ILPA Meeting – 21 September

Attendees

* Sinead Marmion
* Sarah Henry
* Una Boyd
* Philip McNally
* Karl McKenna
* Carolyn Rhodes
* Agnieszka Luczak
* Hannah Cullinan
* David Southey
* Paula Quigley (Guest speaker)

**Introduction**

**Frontier Workers**

Applications are being accepted. Approximately 5,000 - 6,000 have been submitted so far.

The application process is straightforward as limited evidence is required. Look at the scheme if clients are in need of a visa. People can apply for the permit as long as they can show that they have retained rights. The guidance seems to say that employers are not required to check, and this could lead to people working unlawfully as there is no incentive.

Query remains in relation to the situation for family members of the frontier worker.

There may be a detriment due to the lack of clarity with the frontier worker scheme as it could lead to problems crossing the border, and issues in the exercise of pre rights on the Channel Islands.

**EUSS – Concessions as a result of COVID now implemented into the rules**

* Joining family members can now apply in the UK on a visiting visa and we expect to see a lot of these from the East Timorese community.
* The Home Office is now banning entry into the UK on an ID card.
* There is a new international sportsperson route.
* New global talent concession.

**New Relocation Scheme for Afghans**

Stormont agreed to take 5,000 Afghans. However, there remains a lack of clarity on this point. It will likely be modelled on the Syrian Scheme which was deemed to be very successful. People had pre- clearance before arrival and were able to access jobs, benefits etc. It seemed to be well- managed with family reunion regarded as the main obstacle.

The Afghan Scheme will provide new settlement protection for refugees to get indefinite leave. There will be separate rules for main applicants and their dependents and decision makers will have to consider other potential routes if the requirements are not met.

**Statement of Changes**

We should plug the concession for people who did not get to NI before the deadline as they can still apply if they have “compelling and compassionate reasons.” This is in the Statement of Changes. There is no mention in the Explanatory Memorandum, but they should be generous with it.

**EUSS Delays**

* Half a million delayed applications.
* In terms of receiving decisions, the process seems to be quite hit and miss at this stage.
* The Client will receive a letter to say that the application has been submitted. This is followed by an email containing the application, certificate of decision and documents.
* 58,000 late applications were made in July 2021. The immigration minister said that these people will receive protection.

**Asylum Clients in Belfast**

Guest: Paula Quigley from Mears

* Our job is to manage accommodation and support services for those within the asylum system. We do this alongside Migrant Help. In recent months we have witnessed a significant spike in arrivals. We have had our yearly intake in 4 months – approximately 350% increase in new arrivals to NI.
* We have seen approximately 200 arrivals this month and we would expect to see around 40 on average.
* Our main client group is single males.
* We are experiencing an issue with quarantine restrictions as many clients are not disclosing information to the Home Office in relation to the countries they have come from. If they have travelled through a “red” country, they must quarantine for 10 days. However, service users are insisting on leaving accommodation to seek legal advice and in doing so, they are breaking the rules in terms of the mandatory isolation period.
* Since July we have been forced to step up the use of hotels for new arrivals due to the high intake.
* COVID has spread through the hotels, and this caused problems in Loughshore as we had to lock the entire hotel down for 4 weeks.
* Please ensure that new clients are completing quarantine before leaving to seek legal advice in offices etc.

Access to GPs/ ARC card backlog

* The Home Office has moved everyone away from decision making to try and deal with the intake as they try to process new arrivals, and this is leading to delays.
* Reports of GPs refusing to accept new asylum seekers, and they are often not willing to schedule interpreters for patients.
* Some clients have also encountered problems with dentists.

If you think your client needs to be moved into alternative accommodation, contact Paul Quigley as this can be arranged for those with vulnerabilities.

Going forward, Mears will provide a list of those able to provide legal assistance to new arrivals in the welcome pack as at present we do not ask them if they have been able to access a solicitor. Our general welfare manager will look into this.

**Notice of Intent**

We have seen quite a large number of these being issued. Brexit has fed into the confusion. The majority of clients are receiving them, and they do not understand what they mean.

**Admissibility Rules**

Currently no agreement with any other countries in Europe.

Diverging views on the implementation of S55 in the Upper Tribunal.

Note: Carolyn Rhodes resigns from ILPA today.

**End.**