



Immigration and Nationality Directorate

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Dear

RE: Important Meetings in Northern Ireland

There are two meetings planned in Belfast. This letter sets out the details and invites your attendance.

The first meeting will take place on the 24th February, at 11.00a.m. It is scheduled to last 1½ hours and will take place at Clarence Court. It is intended for Government Departments and NASS agents (NLACRO).

Agenda:

- Share and clarify information on migrants in Northern Ireland.
- Develop agreed handling strategy
- Establish monitoring points for trends in asylum seeker activity
- Share NASS contingency and longer term plans.
- Agree inter-departmental arrangements for NASS and its agents in N.I.
- Consider cross border liaison/co-operation

The second meeting is scheduled for the 2nd March and will again be held at Clarence Court. The attendance will be much wider, **including other statutory and voluntary agencies**, which are likely to have an ongoing interest in asylum seekers in N.I. They are likely to form the basis of the Province's "stakeholder" group. This meeting will last from 11.00a.m. to 3.30p.m. A buffet lunch will be available.

Agenda:

- NASS mission statement
- Key tasks
 - Identify and build network of contributors/ providers
 - Define and establish formal structures
 - Establish mechanisms of local accountability – Stakeholders Group
 - Identify likely numbers/levels of demand
 - Ratio of singles to families
 - Ethnic/racial mix
 - Identifying the “cluster areas”.
- The Process – what is required at different stages.
- Contingency Planning
- 1st April to 1st October
 - Emergencies
 - Accommodation
 - Vouchers
 - Wrap around services
 - Dealing with excess demand.
 - Developmental tasks for 1st October

Attendance at the meeting should be notified in advance to: -

Stephen Baird
Department for Social Development
Clarence Court
10/18 Adelaide Street
BELFAST
BT2 8GB
Tel: 01232 541 162,

There are restrictions on the numbers attending and the usual security arrangements will have to be made.

I look forward to seeing you at these meetings.

Yours sincerely,

J.E. Heatley,
Asylum Seekers Support Team

Report on Developments in N. Ireland

08 February 2000

To; Bob Eagle, Judith Simpson, Rachael Reynolds.

From; Joe Heatley

1. At the meeting with the Minister, Mrs Roche a number of points were raised that needed further clarification.

NUMBERS

2. Although it was not included in the note of the meeting, a clarification of the numbers of asylum seekers and potential asylum seekers in the Province was requested.
3. The Northern Ireland Law Centre (NILC) quoted a figure of over 300 enforcement actions in a year. This was in spite of the very low level of claims lodged at Belfast International Airport, 20/year.
4. I discussed the figures with Elwyn Sutter, Chief Immigration Officer, and it is unfortunately a complex situation.
 - Port applicants in N.I. 20p.a.
 - Port Applicants UK/with NI address... NK
(Survey by NI Social Security Agency underway/ CIO says about 20)
 - In country apply to PEO/police... 100p.a.(est.)
(They do not claim support in very large numbers)
 - Numbers claiming Social Work Support... 30total
5. The situation is made much more complex by large numbers of illegals and transients between Dublin and the mainland both ways
 - Illegals (mostly Fujian Chinese)... 1000(total)
 - Transients... 700/month
6. The report on enforcement actions numbering 300+/year may very well be accurate, but these are not necessarily people who will be entitled to claim support from NASS.
7. Actions against illegals number about 150/year and may result in 50 claims for asylum. However the individuals involved usually have an address (and a job) and have managed without living needs support up to that point. You will remember that the access to vouchers only is denied to people whose application predates April. We need to develop a line so that we do not get an increasing number of illegals accessing support only in NI, detected and claiming asylum after April.
8. The transients are also a complex problem. The estimate is 700+/month and there is traffic in both directions. There are believed to be two groups. The first are double claimants, receiving support and/or working in both countries. The second are absconders and those nearing the end of their UK appeal, who wish to run another application in Dublin (consecutively). There may of course be a third group who have decided on Dublin as their preferred location and are making their way overland via the UK
9. The risk for NASS is that vigorous action on either side of the border may throw a greater number of applications onto the new arrangements. Thus would we help stranded UK claimants get back to where their existing claim lies? If they are detained or make fresh applications would we permit or decide they should remain in NI? Should we have a contingency for the first months that numbers over what we are prepared to deal with will be dispersed back to the mainland?

CONTACTS WITH NI HOUSING EXECUTIVE

10. The minute of the meeting says that I had already had contact with the Chief Executive of the Housing Executive. I think this is inaccurate. I believe what I did say at the meeting was that I was surprised that the CE did not know of our interest in possibly procuring accommodation from them.
11. I have never met nor spoken to the CE. I have met and spoken to one of his senior officers on 4 or 5 occasions since March last year. At all of these meetings Mr Rooney has been most helpful in suggesting that there is no significant obstacle to the Executive providing at least some of the accommodation NASS will need. This discussion has not gone to a significant level of detail, as I believe for various reasons that other sources may answer our needs better in the short term. There is no doubt that the Executive is likely to be a significant provider in the longer term.