

- In November 1996 there was a "backlog blitz" on students and marriage cases. The guidance was that "all student cases where study has been less than three years should be granted unless there are substantial cause for doubt; short student extensions are to be positively discouraged", and "marriage applications where the decision is freely balanced should also be granted."

- In February 1997 - the guidance was that there was a "need for resources to be managed effectively and for staff to overcome any reluctance they may have to taking decisions on the available evidence."

1998? - special group of staff

December 1998

- In March 2000, [in the wake of the ICD failure] a backlog had built up in the Case Allocation Unit in General Group. A backlog clearance exercise was initiated. Barbara Roche answered a PQ.

- The position on ACE and BRACE is that, against a background of large increases in these general applications, in early 2002 it was decided that a special effort would need to be made to reduce the numbers of backlog cases over 6 months' old

- Working guidance was given to staff in April 2002 to the effect that for routine cases over six months old, they should continue to take decisions in accordance with the Immigration Rules, but encouraging them, so far as possible, to do so on the basis of the evidence immediately available. Applications were to be granted if a refusal was unlikely to be sustainable. The guidance did not apply to a range of the more complex cases which would need more intensive inquiries. This was ACE.

- In October 2002, there was still a significant backlog and an increasing number of old cases. Internal management information suggests that out of 34,700 outstanding cases 6,600 (19%) were over 12 months old. It should be remembered that at the time IND's efforts were focused largely on dealing with a surge in asylum applications.

- To address these concerns, in November 2002 further working guidance was issued to staff, to the effect that, in all cases over 12 months old, with one or two small exceptions, decisions should generally be taken on the basis of the information on the file, with no further enquiries. A decision could be to grant or to refuse, but had to be defensible under the Immigration Rules. The guidance

acknowledged that there would be times when this would not be the right course of action.

- The case of [REDACTED] was decided - wrongly as it happens - under this approach. *[Did we, in exploring the [REDACTED] case publicly, allude to the backlog clearance practice?]*
- From 27 March the BRACE approach was extended to cases over 9 months old and from 14 April to cases over six months old.
- In July 2003, the introduction of charging gave IND an opportunity to set and meet high standards of service in this area. Staff were encouraged to grant applications older than 3 months which were submitted before 1 August unless the information on the file supported refusal.
- **[We need more here on the cases dealt with under these "enhanced procedures". How many cases, in Croydon/Sheffield have/are still subject to BRACE? General Group were looking into this.]**
- Initial Consideration Unit: backlog clearance in March 2003.
- Which cases receive fuller consideration and involve more detailed enquires?

24 April 2002

- Cases with application dates over 6 months old.
- Decision still in keeping with the Immigration rules, but as far as possible to be taken on the basis of the evidence immediately available
- Guiding principle: grant if a refusal is not likely to be sustainable

11 November 2002

- Cases over 12 months old
- Aim to clear backlog of such cases by end December 2002 by making a decision solely on the information on the file. No further enquiries.
- Could be grant or refusal - no assumptions, but must be defensible under the rules
- Guidance acknowledged there would be times when this not right course of action. Caseworkers entirely justified in coming to that conclusion but would need approval of senior caseworker

Cases dealt with under these procedures were not recorded separately from the general run of statistics. Internal management information suggests that around 5,500 cases were dealt with in this way between 11 November 2002 and 26 March 2003, but this is very provisional and we think the true figure may be higher.

From 27 March 2003 the approach was extended to cases over nine months old and from 14 April to cases over six months old. From 14 April to 7 July 2003 internal management information suggests that around 7000 cases were dealt with under this approach.

8 July 2003

- Prospect of closing down sale before charging
- Applicants over 3 months old and submitted before 1 August 2003 to be granted unless information on file is such that it can properly and defensibly support a refusal
- Refusals to be cleared with a senior caseworker
- Non-compliance refusals only where application was not accompanied by all required supporting documents

Internal management information suggests that around just under 9000 cases were dealt with under this approach. Again, this is very provisional.