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for immediate use

Women asylum seekers omitted from Government's women's strategy

New report highlights lack of gender sensitivity within asylum system

The lack of gender sensitivity within the UK asylum system is highlighted in *Every single woman*, a new report and short film launched today by the Charter of Rights of Women Seeking Asylum.

This follows the government's report *Together we can end violence against women and girls - a strategy* which was launched by the Home Secretary, Alan Johnson last week [Wednesday 25th November]. Whilst detailing many reforms in the criminal justice system over the past decade, the government's strategy fails to adequately cover the needs of women who come to the UK seeking protection from such violence abroad.

Every single woman is a timely report as it looks the disparity between the way the UK border Agency treats women seeking asylum compared with how other public bodies such as the police and prison service treat women. In all cases women settled in the UK have a far more gender sensitive system than women asylum seekers.

Real experiences - case studies

In the course of researching the report, women seeking asylum were found to:

- have been left homeless and destitute on the street despite being pregnant
- have been expected to discuss experiences of rape in the presence of male translators
- have had their rooms and intimate belongings searched by male staff in immigration detention centres.

Debora Singer, Research and Policy Manager at Asylum Aid, said:

"This report reveals how women seeking asylum have been left behind by the UK Border Agency whilst other agencies such as the police have implemented a raft of reforms that recognise the real needs of women.

A change of culture is urgently needed within the UK Border Agency to ensure that women seeking asylum receive at least a comparable standard of treatment to women in similar situations who are settled in the UK. Every single woman has a right to such gender sensitive treatment."

ENDS

Notes

1. The Charter of Rights of Women Seeking Asylum was launched in July 2008 and has been endorsed by 189 organisations to date, including Oxfam, Amnesty International UK, Liberty and Rape Crisis.
2. To download a copy of the report visit www.asylumaid.org.uk/charter
3. To watch the video visit www.vimeo.com/7837560
4. **For an interview with Debora Singer, and to discuss the report further, please contact Ben Folley on 07779 113 450.**