



Scottish Strategic Co-ordination Group Operations Sub-group

The meeting took place on **Thursday 6 September 2007 at 10am in COSLA's Glasgow Office on Buchanan Street.**

1. **Present:** John Short (IOM), Shafiq Mohammed (YMCA), Ann Kinghorn (YMCA), Maria Walker (GASSP), Margaret McDonald (GASSP), Catherine Grant (Glasgow City Council), Joe Brady (Scottish Refugee Council), Anne McDonald (NHS GG&C), Lesley Ann Ballantyne (NHS GG&C), Ray Smith (the Angel Group), Patricia McGonigle (BIA), Catherine Harmon (BIA), Mhoraig Green (COSLA: chair, minute), Lorraine Cook (COSLA).
2. **Apologies:** Derek Mitchell (COSLA).

Previous Minutes & Matters Arising

3. Members agreed that the minutes of the Operations subgroup from August.
4. Under matters arising JB said he was still pursuing a meeting with KF to meet to discuss issues with Chinese nationals.
5. All other action points are dealt with within the agenda.

Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme

6. JS updated the group on progress towards IOM's new operating model. They hope to receive ministerial approval for the new model this year and will be able to release more details after this has happened.
7. In the interim IOM are still able to offer around £500 for relocation and £1000 towards integration assistance.
8. IOM are also looking into trialling some new technology including a direct line, free-phone from the reporting centre to IOM's office. They have also been

considering developing a touchscreen information booth with information in a number of languages.

Childcare Provision at Brand Street

9. PM reported that childcare is now being provided by BIA at their premises in Wales. BIA are treating this as a pilot and the outcome of the pilot will inform the decision of whether childcare should be provided in Scotland. There is no official timescale for the pilot.
10. MG reported that she had not received much information from partners regarding the need for childcare amongst their clients. JB said that SRC is now surveying new arrivals and almost all have said they would like to access childcare at Brand Street while they attend appointments there.
11. YMCA proposals were discussed briefly again and the model is to be reconsidered. Maria Walker is also investigating services available locally in Govan and will share these with MG.
12. Action: **MG to produce paper on the need for childcare and detailing how it could be provided before the next meeting.**

Move-On Working Group Update

13. MG updated the group on the activity of the move-on group. Representatives of the group met with DWP recently and will meet with GHA and the Homelessness Team within the Scottish Government in the next few weeks.

Move-On Protocol with RST

14. SM reported that the Move-On protocol with RST had been operational since 27 August and that YMCA are happy with how it is operating after a few minor amendments. The Angel Group and GASSP were also content that the protocol is working effectively, although Angel only expect to use it for a short time while they develop an online referral system.
15. There was some discussion over whether the mandate had been signed off by Glasgow City Council's legal team. It was agreed that John Donaldson was in the best position to clarify this and that it should be raised at the Move-On group. **Action: Issue to be raised at the Move-On group.**
16. MW also asked for the issue of how children's welfare is affected if they have to move to another area of the city to be considered at the Move-On Group too. **Action: Issue to be raised at the Move-On group.**
17. JB raised the issue of the Integration Loan Scheme, which allows new refugees to claim up to £1000. He said that loans were being issued 3-4 days after the application was lodged and that people receive £780 on average. Repayments are

around £3 per week. JB noted that he had raised concerns with the Integration Loan Scheme team that new refugees in Scotland are having difficulty accessing benefits and other welfare entitlements and may be attempted to apply for loans which would then be used to support children; the Scottish Refugee Council and Refugee Survival Trust briefing on destitution of new refugees is being sent to the Integration Loan Scheme team to inform monitoring.

Lead Professional Update

18. CG reported that the Lead Professional staff have all now been selected and are likely to begin mid-October. Two of the staff have considerable experience in the asylum field. CG will be in touch with a number of agencies to arrange induction visits. Someone will also be in touch with accommodation provider re sharing information about anti-social behaviour etc.
19. The lead professional team will focus on cases from 2005-2006, and this will not involve dealing with a massive number of cases.
20. GCC staff are currently working with BIA to refine the proforma to ensure the information collected is useful, accurate and current. Following a one month pilot the proforma will be reviewed.
21. CG raised the issue of legacy cases outwith Glasgow and said the COSLA should play a role in engaging with local authorities around legacy, since the Lead Professional Team's work will be concentrated in Glasgow. MG confirmed that COSLA SMP had already been looking at the numbers outside of Glasgow.
22. There was some discussion around the need for a media strategy. It was agreed that the FFD groups may be an effective way of disseminating information about the role of the lead professional. It was also agreed that it may be useful to engage with legal professionals, although this may be a role for BIA.

HMIe Follow-Up Action

23. MW said that planning for the consultation event was going well and that most members of the group would receive an invite shortly. The action plan should be finalised by the end of October and can be discussed at a future meeting.

Mental Health Issues

24. CH raised the issue of mental health problems and violent behaviour amongst BIA clients, particularly those on section 4 support. She expressed concern that this be developed to ensure that clients receive best services possible from agencies and providers. She said it may be useful for all agencies to share information about people with mental health issues to make sure that BIA can meet their needs and also so that staff are aware of risk.

25. It was noted that whilst some agencies had developed protocols between each other to support vulnerable clients and ensure that appropriate risk assessments were being conducted, not all agencies were doing so.
26. There was some discussion around this with a number of agencies flagging up incidents where their staff had been at risk. It was agreed that a short life working group should be established to look at these issues and to develop a protocol for sharing information between agencies. JB suggested this could take the form of a workshop.
27. JB also noted that he had queried at a NAM implementation group meeting whether there was an existing protocol for vulnerable/special need clients and at the time it had been noted that there was none and local solutions were expected to be developed. JB noted that undiagnosed and unsupported clients were unlikely to fare well in the asylum system and process and this issue had also been discussed at the SRIF health and social care working group. NASS Policy Bulletins still do not reflect Scottish legislation and policy and a protocol needs to be developed by this group to ensure that vulnerable clients are not unnecessarily garnering negative outcomes.
28. MG asked for a volunteer from within the group to convene the meeting since COSLA SMP staff do not currently have the time to dedicate to this issue. It was agreed that Anne Douglas at the COMPASS team should be contacted before the group is formed. MG will contact Anne Douglas and will contribute to the organisation of the first meeting, but will not be able to provide secretariat or take forward actions from the meeting. **Action: MG to contact Anne Douglas and ascertain availability for this new working group.**

Convening NAM monitoring group

29. MG reported that COSLA officers are currently looking into a new role for the NAM Implementation group and that this group may take on a monitoring function.
30. PM pointed out that NAM is being monitored at a UK-wide level by UNHCR. She said that following discussions within BIA the NAM Team were keen to attend the Operations Group on a bi-monthly basis to report on the operation of NAM rather than setting up a separate NAM group.
31. JB said he still felt that there was a role for a group based in Scotland to look at how NAM operates in the Scottish context and the impact it has locally. This is underlined by the NASF having no Scottish representation apart from a Scottish Government representative and outstanding issues regarding legal representation and aid being unresolved. UASC asylum claim determination in NAM is still fresh and since this is related to the proposed Reform programme, again with separate children's legislation to consider JB feels there are no grounds for discontinuing a NAM focused group.

32. It was agreed that this issue would need to be raised with Karen Fagan. **Action: COSLA officers to liaise with Karen Fagan.**

AOCB

33. JB asked who will take over from Val Thompson. He said it was important for the police to be represented on the group especially since NAM and increased dispersal is likely to create changing communities meaning that community cohesion issues would have to be monitored. **Action: MG to re-establish representation from Strathclyde Police.**
34. PM had brought an update on gender issues. She reported that there are now 16 female and 10 male case-owners within the NAM team. She said that given sufficient notice they are able to deal with all requests for a case-owner for a specific gender. Finding interpreters of the appropriate gender is more of an issue. A pilot is underway at Croydon to ask if people require a case-owner/interpreter of a particular gender at screening interviews and first reporting events. A briefing pack and a dvd for use within induction centres is also nearing completion and will be circulated soon, although there is no precise timescale for this.
35. SM asked for an update on dispersal. He wanted to know whether Glasgow was at capacity, and said YMCA are currently receiving a high level of new section 4 cases. CM said that the maximum thresholds are not being hit, but that the proportion of section 4 cases within the city is increasing. She agreed to report on this at each monthly meeting, although said she would not be able to report on each accommodation providers' share of the contract. **Action: CH to provide reports to meeting on ongoing basis.**
36. MW raised the issue of Educational Maintenance Allowance, which the Scottish Government has made available to asylum seekers. MW is concerned about how this will impact on asylum support. The Scottish Government is operating on the assumption that since DWP do not count EMA as income, the Home Office will not either. MW said this was an issue that had to be clarified as soon as possible.

Date of the next meeting

37. The next meeting of the Operations Subgroup has been rescheduled for 2pm on Tuesday 9 October.