



New Asylum Model

The Home Office have introduced a new process for dealing with asylum claims. It is called the New Asylum Model or NAM for short. Over the past few months, more and more new asylum claims have been dealt with by NAM. From April 2007, all new asylum claims will be NAM cases.

Why have the Home Office introduced NAM?

The key aim for the Home Office is to make the process quicker. In the NAM process, the Home Office aim to make a decision on an asylum claim within one month of the claim being made. If the claim is refused, within a further five months, the Home Office aim to conclude any appeal and to remove the person if the appeal is dismissed.

How will NAM make the process quicker?

The Home Office believe the process will be quicker because of three unique aspects of the NAM process. Firstly, the case-owner (the Home Office official responsible for the case) will conduct the case from start to finish. Secondly, the case-owner will work with the asylum-seeker's representative in order to work out what are the real issues in the case. Thirdly, NAM has a tight timetable to be followed from the time a claim is made to the time a decision is made.

Case-owner conduct from start to finish

The case-owner will meet the asylum-seeker at an early stage – within four days of the claim being made. He or she will be responsible for setting any reporting conditions. The case-owner will conduct the asylum interview, make the decision on the claim and conduct any appeal on behalf of the Home Office – including representing at the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal. He or she will also deal with housing and welfare support for the asylum-seeker, integration if the person is granted status and removals if the claim is rejected. The Home Office believe this method will mean they have greater control of the process.

Case-owner working with the asylum-seeker's representative

The case-owner will be in close contact with the asylum-seeker and his or her representative. Both will have the name and telephone contact details of the case-owner. It is intended that by discussing the case with the representative, agreement can be reached about which parts of the claim are accepted and which may require further evidence. The Home Office believe this will reduce any time spent on irrelevant matters. They also believe that it will assist them to make better decisions on asylum claims, and so reduce the number of appeals.

A significant problem so far has been that asylum-seekers have had difficulty in accessing legal representation. A pilot scheme in Solihull provides for asylum-seekers to be allocated a legal aid representative, but there have been many examples where this has not worked adequately. One concern is whether individuals should be allocated representatives rather than having the opportunity to choose for themselves.

Tight timetable

On the day an asylum-seeker makes his or her claim for asylum, he or she will have a screening interview. The next day the asylum-seeker will be dispersed (this applies to those who cannot support themselves; current practice suggests that dispersal will be delayed). At that point the case will be transferred to one of SEVEN NAM centres. The asylum-seeker will meet the Home Office case-owner within a further three days. By the tenth day, the Home Office will require a

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representative to have submitted the asylum-seeker's statement and any supporting evidence. In the following days, the case-owner and representative will discuss the case to work out what parts of the claim are accepted and what further evidence is needed. On the fifteenth day, the asylum-seeker will have his or her full asylum interview. After this, there will be further discussion between the case-owner and the representative and further evidence may be put in. The case-owner's decision, whether to grant or refuse asylum, will be given to the asylum-seeker on the twentieth day.

This timetable is worked out according to working days – so weekends and bank holidays are excluded. Twenty days, therefore, amounts to four weeks or about one month.

Children

Asylum-seeking children will pass through the NAM process in almost exactly the same way. Representatives will be expected to return a SEF form rather than a statement by the twentieth day. The Home Office intend to interview children who claim asylum in their own right by the twenty-fifth day, and to give their decision by the thirty-fifth day. This will apply to children aged 12 years or older. Case-owners dealing with children's cases should be specially trained.

NAM structure

There are seven NAM centres – in Glasgow, Cardiff, Leeds, Liverpool, Solihull, Central London and West London. Each centre has a number of teams to reflect how many claims it is expected each centre will deal with. Glasgow and Cardiff each have two teams. Leeds has five teams; and the other centres each have four teams.

Each centre has its own regional director. It is intended that NAM centres should have increased responsibility for setting and implementing policy in their particular regions. The Home Office intend to develop regional stakeholder groups to reflect this devolution of responsibility to the regional centres.

Detained cases

NAM also deals with detained asylum-seekers. The timetable is the same – except for asylum-seekers detained in the Fast Track process, which currently operates at Harmondsworth and Yarl's Wood. The Fast Track process is very much quicker (a case may pass through the whole process, including appeal, within about one month) than the ordinary NAM process.

Cases not dealt with by NAM

There remain many outstanding cases that have not been dealt with in the NAM process. NAM will not take responsibility for these cases. The Home Office believe there is a backlog of about 400,000 to 450,000 asylum cases, which have not been finally resolved – whether by a grant of status or the person's departure from the UK. These cases are to be dealt with in what is called Legacy. More information on this will be provided in a forthcoming Information Sheet.

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