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# Refugee Action runs for funds



Top row: Qerim, Miriam, Hanna, Linda, Liz, Chris, Pauline, Patrycja; bottom row: Christie and Sam

Sixteen keen members of staff and volunteers from the Bristol office are currently in training for the Bristol 10K on Sunday 9 May 2010 to raise money for our destitution fund.

The route will take our sprightly team of runners round Bristol's historic floating harbour and along the Portway by the River Avon. The team consists of those who run regularly and some brave souls who are giving it a go for the first time!

All monies raised will go towards buying food and emergency shelter for those who find themselves in desperate need.

- £5 will buy basic food to sustain a destitute client for a day.
- £30 will buy one night's hostel accommodation.

To donate, please go to:

<http://tinyurl.com/y8j5kb7>

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Please sponsor the team who are hoping to raise £3,000 to support our destitute clients

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Read our new blog  
[blog.refugee-action.org](http://blog.refugee-action.org)

# Statistics

## Home Office provisional asylum statistics for 2009

All the information on this page is from Refugee Action's summary of Home Office quarterly statistics for October – December 2009. For the full 10-page summary, contact Refugee Action on 0117 941 5960.



### Applications

- Asylum applications (excluding dependants) in 2009 **decreased** and was 6% lower than in the previous year (down from 25,930 in 2008 to **24,250** in 2009). Including dependants, the number of applications in 2009 (**29,845**) was 5% lower than in 2008 (31,315).
- **92%** of principal applicants in 2009 applied **in-country**.
- In 2009, there were **2,990** asylum applications from **unaccompanied children** (excluding dependants); a fall from the previous year's figure of 3,970. **1,000** applications for asylum were **age-disputed**.
- In 2009, the number of **fresh claims** for asylum (excluding dependants) was 4% lower in 2009 (**855**) compared to 2008 (895).

### Nationalities

The main national groups applying for asylum in 2009 were:

1. Zimbabwe (5,540) – rise, 2008 position number 2
2. Afghanistan (3,330) – fall, 2008 position number 1
3. Iran (1,835) – rise, 2008 position number 4
4. Eritrea (1,360) – fall, 2008 position number 3
5. Pakistan (1,275) - rise, 2008 position number 9
6. China (1,165) – rise, 2008 position number 7
7. Sri Lanka (1,110) - fall, 2008 position number 6
8. Somalia (920) – same position as 2008
9. Iraq (845) - fall, 2008 position number 5
10. Nigeria (635) – same position as 2008

### Decisions

24,550 initial decisions were made in 2009, 27% higher than in the previous year. 17% of initial decisions in 2009 were to grant asylum, compared with 19% in 2008. 10% of initial decisions granted humanitarian protection or discretionary leave, compared to 11% in 2008. 73% of initial decisions were refusals, compared to 70% in 2008.

Of the 4,175 cases granted refugee status at the initial decision stage, the largest proportion were **Zimbabwean** nationals (39% of the 4,175 cases; 27% of all initial decisions on Zimbabwean cases) and the second largest proportion were **Eritrean** nationals (19% of the 4,175 cases; 46% of all initial decisions on Eritrean cases).

The number of **appeals** that were determined in 2009 (14,595) increased by 36% compared to 2008 (10,720). **66% were dismissed** and **28% were allowed**. This compares with 71% dismissed and 23% allowed in 2008.

A total of 15,580 people who had claimed asylum at some stage entered **detention** under Immigration Act powers in 2009. **715 of these were children**.

# Introducing...

## The Anglo-Iranian Society



Rosa Ross, Secretary

Farzad Alahyari, Chair

### When was your organisation established?

The Anglo-Iranian Society was formed in May 2006 and became a registered charity in August 2008.

### Why was the organisation set up?

Since 2000, the Iranian population in Bristol has increased, especially refugees coming from Iran or other parts of the UK. We felt more need to have a community and we wanted to help these youngsters find their way of life better.

### What services do you provide and what projects do you run?

We focus on cultural activities as well as advice for newcomers. The activities we run at the moment are:

- Poem night (monthly)
- Ladies' night (monthly)
- Guitar class (weekly)
- Farsi class (weekly)
- Important calendar date activities, including Mehregan (harvest); Yalda (winter solstice); Iranian New Year Norooz (start of spring according to solar calendar); fundraising concert for Iranian local singer.

### How does the AIS meet the aspirations of the local Iranian community?

Iranian people are brought up in a family-oriented society and so far the Anglo-Iranian Society has been very successful in being the main place for communication and advice for many Iranians, from refugees and students to families.

### What are the main challenges you have had to face to date and what are the main fears you have for the future?

Doing what we are doing needs money, time, courage and active staff and volunteers. We have had ups and downs with getting Iranians' trust

and support. Our main fear is that all our work will stop because of financial problems as we have not been able to get any grant whatsoever.

### What are your future plans and hopes?

We have a number of plans. We hope to involve other communities and government departments in our work.

Anglo-Iranian Society (AIS), 8 Ashley Down Road, Bristol BS7 9JW, t: 0117 924 5525



Nuwa Serunjogi

The Anglo-Iranian Society is supported by Nuwa Serunjogi, Organisational Development Officer under the BASIS project at Refugee Action.

Nuwa works with refugee community organisations in Bristol, Swindon, Gloucester and Plymouth. If you are involved in a refugee community organisation (RCO), or provide funding to such organisations, and would like support from Nuwa, contact: t: 0117 941 5960 e: [Nuwas@refugee-action.org.uk](mailto:Nuwas@refugee-action.org.uk).

The BASIS project is an England-wide service giving one-to-one support to hundreds of RCOs to help them manage, develop and sustain their organisations. It works closely with funders and other mainstream bodies to increase their understanding of RCOs.

[www.thebasisproject.org.uk](http://www.thebasisproject.org.uk)



# Policy and legislation

## Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act implementation: 'active citizenship'

The Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 became law on 21 July 2009. It includes an 'earned citizenship' system for migrants from outside the European Union who want to become British. The Home Office plans to implement this system from July 2011.

At present non-EU migrants are first eligible for a passport five years after they arrive in this country. After July 2011, they will have to serve a further probationary period of one to three years and will face more tests.

In order to be able to become citizens after only one probationary year, migrants will have to show that they have taken an active part in the community, named 'active citizenship' by the Home Office.

To demonstrate active citizenship, migrants can **volunteer** with a 'recognised organisation' such as a charity; serve on a community body or take part in an activity that:

- advances education or health
- advances social and community welfare

- advances heritage, arts, culture or sport
- benefits the natural environment
- benefits children, young people, elderly people, disabled people or other vulnerable groups
- involves mentoring or befriending.

<http://tinyurl.com/I95c4a>

Several community and voluntary organisations voiced concern about how the system would be monitored; what resources and support would be made available to organisations taking on migrant volunteers; and whether it is fair to penalise migrants who cannot volunteer (for childcare, work, or health reasons).

**If your organisation would be interested in taking on more refugee volunteers and you'd like to be on our opportunities list, or need advice, contact Katie Hope, Deputy Manager (Development), t: 0117 941 5968, e: [katieh@refugee-action.org.uk](mailto:katieh@refugee-action.org.uk)**

## Government publishes consultation on charging foreign nationals for healthcare - some refused asylum seekers will now be exempt

The government has published its consultation on proposed changes to the system for charging for secondary healthcare (hospital treatment). As things currently stand, an asylum seeker whose claim has been refused, who has exhausted all appeal rights and who has not yet begun treatment in a hospital has to pay for it. This has led to harrowing cases of women giving birth at home, or people being denied treatment for cancer, because they are unable to pay.

The new charging regulations were introduced in 2004, and immediately came under intense opposition from charities and health professionals alike, as it became clear that the rules were tantamount to refusing some asylum seekers treatment for serious illnesses. The Refugee Council produced a report in 2006 containing

dozens of cases of people who had been denied treatment and some of the consequences.

The Department of Health is now proposing to modify the regulations to exclude asylum seekers whose claims have been refused but who are on Section 4 or Section 95 support. They also recognise that refused asylum seekers are unlikely to be able to pay for treatment, particularly if it is costly, therefore debts may be written off. They have also changed the rules so that unaccompanied children, previously included in the charging regulations, are exempt.

Source: Refugee Council

A copy of the 1996 report is available at <http://tinyurl.com/yb7j9ox>

## Refugee Action in the news...

BBC News 26 February, 2010

### UK Border Agency asylum case target 'unachievable'

A key Home Office target of dealing with 90% of asylum applications within six months is "unachievable", an independent watchdog has warned...

Ministers want the target met by the end of 2011 but Mr Vine said this would not happen without hiring more staff.

...Charity **Refugee Action** said about half of its clients were backlog cases ..."It is obviously important that applications are resolved speedily," said a spokesman.

"But it's also vital that applications are resolved accurately. Those in need asylum are among the most vulnerable people in our society, and a wrong decision can mean a death sentence."

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8537987.stm>

Daily Mail, 4 March 2010

### Migration officer 'sang Um Bongo song to an asylum seeker from Congo'

A Border Agency staff member sang the Um Bongo advertising jingle to a Congolese asylum seeker, it has been alleged.

Louise Perrett, 29, claimed a colleague sang 'Um Bongo, Um Bongo, they kill them in the Congo' when the woman revealed she was fleeing fighting in the strife-torn West African country.

She also said border guards made migrants pretend to shoot guns to 'prove' they were former child soldiers.

The Home Office department has launched an internal review after the former employee made the allegations... <http://tinyurl.com/y8gxbob>

For more information about Louise Perrett's claims, read a blog by Refugee Action Bristol's volunteer, Chris, at <http://tinyurl.com/y89uovx>

BBC News, 1 March 2010

### Big rise in Afghan child migrants

When an asylum seeker fleeing the world's deadliest conflict zones arrives in Europe, their chances of being granted refugee status differ drastically from country to country. With the European Union struggling to unify its policies across member states, this uneven approach has hampered efforts to deal fairly and efficiently with applicants, experts say.

"It's what we refer to as the asylum lottery," says Bjarte Vandvik, secretary general of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles.

"If you get to Finland then you get to stay. If you get to Greece, then you have no chance."

The overall number of asylum requests in the EU has dropped sharply since the early 1990s. But conflicts such as those in Afghanistan and Somalia still drive up numbers from certain countries.

One particularly vulnerable group affected by uneven policies in the EU is that of unaccompanied Afghan children, whose numbers have risen sharply over the past two years...

<http://tinyurl.com/ybwlabh>

### Refugee Action on Secret Millionaire



Our Leicester office features in the Secret Millionaire programme on Channel 4 on 15 March. The millionaire (pictured above) was shocked and moved by the plight of those who are living destitute on the streets the UK, refused sanctuary but unable to return home. We're delighted that he made a generous donation to our new Fresh Start project.

- More info: <http://tinyurl.com/ye9rs2m>
- Read Hamed's story: <http://tinyurl.com/y89tjcp>
- Help us stop destitution: <http://tinyurl.com/ybwsbkx>

# Training and volunteer opportunities

Education grants for refugees  
For refugees wanting to get (back) into education, the following might be helpful:

**Council for Assisting Refugee Academics**  
<http://www.academic-refugees.org/>

**Airey Neave Trust**  
<http://www.aireyneavetrust.org.uk>

**International Federation of University Women**  
Assistance for women and women refugees  
<http://tinyurl.com/ybel8np>

**Commonwealth Scholarships**  
For postgraduate study  
t: (02) 6285 8348  
e: [fellowships.enquiries@idp.com](mailto:fellowships.enquiries@idp.com)  
When emailing Mr Singh please include "CSFP" in the subject line.

**Elizabeth Nuffield Educational Trust Grants**  
[www.nuffield.org/home/](http://www.nuffield.org/home/)

## Volunteer for Refugee Action's new Migration Impacts Fund project

The Migration Impacts Fund (MIF) Project has just started at Refugee Action. The project will raise awareness of refugee and migrant issues with the public sector in Bristol; support vulnerable refugees and migrants through mentoring; and organise migrant and refugee community events in Bristol.

We are presently recruiting for two volunteer roles:

- **Volunteer awareness trainers** who will be trained to give training in pairs to organisations about refugees and migrants
- **MIF mentors** who will work one-to-one with vulnerable refugees and migrants to help them integrate in Bristol.

**We strongly encourage people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to apply for these roles.**

To receive a full volunteer role description and more information about volunteering at Refugee Action, **please contact Liz Roberts, MIF Project Worker, t: 0117 941 5970 e: [lizr@refugee-action.org.uk](mailto:lizr@refugee-action.org.uk)**

Interested in refugee and asylum seeker issues?

Interested in young people and education?

Want to be involved in an exciting new Bristol project?

POSITIVE  
IMAGES



### We need volunteers from a refugee background. Can you help?

To deliver interactive workshops to primary and secondary schools and youth groups in Bristol and to support the development and delivery of long term action projects. POSITIVE IMAGES is an anti-stigma project that aims to challenge negative stereotypes and myths surrounding asylum seekers and

refugees. We also need Volunteer Advocates to help steer the project and promote it in the community. For more info Contact the Positive Images Project Manager:

**Anna Kwar, 0117 3012603, [akawar@redcross.org.uk](mailto:akawar@redcross.org.uk)**



# Campaigns

## **CITIZENS for Sanctuary: Ask your MP to take the Sanctuary Pledge before elections**

CITIZENS for Sanctuary has brought together an alliance of 13 organisations - including the Church of England, Catholic Bishops' Conference, Chief Rabbi and the Muslim Council of Britain - representing seven million people across the UK, to back the Sanctuary Pledge at the 2010 election.

Our aim is simple. Building on the recommendations of the Independent Asylum Commission, we want prospective parliamentary candidates from all the main parties across the country to sign up to the Sanctuary Pledge.

Time is running out - the election is likely to be on May 6th. So please, get involved and take action now. Visit

[www.sanctuarypledge.org.uk](http://www.sanctuarypledge.org.uk) or email [support@sanctuarypledge.org.uk](mailto:support@sanctuarypledge.org.uk) and we will get back to you with information about how to get involved in your area.

Thank you to those of you who have already committed to supporting the Sanctuary Pledge - together our co-ordinated action across the country will bring success, and an end to the detention of children.

Jonathan Cox, Lead Organiser  
CITIZENS for Sanctuary  
t: 07919 484066

## **Bristol gears up for sanctuary status**

*By Forward Maisokwadzo, Development Worker, City of Sanctuary*

Imagine. You are a young woman in your early 20s. Early one morning in 2001 you were abducted by militia from your home in southern Somalia. You were imprisoned, tortured and gang-raped. After a year you managed to escape and fled to Britain where you sought asylum. The UK Border Agency dispersed you to Bristol. On arrival however, you experienced suspicion and open hostility from neighbours - even from 'some service providers'. Today you are still plagued by nightmares.

Now many people of goodwill in Bristol from faith, community, voluntary, business, universities, schools and other groups are hoping to overcome the ignorance that led to this, and build a culture of welcome and hospitality for those who seek sanctuary here.

Becoming a City of Sanctuary will show that Bristol is still a welcoming, tolerant city, where people from a wide range of backgrounds can live together happily. After all, Bristol is often said to be Britain's friendliest city - this is one important way of proving that. The group is working towards the launch by end this year.

To pledge your support contact:

e: [Forward@cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:Forward@cityofsanctuary.org)

t: 0117 941 5960 or visit:

[www.cityofsanctuary.org/bristol](http://www.cityofsanctuary.org/bristol)

## **Campaign success on asylum support cuts**



Campaign success! After receiving your cards and emails, and meeting with Refugee Action, the immigration minister has decided to increase asylum support.

The increase is only an inflationary one, but this is an important win. Despite the economic situation, the government have listened and accepted the principle of not cutting support to an already vulnerable group of people. A huge thank you to those of you who have taken action on this issue, we couldn't have influenced the minister without your support.



# Refugee Week 2010

## Refugee Week 2010

14 – 21 June

Look out for information about events celebrating Refugee Week in Bristol. For a run-down of events, go to

<http://tinyurl.com/ybqqz4h>

If you are interested in putting on an event, download the Refugee Action guides:

- **Planning an arts event in the refugee sector**

<http://tinyurl.com/ybkrjn2>

- **Working with the arts and refugees**

<http://tinyurl.com/yczetdg>

A **local steering group** is organised by Bristol City Council. Ensure your event is in the publicity by contacting Lorraine Ayensu e: [lorraine.ayensu@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:lorraine.ayensu@bristol.gov.uk)

## Funding for refugees planning Refugee Week events

UnLtd's RISE Programme has a number of Awards of £500 – £1,000 available to run events during Refugee Week 2010.

People eligible to apply are:

- Refugees with current proof of status
- living anywhere in England
- over the age of 16
- applying as an individual or informal group

## Deadline: 21 March 2010

Contact Maryam Pasha, RISE Coordinator

e: [RISE@unltd.org.uk](mailto:RISE@unltd.org.uk)

t: 0207 566 1136



[www.simpleacts.org.uk](http://www.simpleacts.org.uk)

## Take a picture of you and your pro-refugee banner!

To help you get started we thought we'd ask you a simple question: What can YOU do to make refugees feel more welcome?

We want your thoughts - any simple thing that you think would make a difference. Answers on a banner please!

Send a photo of you and your banner to

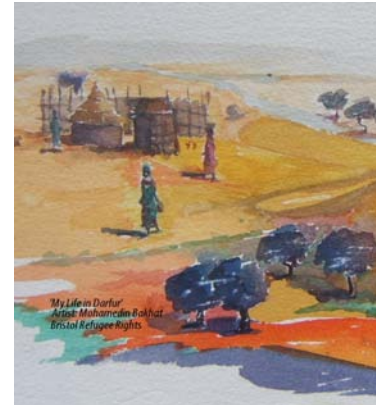
[info@refugeeweek.org.uk](mailto:info@refugeeweek.org.uk)

Or take a look at some of these for inspiration!

<http://tinyurl.com/yhng77x>



## Call for entries



'Celebrating Sanctuary' is an art exhibition from 11 – 21 June at The Pierian Centre, as part of national Refugee Week. The art on display is either by or about refugees and asylum seekers.

There will also be a strand of the exhibition on display at St Pauls Learning Centre throughout June.

If you are or know an artist whose work tackles asylum, exclusion or poverty issues then send up to three images and a description of the work to Katy, the exhibitions curator, at [katychard@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:katychard@yahoo.co.uk)

The deadline for submission is 31 March 2010.

Warm wishes from June and Katy at the Pierian Centre

# Conferences

## Human trafficking in the UK: Strengthening prevention, prosecution and protection

Wednesday 28 April 2010

One Whitehall Place, London

For more information, contact the Public Policy Exchange in association with the Centre for Parliamentary Studies:

14 Great College Street, London SW1P 3RX

t: 0845 606 1535

f: 0845 606 1539, e:

[info@publicpolicyexchange.co.uk](mailto:info@publicpolicyexchange.co.uk)

## The next five years: Your chance to have a say

Sunday 25 April, 10am – 2.30pm

Vassall Centre, Gill Avenue, Fishponds

Bristol BS16 2QQ

Organised by the Black and Minority Ethnic Carers in South Gloucestershire, this conference for BME carers will focus on the key strands of the Carers Strategy.

For more information and registration please contact Saban Hussein, Monday – Wednesday:  
t: 0117 9589985

e: [sabanh@carers-sg.org.uk](mailto:sabanh@carers-sg.org.uk)



## Refugee Action's opening hours

9 Hide Market, West Street Entrance on Waterloo Street (opposite the Sofa Project)

We are **open for drop in advice**:

Monday 10 – 12

Thursday 10 – 12

We are sorry that if there are a lot of people, we may not be able to see everyone who is waiting in the queue. If you can, **ring us for advice** instead.

Our **telephone advice line** 0117 941 5962 is open:

Monday 2 – 4.30

Tuesday 10 – 12.30

Thursday 2 – 4.30

Friday 10 – 12.30

## About Refugee Action

Refugee Action is an independent, national charity working to enable refugees to build new lives in the UK. We provide practical emergency support for newly arrived asylum seekers and long-term commitment to their settlement, and we deal with some 40,000 enquiries from refugees and asylum seekers each year. As one of the country's leading agencies in the field, Refugee Action has more than 29 years' experience in pioneering innovative work in partnership with refugees.

## Refugee supporters' news

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[www.refugee-action.org.uk](http://www.refugee-action.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/refugeeaction](http://www.facebook.com/refugeeaction)

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