

Asylum report: The quality of legal service provided to asylum seekers

Research report

December 2016

In this report, we set out the results of our thematic asylum project (the project). This review was undertaken in the light of the findings of independent research we commissioned in 2014, reported in the, 'Quality of legal services for asylum seekers', published in January 2016 (the research paper).

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Executive summary

Asylum seekers are some of the most vulnerable people needing the services of a solicitor or law firm. This has led to a number of organisations focusing on the quality of legal services provided to asylum clients.

In this report, we set out the results of our thematic asylum project (the project). This review was undertaken in the light of the findings of independent research we commissioned in 2014, reported in the, 'Quality of legal services for asylum seekers', published in January 2016 (the research paper).

We set out our findings in the core areas of:

- introduction of clients
- client care
- legal process
- appeals and judicial reviews
- staff supervision
- qualifications and training.

These findings are supported by some examples of good and poor practice.

The majority of firms we visited appreciate the potential vulnerability of their clients and many have shown dedication to supporting their clients. This support includes examples where guidance and advice have been provided in addition to the expected legal service, often without charge.

Many of the firms have welcomed our review and share our commitment to encouraging an improvement in the quality of legal services provided to asylum seekers.

Although the overall picture is broadly positive, there remains scope for improvement and areas of concern.

In particular, there is a need for further focus on:

- communicating the key client care messages
- the role and quality of interpreters
- providing an appropriate explanation of costs
- meeting the client's specific needs and avoiding over-reliance on firm policy or proforma documents
- meeting and considering all of the legal needs of the client
- ongoing training and the competency of advisers
- the appropriate and professional use of the appeals process.

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