



Service Information

The Sojourner Project is a pilot scheme run by Eaves and funded by the Home Office, and will be operational from Monday 30th November 2009 until the end of February 2010. Eaves will be working in partnership with a range of other voluntary providers to co-ordinate support, accommodation and subsistence for women and their dependents throughout the country.

The Sojourner Project is for women with no recourse to public funds, who entered the UK on a spousal or partner visa and are eligible to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) under the Domestic Violence Rule.

Who is eligible for this service?

- Victims of domestic violence who have no recourse to public funds
- Those admitted to, or granted an extension to their stay in the UK as a spouse, civil partner, unmarried or same sex partner
- Those who qualify for ILR under the Domestic Violence Rule

The service can be offered to those meeting the above criteria, and their dependents.

How can you access the service and what is the process?

It is anticipated that the majority of the referrals will come from existing Domestic Violence Helplines and refuges, however anyone can make referrals to the scheme by calling the Sojourner Project Duty Worker on 0207 840 7147.

Once the referral has passed initial assessment, they will be admitted onto the first stage of the pilot:

What does stage one of the pilot involve?

Eaves will work in partnership with a range of other voluntary providers to co-ordinate support, accommodation and subsistence for those on stage one of the pilot, and their dependents.

Eaves have partnership arrangements in place with service providers who have expertise in supporting victims of domestic violence, women from Black, Minority Ethnic and Refugee Communities, and those with No Recourse to Public Funds.

Where service providers do not have partnership arrangements in place with Eaves, it is possible to set these up once Eaves are assured of their suitability. It is noted that not all groups that want to take part in the pilot have the necessary expertise in supporting victims of domestic violence, and women from Black, Minority Ethnic and Refugee Communities, and those with No Recourse to Public Funds.

Support providers wishing to enter into partnership arrangements for the purposes of this pilot will be asked to sign a Service Level Agreement with Eaves. This will outline roles and responsibilities of both parties.

Eaves have separate arrangements in place for allocating referrals in Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland and England, working with the appropriate partner agencies. Please contact us for details regarding the arrangements in these countries.

Once support and accommodation has been agreed the support provider will need to complete a referral form and e-mail a copy to the Sojourner Project Duty Worker on sojourner@eaveshousing.co.uk

The Sojourner Duty Worker will forward the completed referral form to the UK Borders Agency (UKBA), who will verify the referral's eligibility to enter the second stage of the pilot.

Once the Sojourner Project Duty Worker has received the eligibility decision, they will inform the support provider.

What does stage two of the pilot involve?

If UKBA confirms eligibility for the second stage, the service user is then entitled to 20 working days (4 weeks) of funded accommodation and support to enable them to submit an ILR application, under the DV rule.

These 20 days include the initial 5 day period on stage one of the scheme.

It is vital that service providers give service users access to qualified legal advisors regarding immigration issues and any ILR application.

Once an application for ILR has been submitted, the service user is eligible for a further 20 working days (4 weeks) of funded accommodation and support whilst waiting for a decision on their application. UKBA have stated that once they have received a valid application, they should be able to turn around applications and make a decision within 20 days. In affect, these last 20 days constitute Stage Three of the pilot.

What is funded under the pilot?

Services providing support and accommodation to service users under the pilot will be funded for a maximum of 40 days. Eaves have established arrangements with refuges across the UK for this purpose, but that does not exclude others from becoming partners during the pilot.

The refuge that is accommodating the referred person and their children can apply to the Sojourner Pilot Project Manager for financial assistance. Under the pilot a service user is entitled to £60 per week subsistence plus an extra £30 per week for every child. Accommodation costs will also be covered, up to a total of £230 per week.

Funding will be paid a week in arrears on receipt of invoice. In addition the refuges will also be able to claim for interpreter's costs. However, please be aware some interpretation services will be exempt from these conditions, therefore please discuss with the Sojourner Project Manager for more guidance. If services are likely to need more than £150 for interpreting, they should get authorisation from the Sojourner Project Manager.

Service users can withdraw from the pilot at any time without affecting their ILR application. They may be entitled to additional support through the pilot should they choose to re-engage, however, this will need to be discussed with the Sojourner Project Manager.

What happens if Home Office funding doesn't cover costs for support providers

If services have provided support to service users who have been rejected for stage two, they are ineligible for any Home Office funding. However, Eaves will try to assist in these cases, using its own resources and funding from Southall Black Sisters and Women's Aid.

It may also be possible to fund services to support those whose ILR applications take longer than 20 days to submit. However, this cannot be guaranteed.

The Process

The following steps outline how the Sojourner Pilot Project will work in practice:

1. A victim of domestic violence who has No Recourse to Public Funds enters a refuge or calls the National Domestic Violence Helpline seeking support.
2. The refuge/DV helpline then contacts the Sojourner Duty Worker by phone. The Duty Worker will take some details about the possible referral and find out whether there is funding available for the person.

3. The person is then moved to the vacancy that will be funded by Eaves under the pilot or accommodation let by Eaves.
4. Once accommodation and support has been agreed, the support provider worker will complete a referral form which is e-mailed to the Sojourner Project Duty Officer. This will then be sent to UKBA to check the applicant's eligibility.
5. The UKBA Duty Officer has a maximum of five days to confirm eligibility to the second stage of the scheme.
6. The UKBA Duty Officer will return the confirmation of the applicant's eligibility to the second stage of the scheme within 5 days. The Sojourner Project Duty Worker will contact the refuge with this information.
7. If the UKBA decision confirms the referred person does not hold the required immigration status and is ineligible, the refuge will not be entitled for Home Office funding for that person for the first five days of the pilot. It will be up to the refuge to decide whether they choose to continue to support the person beyond the pilot funding. However, Eaves will work with the service provider to try to cover costs incurred on the first five days.
8. If the UKBA decision confirms that the referred person does hold the required immigration status and is eligible, the refuge will receive funding for the maximum of 20 days, (inclusive of the first five days of the eligibility period), to allow the applicant to gather their evidence and submit an application for Indefinite Leave to Remain under the Domestic Violence Rule.
9. If the referred person doesn't submit an application within the 20 days, the funding under the pilot will stop and the refuge will need to decide whether they will continue to support the person.
10. If the referred person does submit an application for ILR within the first 20 days, the UKBA will confirm receipt of the application. The refuge will be able to request further funding for another 20 days.
11. UKBA has a maximum of 20 days to make a decision on the application provided all the relevant information is received.
12. Once a decision has been made by UKBA the funding to the refuge ceases. This is regardless of whether the person has been granted or refused ILR under the Domestic Violence Rule.
13. If the applicant receives a negative decision and would like to appeal, unfortunately under this pilot it would be at the discretion of the refuge whether they would continue to support that applicant.

14. If the applicant receives a positive decision it is expected that they would have recourse to public funds, and therefore access housing and support services.