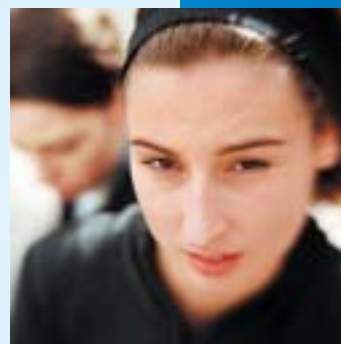


# Infrastructure support needs for **Refugee and Migrant Community organisations**



*A Report exploring provision and  
support for refugee organisations  
in Bradford*



## Acknowledgements

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## Introduction

Bradford became a designated refugee dispersal area in 2000 and through the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) and in collaboration with Bradford Metropolitan District Council has been providing services to over 1000 refugees and asylum seekers. By June 2006, there were 705 dispersed asylum seekers in NASS supported accommodation in Bradford<sup>1</sup>. To be added to this figure is the number of individuals already granted refugee status and those not registered or deemed ineligible for NASS<sup>2</sup> support. Bradford also sits the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal (AIT), which deals with a number of immigration cases and appeals within Yorkshire region.

This research was funded by *ChangeUp* to explore services relating to refugee organisations. The research sought to:

- Identify gaps in refugee infrastructure support organisations' provision;
- Identify the needs of refugee community organisations;
- Provide a clearer understanding of refugee organisational capacity.

Action for Black Community Development (ABCD) Ltd was the lead organisation and worked with Bradford Action for Refugees (BAfR) in the administration of the research questionnaire. The research was conducted from 7th September 2006 and ended on 21st October 2006. The research targeted two types of responses, i.e. responses from organisations providing a service or services for refugees or refugee organisations and responses from refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers with experience about a service or services offered by refugee community organisations.

There are 2 major refugee communities (African) and (Kurdish) and little or no information on 'White other' communities. The Bradford Refugee Forum, which is a body bringing different refugee community organisations together, is just under 2 years old. There is a cross-section of organisations serving across the district. Some statutory bodies provide services to refugees.

In terms of the number of organisations participating in the research, it should be indicated here that the situation is not helped by the fact that DIVA<sup>3</sup> registers only about 7 refugee community organisations. In fact, there is the slightly erroneous entry of 5 organisations described as refugee organisations. Of these 5 organisations, only 3 of these organisations listed actually dedicate themselves to refugees. This paucity of information of RCOs is reflected regarding the sample size below in the research findings.

1. See *Asylum Statistics: 2nd Quarter 2006 United Kingdom*, Home Office (London).

2. The National Asylum Support Service (NASS) is a Home Office service providing a degree of support, mainly in the form of accommodation and subsistence to asylum-seekers while awaiting a decision on their asylum claim. This support is provided on fulfilment of certain conditions and is therefore not automatic.

3. DIVA is a database of community and voluntary organisations in Bradford district. It may be accessed at [www.divabradford.org.uk](http://www.divabradford.org.uk).

## Administration of the questionnaire

Copies of the questionnaires that were sent out are attached in the appendix. Testing out the questionnaire revealed that some respondents would have struggled with understanding some questionnaire items. During an initial analysis of the pilot questionnaire<sup>4</sup>, it was felt that respondents with little or no English would have needed an interpreter and that to be fully understood there was need for the questionnaire to be administered in person by a researcher.

In addition, it was also observed that individual refugees would have been reluctant to disclose their identity and contact details. Refugees' fear of authorities such as the police, local authorities, and even NASS is real and needs a longer engagement to dispel. Temple and Moran (2006: p193-94) provide insight in this with telling examples. This explains to a large extent the reluctance of many individuals to complete questionnaires or participate in research. The outcome of the analysis of the pilot questionnaire necessitated a change in the layout of the questionnaire, shifting the item on identity to the bottom of the last page and clearly marking it out as optional. Bradford Action for Refugees, Bradford City Council and ACBD Ltd. helped in circulating the questionnaire. These were sent out as e-mail attachments and in some cases, as hard copies given out to individual respondents.

### Literature Review

Few reports are available relating to the health needs of African and African-Caribbean communities. *The Time for action: The health of African and African-Caribbean people in Bradford, a needs assessment* (2002), set out a series of recommendations several of which have not seen the light of day. These reports argued for enhanced access and better delivery of health provision to new migrant communities. The research, undertaken by BME<sup>4</sup> community organisations identified gaps in service delivery by statutory bodies. Whereas some aspects of refugee concerns were covered by the research, asylum seekers' needs were not catered for, and owing to restriction to public funds, asylum seekers continue to experience deprivation at various levels. *The Destitution Trap* by Refugee Action (2006) does highlight the needs of asylum seekers more starkly.

On a wider level, Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) has published several pieces of pertinent research: Perry, John (2005) *Housing and Support Services For Asylum Seekers And Refugees: A Good Practice Guide*, York; Temple, Bogusia et. al. (2005) *Learning To Live Together: Developing Communities with Dispersed Refugee People seeking asylum*; JRF (2001) *The role and future development of black and minority ethnic organisations*, York. These pieces of research point to an area of activity of which very little awareness exists. The paucity of knowledge about refugee issues, and work with refugees often means strategic planning is inadequate and the maximisation of resources is not realised. This is also evident in the research findings for Bradford.

It is the case that a number of communities feel they have been 'over-researched' and would prefer seeing 'outcomes' or results instead of more research. *Doing Research With Refugees Issues and guidelines*, edited by Temple and Moran (2006) is a useful reminder about the complexity of research in the refugee communities. Of relevance to Bradford is Chapter 6 'The community leader, the politician and the policeman' by Manawar Jan-Khan. Jan-Khan attempts to explore the Pakistani community in Bradford and interlinks their experiences to refugee communities. However, the difficulty with this attempt is in making a distinction between the Pakistani community as a refugee community as opposed to a migrant community. Indeed, Pakistanis themselves may not see Bradford's Pakistani community as a refugee community. A factor to be borne in mind is whether or not individuals and communities self-identify themselves as refugees. Over time, generations may even feel more distant with being identified as refugees.

Worthy of mention is the *Change Up* report commissioned by COEMO (2006) *Report On Change Up (Gaps and Needs) A Survey of Infrastructure Support Services for Black and Minority Ethnic Groups in Bradford and District*. The survey, involving Bradford based BME groups and members of the Bradford and District Voluntary and Community ISO Group, reveals a multiplicity of activities and services with numerous overlap amongst organisations. According to the report, 74% account for social and cultural activities offered to groups, followed by training and education and advice and guidance at 68%. There are interesting findings in the COEMO report. For example, the main areas of support accessed by local BME groups are: a) funding and fundraising and b) advice and guidance (63%). These areas are followed by: a) organisational support, b) payroll and c) training (58%). In contrast, the main service offered by ISOs is: organisational support (76%). Funding and fundraising is at par with: a) personnel/employment advice and b) training services (at 47%), (COEMO, 2006: 7-8).

### Findings

A preliminary report was issued immediately on 20th October 2006. It was immediately clear that refugee voices are many, that their needs are varied, and yet the need to give space to all these voices is fraught with challenges. Strong political voices dominate the news media while the most vulnerable voices receive very little support. The substance of the preliminary report is included herein. After an analysis of the questionnaire submissions, the research has found that:

*Bradford's refugee communities are diverse.* These communities tend to keep to themselves, often segregated on lines of ethnicity, race, nationality and

4. This meeting held on 12th October 2006, involved Jim Johnson and Dorine Nakuti (from BAfR) and David Odunukwe and Clement Katulushi (from ABCD Ltd.).

5. BME is commonly used to refer to Black and Minority Ethnic people.

6. It is important to note the existence of those Muslim refugees of Asian origin expelled from Uganda by Idi Amin in the 1972. Refer also to Temple and Moran (2006: p175) who discusses this to some detail. Further, Pakistan and Indian nationals also accounted for a high percentage of asylum applications in 2nd quarter of 2006, according to the Home Office (2006) asylum statistics bulletin.

and sometimes culture. In some cases, the diversity tended to to enrich the cultural experience of Bradford but the attendant political context and background has restricted participation and access, as well as highlighted a culture of fear within the communities. However, it has to be stated here that the diversity of Bradford's refugee committees is not evident in the responses, given that the sample size and returns are relatively small. One glaring omission, for example, is input from the Iraqi community in Bradford. In discussions about the lack of input from the various refugee communities, it was observed that 'most refugees from Eastern Europe tended not to organise themselves into voluntary and community organisations'. On the other hand, it seems Africans seek to form such organisations. Another consideration is that some older communities relate less and less with refugee identity over time. Thus the Ukrainian, Chinese and Polish communities in Bradford may not be engaging fully with research as the African refugee communities. The involvement of non-African refugee communities is currently a matter of concern for the Bradford Refugee Forum, which is keen to see more participation from the wider diverse refugee community.

### **Nature of Organisations**

An aspect of the research was to enable organisations to provide a description of what they considered themselves to be. The following describes the nature and type of organisations working with refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers.

**ISO:** In this category are infrastructure organisations, such as ABCD Ltd. and Bradford CVS, to mention but a few. The purpose of organisations in this category is to offer infrastructure support to beneficiary organisations whether or not these organisations are primarily carrying out refugee work. Bradford CVS is able to offer training for RCOs, a service which is also being provided by ABCD but more targeted at African and African-Caribbean groups. These organisations serve a much broader mandate and include refugee work as an area of work alongside other community development work.

**Q-ISO:** Some organisations considered themselves to be refugee infrastructure organisations. However, this seemed to stem from the availability of a development worker with a remit to work with refugee community organisations. These organisations tended to work directly with individual refugees and asylum seekers, providing services and undertaking casework-related activities. Another way of describing these organisations, with a foot in infrastructure support and another in service provision, would be as quasi-infrastructure support organisations, q-iso. A common characteristic of q-iso is that they tend to be umbrella bodies, drawing membership from other independent organisations, providing a network and forum for sharing good or best practice.

**RCO:** Refugee Community Organisations described themselves as such on the basis of membership composition and intent of purpose. In this category, the

organisation drew its members from a common country of origin, possibly sharing a political inclination, and coming together locally to achieve set aims. With the exception of statutory organisations, refugee infrastructure support and community organisations were basically about playing some form of advocacy and campaigning role. Bradford Kurdish Association and African Community Support Project identify themselves as RCOs. Increasingly, these organisations are beginning to arrange for training as part of their service provision, although so far, this training is not accredited. African Refugees Health Access and Support (ARHAS) has been focussing on training in health as well as raising awareness among young people on issues related to knife, drug and gun culture.

**SP:** Other organisations, especially within the statutory sector, would best be described as service providers. These existed as 'units' or 'departments' of a larger body and therefore operated within a generic business plan. Service provision as an activity seems to exist across the sector, with non-traditional type organisations also coming up with projects specifically targeting the refugee 'market'. In the questionnaire, there was an attempt to distinguish between infrastructure support needs and non-infrastructure needs by mapping out a grey area of services, which had become appendices to the organisation's core reason for existence. There is increasing involvement of organisations whose core business is not necessarily refugee work. Some of these are more entrepreneurial, such as Urbanbiz, which describes itself as 'a social enterprise, which engages with communities to support good causes'. Indeed, social enterprise for refugees is an area presently receiving some attention. UnLtd, for example, is providing grants to refugees wishing to develop a business idea.<sup>7</sup> These schemes unfortunately are not addressing the sustainable infrastructure needs of organisations. The Bradford Refugee Forum has mentioned as a matter of urgency the need for a systematic and strategic approach to funding the basic operations of RCOs and to developing their infrastructure.



7. UnLtd is currently offering, through Refugee Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs (RISE), grants between £500 to £5,000 to help individual refugees and small groups wishing to engage in some business or social enterprise that will benefit their community. The Africa 2000/Afri Food Coop in Bradford is a recipient of such an award. RISE is funded by the Home Office and the European Refugee Fund.

## Services

Activities and services offered by organisations include provision of help and advice for asylum seekers with regard to NASS support and housing, access to benefits and mainstream services and community cohesion activities. The following are selected comments highlighting what some organisations describe themselves as doing:

- *We give help and advice for refugees with positive decisions, with access to benefits and housing.*
- *We are voluntary organisations wanting to engage African refugees and the rest of society.*
- *We provide good training and services to refugees, asylum seekers and migrant African families.*

Larger and well established organisations, such as Refugee Action, Refugee Council and Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Consortium for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, provide more professional services, such as work placements, outreach visits, skills audits for refugees, developing policies for RCOs and helping refugee women to access employment. Organisations delivering on NASS contracts offer a service stipulated by NASS standards. Thus housing providers make home visits as part of their NASS contract.

There is concern regarding the quality and/or availability of support in housing, employment and health. There is sharp contrast in clients accessing help from BAfR and those going to Bevan House. Whereas BAfR noted a decrease in the number of refugees and asylum seekers from Africa and an increase in the number of Eastern European migrants, Bevan House reported an increase in the number of African women accessing services. There was no statistical evidence given other than the observation that BAfR was also recording an increase in the number of clients from the new migrant communities from Eastern Europe. Most of the African refugees accessing support from Bevan House were presenting health needs.

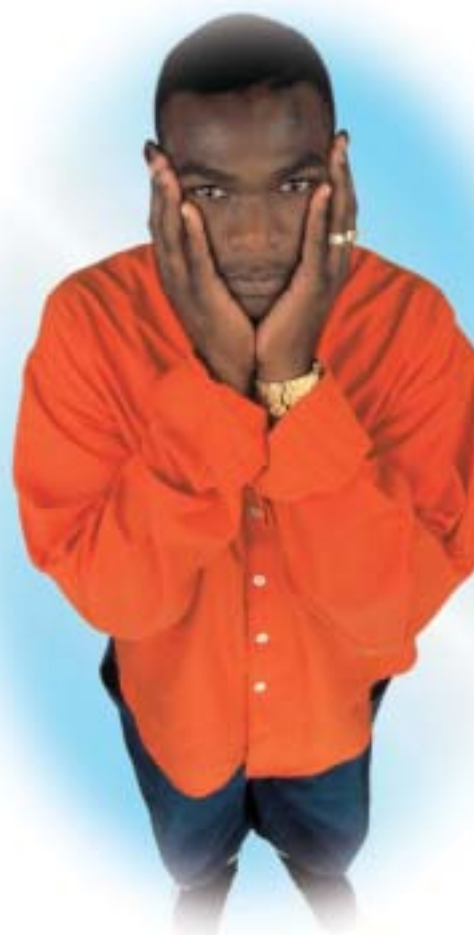
On the other hand, ABCD Ltd, through the ACCEPT<sup>8</sup> project noted an increase in the number of refugees needing help in job search, education and training. The ACCEPT project offered help to African and African-Caribbean people to get into sustainable employment through education, training, and job search support. Numbers between male and female refugees and asylum seekers tended to be generally at par. Urbanbiz now offers an ACCEPT replica and through this is servicing both African and Eastern European migrant workers.

### Language Support

From the onset, it was clear that 'language' posed a difficulty for a number of refugee respondents, just in filling out the questionnaire form. Less than half of the organisations participating in the research had professional services offering language support to refugees or migrant workers. Some organisations relied on volunteer expertise to enable effective communication. Refugees from Somalia, Ethiopia and

Eritrea<sup>9</sup> seem the most affected. Almost none of the q-iso had any resource, human included, able to speak Tigrinya, for example. ESOL classes have taken off fairly well but these assume that refugees possess a minimum level of English sufficient to attend classes. But the truth behind ESOL classes is that those most in need of this service cannot access it. A typical comment from an asylum seeker who came into ABCD offices: 'I have been trying to get into an English class for one year now, they ask me for an NI number and want to see my passport. I am still looking for somewhere to learn'.

From responses given in the research, and subsequent interviews with respondents, there is a very strong view that the arrival of migrant workers from Eastern European countries, in the wake of the expansion of the European Union, is shifting attention and resources from refugees to EU migrant workers. New ESOL classes and projects are now targeting Eastern European migrant workers just as free ESOL classes for asylum seekers are being withdrawn. At the strategic level within Bradford district, planners whose remit initially was the refugee sector have now amended their remit to encapsulate the new migrant workers.



8. The ACCEPT project was a project run by ABCD Ltd offering support to African/African-Caribbean people to gain employment through help with education and skills training, help with child care costs, job search and job preparation. This project, funded by the European Social Fund, was also accessed by people from other BME communities. It ended on 31st March 2006.

9. According to Home Office (2006: 2) Afghan nationals accounted for the largest number of asylum applicants, followed by Chinese and then Eritrean. Iranian, Somali, Zimbabwean and Pakistan nationals also feature among the top ten applicant nationalities in the 2nd quarter 2006 nationwide.

## Individuals' personal comments

A number of views were expressed on what individuals thought was a priority in service provision. These included:

- *Accommodation is a priority.*
- *Integration services need to be more proactive, better funded and include more sensitivity with diversity.*
- *Very little financial support is available so need to expand this (income support for refugees and asylum seekers).*
- *Accommodation is the most important thing a refugee needs on arrival.*
- *A fair lawyer who can help in asylum claim without discrimination or prejudice.*
- *Refugees need a centre where they can meet privately without fear of state monitoring.*
- *The drive to get refugees and asylum seekers out to work requires qualifications and is independent.*
- *Understanding of available opportunities and ways or means to maximise these opportunities to develop themselves.*

There is a strong case for casework providing a one-to-one support. This is something that RCOs and a number of professional organisations are able to offer, and a drop-in service envisaged by Bradford Refugee Forum. Another commonly expressed need was for accommodation and employment. Levels of destitution amongst refugees are high, and higher still for asylum seekers, mainly because employers present a raft of requirements and qualifications which refugees and migrant workers either do not have, such as experience of working in the UK, or whose equivalence seem to be lower than the UK preference. Asylum seekers are prohibited from taking up employment while their access to public funds is restricted. This results in a frugal budget-type lifestyle for those on NASS support and destitution for those outside NASS support.

### Other comments

- *Befriending is good. This is provided by BAfR and BIASAN.*
- *It is good, it helps me to stay motivated and feel welcome.*
- *Psychological support, and should be sent to specialists, because when they arrive in the U.K they have a lot of problems.*
- *Greater financial support - money offered is just below the lowest paid worker.*
- *Need to access the organisations that are given a funding so those that are more honest are given this task.*

- *As asylum seekers what we need is peace of mind and try to listen for all the experience that happen to us, that's why we come here and trust the people of England for we thought our life would be solved and safe.*
- *By allowing asylum seekers to advance their education, e.g. go to colleges and universities, not letting them on low-level education.*



## Organisational comments

Generally, funding concerns were directly or indirectly alluded to by a majority of organisations, especially the RCOs. Most of these organisations are not able to transform themselves into registered charities because they do not meet the new £5,000 minimum income level. Others still have no capacity to meet insurance liability requirements and several RCOs, including the Bradford Refugee Forum are in need of decent office space. Maendeleo Refugee Youth Club, and ARHAS are currently linked up with more stable organisations albeit temporarily owing to affordability of office premises.

### Needs

Refugee organisations mentioned several needs. A majority of RCOs are faced with infrastructure requirements, such as premises for office space, space for drop-in services and facilities for children. One RCO expressed need for 'more support from the local and national authorities to develop our project. We need premises where we can deliver our services in professional ways'. 'Finding premises' is a key need also expressed in the Flying Giraffe (2004: p10) report. The need for premises is almost matched by the need for sustainable funding. Of course, this situation is not peculiar to RCOs only, but sustainability is of greater concern for an area of community development seen as 'unpopular'. In responding to this need, ISOs tend to offer information and guidance relating to sources of major funding. The challenge is that few RCOs are in a position to meet conditions placed upon them by funders. This tallies with COEMO's (2006: p12) findings that the highest area of need, according to both local BME groups and ISOs is for 'more funding and fundraising advice and support - including practical help'.

Most RCOs are involved in community cohesion projects. They offer services or conduct activities intended to integrate refugees into the broader community. RCOs' ability to deliver these services reflect experiences and expertise available within refugee development work. RCOs have more direct contact with individual refugees and this contact is mirrored in services provided. A comment that was expressed by a number of RCOs related to the health needs of refugees. Here, there is no one view about health provision but two comments are worth quoting:

*'Mental health relating to refugees - this has little specialist support, what is available has no understanding of what refugees and asylum seekers have experienced. Counselling therefore tends to be poorly informed'.*

These comments must also be weighed against the comment from a statutory organisation providing a health 'service specifically for asylum seekers and refugees'. This organisation offers health provision including access to a Counsellor with lead responsibility for developing the service for refugees and asylum seekers. Interpretation support consists mainly of South Asian languages plus limited French. For most refugees

and asylum seekers, current support is far below meeting need. It also indicates little confidence in the level of expertise of those providing such support and hence reveals a training need.

The second observation was that:

*'Africans generally face prejudice as communities infecting British society with HIV/AIDS and so even refugees living with HIV/AIDS suffer both discrimination, prejudice and stigma within the broader society which makes it more difficult in accessing appropriate services. This means our capacity to provide services to refugees is often weak, and our organisation has to exist by piecemeal funding schemes.'*

The observation cited above drew out further gaps in terms of the capacity of RCOs to deliver in most of their activities, especially in community cohesion projects. Local funding through organisations such as Community Empowerment Network (Cnet) and Linking Communities (Diversity Exchange) are far from adequate in the sustainability of RCOs. This is also true of the wider BME sector nationally, that funding is crucial to the success and continuation of the sector, (Social Business Company, 2005: p4).

Although there is training available for groups to access minimum book-keeping or financial accounting procedures, it is still the case that most RCOs have not built up a strong enough financial track-record to impress major funders. This in turn means RCOs are still struggling in terms of meeting both capacity and capability as constituted organisations. For example, the commencement of the New Asylum Model<sup>10</sup> in Yorkshire and Humber in April 2006 has left many RCOs struggling to respond competently to offer appropriate advice to their members. For most organisations, there is a strongly held common view that support services for women and children are either inadequate or poorly funded. What was also clear during the research is that RCOs are still not accessing in-depth funding advice, and that a number of RCOs need more support with the actual writing-up of grant applications.

Another observation was that:

*'Established community organisations have to work hand-in-hand with refugee communities in order to improve their services and make them more beneficial to the entire community'.*

This sentiment, expressed in other ways by other respondents, underlies the viewpoint for closer co-ordination and joined-up working between ISOs and RCOs. It is possible that emergent organisations, with few resources, capacity or capability, are looking to more established organisations for some form of partnership, a mentoring relationship in which various resources, including infrastructure, are shared without necessarily leading to a loss of autonomy.

A typical comment by some RCOs is the lack of genuine 'accessibility for refugees and asylum seekers to health services'. An asylum seeker suffering from a

10. The New Asylum Model (NAM) is a faster, tightly-managed process for all new asylum claimants.

toothache could not access emergency dental service because he was 'ineligible'. There is obviously a gap here. This situation of need simply highlighted the extent to which RCOs are able to proffer support but also, the need for more robust networking between RCOs and ISOs. The Department of Social Services will offer support to unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) as well as failed asylum seekers and a level of support to refugees. What RCOs are clearly not aware about is the type of support available and how their members could access this support. Destitution underlies the lives of most refugees and asylum seekers the levels of which RCOs and ISOs are not equipped to deal with. This is not exclusive to Bradford alone, as the Refugee Action (2006) report reveals.

### **Multi-agency Work**

Gaps exist in the way these structures operate at both strategic and operational levels and in terms of addressing infrastructure and capacity needs of RCOs. There is little evidence of sustainable resources for this area of need. The extent of provision for the infrastructure of organisations is a matter of urgency, needing much more than access to IT equipment but rather creating an environment where long term planning is feasible and accessible even to smaller emergent groups.

There is a gap in determining the quality and effectiveness of services. What this research indicates is the need for coordination between service providers and refugee communities, and harmonisation of information networks. There is need for better and more effective representation between front-tier RCOs, agencies and ISOs in order to enable a coherent delivery of development. From discussions with RCO leaders, it was evident that few RCOs are familiar with the work of the Multi-Agency Asylum Seekers Operational Group.

Closer collaboration could give a clearer indication of the jobs refugees are getting into, as well as how claimants who have been granted a positive decision could benefit from a work-placement scheme. In this, the Job Centre, recruitment agencies and RCOs are likely to find the multi-agency framework of use. On the other hand, ISOs need to keep abreast with developments in order to establish, where necessary, an effective referral system. Further, the potential of the multi-agency operational group for refugees and asylum seekers is evident in being a body of influence, not only with business and employers, but also with agencies such as the Learning Skills Council. ISOs should be in a position to contribute and strengthen to RCOs narratives at informing strategy and enabling a peer-monitoring support mechanism.

### **Legal support**

The capacity of most RCOs and ISOs in provision of legal support, albeit as immigration advisers is a noticeable omission. With Legal Aid no longer readily available, solicitors<sup>11</sup> supporting and working with refugee causes are hard to come by. Few ISOs offer any legal support and legal training related to refugee

issues does not feature as a priority in further and higher education in Bradford. Consequently, very few RCOs are looking to registering with the OISC<sup>12</sup> to be able to offer basic immigration advice. This is because the registration fee does not come cheap. It is therefore the case that provision of immigration advice may be done in breach of the law. The need is clearly for ISOs to enable relevant training and ensure RCOs are working towards the fulfilment of the OISC Code of Standards<sup>13</sup>.

In further follow-up discussions with leaders and members of RCOs management committees, it is also clear that much immigration advice is being dispensed by organisations with little or no training in immigration law. There is awareness about the legal requirement placed upon immigration advisers by the OISC that such immigration advisers must be registered by the OISC to offer such advice. However, various factors including legal costs, have meant that a majority of advice workers are ill-qualified to provide this service. For RCOs depending on volunteers to offer such support, the 'good-intention' and often 'personal experience of the system' seem to replace the need to meet minimum standards. As with other training subjects, advice training will need to be targeted in terms of how members of RCO management committees are able to commit themselves to the training, how local solicitors can resource such training, and how *Change Up* funding can be utilised through existing providers already working with RCOs. A consultative exercise might provide a clearer way of addressing the issue of advice training for RCOs in Bradford.

Accessing legal support is not the only problem. It is also a matter of concern for a number of organisations that they are meeting their own legal obligations as organisations. The need identified from comments in this respect had to do with Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks for volunteers, provision of crèche facilities and disability access. RCOs need more help in understanding the CRB process and how this links with overseas records. Often, refugee volunteers and potential employees may feel frustrated if the process seems to take too long. The need for CRB checks is however becoming mandatory for RCOs looking to working with children and young people. A large number of funders insist that organisations put in place appropriate policies, such as Safe-guarding Children policies, and that these policies and mechanisms are reviewed frequently. A Volunteering Policy should seek to address possible areas of concern for refugee and asylum seeker volunteers. In addition, these organisations are concerned that they are not able to develop into registered charities because they do not have both the structures and the procedures in place to meet requirements under the Charities Act 2006. Where

11. By the end of November 2006, a level of free Legal Asylum Advice in Bradford was still being offered by Barry Clark Solicitors, Bradford Law Centre, the Immigration Advisory Service and Switalski's.

12. This stands for Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner, established under The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, to regulate immigration advisers and service providers.

13. OISC (2000) Code Of Standards.

more robust financial procedures are required, most RCOs do not have the staff to implement and consistently maintain good practice. Other areas of difficulty include following through on insurances such as public liability, and on employment policies. The result is that RCOs are content only at existing as constituted community organisations.

The involvement of refugees in professional organisations, i.e. organisations legally constituted, is a point requiring further exploration. Considering that very few statutory organisations submitted completed questionnaires, it is not possible to determine how many refugees are employed in these organisations especially in matters directly relating to refugees, nor is it possible to have a more accurate picture of asylum seekers serving as volunteers. It is not far-off the mark however to say that there are very few organisations actively engaging refugees as staff. An example from a questionnaire submission: in a team of 21 staff, there were no refugees or migrant workers employed by one statutory organisation in a service directed at refugees. Another organisation's immigration unit has a staff team of 11 - there are no refugees or migrant workers, not even volunteers on the team. Less than 4% of the organisations involved in the research employ refugees even in areas where refugee experience could be of benefit. On the other hand, refugees, migrant workers and asylum seekers make up more than 90% of the management committees of RCOs.

### **Publicity**

Despite observations lamenting lack of coordination within the refugee sector, some organisations seem to provide strong referral links. In this case, Bradford Action for Refugees is seen as providing a visible frontline service for refugees. Most refugees come in contact with RCOs and ISOs mainly as a result of word-of-mouth contact. 'Word of mouth' certainly ranked as the most popular mode of communication. There are several possible reasons for this. One reason proffered by a respondent was in the one word 'trust', that refugee communities are 'vulnerable communities', where trust, insecurity and identity are major concerns. This is certainly in agreement with the findings of the Social Business Company (2005: p7) in relation to the wider VCS sector. It is necessary however to strengthen other ways of information flow to refugee communities, including ways in which ISOs and RCOs publicise themselves in relation to refugee and asylum seeker services.

In general however, the COEMO (2006: p9) report suggests that many local BME groups have an awareness of infrastructure organisations. In the case of what this research set out to do, and following on from interviews with RCOS and refugees, it is the author's considered opinion that RCOs in general are not fully familiar or conversant with what ISOs do and offer. They have a vague understanding about their existence but are not properly cognisant with how they can access ISO services. To this extent, the 'Word of mouth' medium, reportedly the most common, is also prone to misrepresentation.

RCOs function effectively when they inspire confidence and sensitivity in working with beneficiaries. ISOs generally tend to distance themselves from individual beneficiaries but their relevance rests on their responsiveness to RCOs. This was clear in conversations with organisational respondents, especially in clarifying the relationship between RCOs and ISOs. One respondent hinted at apparent rivalry between some ISOs, and between ISOs and service providers. Related to this was the suspicion that some service providers exploited the refugee situation mainly as a source of funding.

The following are a sample of comments from organisations:

- *Many of the services provided are not sensitive to the needs of the community and services are not accessible.*
- *Cheaper access to NARIC<sup>14</sup> type service (this is for refugees and migrant workers to have documentation which provides a translation of their qualifications into the British equivalent).*
- *There is need for support on housing, education, jobs, and economic issues.*
- *There are lots of organisations pretending to work for refugees - during refugee week, these organisations do not offer any support or any financial support - how does this reflect their concern?*
- *There is need for an easier route of CRB checks for refugees.*
- *Easier and more accessible accredited courses.*

### **Development Plans**

There is also very little documentary evidence of development or business planning for refugee work. Established RCOs and ISOs are fairly conversant with what they are about, yet a review of development plans seems to be lacking or unavailable. Although 50% of the organisational responses indicated that they had development plans for refugee work, another 50% did not. Of the 50% organisations that had such plans, the majority of these plans related to the general administration of the organisations, and refugee planning tended to be one of several other areas of activity. Further, none of these organisations provided actual documentation of their development plans. It can be deduced that this gap could be blamed on weak organisational capacity, that these organisations do not have the means and resources to develop robust and feasible plans for sustainable refugee projects and activities. For mainstream ISOs, it may be the case that refugee work is undertaken as an add-on without need for building a case for it.

It is clear, in the context of research objectives, that more action research is needed, perhaps concentrating on getting more feedback from infrastructure

14. NARIC stands for National Recognition Information Centre. It is the National Agency under the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). NARIC is used especially by some universities and employers to relate overseas qualifications to the UK qualifications framework.

organisations, service providers and refugee community organisations. This is partly to firm up the finding that organisations' work and information systems are disjointed. Refugee community organisations are faced with a number of challenges. Most RCOs rely on volunteers, lack office space, have little or no infrastructure, and capacity to deliver on their project outcomes.

### **English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)**

Organisations, too, need to work hand-in-hand with local authorities and the Local Strategic Partnerships regarding the provision of ESOL classes in Bradford. One of the recommendations of the COEMO report (2006: p19) was for the extension of language services - including translation of materials and interpreters in Bradford. The long-term effect of this is to plan and facilitate entry into employment. A report commissioned by the Employability Forum (2006: p6) has pointed out nationally, that ESOL 'provision is of variable nature and quality. ESOL does not feature prominently in most local LSC planning arrangements...' Whereas ESOL is mainly in the domain of service providers, its strategic role has much to do with the capacity of RCOs and migrant communities. An earlier move by government ministers to abolish the right to classes at taxpayers' expense for asylum claimants is currently under review with the likely consideration of dropping the ban for claimants who have had to wait for more than six months for a decision.

The fact that disquiet over ESOL provision has abated needs to lead to better coordination, investment and consultation with refugee organisations. In most cases, it is Basic English that is being provided while the need is for a more advanced study of English. A review of ESOL could benefit from a link with IELTS<sup>15</sup>. Unaffordable fees for example immediately put off refugees and migrant workers wanting to undertake IELTS. Just as there is a number of training-related projects offered by various types of organisations, the quality of training also varies. There is very little shared information as to who is doing what, where, and how, except that refugees are potential or intended beneficiaries, and asylum seekers are faring badly in terms of access to services.



15. IELTS stands for International English Language Testing System.

## The Way Forward

The greater challenge lies in ensuring adequate funding and the investment of confidence in refugee organisations. However, to address such a challenge, there is need for a few short-term recommendations followed by longer-term action plans.

- There is still need for research to cover more detail and over a longer period of time. This will broaden the participation of refugee communities as well as increase the sample size. Such research should also include an element of an infrastructure health check.
- The Bradford Refugee Forum needs immediate financial support to lead to a better infrastructure and capacity position. This should be the conduit for engagement with front tier refugee community organisations.
- There is need to establish a better and clearer identification of refugee community organisations and service providers. This can be achieved through a more effective use of DIVA and even ISOs who are in contact with refugee organisations.
- There is much more that can be achieved with more tailor-made or customised training. Most RCOs have not taken full advantage of existing training provision. A review of such training and a consideration of incentives offered to RCOs to attend such training would help increase the uptake.
- The Multi-agency framework should engage much more proactively with refugee community organisations. In turn, partnership links should be much more meaningful, mutual and beneficial. Within the multi-agency framework, collaboration ought to lead to better dealing with processes of integration and community cohesion strategies.
- There is need for further research about the employment of refugees and the engagement of asylum seekers as volunteers in Bradford. Few RCOs are in a position to offer employment to refugees although they are more likely to engage refugees and asylum seekers as volunteers. A number of RCOs are also likely to include refugees and asylum seekers on their management committees. The Multi Agency Operational Group mechanism could provide a framework of identifying the contribution of refugees within the job sector and moving forward their prospects.
- There is clear evidence that African RCOs are providing an element of critical leadership within their communities. There is need to engage more with non-African RCOs especially in terms of strengthening community cohesion and/or the Shared Future<sup>16</sup> agenda.

- There is a proliferation of European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses. These seem to meet an urgent need but the market focus is now on migrant workers especially from Eastern European countries. Access to ESOL is as much an issue for refugees as it is for asylum seekers. Course providers, employers and RCOs need a mechanism to work towards this, and ISOs may provide the framework for such a mechanism.



16. The Shared Future report, commissioned by Bradford Vision and submitted to Bradford City Council as lead organisation, seeks to build tolerance and mutual respect between all individuals and communities based upon clear rights and responsibilities and facilitated by communication and interaction.

## Conclusion

The study found disparities in the range of services and provision for refugees. There is little clarity as to exactly what organisational resources are available to RCOs and precisely what services individuals can access. In some cases, there is an element of confusion between services for refugees and asylum seekers, and services not accessible by asylum seekers. Here, the central government position is that asylum seekers access to public funds is extremely restricted. Thus RCOs seeking to respond to issues of destitution among asylum seekers need to explore alternative sources of funding for their work. For most refugees and asylum seekers, a large part of the solution lies in being able and being allowed to access jobs.

Standards of service are similarly disparate. Drop-in services, befriending schemes, housing advice, induction or citizenship schemes, legal issues, conversation clubs, etc. are an example of initiatives being delivered across the sector. The possibility of a disservice to refugees is ever present as in most cases refugees feel vulnerable and without influence.

Owing to increased numbers of migrant workers from Eastern European countries, refugee organisations are concerned that refugee communities, their needs and issues affecting them, are being marginalized by local authorities and service providers. This will erode confidence in the sector.

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## Appendix A: Questionnaire Returns

By Monday 23rd October 2006, the following were received:

**Questionnaires for individuals: 27**  
**Questionnaires for organisations: 21**  
**Individuals declined to answer: 10**  
**Organisations failing to return questionnaires: 10**

### *Individual responses*

From completed questionnaires for individuals, the following information is given:

- No. of male respondents: 9
- No. of female respondents: 18
- *Respondents' source of information about where to go for help:*
  - Word of Mouth (21)
  - Flyers (4)
  - Other - Job centre (2)
- *Ethnicity of respondents:*
  - Black (16)
  - Black other (5)
  - Asian (2)
  - White (1)
  - Unknown (1)
- *Catchment area:*
  - BD8 (12)
  - BD5 (10)
  - BD3 (3)
- *Age range:*
  - Under 25 (3)
  - 25-59 (24)
- *Individuals related to the following:*
  - BAFR (12)
  - BIASAN (3)
  - ABCD (7)
  - NASS (3)
  - Bevan House (2)

### **Organisations**

The following organisations submitted completed questionnaires:

- Action for Black Community Development Ltd.
- African Caribbean Achievement Project
- African Community Support Project
- African Refugees Health Access and Support
- Bradford Action for Refugees
- Bradford Community Housing Trust
- Beacon
- Bradford Immigration and Asylum Support Advice Network (BIASAN)

- Bradford Kurdish Association
- Bradford Refugee Forum
- Conflict Resolution Centre
- Democratic Republic of the Congo Community of Bradford (DRCCOB)
- EuroUK Charity Africa,
- Millennium Renaissance Consultants
- Light of the World Community Centre
- Urbanbiz
- Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Consortium for Asylum Seekers and Refugees.

### **Statutory Bodies**

City Therapeutic Resource Team (NHS)  
 Social Services Department

Breakdown of responses from 21 organisations:

- *Ethnicity of beneficiaries:*
  - All communities (9)
  - African (4 - but also open to all)
- *Gender of beneficiaries:*
  - All (12)
  - Female only (1)
- *Locality of beneficiaries postcodes:*
  - BD8 (3)
  - BD7 (4)
  - BD5 (1)
  - BD1 (3)
  - LS1 (1)<sup>17</sup>
- *Age range of beneficiaries:*
  - All (7)
  - Under 25 (1)
  - 25-59 (4)
- *Availability of business-plans or similar planning documents for refugee work:*
  - Available (10)
  - No plan (10)
  - No response (1)

17. Only the Refugee Council area of work includes Leeds LS1 in its beneficiary catchment area.

## Appendix B: Research into Refugee and Migrant Communities Infrastructure Support

ISNRMCO No. (office use only)

Please tick the boxes that apply

**1.1 Are you:**

- White (British, Irish, European, other)
- Black (Caribbean, African, other)
- Asian (Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, other)
- Any other ethnic group

**Are you:**

- Female  Male
- Refugee  Asylum seeker  Migrant worker

**Aged:**

- Under 25  25-59  60-79  80 or over

**1.2** The name and contact details (email address if available) of the organisation(s) where you received support. *We need these details so that we can contact the organisation if we need to follow up on some detail.*

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**2. The Referral**

**2.1** How did you find out about the organisation?

- By word of mouth  Flyer
- Community Centre  Website
- Other (please specify):

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**2.2** Who attended to you in the organisation?

- Organisation's employee  Volunteer
- Migrant worker
- Other (please specify):

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**2.3** Did the organisation give you any promotional/publicity material or literature to explain the service they are offering?

- Yes  No

Was this information in the publicity clear to you?

- Yes  No

If yes please include a copy if possible.

**2.4** Did the organisation provide you a service or services specifically because of your status as an asylum seeker or refugee?

- Yes  No

Please give us information about your personal experience of the support you have received from refugee community organisations.

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**2.5** Outreach services: Please tell us about any outreach services you were offered, for example home visits.

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**2.6** Please tell us about how accessible you found the service, for example:

Any languages spoken by workers?  Yes  No

Is their office accessible to wheelchair users?

- Yes  No

Do they offer crèche facilities?  Yes  No

**2.7** What is your impression about the organisation's experience of refugee communities?

- Excellent  Good  Okay
- Could be better  Poor



# Appendix C: Research into Refugee and Migrant Communities Infrastructure Support Organisations

ISNRMCO No.	(office use only)
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Please tick the boxes that apply

**1. General Information**

*Organisation's name*

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*What is the status of your organisation (charity, social enterprise, etc)?*

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*Is your agency a profit-making organisation?*

Yes  No

*Are you an*

*Infrastructure support organisation*  Yes  No

*or a Service Provider?*  Yes  No

**2. Contact Details**

**2.1 Organisation's address**

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*Organisation's phone number*

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*Organisation's fax number*

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*Organisation's email*

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*Organisation's web address*

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*How long has your organisation been in existence?*

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*Your Name*

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*Your Position in the Organisation*

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**2.2 The name and direct contact details (telephone, email address) of the manager in your organisation in charge of developing refugee infrastructure provision.**

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We need these details so that we can contact you if we need to, for example to follow up on some detail.

**2.3 Other contact**

*Please tell us if there are any extra contact details you have for example if:  
You have an out of hours emergency phone number.  
You only offer a service to people who have been referred to you by another agency.  
Your office is not open to the public.*

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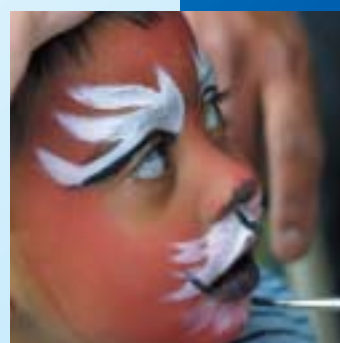
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# Infrastructure support needs for **Refugee and Migrant Community organisations**



*A Report exploring provision and support for refugee organisations in Bradford*

