

In response to an FOI request for information concerning voluntary returns

The department received a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) requesting the following:-

Please provide information concerning the number of people who have benefited from assisted voluntary return schemes and are subsequently found to have come back to the U.K.

1. In each of the five calendar years 2001-2005 (or financial years 2000/01 - 2004/05) how many asylum seekers, failed asylum seekers or others with no legal basis of stay in the U.K. received financial help, or help in kind, to return to their country of origin under each of the following assisted voluntary return schemes:
 - a. Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme.
 - b. Assisted Voluntary Return of Irregular Migrants.
 - c. Return to Afghanistan Programme
2. The total value of financial assistance, or else the average value of financial assistance to each successful applicant (or both), under each scheme in each year.

Response

In each of the five programme years 2000/01 to 2004/05 the numbers of voluntary returns under the Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP), the Assisted Voluntary Return for Irregular Migrants (AVRIM) programme, which began in November 2004 and the Return to Afghanistan Programme (RAP), which commenced in August 2002, are as follows.

	VARRP	AVRIM	RAP
2000/01	689	0	0
2001/02	1192	0	0
2002/03	1354	0	38
2003/04	2690	82	77
2004/05	2798	347	51

It should be noted that AVRIM and RAP programme years run from 1st April to 31st March. VARRP years are different and depend upon the European Commission.

VARRP 2000/01 ran from 1st September 2000 to 31st August 2001
VARRP 2001/02 ran from 1st September 2001 to 31st August 2001
VARRP 2002/03 ran from 1st March 2002 to 28th February 2003
VARRP 2003/04 ran from 1st March 2003 to 29th February 2004
VARRP 2004/05 ran from 1st March 2004 to 28th February 2005

The number of people who have voluntarily returned to their country of origin under these programmes and who have subsequently returned to the UK and again applied for voluntary return totals 9 for the years 2000/01 – 2004/05. The nationalities of the 9 are from Albania (4) Kosovo (3), Poland (1) and Nigeria. (1) Out of the 9 individuals, 4 initially left the UK under VARRP and returned under AVRIM the second time. They did not apply for or receive any reintegration assistance when they left under VARRP. The AVRIM programme does not provide returnees with reintegration assistance, therefore these returnees did not receive any support.

A further 4 cases, where the returnees returned under VARRP on both occasions, were dealt with between 2000 and 2003 and received no reintegration assistance. Out of the 9 there was only one case where the applicant returned under VARRP on both occasions and benefited from reintegration assistance worth £797 for a

business set up when he first returned under VARRP. At no point has anyone received reintegration assistance on more than one occasion.

Since 1st August 2005, the eligibility criteria for VARRP excludes any applicant who has previously returned under VARRP and then returned to the UK.

In each of the programme years 2000/01 to 2004/05 the total value of financial assistance given to returnees under each scheme is set out in the following table. RAP and reintegration assistance under VARRP were first introduced in August 2002. There is no reintegration assistance element under AVRIM.

	VARRP	AVRIM	RAP
2000/01	Nil	Nil	Nil
2001/02	Nil	Nil	Nil
2002/03	£4,955	Nil	£20,600
2003/04	£240,996	Nil	£66,146
2004/05	£516,163	Nil	£22,764