

**Supporting the successful Integration and settlement of ethnic minorities,
refugees, migrants and other isolated communities**

We wish you a Merry Christmas And a Happy New Year!

On Saturday 13th of December Sure Start Centre was occupied by the smiles and the happy faces of many children and their parents as we celebrated our Christmas and New Year party. The party was filled with a fantastic atmosphere of music, dancing, magic and lots of games; and not forgetting many prizes for those who tried hard and showed a real commitment on the dance floor.



Thank you Santa!

A special thank you, of course, for all those who worked hard to make this day as special as it was, in particular to Marlene, Joana, Rohini and many others who gave their time and efforts to make the children and every one happy.

Finally our staff, trustees and volunteers wish all of you have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



This year's celebration was very special, and I truly mean it, as we had the real Santa coming to see the children and he gave a special gift to each of them together with an unforgettable memory of these magical moments for years to come.

Our special double issue this month includes: Mayor of London calls for migrant's amnesty – Immigration news – Recent events at ISS with photos – Harlow Foodbank and how we can help and be helped – all this and much more inside...

Mayor calls for migrant's amnesty

Boris Johnson has made a call for an "earned amnesty" for thousands of illegal immigrants living in the capital.



The London mayor has launched a review into the feasibility of granting an amnesty to an estimated 400,000 people living illegally in London. It is expected to report in two months.

Johnson has departed from the Conservative party line in his belief that people who have resided illegally for years in the capital should "earn" their citizenship. Although he has no legal powers over immigration policy, the mayor told Channel 4 he wanted to "lead the debate" on the issue. The mayor is expected to lobby the government once the City Hall review is complete, although both Labour and the Conservatives regard the issue as politically toxic and have in the past attacked the Liberal Democrats for suggesting it.

He first floated proposals for an amnesty for long-standing illegal immigrants during his mayoral campaign, prompting David Cameron to comment that one amnesty would just "store up" the need for a further one down the line.

Johnson's spokesman explained that the mayor "cannot change the laws on immigration", but he added: "It is his job as mayor to speak out for people in London on issues where he has relevant things to say."

SOURCE: The Guardian 22 November 2008

Immigration falls and set to decline further in recession

A decline in immigration is starting to accelerate as the recession bites, with a 36% fall in the number of Poles and other east Europeans coming to work in Britain recorded so far this year.

Figures published last month by the Office of National Statistics show that even before the economic slowdown, total immigrant arrivals in Britain were lower in 2007 at 577,000 than the 591,000 who came in 2006.

This was accompanied by a sharp fall in emigration from Britain - down 60,000 from a record peak of 400,000 in 2006 to 340,000 last year. Australia and Spain remain the favourite destinations for Britons going to live abroad.

This decline in the number of people leaving the country to start a new life abroad meant that the net migration figure - the difference between those coming in and those leaving the country for more than 12 months - for 2007 published yesterday rose by 46,000 to 237,000.

Meanwhile, the latest asylum figures show that applications to Britain rose by 12% this summer, with Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iran and Iraq the top five countries from which people were fleeing.

The detailed figures for east Europeans confirm the sharp fall in the number of Poles and Slovaks coming to work in Britain this summer. While 59,000 Poles and other east Europeans registered to work in Britain between July and September 2007, the number fell to 38,000 over the same period this year. This is the lowest level since Poland joined the EU in 2004.

This decline is matched among arrivals from the newest European Union states, Bulgaria and Romania. Only 6,515 registered to work in Britain this summer, compared with 9,470 in 2007. The decline is likely to influence a decision by the home secretary, Jacqui Smith, next month on whether to lift restrictions on Bulgarians and Romanians working in Britain.

National insurance registrations for foreign nationals working in Britain in the first half of this year were also down by 13%.

The immigration minister, Phil Woolas, said the figures showed a dramatic drop in the number of Poles coming to work this year. "It suggests that regeneration in Poland is encouraging people to stay in their home country," he said.

"On top of this, our new points system means only those from outside Europe with the skills we need will be able to work or study here, and no more."

SOURCE: Home Office

**Do you need help? Please ring on
01279 639442**

Borders, Immigration and Citizenship Bill

3rd December 2008

"A bill will be brought forward to strengthen border controls, by bringing together customs and immigration powers, and to ensure that newcomers to the United Kingdom earn the right to stay"

The purpose of the bill is to strengthen the border by giving the UK Border Agency the powers it needs at the frontier bringing together customs and immigration functions to enable a fully integrated approach to border control; increasing operational effectiveness and border security and ensure that newcomers to the United Kingdom earn the right to stay here; with changes to nationality law to implement the new path to citizenship within a firm but fair immigration system; and introducing a duty on UKBA to safeguard the welfare of children in its work.

The main benefits of the bill include Strengthening the border by bringing revenue and customs functions into the UK Border Agency which will enable its officers to use them alongside immigration powers, enabling a fully integrated approach to border control functions, increasing operational effectiveness and border security.

Ensure migrants earn the right to stay by implementing the new path to citizenship, with progress slowed down if migrants don't make an effort to integrate, or commit even minor crimes. There will be a number of changes to Nationality law, allowing us to shorten or lengthen the qualifying period for naturalisation according to behaviour.

Implement a firm but fair system - with measures including a new duty for the UKBA to safeguard the welfare of children; and to ensure fairness in nationality cases by removing the historical cut-off point for enabling children of British mothers born before 1961 to become British themselves, and enabling those serving overseas in the armed forces to register their children as British.

Living in the UK as a spouse or partner

New immigration rules came into force on the 27th November 2008. They raise from 18 to 21 the

minimum age at which a person may sponsor, or may be granted, entry clearance (including visas) or limited leave as the spouse, civil partner, fiancé(e), proposed civil partner, unmarried partner or same-sex partner of another person.

This reform is aimed at tackling the problem of forced marriage. We believe it to be important to protect young people from being forced into relationships they do not want at a time in their lives when they could be establishing a degree of independence as an adult through further education or through work. We believe that raising the age will provide an opportunity for individuals to develop maturity and life skills and to complete their education. It may also allow them to resist the pressure of being forced into a marriage. It will delay sponsorship for marriage until the age of 21 and allow vulnerable young people an opportunity to seek help and advice.

As a limited concession, the change in minimum age to 21 will apply only to cases where the UK-based sponsor is present and settled in the UK, or is being admitted for settlement on the same occasion as the applicant.

The minimum age of 18 will continue to apply to sponsors and their partners in those cases where the stay of a sponsor is subject to a time-limit (for example, students, work-permit holders).

For more information see home office website: www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk

VOLUNTEERING

**Is a great way to get to
know more people and
learn something new
which may help you later
when looking for work as
training is usually given.
There are many different
ways you can help so
please call our office to
discuss opportunities
01279 639442**

Trustees Away Day



The 6th of November was an unusual trustees meeting day as it was held outside the Rainbow Centre where we usually have our meetings. The day was filled with a rich agenda including the Business Plan for 2009-2010, Discussions on future funding opportunities and many other topics.

What is more important trustees had the opportunity to know each other better and enjoy a meal and drink together before going back to the room to work hard together by sharing ideas and experiences.

'Your Health Matters' Event



For many of us who are struggling with any kind of health problems our lives become even more difficult adding the fact that we do not have family or friends to support us in the most needed moments. It has been proved that ethnic minorities in general do have higher rates of hospitalization or have less knowledge/access to health services provided nationally. The lack of information remains a big factor which constantly feeds the



statistics of health issues experienced by ethnic minorities.

Integration Support services aims to play an active role on informing and encouraging our community to live a healthy and an active life. We did organise this year's event thanks to the support of our partners VSRN-EE and West Essex PCT with whom we work closely to reach those who need help by providing information, guidance and appropriate referrals. Particular attention this year was given to Mental Health which remains a big Stigma among our community. A wide range of information was displayed at the Sure Start Centre on the 15th of November associated with a festive



atmosphere of Belly dancing, yoga and a taste of food from different cultures.

A big thank you to our sponsors VSRN-EE, West Essex PCT, and all volunteers who contributed towards this special event.

Need to talk? We have regular drop in sessions in our office at 2 Wych Elm on Thursdays from 10.30 am – 2.30 pm Ring 01279 639442



Congratulations and Well done Mimoza Matoshi

Since September 2006 Mimoza Matoshi, ISS Secretary has been studying at the University of East London to complete a Master Degree on Refugee and Cultural studies. She was motivated by her working with ISS to do this programme which will be a huge benefit for the future of Integration Support Services and the many people we support. She graduated this December and is looking now towards another challenge to establish a Women's Aid Charity in Kosovo or Albania.

Our congratulations and best of luck for the future!

Harlow Foodbank

In Harlow an organisation called The Trussell Trust has been working with The Michael Roberts Charitable Trust, who have a neighbouring office to ours at 2 Wych Elm and we were excited to be told about the project which involves local people in crisis. We know from personal experiences that situations can happen that can lead to all sorts of financial difficulty which can lead to us being unable to feed ourselves or our family. Harlow foodbank is part of a national network of foodbanks, giving out nutritionally balanced emergency food to people who have nowhere to turn.



But where do we fit in? ISS have agreed to work in partnership with the Michael Roberts Charitable Trust by identifying people in crisis and assessing their need and supply them with a voucher so they receive help. Also we are looking to seek volunteer help within our ISS network and also collect foods urgently needed. Volunteers would befriend people or give out food at the foodbank centre and help in many other ways. We will explain more in forthcoming issues of our newsletter.

The foodbank satellite will be in the Belltower at St Paul's church in Harlow town centre so just a short distance from ISS office and due to open in April 2009. So if you have an interest in either receiving help,



or even more important of helping as a volunteer, please call our office on 01279 639442. This is an ideal and valuable way of being a part of your new community in Harlow, and helping others as you have been helped.

Robert Halfon visits ISS



Left to right: Mimoza Matoshi, ISS Secretary, Robert Halfon, Cliff Moore ISS Trustee and Marlene Brooks. Editor ISS News

On 24 November ISS welcomed Robert Halfon to our ISS office and he expressed sincere interest in the work we do here. He had this to say:

“The future is in our hands. In the hands too, of the homeless, refugees, migrants and other ethnic minorities wishing to integrate successfully into our community within a sustainable and collegiate framework, where permissions allow.”

On Robert's website he invites anyone who needs our help or wishes to help or support us themselves to contact our office.

Culture Aware Pages

Hanukkah

A Jewish winter holiday



Hanukkah, a Jewish holiday also known as the “Festival of Lights”, is celebrated for eight days around November/December. It begins on the twenty-fifth day of the Jewish month of Kislev (on the lunar calendar). This

holiday commemorates something that happened two thousand years ago, when a small group of Jewish fighters won a battle for religious freedom.

In Syrian-Greek Palestine in the second century before Christ, the king was Antiochus Epiphanes. He wanted everyone to worship the many Greek gods, but the Jews believed in one God only. Mattathias, a Jewish priest in the village of Modin near Jerusalem, and his five sons started a rebellion against King Antiochus Epiphanes. These Jews fought bravely under the leadership of one of the five sons, Judas Maccabeus.

The Jewish Temple in Jerusalem had been captured by King Antiochus’s soldiers, who dedicated it instead to their Greek gods. On the twenty-fifth day of Kislev, in the year 165 BC (before the birth of Christ), the brave Maccabees finally took back the Jewish Temple. It had taken the Maccabees three years to finally drive the soldiers of King Antiochus Epiphanes from the Temple and to restore it as a Jewish holy place.

They needed sufficient oil to re-light the ritual candelabra, or menorah, in order to rededicate the Temple to the Jewish people. The small amount of oil that was found didn’t appear to be enough for even one day, but it miraculously gave light for eight days. Hence is Hanukkah the “Festival of Lights.”

Hanukkah is celebrated in Jewish homes for eight days with the daily lighting of the menorah, beginning with the first candle lit at sundown on Hanukkah eve. An extra candle called the shamash is used to light the other nightly candles. On the second night two candles are lit, and on each night thereafter, another candle is added. On the

eight night, eight candles and the shamash are burning together. Blessing of thanks are recited for the joyous holiday of Hanukkah.

Gifts are exchanged. Grownups and children sing Hanukkah songs. Special holiday foods include delicious potato latkes (pancakes) fried to crisp perfection in oil. The oil used for cooking the latkes is a reminder of the ancient of the small amount of oil that burned for eight days.

The dreidl game is a spinning-top game traditionally played by young people during the holiday. The Hebrew letters on the dreidl stand for the words, “a great miracle happened there.”



By Orit Granot

**Exciting new opportunity
for the new year**

**ISS Trustees/Volunteers
Needed**

**Do you have a passion to work with
the community?**

**Do you want to represent your own
community at our board meetings,
by bringing their voice to us and
making a difference?**

**We need your experience, time and
dedication to run our organization
to the best possible standards.**

**Give us a call for more information
and we would be very happy to
explain in more details the benefits
and challenges of becoming a
trustee or a volunteer.**

01279 639442

Aid AL-Adha or Feast of Sacrifice

(Muslim) 8th of December

Traditions and practices



Eid al-Adha or Feast of Sacrifice is the most important feast of the Muslim calendar. It concludes the Pilgrimage to Mecca. Eid al-Adha lasts for three days and commemorates Ibrahim's (Abraham) willingness to obey God by sacrificing his son. Muslims believe the son to be Ishmael rather than Isaac as told in the Old Testament. Ishmael is considered the forefather of the Arabs. According to the Koran, Ibrahim was about to sacrifice his son when a voice from heaven stopped him and allowed him to sacrifice a ram instead.

The feast re-enacts Ibrahim's obedience by sacrificing a cow or ram. The family eats about a third of the meal and donates the rest to the poor.

Men, women, and children are expected to dress in their finest clothing to perform Eid prayer (Ṣalātu l-`Īdi) in any mosque. Muslims who can afford to do so sacrifice their best domestic animals (usually sheep, but also camels, cows and goats) as a symbol of Ibrahim's sacrifice. The sacrificed animals, called uḍḍiyah (Arabic: *أضحية*, also known as "al-



qurbāni"), have to meet certain age and quality standards or else the animal is considered an unacceptable sacrifice. Generally, these must be at least a year old.

At the time of sacrifice, God's name is recited along with the offering statement and a supplication as Muhammad said. According to the Quran, the meat is divided into three shares, one share for the poor, one share for the relatives and neighbours and the last to keep to oneself. A large portion of the meat must be given towards the poor and hungry people so they can all join in the feast which is held on Eid al-Adha. The remainder is cooked for the family celebration meal in which relatives and friends are invited to share. The regular charitable practices of the Muslim community are demonstrated during Eid al-Adha by the concerted effort to see that no impoverished person is left without sacrificial food during these days. Eid al-Adha is a concrete affirmation of what the Muslim community ethic means in practice. People in these days are expected to visit their relatives, starting with their parents, then their families and friends.

Distributing meat among people is considered an essential part of the festival during this period, as well as chanting Takbir out loud before the Eid prayer on the first day and after prayers through out the four days of Eid. (See Takbir in "Traditions and practices" of Eid el-Fitr.) In some countries families that do not own livestock can make a contribution



Distribution of meat of a traditionally sacrificed animal to the poor all over the world.

The Republic of Turkey modified Kurban regulations. Turkish law prohibited the locations of the sacrifice from public space and most sacrifices are now at secluded areas or indoors, so that they will not offend the sensitivity of many people and will not be viewed by children.

to a charity that will provide meat to those who are in need.

December/January Programme

IMPORTANT

THIS PAGE IS USUALLY RESERVED FOR OUR REGULAR PROGRAMME BUT DUE TO MANY OF US GOING AWAY FOR THE HOLIDAY THE OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED FROM 23rd DECEMBER TO 5th JANUARY

THE LAST SURE START SATURDAY CLUB MEETING THIS YEAR WILL BE ON 20th DECEMBER AND RESTART ON SATURDAY 10th JANUARY 2009 at 10.30 am.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OVER THE YEAR TO EVERYONE. WE HOPE YOU HAVE A HEALTHY HAPPY HOLIDAY AND LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU IN THE NEW YEAR.



We are grateful to our sponsors:



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This newsletter can be forwarded to you by post monthly at the cost of £1 monthly or £12 annually per copy which includes postage charges. Simply contact our office. **Marlene Brooks (Editor)**

And all who helped and contributed towards the publication of this double issue

**As a footnote, but no less important we would like to thank our trustee Cliff Moore who is working hard to build us a website which is nearly finished.
Look for news of the launch in the next issue!**