

ASAP

ASYLUM
SUPPORT
APPEALS
PROJECT

DEFENDING ASYLUM SEEKERS

LEGAL RIGHTS TO FOOD AND SHELTER

JOB INFORMATION PACK

SOLICITOR

About the role

This is an exciting opportunity to lead ASAP's well-respected legal work defending and promoting the rights of asylum-seekers to access food and shelter (asylum support) in the UK, in a varied and rewarding role. You will be part of a committed team of staff and volunteer legal advisors, solicitors and barristers who provide free legal advice and representation for asylum seekers at the First-tier Tribunal (Asylum Support) through our award-winning duty scheme. You will be at the forefront of analysing and reacting to emerging asylum support issues affecting destitute asylum-seekers; with the potential for generating significant positive change for this group through contributing to ASAP's policy work and leading on strategic litigation. You will develop and share ASAP's unrivalled expertise in this area by contributing to and overseeing the quality of our legal information and training for our volunteers, staff and front-line advisors around the UK.

We are looking for candidates who are confident, multi-skilled team players. You must be resilient, adaptable, able to work at a high level across ASAP's different work streams and committed to ASAP's vision and values.

If you would like an informal discussion about the role with ASAP's current solicitor, please contact deborah@asaproject.org.uk

Closing date for applications by: 11.59pm on 5th December 2021

About ASAP

The Asylum Support Appeals Project (ASAP) is a small national charity which was set up in 2003 to reduce the destitution of asylum-seekers by protecting their legal rights to food and shelter. We have a team of 11 permanent staff members and around 45 volunteer solicitors and barristers. We are based in East London.

ASAP delivers three strands of work

- We offer free, high-quality legal representation and advice to around 600 asylum-seekers and refused asylum-seekers per year appealing against Home Office decisions to refuse or withdraw their support.
- We provide asylum support advice and training to hundreds of frontline organisations, advice agencies and legal practitioners working with asylum-seekers each year. We operate an advice line and online forum (Asylum Support Advisors Network) for over 1000 members.
- We use our strong evidence base to improve policies and procedures on asylum support through closely linked policy work and strategic litigation.

Alongside this, we run a women's project, to ensure we offer a gender sensitive service to destitute women asylum-seekers, to train women's organisations in asylum support law, and to progress policy work for women asylum-seekers, currently focused on access to support for those experiencing domestic abuse.

ASAP is recognised as a Centre of Excellence by the London Legal Support Trust. ASAP was highly commended in the 2019 Law Works Annual Pro Bono Awards for Most Effective Pro Bono Partnership and won the Andy Ludlow 2015 London Homelessness Award.

Our vision

All people seeking asylum in the UK have shelter, food and support rather than living in destitution.

The Home Office and Tribunal are held to account, to ensure access to justice, dignity and equality for the people we serve.

Our key goals

Goal 1. Increasing quality representation and dignity at the Asylum Support Tribunal for all asylum-seekers.

Goal 2. Building the asylum support skills of other organisations to ensure asylum-seekers across the UK have access to quality advice and information about their legal rights to food and shelter.

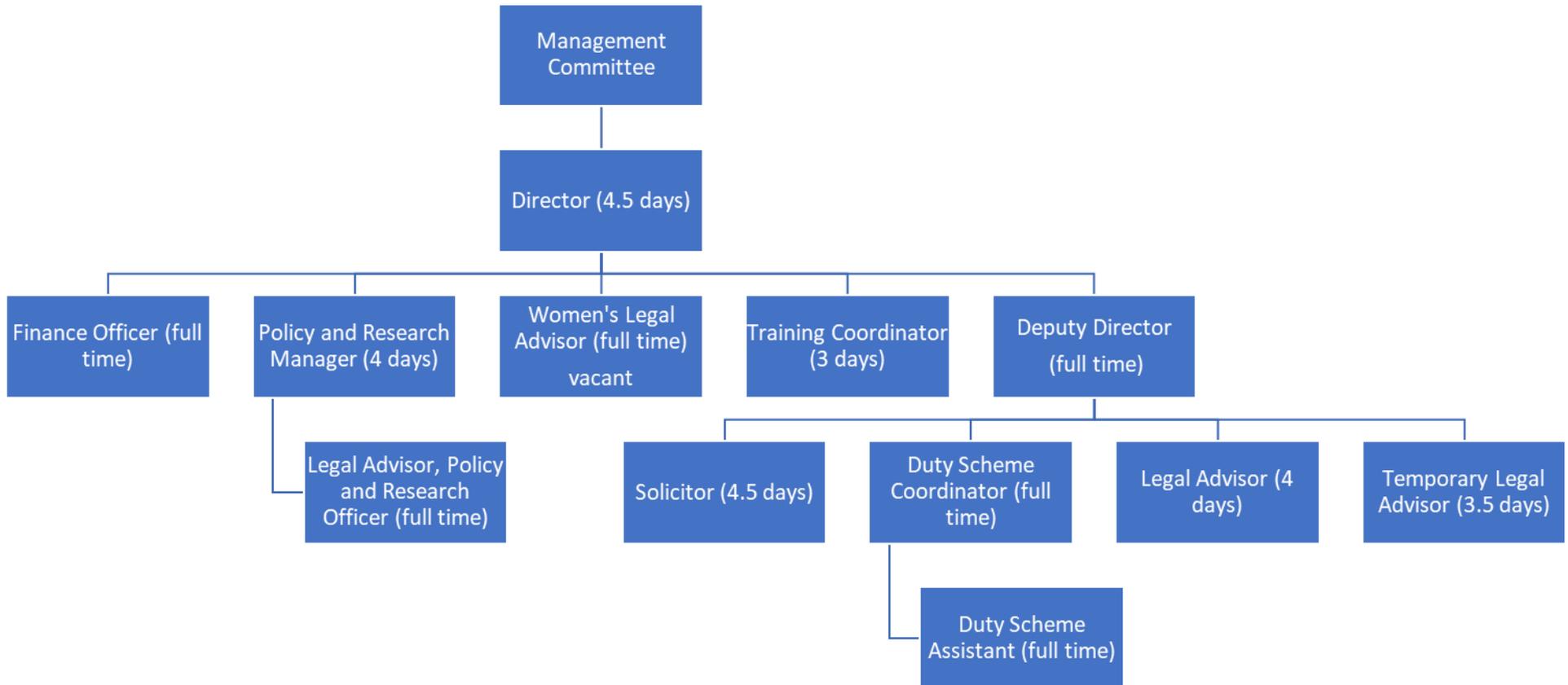
Goal 3. Tackling the root causes of destitution through policy, lobbying and litigation.

Goal 4. Maintaining a well-resourced and purposeful organisation to assist asylum-seekers and the organisations supporting them.

You can find out more detail about our strategic plan here:

[ASAP strategic plan 2019-24 A4.pdf \(asaproject.org\)](#)

The government has proposed to bring in elements of the Immigration Act 2016 which would reduce the right of appeal against an asylum support refusal. See our briefing [here](#). Although this would not change our overall strategy, it may affect our service model. ASAP is currently considering which service model would best meet the needs of destitute asylum-seekers under these changes, including whether to apply for a public law legal aid contract. Any new or enhanced service model would run alongside our existing duty scheme.



Job Description

Post:	Solicitor
Responsible To:	Deputy Director
Salary and benefits:	£39,385 starting salary (including inner London weighting) 1.5% cost of living increase likely 6% employer pension contribution and season ticket loan
Location:	East London, E14 Office based with current flexibility to work from home part-time
Status:	Permanent contract after 6 month probation period
Hours:	35 hours per week (excluding lunch break)
Leave:	30 days per annum plus bank holidays

Purpose of the post

ASAP's Solicitor is retiring towards the end of 2022 and, subject to a successful 6 month probationary period, you will take full responsibility for the core tasks listed below on her retirement. Until that point, you will work closely with the existing Solicitor, who will, during the probationary period, allocate work to you, provide you with day-to-day supervision and support and lead on key decision-making.

There are 4 interlinked strands to the role.

- 1) **The Duty Scheme:** This involves supporting the day-to-day running of ASAP's duty scheme representation service at the First-tier Tribunal (Asylum Support) (AST). You will work closely with ASAP's current Solicitor and Duty Scheme Co-ordinator (DSC) to provide joined up and consistent support to the scheme, including covering for the DSC on a regular basis. ASAP's duty scheme team consists of the Solicitor, the DSC, the Duty Scheme Assistant ,1 legal advisor and the Deputy Director. The Deputy Director manages the duty scheme. Other staff members are also involved in representing appellants at the AST. Your role will ensure the high quality of the duty scheme through assisting with the recruitment, training, support and supervision of the volunteer solicitors and barristers. You will also provide legal induction, supervision and support to ASAP staff members in relation to all facets of their legal advice work.
- 2) **Representing appellants at the AST:** You will regularly provide representation to appellants at the AST.
- 3) **Supporting ASAP's policy work, including through strategic litigation:** Working closely with the Policy and Advocacy Manager and Director, and in line with ASAP's policy objectives and strategic plan, you will support ASAP's efforts to achieve positive change to asylum support policy and law. This will include supporting a continuum of advocacy strategies, from informal advocacy through to litigation. As part of this work, your role will lead on the

identification of unlawful decisions, procedures and practices of the AST and the Home Office in the asylum support appeals system and, where appropriate, the development of litigation strategies to challenge them. You will refer specific dismissed appeals to external solicitors for judicial reviews. As there is no Upper Tribunal for the AST, judicial reviews are particularly important in the development of asylum support law. You will work in partnership with legal aid solicitors, when ASAP is involved in strategic litigation. You will maintain and develop ASAP's strong links with public law solicitors and barristers and the wider social welfare legal services sector.

- 4) **Sharing our expertise:** You will provide legal advice through ASAP's second tier advice line. You will participate in the planning and delivery of ASAP's 2nd tier training programme which improves the availability and quality of asylum support advice around the UK. You will contribute to ASAP's growing online resource of asylum support materials for external agencies and advisers.

In addition, you will assist the Deputy Director and Director in developing alternative/additional service models according to changing client need and the changing political and legislative environment, including exploring the potential of taking on a public law legal aid contract.

This is a varied role, involving a lot of collaborative working with professionals both inside and outside of ASAP. In addition to the training and supervising of ASAP volunteers and staff, it also gives the opportunity to become very specialist in this niche area of public law.

Main duties and responsibilities:

A. Substantive work

Duty scheme duties

- To work closely with the duty scheme team to support the day to day smooth running of the scheme, including providing regular cover for the DSC as required.
- To share with the duty scheme team the daily support and supervision of duty scheme volunteer advocates (DSAs) representing in appeals, including any necessary admin tasks.
- To oversee, and take part in, a system of assessments, observations and file reviews for new and existing DSAs to ensure that the quality of ASAP's legal advice is maintained.
- To lead on any extra individual support and supervision of a DSA that may be required.

- To ensure that training materials and online guides for DSAs are developed and updated as necessary, either by drafting them directly or allocating the work to a DS legal advisor or DSC.
- To lead, with the DSC, on the recruitment, training and assessment of new DSAs, with the assistance of the DS legal advisor.
- To lead on the annual update training for DSAs, working with the DSC and DS legal advisor to identify training needs and design and deliver the training.
- In conjunction with the Director and Policy and Research Manager, be the key ASAP contact for communication with the AST judiciary.

Legal Team duties

- Provide legal induction, training and ongoing support and legal supervision to ASAP's legal team members on all aspects of their legal advice work.
- Convene and chair ASAP's legal team meetings.
- Oversee the updating and legal accuracy of ASAP's internal and external legal advice and information materials.

Direct Legal work

- Provide legal representation and advice to asylum-seekers at AST.
- Respond to individual case queries from organisations working on asylum support through ASAP's advice line.
- Where appropriate take part in reciprocal peer to peer observations regarding representing at the AST and file reviews to maintain quality of advice, advocacy and procedures.
- Attend regular legal supervision sessions with the Solicitor during the probationary period. On the retirement of ASAP's current Solicitor, attend legal support and supervision sessions with an appropriately qualified and experienced external professional, to maintain and develop legal expertise in asylum support law.

Strategic Legal work

- Identify where Home Office and/or AST are acting unlawfully and, where appropriate, lead on planning and conducting ASAP's litigation in conjunction with the Policy and Research Manager and in line with ASAP's policy objectives and strategic plan.
- Write witness statements for external judicial reviews, if requested and appropriate, or oversee the writing of them by other legal team members.

- Decide if a dismissed appeal should be referred out for a judicial review, and complete the referral, or, if appropriate, assist another legal team member to do it.
- Contribute to government proposals and consultations as required, working closely with the Policy and Research Manager.

Training / maintaining links with legal sector

- Provide training on asylum support appeals to advice workers, advice agencies and legal practitioners in London or regionally
- Attend and participate in quarterly Housing and Immigration Group meetings and six-monthly AST user group meetings and other ad hoc external meetings as necessary, working closely with ASAP'S Policy and Research Manager and in line with ASAP's policy objectives and strategic plan.
- Maintain and develop links with social welfare/ public law legal aid solicitors with a view to being able to make referrals to them for legal challenge, especially on an urgent basis.

Other

- Contribute to internal discussions on ASAP's service model, with a particular focus on ASAP's legal work.

B. General

- Attend regular line management supervision sessions with the Deputy Director, and professional development training as required.
- Attend and actively participate in team meetings and ASAP events
- Run training / workshops at ASAP conference and other events if required.
- Ensure that all work carried out will be in the best interest of asylum-seekers and refugees and in accordance with Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy
- Be available to work some evenings and occasional weekends (for which Time Off in Lieu will be given).
- Uphold the ethos and protect the good name of the ASAP, working in line with ASAP policies and procedures

Person Specification

	Essential unless indicated otherwise
Commitment to ASAP's clients	<p>Experience of representing vulnerable individuals</p> <p>Understanding of, and interest in, the issues affecting asylum-seekers in the UK particularly in relation to asylum support</p> <p>A commitment to asylum/ human rights/ social justice issues</p> <p>Understanding, awareness of and commitment to the principles and practice of equal opportunities and diversity</p>
Legal	<p>A solicitor, with at least 3 years' experience post-qualification</p> <p>Knowledge of asylum support law and asylum support appeals, and at least one related area (eg housing/ welfare benefits/ immigration law/ community care)</p> <p>Experience of conducting judicial reviews</p> <p>Experience of advocacy in tribunals and/or courts</p> <p>Ability to represent at the AST to a high standard, requiring both advocacy and written drafting skills</p> <p>Experience of managing cases and maintaining files to quality standards set out by the Legal Aid Agency</p> <p>Ability to monitor and keep up to date with developments in asylum support law and practice</p> <p>Ability to communicate well with DSAs and staff legal advisors, so as to provide effective training and ongoing legal supervision and support to them.</p> <p>Experience of providing legal supervision to volunteers or colleagues (desirable)</p>
Advice and training	<p>Ability to design and deliver training for volunteer duty scheme advocates, external advisors and external legal practitioners on asylum support law and policy</p> <p>Experience of delivering training, including for voluntary sector organisations (desirable)</p>

	Experience of giving legal advice to second-tier advisors (desirable)
Skills and abilities	<p>Ability to manage a busy and varied workload to a high standard and within deadlines, remaining resilient and calm under pressure</p> <p>Ability to communicate complex information accessibly both orally and in writing to a range of audiences including drafting factsheets and designing training materials</p> <p>Demonstrable ability to work on own initiative and as part of a small team in a cooperative, flexible and supportive manner</p> <p>Ability to build positive and effective interpersonal relationships with people of all backgrounds, in person, on the phone, in writing and on remote platforms</p> <p>Solid IT and administrative skills (this is an administratively self-serving post), including experience of excel and client databases (desirable)</p> <p>Willingness and ability to work occasionally outside office core hours, including occasional weekends</p>

Application Process

ASAP is an equal opportunities employer. We welcome applications from individuals regardless of age, disability, gender, gender identity, marital status, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation. We positively encourage applicants with lived experience of seeking asylum and/or asylum support.

Candidates may ask for clarification of elements of the person specification and/or the application process, and may discuss any issues that might impact on how they would be able to undertake the work. ASAP will not discuss issues that may give any candidate information that would give them an advantage in their application.

To apply, please complete the [application form and equality and diversity monitoring form](#) and send them to Alice Webb, Deputy Director: alice@asaproject.org.uk . Please quote “**Job Ref: ASAP solicitor CONFIDENTIAL.**” in the subject of your email.

The deadline for applications is 11.59pm on 5th December 2021.

Applications received after this time will not be considered.

A recruitment panel will be nominated for each vacancy. The recruitment panel will use the completed application form to assess each candidate's ability to meet the essential requirements of the job as set out in the person specification using a scoring system. The highest scoring applicants will be interviewed.

Interviews will be held on Tues 14th Dec 2021

Our intention is to hold face to face interviews in central London. Requests for remote attendance will be considered if face to face attendance is not possible.

Further information about the interview process will be provided to short-listed applicants. Interviews will consist of at least one practical test of your abilities relating to the role and a standard interview with a panel of at least three people.

Please let us know in advance of your interview if you have a disability and require reasonable adjustments for the interview and/or assessment process to ensure the process is fair and equitable to all applicants.

Interview questions will be decided in advance based on their relevance to the job description and person specification and scored separately by interviewers. A score sheet will be set in advance, interviewers may only use information from the application form, the interview and any other assessment methods to inform their score.

ASAP keeps assessment records/notes for all applicants, whether shortlisted or not, for 12 months. They are stored securely and then destroyed securely after the above

period. All short-listed candidates will be notified of their selection decision and can obtain feedback from the assessment if they request it.