

**New Labour's Management of the
Asylum System (1997-2007)
and the Consequent Social
Exclusion of Asylum Seekers**

A Greater Manchester Case Study

Ben Hickman

For more information please contact:

ben.hickman1985@googlemail.com

07877892932

Abstract

In response to mounting national pressures, New Labour have attempted to reduce the number of applications for asylum in the UK. Their management of the asylum system is based upon a false dichotomy between the categories of 'economic migrants and 'asylum seekers', which has led to the insufficiently evidenced assertion that socio-economic 'pull-factors' are leading to abuses of the asylum system. In an attempt to reduce the lure of these 'pull-factors', New Labour have implemented policies designed to exclude asylum seekers from certain spheres of UK society. This research aims to develop the theory that New Labour has implemented policies that result in the social exclusion of asylum seekers, evidenced via a case study of asylum seekers in Greater Manchester. It will be demonstrated that the social exclusion of asylum seekers is apparent in a denial of their right to a basic standard of living, a denial of their access to local services, and a denial of their potential to participate fully in UK society.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Academics have recently traced a shift in New Labour's management of immigration away from a multicultural agenda towards an at least partial assimilationist response (for example see Joppke 2004; Back et al 2002). However, the theory that New Labour's management of asylum seekers can be considered in terms of exclusion has not been developed. Therefore, this research aims to develop a theory of New Labour's exclusion of asylum seekers and to evidence that theory using the experiences of asylum seekers in Greater Manchester. Evidence will be provided by an analysis of specific New Labour policies, their implementation, and their exclusionary consequences upon the lives of asylum seekers.

Part 1 of this research aims to demonstrate that in response to national pressures, New Labour has sought to reduce the numbers of applications for asylum. It will be maintained that this has been based upon a commitment to dichotomous categories of 'economic migrants' and 'asylum seekers', and the explicit attribution of the rising numbers of asylum applications to the threat of 'economic migrants' seeking to 'abuse' the asylum system (Home Office 1998: para1.14). Consequently, this has legitimised the social exclusion of asylum seekers in that New Labour have introduced policies designed to remove asylum seekers from those elements of society perceived as providing motivation for abuse.

Furthermore, *Part 1* will explore the theoretical weaknesses of New Labour's legitimisation of the exclusion of asylum seekers by considering the phenomenon of asylum seeking in the wider context of transnational migratory behaviour. Placing asylum seeking in this context demonstrates that national policy is a blunt tool for influencing migratory behaviour. Consequently, it will be illustrated that New Labour's commitment to the dichotomous categories of 'asylum seekers' and 'economic migrants', and their contention that rising applications for asylum can be attributed abuses of the asylum system, are both critically problematic.

Part 2 provides an examination of evidence supporting the theory that New Labour's management of asylum seekers is exclusionary, via a case study of asylum seekers in Greater Manchester. This case study is used to explore the implementation of policy designed to exclude asylum seekers from particular spheres of society. Specifically: the introduction of a no-choice dispersal policy; the complete withdrawal of asylum seekers from the mainstream benefits system; and the removal of asylum seekers' right to work. Importantly, it provides a discussion of the social exclusion of asylum seekers by New Labour with reference to the effects this has upon their lives.

Therefore, *Part 1* of this research develops a general theory of asylum seekers' social exclusion by New Labour, and an analysis of why this is theoretically problematic. Firstly, the implications of understanding asylum seeking in a transnational context are made clear by exploring asylum seeking as part of the wider phenomenon of global migratory behaviour (*Chapter 3*). Secondly, the national pressures that New Labour faces are identified in order that New Labour's motivation to reduce applications for asylum is understood (*Chapter 4*). Finally, the theory of asylum seekers' exclusion by New Labour is developed by considering the management of asylum seekers as a response to national pressures (*Chapter 5*).

Part 2 provides practical evidence from a case study of asylum seekers in Greater Manchester in terms of social exclusion in practice as an impact of policy. Therefore, *Part 2* begins by developing a deeper understanding of the term 'social exclusion' (*Chapter 6*) before relating it to the three New Labour policies under discussion: the introduction of no-choice dispersal (*Chapter 7*); a complete withdrawal of asylum seekers from the mainstream benefits system (*Chapter 8*); and the denial of access to the labour market (*Chapter 9*).

Chapter 2: Method

As discussed, the aim of this research is to explain New Labour's management of the asylum system in terms of the social exclusion of asylum seekers. It will assess the implementation of exclusionary policies and the consequences of these policies upon the lives of asylum seekers. Evidence is provided via the explanatory case study of Greater Manchester, used as an example of a local arm of the State (for a discussion of its relevance see *Chapter 7*). Specifically the research seeks to address the following questions:

Figure 1: Research Questions

QI. <i>What social context has resulted in New Labour policies that exclude asylum seekers from participating in society, and why are these policies theoretically problematic?</i>
QII. <i>What specific aspects of New Labour's asylum policy (1997-2007) lead to the social exclusion of asylum seekers?</i>
QIII. <i>How has this exclusionary asylum policy been implemented since its introduction?</i>
QIV. <i>How is this social exclusion apparent in the effects that these policies have upon the lives of asylum seekers?</i>

A case study has been used to enable the analysis of a complex, contemporary social phenomenon within its natural environment (Yin 2003). *Part 1* of this dissertation is a review of relevant recent literature explaining the development of the theory that New Labour's management of asylum seekers results in their social exclusion, and explaining its theoretical weaknesses (QI). *Part 2* provides evidence for this theory via a discussion of the relevant exclusionary policies (QII) in terms of their implementation within Greater Manchester (QIII), and their effects upon the lives of asylum seekers (QIV).

Therefore, *Part 2* focuses analysis via a bounded case study allowing the research to reveal the way a general principle of social organisation (the social exclusion of asylum seekers) manifests itself in a specified practical context (Gomm et al 2000: 171). The advantage of focusing on a technically distinct situation is that it allows a deeper and more engaged analysis than would be achieved if a wider area were under study (Yin 2003: 14). Furthermore, the fact that the case is technically specific overcomes problematic aspects of the concept of social exclusion. There is often a lack of clarity as to *who* exactly are excluded, and insufficient consideration of *what* people are being excluded from (Ratcliffe 1999: 4). However, this research overcomes these limitations by focusing upon a specifically bounded situation defined in the following way:

Firstly, '*asylum seekers*' are those people who have applied for asylum under the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, as amended by the 1967 Protocol (UNHCR 2007). Secondly, '*Greater Manchester*' refers to the ten boroughs that constitute the Metropolitan County (Appendix 1). Thirdly, the '*1997-2007*' time period reflects the fact that although key immigration legislation was introduced in 1999 and 2002, the widest possible period of analysis allows for a deeper understanding of the effects these policies have had over time.

Furthermore in terms of 'what' asylum seekers are excluded from, it is important to make clear that 'asylum seekers' in this research are those persons seeking asylum in the UK, but who have not yet received a decision on their claim. Therefore they are both: (a) living in the UK and thus a constituent part of UK society, and (b) have the potential to receive a positive decision on their asylum claim, be granted refugee status, and become full British citizens. Asylum seekers are being socially excluded from full participation in a society in which they are naturally a constitutive element.

The case study data was gathered under a framework that was pre-determined by the general theory. Therefore, due to the iterative nature of explanation building and the flexible nature of case study design, analysis and data collection were simultaneous (Yin 2003: 120). Firstly, the theoretical proposition was compared with documented

evidence of New Labour's asylum policy in order to identify its potentially exclusionary aspects. This involved a review of Home Office, Parliamentary and non-governmental organisations documentation (Appendix 2). Thematic review of the documents provided revised structural points of interest for further analysis. It is acknowledged that these documents may be biased in some respect (Yin 2003: 87) but this review provided only potentially excluding structural aspects of New Labour policy worthy of further investigation.

Further analysis took the form of focused semi-structured interviews with key informants in Greater Manchester: a local authority service provider; three representatives of organisations working with asylum seekers; and three asylum seekers (See Appendix 3). The focus of these interviews was structured by those aspects of policy that had already been highlighted as possibly leading to social exclusion. Therefore, the interviews were used to gather informants' subjective experiences of those policies. The experiences of the informants were coded to inform a refinement of the areas of New Labour policy already identified, and to explore the effects that these policies had in practice on the lives of asylum seekers.

Finally, this information was used to guide and inform the secondary analysis of existing data sets (Appendix 4) concerning Greater Manchester populations, and a meta-analysis of existing research on asylum seekers. These two further data sources were viewed from the perspective of social exclusion as developed by the documentation review and interviews. Existing data sets provided vital information on the composition of Greater Manchester's population and existing problems of poverty and social exclusion. Meta-analysis of existing research on asylum seekers was used to further support the views of informants and the initial identification of aspects of policy that lead to social exclusion.

The internal validity of the study is therefore supported by a process of iterative explanation building, with each new data source refining the theory that New Labour's asylum policy leads to the social exclusion of asylum seekers. This also provides a clear chain of evidence further increasing the reliability of the conclusions

reached (Yin 2003: 105). Furthermore, the fact that the case study is being used as an explanation of the way in which a general theory is manifest in practice overcomes concerns about generalising case study research. In this regard, a limitation of the research is that the experiences of asylum seeking in Greater Manchester cannot be validly generalised to wider populations. However, it is not the purpose of the case study to provide entirely generalizable data, but to evidence a theory that is generalizable to wider populations. Therefore, the experiences of asylum seekers in Greater Manchester are simply used to provide a relevant example of theory in practice.

A critical problem for the study is its objectivity given that it began as an attempt to use a specific case to explain a pre-determined theory. From this perspective, the construct validity of the research ensures its objectivity through a number of methodological features. Firstly, using semi-structured interview schedules increases objectivity; allowing informants the opportunity to voice their opinion uninfluenced by the researcher's presuppositions. Secondly, although selection of informants was not random, the purpose of the interviews was to gather information from people with particularly relevant experiences of the asylum system. Therefore, a representative sample is provided by the fact that the chosen informants have the relevant experience. Thirdly, there is a triangulation of methods in that document analysis, semi-structured interviews, secondary analysis of existing data sets and meta-analysis of existing research all contribute to the explanation. In addition, multiple sources of evidence are used within each method allowing for numerous perspectives at each stage (Yin 2003: 98).

Access to vulnerable and isolated informants was problematic. Therefore, the Ahmed Iqbal Race Relations Centre (University of Manchester) and Refugee and Asylum Seeker Participatory Action Research (RAPAR, a Manchester based charity) were used to make contact with asylum seeker communities. In addition, trust and rapport was built between informants and the researcher by spending time in environments that the informants were comfortable with (Emmel et al 2007). Asylum seekers were met and interviewed either at RAPAR's office or at the Arlaadi Somali Community

Centre. Finally, the desire for rapport and the obligation to protect a subject's right to privacy create an ethical dilemma that needs to be addressed (de Laine 2000: 29). In this respect, it has been ensured that informants were aware of the nature of the research, have given informed consent, and the anonymity of asylum seeking informants is respected throughout.

Part 1: In Theory

New Labour policy in theory and the social exclusion of asylum seekers.

Chapter 3: The Context of Transnational Migratory Behaviour

Contemporary migration theory demonstrates the necessity of exploring the phenomenon of asylum seeking through a transnational lens, because the lives of increasing numbers of individuals can no longer be understood by looking only at what goes on within national boundaries (Levitt & Schiller 2004: 1003). Therefore, it is vitally important to begin by exploring the phenomenon of asylum seekers in the UK in the wider context of transnational migratory behaviour. There are three important consequences for this research that arise from this perspective: firstly, national policy settings are inevitably a blunt tool for managing migratory behaviour (Castles 2004); secondly, since weak states and weak economies are inseparable, asylum seekers will necessarily flee both economic impoverishment and human rights abuses (Duffield 2001); thirdly, highly developed nation states need immigrants to fill shortages in their labour markets.

Transnational migratory behaviour in a contemporary globalised context cannot be turned on and off like a tap through the appropriate national policy settings (Castles 2004) because it is 'impossible to separate the globalisation of trade and capital from the global movement of people' (Cairncross 2002: 3). Globalisation is the intensification of global connectedness, a 'world of full movement and mixture, contacts and linkages, and persistent cultural interaction and exchange' (Xavier Inda & Rosaldo 2002: 2). Therefore, the emergence of a global economy of transnational corporations is based upon international markets involving the movement of goods, services and indeed people.

Consequently, moving towards a globalised and increasingly connected world has meant entering the 'Age of Migration' (Castles & Miller 1998). In terms of the transnational movement of people, it is estimated that there were just 84 million migrants worldwide in 1975 and in less than 30 years this had more than doubled, reaching 175 million by 2002. It is projected that there will be as many as 230 million migrants by 2050 (Berkeley et al 2006: 6).

The facilitation of transnational migratory behaviour in an increasingly globalised world has two important components. Firstly, globalisation creates the cultural capital and technological means needed for migration: long-distance travel has become far cheaper and more accessible than in the past; electronic communications facilitate the dissemination of knowledge of migration routes and work opportunities; global media beam idealized images of First World lifestyles into the poorest villages (Castles 2004: 862-863); and the growth of transnational social networks and diasporas (themselves a product of earlier migratory movements) has made it easier for people to move to and settle in other countries (GCIM 2005: 7).

Secondly, globalisation creates the conditions under which people are mobilized to migrate. The expansion of export manufacturing and export agriculture, both inseparably related with direct foreign investment from highly developed countries, has mobilized new segments of the population into regional and long-distance migrations. The transformation of subsistence workers into wage labour, the displacement of small farmers, and the large scale movement of women into wage labour has led to rural-urban migration and the mobilization of an urban reserve of wage labour both within and across national boundaries (Sassen 1998: 18).

Furthermore, the transnational mobilization of wage labour is partly generated by the restructuring of labour demand in global cities. Transformations in the world economy have expanded the roles of major urban centres in highly developed countries creating 'global cities'. These global cities are dynamic, innovative and highly cosmopolitan urban centres that are facilitating the process by which people, places and cultures in different parts of the world come to be increasingly interconnected (GCIM 2005: 5). The consolidation of such cities generates a restructuring of the labour demand and evidence shows that the result is an expansion of very high-income professional and technical jobs, a shrinking of middle income jobs, and a vast expansion of low-wage jobs.

Therefore in a globalised world, highly developed nation need immigrants to fill necessary shortages in their labour markets. Transnational immigrants provide labour for low-wage jobs, including those that service the expanding high-income jobs and the high-income lifestyles of the growing top-level professionals; the expanding

downgraded manufacturing sector, including declining industries in need of cheap labour for survival; and finally, jobs created by the presence of the immigrant community itself (Sassen 1998: 22).

In terms of the effects that this restructuring has upon people's lives, international borders serve only to maintain global inequalities (Zolberg 1989). Globalisation marginalises many of the low-income developing countries, has increased inequality between nations and peoples, and polarises the world into rich and poor (Murshed 2004: 67-68). This gap between living standards in richer and poorer parts of the globe is continuing to grow (GCIM 2005: 12). 'Disparities in income, social conditions, human rights and security have increased, and despite some areas of rapid growth...parts of the South have become disconnected from the global economy, leading to stagnation and conflict' (Castles 2004: 862).

Furthermore, a good number of the low-income countries experiencing unemployment, low incomes and high rates of population growth are also countries where the democratic process is fragile, where the rule of law is weak, and where public administration is inefficient (GCIM 2005: 14). In these low-income countries, conflict is facilitated by extreme poverty, poor social conditions and systematic economic discrimination against groups based on ethno-linguistic or religious differences. Natural resources can lead to contests for control, taking the form of warfare, criminality and corruption (Murshed 2004: 76-78).

Given these conditions, it is not surprising that many people are looking for a future beyond the borders of their own country (GCIM 2005: 6). By migrating, people who are living in precarious economic and political circumstances are able to insure themselves and their families against market volatility, political crises and armed conflicts. Therefore, in the context of a globalising world, weak states and weak economies can be seen as inseparable; people move to escape both economic impoverishment and human rights abuses (Duffield 2001). The result of this is the creation of a 'migration-asylum nexus' that makes it impossible to distinguish, to any effective extent, between 'economic migrants' and 'asylum seekers' (Castles 2004: 862).

In conclusion, there are a number of significant consequences of placing asylum seekers in the UK in the context of transnational migratory behaviour. Firstly, since this transnational perspective necessarily involves the fact that weak states and weak economies are inseparable in a globalised world, policy attempting to make a definite distinction between economic migrants and asylum seekers becomes highly problematic in practice. More fundamentally, the transnational migration of people will continue to intensify as the process of globalisation increasingly facilitates and motivates it. Therefore, national policy is inevitably a blunt tool for managing immigration; however much governments tighten and enforce immigration mechanisms, increasing transnational migration is an unavoidable phenomenon of a globalised world.

Chapter 4: The Context of National Pressures

Before relating the implications of transnational pressures to New Labour's management of the UK asylum system, it is important to highlight the national pressures that motivate New Labour to respond to migratory behaviour through national policy. This discussion will focus specifically upon national pressures surrounding the asylum system that provide a strong motivation for New Labour to reduce numbers of applications for asylum. It is vital to recognise that there has been a significant increase in applications for asylum in the UK, and consequently there has been a rise in financial cost to UK governments. In addition, asylum and immigration policies need to be understood as vote-winning issues for UK governments, and therefore public and media opinion towards asylum seekers must be taken into account.

However, although perhaps self-evident, it is important to begin by recognising explicitly that the UK has a commitment to providing for asylum seekers. Firstly, the UK is a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, as amended by the 1967 Protocol (UNCHR 2007). This means that the UK has accepted a responsibility to protect those people who flee their countries due to a well-founded fear of persecution. In addition the UK is a signatory to the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR 2003) which means that it has a commitment not to send individuals to a country where there is a real risk they will be exposed to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment.

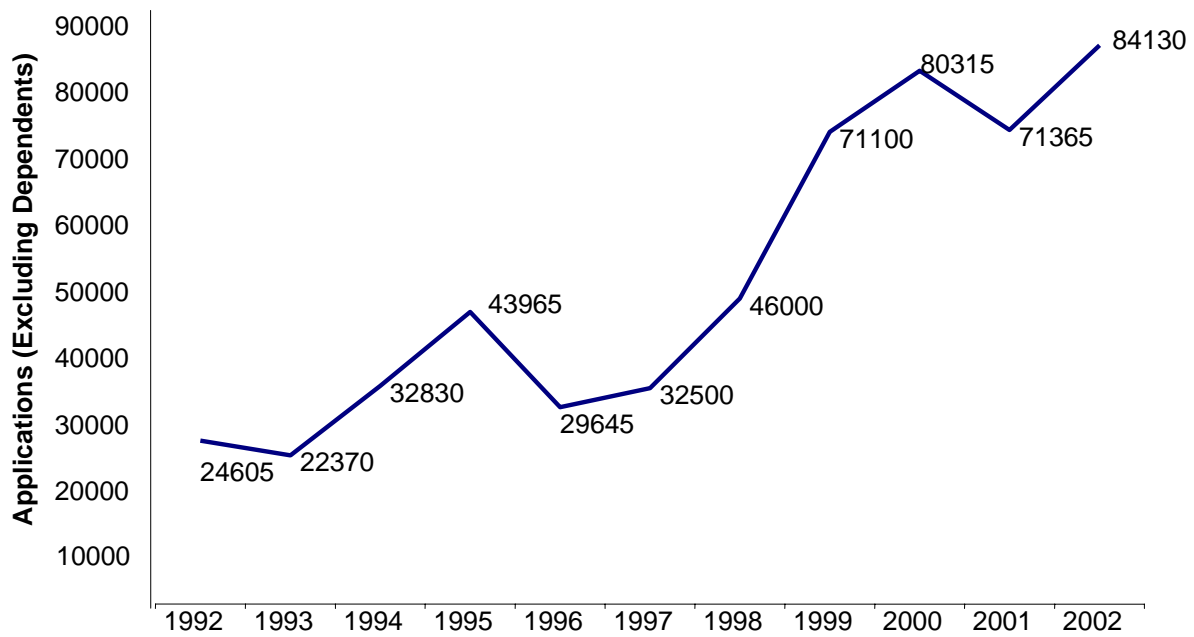
Secondly, recent research conducted by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) (Lewis 2005) concluded that more than three-quarters of the British Public feel that people in fear of their lives should be allowed to remain in the UK. Similarly, the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust (2004) concluded that 78% of the British public felt that people fleeing from genocide or ethnic cleansing should be allowed entry to the UK, or at least be given the right to have their case judged on its merits (Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, 2004). Therefore, evidence would suggest that there is considerable and broad support for the principle of asylum, and the UK's role in providing protection for those who are in need of it.

In terms of national pressures on New Labour to reduce applications for asylum, from the late 1980s the total number of applications began to rise dramatically from around 4,000 a year during 1985-1988 (Home Office 1998: para1.9) to around 24,000 in 1992. Applications continued to rise significantly during the first years of the New Labour Government, reaching a peak of over 80,000 in 2000/2002 (*Figure 2*). This rise in applications is consistent with increasingly facilitated transnational migration, as discussed in *Chapter 3*. However, from the perspective of national pressures there are two additional and crucially important consequences in relation to New Labour's motivation to reduce numbers of asylum applicants.

Firstly, alongside pure numbers of applications increasing, the financial cost to the government of maintaining the asylum system was rising dramatically (*Figure 3*). During the first few years of New Labour's government the financial cost of supporting asylum seekers rose from £375 million to over £1000 million. Secondly, during this period, asylum has increasingly formed the basis of negative stories in the national press and asylum seekers have become the subject of increasingly hostile public concern.

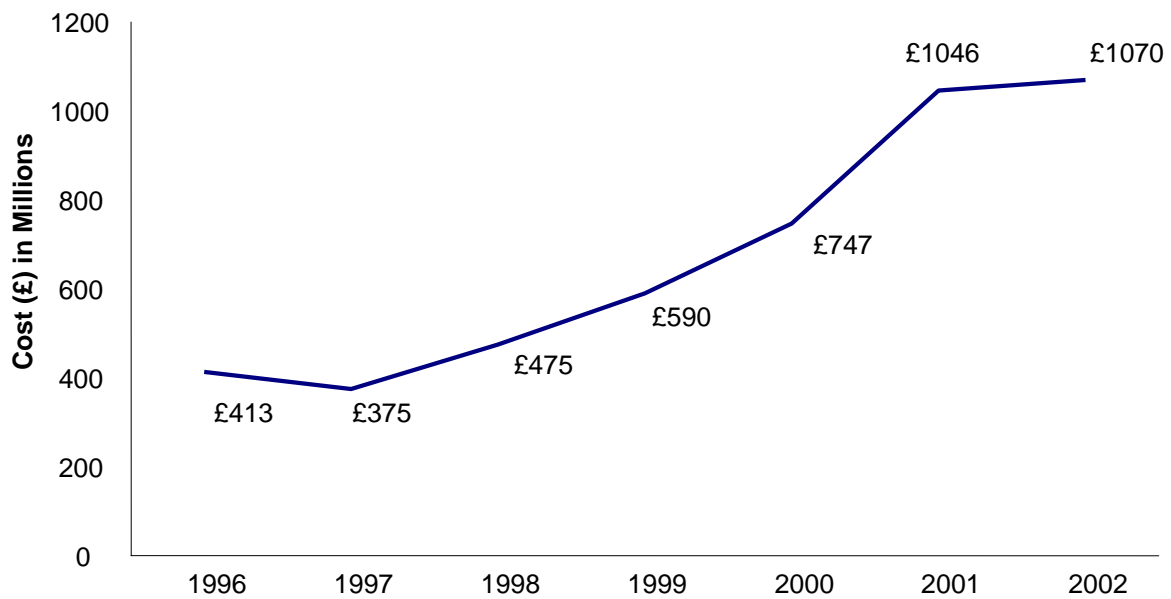
Whilst some of the negative representation of asylum seekers in the UK press may reflect the actual rise in numbers of asylum seekers entering the UK, the sheer magnitude of newspaper coverage is grossly disproportionate and the tone has become increasingly hostile (Greenslade 2005: 3). Furthermore, it has done little to inform the public about the complexity of asylum issues or to provoke any sense of compassion towards those who have been persecuted elsewhere and find themselves in the UK (Greenslade 2005: 3).

Figure 2: Applications for Asylum 1992-2002



Source: 1992-1996 Home Office (2000)
1997-2002 Home Office Asylum Statistics Online

Figure 3: Asylum Support Costs 1996-2002



Source: House of Commons (2004)

It is generally agreed that the impact of such sentiments from the media serves to frame public debate on asylum issues. However, the direct consequences of negative media coverage are less clear. One tangible way in which the media can influence public opinion is to provide fuel for public prejudices in the form of stories and material to justify them (Lewis 2005: 23). In addition, research would suggest that the media encourages latent feelings that there is nothing to be done about immigration issues that concern people, thus increasing feelings of anger, disgust and a sense of powerlessness among 'white majority people' (Valentine and McDonald 2004).

Furthermore, the content of newspapers cannot be completely separated from the opinions of their readerships. Popular papers rarely, if ever, publish material that is unequivocally opposed to the views of their readers. In other words, there is a definite reciprocal relationship between newspaper and audience (Greenslade 2005: 5). In terms of public opinion, arguments surrounding immigration have become increasingly important political concerns in recent years. In 2003, the results of a YouGov survey placed immigration and asylum seekers as the most important political issue facing the UK in the minds of the British people (YouGov 2003).

In addition, Saggar and Drean's (2001) comprehensive summary of various recent opinion polls relating to asylum and immigration concludes that a significant proportion of the British population express intolerant attitudes to migrants and ethnic minorities. Common majority sentiments identified in surveys are that 'there are too many in Britain', that 'they get too much help' and that 'migration is out of control' (Saggar & Drean, 2001). It is important to note that although public fears about asylum seekers are a reflection of genuine concerns relating to the costs and burdens that increasing applications for asylum entail; fears about asylum seekers are often based upon a lack of reliable information. This means that there is very little accurate knowledge among the British public about the numbers of asylum seekers coming to the UK or their relative proportion in relation to the world's asylum seeking population (Lewis 2005: 8).

In conclusion, the UK is committed to the providing for asylum seekers and there is broad public support for the principle behind the asylum system. However, increasingly facilitated transnational migratory behaviour has been reflected in a national rise in applications for asylum. The consequence of this is an asylum system that provides an increasing financial burden to UK governments, alongside increasingly common and hostile media coverage and mounting public concern. The combination of these pressures provides a strong incentive for New Labour to attempt to reduce the number of people who are applying for asylum in the UK.

Chapter 5: New Labour's Exclusion of Asylum Seekers

This chapter aims to relate the national pressures discussed in *Chapter 4* to New Labour's management of the UK asylum system, and to explain how this has specifically resulted in policies that lead to the social exclusion of asylum seekers. Furthermore, in returning to the perspective of transnational migratory behaviour (*Chapter 3*), this chapter will demonstrate the theoretical weaknesses of New Labour's exclusionary response.

The conceptual framework for understanding New Labour's response as exclusionary will be provided by Stephen Castles' (1995) analysis of nation-states' policy responses to immigration. Castles' (1995) 'differential exclusion' model represents a response to immigration based on preventing the threat of permanent settlement. Therefore, this model conceptualises an immigration system in which immigrants are incorporated into particular societal spheres, but are excluded from others.

As *Chapter 4* discusses, there has been an increase in the number of people applying for asylum in the UK and this continued to rise significantly during the first years of the New Labour Government. Consequently, there has also been a dramatic rise in the financial cost of supporting asylum seekers, and public and media concern surrounding the asylum system has substantially increased. The combined effect of this upon New Labour is a strong incentive to attempt to reduce the number of applications for asylum. This motivation is indeed made explicit in New Labour publications:

"In recent years our asylum system has been under severe strain...the cost to the taxpayer has been substantial and is increasing..."

(Home Office 1998: Preface).

"It is understandable that people migrate to seek a better life for themselves...But this can leave settled populations, including many in the UK, concerned about the impact on...their way of life"

(Home Office 2006: 1).

However, the UK is committed to the reception and protection of asylum seekers (*Chapter 4*) and nation states need immigrant labour to remain competitive in the world economy (*Chapter 3*), therefore it would not be feasible for New Labour to explicitly limit numbers of immigrants or asylum seekers. Thus in an attempt to manage national pressures, New Labour has had to simultaneously reduce applications for asylum, whilst honouring a commitment to the protection of asylum seekers and allowing for the necessary economic benefit immigration entails. Accordingly, in Tony Blair's own words:

"The challenge for the Government is to maintain public confidence in the system by agreeing immigration where it is in the country's interests and preventing it where it is not"

(Home Office 2005: Foreword).

Consequently, New Labour's solution to national pressures is found in the managed migration of immigrants that are 'good' for the country and the exclusion of those that are 'bad'. For example, to encourage migration where it is in the country's interests, New Labour introduced the Highly Skilled Migrants Programme in 2002 in recognition of the fact that the 'UK is competing' for 'highly skilled migrants' (Home Office 2002a: 42). In addition, they built upon the principles of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme to 'meet the demand' for 'short-term casual labour' (Home Office 2002a: 44).

However, this commitment to the necessity of immigrant labour has been implemented alongside attempts to reduce numbers of asylum seekers and to prevent immigration where it is not in the country's interests. The primary device that New Labour have employed in order to reduce applications for asylum is reducible to the contention contained within the following statement:

"There is no doubt that the asylum system is being abused by those seeking to migrate for purely economic reasons. Many claims are simply a tissue of lies."

(Home Office 1998: para1.14)

Essentially, New Labour have presented case in which the rising number of applications for asylum in the UK can be attributed predominantly to people who wish to circumvent existing immigration controls rather than those genuinely fleeing from persecution. In other words, New Labour have constructed the assertion that there are 'pull factors' in operation, attracting 'bogus' asylum seekers to abuse the asylum system. It is suggested that these 'pull factors' serve to entice economic migrants into claiming asylum in order to gain access to accommodation and support, welfare systems and the labour market (Gardner 2006: 3-4).

Therefore, new Labour have endorsed the dichotomous categorisation of 'asylum seekers' and 'economic migrants' and 'effectively criminalised the process of seeking political asylum' (Back et al 2002: 451). It is clear that this rhetoric mediates a differentiation between 'them' and 'us' by identifying economic migrants who are abusing the system as a danger to the survival of the national community. Therefore, New Labour have presented asylum seekers as a threat consistent with Castles' (1995) model. Furthermore, this dichotomy has allowed New Labour to exclude asylum seekers from the natural fabric of society, and legitimised that exclusion by perceiving asylum seekers as illegitimate recipients of socio-economic rights (Huysmans 2002: 767).

The result of this commitment to the 'threat' of economic migrants abusing the asylum system has led to the implementation of policies by New Labour that seek to remove asylum seekers from those elements of UK society seen as providing the motivation for abuse. Therefore, as Castles' (1995) model describes, asylum seekers are excluded from particular spheres of society. Consequently, the theory that New Labour's management of the asylum system leads to the social exclusion of asylum seekers refers to a specific denial of particular human and political rights to a section of the population. The New Labour Government, which has the power to grant these rights, is not a neutral agency but discriminates explicitly (Ballha & Lapegre 1997: 420).

Therefore, this Chapter has so far provided a general theory of the social exclusion of asylum seekers under the management of New Labour. At this point exclusion is universal in the sense that New Labour rhetoric is being portrayed as creating a

perception of society as being dichotomised between those who are part of the 'mainstream' and those who are not (Ratcliffe 1999: 2). However, when New Labour then implement policies that deny asylum seekers access to socio-economic rights this serves to generate particularistic manifestations of social exclusion. Before turning to these practical manifestations in *Part 2*, it is necessary to first address the theoretical problems associated with New Labour's exclusionary management of asylum seekers.

Policies that result in the exclusion of asylum seekers from particular societal spheres based upon the dichotomous categories of 'genuine/bogus' and 'asylum seeker/economic migrant' are severely misguided from a theoretical perspective. Firstly, as explored in *Chapter 3*, applications for asylum in the UK are increasing parallel to increasingly facilitated transnational migration. Therefore, national policy is inevitably a blunt tool for the management of migratory behaviour; migration cannot simply be turned on and off like a tap via the appropriate national policy settings (Castles 2004).

Secondly, contemporary understandings of migratory behaviour recognise that since weak states and weak economies are often inseparable, people move both to escape economic impoverishment and human rights abuses (Duffield 2001). This creates a 'migration-asylum nexus' in which it is extremely difficult to distinguish effectively between 'economic migrants' and 'asylum seekers' (Castles 2004). Therefore New Labour's attempts to apply these dichotomous categories are highly questionable.

Thirdly, there is strong evidence to suggest that New Labour are mistaken in labelling the lure of welfare benefits as a major 'pull factor' for abusers of the asylum system. For example, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) state that geopolitical considerations or family links play a more crucial role as far as the 'attractiveness' of a destination is concerned (UNHCR 2003: 16). Even when the Home Office commissioned its own research (Robinson & Seagrott 2002), it concluded similarly to UNCHR, that resident family and friends were a greater attraction to potential migrants rather than expectation of any benefits that may be available or the ability to work.

Finally, people seeking asylum in the UK are both a constituent part of UK society and have the potential to be granted refugee status and possible British citizenship (*Chapter 2*). For these people, participation in UK society begins on the day of their arrival. Although New Labour themselves are dedicated to tackling social exclusion by “extending opportunities to the least advantaged so that they enjoy more of the choices, chances and power that the rest of society takes for granted” (Social Exclusion Task Force 2008), it would appear that asylum seekers are not included in this vision. A denial of access to certain spheres of society for asylum seekers can only serve to socially exclude a vulnerable group of people and have extremely detrimental effects upon their lives. The effects of this social exclusion upon the lives of asylum seekers will now be considered in detail in *Part 2*.

Part 2: In Practice

New Labour policy in practice and the social exclusion of asylum seekers.

Chapter 6: Understanding 'Social Exclusion' in Practice

Current usage of the term social exclusion offers a number of distinct meanings, and the ease with which academics move from one use of the term to another constitutes a serious weakness (Ratcliffe 1999: 18). Therefore, before a detailed analysis of New Labour's exclusionary policies is undertaken, it will be useful to define more clearly the concept of social exclusion, and to clarify the way social exclusion is to be identified in the implications of policy.

The concept of social exclusion was developed in Britain in the critical social policy of the 1980s. It draws on the work of Peter Townsend (1979) who argued that a proper understanding of poverty should not be limited to questions of subsistence, but should incorporate people's ability to participate in society. Social exclusion is therefore a broader concept than poverty: encompassing not only low material means, but the inability to participate effectively in social and cultural life, resulting in a distancing from mainstream society (Walker & Walker 1997).

Part 1 has utilised a universal concept of exclusion in terms of the specific denial of asylum seekers' ability to participate in key social institutions (Ballha & Lapegre 1999). As *Chapter 5* demonstrated, the dichotomous categories of 'asylum seekers' and 'economic migrants' have allowed New Labour to implement policy that specifically attempts to reduce socio-economic 'pull factors'. This has been achieved by excluding asylum seekers from those spheres of society that are seen as providing 'economic migrants' with the motive to abuse the system.

The following chapters will attempt to employ a particularistic concept of social exclusion to demonstrate how asylum seekers positioned beyond the bounds of certain social institutions experience that exclusion (Ratcliffe 1999). The specific policies under discussion are given in *Figure 4*. These policies serve initially to place asylum seekers in a 'state' of social exclusion due to the fact that they are located beyond the bounds of key social institutions (for example they are 'excluded from' mainstream welfare support and 'excluded from' the labour market).

However, this 'state' also creates a process of social exclusion in which asylum seekers are denied a basic standard of living, are unable to access key local services, and are incapable of fully participating in social life (Milbourne 2002). Consequently, this process of social exclusion will be demonstrated with reference to the implementation of the following New Labour policies in Greater Manchester, and the effects that they have upon the lives of asylum seekers.

Figure 4: New Labour Policies and Social Exclusion

The introduction of a dispersal policy providing no-choice accommodation. <i>Immigration and Asylum Act (Home Office 1999)</i>	<i>Chapter 7</i>
The withdrawal of asylum seekers from the mainstream benefits system. <i>Immigration and Asylum Act (Home Office 1999)</i>	<i>Chapter 8</i>
The removal of the right for asylum seekers to seek permission to work. <i>Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act (Home Office 2002b)</i>	<i>Chapter 9</i>

Chapter 7: Socially Excluded Neighbourhoods and the Policy of Dispersal

The *Immigration and Asylum Act* (Home Office 1999) introduced a policy of dispersal as an attempt to 'relieve the burden on provision in London' where the majority of asylum seekers were concentrated (Home Office 1998: 8.22). Its introduction required that all applicants for asylum be dispersed on a 'no-choice' basis to a region outside of the South East, and administration of the policy required a new government directorate: the National Asylum Seeker Support Service (NASS) (See Appendix 5).

The dispersal policy serves only to relocate highly vulnerable asylum seekers to areas where existing communities are themselves marginalised and disadvantaged (Pearl & Zetter 2002: 238). The effects of this are consistent with the process of social exclusion identified in *Chapter 6* because it serves to compound current problems of deprivation and denies asylum seekers a basic standard of living. Furthermore, asylum seekers dispersed to these areas are denied the ability to fully participate in social life, often experiencing hostility from existing populations and a lack of opportunities to participate in familiar cultures. Furthermore, dispersal policy results in the non-realisation of the socio-economic rights of asylum seekers due to the fact that there were initially no formal or informal support networks in place to help asylum seekers access local services.

The fact that deprivation and social exclusion are spatially concentrated in Britain allows a discussion of the effects of socially excluded and excluding neighbourhoods (Lupton & Power 2002: 118). The key rationale behind the introduction of the dispersal policy was the notion of burden-sharing; providing for asylum seekers and their dependents in areas of the country with a ready supply of cheap, surplus accommodation. Indeed, the availability of accommodation is the only criterion for dispersal specified in the legislation (Boswell 2001: 11).

Published at the same time as the Government's introduction of the *Immigration and Asylum Act* (Home Office 1999) a report by the Unpopular Housing Action Team (UHAT) (DETR 1999) identified the North West as having the highest percentages of

low-demand housing in the country (*Table 1*). The crucial feature (in relation to the provision of a basic standard of living for asylum seekers) of the availability of this low-demand housing in the North West is that it exists hand in hand with communities experiencing deprivation and social exclusion.

Table 1: Regional Distribution of Low-Demand Housing Stock

Local Authority	Housing in Low Demand (%)		
	Local Authority	Registered Social Landlord	Private Sector
North West	31	28	38
West Midlands	11	14	15
Yorkshire & Humberside	16	10	15
East Midlands	8	6	8
London	9	5	7
North East	17	11	5
South East	3	14	4
South West	2	5	4
East	3	7	4

Source: Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions 1999: 3-4

The UHAT (DETR 1999) research matched the areas of low-demand housing to the English House Condition Survey (EHCS 1999) and concluded that low demand neighbourhoods strongly overlap with those which the EHCS surveyors characterised as run down or neglected. Crime is much more likely to be perceived as problem in these neighbourhoods, they tend to have worse air quality, more neglected buildings, more defective dwellings, more graffiti, more dumping and more vandalism. Furthermore, areas of low demand overlap with areas of poverty and deprivation, including significant levels of unemployment (Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions 1999: 23).

In relation to Manchester specifically, the most recent snapshot (*Table 2*) shows that Greater Manchester is currently providing support for approximately 4170 dispersed asylum seekers across 8 of the 10 boroughs. Additionally, *Table 2* offers the most recently available figures on deprivation in Greater Manchester. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) measure has been chosen as a representative figure because it is particularly relevant to discussions of social exclusion, taking into

account a wide range of domains (Appendix 6). Comparing the dispersal boroughs in Greater Manchester with IMD figures (*Table 2*) suggests that there is a consistent link between the availability of low-demand surplus housing, deprived neighbourhoods and the dispersal of asylum seekers.

Table 2: Greater Manchester- Asylum Seekers in NASS Accommodation & IMD Rankings 2007

Local Authority	Number of Asylum Seekers, (December 2007)¹	IMD Ranking 2007 (out of 354)²
Manchester	1310	4
Salford	910	15
Wigan	580	67
Oldham	535	42
Rochdale	395	25
Tameside	230	56
Stockport	165	161
Trafford	45	178
Total	4170	~

¹*Home Office (2007a)*

²*Department for Community and Local Government (2007).*

As the shaded section identifies, IMD figures rank 6 of the 8 Greater Manchester boroughs currently providing dispersal accommodation to asylum seekers within the top 20% most deprived in England. A total of 3960 (almost 95%) of Greater Manchester's asylum seekers are currently being supported in these areas. Furthermore, over a third of these (1310) are being supported within the City of Manchester itself which ranks as the fourth most deprived local authority in the whole of England. Focusing the discussion further to an analysis of specific wards, Manchester City Council (2002) stated that by mid 2002, 96% of all NASS placements within the City of Manchester were in wards in the top 10% most deprived in the country, and over a third of them were in just three of the most deprived wards (Bradford, Gorton South and Lightbowne) (See Appendix 7).

Therefore, evidence would suggest that at a local authority and ward level vulnerable asylum seekers are being dispersed to areas of Greater Manchester in which deprivation and social exclusion are already points for concern. The result is a policy that serves only to further concentrate the most disadvantaged people in the least

advantaged places, compounding existing problems of deprivation and social exclusion and denying asylum seekers a basic standard of living.

Furthermore, research would indicate that existing populations living in these conditions of deprivation will be more likely to hold hostile views towards asylum seekers. For example, an Institute of Public Policy Research paper (Lewis 2005) suggests that the more vulnerable someone feels to economic competition the more hostile their opinion towards asylum seekers will be (Lewis 2005: 7). In addition, Dustmann and Preston (2000) found that the strongest link to racial prejudice was education, with highly educated people being ten to fifteen times less likely to express racially intolerant opinions than individuals with low levels of education.

Continuing with the examples of Bradford, Gorton South and Lightbowne, it is clear from recent Census statistics and IMD measurements that these areas are experiencing substantial economic deprivation and that educational attainment is significantly low (*Table 3*). Therefore, when related to the research on people's attitudes towards asylum seekers, this combination of indicators would suggest that the populations in these areas are more likely to hold hostile opinions toward asylum seekers.

Table 3: Bradford, Gorton South, Lightbowne- Educational Attainment & IMD

Ward	Adults (16-74) With No Formal Qualifications ¹ (2001)	IMD Ward Rank (out of 8414) ² (2000)
Bradford	51%	22
Gorton South	47%	63
Lightbowne	43%	210

¹Census (2001)

² Department for Communities and Local Government (2000)

Importantly, the figures are not being used here to make any judgement about existing populations. Clearly there has been no attempt within this research to understand the relationships between deprivation and educational attainment, nor has it been addressed whether or not hostile opinions in areas experiencing deprivation are justified given their population's economic vulnerability. The figures are being used validly to point to the fact that asylum seekers are dispersed to areas experiencing

these problems, and that these areas are more likely to provide a hostile reception due to some of their demographic characteristics.

Consistent with this suggestion, experiences of hostility were common to the asylum seeker informants spoken to as part of this research. As they explained:

“It wasn’t easy for people in Salford to accept us. When my daughters were on the buses, people were pulling on their headscarves and spitting on them.”

Interview with Aaminah (2008)

“I did not feel like the community would accept me, I was scared to be there, they even threw eggs at our windows”

Interview with Lusala (2008)

In addition, a Home Office review of the dispersal programme (Zetter et al 2003) similarly concluded that the procurement of housing in the poorest areas had polarised entrenched views held by the host community against incomers and this has left asylum seekers isolated from their local community. It specifically pointed to a series of problems in the north-west of England, citing districts of the City of Manchester. These areas were considered extremely dangerous and very unpleasant environments by refugees. The report warned that the policy of dispersal had indeed sent asylum seekers to highly volatile environments where they encountered hostility and prejudice, and where there was a worrying level of spontaneous racial harassment and racial attacks (Zetter et al 2003).

It is clear that whether hostile opinions are justified or not, asylum seekers have experienced hostility from existing populations in the new dispersal areas. As Aaminah and Lusala both describe, they didn’t feel like the communities they were living in could accept them. This potentially leads to the social exclusion of asylum seekers in terms of participation in society by making them feel isolated from the communities in which they live. Furthermore, these feelings of isolation are exacerbated by the fact that the areas of dispersal often had relatively small existing minority populations. Although government policy aimed to distribute asylum seekers

to areas with resident minority communities, in practice dispersal has been largely accommodation-led (Boswell 2001: 25).

Furthermore, although when it was initially introduced the aim of the dispersal programme was to 'cluster' asylum seekers by common language and country of origin, this was often not the result (Pearl & Zetter 2002: 235). With a diverse range of accommodation providers controlled by a central, remote NASS, inevitable emphasis was placed on managing contractual arrangements and clustering failed to happen at local levels.

Therefore, the isolation of asylum seekers due to a hostile reception is compounded by the failure of attempts to cluster asylum seekers and the dispersal of asylum seekers to areas with relatively small resident minority communities. Firstly, the dispersal policy's denial of asylum seekers' ability to participate in social life is potentially made more potent by the fact that asylum seekers can feel like they are alone in an alien culture. Secondly, asylum seekers are potentially denied the ability to participate in communities in which other people speak their language and share their culture. Lusala captured these sentiments well when he described his feelings of loneliness:

"I want to move to a different part of Manchester where I will be amongst other Muslims - I stick out here and sometimes feel lonely."

Interview with Lusala (2008)

Taking into consideration Lusala's feelings of loneliness and isolation, it is not surprising that the reasons for the apparent popularity of certain areas amongst asylum seekers suggests that they are already diverse; they house residents with similar backgrounds to asylum seekers; and because local services and networks are in place to cater for specific ethnic and minority needs (Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research 2003: 7). Therefore, in denying asylum seekers the chance to live in these types of communities, dispersal policy results in social exclusion. For example, without other people who speak their language, local Mosques, community groups

and halal meat, asylum seekers are denied participation in experiences relating to their own cultural communities and way of life.

Finally, as these areas had often had no previous experience of dealing with asylum seekers or refugees, and existing minority populations were often small, there were no formal or informal community support networks in place. This potentially results in the non-realisation of asylum seekers entitlements to local services due to the fact that there are no support networks in place to help them both become aware of and access them.

For example, under the dispersal policy asylum seekers are accommodated in housing provided by either private suppliers or local authorities, and these providers are contractually obliged to 'facilitate access' to relevant health, education and social services (Boswell 2001: 17). However, this is often interpreted as providing asylum seekers with a list of local health centres and schools in English (CIH 2001). Therefore, a newly arrived asylum seeker with no grasp of the English language would be unaware unable to locate key services. Policies of dispersal serve to exclude asylum seekers from those services because although they may be entitled to them, they are potentially unaware of their existence or how to access them.

In conclusion, New Labour's no-choice dispersal policy contributes to the process of social exclusion of asylum seekers in a number of ways. Firstly, asylum seekers are forced to live in areas that are already deprived and marginalised and therefore compound existing problems of deprivation and are denied a basic standard of living. In addition, the policy of dispersal affects asylum seekers' ability to participate in social life due to the hostility they experience from existing populations and this is exacerbated by the fact that the dispersal areas often had relatively small minority populations. Finally, dispersal policy also results in the non-realisation of asylum seekers' entitlement to local services due to the absence of formal and informal support networks in the new dispersal areas.

Chapter 8: A Separate System of Subsistence Support

As discussed in the previous chapter, New Labour's policy of dispersal results in the social exclusion of asylum seekers in terms of a denial of a basic standard of living and a lack of participation in society. These effects are further compounded by the provision of support to asylum seekers under New Labour. The introduction of an entirely new and separate system for the provision of subsistence support served to explicitly deny access to the mainstream welfare system. The alternative support system that New Labour has put in place provides a level of subsistence that denies a basic standard of living for asylum seekers and impacts upon their ability to participate in social life. This is manifest in the construction of feelings of detachment and an impact upon access to key local services.

The legal basis for the provision of support to asylum seekers is Part 6 of the *Immigration and Asylum Act* (Home Office 1999). Subsistence support and accommodation is available to asylum seekers over 18 and their dependents that without such support would be left destitute. A destitute asylum seeker is entitled to adequate, no-choice accommodation and basic subsistence support whilst their asylum claim is being processed. Housing provision and subsistence support has been administered by the newly created National Asylum Seeker Support Service (NASS) (See Appendix 5).

New Labour's objective on introducing the new legislation was to 'provide for asylum seekers separately from the main benefits system', based upon the fact that 'asylum seekers are temporary residents here' and there is a need for a system which 'minimises the incentive for abuse' (Home Office 1998: para8.17). However, as discussed in *Chapter 5*, evidence would suggest that asylum seekers are not motivated by the lure of welfare benefits within receiving countries. Furthermore, asylum seekers do not generally have any detailed knowledge of the welfare systems of the countries to which they migrate (Geddes 2004).

Originally, subsistence support was provided in the form of vouchers that were exchangeable for food at specific outlets. In terms of their exclusion, the use of vouchers makes asylum seekers more visible as a detached group and underlines their

dependence on welfare benefits, and so can also fuel public perceptions of them as a 'burden' (Sales 2002: 458). The use of vouchers sends negative messages to society and local communities about asylum seekers (Refugee Council Policy Response 2006: 3) and it is clear that the stigmatising effect of using vouchers instead of cash can make asylum seekers themselves feel like they are detached from the communities in which they live. Aaminah poignantly described her feelings of detachment whilst informing this research; her views are consistently supported by interviews with asylum seekers in other research (see for example Temple et al 2005, Eagle et al 2002).

“Using vouchers when everyone around you is using money, it is shameful. It is like getting a stamp saying you don't belong”

Interview with Aaminah (2008)

Aaminah's comment is clearly consistent with the fact that vouchers serve to make asylum seekers more visible, going as far as describing them as a 'stamp' that she doesn't belong. In addition, she also reflects feelings of stigmatisation in her perception of the vouchers as 'shameful'. When the Home Office (Eagle et al 2002) conducted its own review of the voucher scheme in 2002 its evidence supported Aaminah's sentiments. It acknowledged that asylum seekers were stigmatised and often felt embarrassed when using the vouchers, and that asylum seekers often experienced hostility from people around them when they were using the vouchers. This which would support the contention that vouchers make asylum seekers acutely visible in the communities in which they live (Eagle et al 2002: vi-viii).

Furthermore, the practical aspects of surviving on vouchers in a cash economy and on low levels of support lead to the social exclusion of asylum seekers, and the Home Office review (Eagle et al 2002) raised a number of additional concerns in this respect. It noted that the retail outlets that were included in the scheme were often more expensive than other local shops or markets, and a no-change policy was in operation meaning asylum seekers had to calculate the full value of their shopping or lose a portion of the voucher's value (Eagle et al 2002: vi-viii). Additionally, in a report by Oxfam (2000) which surveyed organisations working with asylum seekers, 98% of the organisations surveyed stated that the voucher scheme was creating serious

difficulties. It found that asylum seekers were often not able to buy enough food, or buy other essential items. In the early stages of the voucher scheme asylum seekers were often not able to buy clothes, cleaning products, toiletries, baby milk or nappies (Oxfam 2000: 19).

Consequently, the failings of the voucher scheme provoked strong opposition from a range of organisations such as trade unions, organisations working with asylum seekers and representatives of statutory service providers including the British Medical Association (Sales 2002: 472). The result of mounting pressure coupled with the fact that the voucher scheme turned out to be more expensive and difficult to administer than the mainstream benefits system, was an announcement by David Blunkett that vouchers would be abandoned by April 2002 (Justice 2002: 40) (see Appendix 8). The replacement of vouchers by a weekly cash subsistence payment resolved a number of the practical problems associated with the use of vouchers for asylum seekers that are discussed above.

However, ending the use of vouchers did not tackle the fundamental issues relating to the social exclusion of asylum seekers in terms of their removal from mainstream society due to a separate system of social support and the denial of a basic standard of living. As *Table 4* demonstrates, asylum seekers receiving NASS (BIA) (see Appendix 5) cash subsistence support receive only 70% of the amount that a normal citizen receives on income support. The fact that asylum seekers are only provided with 70% of income support has often been cited by campaigners as concrete evidence of the poverty of asylum seekers.

In spite of this, the 70% figure in itself is not sufficient to suggest that asylum seekers are poorer under NASS (BIA) support than they would be in the mainstream benefits system. This is because the amount is designed to reflect the fact that asylum seekers do not have to pay utility bills. Therefore, suggesting asylum seekers are socially excluded due to poverty arising from this 70% comparison with income support is not sufficiently evidenced.

Table 4: NASS (BIA) Subsistence Support & Income Support

Circumstances	NASS (BIA) Support ¹	Income Support ²
Couple (married/civil partnership)	£ 64.96	£ 92.80
Single parent aged 18 or over	£ 41.41	£ 59.15
Single person aged 25 or over	£ 41.41	£ 59.15
Single person aged 18-25	£ 32.80	£ 46.85
Single person 16 -18	£ 35.65	£ 46.85
Single person under 16	£ 47.45	~

¹*BIA (2008)*

²*Job Centre Plus (2008)*

However, there are significant ways in which withdrawing asylum seekers from the mainstream benefits system can be evidenced as having denied them a basic standard of living. Firstly, providing for asylum seekers separately from the mainstream benefits system means that they are ineligible for additional forms of support that, depending upon their circumstances, UK citizens are entitled to receive. Asylum seekers are excluded from subsistence support such as the Sure Start Maternity Grant, the Social Fund, discretionary grants, loans and benefits such as disability allowance and pensioner benefits, Educational Maintenance Allowance and higher education loans and grants (IPPR 2005: 31). For example, the Pension Credit scheme currently guarantees all single persons aged 60 and over an income of at least £119.05 a week (DWP 2008). This figure compares to the sum of £41.41 per week that an asylum seeking person of the same age would receive (*Table 4*). Elderly asylum seekers are therefore entitled to less than half of what UK pensioners are expected to be able to live on.

Secondly, asylum seekers in order to receive subsistence support must be destitute and unable to support themselves. This is defined by the Home Office as not having adequate accommodation or support for themselves and their dependents for the next 14 days (JCHR 2007: 24). In other words, on arrival in the UK asylum seekers' resources and possessions must be extremely limited or non-existent to qualify for subsistence support and accommodation. Therefore, unlike someone who has lived in the UK all of their lives, asylum seekers have not built up possessions and resources over a period of time that could help to alleviate the effects of their poverty.

Consequently, the low income that asylum seekers receive, combined with their inability to claim other benefits or have the resources behind them to help them cope with their poverty, has very real exclusionary effects. Dependence on low levels of subsistence support makes it more difficult for asylum seekers to access the local services that they are entitled to, and lack of resources can lead to growing isolation. A particularly concrete example of this isolation is the ability for asylum seekers to access and use public transport. Whilst the voucher scheme was in operation asylum seekers were excluded entirely from public transport because they were without the cash to pay for it. Now, even with the provision of weekly cash payments, public transport is something asylum seekers often cannot afford. Informants supported these sentiments, describing how inability to pay for transport makes participating in local activities in Manchester almost impossible.

“There’s an asylum seeker in Bury and he often tries to come to Manchester because of the Somali community here and to play football with his friends. He needs to be able to get the bus but to do that he needs money he hasn’t got. He can’t get here if he can’t pay”

Interview with Liban (2007)

“I am in jail, I cannot use the transport and I am not free. I cannot afford to go out, to live life according to how I want to live it, to do the things I want to do.”

Interview with Lusala (2008)

It is apparent that the feeling of being trapped that Lusala describes is potentially exacerbated by the fact that asylum seekers are dispersed to areas that are isolating and excluding in themselves (*Chapter 7*). This is highlighted by Liban’s recollection of a young man who is isolated in dispersal accommodation in Bury. Inability to use public transport for this young man means social isolation because he can not travel into Manchester to be involved in familiar cultures, to see his friends and to be with people who speak his language. Therefore, due to their low incomes asylum seekers can find themselves trapped and unable to participate in local activities, to live their lives according to how they want to live them, because they can’t afford to do so.

In terms of local authority services, asylum seekers are entitled to the same access as any other citizen. Therefore from the perspective of Greater Manchester's service providers, asylum seekers have *entitlement* that is equal to that of any other citizen in terms of health care, social care, and education. However, problems of exclusion arise when asylum seekers try to *access* those services due to New Labour's management of their welfare and support (Interview with Kath Nickson 2007).

For example, although asylum seekers are entitled to housing, access to housing of an acceptable standard raises serious concerns. As discussed in *Chapter 7*, research by the Unpopular Housing Access Team suggests that asylum seekers are being housed in neighbourhoods that are 'run down or neglected' (Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions 1999). Furthermore, conditions in private sector housing specifically provided for asylum seekers' can be unsanitary, overcrowded and unsafe (Justice 2002: 40). A survey by Manchester City Council found that an estimated 35% of private sector asylum seeker accommodation within its authority was unfit for habitation, with many houses in multiple occupation lacking compulsory fire safety equipment (Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research 2003). Therefore, although asylum seekers are entitled to housing they are often excluded from accessing sanitary, well maintained, safe housing and have no choice about the accommodation they are provided with, or its location.

Another illustrative example of the way asylum seekers are excluded from their entitlement to local services is access to education. Although asylum seeking children have full entitlement to education, consequences of the provision of housing and subsistence support by NASS can lead to difficulties in access. Research by the National Children's Bureau (NCB) (Appa 2005) specifically examining these issues commented that although NASS policy states wherever possible housing placements should take into consideration the education of asylum seeking children, the reality is quite different. Changing accommodation frequently disrupts the education of asylum seeking children because they are moved to new areas where they are forced to start new schools (Appa 2005: 29).

In addition, the poverty of asylum seekers as a result of low levels of NASS support means that families often do not have enough money to buy school uniforms, requiring the help and advice of schools in order to approach agencies or community groups for aid (Appa 2005: 12). Furthermore, the need to buy stationary and textbooks when they are not available has to be balanced with purchases of food, clothes, and transport. Similarly, access to sports and other extra curricular activities is virtually impossible to fund which limits the range of leisure pursuits open to asylum seeking children (Appa 2005: 34). Consequently, opportunities for asylum participants in school life and the local community are limited due to their low levels of subsistence support.

In conclusion, the complete withdrawal of asylum seekers from the mainstream benefits system has served to position asylum seekers in a state of exclusion beyond the bounds of this element of UK society, and the use of a voucher scheme (although now abandoned) served to exclude asylum seekers from the UK cash economy. In addition, the newly introduced separate system of support contributes to a process of social exclusion in that it denies asylum seekers a basic standard of living which inevitably impacts upon their ability to participate in social life. This is apparent in the fact that dependency on benefits constructs feelings of detachment, and low income restricts asylum seekers' ability to access key local services like public transport and education.

Chapter 9: Labour Market Exclusion and Removing Permission to Work

The *Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act* (Home Office 2002b) entirely removed the right of asylum seekers to seek permission to work (see Appendix 9). The Home Office gave two reasons to justify the introduction of this policy. Firstly, as previously discussed, it was part of an attempt to create a system that is not 'open to abuse' by those who would seek to come here for economic reasons (Beverley Hughes, then Minister of State, 2002). Secondly, it was stated by the Home Office that the vast majority of asylum cases were being decided within six months and future decisions were aimed to be made within two months.

However, there is no evidence to suggest that having permission to work leads to people attempting to abuse the asylum system (*Chapter 5*). Furthermore, although the Home Office are now making decisions more quickly, there are still a significant number of claims that fall outside the 6 month period. For example, only 38% of the applications made in September 2006 were concluded within 6 months and a total of 6,400 asylum applications were still awaiting an initial decision by the end of 2006 (Home Office 2007b). In addition, denying asylum seekers access to employment can make it very difficult for them to enter the labour market if and when it does become legal to do so. Therefore they can be excluded from productive activity for significantly longer periods than the length of their asylum application (Bloch 2000: 80).

As discussed in *Chapters 3* and *5* there is a shortage of skills and labour in the UK and New Labour have announced plans to use the immigration system to target workers from abroad to fill those gaps. Paradoxically, whilst these skills are being actively recruited abroad, individuals already present in the UK in possession of the necessary skills are being denied the right to work. Many asylum seekers have the qualifications and skills that are needed by the UK economy but are excluded from applying for permission to work (Humphries et al 2005: 6-7). In addition, asylum seekers excluded from applying for employment through the Highly Skilled Migrants

Programme and Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme because applications have to be made from outside the UK (Morris 2002: 413).

In terms of the effects the introduction of this policy has had as an element a the process of social exclusion, there is a strong body of evidence identifying employment as the single most important factor in facilitating the participation of immigrants in society (For example see Coussey 2000; Bloch 1999; Robinson 1998; Knox 1997). Employment is key to successful participation in society for asylum seekers because it can help to alleviate the effects of depending upon low levels of subsistence support, and employment provides social legitimacy that can help to reduce perceptions of asylum seekers as a 'burden' (*Chapter 8*) (Bhalla & Lapegre 1997: 418).

In denying asylum seekers permission to work, New Labour has enforced dependence upon NASS subsistence support and accommodation. However, if asylum seekers are to participate fully in society then they require a level of subsistence that does not set them apart from others, with equivalent opportunities to improve their standards of living in the future. Therefore, access to the labour market would help to alleviate the exclusionary consequences that result from asylum seekers being subject to a no-choice dispersal policy (*Chapter 7*) and restricted to survival on NASS support (*Chapter 8*). In addition, employment itself leads directly to opportunities for participation in social life. This takes the form of interaction with other people, the chance to learn English and the chance to regain self-esteem and confidence (Knox 1997: 31).

Furthermore, the negative effects of a lack of participation in the labour market can serve to make asylum seekers feel isolated from society. Asylum seekers recognise the fact that their being turned into dependents affects the way that they feel about participating in their communities (Temple et al 2005: 34). For example, an informant of this research described how dependence on benefits meant for him the denial of his desire to be a part of something:

“The main effect dependence on benefits has on asylum seekers is basically feeling worthless. This is very difficult from a human perspective because we always want to be a part of something, to create something. That’s what is lost for asylum seekers. It’s very difficult to be part of something”

Interview with Chege (2008)

MacKenzie and Forde’s (2007) survey of the social and economic experiences of asylum seekers supports Chege’s feelings of detachment as a result of dependence. In their research, asylum seekers talked about their unease at reliance on state benefits. It is suggested that for people who have been used to providing for themselves through paid employment, dependence is often an unfamiliar and disconcerting experience. This is linked by MacKenzie and Forde to the wider sense of loss of control over their lives asylum seekers experience due to their uncertain immigration status (MacKenzie and Forde 2007: 29).

Furthermore, as Chege expresses in his desire to ‘be part of something’ and to ‘create something’, denying permission for people to seek employment fails to recognise their productive value as human beings (Bhalla & Lapegre 1999: 21). There is broad consensus that the effects of this are a significant deterioration in well-being, both in terms of physical and psychological health (Shields & Wheatley-Price 2003). Chege continued by explaining what not being able to work meant to him:

“I had to do something, had to go somewhere. You can’t cope; you go crazy sitting at home. What can I do, what is the point?”

Interview with Chege (2008)

As Chege describes, the denial of his desire to be a productive part of society leads to isolation and feelings of hopelessness. Similarly, research for the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NRDA) (Humphries et al 2005) concludes that asylum seekers need to work both for a sense of dignity and self respect and to be able to give something back to a nation they feel has offered them safety. Employment brings with it dignity, alleviates the negative effects of feelings of isolation, and increases scope for participation. However, New Labour’s removal of asylum seekers’ permission to seek employment has excluded them from these opportunities.

In conclusion, the effect of New Labour withdrawing the right of asylum seekers to seek permission to work, is to place asylum seekers in a state of exclusion beyond the bounds of the labour market. This explicitly denies them vital opportunities to participate in UK society, to mix with other local people and to learn the English Language. Furthermore, this contributes to a process of social exclusion because being unable to seek employment means asylum seekers are forced to depend upon NASS subsistence support and dispersal accommodation. This compounds the effects of poverty discussed in *Chapters 7 and 8* and serves to strengthen feelings of isolation; intensifying asylum seekers' feelings of detachment from the society in which they live.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

Increasing numbers of asylum seekers, the consequent rising financial costs of the asylum system, and mounting public and media concern has provided New Labour with a strong incentive to reduce applications for asylum (Home Office 1998: Preface). New Labour's solution has been to adhere to a dichotomy between categories of 'asylum seekers' and 'economic migrants', and to contend that large numbers of 'economic migrants' are abusing the asylum system simply to circumvent existing immigration controls (Home Office 1998: para1.14). Consequently, reducing applications for asylum has taken the practical form of eliminating the socio-economic 'pull-factors' that lure 'economic migrants' to abuse the UK asylum system.

This is consistent with Castle's (1995) model of exclusion in that New Labour are presenting the permanent settlement of increasing numbers of asylum seekers as a threat, and therefore seek to exclude them from certain spheres of UK society. Thus, the theory of social exclusion developed in this research refers to the removal of particular human and political rights by New Labour, who explicitly discriminate against the asylum seeking component of the UK population (Ballha & Lapegre 1997: 420). Accordingly, New Labour have implemented policies that position asylum seekers beyond the bounds of key social institutions: the dispersal of asylum seekers on a no-choice basis outside of London; a complete withdrawal of asylum seekers from the mainstream benefits system; and the removal of asylum seekers' right to seek permission to work.

A study of Greater Manchester has shown that the result of this state of exclusion is a process whereby asylum seekers are denied a basic standard of living, are unable to access local services, and are unable to fully participate in the society in which they live (Ballha & Lapegre 1999). It has been demonstrated that dispersal has relocated vulnerable asylum seekers to areas that are themselves deprived and marginalised (Pearl & Zetter 2002: 238) and that asylum seekers are being accommodated in areas that are run down and neglected (DETR 1999: 23). This denial of a basic standard of living has been reinforced by the removal of asylum seekers' right to seek permission

to work; asylum seekers are forced to depend upon low levels of subsistence support that position them in an inescapable situation of poverty.

Furthermore, dispersal and low income lead to the exclusion of asylum seekers from local services and a consequent non-realisation of their social rights. Firstly, it has been illustrated that asylum seekers' low-incomes often impact directly upon their access to local services like public transport and education. Secondly, the new dispersal areas often had no experience of dealing with asylum seekers and therefore there were no formal or informal support networks in place to assist asylum seekers in becoming aware of, and accessing, local services.

The consequence of denying asylum seekers a basic standard of living and excluding them from local services and the labour market is to deny them the ability to participate fully in the communities in which they live. Employment is a vital space for interaction with others; it also offers the chance for asylum seekers to learn English and the opportunity to regain self-esteem and confidence (Knox 1997: 31). Therefore, withdrawal of permission to work has denied asylum seekers access to one of the most fundamental ways in which people participate in society.

In addition to the practical aspects of this exclusion, perceptions of detachment are generated by the fact that asylum seekers often experience hostility from existing populations in new dispersal areas. This isolation is potentially intensified by the absence of existing minority populations and lack of opportunities for asylum seekers to participate in familiar cultures. Moreover, removing permission to work fosters feelings of dependence and perceptions of asylum seekers as a 'burden' to society (Sales 2002: 458); the result is a potential intensification of perceptions of detachment and a further separation of asylum seekers.

Finally, with the implications of New Labour's exclusionary policy on the lives of asylum seekers summarised, it is crucial to reiterate the theoretical weakness of New Labour's exclusion. Placing the phenomenon of UK asylum seekers in the wider context of transnational migratory behaviour has demonstrated that rising applications are consistent with increasingly facilitated global migratory movements. Consequently, national policy is inevitably a blunt tool for effectively influencing

migratory behaviour; migration cannot simply be tuned on and off like a tap through the appropriate national policy settings (Castles 2004).

More importantly, since weak states and weak economies are often inseparable in the modern world, people move to escape both economic impoverishment and human rights abuses (Duffield 2001). The result of this is the creation of a 'migration-asylum nexus' making it extremely difficult to distinguish effectively between categories of 'economic migrants' and 'asylum seekers' (Castles 2004). Furthermore, there is strong evidence to suggest that New Labour are mistaken in labelling the lure of welfare benefits as a major 'pull factor' for abusers of the asylum system. Therefore, New Labour's commitment to dichotomous categories of 'economic migrants' and 'asylum seekers', and the assertion that welfare benefits are enticing abuse of the asylum system, are both insufficiently evidenced and unfounded as a means of legitimising the implementation of exclusionary policies

This research has acknowledged that national pressures upon New Labour have provided a strong motivation to reduce applications for asylum in the UK. However, New Labour's management of the asylum system via the social exclusion of asylum seekers has meant a situation in which formal inequalities in social and political rights between people living in the same country have become a normal feature of UK society. The brutally detrimental consequence of this upon the lives of asylum seekers is a process of social exclusion: a denial of their right to a basic standard of living, a denial of their access to key social services, and a denial of their ability to participate fully in UK society.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Greater Manchester Boroughs

The ten boroughs constituting Greater Manchester Metropolitan County*:

1. Bolton
2. Bury
3. Oldham
4. Rochdale
5. Stockport
6. Tameside
7. Trafford
8. Wigan
9. Salford
10. Manchester

**Although the Metropolitan County Councils were abolished in 1986, the county areas are still recognised (Office of National Statistics 2004).*

Appendix 2: Document Evidence Cited in Text*

- Fairer Faster Firmer: A Modern Approach to Immigration and Asylum (Home Office 1998)
- Immigration and Asylum Act (Home Office 1999)
- Secure Borders Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity in a Modern Perspective (Home Office 2002a)
- Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act (Home Office 2002b)
- Beverly Hughes, Written Answer to Barry Gardiner MP (Hughes 2002)
- Asylum Statistics 1992-1996 from (Home Office 2000)
- Asylum Statistics 1997-2002 Home Office Asylum Statistics Online (1997-2002)
- Controlling our borders: Making migration work for Britain, Five Year Strategy for Asylum and Immigration (Home Office 2005)
- A Points-Based System: Making Migration Work for Britain (Home Office 2006)
- Asylum Statistics: 4th Quarter 2007 United Kingdom (Home Office 2007a)
- Asylum Statistics 2006 (Home Office 2007b)
- Current BIA Subsistence Support Amounts (BIA 2008)
- Current Income Support Amounts (Job Centre Plus 2008)
- Current Pension Credit (DWP 2008)
- Memorandum by Manchester City Council (SOC17) submitted as written evidence to Select Committee on Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing Planning, Local Government and the Regions (Manchester City Council 2002)
- Joint Committee on Human Rights: The Treatment of Asylum Seekers: Tenth Report of Session 2006-2007 Vol.1 (JCHR 2007)
- United Nations Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (UNCHR 2007)
- From Dispersal to Resettlement (CIH 2001)
- Asylum: Changing policy and practice in the UK, EU and selected countries (Justice 2002)
- Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR 2003)
- Asylum Support Costs Hansard Written Answers for 16 Nov 2004 (pt 50) (House of Commons 2004)
- Asylum in the UK: An IPPR Fact File (IPPR 2005)
- Council Directive 2003/9/EC of 27 January 2003: laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers (ECD 2003)

**For full references see Bibliography*

Appendix 3: Key Informants

Informant Type:	Organisation	Name	Relevant Experience:
Local Authority Service Provider	Tameside Council	Kathleen Nickson	<i>Kathleen is Lead Officer for Services for Children and Young People, Tameside Council. As such she has first hand experience of the provision of local services to asylum seeking children and their parents across education, health and social care.</i>
Non-Governmental Organisation Representative	ASHA	Tony Openshaw	<i>Tony set up and runs ASHA (Asylum Support Housing Advice) in Greater Manchester. The organisation provides legal advice to more than 2000 asylum seekers across greater Manchester about accommodation and subsistence support.</i>
	Refugee Action	Nigel Rose	<i>Nigel Rose is manager of Refugee Action in Manchester. As such he leads a team which provides a reception service for newly arrived asylum seekers, as well as advice and advocacy at all stages of the asylum process.</i>
	Arlaadi Somali Community Centre	Liban Ahmad	<i>Liban Ahmed is himself a former asylum seeker. He now works closely with the Arlaadi Somali Community Centre in Manchester which supports many asylum seeking members of the Somali community.</i>
Asylum Seeker	N/A	Aaminah*	<i>Aaminah is a Somali Asylum seeker living in the Salford area of Greater Manchester. She is currently seeking asylum with her husband and their five children.</i>
		Lusala*	<i>Lusala is a Somali asylum seeker who has not yet received an initial decision on his asylum claim. He has been in Manchester for over a year.</i>
		Chege*	<i>Chege is a failed Kenyan asylum seeker who is living destitute in Greater Manchester. He is working illegally to support himself because he has no recourse to public funds.</i>

**All names of asylum seekers given are pseudonyms to protect their identities and respect their right to privacy*

Appendix 4: Existing Data Sets*

- Applications for Asylum 1992-1996 (Home Office 2000)
- Applications for Asylum 1997-2000 (Home Office Asylum Statistics Online)
- Asylum Support Costs (Commons Hansard 16th November 2004)
- Regional Distribution of Low-Demand Housing (DETR 1999)
- Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007 Local Authority Rankings (Department of Community and Local Government 2007)
- Adults 16-74 with no formal qualifications: Bradford, Gorton South & Lightbowne (Census 2001)
- Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000 Ward Rankings (Department of Community and Local Government 2000)

**For full references see Bibliography*

Appendix 5: NASS and BIA

The National Asylum Seeker Support Service (NASS) was created in 2000 to administer the new dispersal policy and provide housing and subsistence support to destitute asylum seekers. Although it is recognised that in 2006 the Government announced that NASS no longer existed as a directorate, it did oversee the majority of dispersal and support within the period this research is examining. Furthermore, it only ceased to exist in name. Its remit continues under the umbrella of the Border and Immigration Agency (BIA) with no subsequent substantive change to policy. Therefore, for consistency, discussions within this research are made with reference to NASS.

Appendix 6: Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2007 & 2002

The IMD figure is particularly relevant to this research because it takes into consideration a wide range of domains congruent to measures of social exclusion:

- Poverty (income deprivation)
- Labour market participation (employment deprivation)
- Socio-economic rights (health, education)
- Local neighbourhood characteristics (barriers to housing and services, crime and the living environment)

The figure therefore provides a score based upon indicators within each of these domains. These scores are then ordered providing a ranking of wards, authorities and regions from most to least deprived. For example, an IMD ranking of 1 means that it is the most deprived ward/authority.

(Department for Community and Local Government 2007)

Appendix 7: Lightbowne

It is acknowledged that the ward of Lightbowne ceased to exist after the 10th of June 2004, with the introduction of new ward boundaries within the City of Manchester. However, it is still a relevant area to this discussion; figures given in relation to Lightbowne were collated pre 2004.

Appendix 8: The Voucher Scheme

Although the voucher scheme has been abandoned, it should be recognised that it is still in place for asylum seekers who have received a negative decision on their asylum claim. Vouchers are the form of support given to failed asylum seekers who:

- Are not able to travel out of the UK (because you are ill/ pregnant)
- Have been given permission to take out a Judicial Review in relation to their asylum claim
- Have already applied for travel documents (from their embassy/ Immigration Service) or have registered for Voluntary Return and are waiting for travel details to be finalised
- The Home Office says there is no safe route of return to their country
- Have exceptional circumstances

However, this research focuses solely on those asylum seekers who have not received an initial decision on their claim therefore this fact is not pursued in depth..

Appendix 9: Asylum Seekers & Employment

Prior to July 2002 asylum seekers who had been waiting for an initial decision for longer than six months were entitled to apply for permission to work. The Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act (Home Office 2002b) entirely removed this right. In February 2005, the UK implemented the European Council Directive 2003/9/EC (ECD 2003). This allows asylum seekers to seek permission to work if they have not received an initial decision within twelve months of making their claim.