

## New Office!

On 1<sup>st</sup> March, the Refugee Survival Trust is moving from its Leith Walk office to the Melting Pot on Rose Street. There are many reasons for this move – not least the flexibility of the Melting Pot office and uncertainty of future RST funding.

The Development Manager and RST volunteers will be ‘hot desking’ at the Melting Pot office alongside a variety of other voluntary organisations and social enterprises. This means that RST will only be paying for the hours the staff and volunteers use – saving precious core funding for RST’s development and lobbying activities to tackle destitution.

Our new contact details are:

Refugee Survival Trust  
The Melting Pot  
5 Rose Street  
Edinburgh EH2 2PA  
Tel: 0131 243 2660  
Email: [info@rst.org.uk](mailto:info@rst.org.uk)

## 21 Days Later

**RST joins forces with the British Red Cross to tackle destitution in the UK asylum system**

A new report by the British Red Cross and Refugee Survival Trust is asking for simple changes to the asylum process to dramatically reduce the number of refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland who find themselves needlessly destitute.

Entitled “21 Days Later”, the report found that an average of £6,000-worth of grants are given to destitute refugees and asylum seekers every month in Scotland to help them pay for basic essentials, such as food, accommodation and clothing. However, over the past 5½ years, nearly 70% of this money should have come from mainstream agencies rather than charities.

“The report shows that there are simple, yet key failures in the asylum



support system that result in unnecessary destitution,” says RST chair Laurie Naumann. “Both adults and children, who have travelled thousands of miles to escape persecution, often find that their nightmare continues as they face destitution in Scotland.”

Named after the three-week “move-on” period given to people whose

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## 21 Days Later (continued from front cover)

application for asylum has been refused, the report demonstrates that it is during this crucial 21-day period that those seeking sanctuary in the UK are most likely to experience destitution.

The report also clearly indicates other key points during the asylum process where people are most likely to find themselves destitute, including those who have actually been granted leave to remain in the UK.

Designed to show how simple, practical changes to the asylum process could prevent the unnecessary destitution of hundreds of people living in Scotland – the report makes clear that the situation is slowly improving, not least because the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) is taking more responsibility for cases at its Glasgow office.

Phil Taylor, Regional

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Nick Scott-Flynn  
British Red Cross

Director of the UK Border Agency in Scotland and Northern Ireland said: “On behalf of the Agency, I welcome the publication of this report, which will make a positive contribution to the ongoing dialogue about asylum seekers and refugees we have with stakeholders in Scotland. “The British Red Cross and Refugee Survival Trust have made a positive impact in the area of the

rights of asylum seekers and refugees, and I am pleased that the report recognises the improvements that have been made to our operations in Scotland.

“The asylum process seeks to ensure that those who require international protection are given the support they need, while working to make sure that those who do not return home. I look forward to working with the Red Cross and Refugee Survival Trust, and our other partner organisations, to resolve administrative issues which might cause disadvantage to asylum seekers and refugees, and together we’ll strive to make improvements to the asylum system wherever possible.”

Nick Scott-Flynn, head of the British Red Cross refugee services, explains: “The relationship that is being built with the UKBA is a

step in the right direction and should be promoted throughout the UK as an example of how the voluntary and statutory sector can work together to reduce destitution and improve the lives of hundreds of families who have already been through enough.

“Some of the circumstances that the British Red Cross have witnessed in dealing with destitution have shown a degree of suffering and inhumanity that if we as the world’s largest humanitarian organisation witnessed them in a different environment, such as an area of natural disaster or a conflict zone, we would be shocked into making an immediate emergency response”.

Download “21 Days Later” at [www.rst.org.uk](http://www.rst.org.uk), or call Jenny at RST on 0131 243 2660 to request a copy.

## Who has RST helped?

**This year, RST has been supporting over 50 destitute asylum seekers and refugees every month. Here are some stories about some of the people who have needed our help...**

£40 was given by RST to a young Iraqi who claims that he was born in June 1993. He was assessed by Social Work as being over 18 years of age and, therefore, required to travel to Liverpool to claim asylum. Without this funding from RST he would have been left in Glasgow alone, homeless, undocumented and extremely vulnerable.

A Congolese woman with two children had been waiting for Emergency Support Tokens to be delivered for several days. She had no money with which she could buy food and other essentials for herself or her children. Due to delivery problems with the Emergency Support Tokens, they had to be re-ordered, which delayed them for a further 4 days. RST gave the family money for food for a week while they waited for their support tokens to be delivered.

A grant of £80 was given to a Chinese man who had been approved for section 4 support. No accommodation was available for the next three weeks and he was not entitled to any other support. The funding given by RST ensured he was able to feed himself until he was allocated accommodation.

## National Audit Office report into the New Asylum Model

In January, the National Audit Office published its investigation into the operation of UKBA's new asylum model and the progress being made in dealing with over 400,000 'legacy cases'. Under the new system an application for asylum is handled by one member of staff from start to finish and this has resulted in quicker decision-making for many claimants. However, NAO found some failings in the system: for example, a full screening interview is not taking place in 25% of cases which means that essential information is being missed and detention is still being used inappropriately in some cases. Although the number of applications for asylum has dropped steadily in recent years, the backlog of new cases in the fast-track system has risen from 4,200 in June 2007 to 8,700 in July 2008.

In 2007 61 new teams were set up to deal with legacy cases, some of which date

back more than 10 years. By removing dependents, UKBA reduced the number of cases to 335,000 and was able to resolve about 90,000 of these cases by May 2008 (about 4,000 cases per month). However, if the backlog is to be cleared by 2011, it will be necessary to deal with 6,700 cases a month. The speed of handling such claims is being hampered by the fact that about 20% cannot be resolved because of "external factors" such as "data errors" which results in these claimants being left in limbo without a decision so that they can move on with their lives. The NAO doubts that UKBA will be able to reach its target in 2011 but Lin Homer, Chief Executive of UKBA has said that "in the latter half of 2008 we cleared an average of 10,000 legacy cases per month, and have already cleared 155,000 cases to date."

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## Conservative think-tank slams ‘policy of destitution’.

Asylum seekers who have been refused permission to live in the UK but are unable to return to their country of origin should be allowed to work and access health care – so says a report published in December by the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), former Conservative leader, Iain Duncan Smith’s think-tank.

The report, co-authored by Bob Holman, who spoke at RST’s AGM last year, proposes setting up a new independent body to make decisions on asylum claims. The body would be made up of a panel of magistrates, with charities and voluntary groups contracted to provide support for immigrants until they are returned home or integrated into society if allowed to remain in the UK. Unsuccessful applicants should continue to receive housing and financial support for up to six months pending their

removal.

The report, *Asylum Matters*, said the existing system forces many refused applicants to face destitution or disappear off the authorities’ radar and drift into illegal employment, prostitution or crime. It states that: "Making refused asylum seekers homeless and penniless is hugely counterproductive. It is much more difficult to work with them to encourage voluntary return or to ensure timely removal."

In a preface to the report, Iain Duncan Smith says "It appears that a British government is using forced destitution as a means of encouraging people to leave voluntarily. It is a failed policy. UK policy is still driven by the thesis, clearly falsified, that we can encourage people to leave by being nasty. The result is that we rely heavily on forcible return, which is both very costly and time-



**“Making refused asylum seekers homeless and penniless is hugely counterproductive.”**  
Iain Duncan Smith MP

consuming, and engages only a small proportion of those whose claims are refused.”

The report recommends speeding up the asylum system so that those rejected are returned home within six months, either forcibly or voluntarily, compared with the existing process which takes an average of 13 months.

Download “Asylum Matters” at  
[www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk](http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk)

# RST's "credit crunch"

## RST is having to take serious steps to reduce its expenditure.

As mentioned in our last newsletter, funding for the Refugee Survival Trust is even more precarious than ever. Many of our trust funders—on whom we rely on for funding for our destitution grants—have suffered as a result of the credit crunch: they have seen their investments fall significantly and the interest they receive on their investments drop to next to nothing. As a result, they have been forced to reduce (or in some cases stop entirely) the donations that they make to RST.

On top of this, RST's core funding from the Big Lottery, which is used to fund our office, staff and volunteer costs, comes to an end in June. So far RST has been unable to secure further funding.

As a result, RST is having to take serious steps to

reduce its expenditure. The office move from Smith's Place to the Melting Pot has enable us to make key savings on our core costs. In addition, we have reduced the hours worked by our Development Manager from 4 days a week to only 3.

We are waiting for the outcome of many funding application—both for grants funding and core funding—and hope to be in a more stable situation in the next six months.

In the meantime, we would like to call on all of our supporters to help us keep donations rolling in. This is essential if we are able to continue stopping vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers going without money for food—or often a roof over their head.

Please help us by taking up one (or more!) of our fundraising ideas. We are relying on you more than ever!

## We need your help!

- Become a member of the Refugee Survival Trust (or renew your membership) by filling in the enclosed application form.
- Set up a standing order to donate what you can each month. £10 a month would enable us to provide a grant to buy food and essentials for 3 destitute asylum seekers every year.
- Hold a collection for RST at your local community group or church—or even better—invite RST to come along to speak about the situations facing asylum seekers in Scotland.
- Hold a fundraising dress-down day, coffee morning or challenge at your work. Ask your boss to double what you raise!

We can help you fundraise by supplying information leaflets, copies of our newsletter or even by coming along to your event!

## Your Questions Answered...

### **How does RST ensure that destitute refugees and asylum seekers know about—and are able to apply for— RST grants?**

The Refugee Survival Trust has an ongoing partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council, which makes applications to RST on behalf of destitute clients. The applications are submitted to RST by caseworkers within the Scottish Refugee Council's "One Stop" service. An RST grants volunteer reviews and approves these applications every evening so that the client receives a decision on the application within 24 hours. If the client is immediately destitute, or needs to travel to Liverpool to submit a claim for asylum, SRC has been given to make small discretionary payment to clients until a full RST grant has been approved.

RST has a range of partnerships with organisations including Positive Action in Housing, Careers Scotland and the British Red Cross. These partnerships help to ensure that these organisations correctly refer destitute clients to the Scottish Refugee Council to access RST funding.

### **Why does RST only make grants through the Scottish Refugee Council?**

The vast majority of RST grants are made through SRC for two reasons:

1. SRC caseworkers are OISC qualified and are therefore able to fully assess the clients' entitlement to other funding (for example UKBA payments, section 4 support, mainstream benefits). This helps to ensure that RST funding is only used as a last resort.
2. RST does not have the administrative capacity to cope with applications many agencies and it is likely that this could result in RST receiving duplicate applications for the same client.



Send your questions to be answered in our Summer newsletter to:

Juliet Harris  
[juliet@rst.org.uk](mailto:juliet@rst.org.uk)

or to

The Refugee Survival Trust  
The Melting Pot, 5  
Rose Street, Edinburgh,  
EH2 2PR



The Refugee Survival Trust only exists thanks to the generosity, help and support given by people in Scotland— individuals, churches, clubs, companies and schools. It is thanks to you that we are able to prevent so many vulnerable people from being destitute on the streets of Scotland. However, as harsh legislation and an often ineffective asylum system forces more and more people to rely on RST funding to survive, we need your help more than ever.

Refugee Survival Trust  
The Melting Pot  
5 Rose Street  
Edinburgh EH2 2PA  
Charity no: SCO24328

Phone: 0131 243 2660  
Email: info@rst.org.uk

Visit our website:  
www.rst.org.uk

**Please pass on this newsletter to friends, family and colleagues, and encourage them to support us—ask them to show their support by becoming a member or regular donor.**

### Please make a donation:

Last year, RST made grants of over £85,000 to prevent the destitution of asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland. RST only has limited funds, and desperately needs to raise more if it is to continue. Without RST, asylum seekers, refugees and their children would be left with no money for food, and often no accommodation. Please make a donation now to help us continue this essential work. **Every donation goes towards preventing destitution.**

Thank you.

Title: Mr / Mrs / Ms / Other .....

Full Name: .....

Full address: .....

..... Postcode: .....

- I would like to make a donation of £ ..... and enclose a cheque/postal order payable to the Refugee Survival Trust for this amount.
- I am a UK Taxpayer and would like the Refugee Survival Trust to reclaim tax on this and all donations hereafter (*please tick*)

NB This only applies if you currently pay tax on income or any savings you have. You must pay an amount of income tax or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax we reclaim on your donations in the tax year.

Please return to:  
Refugee Survival Trust, The Melting Pot, 5 Rose Street, Edinburgh, EH2 2PA