

Anniversary of new asylum model should bring an end to shameful asylum detention, says charity

The charity Bail for Immigration Detainees today called on the government to use the one year anniversary of the New Asylum Model as an opportunity to stop detaining asylum seekers while their claims are decided.

Since the national roll-out of the New Asylum Model in March 2007, 1,205 asylum seekers have had their claims decided in detention under the fast track process despite the New Asylum Model offering faster timescales and greater contact with a dedicated Home Office case worker than the previous system for non-detained cases.

According to Amanda Shah of Bail for Immigration Detainees:

‘The government is sticking to its target for 30% of new asylum claims to be heard in detention without justifying the continued need for the detained fast track since the introduction of the New Asylum Model. Non-detained processes exist and they should be used instead. It costs £903 per week to keep someone detained at Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre. This is a waste of taxpayers’ money when alternatives to detention are available.’

Research carried out by the charity has shown that asylum claims heard in detention are set up to fail by the speed of the process, the pressures of the detained environment and the lack of legal representation for appeals.

‘Since the government started to detain asylum seekers for its own administrative convenience, children, torture survivors and women who have been trafficked to the UK have all been wrongly detained while their asylum cases have been decided. This is a shameful way to treat vulnerable people coming to the UK in search of sanctuary’ says the charity’s Assistant Director, Amanda Shah

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Notes for editors

1. Bail for Immigration Detainees today released a briefing paper for journalists and researchers on the detained fast track. The briefing explains the detained fast track process and illustrates the charity’s key concerns with research and case studies. The briefing is available from www.biduk.org
2. Asylum seekers currently have their cases heard in detention centres at Harmondsworth near Heathrow Airport, Yarl’s Wood near Bedford and Oakington in Cambridgeshire.
3. Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID) is an independent charity working with asylum seekers and migrants in detention centres and prisons to secure their release from immigration detention.
4. Further briefing papers on immigration detention will be released on BID’s website shortly including on the detention of children and access to bail.

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