



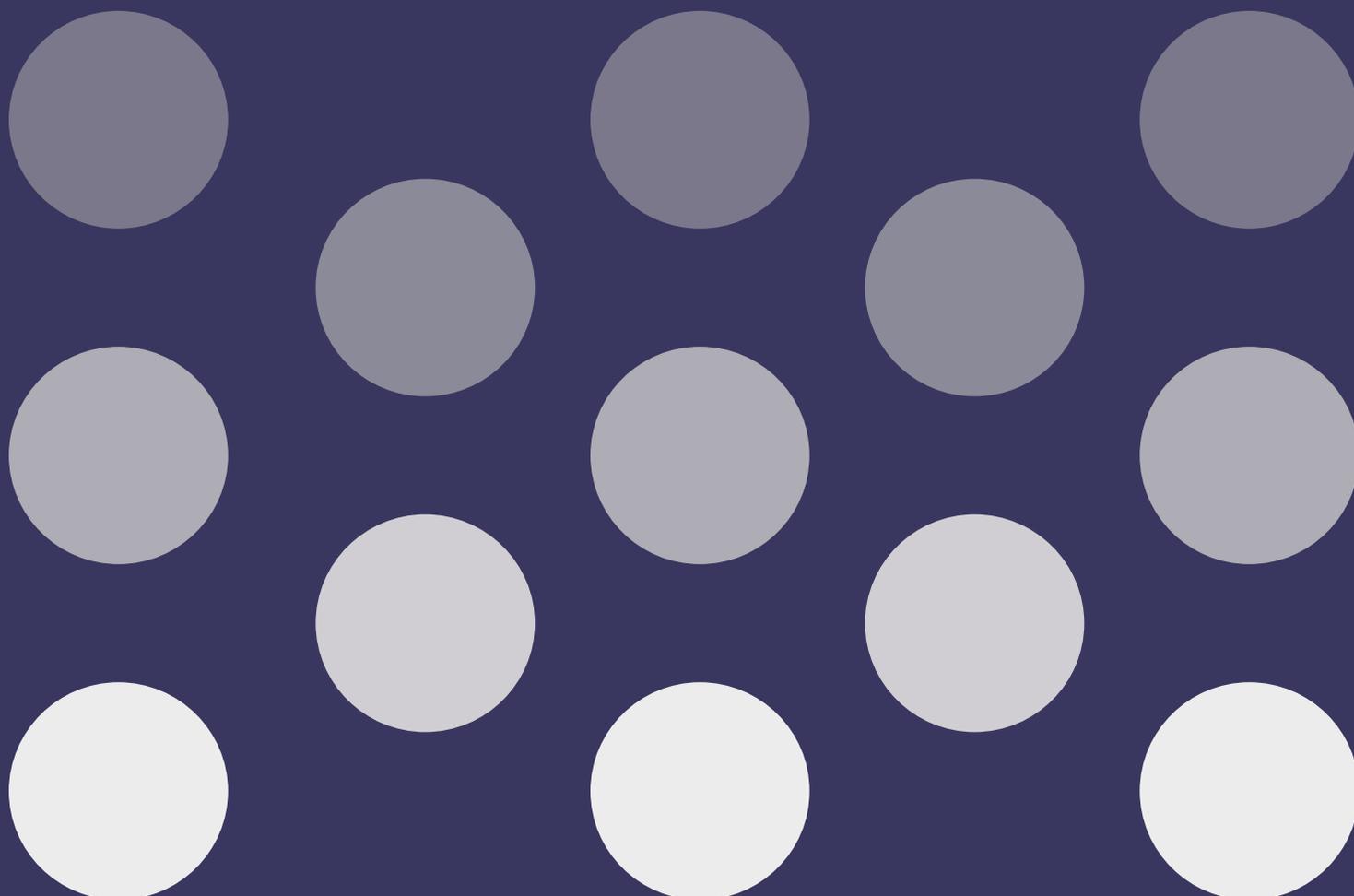
Reporting asylum

The UK Press and the Effectiveness of PCC Guidelines

January - March 2005

By the ICAR public images partnership for National Refugee Integration Forum, Community and Media Sub-Group and Funded by Immigration and Nationality Directorate, UK Home Office

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The UK Press and the Effectiveness of PCC Guidelines

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The ICAR public images partnership set up to undertake this research comprises the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees (ICAR) at City University, asylluminitiatives, MediaWise, the Refugees, Asylum seekers and the Media (RAM) Project and the Refugee Council.

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In addition, the following people conducted the research for MediaWise:

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ICAR

The Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees (ICAR) at City University is an independent organisation that undertakes research and provides information and analysis on asylum issues in the UK and globally.

In recent years ICAR has been at the forefront of initiatives aimed at raising awareness of the need for improved standards in newspaper reporting on asylum seekers and refugees. ICAR's work in this area includes producing research reports, hosting workshops and providing a fact-checking service. For further details see:

- Media Image, Community Impact. Assessing the impact of media and political images of refugees and asylum seekers on community relations in London. Commissioned by the Mayor of London, ICAR, July 2004.
- Reflecting asylum in London's communities - monitoring London's press coverage of refugees and asylum seekers: an analysis of press reporting January - February 2005, conducted by the ICAR public images partnership for the Greater London Authority
- The challenge of reporting refugees and asylum seekers: ICAR report on regional media events organised by the Presswise RAM project .ICAR and RAM, London, Nissa Finney, April 2003.
- Understanding the Stranger (<http://www.icar.org.uk/?lid=334>)
- Ask ICAR (<http://www.icar.org.uk/?lid=1582>)

All available on the ICAR website www.icar.org.uk

RAM Project

The Refugees, Asylum seekers and the Media (RAM) Project was set up in 1999 by MediaWise to campaign for fair and accurate coverage of asylum seekers and refugees. Its activities have included the production of research and guidelines for journalists, bringing together media professionals, refugees and asylum seekers to discuss how coverage can be improved, and the creation of local campaign groups that work with local and regional media.

MediaWise, formerly known as PressWise, is a registered charity which began as a voluntary organisation in 1993, set up by 'victims of media abuse' backed by sympathetic journalists and media lawyers. The Trust champions press freedom and responsible journalism, and is committed to the promotion of accurate and fair reporting. It provides: advice to members of the public affected by inaccurate or unfair print or broadcast coverage; information about media ethics, law and regulation, and how the media operate; research into aspects of media practice, representation of minority groups, and media regulation; training for community groups on how to make best use of the media, and for journalists about more effective ways of reporting problematic issues.

The organisation has a rights-based approach to media ethics. It believes that: press freedom is a responsibility exercised on behalf of the public; the public has a right to expect accurate information from the media, and should be informed promptly when inaccurate information is published; and those treated unfairly by the media are entitled to independent advice.

MediaWise journalists have devised and delivered training programmes for media professionals and non-governmental organisations in over 25 countries, with the International Federation of Journalists, the British Council, UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO, among others. It employs experienced journalists and collaborates with NGOs, media and academic bodies and international agencies.

The Refugees, Asylum seekers and the Media (RAM) Project was set up in 1999 by MediaWise to campaign for fair and accurate coverage of asylum seekers and refugees. Its activities have included the production of research and guidelines for journalists, bringing together media professionals, refugees and asylum seekers to discuss how coverage can be improved, and the creation of local campaign groups that work with local and regional media.

Other projects include:

- Children and the media (since 1997)
- Media and diversity (since 1997)
- Health and the media (since 1998)
- Suicide and the media (since 2001)
- Journalism and public trust (since 2004)

Refugee Council

The Refugee Council is the largest organisation in the UK working with asylum seekers and refugees. It is an independent organisation and registered as a charity funded by local, central and European government grants, grants from trust funds and corporations and funds provided by individuals. The Refugee Council's work includes: giving advice and support to asylum seekers and refugees to help them rebuild their lives; working with refugee community organisations, helping them grow and serve their communities; caring for unaccompanied refugee children to help them feel safe and supported in the UK; offering training and employment courses to enable asylum seekers and refugees to use their skills and qualifications; campaigning and lobbying for refugees' voices to be heard in the UK and abroad; keeping them high on the political agenda and discussed in the media; and producing authoritative information on refugee issues worldwide, including reports, statistics and analysis

Accurate terminology

Refugee

In this report refugee is defined as those granted refugee status according to the 1951 Convention and those granted complementary humanitarian status. The United Kingdom is a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol to the Convention. According to Article 1 of the Convention, a Refugee is defined as someone who:

‘Owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country’

A wider definition of the term refugee is commonly used to also include anyone who has been granted a legal right to remain in the UK on humanitarian grounds following an application for asylum or after arriving in the UK because of a humanitarian programme. This wider definition is used in this report.

Asylum Seeker

An asylum seeker is someone who has lodged a claim for asylum under the 1951 Convention and who is waiting for his or her application to be considered by the Government.

Illegal asylum seeker

Because the UK is a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, under international law nationals of other countries arriving in the UK have the right to apply for asylum against persecution, and have their request considered. An ‘asylum seeker’ is someone who has applied for asylum, and is waiting for a decision (whatever the merits of their case). Therefore there can be no such thing as an ‘illegal asylum seeker’ because it cannot be illegal to seek asylum in the UK

List of Abbreviations

ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
BNP	British National Party
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECRE	European Council on Refugees and Exile
GLA	Greater London Authority
ICAR	Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees
NRIF	Home Office National Refugee Integration Forum
PCC	Press Complaints Commission
RAM	Refugees, Asylum seekers and the Media Project
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report, based on intensive research by the ICAR public images partnership, shows there has been an overall improvement in press coverage of asylum since the Press Complaints Commission introduced new guidance for journalists. The investigation found inaccurate terminology in just one per cent of articles surveyed and only a small number potentially breached existing guidelines. However, coverage in all papers suggests journalists are preoccupied with a system in 'chaos' rather than (potentially more enlightening) discussion about the context of asylum - though this may be attributable to the priorities of politicians rather than intentional media bias.

The authors suggest a number of improvements to the regulatory framework, editorial approach and Home Office operation.

Aims of the research

The research which led to the publication of this report is the first systematic monitoring of UK newspaper reporting of asylum seekers and refugees since the introduction of the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) Guidance Note on Reporting Refugees and Asylum Seekers in October 2003. The primary aim of the research is to assess the impact and adequacy of the Guidance Note in ensuring an acceptable minimum standard of journalism.

Further, the project aims to assess how far reporting of asylum meets an acceptable minimum standard because it a) meets current regulatory requirements and b) meets additional professional journalistic standards which ICAR believes should form part of the regulatory framework.

In addition, the research examines the extent to which reporting of asylum meets ICAR's best practice standard for responsible reporting of asylum, and how far such reporting is balanced and unlikely to undermine refugee integration

The sample

The study monitored 50 newspapers: all 20 nationals and their Sunday equivalents, 22 regionals chosen for highest circulation and geographical cover, and eight faith/minority papers again reflecting circulation. They were collected during the ten weeks between January 10th and March 20th 2005. The sample produced an average of just over 200 articles a week relating to asylum and refugees.

Context of research

The period of research came soon after the Asian Tsunami and ended six weeks before the much-heralded 2005 general election in the UK. Consequently speculation about the issues affecting the outcome of the general election dominated the news with new policy proposals being announced by the two main parties. The anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz prompted Holocaust memorials during the monitoring period. That and the tsunami both put the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees into an international context.

Methodology

The news event timeline collated from BBC, Government and Refugee Council sources shows the main national and international events during the research period from which news might have been extracted. The newspaper articles formed the main source of data for the research and were subjected to content analysis. A selection of articles was singled out for further investigation, including reference to the primary sources of information cited - for example research reports, political speeches and Home Office statistics. Additional information was gained through interviews with newspaper editors.

Content analysis was used to identify sources, words, phrases, and images used in the text of articles. The coding of the data was based on an analysis of what particular statements signified in the context of a public discourse. In addition to presenting results for all the newspapers in the sample and by the type of paper - faith/minority, regional and national - the report also subdivided the data in two other ways.

First, it examined the content of articles in the highest circulation national daily newspapers (ie those likely to have greatest impact on public opinion) to explore whether they followed the trends for the national newspapers as a whole.

Second, it examined the content of articles which dealt with asylum seekers or refugees as individuals or small groups of individuals, rather than as a large anonymous group of people. The aim was to explore whether presenting news on asylum seekers and refugees in terms of individuals was associated with other differences in the style of reporting, when compared to the whole sample of articles.

Where it was suspected that there might be inaccuracies in the articles these were tested in further detailed investigations by the Refugees, Asylum seekers and Media (RAM) Project.

The researchers also conducted interviews with editors to discover how they perceived their own coverage of the issues, their knowledge of and views about the adequacy of the PCC Guidance Note and Editors' Code of Practice, and scope for improving newspaper coverage.

Research questions

The research sought to explore the adequacy of the PCC Guidance Note by determining how far the nature of reporting of asylum seekers and refugees was still a cause for concern, particularly whether such matters fell outside the issues covered in the Guidance Note. The Guidance Note represents a significant step forward by the PCC in tackling inaccurate, unbalanced and inflammatory reporting of refugees and asylum seekers by UK newspapers, but there are concerns amongst those who work with refugees and asylum seekers that they are not consistently applied and do not go far enough. The scope of the requirements that the Guidance Note places on newspapers is narrow and therefore its ability to have an impact on hostile and inaccurate reporting is likely to be limited. However by promoting standards in one aspect of coverage it may influence reporting more widely.

The analysis

a) in the context of a regulated minimum standard:

During the period of this study, asylum was perceived to be highly newsworthy by the UK press. This was particularly true for the highest circulation national dailies. Articles about asylum from these papers made up a third of all those found in the national papers (34%) and a quarter of those found in the sample as a whole (24%). This is the equivalent of about one per day for the nationals, two or three a week for the regionals and fewer than one a week for the minority/faith papers.

More than 2,000 articles were assessed for inaccurate terminology through the content analysis exercise. 37 were selected for further investigation for possible breaches of the Editors' Code. 22 articles, or 1% of the total contained inaccurate terminology, such as 'illegal asylum seekers'.

The 37 articles singled out for further investigation were analysed for possible mixing of fact, comment and conjecture. Examples were found of misuse of statistics, stories whose main claims were misleading and misrepresentation of quotes or facts.

The researchers also questioned whether articles breached the Editors' Code regarding discrimination - as in unnecessary reference to a person's immigration status - or in the use of inflammatory language. There was no evidence that a particular nationality, ethnic group or religion was the focus for hostile coverage. However the researchers did find some gender imbalance, and evidence of unnecessary reference to a person's immigration status. None of the news, comment or feature articles in the sample were found to be inflammatory, though some letters and headlines gave cause for concern.

18 (out of a possible 50) editors agreed to be interviewed for the research. Some of those questioned were unclear about the distinctions between asylum and immigration and felt the Guidance needed clarification.

b) in the context of best practice, balance and refugee integration

In addition to the specific analysis described above, the researchers took a more general look at asylum reporting in the context of ICAR's criteria for best practice. For example they considered whether coverage was informative, contextualised and well sourced; whether it fairly represented the experiences and views of the subjects; whether it avoided generalised, unspecific allegations likely to inspire hostility; and how far it reflected Home Office concerns about balanced reporting that does not undermine refugee integration.

This part of the research found that the most common theme of asylum-related stories was policy, and these articles showed a preoccupation with removal rather than humanitarian or integration issues. What was missing was much investigative reporting to search out other sides or depths of the story.

The Conservative leader Michael Howard's proposals to restrict asylum were widely reported, as was the Government's new five-year plan for immigration. Coverage of the latter focused on plans to increase removals of failed asylum seekers.

In terms of balance, the sample included a range of partisan opinion, but with more attention

being paid to anti-immigration and anti-asylum views than supportive ones. This trend was seen most clearly in the top six national dailies, which in contrast to the overall sample of national, regional and faith/minority newspapers placed the emphasis on describing asylum as 'in chaos' or 'out of control'. The faith/minority papers did not report about 'lax' border controls or 'excessive' control by the European Union. The regional papers were least critical of the government's proposals and most often raised concerns about the 'wretched, squalid' etc. tone of the political debate.

Crime and community safety stories featured in 17% of the articles. Crime alone received little coverage in the faith/minority press, while the regionals paid more attention to the harassment of refugees and asylum seekers than the nationals. The highest circulation nationals were more interested in terrorism than the other groups.

One new aspect of the coverage was the significant contribution of refugees to the arts. Stories about this formed more than 10% of the entire sample, a larger proportion than those about Michael Howard's proposals for changing the asylum system. The perception of asylum seekers and refugees as 'educated, professional, skilled contributors to economy/society - or preparing to contribute' was also a dominant theme in all types of newspapers and far outweighed the most commonly expressed hostile views.

Only a minority of articles (22%) focused on individual asylum seekers or refugees. ICAR regards this as an important means of increasing understanding of how policies and attitudes affect real people. The regional papers featured slightly more of this type of story than the sample as a whole.

New themes emerging from this investigation, apart from the artistic voices mentioned above, were the use of jokes - which were usually found to be hostile towards refugees and asylum seekers. Another was letters, which again revealed predominantly uninformed or hostile attitudes. A fourth was the examination by some papers of their own or rival press coverage. The Daily Mail and The Daily Express were the most criticised papers, while the Daily Mirror, The Financial Times and three regionals each received praise.

Findings and recommendations

The Guidance Note & ICAR's minimum standards

The report concludes that the Guidance Note has been helpful in identifying and proscribing terms that are erroneous. However such terms were only found infrequently before the Note was introduced, and they have not been eradicated completely.

In giving only one specific example the Guidance Note has missed an opportunity to prevent a range of alternative erroneous terms being used, suggesting a residue of lazy journalism and poor understanding of the legal framework governing asylum applications. Inaccuracy was more frequent in the top six papers (3% as opposed to 1% in the sample as a whole), which would suggest PCC Guidance is having least impact on the widely circulating papers.

During interviews, Editors said there was a need for more clarification of asylum terms, and on how to handle readers' letters that might breach the Editors' Code and Guidance. The report concludes that the issue of further guidance on publication of letters is important. The Editors

also felt there was less understanding of the Code amongst minority/faith papers and questioned whether it had been adequately publicised in that sector.

The report concludes that adding 'immigration status' to the Editors' Code's definition of discrimination would allow such irrelevant and hostile references to be challenged. Since a relatively small number of articles produced such a wide range of inaccuracies the report also suggests the PCC should provide more information about how papers could comply with Clause 1 of the Code (on Accuracy).

ICAR believes clarification is needed to explain the significance of hostile reporting - for example that in some cases it could raise concerns under the Public Order Act - whether it contains accurate information or not. Similar action would be helpful in relation to the use of inflammatory headlines, whose potential impact can be equally harmful.

ICAR's best practice standard

The research found that while some stories from the events timeline received a lot of coverage others were given almost none, suggesting that reporting asylum is not wide-ranging enough to be properly informative. Further, most stories were reported only in the national context, not reflecting the international or local dimension, providing insufficient contextual information.

On subject selection, reporting failed to meet ICAR's standards for a number of reasons. Almost two-thirds of the articles focused on policy but generally following the same themes that had been dominant in previous surveys. There was little evidence of an investigative or innovative approach and most political reporting was found to be 'tired, repetitive and unquestioning'. Stories reflected the obsession with chaos and failed to offer alternative perspectives. This was reinforced by the choice of sources, which were mostly political with very few legal references. Political reporting generally failed to refer to individuals, which may help to give a fairer representation of the issues.

Statistics were used to strengthen dominant themes and drawn from easily accessed sources. They were usually presented in unspecific, generalised terms such as 'hundreds' or 'thousands'. However there has been a welcome reduction in the use of such widely criticised terms as 'flood'.

In other areas reporting was more likely to conform to ICAR's standards. For example in coverage of less frequently occurring subjects like economic impact, crime and detention, perceptions were more contextualised. Although some criticism of economic impacts focused on preferential treatment, most was about the beneficial impacts of refugees. Also crime was less frequently reported, and harassment (of refugees and asylum seekers) more, than in previous media monitoring. This may be due to the inclusion of regional papers in the sample.

In the category of perceptions and interactions, the most common issue was concern about the background countries of refugees and their reasons for flight. 'Bogus' was the most common hostile epithet but was far outweighed by reports saying refugees should be welcomed.

The sympathetic responses from local communities, particularly as reported in regional papers, were in marked contrast to the issues dominating the political debate. In particular, it is interesting that local concern about asylum seekers facing deportation featured highly - given the political focus on increasing deportations.

The wide range of ‘civil society’ sources used in the sample complies with ICAR’s position on best practice, though national papers could include more local sources and regional more national ones, to present a more informative picture. Two percent of stories gave no or unspecific sources (eg. ‘experts’) meaning the reader had no way of checking their accuracy.

Only 22% of the articles provided an individual focus - falling short of ICAR’s standards for giving a fair representation of how individuals are affected by policies and events. Using an individual focus was found to be conducive to investigative journalism, giving a more complex understanding of policy issues and their implications, and highlighting issues not previously covered. The report concludes that if greater effort was made to include individual examples in reporting it would help journalists meet the PCC requirement for accuracy.

Reporting of the arts in this sample was found to be highly informative, bringing new perspectives to the public understanding of asylum and drawing on a range of contextual information. Reporting of jokes, depicting asylum seekers in a stereotypical way, had the opposite effect and was far from achieving ICAR’s standards of best practice.

The report suggests that journalists should question the usefulness of printing letters containing generalised misinformation, and/or include corrections alongside such publications. Greater context and information is also needed when publishing opinion polls, to provide context and avoid inflaming public opinion.

The media’s discussion of its own reporting is regarded as a positive development -although it was generalised and failed to suggest ways of improving coverage. Also the debate was mainly restricted to the nationals and could be more effective if more regional papers participated.

The research shows striking similarities in the content of national and regional papers, though the regionals came closer to ICAR’s best practice standard in carrying stories with a local and individual focus more often than the nationals. While this may be attributable to their different role, the nationals could provide more balance by highlighting the heterogeneous nature of refugees and the skills and experiences they bring. The minority/faith papers, though a smaller proportion of the sample, generally did report from a more original and informed perspective, concentrating more on the potential contribution and skills of refugees.

Overall, the sample indicated that minimum standards were usually achieved and many articles met some of the elements of ICAR’s best practice suggestions, particularly when not reporting national political debates. In addition, despite the narrow focus of the Guidance Note it is possible to conclude that it has had a beneficial effect, and one that extends to aspects of reporting not explicitly mentioned in it. In other words, the existence of the Guidance Note in itself appears to encourage greater vigilance in reporting asylum and refugees.

In relation to the ‘top six’ dailies, these were found to be less informative and less contextualised in their reporting of asylum. They had a narrower focus; the journalism was more repetitive and tired, less investigative, more generalised and featured unspecific allegations likely to cause hostility and fear. Many but not all of the articles found to be furthest from ICAR’s best practice came from this group.

Although these papers generally conformed to PCC minimum standards, they ‘sailed close to the wind’ and would draw attention of the Guidance Note if it were extended as suggested.

The report offers a 'toolkit' to assist journalists in achieving good practice in reporting asylum.

Balanced reporting, unlikely to undermine integration

In terms of balance, the researchers found most cause for concern in the reporting of asylum policy. Integration was rarely featured, nor were reports about the steps already taken to tighten immigration controls. Instead there was a focus on failure, which could have a powerful impact on public perceptions. Also the disproportionate reference to the views of minor right wing parties is likely to promote undue fear. And the failure to include information about the international situation represented a missed opportunity to dispel concerns that the UK takes 'more than its share' of refugees.

Despite the finding of generally balanced reporting of non-political topics, it is possible to argue that political reporting has most impact on public opinion. The report suggests that further research into this would be helpful.

In relation to statistics the report suggests there is scope for the Home Office to make more information available and accessible. More consideration should also be given to the relationship between the press and public opinion in the context of readers' letters, and the Home Office should monitor the use of opinion polls and how they are drawn up.

The contribution of arts coverage in promoting individual focus is likely to increase understanding amongst people who read those pages and more research would be useful into how the experience of refugees and asylum seekers could be introduced as voices in other fields, especially political.

The emerging internal media debate is a window of opportunity for the Home Office to build partnerships and engage the many stakeholders to promote a more balanced view of asylum. This would also help balance the currently one-sided use of sources that tend to reflect immigration control rather than integration. However there may be a problem in that the tone of political debate has been criticised for being 'wretched, squalid and shameful'.

With poor standards and strong views being concentrated in the most popular papers this means the highest standards of reporting are not reaching the widest audience. However, given that this group are often out of step with the rest of the press there may be opportunities for the Home Office and partners to exert pressure on them to act more responsibly.

Overview

The research found that whilst asylum continues to receive a lot of coverage in the press most of it is not hostile to asylum seekers and refugees. There were only a small number of articles that might be of concern to the PCC under terms of the Editors' Code and the PCC Guidance Note. National, regional and minority/faith newspapers all portrayed refugees and asylum seekers as actual or potentially 'educated, professional, skilled contributors to society' far more often than they expressed the most commonly hostile views.

However there are some reasons for concern. Overall, the political coverage appears unbalanced, and while this may reflect the nature of the political debate rather than media bias, the emphasis on asylum chaos rather than protection is likely to have an impact on public perceptions.

Some articles were found to contain hostile, potentially inflammatory language, inaccuracies and confusion of comment and fact. Given that most people read only one or two newspapers, if hostile reporting is concentrated in those publications it could have a significant impact, especially if the readers fail to question what is written.

The analysis shows a marked difference in reporting between the different categories of papers. For example, it found that poor standards of reporting, combined with strongly held views, were concentrated in the most popular newspapers, and that reporting which met the highest standard was not reaching the widest audience. The authors suggest there may be opportunities for other papers, professional bodies, civil partnerships and the Home Office to exert pressure on this minority of papers to report more responsibly.

The report also identifies new themes and types of information in the way asylum and refugee issues are covered. A significant number of stories highlighted refugees' contribution to the arts, while there were less favourable references to asylum in jokes and readers' letters. The press itself showed evidence of some self-criticism, analysing its own or rivals' coverage of these issues.

Whilst the study contains generally less hostile reporting than previous samples, the legacy of earlier hostile reporting shows its influence on the current political concern with chaos and control.

Overall, the findings indicate further improvements could be made to the way asylum is reported, and recommends extending the PCC and Editors' Codes and promoting ICAR's model of best practice. The report also suggests that encouraging refugees to integrate into political life would lead to the media being better informed about asylum issues.

The authors highlight the potential harm that can result from inaccurate or hostile press reporting and question the effectiveness of the current system of self-regulation.

They also suggest more could be done to report issues that fail to make it into some of the more contentious newspapers. Falling back on stereotypes can blind readers to the realities of living as a refugee or asylum seeker. Reliance on government news releases has a similar effect. A more fulsome and balanced picture could be achieved through a more innovative and proactive approach to reporting.

Recommendations

The PCC is urged to:

1. Given that editors and the nature of coverage are not constants, the PCC should consider reissuing its editorial guidance notes annually, appropriately modified to take into account changing political circumstances and issues highlighted by complainants.
2. Each reissue should be accompanied by a reminder that:
 - editors should adhere to the spirit as much as the letter of the Code of Practice and the guidance notes;
 - it is important to use terms correctly, given the tendency of conflating terms within stories - for example the use of 'asylum seeker', 'immigrant', 'migrant', and refugee as if they were interchangeable unless the changing status of individuals warrants such usage;
 - the use of essentially meaningless terms such as 'illegal asylum seekers' or 'illegals' should be avoided;
 - further advice and guidance on technical and legal matters are available from quangos, non-governmental organisations and academic bodies concerned with asylum and refugee issues;
3. The PCC should be prepared to consider more 'third party' complaints about the coverage of refugees and asylum seekers given that civil society is directly affected by the social and political issues raised by misinformation about refugee and immigration issues. It should accept that refugees and asylum seekers, UK citizens and advocacy groups not specifically named in a story have legitimate concerns that should be addressed when errors of fact or extreme language are published.
4. The PCC should issue guidance for editors and the public about the interpretation of the term 'significant inaccuracy' when dealing with complaints under Clause 1 (Accuracy).
5. The PCC Code Committee and the Press Standards Board of Finance, and the Editors' Code Committee should consider incorporating into Clause 12 (Discrimination) reference to a person's immigration status, just as it has recently amended the Code to include 'gender'.
6. The PPC should meet with refugee community organisations to ensure that vulnerable groups are aware of the PCC's existence and role, since similar 'self-regulatory' bodies often do not exist in their countries of origin.
7. New editions of the Editors Code Book should include
 - an expanded explanation of technical terms relating to asylum and refugee - as exemplified by the Guidelines leaflet produced by MediaWise, the NUJ, the Refugee Council and the UNHCR;
 - reference to good practice models such as that outlined in the ICAR toolkit, The CRE Guidance for journalists on reporting race, and NUJ guidance on reporting race issues.

To Newspaper Editors

1. Newspaper editors should continue to strive for consistently high standards of fairness and accuracy in reporting asylum, refugee and race and community relations issues. In particular they should recognise the human rights of individual asylum seekers and refugees and seek to highlight the personal stories behind the public debates around social policy issues.
2. Newspaper should use their columns to examine the media industry's representation of public debate on issues of controversy, as a means of exerting peer pressure to promote best practice in terms of accuracy and fairness and the avoidance of misleading stereotypes.
3. Newspapers are encouraged to produce journalism that questions and goes beyond narrow and immediate political debate on asylum policy, in order to stimulate an informed debate on the issues raised by asylum and refugee protection and integration.
4. Newspapers should be mindful of the cumulative effects of inaccurate and stereotypical reporting of refugees and asylum seekers on their sense of safety and well being as well as on public trust and community relations.

To the Home Office

1. The Home Office should ensure that its Press Office is appropriately staffed and resourced to provide reliable facts and figures about refugee and asylum issues, policies and stories.
2. Given the powerful role the media has to play in the successful integration of refugees, the Home Office should engage in dialogue with editors, home affairs journalists and the regulatory authorities to ensure that policy is understood and specific initiatives are given appropriate context. (e.g. more frequent and comprehensive media briefings)
3. The Home Office should also engage in dialogue with editors, journalists and regulatory authorities to explore the process by which hostility is generated by reporting and to better define when reporting is hostile and inflammatory
4. The Home Office should commission (Media Monitoring) research when it becomes clear that issues of controversy are routinely being misrepresented. It should make available its findings to politicians and the public, and engage in dialogue about its findings with all interested parties (including Editors, specialist journalists, journalists' organisations, and relevant non-governmental organisations).
5. The Home Office should ensure that the role of the media is central to its integration policies, projects and structures, especially via easily accessible websites
6. The Home Office should ensure that all politicians have access to reliable information about refugee and asylum matters, and in particular offer guidance about the correct use of terminology.
7. In fulfilling its responsibilities to refugee integration, the Home Office should seek to ensure that opportunities are provided for refugees to play an active role in domestic political life, and take a lead by ensuring that refugees and their organisations are fully consulted on policy issues, provided with access to consultative fora, and included in both the management and implementation of projects funded by the Home Office.

Introduction

Summary of aims

Aim 1: The main aim of the research which led to the publication of this report was to conduct the first systematic monitoring of newspaper reporting of asylum seekers and refugees since the introduction of the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) Guidance Note on Reporting Refugees and Asylum Seekers in October 2003, in order to assess the impact and adequacy of the Guidance Note in ensuring an acceptable minimum standard of journalism is achieved.

Related aims were to consider how far press coverage fell short of a higher or 'best practice' standard for responsible reporting and in the process to examine how far the general portrayal of asylum to the British public may have been a balanced one, contributing to public understanding of debates about asylum, citizenship and refugee integration.

This report, the first to sample a truly national cross section of 50 newspapers, gives a comprehensive overview of how the UK's press currently report asylum. The research was focused on monitoring newspaper coverage but also included interviews with editors. It combined wide-ranging content analysis of over 2000 newspaper articles with a qualitative study of a small sample of articles to investigate their provenance and accuracy, conducted by a team that included exiled journalists. It allowed for detailed comparisons between national, regional and faith/minority newspapers (1), and between all national papers and the top six daily nationals, and for the identification of new reporting trends not discussed in previous reports.

Long-standing concerns

ICAR recognises that the Guidance Note was issued in response to long-standing and increasing concerns from a range of sources about the nature of newspaper coverage of asylum and the potential impact on public opinion, refugee integration and community relations. Evidence of this has been well documented in a number of previous research studies. For example, ICAR's report: *Understanding the Stranger* found that:

'National media coverage of asylum and asylum seekers is generally considered to be provocative, inflammatory and unconstructive by local people, asylum seekers and those who work with them. This adds to the general climate of mistrust, fear and ignorance in which local people and asylum seekers have to attempt to understand and live alongside each other.' (2)

ICAR's report *Media Image Community Impact* found:

'clear evidence of unbalanced and inaccurate reporting likely to promote fear and tension within communities' (3)

In its report *Community Cohesion* (2001), the independent review team commissioned by the Home Office found that:

there is an urgent need to promote community cohesion, based on a greater knowledge of, contact between, and respect for, the various cultures that now make Great Britain such a rich and diverse nation.
"we did not solicit views about the role of the press and media and were therefore surprised to find that they were criticised in all but one case."
"discussions [should] be held with a range of regional newspaper editors (and media representatives) to establish a voluntary code of guidance.... On all aspects of community cohesion" (4)

In 2001 the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) also expressed concerns:

'where asylum communities have been established there has been ill informed adverse media coverage which has contributed to heightened local tensions and resentment of asylum seekers.. The difficulty with maintaining.. a positive media message is significant, the failure to do so may undermine much of the Police Services efforts to limit tensions and maintain community harmony.' (5)

1 Smaller scale attempts to do this have been carried out for the Greater London Authority

2 ICAR, (2003) *Understanding the Stranger*, London ICAR <http://www.icar.org.uk/?lid=496>

3 ICAR (2004) *Media Image Community Impact Media Image, Community Impact*, London: GLA/ICAR <http://www.icar.org.uk/pdf/mici004.pdf>

4 Cantle, T. (2001). *Community Cohesion Review Team Report*, the Home Office, p.10 and p45

5 ACPO (2001) *Guide to meeting the policing needs of asylum seekers and refugees* Ch 7 Media strategy

The Media Image Community Impact report, in exploring the relationship between media reporting and harassment, concluded that relentlessly hostile reporting about asylum can itself be a form of harassment, and is perceived as such by asylum seekers and refugees and their community organisations. (6)

Freedom of the press is not absolute, and is subject to legal constraints. In some instances, the police have warned editors that inflammatory reporting is in danger of breaching the Public Order Act, which states:

‘A person who publishes or distributes written material which is threatening, abusive or insulting is guilty of an offence if-

a) he intends thereby to stir up racial hatred, or

b) having regard to all the circumstances racial hatred is likely to be stirred up thereby” (7)

In the main, minimum standards of reporting are imposed by self-regulation via the Press Complaints Commission and the majority of complaints are dealt with by their complaints procedure rather than through legal action. The repeated complaints about coverage of asylum have been acknowledged by the Press Complaints Commission, which has responded by issuing the Guidance Note. Similarly, the Home Office National Refugee Integration Forum (NRIF) has recognised that addressing maintaining reporting standards and promoting best practice reporting is a vital part of fulfilling its responsibility to facilitate refugee integration and for that reason has commissioned this research study.

6 See ICAR (2004) Media Image Community Impact Media Image, Community Impact, London: GLA/ICAR <http://www.icar.org.uk/pdf/mici004.pdf>

7 Public Order Act 1986 Section 19(1)

Freedom of the press

The essential importance of a free press in preserving democracy and safeguarding human rights is widely recognised. In criticising the nature of some press reporting on asylum, suggesting models of best practice and making recommendations, this report in no way seeks to undermine the freedom of the press. It argues for greater adherence to the Editor's Code, particularly on accuracy, and it calls for greater awareness of aspects of reporting likely to generate unfounded fears and create tension in communities, which it believes can be avoided by more informative and balanced reporting. ICAR has characterised reporting of refugees as a field of competing rights: 'on the one hand the rights of a democratic society to freedom of speech and freedom of the press and on the other, the rights of asylum seekers and refugees to freedom from harassment and persecution.'⁸ These rights are enshrined in the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Article 14 Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

Article 19 Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 29 (2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.'

Refugee protection in the host country should include protection from media misrepresentation. Making proposals for how newspapers, and those interested in setting journalistic standards should navigate between these rights, is complex, but does not threaten freedom of expression. This point has been well expressed by the National Union of Journalists (NUJ):

'The call for more interpretation, analysis and evaluation of the presence of asylum seekers is in no way contradictory to editors' or journalists' traditional responsibilities of full and balanced reporting. In many cases, it may be an extension of their present practices, but it is a constructive extension not a threatening one.'

The importance of a free press is understood most clearly by refugee journalists who have experienced persecution in their countries of origin as a result of their commitment to journalism. Refugee journalists from the Refugees Asylum Seekers and the Media (RAM) Project are an important part of the team that carried out the research for this report. In order to emphasise our commitment to a free press, and to highlight how press freedom and refugee rights are compatible, we include in Appendix # statements from refugee journalists.

⁸ ICAR (2004) Media Image Community Impact Media Image, Community Impact, London: GLA/ICAR <http://www.icar.org.uk/pdf/mici004.pdf>

Asylum in the UK

The UK has a long tradition of providing asylum. Today asylum in the UK is regulated by international legislation - the UK is a signatory to the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951, the 1967 protocol, and the European Convention on Human Rights 1950. More recently, the UK has signed EU directives which are intended to facilitate a Common European Asylum System. Numbers seeking asylum in the UK, and world-wide, increased to previously unseen levels during the 1990s and early part of the new millennium. Annual asylum applications in the UK were 46,015 in 1998, 80,315 in 2000, and peaked at 84,130 in 2002 (9). Since 2002 numbers have fallen steadily, in 2004 there were 33,930 applications and this looks likely to fall again in 2005 and 2006 (10). This is partly attributable to global trends - UNHCR reported falls in the number of refugees worldwide for the 4th consecutive year, to 9.2 million in 2004, a drop of 24% in the last 4 years (11), likely to be linked to a fall in the number of major armed conflicts worldwide (12). The reduction in numbers seeking asylum in the UK is also a result of UK government and European policies. Since the early 1990s, successive governments have responded to the increase in numbers seeking asylum by introducing legislation aimed at controlling the flow and reducing the intake of asylum seekers, while seeking to fulfil their responsibilities to offer protection to refugees under the 1951 UN Convention. The European Common Asylum Policy imposes further controls intended to limit the movement of asylum seekers into and between European states.

Despite recent reductions in the number of asylum applications, the number of people who have been allowed to settle in the U.K - granted Refugee Status under the 1951 Convention or another form of humanitarian status - is growing. The increased number of refugees to be integrated into local communities has been the subject of new policy initiatives - leading to the publication of the strategy 'Integration Matters' (13) and the creation of the National Refugee Integration Forum, which commissioned this research. UNHCR's integration goals for host governments include (14): *'foster the understanding of the receiving community'* and *'counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities'*.

The Home Office has defined integration as follows:

'Integration takes place when refugees are empowered to: achieve their full potential as members of British society; contribute to the community; and access the services to which they are entitled.' (15)

The Home Office strategy document Integration Matters refers to the impact of the media on integration: (16)

*'In order for refugees to contribute to all aspects of community life, they must feel safe and secure'
'Host communities also need support: they are entitled to receive fair and accurate information about refugees, from the Government and the media'
'The media can be a powerful force for understanding. But too often people hear of refugees only when some problem comes to light. To create a more balanced coverage, efforts should be made to encourage journalists to look for ways of presenting the many positives about the presence of refugees to the wider public. But those efforts must not be made in a way which seeks to dictate to the media about their handling of these issues.'*

9 Asylum Statistics United Kingdom 2003 <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/hosb1104.pdf>

10 Asylum Statistics 4th Quarter 2004 <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/asylumq404.pdf>

Asylum Statistics 1st Quarter 2005 <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/asylumq105.pdf>

11 UNHCR 2004 Global Refugee Trends <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/statistics/opendoc.pdf?tbl=STATISTICS&id=42b283744>

12 see 'Patterns of major armed conflicts 1990-2003' by Mikael Eriksson and Peter Wallensteen, published in the SIPRI Yearbook 2004, as cited in Uppsala Conflict Data Project Stockholm international peace research institute - patterns of major armed conflicts http://www.sipri.org/contents/conflict/MAC_patterns.html

13 Home Office Immigration and Nationality Department, strategy document Integration matters www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/.../refugee_integration0.Maincontent.0002.file.tmp/267218_RefugeeFinal_240205.pdf

14 'The UNHCR Integration Handbook sets out 9 "integration goals". These goals were developed with a view to putting into operation the principles developed and endorsed at the 2001 Norrköping International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Refugees.' UNHCR website www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/protect/opendoc.pdf?tbl=PROTECTION&id=3d089b3ca

15 Integration matters paragraph 1.10

16 Integration matters Para 2.12 to 2.16

Policies to promote refugee integration are important in the context of wider government priorities, including recent and forthcoming policy developments on race relations, racial discrimination and harassment, hate crimes, human rights, social exclusion and community cohesion. Nonetheless, it is the development of an efficient asylum policy, which controls numbers, processes claims quickly, and returns those 'failed' while minimising pressures on public, welfare and legal services, which has been the main concern of successive governments and the focus for newspaper attention, rather than refugee integration. Measures to control and deter asylum seekers by limiting the rights of asylum seekers and refugees can run counter to integration policies. This was seen most sharply in government proposals announced during the time period of this research, which suggest that asylum should be granted for a limited period rather than indefinitely. Asylum has become highly politicised- the success or failure of asylum policy is perceived as central to the fortunes of the politicians responsible and their opponents. This is seen most clearly during pre- election periods, such as the period when this monitoring took place. Asylum has also become highly newsworthy - while frequency and tone of coverage has varied between papers, many national papers have reported on asylum on a daily basis. Past studies have shown that while there are some reports sympathetic to the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers, the dominant theme has been criticism of perceived abuse of the asylum system - most commonly described as a problem of 'bogus' asylum seekers. The most common response to government policy initiatives is that they are not effective in controlling 'the problem'. (17)

The questions of how far the media influences asylum policy, and how far politicians set the tone for reporting are not the focus of this report, but there is evidence that the images presented by both groups have had an impact on public opinion and on community relations, at a time of adjustment to the increased and more widespread presence of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK, and the policy framework is likely to impact upon the effectiveness of the PCC Guidance Note in improving standards of reporting on asylum.

17 See Media Image, Community Impact for its analysis and a summary of other reports

Events related to asylum in the UK that occurred during the monitoring period (18)

Here, information is given about the events occurring before, during and after the period of this research. Events listed are limited to national political events, and the publication of research, statistics and other reports relating to asylum policy. Local events, cultural events and events affecting individuals - including crimes - are not listed here.

Speculation about the issues affecting the outcome of the general election dominated the period from which the sample was taken, as well as the period before and after it. The forthcoming election meant that new policy proposals were announced by the two main parties. Proposals suggested by other parties did not feature on these three websites used as sources; however the creation of a new political party - Veritas - is listed. Two significant international events occurring before or during this time period elicited a widespread humanitarian response - firstly, the emergency response to assist the victims of the tsunami, secondly memorials conducted for the Holocaust, on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Both these events, in different ways, relate to the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees. Two other events were listed affecting particular nationalities - there were demonstrations against deportations of failed asylum seekers to Zimbabwe, and asylum-seekers and refugees from Iraq were assisted to participate in voting in Iraq's first democratic elections. Statistics were issued showing falls in numbers seeking asylum in the UK and internationally. The Home Office introduced a series of measures increasing control of asylum and immigration (restrictions on marriage, extension of the list of 'safe countries', airline checks, return of unaccompanied children) and also launched its integration strategy. Following the Law Lords ruling, terrorist suspects were released from detention. Parliamentary committees commented on the efficiency and fairness of policies. Publications were issued by various bodies on the topics of health, accurate information, detention, bureaucratic costs, retraining refugee professionals, and legal aid provision. There were also events indicating the media's role - the Sunday Telegraph carried Conservative Party advertisement about immigration, the BBC showed a documentary about conditions in detention, and the Refugee Council and others issued an information leaflet aimed mainly at politicians and the press.

Key events for the period immediately preceding the press monitoring

- A general election was expected to be called in May 2005. There was discussion about whether or not asylum will be a major election issue.
- 15 December 2004 David Blunkett resigned as Home Secretary. He was replaced by Charles Clarke and there was speculation about whether there will be changes in asylum policy.
- 16 December 2004 the Law Lords ruled that holding nine men in prison indefinitely on suspicion of terrorism is unlawful under international human rights law. Some of the men had previously been granted asylum.
- 26 December 2004 a tsunami in the Indian Ocean created a humanitarian crisis. Many asylum seekers and refugees in the UK had relatives in the region who were affected by the disaster.
- 29 December 2005 in his New Year message the Prime Minister stated that new proposals on asylum will be set out later in the New Year.
- 6 January 2005 the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) facilitated the procedure by which Iraqis in the UK (including asylum seekers and refugees) can register to vote in the elections for Iraq's Transitional National Assembly due to take place 28 - 30 January 2005.

Forthcoming events

The general election was held on May 5th 2005. During the monitoring period, this was the main known forthcoming event.

18 The list of events is compiled from news reports on the following websites: BBC News <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>, the Immigration and Nationality Department of the Home Office <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/content/ind/en/home.html> and the Refugee Council <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/>

Events timeline - the key events for the monitoring period

	Week beginning 10.01.05
11.01.05	National Aids Trust and Sigma Research published a report on discrimination against those with HIV which criticised dispersal and other aspects of asylum policy.
	Week beginning 17.01.05
17.01.05	Home Office announced tighter controls on immigrants wishing to marry in the UK from 1 st February.
18.01.05	Home Office announced that India will be added to list of 'safe countries'. Asylum seekers from safe countries who are rejected can only appeal after being removed from UK.
23.01.05	The Conservative Party placed an advertisement in the Sunday Telegraph calling for more limits on immigration and asylum.
	Week beginning 24.01.05
24.01.05	Conservative Party leader Michael Howard made a speech outlining wide-ranging proposals on asylum and immigration, including withdrawal from the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.
27.01.05	Holocaust Memorial Day. 60 th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.
28-30.01.05	Iraqis in the UK, including asylum seekers and refugees, voted in Iraqi elections.
29.01.05	Demonstration in London calling for end to deportations of failed asylum seekers to Zimbabwe.
29.01.05 - 30.01.05	Under the Anti Terrorism Crime and Security Act, terrorist suspects Abu Rideh, who has refugee status, and asylum seeker 'C' were released from detention.
	Week beginning 31.01.05
February (no date)	Refugee Council and other NGOs launched 'Tell it Like it is' leaflet, giving factual information on asylum.
	Week beginning 07.02.05
07.02.05	Home Secretary Charles Clerk set out five-year plan for asylum and immigration.
08.02.05	The Public Accounts Committee criticised waste in asylum system and calls for faster asylum decisions.
09.02.05	The Government announced plans to return Albanian asylum seeker children without parents - 'unaccompanied minors' - to Albania.
11.02.05	The Labour Party set out their six election pledges, one of which is 'your country's borders protected'.

	Week beginning 14.02.05
14.02.05	The Conservative Party announced proposals for health checks and HIV tests for migrants seeking to come to Britain for more than a year. This does not include asylum seekers.
14.02.05	Robert Kilroy-Silk, of newly formed Veritas Party, stated he would grant an amnesty to asylum seekers with children who are in the UK and deport those without.
	Week beginning 21.02.05
21.02.05	Home Office announced expansion of the Airline Liaison network. This aims to prevent passengers without documents departing for the UK
22.02.05	2004 Asylum figures released by Home Office revealing a 60% fall in applications since 2002. Removals continue to rise.
22.02.05	The Home Affairs Select Committee criticised Home Office targets on asylum and set out recommendations ahead of the 2006 spending review.
	Week beginning 28.02.05
28.02.05	Save The Children published a report arguing that detention before deportation can cause problems like depression and eating disorders in young asylum seekers.
01.03.05	UNCHR figures showed fall in numbers seeking asylum in richer countries.
02.03.05	BBC Detention Undercover documentary gave evidence of abuse by immigration staff in a detention centre.
	Week beginning 07.03.05
09.03.05	Home office launched national refugee integration strategy - 'Integration Matters'.
	Week beginning 14.03.05
14.03.05	Council for assisting refugee academics (CARA) issued report on difficulties faced by skilled refugees in retraining to work in UK - particularly doctors.
	Week beginning 21.03.05
21.03.05	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons reported on non-residential immigration holding facilities.
22.03.05	Church of England report 'a place of refuge' urged parishioners to support asylum seekers and refugees and campaign on their behalf.
22.03.05	The Constitutional Affairs Committee expressed concern at plans to limit legal aid for asylum seekers.

The PCC Guidance Note on Refugees and Asylum

The Press Complaints Commission (PCC) is a mechanism for self-regulation by the press. It investigates cases brought by members of the public who have complaints about newspapers and aims to reach resolutions in a ‘fast, free and fair’ manner. It intends to be accessible to all and there is no requirement for individuals to be represented by a solicitor. Guidance Notes are issued by the PCC to give further advice to editors on aspects of the Editors’ Code of Practice and on issues that are causing systematic concern. They do not have the same status as the Editors’ Code of Practice in that they are drawn up by the PCC rather than by newspaper editors, but they are used as a reference in making adjudications on complaints. Guidance notes are not issued very often; at present there are 11.

While the PCC has received complaints about reporting on asylum it states in the preamble to the Guidance Note that:

“The clear majority of complaints raise no breach of the Code of Practice.”

It goes on to say that: ‘one discrete group of complaints has led to a number of breaches’ and these relate to the use of inaccurate terminology. The PCC Guidance Note on Refugees and Asylum Seekers is therefore limited in scope and refers mainly to use of accurate terminology:

‘The Commission is concerned that editors should ensure that their journalists covering these issues are mindful of the problems that can occur and take care to avoid misleading or distorted terminology. By way of example, as an “asylum seeker” is someone currently seeking refugee status or humanitarian protection, there can be no such thing in law as an “illegal asylum seeker”. A “refugee” is someone who has fled their country in fear of their life, and may have been granted asylum under the 1951 Refugee Convention or someone who otherwise qualifies for Humanitarian Protection, Discretionary Leave or has been granted Exceptional Leave to Remain in the country. An asylum seeker can only become an “illegal immigrant” if he or she remains in the UK after having failed to respond to a removal notice.’

It also refers to discrimination:

‘Editors are, of course, already aware that pejorative or irrelevant reference to a person’s race, religion, or nationality is already prohibited under Clause 13 (Discrimination) of the Code’

While the remit of the Guidance Note is narrowly drawn, it includes one wide-ranging statement:

‘the Commission - in previous adjudications under Clause 1 (Accuracy) of the Code - has underlined the danger that inaccurate, misleading or distorted reporting may generate an atmosphere of fear and hostility that is not borne out by the facts.’

Assessing the impact of the PCC Guidance Note requires judgements to be made firstly, about the nature of any differences in reporting before and after its introduction and secondly, about whether these differences are due to the introduction of the Guidance Note or some other cause. Differences before and after cannot be systematically measured, since this study was begun over a year after the introduction of the Guidance Note and, being larger than any other study previously undertaken, includes newspapers which have not been monitored by previous studies. However, all of the studies undertaken before the introduction of the Guidance Note expressed similar concerns about hostile and inaccurate reporting, and so the impact of the Guidance Note could be judged on whether this study’s results correspond to the generalised concern seen in other studies or whether the results show a more positive picture. Other causes which may influence the results also need to be taken into account, and these are explored more fully in the Conclusions.

The adequacy of the Guidance Note is easier to measure - in that it can be assessed by determining how far the nature of reporting of asylum seekers and refugees is still a cause for concern, particularly whether matters for concern fall outside the issues covered in the Guidance Note. The Guidance Note represents a significant step forward by the PCC in tackling inaccurate, unbalanced and inflammatory reporting of refugees and asylum seekers by UK newspapers, but there are concerns amongst those who work with refugees and asylum seekers that they are not consistently applied and do not go far enough. The scope of the requirements that the Guidance Note places on newspapers is narrow and therefore its ability to have an impact on hostile and inaccurate reporting is likely to be limited, however by promoting standards in one aspect of reporting it may influence reporting more widely.

Some monitoring of the impact and adequacy of the Guidance had been conducted before this research began. The Mediawise Refugees and the Media Project (RAM) has been monitoring adherence to the Guidance Notes and, for example, found 'illegal asylum seeker' used 7 times in April 2004 and twice in May 2004. In June 2004 the Daily Express ran the headline: 'Illegal asylum seeker lands top police job'. In all, 'illegal asylum seekers' had been used 33 times in the national press in the year since the PCC guidance had been issued, only 5 fewer than in the previous year. The Daily Express used it five times compared with four the year before, the Daily Telegraph, three instead of one.

RAM has also identified a number of stories which raise concerns in relation to the Guidance Note's warning of: "the danger that inaccurate, misleading or distorted reporting may generate an atmosphere of fear and hostility that is not borne out by the facts". Under the headline 'Asylum Chaos' the Daily Express of 18 Nov 2003 reported on a court case against an asylum seeker who had used two names to defraud the benefits system. It claimed "asylum-seeking benefit cheats are using false identities to claim handouts in frauds costing the British taxpayer £100 million a year". The Department for Work and Pensions told the RAM Bulletin that the £100m figure referred to the total amount of identity fraud in the UK. On 27 November, London's Evening Standard chose to illustrate the news that police investigating 167 sexual assaults by minicab drivers can now take DNA samples from unlicensed minicab drivers, by citing only one case - that of an asylum seeker jailed for rape nine months earlier.

In collating background information for this study, ICAR contacted ACPO and its members for views on current standards of reporting asylum. One Chief Inspector responded: 'the way the press allegedly use statistics to say the opposite to what they prove... is particularly damaging.... and even dangerous to such vulnerable people, without quite using the 'inciting' word'

Another described how he had been misrepresented by a national paper and said that despite the very low minority ethnic population in his area: 'the general perception of the majority of the public is that ...shire is swamped with asylum seekers, as their limited knowledge of 'foreigners' is based upon the unhelpful media reports and hysteria about immigration.... National media agendas, and I have to say political electioneering around the subject by all parties, is undermining attempts by the local press and other agencies' Examples were given by ACPO and its members of local police/ local authority joint interventions in response to concerns about the media- producing 'myth-busting' leaflets, holding meetings with local papers with a track record of printing 'very negative letters', and challenging papers that give the nationality of foreigners in court reports, but do not mention when those accused/convicted are British.

Towards the end of 2004 the Liberal Democrat Culture spokesperson Don Foster MP called on the PCC to 'raise its game' following evidence that newspapers were flouting the Guidance Note. At the end of 2004, not long before the start of this research, PCC Chair Sir Christopher Meyer agreed that the PCC would carry out its own monitoring and commissioned a cuttings agency to scan all British newspapers for use of the term 'illegal asylum seeker'. This study is therefore measuring the impact and adequacy of the Guidance Note in the context of existing evidence that it is being flouted, and of increased vigilance by the PCC.

The full text of the PCC Guidance Notes on refugees and asylum seekers

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Over the past few years, the Commission has received increasing numbers of complaints - principally concerning discrimination - about the coverage of issues relating to refugees and asylum seekers.

The clear majority of complaints - including those stemming from partisan comment and campaigning - raise no breach of the Code of Practice.

However, one discrete group of complaints - which fall under the broad banner of Clause 1 (Accuracy) of the Code - has led to a number of breaches, and the Commission thought it useful to draw this issue to the

attention of editors.

Those breaches of the Code that have occurred - in a similar manner to the issue of the reporting of mental health, about which the PCC issued guidance in 1998 - appear largely to have arisen from misunderstandings about terminology.

The Commission is concerned that editors should ensure that their journalists covering these issues are mindful of the problems that can occur and take care to avoid misleading or distorted terminology. By way of example, as an “asylum seeker” is someone currently seeking refugee status or humanitarian protection, there can be no such thing in law as an “illegal asylum seeker”. A “refugee” is someone who has fled their country in fear of their life, and may have been granted asylum under the 1951 Refugee Convention or someone who otherwise qualifies for Humanitarian Protection, Discretionary Leave or has been granted Exceptional Leave to Remain in the country. An asylum seeker can only become an “illegal immigrant” if he or she remains in the UK after having failed to respond to a removal notice.

Those groups set up to support and advocate on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers can provide further clarification to journalists if required.

Editors are, of course, already aware that pejorative or irrelevant reference to a person’s race, religion, or nationality is already prohibited under Clause 13 (Discrimination) of the Code. Similarly, the Commission - in previous adjudications under Clause 1 (Accuracy) of the Code - has underlined the danger that inaccurate, misleading or distorted reporting may generate an atmosphere of fear and hostility that is not borne out by the facts.

Other aims

Aim 2: Assessing how far reporting of asylum meets an acceptable minimum standard because it a) meets current regulatory requirements and b) meets additional professional journalistic requirements which ICAR believes should form part of the regulatory framework

This report aims to assess how the PCC framework can set an acceptable minimum standard and how far this is met by the newspaper reports found in this sample.

While the introduction of the PCC Guidance Note has been the trigger for this research, the Guidance Note is properly seen as an extension of the Editors’ Code of Practice, which is central to the self regulation of the press. It is drawn up and agreed by newspaper editors and then ratified by the independent PCC. The PCC adjudicates on complaints received in relation to alleged breaches of the Editors’ Code.

The following explanation of the Code is given on the PCC website:

‘All members of the press have a duty to maintain the highest professional standards. This Code sets the benchmark for those ethical standards, protecting both the rights of the individual and the public’s right to know. It is the responsibility of editors and publishers to implement the Code and they should take care to ensure it is observed rigorously by all editorial staff and external contributors, including non-journalists, in printed and online versions of publications. A further sign of this commitment is that adherence to the industry’s Code is written into the contracts of employment of the vast majority of editors in the country. Central to the work of the PCC and to the Code of Practice is the added protection it gives to particularly vulnerable groups of people. Editors should co-operate swiftly with the PCC in the resolution of complaints. Any publication judged to have breached the Code must print the adjudication in full and with due prominence, including headline reference to the PCC.’ (19)

The general requirements in the Code relating to accuracy in reporting (Clause 1) are developed in the Guidance Note to cover use of accurate terminology in reporting about refugees and asylum seekers, but other aspects of the

19 PCC (2004): Code of Practice (revised) <http://www.pcc.org.uk/cop/cop.asp>

accuracy clause should also be considered central to ensuring an acceptable minimum standard of reporting on asylum is reached.

Clause 1 Accuracy

- i) The Press must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information, including pictures.
- ii) A significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distortion once recognised must be corrected, promptly and with due prominence, and - where appropriate - an apology published.
- iii) The Press, whilst free to be partisan, must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact.
- iv) A publication must report fairly and accurately the outcome of an action for defamation to which it has been a party, unless an agreed settlement states otherwise, or an agreed statement is published.

Accuracy is difficult to assess without carrying out background investigations into information used in articles. It was beyond the scope of this research project to investigate accuracy in this way for all of the articles found during the monitoring period, however a sample of 17 articles were investigated in depth. For the purposes of the content analysis carried out on over 2000 articles, accuracy is considered to be indicated by use of identifiable sources and by the presentation of factual information in a manner that promotes information-based debate, clearly distinguishing fact, opinion and conjecture. This definition does not prejudice journalists duty to protect sensitive human sources. Significant inaccuracy is not defined by the PCC. In the case of the in depth investigations, several instances of inaccurate information are considered to amount to significant inaccuracy.

Furthermore, other aspects of the Code of Practice contain requirements which are helpful in challenging reporting on asylum issues, and for the sample of newspaper articles found in this research, the clause on discrimination is relevant.

Clause 12 Discrimination

- i) The press must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to an individual's race, colour, religion, sex, sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability.
- ii) Details of an individual's race, colour, religion, sexual orientation, physical or mental illness or disability must be avoided unless genuinely relevant to the story.

This report examines discriminatory practices by looking at gender balance and by assessing how far some nationalities and religions are subjects of unduly hostile reporting. It also examines articles which make unnecessary and hostile reference to immigration status which, if they reported in the same way about a particular nationality or religion, would be considered discriminatory. Press awareness of harassment, bullying and discrimination directed at asylum seekers and refugees is also examined.

The recently published Editor's Codebook gives additional information about readers' letters:

'the Code applies to all editorial staff... and to contributed editorial material, such as agency copy - and readers' letters' (20)

In assessing where this regulatory framework should be extended ICAR draws on the standards set by the NUJ. The National Union of Journalists has developed the NUJ Code of Conduct²¹ which predates the Editor's Code. All journalists joining the union must sign that they will strive to adhere to it.²² Clause 10 of the NUJ Code goes further than the Editors' Code in that its definition of discrimination includes marital status. In addition, whereas the Editors' Code states that the press must avoid 'prejudicial or pejorative reference' the NUJ Code goes further because it refers to publication of material that not only is discriminatory, but which 'encourages discrimination, ridicule, prejudice or hatred'.

10. A journalist shall mention a person's age, sex, race, colour, creed, illegitimacy, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation only if this information is strictly relevant. A journalist shall neither originate nor process material which encourages discrimination, ridicule, prejudice or hatred on any of the above-mentioned grounds.'

The NUJ's guidelines also state:

'in court reporting, the racial dimension of the case should be reported only if relevant. News is not news simply because a black person, asylum seeker, Muslim or immigrant is involved.' (23)

This report explores evidence of reporting which might be considered discriminatory if existing regulations were extended to include irrelevant and hostile reference to immigration status.

The Public Order Act

The adequacy of the Guidance Note is also assessed in terms of whether the advice it gives is sufficient to ensure that Editor's understand how to avoid breaching the Public Order Act.

20 The Editors Code of Practice Committee (2005) : The editors codebook, page7

21 NUJ Code of Conduct <http://www.nuj.org.uk/inner.php?docid=59>

22 <http://www.nuj.org.uk/inner.php?docid=59>

23 Lionel Morrison, of the NUJ's Ethics Council, has written 'Guidelines for journalists on proper coverage of refugee-related topics' Originally published by Amnesty International, 17 February 2004 available on Mediawise website http://www.mediawise.org.uk/display_page.php?id=649

Aim 3: Assessing how far reporting of asylum meets ICAR's best practice standard for responsible reporting of asylum

It is possible for reporting to meet the PCC's requirements in terms of accuracy, including accurate use of terminology, and in terms of avoiding discrimination, and yet to perpetuate hostility, fear and misunderstanding of asylum seekers and refugees. Establishing a regulatory regime that insists on more informative reporting is difficult without compromising unduly the right to freedom of speech. A more appropriate response is to encourage all editors to aim for best practice in responsible reporting of asylum, which ICAR defines as reporting that:

Is informative

Provides appropriate context - legal, international and local

Draws on a range of identifiable sources of information and viewpoints

Includes fair representation of the opinions and experiences of those people affected by the events reported

Avoids generalised, unspecific allegations likely to inspire hostility

This report aims to identify where reporting meets this best practice standard. This best practice standard for responsible reporting of asylum corresponds to elements of the guidelines set out by the NUJ:

'Do a journalist's job and find out the facts rather than help recycle prejudice!' (24)

'It should not require a newspaper to stop printing immigration or asylum statistics or to stop discussing calls for a reduction in future immigration in its editorial columns. But, what it does require, and this is by no means inconsistent with the traditional requirements of editorial standards, is that immigration statistics should be reported accurately, with adequate interpretation and in context; that speculation or views should be attributed as such and not presented as fact.'

'The "bandwagon effect" and hysteria should be avoided. Stories and allegations should be ascribed to their source and their authority evaluated. Statistics should be checked, interpreted and placed in context. Speculations and rumour have no place in news columns. Fears should not be exploited by irresponsible and exaggerated reporting. Particular care should be taken when reporting violence and events that cause racial tension.' (25)

24 Lionel Morrison, of the NUJ's Ethics Council, has written 'Guidelines for journalists on proper coverage of refugee-related topics' Originally published by Amnesty International, 17 February 2004 available on Mediawise website http://www.mediawise.org.uk/display_page.php?id=649

25 Guidelines for journalists on proper coverage of refugee-related topics' http://www.mediawise.org.uk/display_page.php?id=649

Aim 4: Assessing how far reporting of asylum is balanced and unlikely to undermine refugee integration

To fully address the concerns of importance to the NRIF which commissioned this research, and those other parts of the Home Office concerned with refugee integration and related policies, notably community cohesion, this report also examines the picture of asylum presented by the whole sample to assess whether it is balanced, or whether it gives a partisan view. In doing so ICAR is not advocating that all newspapers should promote ‘positive images’ of asylum seekers and refugees, nor that it is reasonable or advantageous for individual newspapers to attempt to introduce balance into every article written. However, this study does aim to assess the extent to which the dominant media messages are likely to undermine efforts to promote refugee integration and community cohesion. While individual newspapers are free to be partisan, the public’s access to balanced information is limited if a major part of the newspaper industry adopts one partisan view.

Many organisations supporting asylum seekers and refugees seek to promote ‘positive images’ in the media, in order to counterbalance instances of hostile and inaccurate reporting. Typically ‘positive images’ concern the positive contribution which asylum seekers and refugees make to the host country. As an impartial organisation, it is not ICAR’s role to promote positive images and that is not the purpose of this report. ICAR believes that the effects of inaccurate and unduly hostile reporting are not counterbalanced by ‘positive images’ and steps should be taken to reduce the incidence of inaccurate and unduly hostile reporting. Furthermore, ICAR avoids use of the terms positive and negative to describe newspaper reporting because it considers these terms to be vague and incompatible with its impartial role.

Judging the newspaper industry

In the context of these aims, individual journalists and editors and the newspaper industry can be judged by how their reporting - including individual articles, reporting in individual newspapers, and reporting across the spectrum of newspapers - corresponds to these four levels:

1. Journalism that appears not to meet current regulatory requirements - defined by the PCC framework - the Guidance Note, Code, Codebook and adjudications.
2. Journalism that would appear not to meet regulatory requirements - if our recommended changes to the Code and Guidance Note were implemented
3. Journalism which meets the PCC’s current requirements and would meet the additional requirements suggested by ICAR’s recommended changes to the Code and Guidance.
4. Journalism which reflects best practice in reporting asylum because it:
 - Is informative
 - Provides appropriate context
 - Draws on a range of identifiable sources of information and viewpoints
 - Includes fair representation of the opinions and experiences of those people affected by the events reported
 - Avoids generalised, unspecific allegations likely to inspire hostility

In addition, the newspaper industry can be judged by how reporting across the spectrum of newspapers reflects a balanced picture that is not partisan and is not likely to undermine refugee integration.

Understanding the power of the press

Media motivations

Although newspapers claim that their reporting is 'straight' (26) news reporting is more accurately seen as a product of a complex mixture of motivating factors. In reporting asylum, the following motivations are likely to influence newspapers (27) in their decisions about what and how to report: **Professionalism** -the commitment to informative, investigative journalism, to uncovering truths, accurately reporting current events and generating debate. **Market appeal** - the pressures of the competitive, commercial news industry mean reporting is influenced by newspaper owners and managers and by competitors. Newspapers compete for readers by reflecting their concerns, providing entertainment and developing a unique identity or market niche (28). **Habit** - the repetitive nature of reporting on familiar themes, and the 'office culture' narrow perspectives, limit contact with the public and promote the use of tired formulas. Accuracy becomes less important than producing 'a story'. **Protection against complaints** - Newspapers can be shamed and damaged by criticism from readers and peers and avoid generating complaints, for example by avoiding references to specific individuals. **Political influence** - the closeness of some newspapers (particularly nationals) to political decision makers means that their reporting is influenced by politicians and also that they can seek to influence the political agenda by promoting particular political views, which may be those of the editor or owner or those historically seen as part of the paper's historic tradition. Newspapers exercise influence both by commenting critically on political developments and by seeking to set the political agenda by highlighting issues that they believe receive insufficient political attention. Statham has argued that in the main influence on reporting of asylum is national politicians, rather than other institutions or members of civil society. In his study of political discourse in the national British media in the 1990s he concluded that British immigration politics 'remains largely in the control of strong executive decision-making with a restrictionist orientation' (29) Conversely, Demos have argued that current dissatisfaction with mainstream political parties has increased the political influence of the press. There exists 'a synthesis between protest movements, press campaigns and public opinion' that is 'capable of competing with governments to frame the political agenda. The trend towards instant, PR-driven protests risks giving newspapers disproportionate power. It pushes politicians into the role of rapid reactors to a majority pressure, rather than arbiters of different interests.' (30)

26 See interviews with editors in Media Image, Community Impact

27 What is newsworthy?

David Brindle 'Research for the Department of Health on communication and the risk to public health has identified ten 'media triggers' likely to make a story about health a major one. They are:

1. Questions of blame
2. Alleged secrets and attempted cover ups
3. Human interest through identifiable heroes, villains, dupes, etc. (as well as victims)
4. Links with existing high-profile issues or personalities
5. Conflict (between experts and/or experts and the public)
6. Signal value: the story as a portent of further ills ('What next?')
7. Many people exposed to the risk, even at low levels ('It could be you!')
8. Strong visual impact
9. Sex and/or crime
10. Snowballing of reportage: the fact that something is a major story is often itself a story, and this becomes self-fuelling as media compete for coverage...

I would add an eleventh trigger: that the story has development potential, that it can be turned into something more than the sum of its parts' p44, Media coverage of social policy: a journalist's perspective, David Brindle in Franklin (ed) Social Policy, the Media and Misrepresentation

28 See Cohen, S and Young, J. (1981) The manufacture of news: social problems, deviance and the mass media London: Constable; Sage Publications and Fowler, R., (1991) Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press, London, Routledge

29 Statham, P (2003) 'Understanding anti-asylum rhetoric: restrictive politics or racist publics?' p170 in Spencer, S. [ed] The politics of migration: managing opportunity, conflict and change, London, Blackwell. P170

30 'Manufacturing dissent' Demos p10-12

Media techniques

The power of the press is based on a range of related communication techniques.

Telling a tale

The roots of modern newspapers, particularly the tabloids, are in the oral narrative tradition of street and folk literature, the broadside ballads that told of notorious crimes, of wonders and disasters (31). Journalists speak of news 'stories' and that description reveals an underlying assumption about how a report carries the elements of a 'tale' - awareness of how things were before a key event occurred, and expectations about what might happen next. This sense of narrative also underpins the tendency of the press to follow a striking report with another one, or to present a stream of articles on the same topic. Symbolic themes can emerge from press coverage when reports of a similar kind are clustered and repeated over periods of time.

Presenting a common sense view

Fairclough (32) has identified the power of the press in reporting political issues as linked to their ability to communicate more effectively with the public than politicians. Political discourse based on parliamentary debate does not relate easily to the public. Politicians need the media to constitute a political public and a base of supporters for their views. The media is skilled in conversational, colloquial communication and their influence lies in the 'common sense' world view that they construct for their readers, which may or may not support the views of a given politician.

Distinguishing between us and them

This common sense view differentiates between 'us' and 'them'. 'Us' is the paper and its readers and favoured sources, while those who hold opposing views or otherwise considered 'different' are 'them'. When newspapers report that 'people are angry about asylum', asylum seekers and refugees are clearly not part of the 'people'. Newspapers strive to build relationships between the 'us' and to identify more closely with the views of their readers by offering their readers opportunities to contribute to letter columns. Opinion polls present information on public views that can be used to inform a newspaper's partisan stance. The highest level of purported identification between the press and people is reached when a newspaper 'speaks for' the nation or the community - the so-called 'ventriloquist' role (33). Bird states that while readers take pleasure in being admitted to an 'insider' scenario that fits with their world view, they remain powerless and under-informed.

Stereotyping

Labelling and categorising helps readers make sense of information presented about particular people in reports by making a connection with what they already know, with the information they already have about that 'type' of person. Newspapers choose to use particular labels: 'there are always different ways of saying the same thing, and they are not random, accidental alternatives' (34). Rather, the labels used reinforce the partisan stance of the newspaper. Repeatedly attaching a given set of labels to individuals or groups creates stereotypes which, while they are presented as informative, hinder rather than promote understanding.

Promoting urban myths

Telling tales founded on stereotypes provides a confusion of information in which it is difficult for readers to distinguish fact from fiction, and promotes urban myths. Newspapers draw on longstanding folklore themes of villainy and heroism, strength and weakness, success and misfortune: 'restructuring diffuse beliefs, uncertainties, and stereotypes in narrative form.' (35). This can be achieved through repetitious reporting or through what Bird calls a 'Gee Whiz' story that is presented as incredible but true.

31 Bird, SE (1992) *For Enquiring Minds: A Cultural Study of Supermarket Tabloids* University of Tennessee Press

32 Fairclough, N. (1995) *Media Discourse*, London, Arnold p2

33 Hall, S., et al. (1978) *Policing the crisis: mugging, the state, and law and order*, London, Macmillan p75

34 Fowler, R., (1991) *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*, London, Routledge p4

35 Bird, E (1992) *For enquiring minds. A cultural study of supermarket tabloids* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press p165

Anonymising

It is also a feature of asylum reporting that newspapers go beyond stereotyping and have anonymised ‘the asylum problem’, stating for example that ‘asylum is voters’ number one concern’ without reference to specific information about individual asylum seekers or refugees. In anonymised reporting, the voices of those whose experiences and opinions are relevant to the report are not sought as sources.

Engaging in a moral panic

A moral panic is where attention is focused on a problem alleged to be ‘out of hand’ which requires urgent action, and large parts of the state, the judiciary and the media combine to portray an uncontrollable situation which requires severe and exceptional remedies. Exceptional cases are repeatedly used to strengthen negative stereotypes. In reporting of this kind, protecting the interests of the majority by restoring control where there was only chaos becomes the dominant theme. (36)

Using humour

Newspapers use humour in reporting to gain market appeal by entertaining readers, and it is a means of reinforcing differences between the ‘us’ who share in the joke, and the ‘them’ who are the subject of the joke. Lionel Morrison of the NUJ has stated:

Editors always argue that using stereotypes or exaggerated images and words in poems to represent individuals or groups of people is in the nature of their work, and they are merely making jokes. But, behind every “joke”, a serious point is being made. It is this serious point, not the jocular verses, jokes or humour in themselves, that is objectionable. Far from being light and harmless fun, these kinds of poems and cartoons, reinforce and perpetuate popular stereotypes of asylum seekers, whether as “illegal” asylum seekers or welfare scroungers. This identifies them as legitimate targets for hostility and its consequences. (37)

Providing or denying a voice

Newspapers provide a stage for a variety of actors to address the public, and present themselves as mediators of social pressures and currents of opinion. Who is given access to the stage, who is sought as a source of information and the relative weight given to the views of different sources, are decisions taken by newspapers that affect how news events are communicated to the public.

36 This is discussed in more detail in Media Image Community Impact

37 Lionel Morrison, ‘Guidelines for journalists on proper coverage of refugee-related topics’

Media impact

The impact of these communication techniques is complex and can be assessed as follows:

Circulating messages to a mass audience

Newspaper messages become powerful because they are simultaneously communicated to a mass audience. In *Media Image, Community Impact*, we argue that communications spiral when messages circulate with increasing frequency and strength. Frequent repetition of stereotypes, and telling tales about 'us' and 'them', are likely to influence public opinion, generate urban myths, and contribute to moral panic. In a case study on reporting of asylum in the Netherlands Van Dijk found: *"the media adopted and magnified the politically dominant theme"* This influenced the views of the public, and as a result:

"soon they reported - as a self-fulfilling prophecy - that the public (especially the people in poor inner-city neighbourhoods) would not tolerate more immigrants.... In other words, we (the political or media elite) are not prejudiced, but the 'public' is." (38)

Tapping in to prejudices

The reception of press messages is not a question of stories entering empty minds. Readers hold preconceptions that frame the reception of messages about asylum and refugees, and there is an extensive literature on attitudes to foreigners and on white attitudes to people of colour. There are plenty of symbolic stories about migrants that form the backdrop to current reports about asylum (39). Barthes has shown how representation in the press can give symbolic significance to a subject by linking it to vivid cultural images and values (40). In the same way, representations of asylum can say more than the bare facts that they report; they speak to values and beliefs about humanity. A recent IPPR report described how reports on asylum speak to prejudices:

'negative, inaccurate, distorted reporting on a large and frequent scale is bound to awaken feelings among the readers that may otherwise have lain dormant. Prejudices amongst some sections of the public towards all incomers to Britain, normally held discretely, have been aroused.... there was no widespread public outcry against asylum seekers prior to a press campaign of vilification which had the effect of legitimising public hostility.. Much of what has been published has been calculated to inflame a sensitive situation... If the only information provided to readers is hostile, one - sided, lacking in context and often wildly inaccurate, how can they be expected to see through the distorted media narrative?' (41)

The use of humour is an example of how reporting can tap in to societies values, and prejudices, particularly jokes relating to suffering (42). Humour can play a role in either mocking, or reducing the seriousness of, the maltreatment of a group. There is some evidence that humour can facilitate a willingness to tolerate prejudice (43). The audience's recognition of the possible implications of a joke influences which sections of the audience are most affected: the least prejudiced do not draw the same conclusion that the most prejudiced do. If this process were to apply to negative jokes about asylum and refugees then we would expect that the jokes would induce greater tolerance of hostility among the already prejudiced.

Prejudicial reporting can be countered by anti-discrimination regulations. The lack of protection for asylum seekers in definitions of discrimination is discussed in 'In a Foreign Land: The new popular racism', by Arun Kundani:

38 See *Media Image Community Impact*

39 Hall, S., et al. (1978) *Policing the crisis: mugging, the state, and law and order*, London, Macmillan

40 Barthes, R (1970) *Mythologies* London: Jonathan Cape

41 Greenslade, R (2005) *Seeking scapegoats: the coverage of asylum in the UK press*, London IPPR, p29

42 Lewis, P (1997) 'The killing jokes of the American eighties' *Humor-International Journal Of Humor Research* 1997, Vol 10, Iss 3, pp 251-283

43 .Ford T, Wentzel E and Lorion J, (2001) 'Effects of exposure to sexist humour on perceptions of tolerance of sexism' *European Journal of Social Psychology* 31 pp 677-691

“Over the last five years, the asylum seeker has entered the tabloid stage as a new stock character with a set role in the daily performance... they become a screen on to which all manner of evils can be projected, without fear of contradiction... The issue of anti-asylum seeker racism is then cut off from the issue of institutional racism as defined in the Macpherson report and none of the impetus to tackle the second is applied to tackle the first.” (44)

Reading critically and widely

The habit of newspaper reading does not imply that the press has the unqualified trust of readers, and disrespect for the press means readers do not believe everything they read (45). Equally, the impact of the media is less if readers do not remember or ‘take notice’ of what they have read, because they do not find it interesting or because they are sceptical about its veracity. The use of repetition, but also the reporting of rare but extreme ‘gee whiz’ stories and shocking headlines make it more likely that readers will remember what they have read.

Assuming that despite bias in individual newspapers, the overall picture presented by the press is balanced, reading a wide range of newspapers minimises the impact of bias. It follows that those who regularly read one newspaper only are most likely to be influenced by the bias of that paper. Greenslade has highlighted the usefulness of letters of complaint as means of influencing reporting (46) - readers can challenge the power of the press by writing letters of complaint.

Alternative sources of public information

Factually accurate, impartial information which focuses on individuals and localities, provided by sources other than newspapers, can counteract media messages and facilitate refugee integration. In a study of local reactions to the policy of dispersal for asylum seekers, it was concluded that *‘when dispersal is debated and the issues are considered on a local scale and a personal level, the weaknesses of the moral panic are revealed and it is to some extent broken down’*. (47)

44 Kundani A (2001) *In a foreign land: The new popular racism*, London, Institute of Race Relations

45 Negrine, R (1994) *Politics and the mass media in Britain* London Routledge, and *Media Image Community Impact*

46 Greenslade’s solutions include to make more complaints - to the PCC and in letters to the editor backed up by copies to the CRE, MPS, Dept Media Culture and Sport. He identifies a weakness of seeking redress as that the PCC does not allow third party complaints and complaints against generalised stereotyping.

47 Finney, N. (2004) *Asylum seeker dispersal: Public attitudes and press portrayals around the UK*. PhD thesis, University of Wales Swansea

Promoting standards

Promoting awareness of standards specified by legislation and regulation and suggested by expert bodies, improving provision of training and contextual information for newspapers, appealing to the professionalism motive and facilitating complaints can challenge media messages and raise standards of reporting. Where standards and attitudes vary between different newspapers, exerting peer pressure may be effective. The role of progressive journalism in addressing the balance of press coverage of asylum and refugees has been positively described as a 'sentimental education' for the public, one that is both problematising and informing. (48)

Promoting refugee voices

The choice of sources other than politicians is key to defining the nature of the common sense view. The importance of a range of appropriate sources is recognised by ICAR and others who have called, in particular, for asylum seekers and refugees to be used more frequently as sources of information, so that asylum seekers and refugees become included in perceptions about 'us' rather than 'them'. The problem of giving a legitimate voice to the excluded groups has been discussed in the case of emergency programmes (49). A similar effect is described in the development of policy on 'ethnic minorities' in which the self-representation of those groups was minimised (50). In this report we examine the trend of promotion of refugee voices through the arts. A recent study of the ethics and politics of migration has drawn attention to the role of the arts in questioning what we mean by the concepts of citizenship and state boundaries in a complex and globalised world (51). This study argues that the arts can provide the moral education that brings a more sensitive appreciation of ourselves and others, and of the ethical ambiguities of the social positions in which migrants come to be placed. This perspective suggests that the arts are more than a displaced form of conventional political engagement but rather can serve as an educative experience in a morally uncertain world. By showcasing the arts, the press are helping to extend the forum for moral education that can bring about a better-informed political debate. However, concerns have been expressed that arts events and coverage of them mainly reach 'the converted.' (52)

In this report we also suggest that refugee voices can be promoted through political integration of refugees, although there are barriers to achieving this, not least reluctance of refugees to be politically active in the host country. (53)

48 Parker, O and Brassett, J. (2005) 'Contingent border, ambiguous ethics: migrants in (international) political theory' *International Studies Quarterly* 49.2 pp 233-254.

49 Nyers, P (1999) 'Emergency or emerging identities? Refugees and transformations in world order' *Millennium-Journal Of International Studies* 28 (1) pp 1-26

50 Lewis, G (2000) *Race, gender, social welfare. Encounters in post-colonial society* Polity Press

51 Parker, O and Brassett, J. (2005) 'Contingent border, ambiguous ethics: migrants in (international) political theory' *International Studies Quarterly* 49.2 pp 233-254.

52 Alsina-Anderson, D. and Price, S. (2003) *Refugee Week Evaluation What external impact does Refugee Week have?* p2

53 Korac, M. (2001) *Dilemmas of Integration: two policy contexts and refugee strategies for integration*. Available at: <http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/dilemmasofintegrationrep.htm> p103-5

Concluding remarks: anchoring the analysis in the stakeholders' agendas

We started with an analysis of press regulation and self-regulation but as we have seen press reporting has major implications for a range of stakeholders -government, civic actors, and citizens. In this section we review again these relationships and their connections with the data analysis that follows.

As well as a major decision maker the government is a key player in the handling of communication and debate. But what responsibilities does this imply? The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) has taken the view that government has a responsibility to act as a leader and a guide in the public debate on asylum and refugees:

'The development of an inclusive and welcoming society is a key prerequisite to the successful integration of refugees. Governments and decision-makers should provide political leadership and set the tone in public debate on non-discrimination and equal opportunities. In particular, governments should identify and counteract the promotion of misinformation that is intended to, or has the effect of, inciting fear and mistrust of refugees (emphases added).' (54)

In *Understanding the Stranger* ICAR found 'Information and explanation is best provided by statutory organisations and those whose role it is to provide even-handed support to both local residents and asylum seekers... advocacy on behalf of asylum seekers and myth-busting have a role to play, but are not an adequate substitute for independent explanation' (55)

The fact that the government bears this responsibility towards refugees confirms that public information is more than a tangential or contingent question for public decision making; the quality of public information is at the heart of a government responsibility to provide adequate protection and security- and one that cannot be shirked. In support of refugee protection from misinformation, how are governments to act? And what should be the relationship between their responsibilities and the freedom of civil society actors -the press, political parties and interest groups- to report and debate the issues of asylum?

First and foremost, the government can legislate to protect the vulnerable. A number of legal controls on information are currently in place, both through the libel laws and through the public interest protections against threats to public order and incitement to hatred. The declarations of the Press Complaints Committee - a regulatory body, albeit a self-regulatory one- on the subject of press coverage that may lead to unjustified hostility touch on the same concern. Where threats and incitement are concerned, there is a case to be made that the vulnerabilities of asylum seekers and refugees may require some stronger provision in law for that purpose. Citizens have existing responsibilities in law, and these could be increased if it was established that levels of security among this vulnerable group were seriously at risk from unduly hostile and inaccurate statements. A key part of our study focuses on evidence of hostile and inaccurate statements through particular case examples and similar indicative evidence across the sample.

In addition to the question of security there lies the question of trust. A more insidious threat to the well-being of asylum seekers and refugees stems from the experience of being mistrusted, discriminated against or dismissed on the basis of prejudiced opinions. The growth of prejudice is based on the dissemination of inaccurate stereotypes that attribute unfavourable characteristics to people on the basis of group membership. Prejudice implies inequality that is perceived to be a result of inherent unworthiness. In response to evidence of prejudice, governments have been faced with demands for anti-discrimination measures to support women and minorities. The aims of public information policy are therefore wider than simply the prevention of inflammatory propaganda.

The context of public information policy is complex and differentiated. The circulation of information in a free society is organised around production for a market, supplemented to a larger or smaller extent by the outputs of interest groups and civic activists. In practice the information market has come to be dominated by mass media that deliver information quickly and efficiently, but also, as we have seen, carry messages that have implications for social cohesion. The coming of the internet and other new technologies has created a wider communications

54 ECRE position paper on the integration of refugees in Europe updated 2002, London, ECRE para 8 <http://www.ecre.org/positions/integ02.shtml>

55 ICAR, (2003) *Understanding the Stranger*, London ICAR <http://www.icar.org.uk/?lid=4964>

potential that is now being organised through the building of new consumer options (downloading, etc).

In a largely free market of information, government can also operate as an independent and active player. The relationship between government and civil society will then fluctuate, with the government free to counter the dominant market messages whether by seeking short-term alliances or by pumping resources into agencies of influence and information. Civil society is weakly and intermittently engaged. At its core, this strategy accepts the competitive logic of an information 'market'.

A more flexible policy is one of inclusion and persuasion, implying corporate partnerships based on a shared responsibility, in which in effect the press is one of a number of civil society actors invited to sign up to an information strategy aimed at achieving public goals.

It is important to recognise that public information policy has been set in the context of a government strategy on immigration under the heading of 'managed migration'. Asylum is regarded as one stream of immigration and new policies are designed to manage the asylum system - through robust pre-entry, on entry and in country controls - that contribute to a form of migration that is 'legal' and 'driven by the demands of the UK economy' while being 'fair'. The new approach to asylum features measures to achieve two principal targets namely a reduction in the intake of asylum seekers, and an increase in the number of 'failed asylum seekers' removed from the UK. The public message supporting these new measures emphasises the ability of the government to control who enters and who stays in the UK, and why this is in the strategic interest of the country. At the same time, however, the government has been involved in developing, for the first time, an ambitious integration strategy for refugees who have an entitlement to remain in the UK. Consultation around the strategy has been widespread and generally regarded as a positive initiative. However, the decision in early 2005 to subject refugee status to review based on the possibility of return up to five years from the granting of status, is thought by many to undermine the principle of integration.

Integration is more than a vision solely for refugees; it implies that all participants in public forums can agree to talk about problematic issues with a view to supporting a common basis of citizenship and that participation in such a discourse reflects an underlying civic consensus on a need for tolerance and understanding. The Home Office Integration Strategy: Integration Matters, makes a significant analysis of what is seen as the problem and how it might be addressed. The government's intention is to stimulate greater presentation of the 'positives' to counter the 'problem' focus of media attention. An explicit concern with 'balance' underpins that analysis.

The 'balance' agenda is therefore a product of the view that press coverage has veered against refugees and asylum seekers by undue attention to 'problems'. A 'balanced' press following its civic mission will begin to redress the ills of prejudice and insecurity.

The implications of current policy are local and regional, and not simply national. The Home Office action plan proposes that regional integration strategies will address the need to provide balanced and accurate information to communities and organisations working with refugees, especially about any impact on local services. Hence our study addresses the local and regional dimensions of press coverage.

The concern with balance is accompanied by a rather different concern which is about promoting 'alternative' approaches to stereotyped and over-simplified portrayals of refugees, and better understanding of the issues they face. The second concern is about increasing understanding and challenging stereotypes rather than about positive and negative images. A corollary of the second concern is that stereotyped positive images are no less unacceptable than negative ones. Hence the government agenda on asylum and refugees would appear to be influenced by the concerns of previous anti-discrimination campaigns.

The government's strategy of consensus and partnership building is therefore an important starting point for the research. With it comes the methodological attention that has been given to questions of understanding, to the avoidance of stereotypes, and also to balance, in terms of topics and stories that can be considered to present a range of opinions and perspectives on asylum, asylum seekers, refugees and the issues involved.

However the strategy is open to question by those who would challenge the record of successive governments in promoting an unprejudiced view of asylum and who might argue that the press and other civic actors are better placed to represent asylum issues fully and properly.

There is certainly a case to be made that the individual asylum seekers and refugees who are affected by the issues reported are insufficiently represented in the press to enable informed reporting and to correct prejudiced views. Previous media monitoring studies have concluded that asylum seekers and refugees should become more involved with the media - by offering themselves as sources of information, or by making complaints, but this has been difficult to achieve. Other forms of empowerment may be likely to influence media images of them. In particular, where refugees participate in decision-making forums affecting their local community they will be able to offer authoritative views on issues other than 'refugee' issues. Of particular relevance to reporting of political debates is the possibility that integrating refugees into political life through promoting their membership of political parties or groups facilitates reference to them as sources of political comment.

ECRE's definition of integration includes: 'participation in all aspects of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the country of durable asylum.' (56)

Agar has given practical examples of indicators of integration:

'Number of refugees assuming office or representational functions with local community organisations or committee, Number of refugees on membership roll of, and assuming political office through, registered political parties, Number of refugees voting in local and parliamentary elections' (57)

A partnership approach to achieving balanced media messages should consider promoting refugee voices in the media through greater integration in political life but contradictory priorities in Home Office policy may make this problematic.

Questions remain about the effectiveness of any efforts to promote balance, whether through government initiatives or civil society partnerships, given the role of the newspapers as political actors. There is a lack of clarity about the relevance of 'balance' to the press, which unlike the broadcasters is not bound by public service obligations. How would the concept of 'balance' sit with a partisan press?

While there may be debate about the limitations in the strategic vision of the Home Office we believe there are important reasons for using the results of the research to inform the government and all the other stakeholders about the extent to which there is balance, informativeness, and avoidance of stereotypes across the press as a whole. If there is to be any improvement in the quality of coverage all stakeholders need to be aware of the content of current coverage, and on what issues further information needs to be provided. Civic actors need that analysis, even if they would not wish to sign up to a 'charter of balanced coverage'. There are really important strategic issues emerging for press editors, managers and owners who want to exercise social responsibility in support of human rights and informed debate. Our interviews with editors contain some encouragement for the belief that sections of the press are willing to take this view. Most importantly, the public have a right to be informed about the choices of information available, while asylum seekers and refugees in particular should be made aware of the extent to which the press is a vehicle, witting or not, for the maintenance of prejudice. As the quality of coverage has implications for human rights and the agenda for future civic action the government is far from the only important audience for this research.

56 ECRE position paper on refugee integration in Europe

57 Ager, A. & Eyber, C. (2002). Indicators of Integration: A Review of Potential Indicators of Refugee Integration.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Media Monitoring

This is a media monitoring study, which analyses the content of newspaper reporting on asylum seekers and refugees in a sample of newspapers during a fixed time period.

There are four sources of data used in this research. Information in the event timeline gives a benchmark of newsworthy events occurring during the monitoring period and this is based on selected websites. The main source of data in this study is newspaper articles, which are subjected to content analysis. Certain articles are investigated further, and this includes drawing on primary sources of information which are cited in newspaper articles, for example research reports, political speeches, or Home Office statistics. Finally, information is gained from interviews with newspaper editors.

Time Frame and Event Timeline

The time period of the newspaper sample was 10 weeks from Monday 10th January 2005 until Sunday 20th March 2005. This time period was determined by the timetable of the National Refugee Integration Forum, and not chosen by the researchers. Newspapers record the events of an ever changing world and so it is in the nature of studies of newspaper reporting that the time period chosen has a significant impact on the results, that the impact is unpredictable, and that no two time periods are likely to produce the same results. There is no such thing as a 'typical' or 'normal' period for reporting current affairs - any period chosen would be characterised by a unique combination of events. This must be taken into account in any attempt to compare results from two media monitoring studies covering different time frames. This represents a limitation on the aim of measuring the impact of the introduction of the Guidance Note. However some attempt is made to take into account the influence of different time frames in comparing the results of this study with previous studies, in the conclusion. This is aided by using an event timeline. The purpose of the Event Timeline is to provide context and a benchmark of newsworthy events against which the news reported in the articles can be compared. The event timeline is drawn from information on three websites giving different perspectives. The BBC is the UK's largest news media and is committed to public service broadcasting and the delivery of 'Independent, impartial and honest' news (58). The Home Office, as the government department with responsibility for asylum and integration policies, has an interest in disseminating factual information on its policies via its website. The Refugee Council, as the leading voluntary organisation advocating for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees, is committed to campaigning and lobbying for refugees' voices to be heard in the UK and abroad, and keeping them high on the political agenda and discussed in the media. Both the Home Office and the Refugee Council are expert sources of information on asylum seekers and refugees and it might be expected there is some correlation between items appearing on their websites and items appearing in the newspapers. For simplicity the events listed in the Event Timeline are limited to national political events, and the publication of research, statistics and other reports relating to asylum policy. Local events, cultural events and events affecting individuals - including crimes - are not listed. More detail on the events making the time period of this report unique are given elsewhere in the Report.

Sampling newspapers

This is the first national media monitoring study on asylum seekers and refugees. It was seen as important to include as broad a range of newspapers as possible within the resources available to the project. In total 50 papers were selected to be studied in this project. A sample of newspapers was constructed in three categories:- national, regional and faith/minority press. In the national category, all 20 of the UK national newspapers and their Sunday equivalents were included.

58 www.bbc.co.uk/info/purpose

The six daily nationals with the highest circulation are shown in bold type.



Paper	publisher	circulation	Number of days publish per week
Express	Express Newspapers	778,523	6
Sunday Express	Express Newspapers	822,070	1
Financial Times	Financial Times Group	127,783	6
Guardian	Guardian Newspapers	316,585	6
Observer	Guardian Newspapers	392,916	1
Independent	Independent Newspapers	217,841	6
Independent on Sunday	Independent Newspapers	173,412	1
Mail	Associated Newspapers	2, 227,7291	6
Mail on Sunday	Associated Newspapers	2,123,914	1
Mirror	Trinity Mirror	1,603,047	6
Sunday Mirror	Trinity Mirror	1,434,813	1
Morning Star	People's Press Printing Society	10,000	6
Star (including Sunday edition)	Express Newspapers	1,102,619	7
Sun	News International	3,115,705	6
News of the World	News International	3,415,248	1
Telegraph	Telegraph Group	862,958	6
Sunday Telegraph	Telegraph Group	648,144	1
Times	News International	559,447	6
Sunday Times	News International	1,159,200	1
The People	Trinity Mirror	886,546	1

In the regional category, high circulation and a good geographical spread were the main concerns in selecting papers. A sample of 22 regional papers was constructed by

- a) Taking the regional paper with the largest circulation for each of the regions listed on the Newspaper Society website, excluding the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.
- b) Adding one additional paper for Scotland and one additional paper for Wales, as Scottish and Welsh papers were under represented, because the Newspaper Society divides England into several regions, but does not do the same for Scotland and Wales.
- c) From the remaining papers, taking the three with the highest circulation in the UK.
- d) Selecting 2 papers representing rural areas (North Wales and South-West England) which were unlikely

to be covered by the papers selected using the above criteria because using a criteria of highest circulation weights the sample towards papers read in urban areas.

e) Selecting 3 further regional papers suggested by the Refugee Council as frequent carriers of stories on asylum seekers and refugees.

This resulted in the following list of regional paper

Paper	publisher	circulation	Number of days publish per week
South West			
Bristol Evening Post	Northcliffe Newspapers	61,000	6
Torquay Herald Express	Northcliffe Newspapers	27,000	6
South East			
Portsmouth News and Sports Mail	Johnston Press	63,000	5
East Anglia			
Eastern Daily Press	Archant	73,000	6
The Peterborough Evening Telegraph	Johnston Press	22, 000	5
West Midlands			
Express and Star	The Midlands News Association	164,000	5
Birmingham Evening Mail	Trinity Mirror	104,000	5
East Midlands			
Leicester Mercury	Northcliffe Newspapers	90,000	6
Nottingham Evening Post	Northcliffe Newspapers	71,000	6
North West			
Manchester Evening News	Guardian Media group	148,000	5
Liverpool Echo	Trinity Mirror	135,000	5
North			
Newcastle Evening Chronicle	Trinity Mirror	92,000	5
Yorkshire Evening Post	Johnston Press	75,000	5
Yorkshire Post	Johnston Press	67,000	5
Wales			
South Wales Echo	Trinity Mirror	59,000	6
South Wales Evening Post	Northcliffe Newspapers	56,000	6

Liverpool daily post - North Wales Edition	Trinity Mirror	41,000	6
Scotland			
Sunday Mail	Trinity Mirror	596,000	1
Glasgow Evening Times	Newsquest	92,000	6
Daily Record	Trinity Mirror	497,000	6
N. Ireland			
Belfast Telegraph	Independent News and Media	95,000	5
London			
The Evening Standard	Associated Newspapers Ltd	424,000	5

In the faith/minority category - the main concern was to generate a small sample of papers with a high circulation, published in English, that are most likely to be read by ethnic minorities, including refugees. Following consultation with the Commission for Racial Equality, the following sample of 8 papers was created:

Paper	Publisher	Circulation	Number of days publish per week
The Voice	The Gleaner Voice Group	Est. 57,000	2
New Nation	Ethnic Media Group	23,000	1
Eastern Eye	Ethnic Media Group	27,000	1
Asian Times	Ethnic Media Group	22,000	1
India Weekly	Ethnic Media Group	13,000	1
The Trumpet	Trumpet Ventures	26,000	1
The Jewish Chronicle	Jewish Chronicle Ltd	35,000	1
The Muslim News	Muslim News Ltd	60,000	Once a month

Sampling articles

Articles from the sample of newspapers were selected for inclusion in the study using the criteria that they contained either the word 'asylum' (which covers both asylum-seekers and asylum policy) or the word 'refugee'. In order to be appropriate for further analysis according to the aims of this research, these articles also needed to refer either to asylum seekers and refugees in the UK or asylum policy in the UK (including European or International policy affecting UK policy). Articles which only cover the following topics were logged but not analysed. Information on them is given in Chapter 3.

- a) Described situation in country producing refugees, humanitarian refugees or displaced people with no reference to refugees in UK or UK asylum policy
- b) Described situation in country hosting refugees other than UK with no reference to refugees in the UK or UK asylum policy

- c) Described situation in country affected by tsunami, either producing or hosting refugees, with no reference to refugees in the UK or UK asylum policy

Content analysis

Content analysis has been used to identify sources, words, phrases, and images used. The coding has been based on an analysis of what particular statements signify in the context of a public discourse. We have also to understand the full qualitative meaning of the articles, which requires a deeper appreciation of how individual reports contribute to a lasting impression. This means considering not simply the content but its likely significance in the minds of the authors and the readership. Their awareness of a topic is shaped by the capacity of reports to symbolise the most salient meanings of that topic. Major news reports become symbolic when their content contributes to a mental image that can become part of a wider cultural understanding of the topic. For consistency, as far as possible the content of newspaper articles was analysed using a pre-determined checklist of words or phrases: 'a codebook'. The code devised for this project was extensive, in order to maximise the detail gathered.

The list of data categories in the codebook is as follows:

- a) information about the origin of the article,
- b) information about the identity of individuals or groups of refugees or asylum seekers described,
- c) information relating to aspects of the PCC guidance and editors code
- d) information on the presentation of policy, numbers, impact on the economy/welfare, crime and community safety, detention, and perceptions/interactions between local communities and asylum seekers/refugees,
- e) information on the sources reported in the articles
- f) information about images published

The detail of the codebook - who is listed as a source, what topics are covered, and which key words are phrases are included - was developed based upon:

- a) knowledge of the asylum and integration policy field
- b) issues of concern about the content of newspaper reports among those with responsibility for the integration of refugees
- c) issues identified as indicators of good and bad practice in previous media monitoring studies undertaken by ICAR
- d) knowledge of sociological and communications theory as it relates to media labelling and myth making.
- e) knowledge of codebooks developed by other researchers, notably that used by researchers at Cardiff School of Journalism in research conducted for Article 19 (59).

In order to respond to the unpredictable nature of news, the approach used allowed for further details of interest to be recorded. These were then examined to identify trends in topics or comments reported which could be included in the analysis. The jokes described in Chapter 4 are an example of a theme that emerged from this study that was not predicted by the codebook, but was recorded during the analysis, using this method.

Creating sub-sets in the data

In addition to presenting results for all the newspapers in the sample, and by the type of paper - faith/minority, regional, national - this report also sub-divides the data in two other ways

- a) it examines the content of the articles in those daily national newspapers with the highest circulation and
- b) it examines the content of the articles which deal with asylum seekers or refugees as individuals or small groups of individuals, rather than as a large anonymous group of people.

The purpose of the first sub-set is to explore whether the daily national newspapers with the highest circulation (ie those with the widest readership and likely to have greatest impact on public opinion) follow the trends seen in the results for the national newspapers. Are the topics chosen, the opinions expressed, the language used and the sources cited in the most popular papers broadly similar to those found in the wider spectrum of national papers, or does reporting on asylum in the most popular papers differ from national coverage in general?

The whole sample of articles contains a mixture of articles, some of which present news on asylum seekers and

59 Buchanan, S., Grillo-Simpson, B., and Threadgold, T. (2003): What's The Story? Media representation of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK,

refugees in terms of individuals or small groups of individuals and some which present such news regarding large anonymous groups of people. The purpose of the second sub-set is to explore whether presenting news on asylum seekers and refugees in terms of individuals or small groups of individuals is associated with other differences in the style of reporting, when compared to the whole sample of articles.

Chapter 4 gives tables of results for the content analysis of articles on issues such as crime, impact on the economy etc. These tables do not show the full range of topics mentioned, views expressed and sources cited, but they give the most frequently occurring. The accompanying text also indicates the most common lesser themes.

Only those topics which occur most often in the sample as a whole - those topics shown in the tables in Chapter 4 - are used as variables to assess the content of the articles in the two sub-sets. Topics which occur rarely in the sample as a whole are not used. No additional criteria are used to decide which variables are used to assess the content of the sub-sets.

Testing for accuracy

Accuracy cannot be tested adequately using content analysis. Accuracy is tested by further background investigations by RAM where it was suspected that there may be inaccuracies in the articles. Subtle inaccuracies may not have been identified and referred for further investigation. Criteria used to indicate that an article should be referred to RAM for further analysis were:

- Use of incorrect, inaccurate or confused terminology;
- Confusion of fact, comment and conjecture;
- An apparent lack of balance in how the topic was reported, particularly where the tone of the article was hostile to asylum seekers and refugees and might be considered to invoke unfounded fear among readers;
- The article was about refugees or asylum seekers and crime, statistics, community tension or children;
- The article named an individual asylum seeker or refugee; or
- The article mentioned the nationality, ethnicity or religion of an asylum seeker or refugee.

MediaWise carried out an initial assessment of each article to determine whether it deserved full analysis - those that clearly did not breach Code or ignore the Guidance were not investigated further. Similarly, where articles simply used inaccurate terminology (such as 'illegal asylum seeker') but appeared not to raise other concerns, a full investigation was not carried out.

For those articles that merited full investigation, MediaWise's task was to establish:

- Was the story fair and accurate?
- Did it breach the editors' Code or appear to ignore the PCC Guidance Note (60)?

Of 2013 articles analysed by ICAR, 37 (61) were referred to MediaWise, and 17 of them were investigated fully. Letters carried by three newspapers were also referred to MediaWise because they used the term 'illegal asylum seeker' (which is effectively outlawed by the Guidance Note).

The MediaWise team used the following checklist to examine the 17 articles:

- Is the story factually accurate?

Check all facts in the story to find out whether they are fairly and accurately reported.

- Paragraph-by-paragraph analysis

Does the story make sense? Is it set out in a logical and comprehensible way? Are there any unsubstantiated claims or leaps of logic? Are fact, comment and conjecture clearly differentiated?

- Sources

Who/what are the sources for the story? Are they named/identified? Check the sources wherever possible. Have they been fairly and accurately represented? If it is a human source (rather than reports/statistics), do they feel that the article has told the whole story, or has it been selective? If they have been quoted, is the quotation accurate? Is the story balanced by quoting two or more sides/opinions?

60 It is important to note that that the research was designed to examine whether or not articles adhered to the PCC Guidance and Code, regardless of the editorial line articles took on asylum seekers and refugees.

61 The articles are listed in Appendix 1.

- Use of language

Has the newspaper made inappropriate or inaccurate use of language (asylum seekers, refugees, illegal immigrant etc)? Does the language breach the Code or ignore the Guidance? Has the publication used dubious phrases (such as 'bogus claimants', 'bogus asylum seeker' or 'illegals') which may not breach the Code or ignore the Guidance but are nevertheless inaccurate/nonsensical?

- Statistics

Check any statistics used. Is the source reliable? Have they been reported accurately? If the writer has processed the statistics in any way, check the figures: have they been considerably rounded up or down? Do they really show what the paper claims? If possible, put them in context.

- Confusion of fact, conjecture and comment - 'editorialising'

Is the article 'straight' news-reporting, or does it include comment and conjecture? If so, is it clearly labelled as such? Has an editorial been written about this article? If so, how far does its tone and content reflect the article? Are any phrases or sentences used in both the article and editorial? Does the editorialising ignore the Guidance or Code?

- Headlines, sub-heads, cross-heads

Are they accurate? Do they add to the reader's understanding of the story, or does they distort/sensationalise it? Is the headline proportionate to the story?

- Pictures and captions

Check whether the pictures or captions are used correctly, and reflect the story. Have they been cropped or manipulated in any way? Are they library images or have they been shot for this article? Are the subjects named? What do they portray? Is any subterfuge, breach of confidentiality, or intrusion apparent, and if so, why? Are the pictures from official sources - such as the police or other agency? If so, check with the source that they have been used properly.

- Reference to previous stories

Does the article make reference to previous stories, either implicitly or explicitly, both in this paper and other media (for example, this may include the use of statistics, quotations or refer back to court cases or scandals)? If so, what impact does that have on the story?

- Complaints

Where possible, check whether anyone involved in the story has complained to the relevant editor or PCC about it.

Interviews with newspaper editors

Interviews with editors of national, regional and faith/minority newspapers were intended to gather information about:

- how editors perceive their own coverage of asylum and refugee issues;
- their knowledge of, attitude towards, and views on the adequacy of the Press Complaints Commission Guidance Note and Editors' Code; and
- what newspapers can do to ensure they report these issues fairly and accurately.

An interview request was sent to all 51 of the national, 'regional' (62) and faith/minority newspapers in the ICAR sample. Of these, 6 (out of 20) nationals, 3 (out of 8) faith/minority and 9 (out of 22) regionals agreed to be interviewed. If editors turned down the interview request, MediaWise asked whether a senior journalist - with specialist knowledge of coverage of asylum seekers and refugees - would be available instead. Interviews with editors of national newspapers were conducted face-to-face (though three preferred to be interviewed over the telephone). Because of funding constraints, all of the regional and faith/minority newspaper editors were interviewed by telephone. Three journalists - two of whom are exiled journalists who have successfully sought asylum in the UK - conducted the interviews in May and June 2005. All interviews were tape-recorded but to encourage editors to speak as freely as possible, they were conducted on a non-attributable basis - interviewees were told that quotations would be used in the final report, but not attributed to named individuals or newspapers. For this reason, the report does not identify which newspapers agreed to take part.

62 For the purposes of this study, 'regional' includes London-wide and Scottish newspapers

ICAR and MediaWise drew up the following a list of questions (63):

- How would you summarise your paper's coverage of asylum seekers/refugees?
- How often, on average, do you run stories on asylum, refugees and immigration?
- How would you summarise the influences on your paper's coverage of asylum seekers/refugees?
- How are journalists on this paper made aware of PCC guidance in general?
- How can an editor ensure that stories on asylum seekers/refugees comply with all aspects of the PCC guidance?
- How effective and useful do you think the current guidance is?
- What steps should a responsible journalist take to avoid instilling unjustified fears of asylum seekers/refugees among readers?
- In addition to the framework laid down by the PCC does your paper have any dos and don'ts about the way you report asylum - e.g. are there certain phrases that you wouldn't use?
- How far are you aware of attempts to influence your paper on asylum seekers/refugees (advice to journalists, letter-writing campaigns,) Can you describe these and say what happened?
- If you want to present your readers with reliable sources of information on asylum issues, which sources do you use?
- How aware are you of the government's policies for integrating recognised refugees and promoting community cohesion? What role do you think newspapers play in achieving these aims?
- Any other comments?

63 Interviewers were obliged to ask all questions, but were free to pursue any additional points raised by the editor.

Chapter 3

Analysing asylum reporting in the context of a regulated minimum standard

Frequency of reporting

This study monitored 50 newspapers:- 20 nationals, 22 regionals and 8 faith/minority papers for 10 weeks - from 10 Jan to 20 March - producing an average of just over 200 articles a week.

On average the frequency of reporting on asylum was:

Less than 7 articles for each of the faith/minority papers for the 10 week period - less than one article a week per paper.

Around 26 articles for each of the regional papers for the 10 week period - around 2.6 articles a week per paper.

Around 70 articles for each for the national papers for the 10 week period - about 7 a week.

Around 80 articles for each of the top six daily nationals for the 10 week period - about 8 a week.

This indicated a very high level of coverage in the nationals and regionals- equivalent to each national paper reporting one article a day and each regional reporting 2-3 articles per week.

Asylum was a less common topic in the faith/minority papers - less than one article a week on asylum - however it was not a rare topic - these papers still cover asylum regularly, but not to the extent of the national and regional press.

This showed that during the period of this study, asylum was perceived to be highly newsworthy by the UK press, a continuation of the situation that has been identified over the last several years. This is particularly true for the top six national dailies. Articles from these papers made up a third of all the articles found in national papers (34%) and a quarter of all the articles found in the sample as a whole (24%).

Total number of articles - frequency of reporting (COLUMN ORDER CHANGED)

Type of paper	Faith/minority	Regional	national	Top six daily nationals	Total for whole sample
Number of newspapers in sample	8	22	20	6	50
Number of articles found	52	569	1392	493	2013
Articles found as % of total number of articles	3%	28%	69%	24%	100%

Number of articles mentioning asylum/refugees that are outside the scope of this study

There were 565 articles mentioning asylum/refugees that are outside the scope of this study because they were only about international events, compared to 2013 relevant articles selected for content analysis. This indicates that while international refugee stories were considered newsworthy they were likely to be considered of less interest than stories about asylum in the UK. The number of international articles was higher in this sample than might be found in other samples because of the high level of coverage of an extraordinary event - the impact of the tsunami. It is interesting that reports about countries generating refugees were far higher than reports about countries receiving refugees. We can speculate about how this might add to fears of an international refugee problem, rather than encouraging us to share in the international responsibility to provide asylum.

The range of countries mentioned shows that asylum is a global issue and that the newspapers sampled were appreciative of this, attention was greatest for a small number of countries - Iraq, Sudan, Palestine (Israel) etc. Of the host countries - most mention was made of refugees in high income countries - America, Australia, Germany, Denmark, Ireland.

Total number articles outside scope of study	565
Described situation in country producing refugees, humanitarian refugees or displaced people with no reference to refugees in UK or UK asylum policy	

Total number of articles	295
Total number of countries mentioned	36
Described situation in country hosting refugees other than UK with no reference to refugees in the UK or UK asylum policy	
Total number of articles	155
Total number of countries mentioned	36
Described situation in country affected by tsunami, either producing or hosting refugees, with no reference to refugees in the UK or UK asylum policy	115

This chapter focuses on aspects of newspaper reporting that are covered by the PCC framework - the Guidance Note and the Editors' Code. It includes information from the content analysis of articles, from the detailed investigations of articles conducted by Mediawise, and from the interviews with newspaper editors. All of the 2013 articles were assessed for inaccurate terminology through the content analysis exercise. 37 articles were selected for possible detailed investigation for further likely breaches of the Editor's Code. They were selected because they contained statements which, as far as could be ascertained by reading alone, suggested that they may contain inaccuracies. Many more of the sample may have contained inaccuracies which were not obvious from reading alone. Of the 37 articles referred to Mediawise, capacity allowed only a small number to be investigated in detail. As such, the articles described here should be viewed as illustrative examples, rather than indicative of the frequency of inaccurate reporting in the sample.

1. The PCC Guidance Note: terminology

This section describes the different types of terminology used in the articles sampled to describe asylum seekers and refugees. In addition to inaccurate terminology, which is proscribed by the Guidance Note, other types of terminology which are a cause for concern were identified. These are: terminology which prejudices asylum applications, vague terminology and mixed terminology.

Inaccurate terminology

The Guidance Note uses 'illegal' asylum seeker as an example of inaccurate terminology. In this section we explore the use of this term and other types of inaccurate terminology. Instances of inaccurate terminology logged by the contents analysis are shown in the table with further explanation given below. The content analysis also found a large number of articles in which there was mixed terminology - asylum seeker, failed asylum seeker and refugee were used interchangeably. Such articles are not counted as using inaccurate terminology, but concerns raised by this practice are discussed under mixed terminology. A more extreme example in which a person who previously claimed asylum, but who now has British citizenship, was described as an asylum seeker, is counted as inaccurate. (*Might Harry make a good squaddie?*, *Mail on Sunday*, January 16).

Inaccurate terminology used - details	Faith/minority	Regional	National	Top six daily nationals	Total
Total number of articles in sample	52	569	1392	493	2013
Asylum seekers					
Illegal asylum seeker/ illegal asylum			4	2	4
Illegal asylum seeker - in an article explaining that this phrase is inaccurate terminology			2*		2*

Claiming false asylum/falsely claim asylum/	2		1		3
Would-be asylum seeker			1	1	1
Individual called an asylum seeker when they have British citizenship			1	1	1
Refugees					
Refugee seekers			1		1
Failed refugee			4	4	4
Bogus refugee			3	3	3
Would be refugee			1	1	1
Economic refugees			2	1	2
Faux refugees			1	1	1
Convention					
Convention on the rights of asylum seekers/ Convention on asylum seekers		1	1		2
Total number of inaccuracies excluding 2*	2	1	19	14	22
As a % of total number of articles	4%	0%	1%	3%	1%

The research uncovered a range of problems with the use of inaccurate terminology. In the 37 stories referred to MediaWise, two used the term ‘illegal asylum seeker’ even though it is clearly outlawed by the PCC Guidance Note and one other uses ‘illegal asylum’. The uses were:

‘Open borders: illegal asylum seekers have made a mockery of immigration policy’ (picture caption for ‘Why should we believe them now?’ - an editorial by Sir Andrew Green, chairman of MigrationWatch UK - *Daily Mail*, February 8);

‘The proposed reform of economic migration would be allied to a further clampdown on illegal asylum as part of a five-year plan issued yesterday by Charles Clarke’ (‘Clarke sets out immigration aims’, *Financial Times*, February 8); and

In his statement to MPs yesterday afternoon, Mr Clarke made clear that there were differences between most

immigrants and illegal asylum seekers ('The immigration debate', *Independent*, February 8) (64, 65).

The term is also used once in letters pages -

Reading your report ("Brown's new stealth taxes bombshell", March 15), I, as a taxpayer, am sick of being fleeced by this government. It could save a lot of taxpayers' money by bringing back birching and hanging, getting rid of illegal asylum seekers, deporting fanatical Muslim clerics... (Letters: Quick solution to problem of Brown's tax bombshells, Daily Express, March 17.)

The PCC will receive and consider complaints about readers' letters, the Commission may investigate those complaints and has in the past upheld such complaints (see for example Mrs Kim Noble and the Jersey Evening Post) and where a complaint is upheld the editor is obliged to publish the adjudication. It remains the case however that editors may be understandably reluctant to censor correspondence from the public. If editors publish correspondence that uses such terminology, it is good practice to clarify why the term is problematic, perhaps in an editors' note after the letter.

The monitoring revealed several other inaccurate terms that newspapers applied to asylum seekers and refugees. Many of these related to refugees rather than asylum seekers. Refugee is a legal status, granted after due legal process. The PCC Guidance states that a refugee is "someone who has fled their country in fear of their life, and may have been granted asylum under the 1951 Refugee Convention or someone who otherwise qualifies for Humanitarian Protection, Discretionary Leave or has been granted Exceptional Leave to Remain in the country". **'Faux-refugee status'** (*It is not vulgar to worry about immigration*, *Daily Telegraph*, January 24) is therefore an inaccurate term.

An asylum seeker whose application for asylum has been refused is a failed asylum seeker. One who is successful, is a refugee. The term **'failed refugees'** (*Deportations drop to their lowest level for two years*, *Daily Mail*, February 23; *Blair's lost his grip on asylum chaos*, *Daily Express*, February 23; and *New asylum fiasco*, *Daily Express*, March 9); is therefore inaccurate. Equally, unless there is evidence that individuals have fraudulently gained Refugee Status by convincing authorities that they are victims of persecution when they are not, **'bogus refugees'** (*Labour nightmare as 75 per cent back Tories over immigration*, *Mail on Sunday*, February 6, and *We'll wipe smug smile off his face*, *Daily Express*, April 6, *Asylum: still no limit of on entries*, *Daily Express*, February 8) is an inaccurate term, **'Refugee seekers'** (*Howard steps up attack on asylum*, *Observer*, January 23) is also an erroneous term, although possibly as the result of a typing error.

'Economic refugee' is inaccurate in that it implies a person's main motivation is economic rather than flight from persecution, in which case they are not a refugee. (*No happy ending for puppet show poll*, *Mail on Sunday*, 30th January)

In countries which are signatories to the 1951 UN Convention... individuals have a right to claim asylum and for that claim to be properly considered. **'Claiming false asylum'** (*The dilemma of immigration*, *Asian Times*, March 8) is therefore inaccurate.

It is unclear whether **'would be refugee'** (*At last... a judge cracks down on benefit tourists*, *Express*, January 14) is intended to mean refugee, asylum seeker, failed asylum seeker, or person considering seeking asylum. Due to this confusion, it is considered to be inaccurate.

64 This is also an inaccurate report - Clarke did not use the phrase in his speech to MPs. He spoke of 'illegal entry...illegal working...illegal labour...illegal immigration' but not illegal asylum seekers. See www.publications.parliament.uk/cgi-bin/semhtml_hl?DB=semukparl&STEMMER=en&WORDS=charl%20clark%20immigr&ALL=charles%20clarke%20and%20immigration%20&ANY=&PHRASE=&CATEGORIES=&SIMPLE=&SPEAKER=&COLOUR=Red&STYLE=s&ANCHOR=50207-06_spmin2&URL=/pa/cm200405/cmhansrd/cm050207/debtext/50207-06.htm#50207-06_spmin2

65 The Gloucester Citizen also used the phrase in a quotation from a politician during the same period. Even though the paper wasn't included in the monitoring sample, its use is worth mentioning here as it raises an important issue. The newspaper published an article which included the following: 'Councillor Gary Phipps, who defected from the Conservative Party to join UKIP last summer, and will stand for the party at the next election in Gloucester, said: "UKIP welcomes genuine refugees but it is essential to limit the numbers of people settling in Britain. Once outside the EU's Common Immigration and Asylum Policy, we will be able to restrict immigration, remove illegal asylum seekers and stop health tourism"' (*Asylum policies attacked*, January 29). This raises an interesting question for journalists: how to report speeches or documents that use meaningless or proscribed language? Journalists have a clear duty to report accurately what political figures say, even (some may argue particularly) when the terminology they use is inaccurate. Good journalistic practice in such cases is to quote the phrase, but then explain to readers why it is inaccurate or meaningless. Use of the phrase in this way is unlikely to be considered problematic with respect to the Guidance Note.

The 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees is often shortened to ‘the Refugee Convention’, ‘the Convention on Refugees’ etc. without misrepresentation, however instances when it was referred to as ‘**the Convention on the rights of asylum -seekers**’ are inaccurate. (*Soundbites won’t take us forward, Morning Star*, February 17)

Terminology which prejudices asylum applications

‘Bogus asylum seeker’, false asylum seeker’ and ‘fraudulent asylum seekers’.

The PCC Guidance does not mention the term ‘bogus asylum seeker’, even though it has become controversial (at least one newspaper has already decided to stop using the term (66), nor does it mention related terms such as ‘false asylum seeker’ and ‘fraudulent asylum seeker’. The phrase ‘bogus asylum seeker’ is so widely used - 50 times in the monitoring period - that only an illustrative sample was referred to MediaWise. They include:

- *A Tory government would set an annual limit to immigration, including a quota for asylum seekers. It would introduce legislation to give the home secretary power to order the removal of **bogus asylum seekers*** (*Brussels: We’ll halt Howard’s curb on migrants*, *Daily Telegraph*, January 25).
- *Conservative leader Michael Howard put his strong views on the emotive subject of illegal immigration and **bogus asylum seekers** at the heart of the Conservatives’ election campaign* (*Howard’s policy on immigrations may hit the EU buffers*, *Sunday Express*, January 30);
- *It is a simple fact that genuine asylum seekers are being swamped by **the bogus ones*** (*Why the Tories are right about asylum by a genuine asylum seeker* (67), *Mail on Sunday*, February 13);
- *The Prime Minister finally promised to kick out thousands of **bogus asylum seekers** and introduce tough screening for those arriving in Britain* (*£4bn asylum waste storm*, *Daily Express*, February 7); and
- *Shocking new official figures... revealed that just one out of every 15 **bogus asylum seekers** was ejected last year, despite Government pledges to increase the number of deportations* (*New asylum fiasco*, *Daily Express*, March 9).

Examples of ‘**false asylum seekers**’ and ‘**fraudulent asylum seekers**’ were also found (*The numbers game*, *Times*, January 25, *End column, Telegraph*, February 11)

‘Bogus asylum seeker’, and other phrases with the same meaning, are problematic for a number of reasons. They imply that the person/s in question has/ve no right to claim asylum, which contradicts the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees which states that everyone has the right to apply for asylum against persecution, and have their request considered. Just as there can be no such thing as an ‘illegal asylum seeker’ because it is not illegal to seek asylum in the UK, so there can be no such thing as a bogus asylum seeker in this sense- unless one is referring to someone who claims to have applied for asylum but in reality has not. An ‘asylum seeker’ is someone who has applied for asylum, and is waiting for a decision (whatever the merits of their case).

The phrase bogus asylum seekers is also widely used by journalists and some politicians (68) to refer to those asylum seekers who are awaiting an initial decision on their application but are perceived to be likely to be refused, or those asylum seekers whose claims for asylum have already been turned down and are awaiting the outcome of their appeal, or have lost their appeal but are making further representations to remain in the UK. The term is used to imply that a person’s case is groundless. As such, referring to ‘bogus’ asylum seekers is nonsensical because it prejudices the outcome of a legal process. By way of comparison, it would not make sense for journalists to describe a defendant entering a ‘bogus plea of innocence’ during a trial.

66 The following appeared in The Guardian’s Corrections and Clarifications column on February 8: ‘The phrase, bogus asylum seekers, practically eradicated from the Guardian, appeared in yesterday’s first leader on immigration, page 17. The Guardian stylebook defines an asylum seeker as “someone seeking refugee status or humanitarian protection” and adds: “There is no such thing as a ‘bogus’ or ‘illegal’ asylum seeker.”’

67 The author of this article was granted asylum in 1999 and so is a refugee rather than a ‘genuine asylum seeker’.

68 For example, Shadow Home Secretary David Davis was reported in The Express on February 23, as saying: “Only 2,895 bogus asylum claimants were removed, down six per cent on the previous three months”, (*Blair’s lost his grip on asylum chaos*).

Furthermore, if an individual exhausts all legal avenues for seeking asylum, they become a 'failed asylum seeker'. Not all asylum claims that fail do so because they are groundless. The UK asylum determination procedure and asylum case law is very complex and many organisations have concerns about its ability to provide protection to those in need. (69)

The term bogus asylum seeker is also problematic because it has become a term of abuse. It is used to make sweeping generalisations about asylum seekers without reference to their individual circumstances which again undermines their legal rights and the asylum process. ICAR's report *Media Image, Community Impact*, warned of the dangers of "relentless repetition by some newspapers of hostile epithets about refugees and asylum seekers" (70).

Vague terminology

'illegals'

Given that the criteria for selecting articles for this sample was use of the terms asylum, asylum seekers or refugees, the use of the term illegals could not be fully explored. Despite this limitation, some instances were found of the use of the term 'illegals' in this sample - for example: (*I'll drive out illegals: Clarke's 5-yr plan*, *The Mirror*, February 7).

The use of a vague term such as 'illegals' in articles relating to immigration and asylum policy raises concerns particularly where it may be used to replace the proscribed term 'illegal asylum seeker'. Use of such vague terminology is incompatible with a commitment to accuracy. The definition of the term 'illegals' is far from clear: does it refer to asylum seekers whose claims are turned down, immigrants who enter the country illegally, those who overstay their visa, or perhaps those who work illegally while claiming asylum? Good journalistic practice is to avoid misleading and meaningless terms such as this, and to use accurate terminology instead.

Mixed terminology

Although the PCC Guidance note warned editors to "take care to avoid misleading or distorted terminology" some newspaper articles in the sample used these terms interchangeably, risking misleading readers over the legal status of their subjects:

- *'Determined ministers will launch a crackdown today on spongeing [sic] **immigrants**... Home Secretary Charles Clarke is to unveil plans to boot out unskilled **asylum seekers**... All refugees would be barred, except skilled professionals such as doctors and teachers... The move comes after ministers admitted our hospitality has been stretched by spongeing [sic] **asylum seekers** pouring through Britain's borders... [Clarke] said there was no "absolute figure" for **economic migrants** but around 140,000 people a year come to Britain to work... Each **immigrant** will have to pass English tests' ('Spongers face boot; Clarke gets tough on migrants', *Daily Star*, February 7);*
- *'Rising numbers of **asylum seekers** heading to the UK have been recorded by police in Calais. Official figures reveal a 22 per cent increase in the number of **refugees** picked up in the Channel port as they attempt to sneak into Britain... Last year the PAF [French Frontier Police] arrested 21,372 **people with no legal right to be in France**... Police in Calais have identified **migrants** from 126 countries passing through Calais on their way to Britain... Mr Kirch insisted the PAF had made serious inroads against the **human trafficking** gangs and had managed to close down three major networks' ('Tony Blair will give me a passport because he is a good man. England is still the best place for me and my friends', *Daily Express*, February 8).*
- *'An underworld Mr Fix-It who arranged slave labour for hundreds of **illegal immigrants** smuggled into Britain was jailed for seven years yesterday... After being flown in posing as tourists, Moo would meet the naive immigrants at airports before directing them to a network of Chinese takeaways and restaurants... Police secretly taped a conversation Moo had with one of the refugees in which he said: "You won't get sent back - if you are questioned by police you just say you are on holiday... Moo, who will be deported when he completes his sentence, pleaded guilty to 10 charges of facilitating illegal entry to Britain' ('Downfall of a human traffic fiend', *Daily Express*, February 12)*
- *'Brickie Mark Waude was about to quit Britain because he was fed up with **asylum seekers** - when he was*

69 reference ICAR's guide to UK asylum law and process

70 Media Image, Community Impact, p102

killed by an illegal immigrant high on drugs. ('Migrant car killer', The Sun, February 14).

Such reporting promotes confusion, conflates important legal distinctions and risks undermining respect for the concept of refugee protection by equating asylum seekers and refugees with other migrant groups

2. The Editor's Code of Practice: Clause 1: Accuracy in general and the mixing of fact, comment and conjecture

The most common issue of concern identified in the sample was factual inaccuracy, including the mixing of fact, comment and conjecture. MediaWise carried out further investigation into a number of cases, the results of which are given here.

The investigations sought to establish the provenance of all factual claims in the articles examined, and uncovered a wide range of inaccuracies from relatively minor errors to seriously misleading ones. The inaccuracies can be grouped into three main categories.

- a. Inaccurate and misleading use of statistics**
- b. Stories whose main claims are misleading**
- c. Misrepresentation**

Case studies of articles/comment pieces are given to illustrate these three areas of concern. Some of these articles contain examples of more than one of these three types of inaccuracy. The inaccuracies have been grouped for illustrative purposes into the three categories.

a. Inaccurate and misleading use of statistics

The following articles contain striking examples of inaccurate statistics.

Case study 1:1 in 20 asylum seekers is HIV; treating them stops 12 hospitals being built (Daily Star, March 8)

This article purported to be based on a report about levels of HIV among asylum seekers and how they should be treated: *Treat with respect: HIV, public health and immigration*, Brian Gazzard, Jane Anderson, Jonathan Ainsworth, Chris Wood, MARCH 2005. Almost all of the statistics quoted in the article are inaccurate. These include:

One in 20 asylum seekers landing in Britain is HIV positive, Aids doctors revealed last night. (The report states that the figure is "approximately 1 in 22" (71).

And treating them will cost more than £1.2 billion over the next 10 years - enough to build 12 new general hospitals. (The report states that treating them will cost £13,485,000 a year. It makes no assessment of the cost over ten years, but applying that figure over ten years gives a figure of £1.34 billion).

The shocking cost, which is crippling some hospital departments, was unveiled by a team of respected Aids specialists - whose report also claims that up to 8,000 asylum seekers with HIV are already in Britain. (The report makes no reference to the cost being 'shocking', and instead states that £13.4 million is "not considerable when compared to the £1-2m per week paid out by NASS on unoccupied properties for asylum seekers" (72). This is editorial comment, and should be labelled as such. The report neither makes reference to the costs 'crippling' hospitals, nor does it give a figure for the number of asylum seekers with HIV.)

Led by Prof Brian Gazzard, the docs say 922 HIV positive asylum seekers came between Oct 2003-Sept 2004. (The report states that 899 HIV positive asylum seekers arrived during this period.)

They were among 20,402 applicants from 10 countries which sent the highest numbers. Most were from Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. (The report states that there were 19,995 applicants from 10 countries.)

71 *Treat with respect*, p4

72 *ibid*, p5

Professor Gazzard confirms that the figures used in this article are wrong. “I can confirm that these figures are just inaccurate,” he told Mediawise (73).

Furthermore, the suggestion in the headline that treating the asylum seekers ‘stops’ hospitals being built is also misleading: while it may be true to claim that £1.2bn is equivalent to the cost of 12 new general hospitals, it is conjecture to state that any spending in this area prevents those hospitals from being built.

This article not only contained statistical inaccuracies, but also seriously misrepresented the recommendations made by the HIV-AIDS doctors in their report. The article states: *‘The docs want treatment halted when their [asylum seekers] applications are rejected.’* However one of the report’s main recommendations is that “*HIV is reclassified as a sexually transmitted disease that warrants free medical care irrespective of immigration status and as a first cost-effective public health measure we urge the Government to immediately reconsider its position on withdrawing HIV treatment to failed asylum seekers and others of undetermined immigration status who do not have an ability to pay.*” (74)

Case study 2: An island door that can’t be left open, (Wolverhampton Express and Star, January 26)

In this commentary about the ‘problem’ of asylum and immigration, the journalist drew a distinction between ‘recent’ immigrants who were largely from Commonwealth countries and “understood our language, culture and history and were keen to become part of this society”, and asylum seekers “arriving uninvited and, in some cases... carrying out various forms of criminal enterprise on our shores”. He argued that the government is too soft on asylum seekers and that Britain is already overcrowded. He encouraged voters to debate “what kind of country we want”.

It raises interesting questions about the ‘significance’ of inaccuracies. The article contained numerous figures and claims that are either highly questionable or demonstrably inaccurate. Taken on their own, individual inaccuracies are unlikely to be deemed significant, but together they add up to a considerable level of inaccuracy.

Inaccuracies include:

It is impossible to tell how many people there are in this country who shouldn’t be here. The figure is at least 1.1 million - that’s the difference between the number of people who registered in the 2001 census and the number of people the National Statistics Office thinks actually live in Britain. (According to figures from the 2001 Census, the population of the UK is 58.7 million (75). The Office for National Statistics (ONS) does indeed publish a different figure - 59.6 million (76) - but the difference between the two is 0.9m rather than 1.1m. However, older figures published by the ONS have suggested that the true population of the UK is 1.1m greater than the figure reached through the Census (77). But the ONS says the difference between the two figures is the result of “overinflation of estimates during the 1990s” and “flows in and out of the UK... it is to do with international migration, not illegal immigration”.) (78)

The National Statistics Office estimates the population of Britain is likely to rise to 71 million by the year 2050 (In fact, ONS figures suggest “the population will peak around 2050 at nearly 67 million and then gradually start to fall”). (79)

... a group of real unfortunates like the 21 Chinese cockle-pickers who drowned at Morcambe Bay last year. (According to Lancashire Police, 23 cockle-pickers died in the tragedy). (80)

73 Email to researcher, 8 July 2005

74 *ibid*, p6

75 www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/uk.asp

76 www.statistics.gov.uk/ci/nugget.asp?id=6

77 ONS spokesman Robert Dechecco, interviewed by researcher, 14 May 2005

78 ONS website

79 www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=760&Pos=2&ColRank=2&Rank=176

80 www.lancashire.police.uk/february2005.php#1February

In the unlikely event that a court finally decrees that an asylum seeker is genuinely bogus and should go back home because his or her life is not in the least bit threatened, the Home Office should still stick them on the next plane home. (It is misleading to state that courts are unlikely to reject claims for asylum - statistics from the Home Office (81) show the majority of claims are turned down: in 2003, 83 per cent of claims were rejected. Of those that appealed that decision, 80 per cent were turned down.)

There is a respectable organization boasting such luminaries as Sir Jonathan Porritt, chairman of the government's Sustainable Development Commission, and Sir David Attenborough, called the Optimum Population Trust. (David Nicholson-Lord, the OPT's spokesman, says that David Attenborough has never been associated with the organisation). (82)

[OPT] wants a massive cut in immigration because it thinks Britain needs to reduce its population from its present 59 million to about 30 million. In fact the National Statistics Office estimates the population of Britain is likely to rise to 71 million by the year 2050. (*"OPT's position is that it wants what it thinks is the optimum population for the country," explains Nicholson-Lord. "At the moment in-migration is the main driver of population growth. We need to have out and in migration in balance. At the moment there are more people coming in than going out. That does not necessarily imply a cut in immigration levels, but migration in balance."*)

It is also worth noting that even though this is an opinion piece, the article is headed as a 'feature'. There is a potential breach of the PCC Code Clause 1iii here, which states: "The Press, whilst free to be partisan, must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact".

b. Stories whose main claims are misleading

The main claims in three other news stories were found to be inaccurate or seriously misleading.

Case study 3: 'Million illegal immigrants 'have set up home in UK' (Daily Mail, January 24)

This article stated that a million illegal immigrants are living in Britain. It claimed that the figures are based on a report, commissioned by the government, from University College London (UCL). The UCL report, *Sizing the Illegally Resident Population in the UK*, contained no figures for the size of the UK's illegal immigrant population. It set out to review how different countries estimate the number of illegal residents and assess their applicability to the UK. The report noted that sizing the population is notoriously difficult and concludes that none of the techniques examined are reliable or applicable to the UK (83). The report's author, Professor John Salt, told Mediawise: "I have no idea where Daily Mail got its figures from." (84)

In fact, *the Mail's* figures had been drawn up by journalists, using one of the techniques that the report concludes is unreliable. But even their own calculations are misrepresented in the headline: the figure reached by the newspaper is 900,000, but is deliberately inflated to a 'million' to give a more striking headline. The headline also uses inverted commas around the phrase 'have set up home in the UK', suggesting that this is a quotation, even though there is no such comment in the story. Furthermore, where the headline states that a million immigrants 'have' set up home in the UK, the first sentence of the story uses the conditional 'could be'.

Although *the Mail* eventually indicated how it has calculated its figures (*'If the ratio in the UK was similar to that in Spain and Italy, it would mean there are at least 900,000 illegal immigrants in Britain'*), the UCL report itself concluded that a technique used in the US - rather than the one chosen by the newspaper - offers the best prospects for sizing the illegal immigrant population in the UK. (85)

81 Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom, 2003

82 Telephone conversation with researcher, 13 May 2005

83 It states: 'Most of the methods discussed are either not applicable in the UK or the results produced are not accurate enough,' *Sizing the illegal population in the UK*, p46

84 Interview with researcher, March 15 2005

85 *ibid*, p46

The article both seriously misrepresented the UCL report itself, and distorts its own, inaccurate, figures. (86)

Case study 4: ‘PM in opt out farce’, (Daily Star, January 26)

This article falsely claimed that the Prime Minister has ‘secretly’ signed an EU Directive that hands ‘control of Britain’s borders to Europe’. The change, it said, leaves Britain ‘powerless’ to both limit the number of immigrants coming to Britain, and tackle the ‘worsening asylum crisis’.

The article claimed: *‘Tony Blair has secretly handed control of Britain’s borders to Europe - leaving us powerless to limit the number of immigrants making a home here. The bombshell emerged after the Tories announced controversial plans to set immigrant quotas. Brussels officials said the idea was illegal. They said Downing Street gave away the right to cut the number of asylum seekers last March by signing up to a European directive which made asylum (87) a matter for EU law.’*

First, the article’s confusion between ‘immigrants’ and ‘asylum seekers’ suggests that the newspaper is ignoring the PCC Guidance Note, which warned editors of the need for correct terminology.

Secondly, none of the four EU Directives relating to asylum that was signed or introduced in 2004 make ‘asylum a matter for EU law’. The directives cover:

The establishment of which country is responsible for examining an asylum claim (Dublin II Regulation)

Minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers (Reception Directive)

A common definition of who is a refugee or otherwise requires international protection and the rights and benefits which attach to each status (Qualification Directive/Definition Directive)

Minimum standards on the procedures for making decisions on asylum claims (Procedures Directive) (88)

The word ‘secretly’ is misleading - these Directives have been under negotiation for years and these negotiations have included the governments of all EU member states and MEPs of all political parties.

It is likely that the article was referring to the Qualification Directive, which was adopted on 30 April 2004 rather than in March. The Directive outlines criteria for qualifying for refugee or subsidiary protection status, and sets out what rights are attached to each status. It does not refer to immigrants, as the article claims, and therefore can in no way be said to have ‘secretly handed control of Britain’s borders to Europe’.

The article also stated: ‘The move means the UK cannot now tackle its worsening asylum crisis’. But government figures show that asylum is not ‘worsening’ in the sense meant in this report. The number of people seeking asylum in the UK has dropped by 61 per cent in the last two years and is currently at the levels of the mid-1990s (89).

86 Salt’s report has been at the centre of further media stories. The Sunday Times reported on April 17, 2005 that Salt had confirmed there are 500,000 illegal immigrants in Britain. Salt distanced himself from this report. He said: “This is total fabrication. I never said anything to that effect.” (interview with researcher).

On June 30, the government produced a figure (430,000) for the number of unauthorised migrants in the UK. Commenting on the publication of the figure, Home Office Minister Tony McNulty said: “No government has ever been able to produce an accurate figure for the number of people who may be in the country illegally. By its very nature it is impossible to quantify, and that remains the case.”

A subsequent Sunday Times report (July 3, 2005) clarified that Salt had disclosed, in a tape-recorded interview, “that he had seen a Home Office paper which concluded there were between 450,000 and 500,000 illegal immigrants in the country.”

87

88 Further information available from ECRE

89 See UNHCR press release ‘UNHCR issues UK asylum report as numbers plummet’, 11 March 2005, www.unhcr.org.uk

Case study 5: 'More than £140 per home on asylum seekers' (*Wolverhampton Express and Star*, February 1)

The main claim the article makes is that the cost of asylum support has reached more than £140 per household in Wolverhampton.

The story is based on a press release from the Wolverhampton North East Conservatives (90). The £140 figure comes from a speech made by the Conservative Party leader Michael Howard on January 28 at Kent County Hall (91). At this time, it was widely expected that the government was about to call a general election.

It began: *'A Wolverhampton conservative candidate has revealed that each household in the city is paying more than £140 on supporting asylum seekers. Alex Robson, prospective candidate for Wolverhampton North East, says the cost of asylum support has risen more than 30 times under the present government. She said: "Under Mr Blair, local councils' spending on asylum has reached more than £140 per household. Britain has a proud tradition of giving refuge to people genuinely fleeing persecution. It is a tradition we want to keep, but our asylum system is being abused. Only two in ten people who claim asylum are genuine refugees (92).'*

The article was misleading in several ways.

It exaggerates the statement made by Michael Howard - Michael Howard said *'Since Labour took office local authorities have spent over £3 billion on asylum - that is the equivalent to almost £140 a household in England'*. His *'almost £140'* becomes *'over £140'*.

The use of the present tense (*'each household in the city is paying...'*) might lead readers to believe that £140 is an annual expenditure figure - but in fact it covers a seven-year period from 1997/8-2004/5, therefore the alleged cost is £140 over seven years.

The article also implied that local authority expenditure is paid for from taxes on householders only, whereas it is also based on taxation of businesses.

Thirdly, it inaccurately presented the £140 as local expenditure (*'each household in the city is paying...'*) The figure was arrived at by the Conservative Party figure by dividing the amount of money spent nationally on asylum since 1997 (£3.1bn) by the number of households in the UK(93). However local expenditure on asylum support is reimbursed to local authorities from central funds administered by the Home Office. The true figure for Wolverhampton City Council's expenditure on asylum seekers is much lower: an estimated £1.5 million in 2005/6 (94).

Finally, it is not made clear that taxpayers in Wolverhampton are treated similarly to taxpayers elsewhere in the UK and are not unfairly penalised.

"There is no direct net cost to Wolverhampton's Council Tax payers via Council Tax," says Deputy Leader of Wolverhampton City Council, Labour Councillor Peter Bilson. "As there are 100,000 households in Wolverhampton, £140 per household would equate to £14 million."

Furthermore, the article provided neither spokespeople from the Council nor other political parties nor civil society organisations with the opportunity to respond to the claims.

This story falsely suggested that people in Wolverhampton are having to pay a significant amount of money to support asylum seekers. In the run up to a general election, in which asylum featured strongly, this is the kind of "inaccurate, misleading or distorted reporting" likely to "generate an atmosphere of fear and hostility that is not borne out by the facts" highlighted by the PCC Guidance Note.

90 www.wolverhamptonnortheast.com/page/3/50/

91 www.conservatives.com/tile.do?def=news.story.page&obj_id=119200&speeches=1

92 The question of 'genuine refugees' - and how journalists should deal with such questionable terminology when quoting official sources - is considered in the next section.

93 Interview with Conservative Party press officer

94 Interview with Deputy Leader of Wolverhampton City Council, Labour Councillor Peter Bilson

In addition to the statistical inaccuracies in this article, there were also significant misrepresentations of additional sources of statistics. For example the figure given for 'genuine refugees' counts those granted U.N. Refugee Status but not those granted other forms of humanitarian protection.

c. Misrepresentation

Case study 6: 'I'll put end to asylum chaos', Daily Star, January 24

This article misrepresented a speech made by Michael Howard to announce new Conservative policies on asylum and immigration. It stated that the Conservatives want "armed security guards to patrol British ports and airports 24 hours a day to turn back all asylum seekers". But in his speech, Howard stated: "We will put in place 24-hour security at ports to prevent illegal immigration." He did not mention 'armed security guards'⁹⁵ who would 'turn back all asylum seekers'. This is a considerable distortion with far-reaching implications in a country where only a small number of specialist police officers carry guns. It also has distinct echoes of stories, highlighted in ICAR's *Media Image, Community Impact report*, that employ imagery of war to exaggerate the 'threat' posed by asylum seekers⁹⁶.

The Star article also stated: 'The Tories fear a repeat of the 2001 Bradford race riot if millions of asylum seekers settle in the UK.' This, too, is inaccurate. In his speech, Howard actually said: "After the Bradford riots the government set up its own Community Cohesion Panel. It concluded last July that: 'inward immigration does create tensions ... communities will perceive that newcomers are in competition for scarce resources and public services. The pressure on resources ... is often intense and local services are often insufficient to meet the needs of the existing community, let alone newcomers.' So it's not racist, as some people claim, to talk about controlling immigration - far from it." The Conservative Party press office confirmed that Michael Howard neither said nor implied that 'Tories fear a repeat of the 2001 Bradford race riot'.

3. Further clauses of the Editor's Code of Practice

Clause 12: Discrimination

A wide range of nationalities, ethnic groups and religions were mentioned in the articles. There is no evidence that a particular nationality, ethnic group or religion was the focus for hostile coverage. The nationality, ethnic group or religion of individuals involved in crimes was often given, but there is no indication of stereotyping a particular group as criminal. Equally refugees and asylum seekers from a range of nationalities were described as skilled contributors to the economy. The commemoration of the Holocaust led to reports highlighting the contribution of Jewish refugees in particular; this does not imply any discrimination against other religious groups as such reports are clearly linked to a newsworthy event.

There is evidence of gender imbalance in the regional and national papers - male refugees and asylum seekers were far more likely to be the subject of articles than females, although there was a balance in the ethnic papers. Gender imbalance was most marked in the top six daily national papers. There is no evidence that women are discriminated against in the sense that they receive more hostile coverage - but they were less prominent and their experiences and views received less attention.

⁹⁵ Conservative Party Press Office press Officer Alan Sendorik confirmed that the media briefing contained no mention of armed guards (interview with researchers).

⁹⁶ See *Media Image, Community Impact*, ICAR, July 13 2004, p102.

	Faith / minority (%)	Regional (%)	National (%)	Top 6 daily nationals (%)	Whole sample (%)
Gender mentioned	6	133	266	93	392
Gender - male	3 (50%)	90 (68%)	212 (80%)	84 (90%)	296 (76%)
Gender - female	3 (50%)	28 (21%)	40 (15%)	7 (8%)	68 (17%)
Gender - mixed male female	0	15 (12%)	14 (5%)	2 (2%)	28 (7%)

Child refugees were discussed in 60 articles, - mainly in the regional papers (37 articles) but there was little discussion of elderly refugees (although some of the Jewish refugees discussed were elderly this was not highlighted) and few references were made to disability or sexuality.

In an article that argued that an individual asylum seeker's case was unbelievable and that he should not be granted asylum, the case concerned claiming asylum on the grounds of sexuality (Daily Express, 16.3.05, The gay asylum seeker saved by Charles Clarke; minister foils bid to kick out man who won't face persecution back home). While such cases were too rare to identify a trend, were further evidence to emerge of papers describing cases claiming asylum on the grounds of sexuality as unworthy, this could be considered discriminatory.

Articles that mention asylum/asylum seekers/refugees but are primarily on a subject other than asylum or immigration

Concerns have been expressed by refugee assisting agencies that some newspaper reports mention immigration status - i.e. they identify a person as an asylum seeker or refugee - when this information is not relevant to the report because it is on a subject other than immigration. Taken to an extreme, this can result in inappropriate references being made to immigration status in a way that generates undue hostility. This might be considered to be a discriminatory practice, although it is not specified as a form of discrimination covered by the Editor's Code. Clause 12 states:

- i) The press must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to an individual's race, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability.*
- ii) Details of an individual's race, colour, religion, sexual orientation, physical or mental illness or disability must be avoided unless genuinely relevant to the story.*

An example of irrelevant reference to immigration status found in this sample is as follows:

In a widely-reported case, a man who posed as a doctor was jailed for ten years in January for a string of frauds. The Daily Mail was the only paper to (incorrectly) refer to him as an 'asylum seeker' (Ten years for migrant who posed as doctor, January 27). Its report began: *'An asylum seeker who posed as a doctor for five years made £1.5million from government agencies and professional bodies,'* even though it later acknowledged: *'He claimed asylum in 1982 and married an Englishwoman a year later, guaranteeing him indefinite leave to remain here'* - so not only was he no longer an asylum seeker, but he had been granted leave to remain in the UK 19 years ago.

Even where the correct immigration status is used, discrimination may be evident where newspapers repeatedly link particular negative attributes to asylum seekers or refugees in a way that would be unacceptable if attached to a racial or religious group. It was factually accurate to report that 'Asylum seeker gets ten years for rape' (Wolverhampton Express and Star, 11 January) and 'Refugee gets driving ban' (Wolverhampton Express and Star, 28 January) but repeated use of such headlines, in excess of those targeting other groups in society, should be considered discrimination.

Assessing whether reference to immigration status is appropriate is more suited to small scale qualitative investigations than for content analysis. However, the media monitoring scheme logged whether reports which

included reference to asylum/asylum seekers/refugees were primarily on the subject of immigration or primarily on other topics.

It is not necessarily preferable that immigration status is only mentioned in reports which are primarily about immigration. From the perspective of the Home Office agenda to promote refugee integration and community cohesion, it can be advantageous that reports that are primarily about, for example, sporting, academic or entrepreneurial successes, mention that those concerned have a refugee background. However, only reports that are primarily about immigration entirely avoid the possibility of mentioning immigration status inappropriately.

Articles considered to be primarily on the subject of asylum/immigration include:

Those which listed a number of policy developments, where asylum/immigration policies are described among others.

Those which were about migrants working illegally, about health checks for migrants, detention on immigration grounds and about the tone of the debate on asylum/immigration .

Those which were on the arts where the subject is wholly on an asylum/immigration issue (eg the documentary about detention).

Articles considered to be primarily on a subject other than asylum/immigration include:

Those that were mainly about the electoral fortunes of various political parties, but made limited reference to their views on asylum/immigration.

Those that were interviews or profiles of political or other well known figures, but made limited reference to their views on asylum/immigration.

Those which were on the arts and asylum is one theme among many or asylum seekers/refugees are contributors to art on a subject other than asylum/immigration (the majority of arts articles).

The table shows roughly half of the articles were primarily about asylum/immigration, and roughly half were primarily about another subject. The faith/minority papers mention least often asylum/asylum seekers/refugees in articles that were primarily about a subject other than migration.

TABLE 4.4 Number of articles on a subject other than asylum/immigration that mentioned asylum/asylum seekers/refugees.

faith/ minority		Regional		National		Top 6 daily nationals		Total	
52		569		1392		493		2013	
17	33%	249	44%	715	51%	212	43%	981	49%

Inflammatory reporting

The PCC makes no reference in the Guidance Note to the legislative context concerning inflammatory reporting which may incite racial hatred. It does not define inflammatory reporting.

ICAR found no evidence among the news, comment or features articles in this sample of reporting which was inflammatory, but it found evidence of extreme hostility, racist comment, and incitement in readers letters, notably the phrase ‘its time for the native population to stand up and revolt’ (*Express*, Feb15, ‘*We fought a war to keep Britain for the British*’).

ICAR believes headlines are a tool that can powerfully contribute to inflammatory reporting. In a recent ruling on a newspaper report about terrorism, the PCC refers to the danger that headlines can be inflammatory. (97)

Headlines are designed to secure the attention of readers - they aim to encourage the reader to read the article that they introduce, but their impact is increased because readers who ‘skim’ a newspaper are likely to register the content of headlines even when they choose not to read the attached article.

For this reason the study looks at the content of headlines with the aim of identifying the most extreme examples - those headlines which identify the article as clearly about asylum or immigration and use descriptions might contribute to a report being considered inflammatory.

The headlines listed here contained some reference to asylum or immigration (they contained one of the following terms: asylum seeker, refugee, migrant, immigrant, refuge, immigration, shelter, asylum, borders, illegals, foreign or they refer to a specific nationality or faith/minority group, or they contained a phrase which is colloquially associated with asylum and immigration - eg ‘Britain is full’ ‘bursting at the seams’, ‘open doors’, ‘walking in to this country’, ‘send them home’, ‘keep Britain British’).

Many of the headlines in this sample raised concerns about asylum and presented it as a problem which needs greater controls. While such headlines might be considered hostile and alarmist, they were a reasonable reflection of the factual information given in the articles and are likely to be described by the PCC as ‘robust comment’. Examples of words and phrases contained in headlines which might be considered hostile and alarmist, but not inflammatory, are: chaos, clampdown, concern, failure, crime, health risks, costly.

The headlines listed here are more likely to risk being considered inflammatory because they used one or more of the following words or phrases to criticise asylum seekers and refugees or asylum policy:

- Bogus or illegals
- Fear (without any explanation of reason for fear)
- Danger (without any explanation of reason for danger)
- Panic (without any explanation of reason for panic)
- Words and phrases linked to war (e.g. blitz, invaded)
- Words and phrases linked to flooding (e.g. tide)
- Suggestions that the British public is being made fools of (e.g. makes mugs of us all, can just walk in)
- Suggestions that the country is facing disaster (e.g. bursting at seams, can’t cope)
- Demands for asylum seekers/refugees to be forcibly removed from the UK (e.g. shut them out, boot them

97 PCC ruling against the article ‘Terror and hatred for sale just yards from Baker Street’ *Evening Standard* (28.07.05). <http://www.pcc.org.uk/reports/details.asp?id=427>

out, kick them out)

- Suggestions that the situation is not simply chaotic but that it is beyond the capacity of the government to rectify the 'problem' (e.g. government has signed away our rights)
- Information which is inaccurate and misleading and likely to raise hostility (e.g. describing European agreements as a 'secret deal', describing asylum seekers who have no legal right to work as 'not trying to find work', describing a detention centre for failed asylum seekers as a holiday camp)

Such words and phrases may be considered to be inflammatory because they are likely to invoke groundless fear and anger among readers and may lead some to believe that they should retaliate against this threat, not least because the authorities are presented as unable to do so.

Using these criteria 41 headlines were found in the sample which make reference to asylum or immigration in a potentially inflammatory way. Over half of these appeared in the top six most popular daily national papers. Such headlines amount to 2% of the total sample and 4% of the top six national dailies - one in 25 articles on asylum in the top six national dailies had a potentially inflammatory headline that explicitly refers to asylum or immigration. This was less evident in the regional papers and there was no example found in the faith/minority papers.

ICAR does not suggest that the PCC should proscribe additional words or phrases other than those already discussed in the section on terminology, nor is ICAR suggesting that such headlines should automatically be considered inflammatory. ICAR does believe it would be helpful for the PCC to bring to the attention of editors the danger that words and phrases identified here risk being considered inflammatory, taking into account other aspects of reporting, and that this is especially true for headlines.

Table 4.1 Frequency of potentially inflammatory headlines

	Faith/minority (%)	Regional	national	Top 6 daily nationals	Whole sample
Total number of articles	52	569	1392	493 (34% of the national articles)	2013
Unduly hostile and inflammatory headlines that mention asylum/immigration	0 (0%)	7 (1%)	33 (2%)	21 (4%)	41 (2%)

Table 4.2 Potentially inflammatory headlines

Date	Paper	Headline
Total	41 headlines	
Faith/minority papers	0 headlines	
Regional papers	7 headlines	
24 Jan	Portsmouth News	'UK CAN'T COPE WITH WAVE OF IMMIGRANTS'
25 Jan	Evening Standard	WE HAVE SIGNED AWAY ASYLUM RIGHTS
26 Jan	Wolverhampton Express and Star	AN ISLAND DOOR THAT CANT BE LEFT OPEN
26 Jan	Wolverhampton Express and Star	BLAIR HANDS ASYLUM RULES TO BRUSSELS
31 Jan	Yorkshire Post	IMMIGRATION RACKET MAKES MUGS OF US ALL
18 Feb	Peterborough Evening telegraph	BOGUS ASYLUM SEEKERS JAILED
24 Feb	Nottingham Evening Post	'BURST AT THE SEAMS' FEAR
Nationals (top 6 dailies)	21 headlines	
18 Jan	Mail	WARCRY OF THE CLERIC SHELTERING IN BRITAIN
22 Jan	Sun	BRITAIN INVADED BY FOREIGN CRIME MOBS

22 Jan	Sun	ASYLUM FEAR
24 Jan	Express	EXPENSIVE FARCE AS NATIONS RETURN ILLEGALS WE KICK OUT
24 Jan	Express	ELECTION WAR ON MIGRANT MADNESS
25 Jan	Express	TIDE OF REFUGEES SITTING IN WAIT ACROSS THE CHANNEL
25 Jan	Express	THE IMMIGRATION PANIC
25 Jan	Sun	HOWARD DEFENDS ASYLUM BLITZ - 2 articles
26 Jan	Telegraph	BLAIR'S ASYLUM SWITCH GIVES EUROPE THE KEY TO BRITAIN
26 Jan	Express	BLAIRS SECRET DEAL TO LET IN IMMIGRANTS LABOUR GAVE TOTAL CONTROL...
26 Jan	Mail	HOW BLAIR SIGNED AWAY RIGHT TO LIMIT MIGRANTS
7 Feb	Mirror	ILL DRIVE OUT THE ILLEGALS
7 Feb	Star	SPONGERS FACE BOOT; CLARKE GETS TOUGH ON MIGRANTS
8 Feb	Mirror	BLITZ ON ASYLUM 'ABUSES'
15 Feb	Express	WE FOUGHT A WAR TO KEEP BRITAIN FOR THE BRITISH
23 Feb	Express	BLAIR LOST HIS GRIP ON ASYLUM CHAOS
2 March	Star	KICK OUT THIS SCUM
3 March	Sun	BLAME BLAIR FOR OPENING OUR BORDERS TO TERRORISTS
8 March	Star	ASYLUM HIV FEAR
10 March	Star	MIGRANTS ON DOLE COST YOU £1BILLION ONE IN THREE HASN'T TRIED TO FIND A JOB
11 March	Sun	PUT THEM ON A PLANE
Nationals (other)	13 headlines	
23 Jan	News of the World	TORIES VOW TO CURB TIDE OF IMMIGRANTS
24 Jan	Guardian	ASYLUM FEAR
30 Jan	News of the World	ASYLUM CRIME FEAR
30 Jan	News of the World	HALT THIS CROOKED TIDE
6 Feb	Observer	LABOUR FUELS WAR ON ASYLUM

6 Feb	News of the World	SLAM DOOR ON ASYLUM CONS
6 Feb	News of the World	£4 BILLION ASYLUM LUNACY
8 Feb	Guardian	VOX POP: 'AT THE MOMENT THEY CAN ALMOST WALK IN'
13 Feb	News of the World	SHUT OUT THESE SCUM
13 Feb	News of the World	WE'LL BOOT 'EM OUT
25 Feb	Times	REFUGEE DANGER
27 Feb	People	SCANDAL OF £22M ASYLUM BUTLINS
20 March	Sunday mirror	'HIV HELP' FOR ILLEGALS

Interviews with Newspaper Editors - Summary of Findings

Results of interviews with newspaper editors on questions relating to the PCC framework

Interviews were conducted with editors (98) of newspapers that had been selected for monitoring in this study. 18 newspapers agreed to interviews- 6 nationals, 9 regionals and 3 faith/minority papers.

While varying opinions are given here, the editors interviewed are a self-selecting group - many of those contacted did not respond or refused an interview, and it could be inferred that those who agreed to an interview are editors with a greater interest in standards of reporting on asylum.

Views on the impact and adequacy of the PCC guidance

Editors were asked a range of questions to assess their views on the impact and adequacy of the PCC Guidance Note on asylum seekers and refugees. These questions covered awareness of the Guidance Note, ensuring compliance, its effectiveness, and whether papers have additional guidance of their own.

In answer to the question: How are journalists on this paper made aware of PCC guidance in general? The most common responses were that all journalists have a copy of the PCC code and receive notification of new information issued by the PCC, such as the Guidance Note on asylum seekers and refugees.

They all get a copy of it. Every journalist has a copy of every PCC advice and guideline.

Two papers said that this does not extend to circulating results of judgements. A number of papers also made the point that there is an expectation that individual journalists take responsibility for ensuring they are properly informed and that they should have received this information as part of their training.

Not every adjudication would be broadcast - that's up to each journalist to some extent.

It is all down to the training of journalists.

One of the regional papers gave evidence of how it ensures awareness of information from the PCC:

We hold PCC refresher courses.

There was some evidence that the Guidance is not always effectively disseminated. Two of the faith/minority newspapers said that they were not aware of the Guidance Note. One of the nationals said:

98 or other senior journalists nominated by the editor to participate in the interview

I'm not convinced our system is as good as it should be.

And another said:

In this newsroom and certainly round the rest of Fleet Street they are totally ignored.

The editors were asked: How can an editor ensure that stories on asylum seekers/refugees comply with all aspects of the PCC guidance?

Most newspapers described the system of checks used; references were made to the responsibilities of the editor, sub-editors, section editors, lawyers etc.

As with the previous question, there was also an expectation that individual journalists take responsibility. As one national newspaper put it:

It's initially the responsibility of the reporter. The news editor reads their copy. I read it after that. The lawyer is ultimately responsible for any issues with the PCC, and also reads it. The chief sub editor also reads it.

One of the regional papers referred to local community views as an incentive to ensure compliance:

If we produced a racist newspaper it won't sell in this city. Anything we do we have to live with it unlike the national newspapers.

One of the faith/minority newspapers replied:

We don't actually use it - we just do a professional job and check our facts thoroughly and have not received complaints about them.

On the question: How effective and useful do you think the current Guidance is? There was some difference in the national and regional responses.

The national papers had a mixed view of the Guidance's impact, some felt it had been more effective than others. It was thought to have been effective in clarifying erroneous terms such as illegal asylum seeker and it was held responsible for having generated debate about the media's reporting of asylum, but it was felt that further clarifications would be helpful - particularly of the distinctions between asylum and immigration.

For example:

I'm not convinced I've seen a change in the tenor of the reporting, and I'm not sure newspapers are making a clear distinction between asylum seekers and immigration. What I'm still unclear about is when one classifies a failed asylum seeker as an illegal immigrant - is it immediately that someone's claim for asylum fails? It's not clear to me, and that's why I think the Guidance is failing. do we have any advice to offer on this, I think it's really tricky

Another paper said:

Given the weight and seriousness of the coverage of these issues, I'm surprised the PCC hasn't taken a more robust view on this.

Another felt that the PCC's role was limited and that under a self-regulatory system newspapers must take responsibility for journalistic standards.

The regional newspapers were more consistently positive about the usefulness of the Guidance, particularly in clarifying terminology.

It certainly is! It puts a benchmark that other papers could follow. It's fundamentally necessary to put this in writing - it gets the standard across and not left to the discretion of editors.

Brilliant. It works for our newspaper.

One reason for its impact is believed to be the ability of the PCC to embarrass newspapers:

I think newspapers take note of the PCC and it seems embarrassing and reflects very badly on any editor, and for newspapers to have to be put in a situation where you breach the PCC guidelines, is just embarrassing.

However, one regional notes the dilemma of whether or not to print reader's letters which contain inaccurate terminology - an issue not covered by the Guidance Note.

The faith/minority papers are mainly concerned with the ability of the PCC to enforce compliance, rather than the content of the Guidance Note.

I think some papers needed to be stamped on by the PCC so that an example is set, and the PCC must make an example of the worst papers.

At times like these, where you have Islamophobia, newspapers have a responsibility to influence positive attitudes - the PCC must carry this forward.

In doing so, it is suggested that the PCC might appeal to paper's self-interest:

I think it makes good business argument for papers to shape up and report asylum and immigration issues sensitively and accurately as the negative coverage is putting off ethnic minority and indeed other readers. So the PCC should sell this argument to papers.

When asked: **In addition to the framework laid down by the PCC does your paper have any dos and don'ts about the way you report asylum - e.g. are there certain phrases that you wouldn't use?**, most papers replied that it is not their practice to develop their own guidelines over and above those issued by the PCC.

For example one regional paper said:

We go very much by PCC guidance. The current PCC is good. There is no point in re-inventing the wheel so to speak.

Only one paper has its own additional rules.

We have guidance on not using the phrase 'bogus asylum seeker', because it's a nonsense term.

Most papers said that although they do not have additional written guidelines the ethos of their paper is to avoid sensational or offensive language - to use 'common sense'. This was particularly true for the regionals.

Don't knee jerk, just don't report statistics because people say so, be aware of different agendas and that it is not a straightforward subject.

Our job is not to offend. We don't deliberately go out to offend.

Certainly we won't encourage sensational language as in other national newspapers. We don't go for terms like 'scrounger' etc. My colleagues and I go to great lengths to avoid these.

One Scottish paper spoke of how their approach to reporting asylum goes beyond standards and into an advocacy role:

I think the PCC guidelines were drawn to tackle the situation in England.....so we are way beyond the PCC guidelines here in Scotland. We have been campaigning for immigration in Scotland due to the shrinking population....the guidelines are aimed at English papers that are anti-asylum and anti-refugee. Our policy as a paper is to encourage asylum seekers and refugees and their needs. And this is part of our work ethos among journalists of the paper.

Action taken by the PCC during this period to enforce the Guidance Note

In July 2005 the PCC stated (99) that monitoring conducted by the PCC into use of the term 'illegal asylum seeker' shows that it is rarely used. When it is found, the PCC write to the editor of the publication. Three complaints had been received about terminology since the introduction of the Guidance Note - 2 complaints about use of the term illegal asylum seeker and one about use of the term bogus asylum seeker. One of the complaints about use of illegal asylum seeker resulted in the publication of a correction and apology (Michelle Lowe of Amnesty International against the Scotsman 24th Nov 2004). No complaints have been received about any of the articles discussed in this chapter.

99 ICAR Conversation with Stephen Abel PCC 6th July 2005-07-12

Chapter 4

Analysing asylum reporting in the context of best practice, balance and refugee integration

This chapter looks more generally at the current state of reporting on asylum that is suggested by the evidence from the 2013 articles found in 50 newspapers over 10 weeks. It provides evidence that allows conclusions to be drawn about how far reporting meets ICAR’s criteria for best practice in responsible reporting of asylum (ie whether reporting is informative, contextualised, well sourced, gives fair representation to the experiences and views of the subjects of the article and avoids generalised, unspecific allegations likely to inspire hostility) and how far it reflects Home Office concerns about balanced reporting that does not undermine refugee integration. Having regard to the Home Office’s mandate to promote refugee integration and community cohesion, it is also important to note how far the picture presented by all the articles in this sample is a balanced one.

This chapter does this in 4 ways:

- It examines the focus of articles and the frequency with which different topics are reported, different views expressed, different words and phrases used, and different sources cited, in the articles sampled.
- It singles out the results from those articles which report on asylum as an issue concerning individuals rather than an anonymous concern, and compares these with the results from the whole sample.
- It identifies themes in reporting which have not been highlighted by previous studies.
- It provides further information from the interviews with newspaper editors, detailing their own experiences of reporting about asylum.

Content of articles - focus

The extent to which articles have a local, national and international focus

Asylum is a subject with international, national and local dimensions. It is the subject of national policy discussions, asylum seekers and refugees come to the UK as a result of upheavals in many parts of the world and are protected by international agreements and their arrival is mainly felt by local communities across the UK. Reports about asylum in the UK are likely to be most informative when they reflect on the international and local context as well as national concerns. In the media monitoring coding scheme mention of a locality or local representative is taken as indication of a local perspective, with the exception of London, which is only considered to indicate a local perspective if the article discusses events specific to London, and is otherwise considered to indicate a national perspective.

The results from this sample show that the vast majority of stories were reported from a purely national perspective. The second most frequent approach was to link the national and international perspective. Including an international perspective was more common than including a local perspective, and reports which combine local, national and international context amounted to only 3% of the sample.

Differences between different types of papers

The tendency to report from a purely national perspective was predominant in all types of papers, but particularly in the nationals. Faith/minority papers linked a national and international perspective most often. Regional papers reported most often from a local perspective compared to the whole sample, and most often linked the national, international and local aspects of asylum in their reporting.

The top 6 daily nationals mainly reported purely national stories and rarely reported local stories - 74% of stories in the top 6 daily nationals were purely national stories. They did not include any stories which link the national, international and local perspectives. Where the top 6 daily nationals included an international perspective it mainly concerned European asylum policies rather than information about situations in countries of origin.

TABLE 4.3

	faith/minority (%)	Regional (%)	National (%)	Top 6 daily nationals (%)	total (%)
Number articles	52	569	1392	493	2013
Local and national	3 (6%)	122 (21%)	61 (4%)	26 (5%)	186 (9%)

National and international	18 (35%)	49 (9%)	295 (21%)	94 (19%)	362 (18%)
Local and international	0 (0%)	28 (5%)	4 (0%)	1 (0%)	32 (2%)
Local, national and international	3 (6%)	49 (9%)	13 (1%)	1 (0%)	65 (3%)
Purely local (or regional)	1 (2%)	131 (23%)	14 (1%)	7 (1%)	146 (7%)
Purely national	27 (52%)	190 (33%)	1005 (72%)	364 (74%)	1222 (61%)

Content of articles - categories and topics

The content of the articles in the sample was assessed by recording the frequency with which a wide range of topics were mentioned in the reports. These topics were grouped into 7 categories - policy, descriptions of policy, statistics, impact on the economy/welfare, crime/community safety, detention and perceptions of/interactions with asylum seekers and refugees. This section first gives information on the frequency with which articles were found to report on the 7 categories, and then goes on to give more detailed information about the most frequently occurring topics in each category.

Frequency of reporting in 7 categories

Almost two thirds of the reports were about policy, and the most common topic was the Conservative party's proposals for reform of the asylum system. Half of the articles made descriptive comments about asylum policy. 'Impact on the economy/welfare' and 'perceptions of/interactions with asylum seekers and refugees' were each raised in about a third of the articles. Crime/community safety did not dominate this sample - 17% of articles were on this subject.

22% of the whole sample of articles have an individual focus and do not report on asylum in an anonymous fashion. This is discussed more fully below.

Differences between different types of papers

The subset of the top six daily national papers was more interested in policy than the sample as a whole (80% of the top 6 reports were on policy). The regional papers were least interested in reporting policy but nevertheless half of the articles from regional papers were about policy. The faith/minority papers discussed the impact on the economy/welfare most often. Crime/community safety was discussed most often in the regional papers and in the subset of the top six daily nationals. Perceptions/interactions were discussed most often in the regional and faith/minority papers.

TABLE 4.1

	faith/minority (%)	regional (%)	national (%)	Top 6 daily nationals (%)	Whole sample (%)
Total number of articles	52	569	1392	493	2013
Policy articles - current, proposed, national and international, asylum and integration	38 (73%)	308 (54%)	895 (64%)	395 (80%)	1241 (62%)
Government proposals	3 (6%)	36 (6%)	165 (12%)	73 (15%)	204 (10%)
Conservative proposals	30 (57%)	127 (22%)	376 (27%)	154 (31%)	527 (26%)
Integration policy	3 (6%)	8 (1%)	27 (2%)	4 (1%)	38 (2%)
give descriptions/ make comment on policy	31 (60%)	244 (43%)	732 (53%)	296 (60%)	1007 (50%)
Statistics	12 (23%)	99 (17%)	218 (16%)	114 (23%)	329 (16%)
Impact on the economy and welfare	25 (48%)	178 (31%)	418 (30%)	122 (25%)	619 (31%)
crime and community safety	5 (10%)	120 (21%)	216 (16%)	108 (22%)	341 (17%)
Detention	1 (2%)	28 (5%)	78 (6%)	24 (5%)	107 (5%)
perceptions of and interaction with refugees and asylum seekers	20 (38%)	222 (39%)	420 (30%)	129 (26%)	662 (33%)

Subset TABLE 4.2 The subset of papers with an individual focus

	Faith/minority	regional	National	Top 6 daily nationals	Total
	52	569	1392	493	2013
Total number articles with individual focus	7 (13%)	146 (26%)	282 (20%)	96 (19%)	434 (22%)

Frequency of reporting in topics

Policy topics reported

The most common international issues mentioned in relation to UK policy were European policy instruments - ie references to EU law, directives, the common European asylum system, ECHR, proposed EU Constitution, and proposed European border police.

The current state of UK asylum policy was characterised as being concerned mainly with the detention and removal of failed asylum seekers, responding to the threat of terrorism, and working within European regulations that impact on the UK system. This was particularly true for the concerns of the national papers. Asylum policy was therefore about managing threats and regulation from outside and focused on removing the 'undeserving' rather than protecting the deserving. The focus on humanitarianism was limited -as was evidenced by the focus on removals policies rather than integration policies or the safety of those deported. This reflected the national policy debate but what was missing was investigative reporting that tried to get beyond this debate.

In reports about policy, it was proposals for new policies, made in the run up to the election, and forming part of election manifestos, that received most coverage, rather than existing policies. There were 204 references to government proposals. 109 of these were unspecific references to Charles Clarke's 5 yr plan or government proposals. The specific part of this plan which was mentioned most often was 'increase use of detention, increase number of removals, tackle failed asylum seekers' which was mentioned 36 times. The themes in the Home Secretary's proposals that were picked up by the papers were those which address one of their main concerns - the plan to remove more failed asylum seekers.

Proposals announced by the Conservative Party got more coverage -527 references- which is equivalent to a mention in 26% of the articles sampled. This included 200 unspecific references to Conservative proposals but many specific aspects of the Conservative Party's proposals were repeatedly reported. The most frequent were: 'quota system, limit numbers' -112, 'withdraw from Convention, refuse accept in country applicants' - 89, 'UNHCR should process asylum claims outside UK' - 43, 'health screening, control health risks' - 34.

Not only was there more reference to Conservative proposals in general, there was more coverage of the specifics of Conservative plans. In contrast, most of the coverage of Charles' Clarke's proposals was generalised rather than giving details. Conservative leader Michael Howard was seen as not merely offering to step up efforts to deal with the dominant problem - removal of failed asylum seekers - but was offering a package of measures to eradicate the problem - asylum seekers would be processed outside the UK, and only the successful would enter the UK, in limited numbers. The other cause for concern - external regulation - would also be addressed by his plan to withdraw from the Convention.

Lesser topics

There were 25 unspecific references to the promise to control asylum made by Robert Kilroy-Silk, leader of Veritas (7 other articles give more detailed reports of his policies). There were 6 references to UKIP's proposals to control asylum and 11 mention the BNP's position. There were a further 6 references to Rodney Hilton Potts, who won a TV competition to become a politician on an anti-asylum platform. Giving alternative views - there were 16 references to the Liberal parties policies which include 'let asylum seekers work' and just one reference to the Green Party's position that 'most asylum seekers are genuine'.

There were therefore a total of 55 references to the policies of minor anti - immigration parties and politicians, with only 17 references to more liberal party - political views. The Liberal party, despite being the third largest political party in the UK got half as much coverage as the newly formed Veritas.

Despite the dominance of the proposal to withdraw from the Convention, UNHCR policies were only discussed 14 times, including only 2 occasions when the Convention was quoted (as opposed to mentioned) and only 2 references to UNHCR's own plans to modernise the Convention through the 'Convention Plus' agenda. While the political coverage was dominated firstly by new proposals from the two main parties and secondly by discussions about current policy, there were 13 references to historical policies - such as those of the 1930s, used as context to inform the analysis of current developments.

Only 3% of articles mentioned integration policies - it appeared most often in the faith/minority press. Most

of the stories were about integration into the job market, including procedures for requalifying, family reunion, marriage, the integration strategy, citizenship tests and mentoring schemes.

Faith/minority, regional and national differences

By far the biggest topic was Michael Howard’s proposals which was mentioned in 79% of faith/minority policy discussions logged. All other topics, including the government’s plans, got mentioned in less than 10% of policy articles. The gap between frequency of reporting Michael Howard compared to other topics was greatest in the faith/minority papers, however, faith/minority papers had mentioned integration policy more often than regionals and nationals. It is striking that the regionals and the nationals showed similar results for the percentage of policy reports covering a range of different issues - suggesting that national and regional papers have similar views on what policy issues are newsworthy. However, some differences were apparent - compared with other papers, regionals more often covered protection issues - ie policy as it relates to decisions taken on individual cases. The proportion of coverage given to various policy topics in the top 6 daily nationals was broadly in line with the nationals as a whole and the sample as a whole.

TABLE 4.5 In terms of the current state of asylum policy in the UK the most common issues raised in the articles (those mentioned over 30 times) are

	faith/ minority	regional	national	Top 6 daily nationals		
Total number of articles	52	569	1392	493		
Articles which mention policy issues,	38 (73%)	308 (54%)	895 (64%)	395 (80%)		62%
						As % of total policy articles (of 1241)
Proposed policies						
Total references to new Conservative party policy proposals - accumulated totals for each type of reference: a) Unspecific reference to proposals announced by Michael Howard, Conservative Party Leader b) Specific proposals - quota system, limit numbers c) withdraw from Convention, refuse accept in country applicants d) UNHCR should process asylum claims outside UK e) health screening, control health risks	30 (79%)	127 (41%)	376 (42%)	154 (39%)		42%

Total references to new government policy proposals - accumulated totals for each type of reference: a) Unspecific reference to Charles Clarke's 5 yr plan/ new government proposals b) Specific proposals to 'increase use of detention, increase number of removals, tackle failed asylum seekers'	3 (8%)	36 (12%)	165 (18%)	73 (18%)	204 (16%)
Current policies					
Deportation/return/removals policy, targets,	1 (3%)	29 (9%)	82 (9%)	42 (11%)	112 (9%)
Failed asylum seekers	0 (0%)	20 (6%)	54 (6%)	33 (8%)	74 (6%)
Terrorism, terror suspects, detention, control orders, tagging, bugging devices, house arrest, terrorism Act	0 (0%)	6 (2%)	59 (7%)	28 (7%)	65 (5%)
EU law, directives, common asylum system, ECHR, proposed EU Constitution, proposed European border police	1 (3%)	8 (3%)	51 (6%)	31 (9%)	60
Determination policy as it relates to decisions on specific cases, evidence needed to prove claim	1 (3%)	29 (9%)	28 (3%)	9 (2%)	58 (5%)
Detention centres or detention policy, including use of private firms to run detention centres	1 (3%)	13 (4%)	21 (2%)	8 (2%)	35 (3%)
Asylum application figures - national, local/regional, total and as percentage of policy articles within each column	1 (3%)	8 (3%)	23 (3%)	11 (3%)	32 (3%)

Minor themes that might have been expected to be major themes!

TABLE 4.6

integration	3	8%	8	3%	27	3%	38	3%	4	1%
Law states that asylum seekers cant work	0		6	2%	13	1%	19	2%	2	1%
Libdem policy proposals	3	8%	4	1%	9	1%	16	1%	2	1%

Descriptions of policies

The comments made about policy can be categorised as about a) the current state of affairs nationally and

internationally, b) about proposals for new policies by the government, the opposition and minor parties, and c) general comments about the political debate on asylum.

The table shows that most political comment was about the state of the current UK asylum system and about Michael Howard’s proposals. The system was largely characterised as in chaos, control of borders have been lost, politicians have failed and they and their statistics are untrustworthy. The most common view expressed about Michael Howard’s proposals was that these proposals are popular and sensible. However, a range of critical views outweighed the positive comments and these most commonly ranged from those who dismissed his proposals as either ‘unworkable, ill-informed’ etc or a sign of political desperation. Stronger criticism and concern was expressed in the views that his policies were ‘dangerous, prejudiced, extreme, encouraging racial hatred’ etc. The main international concern was that the UK had ‘handed control’ of asylum policy to the European Union. International agreements were seen as a barrier to control. While a range of views were expressed about the government’s new proposals on asylum, these were most commonly interpreted as an attempt to get tough from a government which was panicked by right-wing opponents and low public support for its record on asylum. There was discussion about the nature of the political debate and again a range of views were given but the most common was concern that the tone of the debate is ‘squalid’, that politicians were ‘competing to be nasty’ and ‘generating fear’ and that the government should facilitate a more humane and less hysterical debate. Political commentary was complex and wide ranging but the main messages were that the current system is in chaos, control has been lost, the government is panicking, the opposition’s plans got some support but were more widely criticised as either unworkable, prejudiced, or extreme and the level of political debate was considered nasty.

While messages about chaos and control and the inadequacy of political responses are likely to raise public fears about asylum, this was partly counteracted by the discussion of concerns about inciting hatred, the criticism of extremism and the calls for less hysterical debate.

Faith/minority, regional and national differences

The most striking difference between the different groups of newspapers was the emphasis placed by the top six daily nationals on describing asylum as in chaos or out of control.

The faith/minority papers differed from the others in that they did not report that border controls were too lax or that too much control had been given to the European Union. They characterise Michael Howard’s proposals as ‘dangerous, extreme’ etc more frequently than other papers. The regional papers were least critical of the government’s proposals and most often raised concerns about the ‘wretched, squalid’ etc. tone of the political debate.

Policy commentary - topics with over 30 references

	faith/ minority (%)	regional (%)	National (%)	Top 6 daily nationals (%)	Total (%)
Total number of articles	52	569	1392	493	2013
Number of articles that give descriptions/ make comment on policy	31 (60%)	244 (43%)	732 (53%)	296 (60%)	1007 (50%)
Views on policy proposals by Michael Howard/Conservative Party - plans supported, necessary/ popular/ vote winner/ supported in opinion polls/ have advantage over Labour/ in touch/ winning/ ‘tabloid friendly’ / fair sensible brave honest clear message responsible	3 (10%)	27 (11%)	101 (14%)	35 (12%)	131 (13%)

Existing asylum system is collapsing, chaotic, out of control, in crisis, shambles, lost track of numbers, lost control of borders, politicians failed to keep control, untrustworthy, clueless, out of touch, people deceived, lied to, misled, Govt's figures unbelievable 'dodgy' /Record of past failures (2 terms of govt) - Scepticism re target setting as failed meet before need external stats body, need more controls	3 (10%)	30 (12%)	96 (13%)	114 (39%)	129 (13%)
Views on policy proposals by Michael Howard/Conservative Party - deceitful untrustworthy malevolent, dangerous, prejudiced, extreme, racist wanting to keep out other cultures/ lurching to right/ moving towards BNP policies/ Encouraging racial hatred/ boosts BNP/ echoing Enoch Powell	3 (10%)	16 (7%)	49 (7%)	22 (7%)	68 (7%)
Existing system is weak, too soft, too lax, letting too many in, soft touch, system abused, generosity abused.	0 (0%)	5 (2%)	61 (8%)	20 (7%)	66 (7%)
Views on policy proposals by Michael Howard/Conservative Party - Impractical ill informed unworkable irresponsible unrealistic vague fantasy costly Stupid, nonsense absurd rubbish saloon bar response, discredited	0 (0%)	22 (9%)	39 (5%)	16 (5%)	61 (6%)
Views on policy proposals by Michael Howard/Conservative Party - Just looking for/ desperate for votes,/ appeasing xenophobic electorate, pandering fears for electoral gain, takes votes from anti-immigration parties responding to polls -only issue on which tories have advantage/ ideas popular but tories aren't	5 (16%)	9 (4%)	40 (5%)	7 (2%)	54 (5%)
Views on Labours proposals /5yr plan - Perception of panic - Labour rattled by, responding to Howard/Kilroy/Polls/public concerns about 'soft touch' Desperate, panic, asylum a vote loser for labour, adopting tory position - getting tough/ macho, unpleasant	2 (6%)	5 (2%)	45 (6%)	16 (5%)	52 (5%)

Britain has given control of asylum, or its borders, to the EU when they should be under British control. Powers given away cannot be taken back without leaving EU - servitude, betrayed, deceived, obscene, secretly, loss of independence, agreed without consultation, ECHR 'barmy', no veto/ asylum a reason to oppose EU constitution	0 (0%)	7 (3%)	40 (5%)	29 (10%)	47 (5%)
Critical comment on the tone of the political debate - Debate is wretched, squalid, shameful, racist, incendiary, political football, tug of war, competing to be nasty, attacking most vulnerable, amplifying hysteria and prejudice, generating fear Debate worries the genuine refugees, destabilises communities and aids BNP Need more humane debate - government should change national conversation	0 (0%)	14 (6%)	28 (4%)	6 (2%)	42 (4%)

Political and legal sources

A wide range of political sources were cited in the sample. The most common was Michael Howard cited 375 times, however the number of Labour political sources outweighed Conservative political sources, indicating that a number of different Labour sources were frequently quoted in the press, whereas Conservative policy on asylum was presented as mainly associated with the party leader. The Liberal Democrat party representatives were quoted less often than the 3 minor anti-immigration parties combined (Veritas, UKIP and BNP). UNHCR was comparatively infrequently mentioned, being cited the same number of times as Veritas.

Legal sources were quoted less often and it is striking that judges, lawyers and court reports appeared more frequently than references to the law itself. Newspapers were far more likely to refer to European law than the UK asylum laws - which were cited less than ten times in the sample (and so do not even appear in the table).

Political sources that appear over 10 times.

TABLE 4.8

	faith/minority	regional	national	Total
Total sample	52	569	1392	2013
International /European politicians/ political institutions				
UNHCR	0	6	36	42
European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Ministers or 'Brussels officials'	0	4	30	34
UK politicians/political institutions				
Michael Howard leader of the Conservative Party	22	80	273	375
government minister or spokesperson, or 'Labour' or 'government' (not P.M. or Home Sec)				323
Prime Minister Tony Blair	5	50	223	278
Home Secretary Charles Clarke	3	41	169	213
Other Conservative shadow or spokesperson Or 'Conservative'				165
Other Labour MP, peer or candidate				133
David Davies Shadow Home Secretary	0	6	53	70
Other Conservative MP, peer or candidate				59
Veritas	1	15	26	42
BNP politician				27
Charles Kennedy, leader of the Liberal Democrats	2	8	16	26
Historic politician (most commonly Thatcher, Churchill, Enoch Powell)				30
Parliamentary Committees				34, or which 16 are Public Accounts Committee
Mayor of London/member of London assembly				27

Member of Scottish Parliament/ Scottish executive				24
Other Liberal shadow or spokesperson				23
UKIP		4	13	17
Mark Oaten, Liberal Democrat Home Affairs Spokesman		7	10	17
Labour councillor				11

TABLE 4.9
Legal sources cited more than 10 times

	Faith/minority	regional	national	total
Total sample	52	569	1392	2013
UK Court report		43	84	127
Judge		30	59	89
1951 UN Convention on Refugees	1	8	58 but only 2 of these quote the convention	67
Solicitor representing an asylum seeker		17	27	44
European common asylum system, directives or more vaguely 'EU law' 'EU policy'	1	4	21	26
European Convention on Human Rights		1	20	21
Prosecutor/government lawyer		13	6	19
Proposed EU Constitution or Treaty		1	16	17
Human Rights Act 1998		0	14	14
Special immigration appeals commission		1	11	12

Statistics

Major topics

Of the reports citing statistics, 170 were totals (ie exact figures) and 96 were estimates, as far as could be determined. Among the most common topics were numbers claiming asylum in the UK and numbers of failed asylum seekers in the UK. It is common to find articles which made comparisons between these different figures -for example, which raised concerns about the proportion of asylum seekers whose asylum applications fail. Statistics are also commonly found in reports on crime.

Lesser topics

Other topics on which statistics also appeared repeatedly were costs of the asylum system (29 references), opinion poll results (28, of which 21 were in nationals and only 1 in the faith/minority papers) and the number of deportations (15) There were 16 references to the incidence of infectious diseases and/or the cost of treatment (12 of them in the nationals), and 11 references to fundraising - ie amounts raised, amounts need to raise, grants given, etc. Figures predicting the numbers needed to support the economy and aging population were mentioned 7 times, figures comparing the numbers seeking asylum in the UK with the worldwide refugee population were mentioned 8 times. References to numbers of local supporters, for example signing petitions and attending vigils, were mentioned 6 times (5 of which are in regional papers).

Generalised terms such as dozens, hundreds etc were found in roughly 10% of articles using statistics.

There is evidence of other emotive terms being used in relation to statistics - terms such as 'influx, wave, flood, tide' appeared 13 times, while terms such as 'soaring/ soared ,rocketing/rocketed, staggering, whopping, endless' appeared 17 times (total of 30 references when both groups are combined).

Faith/minority regional and national variations

While all papers were most concerned with statistics relating to the number of asylum seekers in or coming to the UK, this was most marked in the faith/minority press. The regional papers were the most interested in statistics relating to crime, while the nationals were most interested in figures relating to failed asylum seekers.

The top six cited statistics more often than the nationals as a whole (23% top 6 reports do so compared to 16% of nationals) and used generalised terms (thousands etc) more often than the nationals as a whole.

Topics with 30 or more references.

TABLE 4.10

	faith/ minority	Regional	national	Top 6 daily nationals	total
Total sample	52	569	1392	493	2013
Are numbers mentioned?	12 - 23%	99 - 17%	218-16%	114 - 23%	329 -16%
Types of numbers mentioned					
Numbers claiming asylum in the UK, numbers of asylum seekers in the UK	5 (41%)	13 (13%)	46 (21%)	22 (19%)	64 (19%)
Numbers relating to extent of a crime - cost etc	0 (0%)	12 (12%)	19 (9%)	10 (9%)	31 (9%)
Numbers of failed asylum seekers, or overstayers - includes 1 regional ref to nos of bogus	0 (0%)	3 (3%)	27 (12%)	16 (14%)	30 (9%)
Terms used to describe numbers					
Generalised term such as dozens, hundreds, thousands, millions	1 (8%)	7 (7%)	23 (11%)	17 (15%)	31 (9%)

The impact of asylum on the economy and welfare

Overwhelmingly, the most common topic discussed within the category impact on the economy and welfare, was the contribution of refugees and asylum seekers to the creative arts, which included art produced by refugees and asylum seekers and art produced by others which is inspired by refugees and asylum seekers or has them as a central character or theme. More than a third of articles within this category were on this subject. In terms of the whole sample, more than 10% of the entire sample were about refugees and asylum seekers contributing to the arts and there were more of these articles than there were articles making general references to Michael Howard's proposals to change the asylum system.

The perception of asylum seekers and refugees as 'educated, professional, skilled contributors to economy/society - or preparing to contribute' was also a dominant theme in all types of newspapers and this far outweighs the hostile views that were most commonly expressed. Even when they were combined 'preferential treatment', 'burden on resources', and 'illegal working' still get less coverage than 'skilled contributors'.

Lesser topics

Other topics which were mentioned a number of times were 'Filling skills gaps', 'Scrounger, sponger, fraudster, robbing the system', 'Unemployed but wanting to work' - of which one regional was 'unemployed but wanting to work despite severe injury', 'Health risk, bringing disease' and 'Children doing as well or better than locals at school despite initial language barriers'. The refusal to give lottery funds to agencies which don't prioritise one or more of a list of needy groups - including refugees and asylum seekers - was mentioned 18 times, and a further 9 articles comment on lottery funding for a refugee assisting agency accused of providing false documents. There were 4 articles about refugees working for or donating to charities unconnected with asylum. A further 12 made more detailed comments about contribution to the economy, and 19 about their impact on employment. There were only 4 references to refugees as 'ordinary working people' and 6 to refugee community organisations meeting community needs. There were 14 references to refugees and asylum seekers continuing political activity related to their country of origin (none of these appear in the faith/minority papers).

Differences between the different types of papers

The faith/minority papers referred to the impact of asylum seekers and refugees on the economy/welfare more often than the regional and national papers. The faith/minority papers referred to asylum seekers and refugees as skilled contributors to the economy/ society most often, whereas the nationals were most frequent in referring to them as contributors to the arts. The complaint of preferential treatment was more common in the regional papers than the faith/minority and national papers, the complaints of 'a burden on resources' and 'illegal working' were both more common in the faith/minority press than the regional and national press. This suggests that on the most commonly occurring themes it is not the case that the faith/minority and regional papers present a more rosy picture of asylum than the nationals.

When compared to the total results for the national papers, the top 6 daily nationals reported the contribution of asylum seekers/refugees to the arts, and to the economy generally, less often than the nationals as a whole. They reported illegal working, and health risks more often than the nationals as a whole. Unlike the rest of the papers sampled, they carried no reports on asylum seeking/refugee children doing well at school.

Main topics

TABLE 4.11

	faith/ minority	regional	national	Top 6 daily nationals	Whole sample
totals	52	569	1392	493	2013
Is impact on welfare / effect on services mentioned? % of total articles	25 - 48%	178 - 31%	418 - 30%	122 -25%	619 - 31%
R/AS contributing to creative arts eg theatre, film	6 (24%)	49 (27%)	173 (41%)	27 (22%)	227 (37%)
Educated, professional, skilled contributors to economy/society - or preparing to contribute	8 (32%)	48 (27%)	95 (23%)	15 (12%)	151 (24%)
Better off than other groups/ pampered/ Receiving preferential treatment compared with other British residents/ less for the rest of us	1 (4%)	19 (11%)	26 (6%)	10 (8%)	46 (7%)
Burden/strain on resources/ Linked to local deprivation and shortages, strain on health service, schools, housing	4 (16%)	5 (3%)	30 (7%)	14 (11%)	39 (6%)
Illegal working, cheap labour, cash in hand, black economy	3 (12%)	13 (7%)	16 (4%)	11 (9%)	31 (5%)
Minor themes					
Filling skills gaps	0 (0%)	13 (7%)	14 (3%)	1 (1%)	27 (4%)
Scrounger	2 (8%)	6 (3%)	18 (4%)	6 (5%)	26 (4%)
Unemployed but want to work	1 (4%)	19 (11%)	16 (4%)	1 (1%)	26 (4%)
Health risk	0 (0%)	2 (1%)	20 (5%)	13 (11%)	22 (4%)
Children doing well at school	2 (8%)	7 (4%)	10 (2%)	0 (0%)	19 (3%)

Presentation of crime and community safety

Crime and community safety was only mentioned in 17% of articles.

The most common crimes in which asylum seekers and refugees were reported as complicit were terrorism and people smuggling or trafficking, especially for prostitution, fraud/deception (includes forged documents, counterfeit money, impersonating nurses, dentists etc) and dangerous driving. However, crime stories did not dominate the sample and most were related to individual cases rather than generalised concerns about criminality. There was recognition of harassment against asylum seekers and refugees.

Most commonly cited criminal incidents

The 3 specific criminal cases which received the most coverage were a) the death of a young boy caused by a drunk driver who is a failed asylum seeker - this is reported not only from a human interest perspective but also as an example of the results of the government's failure to return rejected asylum seekers. b) the killing of a refugee dispersed to Swansea in a racial attack - with coverage given to local responses in support of refugees and against

racism, and c) the case of a man who posed as a doctor and in this capacity wrote medical reports on asylum seekers which were submitted with their asylum applications.

Minor themes

There were 23 references to sexual crimes perpetrated by asylum seekers/refugees - 12 articles about rape or sexual assault cases, 11 about asylum seekers or refugees charged with /convicted of GBH after infecting their partners with HIV. 14 of these were in the regionals and 9 in the nationals. There were 9 references to asylum seekers/refugees, who are suspects in a crime, escaping, hiding or running away.

Differences between types of papers

Crime stories received little coverage in the faith/minority press. The regional papers reported on crime more often than the nationals. The crime perpetrated by asylum seekers or refugees that got most attention in the regional press was dangerous driving, whereas the nationals were most interested in terrorism and people trafficking/smuggling. The regionals reported on harassment of asylum seekers and refugees more often than the nationals, and reported this more frequently than any of the other major crime topics.

The top 6 daily nationals were more interested in terrorism than the sample as a whole. The top 6 were less interested in reporting about asylum seekers/ refugees suffering harassment than the sample as a whole.

TABLE 4.12 Tables showing frequency of reporting of crime and community safety issues. Table shows topics reported over 30 times only.

	faith/ minority (%)	regional (%)	national (%)	Top 6 daily nationals (%)	Whole sample (%)
Total sample	52	569	1392	493	2013
Are crime and community safety issues mentioned? (as % of total articles)	5 (10%)	120 (21%)	216 (16%)	108 (22%)	341 (17%)
TOPICS					
Arrested, jailed, guilty	0	37 (31%)	42 (19%)	26 (24%)	79 (23%)
Terrorism	0 (0%)	11 (9%)	68 (31%)	36 (33%)	79 (23%)
Complicit in people smuggling, trafficking, especially for illegal work and prostitution - gang-master, pimp, brothel	1 (20%)	8 (7%)	35 (16%)	12 (11%)	44 (13%)
Experiencing physical or verbal harassment or attacks, particularly children attacks on property, arson, anti-semitism, bullying Includes 10 reports referring to racially aggravated killing of a refugee or asylum seeker	1 (20%)	20 (17%)	12 (6%)	1 (1%)	33 (10%)
Criminal activity by refugees and asylum seekers involving forged documents, deception, bribery, fraud, counterfeit money, money laundering	1 (20%)	11 (9%)	19 (9%)	17 (16%)	31 (9%)

Dangerous driving, including driving without license or insurance, drink driving, hit and run. Includes 24 reports about case of young boy killed by failed asylum seeker		17 (14%)	13 (6%)	13 (12%)	30 (9%)
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Detention

As fewer articles were on detention than on the other categories, the results are not divided into major and minor topics

Summary

Detention is the smallest category in the media monitoring coding scheme and was discussed in only a small proportion of the articles sampled. Stories on detention tended to raise concerns about hardship, abuse by guards, suicides, children in detention. There was almost no interest in stories about escaping from detention or in describing detention as luxurious or about asylum seekers in detention assaulting their guards although such stories do appear in the top six daily nationals.. As such, when newspapers chose to report on detention, such reports were largely sympathetic to the circumstances of asylum seekers in detention.

TABLE 4.13

	faith/ minority (%)	regional (%)	national (%)	Top 6 daily nationals (%)	Total (%)
Total sample	52	569	1392	493	2013
Detention mentioned? (as % of total articles)	1 (2%)	28 (5%)	78 (6%)	24 (5%)	107 (5%)
TOPICS					
Detention under immigration controls		23 (82%)	37 (47%)	10 (42%)	60 (56%)
Detention on suspicion of terrorism		6 (21%)	34 (44%)	11 (46%)	40 (37%)
Abuse, violence, racism in detention - perpetrated by guards/officials	1 (100%)	7 (25%)	16 (21%)	4 (17%)	24 (22%)
Hardship in detention/ Hardship for rest of family when one member is in detention		8 (29%)	11 (14%)	2 (8%)	19 (18%)
Suicides in detention/ Suicidal/ attempted suicide in detention		2 (7%)	5 (6%)	2 (8%)	7 (7%)
Detention of children under immigration controls		2 (7%)	3 (4%)	1 (4%)	5 (5%)
Minor points					
Abuse, violence, racism in detention - perpetrated by both guards/officials and detainees			1 (1%)	1 (4%)	1 (1%)

Escaped from detention under immigration controls, missing			1 (1%)	1 (4%)	1 (1%)
Detention centre described as 'luxury'			1 (1%)	1 (4%)	1 (1%)

The perceptions of and interactions between asylum seekers and refugees and the general public

Major themes

The most common issue discussed within the category of perceptions of and interactions between asylum seekers and refugees and the general public, was sympathy or at least background information on their country of origin and reasons for flight. This was closely followed by reports of concerns about media attitudes to asylum. The most common hostile perception found in the sample was 'bogus, false or fraudulent'. However, this was far outweighed by reports stating that asylum seekers and refugees are being or should be offered welcome, support and help, that communities celebrate diversity and are actively involved in helping them to integrate, and that communities are concerned about individuals facing detention and deportation.

Six percent of the articles on perceptions of and interactions with asylum seekers and refugees were about concern/ anger/ or alarm - notably not presented as the opinion of the paper or a named individual but more generally as the widely held view of the British public.

Minor themes

24 articles discussed the need for more accurate information, or criticised the perpetuation of inaccurate 'myths' - 1 in the faith/minority papers, 11 in the regionals and 12 in the nationals. Fundraising/events in support of local asylum seekers/ refugees were mentioned 21 times, 16 times in regional papers and 5 in the nationals. There were 17 references to asylum seekers or refugees as 'traumatised or suffering mental health problems' - 12 in the regionals and 5 in the nationals. The monitoring scheme sought to identify instances where asylum seekers and refugees were described as 'ordinary people just like you and me', but this perception hardly featured in reporting.

Differences between the different types of papers

Marked differences were evident in reporting between regional and national papers within this category. 'Bogus, false or fraudulent' was found in 10% of national articles and 16% of articles in the top six daily national papers but only 3% of regional articles. Reports about communities helping asylum seekers and refugees to integrate, celebrating diversity, and about communities concerned about detention and deportation, were more common in regional papers. The reports suggesting the public in general is concerned/angry/alarmed about asylum/asylum seekers and refugees were most common in the top six daily national papers where it occurs in 14% of articles, compared to 9% of nationals as a whole and 3% of regional articles. Criticisms about media reporting were largely in the national papers but not common in the top six daily national papers. The faith/minority papers reported sympathy for or information about circumstances in the country of origin/causes of flight more often than national and regional papers, and least often reported that the public are concerned/angry/alarmed etc. The top 6 daily nationals reported least often expressing sympathy for or interest in conditions in the country of origin and that communities are helping asylum seekers/refugees to integrate.

Table showing frequency that articles report on topics about the perceptions of and interactions between asylum seekers and refugees and the general public.

Top scoring topics shown only (mentioned over 30 times).

TABLE 4.14

	faith/ minority (%)	regional (%)	national (%)	Top 6 Daily Nationals (%)	Total sample (%)
Total sample	52	569	1392	493	2013
perceptions of and interaction with refugees and asylum seekers	20-38%	222- 39%	420-30%	129 - 26%	662- 33%
Sympathy for experiences in country of origin/ Information given on international context/ Fleeing human rights abuses, horror, oppression, torture, war	4 (20%)	43 (19%)	41 (10%)	8 (6%)	88 (13%)
concern expressed at media attitudes to asylum - by public or by newspaper	4 (20%)	14 (6%)	68 (16%)	3 [1is about liberal press] (2%)	86 (13%)
Bogus, false, fraudulent	2 (10%)	6 (3%)	42 (10%)	21 (16%)	50 (8%)
Are being or should be offered welcome, support, help	1 (5%)	28 (13%)	26 (6%)	6 (5%)	55 (8%)
Local concern at unsuccessful applicants planned or actual detention or deportation	1 (5%)	29 (13%)	12 (3%)	1 (1%)	42 (6%)
Community helping asylum seekers/refugees to get involved in community activities /to integrate/ promote understanding	2 (10%)	22 (10%)	15 (4%)	1 (1%)	38 (6%)
'the public' or 'the British people' are concerned / angry / alarmed etc.	1 (5%)	6 (3%)	36 (9%)	18 (14%)	43 (6%)
Community benefiting from cultural diversity/ awareness of and celebration of diversity / appreciation of equality	1 (5%)	17 (8%)	12 (3%)	3 (2%)	31 (5%)

Public sector and civil society sources

Across the whole sample, a very wide range of sources other than political, legal, media or arts sources was cited, giving a rich and complex cross-section of views from civil society. There were 291 references to national public sector sources, 80 references to local public sector sources, 31 references to international or pan-European

voluntary agencies, 339 references to national voluntary agencies and 110 references to local voluntary agencies. There were 478 references to individuals as sources of information (of which 217 are references to individual asylum seekers or refugees) 51 to faith sources, 48 references to funders, 41 to academic sources, 35 to union representatives, 27 to refugee community organisations, 18 to sports sources and 3 to comedians. 49 articles - 2% of the total have either no source or an unspecific source.

TABLE 4.16

	faith/ minority	regional	national	total
National public sector sources- total number citations	6	85	200	291
Total number different national public sector sources mentioned	2	12	25	34
National public sector sources - mentioned more than 3 times				
Home Office or IND	4	41	107	152
Police	2	27	48	77
Contractor running Home Office detention services (Group 4, UK detention services, Premier detention services, Global Solutions)		6	13	19
Office for National Statistics	0	3	6	9
MI5 / security chiefs	0	0	6	6
community cohesion panel/ report/Ted Cattle	0	0	5	5
Crown prosecution service	0	4	0	4
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	0	1	3	4
Dept health	0	0	3	3
National Refugee International Forum	0	3	0	3
Local/regional public sector sources- total number citations	0	44	36	80
Total number different national public sector sources mentioned	0	19	15	28
Local/regional public sector sources - mentioned more than 2 times				
Local/regional government official - unspecified	0	3	0	3

Kent County Council/ Social Services Kent County Council	0	1	2	3
Bristol City Council/ Bristol Council Anti-Social Behaviour Team	0	2	1	3
Peterborough City Council/ Peterborough Youth Service	0	3	0	3
Newcastle City Council	0	2	0	2
Manchester City Council	0	1	1	2
Hackney borough Council	0		2	2
Local refugee forum or partnership or Regional refugee consortium -(Nottingham Refugee Forum 2, Leicester North West Community Forum 1)	0	3	0	3
Local NHS, local hospital, nurse, doctor, health authority	0	7	7	14
'AIDS doctors'	0	0	3	3
Education officer/Teacher/ Head teacher	0	6	7	13
Local school (general) or local pupils or local children	0	6	6	12
London Underground	0	2	0	2

TABLE 4.17

Civil society organisations				
International or pan - European voluntary agency				31
Amnesty International		3	11	14
Save the children		4	5	9
Red Cross / RC Family finding service		2	2	4
IOM			3	3
ECRE			1	1
National funding organisations				48
Lottery fund, lottery board, big lottery fund, heritage lot fund, community lot fund etc	2	7	23	32
Other (World refugee fund, comic relief, millennium awards fellowship, refugee aid trust, mary Thompson fund, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, greater Bristol foundation		8	8	16

National unions				35
Unions in general, TUC, TGWU, BECTU, STUC, NUS, GMB, NUT, National Farmers Union, Communication workers union, Public and Commercial Services Union		4	16	20
Former Union leader Bill Morris	2	3	10	15
National voluntary agency				339
CRE, CRE reports on /awards for the media	2	13	39	54
Migration Watch UK		2	42	44
Refugee Council (and 'Tel it like it is' guide published by Refugee Council and others)	1	10	25	36
JCWI	5	12	11	28
Liberty	2	2	13	17
Charity commission	1	3	9	13
NAAR	1		8	9
IPPR			7	7
CBI			7	7
Council for assisting refugee academics		2	4	6
National coalition of anti-deportation campaigns		1	5	6
Terence Higgins trust		4	2	6
Medical foundation care victims torture/report 'Harm on Removal'			6	6
BMA		2	3	5
Health Protection Agency	1		4	4
Unite against fascism			3	3
BID			3	3
NSPCC/ cymru		2	1	3
Refugee Action		1	2	3
STAR		3		3
Centre for policy studies			3	3
other national agencies - total	4	24	45	73
Regional or Local voluntary agencies - supportive				110

Detainee Support and Help Unit	1	3	10	14
All Wales ethnic minority association		7	1	8
Local race equality council		7	1	8
Bristol defend the asylum seekers		6	1	7
Housing associations		6		6
Scottish refugee council		2	2	4
Scotland's fresh talent initiative		1	2	3
Swansea bay asylum seekers support group		3		3
other local or regional community org/ representative	1	35	6	42
Community services cited in articles about refusal of lottery funds eg Severn area rescue, scouts, Samaritans		2	13	15
Faith Leaders				
(for example, Rabbi Julia Neuberger Jewish council racial equality (jcore) Board of deputies of British jews Muslim association of Britain Muslim council of Britain Liverpool City Mission Cardinal Murphy OConnor Youth with a mission Bishop of Lancaster Report 'A place of refuge' by the Church of England General Synod)	7	6	38	51
Named academic or institution -				
(for example, Sami Ramadani at London Metropolitan University Prof. John Curtice at Strathclyde University St.Johns College Oxford Leeds University Sutton Coldfield College University college Cardiff The Open University Leicester Universtiy Students union Economic Research Council)	2	10	29	41
Sports source				
(For example - football association Everton FC Leicester local football teams National Basketball association Lord Coe - Chair of Olympic Bid Refugee sports development project Sportsman Luol Deng (refugee))		10	8	18

Comedians - Pub landlord, Alf Garnett, Woody Allen			3	3
Refugee community organisations				27
Association of Jewish refugees	3	2	9	14
other	1	12		13
Individuals - total				478
Member of public named	7	84	110	201
Member of public un-named	1	3	3	7
Celebrity - not supporter/neutral	1	1	4	6
Asylum seeker adult male	1	32	26	59
Asylum seeker adult female	0	26	7	33
Asylum seeker child	0	13	2	15
Refugee adult female	3	10	15	28
Refugee adult male	2	22	55	79
Refugee child	0	2	1	3
Individual supporters				
Campaigner supporting asylum seekers and refugees (not belonging to a specific organisation) named, un-named or petition / candlelit vigil/ protest against detention centre - in support of asylum seekers		8	6	14
HIV sufferer helped by as carer		1	1	2
Family/friend of refugee		3	3	6
Celebrity supporter - actors, singers, sports-persons etc	1	4	6	11
Individual protestors				
Campaigner opposed to asylum seekers and refugees (not belonging to a specific organisation) named, un-named, Petition against asylum seekers		2	1	3
'victims' - parents of boy killed by drink-drive asylum seeker, victim of asylum seeker with HIV, prostitute victim of asylum seeker pimp etc		5	6	11

No source/ unspecific source	faith/ minority	regional	national	total
Unspecified source - Unconfirmed reports, Latest figures, Official figures, Community leaders, Government experts, party officials, the internet		8	11	19
No source		5	25	30

Images in the regional and faith/minority press

A log of images was collated for the 3- week period 14 February- 6 March. The faith/minority and regional images were collated from real copies of the newspapers, with the help of Student Action for Refugees. The sample presented an opportunity to examine evidence that is rarely collated on such a scale. There were insufficient resources to monitor national newspaper images. The most common image was of a member of the public or a civil society organisation either supportive of or neutral regarding asylum seekers and refugees. There were almost as many pictures of politicians. The most common images of politicians were of Conservative politicians, it was usually the Conservative leader, Michel Howard who was pictured.

There were 44 images in the regional papers. One was a still from a documentary showing abuse of asylum seekers in detention by security officers, the rest were all photographs showing people. The most common subjects in the regional images were either asylum seekers/refugees as criminals, or supporters of asylum seekers/refugees. There were 14 images in the faith/minority papers. All were photographs, one of a document, the rest of people. The most common subject was supporters of asylum seekers/refugees.

Photographs of people

	Faith/minority	Regional	Total (faith/minority and regional only)
Politician - total	3	11	14
Politician - labour		3	3
Politician - conservative	1	4	5
Politician - LibDem	1		1
Politician - veritas	1	2	3
Politician - Respect		1	1
Politician - Member Welsh Assembly		1	1
Asylum seeker/refugee - negative image		10	10
Asylum seeker/refugee - criminal		5	5
Group of asylum seekers - questioned by police		2	2
Group of asylum seekers - hooded/sleeping rough		3	3
Asylum seeker/refugee - positive or neutral image	1	6	7
Asylum seeker/refugee		3	3
Asylum seeker/refugee - victim		2	2

Mixed group asylum seekers/refugees/ locals	1	1	2
Members of public or civil organisations - opposed to asylum seekers/refugees		2	2
Victim of criminal asylum seeker/ refugee		1	1
Criminal killed asylum seeker/refugee		1	1
Members of public or civil organisations - supporters or neutral	6	9	15
Trevor Phillips - CRE		1	1
Local authority Asylum team manager		1	1
Supporter of asylum seeker/refugee	2	5	7
Group of immigrant children	1		1
Members of public - mixed or neutral views	3		3
Crowd at anti racism rally		1	1
Actor on stage (portraying Odysseus as an asylum seeker)		1	1
Lawyer	1		1
Journalist	2	5	7

Articles with an individual focus

ICAR believes best practice in responsible reporting of asylum requires that fair representation is given to the opinions and experiences of those affected by the policies or events reported. This reduces the chances that asylum seekers and refugees are presented as a anonymous mass, or are unfairly stereotyped. In this section of the report, the results of a subset of the data are given, compared to the results for the whole sample, in order to show the content of articles that use this approach can present an alternative picture. The results are summarised here and the tables containing more detailed results are given in the appendix. This subset comprises those articles that have an individual focus . We have distinguished these by logging references to individual males and females or small groups either of males, females or mixed - eg a family group or a group of friends, or more rarely another small group such as a group of musicians.

Only a minority of the articles in the whole sample - 22% - had an individual focus. This type of article occurred slightly more often in the regional press - 26% of regional articles had an individual focus. There was only one use of an inaccurate term, which might indicate more care was taken but this cannot be asserted as figures for inaccurate terms in the whole sample are low. Articles with an individual focus were less often purely national in scope (40% of articles with an individual focus are purely national in scope compared to 61% of the whole sample) and more often had a local or international perspective.

Articles with an individual focus mentioned policy less often than the whole sample of articles (44% compared to 62%). Where policy was mentioned in articles with an individual focus, compared to the sample as a whole, it was more often about determinations of policy at it relates to decisions on individual cases (25% of individual focus policy articles compared to 5% of the whole sample policy articles) or terrorism (25% of individual focus policy articles compared to 5% of the whole sample policy articles). The high incidence of reports about terrorism in these articles was as a result of a number of articles on the subject of: 'who are the terror suspects?' when individuals were released from Belmarsh. Interestingly, the articles with an individual focus did not feature policy proposals to the same extent as the whole sample - highlighting that policy proposals were rarely reported from the perspective of the individuals affected (7% of individual focus policy articles were on the Conservative Party's proposals and 3% were on the government's proposals compared to 42% and 16% respectively for whole sample policy articles).

An interest in the impact on the economy/welfare was more common in the articles with an individual focus than in the sample as a whole (41% of individual focus articles were about the impact on the economy/welfare compared to 31% of the sample as a whole). Over half of the individual focus articles about the impact on the economy/welfare praised the contribution made by asylum seekers/refugees to the economy (57%), which was far higher than the results for the sample as a whole (24%). 'Children doing well at school' was reported more often in the articles with an individual focus than in the sample as a whole but so was 'illegal working etc'. Crime appeared very often in the articles with an individual focus, more often than in the sample as a whole (40% of articles with an individual focus were about crime compared to 17% of the whole sample). Terrorism was the most common crime cited and occurred more often than in the sample as a whole (31% of individual focus articles were about crime compared to 23% of the whole sample). An individual focus does not appear to lead to greater awareness of incidence of harassment, on the evidence of this sample, as there were slightly fewer articles on harassment of asylum seekers and refugees in the articles with an individual focus (8% of crime articles) than in the sample as a whole (10% of crime articles).

Detention occurred more frequently in the sample of articles with an individual focus than in the sample as a whole, and these reports were mainly concerned with terrorism. Reports of hardship in detention were more likely in the articles with an individual focus.

The proportion of articles on perceptions of/interactions with asylum seekers/refugees was approximately the same for articles with an individual focus and for the sample as a whole (35% and 33% respectively). The articles with an individual focus were far more likely to express concern for/interest in conditions in the country of origin (41% of individual focus articles about perceptions/interactions did so compared to 13% of the whole sample of articles about perceptions/interactions). The articles with an individual focus were far more likely to report community concern at detentions/deportations (22% of individual focus articles about perceptions/interactions did so compared to 6% of the whole sample of articles about perceptions/interactions).

Some common hostile generalisations and stereotypes were less evident in this sub set - waves/floods, hundreds/thousands. Interestingly two of the most common conceptions - preferential treatment and burden/strain on resources - hardly feature. In contrast, 'making a contribution', 'sympathy for experiences', and 'local concern at deportation' featured most often. However there was only a slight reduction in the frequency of the term 'bogus' or the opinion that 'the public are angry/concerned about asylum' when the results for the individual focus articles were compared to the sample as a whole. (Bogus appeared in 4% of the individual focus articles about perceptions and interactions compared to 8% of the whole sample of articles about perceptions and interactions, while 'the public are angry/concerned' appeared in 3% of the individual focus articles about perceptions and interactions compared to 6% of the whole sample of articles about perceptions and interactions).

It might have been predicted that the articles which mention individual experiences tended to be more sympathetic and exclude the policy debate. In fact the picture is more complex. Individuals did have a say in the political debate when they discussed their own situation, so long as that situation was 'anxiously waiting for a decision' etc. Sometimes this could bring in a wider policy issue eg deportation at the age of 18 of failed asylum seekers who arrived as unaccompanied minors. So it is more accurate to say that their role in the political debate was limited to a narrow field. Secondly, although the articles with an individual focus tended to be less hostile, they did not only present 'positive images' but also frequently covered crime, and did not avoid use of hostile terms such as bogus. Articles with an individual focus were however more likely to report issues and present opinions which differed from the dominant view.

What new themes have emerged?

As this is the most comprehensive study of reporting of asylum in the UK press conducted to date, it is not surprising that it revealed themes in reporting which have not been explored in previous studies. The new themes that emerged in this study are:

- a) Artistic voices
- b) Jokes
- c) The voice of the reader - Polls and Letters
- d) Media voices - The press as sources and discussions on the role of the press

a) Artistic voices

It was decided to log references to the arts because the authors were aware of the increasing interest in asylum seekers and refugees as the inspiration for and creators of art. This was reflected in newspaper reporting in this sample, which contained 237 references to the arts. These included references to books and/or authors, plays, dance, artists and/or exhibitions, museums, film, music and arts websites. TV and radio programmes were also included as artistic references if they were documentaries or features, but news, political debates, political interviews and other political/election related programmes were not (these were logged with media sources). These 237 references are equivalent to 12% of the articles about asylum containing a reference to the arts. A total of 129 separate artists or artistic products were mentioned - including 41 books, 28 films and 19 events, exhibitions or museums. The artistic voices were a mixture of art produced by asylum seekers or refugees and art produced by settled British residents inspired by asylum seekers and refugees. The success of the artistic voices in gaining the attention of the newspapers should be compared with the lack of focus on individual asylum seekers and refugees in political reporting. One possible reason for this success is that resources have been given to community arts projects involving asylum seekers and refugees. Another is that newspapers (particularly regional papers and the arts sections of national papers) find such arts events/publications newsworthy, with visual appeal. 'Pigeon-holing' asylum seekers and refugees in the arts pages of newspapers could be interpreted as new form of stereotyping, allowing them restricted access to the media only, and arguably perhaps suggesting that they are more interested in cultural than political issues.

The information gathered here on the artistic products that get the most coverage suggests that this interpretation is too simplistic. The most commonly cited were not reflections of cultural identity, they were critiques of the politics of asylum. The film *Hotel Rwanda* and Caroline Moorehead's book *Human Cargo* both highlighted the failings of international frameworks for protecting refugees, and did so by focussing on individual stories. The documentary *Detention Undercover* exposed the abuse of detainees in immigration detention centres while the dance production *the Age of Unbeauty* also represented the hardship faced by detainees. The singer M.I.A. described the shame she felt growing up as a refugee in the UK where refugees are considered: 'the scum of the earth'. The production of Homer's *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus is an asylum seeker, was an example of an artistic product generated by artists with a settled British background, drawing strongly on Western European cultural traditions, that commented on current attitudes to asylum. The characters of the immigration officials even used terminology which we have highlighted in this report as a cause for concern in newspaper reporting, when they referred to Odysseus as one of the: 'bloody illegals'.

TABLE 4.28 Number of references to the arts

	Faith/minority	Regional	National	Total
Total	10	44	183	237
Books (or authors or publishers)	3	6	60	69
Poetry	0	0	5	5
TV and radio	2	9	30	41
Films (or filmmakers)	1	14	30	45
Music	0	4	6	10

Art	0	1	4	5
Dance	0	0	5	5
Theatre	0	5	22	27
Exhibitions, events, museums	4	5	20	29
Arts websites	0	0	1	1

Number of individual books, films etc. mentioned

TABLE 4.29

	Faith/minority	Regional	National	Total
Total	9	27	93	129
Books (or authors or publishers)	3	5	33	41
Poetry	0	0	4	4
TV and radio	2	2	9	13
Films (or filmmakers)	1	9	18	28
Music	0	4	5	9
Art	0	1	4	5
Dance	0	0	2	2
Theatre	0	2	5	7
Exhibitions, events, museums	3	4	12	19
Arts websites	0	0	1	1

Most frequently cited artistic sources (mentioned 4 times or more)

TABLE 4.30

	Faith/minority	Regional	National	Total
TV- BBC documentary: Detention undercover	1	8	22	31
Film- Hotel Rwanda	0	6	10	16
Theatre - The Odyssey by Homer at Bristol Old Vic	0	4	11	15
Book - Human Cargo by Caroline Moorehead	0	0	12	12

Exhibition - 'Common ground' exhibition by British Council or photographer Anthony Lam, contributor to Common Ground exhibition	1	2	3	6
Book -The Final Solution by Michael Chabon	0	0	5	5
Book -Jacobs gift by Jonathon Freedland	1	0	4	5
Book - The Bear Boy by Cynthia Ozick	0	0	5	5
Theatre -The Bogus Woman by Kay Adshead	0	0	5	5
Exhibition - Monet Exhibition at Tate Britain	0	0	5	5
Dance-The age of unbeauty by the Australian Dance Theatre	0	0	4	4

Examples of different types of arts stories

TABLE 4.31

Headline, paper type of article, date	8.3.05 The Times Soaring through the pain barrier Review of 'The Age of Unbeauty' performed by Australian Dance Theatre
Relevant quotes and/or description	'There are two questions being asked in Garry Stewart's The Age of Unbeauty. Is there no limit to man's inhumanity to man? And how far can you take the human body? The first question provides the theme for their 60-minute production, currently receiving its British premiere. Stewart, who directs Australian Dance Theatre, says that Age of Unbeauty was born out of a "sense of frustration and angst at being in a world where there is an extraordinary degree of inequality". His anger was originally sparked by his country's treatment of refugees and asylum seekers ("who end up in razor-wired facilities in the middle of the desert")...There are sharply etched images of imprisonment, of death in the gas chamber, of corpses carted off to mass graves, of the humiliation of prisoners...The use of video footage, which pleads compassion and connectedness, acts as an antidote to the physical brutality.'
Headline, paper type of article, date	30.1.05 Sunday Telegraph A far cry from north-west London Reviews the recording artist M.I.A.

Relevant quotes and/or description	<p>‘after her dad’s political activities in the cause of Tamil independence necessitated an urgent return to Britain.. as a refugee on a Surrey sink-estate...working her way into St Martin’s School of Art, and thence to her current position as the toast of the New York glitterati.’</p> <p>‘the title of her first official album release is Arular, which was the alias her father took on when he disappeared into the dangerous world of the Sri-Lankan political underground...She made it “in the hope of turning all the negative memories into positives.” ...Far from looking back with yearning to the culture she’d left behind, Arulpragasam grew up “embarrassed about coming from Sri Lanka”. “I was determined not to be seen as a refugee,” she remembers dryly, “because I didn’t want to be thought of as the scum of the earth”...Ironically, the key factor rendering her spiky postglobalisation pop palatable in the US is the one thing that domestic audiences haven’t quite been able to come to terms with: “it’s the fact that I’m British”.</p>
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Headline, paper type of article, date	<p>26.2.05 Guardian Homer in the 21st century Review of a new production of The Odyssey</p>
Relevant quotes and/or description	<p>‘A stocky man wearing jeans and a T-shirt is washed up on the shore and is discovered by two immigration officers. “He’s trying to get in under our noses,” says one. “Bloody illegals,” says the other. “You’re going home, sunshine” says the first. “I want to go home,” sighs the man. He is Odysseus, the wily Greek general who triumphantly ended the siege of Troy and has been tossed for over a decade on the high seas as he tries to make it home. It is the emotional pain of exile and the meaning of home that provides the swell and tug of David Farr’s gripping retelling of Homer’s epic...the final moments when the survivors of sacked Troy - seeking asylum but longing for their lost homes - relive their terror and pain is an exhilarating demonstration of the healing possibilities of the imagination.’</p>

b) Jokes

Jokes are part of the techniques used by newspapers to convey information and entertain, and are compatible with the PCC’s view that newspapers are entitled to be partisan and to engage in robust comment. The jokes found in this sample were not necessarily hostile to asylum seekers and refugees - some mock the popular perceptions of asylum threats. However the main effect of the jokes found in this sample was to emphasise hostility towards and disrespect for the concept of asylum. The majority of the jokes were a nod and a wink towards the views that the papers believe they share with their readers, that asylum seekers and refugees are not genuinely in need of protection. They are powerful because they reach a wide audience - including those who are not interested in news reporting. Some emphasised the different-ness between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and played to stereotypes. Some reinforced the view that asylum seekers are disliked by the public, and portrayed the British people as invaded, oppressed by an asylum system over which they lack control. Some laughed at conditions faced by asylum seekers, and the sample contained one example of a flippant reference to supporters of asylum seekers by the Prime Minister. Even jokes that were supportive of asylum seekers - jokes at the expense of the system, or right wingers - nevertheless acknowledged the prevalence of hostility and confusion without offering a clear alternative. Some of the satirical comments intended to highlight insensitivity towards asylum seekers and refugees arguably contribute to raising the temperature of the debate by using extreme language, and can be misinterpreted.

When this is compared with our findings on other aspects of the sample, such jokes seemed to be perpetuating views which were most in tune with the political debate, but were not reflecting the more positive issues reported on the impact of refugees and asylum seekers on the economy and welfare, and on perceptions of and interactions with asylum seekers and refugees. Jokes of this kind can be seen as consonant with the poor practice which has led some parts of the media to question reporting of asylum and an indication of the importance of reporting asylum as an issue concerning real individuals rather than an anonymous group. They are different from the jokes that refugee communities enjoy- ones that evoke the ironies and emotions of an uncertain situation. (100)

100 Raskin, R (1997) ‘Far from where? On the history and meanings of a classic Jewish refugee joke’ American Jewish History 85.2 pp 143-150

Examples of jokes, satire and flippant comments found in the sample

Jokes that criticise common perceptions of an asylum threat

TABLE 4.32

26/01/05	The Independent	My So- Called Life: They're All Coming Here For the Weather	'The Conservative party is right about immigration to this country. It is getting seriously and frighteningly out of hand. Indeed, just the other day, I woke up and found immigrants everywhere six in the wardrobe....and one even sitting on the end of my bed... he had thought he would seek a little asylum there...I also found an entire family of asylum seekers in my shoe. I think they were bogus, though, because when I shook them out they went and hid under the piano..This makes me think they did not have the right paperwork.'
Guardian	9.3.05	Do we really need badges...?	Reporting that London Underground proposes badges for pregnant women who hope to get a seat, article says of the Daily Mail 'how long will it be before that estimable organ tumbles to the fact that female asylum seekers could shove pillows up their jumpers and wrest seats from deserving Anglo-Saxons...?'

Some of these raise the temperature by using extreme language

TABLE 4.33

27.1.05	The Independent	America's unique version of democracy	'Half of Britain goes beserk if the European Union interferes with British law by recategorising wheelks or insisting we can't set fire to asylum seekers.'
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Jokes that emphasise different-ness and that asylum seekers are disliked by public

TABLE 4.34

Sun Telegraph	6.3.05	Word on the Street	Review of property for sale. ' "A towering monument to wealth and excess" was the kindest description that one reporter could give Updown Court.... Many might prefer the term "ghastly"trashy....Recently the Government put forward a loose proposal to force the owners of derelict and unused buildings to rent their properties to local authorities...The property is said to "appeal to international tastes". That should make it ideal as an asylum seekers' hostel'
Guardian	3.3.05	In the House	'If there is any group the British public hates more than asylum seekers it is contemporary artists.'

Jokes that play to stereotypes - illegal working, scrounging, bogus

TABLE 4.35

08/02/05	The Sun	Fiddlers on the Roof	'It seems you can't move these days for musicals...So before long don't be surprised to see the following in a theatre near you... Fiddlers on the Roof, The Asylum Story...the mob are furious at not getting full benefits after illegally entering Britain. Songs: If I were a rich migrant.'
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08/02/05	Express and Star	Asylum Call Such A Lark	Letter stating that a writer wanted to go to Greece on holiday but decided to claim asylum instead and is "having a great time at the expense of the Greek tax-payers," getting free accommodation, food and living expenses. Also claimed that if his claim was unsuccessful he would even get a free flight home.
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Jokes that laugh at conditions faced by asylum seekers

TABLE 4.36

Guardian	21.2.05	New kids on the rack	'the attention seeking antics of Maxim editor Greg Gutfield - including the feature "Fresh off the Boat", which offers readers the chance of a date with an attractive female asylum seeker - have helped stem the circulation falls'
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Express	15.3.05	Hickey	'A "scandalous waste of refugees' talents" screams a headline in the Herald. Obviously, the reporter had not thought to visit Hickey Estates where refugee doctors and dentists are gainfully employed picking and sacking potatoes. I ask them why they are so happy...a charming Kurd tells me: "Meester Hickey, we take one look at feelthy Scottish hospital wards and realise we much safer in your open air!"'
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Times	19.3.05	Liar, Liar, pants on fire	Review of book: Exposure by Tabitha Stevenson 'a saga of family dysfunction' which includes a couple of asylum seekers living in the garden shed. At the end of the novel 'all seem set to live happily ever after. Apart from the asylum seekers, who are pretty well ruined - but that is the lot of asylum seekers after all.'
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Jokes that show British people invaded, oppressed by asylum system, lack of control

TABLE 4.39

6.2.05	Mail on Sunday	Emulsion can't replace emotion	On TV programmes about British who move to their 'Dream Home Abroad': 'I reckon that within ten years, Britain will be a nation of asylum seekers living the high life, and we will all be abroad'
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6.2.05	Sunday Express	Don't start writing an epitaph for ballet	'The UK's leading dance companies are being invaded by foreigners...By reputation, the company {English National Ballet} is as English as rain at Wimbledon. But a glance at any current programme could lead you to believe that a truckload of asylum seekers had just jumped from a container lorry in Covent Garden'
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19/02/05	The Sun	Foreign is Fine by Me	Discusses how English football teams no longer have any 'homegrown' players. 'It is ridiculous to force a manager..to employ a third of their squad on the basis of a UEFA rule...Next thing, they will demand every squad includes two women, a couple of dwarfs, an asylum seeker (own transport organised), an Urdu speaker...'
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An extreme example which jokes about persecution

TABLE 4.40

10/02/05	The Independent	How About an Immigrant Idol Reality TV Show?: They could Parade Their Skills Before A Celebrity Panel, Then Viewers	Labour and Conservative proposals are compared to the tough responses from judges on TV talent show. Suggests a celebrity panel should choose who should be let in with comments such as, "Call that carpentry. It's pathetic. Get back to Burma, you deserve to be tortured." Comment on how people should only be let in if they have a skill that we need. 'For example, at the moment there's a shortage of tradesmen in London. So we should write to the Indonesian government asking: "Would it be possible to torture around 200 plumbers, so that they might apply for asylum in our country where they would be able to mend our drains, and provide economic benefits"...but during the weekends he'll borrow books from our libraries... proving an utter burden.'
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Flippant reference to supporters of asylum seekers by Prime Minister

TABLE 4.41

South Wales Evening Post	18.3.05	A grand day out for Tony	Tony Blair's campaign trail takes him to Swansea. 'Suddenly the motorcade breaches the ring of steel thrown across St Helen's Road and steals into the Guildhall car park. There's nobody there apart from scores of bored looking police. "Strange" says Tony Blair "I had thought there would be the usual rent-a-mob of protesters when we arrived in Swansea today - Iraq, pensions, asylum seekers.."'
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c) The voice of the readers - Letters and Polls

The editors interviewed for this report commented that they frequently received letters about asylum and that many of these were hostile. They stated that letters from the public were taken into account when editors made decisions about what stories to publish in their newspapers: the voice of the public is considered to be reflected in letters pages and influence coverage. This relationship is two-way, in that editors select which letters are published and therefore may choose to give voice to those who support their editorial line. In pre - election periods such as the time period of this sample, it is common for opinion polls to be commissioned and the results published in papers, these add to the information available to and presented by the newspapers about the perceived views of the public. Letters and polls are an important element of the information reported in this sample of newspapers and the results and their implications are considered here.

In this section we focus only on letters which are written by members of the public, and exclude all those where the author identifies themselves as a politician, representative of a voluntary organisation, etc (101). Letters from the public make up 7% of the articles in the sample. Papers vary in the frequency with which they publish letters about asylum. The results from the national papers suggest that letters appear most frequently in papers which could be seen as opposite ends of the political spectrum in their views on asylum. Letters about asylum appear most often in the Daily Express and the Star, but also in the Independent.

The views expressed in letters also vary, and the main themes are:

- a) general hostility directed at asylum seekers/ refugees.
- b) complaints that asylum seekers/refugees receive preferential treatment, and complaints about how lottery money is allocated (102).
- c) concern about asylum costs, numbers of asylum seekers/refugees, and about the 'open door', including concerns about terrorism.
- d) concern at chaos, government failure to control asylum.
- d) support for and complaints against policy proposals made by Michael Howard.
- e) support for asylum, asylum seekers and refugees.
- f) concern at the tone of political/media debate, and criticisms of the media's reporting of asylum.
- g) a number of letters relating to a specific incident - the killing of a child by a failed asylum seeker drunk driver.

The number of letters published expressing hostility and concerns about asylum seekers and refugees and criticisms of the government for failure to control asylum, far outweighed those published expressing support for asylum seekers and refugees and criticisms of the political/media debate. The number of letters published in support of Michael Howard's proposals outweighed those critical of his proposals. This suggests that although editors claimed to seek a public debate in their letters pages, the majority of views expressed give a one-sided view of public opinion. It is outside the scope of this study to judge how far this reflected the postbag received by the papers, and how far newspapers were selecting letters for publication because they correspond to their editorial line.

Differences exist between the different types of papers - letters in the national papers were most often about national policies. Letters in the regionals were more about local impact e.g. preferential treatment, costs, and a local incident where a child was killed by a drunk driver. The two letters in the faith/minority papers were both critical of Michael Howard.

Although frequently hostile, most of the letters pages did not give an impression of a public that has specific, well-informed complaints about asylum policy and/or asylum seekers and refugees based on their own experience. The letters about the death of the child did so, but they were not typical. As the examples given below show, many of the letters make complaints that were unsubstantiated - they offered no factual evidence for the claims made, while others were misinformed. At least one of the letters contains overtly racist comments.

Polls were cited in 137 articles, that is 7% of articles, and occurred least often in the regional papers. Most of these gave information that would enable the reader to find out more about the poll, but 18% (24 of the 137

101 We are aware of the practice of political and campaigning sources writing letters to newspapers pretending to be members of the public, without identifying their affiliations.

102 Preferential treatment was the main concern found by IPPR. See Lewis, M., (2005) *Asylum: Understanding public attitudes*, London: IPPR

citations) were unspecific, for example ‘polls show’, ‘according to the polls’ etc. Just over half named the pollster, but gave no additional information about who commissioned the poll or in which publication it appeared. The pollsters cited most frequently were MORI (cited 20 times) and YOUGOV (cited 18 times). In this sample, opinion polls were cited as an indication of the influence of asylum issues on voters’ intentions, however, very few articles published the questions asked by the pollsters or details of how many people were questioned and how they were selected.

Publication of letters from members of the public

TABLE 4.42

Total	135 (7% of 2013)
National	74
Express	13
Star	11
Independent	11
Mirror	8
Sun	8
News of the World	6
Sunday Express	5
Guardian	4
Financial Times	3
Times	1
Telegraph	1
Sunday Times	1
Mail	1
People	1
Regional	59
Wolverhampton Express and Star	11
Bristol Evening Post	10
South Wales echo	8
Torquay	5
Yorkshire Post	4
South Wales evening Post	4
Liverpool Daily	4
Birmingham evening mail	3

Leicester Mercury	3
Portsmouth	2
Scottish Record	2
Nottingham	2
Glasgow Evening Times	1
Faith/minority	2
Jewish Chronicle	1
New Nation	1

Topics

TABLE 4.43

National - topics mentioned in more than 1 letter

Support for policies of Michael Howard/Conservatives	7
Govt policy failed	6
There are too many asylum seekers/reduce/control numbers	6
Complaints about preferential treatment	6
Increase deportations, especially if convicted of crime	5
Criticism of lottery funding for asylum seekers/refugees, refusal for lifeboats etc.	4
Terror threat - need control asylum	3
Asylum too costly	3
Asylum a burden	3
Support humanitarianism/ protect right to asylum/ protect the genuine	3
System too soft/abused	2
Tone of political debate criticised	2

Regional - topics mentioned in more than 1 letter

Preferential treatment	11
Costly	7
Case of failed asylum seeker, drunk driver, killed child, indicates government failure	7
Control numbers	3
Government failed	3

Support for policies of Michael Howard/Conservatives	3
Criticism of policies of Michael Howard/Conservatives	3
Both major parties criticised	2
Media criticised	2
Refugees make a contribution	2
Refugees do not get preferential treatment	2
Refugees suffer harassment - bullying and discrimination	2
Policy of health checks supported	2
Support humanitarianism/ protect right to asylum/ protect the genuine	2

Faith/minority- topics mentioned in more than 1 letter

Criticism of policies of Michael Howard/Conservatives	2
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Examples of letters that add nothing to debate because purely hostile - no evidence for assertions

TABLE 4.44

date	paper	subject	details
27.2.05	Yorkshire post	Short	I would give Queen my last penny but tell refugee to get lost
16.3.05	Star	Too many, preferential treatment	Y iz our country a haven 4 every asylum seeka, pikey, deadbeat n terrorist? We need to sort it out now.....If asylum seekers want in this country, they should have to learn the language and be proud of the flag or stay where they come from! STOP just letting them in and giving them everything on a silver platter.
15.3.05	Star	Burden	'the downfall of our country is due to asylum seekers'
9.1.05	Star	Asylum figures	Not surprised refugee numbers waitin 2 cum in 2 this country r now fewer - theyre all here

Racist letters

TABLE 4.45

15.2.05	Express	Lottery grant given to asylum support project while others refused	Boycott lottery 'I fought a war to keep this country English'
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Misinformed letters

TABLE 4.46

9.3.05	Bristol Evening Post	Asylum seekers on benefits	Make no effort to support themselves
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Use of polls as sources

Table 4.47

	faith/minority	regional	national	total
Total number of articles	52	569	1392	2013
References to polls	5	18	114	137
References to polls as % of total number of articles	10%	3%	8%	7%
Poll- unspecified	4	3	17	24
Poll - pollster named	0	5	69	74
Poll -publication named	1	3	2	6
Poll- pollster and publication named	0	5	7	12
Polling by political parties	0	2	13	15
Other polling/surveys	0	0	6	6

d) Media voices - The media as sources and discussions on the role of the media and the circulation of accurate information

The newspapers in this sample often cited other newspapers, and other branches of the media, as sources of information and in doing so reinforced the messages of those media. Most frequent were references to TV and radio news and political programmes, 33 separate TV or radio sources were listed - most either references to particular channels, or programmes (103). The most often cited TV or Radio channel was the BBC, the most often cited programme was the weekly political review 'Breakfast with Frost'. Among the print media, national newspapers were the most frequently cited - 22 national papers were mentioned. Most nationals were mentioned only once or twice but a small number of nationals were frequently cited - the Mail was mentioned 40 times, the Express 29 times and the Telegraph 19 times. National magazines and journals were mentioned more often than regional newspapers. Only 5 regional papers were cited, mostly once, with the exception of the London Evening Standard. 16 magazines or journals were mentioned - most relate to politics, journalism or social care, and the most frequently cited magazine is The Spectator. Faith/minority newspapers were rarely mentioned although the Jewish Chronicle was mentioned 5 times. The Press Complaints Commission was rarely mentioned.

It was not common for papers to make vague references to other media as sources - 'the tabloids say', 'the press believes' etc. It was more likely that papers would express 'the view of this paper' without any reference to other sources (50 articles) or use their own previous articles as references (60 examples). There were 25 articles in which the source was an undercover journalist - 17 of these are in the national papers.

A striking feature of this sample was the frequency with which newspapers comment on the state of their own industry, either making criticisms of named papers or more generally about the of standards of reporting in sections of the press - most frequently 'the tabloids'. The examples below indicate the different types of comments made in this sample in relation to the internal debate on media reporting of asylum. The substance of the criticisms vary -some are 'point-scoring' others more thoughtful and detailed. Nine papers were criticised. The most common were the Mail (criticised in 15 articles) and the Express (criticised in 10 articles). Although

103 This excludes TV and radio arts programmes which are discussed earlier in this chapter.

there was one instance of a paper criticising another for being 'liberal' the internal debate within the newspaper industry about media coverage of asylum was largely about two related issues:

- a) inaccurate reporting, the promotion of misinformation, the perpetuation of myths, about the lack of accurate information available to the public and the effects on public attitudes, and
- b) scaremongering, which was described as frightening the public, stifling debate, influencing politicians and making life tougher for asylum seekers and refugees.

Far less frequently, there were instances of papers being praised for their stance on asylum - this was usually in the regional papers - and commentators contrast 'reporting in this paper' with reporting elsewhere in the media. Five papers were praised. These were the Daily Mirror, Financial Times, Glasgow Herald, Portsmouth News, Yorkshire Evening Post. (all received one mention). The joint publication by refugee councils and other agencies of key facts for politicians (104) was widely reported in regional papers.

How widespread was this debate? The sample contained 100 articles which commented on the nature of media reporting of asylum. Seventy of these were in the national press, 26 in the regional press and 4 in the faith/minority press. Nine national newspapers, 14 regionals and 4 faith/minority papers wrote at least one article on this issue. The majority of the articles were generated by 7 national newspapers - the Times, Financial Times, Guardian, Independent, Observer, Mirror and the Morning Star wrote 63 articles between them on this subject. Absent from this debate were 5 of the top six most popular daily nationals. Although more regionals than nationals participated in this debate only 2 did so more than twice. Papers in Bristol, Liverpool and Yorkshire report on this most frequently.

This internal debate is not a trend that has been identified by previous monitoring studies. While rivalry between newspapers has always made it likely that newspaper reports would contain criticisms of other newspapers, the intensity of the current internal debate on reporting of asylum appears to be new. There are various reasons that might explain this growing debate. Firstly, the sustained and targeted criticism of newspaper reporting on asylum from agencies outside the media during the last few years is likely to have had an effect (105). Secondly, during the time of the sample the Mayor of London made a public statement criticising the tone of reporting on asylum in newspapers published by Associated Newspapers, and this was widely reported. Finally, the pre-election period placed asylum at the centre of political debates and so the tone of newspaper coverage of asylum could be seen as influential to the electoral fortunes of the various political parties. This might inspire papers to criticise coverage of asylum in another as a means of undermining a political party supported by that paper.

While papers critical of the tone of reporting were no doubt motivated in part by professionalism, the findings suggest that asylum was a highly politicised subject for newspapers, and they were divided according to their political allegiances. There was not a unanimous view about the need for improved standards and the tone of reporting on asylum was not an issue of concern for the right wing press.

In most cases where the media was used as a source of information, the article made specific reference to named publications or programmes, so enabling the reader to assess the accuracy of the report. Vague references to media sources were rare. As such, no concerns about accuracy as defined by the PCC are raised here.

104 Refugee Council et al. (2005) Tell it like it is: the truth about asylum, London, Refugee Council is a small pocket sized leaflet - gives definitions of refugee, asylum seeker, failed asylum seeker, illegal immigrant and economic migrant. It explains there is no such thing as an illegal or bogus asylum seeker. It gives statistics and international comparisons, explains benefits received and contributions made. It says that the 1951 UN Convention has saved millions of lives and no country has withdrawn from it.

105 See the numerous 'myth busting' type publications available from UNHCR, Oxfam, CRE, National Assembly Against Racism, Refugee Council etc. which all quote from newspaper articles and present factual information that contradicts the views presented by the quotations. For example Diversity online offer 'a rebuttal service for asylum stories in the media', at <http://www.diversity-onLine.org>, and The Commission for Racial Equality (www.cre.gov.uk/gdpract/refuge.html) says "Much has been written about refugees and asylum seekers in recent months. Unfortunately, everything said is not always based on fact. This page seeks to clarify the truth."

TABLE 4.48 Media Sources mentioned 5 times or more in the sample as a whole.

	faith/minority	regional	national	total
Press Complaints Commission (PCC)		2	3	5
Newspapers /The media/the press/ other papers		1	11	12
Tabloids			5	5
Opinion of this paper - editorial/comment - only source	5	15	30	50
Previous article in this paper/ letter received	1	28	31	60
Undercover journalist - named, un-named	2	6	17	25
Publishers Associated newspapers	2	0	7	9
Another newspaper (local or regional) Evening Standard	2	2	13	17
Another newspaper (national) Mail	2	4	34	40
Express	3	7	19	29
Telegraph	0	5	14	19
Sunday Telegraph	0	0	12	12
Guardian	3	2	5	10
Sun	1	2	7	10
Mail on Sunday	1	2	3	6
Independent	1	2	2	5
Mirror	2	1	2	5
Another newspaper (faith/minority press) Jewish chronicle	0	3	2	5
Magazines/journals Spectator	1	2	6	9
TV or radio - news or political discussion				
BBC Breakfast with Frost	0	0	16	16
The BBC	0	0	11	11
Radio 5 live	1	1	6	8
GMTV	0	0	7	7
Westminster Hour	0	2	5	7

Channel 5	0	1	4	5
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Papers writing 3 or more articles on media debate

TABLE 4.52

Nationals	63
Guardian	29
Independent	13
Morning Star	12
Observer	6
Financial Times	3
Regionals	9
Liverpool Echo	3
Bristol Evening Post	6

TABLE 4.53 Papers criticised by other papers for the quality of their reporting

Nationals	
Daily Mail	15
Daily Express	10
Sun	4
Guardian	2
Telegraph	2
Sunday Telegraph	1
News of the World	1
Regionals	
London Evening Standard	3
Bristol Evening Post	2

Some articles are about misinformation

TABLE 4.49

Guardian	16.2.05	Staying Power	Interview with Maeve Sherlock, Chief Executive of Refugee Council. "The public debate is conducted on such misapprehension," she says. "A Mori poll a few years ago showed people thought a quarter of the world's refugees were coming to Britain. Well I'd raise eyebrows if I thought that" Article refers to the Refugee Council's information leaflet.
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Generalised complaints against media/tabloids - impact on politics, public opinion and circulation of

misinformation

TABLE 4.50

Independent	4.2.05	Escape from, and to, misery	'Contrary to popular prejudice.. refugee numbers are actually falling...the system... for dealing with refugees is failing in most Western countries. There are many reasons for this, not least the difficulty of having a proper debate about our obligations and limitations in the context of a hostile and hysterical press'
Financial Times	8.2.05	Ill-timed debate on migration controls	'Labour's proposals, published yesterday, appear more attractive than the sketchier Conservative plans outlined two weeks ago....The pity is that these proposals have emerged in the febrile debate of an election campaign where immigration has become an issue because of irresponsible media coverage'
Bristol evening Post	5.3.05	Show respect for immigrants	Article notes: 'a lack of humanity when the issue of immigration was raised by politicians and some parts of the media' Local Doctor says: "I feel that in parts of the media the debate does not treat people people with a sense of humanity.. Sometimes when I open the newspapers, I don't recognise the picture of immigrants painted there. There's a need to plead with politicians and the media to focus on respect for immigrants for the contributions they make to society."
Liverpool Daily Post	8.3.05	Asylum debate	Letter - Abuse in detention centres is 'symptomatic of a wider climate where aggression towards vulnerable asylum seekers and immigrants is commonplace and accepted. This is reinforced by the often hostile media coverage of those seeking asylum in the UK' calls for 'leadership by politicians and the media to reframe the asylum debate in terms of honesty, humanity and dignity.'
New Nation	28.2.05	Lifting the lid on Immigration	'What is annoying is when I hear some misguided black people supporting the 'let's keep them out, too many of them are coming here' view, thereby pandering to the prejudice and bigotry of the popular press. The media and desperate politicians such as Howard would have us believe that we are being 'swamped'... Research shows that just a third of refugees come to Europe'

Complaints against specific articles in specific papers with proposals for improved standards

TABLE 4.51

Guardian	17.2.05	The path back to trust	Describes 'swan bake' story in the Sun as 'an urban myth that could in a marginal way make life even tougher than it already is for immigrants'. 'what responsibility does the media take for the stuff that it distributes?.. we expect a polluter to pay for fouling the atmosphere, why shouldn't a news organisation have some kind of price to pay for fouling the public discourse?' National editors 'secure in their highrise buildings in London's docklands' are not accountable to locals, and asylum seekers have 'no economic and social clout whatever' Concentration of ownership means 'not... much choice in the marketplace for ideas' - This article is unusual because it suggests standards that the media should follow
Guardian	21.2.05	The media - 'too white for its own good'	Discusses views of Trevor Phillips, Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality that 'the mainstream press is more nuanced than some campaigners have suggested. ..The Express "is not interested in having a debate about immigration and asylum. They have decided its bad; that we are about to be overwhelmed and flooded; they have no interest in hearing other voices and that seems to me not what a paper in a democratic society ought to be about". The Mail, on the other hand - though it subscribes to a worldview "where everybody is threatened and we are about to go to hell in a handcart and all that stuff" - is more sophisticated and it is wrong just to dismiss it as a terrible right wing rag"...the Mail is open to running pieces that challenge its own views'
Morning Star	19.2.05	Bigoted Post editor deserves an ASBO	Letter - 'Sadly it is not just the London Evening Standard which is a mouthpiece for prurient free-market moral-might nonsense. Bristol's once independent broadsheet The Evening Post is now part of the Mail's Northcliffe Group and has descended into a tawdry right wing tabloid.' 'somehow managed to escape censure by the Press Complaints Commission, despite penning an extremist weekly column, Devil's Advocate' 'Complaints over the years from groups as diverse as .. Refugee Action.. Avon and Somerset Constabulary have sadly all failed to counter Lowe's misuse of his column'

Editors' interviews - questions about their own coverage of asylum

The public self-examination of the press made the views of editors about their own coverage of asylum especially interesting. Questions focussed on content, sourcing and responsibility. Their responses are given below.

Content

Newspaper editors were asked: How would you summarise your paper's coverage of asylum seekers/refugees? And How would you summarise the influences on your paper's coverage of asylum seekers/refugees?

National news paper editors described themselves as being concerned both with policy and with the human news stories of suffering faced by asylum seekers. Several said they were concerned to clarify distinctions, such as those between asylum, immigration, and economic migration, and those between asylum seekers and refugees.

We do think we strike a balance, but we have also consistently challenged those who fail to make the distinction between asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees. That's the number one point about the debate in the British media - that that distinction is not there. There's a very confusing lack of definition in the media between asylum and immigration - which are two different things. That conflates the two things in most people's minds.

One of the national papers and one of the faith/minority papers said their position was to defend the rights contained in the UN Convention.

We also made it very clear that there are fundamental rights here that have been hard fought-for. We have attacked the Tories for their plan to derogate from the 1951 Charter and the Government for its supine response to the Tory's plans.

Several national papers said that they were influenced by the track record of some parts of the media in reporting asylum. One of the faith/minority papers also mentioned this.

In our editorial line, we've been quite clear that asylum is not as much of a problem as other parts of the media say it is. As a newspaper we don't have a view that there is scandal of vast numbers of asylum seekers flooding our country, which might be the position on other papers.... A lot of the issue is driven by a media construct. We are trying to approach it in a less incendiary way than other media. We've campaigned against the hysteria and bigotry of some other newspapers on this. Two of the nationals mention being influenced by stories about local events reported in regional papers. The majority are stories that have snowballed in a local area and taken on a national importance.

Newspapers are influenced by perceptions of 'compassion fatigue' which means the suffering of asylum seekers is rarely seen as newsworthy.

One of the big problems we now have in the media is that there's a great issue with not covering the stories of asylum seekers who are sent back - it's just died a death. There's now a massive hurdle in terms of human suffering that an asylum seeker would have to face before they would have any chance of getting their face in a newspaper. There are people perishing every day of the week in the Mediterranean; there are people here with the most shocking stories of persecution, and astonishing journeys to get here - but there's a degree of fatigue with the story. That's an issue for us to think about. If we're not here to uncover human wrong-doing and human suffering, then what are we here to do? We get at least a call a week about tragic cases. That's why there's such a skewed view of asylum in this country - because you're just not getting that kind of coverage.

Concern in the liberal press about how to sensitively report criminality among some asylum seekers means this may be under reported.

There's one issue the liberal press is yet to get a grip on. There's a serious issue around asylum seekers and crime - there's a considerable amount of respectable research which demonstrates that a lot of drug crime, trafficking and prostitution is being driven by asylum seekers from certain countries. We need to sit down and think about how we report responsibly these serious issues around serious crimes, without being branded racist.

The regional papers were most likely to describe their reporting as fair, balanced, with no 'agenda'. One said their role was 'to dispel myths'.

Their reports have a local focus. One said their position was for equality, another that they are 'anti-BNP'. One said they are influenced by the multi-cultural nature of the local community. Several said the stories of individual asylum seekers threatened with deportation had prompted them to join campaigns.

Several of the regional and faith/minority papers mentioned that they were positive, sympathetic, pro-immigration and keen to report the contribution made by asylum seekers and refugees. One of the faith/minority papers said:

Even though asylum seekers and refugees contribute greatly to society, they are portrayed on the contrary. Instead of having a peace of mind and live a normal life, they continue to suffer. Asylum seekers should be given refuge in this country, we should abide by the UN charter on refugees, we should not withdraw from it as the prime minister and Howard said. These people contribute to our society, many are doctors, teachers, economists, etc. and bring a lot.

Another of the faith/minority papers said their position was influenced by the immigrant or refugee backgrounds of most of their readers.

The editors were asked: How often, on average, do you run stories on asylum, refugees and immigration? and How many of these are human interest stories?

Responses varied from papers which state that they report stories relating to asylum seekers and refugees every day, to those who say they do so rarely - about once a month. A number of papers said that the frequency of reporting on asylum was varied depending on what newsworthy events take place. Examples given of events that are likely to result in increased reports were the publication of Home Office statistics, crimes, local campaigns against deportation, the impact of dispersal, community relations issues, and election campaigns which mention asylum.

One national paper described how one story can lead to a spate of others on a similar theme.

Some time ago 40 or 50 migrants were found coming off a lorry - and then what we got was a flood of stories from local agencies. It's the same if there's a major stabbing in London, you get loads of stories from agencies across the country about people being stabbed. Agencies see that kind of thing and think it's a way of getting stories in.

While some nationals report human interest stories others are more concerned with policy. However, almost all of the regionals and faith/minority papers say that all their asylum reports are human interest stories. The regional papers describe this as an essential feature of reporting local issues.

Every story is a human interest story. We want pictures, people in our stories. Since it's local I'd be disappointed if it didn't have a human interest angle.

One of the faith/minority papers says they have little contact with asylum seekers and refugees.

Sourcing

Newspapers were asked: If you want to present your readers with reliable sources of information on asylum issues, which sources do you use?

The Home Office is the source cited most frequently by the papers and is mentioned by all the nationals interviewed. The next commonly mentioned source is the Refugee Council. The regional papers are most likely to mention local sources. Papers differ in the range of sources that they use. For example one national lists:

Home Office, Treasury, IPPR etc. Academic sources and campaign groups as well. UNHCR, Refugee Council. ONS for migration stats.

And one regional lists:

we go to the pressure groups, embassies, MPs of the area in which asylum seekers reside. We go to everyone including voluntary organisations to get a balanced view.

Whereas another national says:

The Home Office is the one we'd go to most frequently. We don't tend to use many others.

And one of the faith/minority papers says:

We usually sign post them to the Refugee Council.

The papers make further points about the appropriateness of sources on asylum:

Home Office, if you can get them to reply quickly to their calls... Very difficult to get anything out of local councils.

First stop is always Government sources. You've got to cut through the crap, but generally the truth is in there somewhere

Refugee organisations could do a bit more. They could get some decent press officers in who ring us in good time to tip us off about decent stories. People have got to engage much more individually with papers. The days of press releasing to all newspapers are over - one major piece will get you much more impact than loads of it'sy stories on page nine and ten. We'd like to see a slightly more sophisticated approach from refugee organisations - focussing on working with us over the longer term. It's important that organisations work with us much better.

In many areas, there are too many bodies to go to for information on asylum seekers. May be what we need is a major single body that we can go to for the right information.

Related to the issue of sources, papers were asked: How far are you aware of attempts to influence your paper on asylum seekers/refugees (advice to journalists, letter-writing campaigns,) Can you describe these and say what happened?

The national papers describe lobbying on asylum issues as 'nothing out of the ordinary' compared to lobbying on other subjects.

A number of regional papers say that there is less lobbying now than previously - either because they have shown they are unaffected by it, or because there are less local concerns than previously:

I don't think there is an attempt. People who use to write letters have stopped because they are not published; people like the BNP tried but failed and the fact that the issue is not a burning one in this city as at now.

The organisations Migrationwatch, Refugee Council and Immigration Advisory Service are mentioned by the national papers as being engaged in lobbying. One of the faith/minority papers also mentions Migrationwatch. One of the regionals states that they have been lobbied by politicians.

One of the faith/minority papers and two of the regionals mention lobbying in relation to campaigns to prevent the deportation of individuals or groups of failed asylum seekers. Campaigns about conditions in detention are also mentioned by more than one paper:

In the last three or four years a local campaign group has represented specific communities which the Home Office wanted to expatriate. We have publicised their campaign. Another issue was the local detention centre where those in charge were victimising or abusing asylum detainees. These have since been rectified.

What indicators do you have for the views of your readers - and how does that influence your reporting?

Most newspapers said that they receive a lot of letters from readers on the subject of asylum, a number of regional papers said that they act on readers views and one national said that papers would be 'stupid to ignore' them. A number report that they receive anti- asylum letters, and that they avoid printing letters that are racist or contain negative stereotypes. One says that such letters prompt them to 'educate' their readers while another says readers letters remind them of the need for balance:

The initial stance of a lot of our readers is anti-asylum. We pick an issue of the day. When the government says let more asylum seekers in, the letters page argues for and against the debate. We found that during this debate most readers who were asked to phone in were against asylum seekers coming in. This tells us they are mistrustful of the asylum seekers. But we don't decide to carry anti-asylum stories. Rather we tend to educate our readers on being supportive. We indicate this through our post bag that asylum seekers should be considered from a humanitarian angle.

In the case of asylum seekers, there are two sides to the story - say we get a phone call from readers about a story on asylum seekers, we can't just make generalisations, but we have to see them as individuals and a complex issue... and our readers remind us how complex the issue is and how difficult and important to get both sides.

Responsibility

Editors were asked: How aware are you of the government's policies for integrating recognised refugees and promoting community cohesion? What role do you think newspapers play in achieving these aims?

In response, differing opinions were expressed. Several of the regional and faith/minority papers were not aware of these two aspects of government policy. Some of the regional papers said they were more aware of local initiatives:

I am not sure of the government policy. But we are well aware of what goes on in our local council.

We are more aware of work by the local police. They are more proactive in areas where a lot of asylum seekers and refugees are living - where police community relations officers are more effective than government policies - in fact, not overtly aware of government policies per se... they don't percolate down to grassroots.

The national newspapers seemed to be more aware of these government policies. However, beyond a commitment to responsible journalism, they are reluctant to promote the aims of these policies, which one paper suggests is the province of regional (local) papers.

I'm aware of the strategy. Do newspapers have a role in it? Yes, possibly. But it's certainly not in our orbit. If there were a story where the system was working particularly well, I'd do it. At the end of the day, newspapers are just fonts for the information we can demystify. And we're here to entertain at the end of the day - it's a big chunk of what we are here to do. There are certain civic responsibilities that we have - but we're not the Central Office of Information, to bang the drum for government. We're here to keep them on the right track.

Yeah, within limits. We can't act as cheerleaders for government policy, though.

Local newspapers tend to be much more active in this than national papers.

One of the regional papers is both aware of the policies and involved in promoting them:

I am indeed. I am myself involved in it and this newspaper is very much embedded in that process.

One of the regional papers responds with a caveat that:

Asylum seekers who are bogus should be reported in the newspapers.

And another highlights inconsistencies in government policy:

Lately during the election campaign we were getting mixed messages from the politicians regarding government policies. There had been scare-mongering by our politicians and often debates on asylum seekers and refugees have been of an inflammatory nature. Daily Mail tops the list in reporting these kind of debates.

The editors were asked: What steps should a responsible journalist take to avoid instilling unjustified fears of asylum seekers/refugees among readers?

In response to this question, the newspapers gave detailed responses and listed many of the points discussed in this report as important elements of good practice. They mentioned:-

Accurate factual information, context, avoiding unfounded allegations, careful sourcing of statistics, avoidance of inflammatory language and inaccurate terminology, balance, quoting all parties concerned, editorial checks, avoiding labelling, and anonymous or generalised portrayals of asylum seekers, avoiding sensationalism and evoking prejudice, not preying on fears, not misleading readers.

You should be careful not just to quote people voicing fears, but also those who are in a position to know the impact of, say, the opening of a new asylum reception centre.

It means not taking a particular and partial view, blowing it up and pretending that's the whole picture. You shouldn't use broad brush strokes on anything

They should ensure that readers do not get the wrong end of the stick.

The biggest problem is a lot of newspapers give asylum seekers labels and tags. They demonise asylum seekers and refugees. They don't speak with them. They become faceless masks rather than individuals and unique stories. That's the main issue, and needed to be addressed.

When papers were given the opportunity to make further comments, they mainly returned to the issue of community relations, and the role of politicians.

Where is the government strategy to get a more balanced debate on this? We've heard time and time again that it will happen, but it just doesn't. I really don't think that there's a proper debate about the contribution asylum seekers and economic migrations can and will make to this country. You don't really get any sense that asylum seekers have become friends and neighbours of people - apart from when the government tries to deport them.

I don't think London newspapers have any concept at all of what multiculturalism means outside London: I'm thinking of some of the big cities. In many respects it's an issue that's completely ignored. There's complete segregation in some of these towns and it clearly causes some degree of anxiety of fear on both sides. There's not much debate about that side of the issue. Most politicians obviously don't want to touch it with a barge pole - Anne Cryer has tried to open it up a bit, but it's not really taken off.

My main observation is that I don't think that immigration and asylum is a big issue as politicians would want us believe. Where the problem is the perception of the public that it is an issue - and responsible journalists should play a role to help people understand the issues.

Summary analysis of editors' interviews: questions about their coverage

It must be stressed that although all editors of newspapers sampled were invited to take part in these interviews, only a proportion chose to do so. 18 newspapers agreed to interviews- 6 nationals, 9 regionals and 3 faith/minority papers.

The results of the editors interviews suggest the following conclusions.

Editors are committed to reporting asylum responsibly - they support the view that responsible journalists should avoid instilling unjustified fears about asylum seekers and refugees, although they are also clear that it is not their role to be 'cheerleaders' for government policies on refugee integration or community cohesion. They deny being influenced by lobbying from politicians or organisations. Some state that asylum should be seen as about individuals, and criticise politicians and newspapers that problematise, stereotype or anonymise these issues. Regional papers run local stories about asylum seekers and refugees, which are frequently about local support for those facing deportation.

Points were raised in the interviews that indicate where there are barriers to achieving best practice - Distinctions between asylum seekers, refugees, migrants, etc. are not clearly made. As noted in Chapter 3 they would like more guidance from the PCC. Stories about 'suffering asylum seekers' are not seen as newsworthy by the nationals; this view can prevent giving a human face to policy reporting. 'Snowballing' occurs - There is a tendency for some stories to trigger publication of several other stories on a similar theme - this can raise the temperature of a debate, particularly if it implies a threat (e.g. asylum seekers/refugees linked to drugs, disease,

terrorism etc).

Knowledge of refugee integration policies and community cohesion policies is patchy.

Some papers rely on only one or two sources for information (eg one editor says they just use the Home Office).

Local authorities and refugee agencies are criticised for not working effectively to provide information for the press and the need for a central source of information is suggested.

Editors cannot ignore the quantity of anti-asylum letters received from the public, they do not print those considered racist but as noted in chapter 3 they would like further guidance on this from the PCC.

Mixed messages from politicians, including scaremongering, make it difficult for papers to report asylum accurately and promote informed and measured debate.

Fears about inflaming community tension means the liberal press is reluctant to report criminal activity by asylum seekers and refugees, or raise concerns about segregation. This adds to concerns about the lack of an open and informed debate about asylum.



Chapter 5

Conclusions

In the introduction we describe the four main aims of this report, which are:

Aim 1: To assess the impact and adequacy of that Guidance Note in ensuring an acceptable minimum standard of journalism is achieved.

Aim 2: To assess how far reporting of asylum meets an acceptable minimum standard in so far as it a) meets current regulatory requirements and b) meets additional professional journalistic requirements which ICAR believes should form part of the regulatory framework

Aim 3: To assess how far reporting of asylum meets ICAR's best practice standard for responsible reporting of asylum

Aim 4: To assess how far reporting of asylum is balanced and unlikely to undermine refugee integration

And we introduce the concept of four levels of journalism, which are:

1. Journalism that appears not to meet current regulatory requirements
2. Journalism that would appear not to meet regulatory requirements - if our recommended changes to the Code and Guidance Note were implemented
3. Journalism which meets the PCC's current requirements and would meet the additional requirements suggested by ICAR's recommended changes to the Code and Guidance, but falls short of ICAR's best practice standard
4. Journalism which reflects best practice in reporting asylum because it:

Is informative

Provides appropriate context

Draws on a range of identifiable sources of information and viewpoints

Includes fair representation of the opinions and experiences of those people affected

Avoids generalised, unspecific allegations likely to inspire hostility

These conclusions address the aims in detail, give examples of different standards of journalism and suggest a journalist's toolkit for achieving good practice.

Aim 1 and 2:

Aim 1: Assessing the impact and adequacy of that Guidance Note in ensuring an acceptable minimum standard of journalism is achieved.

Aim 2: Assessing how far reporting of asylum meets an acceptable minimum standard because it a) meets current regulatory requirements and b) meets additional professional journalistic requirements which ICAR believes should form part of the regulatory framework

Impact of the Guidance Note

The PCC Guidance Note has been helpful in identifying and proscribing terms which are erroneous. It is to be welcomed that erroneous terms were only found in 1% of articles sampled, and this may in part be attributable to the introduction of the Guidance Note, but it should be noted that before the introduction of the Note the use of such terms was only found infrequently. The aim of the Guidance Note was intended to address the minority of articles on asylum that use terms incorrectly - 'the clear majority of complaints raise no breach of the Code of Practice' (106) - and it has evidently failed to eradicate completely the use of the term 'illegal asylum seeker' or other erroneous terms.

A range of inaccurate terms were found, and they were contained in a cross section of (mainly national) newspapers. Such terms, and the interchangeable use of terms with different meanings (e.g. refugee, asylum seeker, failed asylum seeker and migrant.) can be seen as a reflection of the fact that global migration processes are complex and it is not always easy to distinguish between forced and more voluntary movements. However, in some reporting there is evidence of lazy journalism and a lack of understanding of the legal framework governing asylum applications. The range of inaccurate terms found, the use of vague terms such as 'illegals', and the use of terms like 'bogus' that prejudice asylum claims, also suggest that while some newspapers were ignoring the letter of the Guidance Note (by continuing to use the phrase 'illegal asylum seeker') others were ignoring the spirit of it by using other terms instead. In giving only one example of an inaccurate term, the Guidance Note has not prevented the use of other inaccurate terms or other types of confusion involving terminology.

The PCC Guidance Note can be seen to have had a significant impact on the national and regional papers

interviewed because there is a high level of awareness of the Guidance Note and acceptance of the PCC's regulatory role, and there are procedures in place for ensuring that the Guidance Note and similar PCC documents are circulated within newspaper offices and adhered to by staff. That only one paper has felt it necessary to generate its own additional guidelines on reporting asylum, with others reporting that they see this as the PCC's role, emphasises the pre-eminence of the PCC in setting standards. This impression is borne out by the regional papers who responded positively to the suggestion that the Guidance Note had been effective.

The PCC has taken steps to enforce the Guidance Note by responding to concerns that it is not adhered to by introducing monitoring, writing to editors, and hearing complaints.

1. Example found in this sample of journalism that appears not to meet current regulatory requirements

Headline, paper type of article, date	'Why should we believe them now?' - Daily Mail, February 8
Relevant quotes and/or description	'Open borders: illegal asylum seekers have made a mockery of immigration policy'
Comment	This article clearly breached the Guidance Note by using the proscribed term 'illegal asylum seekers' in a picture caption for an editorial by Sir Andrew Green, chairman of MigrationWatch UK. This quote reflects one of the most common views expressed in descriptions of asylum policy in the sample - that government policy has failed to keep control of the UK's borders.

Adequacy of the Guidance Note

The results for the top six daily nationals show that erroneous terminology was used more frequently in these papers - 3% of articles from these papers contained erroneous terms compared to 1% of the sample as a whole, suggesting that the Guidance Note has had the least impact on the most widely circulating papers.

It is a cause for concern that the Guidance Note makes no reference to other examples of erroneous terms besides 'illegal asylum seeker', or to vague terms, terms that pre-judge asylum applications or interchangeable use of terms. Greater accuracy in applying labels is important to promote public awareness of their meanings and legal implications. Several of the editors interviewed requested more information on definitions of terms. That there is no reference to these points in the Guidance Note suggests that it is less than adequate in addressing trends in asylum reporting.

The definition of discrimination in the Editor's Code does not include immigration status. This study found evidence of irrelevant and hostile references to immigration status which could be challenged if immigration status were included in the definition of discrimination and if this were highlighted in the Guidance Note. This evidence suggests that the Guidance Note does not adequately reflect concerns about discriminatory reporting. Discrimination can be perceived in patterns of repetitious reporting, where it may not be evident in a single report, and this should be taken into consideration by the PCC.

In the editor's interviews the need for more Guidance on publication of reader's letters was raised, where such letters may include material that raises concerns under the Editor's Code and Guidance. The Editor's interviews also highlight that there is less awareness and understanding of the Guidance Note among the Faith/minority papers, raising questions about how adequately the PCC has circulated the Guidance Note among minority press.

Some editors interviewed felt that the PCC's role is limited within the self regulatory framework and call for the PCC to be more robust. While the PCC has been active in monitoring breaches of the Guidance Note in relation to the term 'illegal asylum seeker' and has responded to complaints made in relation to the Guidance, the PCC's procedures which prevent third party complaints limit the effectiveness of the Guidance Note, particularly where the subject of a newspaper article speaks limited English and is uncertain of their rights. This also makes complaints difficult when articles relate to anonymous groups of people rather than individual asylum seekers or refugees.

Although the Guidance Note makes reference to the Accuracy clause of the Editor's Code, it does not fully explain the content of that clause or how it applies to reporting asylum seekers and refugees. Although this project only had resources to investigate in detail a small number of articles, a range of inaccuracies were found, including misuse of statistics, groundless claims, misrepresentation and confusion of comment, conjecture and fact. Whilst it is acknowledged that asylum is a complex issue and that the daily pressures of a newsroom make accurate and informative reporting of this subject a challenging task, it is a cause for concern that the inaccuracies uncovered by this research often relate to fear inducing subjects and/or hostile views, blurring the distinction between fact, comment and conjecture and inaccurate use of statistics. In order to adequately respond to these practices the Guidance Note could be strengthened by giving more information about how to comply with Clause 1.

The inclusion in the Guidance Note of the statement:

'the Commission - in previous adjudications under Clause 1 (Accuracy) of the Code - has underlined the danger that inaccurate, misleading or distorted reporting may generate an atmosphere of fear and hostility that is not borne out by the facts.'

is a step in the right direction but needs more explanation. It makes clear that reporting which is 'unduly hostile' ie contains hostile remarks based on inaccuracy, is proscribed. It is not clear how far hostile reporting is permissible when it is based on accurate information, or, as is extremely common, hostile allegations are contained in opinion pieces which present little or no factual information, accurate or otherwise. ICAR believes that in most cases, hostile reporting based on accurate information is fair comment and hostile reporting with little factual content falls short of best practice but should not be proscribed by the PCC. However, ICAR feels it is important to make clear that some instances of hostile reporting are sufficiently extreme to be considered inflammatory and raise concerns under the Public Order Act, and that this applies whether they contain inaccurate information, accurate information, or no factual content.

Forty-one headlines were found in the sample which make reference to asylum or immigration in a potentially inflammatory way. Over half of the potentially inflammatory headlines appeared in the top six most popular daily national papers- one in 25 articles on asylum in the top six national dailies has a potentially inflammatory headline that explicitly refers to asylum or immigration.

The words and phrases used in such headlines should not automatically be considered inflammatory, but ICAR does believe it would be helpful for the PCC to bring to the attention of editors the danger that certain words and phrases risk being considered inflammatory, taking into account other aspects of reporting, and that this is especially true for headlines.

The Guidance Note should provide further clarification of these points.

Although the Editor's Codebook states that:

'the Code applies to all editorial staff... and to contributed editorial material, such as agency copy - and readers' letters' (107) the PCC rarely comments on letters published in newspapers. In the light of the evidence found of hostile, unsubstantiated, misinformed and racist material in letters, further guidance on publication of letters is important. Examples from this sample of level 2 Journalism: Journalism that would appear not to meet regulatory requirements - if our recommended changes to the Code and Guidance Note were implemented.

Headline, paper type of article, date	'Spongers face boot; Clarke gets tough on migrants', Daily Star, February 7
Relevant quotes and/or description	'Determined ministers will launch a crackdown today on spongeing [sic] immigrants... Home Secretary Charles Clarke is to unveil plans to boot out unskilled asylum seekers... All refugees would be barred, except skilled professionals such as doctors and teachers... The move comes after ministers admitted our hospitality has been stretched by spongeing [sic] asylum seekers pouring through Britain's borders... [Clarke] said there was no "absolute figure" for economic migrants but around 140,000 people a year come to Britain to work... Each immigrant will have to pass English tests'

107 The Editors Code of Practice Committee (2005) : The editors codebook, page7

Comment	This article used migrants, immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants interchangeably, without making it clear that these terms have different meanings or to what extent the policies proposed apply to each of the different groups. This compounds the impression of an anonymous mass of people. ICAR believes the Guidance Note should give definitions of each of these terms and information on how to use them distinctly.
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Headline, paper type of article, date	Ten years for migrant who posed as doctor, January 27 Daily Mail
Relevant quotes and/or description	‘An asylum seeker who posed as a doctor for five years made £1.5million from government agencies and professional bodies,’ ‘He claimed asylum in 1982 and married an Englishwoman a year later, guaranteeing him indefinite leave to remain here’
Comment	It is misleading to describe someone who has been granted leave to remain in the UK following marriage to a British citizen 21 years before the article was written as an ‘asylum seeker’. This might be considered discrimination on the grounds of immigration status, were immigration status to be included in the PCC’s definition of discrimination, as proposed by ICAR.

Headline, paper type of article, date	We fought a war to keep Britain for the British, Express Feb 15
Relevant quotes and/or description	‘I totally agree with Joyce Betts’ letter calling for lottery players to boycott ticket sales (Letters, February 11). I read with disgust and anger of the £230,000 awarded to The Asylum Support Appeals Project when far more worthy causes receive nothing. With thousands of others I fought a war to keep this country English. What for? Enoch Powell, Winston Churchill and others endeavoured to control immigration to this country. But in recent years, with no effective border controls and now the decisions of Brussels, the English are now the minority who suffer the consequences of being at the back of the queue for health, pensions, housing, transport and Lotto grants. Senior citizens and hard-working people invest their pensions and wages in the Lottery...It is time for the native population to stand up and revolt against both the Lottery and any government prepared to allow our country to be handed over to mass immigration and laws set by Brussels. A land of hope and glory? Not for the natives. Britons will never, never be slaves - it makes me ashamed of my country’s decline.
Comment	This letter was not only racist and hostile, the references to war and treason, particularly the phrase ‘its time for the native population to stand up and revolt’ were inflammatory. The central allegation made - that an asylum support organisation received £230,000 from the lottery may be accurate, but this does not diminish the power of such material to incite extreme hostility. Publication of such material could be deemed to raise concerns under Public Order legislation. This suggests that the PCC should issue guidance on inflammatory material which is based on factual accuracy, and that it should provide guidelines on publication of letters.

Examples from this sample of level 3 Journalism: Journalism which meets the PCC’s current requirements and would meet the additional requirements suggested by ICAR’s recommended changes to the Code and Guidance, but falls short of ICAR’s best practice standard

<p>Headline, paper type of article, date</p>	<p>Times February 5, Points system and higher charges to cut immigration</p>
<p>Relevant quotes and/or description</p>	<p>‘Charles Clarke will unveil a package of proposals next week to clamp down on immigration and asylum seekers, including a new points system and increased charges for migrants. ... Mr Clarke will focus the Government’s five-year strategy on dealing with the widespread public perception that migrants who are refused permission to stay in the country never leave. The government was forced to abandon a target to remove 30,000 failed asylum seekers after it proved too ambitious. But the Prime Minister has pressed the Home Office for a stronger drive to increase removals so that the number of failed applicants and dependents removed each month is more than unfounded applications. Latest figures show that 17,895 failed asylum applicants and their dependents were sent back in 2003, though the same year a total of 60,045 applicants and dependents sought asylum....</p> <p>The Prime Minister, who has been told by his private pollsters that immigration is one of the top concerns of the public, said: “We need to get to a situation where you are absolutely clear that those people coming in on the work-permit route are actually necessary for our economy”</p> <p>David Davis, the Shadow Home Secretary, said: “Britain has become a soft touch. Mr Blair’s government has lost control of the system. He promised Britain would have ‘firm control over immigration’ but it has more than doubled since 1997.”</p>
<p>Comment</p>	<p>This article appeared factually accurate (as far as can be ascertained without further investigation) in that it gave precise rather than vague information and cites named sources. Although it referred to both migrants and asylum seekers the terms are used correctly rather than interchangeably, there is no use of erroneous terminology, vague terminology, or terminology that pre-judges asylum applications. The language used is measured and raises no concerns about discrimination on grounds of immigration status.</p> <p>This article fell short of ICAR’s best practice because it is only partially informative - perpetuating the dominant view of asylum policy as an example of government failure, and a problem requiring tighter controls, without offering any alternative views. The story was purely national in scope, there is no international or local context. The sources cited were limited - they represent the two main political parties, the third main party is not cited, nor are representatives of civil society. The views and experiences of individuals affected by the events reported - asylum seekers and refugees - were not included. The report discussed asylum policy in anonymous terms rather than as an issue affecting individuals. The references to poll results and public opinion were vague.</p>

Headline, paper type of article, date	I'll tighten security so that everyone in Britain can feel safer, the Express, Jan 20
Relevant quotes and/or description	<p>'I was as astonished as every reader of the Daily Express will have been by the shocking investigation in yesterday's newspaper showing just how easy it is to get into Britain - for drug smugglers, illegal immigrants, people traffickers and even terrorists hell-bent on causing death and destruction. There could be no better evidence of how this government has let down the British people on such crucial issues....This investigation raises very serious issues, not just about national security but also about uncontrolled migration and organised crime. It is little wonder that most people feel they are part of a forgotten majority who no longer feel safe in their homes and on the streets.....</p> <p>On his first day as Home Secretary, Charles Clarke said: "The immigration and asylum system needs urgent reform." That was just more talk. This government has had nearly eight years to carry out that reform but it has lost control of the system and let people down.'</p>
Comment	This opinion piece, written by Michael Howard, leader of the Conservative Party, met the minimum standard set by the PCC - it avoided erroneous terminology or factual inaccuracy. It fell short of ICAR's standard of best practice mainly because it contained generalised assertions likely to invoke fear and hostility in the reader, for which no evidence is provided or source cited - particularly the opinions that migration is 'uncontrolled' and that 'most people...no longer feel safe in their homes or on the streets' .

Headline, paper type of article, date	Asylum Crime Fear, News of the World, January 30
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A journalist's toolkit for consistently implementing good practice in reporting on asylum - a minimum not an exhaustive list -

1. Copies of the PCC Guidance Note.
2. Easy reference information explaining the most common terminology, its legal and colloquial definitions and appropriate usage and to the most common misapplied and erroneous terms.
3. Easy reference to relevant international, European and national legal and policy instruments, explained for the lay person.
4. Reliable and detailed written information from political parties about their current and proposed policies, and any undertakings made by politicians to set standards for political debate.
5. Information on where to access credible statistical information.
6. Information on where to access credible international information - e.g. on the situation in countries of origin and causes of flight.
7. Reliable and impartial information about public interest in asylum, gaps in public knowledge, questions the public would like answered.
8. Contact details and background information on a range sources able to offer views on asylum issues, including:
 international and national expert agencies
 local community sources -including local authorities, local refugee community organisations, local voluntary sector agencies etc.
 refugees and asylum seekers able to offer views on asylum issues
9. Contact details for organisations able to offer a fact checking service.

<p>Relevant quotes and/or description</p>	<p>‘One in three people believes asylum seekers are partly responsible for rising crime levels, a News of the World poll reveals... Nearly half (49 per cent) of those quizzed believe asylum seekers get priority housing, NHS treatment and schools when they should not... NEWS OF THE WORLD POLL 32% think asylum seekers are partly responsible for rising crime levels 49% say they get priority in housing, NHS treatment and schools’</p>
<p>Comment</p>	<p>This article passed the minimum standard because it accurately reported the results of the opinion poll and avoided erroneous terminology. It failed to meet ICAR’s standard of best practice because it missed the opportunity to provide readers with a fully informative picture. In particular, there was no factual information given about the extent to which asylum seekers are responsible for crime in the UK, or about whether they are entitled to priority access to public services. Generalised unspecific hostile allegations were made and the likely result is that fears are reinforced. The headline, while it accurately reflected a key point made in the article, might be considered inflammatory as it risks inducing extreme hostility and fear.</p>

Aim 3: Assessing how far reporting of asylum meets ICAR's best practice standard for responsible reporting of asylum because it:

Is informative

Provides appropriate context

Draws on a range of identifiable sources of information and viewpoints

Includes fair representation of the opinions and experiences of those people affected

Avoids generalised, unspecific allegations likely to inspire hostility

During this monitoring period, there were 27 national events logged in the timeline as newsworthy, based on the most informative websites in this field. Comparing these events with the topics occurring most frequently in the newspapers gives an indication of how informative the newspapers are about national events. This comparison shows that some of the events listed receive a great deal of coverage - notably policy proposals announced by Michael Howard and the Conservative Party, whereas other events, notably those detailing the introduction of tighter controls on immigration, political activity by refugee communities, and efforts to integrate refugees, receive almost no coverage (108). This suggests the conclusion that newspaper coverage of national events related to asylum is not sufficiently wide-ranging to be fully informative.

Reports about asylum in the UK are likely to be most informative when they reflect on the international and local context as well as national concerns. The content analysis looked at the extent that international, national and local context are used. The results from this sample show that the vast majority of stories were reported from a predominantly national perspective. Including an international perspective was more common than including a local perspective, and reports which combine local, national and international context amounted to only 3% of the sample. This led to the conclusion that in general there was insufficient contextual information in most articles to reach what ICAR considers to be best practice standards.

The content analysis looked at the topics reported. Almost two thirds of reporting in this sample was political, focussed on national policies - current and proposed, and much of this reporting fell short of ICAR's best practice standard for a number of reasons. Rather than being innovative and investigative, much of the political reporting continued to report themes identified as dominant in previous studies - the current state of asylum policy was reported as being concerned with removing the undeserving rather than protecting the deserving. In the pre - election period, proposals introduced by Conservative leader Michael Howard to resolve this problem by only allowing a limited number of previously assessed cases to enter the UK dominated the sample. While the Government's plans to increase controls within the existing system were widely covered (although to a lesser extent), reporting of the policies of the UK's third party - the Liberal Democrats - was less than that of minor right wing anti - immigration parties. There was a lack of context shown in the many reports that mentioned proposals to withdraw from the Convention but did not explain the rights contained in the Convention or explain UNHCR's current and proposed policies. The majority of the political reporting, while frequently critical of the two major political parties, was tired, repetitive and unquestioning. It perpetuated the dominant theme of political and media images of asylum in recent years - of a system in chaos requiring further control - without investigating fully contextual information to uphold or dispel this view.

These trends were reinforced by the choice of political and legal sources. Legal sources were far outweighed by political sources, and there were less than 10 articles which use UK asylum laws as a source of information. The vast majority of the sample fell short of best practice on the grounds that it provided little or no legal context or quotations from appropriate legal sources, even when to do so would allow reader to assess political arguments presented. Political sources were dominated by the two main parties, the most frequently cited being Michael Howard.

Political reporting generally failed to seek the views or present the experiences of the individuals who were most affected by the events reported. Individual asylum seekers and refugees sometimes made political comments in relation to the decisions taken on their own cases but were almost never invited to comment more widely on asylum policies or policy proposals. This lack of fair representation in the political sphere fell short of best practice reporting.

108 for example - Home Office announces that India will be added to list of 'safe countries'. Asylum seekers from safe countries who are rejected can only appeal after being removed from UK. Demonstration in London calling for end to deportations of failed asylum seekers to Zimbabwe. Home office launches national refugee integration strategy - 'Integration Matters'

Where statistics were used in this sample they strengthened the dominant themes in the political reports - numbers of failed asylum seekers, numbers deported, but newspapers are also influenced by the accessibility of particular statistics. Numbers of asylum applications were the most common topic - these are published regularly by the Home Office. Court proceedings provide an easily accessible source of statistical information on the extent of a crime. Generalised terms continued to be used, including generalised, unspecific terms such as 'hundreds, thousands'. It is a welcome step towards better practice that although widely criticised terms such as 'flood', were still found, they appeared to be less prevalent in this sample than in previous studies.

Other categories of topics examined (economic impact, crime, detention, perceptions) appeared less frequently than policy but such reports were more likely to reflect ICAR's standard of best practice. Such reporting was more likely to be informative and contextualised than reporting about policy, covering a wide range of experiences and viewpoints.

While a range of concerns were expressed about the economic impact of asylum seekers and refugees, and resentment that they might receive preferential treatment compared with other British residents was a common complaint, the majority of reporting presented the impact on the economy and welfare as beneficial, and highlighted the desire of refugees and asylum seekers (including children) to contribute to the economy and society, particularly to the arts.

Crime perpetrated by asylum seekers and refugees was regularly reported, but less frequently than has been found in previous media monitoring studies. Community safety concerns for asylum seekers and refugees - incidents involving harassment, bullying, etc. appeared to be more widely reported than in previous studies, this may be a result of the inclusion of regional papers. Previous studies identified this as a gap in reporting which failed to reflect the reality of asylum seekers' and refugees' experiences. When newspapers chose to report on detention, such reports were largely sympathetic to the circumstances of asylum seekers in detention.

The most common issue discussed within the category of perceptions of and interactions between asylum seekers and refugees and the general public, was sympathy or at least background information on their country of origin and reasons for flight. This was closely followed by reports of concerns about media attitudes to asylum. The most common hostile perception found in the sample was 'bogus, false or fraudulent'. However, this was far outweighed by reports stating that asylum seekers and refugees are being or should be offered welcome, support and help, reports that communities celebrate diversity and are actively involved in helping refugees to integrate, and reports that communities are concerned about individuals facing detention and deportation. The sympathetic responses from local communities, particularly as reported in regional papers, were in marked contrast to the issues dominating the political debate. In particular, it is interesting that local concern about asylum seekers facing deportation featured highly given the political focus on increasing deportations. There were contradictory themes in this aspect of the sample - although it was common for communities to be reported as supporting asylum seekers and refugees and benefiting from diversity, newspapers also regularly report that the public are 'concerned, angry, alarmed'. It was a feature of this sample that many such comments about public anger/concern were generalised and unspecific, giving no evidence of anger/concern or reasons why it exists.

Newspapers sought information from a wide range of sources and the voices of civil society were heard in asylum reports although refugee community organisations were rarely quoted. The mix of national and local civil society sources was helpful in portraying asylum as a national issue that involves local communities, but this was only partially achieved because national sources tend to be cited in national papers, and local sources cited in regional papers. The wide range of civil society sources used in this sample complies with ICAR's position on best practice in responsible reporting of asylum, although national papers could include more local sources and regional papers more national sources, in order for a more informative picture to be presented to readers.

2% of articles gave no source or a highly unspecific source eg 'experts'. Such articles fell short of best practice because information contained in them was unsubstantiated and their accuracy could be assessed by the reader.

The monitoring of visual images was limited in this study. It provided some evidence that the photographs used reflected the trends seen in written reporting. Most photographs were of politicians, notably the Conservative Party leader Michael Howard. Non-political photographs gave a wider range of subjects and perspectives.

Articles with Individual focus - which reported events as concerning individuals rather than an anonymous group - were examined. Only 22% of articles had an individual focus - articles which do not have an individual

focus fall short of ICAR's best practice standard because they do not give fair representation to those affected by the events reported. Using an individual focus does not necessarily result in promoting 'positive images' of asylum seekers and refugees or mean that hostile language is avoided, but generalised, unspecific allegations are less common and a greater attempt to understand context, is more common than in the sample as a whole. Many of the stories with an individual focus were about criminals and terrorist suspects, however, in discussing concerns regarding the behaviour of individuals such reports were more informative than those that discuss 'asylum and crime' in a stereotypical or anonymous way. Using an individual focus is also conducive to producing more investigative journalism, giving a more complex understanding of national policy issues and their local implications and highlighting issues not frequently covered.

The appreciation of the contribution of asylum seekers and refugees, particularly to the arts was even more marked when articles with an individual focus were compared to the whole sample but there remained an absence of asylum seekers and refugees as sources of information in the political debate, except where they discussed decision making procedures affecting their own case. Although such articles make an important contribution to understanding the experiences of those awaiting decisions and fearing deportation, there is a danger that the sympathetic images of asylum seekers and refugees produce alternative stereotypes of victims or artists. There was little presentation of individuals as 'ordinary people just like you and me'.

The results from the subset of articles with an individual focus lead to the conclusion that including an individual focus is an element in achieving best practice, and furthermore is likely to make meeting the PCC requirement of accuracy more achievable.

This report explored a number of new themes which have not been discussed in previous reports.

The reporting of the arts in relation to asylum, as seen in this sample, was highly informative, bringing new perspectives to the public understanding of asylum and drawing on a range of contextual information - international, cultural and historic. It focused on individual experiences rather than portraying anonymous masses, it did not stereotype, and made relevant comment on current political and public responses to asylum. As such, much of the arts coverage reflected the elements of best journalistic practice suggested by ICAR.

Conversely the evidence of this sample was that jokes contained in the articles were far from achieving standards of best practice, because they dealt in stereotypical, generalised allegations likely to encourage hostility and disrespect for the concept of asylum.

Newspapers sometimes cite public opinion to support their assertions and to guide their editorial line, using letters and opinion polls as evidence. The frequency of opinion polls results found in this sample reflected the interest in the fortunes of political parties in the pre - election period - references to opinion polls in reports on asylum reinforced the view that asylum was a key electoral issue for the voting public.

The letters pages sampled in this study indicated that there was hostility towards asylum seekers and refugees among the public, but mainly this was not well informed or based on direct experience. In terms of promoting best practice in responsible journalism, ICAR believes that journalists should question the usefulness of publishing letters which contain generalised hostile allegations without adding new information to discussions about asylum - such as those found in the Star's 'Text Maniacs' column. While recognising that editors are not responsible for the accuracy of information supplied in letters, in the light of concerns about the perpetuation of misinformation about asylum, best practice might include publication of correct information alongside letters where misinformation is evident. For example, concerns about preferential treatment sometimes suggest a lack of comparative information about the rights to services of asylum seekers and refugees compared to other UK residents.

Given the influence which poll results may have in a pre-election period, both on voters and politicians, best practice suggests newspapers should publish as much information as possible about polls cited as is consistent with the limitations of column space. As a minimum they should name the pollster and give reference to where further details can be obtained, including details of questions asked, sample size, commissioning body etc. Claims to understand public opinion on asylum which are not backed by evidence fall far short of best practice, and may be inflammatory.

A large number of articles were concerned with an internal media debate about the media's coverage of asylum. This is not a topic that has been identified in previous studies as a common feature of reporting on asylum. It

suggests that newspapers were increasingly aware of the growing concern about hostile media coverage and its impact on communities and the political debate, made by interested parties - including refugee agencies, some politicians, academics and the authors - and were now reflecting those debates in their reports. The media's internal discussions should be seen as a positive force for ensuring that the press adheres to the minimum standards set by the PCC and strives to achieve best practice in responsible reporting of asylum. However its effectiveness in this sample was limited for two main reasons. Firstly, much of this debate made generalised rather than detailed and constructive criticisms of reporting by 'other' papers, missing the opportunity to highlight in what way reporting might be improved. Secondly, although a large number of papers commented on this infrequently, the debate was normally maintained by a limited number of national papers. Its effect could be strengthened by efforts to engage more fully the papers that take an occasional interest in the subject, notably the regional papers.

The wide range of media sources cited meets ICAR's proposed standard for best practice that a wide range of sources is advantageous. However, the predominance of the national press - with the regional and faith/minority press cited far less often, suggests that some media sources that may have useful local or community knowledge, were overlooked.

The results of the content analysis show that although there were differences between the regional and national papers, it was striking that on a number of occasions results for national and regional papers were similar. Regional papers carried stories with a local perspective, and stories with an individual focus, more often than nationals, which were two key elements of ICAR's best practice standard. This might be explained by the different roles or audiences of the two types of paper - regional papers are rooted in local communities and national papers are expected to reflect national news - but the role of national newspapers does not prevent them from developing local and individual perspectives to national stories.

Another way in which the nationals could write more human stories, without having to write about individuals per se, would be to write articles which drew attention to the heterogeneous nature of refugees and in particular to the skills and experiences they bring. Reporting of this nature would provide a balance to the stereotypical image presented by much media coverage and by inference through political images.

The regional papers were closer to attaining best practice in political reporting - they carried more stories about how the decision making process affects individual asylum seekers and refugees - than the nationals. Such stories are informative because they give an important human perspective to the prevailing political debate about control and removal.

The faith/minority papers form a far smaller part of the sample of papers. In a number of respects they reported from an original and informed perspective which did not perpetuate the familiar dominant themes. For example, the faith/minority papers reported more often that asylum seekers/ refugees are or wish to be skilled contributors to the economy, and reported least often stories of criminality among asylum seekers/refugees.

We have listed here a number of grounds where reporting falls short of best practice, however the picture presented by the sample as a whole is one where minimum standards are normally met and many articles meet some of the elements of best practice established by ICAR, particularly when not reporting national political debates. Although comparisons are difficult there are indications that standards are higher in this sample than found in previous studies. In assessing the impact and adequacy of the Guidance Note it is possible to conclude from this that despite its narrow focus, it may have had a beneficial effect that extends to aspects of reporting not explicitly mentioned in the terms of the Guidance Note.

The 'top six' daily nationals

This study looked specifically at the nature of reporting in the 'top six' daily national papers, compared to all national papers and all the papers in the sample. **These papers were selected on the basis that they had above average circulations.** The study concludes that in some key aspects of the content of reporting studied here, the 'top six' diverged from the picture presented by the nationals as a whole and the sample as a whole, and were further from meeting ICAR's standards of best practice. The results, already given in tables in Chapter 4 of this report, are reproduced in a summary table here.

The summary table shows that the top six daily nationals reported from a purely national perspective more often than the sample as a whole, but not significantly more often than the nationals as a whole. The top six reported on policy more frequently than both the nationals as a whole and the sample as a whole and policy was described as chaotic, out of control etc or that control has been given to the EU, more often in the top six papers than in the nationals as a whole or the sample as a whole.

The top 6 used generalised terms (thousands etc) more often than the nationals as a whole and the sample as a whole when reporting statistics. The top 6 daily nationals were more interested in reporting crime than the nationals as a whole and the sample as a whole but these crime stories were less often about asylum seekers/refugees suffering harassment. The top 6 daily nationals reported the contribution of asylum seekers/refugees to the economy less often and health risks more often than the nationals as a whole and the sample as a whole. They described asylum seekers/refugees as bogus more often and carried articles expressing concern about the tone of media reporting on asylum less often than the nationals as a whole and the sample as a whole. They reported that the public is angry about asylum more often than the nationals as a whole and the sample as a whole. As such, the reporting in the top 6 daily nationals was less informative and less contextualised. It was more narrowly focussed, more repetitive and tired, less investigative and gave more generalised, unspecific allegations likely to promote hostility and fear. Many, though by no means all, of the articles which were furthest from ICAR's best practice standard were drawn from this group of papers.

While the top six generally conformed to the PCC's minimum regulatory standard, they 'sailed close to the wind'. It is likely that far more articles from the top six national daily papers would draw the attention of the PCC if the PCC's Guidance Note was extended in the ways suggested in this report.

The top 6 daily nationals accounted for one third of the national articles found in the sample period - almost 500 articles in 12 weeks. It should be stressed that these papers are not a homogenous group and standards of reporting differ within the group of six, however, the results for the whole group show that poor practice in reporting asylum is concentrated in these most highly circulating papers. While our study of 50 diverse papers offers examples of informative, contextualised and representative reporting, the impact of these is limited if they appear in papers with a relatively small readership. This is further reduced if other more popular papers repeatedly present reports likely to perpetuate fear and hostility and unlikely to challenge stereotypes and misinformation.

Summary table showing key areas of divergence in reporting when top six daily nationals are compared with the results for the nationals as a whole and the sample as a whole

	Top six	Nationals	Whole sample
Articles that are purely national in scope	74%	72%	61%
Articles about policy	80%	64%	62%
Describe policy as 'in chaos, out of control, failure, untrustworthy' etc - as % of policy descriptions	39%	13%	13%
Describe policy as 'Given control of borders to EU' - as % of policy descriptions	10%	5%	5%
Use of generalised terms 'hundreds, thousands' etc in articles which use statistics	15%	11%	9%
Educated, professional, skilled contributors to economy/society - or preparing to contribute - as % of articles about impact on economy/welfare	12%	23%	24%
Health risk- as % of articles about impact on economy/welfare	11%	5%	4%

Articles covering crime	22%	16%	17%
Experiencing physical or verbal harassment or attacks - as % of articles about crime	1%	6%	10%
Bogus, false, fraudulent - as % of articles about perceptions	16%	10%	8%
concern expressed at media attitudes to asylum - by public or by newspaper- as % of articles about perceptions	2%	16%	13%
'the public' or 'the British people' are concerned / angry / alarmed etc. - as % of articles about perceptions	14%	9%	6%

4. Examples from the sample of journalism which reflects best practice in reporting asylum because it:

- **Is informative**
- **Provides appropriate context**
- **Draws on a range of identifiable sources of information and viewpoints**
- **Includes fair representation of the opinions and experiences of those people affected**
- **Avoids generalised, unspecific allegations likely to inspire hostility**

Headline, paper type of article, date	Worrying emergence of Tamil crime gangs Eastern Eye 18Feb
Relevant quotes and/or description	'The Metropolitan Police is ready to launch major operations against crime gangs made up of South Asians living in London.... We must be wary of the negative connotations that may come from a well-publicised scheme such as this. It is vital to point out that Britain's Sri Lankans are as an industrious group of people as any in the UK. But the Newham United Tamil Association is right to say that some vulnerable and desperate Sri Lankans who fled the civil war could only find an escape from poverty by working in criminality. Many Home Office projects to help refugees and asylum seekers have only been created in recent years by the Government and the effectiveness of these is yet to be measured. The similarity of the Tamil gang wars to the kind of black-on-black crime associated with areas like Harlesden and Birmingham is a worry. The lack of information from the community, the movement towards gun crime as well as the disproportionate violence is similar. Eastern Eye urges people to speak up now and shop the criminals while the Met has some control.'
Comment	This article showed that best practice reporting on asylum is not necessarily about presenting positive images. Dealing with the contentious issue of crime among a refugee community, this report gave factual information and avoids unspecific allegations. It was informative - it gave details of an issue which is not covered elsewhere in the sample. There was international, national and local context - reference to the situation in the country of origin, to national Home Office policies, and to localised police activity. Sources included a refugee community organisation, which presented the experiences of those who are affected by the events reported. While recognising criminality exists within a particular refugee community, this article gave reasons why this might be the case and showed the community leaders engaged with the problem, and the Home Office involved in integration policies. The article also did not stereotype and pointed out that most members of that community are 'industrious'.

<p>Headline, paper type of article, date</p>	<p>25 Jan Guardian Howard stirs up migrant storm</p>
<p>Relevant quotes and/or description</p>	<p>‘Michael Howard yesterday fleshed out his plans to set quotas for immigrants and asylum seekers... and a bar on asylum applicants making claims from inside the UK. Insisting his ideas were common sense and not racist, he set out a phased programme to rewrite Britain’s immigration laws. He said a Conservative government would give the UN secretary general 12 months notice of withdrawal from the 1951 convention on refugees. The government would then meet its annually set quota of refugees by selecting “genuine” applicants from those in the care of the UN high commissioner for refugees (UNHCR).’</p> <p>‘The UNHCR said it would not cooperate with a Conservative government over its quota plan if Mr Howard withdrew from the convention on refugees. The Liberal Democrat peer Lord Lester, a human rights expert, accused Mr Howard of a piece of “complete legal illiteracy” saying it was not possible to derogate from the part of the European Convention on Human Rights covering protection from persecution....a point confirmed by the EU Justice Commissioner, Franco Frattini’</p> <p>‘A race relations expert cited by Mr Howard in support of his claim that “communities cannot successfully absorb newcomers at today’s pace” also joined the chorus of criticism. Ted Cantle, who led inquiries into community cohesion after riots in northern towns in 2001, said that if public debate concentrated on migrants alone rather than a much broader debate “everyone is going to be the loser”.</p> <p>Tony Blair, wary of being wrongfooted, conceded that abuses existed in the asylum system, but said the Tory plans were unworkable...</p> <p>Trevor Phillips, chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, told BBC radio that the announcement “gives space to people who will be saying ‘Nudge, nudge, wink wink, we know what Michael Howard is saying”</p> <p>Mr Howard said that... [gives further details of proposals] ‘In the final stage, the line between claiming asylum and coming to Britain would be broken, with all asylum seekers processed in centres close to their region of origin.’</p>
<p>Comment</p>	<p>This article - one among many about Michael Howard’s proposals- met many of the elements of best practice. It was informative - explaining the proposals and responses to them in detail. It provided context, both international and legal (by reference to the ECHR) and discussed impact on local communities. It included a wide range of sources- not just from the two main political parties but also from the third main party, from the European Commission, and civil society sources. Although Michael Howard was alone in defending his position his views were explained in detail and he was given the last word. The article gave the reader a good understanding of the proposals, their justification, and the concerns of their opponents. The article failed to meet ICAR’s criteria of including the views or experiences of those affected by the events reported.</p>

Headline, paper type of article, date	24 Feb Manchester evening news 'model citizen' in deportation battle
Relevant quotes and/or description	'An asylum seeker who has dedicated his life to helping HIV sufferers faces being expelled from Britain. Perparim Demaj, who fled Kosovo seven years ago during the troubles, has been ordered to leave by the Home Office despite becoming a pillar of the community in Manchester. A massive campaign to prevent the deportation has been launched by civic leaders at Manchester Council, who were forced to sack Mr Demaj because the Home Office removed his right to live and work here. For five years..[he] has held a job as a HIV support worker with Manchester Council. He has learned to speak English and is an active member of the community. Mr Demaj, a father of two young children, said: 'I've been in Chorlton since I arrived... I am happy here - it is my home. If I go back to Kosovo I will get killed.' Steven Barksby, a HIV sufferer who was supported by Mr Demaj, said: 'I can't even begin to describe how special Perparim was a support worker. As someone with HIV, I often have to deal with ignorance and insensitivity, but Perparim really seemed to understand'.. although he was given temporary leave to remain in the UK after fleeing the war-torn region of Drenica in 1998, his application for asylum and subsequent appeals have been exhausted....Richard Leese, the leader of Manchester City Council, said: 'Manchester would not exist as an international city if it was not for immigrants who come here and bring their enthusiasm to work. We have lost a very good worker and Manchester is at risk of losing exactly the sort of citizen we would like all our citizens to be'
Comment	This article was more typical of what might be called 'promoting positive images' however it is selected as an example of good practice because it was informative - avoiding common positive stereotypes of asylum seekers as victims, or achieving extraordinary financial, sporting or artistic success - it showed an asylum seeker fulfilling a more mundane role, providing, rather than receiving welfare services. It gave international and local context, particularly reflecting local responses to national policy. The sources used were limited but the individual affected by the events reported was quoted.

Barriers to achieving best practice

Previous reports have made suggestions about the type of information journalists need in order to write well informed articles about asylum, and ICAR suggests here a toolkit of information needed to achieve best practice. Many organisations have produced checklists of facts and definitions for use by journalists reporting about asylum. For example, in 2003 MediaWise, in consultation with the UNHCR, refugee organisations and the NUJ Ethics Council produced and distributed a leaflet containing definitions, guidelines and useful contacts (see Appendix 2). The question remains why it is that even though such recommendations are easy to understand and to implement, best practice standards are not met.

Partly this relates to the media motivations discussed in the introduction. The newspaper editors interviewed provided evidence of this. For example, they stated that the human face of asylum stories is not necessarily seen as newsworthy, that some stories trigger publication of several other stories on a similar theme which can raise the temperature of a debate, and that they are influenced by the (hostile) views expressed in readers' letters.

Editors also complain that efforts by various organisations to provide them with the information they need are insufficient. Successive reports have urged refugees to get more involved with the media, and the media to use refugees as sources more often, with limited success. One reason for this is that not enough attention has been paid to integrating refugees in political life. Refugee integration policies have been successful in promoting cultural expression - most notably through 'Refugee Week' - and this has led to media attention. However, it is political reports that have dominated the sample of newspaper articles studied here.

Aim 4: Assessing how far reporting of asylum is balanced and unlikely to undermine refugee integration

Imbalanced reporting within one or more sector of the press, stereotyping, perpetuating prejudices and reinforcing narrow partisan views, is likely to influence public opinion. Where these stereotypes are hostile to asylum seekers and refugees and partisan views call for more controls, the impact on public opinion is likely to make Home Office policies for refugee integration harder to implement.

Unlike the BBC, newspapers are not intended to be impartial. The Editor's code makes no commitment to balanced reporting and ICAR does not include balance in its definition of best practice. As outlined above, ICAR believes informative reporting to be essential in meeting best practice standards. 'Informative' and 'balanced' reporting are separate but related concepts. Informative reporting, while free to be partisan, provides a range of newsworthy information, not only reporting well known themes and viewpoints, but valuing different perspectives. Informative reporting is a best practice standard which it is reasonable to expect all newspaper articles to aim for.

Balanced reporting goes further - to be balanced, reporting of different perspectives is not simply valuable but essential. Opposing views should be fully explored and a range of stories should be covered. ICAR defines balance in reporting as: presenting the reader with sufficiently diverse information to enable understanding of news events without perpetuating prejudice

Balance can be judged at different levels - within an article, or an edition of a newspaper, or across a range of newspapers - and for different time periods- either on a particular day's coverage, or the track record of coverage over a given period time. For the purpose of the analysis we have focused on balance across types of newspaper -national (high and low circulation), regional, and faith/minority for the time period of the sample.

ICAR's definition of balance does not proscribe partisan comment in individual articles or newspapers - it is reasonable for newspapers to adopt a point of view on an issue and therefore to tend to report from that perspective, and ICAR's definition recognises that balance does not require that each article written should contain a range of views or sources.

However, ICAR believes it is important for community relations that, when assessed collectively, newspaper reporting is balanced, providing readers of regional, faith/minority and national papers, particularly those national papers with the largest readerships, with the broadest possible range of information, and that partisan reporting is sufficiently diverse that one political viewpoint is not dominant within a sector of the newspaper industry.

In assessing the results of the content analysis from this perspective, this study concludes that reporting about asylum policy is the main cause for concern. Political reporting rarely reported on integration policy, or on steps already being taken to tighten asylum controls, instead describing existing policies as a failure and focussing on calls for tighter controls. The habit of calling for tighter controls to be implemented, while failing to report the controls that were introduced during the period, may have a powerful impact on public perceptions of asylum. The use of minor right-wing parties as sources is disproportionate to the support that they receive from voters. This exaggerated association of asylum with far-right political activity is likely to promote undue fear. While reporting on non- political topics was well balanced, it may be that it is political reporting which has the most impact on public opinion - particularly on opinions of government policies- further research would be appropriate to test this.

The evidence from the articles excluded from further analysis because they mentioned asylum seekers/refugees in countries other than the UK, showed that most reports about host countries focused on wealthy Western countries. This is imbalanced and does not reflect the realities of global refugee protection, where most asylum seekers and refugees remain in countries close to their country of origin. Promotion of information to correct this imbalance is likely to dispel concerns that the UK takes 'more than its share' and so aid refugee integration.

The evidence from reporting of statistics suggests that this was influenced by which statistics were most easily accessible, and therefore that there is scope for the Home Office to improve balance in reporting by making appropriate information more accessible to journalists.

The lack of balance in the public opinions published in letters pages is a cause for concern. It suggests that more attention needs to be given to understanding the relationship between public opinion and the press and how

unduly hostile views circulate and are compounded between them. The Home Office and associations concerned with public surveys may consider monitoring opinion polls on asylum, particularly the construction of samples and the questions asked, in order to assess how far polls accurately reflect public opinion on asylum.

Promoting reporting which gives an individual focus promotes community as well as individual perspectives, and should enable asylum seekers and refugees, and their representatives, to become more familiar in dealing directly with the media. In giving a more informative picture it is likely to promote integration and to highlight more effectively where challenges to integration exist. For example, in this sample the singer M.I.A. powerfully described her experiences growing up as a refugee in the UK:

'I was determined not to be seen as a refugee... because I didn't want to be thought of as the scum of the earth.'

The evidence of the arts coverage in promoting an individual focus is to be welcomed. It is likely to increase understanding of the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees among those sections of the public that read articles about the arts. Much of this coverage provides evidence of settled British residents working closely with asylum seekers and refugees. The coverage of asylum in the arts emphasises humanitarianism, but is also a means of political expression. Further research into how this level of coverage of artistic voices has been achieved would be useful in order to determine how the experiences and talents of asylum - seekers and refugees in other fields can be promoted, particularly so that their voices can be heard more effectively in political debates. The experiences of the refugee journalists cited in the introduction, and the contribution they made in conducting this research, show how they can play a role in promoting reporting about asylum which supports refugee integration.

Many of the national public sector bodies cited as sources were linked to immigration and security controls - e.g. the police, detention services, MI5, Crown Prosecution Service. Sources linked to refugee integration and community cohesion were mentioned far less often. Furthermore, while 4 out of 5 of the most frequently mentioned national voluntary agencies were supportive of the rights of asylum seekers and refugees (CRE, Refugee Council, JCWI, Liberty) it is noteworthy that the second most frequently cited national voluntary agency was Migrationwatch UK, an organisation that argues for the introduction of greater immigration controls. The frequency with which newspapers use various sources drawn from the media suggests a lack of balance - the most frequently cited national papers are those commonly considered to support the Conservative Party, which during the pre-election period pressed for greater immigration controls. Collectively, these trends have the potential to contribute to reporting which is not supportive of refugee integration.

The wide range of other civil society organisations cited is evidence of that there are numerous stakeholders who may be interested in building partnerships with the Home Office to promote a more balanced picture of asylum. Attention should be given to the finding that papers are reporting that in their view, or the view of their readers, there is concern about the tone of political debate - characterised as 'wretched, squalid, shameful, hysterical' etc. which may make partnership building between the Home Office and civil society more difficult.

The emerging internal media debate about standards of reporting asylum is a window of opportunity for the Home Office to build partnerships with sectors of the press. This should take account of the different perspectives of faith/minority, regional and national papers, and seek to strengthen the different aspects of best practice demonstrated by each group of papers.

Reporting in the top six daily nationals

In terms of balance, the evidence from the sample as a whole is that, while a range of partisan opinions were expressed, anti-asylum views gained more media attention. The Conservatives' proposals were discussed most fully, and minor rightwing parties and Migrationwatch appeared prominently. This pattern was seen most clearly in the top six daily nationals. Their reporting did not necessarily accept the position of a given political party, but it expressed similar conclusions about asylum - among them were the papers that most frequently stated that the system is in chaos, the government has failed and greater controls are needed. The pre-election campaigning added new dimensions - under Michael Howard's leadership the Conservative Party suggested radical measures to end the right to claim asylum under the UN Convention relating to the status of Refugees. The mixed response that this received from the top six, where some described him as brave, but more articles criticise than support his

view, on the grounds that it is extremist, unworkable or opportunistic, contributed to the general impression that further controls were needed but that politicians from both major parties were unable to control the chaos.

We saw how inaccurate terms were found most often among these papers. It is a cause for concern that poor standards of reporting, combined with strongly held views, were clearly evident in the most popular newspapers, and that reporting which meets the highest standard is not reaching the widest audience. However this suggests that there are opportunities for other papers, professional bodies, civil partnerships and the Home Office to promote better practice and to exert pressure on this minority of papers to report more responsibly.

Other factors which may also have produced these results

In assessing the impact and adequacy of the Guidance Note, it is necessary to take into account other factors that may explain why the overall impression is less hostile towards asylum seekers and refugees than in previous studies.

1. Newspaper editors were aware that a 'parallel' monitoring exercise was being conducted at roughly the same time as this research and in some cases have issued instructions to journalists to take extra care in reporting asylum during the monitoring period.
2. A wider range of newspapers has been included in this sample than in previous monitoring exercises. In particular the MICI (ICAR 2004) study, although it aimed to provide a cross section of national papers, did not include regional papers outside London.
3. Each time period studied will generate a unique sample of articles relating to the newsworthy events of that period. Key differences in the events occurring during this period, compared with the MICI study are:
 - a) this period was dominated by political debate about new proposals issued in the run up to the election, whereas the MICI sample period was during the parliamentary Summer recess and the agenda was set more by the media themselves - resulting in more expose's, 'special investigations' and exaggerated claims (e.g. eating donkeys)
 - b) the holocaust memorial events which occurred during this period, provided a reminder from history of the need to offer humanitarian protection to refugees. No equivalent event occurred during the MICI sample period.
4. Changes have occurred in the migratory flows of refugees in recent years - there has been a fall in the number of international cross-boarder refugees worldwide, a fall in numbers coming to Europe and a fall in numbers seeking asylum in the UK. For those newspapers that perceive asylum to be a 'problem' in terms of 'too many' coming to the UK, this fall may have resulted in less hostile reporting on asylum.
5. Finally, pressure from within the newspaper industry, as exemplified by the media's debate on its own standards discussed previously, and externally, from the wide range of agencies that have expressed concerns, may be responsible for 'shaming' some newspapers into changing the tone of their reporting.

Overview

This first truly national study of newspaper reporting of asylum gives a comprehensive overview of the content and tone of reporting and the views of editors. It found that frequency of reporting of asylum remains high but that there were only a small number of articles which might be of concern to the Press Complaints Commission within the current terms of the Editors' Code and PCC Guidance Note. Articles concerning economic and welfare issues, crime and community safety and perceptions of and interactions with asylum seekers and refugees covered a range of perspectives and taken as a whole **the coverage of these issues was not predominantly hostile towards asylum seekers and refugees.**

The following concerns remain:

- a) Looking at the coverage as a whole, reporting of the political debate appeared imbalanced, it was dominated by discussions of chaos and control with little attention given to extending humanitarian protection or enabling refugee integration. To some extent, but not entirely, this was a reflection of the tone of the political debate, rather than media bias; however this widespread view represents a highly powerful

national message likely to have a strong impact on public perceptions.

b) A minority of articles described asylum seekers and refugees in terms that are hostile and risk being inflammatory and contained inaccuracies including misuse of statistics, groundless claims, misrepresentation and confusion of comment, conjecture and fact

c) The frequency of reporting on asylum means that even if the majority of articles were accurate and use measured language, the minority of inaccurate and hostile articles represent a significant amount of circulating information that is likely to be having an impact on sections of public opinion and possibly on community relations. Given that most people do not read all of the 50 newspapers sampled here, this is particularly concerning if hostile and inflammatory articles are concentrated in particular newspapers, which are read by less questioning or less informed (109) readers.

The analysis shows that there are clear differences between the reporting of asylum in different newspapers, and that there are differences between different categories of papers - namely the national, regional and faith/minority press and the top six national dailies.

The study has identified new themes in the way in which asylum is presented by newspapers, and provides new information on the way that individual asylum seekers and refugees are portrayed.

Although there are limitations on how far it is possible to make comparisons with previous studies which used different samples of newspaper articles, the findings of our study suggest that this sample is less hostile than previous samples. That difference may imply that newspapers are adopting a more responsible approach to reporting asylum; however the influence of the press on public opinion and political debate means that the legacy of hostile reporting underlies the current political concern with chaos and control.

The findings suggest that improvements are still needed in the way asylum is reported in the UK. Setting standards and monitoring their implementation is an effective means of achieving this, and recommendations are made for extending the PCC Guidance Note and Editors' Code, and for promoting ICAR's model of best practice. New approaches are also needed to improve reporting about asylum, and key to this is prioritising the integration of refugees into political life, so that they are better placed to act as sources of information in newspaper reports of asylum policy.

The 'spectre' of insecurity reducing poor practice

The freedom of the press is a major principle of democratic societies and there is suspicion about suggestions for increased control and regulation of press freedom. The question-marks against some current press coverage stem from exactly the same fears for freedom: fears about the consequences of poor reporting for the freedom of vulnerable people to enjoy safe and decent lives without harassment or neglect.

The vulnerability of asylum seekers and refugees is similar to other groups that face misconceptions and hostility and whose rights to protection under law have been upheld in international agreements. The effect on public order of generalised calumnies based on biased and inaccurate information is recognised in legal provisions that prohibit provocative declarations about minorities. For example, there is now a considerable debate about the merits of introducing extensions of the criminal law to protect religious minorities against the effects of inspiring 'hatred'.

The controls that are under scrutiny in the research have been constructed as alternatives to legal redress through the courts, which may prove expensive and time-consuming. Complaints procedures under independent panels like the PCC represent comparatively mild interventions when compared with the proposals to deal with 'hatred'. Indeed the key question has been whether they have any impact at all. There was therefore a substantial case for considering the impact of this self regulatory process and whether any measures might strengthen this impact in reducing the most irresponsible and dangerous kind of reporting.

The content of poor editing and reporting has been illustrated in the case studies analysed. The danger of continuing poor editing and reporting is that it adds to and indeed orchestrates community tension and leads to the potential for hostile action against a vulnerable minority.

109 see Media Image Community Impact

The 'spectre' of ignorance and prejudice-increasing good practice

The problems of press coverage are only partly about what is reported, but about what is not reported as thoroughly as it should be. Vulnerable people have a right to be heard and understood and a right not to be harassed unduly by the press. Just as important is the question of how the press could be 'liberated' to report on the many aspects of asylum that too often may fail to reach the radar of the most contentious newspapers: the quality and effects of decision-making; conditions in accommodation: families, community and school integration; international dimensions of problems, etc.

Equally the portrayal of asylum seekers and refugees in stereotyped ways obscures the all too human realities of fear, anxiety, need, and even mixed motives, which lie unseen behind that section of press reporting that harps on crime, disease, laziness and financial greed. Reporting that questions stereotypes, brings out new information and highlights new perspectives needs support, training and recognition.

The vaunted freedom of the press is also a freedom to fall asleep: as we hope to have shown the reporting of asylum has been littered with lost opportunities and gaping silences. According to a careful study based on years of coverage, a good deal of the reporting seems to have based on government press releases (110). The present study with a very large, intensively analysed press sample has attempted to demonstrate how far there is adequate and informative attention to the many issues that affect communities and individuals.

The attention that the press gives to topics underpins the choice of categories for the analysis of coverage. Within those topics there has been an attempt to hinge the analysis around the balance of issues that might be considered favourable or unfavourable to asylum seekers and refugees. The question to be addressed here is the public representation of debateable issues in terms that allow the citizens choice about the representations they can access. As we have suggested this is a civic question -and not simply a 'government' one.

Shortage of understanding can be remedied by the issuing of guidance on accurate terms, supplying contextual information, suggesting topics of inquiry, making sources accessible and so on.

Little in this approach is new. There are clear parallels in the field of scientific reporting (111) where the same concerns have been expressed about the deleterious impact on public health of irresponsible reporting that gives rise to 'health scares'. In guidelines issued by the Social Issues Research Centre in partnership with the Royal Institution in September 2000, the same concepts of accurate and informative reporting based on credible sources are applied; the suggestion of a code of practice -and even their calls for 'experts' to be available and databases to be made accessible- are echoed in what we have to say in our recommendations.

This study has allowed us to identify and understand multiple strands of concern, about inflammatory as well as prejudiced and poorly informed reporting. We therefore call for a strategic and specific range of actions and policies.

110 Arguments put forward by Statham are discussed in the introduction.

111 Code of Practice / Guidelines on Science and Health Communication. Prepared by the Social Issues Research Centre in partnership with the Royal Institution - September 2000 http://www.sirc.org/publik/cop_guidelines_j.html

Recommendations

To the PCC

1. Given that editors and the nature of coverage are not constants, the PCC should consider reissuing its editorial guidance notes annually, appropriately modified to take into account changing political circumstances and issues highlighted by complainants.
2. Each reissue should be accompanied by a reminder that:
 - editors should adhere to the spirit as much as the letter of the Code of Practice and the guidance notes;
 - it is important to use terms correctly, given the tendency of conflating terms within stories - for example the use of 'asylum seeker', 'immigrant', 'migrant', and refugee as if they were interchangeable unless the changing status of individuals warrants such usage;
 - the use of essentially meaningless terms such as 'illegal asylum seekers' or 'illegals' should be avoided;
 - further advice and guidance on technical and legal matters are available from quangos, non-governmental organisations and academic bodies concerned with asylum and refugee issues;
3. The PCC should be prepared to consider more 'third party' complaints about the coverage of refugees and asylum seekers given that civil society is directly affected by the social and political issues raised by misinformation about refugee and immigration issues. It should accept that refugees and asylum seekers, UK citizens and advocacy groups not specifically named in a story have legitimate concerns that should be addressed when errors of fact or extreme language are published.
4. The PCC should issue guidance for editors and the public about the interpretation of the term 'significant inaccuracy' when dealing with complaints under Clause 1 (Accuracy).
5. The PCC Code Committee and the Press Standards Board of Finance, and the Editors' Code Committee should consider incorporating into Clause 12 (Discrimination) reference to a person's immigration status, just as it has recently amended the Code to include 'gender'.
6. The PCC should meet with refugee community organisations to ensure that vulnerable groups are aware of the PCC's existence and role, since similar 'self-regulatory' bodies often do not exist in their countries of origin.
7. New editions of the Editors Code Book should include
 - an expanded explanation of technical terms relating to asylum and refugee - as exemplified by the Guidelines leaflet produced by MediaWise, the NUJ, the Refugee Council and the UNHCR;
 - reference to good practice models such as that outlined in the ICAR toolkit, The CRE Guidance for journalists on reporting race, and NUJ guidance on reporting race issues.

To Newspaper Editors

1. Newspaper editors should continue to strive for consistently high standards of fairness and accuracy in reporting asylum, refugee and race and community relations issues. In particular they should recognise the human rights of individual asylum seekers and refugees and seek to highlight the personal stories behind the public debates around social policy issues.
2. Newspaper should use their columns to examine the media industry's representation of public debate on issues of controversy, as a means of exerting peer pressure to promote best practice in terms of accuracy and fairness and the avoidance of misleading stereotypes.
3. Newspapers are encouraged to produce journalism that questions and goes beyond narrow and immediate political debate on asylum policy, in order to stimulate an informed debate on the issues raised by asylum and refugee protection and integration.
4. Newspapers should be mindful of the cumulative effects of inaccurate and stereotypical reporting of refugees and asylum seekers on their sense of safety and well being as well as on public trust and community relations.

To the Home Office

1. The Home Office should ensure that its Press Office is appropriately staffed and resourced to provide reliable facts and figures about refugee and asylum issues, policies and stories.
2. Given the powerful role the media has to play in the successful integration of refugees, the Home Office should engage in dialogue with editors, home affairs journalists and the regulatory authorities to ensure that policy is understood and specific initiatives are given appropriate context. (e.g. more frequent and comprehensive media briefings)
3. The Home Office should also engage in dialogue with editors, journalists and regulatory authorities to explore the process by which hostility is generated by reporting and to better define when reporting is hostile and inflammatory
4. The Home Office should commission (Media Monitoring) research when it becomes clear that issues of controversy are routinely being misrepresented. It should make available its findings to politicians and the public, and engage in dialogue about its findings with all interested parties (including Editors, specialist journalists, journalists' organisations, and relevant non-governmental organisations).
5. The Home Office should ensure that the role of the media is central to its integration policies, projects and structures, especially via easily accessible websites
6. The Home Office should ensure that all politicians have access to reliable information about refugee and asylum matters, and in particular offer guidance about the correct use of terminology.
7. In fulfilling its responsibilities to refugee integration, the Home Office should seek to ensure that opportunities are provided for refugees to play an active role in domestic political life, and take a lead by ensuring that refugees and their organisations are fully consulted on policy issues, provided with access to consultative fora, and included in both the management and implementation of projects funded by the Home Office.

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Appendix I

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- £4bn asylum waste storm, Daily Express, February 7
- 1 in 20 asylum seekers is HIV, Daily Star, March 8 (full analysis)
- An island door that can't be left open, Wolverhampton Express and Star, January 26 (full analysis)
- Asylum: still no limit of on entries', Daily Express, February 8
- Australia's refashioned rules still leave a place for skilled migrants, Financial Times, February 8
- Blair's lost his grip on asylum chaos', Daily Express, February 23 (full analysis)
- Brussels: We'll halt Howard's curb on migrants, Daily Telegraph, January 25
- Clarke sets out immigration aims, Financial Times, February 8
- Crooked asylum seeker flogging guns in Safeway car park, The People, January 30 (full analysis)
- Deportations drop to their lowest level for two years', Daily Mail, February 23 (full analysis)
- Downfall of a human traffic fiend', Daily Express, February 12 (full analysis)
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- I'll drive out illegals: Clarke's 5-yr plan, The Mirror February 7
- I'll put end to asylum chaos, Daily Star, January 24 (full analysis)
- It is not vulgar to worry about immigration', Daily Telegraph, January 24
- Labour nightmare as 75 per cent back Tories over immigration', Mail on Sunday, February 6
- Lifeboat snub row, The Sun, January 27 (full analysis)
- Lotto 'race' snub for Samaritans, The Sun, February 10 (full analysis)
- Migrant car killer, The Sun, February 14
- Million illegal immigrants 'have set up home in UK', Daily Mail, January 24 (full analysis)
- More than £140 per home on asylum seekers, Wolverhampton Express and Star (full analysis)
- New asylum fiasco', Daily Express, March 9 (full analysis)
- PM in opt out farce, Daily Star, January 26 (full analysis)
- Spongers face boot; Clarke gets tough on migrants', Daily Star, February 7
- Ten years for migrant who posed as doctor, Daily Mail, January 27
- Test immigrants for AIDS menace, Daily Star, January 17
- The immigration debate, The Independent, February 8
- The numbers game,' Times, January 25
- Tide of refugees sitting in wait across channel, Daily Express, January 25 (full analysis)
- Tony Blair will give me a passport because he is a good man. England is still the best place for me and my friends', Daily Express, February 8 (full analysis)
- We'll wipe smug smile off his face', The Express, April 6,
- Convention 'outdated', Daily Express, January 24 (full analysis)
- Howard's policy on immigrations may hit the EU buffers, Sunday Express, January 30
- Test immigrants for AIDS menace, Daily Star, January 17
- Why should we believe them now?, Daily Mail, February 8
- Why the Tories are right about asylum by a genuine asylum seeker, Mail on Sunday, February 13

There were referrals for letters in three newspapers:

- Daily Express, March 17
- Sunday Mercury, January 30
- Western Morning News, February 22

Appendix 2

Reporting asylum and refugee issues

Produced by MediaWise (The PressWise Trust) for the NUJ Ethics Council, with support from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

If you would like a free copy email pw@presswise.org.uk

INTRODUCTION

Asylum and immigration issues are controversial areas of public policy and debate. However, public opinion and policy formation are not well served when media coverage is inaccurate, misleading or unfair.

This leaflet is designed to be of practical assistance to journalists seeking to report on the issues accurately and fairly.

Asylum seekers and refugees who have already fled conflict and persecution, and communities identified with them, have been subjected to xenophobic attacks in the UK. Alarmist media coverage has been blamed for encouraging or validating such attacks.

In October 2003 the Press Complaints Commission issued a guidance note to editors warning of “the danger that inaccurate, misleading or distorted reporting may generate an atmosphere of fear and hostility that is not borne out by the facts” - and could be in breach of Clause 1 of the industry Code of Practice.

TERMINOLOGY

Journalism uses shortcuts to convey information. However, it helps to be precise and consistent when using terms with legal definitions.

Who is an asylum seeker?

Anyone who has applied for asylum against persecution under the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, and is waiting for a decision.

Who is a refugee?

Anyone who has been granted asylum under the UN Convention, to which the UK is a signatory along with 144 other countries. The precise legal definition in Article 1 of the Convention refers to a ‘refugee’ as a person who: “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”

What about those fleeing general conflict?

People who do not qualify for refugee status may be granted humanitarian protection allowing them ‘leave to remain’ in the UK for a defined or indefinite period, if they cannot safely return to their home country. UNHCR describes these people as ‘refugees’.

Can those not granted refugee status or temporary leave to remain be sent back home?

YES - although their country of origin might refuse to accept returnees or return may not be possible. Such individuals will generally not be eligible to receive UK benefits or support, nor are they legally entitled to work. In some cases they will be held in detention.

Who is an ‘illegal asylum seeker’?

NO-ONE. This term is always incorrect. It cannot be illegal to seek asylum since everyone has the fundamental human right to request asylum under international law. The term ‘bogus asylum seeker’ is also inaccurate and misleading as it pre-judges the outcome of an asylum application - rather like describing a defendant as entering a ‘bogus plea of innocence’ during a trial.

Are there ‘failed asylum seekers’?

YES. The term covers individuals who have exhausted all their legal avenues in seeking asylum. That does not necessarily mean their claim is ‘bogus’; it means they have failed to meet the UK’s current criteria, which change from time to time. Their lives may still be at risk, and they may qualify to remain in the UK on humanitarian grounds.

Are ‘asylum seekers’ the same as ‘illegal immigrants’?

NO. Asylum seekers have registered with the Home Office and are allowed to remain in the UK while their claim is being considered. The Convention acknowledges that someone fleeing persecution may enter a country by irregular means (and often without any documents) in order to claim asylum. The term ‘illegal immigrants’ could apply to people who can be shown to have:

- entered the country illegally, without permission from an Immigration Officer, who then continue to reside in the UK without contacting the authorities or making an asylum application; OR
- entered the country legally, with all the necessary documents, but then disregard limits placed on the length of stay set on their visa (‘overstayers’); OR
- refused to co-operate with Home Office attempts to remove them for whatever reason.

What do you call someone who tries to enter the UK by unlawful means?

Some of those smuggled into the UK (hidden in lorries, etc) will be seeking asylum, but it is inaccurate to categorise them all as ‘asylum seekers’ since some may have no intention to seek asylum. The government refers to these as ‘clandestines’ although ‘irregular migrants’ might be a more accurate and less confusing term. People-smugglers are committing a crime but their clientele may not be.

Who are ‘economic migrants’?

People who leave their home country to seek work and opportunities unavailable there. The term could be applied to all those who obtain work permits from the government to fill labour shortages in the UK. UNHCR describes a ‘migrant’ as someone who makes a conscious, voluntary choice to leave their country of origin. When they want to, they can return home in safety.

REPORTING THE CAUSE OF ASYLUM SEEKING

Relatively little coverage is given to the human rights abuses and conflicts that force people to flee their homes, yet providing this global context would improve the quality of debate around asylum issues. Historical, cultural and family links with the UK and a desire for safety under the rule of law may be more significant than so-called ‘pull factors’ like access to benefits.

At least 25% of all those granted asylum in the UK are women, and many unaccompanied minors are sent on hazardous journeys to find safety in the UK.

A wealth of background information is available on the Internet, and balance can be achieved by referring to a variety of sources. (See Links)

Interviewing refugees and asylum seekers

Asylum seekers and refugees have a right to be heard, and many have amazing stories to tell. However fear of reprisals ‘back home’, stereotyping, negative coverage and public hostility in the UK make many reluctant to talk to journalists.

When seeking interviews:

- be clear about your purpose;
- be sensitive to requests for anonymity;
- inform yourself about countries of origin.

Avoid stereotyping

Material that relies upon stereotypes for its impact (images implying threat and illegality, for example groups of masked or hooded young men) can mislead and distort perceptions, especially where they do not relate to the facts of a story. Each person’s story is different.

Know your experts

When relying on experts and specialist organisations, it helps to check their details to provide context for the public - most will have websites that provide some background. Avoid relying on one source, especially when issues are contentious. There is a great variety to choose from.

Getting facts and figures right

A failure to distinguish between fact and conjecture can have alarming consequences, as can distortion of facts and figures. It is always worth checking and challenging figures quoted by politicians or others with a vested interest. To enhance credibility, indicate the provenance of statistics. (See Links)

PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILMING

Take care when publishing images that may identify individuals. Make sure captions are accurate. If in doubt about the use of images - talk to the people being portrayed.

- People fleeing persecution leave families behind who may face retribution from repressive regimes if relatives in the UK are identified.
- Exiled political activists from other countries may risk death threats or attacks by agents of the regime they opposed, or by regime loyalists in the UK.
- Normal considerations of respect for personal privacy apply to asylum seekers and refugees, particularly when identifying children.
- Giving prominence simply because of their asylum or refugee status could lead to unwarranted discrimination and hostility.

REPORTING THIRD PARTY COMMENT

To avoid 'misleading or distorted reporting', care should be taken when quoting third party comments - and the prominence given to them. Publishing unsubstantiated claims or comments is poor journalistic practice. In the case of asylum issues, publishing hostile allegations can generate 'fear and hostility that is not borne out by the facts'.

Appendix 3

Tables for articles with an individual focus

The extent to which articles have a local, national and international focus

TABLE 4.18

	ethnic (%)	Regional (%)	National (%)	Top 6 daily nationals (%)	Total (%)
Total number articles with individual focus	7	146	282	96	434
Local and national	1 (14%)	22 (15%)	16 (6%)	9 (9%)	39 (9%)
National and international	3 (43%)	10 (7%)	99 (35%)	29 (30%)	112 (26%)
Local and international	0 (0%)	16 (11%)	3 (1%)	0 (0%)	19 (4%)
Local, national and international	0 (0%)	38 (26%)	7 (2%)	0 (0%)	45 (10%)
Purely local (or regional)	0 (0%)	44 (30%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)	46 (11%)
Purely national	3	16 (11%)	155 (55%)	58 (60%)	174 (40%)

Articles that mention asylum/asylum seekers/refugees but are primarily on a subject other than asylum or immigration

ethnic	Regional (%)	National (%)	Top 6 daily nationals (%)	Total (%)
7	146	282	96	434
4	73 (50%)	172 (61%)	42 (44%)	249 (57%)

Policy topics reported

TABLE 4.20

	faith/minority (%)	regional (%)	National (%)	Top 6 daily nationals (%)	Total (%)
Articles with an individual focus	7	146	282	96	434
Is asylum/refugee policy mentioned?	3 (43%)	66 (45%)	122 (43%)	36 (38%)	191 (44%)

Terrorism, terror suspects, detention, control orders, tagging, bugging devices, house arrest, terrorism Act	0 (0%)	5 (8%)	43 (35%)	14 (39%)	48 (25%)
Eu	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)	3 (1%)
Determination policy as it relates to decisions on specific cases, evidence needed to prove claim	1 (33%)	27 (41%)	20 (16%)	6 (17%)	48 (25%)
Deportation/ return/removals policy, targets,	1 (33%)	18 (27%)	14 (11%)	9 (25%)	33 (17%)
Failed asylum seekers	0 (0%)	8 (12%)	8 (7%)	6 (17%)	16 (8%)
references to conservative proposals	2 (67%)	4 (6%)	8 (7%)	1 (3%)	14 (7%)
Policy of not allowing asylum seekers to work	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	4 (2%)
Total for integration policy topics - use checklist below	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (3%)	0 (0%)	4 (2%)
Total references to new government policy proposals	0	4	1	0	5

POLICY DESCRIPTIONS

TABLE 4.21

	faith/minority	regional	National	Top 6	Total
Articles with an individual focus	7	146	282	96	434
Is asylum/ refugee policy described	3 (43%)	37 (25%)	74 (26%)	28 (29%)	114 (26%)

Policy descriptions/comments in articles with an individual focus on the topics of decision making and deportation/removal

TABLE 4.22

faith/minority	Regional	national
Like putting him on death row	<p>Terrified</p> <p>Home Office decision not to allow a failed asylum seeker studying at Oxford to apply for a student visa is wasted opportunity</p> <p>Anxiously waiting</p> <p>Locals believe genuine</p> <p>Not given a fair hearing</p> <p>Victim of obsession to cut numbers</p> <p>Asylum refused torture victim</p> <p>Fear killed on return</p> <p>In limbo</p> <p>Case reviewed after handed petition from local supporters</p> <p>Frightened will be taken away in the night</p> <p>Deportation of hard working people is wrong</p> <p>End of legal aid meant vulnerable asylum seeker forced to represent self</p> <p>Pressure from local supporters can influence decisions</p> <p>The government is failing to deport failed asylum seekers (occurs twice)</p> <p>Deportation of failed asylum seeker would have prevented death of child by drink driving - family should get legal aid to sue Home Office</p> <p>Deportation of failed asylum seeker would have prevented death of child by drink driving - appeal procedure should be tightened up</p> <p>The Tories would deport failed asylum seekers more effectively</p>	<p>Asylum refused despite evidence of torture scars, and immediate family murdered</p> <p>Return of unaccompanied minors once they reach 18 is described as appalling, shameful political expediency.</p> <p>Increase in deportations is due to election campaigns, but a local Tory candidate joins campaign to stop deportation of local asylum seeker - because believes vote winner</p> <p>Frustrating that Home Office overlooks potential value to economy of asylum seekers unfair</p> <p>how can they refuse?</p> <p>Detention of failed asylum seeker would have prevented death of child by drink driving</p> <p>Government fails to deport failed asylum seekers (occurs 5 times)</p> <p>Home Office decision to look again at case of individual claiming asylum on grounds of sexuality is 'extraordinary' (occurs twice)</p> <p>Home Office decision not to allow a failed asylum seeker studying at Oxford to apply for a student visa is unreasonable</p>

Statistics

Major topics

TABLE 4.23

variable name	faith/minority	regional	National	Top 6 daily nationals	Total
Articles with an individual focus	7	146	282	96	434
NUMBERS MENTIONED?	1 (14%)	20 (14%)	39 (14%)	15 (16%)	60 (14%)
Numbers claiming asylum in the UK, numbers of asylum seekers in the UK	1 (100%)	0	2 (5%)	0 (0%)	3 (5%)

Numbers relating to extent of a crime - cost etc	0 (0%)	4 (20%)	15 (38%)	8 (53%)	19 (32%)
Numbers of failed asylum seekers, or overstayers - includes 1 regional ref to nos of bogus	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	1 (7%)	1 (2%)
Generalised term such as dozens, hundreds, thousands, millions	0 ((0%))	2 (10%)	4 (10%)	3 (20%)	6 (10%)

The impact of asylum - on the economy and welfare,

Main topics

TABLE 4.24

	faith/ minority (%)	regional (%)	National (%)	Top 6 daily nationals (%)	Total (%)
Articles with an individual focus	7	146	282	96	434
Is welfare / effect on services mentioned?	4 (57%)	54 (37%)	122 (43%)	25 (26%)	180 (41%)
TOPICS					
Educated, professional, skilled contributors to economy/ society - or preparing to contribute	3 (75%)	34 (63%)	66 (54%)	6 (24%)	103 (57%)
R/AS contributing to creative arts eg theatre, film	2 (50%)	13 (24%)	62 (51%)	6 (24%)	77 (42%)
Illegal working, cheap labour, cash in hand, black economy	0 (0%)	11 (20%)	6 (5%)	4 (16%)	17 (10%)
Children doing as well or better than locals at school/ Children catching up at school despite initial language barriers	0 (0%)	9 (17%)	8 (7%)	0 (0%)	17 (9%)
Refugee community organisations meeting community needs/ Individual as/refs meeting community needs	0 (0%)	7 (13%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (4%)
Unemployed but wanting to work - esp doctors	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (7%)	1 (4%)	6 (3%)
Filling skills gap	0 (0%)	2 (4%)	4 (3%)	0 (0%)	5 (3%)

Health risk, bringing disease	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (4%)	1 (4%)	5 (3%)
Scrounger, sponger, fraudster, robbing the system	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	2 (2%)	1 (4%)	3 (2%)
Better off than other groups/ pampered/ Receiving preferential treatment compared with other British residents	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	1 (4%)	1 (1%)
Burden/strain on resources/ Linked to local deprivation and shortages	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (1%)

Presentation of crime and community safety

Major themes: Tables showing frequency of reporting of crime and community safety issues. Table shows topics reported over 30 times only.

TABLE 4.25

meaning	faith/ minority (%)	regional (%)	National (%)	Top 6 daily nationals (%)	Total (%)
Articles with an individual focus	7	146	282	96	434
Are crime and community safety issues mentioned? - as % of total articles	1 (14%)	59 (40%)	112 (40%)	59 (63%)	172 (40%)
TOPICS					
Arrested, jailed, guilty		28 (47%)	31 (28%)	21 (36%)	59 (34%)
Terrorism		7 (12%)	46 (41%)	22 (37%)	53 (31%)
Criminal activity by refugees and asylum seekers involving forged documents, deception, bribery, fraud, counterfeit money, money laundering	0 (0%)	12 (20%)	17 (15%)	10 (17%)	29 (17%)
Dangerous driving, including driving without license or insurance, drink driving, hit and run. Includes 24 reports about case of young boy killed by failed asylum seeker	0 (0%)	10 (17%)	11 (10%)	11 (19%)	21 (12%)
Complicit in people smuggling, trafficking, especially for illegal work and prostitution - gang-master, pimp, brothel	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	16 (14%)	7 (12%)	18 (10%)

Experiencing physical or verbal harassment or attacks, particularly children attacks on property, arson, anti-semitism, bullying Includes racially aggravated killing of a refugee or asylum seeker	1 (100%)	9 (15%)	3 (3%)	0 (0%)	13 (8%)
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Detention

TABLE 4.26

Articles with an individual focus	faith/minority (%)	regional (%)	National (%)	Top 6 daily nationals (%)	Total (%)
	7	146	282	96	434
Detention mentioned?	0	12 (8%)	41 (15%)	10 (10%)	53 (12%)
imm		11 (92%)	11 (27%)	4 (40%)	22 (42%)
terror		1 (8%)	29 (70%)	4 (40%)	30 (57%)
Hardship in detention		5 (5%)	8 (20%)	2 (20%)	13 (25%)
Suicide in detention		1 (8%)	4 (10%)	2 (20%)	5 (9%)
Abuse in detention			1		1 (2%)
luxury		0 (0%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)
Detention of children		1 (8%)	4 (10%)	1 (10%)	5 (9%)
escaping		0 (0%)	1 (2%)	1 (10%)	1 (2%)

The perceptions of and interactions between asylum seekers and refugees and the general public

TABLE 4.27

	faith/minority	regional	National	Top 6 daily nationals	Total
Articles with an individual focus	7	146	282	96	434
Are perceptions of and interaction with refugees and asylum seekers mentioned?	4 (57%)	71 (49%)	75 (27%)	17 (18%)	150 (35%)
topics					

Sympathy for experiences in country of origin/ Information given on international context/ Fleeing human rights abuses, horror, oppression, torture, war	2 (50%)	35 (49%)	24 (32%)	2 (12%)	61 (41%)
Local concern at unsuccessful applicants planned or actual detention or deportation	1 (25%)	25 (35%)	7 (9%)	0 (0%)	33 (22%)
Are being or should be offered welcome, support, help	0 (0%)	8 (11%)	19 (25%)	1 (6%)	27 (18%)
Bogus, false, fraudulent illegal, failed, rejected	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	4 (5%)	0 (0%)	6 (4%)
Community benefiting from cultural diversity/ Awareness of and celebration of diversity	0 (0%)	3 (4%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)	5 (3%)
Community helping asylum seekers/refugees to get involved in community activities, integrate, promote understanding	1 (25%)	4 (6%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	6 (4%)
concern expressed at media attitudes to asylum - by public or by newspaper	0 (0%)	4 (6%)	8 (11%)	0 (0%)	12 (8%)
'the public' or 'the British people' are concerned / angry / alarmed etc.	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	4 (5%)	4 (24%)	5 (3%)

Appendix 4

Analysis of '1 in 20 asylum seekers is HIV'

Details of article

Headline: 1 in 20 asylum seekers is HIV; treating them stops 12 hospitals being built

Paper: Daily Star

Journalist: Iain Burchell

Date: March 8, 2005

Page: 9

Summary

The article claims a new report from leading HIV/AIDS doctors shows that one-in-twenty asylum seekers arriving in Britain is HIV positive. The headline says that treating them 'stops' 12 hospitals being built. The doctors, it adds, want treatment stopped when asylum cases are rejected.

How the article raises issues of concern to the PCC

The article raises concerns under Clause 1i (accuracy) and 1iii (fact, comment and conjecture).

Paragraph-by-paragraph analysis

One in 20 asylum seekers landing in Britain is HIV positive, Aids doctors revealed last night.

This is inaccurate. The report estimates that 899 asylum seekers (out of the 19,995 applications between October 2003 and September 2004) are living with HIV. It clearly states that the figure is "approximately 1 in 22" (112).

And treating them will cost more than £1.2billion over the next 10 years - enough to build 12 new general hospitals.

This, too, is inaccurate. The report estimates that treating the 899 asylum seekers will cost £13,485,000 a year - it makes no assessment of the cost over ten years. However, applying the annual cost over ten years would give a figure of £1.34 billion.

The suggestion in the headline that treating the asylum seekers 'stops' hospitals being built is also misleading. It might be correct to claim that £1.2bn is equivalent to the cost of 12 new general hospitals - but it is conjecture to suggest that spending in this area prevents those hospitals from being built.

The shocking cost, which is crippling some hospital departments, was unveiled by a team of respected Aids specialists - whose report also claims that up to 8,000 asylum seekers with HIV are already in Britain.

Far from suggesting that the cost is 'shocking', the report states that £13.4 million is "not considerable when compared to the £1-2m per week paid out by NASS on unoccupied properties for asylum seekers" (113). This is editorial comment, and should be labelled as such. The report also makes no reference to the costs 'crippling' hospitals.

The report does not give a figure for the number of asylum seekers with HIV.

The authors advocate better services for asylum seekers with HIV, and state that "prevention of HIV or its early diagnosis and effective treatment is not just a right in itself but represents a responsible use of taxpayers' money" (114) - a very different message to that put forward by the newspaper. They also note: "providing treatment and preventing onward transmission of HIV from the estimated 899 asylum seekers... would save between £500m and £1 billion over an average lifetime." (115)

112 Treat with respect, p4

113 *ibid*, p5

114 *ibid*, p5

115 *ibid*

Each year the NHS has a £120million bill to give them retroviral drugs - and treatment must continue for 10 years.

But 1,000 more with HIV get in each year so the bill is mounting.

The report makes no mention of this number, so it is unclear where it comes from.

The doctors' findings have sparked fresh demands for Home Secretary Charles Clarke to tighten controls to stop people with HIV getting into Britain.

The doctors make no recommendations about asylum controls - but do recommend very clearly that the Government should enable everyone with HIV, regardless of immigration status, to receive free HIV treatment.

Led by Prof Brian Gazzard, the docs say 922 HIV positive asylum seekers came between Oct 2003-Sept 2004.

The report actually states that 899 HIV positive asylum seekers came from 10 countries. Professor Gazzard confirms that the figures used in this article are wrong. "I can confirm that these figures are just inaccurate," he says (116).

They were among 20,402 applicants from 10 countries which sent the highest numbers. Most were from Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia.

The report states that there were 19,995 applicants from the 10 countries.

In that 12-month period 764 of 2,270 asylum seekers from Zimbabwe were HIV positive - more than a third.

The report states that 765 out of the 2,270 asylum seekers from Zimbabwe were HIV positive.

It costs the NHS £15,000 a year to treat each HIV patient. But docs say it'd soar to £1m a year if not treated as they'd spread the virus.

The report also mentions prevention and early diagnosis as well as preventing transmission of the disease.

Many drag out their bid to stay through the appeal system to get treatment. But the docs want treatment halted when their applications are rejected.

This is categorically untrue. One of the main recommendations of the report is "that HIV is reclassified as a sexually transmitted disease that warrants free medical care irrespective of immigration status and as a first cost-effective public health measure we urge the Government to immediately reconsider its position on withdrawing HIV treatment to failed asylum seekers and others of undetermined immigration status who do not have an ability to pay." (117)

The Tories say they would screen all asylum seekers and boot out NHS spongers.

Migrationwatch UK chief Sir Andrew Green said: "Ninety per cent of new HIV cases are thought to have been acquired overseas, mostly in Africa.

"We must require visas from these countries and that they're only issued after medical testing."

Analysis of 'More than £140 per home on asylum seekers'

Details of article

Headline: More than £140 per home on asylum seekers

116 Email to researcher, 8 July 2005

117 *ibid*, p6

Paper: Wolverhampton Express and Star
Journalist: Cathy Spencer
Date: February 1, 2005
Page: 20

Summary

This article reports claims by Alex Robson, prospective Conservative candidate for Wolverhampton North East, that under the present Labour government the cost of asylum support has reached more than £140 per household in the city. Robson says that abuse of the current asylum system is putting pressure on local services and that the Conservatives will advocate a better and fairer system like the Australian model, which is based on a points system.

The story is based on a press release from the Wolverhampton North East Conservatives (118). The £140 figure comes from a speech made by the Conservative Party leader Michael Howard on January 28 at Kent County Hall (119).

At this time, it was widely expected that the Government was about to call a general election.

How the article raises issues of concern to the PCC

The article raises concerns in three areas. Firstly, the £140 figure is presented as fact in both the headline and body, even though it is disputed by Wolverhampton City Council (inverted commas around the headline, and/or the use of 'claimed' rather than 'revealed' in the first line would indicate that this figure had not been verified by the newspaper). This is an issue of accuracy (Clause 1i of the Code). Secondly, the article fails to provide a clear time-frame for the figure (again, Clause 1i of the Code). Thirdly, the article lacks balance.

Paragraph-by-paragraph analysis

A Wolverhampton conservative candidate has revealed that each household in the city is paying more than £140 on supporting asylum seekers.

Alex Robson, prospective candidate for Wolverhampton North East, says the cost of asylum support has risen more than 30 times under the present government.

She said: "Under Mr Blair, local councils' spending on asylum has reached more than £140 per household. Britain has a proud tradition of giving refuge to people genuinely fleeing persecution.

The article fails to provide a clear time-frame for the figure. The use of the present tense ('each household in the city is paying...') strongly suggests that this is an annual expenditure figure. In fact, it covers a seven-year period from 1997/8 to 2004/5 (which gives an average expenditure of £20 a year).

It presents the £140 as local expenditure ('each household in the city is paying...') when, in fact, it is not (120). Costs for supporting asylum seekers are reimbursed to local authorities through central funds from the Home Office. But the article does not make this clear - by presenting it as a payment per household in Wolverhampton, it strongly suggests that this is a local figure.

The true figure for local expenditure is an estimated £1.5 million for 2005/6, according to the Deputy Leader of Wolverhampton City Council, Labour Councillor Peter Bilson (121). He adds: "We do not know from where

118 www.wolverhamptonnortheast.com/page/3/50/

119 www.conservatives.com/tile.do?def=news.story.page&cobj_id=119200&speeches=1

120 Alan Sendorek, Conservative Party press officer, explained how the figure was calculated: "Annual asylum spending by local councils, which is mostly reimbursed by central government (ie the taxpayer), has risen by 30 times since 1997. In total, £3.1 billion has been spent since 1997, which works out as £142 per household nationally, (ie under Mr Blair spending has reached more than £140). Taxpayers in Wolverhampton have been subject to this as much as anyone else, even if they have paid via central government taxes (reimbursing local councils) rather than local council taxes" (interview with researcher).

121 "Local expenditure by Wolverhampton City Council on asylum seekers in 2005/6 will total £1.5 million, which comes from specific central Government grant via the NASS (National Asylum Support Service) contract. There is no direct net cost to Wolverhampton's Council Tax payers via Council Tax," he says (interview with researcher).

or how the figure of £140 per household has been derived. As there are 100,000 households in Wolverhampton, £140 per household would equate to £14 million.”

“It is a tradition we want to keep, but our asylum system is being abused. Only two in ten people who claim asylum are genuine refugees.

According to the most recent Home Office figures, the number of asylum applications (excluding dependants) received in 2003 was 49,405 - and of those only 17 per cent (8,398) were allowed to stay in the UK (122), which broadly equates to one-in-five (or two in ten). But it is misleading to claim that those asylum seekers who are not granted leave to remain are not genuine refugees. Not all asylum claims that fail do so because they are groundless - for example, someone may have very good reasons for being granted asylum, but their claim may fail because they receive poor legal representation. Also, the criteria for asylum change from time to time and an individual's life may still be at risk even though they don't qualify to stay in the UK on humanitarian grounds. While journalists have a duty to accurately report what politicians say, they are also free to challenge inaccurate statements such as this.

“Abuse of the system is putting pressure on local services. The cost of asylum support by local councils has risen over thirty times under Mr Blair.” She says the majority of British people want a system that gives priority to genuine asylum seekers but this has been forgotten by Mr Blair, who has allowed the system to be abused. “This is taxpayers' money that could have been spent on local priorities. Mr Blair promised to run a ‘swift and fair’ asylum system. This was all talk,” she said.

As explained above, spending on asylum is reimbursed to local authorities by the Home Office, so it is misleading to claim that this money could have been spent on local priorities - this claim, too, could have been challenged.

“The situation will get even worse if Labour, supported by the Liberal Democrats, surrender to the European Commission and give up our veto over new EU laws on asylum and immigration, and give unelected, unaccountable judges more power over our asylum system. Instead, Conservatives have recently outlined practical solutions to tackle the problem. We will introduce an Australian-style points system for work permits - giving priority to people with the skills Britain needs. Asylum will only be given to those in genuine need.”

The article fails to provide third-party comment on the figure and claims made by Robson. Good journalistic practice would be to include a response from the local or national government (or at least indication that their comments had been sought).

122 ‘Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom, 2003’, published 24 August 2004

Appendix 5

Testimonies of refugee journalists (123)

Three journalists from the RAM Project describe their difficult experiences working as journalists in countries where freedom of the press is not respected.

LILIYA SAZANAVETS, JOURNALIST FROM BELARUS

I was a successful journalist and writer in Belarus when, in 1994, Mr Lukashenka became the president. After I published articles about Lukashenka or the government, I received anonymous calls. One day someone tried to kill my youngest son. A masked man shouted to him: 'Tell your mother that if she doesn't stop her writing, we will kill her and you!' In 1999 I was elected as a member of the Central Electoral Committee of the Republic of Belarus and I became Press Secretary to the Chairman of the Parliament. The Belarusian Parliament tried to return Belarus to democracy. Our Committee Chairman disappeared and was probably killed. I was poisoned and almost died. Thanks to God and my doctor, I am still alive. I left Belarus for Lithuania and continued working from there, my husband and children remained in Belarus. In July 2000, I was stopped on the border between Belarus and Lithuania and told that a special 'death squad' had been given secret orders to kill me. Soon afterwards our family came to England. I have continued to work as a journalist, contributing to reports about the Baltic and about refugees.

ABU BAKAR SHAW, JOURNALIST FROM SIERRA LEONE

Practising journalism in Sierra Leone was and remains dangerous. Freedom of the press is non-existent. Censorship and intimidation of the press has become the norm under the so-called democratic government of president Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. I was Production Manager at ExpoTimes, the award winning, best-selling independent newspaper in the country. It was banned in 1998 for our editorial stance. Like other dailies, ExpoTimes was totally against any form of military intervention to resolve years of the bloody civil war. The government was in favour of military solution. Anyone favouring dialogue was considered a rebel-collaborator. As a result ExpoTimes' editors fled abroad. I was arrested together with News Editor Conrad Roy in 1998. We were detained at a maximum security prison where we were tortured, maltreated and starved. 10 months later I was bailed. My colleague Conrad Roy, who was facing treason charges, died in prison in mysterious circumstances. I left Sierra Leone and came to the UK. I am now a British citizen and graduated last year in New Media Journalism with Law at the Thames Valley University London. ExpoTimes has been revived on the internet and I am its UK correspondent.

JAHANGIR HAJIPOUR, JOURNALIST FROM IRAN

As a writer and journalist I have seen the ill-treatment of all those with political views whose job it is to write. When I started work as a teacher I noticed how the Islamic rules in Iran restrict freedom of expression, and wrote many articles critical of it. In consequence I was taken to court as an anti-revolutionary. In 1994 I was banned from teaching for six years. From 1996 I worked as an interviewer and TV presenter in the Cultural Centre for Iranians Abroad and I was an editorial writer in charge of the political pages of the daily Tose-eh, which was run largely under the direct supervision of the Deputy Labour Minister. Then Tose-eh was banned for three years and other papers that I wrote for - Sobhe Emrooz Azad and Azadegan - were banned permanently by the government. I was accused of supporting western propaganda when I wrote an editorial critical of Iranian TV and interviewed a leading left-winger for the weekly Siasat. I received threats and intimidation when I refused to handle translation for the Vali-e-Faqih office. They called me 'infidel'. I was told I would regret my decision and no-one would help me. I was followed continually by the Security Forces and beaten by Ansare Hezbollah many times. In 2000, I left Iran for the UK. I have since completed a book, Home, about the views of asylum seekers and refugees on the differences between their own countries and the UK. I am also working on a new book called Terrorism in worldwide dimensions.

123 further information available from Mediawise (2003) Exile Journalists Directory, Mediawise

