

## REFUGEES - NEEDS ANALYSIS

Updated March 2005

### Summary of Needs

There are likely to be between 200-300 refugees in the city who may be eligible for Supporting People support, experiencing difficulties such as homelessness, accessing mainstream services, mental health issues, and difficulties in accessing translation. Information about housing related support needs of refugees is not currently routinely collected however, and the need for further research with regard to needs, alongside partnership work to co-ordinate support was highlighted.

### 1. The scale of potential need in Plymouth:

- ❑ It is estimated by Refugee Action in Plymouth that the city has up to 1000 asylum seekers and refugees, with between 150 and 200 destitute as a result of failed application. It is difficult to be precise about the number of successful asylum applicants (refugees) living in the city as some will have moved away and others will move into the city but a common estimate is between 200 and 300 people.  
ASR Policy Action Plan 2004 – 2005.
- ❑ 19 Nationalities are represented in these figures, including Kurds from Northern Iraq and Turkey, Iraqis and people from Congo, Cameroon, Sudan, Angola, Ivory Coast, Algeria, Iran, Syria, China and Mongolia.
- ❑ During 2004 Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support Council in Plymouth saw an average number of 37 asylum seekers/refugees a day seeking support across a range of need. This represented a significant increase on the previous year.
- ❑ DCRSC 's Housing Advise Worker helped 201 refugees and 202 asylum seekers in 2004.
- ❑ No official data exists with regard to the prevalence of disability among refugees, with estimates ranging from 3% to 10% of the total refugee population. (In Plymouth this would mean that as many as 9 – 30 refugees in the city have a disability and could require support).  
Joseph Rowntree Foundation: September 2002 - Ref 962  
Disabled people in refugee and asylum-seeking communities in Britain

### 2. Services currently operating:

There are a number of services in Plymouth with a specialist focus on supporting refugees. These include:

## Appendix 'N'

### **Those receiving funding from Supporting People**

- Plymouth Access to Housing (PATH) – providing floating housing related support and guidance to refugees – 8 units.
- Students and Refugees together (START) – providing floating housing related support and guidance to refugees – now achieving 35 units (March 2005) Specialist focus has so far been on supporting families.
- Adelphi - has provided 24 Supported Accommodation move-on units for those receiving positive decisions. This is discontinuing in March 2005. 18/24 residents have been found accommodation in Stonham, PCC housing and private rental. March 2005 all residents have been re-housed.
- Eddystone – providing floating support to people with HIV/AIDs and developing specialist knowledge and skills to help people who are refugees and other members of the BME community.

### **Those services for refugees not receiving funding from Supporting People**

- Plymouth has an Asylum Seeker and Refugee Coordinator – employed by Routeways. This post holder has been helping the city work towards a coordinated and cooperative approach to working with asylum seekers and refugees. A 3 monthly round of meetings focussing on different aspects of support have proved important for the city in moving forward.
- Refugee 1<sup>st</sup> – provide support, advocacy, guidance and peer support to refugees and asylum seekers.
- Refugee Action – Providing legal advice, advocacy and other support to refugees and asylum seekers. Receives notification from NASS when asylum seekers receive positive decisions.
- Shelter – providing housing advice and support across all groups.
- DCRSC – providing support and guidance to refugees and asylum seekers across a wide range of need. A specialist multi-lingual housing support worker makes up part of their permanent workforce.
- MIND – a specialist worker appointed to provide benefit advice to refugees.
- Ethnic Minority Achievement Service – working with families and children within the education system.
- Youth Enquiry Service – supporting young refugees.
- Plymouth College of Further Education – providing education and related support to asylum seekers and refugees.
- Open Doors – language college, also supporting women and children.
- Clearsprings – (NASS funded ) providing supported accommodation to asylum seekers.
- Adelphi – (NASS funded) providing supported accommodation to asylum seekers.

And other services that offer support which are not recorded here because of the more generic nature of their work e.g. social services departments, health trusts.

### **3. Commissioned research about needs:**

Research commissioned from EKOS with regard to the need for housing support across the city did not include representative views from agencies dealing with

## Appendix 'N'

refugees, and did not therefore accurately reflect the needs of this client group. As a result it is not included.

### 4. Other information about needs:

- 63 languages are spoken in primary and secondary schools across the city.
- 83% of asylum-seekers speak English only slightly or not at all on arrival.
- 23% of refugees had a degree but 27% had little or no education.  
Department for Work and Pensions: Refugees' Opportunities and Barriers in Employment and Training, December 2002, quoted in Skills and Learning Intelligence Module 2003.
- 2/3rds of refugees have experienced anxiety or depression.  
Social Exclusion Unit, 2004.
- Research indicates that refugee families have particular difficulties with: isolation, insecurity and fear; finding out about and accessing the range of services available to them – especially where information about services was not provided in mother tongues; reluctance to approach official organisations for help; lack of availability of translation services and long term support with the English language. Children and parents were struggling to cope with resettlement as a result.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation: Social Policy Research 1995, 'Meeting the needs of refugee families and their children.

- Difficulties accessing mainstream services  
*"The crossover to mainstream services is very stressful for refugees. The statutory services are not geared up for refugees. And the refugees are often afraid of authority and do not understand the systems they have to deal with".*  
Services for Vulnerable Adults in the South West, GOSW, 2004.
- Homeless refugees  
*"Many new refugees end up sofa surfing with friends who still have NASS accommodation, putting that accommodation at risk. One landlord in Plymouth complained that his house for 4-5 people regularly had 15 people staying there".*  
Asylum-seeker support worker, Services for Vulnerable Adults in the South West, GOSW, 2004.

## 5. Consultation with stakeholders:

**In December 2004 a strategy planning consultation event took place arranged by Supporting People to help in the development of its 5 year strategy.**

Refugee service stakeholders were invited to attend. Priorities put forward by those attending meeting are:

□ **1<sup>st</sup> Priorities.**

Development of increased collaboration and trust between provider organisations

Replacing Adelphi provision (housing based support ) with separate floating support (from integrated local agencies)

Concern about accessibility of accommodation for refugees.

Move on advice and support – professionally managed.

Partnership approach to provision of floating support.

□ **2<sup>nd</sup> Priorities:**

Improve access to 'hard to reach' refugees both families and children/singles.

Continuing and developing existing services

Housing interview and signposting (floating support idea – joint working utilising skills of different agencies.)

Supported housing more geared to accepting BME Community.

□ **3<sup>rd</sup> Priorities:**

Supporting development of clearer services and partnerships for refugees.

Continued support for most vulnerable, monitoring situation and progress over 12 months period.

Hostels for homeless be more accepting of BME community

Consideration was given to partnership working, with a view to a clear pathway of support once a positive refugee decision was received. Leaflets are being developed by some of the agencies to ensure that each other and service users understand the roles of each organisation. This could be developed further – and lead to more partnership work?

Families should not face several moves – children's education becomes affected, support systems destabilised, and this adds to vulnerability rather than reduces it. “

“Can we work with housing allocations to try to bring a smoother process, which is not crisis led?”

**Apart from the needs/challenges already noted, other overriding challenges for Plymouth include:**

- Helping the public understand better the truths about the experience of asylum seekers

## Appendix 'N'

- Helping the public move towards a more tolerant and welcoming approach, which recognises the value and skills that refugees can bring to our city.
- Developing our support systems so that they can act in a collaborative and systematic way in helping asylum seekers and refugees, and reduce the further trauma associated with establishing themselves in a new setting.
- Finding a way to manage the growing and distressing situation of up to 200 failed asylum seekers in Plymouth being in a situation of destitution and without income
- To ensure that front line staff within statutory agencies are suitably prepared and skilled in dealing with the issues facing asylum seekers and refugees.

### 6. Background information:

- Draft strategy priorities: Priorities of the SP team in the draft strategy: “Currently there is only a minimal provision of support services for this group, so provision needs to be increased ...to provide adequate support for this group”.
- Dispersal of refugees to Plymouth: Under the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act Plymouth was selected as one of the dispersal areas for Asylum seekers. Negotiations between the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) and Plymouth City Council failed to bring about a contract and funding to support asylum seekers. As a result they began arriving and were housed through private agencies contracted by NASS. This led to inadequate preparation and resulted in a number of agencies being set up across all sectors in an ad hoc way. ASR Policy Action Plan 2004 – 2005

**The lack of an agreed NASS contract has meant that unlike other areas, the local authority has been unable to control the numbers and diversity of those dispersed to Plymouth. This has led to greater challenges particularly in the area of translation/interpretation with more than 50 different ‘first languages’ spoken.**

Ethnic Minority Achievement Service.

- Failed asylum seekers: “The last year has seen a significant and frightening rise in the numbers of asylum seekers who have no legitimate means of support..... Most who have been made homeless have been able to sleep on the floors of friends who have accommodation, often rather glibly referred to as sofa surfers.”  
Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support Council (DCRSC) Annual Report 2004.

## Appendix 'N'

- Strategic plans of ASR Group: In March 2003 The Asylum Seeker and Refugee committee held a strategic planning event involving the stakeholders in the city involved with both frontline support and strategic development. Out of this came the Asylum Seekers and Refugees Policy Action Plan 2004 – 2005 in draft form. This document is still in the process of being approved by PCC and changes to the document are anticipated. However the planned outcomes/targets in relation to housing for refugees are listed in the table below:

No.	OBJECTIVE:	OUTCOME:	ACHIEVED BY:
1	To achieve clarity over roles/duties of Housing and Social Services in provision of ASR services in order to address gaps in provision.	Clear and accessible definitions of departmental roles and responsibilities. Referral mechanism for Refugee Action.	Publication of a clear definition of departmental roles and responsibilities. Development of referral protocol for Refugee Action. Training sessions for identified officers.
2	Successful transition from NASS accommodation for refugees.	To provide a home to all who have received a positive decision.	PCC to arrange home visits by housing advisers in collaboration with current providers.