



Registration Number: N201600006

Longitudinal Evaluation of Hope Projects (West Midlands) Ltd.: Legal Project

Invitation to Tender November 2020

Introduction to Hope Projects (West Midlands) Ltd

Hope Projects (West Midlands) Ltd. is a charity and a company limited by guarantee providing support to destitute asylum seekers who have exhausted all rights of appeal in the West Midlands. We exist to overturn flawed refusals of asylum and prevent destitution.

Our work is informed by the following theory of change that places an emphasis on providing physical, psychological/emotional and legal support for destitute asylum seekers in order to enable them to fight erroneous decisions made on their applications for asylum:

- **A Case:** asylum destitution results from flawed asylum decision-making . We undertake a rigorous assessment process with our clients, led by an OISC3 immigration advisor to allow us to focus our limited resources on people who we believe have the strongest case to challenge refused applications.
- **A Place:** It is almost impossible for anyone to gather the evidence to build an effective case against flawed asylum refusal if they are overwhelmed by the crisis of destitution and street homelessness. We provide safe and secure housing and financial support so people focus on overturning flawed asylum decisions.
- **A Plan:** Asylum seekers often do not understand the process or the rationale for the asylum decisions received. Our immigration advisor helps people understand why they have been refused asylum, and what steps they can take to help correct the decision. Clients are provided with a simple legal plan which they act on with the aid of volunteer support, enabling them to follow and stay in control of their own case. Where legal aid has not been obtained, but there is a case to argue, we find solicitors to take the case and in limited cases, we act as the legal representative.
- **Strength for the fight:** Asylum destitution is disempowering. We help people rediscover the strength to take on the challenge ahead via a support model focused on day-to-day empowerment and well-being. We rebuild the habit of empowerment by increasing residents' voices in the running of Hope Projects itself.
- **Allies:** We reach out beyond the asylum and refugee sector to raise awareness and build a network of allies. Hope works at the centre of a unique partnership; combining the strengths of key partners including Red Cross, Refugee and Migrant Centre, Restore, Baobab Women's project,

Entraide, ASIRT and Refugee Action in a multi-agency approach to addressing destitution. We aim to extend this partnership further, building a family of individuals and organisations willing to publicly stand against asylum destitution.

We deliver the following three services:

- **Housing:** We have 12 properties in and around Birmingham accommodating up to 35 individuals. We also have two rooms in Wolverhampton with Hope into Action.
- **Hope Destitution Fund:** Hope provides a little over £20.00 per week to residents in our accommodation projects, and to others who satisfy our Destitution Fund criteria. In 2019/20 we helped 112 people via this fund. We also provided funds to enable 151 to travel to Liverpool to make further representations in person.
- **Hope's Legal Advice Project:** this new service is accessible via our drop-in service and referral from a wider range of partners. At an initial interview (with interpreters) we obtain documents and gather information, after which we provide a detailed client care letter, setting out the history of the client, the applicable law, reasons why the client was refused refugee status, potential remedies and next steps. Hope arranges a second interview with the client and interpreters to go through the client care letter/advice. The project is registered with the OISC at Level 3, enabling our advisor to provide legal asylum and immigration advice and representation at Tribunal. The project builds on legal advice Hope have been providing since 2016. The new legal project – focused on giving client's legal advice direct rather than supporting partner agencies – began in June 2020 supported by a grant from The Oak Foundation, and will run for five years.

Longitudinal evaluation: aims and research questions

We are delighted to invite proposals for a five-year longitudinal evaluation of the legal advice service provided by Hope Projects Ltd. The proposed study relates only to Hope's Legal Advice Project and not to our housing provision or Destitution Fund.

The overarching aim of the study is to contribute to the evidence base on the effectiveness of the legal advice in overturning flawed asylum decisions and preventing asylum eviction, and to inform project improvements during and subsequent to the five-year period of funding. Hope seek a research team with existing expertise in the issue of asylum law and policy.

The specific research questions driving the study are as follows:

1. How effective is Hope's legal advice service in ***progressing the legal case*** of individuals subject to flawed asylum decisions, including but not limited to:
 - (a) securing clients legal representation and;
 - (b) securing clients status/leave to remain in the UK?
2. How effective is Hope's legal advice service in promoting clients' ***understanding of their legal case and what they can do to progress their case?***
3. To what extent is the legal service effective in ***improving clients' material circumstances***, in particular in helping clients avoid destitution and street homelessness and secure sustainable forms of statutory support?
4. What are ***clients' experiences*** of Hope's legal service?
 - are the projects aims and approach clear and well understood by clients?
 - to what extent do clients feel empowered by the legal support they receive and to what extent are they in control of their legal case and wider circumstances?
 - does the service respond to client needs in a person-centred and appropriate manner?
 - what are the strengths and weaknesses of the service from clients' perspectives?
 - How, if at all, could the service be improved from a client perspective?
5. What are the ***legal, policy and practice implications*** of this longitudinal evaluation for Hope Ltd., it's local partners and wider stakeholders, and national government?

The evaluation should deploy longitudinal methods to explore the answer to these questions in the immediate/short-term (immediate impacts of service engagement), medium-term (impacts of service engagement after several months to 1 year of service engagement) and longer term (up to five years post service engagement).

Hope Projects Legal Advice Service started on 1st June 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown. It is essential that the evaluation remains responsive to the changing environment and that in seeking to answer the research questions above the research team are sensitive to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic e.g. the extent to which project effectiveness has been impacted by lockdown measures and the COVID-19 response.

Study methods, sample and components

We anticipate researchers adopting a mixed methods approach to the proposed study, combining measurement of 'hard outcomes' (whether clients secure legal representation, whether clients achieve status, changes to clients housing status and income) with a qualitative exploration of the legal service from multiple perspective.

We envisage the longitudinal evaluation combining two elements to answer the research questions described above.

First, the research team will conduct **qualitative longitudinal research with a diverse sample of Hope legal project's clients**. The sample will include clients from a variety of countries of origin who have been assisted from June 2020 onwards. We estimate that the use of phone interpretation will be necessary for around 80% of the recruited sample. Interpreting costs up to a maximum £1000 of interpreting (approx. 25 hours) per year (over 5 years) can be met via an existing interpreting contract help by Hope additional to the evaluation budget.

We anticipate that the research team will recruit the client sample, with the assistance of Hope, with at least 3 intakes during the programme. We would seek the recruitment of clients at a number of intervals during the study to ensure that changes to the service over time can be explored in the research. Proposals should detail the research team's approach to sampling and minimising client attrition.

Appropriate research methods should be deployed to address the research questions above, with due consideration paid to the vulnerability of our client group (e.g. by taking a trauma-informed approach). An account of the ethical considerations pertinent to the research and how these will be addressed should be included in the proposal.

Second, the research team will conduct **qualitative research (interviews and/or focus groups) with a wider group of stakeholders with perspectives relevant to the research aims and questions** detailed above. This should include Hope staff, volunteers and trustees and representatives from key local stakeholder and partner agencies. It would be desirable also to include focus groups with a wider group of Hope legal advice service clients than are involved in the qualitative longitudinal element of the study.

We would anticipate at least two waves of qualitative research with key stakeholders over the course of the five year project to track developments in the service and context over time, and in particular would like findings from this component to inform the Dec 2021 and May 2024 reports.

Budget

Total funding of up to £30,200 (Including VAT, travel and subsistence) over five years is available for the evaluation.

Interpreting costs up to a maximum £1000 of interpreting (approx. 25 hours) per year (over 5 years) can be met by Hope in addition to the evaluation budget. Any additional interpreting costs will need to be met within the project budget.

The contractor will be paid in instalments, half in advance and half spread through completion of each output. The year on year profile can be negotiated, but the total sum available is fixed.

Outputs and timetable

Hope seek the following set of evaluation outputs:

An externally published report including stakeholder feedback and interim study findings and incorporating the longitudinal element of the study tracking client experiences and outcomes. This will include a section of recommendations for service improvements for trustees. Report to be published by Dec 2021

A short report looking in more detail at key findings from client feedback from the unfolding longitudinal study. Report to be published Dec 2022

A final externally published report including stakeholder feedback and incorporating the conclusion of the longitudinal study tracking client experiences and outcomes. This will be outward facing, with recommendations for future funders, sector partners, policy makers and influencers. Report to be published May 2024.

Management of the project

The contractor will be expected to keep in close contact with Hope Projects e.g. through catch up meetings or summary reports at regular intervals. Hope Projects will have the opportunity to comment on draft research instruments and reports before they are finalised. The contractor will provide one named central point of contact for the Hope team in the research proposal.

Format of Bids

The tender proposal should include the following information:

- A description of the approach and research methods the research team intend to employ, including:
 - the approach to sampling to be taken (pertaining to both legal service clients and Hope staff, trustees, volunteers and partners)
 - frequency and format of data collection
 - the approach to data analysis and write up
 - the ethical implications of the research and how these will be managed
- A detailed workplan and timetable of milestones and deliverables
- Details of the staff team to undertake the work and their roles, including management structure
- An account of project risks and how these will be mitigated

- Project budget, broken down into different phases as appropriate, and showing the relevant daily rates against each member of the team to be employed on the project.
- Details of a single named point of contact for all correspondence relating to the project.
- Relevant experience in similar evaluations/research projects by the research team
- CVs of key members of the evaluation team
- Details of two referees who can comment on the research teams previous work
- Confirmation that work can be start by 1/1/2021. at the latest

Intellectual Property

Any information gathered during the course of the project and not already in the public domain is deemed the property of Hope Projects Ltd. The information provided in the reports, and the rights to all other outputs, shall become the property of Hope Projects Ltd.

GDPR

All members of Hope Projects and the contractor must act in accordance with the GDPR

Tendering timeline

Key dates:

- Request for quotation issued 28 September 2020
- Deadline for proposals 13th November 2020
- Shortlisting week commencing 16th November
- Interviews week commencing 23rd November 2020
- Research start date no later than 1st January 2021

Submission of Proposal and enquiries

Proposals should be submitted as a Word or PDF document by email to Phil Davis at admin@hope-projects.org.uk