



Steering Group Minutes of Meeting: 27th September 2007

Present

- **Olvia Fellas**, Head of Service, Refugee and Migrant Service, LB Islington (Chair)
- **Peter Olnier**, Strategic Manager for Asylum and Persons from Abroad, Birmingham CC
- **Vicky Williams**, Team Manager, National Consortia Co-ordinating Group
- **Carey Baff**, Operations Manager, Birmingham City Council
- **Lucy Bryson**, Team Manager, Brighton and Hove City Council
- **John Hobson**, Immigration and Asylum Unit, Bradford MBC

Apologies

- **Bill Brittain**, Principal Manager, Health, Disability & OTRB, RB Kingston
- **Colin Elliot**, Principal Manager, Asylum Seekers and Refugees, Manchester City Council
- **Cynthia Winifred**, LB Lambeth
- **Mark Brangwyn**, Head of Health & Social Care, London Councils
- **Paul Mavin**, Team Manager, Intermediate Care Services (PSI and SGH Social Work), Southend on Sea
- **Ted Brown**, Principal Care Manager, Bradford MBC
- **Mark Rapley**, Corporate Consultant, LB Lambeth
- **Mary Blanche**, Senior Policy Manager, Asylum and Migration, Kent CC
- **Becky Lyons**, Commissioning Manager, Disability, Newcastle CC
- **Bill Davies**, Team Manager, MAST Statutory, Manchester City Council
- **Emma Jenkins**, Policy Adviser, Local Government Association (LGA)
- **Lynda Lawrence**, Newcomers Coordinator, Sandwell MBC
- **Lorraine Ayensu**, Team Manager, Bristol CC
- **Sheila Ross**, Team Manager, Leicester CC

Minutes: Samantha Gill, LB Islington

1. Minutes and matters arising

1.1 Key Contacts List

Draft key contacts list has been developed to identify and produce a list of key contacts within the Refugee Sector. In addition, these key contacts should be aware of the Network and what the Network is hoping to achieve. Initial draft

of who's who will be put together although this will be a work in progress due to the shift in people's roles.

- **VW** to follow up on Welsh contacts and to put together a strategic stakeholders group map.

1.2 Media

Paul Rowen, MP for Rochdale spoke to the Asian News newspaper regarding women with nrpf who are victims of domestic violence. In the article he makes reference to Islington's No Recourse to Public Funds service and the Network. The profile of persons with no access to public funds may also be raised when the 'Still Human Still Here' campaign launch their video in the near future.

- **OF** to write to MP and advise of Network activities including the brief on domestic violence.

1.3 Strengthening links with local authorities

A letter from the ADASS/ADCS Asylum Taskforce has been sent to all Local Authority Chief Executives asking that a lead officer be identified to take responsibility for identifying costs and numbers of persons with NRPF and their response to requests for services.

It is hoped the letter will highlight the cost to local authorities and encourage them to capture information. Some local authorities may have an issue with disclosing this information.

Olvia is the contact person and will be co-ordinating responses.

- **OF** to circulate copy of letter

2. BIA

Adrian, Olvia and Emma Jenkins met with BIA Enforcement and Compliance (E&C) officers in early September. The following issues were discussed:

- Potential Fraud (no mechanism for information sharing amongst local authorities)
- Intelligence Sharing with BIA
- Better working relationships between BIA and local authorities, ensuring that the flow of information goes both ways.

BIA E&C discussed proposed legislative changes to schedule 3, section 54 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act that will coincide with reforms being proposed to UASC. The aim of the legislative changes will be to reduce persons eligible for local authority support. However, this needs to be considered in light of human rights and it may mean that local authorities will need to support more people to avoid a breach of human rights. The positives of legislative changes will be to make things clearer for some groups such as EEA nationals barred from receiving leaving care support.

Peter Olnier advised that he has regular monthly meetings with the local Enforcement and Removals team in Birmingham to try and resolve these and the following issues:

- Reporting persons to benefits agency
- How benefit fraud may affect claims pending
- Data protection (Confidential Information)
- What information can we share and who with?

2.1 Grant Claim for Network

Olivia will be submitting a grant claim to the BIA to contribute towards the NRPF network for 2007/2008. Last year BIA contributed £39,000.

3. Terms of Reference for Steering Group

The NRPF Network Steering group are to look at the terms of reference, these need to be clearer and maybe reduced to 6 key points of what the role of the group is.

- Sharing information
- Sharing practice guidance
- Training, Information and advice
- Facilitating re-imburement
- Achieving greater consistency between local authorities
- Working with government departments to raise the practical and policy issues

4. National Database

The NRPF Steering group discussed the value of having a central source of information linked with the BIA and all Local authorities.

This could help in various ways such as tracking clients and combating fraud. BIA already have a database through LA Comms –what would the data protection issues be if we had access? We need to know exactly what we can share with other agencies/ local authorities.

Carey suggested developing protocols within own regions might be an easier starting point.

A National Database similar to the old asylum A-CID database or the new NRUC database could be useful.

- **VW** to follow up with NRUC to see if something similar could be developed re adults.
- **OF** and **PO** to look at legal advice received for LA/IND taskforce regarding sharing of information.

6. Regional / local updates

6.1 West Midlands

The West Midlands regional group are still working on data collection.

- legacy cases – hard getting contacts in BIA

- update on asylum model
- research was carried out on Domestic Violence NRPf cases – a report has been produced but yet to be finalised

The regional group are also looking at the impact of pregnancy on women with nrpf (child & maternal health services, GP's and voluntary sector). Infant mortality rate is highest in Birmingham. PCT has set up a taskforce to look into this.

6.2 South East

In the Brighton and Hove area numbers have continued to rise. The South East are seeing less Domestic Violence referrals but a rise in HIV. Brighton and Hove are to set up a dedicated team to manage these cases.

6.3 Yorkshire and Humberside

John reported that numbers of referrals are increasing and domestic violence is a big issue for Bradford at present. Vicky to facilitate a regional group, and an initial meeting is being planned. Vicky suggested keeping consistent branding for the regional groups so people are aware of whom they are.

6.4 South West

Lorraine from Bristol City Council is seeing a huge increase in Domestic Violence and a decrease in UASC referrals.

6.5 East Midlands

Sheila Ross asked if anyone else was having issues regarding delays with age assessments and the cost involved with this?

It was noted that the ADCS might be able to offer help with this.

7. Any other business

7.1 Council Tax

A high number of families and UASC from the old asylum process have outstanding liability orders for council tax – many local authorities are asking Housing for these debts to be written off.

7.2 Special Circumstance Bids

The deadline for the special circumstance bids to the Home Office is drawing near. Local authorities are encouraged to submit these bids to make the Home Office aware of the cost involved with supporting persons with NRPf. Last year a number of authorities included everything from staffing costs to assessments.

- **OF** to confirm date of deadline

7.3 Dates and locations of NRPf Network Steering Group meetings

Carey suggested that future NRPf Steering group meetings be kept in line with the ADASS Asylum Taskforce meetings. The initial idea was to have the Network meetings a couple of weeks before the Asylum taskforce meeting.

The Steering Group members did not feel this was necessary and it was agreed that network meetings would now be in line with Asylum Taskforce meetings.

The next steering group meeting however, is to remain in London as people have already been informed of the date and location. Future meetings shall be organised in different regions to remain fair on the members who have to travel far.

The next meeting is to be held on 6th November 2007, 12.00 – 3.00 pm conference room 3, Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1 2UD.

- **OF** to confirm January meeting in Manchester with Colin Elliot