

Asylum Guides

Case Study Part One - Mercy

Mercy arrived in the UK 1 year ago. She claimed asylum and was dispersed to Rochdale. She didn't know anyone and did not speak English. She was put in a house with another woman who did not speak her language. She was alone. She tried to register for a GP, but couldn't complete the initial forms as she had no one to help her complete them. She went to 3 surgeries but was turned away.

She received a letter asking her to go for her Substantive Interview. She went to a firm of solicitors, but did not have the correct paperwork to show she was receiving S95 support, so the solicitor did not sign her up for legal aid. She went to her interview unprepared, without having received the legal advice she was entitled to. The interview was very early. She had to take 2 buses and a train which she had to pay for herself as she had not received a travel voucher from the Home Office. The interview lasted for 5 hours and Mercy had just 1 break.

She was not happy with the interpreter as he spoke a different dialect and she could not understand him very well. She was uncomfortable to have a man from her country in the room and did not feel she could tell her full story to the Home Office caseworker.

- **At which points could an Asylum Guide have helped Mercy?**
- **What information could they have given her?**

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Case Study Part Two - Mercy

Mercy received a negative decision 3 weeks after her asylum interview. She went to see a solicitor with the correct paperwork to ask for help with her appeal. The solicitor could not represent her because he had no time to prepare the case and because he did not think the case had more than a 50% chance of success. The interview read poorly, there were many inconsistencies.

Mercy went to court alone and unrepresented. She was scared, tired and traumatised, not only by her own experiences in her home country, but by her experiences in the UK.

The Judge was kind, but again Mercy was unprepared and too scared to fully retell her story and experiences. The Judge agreed with the Home Office's decision. Mercy missed the deadline to appeal the Judge's decision because she did not know about the deadline.

Mercy then received an eviction notice from her accommodation provider. She is now homeless.

- **How could an Asylum Guide support Mercy?**
- **What information could they give her?**
- **Where could they refer/signpost Mercy to, for further support?**

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Case Study Three - Maryam

A case study for group asylum guide sessions

Maryam has joined a group asylum guide session having recently arrived in the city. Maryam is pregnant and living in initial accommodation. She does not have a solicitor and she is very confused about what happens next. Maryam speaks Arabic and needs support in her own language or with an interpreter. She has been to a screening interview but does not know what it was for or what happens next. Someone she met in IA has encouraged her to attend today, but she is very anxious and confused about her situation.

- **What could the Asylum Guide do to support Maryam in this session?**
- **What information would be useful to share?**
- **Would Maryam benefit from being signposted/referred to other services?**

Case Study 3 - Nicole

An example of a client matched with an Asylum Guide on a 1:1

Nicole had to flee her country, leaving two young children in the care of her extended family. At the time of the referral to Asylum Guides, Nicole did not have a solicitor; she had no date for her substantive interview and had no understanding of the asylum process at all. She was pregnant and waiting for her asylum support application to be approved.

Nicole was matched with a French speaking Guide. Nicole's Guide initially met with her twice to go through the introduction to the asylum process. This usually takes place in one initial meeting but it was clear to the Guide that Nicole presented as vulnerable; she seemed utterly overwhelmed by her situation.

The Guide spoke about the need to find a solicitor and signposted Nicole to solicitors in Manchester. Nicole's application for support was approved. Soon after, Nicole gave birth and received a date for her substantive interview. She was now the sole carer for her new born baby, otherwise alone in a strange city; traumatised by what she had experienced in her country. She felt stressed and anxious.

Her Guide went through the information she needed to know about the substantive interview and supported Nicole to understand her rights and entitlements. Nicole was able to ask her solicitor to contact the Home Office to request the interview be recorded, that the caseworker and interpreter be female and for childcare. Because of the trust she had built up, Nicole was responsive and engaged. She took on board all the information and reported that despite all the recent anxiety and upheaval she felt prepared for her interview. Without the support from her Guide she would have attended that interview never having spoken to anyone about it, or without any information about what to expect.

Unfortunately, Nicole received a negative decision from the Home Office after her Substantive Interview, but her solicitor is going to support her to appeal this decision. The solicitor felt that the transcript of the interview reads well and shows Nicole to have been consistent and clear in her responses. It reads as if she was prepared for her interview. Her Guide saw a marked difference in her presentation since the first time they met.

- **What do you think were the most helpful things the Guide did?**
- **What do you take away from this example?**

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