

# ASAP

ASYLUM  
SUPPORT  
APPEALS  
PROJECT

DEFENDING ASYLUM SEEKERS

LEGAL RIGHTS TO FOOD AND SHELTER

## Research into access to advice on asylum support and appeals Invitation to Tender

### Introduction

The Asylum Support Appeals Project (ASAP) is a small national charity that reduces destitution amongst people who are seeking asylum by protecting their legal rights to food and shelter.

**We reduce systemic barriers to accessing financial support through policy work and strategic litigation.** We use evidence from our direct advice work to identify unlawful policies/practices. ASAP has a strong track record of policy change, from research with the Refugee Council which led to the Home Office funding refuge spaces for women within the asylum system, to initiating strategic litigation which stopped up to 4000 people from being evicted during the second wave of the pandemic.

**We provide free legal representation and advice** to destitute asylum seekers who have been refused financial support/accommodation by the Home Office, and are appealing against this refusal. We are the only organisation outside Scotland to do this. Without ASAP those within the asylum system would have to represent themselves, despite language and cultural barriers, and with little understanding of asylum support law. Last year our 45 pro bono lawyers overturned 70% of the appeals we assisted with, against Home Office refusals/withdrawals of support. Quotes include: *'I couldn't have expected more fine and respectful, serious, sympathetic and helpful assistance. It is very humane.'*

**We build the capacity of the asylum support advice sector.** As the go-to experts in asylum support law, we build knowledge amongst organisations helping destitute asylum seekers. Last year we trained 1215 people around the UK. We run a second-tier advice line which took 633 calls last year: *'As the only caseworker in my organisation I find it useful to be able to double check my thinking on a person's situation'*. We also run the Asylum Support Advice Network (ASAN), a national network of over 1000 advisors, to share best practice in asylum support.

### Project Outline

#### **Problem**

Those whose financial support and/or accommodation is refused or withdrawn by the Home Office often have the right to appeal the decision. Around 60-70% of appeals with which ASAP assists result in the individual and their family being entitled to access support. A significant proportion of those whose support is refused/withdrawn and who do not appeal, are therefore likely to be left destitute despite being entitled to support.

Since 2020 the proportion of people that have appealed an asylum support decision has significantly reduced. This is particularly the case for those refused section 4 support (financial support and accommodation, where people refused asylum cannot leave the UK through no fault of their own).

The proportion of S4 applicants who appealed against a refusal of support dropped from 41% in 2019/20 to just 8% in Q2 2022. We do not know why this is. Possibilities include:

- a. People are struggling to access advice about asylum support and asylum support appeals.
- b. Migrant Help, the only national organisation funded to provide advice on asylum support, stopped helping people to submit asylum support appeals in September 2020.
- c. People have decided not to appeal because they are worried about hostile government policies towards asylum seekers including increased focus on removals.
- d. People have decided not to appeal because they do not think they have any grounds for appeal.
- e. People are misadvised to reapply for support rather than to appeal.
- f. People do not know they have the right to appeal (possibly because the Home Office letter refusing or withdrawing support does not mention this right (although as far as we're aware they generally do), possibly because they do not understand the Home Office letter or do not receive it because it is sent to the wrong address).

The Home Office is increasingly using hotels as asylum support accommodation, in areas that have little specialist advice infrastructure. We would like to support the sector to better understand where these gaps in advice are, so that organisations can consider whether and how to plug them.

### **Aim**

To enable those within the asylum system to access justice through high quality advice about their entitlements to support, including asylum support appeals.

We will use the findings of the research to inform the sector about the gaps in advice on asylum support across the UK, supporting organisations to consider operational and policy responses.

### **Research objectives**

- a. Research access/barriers to national advice on asylum support (priority)
- b. Research key reasons for the reduction in the proportion of asylum support appeals (priority)
- c. Identify if/where there are 'advice deserts' on asylum support and asylum support appeals (essential but can be done after a and b)
- d. Research the capacity of local organisations to provide advice on asylum support, and to understand the reasons they are/ are not assisting with asylum support appeals (essential but can be done after a and b)
- e. Provide suggested recommendations to improve access to advice on asylum support including asylum support appeals (priority)
- f. Map the 'advice deserts' and advice services against current locations of asylum support accommodated people (desirable)
- g. Map the advice deserts and advice services against full dispersal model plans (desirable)

### **Proposed approach**

- a. 20-30 semi-structured interviews (with 10-20 organisations and 10 individuals with lived experience of asylum support, ideally those who are not in contact with organisations that assist with asylum support appeals).
- b. 2 focus groups with those with lived experience of asylum support.
- c. Survey issued to organisations advising people on asylum support, with response aim of 50
- d. Desk research to collate existing data and statistics

## **Deliverables**

- a. Raw data from the survey and in-depth interviews
- b. Report analysing data and summarising key findings and recommendations for improving access to advice on asylum support and asylum support appeals

## **Researcher Criteria**

ASAP will use the following criteria in assessing tenders:

- a. Significant professional research experience including leading an independent research project
- b. Interest and experience in access to justice research
- c. Experience of writing published reports for a voluntary sector audience
- d. Experience of producing robust research with a practical application
- e. Experience of collaborating with partners and stakeholders in the production of research pieces focusing around improvement of service delivery
- f. Experience of running focus groups with those with lived experience of the asylum system
- g. Familiarity with the key issues and the policy and practice context
- h. Experience of collaborative working
- i. Understanding and interpretation of the brief and its objectives
- j. Experience of researching legal advice provision in the UK context
- k. Ability to deliver the research to the timeframes outlined, and within the budget offered

## **Timeframes and budget**

The research will be delivered between June and September 2023 with initial findings and draft recommendations ready by the end of September.

The maximum budget for this piece of work is £12,000, inclusive of travel and expenses. We have allocated budget to cover the cost of vouchers to recognise the time and expertise of those with lived experience of asylum support. Please include a detailed budget with your proposal.

## **Application Process**

Please submit a written proposal in word or pdf format no longer than 4 sides of A4 to Kat Lorenz: [kat@asaproject.org.uk](mailto:kat@asaproject.org.uk) by midnight on the 11<sup>th</sup> June 2023 detailing:

- a. Your experience, referring to the key researcher criteria
- b. Approach to the evaluation, covering each of the research objectives and deliverables
- c. Delivery plan including key timeframes and milestones
- d. Key risks and ethical issues
- e. Budget breaking down costs into staffing, travel, admin costs, according to the key milestones, including VAT.
- f. Two referees

Applications will be shortlisted by the 17<sup>th</sup> June. Interviews may be held in the week of 19<sup>th</sup> June, to invite applicants to present their proposal to the ASAP research panel.

If you have any questions or would like an informal discussion of the research please contact: [kat@asaproject.org.uk](mailto:kat@asaproject.org.uk)