



NAO Report – returning failed asylum seekers - Key Data¹

1 Costs

- a) 2003-4 IND total spend was £1.89 billion on its immigration and nationality operations.
- b) £1.07 billion of this was on NASS of which it is estimated that £308 million was on failed asylum seekers awaiting removal.
- c) £300 million was spent on the removals process and other enforcement work in total – £285m by IND and £15m by HM Prison Service. (Detection £75m, Detention £156m, Obtaining travel documentation and dealing with further representations £41m, Arranging removal £25m, Assisted Voluntary Returns £3m)
- d) The total spend on failed asylum seekers was therefore in the region of £600m.
- e) The cost of an assisted voluntary return is estimated at £1,100 compared with an average cost per removal of £10,100 in 2003-4 and a cost of £11,000 for enforced removals.

2 Numbers awaiting removal and being removed

- a) Estimated by the NAO at between 155,000 and 283,500. (This includes citizens of the 2004 EU Accession States and failed asylum seekers granted an amnesty and it will also include some failed asylum seekers who have returned voluntarily and unrecorded. It excludes dependants and will also exclude those granted ELR whose leave has expired who remain in the UK. The 155,000 estimate is the number of cases recorded on the IND database. And does not include all cases where initial decisions were taken before May 2000 or whose appeal was before 2002.)
- b) The number of people removed or returning voluntarily each month was about 1,000 in 2004-5 compared with (assumed) unsuccessful cases of 2,150. (but note this is misleading as actual cases which have reached a final decision are higher than assumed unsuccessful new applications).

3 Returns

- a) 7% of recorded returns are voluntary.
- b) A further 16% are assisted voluntary. Take up of assisted voluntary returns has increased from 1,200 in 2001-2 to 2,800 in 2004-5.
- c) Detained priority cases constitute a further 17% leaving 60% who are removed through standard enforcement processes.
- d) 62% of cases dealt with via the Harmondsworth fast-track procedure between 4/2003 and 7/2004 who were refused asylum were returned. Harmondsworth achieved high removal rates from some countries not in the top ten for removal (eg. Pakistan 50% and Turkey 41%)
- e) 68% dealt with at Oakington between 11/2002 and 6/2004 from countries assumed to be safe were returned.
- f) In a sample of 800 non-detained applicants exhausting their appeal rights in February and March 2004, only 3 per cent were removed within 3 months. 21% of the sample were from countries for which travel documentation is not a problem but a quarter of these had absconded.
- g) On average, between June 2003 and May 2004, removal took place 403 days after applicants' appeals had been completed.

- h) Two sets of exercises were mounted by IND to try to measure how many failed asylum seekers were leaving voluntarily and unrecorded. The first over four periods totalling 5 weeks at Heathrow airport identified 191 immigration offenders of whom 40 were failed asylum seekers. The second conducted at six airports in October 2003 identified 135 offenders of whom just 10 were failed asylum seekers.
- i) 5 of the top 10 countries to which failed asylum seekers were returned between May 2003 and April 2004 were Eastern European – 2 (Poland and Czech Republic have subsequently joined the EU and a third, Romania, is expected to do so in 2007,)
- j) 20% of applicants reviewed by the NAO who have had their appeals to the adjudicator dismissed had not been removed quickly because of further representations (from MP's etc) or a marriage application or a work application.

4 Process

- a) 50% of failed asylum applicants in the removable pool as at 5/2004 had applied for asylum more than 3 years previously.
- b) Fewer than half of operations to find failed asylum seekers and other immigration offenders at their recorded address were successful.
- c) The number of detention places has increased to 2,750 from March 2005 from an average of 1,900 in the period 2001-4. This will allow removals to be increased by 340 to 375 a month.
- d) 66% of failed asylum applicants who have exhausted the appeals process require emergency travel documentation, 22% are removable on an EU letter, 12% are not removable at all for policy or practical reasons (Iraq, Zimbabwe and Burundi).
- e) In March 2004 there was a 17 day delay on average in seeking emergency travel documentation from embassies. This had been reduced to 7 days by November 2004. In March 2004 the embassies took on average 53 days to provide the travel documentation.
- f) Since 2003 asylum seekers applying with no other permission to enter the UK have had to report weekly or monthly to IND. Those applicants with other leave to enter, eg. students, have not had to report.

5 Government and IND Targets

Government target

By the end of 2005 the number of removals should be as great as the number of newly unsuccessful claims. This is defined as the number of new claims less the assumed successful ones based on historical data regarding refusals rates of initial claims and dismissal rates of appeals.

Additional IND targets – 2004/5

- a) To achieve 31,000 enforced removals by the end of March 2005 – 18,000 failed asylum applicants and 13,000 non-asylum offenders.
- b) 3,600 of the asylum removals to be removed within 3 months of exhaustion of appeal rights.
- c) 3,000 of the these failed asylum applicants to be via reporting centres.
- d) To undertake 500 operations targeted at enforcing immigration law
- e) To improve removals by 15% in the top ten difficult countries to remove (based on 2003-4 out turn)
- f) To increase monthly family removals to reach 135 family units by March 2005.

¹ Report by the Comptroller and Auditor-General
 Returning Failed Asylum Applicants - HC 76 - ISBN0 10 2933405 Session 2005 – 2006 14 July 2005
http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/05-06/050676.pdf