



MARCH/APRIL 2008

NNRF NEWSLETTER

Contents

Case Resolution	2
Asylum Policy Group.....	2
DRC Update	3
Workers of Iran	3
Citizenship Test	3
City of Sanctuary	3
Amnesty campaign	3
Green Paper	4
Biometric Travel Document	4
BIA and Customs merger	4
BIA removal projects	5
Doctors to oppose healthcare plan	5
New forms and fee increase	5
Section 4 news	6
Migrant Service Provision Report	6
Asylum Statistics	7
Reports Available	8

Case Resolution – latest information

The Border and Immigration Agency's (BIA) plans to clear the backlog of unresolved asylum cases (estimated at 450,000!) by 2011 are in progress. Nottingham City Council has been told to expect 159 families to be granted Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) by mid-March. Some single people are also starting to receive ILR letters.

Other old cases will be assigned special caseworkers (without further questionnaires being sent necessarily) so there may be more than the initial 159 families granted ILR.

Once ILR is granted, a family has 28 days before NASS support and accommodation cease. They will then be "statutorily homeless" and the City Council will be legally bound to house them.

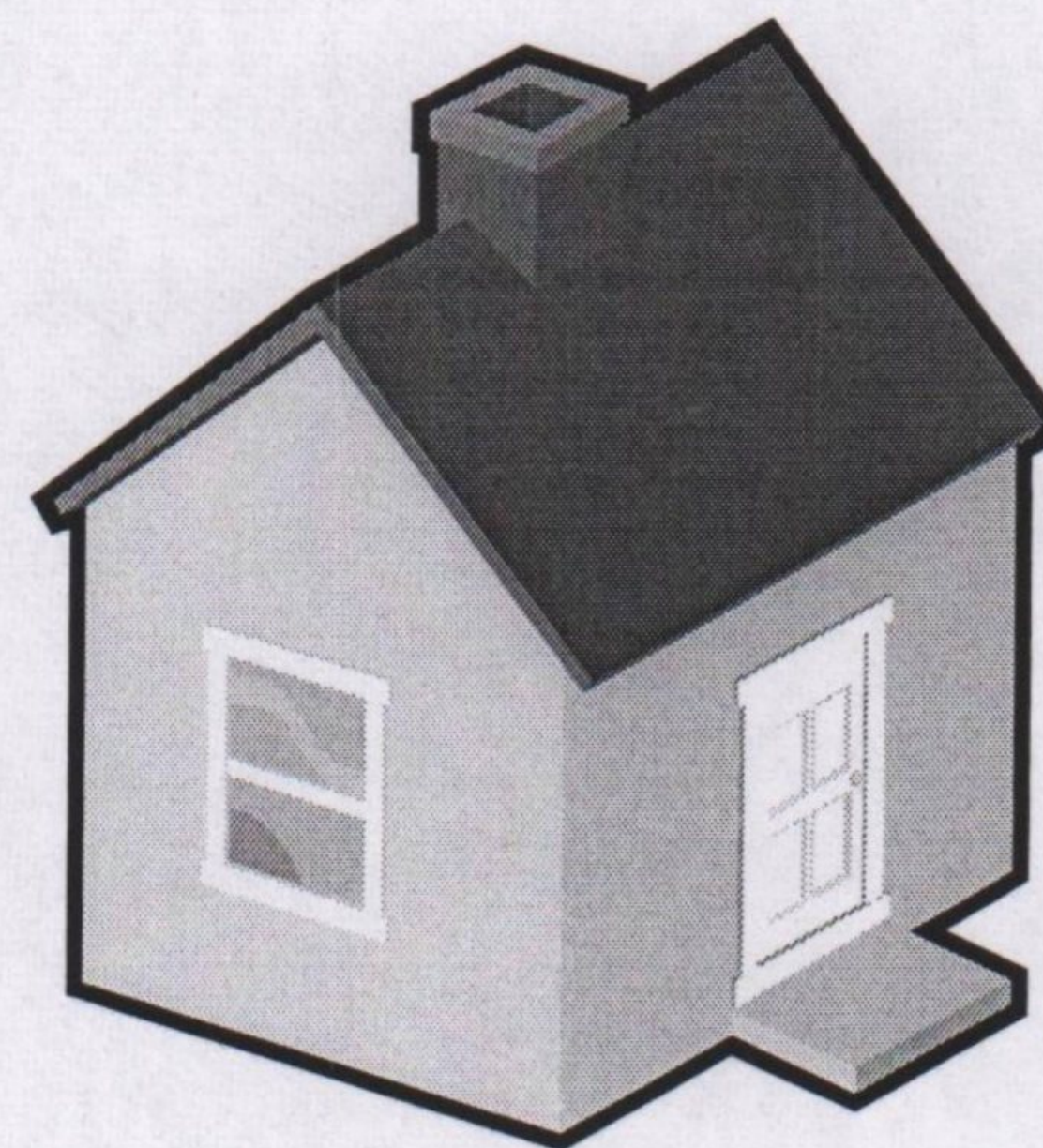
If the family's NASS house belongs to the Council, these families can opt to stay in the property after signing a tenancy with Nottingham City Homes. If

they want to move, Housing Aid will help them to bid for another property but if, after 28 days, their bidding is unsuccessful, they will either have to stay in their NASS property or be homeless. If they successfully bid but the house is not ready, they will have to move into temporary accommodation (potentially in a family hostel).

Families have no option of permanently staying in houses belonging to Refugee Support or Priority Properties but the Council is hoping to take over these houses for 6 months, while the family seeks alternative accommodation.

All families should be visited by someone from the Council's Housing Aid team who will advise them of their housing options. Refugee Support has a contract with the Council to provide advice and support to families as soon as they receive their ILR letter (including assistance with applying for benefits). They are also, of course, welcome to come to Refugee Forum for advice.

Upon ILR being granted, families will only have a right to apply for Council housing in the town to which they were dispersed by NASS. They can move elsewhere in the UK but will have to find private accommodation. After 6 months living there, they will have the right to apply for council housing in that area. They should be warned that family accommodation in London and the South East can be very expensive and waiting times for Council housing are high (between 10-15 years in the London area).



Asylum Policy Group Report

It is estimated that there are about a quarter of a million failed asylum seekers in the UK. The majority of whom are not allowed to claim benefits but are also forbidden to work (with the repercussions of working illegally increasing all the time) yet the situation in their country of origin means that their return is unfeasible. The law effectively forces these individuals into destitution. At the same time, the asylum process is overburdened and chaotic.

Researchers state that the root of the problem is that the system was designed to deal with only a few cases, not the 25,000 or so applications that are actually made. Some estimates suggest that there are up to 450,000 failed asylum seekers living in the UK without statutory support. 90% of them feel it is unsafe to return to their country of origin.

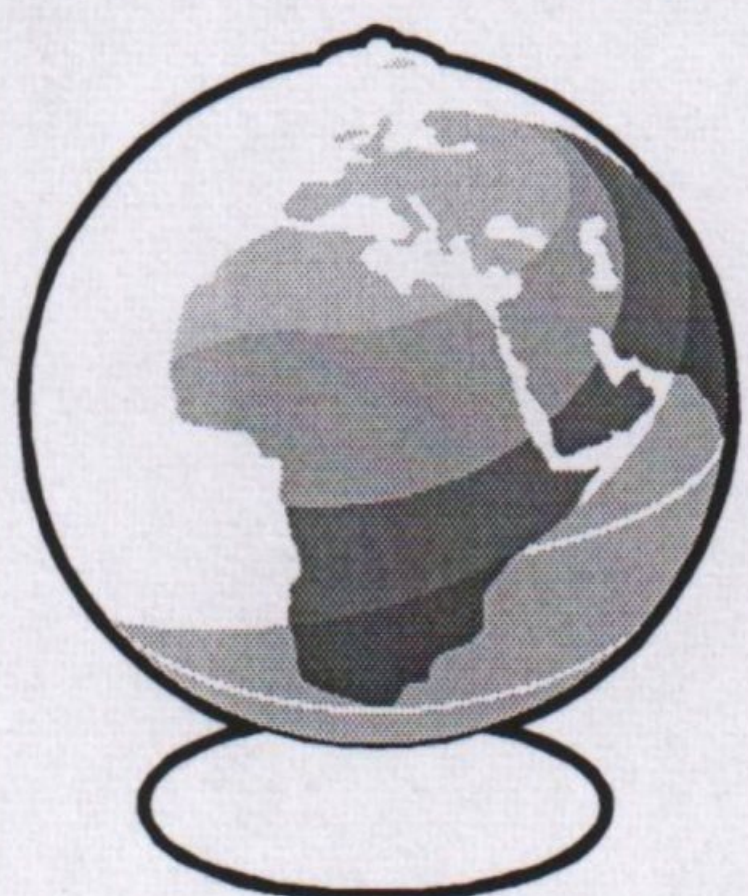
The Government's response to this has been to tighten asylum law (restricting legal aid, splitting up families) and moving responsibility around asylum to different departments within the Home Office. The system costs £1.5 billion per annum but does not work and has resulted in a growing destitute underclass supported only by voluntary organisations.

Summarised from The asylum Policy Group's Report in, The Centre for Social Justice's Policy Programme 2007-2008 Launch.

www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk

DRC Appeal Update

Recently, the appeal regarding the DRC test-case was refused at the first stage. Although papers are now being prepared to take the appeal directly to the Court of Appeal, the Home Office are detaining people that go to sign-in and issuing them (and those already detained) with removal directions.



Solidarity with the workers of Iran



The Iranian government has been arresting workers who have stood up and tried to organize unions. This repression is in violation of International Labour Organization core conventions and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ("everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests"). On 6th March, trade unions around the world held an international day of action in solidarity with the workers of Iran. See link for more information:

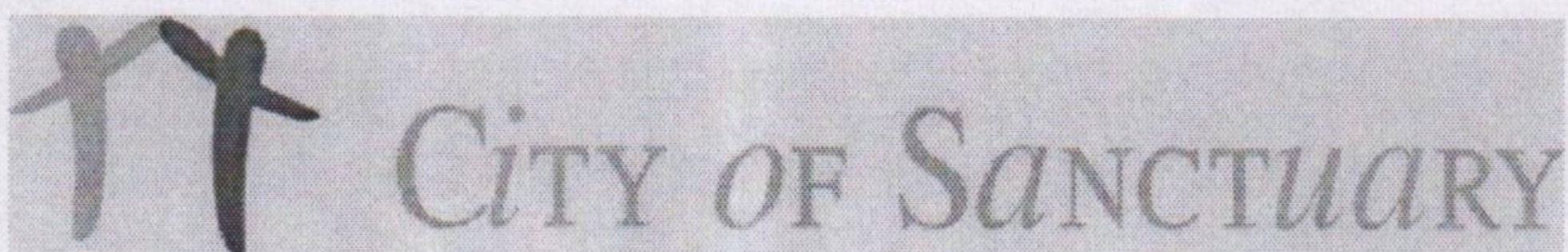
<http://www.itfglobal.org/campaigns/osanloo-action.cfm>

Citizenship Test Computer Software Available

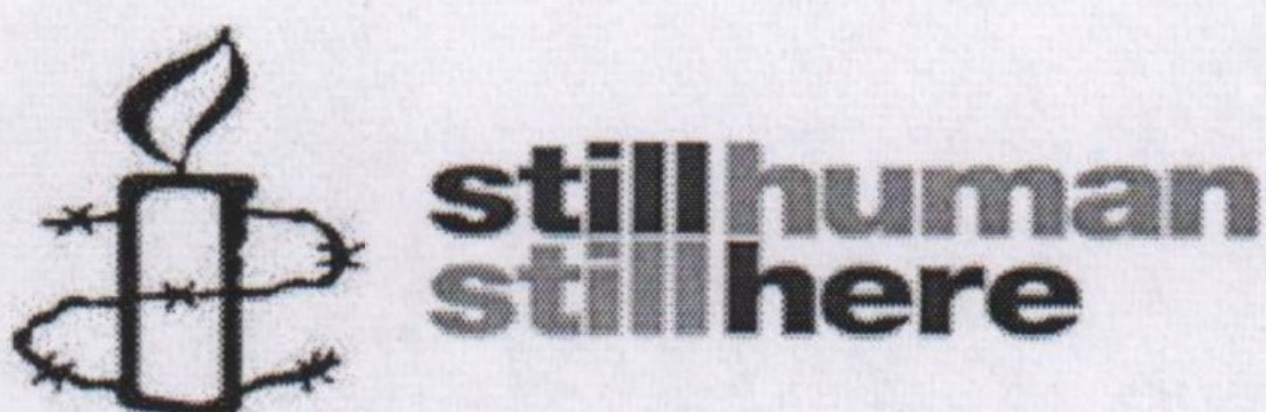


Nottingham City and County Libraries now have licences to provide software which will help people prepare for and assess their readiness to take the British Citizenship Test. The course, called *Life in Great Britain* includes the text of chapters 2,3,4,5 and 6 of *Life in the UK* a journey into citizenship. The course has been designed to enable the learner to work through the program independently, but can be used with tutor support. Learners need to have a reasonable grasp of English to get the most out of the programme.

The software is available at Arnold, Aspley, Beeston, Carlton Road, Central, Hyson Green, Mansfield, Meadows, Newark, Radford, Retford, Sneinton, St Anns, Sutton-In-Ashfield, Worksop and West Bridgford libraries.



City of Sanctuary is a movement to build a culture of hospitality for refugees and asylum-seekers. Sheffield became the first official 'City of Sanctuary' for asylum seekers and refugees in September 2007; there are now working groups in Leicester and Leeds. The first national City of Sanctuary Conference will be on 4 June 2008 in Sheffield. www.cityofsanctuary.com



Amnesty International have produced a short documentary to highlight the hardships faced by destitute refused asylum seekers in the UK. The 12 minute film "Still Human, Still Here" shows the lives of three refused asylum seekers. It is part of their ongoing campaign to end the threat of destitution as a tool to deter people from claiming asylum in the UK. The campaign calls for the government to continue financial support and accommodation to refused asylum seekers and grant permission to work as well as full access to healthcare and education.

The film can be found at www.amnesty.org.uk/asylum

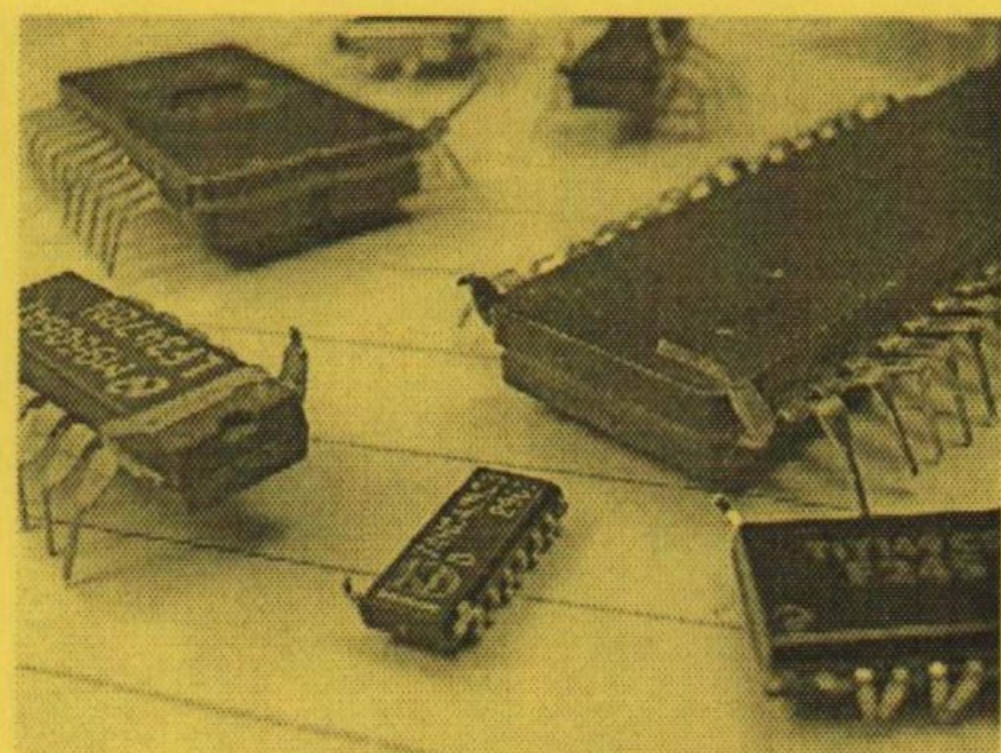
The Green Paper: The Path to Citizenship

The Government has proposed radical changes to the way that migrants can earn their stay in Britain. They propose a three stage route to citizenship including a probationary period that requires new migrants to demonstrate their contribution to the UK before being granted full citizenship. Full access to benefits would be delayed until the successful completion of this probationary period.

Applications from migrants who have carried out voluntary service would be more likely to be successful, migrants would be required to have good English-language skills, anyone guilty of a minor offence would have to have a longer probationary period while anyone that has committed a major offence would be completely barred from acquiring citizenship. It has also been proposed that migrants should pay into a fund to manage the transitional impacts of migration and carry out voluntary work to show their commitment to "our shared values."

Critics have stated that the proposals are discriminatory as they will favour migrants from wealthier, more privileged backgrounds and also mean that once granted citizenship, migrants will not be equal to native-born citizens.

These changes come alongside the introduction of a points-based system that will enable only the most skilled to enter the UK; a single border force to guard ports and airports and the finger printing of all Visa applicants as part of the Government's plans to restrict migration into the UK.

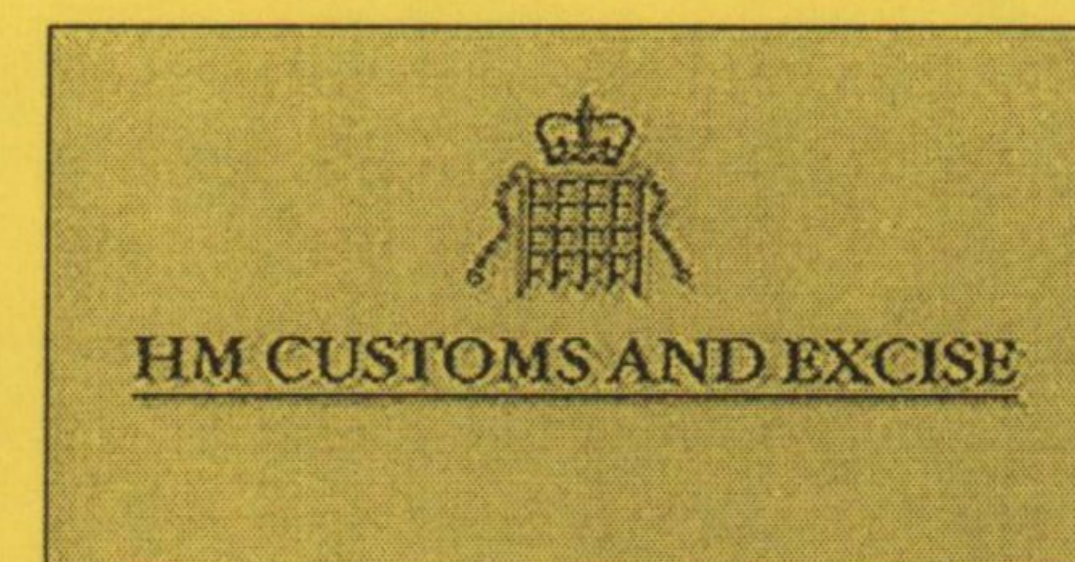


Biometric Travel Documents

All travel documents issued since 17th March will have a biometric chip that contains the holders name, nationality, sex, place and date of birth and signature. The fee has stayed the same (so far) and applications still need to be made by completing a travel document application form (TD112 Revision 12) and enclosing the correct fee and supporting documents.

BIA AND CUSTOMS AND REVENUE TO MERGE

A merger between the Border and Immigration Agency and Her Majesty's Customs and Revenue is scheduled for later this year and will be known as the UK Borders Agency. Some of the changes that this will involve include:



Overseas

- Instead of just a stamp in a passport, Visas will involve potential visitors providing fingerprints
- British immigration officers will be stationed at major European ports (e.g. Calais, Paris, Brussels)
- Over the next few years, information about ticket purchases will be made available to the UK Border Agency in advance of travel

At the Border

- Immigration control and customs are beginning to share responsibilities
- Immigration officers to have stronger police-like powers to make arrests and prosecute offenders more often.

In the UK

- ID cards will be introduced to foreign nationals from this year meaning that people overstaying their Visa won't be able to access health or other benefits.
- The Australian-style Points Based System, came into force at the end of February
- Employers that don't carry out the correct ID checks could face fines of up to £10,000 per illegal worker
- Foreign nationals who break the law will continue to be deported

For more information <http://www.gnn.gov.uk/Content/Detail.asp?ReleaseID=346647&NewsAreaID=2>

Charities attack BIA project

Refugee and children's rights campaigners have criticised the government's Clan Ebor project. The project, for families refused asylum, aims to encourage asylum seekers to return to their country of origin. Campaigners describe the project as "flawed, confusing and deeply distressing for parents and children." The letter inviting families to an interview with the BIA implied that their case would be reviewed but instead they were only informed of their removal options. Families were told had no option but to return to their country despite not having exhausted the asylum process. Some families were misled and told that if they did not voluntarily return, they faced deportation even though the House of Lords regarded their country as unsafe for return.

Detention alternative

The Migrant Helpline is the Home Office's alternative to detention pilot. The Helpline provides information to asylum seeking families about returning to their country of origin whilst they stay in Migrant Helpline accommodation. This means that families are not placed in detention facilities since the Migrant Helpline accommodation is not a secure holding.

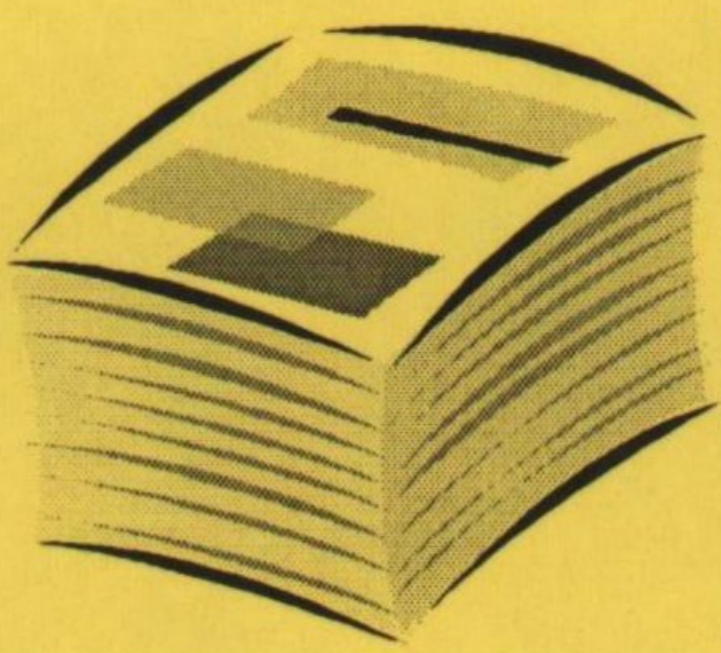
It is not clear if this pilot is part of the same project as the Clan Ebor project but both focus on getting families to voluntarily return to their country of origin (without discussing any other options available to them).

Doctors get ready to oppose the Government's health care plan

Doctors are threatening a rebellion if the proposals to deny failed asylum seekers access to free healthcare are adopted. 276 GPs have signed a petition stating that they will actively defy the law if necessary. They have expressed their belief that the policy would create major health risks for asylum seekers.

See <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/doctors-rebel-over-plan-to-prevent-treatment-for-failed-asylumseekers-770528.html> for full story.

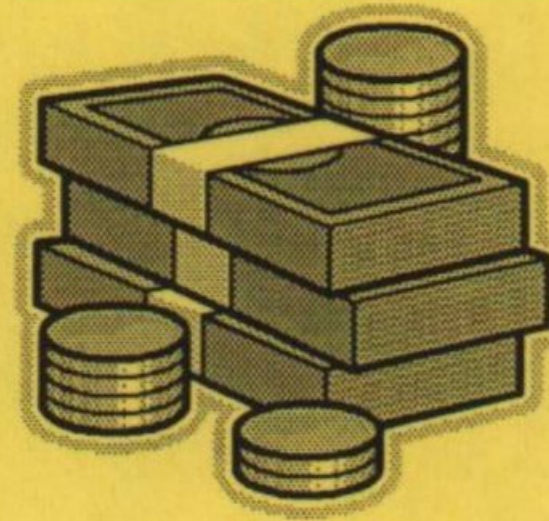
New forms



On or after 29th February, applications for the following must be made on revised forms (dated 02/2008):

- Extension of stay or further leave to remain
- Settlement, permanent residence or indefinite leave to remain
- Transfer of residence permit from and old to a new passport
- Certificate of approval for marriage or civil partnership in the UK

Form codes as follows: FLR(O), SET(DV), SET(F), SET(M), SET(O) and NTLTOC.

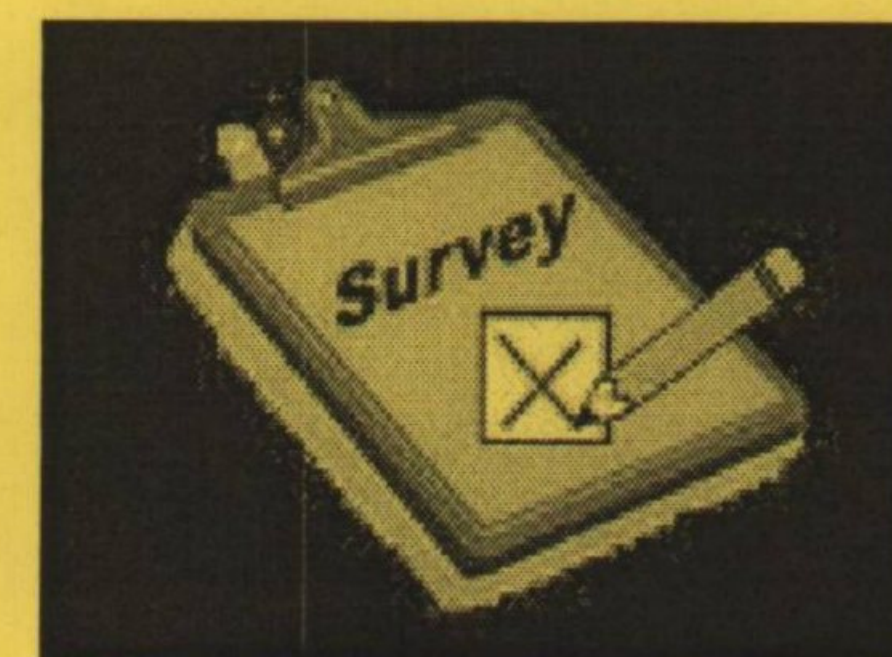


Fee Increase

The charge for travel documents is soon to increase: from £66 to £72 for adults and from £45 to £46 for children.

Section 4 vouchers - Refugee Council survey

In order to assess the impact of Section 4 vouchers, Refugee Council are carrying out a survey amongst organisations that work with refugees and asylum seekers. The survey can be found at:



http://surveys.refugeecouncil.org.uk/s4_vouchers/s4_vouchers.htm

Section 4 accommodation allocation

Following concerns about an apparent increase in the number of Section 4 applicants being dispersed out of region, BIA will, as far as possible, keep applicants in the region where they previously received asylum support (except for London cases where a special circumstance requiring them to remain in London must be demonstrated). This should mean a greater number of people will be able to stay within their current region.

Changes to section 4 Regulations

Changes to regulations mean that an amended support package including extra support for pregnant women, new mothers and children and also provision for essential travel and phone calls. The new regulations make provision for one-off essential items like cots and prams and for exceptional travel costs (e.g. for health appointments). The application form can be found at the following link:

www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/applicationforms/asylum/section4provision

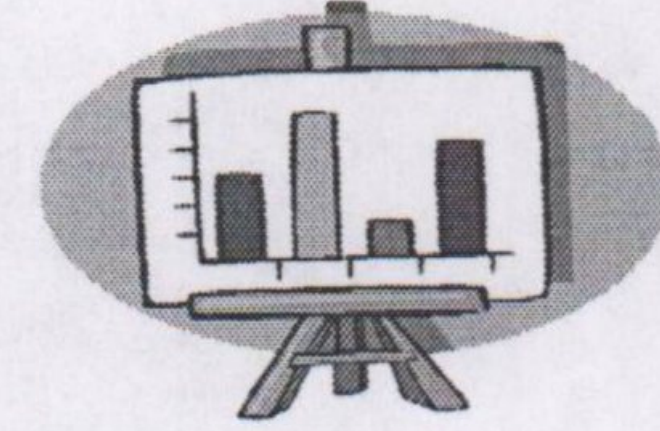
Delays with Section 4 Support

Despite BIA's assurance that priority applications for Section 4 support (e.g. from homeless or pregnant people or from people suffering physical or mental health problems) would be assessed within 48 hours, people are still waiting up to 2 weeks for support. As well as these delays when first applying, records show that once someone is accepted for Section 4 support, they have to wait for several days before accommodation is allocated.



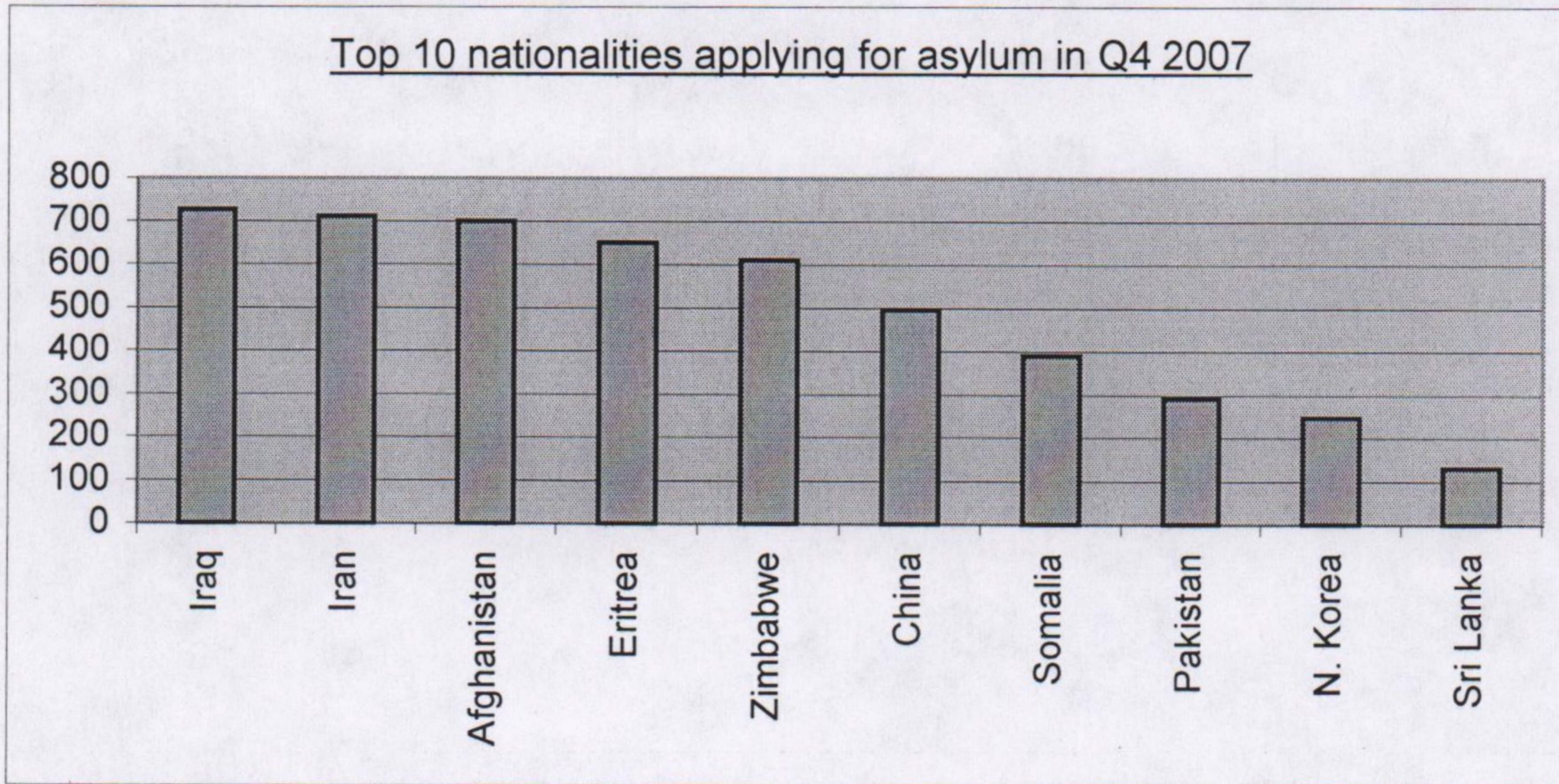
Migrant Service Provision

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has produced a report to help migrant and refugee community organisations to bid to become service providers. The document can be found at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/2166-migrant-service-provision.pdf>



Asylum Statistics: 4th Quarter 2007

Top 10 nationalities applying for asylum in Q4 2007



Initial decisions

- 20% of initial decisions in Q4 2007 were to grant asylum, 9% were to grant humanitarian protection or discretionary leave and 70% were refusals compared with 13%, 11% and 76% respectively in Q4 2006.
- 43% of substantive applications in Q3 2007 had initial decisions made and served within two months, lower than Q3 2006 (59%).

Appeals

The proportion of appeals dismissed was 70% in Q4 2007, whilst 25% of appeals were allowed.

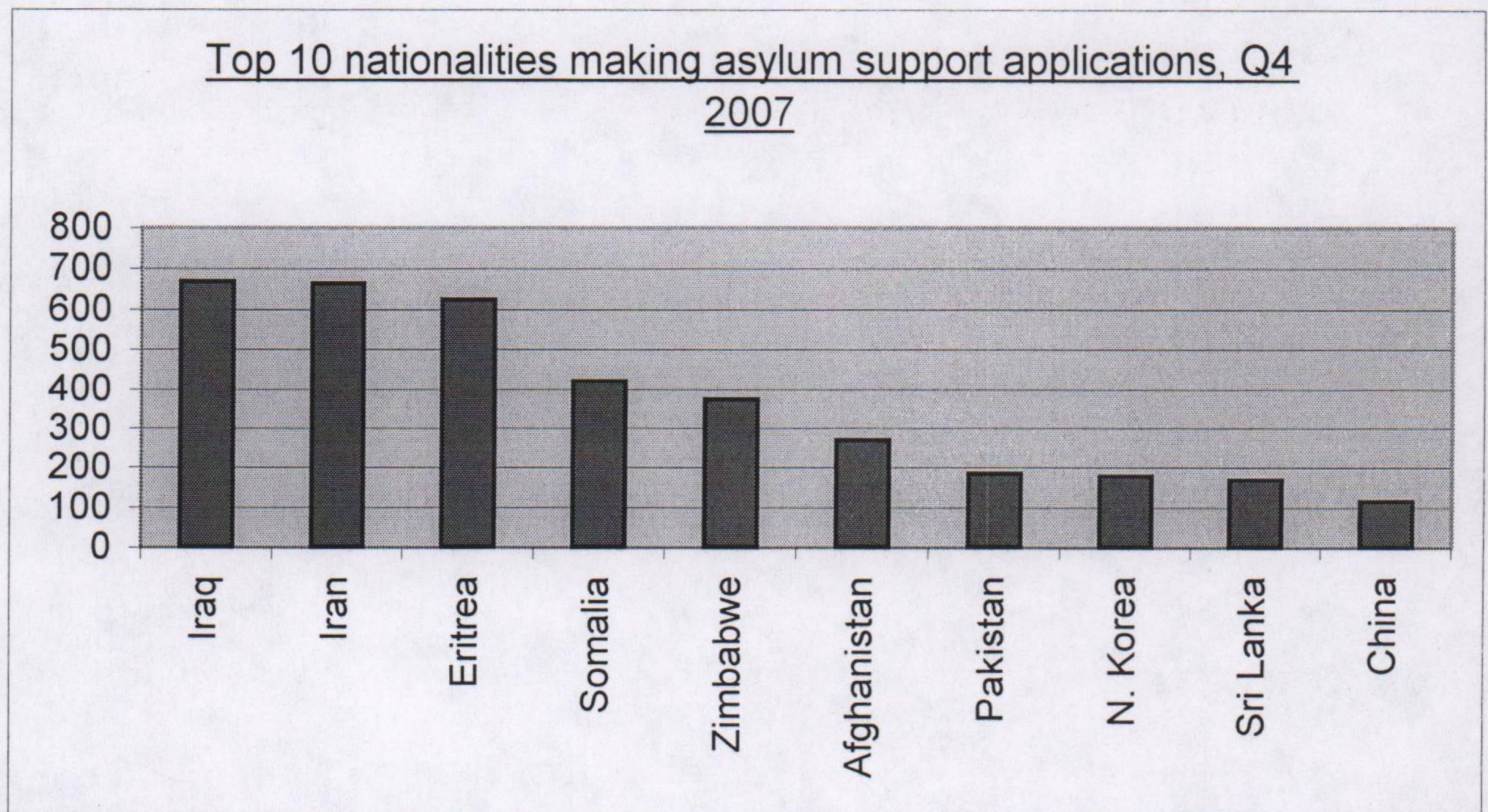
Removals

- in 2007, 63,140 persons were removed from the UK, 1% lower than in 2006 (63,865).
- the five nationalities accounting for the highest number of asylum removals in Q4 2007 (principal applicants) were Afghan (255), Turkish (180), Nigerian (155), Pakistani (155) and Serbian (150).

Eligibility for Section 55 support

- 140 principal asylum applicants were assessed as ineligible for support under Section 95 and 98 on the grounds that the Secretary of State was not satisfied that their claim was made as soon as reasonably practicable.

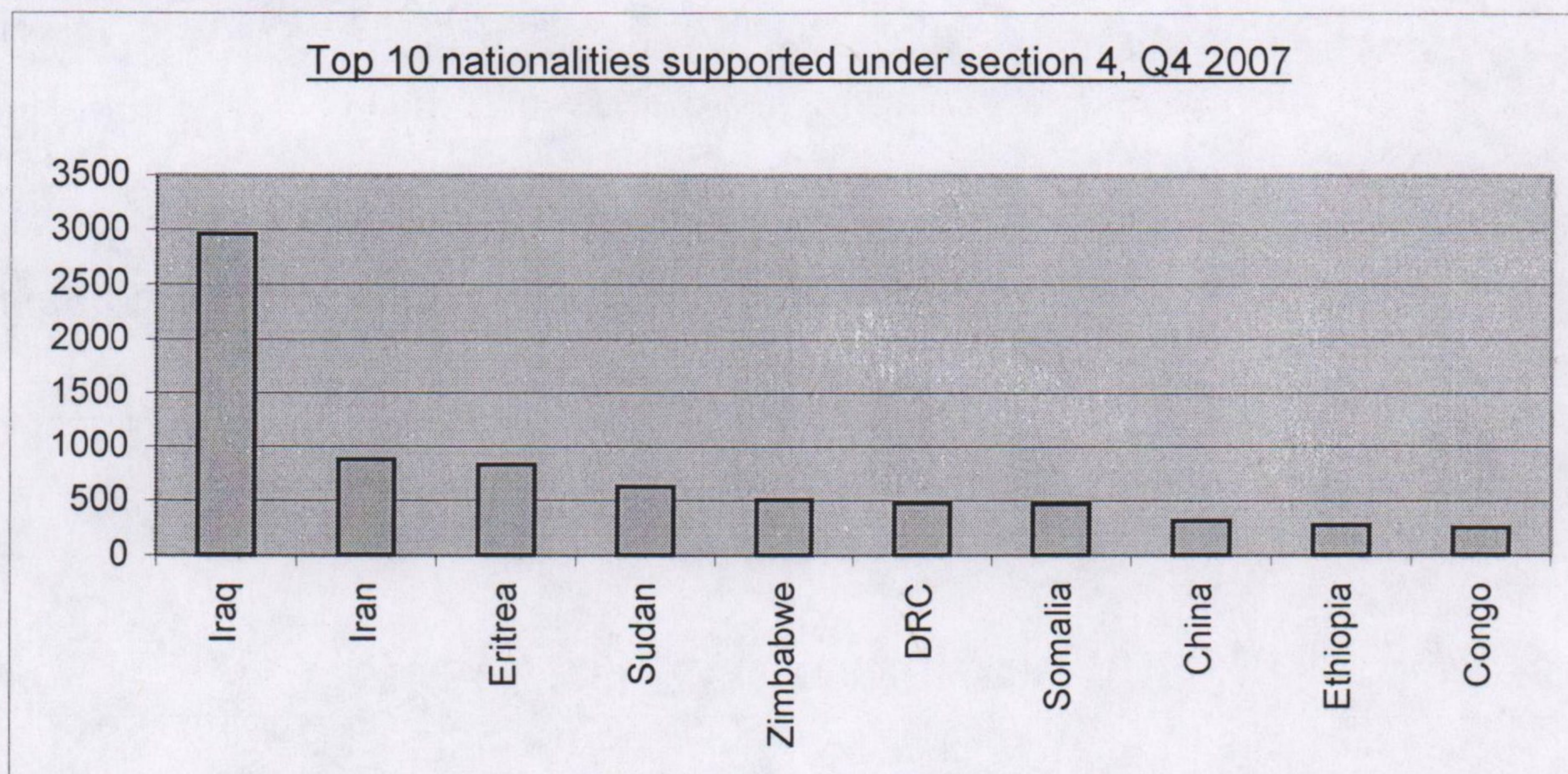
Top 10 nationalities making asylum support applications, Q4 2007



Decisions to grant Section 4 Support, 2007

Q1	1895
Q2	1635
Q3	1475
Q4	1585

Top 10 nationalities supported under section 4, Q4 2007



Other Reports Available

- Living on the Edge of Despair, The Children's Society, February 2008
- IAP News No. 72, January 2008
- IAP News No. 73, February 2008
- Women's Asylum News No 72, February 2008
- The Iraqi Refugee Crisis, Migration Policy Institute, 2008
- Accession Monitoring Report may 2004 – December 2007, BIA

Notes