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# Medical Opportunities with the Helen Bamber Foundation

## Who we are

The Helen Bamber Foundation is a specialist human rights charity based in London. We provide expert care and support for refugees and asylum seekers who have experienced extreme physical, sexual and psychological violence, abuse and exploitation.

The individuals we work with have been subjected to atrocities including state-sponsored torture, religious / political persecution, human trafficking, forced labour, sexual exploitation, gender-based and 'honour-based' violence. Many of our clients have been repeatedly victimised over many months and years.

We work with hundreds of survivors of cruelty from all over the world, including women and men from Albania, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, India, Afghanistan, China and Vietnam.

Our range of integrated services address the complex needs and vulnerabilities of

survivors. We offer survivors access to an individually tailored programme of specialist psychological care and physical rehabilitation activities alongside a Medical Advisory Clinic, expert medico-legal documentation, safeguarding, welfare and housing support, creative arts, and employability skills programmes.

There are two types of medical opportunities at the Helen Bamber Foundation:

1. Medical Advisory Service (voluntary)
2. Medico-Legal Report Writing

## Medical Advisory Service (voluntary)

Survivors of torture and human cruelty often suffer a myriad of deeply entwined physical and psychological health problems.

Our clients have usually had ineffective and sporadic contact with health care providers, often limited to emergency or crisis contact. Beginning to address their medical needs is extremely difficult, compounded by limitations of time and accessibility within the NHS.

To help our clients access the medical care they need, we operate a Medical Advisory Service.

### Activities

We recruit and train volunteer doctors or other allied healthcare professionals to assess client's medical concerns, offer explanation and advice to clients and liaise closely with their GP or other NHS services. Our doctors do not treat, prescribe or refer to secondary care.

### Approach

We operate the clinic from specially designed on-site treatment rooms. Clinicians spend as much time as they need with each client. Typically, each appointment lasts an hour. The Medical Advisory Service is fully integrated into the rest of the organisation. Clinicians work closely with therapists, caseworkers, and the legal team to support the individual needs of each client. We have the use of specialised interpreters.

### Opportunity

The Medical Advisory Service is run by our Lead GP and a team of three to four volunteer doctors who commit to one day a week or a fortnight. We also have a specialist physiotherapist and a psychiatrist working within the team. This role is particularly suitable, but not

exclusively, for GPs. Recruitment is open and ongoing.

### Training

Training is provided on-site by our Lead GP and other clinical staff, including the Foundation's psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and psychotherapists.

## Medico-Legal Report Writing

Our clients have either fled extreme violence or abuse and/or been trafficked to the UK against their will. Many of our clients therefore seek international protection (asylum) in the UK. Navigating the UK asylum process is challenging for survivors of torture and human cruelty. Disorientation and memory impairment because of trauma is often interpreted as negative credibility and often results in a refusal of survivor's application for legal protection.

The lack of stability and safety, and threat of being returned to a violent or exploitative situation in their country of origin, are incredibly detrimental to our clients' recovery.

To support the just determination of survivors' claims for asylum and thus maximise their opportunity for recovery, we operate a Medico-Legal Report service.

### Activities

We recruit and train doctors to undertake assessments of clients and draft Medico-Legal Reports. Reports document the impact of trauma (whether physical and psychological or psychological only) and clinical concerns inherent in deciding

whether it is safe to return someone to their country of origin.

### Approach

Medico-Legal Report Writers assess clients in specially designed on-site treatment rooms. Each assessment usually requires two appointments, typically four hours for the first and two hours for the second. The Report is then typically drafted off-site. Each report takes about six to eight hours to draft. Reports are then reviewed by Helen Bamber Foundation's in-house legal team.

### Opportunity

Doctors from all specialties may be suitable for this role, but it is particularly suitable for GPs, psychiatrists or those with past experience in refugee healthcare. We look for doctors with at least 5 years post qualification experience.

Commitment is flexible but requires attendance at a two-day training session and we request each volunteer to write at least four reports a year.

### Training

We offer a two-day training course which we run annually for new Medico-Legal Report Writers. This includes training on asylum law, refugee health, assessment of physical and psychological sequelae of torture, human trafficking, and psychological therapies.

We then ask each doctor to shadow an experienced Medico-Legal Report Writer during an assessment and be involved in the reviewing process of that report. We may ask the doctor to be shadowed during their first report assessment depending on their level of previous experience.

Please note: MLR writers act under contract as 'consultants' to the Foundation and can be paid for their work or can choose to donate their fee back to the organisation.

### Support for volunteer doctors

All volunteer doctors are strongly encouraged to attend our bi-monthly Peer Group Meetings which take place between 6.30pm and 8pm. These offer peer support and as well as ongoing education.

#### Who do I contact?

If you are interested in volunteering with the Medical Advisory Clinic or working as a Medico-Legal Report Writer, please send you C.V. and a short covering letter explaining your interest to:

Dr Jane Hunt at  
[jane.hunt@helenbamber.org](mailto:jane.hunt@helenbamber.org)