

IAP NEWS

No 63

The newsletter for the Inter-Agency Partnership ??? 2005.

Welcome to the November edition of IAP News. This edition features: reports into destitution, update on New Asylum Model, NASS support figures for September, quarter 3 asylum stats, report into conditions at Harmondsworth

TWO REPORTS HIGHLIGHT DESTITUTION AMONGST FAILED ASYLUM SEEKERS

According to reports released by Amnesty International UK and Refugee Action the government's policy on refused asylum seekers does not work and is forcing thousands into abject poverty.

The findings, contained in an Amnesty International report on London and a Refugee Action report on another nine cities, reveals the suffering caused by an inhumane and ineffective government policy that cuts off support for refused asylum seekers. The policy, said the two organisations, is leading to a new wave of widespread destitution.

Financial support and accommodation for asylum seekers is cut off 21 days after a final claim for asylum has been refused. Section 4 "hard case" support makes vouchers and hostel accommodation available to those who meet one or more specific criteria. These include signing up for the government's Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VAARP), having a serious medical reason preventing immediate departure from the UK, or there being no voluntary travel route back to their country. At the end of June 2006, 6,145 applicants were in receipt of Section 4 support. The remainder of the refused asylum-seeking population is destitute. The National Audit Office recently estimated the backlog of refused asylum seekers at between 155,000 and 283,500.

The reports note that the government is deliberately using destitution in an attempt to drive refused asylum seekers out of the country. But the research found that, far from encouraging asylum seekers to return to their countries of origin, destitution made return less likely.

Refugee Action's report *The Destitution Trap* is the first in-depth, national survey of destitution among asylum seekers. Researchers conducted 125 interviews with

refused asylum seekers who were deliberately excluded from support, or the means to support themselves, as a matter of government policy. Interviews took place in nine UK cities (the regions covered by Refugee Action) with the majority in the Midlands (39%), just under a third (29%) in the North West (Liverpool and Manchester), just under a fifth (23%) in the South West, and the remaining 8% in the South East of England. 91 (72 per cent) were men and 33 (27 per cent) were women, reflecting the proportions of male and female asylum seekers nationally.

Refugee Action and Amnesty International are calling for the government to:

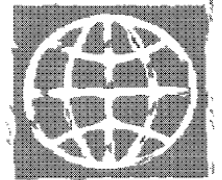
- ◆ Ensure that refused asylum seekers remain on the same financial support and accommodation as during the asylum process until their situation is resolved
- ◆ Grant temporary, renewable permission to stay in the country that allows refused asylum seekers, who cannot safely be returned to their countries of origin within six months, to stay in the UK, to work and to access medical care
- ◆ End the long-term limbo of refused asylum seekers still in the UK after several years, by granting them permission to stay in the country, as well as the right to work, to claim benefits and access medical care
- ◆ Ensure that the government's asylum case-workers build in anti-destitution support measures as part of the so-called "New Asylum Model" where cases are managed from beginning to end

**The two reports are available to
download at:**

www.refugee-action.org.uk

www.amnesty.org.uk

asylum
support
programme



**MIGRANT
HELPLINE**



NEW ASYLUM MODEL - UPDATE

In February 2005 the UK government published a five year immigration strategy which included a "New Asylum Model" (NAM). The NAM is a fundamentally new procedure for processing asylum claims. The Home Office began implementing the NAM in May 2005 and intends that the NAM will be fully introduced by April 2007. Cases which are currently in the asylum process ("legacy cases") will continue to be dealt with under the current system.

NAM is characterised by three processes:

- Segmentation
- Fast track processing
- Case ownership.

Segmentation

During the initial screening interview Immigration Officers will assign their case to one of nine segments based on their case characteristics.

- Third Country
- Children, accompanied and unaccompanied
- Potential non-suspensive appeal (NSA)
- Late and opportunistic, low barriers to removal
- Late and opportunistic, high barriers to removal
- High priority, low barriers to removal
- High priority high barriers to removal
- Standard priority, low barriers to removal
- Standard priority high barriers to removal

Segmentation determines the processing, management and support pathways of each individual case thereby determining:

- the speed at which a person's asylum claim is processed;
- when they will have the initial interview
- whether they will be assisted to access legal advice
- accommodation that a person is required to occupy (e.g. highly supervised accommodation blocks; flats close to reporting centres or remote accommodation)
- how and when a person is required to report to the Immigration Service, that is, whether this will be by voice recognition or appearance in person weekly or daily. Compliance with these requirements will be a condition of continuing support.

Fast track processing

NAM uses a fast track procedure piloted in Harmondsworth detention centre and the North West Pilot. It accelerates the assessment process by removing the SEF process and integrating casework for detained and non-detained applicants. It reduces the time from initial interview to initial decision from two months to two-weeks.

Case ownership

The NAM has a single case owner case management model. The case owner is responsible for each asylum seeker throughout the process – from application to status or removal. Case owners will be Higher Executive Officers (HEOs), reflecting their complex roles and responsibilities which include:

- producing case management plans for each claimant ensuring that their case is dealt with within the stipulated timescales.
- moving cases from one segment to another if they have been inappropriately allocated (however this process remains unclear).
- making case decisions, handling appeals, ensuring appropriate support and reporting arrangements, arranging re-documentation, and handling removals casework.

Implementation

Currently 33% of new asylum claims go through NAM – the aim is to get at least to 50% by Christmas. There will be a series of quantum leaps in terms of numbers as case owners complete their training.

IND is in the process of procuring initial accommodation in 4 of the 6 NAM regions (Cardiff, Leeds, Glasgow and Solihull). Initial accommodation is provided to those eligible claimants while their claim is registered and the initial asylum decision made. This new accommodation is required to ensure that the NAM case managers and new asylum seekers are located near to one another.

The Home Office is in the process of recruiting 25 Asylum Team Leaders and there is also a recruitment programme underway to recruit 300 caseworkers. By March 2007 the NAM structure will be:

- Cardiff – 2 teams
- Glasgow – 2 teams
- Leeds – 5 teams
- Liverpool – 4 teams
- London Heathrow – 4 teams
- London Fleet Street – 4 teams (near to Beckett and Communication House reporting centres)
- Solihull – 4 teams

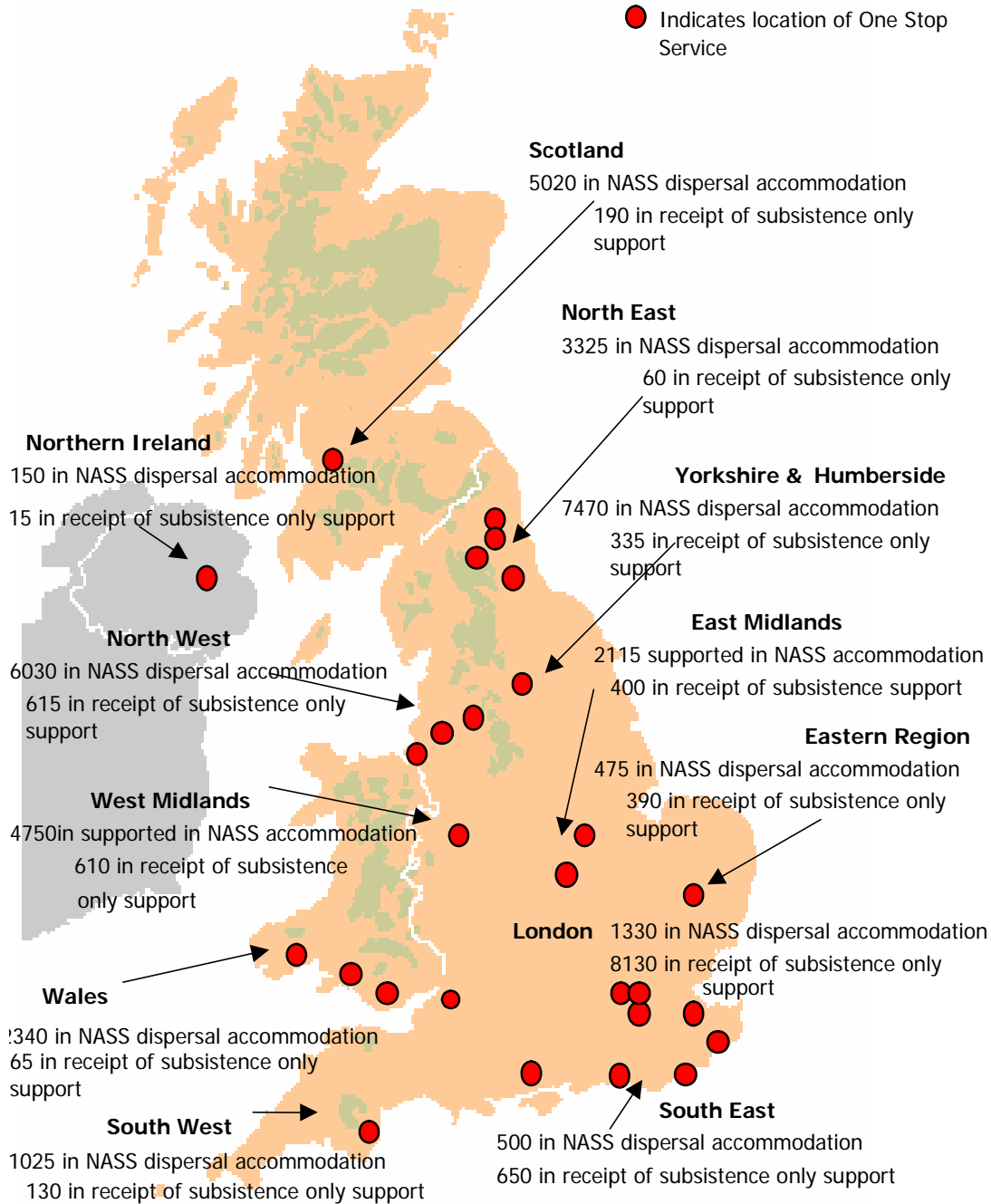
Caseowners will undergo an 8 week long training programme for new recruits which will cover all aspects of IND's work to allow for greater understanding of the asylum process as a whole.

The IAP is working with staff from NAM to update the information briefings given to asylum seekers to explain what will happen to them during the asylum process.

IAP News will keep you updated on the New Asylum Model

**Number of asylum seekers in NASS dispersal accommodation
Number of asylum seekers in receipt of subsistence only support
as at the end of September 2006**

Total number of asylum seekers in NASS dispersal accommodation – **34,540**
 Total number of asylum seekers in receipt of subsistence only support – **11,590**
 Total number of asylum seekers supported by NASS – **46,130**



10 areas with most asylum seekers receiving accommodation & subsistence		10 areas with most asylum seekers receiving subsistence only		10 areas with most asylum seekers receiving subsistence only (excl. London)	
Glasgow	5020	Newham	745	Gtr Manchester	420
Gtr Manchester	3385	Haringey	630	Birmingham	340
Leeds	2020	Ealing	610	Leicester	195
Birmingham	1700	Enfield	500	Luton	115
Newcastle	1210	Brent	495	Slough	115
Cardiff	1085	Waltham Forest	430	Leeds	115
Nottingham	1060	Gtr Manchester	420	Coventry	105
Sheffield	1045	Redbridge	370	Edinburgh	75
Liverpool	910	Hackney	350	Bristol	75
Salford	890	Birmingham	340	Nottingham	65

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ASYLUM STATISTICS RELEASED - JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2006

According to the latest Home Office figures applications for asylum in the UK rose by 7 per cent on the previous quarter during July, August and September 2006. The total number of applications was 5,490 (7,105 when including dependants) an 11 per cent increase on the previous quarter.

No. of asylum applications	
Qtr 3 2005	6,320
Qtr 4 2005	6,175
Qtr 1 2006	6,455
Qtr 2 2006	5,490
Qtr 3 2006	5,850

Top 10 nationalities	
Eritrea	720
Afghanistan	600
Iran	570
China	515
Somalia	470
Iraq	330
Zimbabwe	280
Pakistan	255
Sudan	175
Nigeria	165
Other	1780
Total	5850

Applications increased from Iraq (up 117%) and Eritrean (up 35%) nationals while applications decreased from nationals of China, Zimbabwe, Sudan and Nigeria.

Decision making

The Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) made 4,565 initial decisions in quarter two 2006. This was lower than in quarter one and lower than the number of applications (a Government target). Nine per cent of the initial decisions made were grants of asylum while ten per cent of initial decisions granted humanitarian protection or discretionary leave.

The Asylum and Immigration Tribunal received 2,715 appeals against asylum decisions in Qtr 3, number of appeals determined fell 22 per cent to 3,380 and 20 per cent of appeals were allowed.

74 per cent of application received in 2005/6 had a final decision up to and including appeal within six months.

REPORT INTO CONDITIONS AT HARMONDSWORTH TRIGGERS DISTURBANCES

Anne Owers, the Chief Inspector of Prison has released a damning report into conditions at Harmondsworth removal centre. The prison inspection team had serious concerns over the way Harmondsworth was run:

- ◆ It is run with a regime as strict as any high security prison
- ◆ It has slipped into 'a culture wholly at odds with its stated purpose' since a 2004 riot
- ◆ 44% of detainees said they had been victimised by staff; 60% said they felt unsafe
- ◆ There is a high use of solitary confinement - 129 times in six months of 2006 - and extensive use of punishment of removal from association
- ◆ "This is undoubtedly the poorest report we have issued on an immigration removal centre"
- ◆ "This is not primarily the fault of staff ... but essentially a problem of management"

More than 2,000 failed asylum seekers and illegal migrants pass through Harmondsworth each year and those interviewed by the prison inspectors described the custody officers as "aggressive", "intimidating", "rude" and "unhelpful", especially towards those who could not speak English.

Disturbances followed a decision not to allow detainees to watch television bulletins about the report. Significant damage was done to the centre. Following the disturbances most detainees have been removed from the centre and relocated to other facilities in the detention estate.

Kalyx Ltd (formerly UK Detention Services), the company running the detention centre is to be forced to pay the government more than £5m for a series of performance failures. The huge amount is believed to be a record sum for a private contractor to have to return to the public coffers,

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

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Closing date for submissions is Friday ???.