



NRPF Network Steering Group
9th April 2008
Local Government Association, London

Present:

Olvia Fellas – LB Islington (Chair)
 Jonathan Price – LB Islington (Minutes)
 John Donaldson – Glasgow CC
 Ted Brown - City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
 Richard Fountain – Luton CC
 Peter Olnier – Birmingham CC
 Emma Jenkins – LGA
 Colin Elliot – Manchester City Council
 Mary Blanche – Kent CC
 Carey Baff – Birmingham CC

Apologies:

Mark Rapley – LB Lambeth
 Bill Brittain – RB Kingston
 Becky Lyons – Newcastle CC
 Helen Johnson – London Councils
 Lorraine Ayensu – Bristol CC
 Sheila Ross – Leicester CC
 Lynda Lawrence - Sandwell CC

Notes	Action points
<p>1. Introductions and Apologies Olvia welcomed John Donaldson and Jonathan Price to the Network Steering Group</p>	
<p>2. Minutes and Matters Arising Information about what NAM does - Colin said that the UKBA are not calling it NAM anymore. The vast majority of cases are being processed much quicker especially in the case of singles. Changes in appeal process could have a knock on effect for people presenting with NRPF. There is no evidence of this yet in Manchester, but they are keeping an eye on this.</p>	
<p>3. Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding from HO Olvia said that this funding has been received and is funding the Communications Officer post – Jonathan has since been appointed. • Joint funding of Red Cross / NRPF events Currently the events are being joint funded by the Red Cross and LB Islington. Olvia will include costs of events in funding bid to UKBA for 2008/09. 	

4. Meeting with BIA

Emma, Helen and Olivia met with the UKBA to discuss key issues facing local authorities including intelligence sharing, combating criminality and engagement with workplace enforcement partnerships.

UKBA provided a document detailing issues of common interest with local authorities.

Olivia had explained that the UKBA’s idea to set up pilot areas was similar to the taskforce, and UKBA agreed to look at these again. It had been flagged up in the meeting that lessons need to be learnt from the Task Forces, particularly around having a fixed end point and sharing reports.

Peter said that the taskforce had completed assignment with Islington and Hammersmith & Fulham and were half way through project with Birmingham when the taskforce was disbanded. The final taskforce report was supposed to be jointly agreed between councils and the Home Office, and was an opportunity to make a case for reimbursement of costs.

Colin said that the Home Office are interested in NRPF cases, especially refused asylum cases, to pick up as part of the next stage of the legacy case review. He said the outcomes of the resolution of family cases placed pressure upon housing and other services in areas with high numbers. In some of the most affected local areas this raised caused real concern about the capacity of services to respond to sudden and large increases in demand for accommodation and support. Olivia said that we are committed to resolving cases and queried whether we are talking to the right people (currently talking to enforcement and compliance).

Peter said that they had developed good relations with their local enforcement team.

Ted said that the fact UKBA wrote these points of common interest means that there has been progress and Olivia agreed that the fact they are having six-monthly meetings means it’s keeping the issues on the agenda. All agreed that the UKBA are ready to build better relations.

5. Numbers and costs data collection

Jonathan presented the findings to date for the numbers and costs research and said that additional authorities were being contacted to aim for more accurate figures. This includes London boroughs and key dispersal areas.

Mary said that she would send the Kent figures

Carey said that different authorities might have different ways of collecting the data, where ‘adults’ may be included in the children’s figures by some authorities and not by others.

Olivia clarified that ‘adults’ refers to single adults and that ‘children’ refers to families being supported and includes adults within those families – where a parent has a Section 21 need they are recorded as being supported under Section 17. The spreadsheet breaks this down into ‘supported under Section 21 and Section 17’. She added that this discrepancy could be highlighted in the report and also used to show that there are differences in recording across local authorities.

Mary to send Kent figures to Jonathan

<p>Richard noted the hike in expenditure in relation to the rise in numbers. This might need to be teased out. Why is this?</p> <p>Colin mentioned the Home Office's Pathways to Citizenship consultation which includes a section on the simplification of legislation. The Network could submit a response in relation to NRPF. Emma suggested that the LGA could look at endorsing this response as part of their response.</p> <p>Jonathan asked at what point should we draw the line on data collection and draw up a report. All agreed that there should be a date deadline rather than a numbers deadline and agreed to give the remaining authorities a month deadline.</p> <p>It was agreed that focus could then move to seeing whether authorities could be asked to collate annual data on NRPF in the same format.</p> <p>Ted was shocked that less densely populated areas not reporting numbers and costs because of the numbers of migrant workers in those areas. Mary said that it is not such a problem in Kent because they can get home safely and that agricultural workers do not present a problem because they work seasonally. She added that NRPF issues had only been identified by those authorities that had received asylum seekers. Peter noted that the NRPF issue would change, with managed migration increasing as an issue.</p>	<p>Jonathan to draft response and circulate to steering group</p>
<p>6. Communications Update</p> <p>Jonathan gave feedback on the Manchester event on February 25th, which was widely seen as a success. The Manchester event report will be disseminated through the newsletter. The next event will be held in Birmingham, on the 28th of May but location is yet to be confirmed. The topic of the conference will be families with children who have NRPF.</p> <p>Jonathan said that he had attended the launch of the Independent Asylum Commission (IAC) interim findings report. There was little mention of NRPF issues (destitute plus) in the report and the Network sent a response to the IAC with recommendations for consideration in their forthcoming report.</p> <p>Peter noted that the report said that the Home Office had claimed that NAM would alleviate many problems related to NRPF. An additional response countering this claim should be submitted.</p> <p>Jonathan mentioned the publication of the Amnesty International / Southall Black Sisters report on NRPF and DV. Although the Network gets a good mention, the report is generally disparaging of local authority practice. Network to draft response to Amnesty.</p> <p>Ted drew attention to a report written by Saheli, a community organisation, and Manchester and Huddersfield Universities about NRPF and DV. They were complementary of Manchester City Council, but wrote a host of recommendations that were not necessarily easy to implement.</p> <p>Colin highlighted the need to maintain constructive relationships between the Network and the voluntary sector and to maintain a focus on the bigger issues – the tensions between legislation and the lack of funding for local authorities and other agencies to help people with NRPF.</p>	<p>Jonathan to draft response with Peter</p> <p>Jonathan to draft response to Amnesty</p>

<p>Olvia said that the Red Cross event sought to bring together the statutory and voluntary sectors in order to work together and start an open dialogue.</p>	
<p>7. Update on Domestic Violence Olvia talked about the report she had written with the Community Safety Partnerships Unit at Islington Council. This report did not receive an acknowledgement from the Home Office. It is now published on the website. The report found that 60% of the women in the 11 refuges who responded to the survey were supported by Social Services.</p> <p>Emma said that it would be worth sending the report to Harriet Harman who has an interest in this area.</p> <p>Olvia stated more broadly that DV was a big issue right now and commended the Luton Council conference on this issue, which she attended with Jonathan.</p> <p>Carey circulated a paper regarding ‘Safeguarding Children and interface with Section 54’, outlining the limitations placed on local authorities by Section 54 and child safeguarding duties. She argued that a debate should be established on this issue.</p> <p>Richard said that Section 20 shouldn’t be used in preference to Section 17. The network will be issuing guidance on good practice for working with families with children. A working group could be set up to draft this guidance following the next steering group meeting.</p>	<p>Jonathan to send steering group link to report</p> <p>Olvia to send report to Harriet Harman.</p> <p>Olvia/ Carey to organise a working group to discuss guidance.</p>
<p>8. EU Nationals Olvia questioned whether authorities ask migrants who are helped to return to their country of origin sign a document to say they won’t return. Migrants can be removed using Section 2 LGA. Embassies can be asked to pay for travel home although the Polish embassy has apparently stopped doing so.</p> <p>Ted mentioned that they have seen people coming back and they only provide tickets on one occasion. He said that it was not permitted to fly people back and so Bradford buy people bus tickets. Mary thought that the cheapest method of transport should be used.</p> <p>Mary suggested raising this issue of embassy co-operation with the Foreign Office.</p>	<p>Olvia to draft document for the Foreign Office</p>
<p>9. Regional Updates • West Midlands (Peter) They had a meeting on the 10th of March. There is a conference on April 30th in Birmingham on NRPF.</p> <p>The Regional Strategic Migration Partnership and the local PCT wrote a piece of research which tried to link maternity mortality with NRPF, however there is no data regarding the immigration status of those subject to perinatal mortality. There are recommendations for local authorities however they didn’t discuss this with Birmingham CC prior to publication.</p>	

- South East (Mary)
Network meetings have been around UASC. Mary reported a lack of momentum following dispersal and the move to migration as a priority area. Portsmouth is doing an audit of how they work and Mary will push the NRPF issue with them.

- North West (Colin)
Colin tried to get a group going with little success. He said that the Regional Strategic Migration Partnership had an asylum sub-group and this was an opportunity to raise the issues.

- Yorkshire and Humberside (Ted)
The second regional meeting took place on the 27th of February. There was a good turn out, all major towns were represented. A 3rd meeting is scheduled for May 29th. Issues raised in the meeting reflected the topics of today's meeting.

- Scotland (John)
John gave an update on case resolution in Glasgow, which had been successful. The JobCentre were involved and met with successful applicants to go over what benefits they were entitled to. NI numbers were issued within 28 days of notification of HO decision.

A NRPF sub-group has been set up as part of the COSLA strategic migration group which is made up of the UKBA, voluntary sector and local government. Authorities are paying different rates of subsistence and have different policies for making decisions.

- London (Olvia)
Access to Freedom Passes arose as an issue with some London boroughs; there is some evidence that criteria for issuing freedom passes has become more stringent, although it is not clear if this is lawful.

10. Next meeting
21st July in Manchester (venue tbc)