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Tell us what you think

We would like to hear your views on how we've performed over the last twelve months and what we should be working on in the future.

We would like to hear comments, suggestions, praise and criticism which will help us identify future work, so please [take our survey](#). There are only 6 questions and it will not take more than 5 minutes of your time. The first five organisations to answer the questionnaire will receive £10 supermarket voucher purchased from one of the voucher-exchange schemes. Please complete the survey before 20 April because we will have our annual planning meeting on 22 April.

If you have already taken our survey online, we might not have your contact details to get in touch if you have won a £10 voucher. Please email abi@asaproject.org.uk with your contact details and the day you took the survey.

Training for Section 4 caseworkers? UKBA's response to ASAP's report *Not Destitute Enough*

ASAP's report Not Destitute Enough prompted UKBA to re-train its section 4 caseworkers and review the Asylum Instruction on section 4 in order to improve their quality of decision making.

ASAP's report *Not Destitute Enough* was published in January 2009. It analysed 40 Section 4 refusal letters and found that many refused asylum seekers' asylum support applications are routinely refused because UKBA's errors and misapplication of the law.

In her letter to ASAP dated 11 March 2009 Emily Miles, Director of the Case Resolution Directorate (CRD), accepted the report's findings. She also outlined how the Directorate intends to utilise its new Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) to improve its work and invited ASAP to repeat the analysis again later this year to see its impact on the quality of asylum support decision making.

Eiri Ohtani, Director of ASAP said, 'We are pleased that the CRD is following our report's recommendations and considering ways to improve the quality of their asylum support decision making. It is unacceptable that refused asylum seekers are forced into unnecessary destitution as a result of wrong decisions by the CRD. We are, however, disappointed that necessary steps to rectify the problem have not been taken earlier which lead us to wonder if the CRD had any quality monitoring system in place at all before. We wait to see if the QAF will indeed improve the way their work is monitored and managed.'

For further information about the report, please contact Eiri at Eiri@asaproject.org.uk *Not Destitute Enough* can be downloaded [here](#).

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The real value of Section 4 support continues to fall

Section 4 support is not adjusted for inflation leading to a slow erosion of the value of vouchers provided for destitute asylum seekers

The value of Section 4 support has been falling steadily ever since it was introduced in 2005. The weekly £35 vouchers have never been adjusted for inflation and as a result their real value declines every year. ASAP is concerned that £35 is no longer enough for destitute asylum seekers to meet their essential living needs.

At the start of April the Consumer Price Index showed inflation to be 3.2%. This means that Section 4 vouchers are now worth £3.90 less than they were four years ago. Had they been adjusted for inflation, the vouchers would now be £38.90.

The falling value is especially concerning given the rising price of food. According to the [Office of National Statistics](#), the strongest upward pressure on inflation this year is from food and soft drinks. The price of vegetables, for example, increased by 19%. As destitute asylum seekers receiving Section 4 support are intended to use the vouchers for food and essential toiletries only, they will suffer disproportionately from rising food prices. As the real value of £35 is eroded, surviving on Section 4 support becomes more and more difficult. It is questionable whether £35 is enough to meet essential living needs.

ASAP believes that the value of s4 support should increase in accordance with the inflationary rate. Although s4 was intended to support people for a short period, in reality, many people remain on s4 support for months and in some cases, in years. According to the Home Office Statistical Review Summary available from [ICAR](#), in the last quarter of 2008, 10,295 people were in receipt of s4 support.

A full-time Duty Scheme at the First-Tier Tribunal (Asylum Support)

With the help of LawWorks and volunteer solicitors, ASAP will soon be able to provide more advice and representation for destitute asylum seekers

Over the last six months, ASAP has been working with LawWorks to develop a new Duty Scheme volunteering scheme for solicitors who work in the City. 17 solicitors from four law firms - Clifford Chance, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, Herbert Smith and Simpson, Thacher & Bartlett - are currently being trained by ASAP's Solicitor and Legal Advisers. It is hoped that they will complete their assessment by the end of May 2009.

This will significantly increase ASAP's Duty Scheme capacity and we are hoping to launch an expanded five-days-a-week Duty Scheme this summer.

Eiri Ohtani, ASAP Director, said "We are thrilled that we will soon be running our Duty Scheme every day of the week, providing more free legal advice and representation to destitute asylum seekers. LawWorks expertly guided us throughout the process. ASAP is a small organisation and our capacity is limited, so we would not have been able to manage such a huge project without their professionalism and hands-on help. It has also been a great pleasure working with so many solicitors who are interested in joining our Duty Scheme."

ASAP is hoping to host a launch event to mark this milestone in the organisation's history. Watch this space!

The end of supermarket vouchers under Section 4?

Immigration Minister Phil Woolas recently announced his intentions to replace supermarket vouchers provided under Section 4 with plastic debit cards

The UK Border Agency will pilot this scheme in June, with a view to rolling out the cards to all section 4 applicants later this year.

As we understand it, individuals will be able to use the cards in a far greater number of shops and venues throughout the UK. It may also be possible to use the new card to purchase bus and train tickets, something that is not possible to do under the current voucher scheme.

On the downside, once the scheme is introduced individuals in receipt to Section 4 will no longer be able to take part in the voucher exchange scheme run by organisations such as Jesuit Refugee Services, Notre Dame Refugee Service and Praxis. These schemes enable individuals on Section 4 support to exchange their vouchers for cash which can then be used to purchase food from cheaper sources such as markets and second hand shops.

Although ASAP welcomes any proposals that improve on the current system, we believe that all those in receipt to Section 4 support should be provided with cash support. We will update you on these new proposals in our future newsletters.

Sponsor ASAP's team: walking 10km to raise funds

ASAP will take part in the London Legal Support Trust's 10km sponsored walk, raising money for our work defending the legal rights of destitute asylum seekers

ASAP will be taking part in the sponsored walk on 18 May to raise money for our legal work, defending the legal rights of asylum seekers to food and shelter.

ASAP has participated in the walk every year and last year we raised £3,000. To sponsor us, please visit <http://www.justgiving.com/asap>.

In summer 2009, we will finally be in a position to launch a daily Duty Scheme service, thanks to LawWorks and a large group of new volunteers from four law firms in the City. Running the Duty Scheme every day of the week has been one of ASAP's key strategic objectives and will be a significant milestone for the organisation, which started this pioneering work once a fortnight in 2004. The money raised on the sponsored walk will help make the daily Duty Scheme possible.

Please sponsor the ASAP team by visiting <http://www.justgiving.com/asap> or sending a cheque made payable to Asylum Support Appeals Project.

If you'd like to join the ASAP team and walk with us, please email abi@asaproject.org.uk or call 020 8686 1888.

Women's Project

ASAP to lobby UK Border Agency to provide more support to pregnant women

Many of the women ASAP works with are pregnant and in receipt of Section 4 support. Under Section 4 support a single person receives £35 in supermarket vouchers. Since Jan 2008, a pregnant woman can claim an additional weekly voucher of £3 throughout their pregnancy.

ASAP is investigating whether the support provided to pregnant women under Section 4 is enough

to meet their essential living needs. ASAP will be working with Maternity Action on this next year. We are hoping to provide evidence to UKBA from midwives and other health professionals to show that the current low level of support is inadequate and is putting the health of pregnant women at risk.

If your organisation would like giving us your views on this issue please contact Gerry Hickey on 020 8686 1888.

New post of Solicitor created at ASAP

We are delighted to announce that a new post of Solicitor at ASAP was created on 1 April 2009. Colin McCloskey, who has been working at ASAP since October 2007, has agreed to take up this role. This will increase our ability to challenge potentially illegal asylum support policies and procedures which are forcing many asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers into destitution and unacceptable level of poverty.

London Project: nine month review

How ASAP's London Councils project has helped asylum seekers access advice and representation in asylum support appeal hearings

The London Project increases access to advice and representation in asylum support appeals in two concrete ways:

- our Duty Scheme at the First-Tier Tribunal and
- our Advice Line which is open Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

In its first nine months, we have been building up a referral network and actively promoting the service amongst London based agencies. Through our Duty Scheme, which now runs four days a week (every working day except Wednesday), the London Project has represented and advised 30 people from the London area. 57% of these appeals had a successful outcome. Below is an example of one of the cases we recently represented.

A young man, who was awaiting a decision on a fresh claim, had been supported by his wife until the breakdown of their marriage earlier this year. This left him homeless and destitute. He stayed for a short while with a friend but then ended up sleeping on the streets for 5 nights. In his application he supplied two letters from friends explaining his circumstances and confirming that they couldn't support him, as well as his own statement. UKBA deemed there was insufficient evidence of destitution and refused his application. His appeal against that decision was allowed and he now has accommodation.

We will also be running training sessions on support options for failed asylum seekers for London based agencies in June 09 (for BAN members only) and November 09. Please see www.asaproject.org for details of all future training dates. In addition, the project's secured funding from London Councils to allows us to continue to co-ordinate the London Destitution Advice Network which meets quarterly.

Details on how to refer clients to our project and other aspects of the London Project can be found on our website www.asaproject.org.uk or you can contact the project worker, Marie-Anne Fishwick, at Marie-Anne@asaproject.org.uk

ASAP's volunteer gets 100 hours of service award

We're very proud that Tom Copeland, ASAP's Office Volunteer, was awarded a certificate from Volunteer Centre Croydon for 100 hours of volunteering

Tom has been volunteering at ASAP since July 2008 and has made an extremely valuable contribution to the work of ASAP. Tom says:

As a student of human rights law I have found volunteering with ASAP a beneficial and informative experience. Shadowing legal advisers at the First-Tier Tribunal (Asylum Support), interviewing clients after appeals, filtering diverse advice line calls, attending meetings and communicating with various voluntary organisations and solicitors who work in the sector have provided me with first hand experience of working in the sector. After settling into ASAP I was gradually given more responsibilities and even my own research projects which have been used in ASAPs policy work which is extremely rewarding.

Having read ASAPs publications and reports prior to starting the internship I imagined the organisation would have more staff and resources than it has, I was therefore surprised when I started to see just 5 members of staff in the office!! As a volunteer working in such a small environment is extremely valuable as it allows you to experience all aspects of ASAPs work and appreciate the specialist role that ASAP carries out in the sector.

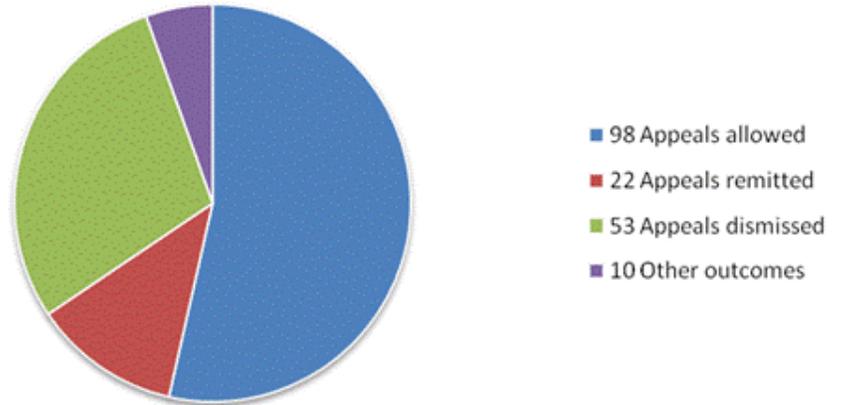
2008-2009: Our work over the last financial year

A summary of what we have done over the last twelve months

- **185 destitute asylum seekers represented at the First-Tier Tribunal (Asylum Support)**
- **92 appellants received advice on their asylum support appeal hearings**
- **574 calls from 501 organisations taken by our Advice Line for Advisers**
- **15 training sessions delivered for 227 participants from 111 organisations**

Below is a chart of our results at the Tribunal. Of the appeals represented by ASAP, 65% were successful (a successful appeal is when the appeal is allowed or is remitted back to the Home Office for further consideration).

Clients represented by ASAP: 185 clients



We hope that 2009-10 will be another record breaking year for ASAP. Our collaboration with LawWorks and 17 volunteer solicitors will allow us to represent destitute asylum seekers at the Tribunal 5 days a week. We will also be running training sessions across the UK and our advisers will be available to take Advice Line calls three days a week. Please visit www.asaproject.org for details of all of ASAP's services.

Vouchers exchange scheme: Can you help?

Could you help people on S4 support by exchanging cash for vouchers?

The Jesuit Refugee Service, Praxis and the Notre Dame Refugee Centre operate London-based schemes to exchange cash for the supermarket vouchers provided as Section 4 support. As the vouchers are provided in place of cash, people relying on Section 4 support are unable to access goods and services not available in supermarkets, like cheaper food from markets, clothes or bus and train tickets.

You can take part in the schemes by exchanging the cash value of the vouchers, which can then be used in local supermarkets such as Tesco and Asda. Jesuit Refugee Service currently have a surplus of Tesco vouchers and are looking for more people to take part in the exchange.

If you can help, please contact one of the following organisations:

Jesuit Refugee Service, 6 Melior Street, London, SE1 3QP

Tel: 020 7357 0974 or email uk@jrs.net

Praxis Community Project, Pott Street, London, E2 0EF

Tel: 020 7729 7985 or email admin@praxis.org.uk

Notre Dame Refugee Centre, 5 Leicester Place, London WC2H 7BX

Tel: 020 7440 2660 or email drop-in@notredamerc.org.uk

Free Legal Representation at the Tribunal in Croydon

Does your client have an appeal hearing at the Asylum Support Tribunal?

If your client has an oral hearing at the Asylum Support Tribunal in Croydon, ASAP could represent their case.

ASAP Duty Scheme runs on **Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays**. We are normally able to represent 2 - 3 cases a day.

To refer a case to us, please fax the following documents to **020 8686 1899**:

- Contact details of the adviser (we do not contact the appellant directly)
- Decision letter from the Home Office
- Notice of appeal
- Any other relevant documents or evidence

An adviser will call you back to discuss the case.

Charting our work

Some of the things ASAP is doing in March and April 2009

Date	Activity
04-Mar	Visiting Positively Women
11-Mar	Black Ethnic Minority Advice Network meeting
17-Mar	Case Resolution Directorate meeting
26-Mar	Women's National Commission: Migration and asylum working Group
30-Mar	Volunteer award: 100 hours volunteering
01-Apr	Visiting Helen Bamber Foundation
01-Apr	Visiting Maternity Action
03-Apr	Asylum Rights Campaign meeting
06-Apr	Meeting with the Chief Inspector of UKBA
06-Apr	Housing and Immigration Group meeting
07-Apr	First-Tier Tribunal (Asylum Support) User Group meeting
07-Apr	Training delivered at Asylum Aid
08-Apr	Meeting with Refugee Council & UKBA
24-Apr	Equal Rights Trust meeting
24-Apr	Case Resolution Directorate meeting
28-Apr	Refugee Sector Conference
29-Apr	Allen Lane Foundation Event

