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Free Legal Representation at the Asylum Support 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 and Thursdays**. We are normally able to represent 2 - 3 cases a day.

Please call **0845 603 3884**.

It helps us to have as much information as possible before the hearing.

Sometimes we are also able to take on cases on other days. Currently, we are prioritising vulnerable women asylum seekers and destitute people in London.

ASAP's Annual General Meeting

ASAP members are invited to attend the AGM, which will take place on

Monday 17th November 2008, 5:30-9pm

British Red Cross Refugee Unit,

5 Berners Road,

London N1 0PW

The AGM is open to all ASAP members.

The event will include a keynote speech entitled 'The Future of the Asylum Support System'. The speech will be delivered by Sue Willman ASAP's Chair and partner at Pierce Glynn Solicitors, where she leads the Public and Human Rights Law Department. She has 14 years high profile litigation experience, including work at the Hammersmith and Fulham Law Centre.

- Facilities are wheelchair accessible
- The nearest Tube is Angel
- Charged car parking spaces are available
- Refreshments will be provided after the meeting

If you would like to attend, please email abi@asaproject.org.uk or call 020 8686 1888.

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The End of Section 4 Support?

Public consultation on the new draft Immigration and Citizenship Bill

In July of this year, the Government published its Draft Immigration and Citizenship Bill, which is intended to replace all previous immigration legislation. When it becomes law, the Bill will have a huge impact on the lives of all immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the UK. Among other 'simplifying' measures, the Bill will change the way asylum seekers can access housing and welfare support ('NASS' support).

The formal consultation process on the asylum support system is due to run from mid October to late November of this year. The outcome of the consultation will influence the asylum support provisions in the new Immigration and Citizenship Bill.

UKBA appears to be concerned that a lot of money is spent on supporting refused asylum seekers and is under pressure to spend less on asylum support in general. Although the overall amount spent on supporting asylum seekers has halved in the last six years (from over £1 billion to £485 million), over 56% of their budget now goes on supporting 'refused' asylum seekers.

Have your say!

PUBLIC MEETINGS HOSTED BY ASAP: THE END OF SECTION 4 SUPPORT?

Monday 10th November 2008 10am-12pm

(Followed by a light lunch)

Oxford House, Derbyshire Street

Bethnal Green E2 6HG

Tuesday 11th November 2008 2:30-4:30pm

(Followed by refreshments)

Palingswick House, 241 King St

Hammersmith W6 9LP

Come and find out

- what changes the Home Office is planning at the moment
- what this can mean for asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers

Share your views on what housing and welfare support asylum seekers should get while they are claiming asylum in the UK.

To attend or for more information, please contact Abi on 020 8686 1888 or email abi@asaproject.org.uk

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Have you Renewed your ASAP Membership?

We are asking individuals and organisations that have been members for more than a year to renew their membership of ASAP

If you or your organisation has been a member of ASAP for longer than twelve months, you should have received an email or letter asking if you would like to renew your membership.

If you would like to continue to be a member of ASAP and receive newsletters and updates on asylum support and attend our training sessions and AGMs, you will need to complete and return [this form](#) renewing your membership by 15th October 2008. If you have any questions, please contact Abi Brunswick on 020 8686 1888 or abi@asaproject.org.uk.

Destitution Awareness Week: 8-12 December 2008

ASAP will represent all appeals at the Asylum Support Tribunal during Destitution Awareness Week

During this annual event, ASAP extends its Duty Scheme to every day of the week with the help of several barristers who volunteer their time.

ASAP also plans to highlight the work of other organisations in London who are also assisting destitute asylum seekers through joint publicity work. Many small charities which give out food parcels and other practical support are under a tremendous pressure, dealing with an increasing number of destitute people.

If you would like your organisation' work to be featured in the publicity, please contact Eiri@asaproject.org.uk.

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ASAP Welcomes New Staff Member

ASAP is pleased to welcome its new Legal Adviser for the London Project, Marie-Anne Fishwick

Marie-Anne says:

"I joined ASAP in September as the new part-time Legal Adviser, having come from the British Red Cross Refugee Unit in London. I had initially joined the British Red Cross in May 03 as a volunteer after finishing a Masters in International Development at SOAS. I then worked for five years as their Refugee Women's Service Co-ordinator. At the Red Cross I gained extensive first hand experience of working with refugees and asylum seekers, in particular destitute vulnerable women. I also acquired a good knowledge of the refugee advice sector in London and a solid understanding of asylum support law. I am also in my second year of a law conversion course as I hope one day to become a solicitor.

"Over the years, I've got to know ASAP well. I had always appreciated and respected the high quality of their work as well as the energy and enthusiasm of the team. I am therefore delighted to have joined the organisation and look forward to making a positive contribution to its work."

Marie-Anne has joined us to lead our London Project, which aims to prevent destitution among asylum seekers in London. She will be taking representing London-based clients at the Asylum Support Tribunal and taking referrals from London based agencies. For more information, see the article on the London Project below or email marie-anne@asaproject.org.uk.

Duty Scheme for Londoners

ASAP's Duty Scheme at the Asylum Support Tribunal (AST) is focusing on clients from within Greater London

Marie-Anne Fishwick is ASAP's new Legal Adviser and has particular responsibility for the London Project, which was mentioned in our July newsletter. The London Project aims to help London based asylum seekers with their appeals at the Asylum Support Tribunal. We are encouraging referrals to our Duty Scheme and plan to publish information leaflets about the appeals system in 6 different languages.

Marie-Anne is working to develop links with London-based organisations that work with destitute asylum seekers. If your organisation works with asylum seekers in London, Marie-Anne could visit you to discuss asylum support issues such as and applications and appeals. Contact her on **020 8686 1888** or marie-anne@asaproject.org.uk if you would

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like to discuss it further.

To refer a client for Duty Scheme representation, please call **020 8686 1888** and note that the Duty Scheme is:

- Available on a first-come, first-served basis. We regret that we have limited capacity and may not be able to take on all referrals at busy times
- Clients need to be living / staying in the Greater London area
- Priority is given to appeal hearings which take place on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

This is likely to change in the future, so please visit our website to check the latest information: www.asaproject.org

If you have any questions about asylum support or asylum support appeals issues, please call our Advice Line **on 0845 603 3884**

Women's Project

ASAP's project prioritising destitute asylum seeking women

April of this year, ASAP Women's Project has been targeting the needs of destitute female asylum seekers who have been victims of sexual violence. For the past 6 months we have been trying to ensure that we reach those women who need our help.

Since April 2008, ASAP has represented 25 women at the Asylum Support Tribunal and advised a further 8 women on their appeal hearings. 94 calls to our Advice Line since April have involved female asylum seekers. Most of the women we helped were destitute and many were also suffering from physical or mental health problems. Several had young children and were surviving on food parcels and small amounts of money they received from local charities.

Case study – a young woman with a serious medical problem:

ASAP represented a young woman with serious health problems in her appeal against the UKBA decision not to give her support. The woman had a serious and extremely rare illness and was pregnant with her second child. UKBA refused to support her stating that her illness is not serious enough and that she is fit enough to leave the UK.

The client was attending a hospital in London where she was receiving specialist care from a consultant. The hospital had provided a letter stating that they had never met a patient with a combination of these problems and stressed that she required expert care and treatment that was only available at this hospital.

At the appeal hearing, the Adjudicator allowed her appeal and granted her support on the grounds that it was unreasonable for someone with her condition to be expected to leave the UK due to the risk international travel would pose to her health.

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After the appeal, based on the medical evidence, ASAP tried to ensure that the woman was provided with accommodation in London as she clearly met UKBA's own criteria for accommodation in London. Despite the strength of the medical evidence and many phonecalls and letters, it took UKBA almost four weeks to house her and her child in London.

We will continue to update you on the work of the project over the coming months. For

Representing Women at the Asylum Support Tribunal in Croydon

If your organisation works with women asylum seekers who would like representation at the Asylum Support Tribunal, our legal advisers are happy to take referrals.

Please contact us on **020 8686 1888** to discuss the case. If we think we can help, we will ask you to fax us the clients documents before the appeal is due to be heard.

more information on the women's project please contact Gerry Hickey on **020 8686 1888**.

Improvements for Asylum Seekers Appealing at the Asylum Support Tribunal

After months of lobbying, ASAP has had some success in getting a fairer deal for asylum seekers appealing to the Asylum Support Tribunal

Extra food entitlements:

UKBA has agreed to provide extra food for asylum seekers who have asylum support appeal hearings and have to stay overnight in a hostel near Croydon. Every year, many asylum seekers travel from regional cities to the Asylum Support Tribunal in Croydon in order to attend their asylum support appeals. Some of them have to stay at the hostel before and/or after their hearing. While UKBA always provided travel vouchers and paid for the hostel accommodation, there was no provision for food apart from breakfast offered at the hostel once a day. As a result, many asylum seekers with no money routinely ended up having no food for almost a whole day. UKBA now provides not just breakfast but dinner and also a lunch pack for a return journey.

Travelling by train:

Asylum seekers with appeal hearings at the AST are now able to travel to East Croydon by train. Under previous UKBA policy, all appellants had to travel to the tribunal by bus, regardless on the length of the journey. This new policy means that many individuals are able to travel home on the same day, and that people with serious health problems are not forced to make long and uncomfortable bus journeys.

Continuation of support

When a person's asylum support is withdrawn, UKBA will continue to provide support if an appeal is lodged with the AST within four days of receiving the letter discontinuing

support. However, the Border Agency were stopping this support if the notice of appeal was given out of time. UKBA has now changed this policy and will now continue to provide support if the late appeal is accepted by the Asylum Support Tribunal.

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Our Progress Over the Last 6 Months

Some information on how ASAP has been performing this year

We are now half way through the financial year, and ASAP has is about to publish its Annual Report for 2007-08. Here are some of the things we have been doing since April:

- ASAP's legal advisers represented 79 asylum seekers at the Asylum Support Tribunal.
- They advised a further 29 people at the AST
- 100% of our feedback from appellants at the AST said they were happy with the service and that ASAP helped them understand the process better
- ASAP took 207 calls to our Advice Line, 119 of which concerned Section 4 support
- 162 people attended our training sessions from 75 different organisations
- 93% of our training participants (71 out of 77) said they felt more confident giving advice on Section 4 support following the training

47% of clients represented in their appeal by ASAP where successful. Asylum Support Tribunal statistics show that only 20% of all appeals are successful. The charts on the next page show a breakdown of decisions with an ASAP representative and overall AST decisions

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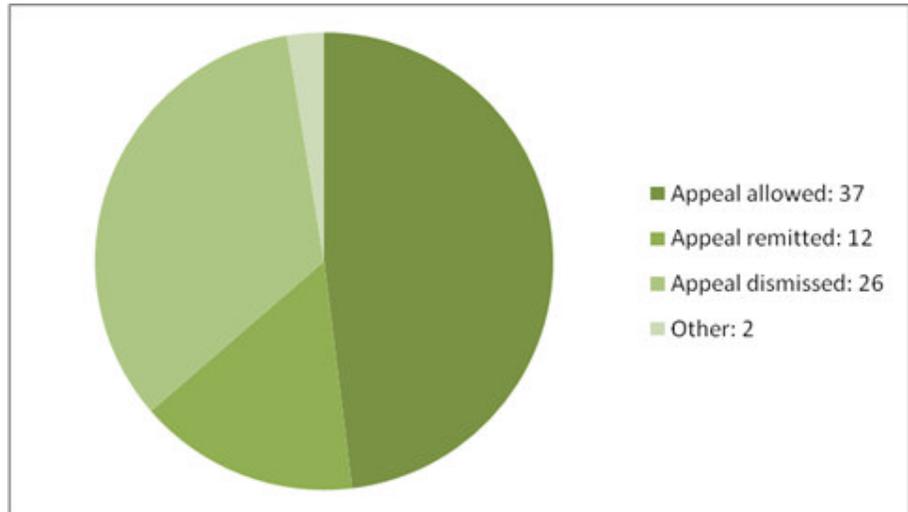
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Clients represented by ASAP, 1 April - 30 September 2008



Overall Asylum Support Tribunal statistics, 1 January – 30 September 2008:

