

Welcome to the Asylum Support Partnership Newsletter, a bi-monthly update on asylum support policy and practice changes.

## Government Policy, Reports and Changes in the Asylum System

### Draft Simplification Bill published

The UK Border Agency's Simplification project was set up to take forward the public commitment made in the 2006 to review the immigration system and radically simplify immigration law. On 12 November 2009 the UKBA published a draft Immigration Bill. This Bill is intended to:

- replace current immigration acts;
- make it easier for the UKBA to make immigration decisions and enforce the law; and
- help migrants understand their position in the United Kingdom.

Alongside the draft bill itself, the UKBA have also published other documents including:

- a narrative document which explains how the changes in the bill will simplify of the immigration system,
- a draft impact assessment estimating the bill's economic impact
- a draft equality impact assessment summarising the bill's equality effects
- a rules framework - this outlines the UKBA's thinking on the reform of the Immigration Rules and guidance, and is being issued for consultation
- draft protection rules - these demonstrate how the UKBA see protection working under the proposed new laws.

You can download these documents by following the link below:

<http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/managingborders/simplifying>

### Government announces changes to returns policy to Zimbabwe

The Government published a Ministerial statement on 29th October outlining their intention to make changes over time to their returns policy to Zimbabwe in order to "reflect developments in Zimbabwe following the formation of the Inclusive Government led by Prime Minister Tsvangirai."

The Government also announced changes to the delivery of the enhanced Assisted Voluntary Return package for Zimbabweans. Instead of providing extra 'in kind' assistance for business set-up, cash payments will now be phased in over a six-month period. The aim, according to UKBA, is that this will "support economic reform in Zimbabwe, enabling people to return voluntarily and use their skills to support change and help rebuild Zimbabwe with capital behind them". The scheme is being extended until 31 December 2009, after which the continued need for an enhanced package will be reviewed.

Alongside these changes the UKBA is working towards resuming enforced returns to Zimbabwe progressively as and when the political situation develops.

More information is available at:

<http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/newsarticles/2009/october/returns-to-zimbabwe>

The **Asylum Support Partnership** consists of five agencies funded by the Home Office to deliver advice services to asylum seekers.

For further updates on the Partnership agencies work please visit the following websites:



[www.refugee-action.org.uk](http://www.refugee-action.org.uk)



[www.refugee.org.uk](http://www.refugee.org.uk)



[www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)



[www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk)



[www.welshrefugeecouncil.org](http://www.welshrefugeecouncil.org)

ASPT is a partnership project hosted by the British Refugee Council.

The British Refugee Council (commonly called the Refugee Council) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales, (No. 2727514) and a registered charity (No. 101445776)

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## Government Policy, Reports and Changes in the Asylum System

**Government introduces guidance on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children**

On 2 November a statutory children's duty, section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009, came into force. It requires the UKBA and its contractors to ensure that they deliver immigration, asylum, nationality and customs functions while safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The duty doesn't create any new functions, however it does require the UKBA to take appropriate steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out existing functions. Section 55 is intended to have the same effect as section 11 of the Children Act 2004 which places a similar duty on a range of other public bodies. It therefore puts the UKBA on a similar footing to those organisations, and helps to support more effective interagency working. The Code of Practice for the UKBA on 'Keeping Children Safe from Harm' has been superseded by this new duty.

The UKBA must act according to the following principles:

- Every child matters even if they are subject to immigration control.
- The best interests of the child will be a primary consideration (although not necessarily the only consideration) when making decisions affecting children.
- Ethnic identity, language, religion, faith, gender and disability are taken into account when working with a child and their family.
- Children should be consulted and the wishes and feelings of children taken into account wherever

practicable when decisions affecting them are made, even though it will not always be possible to reach decisions with which the child will agree.

- Children should have their applications dealt with in a timely way and that minimises the uncertainty that they may experience.

For more information please go to:

[www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/policyandlaw/legislation/bci-act1/](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/policyandlaw/legislation/bci-act1/)

**New Operational Guidance Note on Sudan**

UKBA published a new Operational Guidance Note on Sudan on the 2nd November. They now accept that, at present, non-Arab Dafuris cannot internally relocate to Khartoum, and that all qualify for asylum, unless they fall within the exclusion clauses.

Please go to:

[www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/policyandlaw/countryspecificasylumpolicyogns/](http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/policyandlaw/countryspecificasylumpolicyogns/)

**Change to further submissions and initial in-country asylum applications**

From 14 October further submissions - where someone whose appeal rights have been exhausted asks to have their claim re-examined owing to a change in their circumstances - will now have to be made in person rather than by post. Refused asylum seekers who claimed asylum before 5 March 2007, and whose case is being managed by the Case Resolution

directorate, are required to make any further submissions by appointment and in person at Liverpool Further Submissions Unit. Failed asylum seekers who claimed asylum on or after 5 March 2007 are required to make any further submissions in person at a specified reporting centre in their region.

In addition to these changes, it is no longer possible for initial in country asylum applications to be made in Liverpool. All applications must be made in person at the Croydon ASU. Please go to the UKBA website for more information and advice: <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/asylum/outcomes/unsuccessfulapplications/further-submissions/>

**Case Resolution Directorate Update**

At the end of September 2009, the Case Resolution Directorate (CRD) had resolved over 220,000 cases. This is an increase of 22,500 since the end of July. Of the 220,000 conclusions, over 66% were either removals or 'other' conclusions such as erroneous or duplicate records, while 34% were grants. The CRD remains on track to resolve the asylum backlog by summer 2011. The last four months have seen an increased focus on the more complex cases and CRD have now concluded over 59,500 supported cases.

CRD were asked by the Home Secretary to consider whether it was possible to clear the backlog earlier than summer 2011. In response to this CRD has now recruited an additional 350 temporary staff and they have revised their operating model to ensure that it is more streamlined and efficient.

## News from the Asylum Support Partnership Agencies

**Scottish Refugee Council publish new research on Section 4 support**

New research by Scottish Refugee Council, released last month, has revealed that large numbers of asylum seekers in Scotland are surviving with no cash for years at a time, and for the wrong reasons. The research focused on over 1000 people on Section 4 support – a lifeline package comprising of accommodation and vouchers worth £35 a week and valid only in a few approved shops - provided to asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute. Intended to be a short-term measure for people whose initial asylum claim had been

refused, it is being used to support people for as long as four years. Scottish Refugee Council figures indicate of 330 people on Section 4 support, 39 per cent had been on Section 4 for over two years, and 16 per cent for three years or more. According to the report, 53% of clients on Section 4 had claims that were still active – and were either going through judicial review or had fresh evidence to support their case to stay in Scotland. Scottish Refugee Council is now calling for all asylum seekers to be given cash support until they are given status in the UK or returned to their country of origin.

Please read the full report at:

[http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/pub/Section\\_Four](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/pub/Section_Four)

**Refugee Council briefing on the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act**

The Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 introduced significant changes which affect refugees applying for naturalisation: once these sections are brought finally into law, planned for July 2011, most people will have a qualifying period of eight years (up from 5) before they can apply for citizenship. If they do some voluntary work, known as 'active citizenship', then this period of time will be reduced to six years.

Refugee Council opposed these changes as they believe a person recognised as a refugee by the UK should receive permanent residence from the time they receive refugee status, so that they can rebuild their lives. Refugees should not be forced to endure the uncertainty of an extended period of temporary leave before they can become British citizens.

For more information on the Refugee Council response to the Bill, please go to: [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)

**Refugee Action, Portsmouth supports local arts project**

Refugee Action has been contributing to a local arts project in Portsmouth called LOCUS, for which they secured Arts Council funding. Launched on 2nd October and run by community artist Ania Bas and photographer Les Monaghan, LOCUS consists of a series of weekly workshops specifically for refugees and asylum seekers exploring a variety of different materials and styles.

LOCUS is held on Fridays at the Friendship Centre and is proving to be very popular with those who attend. For more information please go to: <http://locusproject.blogspot.com/>

**Asylum Support Partnership update client advice leaflet on Domestic Violence**

The Asylum Support Partnership has recently updated its leaflet on Domestic Violence. Translations of the leaflet are now available on the Refugee Council multilingual site at: <http://languages.refugeecouncil.org.uk/english/index.htm>

**Report of the Refugee Council and France Terre d'Asile joint fact-finding mission to Calais**

As a result of Refugee Council concerns about migrants in Calais, their exceptionally poor living conditions, and the lack of access to protection for refugees in the area, they conducted a fact-finding mission to Calais in partnership with the French NGO, France Terre d'Asile. The Refugee Council produced a joint report which contained the findings from the visit, as well as recommendations for solutions that they believe are required at UK, French and EU levels to ensure that refugees are identified and protected in Calais. They suggest that "the UK authorities should acknowledge that migrants in the Calais area are not all 'illegal', and that an unknown proportion are indeed refugees with a right to protection under international law." The Refugee Council feels that the recommendations are especially pertinent given the recent closure by the French authorities of one of the camps. To read the full report please go to: <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy/position/2009/calais.htm>

## News from the Asylum Support Partnership Agencies

**Scottish Refugee Council  
Financial Literacy project**

Scottish Refugee Council has begun a new Financial Literacy Project which aims to reduce financial exclusion among refugees by helping to develop financial skills and providing an understanding of available financial options and avoidable risks. Workshops are free and cover topics like budgeting and borrowing money, insurance and more specialised areas like starting up a business. For more information contact Edwin Finlayson on 0141 223 7971 or email [edwin.finlayson@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:edwin.finlayson@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk)

**Update on the Scottish  
Refugee Council Conference**

Scottish Refugee Council held its annual autumn conference, "Asylum in Scotland: the year ahead" in Glasgow on Friday 23 October 2009. The day gave practitioners, policy makers, asylum seekers, refugees and others delegates the chance to discuss recent and proposed changes to the UK system. It also examined the likely impact of the forthcoming General Election on the asylum system in the UK, while recognising the influence of the devolved settlement on politics. Speakers included Bill Brandon of UK Border Agency; Donna Covey of the Refugee Council, a speaker from a refugee background, Professor Heaven Crawley of the Centre for Migration Policy Research and Scottish writer and media commentator Gerry Hassan. Afternoon workshops discussed areas such as women's health, the Section 4 in Scotland research findings and the active review.

**Bristol Refugee Action  
integrate the services offered  
to clients**

Bristol Refugee Action felt that in order to provide the most efficient and streamlined possible service they should integrate the services that they offer to clients. As such the Refugee Integration & Employment Service (RIES) has been integrated with the One Stop Service (OSS) timetables, service provision, rotas & mechanisms.

This means that all Bristol Refugee Action OSS caseworkers are skilled and qualified to advise RIES clients and act as Case Managers for that service. As well as enabling clients to access RIES advice and support at any time this continues to greatly increase the skills, knowledge, capacity and scope of OSS staff.

For more information on this change please email Elinor Harris, manager of Refugee Action in Bristol at: [elinorh@refugee-action.org.uk](mailto:elinorh@refugee-action.org.uk)

**Glasgow-based Move-On  
response team win diversity  
and equality award**

Through consultation and in partnership with UKBA, HRMC, Scottish Refugee Council and Glasgow City's Refugee Support Team, the Move on Response Team was created with the remit to provide a tailored and unified service for Glasgow's refugee customers.

Through effective partnership working, the team facilitates access to DWP benefits, child benefit, tax credits and housing benefit while guiding and supporting the customer through their journey. The highly

trained and dedicated team of advisers and support staff provide advice on employment, educational, residential and domestic issues ranging from CV production, job submissions and English classes to housing and health provision.

The team's hard work was recognised at the recent 2009 Diversity and Equality Awards when they won for the individual or team who has demonstrated exemplary improvement across the board in equality and diversity. The full story can be found at:

[http://www.diversityandequalityawards.co.uk/?page\\_id=560](http://www.diversityandequalityawards.co.uk/?page_id=560)

**Refugee Action and Lucky  
Voice launch sponsored  
karaoke marathon for charity**

The first ever non-stop sponsored karaoke marathon was organised by Refugee Action, and a range of other charities and was hosted by Lucky Voice in Islington, London, and Brighton. Singers were aiming to raise a total of £50,000 for charities including Refugee Action, Just for Kids Law, Asthma UK, Youth Music, Serenity Foundation, Scene and Heard, Food Chain, Children of the Andes and others. Esme Peach, who organised the Charoike Marathon event for Refugee Action, said: "Whether its a love of X-Factor or singing in a local choir, we Brits certainly love a singsong. And karaoke is such a popular pass-time up and down the country that I thought why not give one of the nation's favourite activities a charitable twist?"

For more information, please visit <http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/Charoike>.

## News from the Refugee Sector

**Research published on Refugees living in Wales**

A new report by Heaven Crawley and Tina Crimes for the Centre for Migration Policy Research at the University of Swansea has been published entitled 'Refugees living in Wales: A survey of skills, experiences and barriers to inclusion'. The researchers interviewed 123 refugees on their skills, qualifications, language abilities, access to housing, education and the labour market. It also asked for their experiences of the communities they live in. The study found at least a quarter of refugees had a degree gained in their own country. However the group as a whole still experienced high levels of unemployment and under-employment.

The report can be found at:

<http://www.swansea.ac.uk/media/Media,41709,en.pdf>

**Medical experts conclude that immigration detention damages children's mental and physical health**

A pilot study by Ann Loreck on 'The mental and physical health difficulties of children held within a British immigration detention centre' has been published in the International Journal - Child Abuse and Neglect. The study conducted of 24 children detained at Yarl's Wood detention centre found that 73% of the children had significant emotional and behavioural problems since being detained. The authors of the study said that as there was "no clear evidence to indicate that detention is necessary in order to prevent families from absconding, more humane alternatives to current practice must be explored."

A joint press release by BID, The Children's Society and The Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund on the study supported the evidence and called for more research to be carried out. The press release can be found at:

<http://www.biduk.org/pdf/press/Evidence%20summary%20medical%20report%20%20final.pdf>

**Paul Getty Junior Charitable Trust re-opens for applications (England)**

The Trust has re-opened for grant applications and will make grants of up to £250,000 in the areas of social welfare, arts and heritage. The Trust seeks to support projects including: improving the prospects of young people, refugees and asylum seekers and integrating different social and ethnic groups. The Trust will usually only support registered charities in England, although applications may sometimes be considered from other parts of the UK if the project is of nationwide significance. For more information see:

[www.jpgettytrust.org.uk/index.html](http://www.jpgettytrust.org.uk/index.html)

**Mentoring and Befriending Foundation publishes research**

The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation has published a series of research summaries on the positive impact of mentoring and befriending within different sectors, including one on asylum seekers and refugees.

To read this report please go to: <http://www.mandbf.org.uk/resources/research/>

**Mind publish two reports on Mental health provision for refugees and asylum seekers**

Mind developed a refugee and asylum-seeker mental health advocacy project to build a better understanding of the mental health concerns of refugees and asylum-seekers in England and to improve their ability to find pathways to appropriate mental health support.

Recently Mind has published two reports of their findings:

- A civilised society - mental health provision for refugees and asylum-seekers in England and Wales
- Improving mental health support for refugee communities an advocacy approach

The first report found that restrictive policies on healthcare, education, accommodation, welfare support and employment are functioning to socially exclude and marginalise refugees and asylum-seekers, both exacerbating existing mental health problems and causing mental distress. The second report advocates for improved engagement between PCTs and refugee community organisations (RCOs) in order to develop more accessible, culturally appropriate services.

For more information please go to:

<http://www.mind.org.uk/>

**City of Sanctuary film released**

This recently released short film tells the story of the City of Sanctuary movement, and showcases some of the wonderful stories of friendship and hospitality between people seeking sanctuary and local communities.

You can watch the film online at:

[www.cityofsanctuary.com/film](http://www.cityofsanctuary.com/film)

## Events and Training

**Centre for Mobilities Research, Lancaster University: 'Forced Migration and Mobilities Research'**

Friday 4th December

This workshop seeks to contribute to ongoing efforts to expand the social-theoretical basis of forced migration studies and cosmopolitan outlook of mobilities research by encouraging a dialogue between both bodies of research. For more information please go to:

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/centres/cemore/event/2977/>

**University of Glasgow – 'Migration, Refugee and Asylum Networking Event'**

4th December, 10.00-16.00

The University of Glasgow is hosting a 1 day workshop which aims to bring together researchers who have/are/plan to work on issues relating in any way to Migration, Refugees or Asylum and to establish common concerns and areas for future collaboration as well as to consider pressing issues, exchange of good practice and stories of successful partnerships. If you are interested in taking part in this event please contact Taulant Guma at:

[Taulant.guma@googlemail.com](mailto:Taulant.guma@googlemail.com)

**ICAR - 'Gathering Evidence Effectively'**

School of Social Sciences, City University, London

8th December 2009, 4-5.30pm

The training will focus on: Finding evidence about asylum seekers, refugees or migrants to put into funding proposals, developing policy papers or research proposals when faced with a lack of time and resources. Led by experienced researchers Julie Gibbs and Gabriela Quevedo from the ICAR team, this seminar will show you where to find key information and how to access it. For more information - Telephone: 0207 040 4596 E-mail:

[icar@city.ac.uk](mailto:icar@city.ac.uk) Web: <http://www.icar.org.uk>

**Scottish Refugee Council – 'AGM and Public Meeting'**

5th January (2-4pm), Glasgow City Chambers, Glasgow

Scottish Refugee Council will be holding its AGM on January 5th which will be followed by civic hospitality. Scottish Refugee Council has attracted two excellent speakers in Roland Schilling, recently appointed as UNHCR's (UN Refugee Agency) permanent representative to the UK, and Professor Alan Miller, the chair of the Scottish Human Rights Commission. They will discuss asylum as a human right from both an international and a Scottish perspective. If you would like to attend please seek further information from Graeme Corbett either by email [graeme.corbett@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:graeme.corbett@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk). or on (0141) 223 7930

**Refugee Council's annual conference - 'From theory to practice: How asylum policy impacts on the refugee experience'**

5th February 2010 in Bloomsbury, London.

The conference focuses on asylum policy and how changes in legislation impact on the experiences of refugees. The conference will also discuss which policies the sector should be campaigning for over the next 12 months. On the day delegates will participate in two workshops from a choice of seven, on topics such as health, asylum support, detention and unaccompanied children. For more information and to download a booking form please go to: [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/eventsandtraining/conferences/](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/eventsandtraining/conferences/)

**Asylum Support Appeals Project – 'Support Options for Asylum Seekers'**

Leicester and Nottingham – Feb '10

If you are interested in attending either of these training courses, which outline what the support options are for asylum seekers then please contact Tom on 020 8686 1888 or [office@asaproject.org.uk](mailto:office@asaproject.org.uk) for more information.