



Conference 2012

PREVENTING BLOCKAGES WORKSHOP

A. “Who should you choose to accommodate, when and how?”

1. Referral Criteria: who qualifies?

We looked at:

- *What are our criteria?* All projects focus on single destitute asylum seekers, generally excluding people with acute mental ill-health, drug or alcohol dependence. A local connection was also usually required, to avoid out-of-area referrals
- *Do we have any ‘unofficial’ criteria?* Generally projects try to focus their support on those who are perceived to have a realistic chance of success with their legal cases.
- *If ‘destitute asylum seekers’ only, what about those who are destitute and from other (e.g.) African countries, but not seeking asylum?* Most projects do not accept such referrals.
- *- or women with no recourse to public funds (‘NRPF’) fleeing domestic violence?* Some projects refer on to the Sojourner Project, run by Eaves Housing (<http://eaveshousing.co.uk/>) - although this service is shortly to be taken over by UKBA

2. Referral Process: how?

- *‘Approved referrers’ list?* Most projects have built close relationships with a few referring agencies, such as Refugee Council and the British Red Cross
- *Information gathering and risk assessing.* Not easy, when often very little is known about people referred. Generally, taking referrals only from trusted sources who know and understand the project / referral criteria, is the best safeguard.
- *Judging credibility.* As above.

- *Prioritising: points system?* Some projects (e.g. Boaz Trust) have a well defined system. Those in greatest need may not be the most compatible with hosts / other household members
- *Who makes the decision to accommodate?* Varies. Some have panels that meet regularly, others consult by phone / email. Agreement that it should not be the decision of only one person, if at all possible
- *Emergency provision?* Generally projects don't take emergency referrals. ASSIST have a host (Board member) who will offer short emergency stays, which is a useful way of checking suitability for long-term support.

B. "How do you move people on?"

- *Fixed term agreements?* No project has these.
- *When guest achieves S4 support / other route to support + accommodation?* The norm.
- *Rotating between hosts / houses?* Some projects have tried this but it can be disruptive for both guests and hosts.
- *When no prospect of legal progress?* BEACON has moved guests out when they have been hosted for an extended period (up to a year) and there is no prospect of any progress on their legal case. Some other projects are reluctant to move guests out unless they clearly have somewhere to go, even after two years or more.
- *Breaching (?written) agreement?* Projects have had to periodically evict guests for disruptive behaviour, drunkenness, drug use. A written agreement at the outset helps. Less problems generally with hosting, where guests tend to be more likely to respect their hosts and property.
- *Who makes the decision?* As for initial referrals (see above). Police assistance has been needed on occasion.