

This leaflet is to help you prepare for your asylum interview and to give you information about what to expect and your rights are.

What is the interview about?

When you apply for asylum in the United Kingdom (UK), you are asking the authorities (the Home Office) to recognise you as a refugee.

The definition of a refugee comes from the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Whether or not you qualify for protection under the Refugee Convention will depend on whether the UK government thinks you have a reason to fear persecution in your country because of your race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

Human rights reasons.

Alternatively, you may have other humanitarian or compelling reasons why you need to stay in the UK, the denial of which may violate your human rights under the European Convention on Human Rights.

As part of your application for asylum, the Home Office will invite you to an interview. This interview is crucial to how the Home Office will decide your claim. Please remember that asylum and human rights laws are complex. It is best to get good legal advice and representation but if you have not been able to do so this leaflet explains what you can expect at the interview and what your rights are.

What will the interview be like and what can I do to prepare?

- The interview will last around two to four hours. The case owner, who is a Home Office representative will be the interviewer and will ask you many questions.
- You should give as much detail as possible about what has happened to you and as clearly as you can. If you don't know the answer to a question, it is better to say so than to guess. It may help to write down events in your own language. Try to tell the case owner why you can't return to your country.
- You should submit any additional evidence, for example medical records or newspaper reports relating to what happened in your country. Keep copies of any papers you are handing in.
- If you are a woman and would find it easier to speak to a female case owner you should ask for this as early as possible. If a female case owner is not available you can ask for the interview to be postponed.
- It is very important that any information and evidence that you give is consistent and not contradictory.

You should ask in writing that the interview is tape-recorded. This can later be used by a legal representative if you get one after the interview.

Interpreters

You have the right to an interpreter that you fully understand.

- If, at any time you do not understand the interpreter, you must tell your case owner immediately. Keep repeating your request until the case owner takes action. Misunderstandings can easily happen and these can have a critical impact on how your asylum application will be decided.
- Your interpreter is there to interpret between you and the case owner and he/she must not advise you on what to do. If this happens let the case owner know at the time and inform Refugee Council or your legal representative afterwards.
- If you are a woman and would prefer to have a female interpreter you can ask for this. If a female interpreter is not available you can ask for the interview to be postponed.

Sometimes we can help people find legal representation. Please ask a Project Worker at our office.

General information

If at any time you do not understand something, do not be afraid to tell the case owner that you do not understand.

- If you feel that you have not been given an opportunity to explain your case fully the interview can be stopped. This should not be held against you.
- If you find the interview traumatic and difficult, you can ask for a break or a postponement to another day.
- If after the interview you think you have missed out any relevant information, you must tell your legal representative as soon as possible. Your legal representative only has five days to submit extra information.

Are you a woman seeking asylum?

Leaflets are available that explain the Home Office's policy on dealing with women's asylum claims. Ask the Refugee Council for one in your language. The leaflets are also available at www.asylumaid.org.uk

Other Refugee Council leaflets are available at:
<http://languages.refugeecouncil.org.uk>

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Asylum interview/English

A guide to your asylum interview

The Refugee Council is an independent organisation with many years of experience of working with asylum seekers and refugees. We provide a wide range of services free of charge in many different languages to help meet your needs.

