



RIGHTS OF WOMEN'S EXCEPTIONAL CASE FUNDING PROJECT

Information about this project

Rights of Women's exceptional case funding project aims to improve access to legal advice and representation for women in England & Wales who have been victims of domestic or sexual violence or abuse.

Since 1 April 2013, legal aid has not been available in many areas of immigration law as well as much of family law unless the individual can prove they have been a victim of domestic violence with specified evidence. If an individual's immigration or family law case is one for which legal aid is no longer generally available, they may still be able to get legal aid by applying for 'exceptional case funding'.

Exceptional case funding is a type of legal aid that is available to individuals who apply to the Legal Aid Agency and who can show their human rights or European Union rights would be breached if they did not have legal aid. An individual may qualify for exceptional case funding if it would be unfair to have to present their own case or they would be unable to effectively do so. This may arise because the case is complicated or the individual is less able to deal with the case alone (for example, because they are suffering from the physical or emotional effects of domestic or sexual violence or abuse).

This project will provide one-to-one casework support to assist women in need of legal help in relation to a family or immigration law issue to apply for exceptional case funding.

What we can do under this project

Rights of Women has limited capacity and so cannot guarantee to assist all women referred to us. For this reason, we are also unable to accept emergency cases with urgent deadlines approaching as we cannot guarantee an immediate response.

Where we are able to assist, our role will be limited to making an application for exceptional case funding only. We are not able to offer a legal casework service for a woman's family or immigration law problem nor are we able to take on any cases once they receive legal aid funding.

This means that if we are successful in helping your client to obtain exceptional case funding, she will then need to find a legal aid lawyer in another organisation to assist with her legal problem.

52-54 Featherstone Street
London
EC1Y 8RT

Tel: 020 7251 6575
Email: ecf@row.org.uk
Website: www.rightsofwomen.org.uk

Who to refer

Women who meet all of the following criteria:

- Have experienced domestic or sexual violence and abuse
- Resident of England or Wales
- Need family law or immigration law help.

In family cases:

- Women who are otherwise unable to access legal aid, for example because they do not have the specified evidence of domestic violence.

In immigration cases:

- Women who may have a European right of residence because she herself is an EU citizen or is the family member of an EU citizen (including having a British citizen child);
- Women who may have a human rights case, for example because they have a family or private life in the UK.

Please note that Rights of Women is unable to provide interpreters. Should your client need an interpreter we would expect you to provide this service.

How to make a referral

Please complete the accompanying form '**Exceptional Case Funding referral form for professionals**' providing as much detail as possible and adding any further information you think may be relevant to our assessment. Send your completed referral form along with any attachments to us at ecf@row.org.uk

What to expect after you have made a referral

On referring your client to Rights of Women's exceptional case funding project you can expect:

1. An acknowledgment of your referral indicating a time frame for our response.
2. We will arrange a telephone assessment with the client on a mutually convenient date and time. Our contact will be directly with the client unless your assistance is required or requested by the client.
3. Following the telephone assessment we will decide whether or not we are able to assist and notify the client accordingly. Where possible, we will also notify you of our decision.
4. After accepting a referral, we will arrange a meeting with the client on a mutually convenient date and time. If the client is based in London we will arrange a face to face meeting in a safe location. If the client is based outside of London this meeting is likely to be held over the telephone. Our contact will be directly with the client unless your assistance is required or requested by the client.
5. If we are unable to accept a referral, we will endeavour to signpost the client to relevant information and services.

If you need more information before making a referral, please call us on 020 7251 6575 and speak to our ECF project team.