

IAP NEWS

No 66

The newsletter for the Inter-Agency Partnership July 2007.

Welcome to the July edition of IAP News. This edition features: Integration Loan Information, Changes to Section 55 team, New Asylum Model update, Zimbabwe case update.

asylum
support
programme

INTEGRATION LOANS

The Border and Immigration Agency (BIA) has introduced a loan scheme which came into action on the 12th June. This loan is available to people over 18 years of age who are classified as refugees and people who have been granted humanitarian protection and their dependents, such as their children. The loan is given to help with purchasing goods and services which will aid people's integration into the UK.

The loans will be interest free and the BIA has stated that the repayment terms will be 'gentle', and start six weeks after the loan is given. (For example for those already on benefits, £3 a week will be deducted). Examples of what the loans are intended for are things such as:

- Deposits for accommodation
- Purchasing tools for a specific trade
- Necessary items for the home
- Vocational training that a person cannot receive through Jobcentre Plus
- Travel cards to get to work and interviews
- Other costs but *not* general living expenses

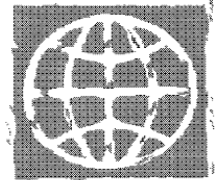
The Home Office have also stated that;

"There is a possibility that certain individuals will be eligible to apply for both a back payment and an integration loan. There is a slight overlap between the two schemes as those who receive their notification on or after **12 June** are entitled to apply for a loan. As part of the loan consideration process the Border and Immigration Agency is obliged to take into account the financial position of each applicant. Individuals should therefore inform BIA if they have applied for and subsequently received a back payment before BIA consider their loan application."

The loans available are between £100 to £1000 and will be paid into a persons' bank account. Alternatively they can be paid in cheque form if they are under £450, and can be cashed at a specific Post Office. The loan is given by, and to be paid back to, the Dept. of Work and Pensions.

For an application form please phone the Integration Loan Team at BIA on 0208 196 5440, and for more information visit the link below:

<http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/lawandpolicy/refugeeintegration/integrationloan>



**MIGRANT
HELPLINE**



NAM UPDATE

All new asylum applications are being processed under the New Asylum Model (NAM). The IAP and the Inter-agency Co-ordination Team (ICT), has noted instances where the implementation of the new procedures is presenting difficulties for asylum seekers.

Many of our concerns relate to the follow issues:

- o Speed of the process
- o The difficulties faced in accessing legal advice & medical care
- o Insufficient information to understand the system before undergoing the substantive interview
- o Travel costs for reporting

In response BIA is considering issuing guidance to case-owners on the need to be flexible in timetabling interviews. The key group for these discussions was the NAM external stakeholders group. However this has now been disbanded pending the creation of a new forum.

This new forum will be called the National Asylum Stakeholder Forum, and will meet for the first time on July 12th. ICT are keen to ensure that the new forum provides opportunities to fully discuss the impact of NAM, hears representations from appropriate agencies, and holds regional sub-group meetings.

Changes to Section 55 team

Since 2002 the Borders and Immigration Agency have had a Section 55 Interview and Subsistence Only Processing Team which worked within the Asylum Routing and Accommodation Unit in Croydon. However this work is to be fully regionalised.

- o From the 18th June the region teams will handle subsistence only support applications
- o From 2nd July they will manage Section 55 interviews too.
- o This means that the Section 55 team will close from 29th June. If you have any queries on specific client cases after this then they should be directed to your regional team.

Zimbabwe update

On the 6th March 2007 a judgment was given by the Court of Appeal on a recent Zimbabwe case known as AA. The judgment allowed the person to appeal against the decision that they could be safely returned to Zimbabwe, and the case was returned to the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal (AIT) to reconsider.

At the time it was felt by the Court of Appeal that the Tribunal had not taken into account the evidence stating that some organisations, have acted violently towards a person who has been forcibly removed from the UK back to Zimbabwe. This could be a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights, (Article 3) and on these grounds and others the case was returned.

However in May the AIT decided that a different case, ('HS [Zimbabwe]') would be heard instead, thus replacing the first one as the new Zimbabwe Country Guidance case. The Refugee Legal Centre say that "The reason is to avoid arguments about the scope of the hearing in [the first case]...and to be able to deal fully with recent developments in Zimbabwe. The hearing has been listed for the week commencing 23 July 2007. The appeal will deal with refugee status and article 3 and consider [the] risk of ill-treatment and humanitarian conditions and what deterioration has occurred since last summer."

The impact on asylum support is that people can now contact a solicitor and if they have grounds for fresh claims on the back of this case, they would be eligible for S4 support until the fresh claim was decided. In wider terms this means that Zimbabwean refused asylum seekers are currently not being forcibly removed.

BULLETIN BOARD

The **Still Human Still Here** campaign is dedicated to highlighting the plight of tens of thousands of refused asylum seekers who are being forced into abject poverty in an attempt to drive them out of the country. Supporters of the campaign believe that the denial of any means of subsistence to refused asylum seekers as a matter of government policy is both inhumane and ineffective.

They are calling on the Government to:

- End the threat and use of destitution as a tool of Government policy against refused asylum seekers
- Continue financial support and accommodation to refused asylum seekers as provided during the asylum process and grant permission to work until such a time as they have left the UK or have been granted leave to remain
- Continue to provide full access to health care and education throughout the same period

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

Updated leaflets for women asylum seekers

In January 2006 the Refugee Women's Resource Project at Asylum Aid circulated new leaflets for women asylum seekers.

These leaflets have now been updated to explain the New Asylum Model (on page 2).

The leaflets are intended for women asylum seekers who are at the beginning of the asylum claim process as they explain the Home Office policy for determining women's asylum claims. The Home Office has them displayed at their Asylum Screening Units and members of the Inter Agency Partnership have been using them in induction packs and displaying them in waiting areas.

The new versions are available in a dozen languages for free download at www.asylumaid.org.uk (via the link on the right of the screen headed *Women's rights in relation to asylum claims: leaflets and CD*).

Paper copies are available from women@asylumaid.org.uk

The Refugees into Teaching Conference

The Refugees into Teaching (RiT) project recently ran its summer conference, entitled Coming Full Circle: re-training and re-employing refugee teachers, on the 22 June. The event took place during Refugee Week, and was held in London's Living Room at City Hall, hosted by the Greater London Authority (GLA). It was very well attended, with over 60 delegates from a variety of areas, including teachers, Local Authority representatives and voluntary sector organisations.

The conference aimed to encourage dialogue between those responsible for selection and recruitment decisions and those seeking to become fully qualified teachers. It explored issues surrounding diversity in the school workforce and links to individual pupil achievement as well as drawing on lessons learnt from employing refugees in the National Health Service.

Speakers included Mike Watkins, assistant Director of Initial Teacher Training at the Training and Development Agency for schools (TDA) and Donna Covey, Refugee Council Chief Executive.

For more information on the project please visit the RiT website at

www.refugeesintoteaching.org.uk

ICT Request for Research on Impact of Asylum Policies

The ICT would be interested to know of any work you have underway, or recently completed, to collect evidence on the impact of asylum policies. It would be very helpful for us to have copies of your findings and information on how these have been received by policy makers. Please forward these to;

ICT@refugeecouncil.org.uk

Please send articles that you would like to appear in the August edition of IAP News to:

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Closing date for submissions is Monday 23rd July.