



From the Chair

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Sir Matthew Rycroft KCMG CBE
Permanent Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Sir Matthew

COMPLAINT

On behalf of Asylum seekers in this area I am writing to you to complain about the treatment of some of them. I believe this falls under the remit of the Home Office for which you are responsible.

The first refers to a family which I shall call A. They are frightened to be named at this point. On New Year's Eve they were moved from a hotel in Somerset, to self-catering accommodation in London. As you will know asylum seekers are interviewed as part of the processing of their claims. The letter calling them for interview was however sent to the Somerset address requiring attendance at an office in Cardiff where an interview was conducted by someone remotely in London. It was passed on, but gave them very little notice to make arrangements.

The Home Office is supposed to provide transport for these interviews but the Family A did not receive any train tickets. Because they had been told that non-attendance would mean that their claim would be treated as withdrawn, they used all the money they had on their Aspen cards to buy two single tickets to get to Cardiff. Their little baby travelled free. They were told that the money they had spent could not be reimbursed although they were given tickets to get back to London. They were not told why reimbursement could not be made. It left them penniless and without the means to buy food.

There are many other examples where no travel tickets are provided – this is not a one off.

The second example, Family B, is another example where day to day care and attention could have saved a lot of grief and anxiety and taxpayers' money. Family B have been in the hotel in Somerset for over a year. And this means they have signed an agreement with Clearsprings, have children in school, are registered with a GP and so on. In short, they are known to the authorities and are only in this hotel because the Home Office put them there. The letter calling Family B for their interview was however sent not to the Somerset hotel (their residence of over 1 year) but to a hotel they had been in, in London before that. Although the Home Office use post for some letters, they also use email from time to time. The family received an email demanding to know why they had not attended the interview and threatening to terminate the claim for asylum. Suddenly therefore they were frightened and worried by the tone of this email when the mistake had been in your department and not with them.

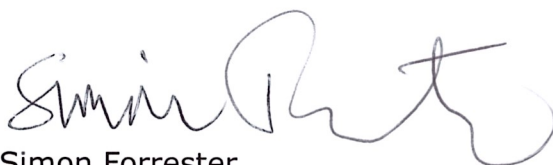
Again, just an example of a commonly occurring problem.

In both these cases, help has been requested from Migrant Help but no help was forthcoming.

I write to you because this is not a policy or political issue but one of management. Getting your staff to use the information available to them would speed this process up, cost the country less and in the long run, where asylum seekers are successful in their claims, give them a more positive start to their new life: our aim must surely be to help them join the communities around them as valued human beings. You might also ask about the efficiency of taking someone from London to Cardiff in order to be interviewed on line by someone in London itself. Across the country this costs the taxpayer a lot of money and appears to achieve nothing except the possibility of confusion and misunderstanding.

We will publish this letter on our website and will add your reply which we look forward to receiving. www.tauntonwelcomesrefugees.co.uk

Yours faithfully



Simon Forrester
Co-Chair of Trustees