



**NRPF Network Steering Group
21 January 2008
Manchester Town Hall**

Present:

Olvia Fellas – Head of Service, Refugee and Migrant Services, LB Islington (Chair)
Mark Rapley – Corporate Consultant, LB Lambeth
Sheila Ross – Team Manager, Leicester
Becky Lyons – Commissioning Manager, Disability, Newcastle City Council
Bill Davies – Team Manager, Manchester City Council
Sophie Rushton – Solicitor, Manchester City Council
Colin Elliot – Principal Manager, Asylum Seekers and Refugees, Manchester City Council.

Apologies:

Bill Brittain – Principal Manager, Health, Disability and OTRB, RB Kingston
Emma Jenkins – Policy advisor, LGA
Mary Blanche – Senior Policy Manager, Asylum and Migration, Kent CC
Richard Fountain – Service Manager, Children's Services, Luton CC
Lorraine Ayensu – Team Manager, Adult Services, Bristol

1. Minutes and Matters Arising

1.1 Joint Council Meeting

Colin attended a joint council meeting, followed by a Westminster briefing in November regarding Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. The joint council are doing two things:

- Raising concerns about the framework of legislation in regard to UASC.
- Looking at practical impacts on Local Authorities, particularly in terms of financial risk.

Some LAs are facing considerable costs, as the Home Office have reviewed past UASC grant claims and are seeking to get back some of the monies. There is also concern about risks relating to standards of care for children, including the impact on other groups.

Generally the MPs accepted the broad points. Suggestion from an MP for further work be done on costs, as it was not possible to see from the briefing the exact costs and the variables across different LA's. The Joint Councils are

commissioning an independent audit of a sample of Council's costs. This report should be available end Jan/ beginning of Feb 08. They plan to send the main findings in correspondence to Liam Byrne, and take him up on an earlier offer of a meeting.

2 Updates from Chair

2.1 Meeting with BIA

Olvia and Emma Jenkins met with Enforcement and Compliance Unit, BIA to discuss future funding of the NRPF network. They are willing to continue funding but don't have access to the funds as yet. *(Since steering group meeting, BIA has confirmed they are able to contribute £35,000 towards the Network)*

BIA wants to set up an 'Immigration Crime Partnership' with Local Authorities – priorities for removal will be foreign criminals and failed asylum seekers. Further work needs to be done as LAs currently report refused asylum seekers who present for support and they have not been removed.

Four key issues that were discussed during meeting:

- Costs and Numbers
- Intelligence sharing
- Managed Migration – for example elderly relatives who have been sponsored and then placed in nursing homes, and people on spousal visa's fleeing DV and not being able to access services.
- Former UASC – who have exhausted all rights – the process in supporting them is inconsistent across Local Authorities.

Lambeth have seen a number of cases where people have been sponsored to come to the UK to access private medical treatment, but have ended up being treated by the NHS and supported by LAs. However other LAs rarely come across people who enter the UK primarily for medical treatment, although many do have a need e.g. HIV

2.3 Review of Access to Health Services

Current Home Office proposal to restrict access to primary healthcare for failed asylum seeker and undocumented migrants.

250 GPs have signed a document stating they will not abide by regulations, which prohibit them from treating people with NRPF. For full report, please see <http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/legal/article3342180.ece>

For the time being – monitor what arguments health are putting forward and support/ add to those. A local level joint response from health and social care may be beneficial, and the NRPF network may also want to make a response.

2.4 Other Meetings/ Groups

Olvia met with John McDonnell (Labour MP) who signed the Early Day Motion on DV. He was interested in the NRPF network and may be useful link.

Delegation led by Archbishop of York is meeting with the Home Secretary on 5th March to discuss destitution among failed asylum seekers.

Strangers into Citizens –are campaigning for irregular migrants who have been in the UK for 4 years to receive a 2 year work visa, at the end of which, subject to references be given leave to remain.

Action Point: For further information regarding Still Human Still Here campaign group please visit <http://www.stillhuman.org.uk/>

2.5 Costs Information

From 15 local authorities, 977 with NRPF people are supported at a total cost of £7,347,297. Responses have not been collated from all LAs including some larger ones such as Manchester, Birmingham and Islington. Edinburgh has responded and Olvia is going to Wales in March to discuss issues. Some local authorities have responded saying they are not supporting anyone with NRPF, which suggests that there is still awareness raising to be done.

3. Steering Group Terms Of Reference

Ongoing. To be put on next meeting agenda

4. National Update

The first NRPF/ Red Cross event is taking place on 25th February in Manchester at the Friends Meeting House, and will be focusing on Local Authority Duties. They may be in need of a legal advisor to speak in Manchester. South Manchester Law Centre, and various barristers were suggested.

Action Point: Sophie and Mark to send possible contacts to Olvia.

Future Events will be as follows:

May – Birmingham – concentrating on the children of families with NRPF.

September – Leeds – Focusing on Domestic Violence

December – London – Focusing on Health

The Red Cross are funding these events at the moment. If the events are to continue, need to consider alternate joint funding.

5. Regional Updates

5.1 Manchester

The Manchester Taskforce has been disbanded.

South Manchester Law Centre have produced a report called "Safe To Return" looking at Pakistani women fleeing Domestic Violence, and the impacts of returning them to their country of origin. It provides a strong body of evidence outlining the reasons why it is not safe for them to return.

Manchester currently supports 12-15 singles and families who are fleeing domestic violence.

5.2 Lambeth

The Home Office are trying to claim back retrospective grant funds from Lambeth. Lambeth are fighting this.

Lambeth recently produced a report and presentation to their MPs. Politically sensitive as they are only Labour Council in London. There has been discussion about a joint pilot project (re removals) with the Home Office, which Mark will run.

5.3 Leicester

Are currently in negotiations with the Home Office re age assessments. Currently a LA can only claim the cost of age assessments when the person is found to be under 18. However the cost of the assessment is still considerable if the person is deemed to be 18+

Sheila is trying to establish links across the East Midlands.

Leicester are encouraging DV cases to put in a Human Rights Application (article 3 claim) to enable them to access Sec 95 support. However London authorities reported that NASS are refusing to support as they are deemed as having a community care need and it is up to LA to support.

5.4 Newcastle

There has been little interest in setting up a regional group. However Gateshead are looking at setting up their own team.

Discussion about how pregnant women are supported. They can access Sec 4 support at 7 months under 'unable to return home' criteria.

5.5 Islington

London NRPF group is meeting next on 20 February. At the last meeting Emily Pemberton from Central London Asylum team attended to discuss BIA and LA joint working. The group is looking at subsistence rates and collating information from London authorities.

Currently working on a protocol/ shared database to stop people going (or being sent) from one LA to another. Newcastle developed a regional protocol framework a couple of years ago.

Action Point:

- Becky to forward regional protocol framework to Olvia.
- Olvia will send GAPS fax no to Bill (fax: **0208 760 4888**)

- Olvia to send Mark details of the next London meeting.

6. Any Other Business

Discussion re what NAM does – is there a description available regarding their roles and guidelines.

Action Point: Bill to ask Shelley Gould if she has info re what NAM does and will pass on.

Discussed delay in someone signing up for Sec 4 support and receiving it. May be useful to ask someone from Sec 4 to attend a future meeting.

Manchester is facing changes to services with 'A Life Not A Service' initiatives – i.e. move towards Individual Budgets. Islington have started opening very basic bank accounts for people. They have a letter that can be sent to banks explaining situation. Islington have also discovered you can put people on Direct Payments, as long as they employ staff from an agency, cannot employ people directly.

Action Point: Olvia to send bank letter and advice received re Direct Payments to the group.

Upcoming Regional Meetings:

London NRPF Network meeting will be held on **Wednesday 20th February 2008** at **2pm** at **Westminster City Hall, conference room 7, 17th floor.**

Yorkshire and Humberside Regional NRPF Network meeting will be held in the **Leeds Civic Hall** on **Wednesday 27th February 2008** from **9.30 to 12 noon.**

Next National NRPF Steering Group Meeting: 17th March 2008, London (exact venue tbc) 1:00pm – 3:30pm