



SERVICE DEFINITION G-CLOUD LOT 2: CLOUD SOFTWARE

EARL – Emergency Accommodation

Resource Link

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1. Introduction

EARL (Emergency Accommodation Resource Link) is a case and placement management system designed for Local Authority Emergency & Temporary Accommodation (EA/TA) services. It replaces fragmented spreadsheets and disconnected systems with one unified platform for managing applicants, placements, financials, compliance, reporting, and inter-departmental coordination.

This Service Definition outlines the scope, features, deployment model, support model, pricing structure and compliance posture of this Service provided by Ascendant Solutions Limited under the G-Cloud Framework.

2. Company Overview

Ascendant Solutions Limited is a multi-award-winning UK public-sector technology provider, recognised nationally for innovation, service quality and measurable impact across Revenues, Benefits and Housing services. The company has earned repeated IRRV Performance Awards across 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2025, including *Excellence in Innovation*, *Excellence in Debt Management*, and *Innovation in the Fight Against Poverty*.

In addition to its strong sector reputation and proven delivery record with Local Authorities, Ascendant Solutions achieved one of the highest honours available to UK businesses, the King's Award for Enterprise (Innovation). The award recognised our Apply4.Online® product following exceptional national uptake and significant contribution to public sector digital transformation.

3. Service Description

EARL (Emergency Accommodation Resource Link) is a purpose-built platform that enables Local Authorities to manage Emergency and Temporary Accommodation with speed, accuracy, and complete financial oversight. It replaces disconnected spreadsheets and legacy systems with a single, intuitive environment where teams can locate, allocate, and manage placements in real time; track every cost, Housing Benefit claim, and subsidy risk which allows the system to collaborate seamlessly across Housing, HB, CTAX, and Out of Hours services.

Designed in partnership with the team at Lewes & Eastbourne Councils, EARL centralises case data, automates administrative tasks, and provides real time dashboards that highlight's high risk and high-cost cases, enabling faster, safer decisions and significant savings; over £1.3m demonstrated in practice. EARL gives councils the clarity, control, and automation needed to deliver compliant, cost-effective accommodation services at a time of unprecedented demand.



4. Core Features & Functionality

Case & Placement Management

- Comprehensive case management hub with full case histories.
- Placement creation, updates, reviews, and financial tracking.
- Out of hours case creation for 24/7 emergency use.
- Detailed applicant information (NI numbers, pets, children, risks, duties, household codes).

Financial Intelligence

- Tracks Housing Benefit, Local Housing Allowance, debt levels, and subsidy loss.
- Realtime cost monitoring (nightly rates, service charges, true cost, contributions).
- Automated alerts for missing rates, high-risk financial cases, and subsidy issues.

Dashboards & Reporting

- Realtime analytics dashboards
- RAG scoring for subsidy loss, HB claims and cost comparison
- Instant reporting and exports
- Customisable reports for strategic and operational insight

Automations & Workflow Tools

- Automated notifications to Housing Benefit, Council Tax, and providers
- Automated placement reviews
- SWEP automation (weather monitoring, alerts, pre/during/post workflows)
- Email/SMS alerting
- Document templates & bulk generation

Configuration & Customisation

- Customisable setup: duties, household types, accommodation options, pricing structures
- File management: upload/download individually or in bulk
- Provider management and configurable filetype filters
- Applicant photo upload and identity checks



5. Benefits

At its core, and as a solution that is under 1 year old, the Service has demonstrated savings of up to 25% of Homelessness budgets. The Service is being heavily invested in to continue efficiency gains and enable inter-departmental data processing with real-time action alerts to key stakeholders in homelessness cases autonomously. By the end of 2026 we expect that EARL, in combination with Pulse RPA®, will automatically synchronise data between Revenues and Benefits systems, Housing systems, Rents, Children's and Adults Social Services, Licensing and more.

Operational Efficiency

- Replaces spreadsheets and multiple systems with one unified platform
- Cuts administrative workload via automation and streamlined workflows
- Reduces human error with rules-based checks (e.g. Gender Specific Allocation, Rate Override Auditing, Mismatch Checks)

Financial Savings

- Proven savings of £1.3m+ for councils through improved housing benefit recovery and reduced placements
- Prevents subsidy loss by highlighting missing or at risk housing benefit claims
- Improves accuracy and reduces overspend by matching the right placement first time

Faster, Safer Placements

- Realtime availability ensures quick allocation
- RAG scored dashboards help identify lost housing benefit Claims
- Reduces inappropriate or unsafe placements (e.g., safeguarding conflicts)

6. Maximising Impact – Synergistic Services

Ascendants services often have services which embed, compliment and significantly enhance operational efficiency. By combining services you may already have, or may wish to consider, measurable gains are possible very quickly. The following lots are example synergistic products:

- Apply4.Online® Residents can be used to capture applicant information.
- SYX – Managing visits to providers and applicants while working remotely.
- Pulse RPA® - Automate extraction of information from legacy systems and synchronise data between departments, automatically suspend benefits claims, end Housing Benefit / CTRS claims and re-designate landlords as liable when cases change statuses in EARL. (subsidy loss minimisation)



- Open Banking – Collect evidence of affordability and spending from applicants via emailed requests to complete Open Banking Consents.
- Benefits Calculator – Signpost and record holistic benefits assessments either through assisted or applicant completed processes.
- Apply4.Online® Business – Collect information from TA EA Providers through online forms in a structured and automatically risk scored way with this Kings Award winning service.
- Hive – Monitor housing suppliers for compliance risks including directorship changes, ownership changes and insolvency activity such as Winding Up Petition notifications and improve public relations by monitoring for “bad press” events involving your suppliers.
- Debtor Tracing Services – For absconding applicants who have a debt owed as a result of their placements.
- Pathway Exempt Search – For the prevention and detection of fraud including Housing Register fraud and subletting fraud.
- Identity Checks for Applicants.
- Owner Insight® can assist in verifying sole trader providers of TA EA accommodation are the registered proprietor of the addresses in their portfolio.
- Vulnerability Registration Service – Register vulnerable applicants (with their consent) on the VRS service to protect applicants from increased financial vulnerability and stress by notifying the applicants creditors and lenders of applicable vulnerabilities. (May impact ability to gain credit)

7. Service Constraints

Data Refresh Timings

EARL operates on real time data pipelines for case updates, placement changes, and financial information, supported by automated workflows and streaming processes in its architecture. For reporting, EARL provides direct read access to Azure SQL database replicas for the Buyer, improving report speed and reducing load on primary systems. This provides near real time refresh with a small replication delay.

Dependencies

- Automated data workflows and scheduled processes rely on stable API connections and correct configuration of event-based triggers.



Browser & Device Requirements

- EARL is a cloud hosted application accessible via the Ascendant Portal, requiring a modern browser environment.
- The system is designed to be accessible “for all”, with an intuitive interface suitable across devices, browsers, and user abilities.
- Standard industry compatibility is implied through support for Microsoft SSO, Azure hosting, role-based access, and multi factor authentication. All of which require up to date browser technology (Chrome, Edge, Firefox).

8. Onboarding & Offboarding

Onboarding

Ascendant Solutions provides a rapid and structured onboarding process for all Lot 2 Cloud Software services. Onboarding applies consistently across all products unless otherwise stated in the relevant Service Definition.

Onboarding Timescales

Subject to any third-party dependencies (for example TransUnion, Price Hubble and HM Land Registry), all Cloud Software services will be onboarded within 48 hours of contract signing.

Training

- Each purchase includes 4 hours of remote “Train the Trainer” onboarding, enabling the Buyer to confidently administer and cascade training within their organisation.
- Additional training, both remote and on-site, is available to purchase separately through our G-Cloud services. Rates are defined in the associated pricing schedule.
- Onboarding training will be provided within 5 working days, or another timeframe agreed with the Buyer.

Administration & Access

All services are self-administered. The Buyer is granted full access controls and user management rights within their tenant, enabling them to create, modify and remove users as needed.



Data Migration

Inbound data migrations are anticipated to be required for some Software Services. Where inbound migrations cannot be handled by built in tools then a scoping exercise will need to take place including a Statement of Works and a quotation for the work being completed under separate cover. Rates for Data Migration work is covered within our G Cloud listing for “Cloud Engineering and Support Services”.

Offboarding

Ascendant Solutions provides a structured, compliant offboarding process ensuring Buyers retain access to their data and receive clear notice of contractual end-of-service activities.

Contract End & Data Extraction

- A 90-day grace period is provided at the end of the contract to allow the Buyer to extract any required information prior to automatic data deletion.
- If the Buyer requires additional support or prefers to have data delivered in a different format or method this will be quoted for and billed at the Senior Engineer Development Day Rate.¹
- During this period, account managers will normally contact the Buyer to confirm requirements and to offer the option of an extended Read-Only service (available separately on G-Cloud as “Storage and Processing”).

System Notifications

All users within the Buyer’s tenant will receive warnings within the system when licences are approaching expiry, including reminders of data deletion risk.

Backups & Restoration

- Air-walled backups are retained for up to 6 years. These backups exist to protect both Buyer and Supplier in the event of any Data Processing compliance investigation or regulatory need.
- Following autonomous deletion, if a Buyer later requests reinstatement of their service, Ascendant Solutions will provide a time-based restoration quote calculated in accordance with the our G-Cloud rate card for Senior Engineer Day Rates.

¹ Ascendant has strict access policies and our developers cannot read data from the production systems. The Senior rate is charged for this area of expertise due to senior management involvement.



- Full service restoration is not guaranteed and will be confirmed at the point of quote. Restoration is subject to archived data availability and authorisation by the Buyer. In scenarios where Ascendant Solutions was instructed to permanently delete tenant level cryptographic keys, restoration will not be possible.

9. Service Levels & Support

Support Hours

Support is available during normal working days, Monday to Friday, 08:00–17:00 (UK time), excluding UK Bank Holidays.

How to Log a Support Request

Buyers may raise support tickets via any of the following channels:

- Online Service Desk: <https://ascendantsol.atlassian.net/servicedesk/customer/portals>
- Telephone: 01302 543 157
- Microsoft Teams: Microsoft Organisation Tenants can call any Ascendant team member directly.

Standard Priority (Normal SLA)

Applicable to non-critical issues where service remains operational.

- Response Time: Within 2 working hour
- Resolution Target: Within 48 working hours

Critical Priority SLA

A critical issue is one that poses risk to the Buyer, Seller, or end customers, including but not limited to system outages, data related failures, or security incidents. These issues should be logged and escalated to all contacts within the Call Off contract.

- Response Time: Within 30 working minutes
- Resolution Target: Within 4 working hours

Out-of-Hours (OOH) Support

OOH support is provided for critical issues.

Escalation and OOH contact details are included within the Buyer's Call Off Contract.



Software Availability SLA

Ascendant Solutions' Cloud Software services are designed to operate "Always Online", using Microsoft Azure's high-availability architecture and design patterns which limit downtime to near zero seconds per day.

Updates as Standard

Upgrades, enhancements, security improvements or performance optimisations to our Cloud Software services are provided as standard and without additional charge. Updates are informed by a combination of customer feedback, usage analytics, and proactive application monitoring, ensuring that improvements are meaningful, stable and aligned to real world operational need. Deployments are designed to be seamless, with minimal or no service disruption, and form part of our standard commitment to maintaining secure, resilient and high performance services.

Agile Delivery & Continuous Deployment

Ascendant Solutions operates an agile, no-release-cycle development model, meaning there is no wait for new features or improvements. Instead, we use a fully automated CI/CD (Continuous Integration / Continuous Deployment) pipeline that safely deploys improvements to our live services every morning at 6am. This approach ensures that fixes, enhancements and refinements reach customers as soon as they are ready, without disruption, downtime, or the risks associated with large, infrequent updates. Our deployment process is automated, heavily tested, and designed for stability, allowing us to deliver rapid improvements based on real-time application monitoring and ongoing customer feedback. For non-technical Buyers, the practical benefit is simple: you always have the best, most secure and most up-to-date version of the service, without needing to schedule upgrades, incur extra costs, or experience outages. This continuous improvement approach provides predictability, increased quality, faster delivery of new features, and ensures our cloud services remain aligned to evolving operational requirements.

Third-Party Dependencies Statement – Sub processors

EARL does not rely on any external third-party software components, libraries, or hosted services to perform its functions. All processing, storage, and operational activity is handled within infrastructure controlled or contracted directly by Ascendant Solutions.

Target Availability of our Software Services

Subject to third party dependencies listed below where applicable, our target SLAs are:

- 99.9% uptime during business hours
- 99% uptime outside business hours



- Web page load times: sub second where no third party dependency exists

Ascendant's services have an embedded "Status Page" notifying user of any unexpected outages or planned maintenance. Incident and Maintenance history is available on our Status Page and Buyers are encouraged to sign up to alerts at <https://status.ascendantsol.co.uk>

10. Technical Architecture

Our Cloud Services leverage the following high-availability Azure services (each benefiting from Microsoft's own SLAs):

- Azure SQL (UK South, UK West High Availability Replica)
- Azure Firewall
- Azure Application Gateway
- Azure App Service
- Azure Storage Accounts (UK South, UK West)
- Azure App Secrets Management
- Azure Key Vault
- Azure DevOps
- Azure Pipelines
- Microsoft Entra ID for Corporate Tenant SSO (may require IT Teams to allow list)
- Amazon AWS SES "Simple Email Service" for system notifications.

These components provide built-in redundancy, automated failover where practical, and resilience appropriate for public sector workloads.

11. Information Security & Compliance

Your contracts reference:

- ISO 27001:2022 Compliant Business Management System.
- Cyber Essentials Plus
- Quantum Cryptography Readiness Plan
- Microsoft Partner
- Bi-Annual Penetration Testing
- Feature Branch Penetration Testing As Needed (e.g. Login software changes)

12. Data Protection

Ascendant Solutions Limited is committed to ensuring that all personal data processed through our cloud services is handled lawfully, securely, and transparently in accordance with the UK GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018, and all relevant public sector data protection requirements. We act as either Data Processor of your data and any data procured on your behalf via connected third



party services. We act as Data Controller mainly in relation to handling your employee information as they use the services and interact with our organisation and our employees.

Roles & Responsibilities

- The Buyer is typically the Data Controller, retaining full responsibility for determining the purpose and lawful basis for processing data.
- Ascendant Solutions, when acting as the Data Processor, processes personal data strictly under the Buyer's documented instructions, as outlined in the Call Off Contract and Data Processing Agreement.

Categories of Data Processed by Ascendant as a Data Controller

All Ascendant Services will process personal data of system users as a Data Controller. Those categories of Personal Data are:

- Name
- Email Address
- Phone Number
- Physical Address (Where using location-based services or mapping / routing)
- IP Address
- Date of Birth (Optional)
- Employment Information (Employer and Job Title)



Publicly Accessible Services

For Ascendant Services that have a publicly accessible website for use by the Buyer's customers. For example, Apply4.Online® allows residents to register to access the service without any connect to a given council. Users may register and never indicate which council they intend to fill in forms for. For this this reason, "User" or "Login" level information is controlled by Ascendant Solutions. When users of the system apply for a scheme hosted by a Buyer, the user personal data is shared with the Buyer via consent and is copied onto the Buyer Tenant Database. The Buyer is the Data Controller of that copy of the information. the user can choose to Update or Delete their user account data at any time. Updates to the Ascendant controlled data will not affect any copies of the data contained within the Buyer's control i.e. data that is contained within part-complete or submitted forms.

Categories of Data Processed by the Service as Data Processor

- Information relating to all applicants including children may contain special categories of data depending on how the Buyer uses the system.
 - Name
 - Address
 - Date of Birth
 - Gender and Gender Identity
 - Phone Numbers
 - Email Addresses
 - Health data
 - Criminal history
 - Financial records
 - Video and Photos
 - Identity Documentation
 - IP addresses
 - Relationships to other applicants including whether one applicant can share a bed with another
 - National Insurance Number and other National Identities
 - Related Agency Involvement, e.g. Children's / Adult social care.
 - Education, Employment and Health Care locations (used to minimise homelessness placement disruption to the family, enable better travel connections to Health services for high frequency users and increase public safety by flagging risk of Offenders being placed close to schools, public spaces, beaches etc)



Lawful Processing & Minimisation

Data is processed solely for purposes connected to service delivery, performance, monitoring, analytics and fraud-prevention (where applicable). We operate strict data-minimisation principles, holding only what is required to deliver the contracted service.

Security Measures

Ascendant Solutions operates within an ISO 27001 certified Business Management System, applying robust organisational and technical controls including:

- Encryption in transit and at rest
- Secure access controls and user permissions
- Air-walled backups
- Monitoring, logging and incident detection
- Controlled development and deployment pipelines
- Multi-factor authentication and Conditional access policies
- Least-privilege access and segregation of duties

Data Storage & Location

All data is stored exclusively within UK based Microsoft Azure environments. Azure services underpinning our systems benefit from high-availability, resilience and strong platform level security.

Access Control & Administration

Access to customer data is restricted to authorised personnel only, and logged for audit. Buyers are provided with full administrative control over user access within their own tenant.

Data Sharing & Sub-processors

Where services rely on third parties (e.g., TransUnion, Price Hubble, HM Land Registry), these sub-processors are listed in the Call-Off Contract or Data Processing Agreement. Ascendant ensures all sub-processors meet equivalent security and data-protection obligations.

Data Retention & Deletion

At the end of a contract, Buyers are provided with a 90-day grace period to extract any required information before automated deletion occurs.

Air walled backups are retained for up to 6 years for legal, regulatory and compliance protection. A



service restoration process is possible, subject to Senior Engineer Day Rates as published on our G-Cloud service.

Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs)

DPIA support is available as part of onboarding. We provide detailed information on data flows, processing activities, risks, and mitigations to enable the Buyer to satisfy their internal governance requirements.

Data Subject Rights

Ascendant supports Buyers in responding to DSARs, objections, erasure requests, rectification, and other statutory rights, ensuring timely, auditable cooperation as required. As a Data Processor we will inform you of any DSAR requests and handle them according to your instructions. Some services apply GDPR Exemptions under Schedule 2 DPA 2018 and will be identified during Onboarding and supporting you through DPIA's.

Incident Management

Ascendant maintains a documented incident response process, including:

- Immediate containment
- Assessment of scope and risk
- Notification to the Controller without undue delay
- Full forensic audit of system activity
- Support with ICO notifications if required

13. Pricing

Please refer to the associated G-Cloud pricing document for the product.

14. Service Roadmap

For information about new features and to stay up to date with the latest news, join our marketing list using the website link: <https://www.ascendantsol.co.uk/about-us/contact-us/>

15. Terms & Conditions

For T&Cs relating to use of our systems please see

<https://www2.ascendantsol.co.uk/Public/TermsAndConditions>



16. Existing Users

Eastbourne Borough Council

Lewes District Council

17. Ordering, Billing & Invoicing

- Following receipt of an order, a Call Off process should be initiated in accordance with the CCS Framework.
- A Purchase Order should be generated by the Buyer at the point of contract signing for the price outlined in the Call Off.
- An invoice will be raised by the Seller upon receipt of a signed and countersigned Call Off Contract. If a purchase order number is required it should be supplied and noted within the Call Off Contract.
- Absence of a purchase order, or purchase order number, does not invalidate any orders and will not prevent invoices being raised after a reasonable grace period, normally 30 days.
- Late payment of invoices may be subject to the Late Payment of Commercial Debts Act and incur additional charges in accordance with the act.