in school.

If the minor feels sick, the guardian or someone from the accommodation centre will help to get an appointment with a doctor. More information can be found [here](#).

Transition to adulthood

An unaccompanied minor who reaches the age of majority will be considered as an adult in the asylum procedure, and the assignment of the legal guardian is automatically terminated. Reaching adulthood marks also cut-off points for support and services.

The reception of unaccompanied minors is under the responsibility of the municipalities and their social services. The SMA requests information from municipal social services at least 3 months prior to when the applicant will turn 18 and checks whether he/she is expected to remain in care facilities (if needed, care can be provided until the age of 21 years).

When the municipality notifies the SMA that care will be ended, the applicant jointly with his/her legal guardian are invited to a '18-year-old appointment' [*18-årssamtal*], which takes place about 6 weeks before the applicant reaches majority in order to receive information on the implications of reaching majority age.

Asylum applicants are then offered accommodation for adults, if possible, in the same municipality where they reside to enable a smooth transition. The legal guardian is responsible to contact the applicant's new school in case he/she must move to another municipality due to a change of accommodation.

Within 5 weeks after turning 18, the applicant will have an appointment with an SMA counsellor to follow up on his/her accommodation situation, schooling and social/health situation.

Detention of unaccompanied minors

Unaccompanied minors or families with children are only detained in the return procedure and not in the procedure when they are refused entry at the border.

[Aliens Regulation](#) (SFS 2006:97 with further amendments), Utlänningsförordning (2006:97), 23 February 2006.

[Aliens Act](#) (SFS 2005:716 with further amendments), Utlänningslag (2005:716), 29 September 2005.

Special procedural guarantees

First instance determination for applicants with special needs

Cases are divided into different tracks. For example, cases which are determined at the beginning that a decision cannot be taken within 6 months are handled in a specific track. The categorisation is to adjust the handling of cases according to special needs.

Access to information

Information on the asylum procedure and other relevant topics (such as the Dublin procedure, accommodation and detention) is available in various languages and accessible through the SMA's [web portal](#) (dedicated material for [children](#), both unaccompanied and in families, explaining the asylum procedure is also available in seven different languages). Information is occasionally in printed form or in booklets at reception centres. Special efforts have been made to take into account the information needs of illiterate persons by using [audio-visual](#) methods.

On the SMA webpage, Protection and asylum in Sweden - Migrationsverket can be accessed by applicants with vision impairments through the function where text is converted to sound. Under the main red textbox, Protection and asylum in Sweden, there is a button with the image of a speaker and the word Listen; when clicked, the text on the page will be read aloud.

Personal interview

Information provision and proceedings (interviews, interpretation, the choice of premises) are adapted throughout the entire asylum process to the applicant's needs and capabilities. The SMA provides adapted access to reception facilities for claimed disabilities without requiring medical evidence initially. If required, a guardian is assigned to the applicant. However, appointing a guardian for adults with disabilities requires medical evidence. Safeguards for persons with a disability are determined on a case-by-case basis. These may include extra breaks during the interview and holding the interview at the location where the applicant is staying.

Legal assistance

Legal assistance is always granted to unaccompanied children and may exceptionally be granted to adult applicants, depending on factors such as age or mental illness.

According to the Aliens Act (2005:716), legal assistance is granted to all applicants for protection. However, the legislation has been reviewed, and legal assistance will only be granted in accordance with the minimum standards of the APR and AMMR.

Guarantees for unaccompanied minors

There is an identification mechanism to systematically identify applicants with special needs or vulnerabilities. There is a specific procedure for unaccompanied minors. In the beginning of any process, an official note must be made if an applicant has special needs and what measures must be taken to provide adequate support. If new information emerges during the process, an official note for support is recorded.

The municipality investigates whether there are relatives in Sweden with whom the minor can live, and whether the minor needs special care and services. If the minor has relatives in Sweden with whom he/she wants to live, social services must agree that he/she can live there. If the minor does not have relatives in Sweden with whom he/she can live, he/she can live with a foster family or in special accommodation (most municipalities have chosen to operate children's homes for unaccompanied minors according to regulations for 'homes for care or residence', referred to as 'HVB housing'). The minor cannot choose a place, and he/she may have to move to another place while he/she waits.

Making, registering and lodging an asylum application

There is a specific procedure for unaccompanied minors. Either the guardian or public counsel lodges the application on the minor's behalf. Normally, the unaccompanied minor must be present when the application is being lodged by the legal representative.

Information provision

Information on the asylum procedure and other relevant topics (such as the Dublin procedure, accommodation and detention) is available in various languages and accessible through the SMA's [web portal](#) (dedicated material for [children](#), both unaccompanied and in families, explaining the asylum procedure is also available in seven different languages). Information is occasionally in printed form or in booklets at reception centres.

Best interests of the child in the Dublin procedure

There is no specific procedure to assess the best interests of the child in the Dublin procedure. The best interests of the child are taken into account during the entire procedure and explicitly assessed in the transfer decision.

The factors taken into account when the best interests of the child are assessed include, first and foremost, the factors enumerated in Article 6(3). No additional factors are taken into account. SMA internal guidelines are followed in assessing the factors.

Case officers in Dublin Units have specific training on unaccompanied minors.

Personal interview

The presence of the legal adviser/representative or guardian is mandatory when interviewing unaccompanied minors.

Legal representation during the asylum procedure

As soon as possible after the start of the asylum procedure, each unaccompanied minor is appointed a guardian or legal counsellor with the aid of the SMA and municipality (more specifically, municipal Chief Guardians Committee, *överförmyndarnämnden*). Either the guardian or public counsel then lodges the application on the minor's behalf. Normally, the unaccompanied minor must be present when the application is being lodged by the legal representative.

Legal assistance and counselling

According to Chapter 18, Section 1a(2), legal aid is compulsory for children who are present in Sweden and they do not have a guardian appointed.