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|                                                           |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>                                  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>                                     | <b>10</b> |
| <i>Background</i>                                         | 10        |
| <i>Research Objectives</i>                                | 10        |
| <i>Acknowledgements</i>                                   | 11        |
| <b>2 NATIONAL CONTEXT</b>                                 | <b>12</b> |
| <i>Dispersal policy</i>                                   | 12        |
| <i>The Asylum and Immigration Act 1999</i>                | 12        |
| <i>Importance of asylum applicant status</i>              | 13        |
| <i>Defining Asylum</i>                                    | 13        |
| <i>Asylum refusals</i>                                    | 15        |
| <i>NASS Support and monitoring</i>                        | 16        |
| <b>3 THE PORTSMOUTH CONTEXT</b>                           | <b>17</b> |
| <i>Involvement by Portsmouth Social Services</i>          | 17        |
| <b>4 RESEARCH METHOD</b>                                  | <b>19</b> |
| <i>Methodology</i>                                        | 19        |
| <i>Sampling group</i>                                     | 19        |
| <i>Designing a Sampling Frame</i>                         | 20        |
| <i>Information Gathering - contacts</i>                   | 21        |
| <i>Research Problems</i>                                  | 22        |
| <b>5 PORTSMOUTH'S ASYLUM SEEKERS - POPULATION PROFILE</b> | <b>24</b> |
| <i>Ethnic origins</i>                                     | 24        |
| <i>Children</i>                                           | 27        |
| <i>Adult group</i>                                        | 28        |
| <i>Gender and age</i>                                     | 30        |
| <i>Family units</i>                                       | 30        |
| <i>Calculating the Asylum-Seeker Population</i>           | 31        |
| <i>Languages spoken</i>                                   | 33        |
| <b>6 NEEDS OF PORTSMOUTH'S ASYLUM SEEKERS</b>             | <b>34</b> |
| <i>Asylum Seeker Support in Portsmouth</i>                | 34        |
| <i>Changing Needs</i>                                     | 34        |
| <i>Dealing with complaints</i>                            | 35        |
| <i>CASE STUDY - complaining about treatment</i>           | 36        |

|           |                                                                       |           |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>7</b>  | <b>HOUSING PORTSMOUTH'S ASYLUM SEEKERS</b>                            | <b>38</b> |
|           | <i>Housing asylum seekers - the changing position</i>                 | 38        |
|           | <i>The housing position today</i>                                     | 40        |
|           | <i>Portsmouth Council involvement in housing of Asylum Applicants</i> | 40        |
|           | <i>Provision of private rented accommodation</i>                      | 41        |
|           | <i>Condition of private accommodation</i>                             | 42        |
|           | <i>Comments from asylum seekers on private accommodation</i>          | 45        |
|           | <i>Hotels' response to cultural needs</i>                             | 48        |
|           | <i>Other findings from hotels</i>                                     | 49        |
|           | <i>Placement agencies role in use of hotels</i>                       | 51        |
|           | <i>Hotels views of their duties to asylum seekers</i>                 | 52        |
|           | <i>Hotels views of help to asylum seekers from other agencies</i>     | 53        |
|           | <i>Hotels Perspectives on Accommodating Asylum Seekers</i>            | 54        |
|           | <i>Homelessness and asylum seekers</i>                                | 56        |
|           | <i>The Gap in Housing Legislation</i>                                 | 58        |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>HEALTH NEEDS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS</b>                                 | <b>59</b> |
|           | <i>Health provision</i>                                               | 59        |
|           | <i>Findings on Health</i>                                             | 59        |
|           | <i>Case Study - Consulting a GP</i>                                   | 61        |
|           | <i>Case Study - healthcare with stigma?</i>                           | 62        |
|           | <i>Hotels' comments on GP Services to Asylum Seekers</i>              | 64        |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>WELFARE SUPPORT SERVICES FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS</b>                    | <b>66</b> |
|           | <i>Case study - the welfare support package in action</i>             | 66        |
|           | <i>Travel assistance</i>                                              | 72        |
|           | <i>Accommodation providers' comments on Social Services</i>           | 73        |
|           | <i>Hoteliers comments on needs of Asylum Seekers</i>                  | 74        |
|           | <i>Provision of clothing and toiletries</i>                           | 76        |
|           | <i>Case Study - Single and pregnant</i>                               | 78        |
| <b>10</b> | <b>EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND EDUCATION</b>                             | <b>79</b> |
|           | <i>Eligibility for work and training</i>                              | 79        |
|           | <i>Findings on Employment in Portsmouth</i>                           | 79        |
|           | <i>Case Study Six - advising on suitable employment</i>               | 80        |
|           | <i>Case Study - advising on suitable employment</i>                   | 80        |
|           | <i>Access to Training and Education</i>                               | 80        |

|           |                                                                  |           |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>11</b> | <b>CONCLUSIONS</b>                                               | <b>82</b> |
|           | <i>Asylum seekers have the same needs as other people</i>        | 82        |
|           | <i>Purpose of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1999</i>            | 83        |
|           | <i>Young working age population</i>                              | 83        |
|           | <i>A Role for Portsmouth Area Refugee Support</i>                | 84        |
|           | <i>The Need for a Base</i>                                       | 85        |
|           | <i>Achieving social inclusion</i>                                | 86        |
|           | <i>Government taking a lead</i>                                  | 87        |
|           | <i>The voice of the asylum seeker</i>                            | 87        |
| <b>12</b> | <b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>                                           | <b>89</b> |
| <b>13</b> | <b>REFERENCES</b>                                                | <b>92</b> |
| <b>14</b> | <b>APPENDICES</b>                                                | <b>95</b> |
|           | <i>Asylum Seekers - Individual profile questionnaire</i>         |           |
|           | <i>Asylum Seekers - Individual needs questionnaire</i>           |           |
|           | <i>Social Services - Portsmouth and local area questionnaire</i> |           |
|           | <i>Social Services - External Council questionnaire</i>          |           |
|           | <i>Hoteliers questionnaire</i>                                   |           |
|           | <i>Landlords questionnaire</i>                                   |           |

## C Identified needs and problems

In June 2000, the asylum seekers surveyed perceived their main needs as:

|                               |     |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| <i>Help with work/money</i>   | 98% |
| <i>Adequate provisions</i>    | 95% |
| <i>Clothes</i>                | 90% |
| <i>Telephone cards</i>        | 85% |
| <i>Friends/meeting people</i> | 80% |

46% of our sample came into the UK unable to speak English. And 43% of our sample said they had not been given any items of clothing since arrival.

264 asylum seekers were accommodated in 8 hotels. Some hotels go out of the way to provide good services to meet the needs of asylum seekers. However, only 1 hotel had 1 person per room. The other 7 all had shared rooms.

Hotels admitted that they did not have a basic understanding of the diverse cultures, religious taboos and dietary patterns of this mix of people. This led to difficulties for asylum seekers and hotels alike.

172 persons are in private rented accommodation in a total of 37 properties. There are three private landlord agencies - but none co-operated with this research. However, they all appeared to have a close working relationship with PCC staff.

The majority of the properties managed by these companies appeared to be substandard and inadequate for letting. Cookers and fridges were not in good working order and properties were supplied with insufficient pots and pans.

Many houses had no sitting areas. Six properties visited had cockroach and mice infestation. Only one property, out of 37, had a television. There were insufficient bedclothes and serious overcrowding. Very basic amenities were missing from the houses including full sized beds for adults.

VIP Agents based in Brighton act as intermediaries for many external placement authorities. Hotels appeared to have been discouraged from making contact with placement local authorities. In turn, this reduced the opportunity for asylum seekers' voices to be raised with relevant authorities.

7 out of 8 hotels regarded the work of PCC Social Services as poor and 6 had a poor opinion of GPs. GPs were reported as appearing to be sometimes discriminatory (with reports of them refusing to prescribe drugs on the grounds that asylum seekers are not tax payers); and refusing to visit if they knew a patient was an asylum seeker.

#### **D Issues from case studies**

The full report presents a number of detailed case studies. Here are some of the issues they raised:

1. Many asylum seekers experience fear when asked to provide information by support agencies. They are often too afraid to complain about the standards or manner of help they are given.
2. There is a clear need for effective interpreters
3. There is a need for effective legal representation
4. There is evidence of poor advice about housing options and of landlords acting unlawfully by harassing and intimidating tenants
5. London boroughs have dispersed asylum seekers but effectively abandoned them so they are no longer supported. Those not supported by Portsmouth Social Services may not get any other help
6. Asylum seekers are expected to attend distant interviews often without a clear offer of help towards travel costs
7. There are long delays in Home Office reaching decisions
8. Asylum seekers who are refused refugee status are not supported in any way whilst appealing or applying for judicial review.

#### **E Recommendations**

There are a range of recommendations arising out of this study which apply in turn to the various agencies involved:

**Portsmouth Area Refugee Support** (formerly the Solent Refugee and Asylum Seekers Support Group)

- 1 The Group should continue to provide 'drop-ins' which offer advice, contact with local agencies, legal representatives, clothing, and signposting to other resources. These 'drop ins' must be at a regular weekly time and place and preferably at Friendship House in Elm Grove.
- 2 The group should investigate the establishment of a resource centre that would operate as a central point of contact, dedicated to serving the interests of asylum seekers. It would signpost other services and offer social events. The Centre should be the first point of call for asylum seekers all over Portsmouth. It should be a place where some of their physical, psychological and spiritual needs can be met. It should be welcoming to asylum seekers who may feel excluded from activities inherent to communities in Portsmouth. The support group should work with independent agencies and other local organisations involved in providing advice services to investigate the feasibility of establishing such a centre.
- 3 The Group must continue to monitor the experiences of asylum seekers in the Portsmouth area, identifying critical issues, and campaigning for resolution of those issues where appropriate.
- 4 A particular project would be to work with asylum seekers to create a recipe book, which would respect differing cultural traditions. This would be distributed to hotels, both in Portsmouth and elsewhere.

**Portsmouth City Council**

- 5 The Council should establish funds to be able to provide Emergency financial support where appropriate
- 6 The Council should establish an accountable but clearly specified procurement process for accommodation.
- 7 The Council should set up rent guarantee scheme to enable asylum seekers to access private rented accommodation when they achieve 'Exceptional leave to remain status'

- 8 There should be minimum standards of accommodation including furniture and facilities, and limits on room sharing. There should be a system of checking standards and for receiving complaints from residents. The standards should be no less than for housing for the general population. There should be a property check and sign off on occupation by new tenants.
- 9 The council should review whether there are specific training needs for staff working with asylum seekers. Particular emphasis needs to be placed on establishing an equality culture.
- 10 A training programme for hoteliers should ensure they are properly prepared to meet the specific needs of asylum seekers.
- 11 The Council should continue to make representations at a national level for changes to national policy where it has evidence from its own experience of the particular difficulties which such policies create.

#### **Health Trusts**

- 12 The Portsmouth Healthcare Trust and Primary Care Groups should provide training and guidance notes to GP's on their role in providing health care for asylum seekers.
- 13 The Trust and PCGs should review their initiatives of provision for asylum seekers and particularly the mechanisms by which asylum seekers are able to make contact with services they need.

#### **The Home Office**

- 14 A monitoring system involving an independent body of inspectors should be instituted. This should have powers to investigate the provision of services by local authorities and other agencies.
- 15 A Whistle-blowing agency should be established to give asylum seekers a place to complain about unreasonable treatment by public bodies. This should be publicised to all asylum seekers as part of their initial registration by immigration officials.
- 16 The Government must urgently review financial support for asylum seekers. There needs to be better arrangements to provide emergency financial support

and to provide transport when requiring asylum seekers to travel to appointments.

The process by which NASS procures accommodation must take account of the failings highlighted in this report. It must be transparent and accountable, include meeting and monitoring reasonable standards and seek to achieve value for money.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### Background

This report presents the findings of research conducted on behalf of The Bill Sargent Trust and Portsmouth Area Refugee Support on the needs of asylum seekers in the Portsmouth area. The research was conducted in the six months between May and October 2000.

The research was commissioned because the partners were concerned about the lack of knowledge on asylum seekers and the extent to which their needs are being met. An increasing number of agencies were requesting information, particularly in the aftermath of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1999. Portsmouth Area Refugee Support wanted to clarify how it could be most effective. So a key aim of the research was to identify potential gaps in provision, and to find ways of catering for those unmet needs through the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Group.

This research was commissioned and financed by the Bill Sargent Trust, a small charity dedicated to research and campaigning on housing and related issues in the South East Hants area. The Trust operates as a member of PHA Group whose lead company is Portsmouth Housing Association.

### Research Objectives

The main objectives of the research were:

- To find out about asylum seeker needs and priorities, and to identify the extent of unmet needs through primary research efforts.
- To collate profile information on asylum seekers in the area according to their numbers, nationalities, gender, age, demography, family composition and languages spoken. This is to enable a database of information to be set up for immediate and long-term use.

## Acknowledgements

The researcher would like to thank all asylum seekers, hotel proprietors, and statutory and non-statutory agencies within and outside Portsmouth, who have given their co-operation and time to assist with this project.

Appreciation also extends to all members of the Research Steering Group and Portsmouth Area Refugee Support, for without their support, this research would not have remained on course.

Finally, the project would like to acknowledge the help given by Barbara Brickwood of Portsmouth Family Welfare Association, whose tireless efforts assisted with provision of various items of clothing for many asylum seekers referred to her by the researcher.

The Bill Sargent Trust and Portsmouth Area Refugee Support are profoundly grateful for this assistance. Many asylum seekers would not have been adequately clothed otherwise.

## 2 NATIONAL CONTEXT

### Dispersal policy

There has been a steady increase in the number of asylum applications received by the Home Office from people seeking sanctuary in the United Kingdom. Between January and June 2000, applications received totalled 24,280. There were 5,900 applications for asylum in June 2000 alone [Home Office 2000], with an average monthly figure of 6,146, compared to 5,930 in 1999.

The continuous rise in the number of asylum applicants impacted heavily upon London and its boroughs, which had to cope with all the implications of accommodating such a large concentration of people in one area. The decision to disperse asylum applicants throughout the country, as stipulated in the new Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, is an attempt at relieving the London areas of the burden of managing these groups. Portsmouth, like every other major city outside London has been affected by the dispersal policy.

### The Asylum and Immigration Act 1999

The Asylum and Immigration Act 1999 received Royal Assent on November 11 1999. It effectively replaced the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996. On December 6 1999, the Act's statutory interim arrangements became operative, with other measures delayed to come into force later in the year.

The Act came into force in its full capacity in April 2000, with the new support system for asylum seekers operating from July 2000, when asylum seeker support officially became the responsibility of NASS [National Asylum Support Service]. NASS aims to support asylum seekers independently of 'mainstream' services and benefits.

Central to the Act is the strategy to encourage the dispersal of asylum seekers away from London, by allocating them to specific areas and only providing

support on this basis. A major implication of the Act is to bring asylum seeker support under the auspices of one main service, NASS. This programme of asylum seeker support is to be effected in stages.



### **Importance of asylum applicant status**

Welfare support and other entitlements under the 1999 Immigration Act are determined by status of the applicant, which is in turn dependent on the time frame between entry into the UK, and applying for asylum. In order that the proper type of support is offered under the terms of the Act, asylum seekers are classified into sub-groups - SAL 1 and SAL 2.

#### **At-port-applicant [SAL 1]**

This term is used to depict the status of an asylum seeker who makes an application for asylum at time of arrival at the port of entry.

#### **In-country-applicant [SAL 2]**

This refers to a person who applies for asylum from within the country. Although some in-country asylum seekers in Portsmouth come in through Portsmouth's Continental Ferry Port, a majority of such residents are persons dispersed to the area from the London boroughs.



### **Defining Asylum**

Asylum seekers are persons who have arrived in the country to seek sanctuary, and having applied to the Home Secretary for permission to reside in the UK, are awaiting a decision on those applications.

The Home Office defines an asylum seeker as:

**'A person who has a fear of returning  
to his or her own country'.**

[Alan Underwood [1996], Home Office Asylum Directorate]

There have been many changes to the UK laws on asylum and immigration since the start of the 1990s. These changes have had numerous impacts on UK's immigration policy on asylum seekers and refugees in the country.

To decide on the status of an asylum applicant, the Home Office measures their claims against the criteria set out in the **United Nation's Convention on Refugees 1951**. Under the Convention, a person is defined as a refugee if the following remain true:

- There is genuine fear of returning to his home country.
- There is a well-founded fear of persecution, for reasons of race, religion or nationality, membership of a particular social group, or for holding a particular political opinion.

In addition, the British Government usually requires that the persecution be personally directed and targeted at the individual. In cases where international initiatives are a concern, persons seeking asylum can be granted temporary or permanent refugee status automatically by the government.

As a consequence of the recent legislative changes to Britain's immigration laws, **'asylum seekers are either classified as ....completely genuine or completely bogus'** [Nick Hardwick [1996], Chief Executive, Refugee Council].

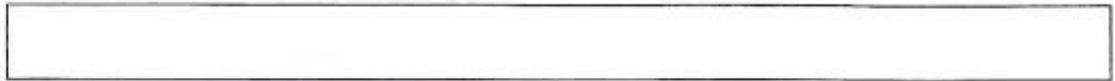
This research focuses on asylum seekers and for the purpose of this report, the term **asylum seeker** refers to all individuals seeking asylum and resident in the Portsmouth area.

Almost all asylum seekers in the area have come to Portsmouth in the past year. This report has not considered the position of those granted refugee status as it has been mainly concerned with needs of people awaiting a decision from the Home Office.

The Home Office decision on asylum applications defines an individual's asylum status. This can give a person either exceptional leave to remain in the country [ELR] or refugee status. In either case, persons are entitled to welfare benefits in the same way as other citizens.

Exceptional Leave to Remain in the country is often granted on compassionate grounds to persons who may not qualify for asylum status under the normal criteria, but who are allowed to enter or remain in the country because

of special circumstances in their lives. This can be war, illness or famine.



## **Asylum refusals**

A refusal can have a devastating impact on persons seeking asylum. Many in this group do not always leave the country immediately, but may proceed to appeal against the Home Office's decision. Such persons may therefore continue to remain for as long as their cases await a final decision.

Local authorities are not responsible for people refused asylum as they automatically lose their rights to statutory support. Loss of right to destitution support often leads to homelessness and extreme poverty as accommodation provision and other forms of support are withdrawn. So these people have to rely on the support of specialised voluntary and community groups and agencies, such as the RSI. Persons refused asylum continue to reside in the city and continue to generate the same needs as every other resident.

They may not have rights to statutory services as do other asylum seekers, but may continue to require assistance with basic human needs that are essential to daily living. There are inevitable consequences of not meeting needs generated by persons in this category. Petty crime such as shoplifting, pick-pocketing and begging are common.

The risk is that such behaviour inevitably leads to arrest and involvement of the Police. Asylum seekers who are refused leave to remain are confirmed as criminals. They are drawn into a spiral from which escape is all but impossible. Their appeal could be weakened or prejudiced by their criminal record.

The challenge facing those who are concerned for the welfare of Asylum Seekers lies specifically in putting into operation, arrangements when an asylum seeker is thrust through the safety-net provision that follows withdrawal of 'destitution support' by the local authority.

A person refused asylum is inevitably deprived of resources necessary for obtaining good diet, or meeting

basic living standards. The challenge is to prevent these individuals from experiencing complete dislocation from society, and to bring them in from the wilderness of social exclusion.



## **NASS Support and monitoring**

NASS took over support of asylum applicants in stages:

All new 'at-port' applicants, who previously would have been supported by local authorities and the Benefits Agency, became the responsibility of NASS in April 2000. In Portsmouth under the new arrangements, all new in-country asylum seekers became the responsibility of NASS in August 2000.

This research has directly experienced the difficulties of tracking asylum persons' movements within the city, and the ease at which contact can be lost. Asylum seekers under the NASS system are currently placed in the city without any local agencies keeping records. There needs to be a system of information gathering to plug this gap.

The new support arrangement offered by NASS are expected to change the current situation, by making it easier for asylum seeker numbers to be properly monitored.

In addition, monitoring procedures, which have so far been both inefficient and inadequate under some local authorities, will now be expected to be responsibly managed by NASS

Transfer of responsibility for new arrivals of asylum seekers to NASS has implications for data collection on this group in the Portsmouth region.

### 3 THE PORTSMOUTH CONTEXT

#### Involvement by Portsmouth Social Services

The existence of asylum seekers in Portsmouth is not a new phenomenon. In November 1998, the city was home to 22 asylum residents known to Portsmouth City Council. Asylum seekers in the area at the time were mainly from the troubled parts of Africa and the former Yugoslavia.

By the summer of 1999, Portsmouth Social Services was funding 30 placements, and at the time was acknowledging the possibility that there could be more asylum seekers in the city unbeknown to the department. A total estimate of asylum seeker/refugee population in Portsmouth was given as 230 persons in June 1999 [PSS 1999]. This estimate took account of the dispersal policy already underway at the time, involving the movement of asylum seekers away from London to relieve pressures on the London authorities.

Under the terms of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1999, Portsmouth Social Services Department continues to support in-country asylum applicants who came into the country prior to 3 April 2000.

In the meantime, while local authorities await the coming into force of the new support system, the Government worked with the Local Government Association [LGA] to implement a voluntary dispersal scheme to relieve pressure on local authorities in London and the Southeast. It involved voluntary arrangements being set up between councils to enable best use to be made of vacant council properties all over the country.

Portsmouth Social Services together with the Housing Department were part of the Southeast Consortium. Local authorities continue to assess in-country applicants in need of support in the usual way to identify those in need of destitution assistance. Those who meet the priority need criteria are likely to be dispersed to any of the consortia around the United Kingdom.

The main aim of this partnership was to ensure that unused housing stock outside London and the Southeast are effectively utilised at lower costs. There are clearing

houses in London and Kent monitoring the availability of accommodation throughout the country, and allocating people to those areas accordingly.

The current situation is that under the Act, all new asylum applicants coming into the Portsmouth area are directly under the care and jurisdiction of Refugee Action Southampton and NASS. Asylum seekers are housed in one hotel for a period of 2-4 weeks and then dispersed to areas outside Portsmouth, as accommodation becomes available.

Portsmouth Social Services will no longer be responsible for meeting the social welfare needs of these applicants, except as an emergency measure, where applicants present themselves outside core working hours when they can be temporarily accommodated by the local authority receiving the application.

## 4 RESEARCH METHOD

### Methodology

The research was conducted from an office based at Portsmouth Minority Support Group [PMSG]. This facilitated contact with asylum seekers who at the time were accessing English Classes provided under contract by Highbury College at the Centre. The course was for three months and catered for 23 asylum seekers.

The researcher used the initial 23 asylum seekers as a useful start for contacting further groups of asylum seekers. The Compass Centre [Highbury College], provided another resourceful lead.

Survey method and Case Study approaches were chosen as appropriate for this work. Questionnaires were developed to be simple, and in ways aimed at meeting the investigative requirements of the project. They took account of language difficulties and acknowledgement of other communication problems the participant group may have had.

The Questionnaire included questions specifically designed to provide an understanding of the persons who make up the asylum seeker communities, as well as the institutions influencing situations in which the target group found itself. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with all asylum seekers in the sample, and with hoteliers following initial telephone contacts.

All Questionnaires used in the research are appended.

### Sampling group

This research was in contact with 284 asylum seekers. 207 of these agreed to participate and were interviewed for this project. However 48 of these 207 persons subsequently withdrew consent to fully participate in the process, fearing their confidentiality could not be guaranteed. However they stayed in regular contact with the research, and their decision to withdraw consent has been fully respected.

The result is that a total of 159 persons participated fully, with about 125 persons remaining in regular contact throughout the six month period [May to October 2000] of this research. The figure of 125 is made up of all persons who withdrew consent [48], together with another 77 who remained in frequent contact.

Participants in the survey were informed that information obtained by the researcher as a result of the research process would be utilised in the final report. They were also informed that their rights to confidentiality would be upheld.

Overt methods were used throughout periods of information gathering. Participants were also told that they were free to withdraw from taking part even when they had started in the process [Milgram, S. 1984].



### **Designing a Sampling Frame**

No primary research had been conducted on Portsmouth's asylum seeker population prior to this work. The lack of available information on the extent of the asylum seekers population together with asylum seekers being dispersed throughout the city made it impossible to aim for and to define a representative sample.

The population characteristics of asylum seekers in Portsmouth were unknown to the researcher at the start of this project. PCC Social Services were asked to distribute introductory letters to their clients inviting them to contact the researcher. However PCC declined to do this.

More-over, the researcher's primary objective in designing a sample, given the problems encountered above, became one of achieving a basic understanding of the social processes involved in managing the needs of asylum seekers in the area. It therefore became necessary to view the study as one of those situations where probability techniques would be impractical and unnecessary. The researcher opted for a non-random sampling frame that is described below.

### **Purposive sampling**

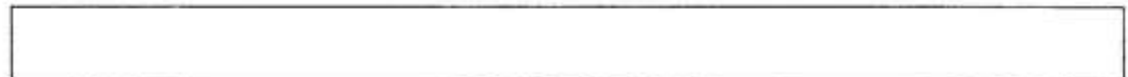
Purposive sampling is defined as a form of non-random sampling where cases are not selected randomly, but are judged to be typical of some category of cases of interest to the researcher.

It is the chosen method where the chance of selection of each element of a population is unknown and for some elements is zero [Gilbert, 1995]. It is best used in the selection of a small number of first-stage units.

### **Bias**

This report does not claim the sample is truly representative, and the researcher acknowledges the possibility of the size of the sample creating a bias in terms of proportion of each group represented in the sample used, when compared to the total population of asylum seekers in the city.

However, as already explained, the research was mainly interested in obtaining views and experiences of asylum seekers on various issues. It was not concerned with generalising from a sample to the whole population. With this as a goal, an attempt at getting a wide variety of people in the sample without being too concerned about correct representation of each group of asylum seekers in their correct proportion became a priority.



### **Information Gathering - contacts**

The researcher made contact with the following groups of people and statutory agencies:

1. Asylum seekers at PMSG - for participation
2. Asylum Seekers in hotel - for participation
3. Asylum seekers in Private Rented Accommodation
4. Highbury College - For access information
5. Portsmouth College - For access information
6. Southdown College - For access information
7. Ektha Housing Association - For Information
8. Community Groups - For Information
9. Churches - For Information
10. Landlords - Participation and Information
11. Refugee Action - Southampton - For Information
12. Refugee Action - London - For Information

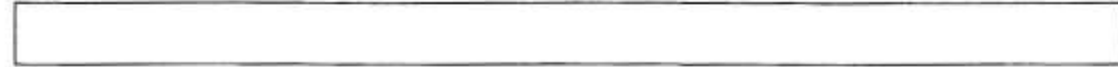
application for asylum status and trigger their deportation.

There could be a number of reasons for the behaviour of Social Services officers towards the researcher. They clearly had a significant caseload and needed to place people in accommodation within a short space of time. They may not have seen the research as positively contributing to their work or they may have felt threatened that the research would be unreasonably critical.

There were meetings with Social Services managers early on in the life of the project, to explain the purpose of the research and the nature of the questions. Issues of confidentiality were discussed and it was agreed that Social Services would collaborate by notifying their clients of the research and inviting them to participate by making contact with the researcher directly. However, practical co-operation of this sort did not materialise. Introductory letters provided to Social Services officers were not passed on to their clients.

In order to break this impasse it was necessary for the chair of the Bill Sargent Trust to write directly to the Director of Social Services in August 2000. Subsequently, co-operation improved and the Social Services Department did provide general information, which has been incorporated into this report.

## 5 PORTSMOUTH'S ASYLUM SEEKERS - POPULATION PROFILE



### Ethnic origins

Portsmouth is home to a diverse group of asylum seekers, whose nationalities range from countries such as the former Yugoslavia, Albania, Romania, Iraq, Iran, and Russia, Turkey to those in Central Africa and South America.

Table 1 illustrates the findings of this research in terms of nationality groups and number of persons accessed within those groups. The table also shows age ranges of persons in each nationality group and the number within each group as a percentage of the samples total of 159. Table 2 shows the ethnic breakdown of those supported by Portsmouth Social Services.

Within the research sample the largest community group appears to be from Iran with 21 persons [13% of total figures]. When persons from Kosovo [20] and Albania [10] are taken together, they form the largest group with 30 persons, making up 20% of sample total.

The research sample covered 31 ethnic groups. However, those under the responsibility of Portsmouth Social Services, comprised only 23 ethnic groups, even though this was twice the number in our research sample and nearly half of the total in the city. Indeed nearly half of the Social Services clients were from Kosovo. This suggests that those asylum seekers who are not under Portsmouth's responsibility, encompass a wider range of ethnic groups, with a much lower proportion from Kosovo.

It can also be seen that when the research figures in Table 1 are compared with those of PSS [table 2], in some cases, the research had managed to access more people from some particular groups than available in the PSS sample.

Table 1 - Asylum Seeker Population and Age Ranges from Research.

| Country<br>Origin | of | Number of<br>Persons | Age ranges | % of Sample<br>Total |
|-------------------|----|----------------------|------------|----------------------|
| Afghanistan       |    | 10                   | 22 - 66    | 6                    |
| Algeria           |    | 1                    | 28         | 1                    |
| Albania           |    | 10                   | 20 - 45    | 6                    |
| Angola            |    | 3                    | 0 - 26     | 2                    |
| Burundi           |    | 5                    | 20 - 59    | 3                    |
| Cameroon          |    | 4                    | 22 - 35    | 3                    |
| Chile             |    | 5                    | 10 - 52    | 3                    |
| Congo             |    | 2                    | 22 - 23    | 1                    |
| Cuba              |    | 1                    | 44         | 1                    |
| Czechoslovakia    |    | 1                    | 28         | 1                    |
| Estonia           |    | 3                    | 22 - 32    | 2                    |
| Ethiopia          |    | 1                    | 28         | 1                    |
| Ghana             |    | 1                    | 17         | 1                    |
| Greece            |    | 1                    | 25         | 1                    |
| Iran              |    | 21                   | 10 - 52    | 13                   |
| Iraq              |    | 19                   | 22 - 34    | 12                   |
| Kosovo            |    | 20                   | 22 - 50    | 13                   |
| Latvia            |    | 2                    | 25 - 29    | 1                    |
| Niger             |    | 2                    | 19 - 23    | 1                    |
| Palestine         |    | 3                    | 0 - 25     | 1                    |
| Romania           |    | 5                    | 23 - 38    | 3                    |
| Rwanda            |    | 6                    | 0 - 27     | 4                    |
| Russia            |    | 4                    | 25 - 35    | 3                    |
| Sierra - Leone    |    | 2                    | 30 - 65    | 1                    |
| Somalia           |    | 8                    | 0 - 29     | 5                    |
| Sri - Lanka       |    | 7                    | 0 - 37     | 4                    |
| Sudan             |    | 5                    | 10 - 46    | 3                    |
| Togo              |    | 1                    | 37         | 1                    |
| Turkey            |    | 2                    | 28 - 31    | 1                    |
| Uganda            |    | 2                    | 0 - 2      | 1                    |
| Yugoslavia        |    | 2                    | 40 - 46    | 1                    |
| <b>Totals</b>     |    | <b>159</b>           |            | <b>100</b>           |

Table 2 - Asylum Seekers supported by Portsmouth Social Services

| Country       | Number in Group | % Population |
|---------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Angola        | 6               | 2            |
| Algeria       | 8               | 3            |
| Afghanistan   | 4               | 1            |
| Albania       | 1               | -            |
| Burundi       | 6               | 2            |
| Burkina Faso  | 1               | -            |
| Cameroon      | 9               | 3            |
| China         | 1               | -            |
| Congo         | 6               | 2            |
| Ethiopia      | 1               | -            |
| Estonia       | 9               | 3            |
| Iran          | 28              | 9            |
| Iraq          | 7               | 2            |
| Krygystan     | 2               | -            |
| Kosovo        | 146             | 47           |
| Kenya         | 1               | -            |
| Latvia        | 1               | -            |
| Lebanon       | 1               | -            |
| Lithuania     | 3               | 1            |
| Libya         | 1               | -            |
| Macedonia     | 1               | -            |
| Mali          | 1               | -            |
| Moldova       | 1               | -            |
| Niger         | 2               | 1            |
| Palestine     | 1               | -            |
| Poland        | 2               | 1            |
| Cuba          | 1               | -            |
| Russia        | 10              | 3            |
| Rwanda        | 2               | 1            |
| Sierra Leone  | 1               | -            |
| Somalia       | 8               | 3            |
| Sri Lanka     | 13              | 4            |
| Romania       | 4               | 1            |
| Sudan         | 6               | 2            |
| Togo          | 1               | -            |
| Czech         | 1               | -            |
| Ukraine       | 1               | -            |
| Uganda        | 2               | 1            |
| Turkey        | 7               | 2            |
| Yugoslavia    | 3               | 1            |
| Zambia        | 2               | 1            |
| Yemen         | 1               | -            |
| Zaire         | 1               | -            |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>314</b>      | <b>100</b>   |

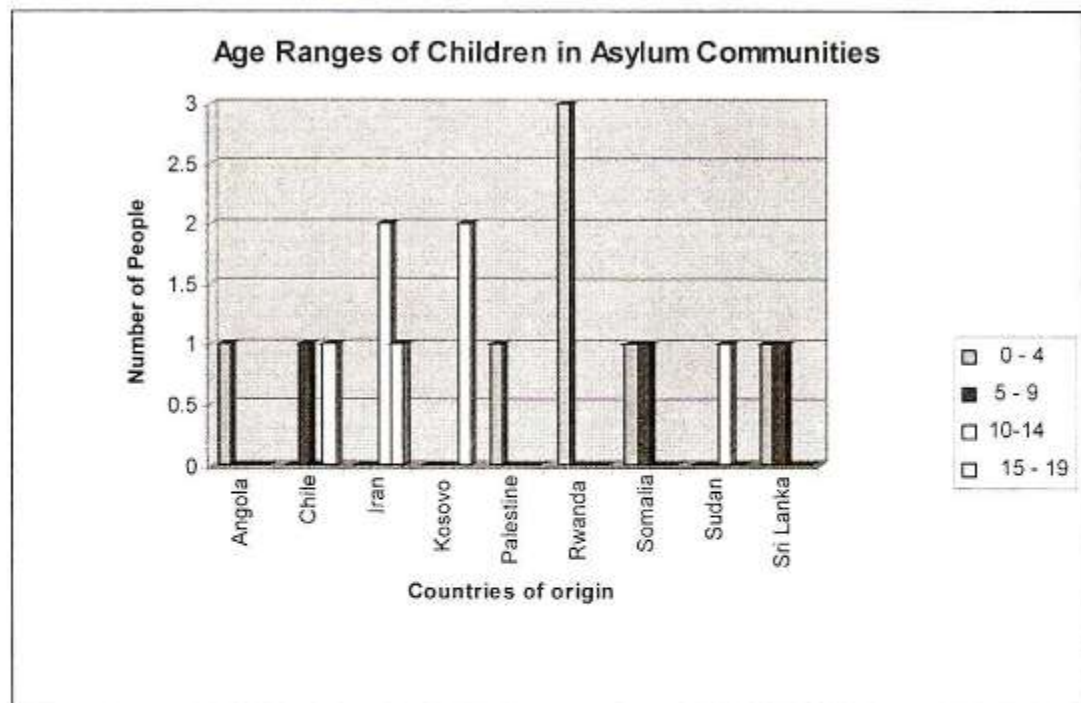
## Children

There are 33 children within Portsmouth asylum seeker communities currently accessing services at the Screening Unit [figures from the Health Screening Unit - see table 3]. Portsmouth, Havant, Gosport and Fareham Social Services did not provide any figures for children.

It is important to note that figures given by the Health Screening Unit will only include individuals who use their services. These form representative sub-groups of such agencies.

This research had access to only 21 offspring. 4 are aged 15-19 years. Another 4 are aged over 19 years and have been included in the adult group. 13 are children between the ages of 0-14 years. 11 of them are from families supported directly by Social Services, 6 by the Benefits Agency. The Chart below shows how many children are aged 0-19 years according to nationality.

**Children in Portsmouth's Asylum Seeker Communities  
May-October 2000 - from the Sample.**



Details of the graph is represented in tabular form below together with figures provided by the HSU:

| Number in Children<br>each Group from | AGE GROUPINGS |     |       |       | TOTALS |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|-----|-------|-------|--------|
|                                       | 0-4           | 5-9 | 10-14 | 15-19 |        |
| Research Findings                     | 7             | 3   | 7     | 4     | 21     |
| Health Screening Unit                 | 10            | 9   | 8     | 6     | 33     |

Table 3 showing comparative figures on Children from Research findings and the Health Screening Unit.

### Comparative Figures

The graph and tables above detail the number of children this research has been able to access. Given that Social Services would not give information that would have aided access to all family groups supported by them, it was not possible to contact all children on their list.



### Adult group

The Sample for this work contains 138 adults. Adult asylum seekers in Portsmouth have an age range of 20 - 66 years. [See table 4].

The table shows that the 20-29 age band contain the largest number of adults [91 persons], 66% of the total adult sample population of 138. This proportion is generally in line with national trends.

**Table 4 Breakdown of research sample population by age**

| <b>Total persons in Age groupings (years)</b> |                |                |                |                |                |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Country</b>                                | <b>20 - 29</b> | <b>30 - 39</b> | <b>40 - 49</b> | <b>50 - 59</b> | <b>60 - 66</b> |
| Albania                                       | 7              | 2              | 1              | 0              | 0              |
| Algeria                                       | 1              | 0              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Afghanistan                                   | 5              | 2              | 0              | 2              | 1              |
| Angola                                        | 2              |                |                |                |                |
| Burundi                                       | 1              | 3              | 0              | 1              | 0              |
| Cameroon                                      | 2              | 2              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Congo                                         | 2              | 1              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Cuba                                          | 1              | 0              | 1              | 0              | 0              |
| Chile                                         | 0              | 1              | 1              | 1              | 0              |
| Czech Republic                                | 1              | 0              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Ethiopia                                      | 1              | 0              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Estonia                                       | 2              | 1              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Ghana                                         | 0              | 0              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Greece                                        | 1              | 0              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Iran                                          | 12             | 5              | 3              | 1              | 0              |
| Iraq                                          | 12             | 3              | 0              | 1              | 0              |
| Kosovo                                        | 10             | 1              | 2              | 1              | 0              |
| Latvia                                        | 2              | 0              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Niger                                         | 2              | 0              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Palestine                                     | 2              | 0              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Romania                                       | 4              | 1              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Russia                                        | 3              | 1              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Rwanda                                        | 5              | 0              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Sierra Leone                                  | 0              | 1              | 0              | 0              | 1              |
| Somalia                                       | 5              | 0              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Sri Lanka                                     | 2              | 2              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Sudan                                         | 3              | 0              | 1              | 0              | 0              |
| Togo                                          | 1              | 0              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Turkey                                        | 1              | 1              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Uganda                                        | 1              | 0              | 0              | 0              | 0              |
| Yugoslavia                                    | 0              | 0              | 2              | 0              | 0              |
| <b>Totals</b>                                 | <b>91</b>      | <b>27</b>      | <b>11</b>      | <b>7</b>       | <b>2</b>       |

## Gender and age

In the research sample there are 99 adult males and 39 adult females. Males make up 72% of total adult population of 138, or 62% of the total sample population of 159.

Females make up 28% of total adult population, or 25% of total number of asylum seekers in the sample. The gender composition of the adult group is shown below, together with percentage of total sample population.

| Age Groupings and numbers in each group |       |       |       |       |       |       |        |
|-----------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| Gender                                  | 20-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60-69 | 70-79 | Totals |
| Male                                    | 74    | 19    | 3     | 2     | 1     | 0     | 99     |
| % total Sample                          | 47%   | 12%   | 2%    | 1%    | 0.6%  | 0%    | 62%    |
| Female                                  | 22    | 6     | 8     | 2     | 1     | 0     | 39     |
| % total Sample                          | 14%   | 4%    | 5%    | 1%    | 0.6%  | 0%    | 25%    |

**Table 5 showing Adult Sample according to Gender and Age**

No evidence exists to suggest male and female representation in the 70-79 age group. Four persons are approaching retirement age, with a further two over 60.

## Family units

Portsmouth Social Services [PSS] currently support 314 asylum persons from figures made available to this research [see table 2]. PSS have not provided any data that indicates family set up of persons on their list.

Trends emerging from this research indicate a high number of single adult persons within these communities, when figures from hotels, research sample and those making contact with the project are considered.

The research sample is made up of 138 adults and 21 children. The accompanying table shows the make-up of the adult group as accessed by this project and how they exist to form Family Units. Figures given are from primary data collated by this research.

| Gender        | Sample total | Single    | Married with Partner | Single Parent | Married not with Partner | Widowed  |
|---------------|--------------|-----------|----------------------|---------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Males         | 99           | 80        | 17                   | 0             | 2                        | 0        |
| Females       | 39           | 13        | 17                   | 7             | 1                        | 1        |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>138</b>   | <b>93</b> | <b>34</b>            | <b>7</b>      | <b>3</b>                 | <b>1</b> |

**Table 6 showing how Adults form into Family Groups.**

Table 6 above shows that there are 7 single parent family households headed by females. These families are part of the 10 families highlighted above.

The project made contact with 10 families. The Health Screening Unit has 10 families on their list, which agrees with data from this research. There was no information available from any of the Social Services departments on number of family units they currently support.

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### **Calculating the Asylum-Seeker Population**

Table 2 shows Portsmouth Social Services' numbers of asylum applicants on 'destitution support'

The Health Screening Unit [HSU] had 367 persons by October 2000. Of these 367 persons, 197 were then supported by Portsmouth Social Services [HSU estimates].

Portsmouth Social Services [PSS] gave 324 as the total number of asylum seekers supported by the department in August 2000. However, the data supplied by PSS [Table 2] totals 314. The later figure of 314 has therefore been adopted as the asylum total supported by PSS from their figures [given in end-August 2000].

8 hotels gave this research information. Data from them gave a combined figure of 227 persons including 52 persons supported by Portsmouth Social Services [July 2000].

From August 2000, a further 37 persons have been placed in Portsmouth under direct support from NASS, bringing the totals in hotels to 264.

Any estimate of total population figures will be an under-estimate of the city's actual asylum population. This is because PSS does not support all asylum applicants in the area. Some are supported by external agencies whilst some are self-supporting.

The following approaches were taken in estimating asylum seeker population in the Portsmouth area in October 2000.

- 1 Using estimates of persons supported by Portsmouth Social Services = **314**. This should include all asylum seekers in private rented accommodation, those in other hotels not accessed by this research, and the 52 from the **8 hotels**.
- 2 Drawing on estimates from participating hotels and excluding persons directly supported by PSS gives  $227 + 37 - 52 = \mathbf{212}$ . This allows calculations to take account of other persons not supported by PSS.
- 3 Using regular contact numbers from this research which does not exclude persons refused ELR status, or those supported by the Benefits Agency = **284**
- 4 Drawing on estimates from the Health Screening Unit gives a total figure of 367 minus 197 supported by PSS giving **170**. However, it is not known how many of these were in the 8 local hotels.
- 5 Allowing for a hidden population of asylum seekers will include:
  - Persons residing in hotels and private accommodation not accessed by this research.
  - Those in the city illegally.
  - Those who have drifted into Portsmouth as a direct but unintended effect of the dispersal policy.

These are all represented as a Table:

| Data Sources                                          | Data              |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Numbers from HSU                                      | 170               |
| Estimates from 8 Hotels                               | 212               |
| Numbers from Portsmouth Social Services               | 314               |
| Projected Values from hidden population               | ?                 |
| <b>Projected Estimates of Asylum seekers' numbers</b> | <b>526 to 696</b> |

**Table 7: Estimating asylum seeker Numbers in Portsmouth**

Given all of the calculations made so far, and on the balance of information available to this project, Portsmouth could be said to have had an asylum population of up to about 700.

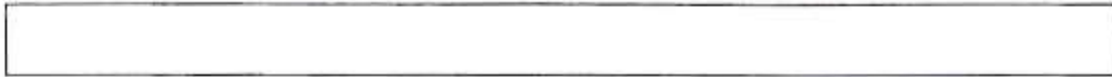
Many asylum seekers rely on other forms of community arrangements for support. There is evidence in Portsmouth to show that many asylum seekers of Islamic denominations already enjoy enormous support from the Moslem community.

### **Languages spoken**

Asylum seekers in the city speak many dialects. Commonly spoken languages are listed as follows:

- French
- Farsi
- Kurdish
- Arabic
- Russian
- Albanian
- Swahili
- Serbo-Croat
- Latvian
- English
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Turkish
- Armenian
- Spanish
- Romanian

## 6 NEEDS OF PORTSMOUTH'S ASYLUM SEEKERS



### Asylum Seeker Support in Portsmouth

This section examines the provisions available to asylum seekers under the new Act, and discusses the research findings as they relate to the different areas of need. Participants' views are used to illustrate and support findings of this primary research.

This work has concentrated on needs of asylum seekers and how they are met at local level of service provision. The type of support given to asylum seekers depends on the application status of the individual.

This section looks at general needs presented from interviews with asylum seekers in the Portsmouth area. The following sections in turn consider their needs under the following headings:

- Housing provision
- Health provision
- Welfare support
- Employment and Training
- Education



### Changing Needs

The researcher made contact with over 284 Asylum seekers in the period May to October 2000. Part of the profiling information contained responses to questions on what asylum seekers perceived as their main needs. The sample figure of 159 is used with their opinions represented below:

| Most frequent needs in the first three months (May-July 2000) |     |                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------|
| 155                                                           | 98% | Help with work/money      |
| 151                                                           | 95% | Adequate provisions       |
| 142                                                           | 89% | Clothes                   |
| 135                                                           | 85% | Telephone cards           |
| 127                                                           | 80% | Friends/meeting people    |
| 123                                                           | 77% | Learning English          |
| 108                                                           | 68% | Good food                 |
| 94                                                            | 59% | Finding a solicitor       |
| 71                                                            | 45% | Help with travel costs    |
| 66                                                            | 42% | Leisure/Sports Activities |
| 40                                                            | 25% | Clean place to live       |

**Table 8 - Initial Needs Survey**

In the last three months [August-October 2000] Opinions of the group of 159 had shifted to emphasise other areas of needs. These areas are highlighted below:

|     |     |                                                    |
|-----|-----|----------------------------------------------------|
| 138 | 87% | Want to access employment                          |
| 129 | 81% | Want a place to socialise/meet people/make friends |
| 74  | 47% | Want access to legal advice                        |
| 72  | 45% | Want help with telephone calls                     |
| 53  | 33% | Want to move from hotels to houses                 |
| 41  | 26% | Want access to higher education                    |

**Table 9 - Later Needs Survey**

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### **Dealing with complaints**

This report has highlighted that many asylum seekers said they were not listened to and their complaints were never resolved. Because of the way in which intermediary agencies provided care and support, and relied on a confidentiality code, it seems unlikely that some cases would have been heard by the outside world, were it not for the work of this research.

A number of asylum seekers interviewed by the researcher were asked if they were prepared to make a formal complaint about the treatment they received from Social Services (which is referred to elsewhere in this report). All of these people who were asked have refused to put forward a formal complaint. Some said they had no wish to make such a complaint as they saw this a fruitless and

that it would make no difference to their situation. For others, their refusal was due to their fear that making a complaint could make their situation worse. In this climate of fear and mistrust there is no effective mechanism for monitoring asylum seeker placements.

The following case study is used to provide illustrate the manner in which an asylum seeker was treated when they asked for assistance, or complained about any discomfiture.



### **CASE STUDY - complaining about treatment**

*This Case is one of a married couple, Mr and Mrs A. They came to the UK to seek asylum. They entered the country in March 2000, and were dispersed to Portsmouth from London in April 2000. The couple were sent to one of the Hotels on arrival, and stayed there for four days. They were then accommodated in a property belonging to Essential Services Ltd., in the area.*

*The house was a 3-bedroom property with 8 people sharing. There were 2 married couples and 4 single men - all of different nationalities.*

*The house was dirty and neglected. Mr and Mrs A and some other residents complained to Social Services about the overcrowded conditions and the general state of the accommodation and were ignored. In addition to this, Mrs A was sexually molested by one of the single male residents. This prompted the couple to return to Social Services Offices to demand something be done.*

*The couple felt they got an inadequate response, however they were moved.*

*The new accommodation involved sharing with 3 single girls and another married couple. The three single girls were noisy, having parties at least twice a week, with visitors staying up most nights. The two married couples suffered sleepless nights and complained regularly to Social Services Officer. Their complaints were again ignored for a while.*

The situation deteriorated after Mr A had an operation and needed to rest to recuperate. When their plea for some quiet and understanding from the three single girls went unheeded, Mrs A went back to Social Services to ask that they intervened.

However, Mrs A felt she was being treated as a constant complainer and a person without any rights.

## 7 HOUSING PORTSMOUTH'S ASYLUM SEEKERS

### Housing asylum seekers - the changing position

In recent years, any debates on asylum and immigration has highlighted a dichotomy between views of people who see asylum seekers as usually genuine, and those who perceive them as generally bogus [See Kennedy, 1999]. According to Cowan [1999], legislators and the media had developed this dichotomy. Michael Howard arguing for Britain to remain a "heaven" and not a "honey pot" for asylum seekers is a case in point [Howard, 1995].

The continuing public debate has led to frequent changes in the Asylum and Immigration legislation, and especially changes in the extent to which asylum seeker are entitled to the safety net of welfare provision.

Government policy has had to ensure that there is basic accommodation whilst at the same time avoiding any indication of preferential treatment. Over recent years there have been a number of changes brought about by government's legislative efforts in this area.

In 1992 asylum seekers were entitled to a grant payment of 90 percent Income Support, which also gave entitlement to claiming Housing Benefit. They were also entitled to claim housing through council waiting lists as well as through the homelessness legislation. Where such applications were successful, asylum seekers were provided with long-term accommodation. If they were refused asylum, they would be deported and thus lose their right to housing.

Since 1992 however, these rules have changed extensively. There has been a substantial shift towards housing exclusion.

The Asylum and Immigration Act 1993 restricted asylum seekers and their dependants' rights under the homelessness legislation. These legislative changes ensured the withdrawal of welfare benefit entitlement from a substantial number of asylum applicants. The impact of these changes has been the restriction of asylum seekers' rights of access to social housing. The restriction was based on the inability of asylum persons

to pay for accommodation; a situation brought about by government withdrawing entitlement to housing benefit and removing from them the right to work.

The following set of legislative activities detail the gradual move by governments to withdraw welfare entitlements from asylum seekers:

1. February 5 1996, the Social Security [Person from Abroad] Amendments Regulations 1996 pronounce asylum seekers ineligible for all social security benefits unless they applied for application at port of entry.
2. 21 June 1996, Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 specified that 'persons subject to immigration control' would be:
  - No longer entitled to local authority accommodation through the waiting list.
  - Ineligible through homelessness legislation, unless of a class specified by the Secretary of State.
  - Unable to work.
  - Enabling power to dis-entitle such persons from claiming benefit.
3. 19 August 1996, Housing Act 1996 was passed. It states that persons from abroad are not eligible to appear either on the waiting list or for assistance as a homeless person. Other persons subject to control under immigration laws were also ineligible.
4. In January 1997, the paradigm shift towards exclusion was reinforced by the Housing Corporation Circular [R3-04/97] 'Lettings to Certain Persons from Abroad' advising Registered Social Landlords that they 'should carefully consider' whether they should accommodate persons from abroad who are ineligible under the Housing Act 1996.

However, there was an improvement in the situation as a result of the case of *Fulham LBC ex parte M* [1998] 30 HLR. Asylum seekers became entitled to care and attention' under s. 21[1][a], National Assistance Act 1948, including food and accommodation- as part of the support package.

These legislative changes show that where asylum seekers are concerned, allocation to social housing is no longer based on the need criteria. Furthermore, it makes it easy to see how access to social housing has been systematically denied to these persons by successive governments on the basis of a lack of resources.

### **The housing position today**

Asylum seekers are not eligible to register on the council's housing waiting list. They are also ineligible for assistance under the homelessness part of the Housing Act 1996, unless they are in a group specified by the Home Office.

Asylum seekers cannot appear on the housing register until they have entered one of the following categories:

- Those granted asylum [refugee status].
- Those given Exceptional Leave to Remain
- Those who have leave to enter and remain [reg 4, SI 1996/2753].

Allowing benefits only to at-port-applicants and denying benefit to in country applicants is an inhumane and drastic means of keeping out the so-called bogus asylum person. Debates surrounding this issue pointed out the intolerable dilemma to be faced by asylum applicants on the grounds that whilst the proposals were aimed at the fraudulent, they were also bound to affect the genuine [Social Security Committee (SSAC) 1996, para.24].

The Committee went further: 'It would be difficult to overstate the alarm... and disbelief that the Government would willingly countenance leaving such people with no means to buy food or the means to house themselves'.

### **Portsmouth Council involvement in housing of Asylum Applicants**

The Social Services Department is required, under the 1999 Act, to provide support as a complete package of accommodation and essential living needs, under the terms of the National Assistance Act 1948, and the Children Act 1989. But the accommodation is to be provided on a 'no choice basis' [para. 8.21, Home Office 1998] and asylum seekers 'would be expected to take what was available'.

Asylum seekers are accommodated in hotels and other properties under contract from private landlords. The majority of asylum seekers in the Portsmouth area are accommodated in the Southsea area of the city. About 264 persons or 38% of estimated asylum seeker population are accommodated in 8 hotels accessed by this research. A further 172 persons or 25% are in 37 houses owned by private landlords that the researcher has identified.



### **Provision of private rented accommodation**

Attempts at locating landlords involved with the asylum project were difficult. However, the research found that there appeared to be three main agencies contracted by the Social Services Department to provide housing for use by asylum seekers.

The basis on which these contracts were awarded is not at all clear. There was not clear evidence of any formal tender process. A number of asylum seekers suggested that there were very close relationships between these landlords and the Social Services officers directly responsible for accommodating and managing asylum-seeker welfare. The relationships were often described in friendship terms, which may seem inappropriate for professional relationships.

The three private landlord agencies are:

- Essential Services Property Management. This company appeared to have priority allocation of asylum seekers to its properties and provided the majority of low quality housing used to house asylum seekers in the area.
- Tully and Company Rental & Management Agency. They owned fewer properties.
- Ashling Property Management.

The three firms were contacted by this research and invited to complete a survey form. However they did not respond. Enquiries were referred to Portsmouth Social Services. The questionnaire for this purpose is appended.

No direct information was received from the private landlords. However, it was clear from responses from

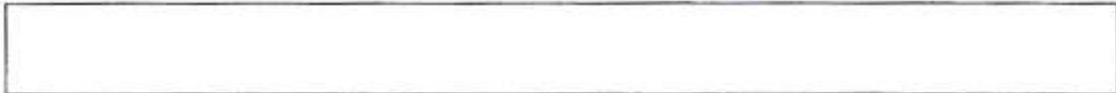
asylum seekers that the close relationship with Social Services played a key role in the manner in which the 'support package of accommodation and essential living needs' were offered to the needy groups, and managed in Portsmouth by Social Services.

This research uncovered many difficulties with housing which are causing asylum seekers real hardship. However, these grievances seem to be generally ignored by Social Services Department.

When asylum seekers repeated these complaints they were not ignored by this research. They were followed up with immediate visits to the properties concerned. The properties were examined and the state of each property documented.

Essential Services Property Management owned and managed most of the properties visited by this project. The majority of properties managed by this company appeared inadequate and substandard. In addition to the issue of poor housing endured by asylum applicants, this also raises questions about the use of tax payers money, paid to these landlords for providing inefficient services.

The next section of the report highlights findings from those visits. The majority of properties visited by the researcher presented with similar problems, deficiencies, and state of neglect.



### **Condition of private accommodation**

This section of the research was concerned with finding out about types of accommodation provided by Social Services under the terms of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act for use by asylum seekers. The state of these properties as witnessed by the researcher is set out in table 10.

| Condition                                                                                                  | No. of Properties |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Old Housing Stock                                                                                          | 31                |
| Cold and Damp                                                                                              | 31                |
| Washing Machines not provided or not operational/electrical appliances not connected to electricity supply | 26                |
| Poorly furnished with limited storage facilities both in Bedrooms and Kitchen                              | 25                |
| Beds with flat mattresses                                                                                  | 21                |
| Supplied with Children's Cabin Beds/2' 6" beds                                                             | 20 Adults         |
| Sitting room areas converted into bedrooms, leaving no communal meeting room for occupants.                | 18                |
| Inadequate supply of Crockery items for the number of people sharing                                       | 15                |
| Mattress Springs visible                                                                                   | 14                |
| Showed signs of neglect                                                                                    | 12                |
| Dirty and poorly maintained                                                                                | 12                |
| Dirty/Smelly Carpets                                                                                       | 12                |
| Paint/Wallpaper peeling off walls                                                                          | 11                |
| Bathrooms with damaged/broken taps                                                                         | 10                |
| No hot running water - electricity switched off by landlords                                               | 8                 |
| 2/3 bedroom properties housed two or more families with children                                           | 7                 |
| Cockroach/Mice infestation                                                                                 | 6                 |
| No wardrobes for some residents                                                                            | 6                 |
| Cracks running through interior walls                                                                      | 5                 |
| Allowed rainwater into bedrooms                                                                            | 5                 |
| Had a Television                                                                                           | 1                 |

**Table 10 - Condition of properties occupied by Asylum Seekers in the Portsmouth Area.**

According to Portsmouth Social Services, the department "tend to use whatever we can access at reasonable cost in the market place" [quote from returned SS Questionnaire]. Since the Council was pursuing cost-efficiency, the question left to be answered is, whether the Council was completely satisfied that there were not better properties available at a comparable cost?

It is understood that Portsmouth City Council had placed a ban in 1997-8, on all known properties managed by Essential Services Properties Management Ltd on grounds that they were of poor quality, and unfit for human habitation. It is not clear whether this ban has been lifted.

Asked why Social Services opted for the properties chosen for asylum seekers, the answer was:

*"We are dictated by market forces - what is available at the time that is cost effective, meets quality standards and complies with HMO and/or planning regulations".*

Evidence shows that these properties were by no means cheap to rent. A typical two-bedroom property was charged at between £145/pw - £170/pw, more in some cases. Most of these properties were poorly furnished.

Housing or shelter is a basic human necessity, and as such emphasis should be placed on the need to provide a minimum standard of accommodation that meets basic housing need of all individuals in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

'A decent home for every family...' has for many years been one of the government's main housing objectives [Department of the Environment 1971]. However accommodation of asylum seekers in Portsmouth under the destitution regulations of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act clearly disregards merits of the decent home concept.

Asylum seekers are a socially excluded group, who have been denied any right to a minimum standard of housing.

A select group of landlords has been allowed to benefit by contracting a service but at the same time does not appear to have been held accountable for the quality of service paid with taxpayers' money. According to the Social Services Department communication between them and landlords was said to be informal, and only on a "need to discuss basis" [SS Questionnaire, August 2000]. Such an arrangement could make it easy for complaints from asylum seekers to be ignored, and the appalling states of properties to go unnoticed.

The lack of Housing Benefit entitlement is also an important factor in limiting the choice of housing by asylum seekers. The low standard of housing made available for asylum seeker use may be seen by some people as intended to act as deterrent for other potential asylum seekers who may be thinking of the UK as a safe haven from persecution.

**Comments from asylum seekers on private accommodation**

Although Social Services ranks nationality and cultural compatibility as factors that assist with determining household composition [SS Questionnaire Q11]. It does not appear to have been taken seriously in the following two instances.

**Person ONE**

- *There is no fridge for storing fresh foods, so I never buy anything like fresh milk or cheese. I have been here for two months. I reported to the landlord but nothing has been done in the two months about giving me a fridge.*
- *The landlord will not allow my friends to visit.*

**Person TWO**

- *Housing is a problem - putting people together regardless of cultural differences is creating a huge problem. The place is a bad place, dirty and full of alcoholics.*

Some of the adverse comments on the standards and sustainability of private accommodation are as follows:

**Person THREE**

- *There is no washing machine. I do washing by hand. The water is cold, no hot water.*
- *The fridge is too small for 6 people to store food.*
- *The chairs are very dirty. I cannot enjoy to live here. I need a clean place to live. I am a human being but they are treating me worse than an animal.*
- *Social Services should treat me like a person and not shout all the time because I complain of dirty place and problems.*

**Person FOUR**

- There is no washing Machine.
- The bathroom taps were broken for 6 weeks
- There are 8 of us in the house, 6 sharing one kitchen, and there is no sitting area for people to sit together and to relax.

**Person FIVE**

- This is a 3-bedroom house. There are two families sharing. We are 3 adult parents and 5 children sharing. Four of these children are adults themselves, aged 19-25 years.
- Some of the children sleep in the living room. We live too far away from the city. I wish we could move closer so that I can meet other people.
- My family feels so isolated.
- I cannot complain. I want to see people different from social services that can listen to you and not make you afraid.

**Person SIX**

- I'm not happy about my accommodation. I have a baby. We live in a very small room next to toilet. The toilet is very dirty, because this is a hostel.
- The whole place is very dirty. The toilet smells badly. I have to live here and cannot complain. I have no choice.

**Person SEVEN**

- In this 4 bedroom house there are three families sharing and a baby on the way.
- The house has mice. Its very dirty. It has needed a lot of cleaning. It was nearly 3 weeks of cleaning before we got it to this state. Social Services told us to get on and clean and be happy we have got a place to live.
- When I told Social Services the place was damp and cold, I was told to feed the slot meter with change from the £25 allowance we received for food.
- I said to [officer] that we are only taken to buy food and not given any cash, she said that I could always buy less food and save £10 for the slot meter.

**Person EIGHT**

- Its a disgusting place. Have you seen the kitchen? The whole place is very dirty. Look at this room. Look at the chair, the bed and the table. How can a person live like this? It is so dirty.
- I cannot let the baby play on the floor. It is very dirty. There's no place for baby to play. I stay baby in bed.
- Everywhere is bad. Toilet, Kitchen and Bathroom very dirty. Cannot take bath. No hot water. House very cold. Radiator not working. I told [officer], they said wait for landlord - up till now, no landlord come.
- Lonely place. House smells bad. Front door no locks. No security. Anybody can come in from the streets. Doors don't lock properly.

The researcher also received comments from other people associated with the project. A voluntary worker who had visited a number of asylum seekers gave their views.

### Voluntary Worker

"I have been to some of these houses that Social Services are using to house asylum seekers and I must tell you that I am shocked".

- "There are no televisions, no radios, nothing to take away the boredom for these people".
- "They are just cooped up indoors with nothing to entertain them with. But this landlord is allowed to get away with it".
- "I mean we all know about his relationship with [name], but he must not be allowed to get away with not providing a homely environment for all the money he is receiving for this service".
- "Put yourself in their shoes, how would you feel getting home from work to an environment without any means of communication with the outside world"?

### Hotels' response to cultural needs

The majority of asylum seekers dispersed from London are housed in hotels. The majority are single people although some hotels have a mixture of married persons with or without children.

The main problem identified during the first four months of this project was the food. All eight hotels questioned agree with this finding. The lack of basic understanding of the diverse cultures, religious taboos and dietary patterns of this mix of people presented a problem that could be said to have been responsible for the difficulties faced by asylum seekers and hotels alike.

As one service provider admitted, "perhaps a quick course on different cultures and backgrounds..." would have helped to do things differently - [Question 34- Hoteliers, July 2000].

264 asylum seekers are housed in the 8 hotels and 87 of these agreed to participate in this research. 68 of these persons complained of disliking the food provided by the hotels. All 8 hotels agree that there was a problem during the initial stages of management.

Quotes from hotels in answer to Q18 of Hoteliers' July 2000 questionnaire follow:

**Hotel manager ONE**

- *The main problem was food, but we think we have now just about got the balance right.*
- *This we checked with [name], who were no help to us. Social Services said that asylum seekers need to eat English food because they are now in England.*

**Hotel manager TWO**

In answer to Q.17:

*"We are not going to cater for all the different nationalities by cooking different dishes. We cater in general except for special needs".*

**Other findings from hotels**

Hotels assisting with this project appeared keen to help. They appeared sincere in their attempt to contribute to ways in which welfare management of asylum seekers could be improved for the future.

Other views from hotels are presented as follows:

- 6 of the 8 hotels said they considered religious and cultural factors when allocating asylum seekers to rooms.
- 1 of the above hotel said choice was another factor it took into consideration prior to room allocation.

- 2 hotels did not consider religion, culture or choice prior to room allocation.
- 5 hotels say they inform Social Services when they have problems allocating rooms to asylum seekers, whilst 3 hotels informed VIP Agents, acting on behalf of the London authorities.

The accompanying table gives responses to questions on room allocation:

| No. Hotels | Persons per room | Rooms<br>Single/ Double |
|------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| 2          | 1                | All single rooms        |
| 1          | 2                | 3 Single rooms          |
| 1          | 3                | 4 single rooms          |
| 1          | More than 3      | 3 double rooms          |
| 1          | 2                | All single rooms        |
| 1          | 4                | 1 Family room           |
| 1          | 2                | All single rooms        |
| 1          | 1                | 2 single rooms only     |

**Table 11 - room allocations in participating hotels.**

The reason for this question was to confirm the extent of overcrowding. Suggestions from asylum seekers at this point in time, were that more than 2 persons were sharing single rooms in the majority hotels. The above table shows that:

- 6 hotels had at least 2 persons per room at all time.
- 3 hotels had at least 3 persons per room at all times.
- 3 hotels had more than 3 persons per room in some instances.
- Only 1 hotel had only 1 person per room in all single rooms at all times.
- 1 hotel had 1 person per room in two single rooms only.

The above data confirms the extent of sharing during May - August 2000.

## Placement agencies role in use of hotels

VIP Agents, otherwise known as Venture International Projects Ltd., based in Brighton act as intermediaries for most external placement authorities. However evidence from the hotels suggests VIP assumes overall responsibility for persons under the care of most external placement authorities, since hotels are not allowed to make decisions or deal with problems affecting asylum seekers without first obtaining permission from VIP Ltd. In fact hotels are also not permitted to make contact with the placement local authorities at anytime on matters relating to asylum seekers.

These arrangements have effectively ensured that asylum seekers' voices were rarely heard by placement authorities. Authorities may have been unaware of the overcrowded conditions, which some asylum seekers were made to endure.

Difficulties in accessing much needed information have already been highlighted. The research could not find simple answers to questions about the process by which asylum seekers come to Portsmouth and are then taken to reside in hotels. This was deemed "sensitive" by Social Services and could not be discussed for fear of breaking the confidentiality code.

Question 12 [see Hoteliers 2000] was simply designed to provide this work with the required information. Our findings are as follows:

- 3 hotels [38%] were approached by VIP and asked to participate in the housing project. Although they came from out of city they were now being supported by Portsmouth Social Services.
- 2 hotels [25%] were approached by Portsmouth Social Services, and accommodate only asylum seekers supported by them.
- VIP contacted 1 hotel [13%] directly. Asylum seekers in this hotel are directly under the care of the Agent. This research has evidenced that some of these asylum residents are in receipt of destitution support from Portsmouth Social Services.

- 1 hotel [13%] was contacted directly by a London Authority, and also by Portsmouth. It accommodates asylum seekers under the care of both authorities.
- A church in Havant made contact with 1 hotel [13%] on behalf of Havant Social Services.
- 3 hotels [38%] say other persons besides the Social Services approached them.



### **Hotels views of their duties to asylum seekers**

When hotels were asked about their duties to asylum seeker residents:

- One said they made contact with their residents on a daily basis.
- One did not have regular contact with its residents because they were self-catering.
- Six said they did so routinely.
- Two made contact only when dealing with complaints.
- One in the self-catering bracket above made contact only when taking residents shopping.
- All 8 hotels as well as VIP Agents say they are responsible for general board of residents.
- All 8 mentioned provision of 3 meals a day as part of their responsibilities to residents.
- Providing them with toiletries such as shaving creams, razors, soaps etc. were mentioned by 6 hotels.
- Arranging access to solicitors, doctors, dentists, educational institutions etc. were mentioned by 7 hotels and VIP.
- Arranging access to religious institutions was mentioned by 1 hotel.

- Only 4 hotels and excluding VIP suggested provision of clothing for asylum seekers.

While some duties, such as provision of meals, appear to be accepted by all, there are other duties, such as providing toiletries, which were not completely accepted.

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### Hotels views of help to asylum seekers from other agencies

Hotel managers were asked about how they viewed the work of other key agencies regarding provisions for asylum seekers (Question 32).

| Agencies                        | Responses |      |      |            |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------|------|------------|
|                                 | Very Good | Good | Poor | Don't Know |
| Portsmouth Social Services      | 0         | 0    | 7    | 1          |
| London Social Services          | 1         | 2    | 0    | 5          |
| Health Centres                  | 0         | 4    | 0    | 4          |
| Benefits Agency                 | 0         | 1    | 0    | 7          |
| Educational Institutions        | 2         | 5    | 1    | 0          |
| GPs                             | 0         | 1    | 6    | 1          |
| Others - Havant Social Services | 0         | 0    | 1    | 7          |

**Table 12 - Responses to Q.32 - adapted from Hoteliers July 2000.**

['No comments' and no responses are registered as "Don't knows").

The above views indicate a high dissatisfaction rating for the work of both General Practitioners and Social Services. Health Centres and Education are thought to be performing their jobs well by participants.

## Hotels Perspectives on Accommodating Asylum Seekers

Hoteliers were also asked about the sort of problems they have had with asylum seekers? They reported having to manage the following behaviour problems:

| Behaviour problems                                                   | No. of hotels |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| In fighting amongst residents                                        | 6             |
| Threatening behaviour - with knives                                  | 3             |
| Drunkenness resulting in vandalism                                   | 1             |
| Excessive demands from certain groups of residents                   | 3             |
| Tantrums when there is no immediate solution to some of the problems | 2             |

**Table 13 - Behaviour problems reported by hotels**

The project asked hotels what impact accommodating asylum seekers have had on them and their businesses. One contributor, referring to one particular group of asylum seekers, says:

*'They have big egos with attitude problem. They want a house with a large garden with all ready-made amenities, and are not prepared to adjust gradually to life in the UK. They want everything now'.*

Further comments were:

- *'They misbehave because they think they are doing me a favour'.*
- *'There are other problems to do with personality. They have not spoken to me at all for about 3 months, and they have been very difficult to deal with'.*
- *'They tell a lot of lies and creep around, and find it difficult to trust people, I think their background is a huge contributory factor, hence the problems.'*

Some of the further impacts on hoteliers were:

- *'I have had to adjust to these people by making an effort to understand their reasons for being the way*

they are. It has been difficult, since their behaviours are unlike ours but then, no two people are alike'. [Two hoteliers mentioned these].

- 'Landlords are forced to bend over backwards to accommodate these people'.
- 'Money has also gone missing'
- 'There have been problems with friends coming to stay the night'

Hoteliers were also asked: 'what other problems have you had?' Answers concerning Social Services included:

- 'there have been problems with Social Services, and [Name] is not very helpful. Social Services want us to provide services, but they are not willing to pay'
- 'Social Services are always late in sending in payments for services rendered. How can we operate efficiently, if we always have to subsidise the local authority?' [5 from this group mentioned these]
- 'Social Services are not assisting with costs of books and other items required by asylum seekers when they attend English classes. We are left to bear the costs of photocopying materials, paper, envelopes pens etc' [Mentioned by all 8 from this group]
- 'They spend all this money on putting asylum seekers into those horrible places [speaking of private landlords' properties], and then expect us to cater for asylum seekers free'.
- 'Most of the time, we provide for residents out of the generosity of our hearts'.
- 'In fact two weeks ago, Social Services wanted to move residents out ... and when they refused to be moved, Social Services decided to starve them out'.
- 'The [name] was ordered not to give them any food, but we could not afford to see fellow human beings starved and deprived of food. So we fed them out of our own pockets'.
- 'There should also be an emergency number for getting in contact with Social Services personnel allocated to dealing with asylum seekers, when there is a problem outside office hours'.

1. A pregnant woman or a person with whom she resides or might reasonably be expected to reside;
2. A person with whom dependent children reside or might reasonably be expected to reside;
3. A person who is vulnerable as a result of age, mental illness or handicap or physical disability or other special reasons, or with whom such a person resides or might reasonably be expected to reside;
4. A person who is homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire, or other disaster.

Asylum seekers have the same rights as other tenants in private rented accommodation. One of the aims of the Housing Act 1988 was to provide 'reasonable security' to tenants whilst simultaneously making it possible for landlords to 'secure a reasonable rate of return on their investments' [para. 3.16]. The DoE also believed at the time, that the private sector could provide a home for people facing a change in their personal circumstances [DoE, 1987].

But the 1988 Act went on to introduce the assured tenancy and the assured short-hold tenancy - both providing limited securities. The assured short-hold tenancy must last at least six months. At the end of the six-month period, the landlord is entitled to evict the tenant after two months notice has been served.

The assured short-hold tenancy appears to be favoured by landlords in the Private Rented Sector, so much that only a few tenancies are made on an assured basis. The 1996 Housing Act made the short-hold tenancy the 'default tenancy'.

This report has established that three housing agencies were used almost exclusively for accommodation provision. Asylum seekers have been left heavily dependent on those housing agents because they are not entitled to access social housing unless in priority need. They are further de-empowered by their dependence on housing benefit and a lack of knowledge or independent advice about their rights as tenants under the Housing Act.

## **The Gap in Housing Legislation**

The Housing Act 1996 [Part IV] seems to make certain groups of homeless people ineligible for housing - generally referring to asylum seekers and those it terms "illegal immigrants" [see ss.185-188 and the Homelessness Regulations 1996, S1 1996/2754].

Having been given powers through the introduction of the assured short-hold tenancy by the 1988 Housing Act, landlords in the private sector remain the main source of accommodation available to asylum seekers. But short-hold tenancies provide limited security that makes the Private Rented Sector an unreliable source for meeting long-term housing needs.

Imperfect information is a widespread phenomenon in the housing market arena. It contributes to serious problems for low-income renters, more so if they are asylum seekers who are desperate and homeless and without support. In a majority of cases, the lack of familiarity with the British housing system prevents them from understanding how to acquire housing without outside help.

Reliant on Housing Benefit and Income Support, asylum seekers can access only those properties whose landlords are willing to take on the responsibility of accessing housing benefit on their behalf. However, many landlords require deposits and asylum seekers do not have money earned through work. They do need a support framework that helps to widen choice and aims at removing barriers to quality housing outside the narrow confines of present provision. So one way of opening a wider range of housing would be through some form of rent guarantee scheme for asylum seekers.

## 8 HEALTH NEEDS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

### Health provision

Good health is an important contributory factor to people's individual welfare. 'It is an essential prerequisite for enjoyment of almost every other aspect of life' [Le Grand, J. et al. 1992].

Throughout the United Kingdom, health care has been provided on a universality basis since 1948.

National Health Services are expected to provide equal access to healthcare for all, and a minimum standard of treatment for all in need. Government policies have been designed to ensure healthcare provisions meet the required quality standards and that they can be freely accessed at point of delivery, without fear or element of stigma.

No research appears to have been conducted on the health needs of asylum seekers in Portsmouth. However, future work in this area may need to be carried out in order that a complete set of data can be collated on health needs and provisions on asylum seekers in the city.

Information in this section of the report has been gathered during May to September 2000, and forms a useful source of primary data on asylum seekers in the area.

### Findings on Health

Details of asylum persons dispersed to Portsmouth are passed on to South East Hampshire Area Health Authority. Information is held at Winchester which send profiling details to the Health Screening Unit at Kingsway House.

The screening unit contacts asylum seekers and invites them to attend pre-screening clinics. On visiting the clinics asylum seekers are screened for communicable diseases still prevalent in areas from where migration of people into the UK have occurred. Tuberculosis seems to be the main concern of the health department at present.

The Health Authority based at Winchester allocates asylum seekers to GPs in Portsmouth. This research had difficulties accessing profiling information on asylum seekers from Winchester. The Officer responsible for managing the asylum seeker list refused to either assist or co-operate with the research.

Table 12 includes hoteliers opinions of the work of GPs, and 6 out of 8 hotels said that GPs were giving a poor service to asylum seekers.

This is significant since asylum seekers have to rely on doctors for health care as well as access to screening services to ensure early detection and treatment of communicable diseases.

Evidence gathered for this report includes reports by a number of asylum seekers of apparent prejudice in the manner in which asylum seekers were provided healthcare [see ensuing case study examples]. Asylum seekers have given detailed accounts of doctors refusing to see them, and in other instances, being blocked by the appointment systems.

Asylum seekers in the care of Portsmouth Social Services must visit the Social Services office to request to see a GP. An appointment is made with a doctor, but this usually takes up to two weeks for the ill person to be seen by a doctor.

The research came across a number of instances where people have tried contacting GP Surgeries without first contacting Social Services. This was either because they were too ill to walk the long distance to Social Services offices [since they do not have money for transport], or they had not been informed of the procedure. In such cases they were refused health care until they had followed the procedure by first going through Social Services offices as stipulated.

This section presents findings on health care provision for asylum seekers. Comments from participants are used to demonstrate the manner in which healthcare needs of asylum seekers are being met in Portsmouth. These views were given in response to survey questions aimed at finding out about:

1. Participants' opinions on the work of other agencies.
2. Subjective views from asylum seekers on how they rate services they are receiving/have received.

A Case study is used to illustrate asylum seekers' experiences during initial periods of contact with some General Practitioners.

## Case Study - Consulting a GP

### The Case Study

'C' is a young person of working-age, dispersed to a hotel in Portsmouth on April 13 2000. Supported by Lewisham Social Services. C first contacted the researcher in May 2000, and appeared to be of average weight for size. At this point in time, C complained of suffering a gradual weight loss, because of the poor quality food provided by the hotel.

C mentioned that many residents had problems with the diet, which consisted of 'everyday bread and cold milk, Sandwiches for lunch [made with a slice of bread and some meat or ham], poorly cooked rice [hard] for supper with oily soup'.

As a Muslim, C could not eat the sandwiches because of the 'meat' and was also unable to tolerate the cold milk because of the temperature. C requested warm milk regularly, and regularly the hotel ignored the request because '**there is no hot milk**' [hotel]. C only eats dinner once a week when eggs are served for supper. C appears to have lost a great deal of weight.

C called on the researcher to discuss a visit to the Doctor the previous afternoon. C was observed to be in agony and displayed a painfully swollen right arm. Examination revealed a swollen shoulder that was causing the client excruciating pain, as movement of the arm was almost impossible. When asked what treatment the doctor had given, the response was that the doctor had asked C to go to Social Services for some form of analgesic drugs.

C said that the doctor had actually said that he could not prescribe pain-killing tablets for the pain, because asylum seekers do not pay for treatment and do not pay taxes. With further questioning from the researcher, it emerged that the patient had been to see the GP two days prior and was given

*Paracetamol on that occasion. C was forced to return to the Surgery the next day since the Paracetamol that was prescribed during the previous visit had not alleviated the pain. Assistance was provided by a befriender, who helped with the purchase of some medication from the chemist.*

#### **Point of Note**

There appears to be an attempt by the GP in this case to bring an element of stigma into accessing health care provision at point of delivery.

There has always been occasions in the history of the welfare state when there have been attempts to deny equality of access to welfare services to some groups in society, based on lack of resources or inability to pay. The 'poor law' era saw the poor and destitute grouped into the "deserving" and "undeserving". The poor laws provide the earliest indications of a welfare state system which allowed welfare on the basis that its recipients were 'undeserving'.

The Poor Law Act 1697 [8 and 9 Will III, c30], contained in its statutory provisions elements of stigmatisation. It had stipulated that all recipients of poor relief should wear the letter 'P' on the right shoulder of their uppermost garment [s, 2]. The Welfare State principle of universality of provision according to need changed the ethos of the 'poor law' days - well, at least until now!

The reported actions of those GPs appear to suggest the continuance of the 'moral delinquency' argument of the Poor Law at local level of provision. This seems to mirror the 'badging of the poor' as above.



#### **Case Study - healthcare with stigma?**

*D had been in Portsmouth since May 2000, supported by Lewisham Social Services. D was referred by the research to the Health Screening Unit for assessment and treatment for a painful knee that was causing problems.*

*At the Health Screening Unit, D was sent to see a doctor and returned to the researcher a few days after visiting the clinic. D was concerned that the medicine prescribed by the GP was not helping the*

pain. The researcher checked the medication prescribed with the local Chemist, and was told the bottle contained homeopathic preparation for the treatment of depression. The patient was informed about this and was shocked to find that they were being treated for a condition for which treatment had not been sought.

According to the patient, the doctor never examined D throughout the period of consultation. The GP asked how D was coping in the UK and was told by the patient that coping was a little difficult with relatives back in country of origin. As the doctor showed no interest in the patient's painful knees, D decided to inform the doctor of an impending move to the north, requesting to know whether the cold weather in the north of the country would aggravate the knee problem. The doctor told D 'No cold weather does not affect your condition'.

If the GP had taken the time to examine the patient, a breast condition would have been detected. The researcher was very concerned about this condition and sent D back to the Clinic for further attention. The doctor sent the patient home without any treatment. D returned to the researcher a few days later in pain, and was advised to visit the Accident and Emergency Department. Meanwhile there was concern the condition could be malignant, a situation which worried the patient greatly.

D went to the Accident and Emergency Department because the pain had become unbearable. Tests revealed the condition was not malignant. D complained that after treatment given in hospital Paracetamol was offered despite complaining of a great deal of pain. D was discharged from hospital the next day, and was asked to contact friends and relatives for transport home from hospital. D was left sitting in the hospital corridor for the whole day despite the hospital knowing of the patient's asylum status and that there were no relatives. The hospital insisted the patient must find a way to leave the hospital.

D remained unwell and with nowhere to go, was eventually given a bed at close to midnight on a different ward, having spent the day on the corridor with no food or medication for the pain. The seriousness of the medical condition is evidenced by

*the fact that D was finally discharged after 7 days in hospital.*

The area of concern in this case centres once again on the actions of the GP and some aspects of the healthcare system. The question remains as to what extent there is a separate agenda of health care provision for asylum seekers.

Stigma has always been effective in reducing the number of people with legitimate entitlement to welfare accessing provisions. The psychology of this restraint draws on Pinker's argument that 'there is a tendency for people who receive something for free to feel stigmatised' [Pinker, 1971]. Moreover, since asylum seekers have no understanding of the role stigma is meant to play in their endeavour to access healthcare, one fails to see how denying effective treatment to asylum seeker patients could reinforce this understanding.

### **Hotels' comments on GP Services to Asylum Seekers**

Enabling access to GP services is one of the main roles of hotels. All 8 hotels agree with this finding. Some of the problems faced by asylum seekers when they attempt accessing health care in Portsmouth are evidenced in the case studies. This study has evidence of other similar cases, and the purpose of this section is to introduce comments from non-asylum seekers to further highlight alleged cases of bad practice.

Hoteliers were asked what they thought about health provision for asylum seekers? Answers were:

1. *I think its rubbish. I hear Kingsway House is now up and running but we've had no information on it at all. There are also problems with the service.*
2. *Doctors will not come out to attend to asylum seekers. When they are called out to see them in an emergency... they always ask - "Oh! These are asylum seekers aren't they?" and then refuse to see them.'*
3. *Doctors' attitude is appalling. They make it quite clear that they do not like asylum seekers and are not happy to treat them.*

- 4 Asylum seekers are therefore getting a raw deal from the Health Service. The biggest problem I see is the lack of interest in asylum seekers by GPs. Social Services and the local community.
- 5 Doctors dislike asylum seekers and in many cases do not give appropriate treatment, yet they complain of being "pushed" and over-worked.
- 6 [Name of practice] are very uncooperative. They provide very poor service for asylum seekers'.

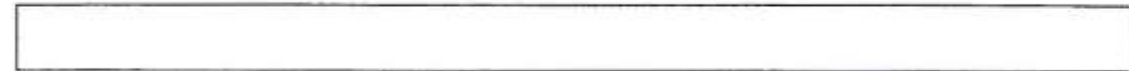
Hoteliers were also asked what they thought should be done immediately to help asylum seekers with health issues - their replies were:

- 1 There should be an emergency number to enable us make contact with an appropriate person when help is needed.
- 2 There should be a contact number serving only asylum seekers for when they are ill or unwell.
- 3 'There should be an emergency number for contacting only those GPs who are willing to, and interested in treating asylum seekers.'

## 9 WELFARE SUPPORT SERVICES FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

This section of the report covers a range of welfare support issues. It comments on asylum seekers' needs for advice and information; for cultural and emotional support; social networks; legal advice; communication with friends and family; basic provisions such as clothing and toiletries. Also, in this section, is the issue of how asylum seekers can make a complaint when the service they receive is unsatisfactory.

Up until August 2000, local authority Social Services were responsible for providing the 'welfare support package'.



### Case study - the welfare support package in action

The case study that follows illustrates the harshness of the legislation, which remains inherent in the Asylum and Immigration Act 1999. It also shows how easy it is for a person with no protection against destitution to easily drop through the safety-net, having acquired the status of a 'non-person' because of his/her asylum situation.

#### The Case Study

*'E' came to the United Kingdom in September 1999. E applied for asylum on the day of arrival and was granted 'temporary admission' into the country, but was deemed 'a person liable to be detained'. E was given SAL 2 status, and was sent to Portsmouth by a London Borough as part of the government's interim dispersal strategy.*

*The temporary admission privilege had restrictions attached. E was told to reside at the address given, and to report to Southsea Police Station once weekly. In addition, no restriction was placed on the applicant taking up employment, and there was no 'need to get the permission of the Department of Employment before taking work'.*

*E lived in one of the hotels in the Southsea area of the city, and received destitution support under care of one of the London Social Services. E kept*

appointments with the Police as instructed. Then in February 2000, E was sent a new IND document detailing status as SAL 1. This was a complete change of status. The decision came as a result of a re-assessment of the circumstances surrounding the applicant's original time frame prior to the initial application.

As a port-of-entry applicant, E now became entitled to claim benefits until a negative decision was made on the asylum application. Meanwhile, E's change of status was initially seen as the reason behind the London authority withdrawing support. Neither the hotel nor the applicant was informed of the intention to withdraw support and the reason for doing so. This subsequently led to E being evicted from the hotel, as payment was no longer forthcoming from the London placement authority to meet the costs of basic accommodation and essential living needs.

E spoke no word of English on arrival in the UK, and neither the hotel, placement authority nor the Immigration Department, took the time to explain what was happening to the applicant, and why the change in status should cause such difficulties.

E was made homeless following eviction from the hotel. Not able to speak a word of English, E was unable to communicate with people. Confused, distressed and frightened, E was compelled to sleep rough, and was picked up by workers from the RSI [Rough Sleepers Initiative]. Efforts were made to find solutions to the various problems E was having.

The RSI staff found out that E's application for asylum had been rejected on grounds that answers given at the initial interview session with an immigration officer were no longer viable. It also emerged that E's answers to interview questions were misrepresented by an interpreter who was a tribal enemy from his country of origin. It appears the London Social Services Department was aware of the negative decision from the Home Office, but failed to pass this on to the applicant.

Meanwhile, the RSI contacted the Benefits Agency and the Department of Social Security on E's behalf. Neither agency was willing to assist. E was refused Income Support and Housing Benefit and access to housing under the Homelessness Legislation, probably because his application for asylum had been rejected.

*E* appealed against the Home office's decision. Legal Aid was declined on the grounds that applicant's case was not winnable. The Appeal date was scheduled for July, and was to be in Dorchester. *E* had no money and was unable to meet the costs of travel to the hearing. No longer entitled to support under the interim arrangements of the 1999 Act, the applicant could not ask for assistance with travel costs.

With the day of the appeal hearing approaching, the RSI sought assistance from Portsmouth Area Refugee Support. Financial assistance was given to cover costs of travel to the hearing. An interpreter was also arranged to assist *E* with communication needs at the hearing. At the hearing, an application was made to the Home Office to allow *E* leave to remain in the country on compassionate grounds. *E* returned to Portsmouth to await a decision following the appeal hearing.

Following this event, the applicant was summoned to the Immigration office at Heathrow at the end of July 2000, an appointment that was duly kept. The applicant was put into detention on arrival at Heathrow, but was released to return to Portsmouth at end of October 2000.

### **Lessons from Case Study**

This Case calls for a better understanding of asylum management issues. Interviews should be conducted fairly, and the legal needs of the applicant must be adequately addressed if justice is to prevail. This report suggests the following points be considered when initial interviews are conducted:

1. It must be understood that applicants cannot willingly volunteer information, because of fear brought about by experiences of what they had endured. It is therefore important that someone who is experienced in trauma counselling should interview asylum applicants. A good interviewer is required to coax relevant information from applicants.
2. Interpreters must be competent with the ability to interpret properly.
3. Asylum seekers require competent solicitors to handle their cases. There is evidence to show that many

asylum seekers are not properly represented at the initial interviews because of language barrier.

4. Many other cases have revealed a lack of solicitor representation at court hearings, where court proceedings had gone ahead without asylum applicants understanding what was happening.
5. Another major hurdle lies in the difficulty encountered in trying to find support for those not supported by Social Services. The situation described in this Case Study provides a case in point. The ease with which an asylum applicant is dropped or rejected by all support agencies provides further challenge for improvements to close the gap in the safety net provision.
6. It is apparent from this Case that the Immigration Department expected asylum applicants to keep appointments outside their areas of residence without being offered transport costs. The difficulties posed by lack of money caused our E a great deal of anxiety.
7. Finally, the case illustrates what can happen when a London Social Services Department disperses asylum seekers to other areas and changes their support package without informing the person or accepting responsibility for what happens to the persons as a result.

#### **Implications from case study**

This case epitomises all the problems associated with the Asylum and Immigration Act 1999. It shows up basic difficulties thrown up by the Interim Support Scheme as well as an unfair and inefficient decision-making system, which have created barriers to housing and welfare support, poverty, indiscriminate detention and destitution.

In justifying proposals for the 1999 Asylum Act, the Home Secretary, Jack Straw prefaced the Bill by saying that 'the current arrangements for supporting asylum seekers are a shambles. New arrangements are needed to ensure that genuine asylum seekers are not left destitute...' [Home Office, 1998].

The 1999 Act also stressed the safety net principle as the underlying basis of the new proposed changes. It is sad to say that this research has not evidenced any sign

of adherence to the spirit of this proposal. What has been demonstrated has been a poor understanding of the political and economic conditions that affect asylum seekers by policy makers.

There are significant implications here for asylum management as a whole. The case highlights enormous gaps throughout the support system. It therefore goes against the proposal of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1999, whose aim was that the underlying basis for support of asylum seekers should be a safety net in cases of genuine hardship [para.8.19].

The ease at which support is withdrawn from vulnerable persons at the end of an asylum process gives cause for concern, as the ultimate result is always homelessness, poverty and social exclusion. It should be noted that people seeking a judicial review do not disappear. They remain with the same basic needs as other asylum persons and residents, despite being denied entitlement to housing benefit, income and general welfare support.

The long wait for a decision from the Home Office can cause strain and hardship. Resources dedicated to providing support and assistance to asylum persons during these trial periods will be a helpful solution.

### **Case Study - seeking help from the Benefits Agency**

*The climate of suspicion surrounding treatment of asylum seekers can come as a shock to someone needing help and understanding from statutory agency staff.*

*'F' came to England with two children and was dispersed to Portsmouth by Heathrow Airport's Immigration Office. Housed in a hotel with both children, F paid their own bills for the first two months until they ran out of money. They then contacted a solicitor out of desperation to ask for a way forward.*

*The solicitor advised a visit to the Social Security Office for assistance. F visited the Benefits Agency (BA) Office at Guildhall Walk. F had difficulty with Officer at the Caller's Office. The Officer refused to help. The reason given was that F did not*

resemble the photograph on the ID document presented as evidence of identity.

The Officer accused F of being a fake and asked F to return to Heathrow to request a replacement of the offending passport photograph. F stressed that the photograph on the ID was a true copy, and showed the officer a passport with their name and photograph to confirm their identity yet again.

The Officer again called F a 'fake' and said F would get no assistance from that office until after the Police and Immigration Office investigated F's application and asylum status.

So F was forced to travel to Heathrow with transport money from a wellwisher, to explain the situation to Immigration officers. The Immigration Office sent F back to Portsmouth with a message for the BA Officer that the photograph would not be altered as there was nothing wrong with it.

Despite this message from the Immigration Department at Heathrow, the BA officer refused to process the claim for benefit, saying F was a 'fake'. F showed the BA Officer some more photographs, hoping that similarities between the photographs would sway the BA Officer.

Whilst in London F had also visited a solicitor to explain the situation with the Benefits Agency in Portsmouth. The solicitor sent F a letter bearing the Company's logo. This letter contained information about F with a photograph of F attached.

F took this letter to the BA Officer, who bluntly refused to acknowledge this additional piece of information. The Officer again called F a fake. In frustration, F went to the Immigration Office at Portsmouth port and complained to an Immigration Officer.

The Immigration Officer examined the document, whose validity BA Officer had refused to acknowledge. F was sent back to the BA Officer with a message to contact the Port Immigration Office. The BA Officer did make contact, but continued to insist on a new set of documents prior to dealing with the claim.

Not knowing what next to do, F went to Portsmouth Social Services for assistance and saw Officer D. F

was referred to another solicitor in Southsea who also spoke with the BA Officer, asking how F could be a fake, and in possession of all the documents accepted by the Home Office, which included F's Birth Certificate.

The BA Officer remained adamant and insisted on seeing original copies of new documents. F went back to the BA Officer, with original papers as instructed by solicitor. F was interrogated extensively by the BA Officer for four hours, in a manner that made F feel very uncomfortable. The BA Officer photocopied F's documents including a Birth Certificate, insisting the documents would be sent to Southampton for further investigation.

Two months later, F had a visit from another officer from the Benefits Agency who apologised for the delay in dealing with the Case. This Officer gave F a National Insurance Number and suggested F apply for Child Benefit. However, this application was later declined on the grounds that F is an asylum seeker.

Seventeen weeks after F first made contact with the Benefits Agency, Income Support was granted.

### **Issues from the case study**

This story demonstrates the adverse impact on asylum seekers when agencies fail to co-operate or work together. It raises the question as to why the Benefits Agency officer could refuse benefit on the grounds of supporting the validity of ID when two separate immigration officials and two separate solicitors gave the view that it was genuine. Was the original refusal on sound evidential grounds, or due to prejudice on the part of the BA officer?



### **Travel assistance**

A recurring theme from interviews and case studies, was the expectation that asylum seekers will travel to interviews in connection with their application, yet not be provided with any assistance with travel costs. The Home Office has clarified the entitlement to costs of travel to interviews and appeals for asylum seekers.

Asylum seekers supported by social services under the interim care arrangements of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Support Act, may apply to Social Services for support to meet travel expenses, under regulation 5(3) of the Act.

Asylum seekers under NASS may apply to NASS for the costs of return travel to interviews or appeal hearings. Accommodation may be provided in particular circumstances if an overnight stay is required. However, it appears that in practice this is not always known about and that asylum seekers do have difficulties.

Also asylum seekers receiving Income Support, are expected to meet the costs of travel to interviews and appeal hearings.

The interviews for this research showed that asylum seekers in the Portsmouth area were not entitled to assistance with costs of travel to hospital from social services in Portsmouth. However, the policy to decline assistance to persons needing to travel to hospital does not appear universal.

### **Accommodation providers' comments on Social Services**

In the course of this research, both hoteliers and landlords were asked for their views on the general welfare and support provided by Social Services.

Comments from hoteliers included:

1. 'There should also be a contact number for reaching officials and case workers when there is a major problem with residents. It is difficult to reach these people when you need them'.
2. 'My experience with Social Services is that they are totally incapable of dealing with any problem to do with asylum seekers'.
3. 'Many of the caseworkers are untrained and cannot cope with the sort of cases they are expected to deal with.'

One landlord was asked how he had managed to cope so far?

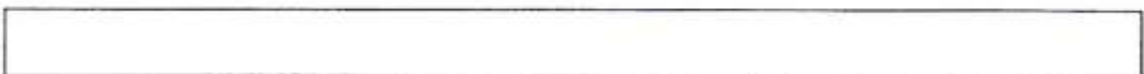
- 'That has been very difficult, mainly by trial and error. [Name] and Social Services have not been much help to us. She has never been able to give clear answers to questions to do with operations'.
- 'She always tells us that asylum seekers do not deserve to be treated differently because they have chosen to come to this country, and must be treated the same as the English people'.
- 'There has been no concrete assistance'.

Another landlord said:

- [Name] was saying there were no guidelines because there is no legislative framework pronouncing guidelines on operational matters'.
- 'We needed assistance on what to do with asylum seekers sent to us with no proper documentation. [Name] replied that she has no answer to that problem. Asked if it was O.K to keep our own records, she had said that I would be infringing on the rights of the individual asylum seeker, as this would be against their civil rights'.
- 'I was baffled! What do you do when a Manager of a department supposed to be directing operations on how asylum seekers should be managed is prepared to sit on the fence and not find out facts to help us cope? You do nothing - absolutely nothing!

A third landlord said:

- 'One thing I have noticed is that Social Services are incompetent. Even though I maintain adequate record of who is here/not here, and send them copies, they still have difficulty keeping track of who has moved on to other accommodation. It is extremely surprising when it is they who move asylum seekers into other properties'.



### **Hoteliers comments on needs of Asylum Seekers**

Hoteliers were also asked what sort of help they thought asylum seekers needed. Answers included:

- 'They need assistance with a lot of things from time the time they set foot at Immigration, and throughout the first four weeks or more of being in the community'.
- They need someone to talk to.
- Someone to befriend them.
- Someone to understand them
- A place where they are made to feel wanted.
- Places to go and meet other people.
- Leisure activities to take their minds off their problems.
- Communication - very essential
- Housing
- Leisure activities - It is difficult for them to utilise any leisure time at the moment because of problems with the White community. They need a place that can provide them with this opportunity.
- Solicitor services.
- A social club would be nice. It would be a good idea to have a place and then create this social club so those asylum seekers can meet with other groups in Portsmouth on social occasions.
- Job opportunities.
- Clothing is also very important and should be provided.
- Help with costs of travel.

Hoteliers were particularly asked about Telephone Cards for asylum seekers

- '[Name] tells us not to issue telephone cards to asylum seekers. She said that if asylum seekers want telephone cards, they must pay for them themselves. But not all asylum seekers have someone to call'.

- '[Name] said that as far as she is concerned, asylum seekers should not be telephoning home, or friends and relatives because they have only just got here'
- 'If they claim to be running away from persecution [which is the reason for them arriving in England], they should be wary of doing anything [such as contacting relatives] that may tell people where they are'.
- 'She said many of them are economic migrants, taking advantage of the system, which is why they are not afraid to telephone home and friends'.

Hoteliers were also asked for suggestions on housing asylum seekers that could be of help to future strategy.

Their answers are presented in this table.

| Suggestions                                               | No. of hotels |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Do not leave persons longer than four months in one place | 1             |
| Give some money                                           | 4             |
| Give some clothing                                        | 3             |
| There should be a way of contacting Immigration           | 1             |

**Table 14 - Hoteliers suggestions**

Hoteliers were also asked for their views on solicitors and their help for asylum seekers.

- 'Solicitors are unreliable. We've found they throw legal papers belonging to asylum seekers away, and are not very keen to represent asylum seekers in court'.
- 'Lawyers do not seem to be interested in the Asylum seekers and some do not want to work efficiently on behalf of the asylum seekers. It is always very frustrating to call them. Most often they do not call back to see the clients.'

|  |
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### **Provision of clothing and toiletries**

In the six-month period of this research, the need for clothing was high on the list of priority needs of many

of the asylum seekers. A high proportion of these persons had maintained they had not been provided with items of clothing as part of their care packages. Evidence from contact with these persons confirmed they were in desperate need for change of clothing, and some hygiene products.

Of the 159 persons in the sample, in May/June 2000, 68 [43%] said they had not been given any items of clothing since arrival. A further 52 persons [33%] said they were given only one shirt and one pair of trousers since arriving in Portsmouth. By August 23 persons [15%] had still not received any items of clothing since arrival in Portsmouth.

*One hotel said that: 'Portsmouth Social Services was meant to supply toiletries but the only supply received by the hotel has been once only during [name's] time, and until today, no other supplies have been forthcoming'.*

Three hotels of the 8 participants complained of Social Services not supplying toiletries for asylum seekers. One hotel remarked in July 2000:

*'[Name] has taken over from [name] since last week and has promised to help as required with toiletries. Would you believe that the women have never been given any toiletries by Social Services, not even hygiene products such as sanitary towels, tampons etc. I would have thought these to be of utmost necessity to any woman's regular habits'.*

The researcher assisted these individuals with clothing provision, by referring them to the Family Welfare Centre. Asylum seekers were adequately clothed by the partnership efforts between the project and this voluntary sector provider.

The research has discovered that clothing is not provided as a right to asylum seekers as part of their destitution support package. Support agencies appear not to see themselves under obligation to provide such basic items that are a necessity to human existence in today's society.

One does not have to be an asylum seeker to regard such provision as an important part of keeping warm and maintaining some sense of decency, and it would be useful to learn the reasons behind some support agencies' apparent disregard of this aspect of destitution support.

### Case Study - Single and pregnant

'G' was dispersed to Portsmouth in February 2000 from London. This was a single lady, who was pregnant on arrival in the country. Portsmouth Social Services provided destitution support. G had the baby in July 2000.

G requested assistance from the researcher because she had not received any clothing or toiletry items for herself and the baby since the birth. She maintained she had asked Social Services Officers for help but had been ignored. She said she had been advised by Social Services to purchase the items herself.

After further detailed questioning from the researcher, it emerged that G had not received antenatal care throughout the period of pregnancy. G spoke very little English, although she spoke French fluently. It would seem that no effort was made to use the services of an interpreter to communicate with her at any time. She also seems to have been neglected post-natally by the authorities.

G had to rely on the altruism and an abundance of generosity from members of Portsmouth Area Refugee Support and the Family Welfare Association. Fortunately, mother and baby are doing well.

## 10 EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND EDUCATION

### Eligibility for work and training

Asylum seekers' eligibility for work is governed by the six-month rule. This means that asylum seekers are not eligible for work until they have been in the country for six months and only become eligible to seek work if they have applied for a temporary work permit to the Home Office.

A decision on an application for a temporary work permit can sometimes involve a lengthy process. According to the Audit Commission, only the main asylum applicant in a family is usually granted a work permit, dependants are usually not.

Asylum seekers are not entitled to unemployment benefits. They are also not eligible to access government training schemes such as New Deal. However, they are entitled to receive advice from employment advisers on how to job search once they have been granted permission to work.

Refugees and persons with ELR status have the right to access employment as any other unemployed residents of Portsmouth.

### Findings on Employment in Portsmouth

Asylum seekers in Portsmouth with temporary work permits from the Home Office are unable to access mainstream job market vacancies. Although they can be given advice and job search help from employment advisers, this report has no evidence that they have done. Evidence suggests that job seekers from the asylum communities be sent to register with employment agencies instead, with no help or advice given.

The following case study highlights the gap that exists in meeting the employment and training needs of this group.

### **Case Study - advising on suitable employment**

'H' had been in the country for eight months, and had lived in Portsmouth for seven. H was granted a temporary work permit in July and had been trying hard to find a job. H visited the Employment Service at the job centre regularly, but had been referred to Manpower Services instead.

H spoke no word of English on arrival in the UK, but the situation has now improved as a result of attending EFOL classes at one of the Colleges.

H is also a skilled welder and had worked on cars in country of origin. H has no other re-cycleable skill. H complains that no adviser has taken the time to ask about his previous experiences and there has been no offer of employment.

### **Access to Training and Education**

Asylum seekers require education and training to enable active participation in society as well as the employment sector. 71 asylum seekers [45% of total sample of 159] come into the UK unable to speak English. With language problems there is a need for people in this group to access English classes [ESOL] and other training provisions.

Asylum seekers are not eligible to enter further education because they are not entitled to educational grants.

Refugees and those with ELR status are entitled to an educational grant after residing in the UK for three years.

Although asylum seekers may be unlikely to enter further education, they are eligible to access English Courses and Computer Training Courses.

The researcher was in regular contact with three higher education providers: Highbury College, Portsmouth College

and Southdown College. The majority of EFOL provision was by Highbury College.

Highbury, Portsmouth and Southdown Colleges also provide computer training for the benefit of asylum seekers.

This research is not aware of any studies that have been conducted on educational needs of asylum seekers in Portsmouth. There is no available data on either asylum seekers or refugee groups in the area concerning this issue.

There is clearly a need to raise the skill and education of asylum seekers by improving access to employment training, and higher education opportunities. In turn this should help to plug some of the skill gaps which are developing in the employment market. This could perhaps be taken up for further investigation by the new Learning and Skills Council.

## 11 CONCLUSIONS

### **Asylum seekers have the same needs as other people**

This report aims to make heard the voices of asylum seekers, who would otherwise be isolated and silent.

Their views reveal cases of abuses of power, inequalities in the way support is afforded through allocation of resources, inadequate housing, poverty in nutrition and clothing together with a general absence of supportive welfare.

Since this is the first work to be carried out on this resident group in the Portsmouth area, the findings should be useful to all those concerned about asylum seekers in the area. Also, the report should be used as a core database for referencing information on the area's asylum seeker communities in the future.

The intention of this work has been to search for "specific knowledge for a specific problem in a specific situation" [Cohen and Manion, 1989: 226], in order that only facts on the asylum issue are presented in this report. Underlying this was the need to advance knowledge through examination of relationships, and micro-political issues, and how they influence the management of asylum seekers.

This research aims to reinforce the human dimension in relation to immigration and to show that asylum seekers have the same needs as other residents, no-matter what status they are given by law. Whatever their rights to equality, freedom and justice, this in no way diminishes their fundamental rights to see themselves as human and individual.

This report should improve our understanding of the economic and psychological conditions that affect asylum seekers as a result of implementation of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1999. In particular it highlights the need to extend the safety net provisions to asylum seekers in future.

## **Purpose of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1999**

Because there is effectively no 'safety net' for asylum seekers, their only sources of support when things go wrong are community organisations, concerned individuals and their own community colleagues. Acceptance and integration into the host community is not only essential to their social well-being, it may also be critical to providing support when state services let them down.

The fact that not all asylum applicants are entitled to protection from destitution serves as a reminder that asylum seekers are now the new 'poor' or 'underclass', deliberately fashioned as a result of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Whatever the stated intention of government policies, this evidence implies that the real purposes are to foster their social exclusion from full participation in British society, at least until their applications have been decided upon by the Home Office.

## **Young working age population**

An increase in the young working age population should benefit the economy, since it could help to spread the tax burden more evenly amongst the population, and also boost the number of people in employment. The welfare state needs more employed people in the tax bracket, if the levels of welfare provisions and basic incomes maintenance for people in the dependent group are to be maintained.

The immediate effect of an increase in the young working age population as a result of the inflow of asylum seekers will be on areas of employment, skill acquisition and leisure provisions. The rise will also impact heavily on future access to housing provision both in Portsmouth and nationally.

The current short-term solution to accommodating asylum seekers has been heavily dependent on the use of hotels as a temporary measure. Long-term solutions may need to address how the extra demand will impact on current accommodation availability. As asylum seekers gain

refugee status, the requirement will be for a more permanent form of housing, which will necessitate their move out of hotels and other forms of temporary shelter. They will need to access educational provisions for themselves and their children as well as competing for jobs within the employment arena.

### **A Role for Portsmouth Area Refugee Support (PARS)**

Throughout this report, the future role of the Group (PARS) has been considered. It is the only group representing the interests of asylum seekers in Portsmouth. The Group should see the situation set out in this report as a challenge. It must become the voice of the socially excluded asylum seeker communities.

Income deprivation and destitution are two main factors affecting asylum seekers in Portsmouth today. For PARS to begin to tackle such problems, they must find ways of enabling the client groups to negotiate barriers to accessing housing, welfare, healthcare, education, employment and training.

PARS has a distinct contribution to make. To fulfil the role it has set itself it has to be innovative and free to experiment in its attempt to find the best way to empower its client group through inclusive methods of service provision.

PARS is applying for Charity Status. It would do well to remind itself of its capabilities as a Charity, presented here with some adaptations from Kramer 1981:

1. It is within its remit to provide specialist care on a selective or exclusive basis for families in need, such as asylum seekers and their dependants. It stands to perform this role satisfactorily because it can concentrate its efforts on one narrow constituency.
2. It has a duty to act as defender of the specialist interest of the group or community, which it represents. Asylum seekers are seen as an undeserving population at risk, PARS advocating on their behalf will take on more importance as entitlement to residency and welfare provision continue to be debated.

3. It should provide support to the group it represents, and should see itself as a vehicle for self-help - a means by which asylum seekers and their families can articulate their concerns.
4. PARS must endeavour to retain its independence, and build the self-respect of its members. To achieve these it must be free from local government control or interference.
5. It has a duty to provide mainstream services for the benefit of its user group. The services do not have to be distinctly different from those of state welfare, but can be supplementary or complementary or on a cost basis to agencies of government. The reasoning behind this is to widen choice of services available to asylum seekers who are currently being denied access to and choice of these services.

So PARS must resist demands by other groups or agencies of government to become too reliant on funding from them. Accepting funding from any source should not cause it to become less able to perform its duties.

### **The Need for a Base**

For PARS to rise to the challenge of its assumed role, it has to engineer trust by involving asylum seekers in its planned operations. To do so contact has to take place at a venue - a meeting place that should also serve as the 'hub' or focal point for all activities.

Asylum seekers are currently isolated and stigmatised by some elements of society, and therefore require a place where they are made to feel welcome, and where gradual socialisation into community life can take place.

Meeting asylum seekers' needs will involve the planning and putting into effect support structures that also require joined-up working with other agencies. As the list of PARS' responsibilities indicate, the duties of PARS are encompassing, therefore necessitating a base or Centre from which activities can be co-ordinated and effectively managed.

The lack of information mentioned in this report, calls for a database of information to be set up, and this can only be effectively stored and managed according to the

demands of the Data Protection Act, in a place where only PARS as a Charity has full control.

There is a counter argument that establishing a dedicated centre promotes separation and isolation when there is a need for integration and inclusion into mainstream activities. This is a valid point and indeed, a specialist asylum seekers centre will only be effective if it actively creates partnerships with other organisations, resources and facilities and as part of its work, promotes processes of integration.

However, the value of a specific centre is that it is a single point of reference and can develop specific expertise in advocacy and in signposting and referring asylum seekers to the appropriate resources.

### **Achieving social inclusion**

Social inclusion is about reaching out to others, and embracing diversity. For some asylum seekers, their problems and fears are deep-rooted and can require psychological help. Facilitating access to such provision is one aspect of social inclusion currently being denied to them by some GP activities.

Social exclusion is about discrimination against certain groups accessing welfare provisions. Active participation in the job market is important for self esteem, and a wage or salary is the main resource most people depend on to meet their needs. Asylum seekers are not permitted to access mainstream job markets in the first six months. Without a change of policy, they may never be in a position to share the beneficial effects of employment.

Social inclusion as a notion addresses issues of poverty which, in the case of asylum seekers, are a direct result of the government limiting their rights to access employment, training, education, health and welfare benefits. Social inclusion gives a person a positive sense of identity.

## **Government taking a lead**

Asylum seekers are currently struggling against Central Government policies and the manner in which they are implemented at local government level. For any changes to happen, they must be initiated by central government. Creating a new vision for the management of asylum seekers in the United Kingdom requires some national initiatives.

1. Government should be seen to lead by example. Its policies and pronouncements should foster social cohesion instead of the social divisions promoted by current policies on asylum seeker management. Any future initiatives should encourage the breaking down of existing barriers between the British public and asylum seekers.
  2. Government must consult and involve other interested bodies in order to ensure that partnership working delivers on this issue in the future. The Government should review the effectiveness of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1999 and particularly its impact on human rights of the individual in the light of the Human Rights Act.
  3. Government has to ensure that local government delivers on policies by providing operative guidelines. There also has to be structures in place to ensure accountability, best value and best practice at local levels of provision.
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## **The voice of the asylum seeker**

This report provides a means for asylum seekers to express their views and raise their voices. The report has also highlighted two powerful mechanisms which normally silence these voices.

Firstly, there is fear. Asylum seekers are waiting for Home Office decisions as to whether they can stay and establish roots in this country or whether they may be

deported and returned to the situation they are fleeing from. They do not want to risk doing anything which could adversely prejudice their asylum claim. So they are often fearful of complaining about their treatment of the way services are delivered to them. They often have a limited understanding of the respective roles of state institutions and the extent to which information is passed between them. They have no indication of the standards of service they should expect nor any mechanism for complaint without risk of prejudice to their asylum application.

The second silencing mechanism is the confidentiality code of public agencies. There are long standing established protocols of client confidentiality which are rightly adhered to by professional staff in service agencies. It is quite correct for such agencies to refuse to divulge personal details of their clients to outside agencies, such as independent researchers. However, there are established methods by which such agencies can facilitate access between their clients and independent researchers in ways that respect confidentiality, but still allow clients to speak and voice their concerns to a wider audience. This relies on a spirit of co-operation by public agencies and a willingness to face up to possible criticism as a result.

This research found that such a spirit of co-operation was sadly lacking. Social Services offered to distribute letters to their clients inviting them to make contact with the research. Unfortunately this offer did not actually happen. Consequently, the opportunity for some people to make their voice heard through this research was denied to them. The more extensively public agencies hide behind confidentiality codes the more the views and opinions of asylum seekers are silenced.

This reinforces the importance of the role which independent voluntary agencies can play as advocates for asylum seekers. But it also supports the need for some form of independent inspectorate which asylum seekers should be given information about at the point when they first claim asylum.

## 12 RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a range of recommendations arising out of this study which apply in turn to the various agencies involved:

### **Portsmouth Area Refugee Support (PARS)**

- 1 PARS should continue to provide 'drop-ins' which offer advice, contact with local agencies, legal representatives, clothing, and signposting to other resources. These 'drop ins' must be at a regular weekly time and place and preferably at Friendship House in Elm Grove.
- 2 PARS should investigate the establishment of a resource centre that would operate as a central point of contact, dedicated to serving the interests of asylum seekers. It would signpost other services and offer social events. The Centre should be the first point of call for asylum seekers all over Portsmouth. It should be a place where some of their physical, psychological and spiritual needs can be met. It should be welcoming to asylum seekers who may feel excluded from activities inherent to communities in Portsmouth. The support group should work with independent agencies and other local organisations involved in providing advice services to investigate the feasibility of establishing such a centre.
- 3 The Group must continue to monitor the experiences of asylum seekers in the Portsmouth area, identifying critical issues, and campaigning for resolution of those issues where appropriate.
- 4 A particular project would be to work with asylum seekers to create a recipe book, which would respect differing cultural traditions. This would be distributed to hotels, both in Portsmouth and elsewhere.

### **PCC Social Services**

- 5 The Council should establish funds to be able to provide Emergency financial support where appropriate

- 6 The Council should establish an accountable but clearly specified procurement process for accommodation.
- 7 The Council should set up rent guarantee scheme to enable asylum seekers to access private rented accommodation when they achieve 'Exceptional leave to remain status'
- 8 There should be minimum standards of accommodation including furniture and facilities, and limits on room sharing. There should be a system of checking standards and for receiving complaints from residents. The standards should be no less than for housing for the general population. There should be a property check and sign off on occupation by new tenants.
- 9 The council should review whether there are specific training needs for staff working with asylum seekers. Particular emphasis needs to be placed on establishing an equality culture.
- 10 A training programme for hoteliers should ensure they are properly prepared to meet the specific needs of asylum seekers.
- 11 The Council should continue to make representations at a national level for changes to national policy where it has evidence from its own experience of the particular difficulties which such policies create.

#### **Health Trusts**

- 12 The Portsmouth Healthcare Trust and Primary Care Groups should provide training and guidance notes to GP's on their role in providing health care for asylum seekers.
- 13 The Trust and PCGs should review their initiatives of provision for asylum seekers and particularly the mechanisms by which asylum seekers are able to make contact with services they need.

#### **The Home Office**

- 14 A monitoring system involving an independent body of inspectors should be instituted. This should have powers to investigate the provision of services by local authorities and other agencies.

- 15 A Whistle-blowing agency should be established to give asylum seekers a place to complain about unreasonable treatment by public bodies. This should be publicised to all asylum seekers as part of their initial registration by immigration officials.
- 16 The Government must urgently review financial support for asylum seekers. There needs to be better arrangements to provide emergency financial support and to provide transport when requiring asylum seekers to travel to appointments.
- 17 The process by which NASS procures accommodation must take account of the failings highlighted in this report. It must be transparent and accountable, include meeting and monitoring reasonable standards and seek to achieve value for money.

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# RESEARCH INTO NEEDS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS IN PORTSMOUTH

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### INTRODUCTION

My name is Elizabeth Bassey. I work for the Bill Sargent Trust as a researcher, and my job is to find out what your needs as asylum seekers are.

Part of my work involves asking you questions, such as the ones on this paper. Before I begin, I want you to understand, that you do not have to answer any questions, if you do not want to.

You are not forced to take part in this interview. You have a right to refuse.

I also want you to understand that any information or answers that you give at this interview will be treated with the strictest confidence. This means that it will not be given to anybody else, and will only be used for this project [research].

Are you happy to be asked questions about yourself? Yes ☐ No ☐

If answer is 'no', discontinue.

### PHASE ONE QUESTIONS

#### ABOUT YOURSELF

1. What is your name? .....
2. You are MAN ☐? WOMAN ☐? Married ☐ Children ☐
3. When were you born? .....[year] Your Age is [ ] years [ ] months
4. Which is your country? For example [IRAN] .....
5. What is your ethnic group? For example [Kurdish] .....
6. What language do you speak? .....
7. When did you come to England? .....
8. Did you come to England by lorry? ☐ boat ☐ aeroplane ☐
9. If by boat, which port? Dover ☐ Other ☐ Which one? .....
10. Did you bring your wife ☐ children ☐ with you?

11. Are they with you? Yes ☐ No ☐

12. If answer is 'no', Where is you family? .....  
.....

13. When did you come to Portsmouth? .....

14. Who sent you to Portsmouth? Kent Social Services ☐  
Lewisham Social Services ☐  
Croydon ☐  
Other ☐ which? .....

**ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVE**

15. What are you address? .....  
.....

16. Who is your landlord? .....

17. Do you like where you live? Yes ☐ No ☐

18. If 'no', why? .....  
.....  
.....

19. What does your landlord give you? Food ☐ laundry ☐ Others ☐ specify  
.....  
.....

20. Do you get any money ☐ Vouchers ☐ No money ☐

21. What do you do after breakfast? Stay in hotel ☐ Go to College ☐

22. What else do you do? .....  
.....  
.....

23. Is there anything more you would want social services to do for you?  
Yes ☐ No ☐

24. If yes, What is it? .....  
.....  
.....

Thank you for your time and help in completing this form.

ASYLUM SEEKERS' NEEDS QUESTIONNAIRE

About Your Needs

EDUCATION

1. Did you go to school/college in your country?  
Yes [ ] go to 2 below  
No [ ] go to 3 below
2. What qualifications did you get? - Please tell us.  
.....  
.....
3. Have you any other qualifications or certificates?  
Yes [ ] No [ ]
4. What are they? - Please state below.  
.....  
.....  
.....
5. What do you think you need to learn/study while  
you are waiting to hear from Immigration?  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....
6. What do you think of the English classes at the  
a. Compass Centre?  
Good [ ] Bad [ ]
7. Why 'good'?  
Because.....  
.....  
.....
8. Why 'bad'?  
because.....  
.....  
.....
9. What do you think of English classes at Portsmouth  
College? Good [ ] Bad [ ]

10. Why 'good'?
- because.....
- .....
- .....
11. Why 'bad'?
- because.....
- .....
- .....
- 12a. Do you think that the way teaching is done is  
useful to you? Yes [ ] No [ ]
- 12b. Why 'yes'
- because.....
- .....
- .....
- 12c. Why 'No'
- because.....
- .....
- .....
13. What other training do you think you need that  
would help you in future? Please state below.
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

HEALTH

1. Have you got a Doctor?
- Yes [ ] go to 2
- No [ ] go to 3
2. Who is your GP?
- Dr.....
- .....
- .....
3. Have you heard of Kingsway House?
- Yes [ ] go to 4
- No [ ] go to 5
4. How did you hear of Kingsway House?
- Sent a letter by the Nurse [ ]
- Sent a letter by Social Services [ ]
- Told by other persons [ ]

5. Does that mean you have not been checked by a Doctor?

Yes ☐ No ☐ go to 6

6. Would you like to be sent for a check-up?

Yes ☐ No ☐ - I am sending you for a check-up.

Action: .....  
.....

7. Have you been sick since coming to Portsmouth?

Yes ☐ No ☐

8. Did you see a doctor? Yes ☐ go to 9

No ☐ go to 10

9. Did the doctor come to the hotel/house?

Yes ☐ No ☐

10. Who called the doctor?

The Hotel Manager ☐

The Landlord ☐

Other Persons ☐

11. Are you happy with the way the doctor treated you?

Yes ☐

No ☐ - go to 13

12. What part of your treatment did you not like?

Please tell us below:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

[continue on separate page if required]

13. Have you had a hospital appointment?

Yes ☐ - continue at 14

No ☐

14. Did you require assistance with transport?

Yes ☐ No ☐

15. If you approached Social Services for assistance with transport, what was their reaction?

a. Social Services gave me money ☐

b. Social Services advised me on how to claim [transport fare] ☐

c. Social Services were not helpful ☐

d. Social Services were very angry that I asked ☐

16. Please state below what you did to keep your hospital appointment.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
[continue on separate sheet if required]

17. What do you think about the services provided by your Social Services Department?

Very Good [ ] Good [ ] Bad [ ] Very bad [ ]

18. Why did you tick the option above?

because.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

1. Did you work in your country?

Yes [ ] - go to 2  
No [ ] - go to 4

2. What type of work did you do? - Please state.

.....  
.....  
.....

3. Would you want the same job if allowed to work here in the United Kingdom?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

4. If 'No' what type of job would you like to do?

Answer .....  
.....  
.....

5. Would you need some training for this job?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

INCOME MAINTENANCE, FOOD and CLOTHING

1. Do you get any money from Social Services?  
Yes ☐ No ☐
2. If 'No' do you get Vouchers?  
Yes ☐ No ☐
3. What do you think about shopping with vouchers?  
Comment .....  
.....  
.....  
.....
4. How do you get your food?  
• I buy it myself ☐  
• I am taken by Social Services to buy food ☐  
• I am given food package ☐  
• None of the above ☐
5. Who gives you clothes?  
• Portsmouth Social Services ☐  
• Bexley Social Services ☐  
• Westminster Social Services ☐  
• Lewisham Social services ☐  
• Surrey Social Services ☐  
• Other - please state ..... ☐
6. When was the last time you were given clothing?  
Answer.....
7. How many times have you had clothes given in the  
past six months?  
Once ☐ twice ☐ three times ☐ Never ☐

LEGAL REPRESENTATION

1. Have you got a Solicitor?  
Yes ☐ - go to 2  
No ☐ - go to 4
2. Do you think your solicitor is doing a good job?  
Yes ☐ No ☐ - go to 5 below

3. Why 'No' [Please give reasons below]

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

4. Would you like help with finding a Solicitor?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

5. Would you like help with finding another lawyer?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

SOCIALISATION PROCESS

1. What do you think of Portsmouth?

Comment.....  
.....  
.....

2. Have you made friends?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

3. If 'NO' is it because:

- You have difficulty meeting people [ ]
- You do not know where to go to meet people [ ]
- You are not permitted to invite people round [ ]
- You do not go out very much [ ]

4. Do you think the following will help you make friends? - [tick as many as relevant]

- A place to meet regularly with others [ ]
- A place to meet and share ideas [ ]
- A place for asylum seekers [ ]
- Where asylum seekers can go for services [ ]
- A place with Leisure facilities [ ]

5. What else would you want to see - please list:

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

6. Finally, I would like to ask you a very personal question about your leaving your country.

[ Please go to page 7]

7

I know you have been through some traumatic times,  
and I will understand if you do not want to talk  
about it, but it will help me understand what you  
are going through in a better light.

7. Can you tell me briefly why you left your country  
to become an asylum seeker in Britain?

Answer

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Thank you for you for answering this second round of  
questions

Please return questionnaire to:

Elizabeth Bassey  
Bill Sargent Trust, c/o Albermale House, Osborne Road,  
Southsea, Portsmouth PO5 3LB

*The Bill Sargent Trust*  
Research for Action

C/o PMSG  
Albermale House  
Osborne Road  
Portsmouth PO5 3LB

Telephone: 023 92 865675

SOCIAL SERVICES QUESTIONNAIRE

Authority [name].....

1. What is the total number of asylum seekers  
under your management? ..... [ ]

2. What nationalities are they and how many?  
[Please specify below]

- Iran [ ]....Iraq [ ]...Turkey[ ]
- Kosovo [ ]...Moldovia [ ]...Algeria[ ]
- Congo [ ]...Latvia [ ]...Afghanistan[ ]
- Rumania [ ]...Albanian [ ]...Angola [ ]
- Niger [ ]...Tunisia [ ]...Togo [ ]
- Tanzania[ ]...Burundi [ ]...Morocco [ ]
- Somalia [ ]...Sri-Lanka [ ]...Uganda[ ]
- Croatia [ ]...Serbia [ ]...Cameroun [ ]

• Others please specify].....  
.....  
.....

3. Religion [please list below types]

- .....  
.....  
.....
- .....  
.....  
.....

4. Language spoken [please list below]

- .....  
.....
- .....  
.....
- .....  
.....

5. Hotels used to accommodate asylum seekers

- Exact numbers [ ]
- Names [please use separate sheet attached]
- Proprietors [names please]

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Research for Action

6. Please list all private properties currently used by Social services to house asylum seekers [Use separate page]. The following information is required:

- Houses [how many]? .....  
Addresses
- Flats [how many]?.....  
Addresses please
- Others [types]
- Landlords [contact numbers]

7. What type of housing do you utilise the most and why?

Answer.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

8. How easy is it to communicate with proprietors and landlords?

Answer.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

9. How regularly do you receive feedback from landlords.....  
hoteliers.....  
others .....

10. Why do you choose these properties and hotels?

Answer.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

11. Factors that determine household composition when deciding where to place asylum seekers?

Answers.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

*The Bill Sargent Trust*  
Research for Action

12. What do you see as your role in the management of asylum seekers?

Answers.....

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

[continue on a separate sheet if necessary]

13. How do you ensure you are getting the right feedback from landlords, proprietors and other agencies?

Answer.....

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

14. What do you do to involve other agencies in the care of asylum seekers in Portsmouth?

Answer.....

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

15. How would you rate your work with asylum seekers? [Please list]

Answer.....

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

16. What effect has the increase in asylum seeker numbers had on your work?

Answer.....

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

- Answer.....

- Answer.....

- Answer.....

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

- Answer**



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Bassey E  
SS External  
July 2000

1

SOCIAL SERVICES ASYLUM-SEEKER QUESTIONNAIRE [EXTERNAL]

Authority [name].....

1. Are you involved in the current dispersal scheme?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

2. Have you dispersed asylum-seekers to Portsmouth?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

3. What is the total number of asylum seekers  
dispersed by you to Portsmouth?

Answer .....

4. Please tick below how many they are according to  
their nationalities.

- |                   |               |              |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------|
| • Angola [ ]      | Algerian [ ]  | Albania [ ]  |
| • Afghanistan [ ] | Burundi [ ]   | Cameroon [ ] |
| • Congo [ ]       | Chile [ ]     | Croatia [ ]  |
| • Ghana [ ]       | Kosovo [ ]    | Latvia [ ]   |
| • Moldova [ ]     | Niger [ ]     | Serbia [ ]   |
| • Somalia [ ]     | Sri-Lanka [ ] | Tunisia [ ]  |
| • Togo [ ]        | Turkey [ ]    | Tanzania [ ] |
| • Uganda [ ]      |               |              |

3. Others .....please state using the spaces below:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

4. What areas of Portsmouth have you dispersed asylum  
seekers to?

Please state .....  
.....  
.....



5. How do you ensure your asylum seekers get to their destination? Please state below

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

6. What types of properties do you use to house asylum seekers in Portsmouth? - See selection below:

- Hotels [ ]
- Houses [ ]
- Flats [ ]
- Hostels [ ]

7. How easy is it to communicate with proprietors and Landlords?

Answer .....  
.....  
.....  
.....

8. How do you ensure the needs of asylum seekers you have placed are met? Please list below.

- a) .....
- b) .....
- c) .....
- d) .....
- e) .....
- f) .....
- g) .....

9. When you make contact with your asylum seeker placements, is this done:

- |                    |         |        |
|--------------------|---------|--------|
| • regularly        | Yes [ ] | No [ ] |
| • Directly         | Yes [ ] | No [ ] |
| • through an agent | Yes [ ] | No [ ] |

10. If through an agent, what do you do to ensure their physical needs are adequately met?

Answer: .....  
.....  
.....  
.....

11. Please list the Agent's responsibilities towards the asylum seekers below: - [as explained by you]

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

12. Which agent do you employ to care for your asylum seeker placements in the Portsmouth area?

[Please state below in the space provided]

.....

.....

.....

.....

13. What are their responsibilities? Please list.

- a. ....
- b. ....
- c. ....
- d. ....
- e. ....
- f. ....
- g. ....
- h. ....

14. What do you see as your responsibilities towards asylum seekers in this arrangement [where agents act as go-between]. Please answer below.

- a. ....
- b. ....
- c. ....
- d. ....
- e. ....
- f. ....
- g. ....
- h. ....

15. Is the Social Services responsible for the providing the following:

|                             |         |        |
|-----------------------------|---------|--------|
| Clothing for asylum seekers | Yes [ ] | No [ ] |
| Toiletries                  | Yes [ ] | No [ ] |
| Telephone cards             | Yes [ ] | No [ ] |

16. Who is responsible for addressing individual problems asylum seekers may have?

|                            |         |        |
|----------------------------|---------|--------|
| Placement Social Services  | Yes [ ] | No [ ] |
| Agents                     | Yes [ ] | No [ ] |
| Portsmouth Social Services | Yes [ ] | No [ ] |
| Voluntary Organisations    | Yes [ ] | No [ ] |

17. Do you contact Portsmouth Social Services about proposed dispersal to the Portsmouth area?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

18. At what stage do you make contact with your asylum seeker placements during this process?

Please state below.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

19. When you make contact, would this be:

|                                 |         |        |
|---------------------------------|---------|--------|
| Weekly[to deal with grievances] | Yes [ ] | No [ ] |
| Once a month                    | Yes [ ] | No [ ] |
| More than once a month          | Yes [ ] | No [ ] |
| Never                           | Yes [ ] | No [ ] |

20. What are the main obstacles you have encountered in the management of asylum seekers[ according to demands of the immigration & Asylum Act 1999]?

21. Please indicate with a tick, how you perceive the work of the following agencies in relation to management of asylum seekers under your care.

| Agencies                | Very Good | Good | Poor |
|-------------------------|-----------|------|------|
| Portsmouth City Council |           |      |      |
| Agents                  |           |      |      |
| Solicitors              |           |      |      |
| Educational Institution |           |      |      |
| Voluntary Organisations |           |      |      |
| Doctors                 |           |      |      |

Thank you for answering these questions and for your assistance with this project.

Please return questionnaire to Elizabeth Bassey at the following address:

Bill Sargent Trust  
c/o PMSG Albermale House  
Osborne Road  
Portsmouth PO5 3LB

***The Bill Sargent Trust – Research For action***

**HOTELIERS' HOUSING QUESTIONNAIRE**

**About Yourself**

1. Do you own a hotel? Yes ☐ No ☐
2. How long have you been a hotelier?  years
3. In what areas of the city do you own hotel [s]?  
.....  
.....  
.....

**About your Property**

4. What type of hotel do you own? [Please tick below]
  - Bed and breakfast only hotel ☐
  - Guest House ☐
  - Country House hotel ☐
  - Country Inn ☐
5. If you own more than one hotel from Q4, which of the above do you rent out for accommodating asylum seekers? [Please tick below]
  - Bed and Breakfast only hotel ☐ How many?
  - Guest Houses ☐ How many?
  - Country House Hotel ☐ How many?
  - Country Inn ☐ How many?
  - Other [not listed] ☐ How many?
6. How many asylum seekers do you have in your hotel?  
Please state exact numbers in spaces provided below.
  - Hotels
  - Guest houses
  - Inns
  - Country House Hotel
  - Others [not listed]

7. What countries do they come from? Please list below.

| Country | How Many | Country | How Many |
|---------|----------|---------|----------|
|         |          |         |          |
|         |          |         |          |
|         |          |         |          |
|         |          |         |          |
|         |          |         |          |
|         |          |         |          |
|         |          |         |          |
|         |          |         |          |
|         |          |         |          |
|         |          |         |          |

#### About Service You Provide

8. Which factors below do you take into account when allocating asylum seekers to rooms in your hotel? Please tick below

- Religion [ ]
- Culture [ ]
- Choice [ ]
- None of the above [ ]

9. Do you inform Social services when you think you might have problems allocating rooms to asylum seekers? Yes [ ] No [ ]

10. How many asylum seekers [per room] do you have in your hotel? Please indicate below

- two per room [ ]
- three per room [ ]
- More than three per room [ ]
- Only one person per room [ ]

11. Why did you choose to house asylum seekers in your property? [Please state in space provided]

**I chose to house asylum seekers because:**

.....

.....

.....

.....

12. How did you learn about this scheme? [Please tick]

- I was approached by Portsmouth Social Services ☐
- I was approached by Havant Social Services ☐
- I was approached by Fareham Social Services ☐
- I was approached by Kent Social Services ☐
- I was approached by other Social Services Dept. ☐

[Please state which Borough Council below]

.....  
.....  
.....

- I was approached by Estate Agents ☐
- I was approached by other persons ☐

**About Asylum Seekers in your hotel**

13. Have you had any problems with asylum seekers in your hotels? Yes ☐ No ☐

14. If yes, what sort of problems have you had? Please state below.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

15. How do you deal with problems asylum seekers may have? [Please tell us using the space below]

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

16. What factors do you consider when planning a week's menu for your asylum seeker residents?

- Culture ☐
- Religion ☐
- Ethnic background ☐
- Taste ☐
- The person's own choice ☐
- None of the above ☐

17. How do you cope with the different food needs of asylum seeker residents?  
[Please tick points that you agree with below]
- By understanding their culture ☐
  - By understanding their religious taboos ☐
  - By giving them more than one choice of menu ☐
  - By thinking none of the above matters ☐
18. What do you do when a resident complains of his/her food? [ Please use space below]
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

**About your duty to Asylum seeker residents**

19. How regular is your contact with asylum seekers in your hotel?
- Daily ☐
  - Once a week ☐
  - Less than once a week ☐
  - Never ☐
20. When you make contact , would it be because:-
- You do so routinely ☐
  - You are dealing with complaints from residents ☐
  - You are checking on the welfare of your tenants ☐
  - You are there to take them shopping ☐
  - None of the above ☐
21. What are your duties towards asylum seekers in your hotel? [Please list all your duties as explained to you by Social Services using the spaces provided]
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

22. When [usually] do Social Services contact you about asylum seeker residents? [Please state]
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- [Use separate sheet provided if necessary]
23. Do you have asylum seekers from other Social Services Departments in your hotel? Yes ☐ No ☐
24. If yes, how do these departments check on the welfare of their placements? [Please tick below]
- Their officers visit regularly ☐
  - The department contacts me regularly by phone ☐
  - The department contacts residents direct by phone ☐
  - I send them a report on residents welfare ☐
  - Portsmouth Social Services sends them a report ☐
  - There is no such contact with London Authorities ☐
  - I have no idea ☐
25. As a participating agent, what sort of help do you think asylum seekers require from you? [Please list]
- .....
  - .....
  - .....
  - .....
  - .....
26. Who gives telephone cards to residents?
- Hoteliers? Yes ☐ No ☐
  - Portsmouth social services Yes ☐ No ☐
  - Sent directly to residents from London Yes ☐ No ☐
  - No-one gives them telephone cards Yes ☐ No ☐
27. How often do you give telephone cards to residents?
- Weekly to the tune of £5 ☐
  - Every two weeks to the tune of £5 ☐
  - Once a month to the tune of £5 ☐
  - I never give telephone cards to asylum seekers ☐

28. So far, have you been in contact with any of the following agencies on behalf of asylum seeker residents? [Please refer to list - tick if relevant]
- Portsmouth social services ☐
  - Other Social services ☐
  - Hospital [Emergency Dept] ☐
  - GPs ☐
  - Interpreters ☐
  - Solicitors ☐
  - Schools ☐
  - Others ☐
  - I have had no reason to make contact ☐
29. As a participating landlord, would you have liked some assistance to help you provide a better service to asylum seekers? Yes ☐ No ☐
10. If yes, what sort of help would you have liked?  
[Please state using spaces below]

.....

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#### About other Agencies

11. Which of these agencies would you have liked more help from?
- Portsmouth Social Services ☐
  - Other Social Services ☐
  - State which one .....
  - GPs ☐
  - Benefits Agency ☐
  - Educational Institutions ☐
  - Voluntary Organisations ☐
  - Other landlords ☐

12. How do you see the work of the following agencies in relation to how asylum seekers' needs are managed?  
[Please tick in relevant spaces provided below]

| Agencies                   | Very Good | Good | Poor |
|----------------------------|-----------|------|------|
| Portsmouth Social services |           |      |      |
| London Social Services     |           |      |      |
| Health Centres             |           |      |      |
| Benefits Agency            |           |      |      |
| Educational Institutions   |           |      |      |
| GPs                        |           |      |      |
| Others                     |           |      |      |

33. With hindsight, is there anything you wish you could have done differently with regards to accommodating asylum seekers? Yes ☐ No ☐

34. What could you have done differently? Please tell us below:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Please tell us what you think!**

35. Given similar circumstances on accommodation, would you like to make some suggestions that could help with future housing and food provisions for this group? Yes ☐ No ☐

36. Use the spaces below for your suggestions.

.....

.....

.....

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**Many Thanks!**

Thank you for time taken to answer my questions, and for helping with this research.

Please return your completed questionnaire to:

E. Bassey  
Bill Sargent Trust  
C/o Albermale House  
Osborne Road  
Portsmouth PO5 3LB

C/o PMSG, Albermale House, Southsea, Portsmouth PO5 3LB  
Registered Charity No. 1042611 Tel: Elizabeth on  
023 92 865675 ext.23

### LANDLORDS' HOUSING QUESTIONNAIRE

#### **About Yourself**

1. Are you a private landlord? Yes ☐ No ☐
2. How long have you been a landlord? [ ] years
3. In what areas of the city do you own properties]?  
[Please state below]

.....  
.....  
.....

#### **About your Property**

4. What types of property do you own? [Please tick below]
  - Houses ☐
  - Bed-sits ☐
  - House Share ☐
  - Single rooms to let ☐
  - Others ☐
5. If you own more than one property from Q4; which of the above do you rent out for accommodating asylum seekers?  
Please tick below
 

|                       |                          |                                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • Houses              | <input type="checkbox"/> | How many? <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Flats               | <input type="checkbox"/> | How many? <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Bed sits            | <input type="checkbox"/> | How many? <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • House Share         | <input type="checkbox"/> | How many? <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Others [not listed] | <input type="checkbox"/> | How many? <input type="checkbox"/> |
6. How many asylum seekers in your properties?  
Please state exact numbers in spaces provided.
 

|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| • Houses              | [ ] |
| • Flats               | [ ] |
| • Bed sits            | [ ] |
| • House Share         | [ ] |
| • Others [not listed] | [ ] |

7. What countries do they come from? Please list below.

| Nationality | How Many | Nationality | How Many |
|-------------|----------|-------------|----------|
|             |          |             |          |
|             |          |             |          |
|             |          |             |          |
|             |          |             |          |
|             |          |             |          |
|             |          |             |          |
|             |          |             |          |
|             |          |             |          |

### About Service You Provide

8. Which factors below do you take into account when allocating asylum seekers to your properties?  
Please tick below

- a) Religion ☐
- b) Culture ☐
- c) Individual Choice ☐
- d) None of the above ☐

9. Do you inform Social services when you think you may be having problems getting properties ready to house asylum seekers?  
Yes ☐ No ☐

10. Do you decide how many asylum seekers to house in each of your properties? Yes ☐ No ☐

11. Who decides how many asylum seekers live in a property?

- The landlord ☐
- Social Services ☐

12. What factors determine how many asylum seekers live in a particular property? [Please tick]

- Size of the property ☐
- Nationality of asylum-seekers ☐
- Sex of tenants ☐

13. What other factors do you take into consideration  
Be-sides those in Q12? Please indicate below. [ ]

- Religion [ ]
- Culture [ ]
- Ethnic grouping [ ]
- Family size [ ]
- Marital Status [ ]
- None of the above [ ]

14. Why did you choose to house asylum seekers in your  
Property? [Please state in space provided]  
I chose to house asylum seekers because:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

[continue on separate sheet if necessary]

15. How did you learn about this scheme? [Please tick]

- a) I was approached by Portsmouth social services [ ]
- b) I was approached by Havant Social services [ ]
- c) I was approached by Fareham Soc. Services Dept. [ ]
- d) I was approached by Kent Soc. Services [ ]
- e) I was approached by other Soc. Services Dept. [ ]

Please state which borough council/s below

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

- f) I was approached by Estate Agents [ ]
- g) I was approached by other persons [ ]

### About Asylum Seekers in your properties

16. Have you had any problems with asylum seekers in  
your properties? Yes [ ] No [ ]

17. If yes, what sort of problems? Please state below.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....





27. So far, have you been in contact with any of the following agencies on behalf of your asylum-seeker residents? [Refer to list and tick as relevant]

- Portsmouth social Services [ ]
- Other Social services [ ]
- GPs [ ]
- Hospital [emergency dept.] [ ]
- Interpreters [ ]
- Others [ ]
- I have had no reason to make contact [ ]

28. As a participating landlord, would have preferred some assistance that would have helped you to provide a better service to asylum seekers? Yes [ ] No [ ]

29. If 'yes', what sort of help would that have been?  
Please state using space below

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

### About other Agencies

30. Which of these agencies would you have liked more help from?

- Portsmouth social services [ ]
- Other Social services [ ] State which one .....
- GPs [ ]
- Benefit Agency [ ]
- Educational Institutions [ ]
- Voluntary Organisations [ ]
- Other landlords [ ]
- Community Groups [ ]

31. Did you make contact with any community groups?  
Yes [ ] No [ ]

32. How do you see the work of the following agencies in relation to management of asylum seekers?

Please tick spaces provided

| Agencies                   | Very Good | Good | Poor |
|----------------------------|-----------|------|------|
| Portsmouth social services |           |      |      |
| London Social Services     |           |      |      |
| Health Centres             |           |      |      |
| Benefits Agency            |           |      |      |
| Educational Institutions   |           |      |      |
| GPS                        |           |      |      |
| Others                     |           |      |      |
|                            |           |      |      |
|                            |           |      |      |
|                            |           |      |      |

33. With hindsight, is there anything you could have done differently? Yes [ ] No [ ]

34. What could you have done differently? Please list.

.....

.....

.....

.....

[use separate sheet provided if necessary.]

### Please tell us what you think!

35. Have you got any suggestions on housing asylum seekers that could help with future provision

[given similar circumstances]? Yes [ ] go to Q36

No [ ] go to Q37

36. Please use the space below for your suggestions

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

[ Please continue on page 8 ]

[illegible]

- Basic needs of asylum seekers are:

- [illegible]

38. Thank you for your time in answering my questions,  
and also for helping with this research.

Please return your completed questionnaire to:

Elizabeth Bassey  
Bill Sargent Trust  
C/o Albermale House  
Osborne Road  
Southsea  
Portsmouth PO5 3LB