Subject: Seeking your support to raise asylum support rates, and request for a meeting

Dear [Name of MP],

[Add a personal introduction. Explain who you are and what organisation you are from (if any), and mention any past contact you’ve had with your MP: e.g. I have lived in your constituency for three years/ I am a supporter of your party/ Thank you for your response to my earlier letter about refugee rights]

As you may be aware, people seeking asylum do not have permission to work in the UK. Unless they have their own savings – and many have used any resources they possess getting to safety – they are forced to rely on support provided by the Home Office. This consists of accommodation given on a no-choice basis and for a single adult, just £5.28 per day to cover food, clothing, toiletries, travel, communication and all other necessities. This is simply too low to cover anybody’s basic needs, forcing asylum seekers to live in poverty and isolation.

On the 16th July 2015, the Government introduced a new statutory instrument that reduced asylum support for all people seeking asylum to a single flat rate. This will substantially reduce the amount given to children seeking refugee protection. This is a devastating blow. The internationally recognised poverty threshold, or ‘poverty line’, is defined as living on less than 60% of the median UK household income. This decision means a couple with a child will soon be forced to live on just under £111 per week, 60% below the poverty threshold.

I ask you to write to the immigration minister outlining the UK’s moral duty to adequately support the small number of asylum seekers who do safely reach our shores and asking that the Government commit to increasing asylum support rates to 70% of income support.

I want to live in a society that treats those who’ve fled war, torture and persecution with dignity and respect. This is an issue that many MPs strongly support, with over 95 MPs signing an EDM on raising asylum support rates last year.

Providing an adequate rate of support is not just a moral issue; it also makes financial sense. For instance, access to a better diet helps people seeking asylum to stay healthy, and having sufficient funds to attend language classes and community centres improves mental wellbeing and tackles depression, thus reducing reliance on health services. Moreover, raising asylum support would better enable individuals to engage with their legal case and would make the process of asylum decision making more reliable and efficient. Roughly fifty percent of people who apply for asylum eventually get some form of leave to remain in the UK and become part of our communities. Surely it makes sense to have an asylum support system that helps them to integrate and use their skills while they await a decision on their case, meaning they are better equipped to be part of our society when granted status?

Thank you for your support on this matter. I would be grateful if you could please keep me informed of any action you take on this.
Optional: It is really effective to meet your MP face-to-face to discuss the issue. Why not ask for a meeting? If you do choose to request a meeting, your Regional Asylum Activism can help you prepare, so do get in touch! E.g. I would also like to take this opportunity to request a meeting to discuss this issue in more detail. Please can you give me an appointment to meet you at your surgery?

Kind regards,

[Your Signature]