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Inside this issue

This bulletin focuses on developments in the area of No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). In this issue, we present a new project for victims of domestic violence and the UKBA initiative to prioritise CRD cases supported by local authorities. We also feature an article on the national reconnection pilot which helps A 8 and A2 migrants return home or access the labour market and an update on the NRPF Connect project.

Pilot scheme for victims of domestic violence with NRPF

Pilot scheme for victims of domestic violence with NRPF

The Sojourner Project is for individuals with no recourse to public funds, who entered the UK on a spousal or partner visa and are eligible to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) under the Domestic Violence Rule.

The project is a pilot scheme run by Eaves and funded by the Home Office which runs from Monday 30th November 2009 until the end of February 2010. Eaves act as the national coordinating body during the pilot, and identify and manage refuge provision for victims who are eligible under the pilot.

Who is eligible for this service?

- Victims of domestic violence who have no recourse to public funds admitted to, or granted an extension to their stay in the UK as a spouse, civil partner, unmarried or same sex partner

- Those who qualify for ILR under the Domestic Violence Rule

The service can be offered to those meeting the above criteria, and their dependants.

Referrals

Referrals to the scheme can be made by anyone calling the Sojourner Project Duty Worker on **0207 840 7147**. Once information on the referral's suitability has passed initial assessment, the woman will be admitted onto the first stage of the pilot. At this stage the referrer will be asked to complete a formal referral form sent by the Sojourner Duty Worker and e-mail it back to them on sojourner@eaveshousing.co.uk

Funding

Refuges supporting the victims will be provided with funding for 20 working days to support the victim whilst they complete

an application for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) under the Domestic Violence Rule.

Once an application is submitted and received by the UK Border Agency, the refuge will be provided with further funding for a maximum of 20 working days whilst UKBA come to a decision on the application.

The refuge that is accommodating the referred person and their children can apply to the Sojourner Pilot Project Manager for financial assistance. Under the pilot a service user is entitled to £60 per week subsistence plus an extra £30 per week for every child. Accommodation costs will also be covered, up to a total of £230 per week.

Funding will be paid a week in arrears on receipt of invoice. In addition, the refuges will also be able to claim for interpreter's costs. However, please be aware some interpretation services will be exempt from these conditions, therefore please discuss with the Sojourner Project Manager for more guidance. If services are likely to need more than £150 for interpreting, they should get authorisation from the Sojourner Project Manager.

Partnership arrangements with Eaves

Eaves have partnership arrangements in place with service providers who have expertise in supporting victims of domestic violence, women from Black, Minority Ethnic and Refugee Communities, and those with No Recourse to Public Funds.

Where service providers do not have partnership arrangements in place with Eaves, it is possible to set these up once Eaves are assured of their suitability. Support providers wishing to enter into partnership arrangements for the purposes

of this pilot will be asked to sign a Service Level Agreement with Eaves. This will outline roles and responsibilities of both parties.

Eaves will be providing national training on the pilot for potential service providers. If you would like to receive training, please contact sojourner@eaveshousing.co.uk

Monitoring and evaluation

The pilot will be monitored and evaluated throughout with an overall evaluation being conducted in March 2010 which will assist in informing next steps in developing a longer-term solution to the issue.

Progress of the project till 9th December 2009

- There have been 11 referrals, with paperwork sent to the UK Border Agency; no decisions have been made by UKBA to date
- Training programme is under way, with sessions already organised in London, Sheffield, Wales and Scotland
- Currently there are 45 places available in London and 40 places outside London, but other refuges can sign area level agreement with Eaves to become part of the project, provided they are found suitable
- Eaves are maintaining a database of referrals and also monitoring an average time it takes to submit an application
- Eaves are working in partnership with Southwark Law Centre to support domestic violence victims, and they are also planning an update meeting with ILPA (Immigration Law Practitioners' Association)
- A victim of domestic violence referred to a local authority can undergo assessment by this authority and at the same time be referred to the Sojourner project (if they are eligible). If the local

authority assessment concludes that the person in question is eligible for support, they will be supported by that local authority. However, if the person in question is not eligible for local authority support, they can be supported under the Sojourn Project starting from the referral date

- There is an agreement in place between UKBA and DWP which allows the successful applicants under the project to obtain their national insurance number within 48 hours

For more details on the project, please see the Sojourner Project webpage:

<http://www.eaves4women.co.uk/Sojourner/Sojourner.php>

For further referral information, please see:

<http://www.eaves4women.co.uk/Documents/Press%20releases/SoujournerServiceInformation.pdf>

Local Authority supported Cases Resolution Directorate cases to be prioritised

In October 2009 UK Border Agency's Case Resolution Directorate sent a letter to Chief Executives informing them about prioritising local authority supported legacy cases (asylum applications submitted prior to March 2007). Many CRD case owners have already begun working on these cases with their local authorities and, following discussions with the Local Government Association and London Councils, CRD has agreed to take a nationally consistent approach to giving NRPF cases priority.

CRD prioritises cases which fit the criteria announced by the former Home Secretary in July 2006 as follows; those who may pose a risk to the public; can be easily removed from the United Kingdom; are receiving public support; and may qualify to be allowed to stay in this country.

How to get NRPF cases considered for prioritisation

Any social services department which would like to have their supported CRD cases reviewed with a view to prioritising them, should complete the spread sheet sent to chief executives and return it to their CRD case owner. If you are not

aware of the details of your case owner please forward the form to caseresolution@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk.

Please note that CRD are only responsible for the cases of individuals who made an asylum claim prior to March 2007.

Following receipt of this form, your caseowner will review these cases on the CRD databases to check that they are not receiving UKBA support and to get an initial indication of the likely outcome of the case. They will then discuss the likely outcomes of the cases and agree time frames with you. This should take place within six weeks of receiving the spreadsheet. If the volume of cases to review is likely to impact on this time frame, your case owner will discuss this with your and agree a suitable timeframe.

Where cases meet the wider priorities and are easily concludable, CRD will endeavour to conclude the cases within three to six months, barring circumstances beyond their control. As each case is decided on its merits, some initial assessments of outcome may be

superseded when applicant's files are fully considered. Your case owner will continue to update you on the progress of these cases. Your case owner will also discuss the likely timeframes and outcomes for those cases that do not meet CRD's priority criteria, including any eligibility for UKBA support.

Cases which are not in the CRD category

To discuss NRPF cases which are not the responsibility of CRD, (those cases where an asylum application was made after March 2007) please contact your regional asylum team. Please quote the Home Office reference number and you will be put in touch with the relevant caseowner.

Homelessness among migrant workers in Peterborough and the origins of the National Reconnection Pilot

- Leonie McCarthy, Project Manager, New Link, Peterborough City Council

Overview and diagnosis of the issue

Increased number of rough sleeping migrant workers has been observed in Peterborough since autumn 2008. Peterborough City Council (Homelessness Outreach Officer), New Link and faith/voluntary organisations were the main reporting agencies. The complexity of the issue included no recourse to public funding, communication barrier, potential risks for exploitation and immigration status of those affected by homelessness. Continuing rise in numbers over the winter 2008 called for an implementation of special measures, and therefore Communities and Local Government Senior Homelessness Advisor – Rebecca Pritchard - was contacted. She and her colleague from CLG visited encampments in Peterborough and established that we had identified up to 39 people sleeping rough in Peterborough, the majority of whom (c. 32) were people from the Central and Eastern European countries (A8s). These numbers had made Peterborough the highest rough sleeping local authority outside London.

These individuals were predominantly Polish in nationality. Many had been working, but outside the Workers

Registration Scheme, with breaks and/or for less than 12 months and therefore did not have recourse to public funds.

The majority of rough sleepers were not exercising their Treaty rights (i.e. working) and were therefore technically in breach of their conditions of entry, as they had been in the country for more than three months, but were not self-supporting.

A significant community was being supported by local faith and voluntary sector groups. The Salvation Army saw up to 65 people at its meal programmes and a local day centre provided free lunches during the week as well as blankets and tents, which were also offered by an independent individual linked to a local church group. The soup run also helped sustain street living.

This activity, whilst meeting short term immediate needs, was sustaining the rough sleepers in their current conditions. A visit to the camps confirmed the high use of alcohol – with many discarded bottles of high strength low cost “cider” and other alcohol. The outreach worker confirmed that most of those sleeping rough were alcohol dependent and not likely to find

work in the current market. There were significant concerns about the deterioration of people's physical health and mental well being; experience in other similar situations shows that people become unwell quickly, and that aggressive and violent situations were often associated with encampments and the stresses of living rough in this way.

Action comprised two separate approaches. Initially, a disruption approach was taken with people being asked to move on by the police. However, this has resulted in people being displaced with little impact on numbers. Many people were leaving tents and bedding in situ, and getting replacements from local community/faith groups – with a growing incidence of discarded rubbish and bedding linked to concerns about public health and amenity.

Subsequently, an approach aimed at engaging with the rough sleepers and offering to help them return home had been taken. However, people had declined the offer because they believed things would pick up in England and/or because they felt shame at returning home in their current condition. However, the physical health and alcohol use of the people concerned meant it was very unlikely they would find work without further intervention and support.

There were growing community cohesion issues in the city. St Theresa's Day Centre reported a divide between traditional day centre users and more recent users from the A8 countries. A number of assaults had been reported – usually perpetuated within the different community groups. Recently, there have been a series of serious assaults and a murder between A8 groups and other local communities in the city.

Proposed Response – National Relocation Pilot (NRP)

NRP believed that the notion that nothing could be done about A10 nationals because 'they had a right to be there' did a great disservice to both the individuals who became increasingly vulnerable but also to local communities living alongside these 'encampments'.

Their proposal was to establish a 'peripatetic' assertive outreach and relocation team working with defined local authorities to:

- map the needs within their community
- work with partners to develop effective multi-agency responses
- engage with and action plan individual rough sleepers and those in 'encampments'
- provide advice, assistance and support in enabling them to access employment, specialist treatment etc
- work proactively, where employment, accommodation, etc have not been sourced, to ensure that individuals are relocated to their home countries where they are more likely to access appropriate services
- provide clear feedback to Local Authorities and communities about the impact of interventions.

This work has been co-ordinated through their existing Rough Sleepers Outreach Service Manager in Cambridge and has had regional remit focusing on particular hotspot areas including Peterborough.

The staff team comprises of:

- 1 x Team leader
- 2 x Assertive (bi-lingual) Outreach Workers

Current situation

Through the work of NRP, by the end of October 2009 13 people will be reconnected with their home country. Further 25 were assisted in applying for ID documents - which allows them to access employment and register with Worker Registration Scheme. That involves many trips to embassies and long waiting periods.

'Mapping homelessness situation with ages'

Among 39 homeless migrants referred (by New Link) to the Relocation Project - 5 (13%) are under the age of 25 but above 19, 16 (41%) are aged between 25 – 40, and 18 (46%) are between the age of 40 – 60. We did not come across anybody aged above 60.

Encourage more involvement of all related partner organisations such as NHS and Hospitals Trust with homelessness situation

No formal arrangements with PCT have been made in order to resolve this. There are some informal structures put in place to assist this group of clients with their medical/health needs by some of the churches. For example, one of the Salvation Army volunteers is a Practitioner Nurse and is available every Monday during the homeless drop-in. It is questionable though whether special arrangements have to be made in order to address this, as rough sleepers can easily access primary care centres and seem to be well orientated as to where to go - further research into the needs of this group would be advisable to avoid unnecessary spending of the city resources.

Further information about referrals to the National Reconnection Service was included in the previous bulletin (p. 6)

NRPF Connect project update

NRPF Connect is a project to develop a national database for the NRPF client group. Following the October Bulletin, concerns were raised by some of our members with regards to a project that advocates for greater information sharing between local authorities and the UKBA. The purpose of the project remains focused on improving accountability and good practice with regards to the vulnerable adults and families who have been referred to local authorities for support. Furthermore, partnership work with the UKBA based on greater transparency reduces the risk of the UKBA acting independently to local authorities

when determining whether an individual or family has a right to remain in the UK.

At present a pilot system is being developed to capture the referral, review and assessment process of local authorities working with NRPF clients. As a management tool for local authorities, it enables those staff with additional NRPF duties to accurately record the areas of work that are unique to this field of service provision and helps them by being able to provide tailored reports on the cases that are being assessed or are currently supported.

Based on the findings of the pilot, due to be completed by 31st March 2010, the project team will consider the next steps in relation to implementing a national system. In the meantime, the current NRPf costs and numbers report provides an excellent opportunity for local authorities to provide an update to the figures received in 2007/2008 whilst accounting for current numbers of cases supported and the lead

people within the council responsible for NRPf. These findings will in turn feed into the development and business planning for the NRPf Connect project.

If further information is required – please contact Henry St Clair Miller, NRPf Team Manager – henry.miller@islington.gov.uk

NRPf training

The NRPf Network, in partnership with Islington Council, continues to provide a one-day training programme for local authorities on their duties to support individuals and families with no recourse to public funds. The training focuses on good practice in assessing and supporting people with NRPf; it provides an overview of relevant legislation and case-law and invites participants to explore the additional factors to be considered where immigration status impacts on entitlements to services in the UK.

Since April 2009, 17 training days have so far been provided to councils and voluntary sector organisations across the UK and the feedback from these events is very positive. The full details of the training days are available on the NRPf web pages: www.islington.gov.uk/nrpfnetwork, - any requests or enquiries can be made to nrpf@islington.gov.uk.

Dates for your Diary

East of England Regional NRPf Network meeting

Wednesday 20th January (13:00-14:30), EERA Offices, Flempton House, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk.

For more details, please contact pamusa@menter.org.uk

East Midlands Regional NRPf Network meeting

Thursday 28th January 2010 (10.00 – 12.30), Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire.

For more details, please contact Kirsty.Lowe@lg-em.gov.uk

London Regional NRPf Network meeting

Wednesday 17th March (14.00-16.00), Westminster City Hall, London.

For more details, please contact simon.wadsworth@croydon.gov.uk

For more details on the regional networks, including who can take part, see: <http://tinyurl.com/5uz9v9>

The NRPF Network is committed to supporting and working with local authorities, the voluntary sector and central government. The Network has over 1300 members and our website attracts over 1000 web hits per month.

The NRPF Network is funded by the UK Border Agency (UKBA) and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

For further information or to unsubscribe, please contact: nrpf@islington.gov.uk or tel 020 7527 7121

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