

Information Sheet for voluntary supporters to Home Office Tribunal Appeal Hearings (Newport, Gwent)

Where possible HBTSR supports asylum seekers attending Home Office Tribunal appeal hearings in South Wales. These hearings are usually held either in Cardiff or Newport. This information leaflet deals with hearings held in Newport.

Attending a Home Office appeal hearing is a daunting prospect for asylum seekers and the experience itself is undoubtedly stressful. In addition the court environment is not a familiar one to most people, including those attending as supporters. This information sheet attempts to provide answers to the most frequently asked questions regarding the experience.

Q. Where is the court in Newport?

A. The court address is:
Columbus House,
Langstone Business Park,
Chepstow Road,
Langstone, Gwent.
NP18 2LX. Telephone number: 0300 123 1711

Q. How do I get there?

A. By car the Court is easily accessible from the Coldra Roundabout (M4, J24) By bus from Newport (Friars Walk) 73, 74c, which will drop you off nearby. Nearest rail station is Newport.

Q. Is there parking at Columbus House?

A. Yes and it is free.

Q. What time do I have to be there?

A. The court building opens at 9.a.m. Asylum seekers and their representatives are required to be at court by 10.a.m. We suggest you should aim to arrive around 9.30.a.m so you are there in plenty of time to meet the person whom you are supporting.

Q. What do I do when I get there?

A. You will pass through a court security check which is similar to airport security and then register with reception on the ground floor. where you should specify the particular appellant you are supporting. You should There is a waiting room where you can wait until your person arrives.

Q. How many courts are there in Columbus House?

A. There are six courts all of which can be running simultaneously and not all dealing with asylum issues. The layout of the court is less formal than you will find in a Crown or Magistrates Court and the proceedings whilst regular are again not as formal. The Judge sits on a raised dais. Counsel for the Home Office and the asylum seeker sit at tables facing the Judge and there is a public gallery at the back of the

court where you can sit.

Q. Are the public allowed in every court?

A. There are some Courts which will have reporting restrictions and the public are not allowed in and this will be made known to attendees.

Q. What time will the hearing begin?

A. Whilst everyone attending their Court hearing that day has to be there by 10.a.m the running order will be decided on the day. The court clerk will inform the asylum seeker and their legal representative and supporters which court the hearing will take place and what time it is expected to commence.

Q. How does the asylum seeker get to Court?

A. The Home Office provide free transport to and from Newport Rail Station.

Q. Are there catering facilities at the Court?

A. No. There is a vending machine for drinks for which you will need change. It is likely that a mobile catering van will visit Columbus House however you could be in court and miss it. Our suggestion is that you take food for yourself and the person whom you are supporting as you could be there for most of the day in some cases.

Q. Is there an interpreter?

A. Yes. The court appoints an interpreter for the actual hearing which is paid for by HMCTS. The asylum seeker may also bring their own interpreter for discussions outside the court hearing.

Q. Can I be present at the discussions between the asylum seeker and their counsel?

A. This is at the discretion of the asylum seeker and/or their counsel. For some asylum seekers this will be the first time they are meeting their barrister and as such it is an extremely important meeting. Evidence indicates that your presence is welcome however you must check first that this is appropriate.

Q. How many supporters can attend?

A. There is no stated upper limit. The Court does not have a capacity for large numbers although there is space for up to five supporters to sit in the public gallery. It is good where possible for supporters to share transport which reduces costs and also provides the opportunity to discuss how best support can be offered on the day.

Q. What happens after the hearing concludes?

A. After the hearing the barrister will talk informally to the asylum seeker and supporters about how the case has gone. The outcome of the hearing and the decision about the future of the asylum seeker is normally not announced at this time. It can be two weeks or more before the decision is announced and the Home Office still has the chance to appeal against that decision.

