

## Instructing a Legal Representative

A legal representative can help you with your asylum claim or immigration matter. Good advice and representation can mean the difference between success and failure. But there are some things you should know before asking a Legal Rep to help you.

Legal Reps must be regulated to give immigration advice. They have professional duties that their regulator can enforce.

An unregulated Legal Rep is breaking the law.

### 1. Your Legal Rep's Duties

A regulated Legal Rep must:

- **Act in your best interests**
- **Keep your case confidential**
- **Behave honestly towards everyone** (not just you!)
- Give you competent advice and representation
- Meet deadlines
- Be honest about their fees and charges
- Do the work you have paid them to do
- Keep you informed of progress
- Treat you with dignity and respect

This means you should trust a regulated Legal Rep. If they break that trust, you can complain to their regulator.

### 2. Your Legal Rep's Role

These are the things that you can expect your Legal Rep to do:

- Meet you in a confidential space (not a public place such as coffee shop!)
- Tell you if you can get legal aid for your problem
- Explain any documents they ask you to sign
- Ask you about your case in detail and take good notes
- Advise you on:
  - Any requirements you must meet
  - Any procedures you must follow
  - Any evidence you will need to get
  - Your chances of success
- Agree what they will do for you
- Agree what you must do yourself
- Answer your questions, wherever possible
- Give you a letter which has:
  - Their contact details
  - A summary of your case and of their advice
  - Any actions you or they must take
  - Details of any fees, or of how your case is funded, and
  - Details of how to complain if something goes wrong

A good Legal Rep will not promise success, no matter how many times you ask!

### 3. Tips

Doing these things will help you get the best out of your Legal Rep:

#### Before Meetings

- Find out if the Legal Rep is regulated
  - You can ask them who their regulator is when you make an appointment
  - You can look for regulated Legal Reps online
  - Other organisations may be able to help you to check whether someone is regulated
- Remember their duties towards you – it will help you to feel more confident!
- Think about:
  - What you need to tell your Legal Rep so that they understand your problem
  - What documents you should take with you
  - What questions you would like to ask
- Get your documents ready
- Make sure you have a pen and paper to take notes

#### During Meetings

- Be friendly and polite
- Disclose full details of your problem
- Answer questions honestly
- Be *careful* and *accurate* when describing events and problems: small mistakes can cause big problems
- Take notes: your Legal Rep will have lots to tell you and you won't be able to remember all of it!
- Ask questions
- Ask for copies of any documents

#### After Meetings

- Keep all your papers in a tidy file
- Do the things your Legal Rep has advised you to do

#### More Generally

- Always attend appointments on time
- Avoid making lots of phone calls
- Avoid dropping in unannounced

Your Legal Rep will be very busy and will have lots of other clients. Too many interruptions will make them less efficient!