



Your independent social work assessment: what to expect

Your immigration lawyer has asked us to meet with you as independent social workers to prepare a report that can be used as evidence for your immigration case.

Who are we and who do we work for?

Social Workers Without Borders is a registered charity, made up of a national network of social workers. We support access to justice and better quality immigration decision making by providing expert evidence when requested by immigration lawyers. Our charity is separate and independent from any local council, the Home Office or any other government agency.

As expert witnesses, we are also independent of you and your lawyer. Your lawyer has provided us with a list of questions to answer but they can't tell us *how* to answer them. We have a responsibility to provide honest and fair evidence, based on our professional knowledge and experience.

What is a social worker?

Social work is a regulated professional role with different areas of specialism. For example, some of us work with children and families, others work with adults. In general, our role is to listen to people, to work with them to understand their needs and to help them get those needs met. This might relate to emotional wellbeing, physical health, practical needs or something else. Social workers have particular expertise around exploring family relationships and considering children's safety, welfare and development needs. We also have expertise around adults' safety and support needs, and in enabling adults and children to have their voices heard.

How will you work with me and my family?

We will answer the questions provided by your lawyer by completing an assessment of your needs and experiences. This involves speaking with you and (if relevant) with your children, other relevant family members and friends, and perhaps with other professionals who know you. Usually we will ask to meet with you where you live. We will also read the paperwork for your case shared with us by your lawyer. We will then write up an independent social work report, presenting relevant information and our professional opinions.

If the assessment involves children - depending on their age and what they are comfortable with - we will ask to speak with them alone. We will explore their wishes and feelings in an age appropriate way, perhaps using drawings or other child-friendly activities. This helps us (and the immigration decision maker reading the report), feel confident that children's own views are represented in the assessment.



Our role is purely to provide this independent report. We are not able to offer any direct or ongoing support, although we may make recommendations or share contact details for organisations that can provide further support.

Will you charge me money for the independent report?

No. Social Workers Without Borders is a funded charity and most of our social workers offer their time on a voluntary basis. This means that if you are not eligible for Legal Aid (government financial assistance for your case) we can complete the report for free. If you are eligible for Legal Aid then your solicitor will apply for funding to cover our costs. Either way, we will never ask you or your family for payment.

During our conversation:

We will ask you questions about your life experiences, your current situation, your health and other needs, as well as your children (if relevant) and your family relationships. The better we understand your situation, the more able we will be to write a detailed and meaningful report. So, we encourage you to answer as fully as you feel able.

However, we appreciate that we might touch on difficult topics and that this can bring up strong feelings. We don't want this conversation to cause unnecessary stress or to feel overwhelming for you. Therefore, please know that you can pause or stop the conversation at any time, or tell us to move on to the next question if needed. We may also suggest breaks during the meeting.

If at any point you want to go back to a question and add or clarify something that is absolutely fine.

It is really important that we understand each other well. An interpreter will be provided if you need one. If there is anything else we need to know or do to support your communication, please let us know. If there is anything you don't understand – either the question, or a word, or the way it is translated, please let us and the interpreter know and we will try to clarify. We will not be offended in the slightest. It is also completely fine to ask us the reason for any questions if that doesn't feel clear.

Next steps

After our meeting, we will prepare a draft report. Your lawyer will review this draft with you, and you will both have the chance to suggest factual corrections or request clarifications. Once the report is finalised, your lawyer will be responsible for submitting it to the Home Office and/ the Court.

If new important information comes up after the report is submitted, we may need to update our findings.

**Confidentiality:**

Any information shared with us during our assessment that is relevant to your case will be included in our report.

We will treat your documents, our notes and our report as highly confidential. Any details we have about you will be held securely and privately.

Within our charity, we will only share information about you with the people that are involved in writing or supervising your report. Outside of our charity, the only person we will share your report with will be your lawyer.

The only time that we might need to share any personal information without your consent is if we are concerned that a child or a vulnerable adult is being harmed or is at imminent risk of being harmed. If a worry like this should come up, we would aim to talk it through with you first unless it was unsafe to do so.

We follow UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). This means you can ask how your data (information about you) is being used, request corrections, or ask for data to be deleted. If you have any questions about your data, you can contact us at: office@socialworkerswithoutborders.org

Feedback

At the end of the process, you will receive a closing letter and feedback form. We would be very grateful if you could share your views on the process, as this helps us to monitor and develop our service.