

Issue 14

Summer 2010

Survival

The Newsletter of
the Refugee Survival Trust

RST

Refugee
Survival
Trust

Why not get your running shoes on for RST this summer?

RST is continuing to look for new and exciting ways to support our work to tackle destitution faced by asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland.

We now use JustGiving, the world's largest and most trusted online charity fundraising platform.

RST's supporters can use this website to make a one-off donation, to

set up a regular donation or to set up a sponsorship site for an event they are taking place in.

At the moment, the most popular fundraising activity for RST is running. We have two supporters taking part in the Great Scottish Run in Glasgow in

September raising money for RST. Good luck to them!

If you are planning on taking part in a race or other event over the summer please consider raising money for RST.



We also have a new FaceBook page so that supporters can keep up-to-date with our latest news online.

If you use FaceBook please join us .

Events like our annual ceillidh also continue to be popular and the one held in Edinburgh in March raised £340. Thanks to all who attended and donated prizes!

Visit our JustGiving website at www.justgiving.com/refugeesurvivaltrust

Find us on FaceBook by searching for 'Refugee Survival Trust'



Sponsor me

Refugee Week is coming up soon!
This year it takes place from 14—20 June

What does the 2010 election mean for asylum seekers and refugees?

As this edition of Survival goes to the press our political leaders are locked away close to Westminster deciding how the next UK Government will be formed.

It's too late to change your vote now, but it is still a good time to think about what the implications of the 2010 elections will be for asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland.

The Tory party won the most seats across the UK (although only one in Scotland). Their manifesto talks about 'providing a safe haven

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to genuine refugees', but provides no details of how they will do this.

The main thrust of their immigration policy is a limit on the number of people who can come here from outside the European Union. If this is implemented we hope they do not apply a limit to the number of refugees who come to

the UK. Refugees come to Scotland from some of the most brutal and war torn regimes in the world and it is impossible to judge how many people will need protection each year or how a limit will be created.

The Liberal Democrats, who have turned out to be 'king-makers' of the election, have the most

Date for your diary—Refugee Survival Trust AGM 2010

Our Annual General Meeting will be held in Edinburgh on Friday 3 September this year.

After holding the meeting in Glasgow for the past two years we are pleased to announce

that this year's venue will be Edinburgh City Chambers.

We expect to welcome new members of the Board following our recruitment campaign earlier this year.

Papers will be sent to



liberal of policies on asylum. They propose setting up an independent agency to handle claims, ending the destitution of children and allowing asylum seekers to work. It remains to be seen how much of this they could retain within a coalition government.

The Labour Party manifesto boasts that asylum claims are at their lowest since the early 1990s and that the cost of asylum support has been halved in the last six years.

We will keep you up-to-date on how the policies of the new Government (whoever forms it) affect the people we support.

members in August. Don't forget to renew your membership before the meeting to ensure you are eligible to vote. We look forward to seeing you in September.

Whom has RST helped?

In 2009/10 RST made grants of more than £40,000 to support destitute asylum seekers and refugees. Here are the stories of some of the people we have helped...

"A 19 year old Palestinian man was removed to France under the Dublin Convention but was then returned to the UK by the French authorities with no money or support. He was given a grant of £80 to provide for living costs while he applied for Section 4."

"A heavily pregnant Chinese woman was moved twice by her accommodation provider and the UK BA was not notified. This meant that Emergency Support Tokens were delivered to the wrong address and the woman had no financial assistance for a week. A grant of £40 was given to cover this period."

"A grant of £70 was given to a Nigerian woman who was hospitalised following a psychiatric assessment and her two children were taken into care. The discharge letters from the hospital took three weeks to be issued and the UK BA would not consider reinstating her support until they were received. We provided this woman for support to cover this period."

"A young Afghani man who went to the police after being assaulted had his ARC card held for fingerprinting and was not able to go to the post office to collect his weekly support. He received a grant of £35 from RST to cover his living expenses until the card was returned to him."

Asylum: Getting the Balance Right?

Independent inspector publishes his first report on UK Border Agency's performance

The Independent Chief Inspector of UK Border Agency John Vine published his first report "Asylum: Getting the Balance Right" in February 2010. The report assessed the UK BA's effort in delivering fast and fair decisions in asylum applications by reviewing policy and procedural documentation, case files and interview transcripts with staff in four of the six UK BA regions.

Vine's report highlighted UK BA's performance targets for concluding new asylum applications and legacy cases for asylum seekers who applied before March 5, 2007. The report criticized the feasibility of these targets, which projected that 90% of asylum applications will be resolved within six months. To achieve this, the UK BA still has to resolve 11,000 cases per month until July 2011,

while currently the agency concludes about 5,000 in a month. Their progress is measured in 'milestone months'. One region informed the review team that March, April and May cases were stockpiled to enable focus around the milestone month of June. Vine observed that "the need to hit the next reported milestone was clearly the overriding objective" and while the target was achieved during these milestone months, it dipped in the subsequent months.

By the end of December 2009, the number of cases concluded had risen to 235,000. This was broken down into 13% removals (30,550), 35% grants (82,250) and 52% conclusions (122,200) which were categorised as 'other'. Among the recommendations, Vine urged the Agency to assess how it can deliver



John Vine is the independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency. He was appointed to his post by the Home Secretary in 2008. He has responsibility for providing independent scrutiny of the work of the UK BA.

performance improvements quickly and consistently and to generate an action plan to show how it will conclude legacy cases by July 2011.

Vine also reviewed how UK BA assured the quality of decision-making through training and case ownership. Vine commended the regional case ownership model and was impressed with the quality assurance frameworks in place. While the existing training provided to Case Owners thoroughly covered topics such as decision-making, there is limited instruction on administrative tasks, despite the "significant negative impact that administrative errors can have."

The report included a range of case studies, including one that highlighted the negative

impact of a case being transferred between Case Owners. In that case a Nigerian asylum seeker had their case refused, despite the fact that UK BA were awaiting an assessment of the person's experiences of torture from Medical Foundation and had released them from detention while the assessment was completed. The asylum seeker had no right to appeal before being removed from the country, but UK BA withdrew their decision following a judicial review.

While this was an isolated case, Vine found that "given the particularly vulnerable nature of applicants claiming asylum, the failure in this case was deeply disturbing."

Lastly, the report examined how the UK BA understood the

experience of applicants and how well the Agency provided information to applicants. There was strong evidence that staff appreciated the experience of the applicants and the impact of their decisions. However, many applicants commented on the lack of information provided and Vine recommended that UK BA share Case Owner's contact details and information on when an applicant's case will be considered.

Vine acknowledged the difficult balance between achieving targets and dealing with some of the most vulnerable people in society. But "first and foremost," he stated, "this is about people's lives."

Read the full report at <http://bit.ly/dmZo7H> and UK BA's response at <http://bit.ly/cjoniE>

Refugee Week in Scotland 2010

Refugee Week is a UK-wide programme of events celebrating the contribution of refugees to the UK. During the week hundreds of events exploring refugee experiences take place across the UK. These range from small community and school activities to art exhibitions, political debates, film screenings, conferences, big music festivals, sports events and so on.

Refugee Week 2010 will take place from 14 - 20 June. Look out for further information on Scottish Refugee Council's website (www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk)

21 Days Later ... Follow up report

We have been working hard pulling together the follow up report to 21 Days Later. We'll be ready to report on what progress has been towards recommendations and what action still needs to be taken later this summer.



Consultation: Reforming Asylum Support

In February Refugee Survival Trust made a submission to UK BA's consultation on Reforming Asylum Support. We made the following points:

- UK BA must avoid the temptation to make budget savings by reducing support to asylum seekers. When they do this, vulnerable people face destitution and it creates pressure on the already stretched resources of the voluntary sector.
- UK BA should commit to supporting asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute while their case is being decided. Refusing to provide support in certain cases prevents people from exercising their right to claim asylum.
- The support system should be designed in a way that minimises the opportunities for mistakes to be made, because administrative errors are a significant cause of destitution.

Responses to the consultation were not published before the election and it remains to be seen how the next Government will take this forward.

Your Questions Answered...

What support is in place to assist families applying for refugee status, especially children and pregnant asylum claimants?

The UK Border Agency is responsible for providing support to asylum seekers who are otherwise destitute while their claim is being processed. A single person over the age of 18 receives £35.52 per week and a couple receives £70.34. Parents receive £51.37 per week for each child under the age of sixteen.

Families continue to receive cash support after their claim is refused, but single people and childless couples move onto a more limited form of support paid in vouchers. If a woman gives birth once she has been moved onto voucher support her family will remain on this limited support.

Women who are pregnant do receive a small amount of extra support. They receive an additional £3 per week while they are pregnant and £5 per week for the first year of their baby's life. They can also apply for a maternity grant of around £300. Thanks to lobbying from RST and others, new mothers can apply for the maternity grant whether they are on cash support or the more limited voucher support.

Besides volunteering for organizations such as RST, how can the Scottish community assist asylum claimants and aid in preventing destitution?

Our work is funded by donations from individuals and trusts, so setting up a regular donation is a good idea.

The start of a new parliament is also a good time to get in touch with your MP. Why not ask them to commit to protecting the rights of asylum seekers and to avoid cutting asylum support as a way of making budget savings? Find out how to get in touch with them here: <http://bit.ly/9DGghG>



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

info@rst.org.uk

or to

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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.

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. You can also donate online: www.rst.org.uk

Please make a donation:

Last year, RST made grants of over £40,000 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. 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: The Refugee Survival Trust, The Melting Pot, 5 Rose Street, Edinburgh EH2 2PR