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# Women's Asylum News

## Women's Project at Asylum Aid

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## Improving Care for Refugees and Asylum Seekers: The Experiences of Midwives

***Helen Beecher Bryant, Project Officer at Maternity Action, presents their latest research report on the experiences of midwives caring for refugee and asylum seeking women***

### **Methodology**

Maternity Action secured funding from Comic Relief to develop, pilot and roll-out a training course for midwives on working with refugees and asylum seekers. This stemmed from the 2007 Confidential Enquiry into Maternal and Child Health (CEMACH) report which highlighted a disproportionate number of maternal deaths amongst these groups. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance (2010) also identified that these women often require additional support.

As part of the training needs analysis, over sixty interviews were conducted with midwives who work with refugee and asylum seeking women. The findings fed the development of the course, which was piloted in four areas of the UK before the two-year roll-out. Over four-hundred calls to midwives were made in the research phase of the project.

A number of themes were drawn from the interviews, outlining the difficulties which pregnant asylum seeking women face. Some of the barriers are easily overcome where the right services and provision are in place. Others may be more complex, and may add to the trauma which the asylum seeking woman has already experienced.

This report explores the issues, from the perspective of the midwife.

### **Barriers to Care**

All NHS services have access to interpreting services, however, their use and effectiveness varies across the UK. There were stories of midwives being discouraged from booking interpreters because of the cost implications to the Trust. Midwives cited examples of not being able to book face-to-face interpreters for certain languages due to a shortage of specialist language groups –

*Most of the asylum seekers I work with are Chinese, which is a problem as there are no Chinese interpreters at all.*

Midwives observed that refugee and asylum seeking women often engaged with maternity services late in their pregnancy. A midwife's first interaction with a refugee or asylum seeker may be when she comes to the hospital in labour, having had no antenatal care. The midwives commented that women who are seeking asylum may have been persecuted by people in authority and may be reluctant to trust healthcare professionals. Asylum seekers tend to come from countries which do not have a structured health service; if women have had other pregnancies in their home country, they will have had a particular experience of birth which will be very different from that which they will receive in the UK –

*Many lack an understanding of the system in the UK for provision for maternity care and therefore either book late and miss important advice or screening tests, and you are alerted to the situation by another professional. Initially some are unable to register with GP surgeries as they have no proof of identification.*

The midwives interviewed commented that newly-arrived pregnant asylum seekers may be unfamiliar with the idea of seeking antenatal care. They observed that an asylum seeker may have many other issues to deal with and may not see maternity care as a priority. She may be experiencing mental health problems, other physical health problems; she may be destitute and not know about her entitlements to support. She may have experienced sexual violence, and her pregnancy may be a result of this; her pregnancy could be a reminder of the abuse she has experienced and of the situation she was forced to flee.

Throughout the UK, there are very few midwives specialising in caring for refugee and asylum seeking women. Even where this specialism has been allocated to a particular midwife, it may be grouped with several other specialisms. Refugee and asylum seeking women are often put into a generic category of 'vulnerable women' or similar, which may often include women who have experienced domestic violence, women who are homeless, women with alcohol and drug problems, and teenage mothers.

Midwives suggested that the complexity of system of rights and entitlements can be a barrier to care. Part of the purpose of Maternity Action's training programme for midwives is to provide clarity about the asylum process, which is extremely complicated. Women may not be aware of their status, let alone their entitlements to support.

*The women start to get some sort of independence in their life. But the UKBA [UK Border Agency] has control. The women are often overwhelmed and intimidated by the whole asylum process.*

The midwives interviewed identified poverty and destitution as another barrier. Women can become destitute if they are not accessing support or are not entitled. Several midwives gave examples of emergency situations they have come across:

*We had one lady we came across has no recourse to public funds. She had a loaf of bread, and a nappy. That was all she had. She didn't even have the money to travel to social*

*services. Social services told me to pay for her transport and to claim it back on expenses. When women are discharged after having their babies, they may not have anywhere to go, so the midwives have a whip-round and buy them food.*

This was not an isolated example. Midwives reported that antenatal appointments are routinely missed because asylum seeking women do not have money for transport. Several midwives mentioned that they have given destitute asylum seekers cash to cover the bus fare. Midwives gave examples of well-meaning activities for asylum seeking women, run in partnership with local organisations, which are poorly attended due to women not being able to afford to travel to them.

Another barrier to the continuity of care is the dispersal of asylum seekers. Midwives expressed frustration at the significant impact which dispersal can have both on the life of the asylum seeking woman, and on the midwife's capacity to provide care.

*With dispersal, we might see someone for two visits, then they deliver, then the woman may be told that she is going, but she is not told where.*

Stories were consistently told of midwives turning up for antenatal appointments, only to find that the woman has been dispersed to another part of the country. There was huge variation in the communication with UKBA. Some midwives are able to call a named UKBA staff member, who can tell them where the woman has gone; others struggle to find out any information.

Poor housing was another theme drawn from the interviews, with considerable variation in terms of good and bad practice, in the midwives' experience. Some midwives felt that landlords did not take the needs of asylum seeking women seriously –

*They [the housing providers] are very difficult. I had a severely mentally ill woman with a young child, who was heavily pregnant with another. The landlord would not provide a washing machine, saying they should do the washing by hand! Also, I find that the doorbells are not always working; the landlords don't see this as important and trivialise everything.*

Despite experiences of housing providers consistently overlooking even the basic needs of the new mother, the interviews revealed some examples good practice –

*The housing providers notify me when the women are pregnant, so I'm able to provide care ASAP and get the women into the system.*

A general lack of capacity and expertise was another theme voiced by the midwives interviewed.

*As a clinician, I would like to be a full-time specialist midwife. This role needs specialist attention, someone who is able to access different types of organisations. And I would love to be able to provide postnatal care. I do not have the capacity to do this.*

Time constraints can prevent midwives from providing the care they would like to provide for pregnant asylum seekers. There is a need for every asylum seeking woman to be the subject of a case conference, so that all relevant agencies can become involved and provide support as part of a wider support package. But this tends to be beyond the midwives' means, both in terms of time and resources. Very few Trusts routinely hold Common Assessment Framework (CAF) conferences for asylum seeking women.

The midwives interviewed identified a need for both specialist midwives and outreach workers.

*Midwives need time to do things more slowly so that they can give asylum seeking women continuity of care, hence increasing the quality of care. They need proper teams of midwives to follow particular groups of women.*

In terms of specialism, for example, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is not routinely included in midwives' training, therefore there is a general lack of understanding about this procedure and the wider issues associated with it. An asylum seeking woman may be fleeing the risk of FGM, or dealing with it in addition to other problems she is facing which may relate to her physical or mental health, in addition to being pregnant.

*Sometimes the ladies do not access care, so outreach is really important.*

A midwife explained that where there are communities of asylum seeking women, these may be tight-knit, to the extent that a midwife can go to a home expecting to find one pregnant asylum seeking woman, but find four. It is important that these community links are used to enable outreach to take place, by trained outreach workers who can get to know members of a community and signpost them to relevant services.

### **Improving Care**

Some strategies for overcoming the barriers mentioned are providing materials in relevant languages; reaching out and gaining the trust of asylum seeking communities; and training midwives to understand the asylum system so that they can advise and better support the women they are working with.

Many midwives interviewed suggested that a central website which they could consult would be a useful tool, and this is something which Maternity Action has developed to consolidate the course – see [www.maternityactiontraining.org.uk](http://www.maternityactiontraining.org.uk)

Of the midwives interviewed, none had received any training in working with refugees and asylum seekers, hence there is a definite need for training in this area. One Specialist Midwife stated –

*There is a big need for training. It is a huge learning curve for midwives, in terms of hearing these awful stories about things you could not dream up. It is shocking. Midwives need to avoid having stereotypes in their minds. Often these women look poor as they are destitute, but they have been 'high flyers' in their countries. We need to defy the stereotypes.*

### **Good Practice**

There were some examples of good practice which are being used in some parts of the country. Some Trusts have Integrated Care Pathways for women asylum seekers, which include referral to a specialist midwife, and CAF conferences.

ESOL classes for pregnant women were mentioned as another positive way to provide language skills and antenatal care at the same time.

Appropriate methods of outreach are also key to reaching asylum seeking communities. One FGM service advertised on a British-based Somali television station and saw a huge rise in the number of women accessing their services

### **Conclusion**

Whilst there is some good practice in some parts of the country, there is far to go. The interviews with midwives from across the UK has highlighted strong themes which impact care, including language and communication; a lack of understanding of the NHS and a fear of authority; poverty and destitution; and dispersal.

In the opinion of the midwives, it appears that there is a need for better partnership work between NHS services, housing providers, asylum agencies and the UKBA, as well as specialist services for asylum seeking women and greater capacity for midwives supporting these women so that their needs can be met in the best and most appropriate way.

The interviews conducted provided a succinct overview of the experiences of midwives working with refugee and asylum seeking women, providing useful information which was used to develop our 2-day training package for midwives.

The full report is available here:

<http://www.maternityaction.org.uk/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/experiencesofmidwivesreport2011.pdf>.

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## Legal Issues

### **Alleged Victim of Trafficking to be returned to Belgium under Dublin II**

#### **AA (Iraq), R (on the application of) v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2012] EWCA Civ 23 (24 January 2012)<sup>1</sup>**

AA is a 21 year old Iraqi Kurdish woman who arrived in the UK in May 2009 and claimed asylum. It was agreed that the initial account of events she gave at her asylum screening interview was fabricated. However, her representatives later made submissions that she had previously claimed asylum in Belgium in October 2007 with her brother where they had swapped their ages (pretending that he was younger than her) in the belief that they would have a higher chance of obtaining asylum. In the accommodation centre she started a relationship with a Cameroonian man. When some Iraqi men residing in the centre found out about it they forced her to have sex with them as she was hiding the relationship from her brother. She later had an abortion and when her brother found out he beat her a number of times. She was also beaten by a group of her brother's friends. She fled to Calais and found a smuggler that agreed to take her to the UK. She slept with the smuggler as she did not have enough money and also because she felt he would protect her from the possibility of being raped by other men around the port. The UKBA did not accept the credibility of this new account of events stating that Belgium was a safe third country. Later her representatives made further submissions on the basis that she may have been trafficked to the UK. The Competent Authority in the UKBA concluded that there were not reasonable grounds to believe that she had been trafficked. The credibility of AA's account had been significantly affected by the falsified account she had initially given when first claiming asylum. The Competent Authority also concluded that even if her account of events was true she did not meet the criteria of the Trafficking Convention as there was no evidence of a scheme to exploit her once in the UK.

This case is an application for judicial review of a decision by the UKBA Competent Authority finding that there were no reasonable grounds to believe that AA was a victim of trafficking to the UK and of a decision by the UKBA to certify her human rights claim as clearly unfounded under paragraph 5(4) of Schedule 3 to the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants etc) Act 2004. AA's claim had been certified with an accompanying decision to return her to Belgium under the Dublin II Regulation on the basis that she had previously claimed asylum there.

The decision by the Competent Authority concluding that there were no reasonable grounds to believe AA was a victim of trafficking stated that AA could not be relied on to provide a truthful and accurate account of events. Reference was also made to the delay in raising the trafficking allegations. The decision also doubted the veracity of her account of events in France and as AA had explained that she had been arrested but released several times by French police it was unlikely that she did not seek their assistance. The Competent Authority did not accept, contrary to what was said in the trafficking expert report, that her treatment in France had been part of a "grooming" process.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2012/23.html>.



The letter concluded that the actions of the man who had brought her to the UK had simply been for his personal gratification.

AA argued that the Competent Authority had applied a stricter test to the “reasonable grounds to believe” decision which would have been more appropriate to the conclusive ground decision. On credibility, AA emphasised that the Trafficking Convention does not expect all victims to self-identify and that it was not uncommon to have initial falsehoods from a claimant because they might be reluctant to disclose what had happened to them. AA relied on the words “abuse of a position of vulnerability” in the definition of trafficking in the Convention and argued that she had had no alternative to what had happened in Calais as she was afraid of her brother finding her. As the definition of trafficking also includes “harbouring” in the “action” element of the definition, AA argued that the Competent Authority had failed to consider whether she had been a victim of trafficking in France irrespective of her being conveyed to the UK. Therefore, AA sought for the Court to make a finding that the Competent Authority’s decision was irrational.

The Court of Appeal found that the Competent Authority was entitled to conclude that AA could not be relied upon to give a truthful account. The Court said that “the Authority appears to have considered her credibility in the round, and it was in my judgment not irrational or perverse of it to conclude that her account of events in France, which lies at the heart of her claim under the Trafficking Convention, could not be relied upon to establish “reasonable grounds” for believing her to have been trafficked”. The Court concluded that this point in itself was sufficient for it to conclude that AA’s claim for judicial review should fail. The Court went on however to consider whether if her account was accepted, “reasonable grounds” would have been established. The Court did not doubt that the “action” requirement of the trafficking definition had been met through the conveying of AA to the UK as it amounted to transportation. The Court on the other hand found no evidence of the “means” element of the definition. Accepting that the closest AA came to the definition was an alleged abuse of her position of vulnerability, it did not agree that she had “no real and acceptable alternative to submitting to the abuse”. The Court concluded that the Competent Authority was thus entitled to find that she had chosen to pursue her objective of coming to the UK and voluntarily returned to the man who would enable her to do so. Finally, the Court also concluded that there was no evidence of the third requirement of “purpose” for the trafficking definition as there was no evidence that the purpose of her transportation was her exploitation. The Court of Appeal thus concluded that she was not a victim of trafficking to the UK and that the Competent Authority had not applied a stricter test to the reasonable ground decision. Although finding that the Competent Authority should have considered whether AA had been a victim of trafficking in France there were still no grounds to believe that she had been.

With regards the Secretary of State’s decision to certify AA’s claim as clearly unfounded, the Court of Appeal concluded that the evidence did not indicate any unwillingness on the part of the Belgian authorities and police to provide AA with protection. As regards AA’s argument of a risk of re-trafficking if returned to Belgium, the Court did not agree noting that the allegations of trafficking all related to her experiences in France. Albeit accepting that she was a vulnerable woman, the Court did not consider AA to be at risk if returned to Belgium. Finally, the Court concluded that the risk of suicide in Belgium or of a severe deterioration in mental health was not such as to bring it to the threshold of Article 3 ECHR. Thus the Court concluded that the Secretary of State was entitled to certify AA’s claim as clearly unfounded.

The Court of Appeal unanimously refused judicial review on the basis of its satisfaction that the two decisions were lawful.

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## Online database of European refugee and asylum case law

A key resource for legal representatives and researchers, the European Database of Asylum Law (EDAL) is an online database containing case law from 11 European Union Member States interpreting refugee and asylum law. All relevant case law is summarised in English and the Member

State's national language and a link to, and/or pdf of, the full text of the original judgment is provided where available.

To access the database: <http://www.asylumlawdatabase.eu/>.

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## National News

### UK to sign Council of Europe Convention on VAW

On 8<sup>th</sup> March - International Women's Day - the UK government announced it was working towards signing the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence before ratifying the treaty and incorporating it into UK law. The Convention includes strong provisions on women asylum seekers, requiring signatories to: recognise gender-based violence as a form of persecution within the Refugee Convention; provide a gender-sensitive interpretation of the Refugee Convention grounds; develop gender-sensitive reception procedures and support services for asylum-seekers; and have gender guidelines and gender-sensitive asylum procedures (articles 60.1-3).

The Convention was finalised in Istanbul in May 2011 and the Prime Minister's announcement did not explain the delay in signing. The Trades Union Council (TUC) has been running a petition to persuade the Government to sign the Convention. This campaign is supported by *End Violence Against Women, Forward, Asylum Aid, We Will Speak Out* and *Rights of Women*. Eighteen countries signed up to the Convention in 2011 - Albania, Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Macedonia, Turkey and the Ukraine.

In fact, the Convention does not appear to require the UK to do much more than it has already committed to. In relation to asylum issues, it is article 60(3) on support and reception conditions that could potentially lead to the most requirements for change in terms of ensuring favourable treatment of women asylum seekers in the UK. The drafting of the articles on asylum was based on the UNHCR Guidelines on Gender-Related Persecution<sup>2</sup> and Resolution 1765 (2010)<sup>3</sup> and Recommendation 1940 (2010)<sup>4</sup> of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. These set out much more detailed provisions that could be used to interpret the meaning of article 60(3) of the Convention.

Parties signing the Convention will be required to submit a report on legislative and other measures giving effect to its provisions which will be considered by a group of experts on action against violence against women. NGOs, civil society and national institutions for the protection of human rights will be able to submit parallel information to this group.

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### Child asylum seekers wrongly detained as adults win £2million in compensation

40 asylum seeking children won a landmark ruling which resulted in the Home Office making a £1million payout in compensation, with a further £1million paid in costs for a legal case that took 5 years to be finalised. These children were wrongly locked up in units which housed adults, a policy that government officials now accept was unlawful. 25 of the 40 girls and boys involved were aged 14-16, the youngest of the group being a 14 year old girl from Sri Lanka. Among them were survivors of torture and among the girls, survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence. The key issue here

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/3d58ddef4.html>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta10/ERES1765.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta10/EREC1940.htm>.

appears to be age-assessment. Despite having access to a large volume of guidance on the issue, originating from the Refugee Council, the UN Refugee Agency, the Royal College of Paediatricians and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in the case of these children the Home Office did not follow best practice. The lawyers representing the group argued that the Home Office officials who conducted the age assessments did not have specialist knowledge or experience of working with children but instead made judgements based on the appearance and behaviour of the children. As a consequence some of the children received incorrect age assessments and were detained as adults, which put them at risk. Perhaps even worse, were the members of the group who had received correct age assessments, from trained social workers, but were then later detained. They even had official documentation proving they were looked-after children but this was either ignored or overruled by the Home Office.

Government policy changed as a result of this case – a UKBA spokesperson claimed in February that currently, if there is a dispute over age, an asylum seeker will only be detained once they have received an independent age assessment that puts them over the age of 18. However, the Refugee Council have released evidence that the practice of detaining children as adults has continued since the case was settled in 2010. In 2010, 26 children detained as adults and subsequently accepted as children; in 2011, 22 cases have been confirmed and some have still to be resolved. It appears as if the government's pledge not to detain children has yet to be achieved.

For the full article see: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/feb/17/home-office-payout-child-asylum-seekers>.

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## **Helen Bamber talks about her more than 60 years of work with torture victims and asylum seekers**

The latest issue of Renounce/Reverb includes a profile of Helen Bamber. Helen discusses the trauma and conflict that the refugee women clients of the foundation carrying her name have experienced. She highlights that women can be persecuted, raped or sold into forced labour and/or prostitution, not only because they were members of opposition parties but because 'they are vulnerable and life has treated them very cruelly'. She touches on the difficulty women have in discussing their ordeal with immigration officials. The profile points to the importance of organisations such as Asylum Aid in helping women who have been refused asylum because they initially could not put forward their case, because of the trauma they have suffered. Helen believes listening more, to the women themselves, and to experts advocating on their behalf, is absolutely key for immigration officials faced with the complex task of helping traumatised women through the process.

For the full profile see: <http://renouncereverb.com/2012/03/08/refugee-women-a-hard-tale-to-tell/>.

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## **International News**

### **Ireland: Bureaucratic loop harming LGBT asylum seekers**

LGBT asylum seekers who are too afraid to disclose their sexuality during their initial screening interview often put their case in jeopardy if they later find the confidence to reveal it. Understandably, given that many LGBT asylum seekers have fled their home country due to homophobic abuse, and been brought up to believe that you should not admit to a sexual orientation that is not the 'norm', they are frequently too wary and scared to reveal it to immigration officials when they first arrive. Yet when they do find the confidence to disclose the entire reason for fleeing their country they are met with disbelief from the authorities, who hold their initial reticence against them. BelongTo, a youth



organisation which works with LGBT people, launched a pilot project in January which aims to equip asylum service providers in Dublin with the skills needed to deal with LGBT asylum seekers and refugees. Thanks to funding from the European Refugee Fund, the Health Service Executive, the Department of Justice and the community group Pobail, the two-year programme will also provide support services for the LGBT asylum seekers and refugees who arrive in Dublin. Ireland's procedures for evaluating LGBT asylum claims also received criticism in 2011, from the Fleeing Homophobia study, which highlighted that Ireland was one of several EU countries which had been refusing and returning LGBT refugees on the advice that they should be "discrete" in order to remain undetected in their home country. However, a 2010 UK Supreme Court ruling, which stipulated that the State cannot expect people to conceal their sexuality in order to avoid persecution, has had an impact upon Ireland. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees Ireland is writing updated guidelines for decision makers dealing with LGBT claims. With these guidelines in place and more programmes like that being run by BelongTo LGBT refugees may face a better future in Ireland.

For the full article: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2012/0131/1224311002906.html>.

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### **Uganda: Investigation launched into human trafficking**

A government investigation has been launched in Uganda following the disturbing increase in Ugandan women being sold into sex work abroad. More than 600 Ugandan women have been trafficked into the Malaysian sex trade, according to the Ugandan consulate in Malaysia, and are joined by at least 10 Ugandan women daily. These women are conned into travelling into Malaysia on the false promise of a well-paid job, whereupon they are held against their will and forced to sell their bodies. It is very difficult to obtain accurate statistics about the numbers of people trafficked every year. In Malaysia, figures have only been obtained through proactive visa raids, following the bust of a trafficking ring in October 2011, in which 21 Ugandan women were discovered in a brothel in Kuala Lumpur. The Ugandan government have been shocked by these figures, despite warnings from the consulate of the emerging crisis. They recently sent a parliamentary committee to Malaysia which is due this month to report its findings. Their aim will have been to discover the firms 'recruiting' these women as everyone is agreed that action needs to be taken in Uganda, to stop the problem at its source.

For the full article: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/95013/UGANDA-Women-trafficked-into-sex-work>.

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## **New Publications**

### ***The experiences of refugee women in the UK***

#### **Refugee Council, March 2012**

Released to mark International Women's Day, this briefing from the Refugee Council looks at the difficulties faced by refugee and asylum seeking women in the UK. It draws on experiences of women they have worked with as part of their Powerful Women's Project and consequently makes policy recommendations which they feel will improve the lives of refugee women in the UK.

The briefing includes some stark statistics about the extent to which women seeking asylum have experienced rape and sexual violence. Of the 54 women they worked with between September 2010 and September 2011 as part of the Powerful Women's Project:

- More than 70% had experienced violence either in their country of origin or in the UK

- 57% had experienced gender based violence in their country of origin
- 44% had been raped
- Just under 30% had been tortured
- More than 20% had experienced gender based violence since arriving in the UK

This briefing calls on the government to increase the level of asylum support in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI), as currently it is set at a rate too low to meet the essential needs of asylum seekers. It points to the evidence of links between poverty and an increased risk of suffering sexual violence. It makes a particular plea on behalf of destitute failed asylum seeking women, arguing that the government policy on enforced destitution has particular gendered impacts 'as it exposes women to unacceptable risks of violence, and forces them into exploitative situations in order to survive'. It criticises the lack of gender sensitivity in the UK asylum system and in particular calls for the withdrawal of the detained fast track. *"As a matter of urgency, it should be suspended for women's claims given the likelihood that they have experienced sexual violence."*

For the full briefing:

[http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy/briefings/2012/08032012experiences\\_of\\_refugee\\_women.htm](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy/briefings/2012/08032012experiences_of_refugee_women.htm)

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## UK Training and Events

### **Sexual Violence Training for Professionals – Launch of Open Training – Rape Crisis South London (RASASC)**

With over 25 years experience in supporting female survivors of rape, childhood sexual abuse, providing independent Sexual Advisors, specialist counselling, therapeutic groups and running the national Rape Crisis helpline, [Rape Crisis South London](#) (RASASC) are proud to announce their 2012 training programme, available for the first time to workers outside of Rape Crisis.

Places are strictly limited and discounts are available for multiple bookings.

#### **Supporting Survivors of Rape – 20th April 2012**

Focusing on adult rape, this session is aimed at professionals and individuals who work in any capacity with both female and male survivors of adult rape. The day will cover both the myths and realities of rape, its impacts for survivors and society, the ways both women and men respond and the best ways of supporting survivors of rape.

#### **Supporting Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse – 18th May 2012**

The majority of women accessing Rape Crisis Centres are survivors of childhood sexual abuse and as such there is a wealth of practice-based evidence within all Rape Crisis Centres. This session aims to share that knowledge, highlighting the myths and realities of childhood sexual abuse, identifying the grooming practices of perpetrators and linking these to the responses of survivors, discussing the impacts of abuse as well as the strategies survivors use in surviving it, and identifying best practice in supporting adult and child survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

#### **Rape and the Legal System 1st June 2012**

The law around rape is notoriously misunderstood and recent reports have highlighted the difficulties in prosecution. This session is designed for anyone who supports survivors of rape through the legal system, whether that be from initial thinking about reporting through to trial. It will equip learners with

an understanding of the processes, changes in law and support available to survivors of sexual violence who choose to go through the criminal justice system.

<http://www.womeninlondon.org.uk/2012/02/training-rasasc/>

For more information, including booking form, please email [operations.coordinator@rasasc.org.uk](mailto:operations.coordinator@rasasc.org.uk).

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Women Centre are pleased to be offering a half-day workshop:

## **Working with women seeking asylum and refugees who have been affected by rape and sexual violence**

**Date & Time:** Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> April 9.30 am -1 pm

**Location:** Huddersfield Quaker Meeting House, Church Street, Paddock, Huddersfield, HD1 4TR

### **Who is the training for?**

Front line staff and volunteers working with women seeking asylum and refugees. This includes: charities and support groups/forums; community groups and small organisations; locality organisations such as SureStart and children centres; statutory services such as health and education; Primary Care Trusts; social services; the police and probation.

### **What are the training aims?**

- Increase awareness of International and domestic protection for asylum seekers
- Increase awareness of the UK domestic asylum process
- Increase awareness of why women flee their country of origin and claim asylum
- Identify some of the challenges that women face in the UK and the asylum process
- Explore the issues impacting women refugees affected by rape and sexual violence
- Demonstrate and develop practical examples in helping your organisation to better support women seeking asylum and refugees
- Increase awareness of self-care

There is a small charge for this workshop

- Huddersfield Town of Sanctuary members Free
- Small voluntary, community organisations and charities £20
- Statutory services £50

To book your place and receive general information about the course, please contact: [caroline.burton@womenscentre.org.uk](mailto:caroline.burton@womenscentre.org.uk) or call 01422 386543.

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## **Roundtable debate: How gendered is citizenship?**

**Date & Time:** 19<sup>th</sup> April 2012, 14.00-16.00

**Location:** Black Box Theatre (Esplanade Building, Tilburg University), Tilburg, the Netherlands

Worldwide, at least 25 countries continue to discriminate against women in their right to transmit nationality to their children, putting their children at increased risk of statelessness and all of the hardships that entails. Elsewhere, citizenship laws discriminate against men in much the same

respect – where children born outside of wedlock cannot inherit their father's nationality. Join the Statelessness Programme and selected experts for a roundtable discussion of how gendered citizenship laws are in the 21st century and the impact that this is having on families across the world. The debate will also consider what processes have enabled reform in countries that have recently introduced gender equality in the enjoyment of citizenship rights and what more needs to be done to encourage other governments to follow suit.

Invited experts will provide a unique insight into the nexus between gender and citizenship: **Prof. Cees Flinterman** will share his experiences from serving for 8 years on the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women; **Prof. René de Groot** will talk about trends in nationality laws in Europe and around the world; and **Ms Radha Govil** (UNHCR Geneva) will discuss the work that is currently being done by the UN Refugee Agency to tackle the last remaining pockets of gender discrimination in nationality legislation. The debate will be led by **Mr Sebastian Köhn**, Programme Coordinator for the Equality and Citizenship Programme of the Open Society Justice Initiative in New York. There will also be the opportunity for the audience to put their own questions to our roundtable experts.

**The event is open to the public, free of charge, no registration required**

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## Double Jeopardy Conference 2012

### **An International conference to examine the global causes of LGBTI forced migration and the experiences of LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees**

**Date :** Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> & Friday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2012

**Location:** Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich University, London

In recognition of World Pride in London the Double Jeopardy Advisory Group are hosting an international conference on Thursday July 5th and Friday July 6th. The conference will focus on the global causes of LGBTI forced migration and the experiences of LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees.

#### **Aim of the conference:**

The conference will provide a forum whereby a global community of refugees and asylum seekers, civil society organisations, activists, academics and NGOs can discuss and agree a global response to address the persecution experienced by LGBTI refugees and asylum seekers.

#### **Objectives:**

The conference will be built around the four key themes:

- 1.The launch of the Greenwich Declaration.
- 2.Dissemination of current academic research.
- 3.Developing and sharing best practice.
- 4.Identify practical ways to use the Greenwich Declaration to achieve global change in the lives of LGBTI people.

**Registration is free for asylum seekers and refugees.** For other registration fees, visit: [http://www.lgbtiasr-doublejeopardy.org/CONFERENCE\\_2012/REGISTRATION.html](http://www.lgbtiasr-doublejeopardy.org/CONFERENCE_2012/REGISTRATION.html).

For more information, contact [doublejeopardy@gre.ac.uk](mailto:doublejeopardy@gre.ac.uk) or 020 7407 4010.

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The conference organisers welcome proposals to give presentations or run workshops which will address the objectives of the conference. Presentations or workshops may focus on any one of the following areas:

- Developing global links for tackling worldwide persecution and discrimination through legal and political processes.
- Developing training programmes to improve the asylum process.
- Health provision, including HIV sexual and mental health.
- Young people who are LGBTI refugees and asylum seekers.
- Specific needs of either lesbians or gay men or bisexual or transsexual or intersex people.
- Housing provision for asylum seekers and refugees.
- Financial support for asylum seekers and refugees.
- Detention.
- Sexual exploitation.
- Projects to address social and cultural isolation experienced by LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees.
- Building links and dialogue between LGBTI groups and refugee community groups.

Conference organizers welcome contributions from organizations and individuals for research (completed and in development), seminars, workshops, round-tables and presentations. Topics are not limited to those suggested above.

People presenting papers or running workshops will be required to register with the conference and pay the registration fee.

Proposals should be sent to [doublejeopardy@gre.ac.uk](mailto:doublejeopardy@gre.ac.uk) by **Friday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2012**.

**In addition there will be:**

A reception at the House of Lords hosted by Baroness Joyce Gould.

Conference Pride Celebration Reception hosted by the Canadian High Commission.

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## **Video: "Queer Cases, Great Law: The Fast-Developing Field of LGBTI Refugee Law"**

As part of the International Refugee Law Seminar series, now in its 2<sup>nd</sup> year, S. Chelvan discussed LGBTI law at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> March.

If you missed the seminar a video of the event has been placed on the School of Advanced Study website:

<http://www.sas.ac.uk/videos-and-podcasts/politics-development-human-rights/international-refugee-law-seminar-series-queer>.

For upcoming seminars in the same series, please visit the SAS website at:

[http://events.sas.ac.uk/support-research/events/advanced-search?func=results&page=sas\\_advanced\\_search&aoilist\\_department\\_id=16&aoi\\_id=322](http://events.sas.ac.uk/support-research/events/advanced-search?func=results&page=sas_advanced_search&aoilist_department_id=16&aoi_id=322).



## *Charter of rights of women seeking asylum*



**Endorsements: 287**

**Google group membership: 154**

### **Raising the Rooftops: Regional Refugee Women's Conference (Yorkshire & Humber) – Report**

The Regional Refugee Women's Conference took place in Sheffield on 7th March 2012. Lord Mayor of Sheffield, Cllr Dr. Sylvia Dunkley welcomed the conference delegates to Sheffield.

Organised by Northern Refugee Centre in partnership with refugee women and other agencies across the region\*, the conference was strategically planned to coincide with International Women's week. With participation from various refugee community and cross sector organisations and individuals from across the region and beyond, the conference was inspiring, informative, enjoyable and engaging covering most topical issues. 115 people attended with a total of 48 organisations represented – some of them at a national level.

The keynote speakers included activist and inspirational refugee woman, Beatrice Botomani; Policy Officer at the Women's Resource Centre – Charlotte Gage; Marian Williams, a refugee woman who inspires through her personal account of overcoming trauma faced by trafficked women and Rose McCarthy – a midwife who has served the National Childbirth Trust for over 20 years with extended experience of working with refugee women. Jim Steinke, Chief Executive of the Northern Refugee Centre gave a regional overview of issues facing refugees and how they affect women. Further presentations were made by Anna Musgrave (Refugee Council) on the Women's Asylum Charter and from Dr. Hannah Lewis (University of Leeds) who discussed her current research work on refugees' experiences of forced labour.

Eleven topical workshops were run on the day covering the topics of forced marriage/honour based violence, CEDAW, sexual health, Why Refugee Women Charter, self-care for workers, campaigning with a gendered focus, housing, working with pregnant refugee women and supporting women who have experienced violence and torture.

Feedback and action points from the workshops will partly shape the work to be carried out regionally by Northern Refugee Centre in 2012 – 2015, supported by Comic Relief.

\*Apna Haq, Ashiana, Bradford Refugee Forum, Centre for HIV - Sheffield, DEWA Project, Jantela, National Childbirth Trust, Refugee Council, SYMAAG, VIDA, WomenCentre, Why Refugee Women Charter

For more information on the Charter and the Every Single Woman campaign, please go to [www.asylumaid.org.uk/charter](http://www.asylumaid.org.uk/charter).

If your organisation would like to endorse the charter, please send an email simply stating the name of your organisation to [charter@asylumaid.org.uk](mailto:charter@asylumaid.org.uk).

## Donations to Asylum Aid

Asylum Aid provides free legal advice and representation to asylum-seekers and refugees, and campaigns for their rights. We rely on the generosity of individuals to help us continue our work. Your support would be greatly appreciated. A gift of just £5 each month could support our free legal advice line.

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