

Welcome to the fourth ASSET UK Newsletter. In this edition we have stories from some ASSET UK beneficiaries, a report on a transnational visit to Sweden by Sheffield College, and a report from an EQUAL event in Poland. The newsletter includes updates from partners and you can find out more from our links on our website www.asset-uk.org.uk.

News from the Central Coordination Team

Partners in ASSET UK were approached by a number of organisations who had heard of our lessons and good practice and want to bid for Round 2. It was encouraging to see that much of the work can be transferred and duplicated in some specific geographical areas - especially the West Midlands. Some wanted to widen the work of skills audits to support refugees and newcomers in various areas too.

Promise Jali, a refugee from Zimbabwe, has been volunteering with the team throughout May & June. Promise has been providing administrative support to the team, including filing, photocopying and some computer work. She is studying for an OCR Level 2 Certificate in Administration at City College in Birmingham. Promise says that being with the ASSET UK partnership "has helped me a lot. Before, I had no practical experience of working with computers and photocopying and you cannot really learn things just by reading about them. It has given me confidence."

ASSET UK showcased the work being carried out in the UK by all partners at the 'Opening Doors - Sharing Practice on the Integration of Asylum Seekers' conference organised by the ATLAS Development Partnership (DP), based in Glasgow.



ASSET UK stall at ATLAS conference
© Refugee Council, 2004.

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Asylum Seekers as Active Participants

Edin Hromadzic, ASSET UK's new Project Development Officer, is supporting the partners' work with asylum seekers. As well as helping the Central Co-ordination Team provide volunteering, Edin is actively supporting the projects below.

The Training & Employment Section at the Refugee Council (TES) is exploring ways of involving more asylum seekers as support teachers in their English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. A significant number of existing clients are: a) native English speakers b) already possess a considerable fluency in the language or c) have a teaching background. TES is developing the training for such clients to eventually deliver the classes themselves and on-going volunteering opportunities such as language support. This would eventually lead to a more cascaded approach to ESOL training - that is, asylum seekers delivering training to other asylum seekers. Numerous barriers to clients taking up the classes have been identified - such as lack of space, the need for child care during classes, accommodation providers not understanding the aim of the project, beneficiaries being dispersed etc. For example, we discovered one accommodation provider was not letting asylum seekers volunteer, as they thought this was not permitted. This may be a common misconception when dealing with employers and seeking work placements. We have started to identify solutions and are also looking at ways of identifying and targeting more vulnerable or isolated members of these communities who may not usually be able to benefit from traditional classes or teaching methods.

Feedback Wanted!

RAGU is continuing to work on the on-line information for asylum seekers. We have completed 4 units:

- Improve your English
- Understand the UK Education System
- Get into Further Education
- Get into Higher Education

You can find them at www.londonmet.ac.uk/ragu/asset

We would be very grateful for any feedback on these.

We are currently setting up focus groups of asylum seekers to test these. We are also using them in dissemination workshops with advisers and have planned an autumn workshop with libraries. If anyone working with asylum seekers and refugees is interested in setting up a workshop for their staff to demonstrate the on-line resource, please contact me at s.davenport@londonmet.ac.uk

Susan Davenport, European Programmes Co-ordinator, RAGU

Tel: 020 7133 4051

To build up their Build Up class, Peterborough College have been given contacts such as dispersal accommodation providers, statutory and voluntary agencies in the region and others involved in working with asylum seekers, such as the Red Cross. Posters advertising classes offered as part of EQUAL ASSET UK are in Refugee Council offices who will distribute them further to other agencies dealing with the dispersal of asylum seekers from London. Peterborough College think that it would be easier for asylum seekers to attend the courses if travel expenses are paid and they are researching that as well as exploring ways of translating their publicity material.

Edin Hromadzic, Project Development Officer, ASSET UK DP, British Refugee Council

Email: edin.hromadzic@refugeecouncil.org.uk, Tel: 0121 622 0968

Community Cohesion and Empowerment in the Heart of Birmingham

The Training and Education Section at the Refugee Council (TES), recently delivered a teacher training workshop to a community organisation in Birmingham called Somali Youth and Development Organisation (SYDO). The organisation began delivering classes in September 2003 and has gone from strength to strength ever since. They are within easy reach of Birmingham City Centre. TES was approached to deliver a teacher training workshop by Ali Hussain, who devotes his time as a volunteer to the running of the organisation. They run ESOL, IT and Maths classes for asylum seekers three times a week, taught entirely by volunteer teachers.

One of their volunteer teachers is Ali Ahmed. Ali is originally from Somalia, and gained a lot of teaching experience in Denmark, where he taught IT and the Somali language to adults and children and was a support teacher in schools. He teaches at SYDO on a voluntary basis for 6 hours each week. He teaches both adults and children, many of whom are recent arrivals from Somalia. They come to SYDO not only for classes, but also for information, advice and guidance on housing, immigration and other related issues. Many of their clients receive letters from Social Services or the Home Office and SYDO contacts these organisations on their client's behalf.

The overall atmosphere when you enter one of their classes, or meet with Ali and the other SYDO organisers, is a real sense of community cohesion. Ali Hussain explained that they face many challenges such as a lack of resources to deliver services, and coping with the difficulty of dispersal and its effect on classes. However, both Ali Hussain and Ali Ahmed agreed that one of the most enjoyable aspects of being involved with SYDO is working with a wide range of different people and the different experiences and stories they bring with them and share. SYDO is now working in partnership with TES on the ASSET UK project. They have previously been involved in partnership work with Birmingham Children's Fund to work with children in less visible communities and a college running a citizenship course. They have received funding and donations from a variety of sources to allow them to provide computer equipment and premises for classes.

I also asked them what their goals were as a community organisation. They both want to see a greater sense of both community and independence for Somali people living in the UK, and would like to see the integration process made a lot easier for those arriving in the UK. It seems to me that through the hard work and dedication of its members, SYDO is making a real difference to these goals.



Participants from the Somali Youth & Development Organisation at the Teacher Training Day with the trainer Katie Evans in June 2004 ©Refugee Council, 2004.

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Regional ESOL Co-ordinator, TES

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ESOL in the Voluntary Sector

On Wednesday 19th May, LLU+ (formerly the London Language and Literacy Unit) at London South Bank University (LSBU) held a one day free event focussing on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in the voluntary sector. It was funded through ASSET UK (ESF - Equal) and the new Central London Skills for Life Professional Development Centre. The event was for ESOL teachers and co-ordinators working in voluntary sector organisations and 51 people attended from 43 organizations.

The programme included:

- An information exchange about ESOL provision;
- A Skills for Life overview/update;
- A presentation on the current ESOL work of LLU+;
- A discussion about ESOL in the voluntary sector, topics included what training and support is needed;
- Information about the LLU+ Central London Skills for Life Professional Development Centre and a tour;
- A choice of workshops (differentiation and using a learning styles approach to teaching & learning in the ESOL classroom).

A 'market place' of stalls provided information about ASSET UK, and an exhibition of resources for teaching/learning and professional development, including books, videos and online training from a variety of sources, including LLU+ and the Basic Skills Agency. Melanie Cook from Kings College London told people about the ESOL Effective Practice Project which is conducting research into adult ESOL.

A range of key issues, and training and support needs for ESOL providers in the voluntary sector were identified by participants at the event:

Staffing: Difficulties in recruiting tutors (experienced and qualified) and a shortage of support assistants and volunteers.

Training: People expressed a need for more training, and for information, advice and guidance about professional development, including the new teacher training framework, rights to training, employers' responsibilities & obligations, and how to support part-time tutors in getting qualifications. It was noted that training needs to be flexible because of problems in obtaining cover. Two training needs identified as important were: support and training in the use of the new Skills for Life assessment materials so that they are integrated into the teaching and learning cycle, and training for teaching basic literacy to low level learners (LLU+ runs this type of training and information was provided about the course).

Funding issues: Some organisations experience difficulties in obtaining funding and that support is needed so that organisations can show funders the diversity of learner needs and the challenges involved in meeting them.

Staff support: People expressed a need for advice on supporting learners, in particular, information about who learners can be referred to for specialist advice, guidance and support, for example, for dyslexia assessment. ESOL teachers from some small organisations expressed a feeling of isolation and said that they would benefit from some specialist ESOL support. Others would welcome the opportunity to meet ESOL tutors from other organisations for networking and peer support, in order to share good practice, and discuss issues and concerns with people from the same sector who share similar concerns.

In response to the event, LLU+ is going to set up a voluntary sector ESOL network (first meeting in autumn 2004). The aim is to have 3 half day meetings a year (autumn, spring, summer), and to offer a workshop following each meeting. For more information about the network, and/or a copy of the report of the event, please contact:

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NIACE Skills Audit Project - Aiding Integration

As part of the ASSET UK skills audit project, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) were invited to host a workshop at this year's Home Office Integration Conference on 29-30 June. The workshop included a presentation of the project's activity, as well as a number of group exercises to assist delegates consider some of the barriers facing asylum seekers and how the project seeks to overcome them. Delegates made a number of recommendations, which will be incorporated into the overall conference report for consideration by the Home Office.

Key issues and recommendations arising out of the workshop included:

- A recognition that the integration process begins as soon as an asylum seeker enters the country and therefore any early support can be incredibly valuable
- An initial skills audit should be undertaken as soon as possible upon entry of the UK. This could result in a system of informed dispersal whereby newcomers could be sent to regions with appropriate skills shortages and support programmes to assist vocational integration
- The importance of embedded ESOL provision should be recognised in order that newcomers have the opportunity to develop vocationally specific English language skills
- Regional centres should be established for the assessment and accreditation of vocational skills
- The concession to work for asylum seekers should be re-introduced.

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Sheffield and Sweden together

'Transnationality is an essential element in the Equal initiative for promoting the transfer of know-how and good practice between partnerships and between member states. By sharing the results of innovative actions carried out by the DPs at national level, transnational co-operation will provide real value-added for policy development at the national and European levels.'

Since coming into post in December 2003 there has been an increased amount of activity with our Swedish partner KOA (Kista Open Academy). Primarily we are sharing good practice and methodology regarding on-line work, although a substantial amount of work is regarding ESOL / SFI (English for Speakers of Other Languages / Swedish for Immigrants).

In February 2004 The Sheffield College hosted a 2-day visit from Sweden with Per Edblom from the Jarfalla Municipality and Goran Hillgren, KOA Project Manager.

A return visit was arranged in March and four members from The Sheffield College spent two busy days seeing over seven projects/companies working with the EQUAL programme in Sweden. Two of the private sector initiatives are described below.

Lernia Centre

We were introduced to Gunilla Envall, the Senior Manager, who looked after us for the session. Lernia is a private company operating throughout Sweden and situated in more than 100 locations.

Refugees requiring SFI are initially processed through the benefits agency and employment services, where their level of Swedish language is assessed and then they are offered a certain number of hours, based on their knowledge of Swedish, for tuition at the Lernia Centre. Their system allows academic students, with little language skills, to join the higher level class rather than start at a lower level, as would happen in England.

One of the groups we were introduced to who were studying Swedish were of an academic level and attended for four hours per day from Monday to Friday. If they did not attend, their benefits would be stopped. As a consequence, the class consisted of approximately 25 students per session and understandably retention was high. The students had come from all over the world - Russia, Iraq, Iran, Somali, etc., much the same as the students we teach at The Sheffield College. All students are offered use of IT equipment and are also given the opportunity to attend numeracy classes.

We talked to a couple of tutors, Daniel and Pille who worked with these students throughout the week. They told us the students were motivated, hardworking and most of them attended regularly but, as at Sheffield College, some students just disappeared due to circumstances beyond their control. A further discussion took place regarding curriculum issues and we exchanged information and good practice.

This visit was very informative and useful to us and the staff at this Lernia Centre made us very welcome and were willing to show us exactly how things worked with them. We could possibly set up a staff exchange in the near future, which we all thought would be beneficial.

Fatma Alioua, ESOL Curriculum Team Leader, The Sheffield College

ThEDUCATION

ThEducation is a private software educational publisher specialising in the delivery of mathematics and the natural sciences via the internet for students aged 13 and above. It offers e-learning at university level but also aims to bridge the gap between school and university, providing the opportunity for students to gain any underpinning knowledge that they may be lacking. Many Swedish colleges and several Swedish universities are participating in their programme including Stockholm University and the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

All materials are available on the Internet 24/7 but there is also a book of the core material if needed. Students receive their own User name and Password. Customers can opt into an existing programme or operate a copy, enabling their own teams to select the materials suitable for their own needs and to add their own material. There is an option to create a final examination, a counselling session each month and a discussion forum if wanted.

ThEDUCATION homepage is: <http://www.theducation.se/english/>

Mathematics

The course consists of 4 chapters with 35 sections covering arithmetic, function theory, polynomials and equations and infinitesimal-calculus. Students gradually work through the materials and are tested regularly. After completing 3 sections a student is given 3 random questions. The student must answer all these correctly to be allowed to progress to the next section. After each chapter there is an assignment for a group of 4 students to work on collaboratively. Where a student needs further work on an area s/he can go

back to the appropriate level.

The materials provided for the course are interesting and varied with many interactive exercises and explanations.

Cost

Costs at the moment are low for the core programme due to subsidy by the Swedish Government.

Roy Webster, On-line Tutor & Curriculum Leader - Languages, The Sheffield College

What has been the added value of the trips?

- Learning how other countries in Europe deal with new arrivals in terms of advice and guidance
- Sharing good practice regarding on-line work
- Learning about other methodologies in regard to language acquisition
- Establishing a working relationship that will continue after the project end date.

Andrew Oatridge Asylum Seeker Project Manager, The Sheffield College

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Success stories with ASSET UK in the East Midlands

To coincide with Refugee Week, a Refugee Experience event was organised on the 17th June as a celebration of refugee communities in Derby. As part of the event ASSET UK presented five awards in recognition of the achievements of beneficiaries on the Derby ASSET UK programme. The awards were presented to four individual beneficiaries and one to Umoja women's group of whom many members are ASSET UK beneficiaries.

The awards were sponsored by Derby College, Derbyshire Careers for Adults, Derby City Council and Sure Start Rosehill project. ASSET UK has worked in close partnership with the award sponsors and the award ceremony provided an opportunity for the celebration of these partnerships.

The Derby College award for Achievement in Learning was presented to Senkal Kilic-Yami. Following skills audit interviews ASSET UK assisted Senkal in accessing provision to meet her needs:

- to practise English language and to develop language skills associated with sewing and embroidery,
- to continue with training for the career of a community tutor in the UK, if she is granted a positive decision on her asylum claim
- to gain an insight into working in the UK and obtain references

Senkal was successful in obtaining a volunteering placement in a charity shop, joining the Link Up project to train in providing learner support and in joining a Diploma in Embroidery course. Some of her work, produced whilst on the course, was displayed at the Refugee Experience event.

Senkal addressed the audience at the Awards Ceremony.

"I was born in the East of Turkey in a village called Gömemis. I learned hand sewing and embroidery skills as a young girl at school and later on at college. I enjoyed this work and attended training to teach others these skills. Between 1985 and 1993 I worked as an embroidery and hand sewing tutor to young women and girls in villages and towns in East Turkey. In 1993 when the Turkish government forces closed the schools in my town of Tunçeli I fled to safety in Izmir and in 2001 I arrived in the UK.



With the invaluable help of the ASSET UK project I joined the Diploma in Embroidery course at Derby College in September 2003. I am grateful to my tutor Eve Luter and the support tutor Maria for their help on this course and I hope to continue with my training next September.

I have also been studying on ESOL courses at Derby College since 2002 and completed Level 1 of the Link Up course (Adult Learner Support).

I hope that one day I will teach hand sewing and embroidery skills again."

To find out more about the ASSET UK project within Derby, please contact:



*Senkal being presented with The Derby College award for Achievement in Learning, June 2004
©NIACE, 2004.*

Ljaja Sterland, ASSET UK Project Worker, NIACE

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Build Up: ESOL for Construction - a Learner's View

My name is Jacques Matensi-Kubanza. I am from the Democratic Republic of Congo; I finished my higher education in 1998. I have a licence in Economy and Development (Sciences and Techniques of Development). I arrived in the UK in August 2002 as an applicant of asylum and my status has not changed from that date. I am a student at Peterborough Regional College where I'm learning English on an Intermediate level course.

Apart from this course, I have also studied since January until July 2004 on the Build Up ESOL for Construction course. My purpose for joining the course was I wanted to learn useful vocabulary that is used in the construction industry because I acquired some experience in construction in my country. I was a builder's help. The aim while taking part in this course is to be able, in the future, to continue my studies in the field of housing and health and safety management.

At the end of this course, I can say that I am satisfied with the lessons because I can understand some vocabulary from the field of construction and I also acquired certain skills in the field of Health and Safety. I thus thank Peterborough Regional College and Mme Louise Cottom who organises this course. I would like to recommend to other applicants of asylum or refugees, that have certain experience in the field of construction, to follow this course.

Thank you.

For more information on Build Up: ESOL for Construction course, please contact:

Celine Castelino, Project Manager, Basic Skills Agency

Tel: 020 7440 6531 or email: celinec@basic-skills.co.uk

Refugee Week Kicks Off Summer Activity Programme

The EQUAL ASSET UK project at the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM) organised a trip as part of the Refugee Week celebrations. Such trips fit within the orientation strand of the work, as well as being an opportunity for NICEM's service users to experience a day out of Belfast. Visits to other parts of Northern Ireland and taking part in leisure activities available is an important aspect of both orientation and integration. The funding for the trip was provided from a small grant from the South & East Belfast Trust and some local churches provided the food for the picnic.

The first part of the day was spent in Tollymore Forest Park, which is at the foot of the Mourne Mountains. While some of the group joined me for a walk along the river, others chose to play football. After the picnic lunch, we travelled to Newcastle, a seaside town, also at the foot of the Mournes. We were fortunate that the weather was exceptionally good and this meant that most people spent the rest of the afternoon on or near the beach. The children particularly, seemed to enjoy this part.

The trip was the start of a larger programme of activities which have been organised/co-ordinated by the EQUAL ASSET UK project at NICEM during the summer period, when access to educational courses are limited.

Moira McCombe, Project Worker, NICEM

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Inicjatywa Wspolnotowa EQUAL w Polsce

Poland, as with all new EU Member States, has an opportunity to participate in the EQUAL initiative for the first time and has selected for implementation five of the nine EQUAL themes: 1/A on Employability, 2/D on Entrepreneurship 3/F on Adaptability, 4/G on Equality and 5/I Asylum Seekers.

The Cooperation Fund Foundation, the National EQUAL Support Structure in Poland, organised a series of Thematic Workshops in June for prospective applicants, to provide them with the necessary information on EQUAL. The seminar on Theme I - Asylum Seekers was held in Cracow and gathered some of the major stakeholders involved in the asylum seeker issues including the Managing Authority - Ministry of Economy

and Labour, the Ministry of the Interior, other government departments, and a number of NGOs and local authorities. David Hudson [ASSET UK], and Stephan Schiele from the German DP Fluequal in Augsburg, were invited as experts.

Crakow is a beautiful, historic, Polish city in the south of the country, rather unspoiled by the ravages of Poland's history, and is well known for being the place where the Pope was based before he went to Rome. Cracow is also where much of the filming of 'Schindler's List' was made. In 2000, Cracow was the European City of Culture.

The primary objective of the workshops was (a) to acquaint prospective applicants with successful examples from applications for the first round of EQUAL as well as (b) to inform them about the ongoing experience and expected outcomes of some existing EQUAL DPs; (c) to provide information on the very practical aspects of the programme such as: how to develop and manage a DP, how to fill out an application, and identifying the most promising practices which can be transferred to other countries. This was followed by brain-storming through preparation and presentations of project ideas in working groups, preparing ideas for EQUAL projects according to the programme's principles and requirements. The expert visitors were invited to comment on how the ideas that were presented, fitted with the EQUAL principles of the programme, such as empowerment, mainstreaming, and transnational cooperation, and with their experience about how their DPs have been developed and managed.

For more information on EQUAL transnational activities please contact:

David Hudson, European Integration Project Manager, Refugee Council

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Asylum Seekers in the EU: The Challenges of Integration

This EQUAL conference in Dublin in April, reviewed the progress of relevant aspects of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Although most of the legislation envisaged was in place, it was agreed that in practice progress on the CEAS had been slow. Since the 1999 European Council at Tampere momentum had not been maintained, the legislation had tended to be 'watered down' and there was less harmonisation than originally envisaged. Some positive aspects of the Tampere Conclusion had been diluted. The initial enthusiastic support from Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) for the CEAS was now more reserved. There needed to be a closer link between what was happening on the ground and evidence on 'what works when' and the framing of legislation. Directives that had been agreed, especially the Minimum Standards on Reception Directive, which directly affected the social and vocational integration of Asylum Seekers, needed to be reviewed as soon as possible.

Key issues discussed:

- Despite the slowness of the negotiation process, significant progress had been reached on the CEAS following the Tampere conclusions. Member States were committed to the CEAS.
- There were questions as to whether the level of harmonisation had been high enough. This seemed to be mainly related to states having a high degree of leeway in the negotiation process.
- Blocking asylum seeker access to employment was debilitating and demoralising. It inhibited both integration and reintegration.

The actual experience of partnerships within EQUAL was put to the test under the scrutiny of policy actors during the conference. It emerged that:

- **Skills audits** kept asylum seekers involved, and ensured that formal and informal qualifications were taken account of in considering education, training and work options. They could be undertaken at reasonable cost and had been successfully applied in different national contexts within the EU. A presentation was made by Sue Waddington [ASSET UK] on behalf of the ETG5 task group on skills audits

- The **co-ordination of services** for asylum seekers was critical. EQUAL had helped a partnership to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to make best use of very limited available resources in Greece.
- **Language competence** was an important route to the social integration of asylum seekers. Linking language training to vocational training had speeded learning for young African asylum seekers within a partnership in Austria.
- Where asylum seekers were restricted from taking employment '**work shadowing**' had brought benefits both to the asylum seeker and the host community. The process had helped employers recognise and eventually realise the benefits of engaging asylum seekers and refugees. The ATLAS Development Partnership (DP) from Scotland presented their Bridges project.
- Partnerships had worked constructively at **transnational learning** across the varied national legislative and institutional contexts. Despite these variations lessons had been drawn from practice in one context and transferred to another. Indeed the national variations and the likelihood of eventual harmonisation and improvements in standards provided strong rationales for transnational learning.

For the next round of EQUAL the key target audience would be national governments and the key task would be 'mainstreaming'. EQUAL partnerships were to continue to generate persuasive evidence that interventions were cost effective and bring economic and social benefits. Such evidence should in turn inform the development of the CEAS.

Asylum and Employment: Developments in the Creation of a Common European Asylum System

Speech delivered by Peer Baneke, ECRE General Secretary at the EQUAL ETG5 CONFERENCE in Dublin, 1 April 2004. Read more at...

http://www.ecre.org/speeches/Equal_Conf.shtml

Forthcoming Events

Teaching Training Workshop - 14 September - Birmingham

These workshops are designed to specifically raise the awareness of teaching ESOL to asylum seekers as well as provide an opportunity to exchange ideas and share experiences. We look at the asylum system, material development, teaching methodology and learners needs.

The workshops are free, 1-day events and provide an excellent opportunity for tutors to enhance their professional development.

For further details or to book a place please contact Katie Evans on 0121 622 0963 or email katie.evans@refugeecouncil.org.uk

Working with Volunteers and Asylum Seekers Seminar - 16 September - Birmingham

This is a one day dissemination and mainstreaming seminar, to share Training and Employment Section's experience of working with volunteers, asylum seekers and asylum seekers as volunteers. It is an opportunity to hear guest speakers and share ideas and good practice among delegates. The dates are 16th September 2004, 8th December 2004, 17th February 2005 and 24th March 2005.

For further details or to book a place please contact Katie Evans on 0121 622 0963 or email katie.evans@refugeecouncil.org.uk

Do not hesitate to contact us for more information on the work of the ASSET UK Project

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(ECOTEC)**

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**From policy to practise:
Making Sense of the Asylum
and Immigration Act 2004
Tuesday 14 September
Regent's College, London**

**Friday 17 September
Cutler's Hall, Sheffield
For further information,
tel: 020 7820 3049**

**Partnership Board
Meeting**

**22 July 2004
12.30pm
at LLU+, London**