



Courts and  
Tribunals Judiciary

**JUDGE MELANIE PLIMMER**

PRESIDENT - FIRST TIER TRIBUNAL (IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM CHAMBER)

19 April 2024

Zoe Bantleman (by email)

Dear Zoe,

**Supporting Litigants-In-Person**

Thank you for your correspondence of 8<sup>th</sup> April.

As you are aware, I have taken your concerns forward through our lead judge on liaising with stakeholders, RJ Roxanne Frantzis, who has liaised directly with colleagues in HMCTS. In response to the three bullet points that you set out at the end of your letter:

- Regrettably the judiciary is not currently in a position to collect data on unrepresented appellants. HMCTS collect data on a variety of matters relating to FTTIAC hearings and you can direct any enquiry to them. However, as I understand it, HMCTS does not collect data on those legacy appeals where the Appellant is unrepresented. As you are aware the majority of appeals now sit on the digital service reform journey (MyHMCTS). Appeals where an appellant is not represented proceed along a separate journey to those where a representative is on record.
- I am content for you to liaise directly with RJ Frantzis on suggestions and dialogue as to signposting and your proposal for a duty desk at hearing centres. It would be helpful if she is involved in any direct approaches to regional hearing centres to ensure relevant issues are fed back to me and to ensure any good practice is shared. One important point is that by the time an appellant comes to the hearing, the likelihood is that their appeal is to be heard on that day and such duty assistance would come very late in the day. As such, any input might be better directed far earlier in the process at a case management stage. Of course, any advice provided via a duty desk is regulated. I am aware that RJ Neil Fromm has been in discussions

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with BPP about the provision of such advice at Hatton Cross. At Taylor House, the local lead is Designated Judge Paul Shaerf who is also in discussions with BPP. In respect of signposting, ILPA are invited to liaise with the Home Office on an agreed form of wording for RJ Frantzis to consider alongside the other RJs.

- FtTIAC judges are experienced at ensuring fairness in challenging circumstances including unrepresented appellants running legally and factually dense appeals. By way of update, I propose to place a summary of your concerns before our FtTIAC Judges. Are you content for this to happen and do you wish to add to your letter of 8<sup>th</sup> April? Please can you liaise directly with RJ Frantzis on this.

I am aware that HMCTS have an existing forum for stakeholder engagement. Public engagement events focus on the experience of public users and seek insight from a range of stakeholders (predominantly from the user advice & support sector), enabling HMCTS to gain feedback and co-design changes to services, provide insight on service performance and identify where service improvements are needed. I understand the next of these meetings is scheduled to take place on 14<sup>th</sup> May.

The next meeting of the IAC's Improvement Group, chaired by RJ Roxanne Frantzis, is on 29<sup>th</sup> April. Please continue to use this forum to express your views and any concerns. This is a helpful high level stakeholder forum and the discussions are fed back to me directly.

Regarding the separate matter you raise concerning remote attendance at in-person hearings without prior notice, I have asked RJ Campbell to respond to you directly, as he has already been dealing with this issue. RJ Campbell is soon to retire and his replacement RJ Feeney is likely to also be involved.

All the best



**Judge Melanie Plimmer**  
**FtTIAC President**