

What a woman seeking asylum needs to know

"Information for HER Legal Representative"

As Protection Gap Advocates we are a diverse group of women who have all had our own experience of the asylum process. We want to make a difference for other women seeking asylum and are working to improve the asylum experience for them. We believe that lawyers can help their women clients by giving them the following information. We are aware many lawyers already do this but we hope this will serve as a helpful reminder.



A woman might find it easier to talk to another woman about her experiences, rather than to a man.

Please make sure a woman has a female interviewer and interpreter if she would like this. The Home Office will try to comply with such requests (especially if made early).

- **A woman may not know that violence by her family such as rape, domestic violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilation or harm because of her sexuality may be relevant to her asylum claim.**
- **Please let a woman know that in the UK there is a law against domestic violence and that this includes physical, mental or emotional abuse by a family member. Please encourage her to let you know if she is at risk and let her know steps she can take to protect herself.**
- **Please ensure that a woman knows that she can apply for asylum in her own right, separately from her husband. Please reassure her that her husband will not be told about her claim.**
- **If a woman separates from her husband once they are in the UK, it is important that she knows that she should get separate legal advice as she could apply for asylum in her own right. Also she should get legal advice about custody of any children.**
- **If you are able to produce a witness statement in advance of a woman's interview, this will be beneficial as it will mean she doesn't have to keep repeating her account.**



Please help a woman prepare for her interview by taking time with her to clarify the key issues and how to express herself.

- **Please reassure a woman that she doesn't need to be afraid of the interviewer. The interviewer won't tell other agencies what she has said.**
- **Please let a woman know she doesn't need to be afraid of the guards or the police. Please explain that they are there to protect her and the public.**
- **A woman may like to have a support worker or friend to accompany her to the interview. Please ask the Home Office before her interview so that the Home Office can decide whether this is possible.**
- **Please encourage a woman to provide as complete an account as possible, including any small details, not leaving anything out.**
- **Please warn her that if she adds anything to her account at a later date, the officials may say it's not true.**
- **Please reassure the woman not to worry if the interviewer keeps asking the same question, just try to give consistent answers.**
- **Please let a woman know that if she is uncomfortable speaking about anything she can write it down or that you can send it to the interviewer later.**
- **Please encourage a woman to tell the interviewer if she does not understand the question. She should say 'I don't understand' rather than 'I don't know' in this situation.**
- **Please let a woman know that she has a right to ask for a break during her asylum interview.**



During a woman's asylum interview her child/children should be able to play in a separate room/nursery looked after by a trained worker. This will mean that she can give her full account without being worried about them. Please liaise with the Home Office to ensure such childcare provision is available when she is given her interview date.

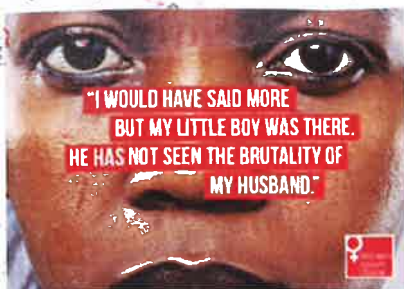
- **If the interviewer doesn't follow the standards detailed above, please let the woman know to make a note of this and tell you about it.**

This information was compiled by the Protection Gap Advocates drawing on leaflets for women seeking asylum by Why Refugee Women and Refugee Women's Strategy Group. © March 2016

www.asylumaid.org.uk/protectiongap

charter@asylumaid.org.uk





"I WOULD HAVE SAID MORE
BUT MY LITTLE BOY WAS THERE.
HE HAS NOT SEEN THE BRUTALITY OF
MY HUSBAND."



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