

[Note from ASAP, the following 2020 guide can be found at <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/AST-Help-for-Users.pdf>]

Help for Users Guide - (applicable during the Covid-19 pandemic)

This guide briefly explains the changes that the First Tier-Tribunal, Asylum Support (FTT-AS) has made to ensure that we continue to decide appeals fairly and efficiently during the pandemic, whilst also maintaining the safety of our users, staff and judiciary. If you would like to read more about the law, practice and procedure that has enabled us to make these changes, the detailed documents are on our website.

Making an appeal:

Appeals can still be made by post or by email – see the section on our website which deals with how to appeal. However, we strongly recommend the use of email for submitting an appeal and communicating with the Tribunal during the pandemic. You can contact us on asylumsupporttribunals@justice.gov.uk

Appeal hearings:

The Tribunal will decide all appeals on the papers, unless a judge rules that oral evidence is necessary. You have the right to object to this and to ask for an oral hearing. Sometimes a judge may rule that your appeal will be decided on the papers, even though you have asked for an oral hearing. This will be in special circumstances – for example if it is urgent and it is not possible to arrange a hearing.

The Tribunal is not running face to face hearings during the pandemic. If an oral hearing is ordered, it will probably take place via a telephone hearing. You will receive detailed instructions before the hearing and the telephone call will be free. You will need to give us a working telephone number on your notice of appeal form

Interpreters will be provided for telephone hearings. Please make sure that you give us language and dialect details on your notice of appeal form.

The appeal decision:

No appeal is being delayed until after the end of the pandemic. The Tribunal will make every effort to list appeals as soon as possible and in most cases a judge will make a decision on your appeal and send you a judgment within 2 to 3 weeks of the date on which your notice of appeal form was delivered to the Tribunal.

Appeals are determined quickly because we know that they concern important issues of accommodation and financial support. However, because appeals are processed speedily, it is important to provide as many documents as you can with your notice of appeal form and to answer quickly (ideally by email) when the Tribunal sends you instructions about further evidence that you need to send in.

We have extended our deadlines for gathering evidence during the pandemic, but you should contact us if you need to ask for more time. A judge will decide whether to grant such a request, balancing the need for a speedy decision on important issues, such as destitution, against the need for everyone to participate fully in the appeal process.