

Newsletter – March



Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe appeal allowed at the High Court. The High Court allowed the Refugee Legal Centre appeal. This now means that this test case will be reheard by the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal.

What is the case about? RLC are putting forward a case that Zimbabweans that are being returned face further persecution upon return. This is one thing that the UK government are not allowed to do.

What does this mean for Zimbabweans? This means that at the moment people from Zimbabwe cannot be returned home forcibly. This does not stop them voluntarily returning if they wish. This obviously leaves Zimbabweans in a state of "limbo" until this case has been decided. We believe that Zimbabweans, who have no outstanding claim, may still be able to apply for Section 4 support.

NASS

NEW

New Policy

NASS have Launched their Policy Bulletin 86 – Possessions. This states what people are allowed to take with them when being moved into NASS accommodation. It also clearly states whose responsibility it is to pay for this. Please see me if you would like a copy of the full policy.

Section 55 Interviews

Since February 2007, Immigration (IND) has been able to provide travel tickets for applicants who are invited to attend a Section 55 Interview. These tickets will not be provided automatically but can be requested. From April 2007 the NAM offices will be responsible for doing these interviews.

What are the interviews for? Section 55 states that a person must make a claim for asylum "as soon as reasonably practicable" Everyone who claims asylum is subject to this rule. It is not as strictly imposed as previously but people could still have access to support withdrawn. The only way to challenge this would be through a Judicial Review.

Section 4

A reminder that if you are from the following countries you may be able to apply for Section 4 support without having to sign for voluntary return. These countries are:

- Zimbabwe (temporarily until the court case is heard)
- Palestine (as they are unable to return you as it is not possible to obtain travel documents to Palestine)
- Iraq (If someone is from central and southern Iraq and this is stated either in their SEF (Statement of Evidence Form) or their initial Refusal papers then they may be able to apply temporarily)
- Afghanistan (Women who are the head of a household)



Transition Process for Section 4.

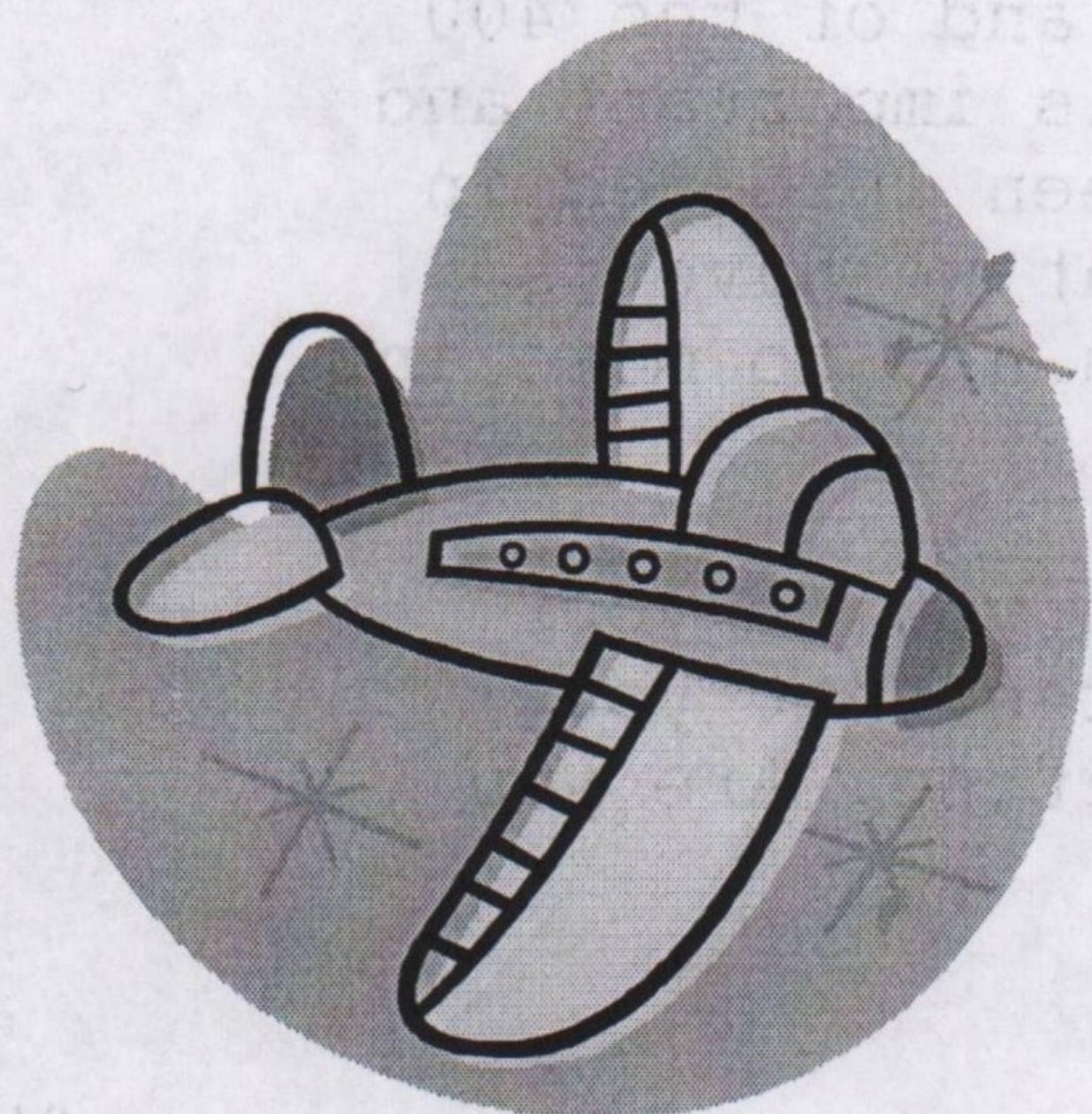
This process is still ongoing. It was due to be completed by 31st March 2007 nationwide. This will now not be achieved. Please find attached a questions and answer document from the Home Office explaining the process.

Choices/Voluntary Return

We had Aidan Hallett from Refugee Action come to Refugee Forum to offer training to staff and volunteers. For anyone who would like a handout of the evening, please see me. Some important information was discussed including the following:

Increase in Financial Package for Voluntary Return:

These categories below will ONLY apply if the person claimed asylum before 31/1/2007.



Applied for Voluntary Return	Return Date	Home Office	Cash on Departure	Amount to be spent upon return. (this will not be cash but will be items, courses, education up to the value of
1/2/2007 – 31/5/2007	Within 3 months of the Home Office excepting their application for Voluntary Return		£500 (in US Dollars – so \$1000 at present exchange rate)	£3000
31/5/2007 – 1/6/2007	Within 3 months of the Home Office excepting their application for Voluntary Return		£500 (in US Dollars – so \$1000 at present exchange rate)	£2000
30/6/2007	No Deadline		N/A	£1000

ESOL Campaign



Recently the government announced that from September asylum seekers would no longer be allowed to have free English classes (ESOL). Refugee Forum along with many other organisations locally and nationally campaigned against this. We are please that the government has now said that free ESOL classes will continue for the following 2 groups of asylum seekers:

- Those people whose cases are still being considered and it has taken more than 6 months
- People whose asylum claims have not been successful but who are not able to return to their home country.

This is good to hear, but it is still not clear how this will work. It does mean that asylum seekers who have been here less than 6 months will be expected to pay for their ESOL classes.

Congratulations to all of you involved in this campaign. It is a start and we will forward you details of any further information or changes.



Travel Documents

There have been some new developments with regards to travel documents.

As from the 2nd April 2007 there will be a new set of fees (not yet released) a new revised form and a new address to send travel documents too.

In addition to this change, we have been advised that if you are Iraqi then it is very likely that your application for a Travel Document or Document of Identity application will be refused. **Why?** Previously the Iraqi embassy was not issuing Iraqi passports. We have now been informed that this is not the case.

So this means that all Iraqi Nationals will need to apply for an Iraqi passport.

If this is refused then they will be able to apply for a Travel Document/Document of Identity.

If this is granted then they will be able to apply for their visa to be put into their Iraqi passport by completing an NTL form.

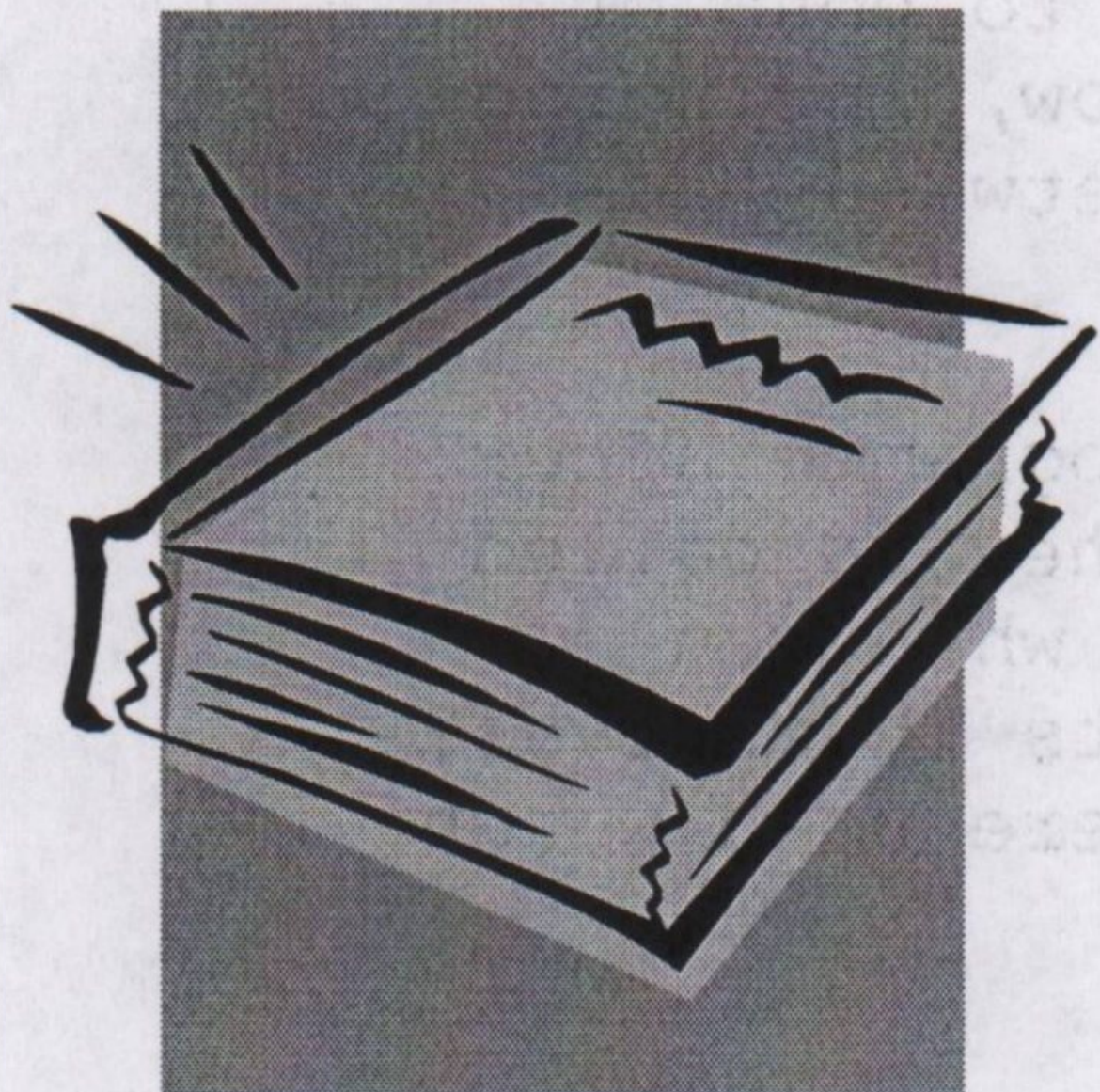
Please feel free to advise someone to come to an advice session if you think this may apply to them.

If they apply for a travel document and it is refused then the person will lose their money.

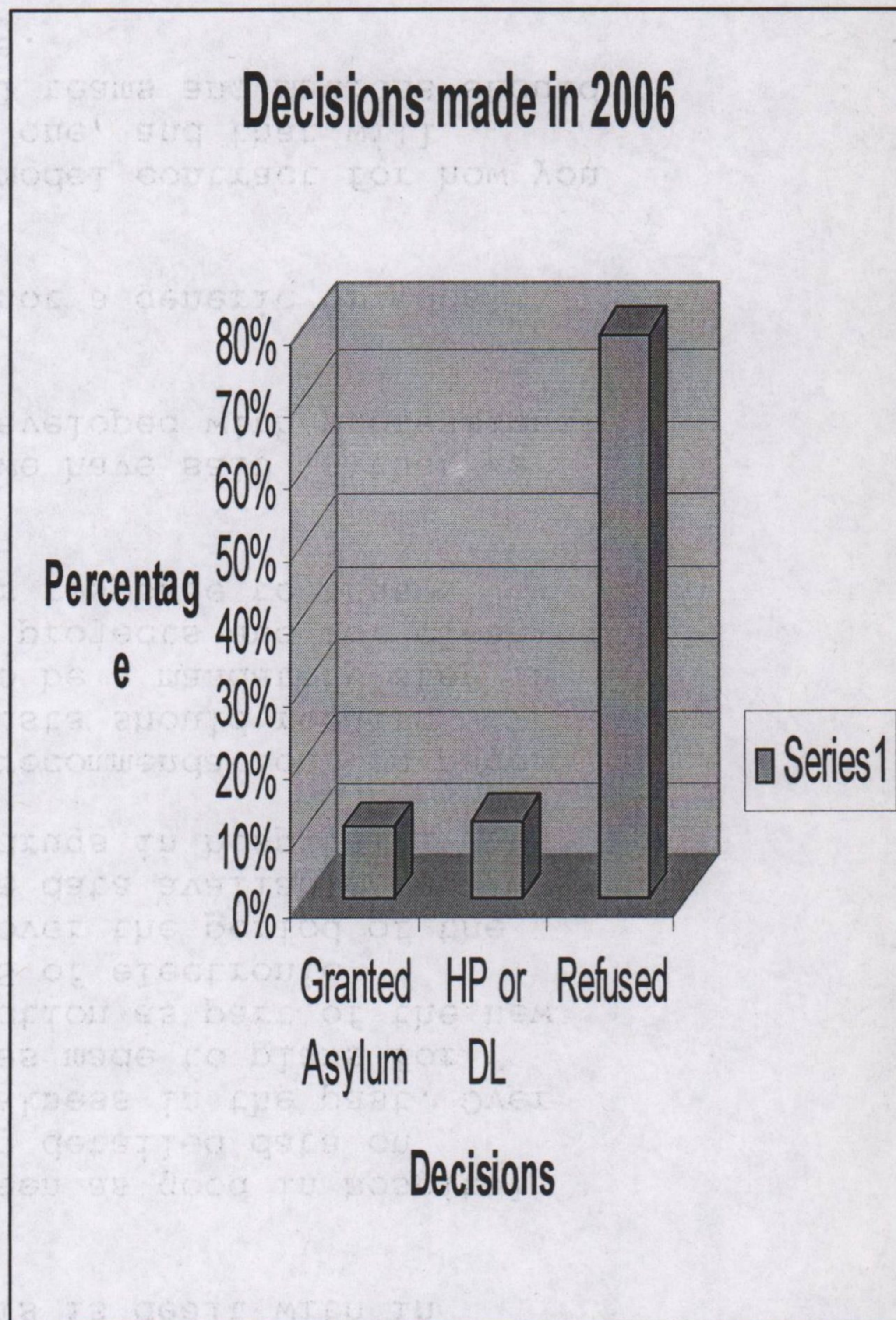
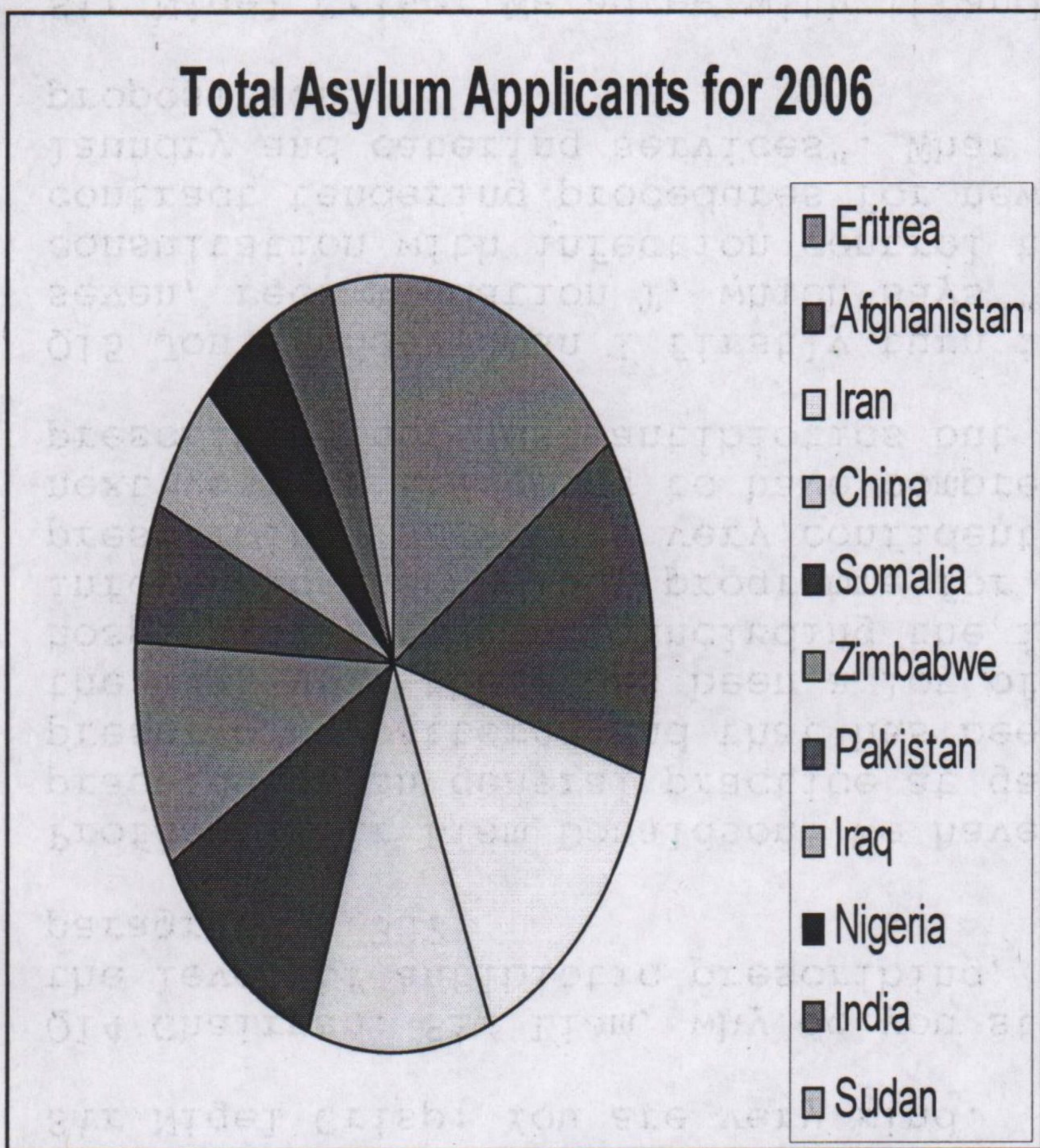
Reports Available:

Asylum Support Appeals Project (ASAP) Failing the Failed? How NASS decision making is letting down destitute rejected asylum seekers. This report looks at poor NASS decision making and how this is leaving people destitute unnecessarily. – Please see me if you would like a copy.

JCWI (Joint Council for Welfare of Immigrants) – 2005/6 Annual Review



Please find attached a report from **Refugee Action regarding Asylum Statistics** for the last quarter of 2006. Some Interesting figures include:



Refugee Legal Centre

We had a meeting with RLC this week and have gained the following information from them. They are still in temporary accommodation and looking to move. They may be sharing premises with Refugee Action. They have 4 caseworkers 2 of whom are quite inexperienced.

They are very busy and taking on referral. They are able to see people for the following things:

- SEF (Statement of Evidence Forms)
- Initial Interview and possible refusals
- Forward appeals and reconsideration requests to their London Office
- Fresh Claims (4 -6 week wait for an appointment)

ILR Requirements

Please find attached an article about the new requirements if you are applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). From 2nd April you will now be expected to have knowledge of life in the UK and knowledge of the English Language. Please see article for further details.



Rise in prices

As from the beginning of April we have been advised that the cost of Travel Documents and Citizenship forms will increase. Please see below a provisional table of changes.

Application type	Old Fee	Proposed Fee	New
Indefinite Leave to Remain	£335	£750	
Citizenship/Naturalisation – Adult	£268	£575	
Citizenship/Naturalisation-Child	£200	£400	
Adult Travel Document (Not a refugee)	£195	£210	
Child Travel Document (Not a refugee)	£115	£130	
Adult Travel Document (Refugee)	£42	£66	
Child Travel Document (Child)	£25	£45	



Legal Services Commission

There are plans to reform the Legal Aid process by 1st October 2007. Anyone who claims asylum after this date will be affected by the new legal aid rules. We have very little details on this, but I will forward this information as soon as I have some.

Refugee Forum News:

Tuesday Morning Support

Please find attached a Leaflet/poster which is being given to anyone who is supported by the Tuesday morning cash group. Unfortunately the decision has been taken to change the way that support is distributed. This is mainly due to the financial cost of supporting people and whether or not the Forum can continue to support people in the same way.

From the 27th of March, everyone who wishes to receive money will have an interview with an advisor before money is distributed. **We are looking for volunteer advisors to help out on a Tuesday morning** as we are aiming to turn this into an Anti-Destitution clinic offering a range of services including the distribution of money. If you are interested then please contact me.

Women's Sessions

On 9th March 2007 we launched the Refugee Forum Women's sessions. Every Friday NNRF will only be open to women until 2pm. They will have access to the internet, computers and advisors as well as being able to socialise, meet people, makes friends and drink tea and coffee.

We are aiming to have an activity at least every two weeks but women will be able to come down every week to use the facilities. We have a group of women volunteers who are helping to shape and steer the group to be as popular and useful as possible.

If you are interested in volunteering (women only) at these sessions then please feel free to contact me. If you wish to come along (again women and children only) then just come down and join in the fun!



New Services

Free Conversation Sessions for ESOL learners

Every Thursday 3:30-5:30pm Central Library, Angel Row (Just off Market Square) 4th Floor Training Room. This is a drop in service, no appointment needed. For more Information please see posters in NNRF or contact Farah on 01159151189.

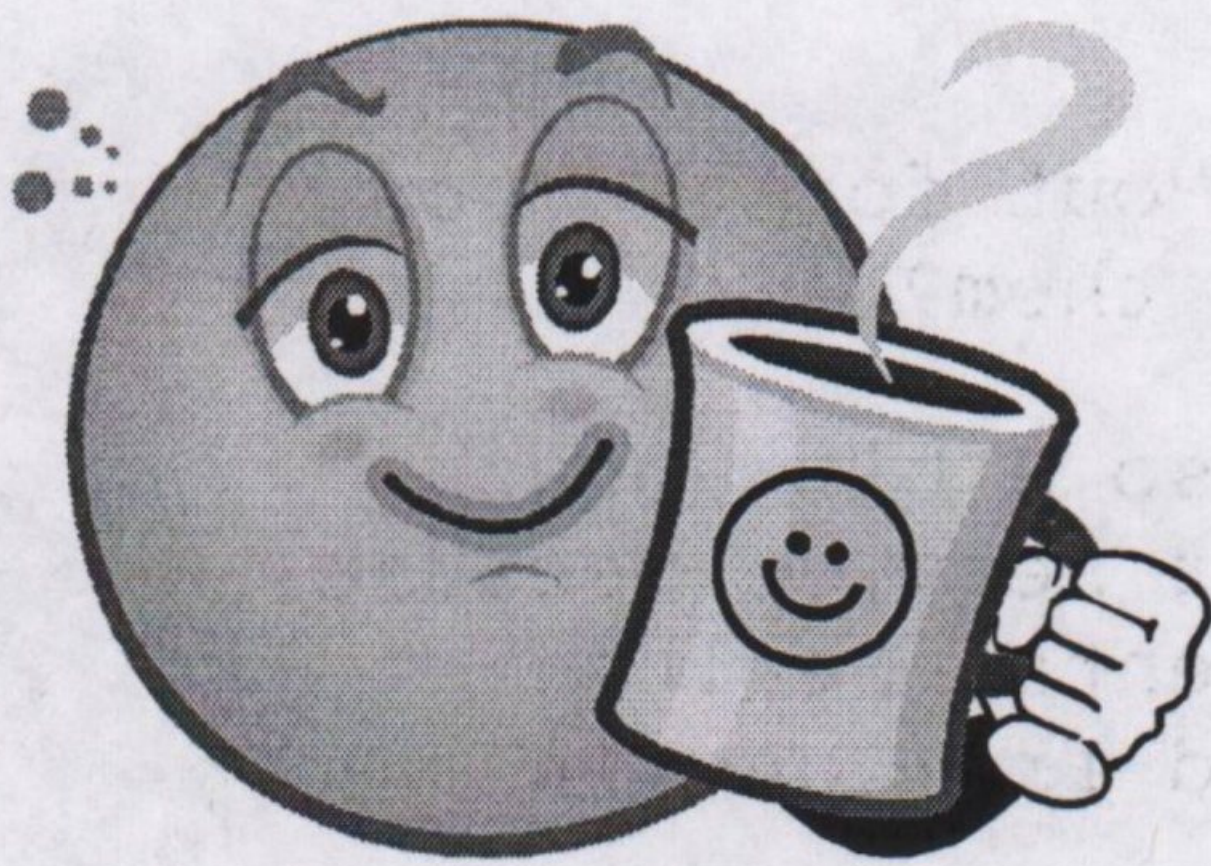
Prisoners of Conscience

We have been approached by the above organisation to become a referral agency. The Fund makes grants to individuals (and/or their families) who have suffered persecution for their conscientiously-held beliefs, provided they have not used or advocated violence or supported a violent organisation or have willingly served in the armed forces.

The Fund makes grants for the relief or rehabilitation of anyone who falls inside its remit. This will include:

- Basic essentials such as food, clothing, toiletries and travel costs.
- Basic furniture.
- Counseling/Therapy sessions.
- Family reunion costs.
- Medical needs.
- Some vocational conversion courses such as PLAB and IELTS.
- We do not help with university fees but can help with travel fares, books etc.
- As a rule, we do not fund retrospectively.

If you think you know anyone that would be eligible (being an asylum seeker or refugee is not enough to qualify) and need a small grant for something specific then please contact me.



Attachments:

Tuesday Morning Support Poster
Refugee Action Statistics
Voluntary Return Form (an example)
NADAC briefing on Zimbabwe
Conversation Classes Poster
Q&A sheet for Section 4