

Policy Strategy 2021-22

Executive summary

The Helen Bamber Foundation (HBF) is a specialist clinical and human rights charity that works with survivors of trafficking, torture and other forms of extreme human cruelty. We believe that all survivors should have safety, freedom and power. Our work alongside survivors shows us that, with early and appropriate care and support, survivors build the strength to move on with their lives ('strength to fly'). Our multidisciplinary and clinical team provides a bespoke Model of Integrated Care for survivors which includes medico-legal documentation of physical and psychological injuries; specialist programmes of therapeutic care; a medical advisory service; a counter-trafficking programme; housing and welfare advice; legal protection advice; and community integration activities and services.

Delivering policy change is a fundamental part of the Helen Bamber Foundations (HBF)'s organisational strategy and a vital way of creating positive change for all survivors. Our organisational expertise, gathered through our in-depth and multi-disciplinary work with survivors of trafficking and torture can provide significant practice and policy guidance both in the UK and internationally.

Securing systemic change for survivors in the current political climate is challenging; while we will continue to push for long term positive change over the coming years, much of our work will also be focussed on preventing a worsening of the current situation and on smaller operational improvements to the current system. HBF will:

- 1) Use our authoritative medico-legal expertise, alongside evidence from our frontline work and research, to secure ongoing policy change by:
 - Providing evidence (including research data) and recommendations to central government through consultation responses, select committee inquiries and parliamentary lobbying.
 - Ongoing direct engagement with civil servants in the Home Office and Ministry of Justice.
 - Undertaking strategic litigation.

- 2) Work collaboratively with others in the sector to deliver systems change by:
- Continued involvement in the joint campaigns working to build public support for a fair and humane asylum system and push back against the Nationality and Borders Bill.
 - Working in collaboration with clinical, legal and social providers in challenging the use of institutional accommodation under quasi-detention conditions.
 - Increasing our policy communications and disseminate our briefings and research to the wider human rights sector. This will include articulating positive alternatives to the current asylum system as well as articulating the negative consequences of the current system and the proposals currently before Parliament, and pushing for recognition and respect for international asylum, trafficking and human rights obligations.

This work will be underlined by the following principles:

- All our policy work will be evidence-led, based on the experiences of survivors and/or HBF's research findings.
- HBF will further embed the voices of survivors in our research and support them to influence policy through engagement with policy makers, consultations and campaigning.
- HBF's policy advocacy will be supportive of the non-discrimination and anti-racism agenda where relevant.
- HBF's policy, advocacy and strategic litigation activities will be closely linked and mutually supportive.
- Part of HBF's communications strategy will aim to further our policy goals and to strengthen HBF as a source of authoritative medico-legal expertise.

The following areas for change are a vital part of HBF's programme to prevent re-trafficking and are a priority for the HBF policy strategy:

1. **Early support and care:** Survivors must be fully and properly identified and protected, with the help of experienced legal advisors, and receive trauma-informed, long term, tailored support.
2. **Healthcare:** Survivors must receive a comprehensive health assessment, appropriate evidence-based interventions and rehabilitation support.
3. **Secure status:** Survivors must be granted secure immigration status that provides them with the stability required to engage fully with therapeutic care.
4. **Stable futures:** Survivors must have access to safe and appropriate accommodation; sufficient financial support and education and/or employment opportunities, to enable them to integrate into the community and rebuild their lives.

Policy priorities

Legal Protection	A safe and supportive environment	Recovery and integration
Identification and protection The identification of survivors of trafficking and torture is improved with equitable access to refugee protection and/or the NRM in line with international standards.	Quasi-detention The Home Office stops the use of mass institutional accommodation for people seeking asylum and provides survivors with quality housing in the community.	Access to mental health support All survivors are offered timely access to appropriate healthcare services and evidence-based specialist therapeutic care with a recognised right to recovery and rehabilitation.
Quality, timely decision making Decisions in the asylum system are quicker and of better quality, making effective use of MLRs and other clinical evidence and using appropriate evidential thresholds.	Support and accommodation Survivors receive the necessary and adequate financial support to ensure dignity and safety in their accommodation so they can recover from trauma and rebuild their lives.	Secure status All survivors are granted leave to remain in the UK that provides the security and stability necessary for them to recover and rebuild their lives.
A fair and accessible asylum process All survivors, including those with additional/complex needs, have equitable and fair access to all stages of the asylum system and receive quality legal advice and representation.	Detention of vulnerable adults Survivors of torture and trafficking are not placed or held in detention.	Access to education and employment All survivors are able to access education, training and employment.