



IMPACT EVALUATION

REPORT **2024**



Our Guiding Principle

He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata!

What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people!

www.asst.org.nz

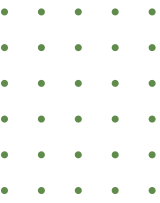
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Executive Summary

Point and Associates (Point) was commissioned by the Asylum Seekers Support Trust (ASST) to conduct an impact evaluation of its services. Funding for the evaluation was provided by the J.R. McKenzie Trust.

ASST provided Point with information as requested, including its contract for services, charitable grants received, services delivered, the organisation’s latest annual report and strategic plan. ASST identified Board members, key community stakeholders and three clients for Point to interview so we could learn more about the work the organisation does and the difference it makes in people’s lives. ASST also reviewed a questionnaire prepared by Point before ASST circulated it to all its clients for feedback. The feedback came directly to Point for analysis. The evaluation took place over October–November 2024.

ASST’s vision is for people seeking asylum to be welcomed in New Zealand, have their rights respected and the support they need to thrive.

As an organisation providing a comprehensive suite of essential services to people seeking asylum seekers in New Zealand, ASST is unique. The organisation provides

Key Services Provided



- **Housing** – a 16-bed hostel and three transitional family housing units are operated by ASST and other accommodation is sourced.
- Support from registered **social workers** and support workers who assess people’s needs and provide **practical assistance**.
- **Referral to settlement support** body (Red Cross Convention Navigator) as required once refugee status is granted.

The organisation takes a trauma-informed, needs based approach, where people’s most basic needs are met first – shelter, food, clothing and immediate health concerns – before attending to other needs, such as emotional and financial security. The range of support provided is based on an assessment of individual need.



High-Need Clients

At any one time, between

25% and 50%

of ASST’s clients have high needs—i.e., they have children, no housing, very limited funds and/or poor mental wellbeing.



Client Supported and Funding

ASST has nine staff supported by volunteers. Funding currently comes from a contract with MBIE and one-off philanthropic grants and donations.

In the 12 months through to October 2024, ASST supported 1,804 clients.



ASST's vision is for people seeking asylum to be welcomed in New Zealand, have their rights respected and the support they need to thrive.

The number of people claiming asylum in Aotearoa is growing. In the 2023-24 FY, the Refugee Support Unit (RSU) was expecting to receive 2,000 new claims.[1] The Unit is not resourced to meet the demand which means decision wait times are growing and will continue to grow for the foreseeable future.[2] We suggest this means the number of people seeking help from ASST is also likely to grow, but the amount of funding ASST receives year-on-year is not linked to change in the number of people they support.

[1] MBIE, 2024.

[2] Ibid.

Local legislation and UN obligations state that asylum seekers need to be kept safe from exploitation and poverty while their claims are heard.[1] This evaluation has shown that ASST plays a key role in ensuring these requirements and obligations are met. In the month of November 2024, for instance, 17 cases of homelessness amongst asylum seekers were resolved.[2]

[1] Fern et al, 2022, page 2.

[2] Personal communication, Dawit Arshak (ASST), 4 December 2024.



Clients with High Needs

For ASST, "high-need" clients are those with children, without housing, and/or poor mental wellbeing. Once those needs are met, it is made possible for ASST's clients to become self-sustaining so that they can get on with rebuilding their lives.

ASST sees that government officials working with asylum-seekers have a heavy workload and that their work can be difficult. ASST provides support where it can, by for instance providing advice and education.

Clients were interviewed for this evaluation and about 80% of the client survey respondents indicated that ASST has made a “huge” or “a lot” of difference in their lives. ASST helped them in the following ways:



Core Systems Navigation

navigate visa, social welfare, education, health and other core systems while they wait for a decision on their claim.



Housing and Work Visa Support

find accommodation and secure work visas, enabling asylum seekers to sustain themselves while awaiting their claims.



Fostering Belonging and Inclusion

find a sense of belonging and inclusion, helping ensure they build their own connections, support networks and friendships in the community.



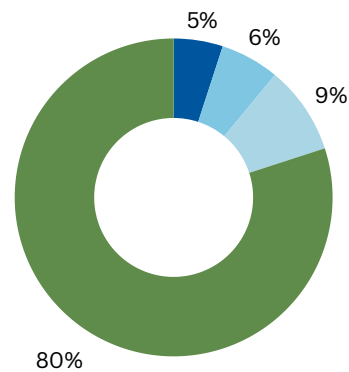
Rebuild their Lives.

Client Feedback on Asst Services

About 6% of the survey respondents said the organisation had made “a little bit of a difference” or was “not very helpful”. Another 5% of the respondents said ASST made “no difference” or had been “unhelpful”. These respondents suggested ways the organisation could be more effective. ASST already had changes underway that align with most of those suggestions. But in our view, some suggestions are driven by systemic issues out of ASST’s control, such as the cost and limited supply of housing. We also suggest that the extent of asylum seekers needs in Aotearoa outstrips the organisation’s capacity to respond (8 staff to 1,800 clients).

In our view, the results show ASST is a very important organisation delivering a much needed, and increasingly needed, service. Securing more sustainable funding will help retain and attract the staff needed to help protect asylum seekers from poverty and exploitation and rebuild their lives.

Client Feedback on ASST Services



- Huge or A lot of Difference
- No Difference or unhelpful
- Other/ Not Responded
- A little or not helpful

- “Huge” or “A Lot” of Difference: ~80% of respondents
- “A Little” or “Not Helpful”: ~6%
- “No Difference” or “Unhelpful”: ~5%

[1] Fern et al. 2022, page 2.
[2] Personal communication, Dawit Arshak (ASST), 4 December 2024.

Overview of the organisation



Asylum Seekers Support Trust's (ASST) vision is for people seeking asylum to be welcomed in New Zealand, have their rights respected and the support they need to thrive. There is limited specialist welfare support for asylum seekers in New Zealand, and as an organisation providing a comprehensive suite of essential services to people seeking asylum seekers in New Zealand, ASST is unique.



What ASST Does

ASST provides practical support according to the needs of each client. This includes



Housing

Housing - a 16-bed hostel and three transitional family housing units are operated by ASST and other accommodation is sourced.



Social Work and Practical Support

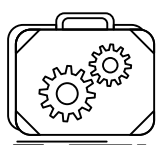
Support from registered social workers and support staff who assess people's needs and provide practical assistance.



Referral

Referral to settlement support body (Red Cross Convention Navigator) as required once refugee status is granted.

ASST also has an advocacy role, advocating on behalf of individuals and for changes that affect asylum seekers and convention refugees more generally. This is done by, for instance:



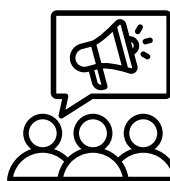
Advocacy and Case Progression

Advocating on behalf of individuals and families, by meeting with immigration officials, lawyers and others as required to help progress their case make sure their needs are met.



Advocacy for Equitable Treatment

Advocating to government and public service providers for equitable and compassionate treatment of all asylum seekers and convention refugee and Quota refugees in New Zealand.



Regional Advocacy and Collaboration

Participating as a member of the Asia and Pacific Refugee Rights Network, focused on seeking durable solutions for refugees in the Asia Pacific region.



Driving System and Policy Change

Collaborated work with the Refugee Alliance and Te Ohu Whakawhanaunga Tāmaki Makaurau, to drive system and policy change or improvement, ensuring better outcomes for asylum seekers in Aotearoa.

The organisation takes a trauma-informed, needs-based approach, where people’s most basic needs are met first – shelter, food, clothing and immediate health concerns – before attending to other needs, such as emotional and financial security. We do this by providing emergency housing, food parcels and other critical supports and practical assistance based on an assessment of individual need. ASST aims to provide a sense of community and belonging to all asylum seekers – it does not discriminate on any grounds.

Key to ASST’s work, aside from delivering it’s own specialist services, is connecting with other organisations to meet asylum seekers needs. The organisation is considered to have strong relationships with other organisations working in the area, such as Red Cross who provide pathways to employment, and Refugees as Survivors (RAS), who provided culturally-grounded mental wellbeing and other supports. The Government’s Refugee Services Unit (RSU), which is part of the Ministry of Business(MBIE), Innovation and Employment, is an important partner in ASST’s work. A person in a key role in the RSU said,

*... through that Casey Review[1] process and working so closely with our Welfare Advisor here as well as that it’s built a really positive reputation for ASST. They have increased, they’ve raised, their profile in a really positive way like we still know them as an advocacy organisation, but we also see them now as a support agency and kind of a partner. (RSU - MBIE)
I feel like our welfare worker definitely [now] has less urgent calls and we have a real partnership there where we know we can get, you know, support through ASST rather than needing to have weekend and midnight emergency calls on this end. (RSU - MBIE)*

[1] In June 2021 INZ commissioned an independent review by Victoria Casey KC. The review assessed the operational practices relating to the restriction of freedom of movement, including the detention of people claiming asylum. The recommendations from the review focused on: 1) the inappropriateness of the use of Police and Corrections facilities to detain asylum seekers; 2) the need for better guidance on the systems and processes INZ staff use when considering the potential detention of asylum seekers; and 3) the need to review INZ processes and legislation to ensure they are consistent with New Zealand’s human rights obligations.

Sourced from: Refugees and asylum seekers | Immigration New Zealand

Asylum Seekers Support Trust Resources and Outputs



Organisational Overview

ASST has **nine full-time** staff and **four part-time** staff, including a General Manager, finance and administration staff, a Client Services Manager, social workers, and support workers. The organisation is governed by a Board that meets **10 times** a year. Volunteers are taken on and trained as required. These roles and the work they do are funded by piecing together a contract with MBIE and one-off philanthropic grants and donations.

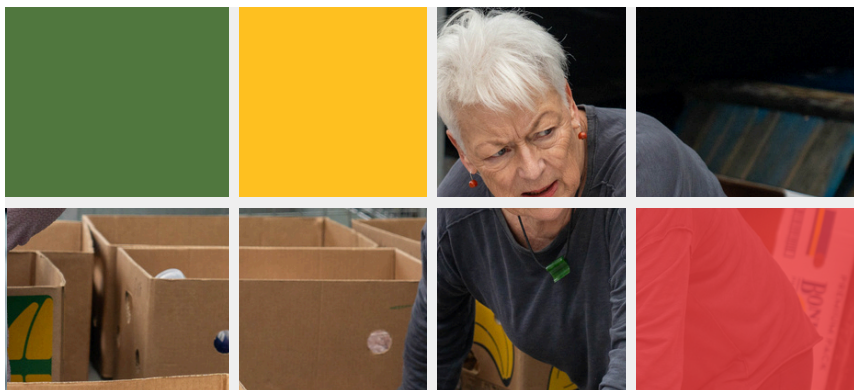
Funding Breakdown

From **1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025**, ASST received **\$922,750** of income to run the organisation. More than half of this is from MBIE for ASST to deliver specialised social work support and run and maintain its accommodation facilities. The remaining income is mainly from philanthropic grants and donations and rent from its ASST hostel and housing tenants.

Source	Amount
MBIE Contract	\$500,000
Philanthropic Grants	\$249,000
Rent from Tenants	\$120,000

Clients Supported

In the **12 months** through to October 2024, ASST supported **1,804 clients**.



November 2024 Actions

In the month of November 2024, **142** new client referrals were received (new referrals do not come with funding attached). In total **2,474 recorded actions** were taken to support ASST's clients during that month. Some examples are:

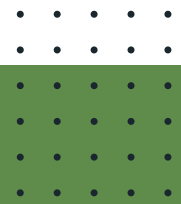


Activity	Number
Food boxes issued	601
Other actions (advocacy, information)	353
Community engagement events	282
WINZ liaison and applications	276
Immigration support actions	205
Material aid distributions	102
Clients helped address homelessness	21
Cases of resolved homelessness	17

Highlighting Impacts For a Month

- Homelessness: ASST addressed homelessness for **21** clients, resolving issues for **17** of them.
- Food and Material Aid: Distributed **601** food boxes and **102** material aid packages.
- Advocacy and Support: Provided **353** other actions, including regular client check-ins and information dissemination.

How the Asylum-seeking process works



Asylum Seeker Trends in Aotearoa

Over the last decade, New Zealand has received 649 claims for refugee status or protection on average each year. An average of 195 of those claimants were granted refugee status annually.[1] The remainder either withdrew their claim, were deported or were granted permission to remain in the country to challenge the decision.

[1] Fern et al., 2022, page 5

Asylum Application Process and Entitlements

The Refugee Status Unit (RSU) is responsible for processing claims for refugee status and protection. Currently an asylum seeker could expect to wait about twelve months for a new claim to be considered [2], although the RSU has recently received additional resourcing and has put measures in place to improve the efficiency of claims processing.[3] There is a backlog of claims to be cleared, but the Unit is not expecting this backlog to grow nor an increase in waiting times.

In the 2023-24 FY, the RSU received 2,345 new claims for refugee status and protection, which was about 3 times more than in the 2022-23 FY (780 new claims).[4] Each claim is considered on its own merits in accordance with Immigration law and New Zealand's international obligations under the United Nations conventions.[5]

Averages over the last 10 years:



Approval rate: 30%

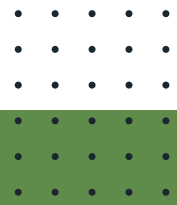
Decisions in 2023-24 FY



Approval rate: 20.5%

[1] MBIE, 2024.
 [2] Personal communication, Dawit Arshak (ASST), 6 December 20204.
 [3] About 400 of these claims are from asylum seekers, i.e., from people who have already arrived in New Zealand. New Zealand Immigration, 2024.
 [4] MBIE, 2024.
 [5] Personal communication, Dawit Arshak (ASST), 6 December 20204.
 [6] Ibid.

TARIQ'S STORY



Tariq was the CEO of a large organization in his home country. He didn't want to leave his job and his country and his family didn't want to leave either but the situation was so bad they felt they had no choice.



They arrived in New Zealand with a one-year visitor's visa. But they felt lost. They didn't know anyone or anything. They had enough money to stay in a motel and pay their way for a while but had no income. Tariq got to know the people running the motel after a few weeks, and he explained their situation and that they need help. Life needed to get back to normal, they were running out of money and he didn't know what to do. They suggested he get in touch with Asylum Seekers Support Trust so he called them and within a day got a call back from someone who asked Tariq to come in for a chat and fill out some forms.

ASST helped Tariq's family start getting things back to normal. ASST advised they first needed to get a place to live because that would mean they could then enrol their children in the local school.

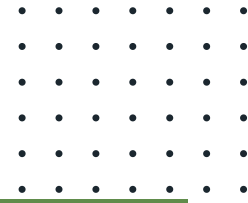
Tariq and his wife didn't know how to rent a house in New Zealand so ASST explained the process. They soon found a house but the local school wouldn't accept their children so ASST informed the school the children had a right to education and that the school was obligated to enrol them. Two days later, the children were enrolled, had uniforms and were going to school.

ASST then helped Tariq get a work visa, apply for support payments through WINZ and get furniture, utensils and other essentials for their house.

Once he was settled in place, he started giving back by delivering food packs and giving business advice to people in the refugee and new migrants community. While Tariq was busy with that, people from ASST took his wife out for coffee and introduced her to people.

Tariq and his family are now in the process of becoming permanent residents. **He thinks without ASST help they may have ended up living on the streets** because living in the motel was quickly draining their funds and he couldn't see a way out. Connecting with ASST changed everything. He feels ASST welcomed them with "open hearts" and had a solution for almost every problem. But he also sees ASST is limited by the resources they have available so he wants to help them when he opens his new business, which he will be able to do when he becomes a permanent resident. While they have left people they love back home, he feels they have gained new family here in Aotearoa.

The Needs ASST Meets



An asylum seeker is a person is seeking protection from serious persecution and human rights violations in another country but who has not yet been legally recognized as a refugee. Seeking asylum is a human right. In the past financial year, over 2,000 people sought protection as refugees in New Zealand, many with no resources at their disposal. Legislation and UN obligations provide for asylum seekers to be safe from exploitation and poverty while their claims are heard.[1] This evaluation has shown that ASST plays a key role in ensuring these requirements and obligations are met.

[1] Fern et al, 2022, page 2.

While some asylum seekers arrive in New Zealand highly-trained, with financial resources, contacts and make a strong start here,[1] between 25% and 50% of people supported by ASST arrive in the country with very little or nothing.[2] The latter can face great difficulty finding housing and employment. Furthermore, while their immigration status is uncertain, they are vulnerable to homelessness, exploitation and poverty. It is not unusual for asylum seekers to walk for hours to get to an interview, meeting or hearing having eaten nothing that day because they cannot afford to eat and take public transport.[3]

Ferns et al (2022) report there is a significant gap between quota refugees and asylum seekers/quota refugees, in that asylum seekers have access to less government-funded entitlements and supports. They note that asylum seekers/convention refugees can experience significant barriers in accessing the same entitlements and supports available to quota refugees. As described below, unless an asylum seeker already has a visa to live and/or work in New Zealand, they may be reliant on community-based organisations for shelter and support until a determination on their case is made. If an asylum seeker’s claim for refugee status is rejected, government supports they were entitled to expire. ASST advocates to government to have this imbalance addressed. ASST also highlights to government the need for:



Clear information

Clear pathways and access to information and support services, including housing and other necessities.



Right to seek asylum

The fundamental right of individuals to seek asylum and the importance of protecting this right.

Challenge	Description
Homelessness	Vulnerable to homelessness due to lack of resources and legal uncertainties.
Exploitation	At risk of exploitation without proper work rights or legal protections.
Poverty	Unable to afford basic necessities, often walking hours to appointments.
Barriers to Support	Limited government-funded entitlements compared to quota refugees.

[1] Fern et al, 2022, page 2.

[1] Ibid, page 3.

[1] Personal communication with Dawit Arshak of ASST, 29 November 2024.

[1] Personal communication with Dawit Arshak of ASST, 29 November 2024.

As described below, preparing a claim for asylum can take several months and the applicant is not entitled to government supports until a letter confirming their claim has been issued. Unless an asylum seeker already has a visa to live and/or work in New Zealand, they may be left with nothing, reliant on community-based organisations such as ASST for shelter and support. If an asylum seeker's claim for refugee status is rejected, government supports they were entitled to may expire, again deepening the reliance of those without a visa on community-based organisations.



Interviewees for this evaluation noted there is a gap between what policies and legislation say the rights and entitlements of asylum seekers are, and what staff at the front-line of many public services think they are. Asylum seekers are often turned away from supports and services they are entitled to. ASST understands government staff need to have specialist knowledge and that it can be difficult work and supports government staff with training and education on asylum seekers' needs and entitlements.

Service logic model



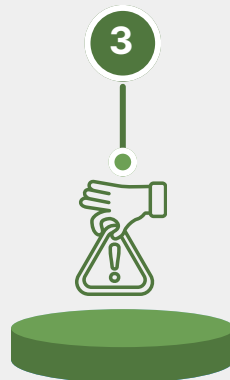
Issues Being Addressed

Persecution and human rights violations.
Lack of resources (money, contacts, language skills).
Risk of homelessness, poverty, and exploitation.
Misunderstood rights by service providers.



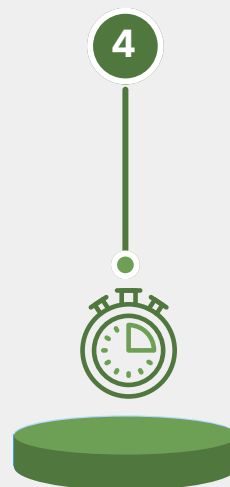
Needs

Housing.
Income and material goods.
Medical and health care.
Language and cultural support.
Understanding visa processes.
Psycho-social support.



ASST Interventions

Housing and advocacy.
Community-based advocacy.
Social support and events.
Food boxes and workshops.



Short-Term Outcomes

Housing secured.
Material needs met.
Applications resolved.
Income and health needs addressed.
Children in school.
Sense of belonging.



Vision

People seeking asylum are welcomed.
Rights respected.
Support provided to thrive.



Yusuf and Mariam's story



Before Yusuf and Mariam left Afghanistan with their children, Yusuf worked as a teacher and Mariam was a Clinical Psychologist. They had a family home, good jobs and family living nearby but things were becoming too dangerous for them so they decided to flee. Yusuf arrived in New Zealand first to try to find somewhere to live but he had very little money. He managed to agree a longer-term deal on a motel room.



Every morning, I went out. I used to go out and find people, asking them for help. I was alone and didn't know anyone. One day, I met a person who provided me with food and gave me some cash. It wasn't a lot, but for me, it was significant because it helped me during a very difficult time. I was extremely worried about my family coming, and the situation was not good.

The person who gave Yusuf food and money also introduced him to a lawyer that could help him prepare an application for refugee status. The lawyer helped them get legal aid for their refugee status application. This legal support was crucial for their stability. Meanwhile, Yusuf searched online to see if there was somewhere he could get additional help. We were running out of money." He found ASST and filled in the online form.

"The next day he received a call. But Yusuf and Mariam were anxious; "Were these people actually who they said they were? Will they really help us?" They did not follow-up on the call from ASST, but ASST followed up with them reassuring they wanted to help. Yusuf and Mariam only had another day left on the rental of the motel room. "After that we were, you know, homeless so we decided to get in touch."
I don't have words to explain that time. She told me you people will be never homeless. Today's your last day. Spend your last night at the motel then straight away come to our office. You know when we arrive, when we reach ASST they brought us here to the family unit and they actually gave our kids a big present. Those small gifts gave them very much happiness. My kids, after such a long period of stress, their eyes twinkled with happiness they were so so happy.

Since that first day, Yusuf said there has been continuous support from ASST, including food parcels, accessing health care, and organizing activities for the children such as visits to the museum and zoo. Yusuf and Mariam have found ASST to be trustworthy and reliable and are extremely grateful for their continued support and kindness.
They check in to see how's your health? How's your mental situation? Do you have food? Do you need this? Do you need that? Especially when you having kids. Without prying" Then they quickly respond to requests and provide essential support without interference."

They highly recommend ASST to other families in need. They now have refugee status and say the organisation has made a huge impact on their family's well-being and stability.

Support Planning

ASST is currently taking on about **100-140** clients a month. They may come to ASST on the advice of lawyers, existing clients, other agencies or by finding ASST on the internet. Most clients are men who have left their family back home although recently there have been more families seeking asylum.

To qualify for ASST's support, the person must have a letter from MBIE recognising confirmation of their claim for asylum. An ASST worker will meet with the client to understand their support needs and tailor the support it provides – tailored support is of utmost importance.



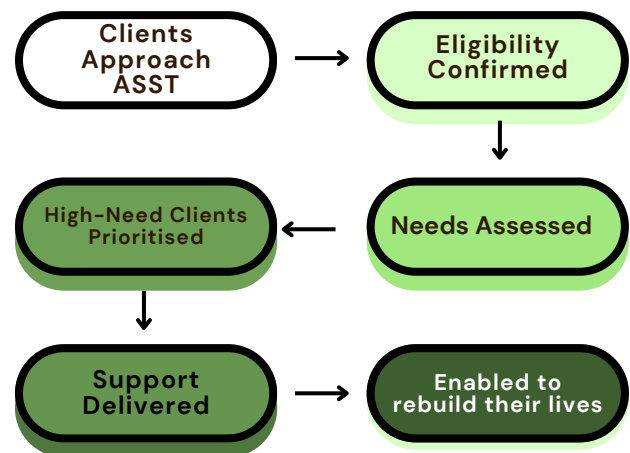
Prioritising ASST's Support

For ASST, high-need clients are those with children, without housing and/or poor mental wellbeing. At any one time, between 25% and 50% have these needs. The priority is ensuring these clients have somewhere to live, clothing and food because once those needs are met, other issues become easier to resolve. This helps people become more self-sustaining so that they may get on with rebuilding their lives.

Housing Support

Single adults and couples are housed in the hostel and families in the units. Clients may also be temporarily housed in private homes owned by individuals and organisations connected into ASST's network of partner agencies and supporters. Client's housing needs may need to be met by ASST for quite some time, especially those who are not entitled to work and families. It is "so, so hard" to find suitable housing for families given the shortage and cost of housing. "If they weren't here, they would have nothing. They would have no means to any sort of shelter" (ASST Client Service Manager).

SUPPORT PROCESS



ASST's priority is making sure asylum seekers have shelter, food and clothing. Once these basic needs are taken care of other issues become easier to resolve.

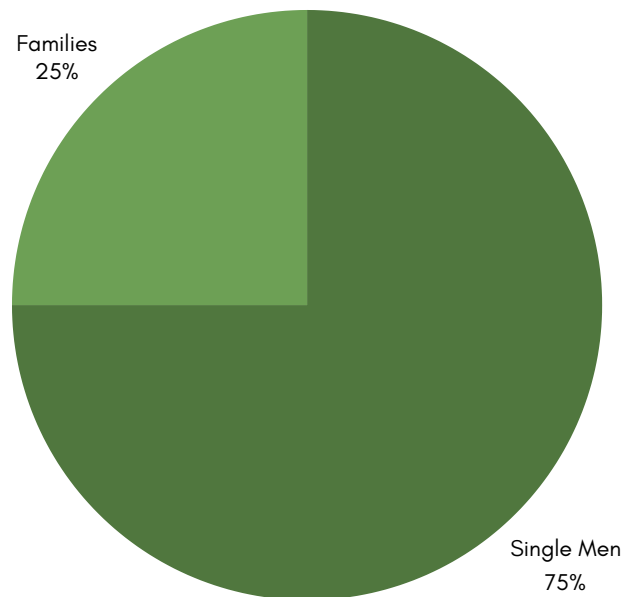
Securing visa status, income or right to work

ASST finds that many people do not understand the asylum seeking process nor how to apply for a work visa and benefit payments. Hundreds people per year are helped with this; some applicants are declined support and benefits due to staff not understanding asylum-seekers rights. Many asylum-seekers do not have the language to ask the questions they want to ask of officials, understand what they're being told, or explain themselves. Therefore, individualised advocacy and support is essential and ASST provides WINZ local branches and head-office with education support.

A growing problem with applications for asylum is that lawyers available to support asylum seekers are "so overrun that there's not a lot of time for them to explain things" (ASST Client Service Manager). This leaves asylum seekers with less knowledge and support than they would have had in the past. ASST does not give immigration advice or prepare asylum applications for clients, but the lack of availability of lawyers to fully brief and support applicants means the amount of work ASST is doing in this space is growing.

Without a recognised right to be in the country or work-visa, asylum seekers have no income. If applicants are refused visa status, "they have no access to anything ... no benefit, no entitlement to work, no nothing. It has a knock on effect" (ASST Client Service Manager). Until and if asylum seekers can work, once they have received of their claim for asylum, they may be entitled to apply for a benefit payment. ASST helps people make sure they are on the right benefit given their circumstance, such as if they have children or not, if they are single or married, and so on.

Client Demographics



Supporting asylum seekers to rebuild their lives

Housing, visas and income are ASST's priorities and clients have more or less need for support in those areas. Once those matters are addressed, ASST helps those in need of support in other areas. "More that kind of self-actualization, that kind of that community connectedness belonging ... empowering clients and like giving them the tools and the power to make decisions for themselves". (ASST Client Service Manager). This may involve helping clients access English classes, get enrolled with a GP and find affordable health care, get kids into school, meet other people, and so on. Asylum seekers sometimes need to be shown how to do these things, and sometimes it involves educating service providers about asylum-seekers rights and entitlements.

The support team ensures clients have somewhere to live, good health, food, clothing, an income and sufficient English ability so they can support and make decisions for themselves. For some clients, this takes longer than others, especially if there are complications with their claim for refugee status or visa.

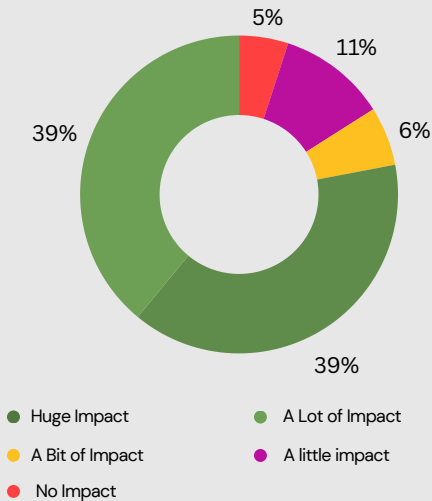
Client feedback about ASST's impact

Point and Associates developed a survey to assess the difference ASST made for its clients. The survey questions were based on ASST's service lines. ASST emailed a link to the survey to all clients on its database, informing them that responses would be anonymous. The invitation was sent to 1,804 people and 222 responded – a response rate of 12%.

222

Responses Received

Client Feedback



Overall impact

The chart shows 39% of respondents reported that ASST has made a “huge” overall difference to their lives, another 38% reported it had made “a lot” of difference, 11% reported it made “a bit” of a difference and 6% reported it had made “a little” difference. 5% reported that ASST had made no difference.

Amongst those that reported ASST made a difference, most noted that ASST helped them in many different ways, highlighting the importance of the organisation's wrap-around, individualised support:

“ Their workers helped me a lot to integrate naturally into the new environment providing all relevant information that I need. ASST recommended me good and affordable lawyers. When I was granted a refugee status, they helped me to get a work visa and they were supporting me till I got the Permanent Residency. My language skills are not very strong, and I can't have specialized conversations. Others have spoken with my case manager, doctor, and others to help solve my issue. ”

The organisation's vision states they aim for asylum seekers to “to be welcomed in New Zealand, have their rights respected and the support they need to thrive”. Those who reported the organisation had a huge impact implied the organisation made them feel this way, even though the wider social system did not:

“ Without their presence I would feel myself abandoned, but with all their love and care I finally found a new home away from home. ASST, with help of my lawyer and Amnesty International NZ, helped me to get out of prison and have a phone and access to internet. It was so important to me that I was able in less than a week to get evidence that was super helpful to win my case. I was more than 3 years at the prison, without any access to internet or phone call and for that reason I was unable to get any evidence to make my case. Make my life miserable and without my rights to prove my case. ”

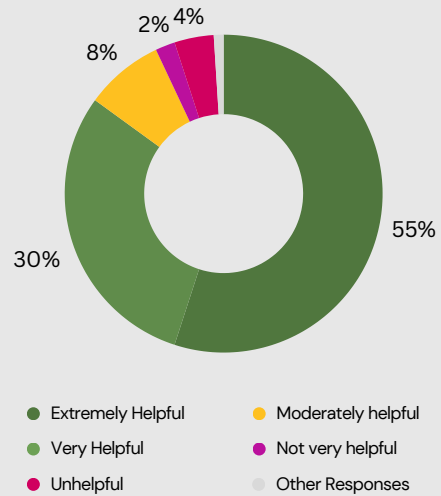
As implied in the quote immediately above, a few respondents noted how hopeless they felt trying to navigate and improve their situation alone without the support of others:

“As my husband deserted us in this unknown place with no help. I was so unsure where to go and what to do. Going back to his country was also not possible. In such a situation they [ASST] take the initiative to make my kids and my life secure in this country.”

Preparing an application for a visa

It was in preparing an application for a visa where most respondents said ASST had made the most difference. More than half the respondents (56%) said ASST was “extremely helpful” with this, and 30% said it was “very helpful”.

Respondents' Feedback
on ASST's Visa Application Assistance



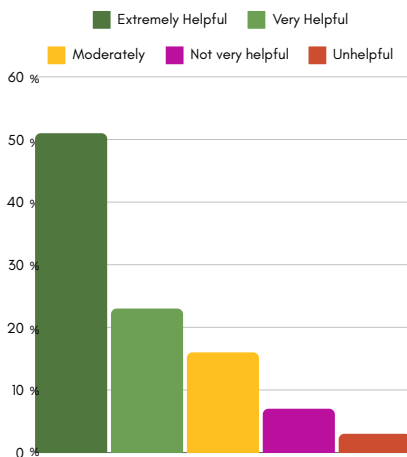
“ASST staff members are always helping me efficiently when it comes to the explanation of a certain law or regulation that I don't understand.”

“From helping us navigate complex paperwork to connecting us with essential resources, your guidance has been a lifeline. Each step of the way, you've helped us feel more secure and hopeful about building a life here.”

Accessing health care or counselling services

Just under half of respondents (51%) said ASST was extremely helpful when they needed to access health care or counselling services. A further 23% said they were very helpful when they need this.

Respondents' Feedback
on ASST's Healthcare and Counselling Assistance



“They helped us access healthcare, and ensured we had secure housing. Beyond meeting our basic needs, ASST offered ongoing emotional support, making us feel welcome and cared for during a difficult time.”

“They helped us find a safe place to live, guided us through paperwork, and made sure we could get healthcare when we needed it. But more than just helping with practical things, they made us feel welcomed and cared for, even when we missed our family back home. Their support made it possible for us to feel safe and hopeful about starting a new life here.”

Accessing housing

Forty-three percent of respondents said ASST was extremely helpful, and another 23% said it was very helpful when it came to accessing housing. Housing has been mentioned in many of the quotes above and a few more that describe how ASST has been helpful in this area are included below.

“ ASST staff members are always helping me efficiently when it comes to the explanation of a certain law or regulation that I don't understand. ”

“ From helping us navigate complex paperwork to connecting us with essential resources, your guidance has been a lifeline. Each step of the way, you've helped us feel more secure and hopeful about building a life here. ”

In this service area, 10% of respondents said the ASST was “unhelpful”. As implied in the following quotes, the root causes may lie in the organisation's limited capacity to help (8 support staff) and wider systemic issues, such as housing cost and supply.

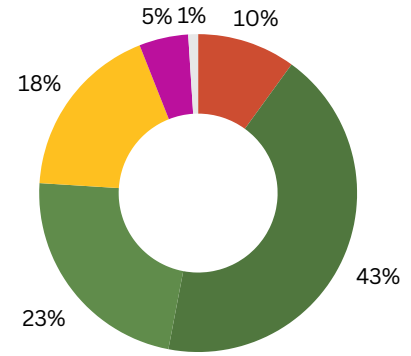
“ I could never get housing with any of the help(?) provided when I needed it most upon arrival. I need better housing and work to reduce the burden of living . My child and I need mental treatment. ”

A further issue is that for some tenants, the units are reported to be in poor condition and the cost of the accommodation is high.

“ The hygienic conditions of the units are terrible. Neither housing nor ASST pays attention to this. The rent of the units is high about 80% of families' benefits goes toward rent and not enough money is left for daily expenses. ”

Respondents' Feedback

on ASST's Housing Assistance



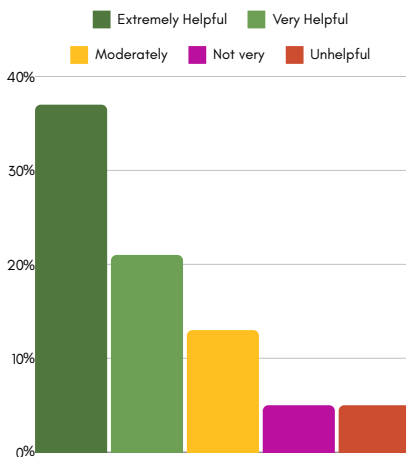
Accessing education

More than a third (37%) of respondents said ASST was extremely helpful when it came to accessing education. Another 21% said it was very helpful. Of those survey respondents who explained how ASST had been helpful in this area, it was in most often relation to English classes.

Some respondents spoke about how ASST often helps with children's schooling because school leaders often do not understand that asylum seekers are entitled to education until Year-13. They noted that their children can initially be worried about starting school in a new country, but ASST supports families through this, by offering emotional support and helping familiarise children and parents with how schools work in New Zealand.

Respondents' Feedback

on ASST's Education Assistance



“ They help me to get house, to learn English (English class), clothes for my baby and me. Just helpfully 😊 ”

Accessing social welfare payments

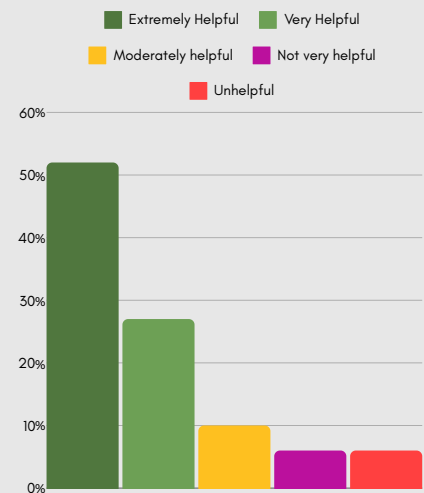
Just over half (52%) of respondents said ASST was extremely helpful when it came to accessing social welfare payments and another quarter (27%) said it was very helpful. The explanations as to how ASST was helpful were similar to those given for applying for a visa – helping understand entitlements, language and complete the forms. Six percent said ASST were not helpful in this area.

“

They helped me fill out the form because due to my level of English it was quite complicated. Helped me to renew my working visa, to get emergency benefits, to apply for IRD number

”

Respondents' Feedback
on ASST's Social Welfare Payments Assistance



Gaining employment

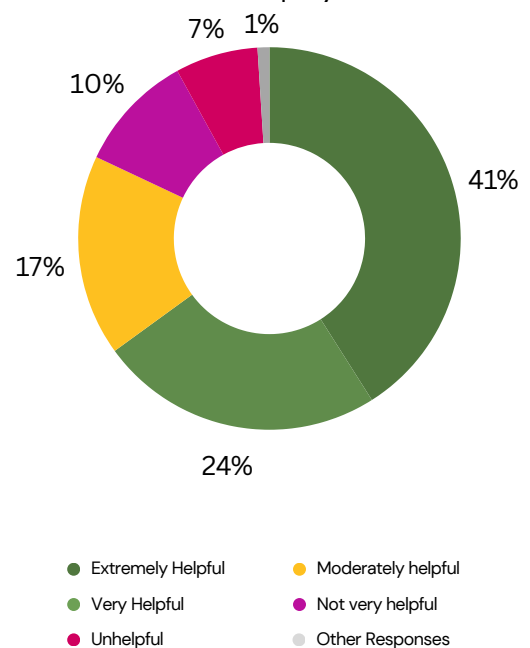
Forty-one percent of respondents said ASST was extremely helpful when it came to gaining employment and another 24% said it was very helpful. Most explanations indicate ASST's help with applying for a work visa, although a few indicated that ASST also helped find relevant work opportunities.

“

Helped to have better job opportunities relative my fields to work. I have got helps many times from ASST when I apply for a work visa. I really appreciate that.

”

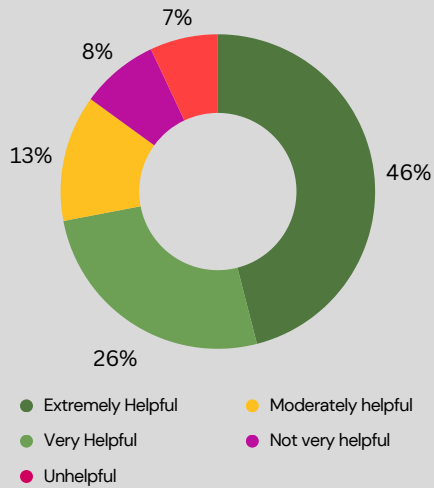
Respondents' Feedback
on ASST's Employment Assistance



Food, clothing or household furniture

When it came to accessing food, clothing or furniture, 47% said ASST was extremely helpful and another 26% said it was very helpful.

Respondents' Feedback
on ASST's Food, Clothing, and Furniture Assistance

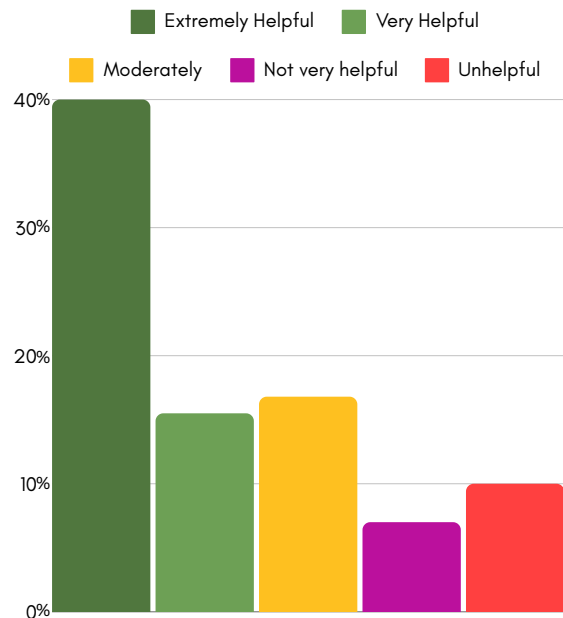


“
Providing heating assistance during the cold season. She gave me baby bed, baby stroller, bath tub, oil, voucher and some clothes for my child. She helped me.”

Respondents' Feedback
on ASST's Small Loan Fund

Getting a loan

ASST has a fund that clients can apply to if they need a small loan to pay for goods and services. When the fund is exhausted, applications are not taken and as borrowed money is paid back the fund is reopened to applications. This was the service that most respondents said is “not relevant” (43%). Of those who said it was relevant, 40% said it was extremely helpful and another 15 said it was very helpful.



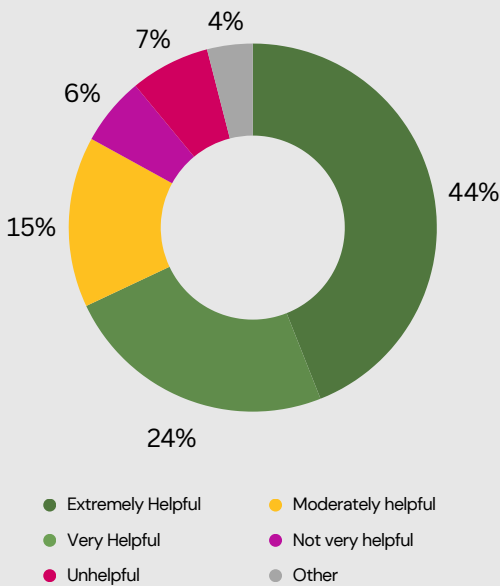
“
Help with Loan for the lawyer to proper the visa applications I was struggling to pay the court fee for my case with the Tribunal but ASST helped me by giving me the loan to pay the same After a got visa you guys help me to buy a car. It was amazing and extremely helpful.”

Meeting people or making friends

Forty-four percent of respondents said ASST was extremely helpful when it came to meeting people or making friends. Another 24% said it was very helpful in this way.

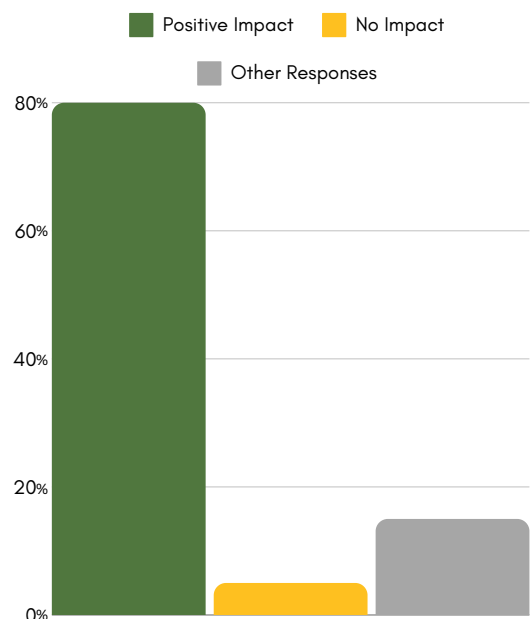


Respondents' Feedback
on ASST's Support for Meeting People or Making Friends



“I could never get housing with any of the help(?) provided when I needed it most upon arrival. I need better housing and work to reduce the burden of living. My child and I need mental treatment. They don't like attend phone call. When they go to hostel they have no time for us and also ignore us. Had approached ASST multiple times however no one ever helped me with anything. I literally begged them and explained my situation in detail yet I am homeless without food & shelter.”

ASST's Impact on Clients



Potential improvements

As noted, 5% of the survey respondents said ASST made no difference. These respondents reported that ASST was not able to meet their needs and suggested ways the organisation could be more effective.

Some interviewees noted it would be beneficial for the organisation to:



Establish processes for feedback from community members on the suitability and effectiveness of ASST's services



Raise Government and sector awareness about the importance of the Asylum Seekers Support Trust and its impact on the community to garner more support and resources.



Strengthen the collaboration between community leaders and ASST to enhance support for asylum seekers.



Conclusion

The Asylum Seekers Support Trust plays a key role in ensuring that Aotearoa New Zealand meets its obligations to protect the welfare of asylum-seekers. It is the only organisation in the country that provides specialised, wrap-around support to the community.

In the current financial year, ASST is budgeting for an income of just over \$900,000 to serve 1,804 clients. At any one time, between 25%-50% of those clients will need a lot of support. The organisation's funding is minimal, piece-meal, short-term in nature and fragile - it is dependent on commissioners and funders deciding to continue to support the organisation

The interviewees and about 80% of the survey respondents indicated that ASST has made a "huge" or "a lot" difference in their lives. ASST has evidently helped asylum seekers:



Navigate visa, social welfare, health and other core systems while they wait for a decision on their claim.



Find accommodation and secure work visas, enabling asylum seekers to sustain themselves while awaiting their claims



Find a sense of belonging and inclusion, helping ensure they build their own connections, support networks and friendships in the community



Rebuild their lives.

ASST sees that government officials working with asylum-seekers have a heavy work-load and that their work can be difficult. The organisation also sees that staff in the Refugee Support Unit and in other parts of government, such as WINZ, need specialist knowledge. ASST provides support where it can be, for instance, providing advice and education.



It is ASST policy to see evidence that a person is a legitimate asylum seeker before providing them with support. For some asylum seekers, the month-to-six-weeks they have to wait to get a confirmation of claim letter from the RSU is extremely difficult. Some of this evaluation's interviewees and survey respondents said they were homeless, or on the verge of being homeless, before getting ASST's help. Others had very little money and limited or no access to other forms of support.

Asylum seekers in these circumstances are amongst ASST's "high need clients". ASST focuses on securing their basic needs, i.e., accommodation, food and clothing. Once these needs are met other issues become easier to resolve. Between 25% and 50% of ASST's clients at any one time are high need.

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In our view, the results show ASST is an important organisation delivering a much needed, and increasingly needed, service. The results also show there are opportunities for the organisation to make improvements, which ASST is aware of and has built into its development plans. Securing more sustainable funding will help retain and attract the staff needed to achieve continued success.



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