

Meeting of the Entry Clearance User Panel **10.00 hours Wednesday 21 April 2004**

Present:

User Panel

Mohammed Akram	Council of British Pakistanis (Scotland)
Helen Carson	Refugee Legal Centre
Azhar Chohan	Paddington Law Centre
Indrani Currie	Coventry Law Centre
Meena Devlukia	University of Warwick
Maria Fernandes	National Organisation of Asian Businesses
Sheila Grewal	Refugee Legal Centre
David Main	Association of Regulated Immigration Advisers
Amjad Malik	Law Society
Julia Onslow-Cole	International Bar Association
Michael Pickett	IAS
Mahmud Quayum	Camden Law Centre
Sarah Rimmington	UKCOSA
Susan Rowlands	ILPA

Observer

Fiona Lindsley	Independent Monitor
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UKvisas/IND

Robin Barnett (Chair)	UKvisas – Director
Mandie Campbell	UKvisas - Head
Sue Davidson	UKvisas – Deputy Head, Operations
Nick Astbury	UKvisas – Deputy Head, Special Projects
Lorraine Fussey	UKvisas – Head of Policy
Jackie Colton	UKvisas – Head of Communications (Secretary)
Steven Walker	IND Appeals Directorate

1. Introduction

- Robin Barnett welcomed Members, and Fiona Lindsley, the Independent Monitor, attending as an observer. He also introduced Mandie Campbell as the newly appointed Head of UKvisas who would be taking over responsibility for day to day operational issues.
- Members will be aware of recent events regarding the consideration of managed migration applications. The Prime Minister's Immigration Group was now overseeing a full review of processes and procedures, and a number of announcements would be forthcoming on tightening control of a range of types of application. UKvisas would continue to work to ensure that a tight and effective control was not incompatible with good service delivery.

2. Action Points from previous meeting

- Robin Barnett ran through the progress made on action points from the October meeting. Members asked for a list of the action points to be circulated to all, along with contact details for Tom Wilkie and Ian Full, and guidance previously circulated on Intention to live together.
- Members discussed difficulties which they had experienced receiving documents as e-mail attachments.

Action Points

- 2.1** Circulate update on action points from last meeting.
- 2.2** Circulate contact details for Ian Full and Tom Wilkie.
- 2.3** Re-circulate guidance to ECOs on intention to live together
- 2.4** All e-mails to User Panel members to contain a list of attachments so that members can confirm they have received them all

3. Operational Overview

Sue Davidson outlined the operational challenges facing the visa operation:

- Global demand increasing at an annual rate of 11% with increases of 20% and more in 40 Posts.
- Pakistan - The categories of application accepted in Islamabad were extended in February 2004 to include first-time family visitors over 30. On target to resume full service (with the exception of working holidaymakers) on 4 May 2004. Islamabad is now fully staffed although the proportion of temporary duty staff is high and this brings its own challenges. Staff will be allocated to Karachi later in the year when accommodation issues have been resolved. A new Director of Visa Services, Alex Pond, will take up post in early June when Colin Mulcahy retires.
- Turkey - Both Istanbul and Ankara are now offering a postal and agency service for a restricted range of applications, and are able to carry out some interviews. The Istanbul staff will move shortly to temporary accommodation, and discussions on the options for a long-term solution are underway. Security concerns following the Istanbul bomb have also led to restrictions in Algeria and Morocco.
- Bangladesh – Dhaka is under considerable pressure at the moment, particularly in terms of SBS applications which have been at an unexpectedly high level. Additional resources are needed particularly at management level which UKvisas have agreed
- Outsourcing – Outsourced operations are now in place in India, Uganda, Singapore and Bangladesh. China, Kenya and Ghana were also now looking at outsourcing.
- Staffing – In addition to the new DVS in Pakistan, the new DVS in Nigeria, Chris Dix had taken up post in March. Carol Doughty would be taking up her post as DVS India in late May. In addition five candidates had now been identified for the newly created posts as Deputy DVS in Lagos, Accra, Nairobi, Mumbai and Islamabad.

Action points:

- 3.1 UKvisas to supply copies of any guidance produced for Fedex in Pakistan and VFS in Bangladesh
- 3.2 Sue Davidson to write to Mahmud Quayum on the handling of postal applications in Dhaka.
- 3.3 Sue Davidson to investigate delays in sending documents from Beijing by diplomatic bag.
- 3.4 Sue Davidson to confirm that Fedex are not accepting and stockpiling applications in advance of full service resumption on 4 May.

4. Appeals

- Steven Walker reported that the backlog of entry clearance appeals awaiting listing will be gone by the end of April. From early May IND will begin sending acknowledgements to reps/sponsors. Members were agreed that the next step would be to ensure that Explanatory Statements were sent out to reps as soon as they were received.
- New procedures had been introduced to ensure that allowed appeals were dealt with quickly. ECOs had now been provided with a list of telephone contact points for POUs. If a successful appellant came into a visa section and more than 35 days had elapsed since the determination ECOs could now ring the POU to confirm that the visa could be issued. This was not ideal, and the ultimate aim remains to have all determinations dispatched electronically. A start had been made with some Tribunal decisions, but technical difficulties remained which POUs were attempting to address.
- Tom Wilkie will be the dedicated point of contact for appeals cases (contact details attached)
- Lorraine Fussey reported that improved arrangements are in place for referrals to IND with the use of e-mail proformas. This has been particularly helpful in helping E African Posts to deal with large numbers of family reunion referrals.
- Work is continuing with IND and IAA on the use of a single reference number for cases across all systems. As an interim measure a system of cross-referencing had been put in place.
- Difficulties arise for legal reps trying to lodge appeals when Posts' fax and phone numbers are out of date or out of operation. Lorraine Fussey confirmed that for the purposes of lodging an appeal the date of postage was considered to be the relevant date rather than the date of receipt.
- The procedure for ECM reviews of refusal cases appears to vary widely between Posts, as do the numbers of cases overturned at review. UKvisas Policy Section will be working with our Operations Section on this and we will issue guidance where necessary.

Action points:

- 4.1 Lorraine Fussey to check whether refusal notices have been amended to reflect the new funding arrangements brought in under the 2003 Act (they were amended last Friday).

- 4.2 Steven Walker to investigate the possibility of written notification to sponsor/rep once the determination is sent for cases where the decision is not to be appealed.
- 4.3 Jackie Colton to ensure that published telephone and fax numbers are correct, and to investigate the possibility of providing updated contact details for “crisis” Posts (Turkey, Morocco, Algiers)
- 4.4 Any guidance issued to ECMs on reviews to be copied to Panel Members.

5. Biometrics

- Nick Astbury outlined the progress towards capturing biometric data as part of the visa application process. A successful fingerprint pilot had been carried out in Colombo in 2003, and this had now been extended to include applicants in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Tanzania and Uganda. Kenya will follow later this year and the rollout to other locations is now under discussion with IND.
- There have been a number of successful matches, and there is also evidence of some deterrent effect.
- All EU countries are committed to fingerprinting visa applicants by 2008, and discussions on the technical arrangements is proceeding.
- UKvisas is keen to ensure that fingerprinting arrangements are compatible with good service delivery. The system in Kampala, where fingerprinting is carried out within an outsourced operation had shown that this could be achieved. The system being introduced in the US showed that real-time matching could be achieved.
- Future work would link in to that of the e-Borders Directorate and with ID card development.

Action points:

- 5.1 Nick Astbury to provide updates to future meetings as necessary

6. Operational impact of changes to the Working Holidaymaker rules

- Sue Davidson reported that the WHM rules change in August 2003 had had a significant operational impact with applications up 32% worldwide. Global application figures are at Annex B
- Delhi, Mumbai and Colombo had been particularly affected and all were now operating separate queues for WHM applications in order to ensure that the rest of the business was not affected.
- Guidance had been issued to ECOs at the time the changes were introduced. A separate session will be incorporated into the ECO training course. Refresher training for existing ECOs is under consideration.
- WHM policy is now being looked at as part of the wider review of managed migration policies and further changes cannot be ruled out.
- Paragraph 28 of the Rules applies to all applications with the exception of visits and EEA Family Permits. WHM applicants must apply in their country of normal residence.
- Refusal notices should refer to the specific circumstances of the applicant, although these could be based on standardised paragraphs supplied in UKvisas’

guidance. Where Members are aware of inappropriate wording being used these should be brought to our attention

Action points:

- 6.1 Mahmud Quayum to forward to UKvisas examples of unsuitable standard paragraphs used in refusal notices
- 6.2 UKvisas to raise with ECMs in Mumbai and Dhaka the use of out of date refusal wording.

7. NAO Value for Money Study of UKvisas

- Robin Barnett reported that the NAO study was due for publication in May 2004. We had built a positive and constructive relationship with the NAO and looked forward to receiving their report.

Action points:

- 7.1 UKvisas to inform User Panel members of publication date

8. Members Forum

- Questions raised in advance and responses are attached at Annex A. Members raised a number of supplementary points and various action points were agreed.

Action points:

- 8.1 Members to write to Robin Barnet by 10 May with specific concerns on procedures followed by Gerry's/FedEx staff in Pakistan. Robin will raise these during his visit to Pakistan in late May, and will report back to the next meeting.
- 8.2 Jackie Colton to issue guidance to UKvisas' Public Enquiry Unit staff on arrangements for correcting erroneous visa endorsements.
- 8.3 DSP Guidance on DNA testing will be updated at the end of April. Jackie Colton to copy new guidance to ECOs to Members when this is issued.
- 8.4 Information on waiting times published on the UKvisas website has been welcomed by Members. Times in Addis and Harare will be added in May as requested by Members.

9. Any other business

None raised.

10. Date of next meeting

- The next meeting will be in early October 2004 at a venue to be arranged.

Jackie Colton
Communications Section
27 April 2004

Summary of Action points

Item	Action	By
2.1	Circulate summary of action points from last meeting.	Attached
2.2	Circulate contact details for Ian Full and Tom Wilkie.	Attached
3.2	Re-circulate guidance to ECOs on intention to live together	Attached
2.4	All e mails to User Panel members to contain a list of attachments so that members can confirm they have received them all	Jackie Colton
3.1	UKvisas to supply copies of any guidance produced for Fedex in Pakistan and VFS in Bangladesh	Sue Davidson
3.2	Write to Mahmud Quayum on the handling of postal applications in Dhaka.	Sue Davidson
3.3	Investigate delays in sending documents from Beijing by diplomatic bag.	Sue Davidson
3.4	Confirm that Fedex are not accepting and stockpiling applications in advance of full service resumption on 4 May.	Done Robin Barnett wrote to members on 30 April
4.1	Check whether refusal notices have been amended to reflect new funding arrangements under the 2003 Act.	Lorraine Fussey Done. Amended refusal notices sent to Posts on 7 May
4.2	Investigate the possibility of written notification to sponsor/rep once the determination is sent for cases where the decision is not to be appealed.	Steven Walker
4.3	Ensure that published telephone and fax numbers are correct, and to investigate providing updated contact details for "crisis" Posts (Turkey, Morocco, Algiers)	Jackie Colton
4.4	Any guidance issued to ECMs on reviews to be copied to Panel Members.	Lorraine Fussey
5.1	Updates to future meetings as necessary	Nick Astbury
6.1	Forward to UKvisas examples of unsuitable standard paragraphs used in refusal notices	Mahmud Quayum/Members
6.2	Raise with ECMs in Mumbai and Dhaka the use of out of date refusal wording for Working Holidaymaker applications.	Lorraine Fussey Done Posts re-circulated guidance to ECOs
7.1	Inform User Panel members of publication date for NAO report	Jackie Colton
8.1	Write to Robin Barnett by 10 May with specific concerns on procedures followed by Gerry's/FedEx staff in Pakistan. Robin to report back to the next meeting on his visit to Pakistan.	Members/Robin Barnett
8.2	Issue clarification to UKvisas' Public Enquiry Unit staff on arrangements for correcting erroneous visa endorsements.	Done Issued 22 April 2004

8.3	DSP Guidance on DNA testing will be updated at the end of April. Guidance to ECOs to be copied to Members when this is issued.	Lorraine Fussey
8.4	Add Harare and Addis to Post waiting times published on website.	Jackie Colton
10	Arrange next meeting	Jackie Colton

Attachments:

- A - Members Forum questions and responses
- B - Update on action points from October meeting
- C - Guidance to ECOs on intention to live together
- D - Contact details for Ian Full and Tom Wilkie

ANNEX A

MEMBERS FORUM

1. **Mohammed Akram**

Occasionally a situation arises where either the UK based staff or more often the local staff give cause for concern. I recently had cause to write to Adrian Loxton in Islamabad on the behaviour of an interpreter. Despite a reminder I have had no response. What procedures are normally adopted to investigate such complaints and what timescale is involved?

All complaints about the level of service are treated seriously and are fully investigated before reply. Complaints should normally be made in the first instance to the ECM or Director, Visa Services for the Post concerned. We try to respond to all correspondence as quickly as possible, but inevitably difficult choices may have to be made on allocating resources to this where application levels are high. If the investigation proves lengthy, we usually send an interim reply. Mr Akram's reply on this case was sent but didn't reach him and a copy has now been provided.

2. **Mohammed Akram**

The question of student applications where the ECO decides, normally on the basis of one or two questions, that the applicant's English is not good enough to pursue the desired course. Should the ECOs assessment override the assessment of the college when there is in the admission letter an English language/orientation course as a pre-cursor to the main course? Should there be an independent assessment in a "normal" environment from a recognised English language teaching body before refusal?

If the applicant has a recognised English language qualification such as CAE, CPE and IELTS then the ECO should not be assessing the applicant's ability to follow the course in English because this has already been professionally assessed. If the applicant does not have a recognised English language qualification then the ECO can assess the applicant's ability to follow the course by reference to simple conversation and interview using English rather than an interpreter. It is up to the applicant to provide all of the evidence required for a student application if they have not undertaken an English language assessment before submitting their student application and cannot prove to the ECO that they have a sufficient standard of English to follow the course, then the application may be refused. In cases where there is a English language/orientation course before the main course then it depends very much on how long the course is and whether it is designed to bring the student up to the required level of English to follow the course or whether it is purely an introductory course for foreign students.

3. **Mohammed Akram**

There is serious concern about the level of service and almost abusive treatment of applicants by Gerry's FedEx staff particularly in Faisalabad. Any agency, although independent, acting on behalf of UKvisas must conform to the level of service required by UKvisas. I have come across a number of cases where

applications are taken without documentary evidence particularly on maintenance and accommodation and it is inevitable that such applications fail. It is difficult to escape the feeling that Gerry's Fedex take applications knowing they will fail but the RS600 is the incentive.

See response to Question 4.

4. **Azhar Chohan** What has happened about guidelines for Fedex staff and what is generally happening about guidelines about outsourced services. In Pakistan Fedex staff are turning applicants away because the sponsorship declaration is not signed by a notary and they are advising on documentation. This is not supposed to happen. What is the complaint procedure that has been agreed?

We too appreciate that poor service by any agency acting on our behalf reflects badly on us and we do our best to ensure that acceptable standards are maintained. We have produced a comprehensive outsourcing guide and ECOs provide training for staff employed by courier and outsourcing services. Complaints about the level of service provided by courier and outsourcing services should be addressed direct to the Visa Section and marked for the attention of an ECM.

On Pakistan, the visa website and all literature clearly explains what documents should accompany each type of visa application. A checklist is handed to each applicant with every visa application form. Notices displayed in all Fedex offices in Pakistan also explain that if applicants fail to supply the documents on the checklist or do not provide an explanation as to why they are not available then the application will fall for refusal. There is no requirement for a sponsorship declaration to be signed by a notary, and if Members have evidence that applicants are being advised otherwise they should inform the ECM Islamabad.

Fedex will try to persuade a visa applicant to re-submit poorly presented applications once all the documents are available. However, if the applicant insists on applying without the necessary documentation, Fedex have no discretion to refuse an application if it falls within our accepted list of categories.

5. **Azhar Chohan**

There is still an on going problem with entry clearance stamps. ECOs make mistakes by putting on the incorrect periods of validity and with endorsing wrong conditions. This causes ongoing problems on arrival to the UK and with the interpretation by other agencies.

Those who notice an error prior to departure should contact the visa office concerned to have it rectified locally. Where an error is discovered after arrival in the UK cases can be notified to Ian Full at UKvisas (ian.full@fco.gov.uk) who will liaise with the Post concerned and with IND to ensure that these are resolved without charge.

6. **Azhar Chohan** Can we find out what is the time scale for issuing entry clearance once appeals are allowed by the adjudicator. Once further appeal deadline has expired the HOPOs send the file for storage. The ECOs claim they can not issue until they get a copy of the decision. The delay is far too long. Can the UKvisas forward the decision by electronic means?

There is no set timescale for the issue of a visa to a successful appellant, and in the vast majority of cases this is done quickly. There have been cases where a successful appellant approaches the Post first who then have to seek confirmation from POU. We have been discussing the possibility of determinations being e-mailed to Posts and POU's are now submitting bids to enable them to acquire the technology to be able to do this.

7. **Azhar Chohan**

In cases where the relationship of the child is disputed by the ECO what is the guideline about DNA testing. The approach seems to be ad hoc especially from Kingston, Jamaica.

DNA testing is used as a last resort in first time settlement applications where there is no reliable documentary evidence available to support the claimed relationship and where an interview has failed to address the ECO's concerns about the claimed relationship(s). If the ECO is not satisfied that the applicant and sponsor are related as claimed and feels that after interviewing there are sufficient discrepancies to make a decision then the application can be refused without a DNA test being undertaken.

Since the imposition of the visa regime, in January 2003 Kingston has not required any applicant to undergo DNA testing to establish their relationship.

8. **Azhar Chohan**

What is the guidance about reviews? The ECM should give detailed reply explaining which issues are still outstanding rather than stating that the decision is maintained. The purpose of asking for a review is to explain concerns raised by the ECO and to provide documentation which explains the case. The review process avoids a lot of costs at the appeal hearing. The review has to be meaningful and the reply should explain what has been taken in to account and what is still of concern.

We agree that used properly the review process can be useful and cost-effective, and ECMs are provided with guidance in Best Practice. When further representations are made on an application (either in the form of an appeal or written representations) post decision, any points raised and any new evidence should be fully and properly considered by the ECO/ECM. In appeal cases the ECO's appeal statement should state that a review has taken place and explain which criteria of the Immigration Rules if any had subsequently been met and those which still remain unresolved and why. In the case of written representations a full response should be sent addressing any specific issues that had been raised and outlining any existing concerns which had resulted in the decision to maintain the refusal.

9. **Kate Handforth**

What plans are there for the expansion of the 'specified nationals' list? When is it going to happen (in particular, what time of year)? Will countries be added in phases?

The introduction of mandatory entry clearance for those intending to stay for more than six months is being phased. Phase 1, covering ten nationalities and work permit holders, came into effect on 13 November 2003. We anticipate that Phase 2 will cover all other non-visa nationalities and will take effect from late 2004. No changes will be made ahead of the peak student season in August and September 2004.

10. Paul Morris

Waiting time in Addis for Somali Family Reunion applications is currently running at 15 months or so. I believe that an extra ECO is being appointed at present and 2 more will go in the summer. How soon is it expected that the intolerable waiting time will be reduced?

Addis has undertaken a comprehensive review of systems. They are now calling existing spouses and children for interview, checking against IND records and issuing where appropriate. Some DNA testing is being carried out. Tier 4 will therefore increasingly consist of more extended family members. An additional ECO has been provided, enabling Post to increase the number of interviews carried out per day. Two more temporary duty ECOs will be provided over the summer.

There are still challenges, for example they find it difficult to recruit good Somali interpreters and the lack of office space means that further expansion of staff numbers will be difficult. Paul Morris was recently in Ethiopia and was able to visit the Visa Section in Addis to see this for himself.

11. Paul Morris

Can we have an update about Nairobi? The current situation is obviously a vast improvement on last year. Nevertheless you advise the refugee Legal Centre that it will take 'several months' before one of their cases is processed. The person had obviously been trying to make an application before last summer as RLC were advised his IM2A was now out of date.

Additional resources were provided to Nairobi in October 2003 and the Somali Team was set up, within the Visa Section, to deal with the backlog of family reunion applications. Further additional resources were provided in January this year. ECOs are assessing outstanding applications in date order. Interviews recommenced early in 2004 and are ongoing. DNA tests take place on a regular basis. The Section has been accepting new applications daily between 10.30 am and 11.30 am since early 2004 have taken in 152 applications.

A large number of applications have now been resolved but there remains some delay in processing due to the volume of applications held. Interviews and DNA tests have been allocated in order of date of receipt of application, ie oldest first, as this is the only fair way to deal with them. New applications will continue to take several months to process.

From May 2004 Nairobi will also be introducing new procedures for student applications including a dedicated drop-box, batching arrangements for the larger schools and universities and a dedicated ECO team in July and August to

deal exclusively with student applications. The new arrangements should help to ensure that the anticipated rise in student applications is dealt with effectively.

12. Paul Morris

What instructions have been sent out to ECOs following the reported case of A S A S Adam (TH04403/2003) which clarifies that 352A applies to those refugees who contracted marriages in 'third' countries.

No instructions have been issued. However, our online DSP guidance reflects this change. We will consult our colleagues in INPD and will issue updated guidance to ECOs.

13. Mahmud Quayum

Please provide an indication, as to how the changes in the rule on WHM are benefiting less affluent applicants, previously excluded from the scheme as acknowledged in the consultation document.

Dealt with under agenda item 6

14. Mahmud Quayum

The consultation document also acknowledged that “Information about the scheme is not widespread throughout the whole commonwealth.” [para 3.1]. To my knowledge in Sri Lanka the BHC has advertised the scheme with a dedicated telephone line. This is commendable. Is there any other post that has done this or are there any plans to your knowledge.

Dealt with under agenda item 6

15. Mahmud Quayum

Has there been training for ECOs on the rule changes and the background to it? If not then how are they supposed to be informed of the reason for these changes and to adapt themselves?

Dealt with under agenda item 6

16. Mahmud Quayum

Are refusal notices drafted centrally and kept in a database and then picked from there to suit a particular applicant? Are the refusal notices supposed to be checked by an ECM within 24 hours?

All refusals which do not attract a right of a appeal should be reviewed by the ECM within 24 hours. In the case of family visitors, refusals are reviewed by the ECM upon receipt of an appeal. With all other appealable refusal decisions ECOs are required to refer the application to an ECM for authority prior to refusal and are then reviewed by the ECO on receipt of any subsequent appeal. Refusal notices are not drafted centrally however in some posts standard refusal wordings for the different criteria of the Rules are used to form the basis of refusal notices. These standard wordings must be tailored to the individual application. For

example when looking at the credibility of a proposed visit to the UK ECOs will often comment on the expenditure involved not being commensurate with the purpose of the trip, however this basic statement must be personalised to include figures such as the actual cost of the trip and the applicants income etc.

17. Susan Rowlands

Closure of Bucharest and Sofia visa sections: is there a planned date for reopening? Is there a contact point for allowed appeals?

Our visa sections in Sofia and Bucharest re-opened on Tuesday 13 April for all categories of application with the exception of ECAA, Work Permits, Seasonal Agricultural Workers, SBS and HSMP. For cases involving allowed appeals please contact the individual Posts.

18. Susan Rowlands

Working holidaymakers: an update on grants and refusals; training and instructions provided to ECOs; availability of information for nationals of Commonwealth countries. Consideration of applications at European posts.

Dealt with under agenda item 6

19. Susan Rowlands

Advice to South Africans travelling to UK re chest X Rays.

Immigration Officers have discretion to refer any arriving passenger seeking entry for more than six months for examination by the Port Medical Inspector. It is the PMI's decision based on clinical judgement whether or not a particular passenger should be X-rayed. A passenger could bring his or her own X-ray although there would be no guarantee that this would be accepted by the PMI.

20. Susan Rowlands

Electronic entry clearance process - any plans to extend?

Online visa applications (e-applications) are now available in Jamaica, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand South Africa and the United States. Helsinki and Dusseldorf were added on 20 April and Tokyo will follow in May. This has proved particularly popular in the US and New Zealand where over half of all applications are now submitted online.

21. Susan Rowlands

Response from Lorraine Fussey to points raised at IND-APC/UK Visas/ILPA meeting - including pagination of bundles sent by ECOs.

Action is in hand and an AECIP will issue shortly.

22. Susan Rowlands

Training for ECOs in Nairobi and Horn of Africa on culture and tradition of marriage in Somali society. Is there such training? Can Prof Lewis or another expert be invited to contribute to such training?

Our view is that on the job training is more meaningful for ECOs than information provided in a vacuum before departure, although we are happy to suggest appropriate pre-posting visits for staff to experts in particular fields.

Some Posts, for example Dhaka and Islamabad, organise induction courses for newly-arrived staff, covering culture, history and traditions and how these relate to visa work. Others, including Nairobi, provide induction packs. Most ECOs work alongside locally engaged staff, who come from a range of ethnic and religious backgrounds, to ensure that cultural differences are understood. Nairobi has a Somali-Kenyan member of staff who works as an interpreter. She is fully conversant with the religion, culture and customs and is on hand for advice whenever needed.

23. Susan Rowlands

Email to posts: how reliable is it?

The vast majority of Posts can now be contacted by e-mail. We are not aware of any specific problems with reliability. Most have a generic inbox for enquiries, although systems for handling incoming messages can vary between Posts.

24. Susan Rowlands

Current delay in listing of an EC appeal. Does it depend on post at which application was decided?

The delay in listing appeals does not depend on where the application was made. Delay in listing immigration appeals has been attributed to the concentration on asylum appeals over recent months. We have been assured that the HO will be at frictional level in the process of appeals by April/May and more resources will then be targeted towards immigration appeals. This should lead to a marked improvement in the turn around time for appeals.

25. Susan Rowlands

Published information on waiting times for decisions, both temporary and settlement, is very helpful. Could it be possible for all posts to publish this information?

The information on waiting times is collated monthly by UKvisas. To do this for all 154 Posts each month and publish this on the website would be a significant burden. From April 2004 we will add Bangkok, Manila and Pretoria to the existing list, based on analysis of calls to our Public Enquiry Unit. We would be happy to consider the case for including data for any other Posts which User Panel members may care to put forward.

26. Susan Rowlands

Could the addresses of the handling agents in Turkey be put on the website?

The two main agencies Setur and Asya Tur were chosen because they have offices throughout Turkey and numerous agencies in Istanbul and the other large cities who accept applications and forward them to either the Ankara or Istanbul offices which are co ordinating this for them. They are well known agencies who advertise in the Press regularly. The visa sections in Turkey have taken the view that to provide full addresses on the website for all these offices would not be practical.

Of the other agencies being used, BA will only deal with those who have purchased tickets or made a reservation with BA; Turkish Airlines will handle only Turkish Airlines company applications and UND handle only road transport association applications. The educational agents Edcon, Sempatur and Biltur are dealing only with student applicants and again are known to the student population.

ANNEX B

<u>WORKING HOLIDAYMAKER</u>					
<u>STATISTICS</u>					
<u>WORLDWIDE APPLICATIONS</u>					
From	To	Applications			
01-Feb-03	31-Jul-03	29010			
01-Sep-03	29-Feb-04	42939			
Increase of	13929	32%			
<u>WORLDWIDE ISSUES</u>					
From	To	Applications			
01-Feb-03	31-Jul-03	26755			
01-Sep-03	29-Feb-04	31303			
Increase of	4548	15%			
Percentage issued between 01-Feb-03 - 31-Jul 03				92%	
Percentage issued between 01-Sep-03 - 29-Feb 04				73%	