

Update regarding the Medico-Legal Report service at HBF to All MLR writers responding to COVID-19

This is our position as of 20 March 2020 and may be updated as matters develop.

1. Following government advice regarding social distancing, the Helen Bamber Foundation's physical office is now shut. Staff are working remotely.
2. All face-to-face appointments at HBF's offices have been suspended until further notice. Clients are being encouraged to apply social distance and to self-isolate as necessary in keeping with current guidance/legislation.
3. We therefore anticipate a significant disruption in the MLR service while lawyers, their clients, the Legal Aid Agency (LAA), and the courts adjust their own current practice and advice regarding their working practices.
4. HBF still has a significant number of MLRs outstanding where we are awaiting confirmations of funding through the representative from the LAA.
5. We propose to establish processes whereby MLRs can be conducted remotely. These may be described as 'Interim'. This is something the Home Office recognises in their [Asylum Policy Instruction](#) (p.9-10).
6. When confirmation of funding comes through, we will look to match those cases with MLR writers willing to participate in these arrangements.
7. For the time being all MLRs will be undertaken remotely. For reports restricted to psychiatric/psychological assessment, a full assessment can often be made remotely using video-conferencing software. Detailed guidance will be provided separately.
8. We anticipate that reports carried out by video will nonetheless carry a significant degree of weight and be as effective in informing Home Office and Tribunal decision makers. We will explain how the MLR was conducted in the body of the report.

V1 20 March 2020
HBF Legal Protection Team

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