

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF SERVICES TO ASYLUM SEEKERS

by Ilona Kytomaa

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	2
PROVISION OF INFORMATION	6
FUNDING SERVICES TO ASYLUM SEEKERS	11
PARTNERSHIP WORKING	14
ASYLUM SEEKERS' CONTRIBUTION TO CROYDON'S COMMUNITY AND ECONOMY	17
AN EPILOGUE	21
LIST OF APPENDICES	22
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	23

1 - INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the Housing and Social Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee Committee meeting of 5th November 2002, members agreed to conduct a review of Services to Asylum Seekers.
- 1.2 This report sets out the findings and recommendations of the working party. Contributors to this review have provided valuable comments regarding the findings and recommendations. In addition, Cabinet Members whose portfolio includes responsibility for the services outlined below have been invited to provide their feedback on the review before the final report is presented to the Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Working and Living in Croydon.

BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The UK has a responsibility to refugees because it has signed the 1951 United Nations Convention and the 1967 Protocol on refugees. The Convention says a refugee is someone who is forced to flee his/her country due to “a well founded fear of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a social group”. To be accepted as a refugee in the UK, an individual must first apply for asylum. While the Home Office decides on a claim the applicant is classified as an asylum seeker. The Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) which deals with applications and the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) are based at Lunar House in Wellesley Road, Croydon.
- 2.2 As a result of the location of the IND, Croydon receives a large number of asylum seekers comparable only with local authorities, which have major ports of entry e.g. Kent County Council, and the London Borough of Hillingdon (Heathrow Airport). Since NASS became operational in September 2000, it has been responsible for new destitute asylum seekers. People with special needs e.g. a physical or mental disability, or a person caring for someone with special needs are entitled to an assessment from the local authority under community care legislation. Unaccompanied children (under 18s) are the responsibility of the social service department under the Children Act 1989.
- 2.3 Croydon Council provides housing and subsistence to a relatively small number of asylum seekers in relation to its size, a number which has been decreasing as NASS has taken over the role of housing newly arrived asylum seekers. In contrast, the Council provides support to a comparatively large proportion of the unaccompanied asylum seeking minors in the Greater London area.

	ASYLUM SEEKERS	UNACCOMPANIED MINORS	TOTAL POPULATION
CROYDON	808 (1.8% of London)	343 (7.1% of London)	331,500 (4.6% of London)
LONDON	44,533	4817	7,188 000

Asylum Seekers supported by LB Croydon compared with all London Boroughs (January 2003)

Source: London Asylum Seekers Consortium

- 2.4 Up-to-date numbers of asylum seekers in receipt of housing, subsistence, social services care packages, and education are set out in Appendix 1.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 This cross-cutting review aims to ascertain whether present services are accessible, integrated and cost effective in meeting the needs of Asylum Seekers in Croydon and to make recommendations for improvement in the services provided.
- 3.2 The objectives of the review were as follows:
- To identify and assess the information available to asylum seekers and make recommendations for improvement where applicable
 - To identify and assess the effectiveness of the working relationships and arrangements between the different agencies involved in service provision and make recommendations for improvement where applicable
 - To look specifically at services to unaccompanied minors and adults, to assess whether needs are being identified and met, that services are culturally sensitive and equally accessible to all asylum seekers and to make recommendations where applicable
 - To look at services provided by other local authorities known to operate good practice and specifically at the asylum services of Kent County Council and the L. B. of Hillingdon, both of which have major ports of entry and work on a similar scale to Croydon. To identify and include any factors from which Croydon could benefit, in the review recommendations
 - To identify any overlaps and gaps in Croydon services and make recommendations where these are found
 - To identify any external factors that inhibit or enhance the work of agencies involved, and therefore the lives of people seeking asylum in Croydon, e.g. whether the perception and reality of rising crime has been linked with asylum seekers, and make recommendations where possible
 - To build in a follow-up stage to determine to what extent the agreed recommendations have been implemented
 - To build in a further stage to assess and capture the impact of this scrutiny review for service users.

MAIN THEMES

- 3.3 Members agreed to examine services provided to asylum seekers through three major themes emerging through the recommendations of the Audit Commission review carried out in 2001:
- Partnership work
 - Information systems
 - Funding issues
- 3.4 In addition to these three themes, the Chair wished to explore what contribution asylum seekers and refugees made to Croydon's community and economy.

RESEARCH CARRIED OUT

4.1 Document research included an examination of:

- Croydon's Action Plan and Progress Report which followed the District Auditor's report 2002 on the corporate review of services for Asylum Seekers
- Information for asylum seekers, including the "Guide to Newcomers" produced by the Council's Equalities Unit
- Health Inequalities - The annual report of the Director of Public Health 2002-2003
- "GP Recruitment and Retention: The Crisis in London" - A Review by the London Assembly's Health Committee (June 2003)
- A variety of briefing documents provided by council departments on the services they provide to asylum seekers

4.2 The review also entailed the following activities:

- Cllrs Arram, Godfrey and Udell and officers involved in this review were extended an invitation to visit the Home Office. In the course of the visit, it was highlighted that the long queues seen outside Lunar House were not of applicants for asylum. Councillors expressed a need for better signage to centres processing asylum claims (supported by the experience of being asked for directions by many applicants) and to the dedicated offices and queuing areas for asylum seekers. Moreover, they felt that toys and activities should be made available for children of asylum seeking applicants waiting for their claim to be processed.
- A visit was made to the Continuing Education and Training Services centre in Ambassador House, Thornton Heath, where three classes were observed. Based on the requirements of the ESOL National Curriculum, the activities observed (asking questions, developing reading skills, leaving work-related answer phone messages) all developed skills, which were directly, linked to real life situations.
- A further visit was made to the Refugee Day Centre in West Croydon which provides equipment (clothing, crockery, etc), free meals, language classes, and advice through the Help Point service
- Two meetings were held with officers who manage the provision of services to asylum seekers, on 3rd September and 5th November 2003.

RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM MEMBERS' VISIT TO THE HOME OFFICE

- That signage to the Home Office from major transport interchanges, and to asylum seekers' offices and queuing areas, should be made clearly visible
- Following the example of banks and building societies, that the Home Office should provide better facilities for the asylum-seeking children who go through its doors.
-

4.3 An extensive number of stakeholders contributed to this review (see acknowledgements on page 23), to whom councillors and officers carrying out this review wish to express their gratitude for their time and expertise.

BENCHMARKING

4.4 Good practice in other councils, as well as Scrutiny Reviews conducted on this topic (e.g. Dover, Enfield) have been examined. The following examples of good service provision to asylum seekers were identified:

- Supported accommodation for 16-17 year olds, such as “The Cedars”, a home consisting of ten units, run by the Refugee Council in Hillingdon, which provides a warden service and support/counselling services to its residents
- The Harmony Centre, in Barking and the Praxis Project in Bethnal Green, which offer a wide range of services, involve users in the *development* of the centres, and offer capacity building and training to help users gain in confidence and achieve independence.
- Effective participation of asylum seekers and refugees in service planning and delivery in a number of contexts, e.g. the Refugee Women’s Association in the UK and the Culture House in Copenhagen (services managed by the Danish Red Cross).

Comparison of services provided in Croydon with the performance of other councils may be summarised briefly as follows:

- The services provided in Croydon compare well with those of other councils. There exists a wide body of good practice locally, and some services e.g. education and health provide a good example nationally
- The service provides many examples of good joint working, e.g. between social services staff and the Corporate Asylum Seeker Service (CASS)
- Care needs to be taken to maintain acceptable standards of housing as responsibility for providing accommodation gradually shifts away from the Council’s Housing Department to Migrant Helpline
- Effective strategic planning with all local agencies will be essential to address the challenges of fast changing legislation and statutory service provision, and to ensure that asylum seekers in Croydon are treated with dignity in accordance with their human rights
- In order to help asylum seekers to adapt to life in the UK, both statutory and voluntary agencies may consider how to involve them more in service planning and provision

2 - PROVISION OF INFORMATION

- 1.1 The Audit Commission's recommendations relating to the provision of information focused on the following issues:
- the provision of information to asylum seekers
 - the sharing of information among agencies
- 1.2 Both these areas represent a significant challenge in the light of the broad range of services being provided asylum seekers' widely differing needs, as well as fast changing shifts in eligibility and statutory responsibilities of the agencies concerned.

INFORMATION FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

- 2.1 Research showed that a wide range of information systems has been produced for asylum seekers by agencies providing services to them, with varied formats and amounts of detail, as shown in the examples described below.
- 2.2 A good deal of information, advice and support are given face to face, by agencies such as the Corporate Asylum Seeker Service, the School Admissions Officer, and Health Services such as the Walk-In Centre in Central Croydon.
- 2.3 The voluntary sector also offers a wide range of advice services, including the Help Point service, set up with the assistance of asylum seekers who had obtained qualifications in community interpreting through the CETS service and recognised a need for increased provision of information and advice.
- 2.4 Agencies such as Croydon Primary Care Trust (PCT) have produced written information carefully tailored to the needs of Asylum Seekers, including
- "Picture of Health", a guidance booklet produced in consultation with asylum seekers, with useful illustrations of the places, documents and symbols they need to be familiar with
 - A system of "Client-held records" allowing asylum seekers to hold records of their full medical care history from their arrival in Croydon, thus enabling health care professionals to make more informed decisions in subsequent medical consultations
 - "Open Your Eyes", a guide to services produced with pupils schooled through the LINK project for 16 and 17 year old newly arrived asylum seeking children at Croydon College
 - A very brief guide to essential services for recently arrived Asylum Seekers
- 2.5 In recognition of children's need for information, the Home Office has recently commissioned 'Save the Children' to produce a leaflet for unaccompanied asylum seeking children, which will be given out in screening units where asylum applications are made, and will provide information on services provided by the home office, local councils, as well as the voluntary sector.
- 2.6 It needs to be highlighted that not all Asylum Seekers have little knowledge of English. People with a good grasp of the language might be well equipped to handle the comprehensive information contained in the Council's recently updated "Guide to Newcomers", which is available in hard copy or on Croydon Council's website, as a PDF file. However, in the case of arrivals with less good knowledge or literacy skills, this information can still be of great value if relevant staff use the booklet as a reference and, where necessary, point to specific sections in their translated form.

- 2.7 Some agencies, such as CETS staff teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages, deal with the changing nature of services to asylum seekers with regular briefing notes to tutors, who then use it to sign-post their students to relevant services. In addition, a lot of practical information and advice is imparted as part of language tuition, which focuses on providing not only language tuition but practical information and skills which will help asylum seekers adapt to their new environment more effectively.

INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATION SERVICES

- 2.8 There is a wide and growing range of free translation and interpreting services available to asylum seekers. The Council runs a pool of qualified interpreters and translators, who carried out over 4000 interpreting assignments and 600 translations in 66 languages in 2003-2004. Health services provide interpreting support through the "Language Line" telephone service, as well as the Professional Interpreting Service (face to face interpreting). Both the Council and Health services issue written guidelines to help officers make good use of these services, and provide adhoc support to interpreters and officers when a communication problem is identified.
- 2.9 A common example involves maintaining the limits of an interpreter's responsibilities: he or she may have to do much more than translate to **explain** the problem or issue being addressed, and procedures/circumstances the other party may not be aware of, but must remain impartial, and must not be tempted to participate in **resolving** the problem, as this is the responsibility of the officer. The team administering the translation pool provides support to help officers, interpreters and clients to remain aware of these distinctions.
- 2.10 With regard to written translation, their use – particularly in the case of information leaflets - needs to be balanced against the likelihood of the material being read, its actual benefit to recipients, the number of people who are likely to use the documents in question, and the cost of this service, which can be very high. In some cases, face to face communication supplemented by brief written summaries, or contact lists, may be more customer-friendly, and yield more effective results.
- 2.11 The interpreting and translation courses offered by CETS provide speakers of other languages the opportunity to make use of and develop their multi-lingual skills. Prospective students' language skills are assessed prior to the beginning of these courses to ensure they are equipped to cope with their demands, and achievement is assessed through the London Open College Network.
- 2.12 A good number of voluntary support groups now offer interpreting services to their communities, which they may feel are more approachable than the services provided by the Council and Health Services. This service widens the availability of bi-lingual communication considerably for individuals who may not yet be confident or well informed enough to contact the Council or Health Services directly. However, there may be a need for quality control to ensure that clients and officers receive accurate translations and information through these services, and feel comfortable with the process.

LEGAL ADVICE

- 2.13 One further information issue which constitutes a real challenge to asylum seekers (as well as support organisations!) is the provision of reliable legal information to asylum

seekers. Organisations providing legal services including immigration advice are audited on a yearly basis by Community Legal Services in Croydon, and are required by the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 to register or obtain a certificate of exemption by the Officer of Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC). However, solicitors are exempt from this regulation.

- 2.14 Some community groups such as the Congolese Voluntary Organisation have achieved Legal Services Commission Quality Mark and are accredited to provide immigration advice by the Office for the Commissioner for Immigration Services, which they provide without burdening clients with heavy fees.
- 2.15 However, a good number of asylum seekers receive poor legal advice on their immigration application. Support organisations such as the Refugee Council and Croydon's Help Point receives regular complaints regarding unscrupulous practitioners who provide inaccurate advice and charge punitive fees. This view was echoed by Home Office staff during members' visit to this agency on 20th March 2003.
- 2.16 The Council may need to explore with its partners the possibility of tightening current auditing procedures, or lobbying central government for tighter regulations which would also apply to solicitors.

INFORMATION FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS - SOME CONCLUSIONS

- 2.17 It may be felt that there is a great deal of repetition and overlap in the provision of information to asylum seekers. Yet the type of information, the level of detail and the format will need to vary greatly according to the extremely wide-ranging needs of this group of service users, and centralized control of all information provision, which involves a wide range of partners, could be unmanageable.
- 2.18 An important way forward would be good co-ordination and information-sharing among the main information givers, such as Migrant Help-Line, CETS, the Council, CVA, Health Services, and the Refugee Council, and good sign-posting of these main players and the information they provided within and across agencies, so that effective, on-going two-way communication may take place.
- 2.19 Despite these existing information systems, officers and representatives of the voluntary sector feel that asylum seekers are not accessing services effectively, feel hampered by the language barrier, and are not fully aware of translation services available to overcome this hurdle. These difficulties may be due in part to the sheer **breadth and complexity** of the information to be absorbed – this is not set to change, and can also be a challenge to local residents! – and to the **bewilderment** of familiarising oneself with an alien environment, with few familiar “landmarks” to rely on.
- 2.20 A number of agencies have endeavoured to explore these problems in greater depth and bring services closer to potential users, including the following:
- a pro-active approach to information provision, e.g. going to key locations to provide services, as in the case of the Homeless Health Team which liaise with hotels to ascertain health issues, and provide training to asylum-seekers living in these establishments on healthy diets, minimising the risk of infections, etc.
 - identifying and addressing the needs of hard-to-reach individuals, including asylum seekers - an approach recently adopted by the Social Services as part of their equalities programme to ensure that all individuals in need of, and eligible for, social services have a real opportunity to access these.

- voluntary organisations such as Relief Line (see page 19) and those listed in Appendix 3 which are working with asylum seekers and refugees to identify their priorities and develop services to address the most urgent needs

INFORMATION FOR STAFF

- 3.1 Naturally, staff involved in service provision to asylum seekers need to have easy access to information in order to be able to communicate it to service users. This is provided through a variety of means, such as:
- training (e.g. sessions provided by the Social Services department to the Home Office on issues relating to Unaccompanied Minors)
 - briefings (e.g. weekly NHS Walk-In staff meetings, e.g. discussions with representatives of the Language Line interpreting service on how to use the service as effectively as possible)
 - regular meetings with various internal as well as external partners
 - written reference documentation (e.g. brief updates to CETS tutors who can then provide informal advice and sign-posting to students)
- 3.2 The challenge to be addressed is that the range of services and agencies involved is wide and constantly changing, and that various partners' information needs vary considerably - some staff in-depth training on a particular part of their work, others merely needing to keep informed to sign-post access to services. In addition, asylum seekers' entitlement to services has changed a number of times in recent years. This suggests a need for a central partnership with a well-known membership of senior officers and other stakeholders and with links to smaller and more specialised partnerships. Its role would be to manage constantly changing responsibilities and share and disseminate information to relevant stakeholders.
- 3.3 Such a central partnership might highlight new developments such as the publication of the Guide for Newcomers to key partners, who might then publicise them further within their own departments or agencies.
- 3.4 Another challenge is the access to and use of asylum-seeker information by staff whose work does not focus on this customer group, and who are not familiar with existing information systems.
- 3.5 The Audit Commission review has recommended that the Council 'review asylum seeker information held by different departments' and produce one comprehensive database or website. Indeed, it could build on information already held in this medium such as the Guide to Newcomers and its translations into community languages, which are soon to be completed. The challenge will be to ascertain how this site is to be managed and which agencies will take on this responsibility in the long term.

INFORMATION FROM ASYLUM SEEKERS

- 4.1 Service providers need information about their customers to ensure that they cater for their needs. This may be done informally as services are provided, or through networking, or formally through consultation exercises. However, obtaining feedback from asylum seekers has consistently proved to be a challenge. In the past, a number of agencies including housing and education made various attempts to reach out to asylum seekers with little success. However, their perseverance has led to the use a

variety of successful consultation methods which entailed canvassing feedback at the point of service delivery. Examples of successful consultation have included:

- obtaining the views of CETS students through brief questionnaires
- getting feedback from pupils on the LINK programme about the “Open Your Eyes” project aimed at familiarising them with local services
- involving asylum seekers in two housing surveys through a fun day, where good use was made of local resources with a great deal of voluntary work and donations from agencies such as the Scouts.

4.2 Social Services Adult Care Management have systems in place to ensure that all customers are consulted about the quality of the services they receive. An informal six-weekly review takes place shortly after the care package has been set up, followed by a more formal review, scheduled a year later. This takes place in addition to any communications with the care manager or caseworker. As a result of feedback from service users with specific dietary requirements, agreements have been developed with local providers of Halal meat, thus promoting choice wherever possible.

4.3 It is hoped that future work can build on this good practice and formalise consultation arrangements for each service provider.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- That all stakeholders providing services to asylum seekers should keep each other effectively informed of information available to asylum seekers, and co-ordinate the development of information for service users, through the recently created Strategic Group for the Development of Services for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, which brings together service providers inside and outside the Council
- That the Equalities Unit publicise the Guide to Newcomers and its various formats to all asylum seekers as well as all the agencies providing services to them, including voluntary sector organisations
- That the Cabinet lobby Central Government regarding the need to improve regulation of immigration and other legal advice to asylum seekers, and to extend regulation and enforcement to solicitors
- That the Strategic Group for the Development of Services for Refugees and Asylum Seekers consider how it may work with the Croydon Refugee Forum to improve consultation and fine-tune service provision
- That, subject to the identification of resources, the Strategic Group for the Development of Services for Refugees and Asylum Seekers oversee the production of an easily accessed web facility containing useful information for asylum seekers and refugees and agencies providing services to them, and establish effective procedures enabling the pages to be monitored and kept up to date.

3 - FUNDING SERVICES TO ASYLUM SEEKERS

AUDIT COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 In general, the Council has effective management arrangements which include sound financial controls. This was the conclusion of the Audit Commission's review of the Council's services to asylum seekers, which stated that good arrangements were in place to manage budget setting, effective identification of significant cost pressures and trends in demand. Monthly reports are produced within both the housing and Social Services departments and monthly monitoring meetings are held with Corporate Finance. Working papers in support of grant claims are of a good standard. The Council is also acknowledged to make effective use of the asylum grant claim
- 1.2 The Audit Commission did, however, make a number of recommendations for improvements. These are set out below, and have been implemented. In particular, with regard to Recommendation 17, the 2002-2003 grant claim included the staffing costs of accounting staff - although new grant conditions for 2003-2004 for adult and families no longer allow councils to claim administrative costs - it is probable that this will also apply to asylum grant claims for children.

R14: 'Introduce a simpler coding structure to record expenditure incurred for unaccompanied minors within Social Services'

R15: 'Review the basis for charging asylum seeker overheads within Social Services and seek to introduce a system where overheads are apportioned using cost drivers, rather than on a flat rate basis'

R16 'Finalise financial procedure notes, and ensure these are circulated to all relevant staff'

R17: 'Review the basis on which grant claims are prepared and ensure that all eligible expenditure is claimed including allowable overheads'

R18: 'Seek to introduce a system of commitment accounting possibly as part of wider Council initiatives, such as the upgrade of Oracle'

EXTERNAL FUNDING

- 2.1 In addition to the asylum grant, officers have succeeded in obtaining funding from a variety of sources to cater for the specialised needs of asylum seekers. A few examples are shown below:
- the Reaching Out project which offers after school activities to young people and aim to help them to adapt to life in the UK
 - library activities for asylum seeking children and families housed in B & B and awaiting dispersal - such a wait can take weeks
 - the yearly Refugee Summer School, which is financed with Lottery Funding

AREAS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

- 3.1 While it is acknowledged that the Council is efficient at claiming back all eligible expenditure through its asylum grant, it is faced with difficult challenges when costs rise significantly above nationally set thresholds
- 3.2 A particular example of this relates to the Hillingdon ruling of August 2003. This stipulated that whereas Unaccompanied Minors aged 16-17 had previously been accommodated under Section 17 of the Children's Act, which entitled them to accommodation and subsistence, they should now be provided with a service under Section 20 of the Children's Act, which gives them the same status as children under the care of the local authority. The service includes the provision of personal development plans, which are regularly monitored and reviewed, as well as a leaving care service to enable them to live independently from the age of 18.
- 3.3 Such a service presents councils with a dilemma as funding thresholds for 16-17 year olds are far lower than the costs of the services they will be entitled to by law. It is to be hoped that recently announced additional funding for this service will be adequate to cover the shortfall which this ruling would otherwise cause.

GATEWAY FUNDING

- 4.1 A bid has been submitted for funding for specialist social work teams to work jointly with immigration services at ports of entry and asylum screening units. These will undertake initial assessments of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking and other children, where a welfare concern arises as part of their contact with the immigration service. In the longer term, if agreement is reached between London authorities, the team will undertake initial assessments on their behalf but that is predicated on having the money, setting up the team and having a formal agreement to do the assessments. The total bid is for a little over £1.1 m per annum for three years. Croydon would receive just over £300,000.
- 4.2 However, some delays have been experienced in releasing this funding, and the proposal, due to be agreed in 2003, is still being considered by the government. The working group expressed concern over this delay in providing support to these potentially very vulnerable individuals, and voiced the need to make urgent representations to the Government to release this funding promptly.

BENEFIT GAP

- 5.1 Another funding issue identified by members is the need to support certain asylum seekers who have gained leave to stay in the United Kingdom but are destitute until they are advised of their National Insurance number, at which point they can make an application for welfare benefits. The cost of supporting refugees after they have been granted leave to remain in the UK is recoverable through the Asylum Grant for their first 28 days as a refugee, while National Insurance records are created. Thereafter it has to be borne by the Social Services department.
- 5.2 The expenditure on this category of refugee, which is projected to reach £27,000 in 2003-2004, has been due to delays in refugees receiving their National Insurance number and thus becoming entitled to welfare benefits, compounded in a small number of cases with exceptional personal circumstances.

- 5.3 It is interesting to note that, in the case of asylum seekers granted leave to remain in the UK under the recent amnesty (see page 21), the Home Office has been successful in securing National Insurance numbers before notifying asylum seekers of their change in immigration status. It is to be hoped that this good practice can be extended to an increasingly wide number of eligible applicants.

FUNDING OF VULNERABLE ADULT RESPONSE TEAM

- 6.1 In June 2003, the Social Services department established a dedicated team to provide a strategic and joined-up service catering for asylum seekers with special needs, in response to the increase in activity in terms of assessments and provision of support which followed the implementation of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2003.
- 6.2 The team provides support services to adults with special needs (and their dependent children) who are not eligible for support from NASS or CASS, and, in the majority of cases, have failed to meet the requirements of section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. However, they are eligible for support under the National Assistance Act 1948 S21 (1a) as they would be deemed to be 'destitute plus' as a result of their condition and ineligibility for support services, and are assessed according to the terms of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 section 47.
- 6.3 The team provides Immigration and Eligibility assessments and a Community Care assessment to applicants with complex needs, and co-ordinates legal responses to applicants and solicitors who use the threat of judicial reviews when applications for services are unsuccessful.
- 6.4 In the long term, it is hoped that this team may provide swift and effective support to adults and their dependents who, for a variety of reasons, are not eligible for services under current eligibility criteria, but present with complex needs in line with criteria set out in the National Assistance Act 1948 and the and Community Care Act 1990. Plans to recruit to these posts, initially on 12 month contracts, are now under way, with a target start date of April 2004.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- That the Executive lobby the Home Office to harmonise asylum grant thresholds for 16-17 year olds with the costs of services which the Council is to provide them according to terms of the Hillingdon Judgement
- In the light of the successful co-ordination of immigration status with National Insurance procedures in Amnesty cases, that the Council liaise with the Home Office and the Benefits Agency to establish sustainable ways of minimising the benefit gap arising after asylum seekers are granted leave to remain in the UK, thus reducing significant Social Services and Housing expenditure arising from delays in obtaining eligibility for welfare benefits
- That the Cabinet make urgent representations to Central Government to expedite the release of Gateway funding to Croydon.

3 - PARTNERSHIP WORK

- 1.1 Findings relating to funding and information issues, the complex and fast changing needs of this sector of the community and complex developments in entitlement show that partnership work is essential to respond to changing circumstances and maintain efficient services.
- 1.2 Discussion with various officers in the course of this review has shown that useful informal networks have formed to provide services to asylum seekers, clustered around the Corporate Asylum Seeker Service (CASS, whose expertise of networks and agencies catering for the needs of asylum seekers is used by other departments such as Education and Social Services.
- 1.3 In addition, a number of problems have been resolved through discussion and subsequent service improvement involving a wide range of agencies. A number of examples are set out below:
 - A number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children experienced delays in being dealt with by the Social Services Emergency Duty Team, particularly if their claim was processed relatively late in the day by the Home Office. Discussions between Social Services and the Home Office have led to the monitoring of queues and the fast tracking of all such cases
 - Tracking of asylum seeking children residing in Croydon has been a high priority for the Council, and its success has been due in part to effective co-operation between the Ethnic Minority Achievement Services and local schools. However, some difficulty had been experienced between the Education and Social Services departments in sharing data regarding asylum seeking children. Discussions between the two departments have led to a smoother working relationship. In addition, work is under way as part of the Children's Trust programme to set up a computer system named the Identification Referral Tracking (IRT) system, which will allow a number of departments to share records in a secure manner not only on unaccompanied seeking children, but any children in the borough who may be at risk of social exclusion. It is anticipated that this work will be completed by April 2004.
 - Regular briefings take place between the NHS Walk-In Centre and Social Services (as well as many other organisations such as Language Line) to improve co-ordination, service provision and use of resources
 - The organisation Migrant Help-Line is contracted out by NASS to provide accommodation to asylum seekers. Following complaints regarding the standard of accommodation provided, the organisation has undertaken to have any new accommodation inspected by the Council's Environmental Officers prior to occupation.
- 1.4 In addition, Members and officers from Croydon liaise actively with external organisations such as the association of London Government (ALG) to help develop a London-wide approach to asylum seeker issues and services.

- 1.5 However, there remain some gaps in communication. In particular, discussion with community groups pointed to a greater need for the Council to communicate with the voluntary sector, to keep it up to date with policy development and promote the services it provides. The Croydon Refugee Forum has brought together community groups registered with Croydon Voluntary Action which cater for the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. It is hoped that this network may assist in bridging this gap by voicing the needs of this community and disseminating information about Council services to the various groups it represents.
- 1.6 Good communication links are also needed with external agencies such as other councils. Where a child is registered as an unaccompanied minor in another council but lives and goes to school in Croydon – a problem which can affect all children in care – difficulties can arise when schools need to obtain authorisation to provide medical treatment or take children on school trips, and cannot access the agencies which can provide this authorisation. More work needs to be done to set up simple communication networks between councils to provide speedy responses in such situations.
- 1.7 Informal networking through small meetings has provided good opportunities to focus on linkages between two or three teams or departments and bring about real improvements in service. However, the Audit Commission Review had also highlighted the need for a corporate strategy to help deliver services and information seamlessly, and would include local performance indicators to help stakeholders monitor the service effectively.
- 1.8 Two partnerships have been set up to address these specific recommendations. One group comprises council officers providing services to asylum seekers and meets to share developments in their service areas.
- 1.9 Another group, the Strategic Group for the Development of Services for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, which reports to the Croydon Strategic Partnership, brings in external agencies such as the police and health partners, and is involved in planning borough-wide service delivery and related issues. This group commissioned a mapping exercise of all services to asylum seekers, which was carried out by Croydon PCT in late 2003 (see appendix 2 for the full list of services available to asylum seekers), and have appointed a project manager to draw up a corporate strategy for future services to asylum seekers and refugees. It is hoped that the mapping work and the Scrutiny Review both contribute to service development in a streamlined fashion.
- 1.9 While acknowledging the usefulness of existing networking, both the work of the Audit Commission and the recent mapping exercise have questioned whether all existing networks retain a clear agenda, particularly in cases where meetings are poorly attended. A task for the future may entail assessing how existing networks may effectively contribute towards service development and delivery in the future, and whether some groups might draw some benefit from meeting less frequently, when a specific need arises and provides a clear agenda for action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- That the Council continue to explore methods of working more effectively with other councils in order to provide effectively for unaccompanied minors and other children in care living in Croydon but registered with another council's social services department.
- That the Strategic Group for the Development of Services for Refugees and Asylum Seekers report to Scrutiny Members how they will use the recent mapping exercise and the findings of this Scrutiny review to streamline and fine-tune services to asylum seekers
- That the Strategic Group for the Development of Services for Refugees and Asylum Seekers determine which smaller partnerships fulfil a useful role, and which could be replaced by occasional ad-hoc meetings when the need arises.

4 - ASYLUM SEEKERS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

- 1.1 Members expressed an interest in ascertaining how asylum seekers have settled in and what contribution asylum seekers have made to life in Croydon, both economically and in other spheres e.g. voluntary work. Findings are set out below.
- 1.2 Before considering the contribution of asylum seekers and refugees to Croydon, however, it is worth highlighting the role of the Home Office itself, as it is the second largest employer in Croydon after the Council with over 4,000 staff and offices occupying 14 buildings in the centre of town. In addition to processing claims for asylum and co-ordinating support to asylum seekers through the National Asylum Support Service (NASS), the Immigration and Nationality Directorate deals with immigration law and control, as well as general clerical work relating to immigration and nationality e.g. student visa applications.

INTEGRATION INTO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

- 2.1 Asylum seekers' first experiences of the United Kingdom entail having to absorb a great deal of new information and adapt to local systems and customs, not to mention fluency in a new language, in order to find a place in the community, and start contributing to its activity.
- 2.2 This process is acknowledged to be a source of anxiety and bewilderment to asylum seekers. However, newcomers gradually adapt to their new environment and make a significant and positive contribution to it, as detailed below. Discussions with the local Police revealed that they do not represent a problem to this agency, or indeed to consultation networks such as Police Consultative Groups which involve local residents in the borough. There exists a perception that the lack of serious social tensions is due in part to the lack of negative reporting in the local media, whereas the national media are considered to exert a far more inflammatory effect on asylum seeker issues.
- 2.3 The Refugee Day Centre in Croydon plays an important role in giving assistance to destitute asylum seekers, through the provision of basic equipment, free meals, as well as ESOL tuition and advice (provided by members of the Help Point advice organisation). It is currently exploring how it may consolidate its service by increasing asylum seeker involvement in service provision (and thus providing capacity-building opportunities), and refurbishing the premises where it is currently based.
- 2.3 CETS play a very practical role in assisting asylum seekers and refugees through the tuition of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Syllabuses are based on the ESOL National Curriculum and incorporate a wide range of life skills (using directories, speaking on the phone, making applications, etc.) into classroom work.
- 2.4 In addition, women are given increasing child care support through the growing provision of crèche facilities, or Access funding to pay for child-minding services. These are now more widely available in areas such as New Addington, which ran child-minding training courses after identifying this gap in provision.
- 2.5 Asylum seeking children are helped to adapt to their school environment through a

variety of programmes, some of which are detailed below:

- Along with other local children from ethnic minorities who require additional support, Asylum Seeking Children obtain assistance through the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Service (EMAS), whose wide programme includes training to teachers and others on issues affecting the teaching of refugees and asylum seeking children
- Children are supported by dedicated Refugee Support Teachers in their first days at school
- Young people have access to a dedicated Connexions adviser who specialises in addressing the needs of asylum seekers
- Special schooling is provided by Croydon College to 16 and 17 year olds, and increasing numbers of newly arrived 15 year olds, who would have difficulty in coping with the challenges of mainstream education without an adequate knowledge of English. This provision, the “Link Programme”, has been reviewed by the Audit Commission, which has acknowledged its useful role, as well as its sound financial management
- “Books on the Move” is a scheme set up by local libraries: 2 workers provide reading practice and materials to children and families awaiting dispersal, and give support to them both in their accommodation as well as in libraries

2.6 In addition, a number of initiatives are in place to provide a sensitive and culturally appropriate approach to unaccompanied asylum seeking children as well as the families who provide foster care, including the following:

- Training is provided to foster carers to familiarise them with the needs of asylum seeking children
- A specific recruitment drive is taking place to increase the number of refugee and other ethnic minority families providing foster care
- The Looked After Children’s Education (LACE) Support Team provides additional support in recognition of the special educational needs of all young people in the care of the Council, including unaccompanied minors, who make up about 50% of this group

VOLUNTARY WORK

3.1 Research carried out during this review has shown that asylum seekers play a significant part in local voluntary work, and actively seek to play a useful role in the local community, particularly as they do not have the right to work.

3.2 A good number access voluntary work through the Croydon Voluntary Bureau, both to support other asylum seekers or to provide support to the community as a whole. A website is due to be launched by this organisation in 2004 which will provide more detailed information on the make-up of its pool of volunteers and the number of asylum seekers involved in this work.

3.3 Asylum seekers have played an important role in providing interpreting and advice support to other asylum seekers, either through their own community networks, or through organisations such as Help Point, which was set up by a group who had obtained Community Interpreting qualifications through CETS. This organisation, which now receives SRB6 funding, provides information, advice and interpreting support on a wide range of service and immigration issues, both from its permanent base in Ambassador House, Thornton Heath and in other appropriate locations such as the Refugee Day Centre in West Croydon, the Oshwal Centre, Shrublands, etc.

- 3.4 Asylum seeker and refugee community groups play a significant role in the work of Croydon Voluntary Action (see Appendix 3). As a result of the growth in the number and membership of groups providing support to asylum seekers, these came together to form the Croydon Refugee Forum in 2002. Work is currently being conducted on its future remit and training needs. The potential of such a forum is significant. Resources, experience and good practice can be shared among its members. In addition, it is hoped that this forum will engage with local agencies and partnerships, thus overcoming the significant difficulties service providers can encounter when attempting to consult with asylum seekers.

OBTAINING WORK

- 4.1 Asylum seekers who are given leave to remain in the United Kingdom face the challenge of gaining the skills and qualifications needed to obtain work.
- 4.2 In addition to providing tuition in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), CETS offers a wide range of courses to help refugees to obtain qualifications as well as employment. For instance, it offers training as bi-lingual classroom assistants and qualifications in childcare ("Certificate in Pre-School Practice") leading to high levels of employment.
- 4.3 The Bridge to Work Programme helps individuals who already have qualifications to find work. It provides job search skills, work placements, and specialist seminars on different professions, and gives refugees individual support in overcoming barriers to employment.
- 4.4 The Bridge to Work Programme also runs a support group for doctors from overseas, who need to pass the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) examination, and then to obtain a job offer before they can be registered by the General Medical Council (GMC) to practise as a doctor in the UK. In addition to the preparation for these tests, challenges to be faced include high examination costs and difficulty in obtaining initial job offers - which may seem anomalous in the light of GP shortages in the London area: indeed Croydon had 14 vacant GP posts in April 2003. "GP Recruitment and Retention: The Crisis in London", a study conducted by the London Assembly in June 2003 into GP shortages in the capital, recommended that...

"The pan-London Action Group, General Medical Council, British Medical Association and other key organisations should work together to be more proactive in Drawing in trained and qualified refugee doctors, Commonwealth doctors and other overseas doctors into London's practices."

- 4.5 GP recruitment in Croydon is managed by the South West London Strategic Health Authority, which also provides work placements for medically qualified refugees through the Post-Graduate Medical Education programme. One refugee has been appointed as a GP in Croydon thus far.
- 4.6 However, it must be recognised that, apart from job recruitment figures relating to CETS students, individuals on the Bridge Project, and a few small-scale local projects, there exists no reliable statistical information regarding refugees in the labour market.
- 4.7 Some anecdotal information exists regarding refugees' difficulties in obtaining work, or

appointments which make full use of their skills. This was borne out by a small research project carried out by the Relief Line organisation*: 60% of the 584 participants in this research stated that they could not find a suitable job, and 2 out of the 9 community organisations questioned stated that they were not happy with the employment prospects

- 4.8 Discussions with refugee groups have pointed to the widespread take-up of jobs such as cleaning in order to earn an income. It was highlighted that many women take up very early morning cleaning work in order for this not to clash with family commitments.
- 4.9 Community organisations such as the Congolese Voluntary Organisation play an important part in helping their members through the job search process and are trying to set up free crèches in order for women to gain access to better jobs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- That the Strategic Group for the Development of Services for Refugees and Asylum Seekers explore what opportunities are available to monitor patterns of training and employment in refugee population, identify employment training needs, and foster collaboration between relevant agencies to develop pathways into appropriate, sustainable employment.
- That, as an aspect of its programmes for promoting SME development, especially in the north of the borough, and social enterprise, ESDU considers explicitly the potential strength which Croydon's new communities bring to business development
- That all sources of support to gain employment be sign-posted more effectively, e.g. through community organisations working with refugees.

* This organisation was set up in September 2002 to relieve poverty and unemployment among people from disadvantaged communities, and African people in particular, and offers support through job skills workshops, advice, advocacy, media training for community groups, homework support and mentoring for young people, etc.

5 - AN EPILOGUE

ASYLUM AMNESTY

- 1.1 A recent ruling by the Home Office is set to bring significant reductions to the number of *asylum seeker* households supported by the Council. On 24 October 2003, the Home Secretary announced that asylum seeking families who applied for asylum in the UK before 2 October 2000, had children before that date and have suffered from historical delays in the system will be eligible for leave to remain in the United Kingdom.
- 1.2 The Council considers that 182 families being provided services by CASS will be eligible for an amnesty, which will reduce the workload of this section considerably.
- 1.3 The number of new cases processed by the Unaccompanied Minors Team has recently risen, with 21 new cases in November, 68 new cases in the end of December, and 12 in early January, leading to an appointment to a previously frozen post.
- 1.4 However, by early February 2004, the numbers of adult households supported by CASS had fallen to 211, leading to the departure of 4 staff - and is set to fall yet further, thus making the service decreasingly cost-effective. NASS are currently dealing with the cases eligible to an amnesty, after which they aim to work with the Council to address the future of the CASS service.

RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet Members make representations to NASS in order to enable the Council to determine the future of the CASS team in the near future and thus plan services in the longer term, give existing CASS staff clear information on the future of their posts, and maximise the retention of expertise in the field of services to asylum seekers, which has been a useful resource to officers inside and outside the Council.

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:

Number of asylum seekers receiving housing, subsistence and education from the Council

APPENDIX 2:

Numbers of Council Translation Pool interpreting assignments between 01/02/2003 and 26/02/2004

APPENDIX 3:

Numbers of Council Translation Pool translation assignments between 01/02/2003 and 26/02/2004

APPENDIX 4:

Service Mapping carried out for the Strategic Group for the Development of Services for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

APPENDIX 5

Case studies of voluntary groups catering for the needs of asylum seekers

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Members of the Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Working and Living in Croydon would like to express their thanks to the following people for their contribution to this review:

Mike Davis (Director of Housing)

Yvonne Murray (Asylum Seekers' Manager)

Linda Wright (Assistant Group Director - Student Services)

Elvira Gregory (Head of Ethnic Minorities achievement Services)

Danielle Tournez (Refugee Consultant, Ethnic Minority achievement Service)

Cheryll Dunn (Head of English, Maths and Languages Faculty)

Jacky Mc Loughlin (ESOL Curriculum Manager)

Chrissy Eland (ESOL Project Manager)

Alan Nimmo (Refugee Development Officer)

Steve Liddicott (Divisional Director - Children's Services)

Brenda Scanlan (Commissioning Manager - Social Inclusion)

Simon Wadsworth (Service Development Manager)

Samantha Greenidge (Development Worker - Older People Division)

Nigel Anderton (Social Services Accountancy)

Ros Hardie-Ejiohuo (Head of Equalities Unit)

Pankaj Doshi (Head of the Council's Translation and Interpreting Service)

David Freeman (Policy Adviser - Voluntary Organisations)

Angela Gibson (North Locality Director, Croydon PCT)

Andrea Bellott (Manager of NHS Walk-In Centre)

Gazelle Howard (Practice Manager, Rainbow Health Centre)

Bridget Malarkey (temporary Project Manager)

Mike Fisher (Assistant Director, Immigration and Nationality Department)

Robert Egwea (Croydon Voluntary Action, Small Groups Worker)

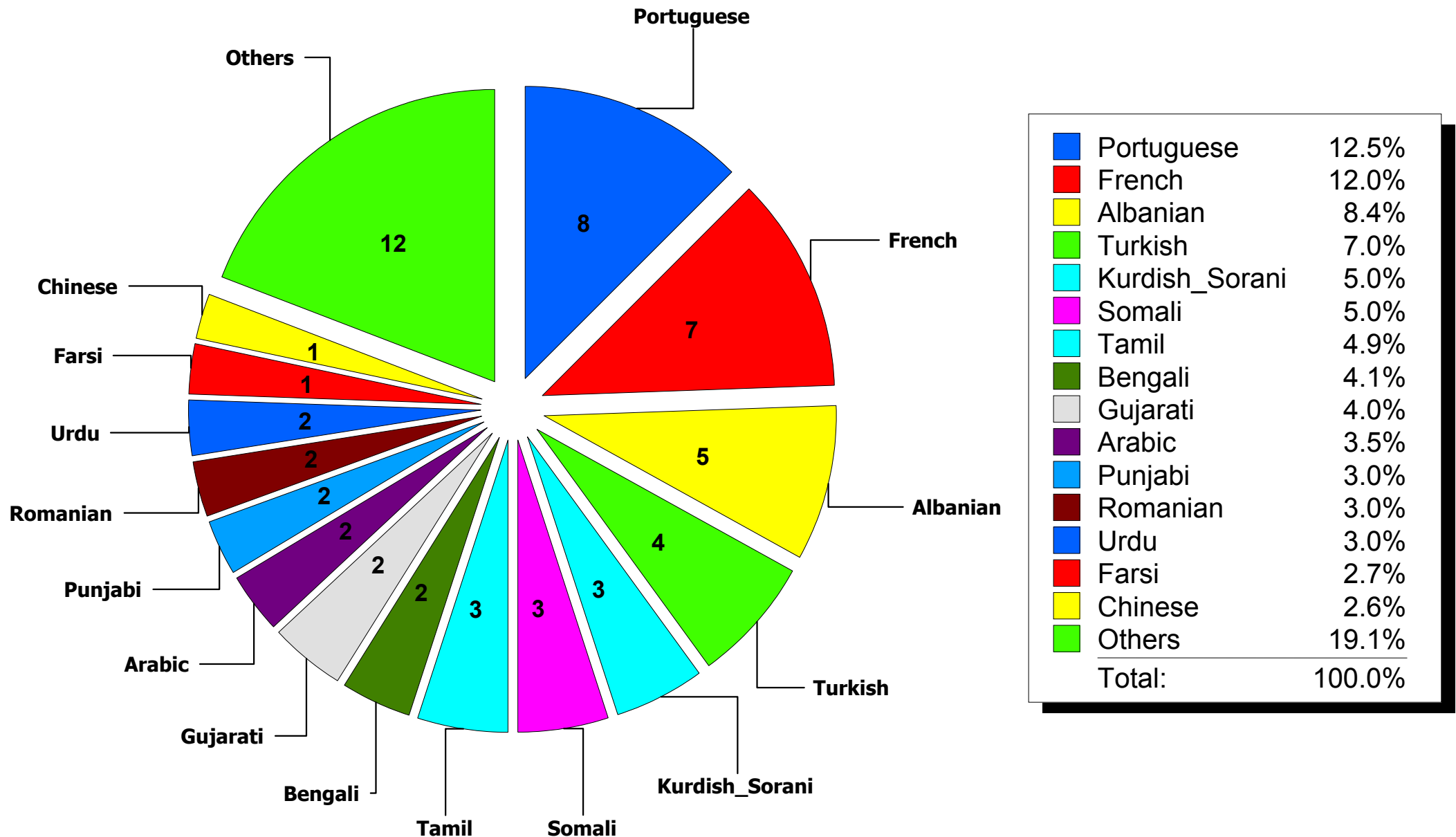
Superintendent Peter Gibbons (Support and Partnership - Croydon Police)

APPENDIX 1: ASYLUM SEEKERS RECEIVING HOUSING, SUBSISTENCE AND EDUCATION FROM THE COUNCIL

CLIENT GROUP AND THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES	RELEVANT LEGISLATION	NUMBER	SERVICES PROVIDED	LEAD DEPARTMENTS
Adults (plus any dependants) who applied at port of entry before 3 April 2000 or applied in-country before 24 July 2000	Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 Asylum Support (Interim Provisions) Regulations 1999	104 households (175 adults & 304 children) as at 31.1.04	Housing, subsistence, advice and support, linkages to education, health, other services	CASS team lead role: Housing Department)
Adults (plus any dependants) Destitute Plus according to terms of legislation in following column	National Assistance Act 1948 S21 (1a) Destitute Plus Entitled under National Health and Community Care Act 1990 NIAA 2002 S55	54 households (74 individuals) as at 23.1.04	Legal assessment Social Services assessment Where eligible, package of services e.g. housing (link to CASS) and social services	Social Services
Learners aged 16 and above	N/A	1726 individuals as at 01.11.03	English for Speakers of other languages (11 centres around the borough)	C.E.T.S. (Education Department)
Unaccompanied Minors - aged less than 16 at point of referral	Children Act 1989 Section 20 Leaving Care Act 2000	340 individuals as at 11.11.03	As other children in care (housing, corporate parenting) including S.S. planning and reviewing processes	Social Services
Unaccompanied Minors - aged 16 + at point of referral	Children Act 1989 Section 17 - now declared illegal following recent High Court Judgement and Government Circular (DoH LAC (2003) 13)	31 individuals as at 11.11.03	Accommodation, subsistence, support and advice	CASS (Housing) / Social Services
All children - aged 5-16, with entitlement to early years provision for 4 year olds.	Refugee children have the same rights to a school education as other children in the UK (DES circular 11/88. Only those children being house in Induction Centres are ineligible for a school place (NIA Act 2002)	1300 pupils - Half in primary, half in secondary Approx. 50% have been in school for over 2 years.	Schooling in mainstream schools with EMAS support "Link project" school places for children arriving in UK in year 11	Education Department

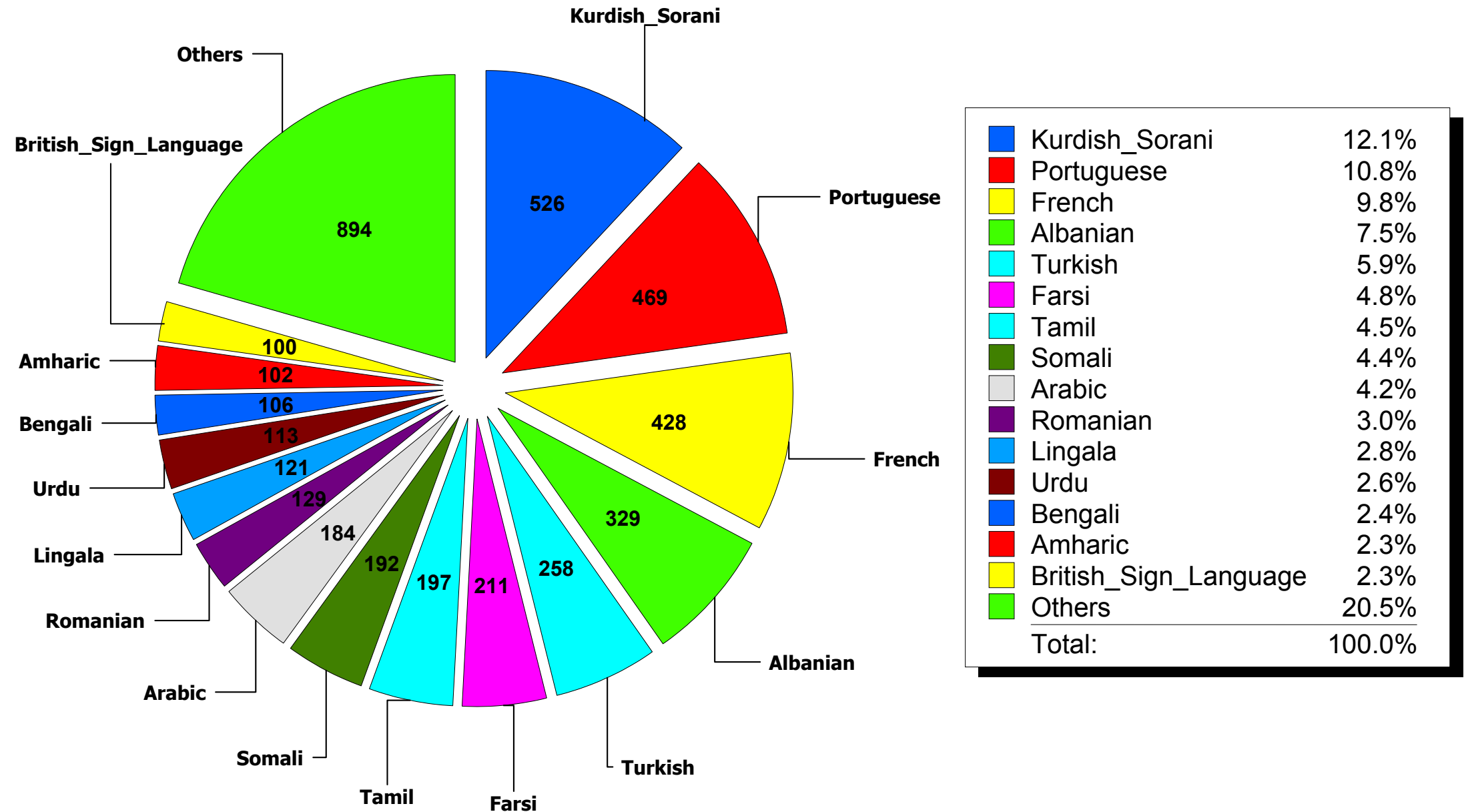
Translation Jobs By language-All Jobs

Between 01/02/2003 and 26/02/2004 (This breakdown includes cancellations)



Interpreting Jobs By Language - All Jobs

Between 01/02/2003 and 26/02/2004 (This breakdown includes cancellations).



APPENDIX 4 SERVICES TO REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN CROYDON

Department and service	Client group/Eligibility	Legal framework	Services provided
Housing, Corporate Asylum Seeker Services (CASS) – Support Services Team	Asylum seekers and dependents falling under the interim arrangements between the old system of welfare benefits and the new system of NASS support: - Those who applied at port of entry before 3 April 2000 and have become disentitled to benefits following an unsuccessful asylum application before 25 September 2000 and pending appeal. - Those who applied in-country before 24 July 2000 (London) both before determination of asylum claim and pending any appeal.	<i>Immigration and Asylum Act 1999</i> – provides for National Asylum Support Service (NASS) to take over asylum seeker support on a phased basis from April 2000. The interim arrangements for support by Local Authorities are provided by this Act and by the <i>Asylum Support (Interim Provisions) Regulations 1999</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sets up subsistence payments ▪ Pays rent (council tax and deposits where necessary) for clients in B&B, privately rented, hostels. ▪ Works with the Home Office and London Asylum Seekers Consortium acquiring and providing statistics and data for asylum seekers. ▪ Provides Red Cross Clothing Vouchers at no cost to the client ▪ Undertakes initial assessment of eligibility for CASS assistance ▪ Provides support and advice, e.g. health, education, housing and finance. Represents clients through liaising closely with several other agencies both within the Council and externally.
Housing, Corporate Asylum Seeker Services (CASS) – Assessment Team	As above	As above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completes thorough assessment of a client's eligibility for CASS assistance ▪ Monitors and review client's case on a regular basis ▪ Gives support and advice on any issues the client may have (accommodation, employment, schooling, finances, harassment, etc.) ▪ Make referrals to Health Visitors, Medical Foundation or CASS's Support Officer if appropriate. ▪ Close liaison with Agencies/ Departments such as the Home Office, Refugee Council, Education and Health Authorities, DSS, Police and the CAB.
Housing, Corporate Asylum Seeker Services (CASS) – Unaccompanied Minors Team (UMT)	Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) under 18 years .	<i>Children Act 1989, s.20 & s.17 place duty on LA</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assessment of the needs of UASC referred from Asylum-Screening unit (under 16) or Refugee Council Rota (16-17) within the provisions of the <i>Children Act 1989</i> ▪ Accommodated under S.20 Children Act 1989. Usually placed in a 'regulated' placement – foster home, residential unit initially, moving to semi-independent accommodation post 16 years. This is equitable to other looked after children. ▪ UMT has initial responsibility for all unaccompanied minors under 18. Cases transfer to Child Care Teams if under 15, then to Leaving Care and Independence Service (LCIS) at 16 plus; transfer to LCIS if 16-plus;

			<p>remain with UMT if 15, transfer to LCIS at 16.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social Work allocation, information gathering, planning and reviewing of service according to Children Act regulations and guidance ▪ Arrangements made to attend school, receive additional language support, receive health checks and assistance with psychological well being <p>▪ Prior to November 2003, 16-17 year olds were supported under s.17 Children Act 1989, mainly in bed & breakfast accommodation. The position of these young people is currently being reassessed</p>
Housing, Procurement	CASS clients and others on housing list		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acquires and provides suitable accommodation including private rented, hostels (for minors 16-18) ▪ Assistance with furniture and other household necessities. ▪ Helps clients with accommodation related forms, e.g. Tenancy Agreements. ▪ Helps to build positive relations between landlords and asylum seekers. ▪ Accommodation is secured for asylum seekers at housing benefits rates so that the client can stay in that accommodation when they are given status and become entitled to housing benefit ▪ Asylum seekers are unable to obtain regulated 6-month tenancies so can be evicted at short notice. Where a landlord decides to evict a client on their becoming eligible for housing benefit, procurement will intervene to offer the landlord a grant to continue to rent to the client.
Social Services, Children's Division, Child Care Team	Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) under 16 years.	<i>Children Act 1989</i>	<p>UASC aged under 15 transfer from Unaccompanied Minors Team.</p> <p>Service as per Unaccompanied Minors' Team above.</p>
Social Services, Children's Division, Leaving Care and Independence Service	Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) aged 16-18 years	<p><i>Children Act 1989</i></p> <p><i>Children Leaving Care Act 2000</i></p>	<p>UASC aged 16 & 17 transfer to LCIS from Unaccompanied Minors Team or Child Care Team</p> <p>Service as per UMT above. Placed in semi-independent accommodation.</p> <p>At age of 18 years, entitled to a Leaving Care service, provided they meet requirements relating to the time they have been in care.</p>
Social Services, Adults Division, Social Inclusion Services, Dedicated Team for Asylum Seekers with	<p>Adults without recourse to public funds who have community care needs.</p> <p>Asylum Seekers People with a current asylum claim being dealt with by the</p>	<p><i>NHS & Community Care Act 1990</i> s.47(1)(a) places duty on local authority to carry out an assessment of a person's need for community care services</p>	<p>Dedicated Team Since June 2003, there has been a dedicated team in Social Inclusion Services for asylum seekers with special needs.</p> <p>Everyone approaching social services for support is given an initial screening assessment of their eligibility for support and their need.</p>

<p>Special Needs/People Without Recourse to Public Funds (Vulnerable adults team from April 2004)</p>	<p>Immigration and Nationality Directorate Failed Asylum Seekers People who have exhausted all their rights of appeal against a negative decision on an asylum claim and are either awaiting or have been given notice to leave their accommodation or the country Habitual Residency Test Failures People who hold a UK passport but have not lived in the UK for 6 months or more. On returning to the UK they are deemed not to be habitually resident and therefore are not entitled to public funds or housing. People subject to immigration control People who have entered the UK on a visa (e.g. student, work or visitors) and have become unable to support themselves under the terms of the entry requirements Over-stayers People who have entered the UK on a visa which has now expired Benefit Gap People who have been getting support from the Social Services Department and have a special need and have been given leave to remain in the UK. The benefit gap is the time between the person being given leave to remain and the access to public funds.</p>	<p>where it appears that they may be in need of those services s.47(1)(b) places duty on local authority to meet the assessed needs.</p> <p>In the case of a person with no recourse to public funds, this position is complicated as they are unable to access benefits. The responsibility thus falls on the local authority to provide for accommodation and subsistence, in addition to any community care needs, under <i>National Assistance Act 1948</i>, s.21(1) “Subject to and in accordance with the provision in this Part of the Act, a local authority shall make arrangements for providing (a) residential accommodation for persons aged eighteen or over who by reason of age, illness, disability or any other circumstances are in need of care and attention which is not otherwise available to them...”</p> <p>The <i>Immigration and Asylum Act 1999</i> inserts a new s.21(1)(A) into the <i>National Assistance Act</i> to exclude people subject</p>	<p>If they are eligible and have an apparent need they are then given a community care assessment and provided with support including accommodation and subsistence if needed and a care package.</p> <p>The department is in the process of establishing a Vulnerable Adults Team which, subject to DMT and Joint Housing and Social Services Strategy Group approval, will be set up by April 2004. The team will consist of: 0.5 management time 1 administrator 1 social worker/care manager 2 support workers 1 case worker</p> <p>The latter 3 posts will incorporate the keyworker role recommended by Milly Kerr's Report of May 2003.</p>
---	---	--	---

	In practice, the majority of clients are Asylum Seekers or former asylum seekers.	<p>to immigration control from this provision where their need for care and attention arises <i>solely</i> from being destitute or from the physical effects of being destitute.</p> <p>Recent case law has confirmed that the local authority has a duty to support adult asylum seekers with special needs even where they would otherwise be entitled to NASS support (<i>Westminster City Council v. National Asylum Support Service</i> (2002)) but not children with special needs who are the dependent of an asylum seeker. (<i>R(A) v. National Asylum Support Services and another</i> (2003))</p>	
Education, Admissions Team, Overseas Admissions Officer	Children newly arrived from overseas, many of whom are asylum seekers	Refugee Children have the same rights to a school education as other children in the UK (DES circular 11/88). Only those children being housed in Induction Centres are ineligible for a school place (Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act 2002).	<p>Interviews all new arrivals from overseas with an interpreter if necessary to assess their individual needs.</p> <p>Checks eligibility and immigration status of child</p> <p>Works to secure an appropriate school place, normally within two weeks, but longer dependant on availability of places, the time of arrival and the ability of the child.</p> <p>Close links with Croydon College Language Link programme to place Year 11 new arrivals who would have difficulty in mainstream schools because of their level of English.</p>
Education, Ethnic Minorities Achievement Service (EMAS)	Schools with refugee pupils		<p>Funded through the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant (EMAG).</p> <p>Refugee Consultant works with schools to support the day to day delivery of school education to RAS children</p>

			<p>3 P/T Refugee Support Teachers to go into schools when large numbers of new RAS arrive or when a need is identified</p> <p>Provide training to teachers and others on issues in educating RAS children</p> <p>Support the gathering of information from schools on the numbers, ethnicity and achievement of RAS children</p>
Croydon College, Language Link Programme	Newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers and others who would otherwise fail to secure a mainstream school place due to their poor English language skills.		<p>Full time provision with an emphasis on improving English language skills, offering additional support as required and encouraging progression to Further Education.</p> <p>Direct referral through the Overseas Admission Officer.</p>
Education, Reaching Out Project			<p>Bids for external funding to support projects in schools with many refugee pupils</p> <p>Money allocated directly to schools which bid for funding.</p>
Education, Integrated Student Services, Refugee Policy Officer			<p>Manages and develops the Year 11 Language Link programme</p> <p>Develops programmes in partnership with other agencies to secure funding</p> <p>Gathers information from schools on RAS children on age, ethnicity, country of origin and provides this information in a range of formats to help better plan services to these children</p> <p>Works with others including Croydon schools, Social Services, CASS, Youth Service, Community and Church groups, EMAS, Croydon Voluntary Action and Refugee Groups to ensure that educational needs are understood and met.</p> <p>Reviews trends and develops new initiatives to meet changing needs</p>
Education, Continuing Education and Training Service (CETS)	<p>Adult education service for the wider community</p> <p>An extensive ESOL and bilingual skills programme. 67% of ESOL learners identified themselves as refugees or asylum seekers in 2002/2003. ESOL courses are funded by Learning and Skills Council and are free to</p>		<p>A wide range of post-16 provision aimed at providing Refugees and those with full settlement rights English and Bilingual skills courses at all levels.</p> <p>ESOL A wide range of courses, including external accreditation and advanced levels as well as basic levels. Range of class options, including classes held in Community venues.</p> <p>Bilingual Vocational Courses For bilingual adults fluent in English and another language who would like to develop their skills to find employment.</p>

	learners.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community Interpreting ▪ Introduction to Community Translation ▪ Bilingual Classroom Assistant ▪ Bilingual Advice Work ▪ English for Bilingual Work ▪ Advocacy & Mediation in Health ▪ Interpreting for Courts, Immigration & Police Services ▪ Childcare – Certificate in Pre-School Practice <p>Bridge to Work Supports overseas professionals to find employment in the UK. Job search skills; ICT; English; portfolio building; opportunity of a work placement. Specialist seminars on different professions. Also runs a support group for doctors from overseas who are preparing for the PLAB test.</p> <p>Childcare Crèche and pre-school at South Norwood and Ambassador House are available for learners to use. Crèche provision at some of the community classes.</p>
Education, CETS, New Deal Courses	Contracted by JobCentre Plus to deliver ESOL to New Deal clients		<p>Clients referred from JobCentre Plus, assessed and placed appropriately</p> <p>Courses run throughout the year, and CETS is able to place learners in appropriate level classes, whereas nationally the provision for New Deal ESOL is quite poor, focussing mainly on the lower levels.</p> <p>Learners attend either 30 or 15 hours per week on a 13 week or 26 week course. They are then assessed and referred back to the JobCentre.</p>
Education, CETS, Family Learning	Families; not exclusively aimed at refugees and asylum seekers but circulated widely to community groups to encourage wide participation		<p>Range of provision aimed at encouraging families to participate in short learning events as an encouragement and taster for further learning</p>
Education, CETS, HelpPoint	People whose English language is poor Mainly CETS learners		<p>Bilingual advice service which holds sessions at ETS Thornton Heath centre, Refugee Day Centre and community centres</p> <p>Advice given on a range of issues including housing, benefits, immigration and other personal issues</p> <p>Provides work experience and employment opportunities for CETS trainees from Bilingual courses.</p>

Equalities Unit			<p>Provides policies, guidance and support to Members, Council departments and staff, community groups and other statutory bodies.</p> <p>Specific focuses of the Unit are hate crime and domestic violence partnership work. Has set up a one-stop for victims of these crimes.</p> <p>The Equalities Unit deals with discrimination and fair access to services, including race issues which would be of relevance to refugees and asylum seekers. The Equalities Unit also has includes the Interpreting and Translation service.</p>
Equalities, Interpreting and Translation Service	Council departments, external agencies such as JobCentres, other Local Authorities, the Health Authority, voluntary sector		<p>Register of 300+ interpreters and translators.</p> <p>Translation of letters or other documents, including those that must be translated by law.</p> <p>Interpreters available on telephone for initial enquiry and to attend pre-booked appointments.</p> <p>There are different pricing structures for internal council agencies, external agencies and the voluntary sector.</p> <p>Croydon: Guide for Newcomers produced by Interpreting Services. It is currently being translated into different languages which will be available on the council website. Agencies will be able to print off copies for clients. This will be useful to both clients and service providers as a reference guide.</p> <p>The Council and the Primary Care Trust are working together on the possibility of an integrated interpreting service. The advantages of this would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One point of contact for interpreting services in Croydon ▪ Continuity of interpreter for clients using different services ▪ Interpreters locally based and have local knowledge
Croydon Primary Care Trust, Homeless Health Team	<p>Homeless people including asylum seekers and refugees living in temporary accommodation in Croydon</p> <p>Aims to access people living in hotel accommodation in the North of Croydon</p> <p>Demand very high, so only able to visit the large hotels –</p>		<p>Team of Nurses, Health visitor, Practice Nurse, Outreach workers and Clerical link workers.</p> <p>Outreach clinics in Norfolk and Queens Hotels (weekly), Refugee Day Centre (weekly), NHS walk-in-centre (fortnightly), Taberner House for UASC (fortnightly).</p> <p>Also referral service – clients can be referred by anyone, e.g. social services, CASS, health visitors.</p> <p>Training programmes for service providers, e.g. for GP receptionist staff in</p>

	Brigstock, Norfolk House and Queens Hotel – which house asylum seekers supported by NASS		<p>how to deal with RAS clients, use interpreting services etc.</p> <p>Produces resources for practitioners and patients. Recent examples include:</p> <p>Bookmark checklist for clinicians on dealing with RAS patients</p> <p>“Open Your Eyes” – produced with Croydon College RAS students as a guide for young RAS new to Croydon</p> <p>“Pictures of Health” – an award-winning booklet showing how to access health care in Croydon through photographs, simple text, and a space for clients to write in their own language. Migrant Helpline have been trained to distribute these booklets by taking clients to the different Health Care access points.</p> <p>Primary Care Liaison Form – HHT completes form with clients to make registration process at GP surgery easier</p> <p>Client Held Records Issued when a client has a particular health need that will require visits to different health professionals</p>
Primary Care Trust, Rainbow Health Centre	NASS-supported asylum seekers living in Emergency Accommodation in Denhevet, Norfolk House and Brigstock House (in North Croydon)		<p>Dedicated GP practice for refugees and asylum seekers. Set up by the Primary Care Trust through Personal Medical Services (PMS) funding. Opened 15 December 2003, begin registering patients 5 January 2004.</p> <p>Clinical Team of General Practitioner, Nurse Practitioner and 2 other nurses. Also practice manager (non-clinician), and reception staff. 3 ½ hours GP time per day.</p> <p>Patients will be registered permanently and given NHS numbers. When a patient moves on, notes can be transferred electronically as well as being given to the client.</p> <p>Will provide health care service to asylum seekers living in EA where they can access all service usual to GPs, as well as services particularly relevant to this client group.</p> <p>Thorough health screening on registration; includes bloods tests for illnesses not common in UK.</p> <p>Possibility of counselling service (in discussion with SLAM).</p> <p>The Health Centre will be able to have face-to-face interpreters if they are needed as they will work on an appointment system. The appointment will be booked using language line, if needed, and they will try to book patients with the same language on the same day to save on interpreters costs.</p>

			The Health Centre will work closely with Migrant Helpline. Patients will be registered to Migrant Helpline's address and they will notify the Health Centre when a patient is dispersed. Migrant Helpline will complete the HC2 form (for free prescriptions) with clients as part of their initial pack.
Primary Care Trust, NHS Walk-in-Centre	Targeted client groups: Refugees and asylum seekers Homeless people Young people		<p>Nurse-led practice with 3 hours of GP time per day. Deals with patients' immediate needs, treats acute conditions and attempts to get them registered with a GP.</p> <p>Wednesday mornings are set aside for training, and they often have outside agencies come in, e.g. social services provided training on referral pathways. Training from language line resulted in a suggestion that interpreters not be kept on hold during a physical examination, hence saving on costs.</p> <p>The Centre has two Health Promotion workers who are able to give advice and find answers to people's questions as well as to react to specific needs, e.g. a group was set up with the YMCA for UASC who are fathers.</p> <p>RAS patients are frequently signposted to the Refugee Day Centre, Migrant Helpline and to the many community organisations. They are also referred to the Mayday Chest Clinic for TB screening.</p>
Croydon NHS Advocacy & Interpreting Services			Service Manager is Elizabeth Mori.
Mayday NHS Trust, Mayday Chest Clinic			Provides TB screening to referred patients, offering BCG where appropriate.
Benefits Agency	Those who made an application for asylum at port of entry before 3 April 2000 <i>and are still awaiting the first asylum decision</i> Those who have made a successful claim for asylum (refugee status)		The same entitlement to welfare benefits as British people, e.g. income support, housing benefit, council tax benefit etc.

Employment Service, JobCentre Plus	Client group as above		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jobsearch ▪ New Deal – includes ESOL contracted through CETS
---------------------------------------	-----------------------	--	---

Department and service	Client group	Legal framework	Services provided
National Asylum Support Service (NASS)	<p>Support is available to those who are destitute as defined by <i>Immigration and Asylum Act 1999</i> and made an application for asylum (as opposed to for NASS support):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> after 29 August 2000 (in any part of UK) at port of entry after 3 April 2000 in-country after 24 July 2000 (London – there are regional variations in this date) at port of entry before 3 April 2000 and who have become disentitled to welfare benefits following a negative decision on their asylum application on or after 25 September 2000 and pending appeal. <p>Support is NOT available to those who made a late claim for asylum or who provided false or incomplete information on or after 8 January 2003</p>	<p><i>Immigration and Asylum Act 1999</i> The Secretary of State may provide or arrange or the provision of support for asylum seekers who appear to be destitute. A person is destitute if “he does not have adequate accommodation or any means of obtaining it (whether or not his other essential living needs are met)” or “he has adequate accommodation or the means of obtaining it, but cannot meet his other essential living needs.”</p> <p><i>Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act 2002</i> ss. 55 & 57 entered into force 8 January 2003</p> <p>Section 55 – Late Claims for Asylum: Refusal of Support Asylum Seekers will only be eligible for support from NASS if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They can prove they have applied for asylum as soon as ‘reasonably practicable’ after arrival in the UK. They meet the criteria for destitution <p>Section 57 – Application for Support: False or incomplete information Access to support by NASS will be denied to those who</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> do not provide a clear and coherent account of how they came to the UK fail to provide clear or 	<p>Accommodation and subsistence OR subsistence only support. Where accommodation is provided, this will normally be outside of London and the South East and the client has no choice as to which area they are ‘dispersed’.</p> <p>Subsistence support is provided in the form of vouchers redeemable for cash at a Post Office.</p>

		<p>accurate information about their circumstances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fail to co-operate with further enquiries. <p>(Unless the refusal of support contravenes their human rights under Human Rights Act 1998)</p>	
Croydon Police			<p>No specific services provided for refugees and asylum seekers.</p> <p>Community Ward Officers and the Partnership Office have the role of building relationships with the community and with community groups. The Ward Officers look at long-term problems in their Ward</p> <p>The Community Ward Officer went to the hotel that housed Sangatte arrivals as a way of opening dialogue, giving asylum seekers knowledge of how to go about reporting crime etc. However, this was a one-off. The Community Ward Officers do not visit the hotels where asylum seekers are housed on a regular basis for this kind of work.</p> <p>Refugees and asylum seekers are relatively low on the police agenda and do not place much demand on Croydon police.</p> <p>Police have been called to isolated incidences at Lunar House, and work jointly with immigration to enforce removal of failed asylum seekers.</p> <p>.</p>
Migrant Helpline	<p>Mainly new asylum seekers applying for NASS support, and those who are obtaining NASS subsistence and accommodation support.</p> <p>MHL does NOT complete subsistence only claims with clients.</p>		<p>One of 6 voluntary sector agencies contracted by NASS to provide Emergency Accommodation to destitute asylum seekers entitled to NASS support while awaiting dispersal.</p> <p>Asylum Seekers are referred to MHL from the Asylum Screening Unit if they are in need of NASS support. MHL complete the NASS 1 form with the client. NASS then screens the claim and the client</p>

			<p>is given a positive decision, in which case they are accommodated, a negative decision, in which case MHL may help them ask for a reconsideration or refer them to a solicitor, or their case may need to be referred to the RANS team for consideration.</p> <p>The RANS team deals with applications for NASS support that may be denied under ss.54, 55, or 57 Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, as legal challenges lead to the establishment of more detailed decision process. These clients receive a holding/concession letter and are accommodated until they can be given a detailed interview.</p> <p>Clients who are refused NASS support are usually referred to solicitors who may obtain an injunction that NASS should accommodate them until a court can review the decision.</p> <p>MHL contracts accommodation at four main hotels in the borough, as well as having 'spot-booked' accommodation for out-of-hours or age-disputed clients or for clients with special needs for whom EA is suitable.</p> <p>Age-disputed clients are referred to the Refugee Council's Children's panel and those who receive a negative decision are found a solicitor.</p> <p>MHL refers clients to the Medical Foundation for Victims of Torture if needed; Medical Foundation worker comes to MHL at Friends road weekly to carry out initial assessments. A few clients obtain positive asylum decisions before they are dispersed, and are referred to the Refugee Council One-Stop Service in Brixton, the Local Authority and the JobCentre</p>
Refugee Day Centre	Asylum seekers and Refugees	N/A	<p>Open as a day centre on Tuesdays with access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lunch ▪ Clothing and household goods ▪ Health advice from Homeless Health Team ▪ Advocacy from Help Point ▪ Crèche

			Other services including English classes are available at specific times during the week
Refugee Project Croydon	Asylum seekers and Refugees	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registered Charity providing legal-based advocacy support Provides information and advice on local services and the immigration system Includes referral to specialist solicitors, and especially liaison with immigration Educational services provision (ESOL classes, English and bi-lingual skills; number power and word power classes; advice and referrals to colleges and universities Employment training services provision (Employment training courses; assists with CV writing, job application form completion; advice on careers/employment) Information Technology training services provision Training for volunteers Parenting and antenatal classes Home tutoring <p>Co-ordinator: Susan McDonald – Tel: 8656 4560</p>
Croydon Churches Floating Shelter	<p>Men and women who have nowhere else to stay.</p> <p>Access is by referral only from specific agencies which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Resource Centre YMCA outreach team Alcohol Recovery Project Migrants Helpline NHS Walk-in Centre CHAS Nightwatch Local drugs agencies (including Mainliners and Cranstoun). <p>The main referral agencies should be the Croydon Resource Centre, or for asylum seekers, Migrant Helpline.</p>	N/A	<p>Will provide cold weather shelter for 10 guests during the period 1 January 2004 to 31 March 2004.</p> <p>The shelter will be in seven church halls operating on a rota system so the shelter will be somewhere different each night of the week.</p> <p>Sleeping arrangements will be foam mattresses on the floors of the seven church halls. An evening meal and breakfast will be provided.</p> <p>Co-ordinator: Joe Crilly</p>

	The Shelter is mainly supposed to be for 'indigenous' homeless due to funding and 'political' reasons. It will have limited space for asylum seeker homeless, who will be expected to stay only for a few nights rather than the maximum of 28 days for other homeless people.		
Nightwatch	Homeless people/rough sleepers in Croydon Numbers of clients approximately doubled from September 2003. This is due to increased numbers of asylum seekers using the service.	N/A	Food is distributed nightly in Queen's Gardens from 9.30pm Chair: Jad Adams – Treasurer: Bob Sleight – Tel: 8668 6593. Bob also keeps Nightwatch's records, including a logbook of clients. This does not record whether someone is an asylum-seeker or not, although it does record names and ethnicity (although only categories used are white & African-Caribbean).
Croydon Resource Centre for Unemployed Adults	Homeless people	N/A	A Day Centre for homeless people, based in St. Mary's Church, Wellesly Road. Provides a place to sit indoors, food, showers and advice. Not spoken to the Centre staff, so not entirely sure of the range of services. Manager: Julia Frazer – Tel: 8686 1222