

**Refugee & Migrant's Forum (RMF) and UK Immigration Service (UKIS)**  
**Meeting held on 18 April 2007**  
**St James Centre**

**Present :** Elinah Mugwagwah (Chair, RMF)  
Azeldin El Sharif (Vice Chair, RMF)  
Elzein Mohamed (RMF)  
AboBecker Zukrya (RMF)  
Hazel Healy (Associate member, RMF)  
Sophie King (Development Worker, RMF)  
Chris Brammer (Chief Immigration Officer, UKIS – Detention and Removal)  
Mo Williams (Senior Executive Officer, UKIS – Reporting Centre Operations)  
Jenny Lazarus (Church Action on Poverty / Associate member RMF)

**1. Developments within the new Borders and Immigration Agency**

- Chris Brammer pointed out that a North West Operational Stakeholder Forum had been set up which MRSN has representation at. This group discuss matters of policy and may be the best place for us to raise our concerns particularly around policy.
- The RMF felt that as a regional body that deals with issues across the end to end asylum process its remit was very wide, and that there were advantages in a smaller group such as this which could bring together refugee community organizations and staff at Dallas Court to address issues on a local level.
- Chris explained that the structure of the agency was currently changing, and a new Regional Director, Gill Mortlock, appointed. Until the structure of the board was clearer – probably in 6-9 months – it would be difficult for UKIS staff to make firm commitments, or to be precise as to the input they could have. The agency's 'Key Targets and Commitments' were set out, with 'excellence in collaborative working' being one of these. UKIS would be happy to continue with the current meetings for the time being.
- UKIS also mentioned that they had recently had an unannounced inspection from HM Prisons Inspectorate following the 2004 inspection report. The new report had been submitted to them in draft form.

**2. UKIS initial response to findings**

- The decision not to submit a written response to the report had been made at a more senior level but the opportunity for dialogue was welcomed
- UKIS welcomed feedback which could inform the procedures at Dallas Court
- UKIS would engage in regular meetings, both the Stakeholder Forums and more informal meetings such as this one
- Contrary to the Forum's point during the presentation in February that they had consulted with a significant number of UKIS clients, Chris Brammer felt that the 80 refugees and asylum seekers who had taken part in the consultation was only a small number compared to the size of the asylum seeking population in Greater Manchester and that the views in the report were therefore not representative of the rest of the population.
- Some of the reporting of individual incidents, e.g. concerning removal visits, was inflammatory; these visits were very carefully monitored. They would prefer to investigate the complaints made about individual visits.

- They wanted to engage with community organizations, and were keen that they were made aware of the complaints procedures at Dallas Court
- The Forum made the point that UKIS would have the opportunity to highlight the areas they strongly denied by submitting a response to the report and that there may be room to negotiate over final wording but despite the extended deadline UKIS would not be submitting a written response because they did not want to be seen to endorse the findings.
- The Forum regretted that UKIS would not be submitting a response to the report but were pleased that the two groups would be engaged in ongoing dialogue. Both UKIS and RMF representatives recognized that some of the problems highlighted in the report were due to a lack of communication and understanding of procedures e.g. complaints, and that this kind of dialogue could work to improve understanding on both sides.

### **3. Launch of the Report**

- This would take place on 15 May at the Friends Meeting House in Manchester. The Forum were planning on the day running as follows, but were waiting for confirmation from UKIS and the Independent Asylum Commission:
  - Consultation findings, Refugee & Migrants Forum
  - Speech from UK Immigration Service - Developments at Dallas Court
  - Speech from Independent Asylum Commissioner
  - A choice of workshops on:
    - Accessing Legal Advice, Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit
    - The New Asylum Model, Eddie Montgomery, Asylum Lead North West
    - The Detention Process, Immigration Law Practitioners Association
- Chris Brammer offered to talk to Ian Collings, Assistant Director NW, to see whether he would be willing to make a presentation at the Launch. He would let the Forum know by Friday 20<sup>th</sup>.

## **4. Reporting Centre Issues (Consultation findings)**

### **1.6 Physical Environment**

- *Lack of outside shelter* : This was in the hands of the landlord(s), Peel Holdings, and it was something which the staff at Dallas Court had been pressing for some time. The only reason they had been given was that a shelter would be unattractive. Even a temporary shelter, such as a portakabin, would need permission from the landlords. Only 30 people reporting could be allowed in at any one time due to fire regulations, and this meant queues built up outside. UKIS felt that the real solution to this problem was to speed up the reporting process itself and they are trying to do this by putting in extra counters.
- RMF asked if we could help with the shelter issue by trying to raise support for a shelter with someone with influence perhaps the local MP or the city council. Mo Williams would
- check with their Business Support Unit to see what progress if any was being made on this matter, and would let RMF know if we could support the case in any way.

- *Lack of Prayer Room* : There used to be a prayer room but with the increase in counters there was now no room for a separate prayer room. This had been a hard decision but the increasing numbers and the constraints of the buildings left little option. The agency had a 15 year lease with the landlord so they could not move to alternative premises.
- *Lack of facilities for children* : Again, constraints of space prevented them from having a dedicated play space and toys except in the detention suites. It would be dangerous to have toys lying around the floor in the waiting area. RMF suggested toys that could be attached to the sides of the room like play cookers, telephones etc. There were baby changing facilities at the Centre.
- *Disabled Access* : The meaning of this comment was unclear as there was a ramp to the entrance and a toilet for disabled people. It was agreed that this could have arisen from a general lack of information regarding Dallas Court and was something which could be included in a general information leaflet. RMF referred to work being done between the Scottish Refugee Policy Forum and the reporting centre in Glasgow on an information leaflet covering useful information about the centre. It was agreed that this was something UKIS and RMF may be able to work on together. Mo Williams would enquire about a budget for this kind of leaflet.
- *Enquiries Counter* : People were referred here following reporting if there were any further queries. There is only one staff member and it was used as a reporting counter at busy times.

### **1.3 Travel Arrangements**

- Information on this could be part of a general information leaflet with a map and details of bus services. Travel expenses were another area which could be clarified in a leaflet.
- The situation regarding travel tickets was confusing, and Mo Williams would investigate why people could not be issued day passes that included travel on the tram.
- The RMF would contact the Community Network for Manchester Transport Group to see if anything could be done about the frequency and route of the 33 bus, operated by First.
- The consultation raised the issue of how people on Section 4 vouchers could be expected to report without a travel ticket. If people had had to miss a reporting date for sickness or any other reason they would not have been given a ticket for their next reporting date but had no cash to buy tickets with. People in this situation wanted to comply with UKIS's procedures but had no means to do so.
- Mo Williams was not sure what should happen in this case and would follow this up.
- UKIS asked RMF for advice on which languages their leaflets should be translated into and circulated an IOM leaflet as an example. RMF would discuss this and feedback.

### **1.10 Waiting Times**

- On occasion it could take a whole day to report, taking in travel times, queuing, and the obtaining of travel tickets/passes.
- Much of this was outside the control of the centre i.e. bus timetables, and there was limited throughput due to the number of counters and staff. It was felt that perceptions

of staff 'wasting time chatting' were unfair. People could not be expected to work all day without interacting.

### **1.9 Children and Families**

- The question of why mothers with children need to report was something which could be raised at the Stakeholder Forum. Sometimes a whole family was asked to come in for an interview to get an up to date picture of the family's circumstances but parents were not told to bring their children to report.
- The problem people reported was having to bring their children because they had no childcare, particularly if families were moved around, which breaks up any 'support system' they had built up. It was also difficult for people from further reaches of Manchester to drop their children at school, come in to report and then pick them up from school in time.
- There was a national Child Protection Policy, and all staff had training locally but UKIS would consider whether there was a need to publish the policy locally.

### **5. Terms of Reference for the Group**

- It was agreed that these should not be rigid but act as a guide for the purpose and practicalities of the meetings.
- UKIS suggested RMF should draft this and circulate for agreement
- Chris Brammer agreed to identify areas in the report which fall within the remit of this group and to identify where other parts of the report could be addressed, or by which teams
- The Forum could input on concerns relating to reporting procedures etc but Dallas Court staff could not guarantee that these would be implemented.
- It was agreed to hold a further meeting in a few weeks so that some progress could be made in addressing the issues raised in the report. Following this the meetings could be on a quarterly basis.
- The topic of future meetings could be decided once UKIS had highlighted which areas of the report it was within their remit to address.

### **6. AOB**

- RMF asked for copies of policies and procedures which Dallas Court use, currently they had the travel expenses policy and information from the Operating Enforcement Manual.
- UKIS only use the OEM they do not generally have separate policies e.g. on complaints. Although an informal complaints procedure was being piloted and a new family removals policy was in draft.

### **Action Points:**

- Chris Brammer to ask Ian Collings to speak at launch event on 15<sup>th</sup> May and notify RMF
- Mo Williams to contact BSU for an update on negotiations on the shelter and to check it wouldn't be a problem for RMF to look at who might have influence over the landlords decision
- To produce comprehensive leaflets and posters, covering reporting centre procedures, in community languages. Mo Williams to investigate what budget there was for their production

- RMF to advise on the languages needed to cover the various communities
- Mo Williams to look into the possibility of issuing day tickets that included the tram
- RMF to contact transport network about the First no. 33 service
- Mo Williams to look into how people on Section 4 vouchers are expected to report if they haven't received a travel ticket
- RMF to draft and circulate a brief terms of reference

**Date of Next Meeting :**

- Thursday 31 May from 11.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m at Dallas Court.
- To be chaired and minuted by UKIS