

**Refugee & Migrant Forum Manchester (RMFM) and
Border and Immigration Agency (BIA)
Meeting held on Thursday 7th February 2008
At Dallas Court, Salford**

Present: Elinah Mugwagwah (Chair, RMF)
Azeldin El Sharif (Vice-Chair, RMF)
Elzein Mohamed (RMF)
Abobeker Zukrya (RMF)
Sophie King (Development Worker, RMF)
Simon Cahill (Assistant Director, BIA)
Chris Brammer (HM Inspector, BIA)
Mo Williams (Senior Executive Officer, BIA)
Jordan Roberts (Executive Officer, BIA, Acting Reporting Centre Manager)
Eric Alexander (G4S)
John Johnson (G4S Strategic Accounts)

Peter Mayor (BIA) attended to take minutes

1. Previous Minutes.

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

2. G4S Presentation

Eric Alexander explained that as part of G4S's ongoing process of continuous improvement, best practice is identified and rolled out across the company. All staff allocated to the BIA are hand picked for interpersonal skills, and undergo a 5 day training course at Warrington. This training is composed of individual modules (E.g. Searching, Communication, Equality & Diversity) and the modules can be modified in line with the particular needs of the sector.

Abobeker Zukrya enquired as to whether it would be possible to introduce Refugee Awareness training into this system. Eric Alexander said that G4S would be quite willing to introduce a module of this nature into the course, and Chris Brammer said that the BIA had already agreed that their staff could receive this training. Sophie King asked if this would involve G4S staff, reporting centre staff and operational staff. Chris Brammer said that the detail would fall to the Training Coordinator but thought it sensible to kick off with a presentation to Reporting Centre & G4S staff together so that feedback could be taken into account.

Eric Alexander offered to give samples of the literature for the training modules to the RMF. There was a request for this to be accessible via the G4S website, however John Johnson suggested that this could cause difficulties with copyright. Eric Alexander concurred with this and stated that this would be impossible without board permission: the website contains the company's policies rather than operational & training manuals to avoid the breach of commercial confidentiality.

Elinah Mugwagwah asked if G4S staff were specific to the reporting centre. John Johnson said that most staff were site-specific although there is sometimes a need to use relief staff.

Mo Williams enquired as to whether any specific child policies were in place. Eric Alexander said not at present.

Elzein Mohamed inquired about G4S's complaints procedures. John Johnson stated that complaints were passed upwards through the site manager. Complaints involving operational issues were subject to internal investigation. Mo Williams stated that most issues were raised by the BIA rather than by individual reportees. Sophie King suggested that such reportees would be unlikely to complain through official channels due to fear of the consequences.

Elzein Mohamed asked if G4S was within the remit of any independent monitoring body. Eric Alexander stated that there are two such bodies, SIBA and BSIA.

Elinah Mugwagwah will send copies of the RMF Consultation report to Eric Alexander and John Johnson.

3. Action plan

Chris Brammer voiced concerns about the size and manageability of the current action point register and the fact that some of the points on it were being brought up at each meeting despite there being no action which could currently be taken over them. It was decided that Chris Brammer would produce a draft of a more manageable action point list, to be circulated as part of the minutes of the meeting.

4. Action points / Feedback from reportees

4.1 Travel tickets

Sophie King said that Forum members had received feedback that reportees who can not report due to illness are not receiving travel tickets by post for their next reporting event, as had been agreed at a previous RMF/BIA meeting.

Jordan Roberts stated that this instruction had not been circulated to Reporting Centre staff and that he was unaware of this issue.

Mo Williams said that she would make sure this procedure was followed and that she would email reporting centre staff to alert them to this.

4.2 Information leaflet

A discussion took place regarding the proposed information leaflet for reportees on rights and responsibilities regarding reporting and detention (to be given to all reportees). RMF delegates agreed to produce a draft version of this in consultation with communities before the next RMF/BIA meeting, the target being to arrive at an agreed version by the end of July, to be published within 2 months of that.

4.3 Staffing levels/reporting frequencies

Elzein Mohamed articulated complaints by reportees that the Reporting Centre telephone was often not answered when people tried to contact staff to notify them that they could not report e.g. because of ill health. Jordan Roberts apologised but said that staffing constraints within the Reporting Centre meant that at busy times priority had to be given to facilitating the throughput of attendees. Unfortunately this may continue to be the case whilst current staffing/reporting ratios remain unchanged.

A discussion followed about the consequences for reportees of missing a reporting date such as having their support stopped or being threatened with detention. If the current situation means that people cannot get through to the reporting centre to notify staff, should they be held responsible? Sophie King

questioned whether reporting frequencies are being looked at if there were too many people going through the centre for staffing levels. Mo Williams said that the new Reporting Centre Manager, Emma Sheehy, would be tasked with reviewing reporting frequency because the centre is over crowded at certain times during the day. It was added that reportees can still access their support if they report within a 7 day period of the missed appointment.

4.4 Telephone interpreting

Feedback also suggests that the telephone interpretation system is still not being used. Jordan explained that the system is used where possible but not when it is too busy. RMFM emphasised the importance of asking someone if they are happy for someone in the centre to interpret for them rather than assuming that it is acceptable and providing telephone interpretation if that is what the reportee needs.

In response to previous request for statistics on use of the BIG WORD telephone interpretation system, Mo Williams stated that stats would not be indicative of whether the service is being used adequately because it would depend on how many people need it and what the particular interaction or query was about

4.5 Detention issues

Chris Brammer handed out copies of the PACE rules relating to telephone calls, and agreed to give them a list of contact telephone numbers for Police Detention Suites.

Azeldin volunteered to translate a copy of an IS 91R into Arabic.

Chris Brammer explained that in normal cases someone is only detained if they have their ticket booked and travel documents in place. He would be interested to see examples as to when someone has been detained indefinitely.

4.6 Stakeholder event in June

Mo Williams is to confirm with Sophie King the date for the planned Stakeholder Forum in June

Internal complaints and IPCC, Case Resolution Directorate, Gill Mortlock, G4S (if still contracted by BIA), Contact Management policy representatives to be invited.

5. Date of Next Meeting

The next RMF/BIA meeting was agreed as 24th April 2008.

The agenda will focus on contact management, tagging and planning the June event. The Medical foundation, G4S (Tagging) are to be invited and Mo Williams will see if there is someone locally with some responsibility for Contact Management if representatives from Croydon will not attend.