



**PAPER FOR THE FEBRUARY COSLA STRATEGIC
MIGRATION PARTNERSHIP BOARD MEETING**

UKBA UPDATE

February 2011



UKBA Acting Chief Executive

Deputy Chief Executive Jonathan Sedgwick has become the acting Chief Executive while we recruit a successor to Lin Homer. Lin moved to the post of Permanent Secretary at the Department for Transport in December 2010.

Asylum Accommodation Contract

The UK Border Agency has agreed to extend the accommodation contract with Glasgow City Council to 3 April 2011 to enable the effective transfer to Ypeople from 4 April 2011.

We remain hopeful that the vast majority of the asylum seekers affected by this change of contract will remain in their current accommodation. In the rare cases where a move to new accommodation is required, the move will be to another property in Glasgow, at least 14 days notice of the move will be given, every effort will be made to ensure that the new accommodation is close to any support services required, and where there are children at school the move will be to an area which will enable them to continue attending their current school.

Ending Child Detention

Yarl's Wood immigration removal centre was closed to children on 16 December 2010, following a review of the detention of children and family returns by the government working with key partners. In May of last year, the government committed to ending the detention of children for immigration purposes. The government unveiled a new approach to family removals, following a wide-reaching review and consultation. The UK Border Agency will now follow a new four stage process focused on engagement with families during the decision-making process, giving parents the opportunity to engage in when and how they return, when they have been found to have no legal right to stay in the UK. The new measures will ensure a family's return home is safe and dignified. Much of this approach was pioneered in Glasgow as part of the A2D project.

We are currently piloting new ways of dealing with those who have exhausted appeal rights to live in the UK that do not include immigration detention. We will be using accommodation near London as a way of accommodating families prior to their departure from the UK. It consists of a residential building where families will be free to come and go as they please. Families will not be arrested or compelled to travel there. The accommodation is provided on a full-board basis. The pilots are designed to test out new approaches to working with families and the aim is to empower families to take control over their departure. We hope that families will choose to depart voluntarily and expect that only a small number of families will enter open accommodation.

Our new measures are both humane and fair. We are providing assistance packages, and family conferences to ensure families understand their options, and will be trying to ensure that families can remain in the community prior to their departure home. We are also creating a new independent family returns panel to ensure that the welfare of children is considered and properly factored into return plans where enforcement action is necessary.

Impact of Spending Review on the UK Border Agency

The UK Border Agency will be smaller in future but it will also be more efficient, replacing costly and outdated paper systems with new technology and targeting resources more effectively. The Government is determined to secure our border which is why we recently introduced the immigration limit setting out a clear, rational approach to control the numbers of people that can come to the UK and work from outside Europe.

Reductions in voluntary sector grants have been announced and discussions are taking place with the parties concerned. However, there are no current plans to reduce Strategic Migration Partnership in the Scotland and Northern Ireland Region.

Scottish Asylum Stakeholder Forum

The first meeting of 2011 was held at Festival Court on the 8 February. Agenda items included updates on:

- Work of the case resolution and asylum teams.
- Asylum accommodation contract.
- British Red Cross Family Reunion Travel Assistance Scheme.
- Processes around issues relating to child protection.
- Possible changes to the Scottish Judicial Review System.

Immigration Limit

On 23 November 2010, the Home Secretary announced a package of measures to manage the number of people from outside Europe who can come to the UK and work, including an annual limit to be implemented from April 2011. The limit was set following advice from the independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), taking into account economic and social impacts. The UK Border Agency also undertook an extensive consultation with business and other interested parties on how the limit should work. The government is clear that the UK is open for business and will continue to welcome the brightest and best people from around the world, but with control on the numbers coming here. The agency will operate the limit in a way that gives businesses in the UK and abroad the confidence they need.

Interim limit – update

On 23 December 2010 the UK Border Agency stopped accepting Tier 1 (General) applications made overseas to avoid exceeding the interim limit set by the government for issued applications between 19 July 2010 and April 2011. At the same time, the agency announced that Tier 1 (General) overseas would not reopen for applications but Tier 1 (General) in the UK would remain open until 5 April 2011. There will be transitional arrangements beyond 6 April 2011 for some applicants who are already in the UK, and the agency will announce details of these in due course.

Student Consultation

Scotland and Northern Ireland held three events for the Student Consultation. The Scottish events were held in Glasgow and Edinburgh on the 13 and 14 January 2011. The Northern Ireland event was held on the 12 January 2011.

On the 27 January 2011 Phil Taylor attended a round table event hosted by Secretary of State Michael Moore with all the Scottish Universities principles on the consultation.

COMPASS – Commercial and Operational Managers Procuring Asylum Support Services

The project team continues to engage with our corporate partners including the National Migration Group and National Asylum Stakeholder Forum to inform future project delivery.

The project will continue to engage, provide updates and consider feedback from corporate partners throughout the project and work with operational colleagues to understand and manage the impact of the changes this project will bring. Further updates on the work of the COMPASS Project will be issued over the coming months.

For further information please contact; Compass@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk