

Bulletin 17 October 2008

SDV News and events

Fundraising

Please remember to use easyfundraising whenever you shop online, particularly if you're buying insurance.

Check out the various ways of getting free funds on the site. You can raise over £2 for signing up to various services (pampers, forever friends, pixmania, financial times info service).

Also remember easysearch – if you make 10 searches a day, you can raise £20 a year for SDV.

Find details of both easyfundraising and easysearch on the SDV website.

<http://www.sdv.org.uk/id15.html>

Immigration, asylum and detention news

Man who came here aged four can be sent back to war-torn country, judge rules

A 34-year-old man who has lived in London for three decades is to be deported to Somalia after a judge said his criminal record qualified him to survive in the war-torn country.

But the family of Abdi Mohamed say sending him back to the east African state would be like signing his death warrant. Mr Mohamed fled persecution in Somalia with his mother and father when he was four and claims to know nothing about the country today.

Since arriving in Britain, he has tried to build a life in north London but took up petty offending to support his drug and alcohol addictions. Mr Mohamed came into contact with law enforcement when he was 12 and later began committing burglaries to buy cannabis and cocaine. His most recent conviction was for an assault on a prison officer, after which the Home Office applied to have him deported to Somalia.

Dismissing his appeal, the immigration tribunal judge said: "His experience [criminal activity] will make him more street wise than someone of a similar age who has led a crime-free and more conventional life. These experiences will place him at a distinct advantage in dealing with the circumstances in Somalia and should make it much easier for him to avoid pitfalls."

The judge, James Simpson, said Mr Mohamed's ability to speak English would help him find work and said his family ties here were not strong. But Mr Mohamed said he has always seen himself as British: "The first I knew that I wasn't British was when the judge said I was to be deported after serving my sentence. I couldn't apply for

citizenship because I was only a little boy when I came here. I am British not Somalian. I know nothing about Somalia."

A UK Border Agency spokesperson said: "Where someone is not deemed conducive to the public good we will not hesitate to deport them."

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/judge-youre-a-criminal-youll-be-safe-in-somalia-961402.html>

Clampdown on 'health tourism' to be scrapped

The government is ready to scrap controversial plans to clamp down on so-called 'health tourism' among asylum seekers, following a revolt by doctors. Ministers had threatened to withdraw the right to free GP treatment from asylum seekers whose claims were rejected, forcing them to pay for care privately or go without except in emergencies. However, doctors have argued this would be unethical and potentially illegal, with some saying they would treat patients regardless of any new rules.

The Home Office and Department of Health - which was due to publish its decision later this month - are understood to be reconsidering their position after conceding that there was no proof that free primary care was encouraging refugees to come to Britain.

'Healthcare should not be a magnet, but there isn't any evidence that primary care is a draw for people choosing the UK as a destination,' said a senior Whitehall source. 'People in that category are often the most vulnerable, they may have communicable diseases, and therefore the view of ministers is that they shouldn't be denied primary care.'

Officials are discussing alternative measures, which could involve targeting those with pre-existing chronic conditions or pregnant women hoping to have a baby on the NHS. However, the dropping of the original proposals marks a significant U-turn after years of wrangling throughout Whitehall.

A spokeswoman for the British Medical Association said: 'Our view was always that there had to be more flexibility for GPs. If you are talking about people who can pay, that is one thing, but asylum seekers are unlikely to have the money.' She said denying primary care could lead to failed asylum seekers later coming to the NHS with 'more life-threatening and more expensive' needs: 'Diabetes may not be an emergency, but if you don't get any insulin you will end up in a coma and coming to A&E.'

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/oct/12/nhs-health>

Homosexuality ban 'no reason for asylum'

The head of the UK Border Agency has enraged human rights groups after stating that gay asylum seekers should not be allowed to stay in Britain simply because their sexual orientation is outlawed in the country they have fled.

Lin Homer, chief executive of the Home Office agency responsible for applying Britain's asylum policies and enforcing border controls, told The Scotsman that a ban

on homosexuality in a home country is not in itself a reason not to deport asylum seekers who fear persecution because they are gay.

After speaking at a conference in Glasgow organised by Scottish Refugee Council, Ms Homer said judges consider the "practical consequences" for homosexuals if they are returned, not a country's societal or legal approach to homosexuality.

Last week, The Scotsman revealed how Jojo Yakob, a young Syrian man who claims he was tortured for being gay, fears for his life after a Scottish judge threw out his appeal against a deportation order.

His case raised concern from equality campaigners that Britain is sending people to countries where they face persecution because of their sexual orientation.

Ms Homer defended the approach taken by her agency and the court, insisting the information about countries of origin used to make these decisions is as comprehensive, and transparent, as possible. "What the court takes into account is the practical consequences for the individuals concerned," she said.

"The simple presence of either a law or a culture that frowns upon homosexuality is not of itself a reason (to grant asylum)."

John Wilkes, chief executive of Scottish Refugee Council, said: "This is inconsistent and muddled thinking. If there was a law in a country that said you cannot be Jewish or a member of the Communist Party, would the UK government send them back to that country to be prosecuted? "To say someone should not be able to express themselves free from persecution is contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights and the Refugee Convention."

Asylum seekers should be given the right to work while they await the outcome of their application, Kenny MacAskill has said.

The justice secretary said allowing asylum seekers to work would help address labour shortages in Scotland and equip people with skills they can use if they are returned to their country of origin.

Speaking at a Scottish Refugee Council conference, Mr MacAskill said the Scottish Government was lobbying the UK government to ensure "fundamental lines in the sand in terms of Scotland's values" are taken into account as the new Immigration Bill is developed. He said this included protection for children, minimal use of detention and integration.

<http://news.scotsman.com/scotland/Homosexuality-ban-39no-reason-for.4582179.jp>

Other news and events

Get World-wise Taster Sessions

World-wise is an adult learning course for people who want to change the world but don't know where to start. World-wise is all about the power we have to make a difference on issues like climate change and international poverty. A ten-week World-wise course, open to anyone in Glasgow, will run from January 2009 where people learn about important global issues, talk about where we fit into the picture, discover

how to influence decision-makers and develop the skills to bring people with us. Sessions cover areas like development basics, trade and climate justice, the Scottish Parliament, using the media and planning a campaign action.

Come along to a free 2 hour session for a taste of what it means to be World-Wise and a chance to meet people taking action on global issues, or tell your friends about it!

Monday 10th November, Mitchell Library 6.30 - 8.30pm

or

Wednesday 26th November, Langside Halls 6.30 - 8.30pm

Email Claire on clairewomble@gmail.com to reserve a space.

Train the Trainer Seminar, Saturday November 15th, 10.30am - 5.00pm, the Pearce Institute, 840 860 Govan Road, Govan, Glasgow, G51 3UU

Open to all asylum seekers and supporters interested in fighting anti-deportation campaigns

Aim of the Train-the-Trainer seminar

The aims of the anti-deportation campaign workshops we will be giving at this seminar include:

- Provide the basics of how to set up an anti-deportation campaign
- Encourage setting up a local anti-deportation campaign group / strengthen existing groups
- Some level of involvement in setting up some local anti-deportation campaigns
- Stimulate local anti-deportation activities
- Empowerment of asylum seekers / reversal of deskilling effect of existing "in limbo"

To apply for a place fill in application form at:

<http://www.ncadcttt.org.uk/content/view/11/4/>

Directions to the Pearce Institute at:

<http://www.pearceinstitute.org.uk/default.aspx>

Mandela/Tambo Lecture and ACTSA Scotland conference on links and solidarity, 25th October in Glasgow Caledonian University

ACTSA Scotland (Action for Southern Africa) is holding a conference on "Building Links and Solidarity with Southern Africa" on Saturday. The annual Mandela/Tambo lecture will form part of the conference.

The Mandela/Tambo Lecture will be given at 10.30am by the High Commissioner for Mozambique to the U.K., H.E. Antonio Gumende, on the subject "Solidarity and Partnerships in the 21st Century: the Challenge of Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Mozambique." There will be coffee before this at 10am and after it at 11.30am. This year's lecture is hosted by Glasgow Caledonian University, and the gathering will be welcomed by the Principal, Prof. Pamela Gillies.

The conference will then continue with sessions on Zimbabwe (with inputs from Tony Dykes, Director of ACTSA, and Fraternity Ndhela, a Zimbabwean activist currently living in Scotland, and contributions from others with first-hand experience of Zimbabwe); on Trade Justice, where ACTSA has been active especially in campaigning on Economic Partnership Agreements as they relate to Southern Africa; and on building links and solidarity with communities and organisations in Southern Africa. Cyril Ndaba, Deputy High Commissioner for South Africa, will contribute to this solidarity session, along with the other speakers, and there will be some input on ACTSA Scotland's specific links with Eastern Cape Province of South Africa and on ACTSA U.K.'s connections with civil society organisations in Swaziland and Zimbabwe. The intention is to have an opportunity for discussion in smaller groups about how links can be encouraged and assisted, as well as the main plenary sessions.

The conference will close at 4.30pm, and be followed by a reception for all those attending.

The cost of the conference is £10, or £5 for concessions, including lunch. Anyone attending only the lecture will not need to pay the conference fee, though donations would be very welcome.

For a place please contact: johnnelson48@yahoo.co.uk

A job you might be interested in: Positive Action in Housing, Project Officer (Casework & Outreach)

£21,251.41 per annum + 5% contributory pension scheme, 30 days annual leave + 15 days public holidays

We wish to recruit a caseworker to assist in providing a free, independent, multilingual and culturally sensitive outreach housing information and advice service for refugees, asylum seekers and minority ethnic communities in Glasgow.

You will undertake casework and provide information, advice and support to the client group through outreach surgeries and direct referrals. You will enjoy working with people; have excellent interpersonal skills and preferably experience of carrying out casework for people in need. As well as English, you will be fluent in one of the following languages; Urdu, Punjabi, Kurdish, Farsi, Arabic, Somali, Swahili, Dari or Pashto. You will be able to write reports and have knowledge of social exclusion problems affecting minority ethnic/refugee communities. You will be computer literate, able to prioritise your work and be an effective and supportive team member.

Positive Action in Housing actively promotes equal opportunities throughout our jobs, services and activities and actively encourages applications from all sections of the community. Previous experience in a voluntary organisation is desirable.

Closing date: 12 noon Friday, 31st October 2008

Interviews to be held: week beginning 17th November 2008

Download an application pack at:

www.paih.org

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<http://www.guardianmarketing.co.uk/vouchers.html>