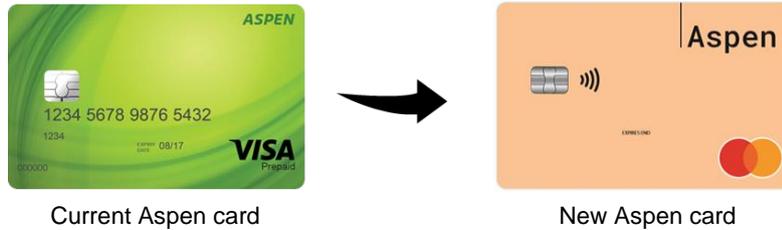




Asylum Support Payments (ASP) Project Update

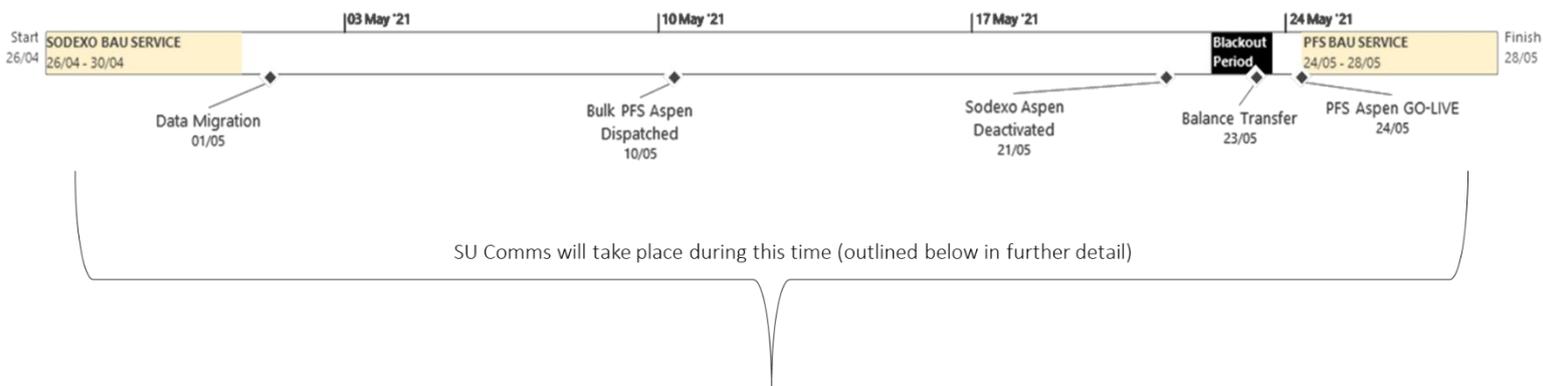
As you will be aware, the Asylum Support Payments (ASP) project will soon be introducing a new payment card for service users (SUs). The new card will function in a similar way to the current card (whilst maintaining the same name), however its colour and provider will differ.



The new Aspen card will be dispatched out to SUs from 10th May, ready for funds to be switched over and cards to be used for the first time on **Monday 24th May 2021**. These will be distributed by our service provider, Prepaid Financial Services (PFS).

Timelines

High-level summary of the transition timeline:



- **From 10th May** – The new Aspen card will be dispatched to SUs, along with an instructional pin mailer (see below for further details on SU comms).
- **Friday 21st May (from 5pm)** – The current Aspen card will be deactivated to enable the balance transfer.
- **Weekend of 22nd/23rd May** – ‘Blackout period’ - A balance transfer between the old and new Aspen card will take place. Throughout this weekend, both Aspen cards will be switched off.
- **Monday 24th May** – The new Aspen card will be live and active for SUs to use, with their previous balance transferred and their weekly payments continuing to be made.

What this means for the SU

When received by the SU, they will be prompted (within the PIN mailer) to activate their new card as soon as possible. Step-by-step instructions will be provided on how to do this. (Note – all communications sent to SUs will be translated into the top 10 languages).

From 5pm on Friday 21st May, the current (green) Aspen card will be switched off to enable a balance transfer over the weekend. The PIN mailer will alert SUs of this and make clear that withdrawals/purchases which are needed during the blackout weekend (22nd & 23rd May) should be made prior to 5pm on Friday 21st May.

On Monday 24th May, the new (orange) Aspen card will be ready to use with previous balances transferred.

The above will be communicated to SUs through several means (please see below for details on SU communications). **However, we encourage you to reinforce this messaging on card activation & withdrawals/purchases needed prior to the blackout period within the SU community.**

Please see below for details regarding how and when we will communicate with SUs directly throughout the transition.

Engagement Update

The current Aspen card (provided by Sodexo) will soon expire and SUs need to be made aware of the incoming change. To ensure a smooth transition to the new card, the ASP team have established a three-pronged approach towards SU engagement.

SU Engagement

1. Leaflets & Posters

The first phase of SU engagement is to distribute and display posters & leaflets (also translated into the top 10 SU languages) within key user locations; including IA sites, DA sites, hotels and MoD accommodation.

The poster is visual in nature and outlines the fact that a new payment card will soon be replacing the current Aspen card. It also refers to an accompanying leaflet whilst encouraging SUs to read this for further information.

The leaflet outlines the incoming Aspen card change in greater detail whilst informing SUs of what to expect and next steps.



We have been liaising with Home Office accommodation providers in order to assist in the distribution of posters and leaflets to key SU locations. We aim for these to be delivered to sites and received by the end of April-early May.

Given your position as key stakeholders, we would like you to be aware of the communications being disseminated to SUs whilst remaining informed of project progress. As such, we have attached both the poster and leaflet within our email (PDF files). **Where, appropriate, please distribute and share these within the SU community.**

2. Aspen Card & Pin Mailer

On the 10th of May, the new Aspen Card with an instructional pin mailer will be sent to all current Aspen card holders.

The pin mailer is personalised (name, address, and NASS reference number) and will clearly and succinctly provide a step-by-step guide for SUs to follow to activate their new card. It will also contain helpline numbers for both PFS and Migrant Help, should they need further support or guidance. The letter will recommend that SUs activate their card as soon as possible. Once activated, this new card will be available to use from Monday 24th May – when their funds will be available on it and previous balances transferred.

The pin mailer will also outline that for a brief period of time, both Aspen cards will be switched off and unavailable to use after 5pm on Friday 21st May; whilst we transfer their current card balance across to their new card.

Due to this, we will state and continue to emphasise the importance of SUs making purchases and/or taking out any cash needed for the weekend of 22nd/23rd May *before* 5pm on Friday 21st May. We will be communicating with accommodation staff on the ground to ensure they are aware of this and to relay this message. **We ask that you also reinforce this message to SUs where appropriate and possible.**

3. Service Migration Letter/FAQs

By Monday 17th of May, a final communication will be sent to all SUs containing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and standard Terms and Conditions relating to their new card. These aim to provide further guidance and support for SUs. This communication will also reinforce the message that SUs should activate their cards as soon as possible. Helpline numbers will once again be provided.

Summary

SU engagement is made up of three steps: communication 1 (leaflets & posters) aims to raise awareness of the incoming Aspen card change within the SU community, whilst communications 2 and 3 (service migration documents) are instructional in nature.

We have worked with Home Office colleagues, PFS & Migrant Help to develop these communications and will be working with them as well as strategic delivery partners to assist us in sharing the communication with SUs.

We encourage third sector partners to help reinforce this messaging being sent to SUs. This is particularly the case for the section above titled '*what this means for the SU*' – where card activation, the blackout period and key dates are of prominence. As well as spreading this information within the SU community, we request that you also distribute the leaflet and posters to SUs where appropriate.

We will be reaching out to you again in the beginning of May to provide further information documents. These include: an FAQ sheet and copies of documents (such as the PIN mailer being sent to SUs and the card's terms & conditions).

For any queries relating to the ASP project and its new Aspen card, please contact: aspteam@homeoffice.gov.uk.