

RCO News

Newsletter from the Community Development Team

The government's Five-year Asylum Strategy - an update

In February 2005, the Government announced its asylum strategy for the next five years.¹ Recent discussions with the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) reveal that the new strategy will have far reaching implications for the way in which asylum claims are processed in the future.

The two most significant areas for refugees and asylum seekers are the proposed new approach to **settlement** and a new, much more closely managed model for **managing asylum applications**. Many of the measures proposed are operational and procedural and therefore, do not require legislation and can be implemented as soon as the Government is ready.

Settlement

The most significant and worrying change contained within the strategy is the intention to invoke the 1951 Refugee Convention cessation clause, which allows ending a person's refugee status "because the circumstances in connection with which he has been recognised as a refugee have ceased to exist."

In future, refugee status will be granted for only five years. After this period, there will be an active review of whether that person is still entitled to refugee status and a right of appeal if status is to be removed. Furthermore, refugee status will be separated from settlement (ILR). Refugees will only be entitled to settle if they pass an English and UK society knowledge test. Those who fail the test will only receive a further temporary leave to remain.

Humanitarian Protection (HP) will also be brought into line, being granted for five years instead of three, as is presently the case. Two slight improvements for HP will be that



World Wide House of Hope: Antenatal Advice and Health Awareness Workshop

recipients will acquire full family reunion rights immediately on receiving HP and the "reasons for travel" test for Certificates of Identity (Home Office travel documents) will be dropped.

No date has currently been put on these proposed changes but it is estimated that they will come into force in two to three months.

New Asylum Model

The strategy also proposes a new approach to asylum claims, which will have significant implications for all new asylum applicants. This new approach will define whether cases are put into a fast track or other standard procedure and will also affect the type of accommodation (detention, closely managed accommodation or dispersed accommodation) and reporting requirements. These decisions will be made by a multi-functional team.

Other aspects of this system include end to end 'ownership' of cases by a single Home Office caseworker. Caseworkers will develop case management plans for each claimant and will be responsible for all aspects of the case from arrival to either integration or removal. There

Continued on next page

¹ See RCO News, issue 20, *The Government's five-year asylum strategy* March 2005.



Continued from front page

will be more face to face contact with people and decisions will be delivered in person. Failure to comply with any requirement will lead to a termination of support.

Fast tracking will increase and support arrangements will be tied to managing the processing of applicants' asylum claims.

Accommodation and reporting will be tightly managed. If applicants do not attend a reporting centre when required, NASS will end their support payments through the ARC card.

These changes will be introduced gradually between March and June 2005. The whole New Model will be fully functioning by September 2006.

Free Media Training Sessions and Free Media Help-line before and during Refugee Week 2005

The Refugee Week National Team are running a number of media training sessions in various cities across the country leading up to and during Refugee Week 2005. The purpose of these sessions is to help events organisers - primarily from refugee community organisations - to effectively promote their events during Refugee Week 2005, as well as to provide them with advice and basic skills on how to deal with media and journalists. These sessions are recommended to those with limited or no experience of working with media. They will explore various ways of reaching local newspapers, radio and television, and how to deal with journalists before and on the day

of the events. Please contact Refugee Week at 020 7346 6752 or info@refugeeweek.org.uk if you are interested in attending any of the following sessions:

Manchester – 11th May

Newcastle – 14th May

London – 23rd May

Norwich – 27th May

Refugee Week National Team have also set up a Free Media Help-line, running until the end of June 2005. Please contact Terry Williams on 07946 343055 or Email: Williams.t5@blueyonder.co.uk

From persecution to destitution

Most asylum seekers are genuinely fleeing persecution and come to the UK to seek asylum. But new restrictions by the Government on legal aid have made it much more difficult for asylum seekers to get a full and fair hearing of their case, resulting in their fear of persecution being taken as unfounded.

Under Section 4 of the 2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act, failed asylum seekers will have state support withdrawn unless they agree to sign up to return home voluntarily. Many failed asylum seekers choose to remain in the UK and 'disappear'. Denied work or any state support, they face a life of destitution.

Harsh new government legislation threatens to further marginalise asylum seekers. Failed asylum seeking families – until now, supported under the Children Act – will face destitution if they do not agree to return home. Even those who cannot be returned

because it is unsafe are being left in a kind of limbo, banned from working yet unable to access benefits.

"At the root of the problem is an asylum system which still fails those who need it. Initial decision-making on asylum claims is so poor that in 2004, around one in five appeals against initial decisions were successful," declared Tim Finch, the director of communications at the Refugee Council.¹

"People would have much greater faith in the asylum system if they could be sure claims are dealt with fully and fairly and have had adequate access to good quality legal advice. The overwhelming impression among asylum seekers and those who support them is that the main aim of the system seems not to be to provide protection, but to drive down numbers," said Tim Finch.

¹ The Guardian, April 6, 2005: "The Refugee Council's Tim Finch discusses asylum"

Sharing Experience

Worldwide House of Hope (WHH)

Worldwide House of Hope is a voluntary group founded in 1999 by members of the African French speaking community in the UK. The organisation stems from the French speaking African community church based in Croydon. When the church was set up, it was found that the members of the community were facing many problems including language barriers, health problems, and lack of information on welfare entitlement, immigration and integration issues. Many people had arrived without parents or relatives and lacked community structure.

The organisation works towards the alleviation of deprivation and distress within the community as well as raising awareness of rights and entitlements to enable asylum seekers and refugees from the organisation's target community to settle and integrate effectively into society.

WHH secured funding from a range of funders, including the prominent BBC Children in Need fund, and the Tudor Trust fund. WHH has delivered a wide range of services, including outreach, training, supplementary classes for children, organising workshops and seminars and networking as

well as advice, information, advocacy, counselling, health and drug awareness programmes and social events.

The organisation has benefited from the help and support provided by organisations such as the Refuge Council through its Community Development Team and the Croydon Council for Voluntary Sector. It has also joined a network of community organisations and agencies with which it works in the provision of services.

WHH was nominated to participate in the African Organisation Development Project for two years. During this period, the organisation made great progress in achieving organisational and development skills.

The WHH's strategy for the future aims at retaining its current services and activities, regularly reviewing and updating them and make them suitable to meet the needs of the target community.

Contact details:

Worldwide House of Hope - Moya Bi Ngwesa,
Croydon House, 1 Peall Road Unit 205,
Croydon CRO 3EX
Tel: 020 8296 0105, Fax: 020 8664 9712,
Email: moya@wwhoh.org.uk

Funding News

Plans for Awards for All England grants of up to £10,000

Awards for All England's participating Lottery distributors (Arts Council England, Big Lottery Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund and Sport England) have agreed to raise the funding ceiling on the small grant programme from £5,000 to £10,000 from early 2006.

In anticipation of the increase, the distributors have boosted their contributions to the programme for the financial year 1 April 2005 to 31 March 2006 to £56.3 million – an increase of 50 per cent compared with the current year.

In the period leading up to the increase to £10,000, Awards for All will be developing and

putting in place enhanced systems for the bigger scheme, which will ensure its quick turn-around and customer friendly approach is underpinned. *NB: This announcement and timetable apply to England only.*

Mike Wilkins, Director of Awards for All England declared: "The increase to an upper ceiling of £10,000 is great news for those applying for smaller amounts of Lottery funds. As well as preparing for the integration of the programme into Big Lottery Fund, we are also busy planning and testing the necessary changes to our business processes and IT systems to take account of the higher ceiling, whilst ensuring that the programme remains accessible and maintains its rapid turnaround."





The Community Development Team's new telephone numbers

Due to office relocation, there has been a change of telephone numbers for all staff at the Refugee Council. The new telephone numbers for CDT staff are:

Alicia Zavala	Team Manager	020 7346 1159	alicia.zavala@refugeecouncil.org.uk
Calvin Armstrong	Partnership Devpt Mgr	020 7346 1162	calvin.armstrong@refugeecouncil.org.uk
Elaheh Rambarzini	Community Development Worker (Women)	020 7346 1160	elaheh.rambarzini@refugeecouncil.org.uk
Girma Afley	Finance and Business Planning Development Worker	020 7346 1161	girma.afley@refugeecouncil.org.uk
Ezechias Ngendahayo	Fundraising and Sustainable Development Worker	020 7346 1163	ezechias.ngendahayo@refugeecouncil.org.uk
	General email address		cdt@refugeecouncil.org.uk
	General fax number		020 7737 3306

Breaking News on the New SORP 2005

Finally, after a long period of consultation, the Charity Commission has revised, updated and published its new Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP). The Accounting Standard Board's policy and code of practice require the Commission to undertake an annual review of SORP. The review was carried out in conjunction with an advisory group, the charity SORP committee. The changes in this new version will affect all charities including RCOs in their accounts and annual report preparations.

What is SORP and SoFA?

SORP provides guidance to charities in the United Kingdom on the preparation of accruals accounts in charities and trustees' annual reports. The Charity Commission also provides guidance on the Statements of Financial Activities (SoFA) that deals with the preparation of receipts and payment accounts by smaller non-company charities. The Charity Commission for England and Wales prepare SORP and SoFA.

In general, the main changes in SORP 2005 are:

- on the clarification of purpose and scope of SORP;

- recommendations for the interpretation of new financial reporting standards; and
- more explanation – use of table for information presentation as primary and related notes and expanded glossary of important terms used.

Some of the more specific changes in SORP 2005 include trustees' annual report, SoFA, expenditure categories and income recognition, disclosure notes and explanations, exemption to smaller charities and advice on new situations.

The revised edition of SORP 2005 was published in March 2005 and it applies to accounting years commencing on or after **1st April 2005**.

For further information and to obtain copies of SORP 2005 you can visit the Charity Commission's website (www.charitycommission.gov.uk). RCOs that don't have access to the internet can contact Girma Afley, the CDT's Community Development Worker – Finance & Business planning on 020 7346 1161 or Email: girma.afley@refugeecouncil.org.uk

Ready Steady Start Organisational Development Course

Free course for new and small voluntary and community organisations.

The course will cover the following themes:

Tuesday 14th June 2005: Setting up a sustainable organisation

Wednesday 15th June 2005: Governance

Tuesday 21st June 2005: Project Development

Wednesday 22nd June 2005:

New to fundraising

For further information and an application form contact: **Jessica Luong on 020 7700 8118 or sat@lvsc.org.uk**

Closing date for completed applications: 26th May 2005.

