



華人資料及諮詢中心 Chinese Information and Advice Centre

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Immigration

Migrants Criticize New UK Citizenship Law

Immigrant workers have criticized the recently passed Border, Citizenship and Immigration Act, describing it as 'unfair'.

Many migrants have criticized the government for implementing the changes without proper consultation, which will see the time they need to spend in the UK before qualifying for indefinite leave to remain increase from 4 to 5 years. There have been complaints that migrants already in the UK have been betrayed as they will not now be able to apply for citizenship when, and under the same terms, that they originally thought they would be able to.

While those who apply for citizenship before the changes are implemented in July 2011 will still be able to do so under the old rules, migrants already in the UK who do not yet qualify for citizenship may not be able to do so. The new rules have also been criticized for their lack of stability, which will prevent migrants from planning for the future. As having Indefinite Leave to Remain status allows migrants to get a mortgage, travel freely and apply for benefits, it is fundamental that the rules are clear-cut.

There have also been criticisms of further changes proposed by the government. Migrant groups have said that requiring migrants to take two Life in the UK tests will not be beneficial, as the current Life in the UK test and English language requirements have not been proven to

assist migrants in local integration, so introducing a second test would merely add pressure to migrants. Some also feel that the proposed points-based citizenship route would be too susceptible to change to allow migrants to plan for the future properly.

The Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act will be introduced from July 2011.

Changes to Child Visitor Rules

The UK Border Agency has announced details of new changes to the rules on foreign students under the age of 18 who come to the UK on exchanges and educational visits. From 1 January 2010, students from countries outside the European Economic Area will be able to apply to enter the UK for up to six months on an exchange or educational visit to a state-maintained school, a non-maintained special school, an independent fee-paying school or an independent non fee-paying school. They will not require entry clearance, unless they are nationals of countries who require a visa to enter the UK.

This provision replaces and supersedes the temporary concession that permitted such visits until 31 December 2009. If you have been granted permission to enter or remain in the UK on the basis of that concession on or before 31 December 2009, the permission will remain valid providing you remain in the UK. For details of the rules please go to:

www.ukvisas.gov.uk.



The Chinese Information and Advice Centre wish our readers, service-users, friends and supporters, and to the Chinese communities in the UK and all over the world--

"A Happy, Healthy, Peaceful and Prosperous New Year"

"Gong Xi Fa Cai"
"Kung Hei Fat Choy".



Refugee & Asylum Project

Cut in Financial Support for Asylum Seekers

The Government has implemented cuts in the amount of money asylum seekers receive every week.

The amount of support for single asylum seekers will be reduced from £42 to just £35.13 a week for asylum seekers over 25. This will mean that asylum seekers will be surviving on £7 a week less than before.

The rate for children, couples and 18-24 year olds will go up in line with inflation, but the government has introduced a single rate for all single asylum seekers regardless of their age. They have justified this by saying that as asylum seekers are placed in accommodation which includes utility bills, they do not face the same increase in costs after they turn 25 as other people on benefits do. However, after the cuts, asylum seekers will face having to survive on just over half of the amount claimants of standard income support receive, which the government claims is the least amount necessary to live on.

Changes to New Asylum Claims and Section 4 Support

The UKBA has announced new rules for making fresh claims. These changes have already come into effect and will affect everyone who has made a fresh claim to asylum since 14th October 2009.

Individuals will now not be given section 4 support after making a fresh claim while their claim is being considered, unless it takes longer than 20 days for a decision to be reached.

From now on those wishing to make a fresh claim will no longer be able to do so by post, but will have to go in person. Those who made their original claim for asylum after 5th March 2007 should make fresh claims at their reporting centre. However, those who made their first claim before this date will need to go to the Further Submissions Unit in Liverpool, after making an appointment (Call **01512370980** Mon-Fri 9am-4pm to make an appointment). Since its launch people have reported that the number is constantly engaged. Once all the appointments for the following 10 days have been filled, usually at around midday, the phone is simply switched to the answering machine. While alternative arrangements will be made for those who are sick, disabled, or in prison/detention to apply by

post or in person locally, they will still need to first call the Liverpool number. There will be no financial assistance available to help claimants travel to Liverpool. This is expected to cause problems as most asylum seekers cannot afford to buy coach or train tickets.



Government Endangering Mental Health of Refugees

Two new reports from the mental health charity MIND have criticized the government for endangering the mental health of refugees and asylum seekers. Problems such as the complex asylum process and detention centers are regularly causing or exacerbating mental health problems in refugees and asylum seekers, while the government is denying them the help they need.

In the first ever report into the services available for refugees and asylum seekers, MIND found that the government's restrictive policies regarding access to healthcare, education, housing and employment were isolating refugees and asylum seekers from society, with poverty and destitution only increasing the problem. As many asylum seekers and refugees have come to the UK to escape torture, conflict and persecution, these problems can all too easily lead to mental health issues.

A second report found that there was not enough provision for mental health services for refugees and asylum seekers, while problems such as language barriers, stigma surrounding mental health issues and lack of understanding of refugee mental health needs were preventing them from accessing help. While the report did commend some Refugee Community Organisations for the mental health support they provide, it stated that the majority were still unable to access the help they need.

If you or someone you know is having problems with a mental health problem, please contact the Chinese Mental Health Association on **020 7613 1008**, Monday-Friday 10-6pm or email info@cmha.org.uk.

Women Support Services



The Link Between Gambling and Domestic Violence

The CIAC is leading the fight against the growing number of casinos and betting shops in London Chinatown. Westminster Council has been urged to stop issuing businesses with gambling licenses due to the high correlation between gambling addiction and social problems like domestic violence. Evidence from New Zealand has found that women with gambling-addict partners were over 10 times more likely to be a victim of domestic violence than women in relationships with partners who were not addicted to gambling. Furthermore, they themselves may become addicted to gambling as a coping mechanism against their abusive relationship.

Sadly, when mothers are victims of domestic violence their children are often indirectly or directly affected as well. In response to this CIAC has launched **The Sunflower Support Programme** which provides support to children and young people affected by domestic violence.

A survey of 144 spouses of compulsive gamblers indicated that 50% were physically and verbally abused by their spouses and 12% had attempted suicide. In addition to the emotional problems of anger, depression and isolation, another 1999 survey of 215 spouses of pathological gamblers indicated that they often suffered from headaches, stomachaches, dizziness and breathing difficulties.

The evidence is clear: the price of gambling is not limited to financial loss but also extends to social, and particularly family, breakdown. If you wish to prevent this problem from destroying the London Chinatown community, then please write to Westminster Council telling them of your opposition to the issuing of further gambling licenses.

Please write to: Westminster City Hall 64 Victoria Street London SW1E 6QP

New Strategy Announced to End Violence Against Women

The government has announced its new strategy to end violence against women and girls. The cross-governmental strategy aims to focus on “*Protection, Provision and Prevention*”, with measures such as teaching about domestic violence in schools, increasing funding for services for victims, and increasing police powers against perpetrators.

Up to £13m will be allocated to provide services such as family intervention projects to support 10,000 families a year, a stalking and harassment helpline, and a 24-hour sexual violence helpline. The government has also pledged to increase the number of Sexual Assault Referral Centres – one-stop centres where victims can obtain medical advice and counseling and the police can retrieve forensic evidence – so that there is at least one in every police force area by 2011.

A pilot will be carried out in which victims who came to the UK on a spousal visa and are forced to leave their homes due to domestic violence will be provided with up to 40 days accommodation and living support, which it is hoped will allow them enough time to complete the necessary forms to apply for indefinite leave to remain. CIAC is a part of “Women Together Against Abuse” (WTAA), which has been campaigning for support for domestic violence victims on spousal visas.

The strategy also includes ‘Go’ orders which will allow the police to prevent perpetrators of domestic violence from returning home. It is hoped this will remove the need for the victim to go into temporary accommodation.

While the implementation of one integrated strategy has been welcomed by women’s groups such as WTAA, there have been criticisms that the funding allocated will not be sufficient to provide specialist services for ethnic minority groups. There has also been criticism from the public that teaching young children about domestic violence will rob them of their innocence.

An Update on the Stateless Citizens Campaign:

London Citizens Meeting with Immigration Minister Phil Woolas

On 2nd December 2009, London Citizens on behalf of Malaysian BOCs (British Overseas Citizens) met with the Minister for Immigration, Phil Woolas, to discuss the fate of the Malaysian BOCs who have renounced their Malaysian Citizenship and become ‘Stateless Citizens’.

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CIAC's News

Homeaccess Scheme

A new scheme has been launched to give children aged 7-14 from low income families access to a computer at home. In order to qualify, you will need to meet the criteria specified below.

The child you are claiming for must attend state school, and you must be receiving child benefit and either claiming free school meals or one of the following; Income-based Jobseeker's allowance, Income Support, Child Tax Credit (but not Working Tax Credit), Pension Credit (Guaranteed Credit but not Savings Credit), Income-based Employment Support Allowance, or Support Under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

If you meet the criteria, please visit the website below to apply: <http://www.becta.org.uk/homeaccess>

Police Community Surgery at CIAC

A walk-in Police Community Surgery is now available every other Monday (next one on 1st and 15th March 2010) 3-5pm at CIAC's office in London Chinatown. No appointments are needed and there will be an interpreter ready to help. Everyone is welcome and we encourage you to make full use of this convenient service offered by the Metropolitan Police to our community at your doorstep. To enquire, please call 08453 131 868 or email info@ciac.co.uk.

Donate Books for Chinese Prisoners and Detainees



Over the past ten years, millions of Chinese people have migrated to the UK, some via proper channels and others through illegal routes. According to an unofficial source, hundreds of Chinese people are currently in prisons or detention centres across the UK. Food and basic facilities are provided to prisoners and detainees, however, as most reading materials and entertainment programmes are only in English, there is increasing concern for the mental health of the Chinese population in prisons and detention centres. CIAC is now encouraging the community to donate unwanted books to help improve the lives of the people behind bars. Cllr Edmond Yeo, chair of CIAC, would like to ask the Chinese community as a whole not only to congratulate individuals on their contribution to

society, but also to show empathy to those who are suffering. CIAC thanks you for your generosity. We accept Chinese language books and magazines at our office. For further enquiries, please contact Ms. Chui-Yee on 08453 131 868.

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During the meeting, London Citizens and the BOC representatives presented case studies to the minister, along with a letter from the Malaysian Home Office which stated that Malaysian BOCs who opt for a BOC passport were advised by the Malaysian Home Office to voluntarily renounce their Malaysian citizenship to avoid committing a criminal offence. The letter also stated that the Malaysian authorities regard BOC status as citizenship, even though the British government does not hold this view.

In the past the Home Office has expressed doubts over the reliability of the evidence from the Malaysian government, yet has not made any attempt to verify with the Malaysian authorities. These doubts were expressed again in the meeting, but the minister said that he would now arrange a meeting with the Malaysian authorities. The minister added that he would like to know how many BOCs in the UK are in this situation and see evidence of their non-returnability. The Home Office will give a list of the evidence they would like to see, and will discuss the issue further with the BOCs at a later date.

Year of the Tiger!

Don't forget this year's Chinese New Year celebrations in London's Chinatown! Free events will be taking place on 21st February 2010 from 12-6pm in Chinatown, Leicester Square and Trafalgar Square. Best wishes and Happy New Year greetings from Mr Les Hardie, the staff and management at Rosewheel Limited (London Chinatown Market).

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If undelivered, please kindly return to CIAC (address below). Thank you.