

Hello,

Welcome to **Week 19 MSCOS**. Please check out this week's news, features, online pages and moderated [discussion forums](#). You can post anonymously – we need YOUR perspectives on practice!

This week our feature is on the core outcomes: [Safety from Any Trafficker or Other Abuser](#) and [Finding Purpose in Life and Self-Actualisation](#). We would like to thank [Alison Pickup](#), the Director of [Asylum Aid](#) who explains the role of legal work and securing leave to remain for survivors in relation to MSCOS. She shares an outline of Asylum Aid's ethos and practice for working with survivors, and its wider focus on impact via key strategic litigation (most recently the Rwanda case), as well as Asylum Aid's collaborative project on developing legal expertise and peer communities with the [Justice Together initiative](#).

Also, thank you to [Wendy Caballero](#) and [Keith Lewis](#) of the [MSCOS Research Advisory Board](#) who gave some insight on the role of music in [Finding Purpose in Life and Self-Actualisation](#).

**See below** too for [Survivor Alliance's Survivors LEAD Program](#) information session happening tomorrow, details on how to sign up below!

## [THIS WEEK'S FEATURE](#)



[Safety from any trafficker or other abuser](#)



Alison Pickup, Director of Asylum Aid says:

“Provision of legal advice and representation for victims of trafficking to obtain leave to remain<sup>1</sup> in the UK falls squarely within the MSCOS core outcome, [Safety from Any Trafficker or Other Abuser](#). At Asylum Aid we are glad to see it is a clear focus for the **MSCOS Community of Practice**. As lawyers, we believe that ‘**safety**’ is the governing rationale for all of our work, and the legal status of leave to remain is one crucial component. Each one of the **MSCOS core outcomes** is required for survivors’ recovery, wellbeing, and integration, and it is helpful to now have these outcomes referenced in one project, one place.

**Asylum Aid’s ethos for working with survivors combines our specialist legal advice and representation with wider championing of the rights of refugees, victims of trafficking and other survivors.** Our lawyers are trained in trauma-informed (‘TiCC’) methods of working, and work to an agreed set of values, including respect and dignity. Building trust is key and it takes time: we remain mindful, both of the traumatic histories experienced by our clients and of the power dynamic that exists between us.

**Our approach to legal work is collaborative with our clients: we work as a team with them.** We cannot make the case *for the* client, however, we can give them the advice and the tools they need for the best possible presentation of their case. Acting with integrity and courage are core values, requiring us to pursue our clients’ cases as far as we are able within the legal system, and equally, explaining to them clearly if we have reached a stage where we can do nothing further to assist.

**We are aware that we cannot meet the pressing need of all survivors for legal advice and representation, therefore we focus on creating a wider impact, engaging in strategic litigation and strategic partnership:**

- **Strategic Legal Work:** In 2022, Asylum Aid brought a legal challenge to the unfair and fast-track procedure used by the Home Office to decide who to send to Rwanda under the Migration and Economic Development Partnership. We bought this challenge because we
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were worried that under the fast-track procedure, people did not have a fair opportunity to access effective legal representation, put forward their case about why they should not be removed, or access the court to stop removal. Although the Court of Appeal dismissed our case, the judges made important findings about the time which people need for the procedure to be fair, and agreed that in almost all cases, access to specialist legal advice is critical to ensure fairness.

We also act on behalf of individuals whose cases can have wider benefits. For example, we are currently acting for a client who, despite being a recognised victim of trafficking, was not granted any leave to remain while waiting for a decision on their asylum claim until after we started legal proceedings. We are arguing that the Home Office operated a secret policy of deferring decisions in these cases. If this claim is upheld, we estimate that hundreds of survivors will be entitled to compensation for breaches of their human rights.

- **Partnership: We intend to create the next generation of expert advisors who specialise in complex legal cases.** Asylum Aid has launched a new project which is funded by the [Justice Together Initiative](#) to pilot a model of intensive training and supervision for lawyers to reach areas which lack legal services for victims of trafficking and other survivors. Research conducted into areas known to be ‘*advice deserts*’ shows that without external training and supervision, new legal services are not sustainable and advisers cannot develop the expertise needed to take on more complex cases. *A thriving legal practice requires a ‘pipeline’ of professional lawyers if it is to sustain the service, develop its staff, and progress.* Our idea is therefore to create a system for delivery of remote, online supervision and training, as well as some in-person visits over a 6-month period. This will give lawyers who are having to work in isolated advice areas, a **community of legal practice** which operates as a peer support network. In the initial phase of this pilot, we are working with four immigration advisors based at [Asylum Justice in Wales](#) and at [Safe Passage International](#).”
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**“Specialist legal aid law practices which work with refugees and victims of human trafficking have been under severe strain in recent years.** The paucity of legal aid, as well as the continuous threats to legal aid, and the generally regressive approach of the UK Government and legislation concerning the rights of refugees and victims of trafficking presents increasing and cumulative challenges to the legal profession which have resulted in many services feeling forced to withdraw. [Asylum Aid](#) has been established as a specialist legal practice working with survivors since 1990, however, it nearly disappeared when its previous home at Consonant went into administration in 2020. Fortunately, the [Helen Bamber Foundation \(HBF\)](#) recognised the need to sustain Asylum Aid’s services and stepped in to incorporate it within the professional **HBF Group**.

*We are aware that many legal practices have been forced to cease their legal aid work and our aim is to provide expert knowledge and peer support wherever we can benefit reputable, legally aided law firms and their clients.”*

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to discretionary leave to remain based upon identification as a victim of trafficking under the UK National Referral Mechanism and issuing of a residence permit (also known as VTS leave), and/or leave to remain under the UK asylum system in relation to a trafficking-based or related asylum claim under the 1951 Refugee Convention or the Human Rights Act 1998.



### Finding purpose in life and self-actualisation

Continuing our online forums on [Finding Purpose in Life and Self-Actualisation](#), (chaired by **Ruth Aguele**) we focused on the role of the arts and activities in the daily lives of survivor leaders, finding that the atmosphere became elevated and discussion flowed freely. Members of the MSCOS research advisory board said they were pleased to discuss this topic, and to learn more about each other in this way.

Explaining the role of music in their lives:

- **Wendy Caballero says**, *“Singing is my passion, if I am sad or in a low mood i used to sing, it calms me to lessen my loneliness, my sadness. if you are only one year in the UK and you don't have family, you need to look for another thing that can make yourself happy.”*
- **Keith Lewis told us**, *“I love music. Tupac's song 'Me Against the World' helped me through a lot of hard times. At my darkest moments, it feels we are all one against the world and that song has brought me through some stark times and has given me so much 'fight'. If you haven't ever listened to this song, put it on. I think that rap stars are the poets of today, and the Shakespeares of yesterday. It is a brilliant song.”*



### **Survivors LEAD Program (UK Survivors only and only 5 spots available)**

The Survivors LEAD program educates and empowers survivors to become leaders. Integrating lessons from the Pathways to Freedom Capacity Building Initiative (CBI) and Survivor LEAD 2021, Survivors LEAD combines experiential education, socioemotional learning, leadership development, and upskilling for employment.

This is part of our efforts to empower survivors by developing leadership skills. These skills can be useful not only for leading a community but also by leading the journey of healing and recovery towards meaningful inclusion.

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[Register here](#) for an information session on **Thursday 10th August, at 2 pm BST** After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. If you are unable to attend but are interested, please email [Maria@survivoralliance.org](mailto:Maria@survivoralliance.org).

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### [DID YOU KNOW?](#)

If you've joined our mailing list recently, over the last 18 weeks we have covered a variety of outcomes, highlighting best practice models and frameworks. You can access them all in PDF [here](#).

Please forward MSCOS to any colleagues or network connections that you think may be interested in our work, and they can sign up to receive newsletter invites via our contact form [here](#), or by direct email to [mscos@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:mscos@kcl.ac.uk).

*The MSCOS Community of Practice content is hosted by the Helen Bamber Foundation. Content is designed and directed by Queenie Sit and Rachel Witkin.*



Working with  
core  
outcomes as  
a set



Secure &  
suitable  
housing



Safety  
from any  
trafficker or  
other  
abuser



Long-term,  
consistent  
support



Trauma-  
informed  
services



Finding  
purpose in  
life and self-  
actualisatio  
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Access to  
medical  
treatment



Access to  
education