

## NRPF Network Meeting - Date 21/5/08

### Minutes

#### Matters Arising

- **Subsistence rates**

Agreed that the subsistence rates that the Network had collated would be re-circulated. We know that different boroughs use different rates, but the Coventry Case which was about subsistence costs was lost because they could not show a logic about how subsistence was paid. The important point is that a local authority needs to follow logical reasoning about how they devise their support level. Keeping within a rate used by other boroughs could form part of this reasoning.

**Action:** re-circulate subsistence rates

- **Front line practitioners forum**

It was suggested that a conference or a series of seminar/workshop events may be another way to meet the needs of front line practitioners. Simon from Croydon has practitioners keen to get involved.

**Action:** Agreed to discuss setting up this up at the next meeting and to open up the email group to all practitioners in local authorities.

### Agenda

#### Feedback from the National Network

- Jonathan gave an update on the national conferences. The first conference in Manchester was attended by 70 delegates including representatives from the BIA North West region. Topics covered included barriers to local authorities to providing assistance, inconsistent practise in different local authorities, difficulty in contacting the BIA. The 2<sup>nd</sup> conference is on 28<sup>th</sup> May in Birmingham.
- Olivia fed back on the Domestic Violence Report from Islington. This was about women who are victims of domestic violence and have no recourse to public funds. Of 19 women in refuges accepted for support, 60% were supported by local authorities. The report sent to the home office recommends access to immediate accommodation and services, and retrospective funding.
- Olivia spoke at the National Day of Action at Portcullis House, organised by the Voluntary Sector Women's Groups. The National Network responded to the 'No Recourse, No Safety' Amnesty International report which was quite critical of local authority support, and the failure to protect women.
- The National Network is collating data about the numbers and costs of people supported which will be presented to the Home Office. So far

they have had responses from 50 local authorities. Wandsworth requested that for this meeting the information specifically about London be extracted from the report when it is complete. It was thought that the response from the Home Office may be to respond by case resolution.

- The National Network is working on a new set of guidance for local authorities. Guidance for working with children and families should be completed by July.
- A training programme is being piloted.
- The Independent Asylum Commission has written a report about destitution and support. The National Network has submitted a response –asking that strategic guidance to Local Authorities is included, and the issue of re-imburement to Local Authorities.

### **Path to Citizenship**

This is a green paper to which the National Network has provided a response. The current proposals are that refugees will get temporary residence and will receive benefits, then after 5 years will move to 'probationary citizenship'. During this time they will be NRPF and will have to prove that they can support themselves. Then they will move to permanent residency after 3-5 years.

The National Network has made 9 recommendations which includes concerns about increased administration costs, creating a new category, how will local authorities be reimbursed when people are NRPF? how will there be input into community development to assist people into work etc?

### **Freedom Pass**

Freedom passes have been stopped in Wandsworth following a legal challenge.

For a freedom pass, a person needs to meet the eligibility criteria for mobility, and should be assessed under this. If the person meets the mobility criteria they should get a freedom pass.

### **Local Authority Updates**

#### **Westminster**

Islington and Croydon have a letter (conditions of service). Bill Brittain suggested that the Network could develop a leaflet/guidelines.

**Action:**Islington and Croydon Conditions of Service to be circulated.

#### **Haringey**

Haringey are dispersing existing clients to Birmingham. Health needs are transferred to Birmingham and Haringey continue to pay subsistence and accommodation costs. Some people being dispersed are asking for

assistance to move various belongings. Do local authorities use indications of wealth in their assessments?

### **Barking and Dagenham**

Have been working with a failed habitual resident who has a right to work but not to benefits. It was advised that an appeal should be made to DWP.

### **Wandsworth**

Have been picking up a lot of people coming through hospital who have previously stayed in other local authorities. This can be a difficult area – hospital is not an ordinary residence, but there are contradictions between legislation and guidance

### **Croydon**

Have been working with someone leaving care and finding difficulty around eligibility in transition. Islington has drafted a protocol with leaving care services which may be helpful.

**Action:** Olvia to bring to next meeting.