



## FINDING AND WORKING WITH A LEGAL AID LAWYER

### Important points to remember

- ✓ **Applying for legal aid to fund your case:** In all cases, a person has to pass the means (meaning finances) and merits (meaning if you have a strong case) tests. If legal aid is not automatically available, **we may be able to apply for Exceptional Case Funding (ECF).**
- ✓ Not all lawyers can undertake legal aid work – they have to have a contract to do so.
- ✓ The legal advice you get will not be better just because you pay for it yourself: it should not make a difference if you are paying your lawyer privately or if they are paid by legal aid.
- ✓ **HMSC will try to help you find a legal aid lawyer but please note that this can take a long time and it is not guaranteed.** We recommend that you keep looking yourself too.
- ✓ The first meeting with your lawyer is important. After the first meeting, once you have signed the legal aid forms with your legal aid lawyer, it is difficult to move to a new lawyer.
- ✓ Once you meet the legal aid lawyer we at Haringey Migrant Support Centre will assume that your case is being managed between you and your lawyer. We will no longer be able to answer questions about your case.
- ✓ Before you go to see your lawyer for an appointment, **think about what you need to tell your lawyer, and what you need to find out from them.** Bring all your relevant documents.
- ✓ Even if you have a lawyer, it's important to understand your own legal case – this is **your case** and **your life** and you need to keep track of what is happening and whether the lawyer is doing the things they should be.
- ✓ **It's ok to ask your lawyer questions: they are there to help you**
- ✓ If we find a legal aid lawyer for you, don't hesitate to contact us again:
  - If you have not heard from them within 2 weeks of us informing you that we found you a lawyer (i.e. no initial meeting has been organised).
  - If you are not satisfied with the work carried out by your lawyer, if you are unable to contact him/her despite multiple attempts or if you are unable to get answers to your questions.