

Mr Tony McNulty MP
Minister of State
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Your Reference

Our Reference
MB/mas

Date
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Contact
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Dear Mr McNulty

FAILED ASYLUM SEEKERS

I was in correspondence with Des Browne about this issue and, as the new Minister with responsibility for immigration, citizenship and nationality, must take up the cudgels again with you.

I chair the Council's Minority Ethnic Communities Advisory Committee – MECAC – and the Committee has requested for the second time that I write to express its members' deep concerns about the existing and growing problem in Derby of failed asylum seekers. The Committee has members from both long-standing and emerging minority ethnic communities in the city – including representatives from the Pakistani, Indian, African, Caribbean, Iraqi-Kurds, Congolese, Somali, Bosnian-Herzegovinian communities.

As I explained to Des Browne, our main issue is with failed asylum seekers, including those who remain here because it is not safe for them to return home. Some of these – currently around 140 here in Derby – will be supported under Section 4, but we estimate that there could be ten times this number of Iraqi-Kurds living in the city without any support because they have not been prepared to accept the conditions that go with Section 4.

The majority of these are young men who wish to work so they can support themselves adequately. We understand that the government rescinded the rule that allowed asylum seekers to work after six months. I can only repeat what I said to Des Browne that the policy is causing destitution among failed asylum seekers, and we are suffering from the inevitable arising social problems. These very problems, as perceived by the long-standing minority

ethnic communities in the inner city, where most of the supported and failed asylum seeker communities live, are:

- promoting a culture of illegal work with poor pay and conditions undermining legitimate businesses, despite very active police action
- increase in abuse of drugs and alcohol, and related crime
- increase in petty crime
- increased risk of community tension and disorder as we house within the city increasing numbers of bored young men without a stake in our society
- increase in xenophobic reactions as newcomers are seen to be either idle or working illegally, so fulfilling extremist stereotypes.

We can only urge you, yet again, to reconsider the policy which does not allow asylum seekers to work legally while awaiting the time when they can safely return home.

The suggestion we made to Des Browne was that Derby be supported to create a pilot project allowing flexibility in relation to employment. We would urge you to give serious consideration to this proposal which we would be delighted to work up with NASS.

In his reply to us of 21 February, Des Browne completely ignored this proposal. It is not just a question of giving people something to do to fill their time as you suggest with unpaid voluntary activities or training. What we have in Derby are large numbers of young men with no income and nowhere to live. Your policies are not helping us with the reality of this situation. We would like you to give serious consideration to our proposal to act as an employment pilot.

I look forward to a more positive response.

Yours sincerely

Maurice Burgess
Leader of the Council

Copy:

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