



Report of an exchange programme in Sweden
Jackie Claybrook 28.06.06

Title of document
Type (Word, Xcel

Kent Country Council/ENARO Exchange programme to Sweden
8th May - 19th May 2006
Jackie Claybrook

etc.)
Saved on (disc,
drive)

History

Version	Date	Author	remarks

Checked by

Function	Name	Date	Signature

Accepted by

Function	Name	Date	Signature

Final version mailed to ENARO-Secretariat:

Date:

Contents:

Document

Contents

1. introduction
2. National asylum policy
3. Current situation
4. reception organization
5. asylum procedure in relation to reception
6. Housing
7. Internal organization of reception
8. Counseling
9. Specific groups/categorial reception
10. social support
11. Communication
12. Personnel
13. Finances
14. Other
15. Analysis

Introduction

The Swedish Migration Board is the central government authority and has responsibility for handling matters covered by the Swedish aliens legislation and the Swedish citizenship act. Sweden has six regional offices and each area has responsibility for asylum seekers placed in their locality. The placing of clients is controlled by the Stockholm office where the asylum claims are initially made. Each area has a certain amount of places available and asylum seekers can be sent to any part of the country whilst their applications are being processed. Unaccompanied children are placed in accommodation under the care of Local Authorities.

I spent my time in Gällivare where adults are placed in accommodation via Stockholm. There are no facilities in this area for unaccompanied minors and they cater for single adults and families.

National Asylum Policy

Sweden works under the Aliens Act 2005, which became effective on 31.3.06. The basis of the act is to provide sanctuary from persecution and also to consider applications from people, who wish to work, study or start a family in Sweden. This Aliens Act has incorporated the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Under Swedish law, persons other than refugees may be granted residence permits if they require protection as a result of conflicts in their home country, have a fear of being punished physically or with death or an environmental disaster has happened in their native country. They may also be granted permits if they have health problems that cannot be treated in their home country. The Migration Board can refuse entry immediately and persons must leave Sweden as soon as possible. An appeal can be made against this decision but persons are not allowed to remain in Sweden to await the decision by the court. A person must leave within three months of the date a residence permit was applied for.

Current Situation

In 2005 there were a total of 17,520 applications granted asylum from applicants totalling approximately 50,000. Many of the recent applicants have been from African countries and Iraq, although there is a large Russian influx. In 2005 44% of applicants were granted residence permits on Humanitarian grounds, 20% of those in need of protection, 14% refugees and 22% quota refugees. The quota refugees are those who have made applications to Migration for residence through family connections.

Reception Organisation

Once a claim for asylum has been lodged in Stockholm accommodation is allocated and the clients are then placed under the care of Migrationsverket in that specific area. The clients are

met at either the airport or the railway station and taken to their accommodation placement. An introduction is made to give information about Sweden and a consultation is made to decide the kind of organised activities a person will be involved in. This will always include education and information on local services, e.g. public transport, social groups, health facilities and other relevant services.

Asylum Procedure in Relation to Reception

Detention centres are used in some cases whilst an application is being considered. Clients may not be detained for more than 48 hours and the time cannot be extended. If a person is unable to supply proof of identity they may be liable for detention for up to two weeks, or if a decision has been made that the person must leave Sweden, detention periods can be extended for up to two months. An adult who is likely to cause breaches of security and disorder can be placed in a locked room or a remand centre. Neither children nor their parents or guardians may be taken into a detention centre if that isolates them from one another. Detention facilities resemble the accommodation centres that the Migration Board provides for asylum seekers. This means that activities and out-door exercise as well as visiting privileges are available at the centres. All other applicants are allocated housing whilst their applications are considered.

Housing

Accommodation is given wherever there are spaces in apartments that have been allocated to house asylum seekers. The Swedish Migration Board furnishes the apartments and single people share a room. Families also share apartments, usually if there is only one child. Asylum seekers do not have a choice of accommodation and could be housed anywhere in Sweden. The accommodation is furnished but they do not supply televisions. Clients do not have to contribute to utility bills or any other costs relating to accommodation. There are no reimbursements made by the residents if they cause damage to the property. The only exception to this is if damage is continuous, they are reported to the police for prosecution. An asylum seeker may live in accommodation with family and friends but there are no provisions to pay any rent. There is a high turnover of moving clients and because of this all post is sent to the office and clients have to attend personally to collect mail. This also indicates if the client is still in the accommodation or if they have left. Once a person has been given permission to stay, they are able to apply for a loan for home furnishing and equipment. This is available only if they are participating in the refugee resettlement programme in the area. Gallivare has spaces for 350 inhabitants and at present have 310 in the area.

Internal Organisation of Reception

Caseworkers are allocated clients and they interview the clients in their offices. All clients have to make an appointment to see their caseworker and home visits are made only when the client cannot attend at the office. The Clients are given advice on issues that may arise, and appointments are made for outside agencies e.g. health clinics by the caseworkers. The

caseworkers use telephone interpreters where necessary. The client's education, work experience and an assessment form the basis of activities they will be expected to take part in.

Counselling

Qualified staff at health centres carries out any counselling. A referral needs to be made by GP. There are no independent charities set up to give counselling. The health centre has a large number of referrals for posttraumatic stress and other related issues.

Specific Groups/Categorical Reception

The Red Cross has a base in Gallivare that has been there since 1946, and a second hand shop helps to finance the group. Work is done with asylum seekers on a Wednesday when advice and help is given in the municipality. They help with contacting and visiting lawyers, banks, employment offices, police offices and will also write letters for asylum seekers. Their main work however, is searching for relatives in other countries and reuniting families. They have also set up a small area as a meeting room for asylum seekers.

There are other support networks that are run by volunteers and one is a café to which any person is welcomed to attend. This particular place is attended regularly by up to 50 people of all nationalities and different activities take place such as music and dance nights.

Social support

Social support is arranged by the Migration Board and is called organised activities. These are provided to ensure that if a permit is granted, integration is easier for the individual. An asylum seeker must take part in organised activities to be entitled to a full daily allowance. One of the stipulations is that school must be attended to learn the Swedish language. There are four classes daily at the education centre, which have approximately 25 in each class. Many are illiterate and speak only their own language or English.

There is a public library that is open to asylum seekers and they are free to borrow books, CD's, Videos etc. They have a foreign section where books are available in 38 different languages.

Work placements are made, but these are unpaid and clients still have to attend school. Asylum seekers who are employed and are financially self-sufficient do not have to attend classes.

Money is taken from the daily allowance for non-attendance unless this is backed up by a doctor's certificate.

There are two qualified health care workers who deal with general problems. Asylum seekers have to pay a nominal charge to visit the doctor. On the initial visit clients are offered blood test etc. especially as HIV is a common complaint because many clients come from African states. The Health Centre is fully equipped from a gymnasium to a laboratory. Advice is given regarding contraception etc. Medicals are not compulsory.

Children who enter Sweden are placed in preparation classes in ordinary schools. This is intended for newly arrived pupils with different mother tongues and in different grades. The activities are directed towards pupils who cannot speak Swedish so are therefore unable to

participate in ordinary lessons. Pupils get individual and intensive Swedish teaching and the education is knowledge related. This system has been working well as the pupil's graduate to an ordinary class after six months to two years depending on their progress.

Communication

The team co-operates with police regarding identifying suspects. The police are also involved with clients who refuse to try to obtain some sort of identity. This is a big problem in Sweden as many refuse to co-operate. This happens especially when removals need to be made, as local officers are responsible for ensuring they leave the country. They do not have separate enforcement staff. Letters of acceptances are sent to the clients from the main regional offices.

Personnel

In Gallivare (Northern office) there are 12 staff (3 Administration – inclusive of finance) and 9 front line staff. 5 of the employees have professional qualifications and these work as caseworkers. 2 members of staff are responsible for the accommodation, and this involves checking the apartments for damage etc.

Other staff members are responsible for education and work and general duties with the clients.

Finances

In 2005 the total expenditure was 251SEK per day. The government funds the amount and each area has a budget. The expenditure for 2005 is:-

Benefits (own accommodation included)	KR 54
Health and Medical Care	53
Education	23
Wages	48
Food and Accommodation	29
Other Costs	44

Services are bought by migrant departments from the local authority. These include education and health care.

Payment to asylum seekers is put into an account, which is linked to a bankcard. Credits to this account can only be made by the Migration Board.

Other

I visited Bowden where decisions are made by Migration regarding asylum. There are many cases which have not yet been decided, but the migration office categorise their case loads into two different groups – fast track and those which need further investigation. The migration board is very keen to obtain proof of a person's identity, and clients are tested on their knowledge of the country and area they claim to originate from, this is done by telephone or video link. There was also a case of a third country applicant who had been sent back to Sweden from the U.K. as a third country applicant.

Once a minor has reached the age of 18 they are treated as an adult and there are no exceptions to this.

Asylum seekers who are unable to attend school for reasons such as alcohol/drug abuse, illiteracy are placed in the community to work with the indigenous population who have social problems. This work ranges from woodwork to cleaning streets. The work period is for three hours per day.

Analysis

Sweden has an asylum system very similar to the U.K. in respect of asylum seekers being despatched to accommodation where places are available regardless of their point of entry. Differences are that applicants are allowed to work after four months of being in the country, even if their status has not been decided. There is also the point that all applicants have to attend language classes and are penalised financially for non-attendance. There appears to be more involvement with the indigenous population especially in more rural areas in the social concept. Minors under the age of 18 are sent to residential accommodation and stay there until they transfer to the adult system. Sweden also places great importance on proof of identity and applicants for asylum are encouraged to contact their families and officials in their home countries to obtain documentary proof. Clients who do not assist in proving their identity could have their daily allowance reduced by the Migration Board. The problem of waiting for a decision is similar to the U.K. and appeals against a decision can be made to one of the three Migrations Courts in Stockholm, Goteborg or Malmo depending on where the application was initially rejected.