



Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum

Annual Report 2015

Working with and for refugees and asylum seekers in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire



VISION AND AIMS STATEMENT

Our Vision

A society where Asylum Seekers and Refugees are welcomed, receive just and compassionate treatment and support in rebuilding their lives.

Our Mission

To support Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Nottingham & Nottinghamshire to gain fair and just outcomes, rebuild their lives and integrate into society.

We seek to achieve this by:

- Providing a welcoming community centre.
- Offering specialised advice & support services.
- Providing programmes to develop confidence, skills and knowledge.
- Campaigning for a just and generous response to Refugees and Asylum Seekers from government and the host community.
- Advocating on behalf of individual Asylum Seekers and Refugees in cases of injustice and hardship.

“Thank you for supporting us as a family. We are happy to have received this support. You are so helpful, kind and caring. We feel we are listened to and valued all the time.”

“I feel the Forum is doing a great job helping people like me. Words cannot describe how grateful I am. They are a pillar of support.”



CHAIRS REPORT

This is my first Report as Chair and unless we can find a replacement Treasurer maybe my last!

When I took on this position last December it was to take the place of, not replace, Patsy Brand- big shoes to fill.

Twelve months ago we had just moved to the Sycamore Centre and inevitably there has been a great deal of work done to make the Centre fit for purpose but I think that staff and users will all agree that the move has been a great success. The separation of the Advice area from our workers' workstations has led to greater confidentiality and better working conditions. The additional space, the Café and Reception gives us greater control, better facilities for our users and has enabled us to set up a triage system to provide a quicker, more efficient service.

There have been other important changes.

A successful Lottery bid has led to the setting up of a much needed Legal Project which has a Manager and four workers and you will see Caroline's report of the Project's progress elsewhere in this report.

After a long (too long) gestation period we have finally introduced a software package called AdvicePro which enables us to set up a database of users and a wealth of information about them. There were obviously teething problems and I want to thank staff and volunteers for their patience and persistence throughout the setting up period. The database grows daily and will enable us, at the press of a button, or two, to provide a whole range of statistics, absolutely necessary for our funders. For instance I can tell you that in the first four months we have been running the system we have seen 1025 individuals from 57 countries and dealt 3796 issues. All of these figures can be broken down in any number of ways.

These are all positive developments but we do face difficulties ahead.

We now have a strong Senior Management Team with a fantastic range of skills which enables the Trustees to concentrate on strategic matters, really, for the first time and some of us have struggled to adjust to this but we are getting there and we need to.

The need for our services is growing and will continue to grow for years to come. A government intent on making life as difficult and unpleasant as possible for asylum seekers will not stop them seeking asylum or keep them from knocking on our door. Funding has always been a problem and we have had great success in fund raising in the past and brilliant support from the City Council but with cutbacks in many areas there are far greater demands on funding organisations and a major challenge for our Trustees is find innovative ways of generating money to ensure our sustainability. We have to make sure our doors stay open.

My thanks to all staff, our fantastic volunteers and Trustees. I thank Barry Clark for relieving me of the financial shackles for at least the last two years and for the work he has done.

I hope you find The Annual Report interesting and informative.

Leo Keely – Chair of the Board of Trustees

**1039 people
in 20 weeks**

**Over 8000*
issues
supported
over the year**

**Advice Pro
went live on
29th June**

**56 different
nationalities**

*20 weeks from advice pro launch

*3 month period 01/08 – 31/10 x 4

MANAGER'S REPORT

It seems incredible that a whole year has gone past since our last AGM. We've already been in the Sycamore Centre for twelve months, and despite a few teething troubles are now well settled in.

So much has happened in the last year that it's hard to pick out the highlights. It's been an exceptional year on the international scene, with extraordinary numbers of asylum seekers coming into Europe, causing a chaotic response from different governments who have chosen to open their borders, build fences or introduce punitive legal changes on the one hand and outpourings of empathy and welcome from local populations on the other

Throughout these events, the UK government has continued in its policy of introducing draconian legislation to curb migration, including measures which directly affect asylum seekers, such as, but not only:

- Cuts in the rate of support for children by about thirty percent
- Introduction of fines and possible imprisonment to landlords renting to irregular migrants
- More cuts to legal aid
- More immigration decisions only appealable from the country of origin

This bill, which will have finished its journey onto the statute books by the time you are reading this contains perhaps the most troubling piece of legislation yet, repealing Section 4 support for families whose claims have failed, leaving children without accommodation or any form of support after twenty eight days.

Whilst refusing to take any responsibility for any of the large number of asylum seekers already in Europe, the government have agreed to take in 20,000 refugees from camps around Syria, in response to pressure from people all over Britain demanding that the government do something in the face of endless stories of suffering and death on the Mediterranean.

Here at the Refugee Forum, we have been overwhelmed with donations of food and clothes, offers to volunteer and requests for us to talk at events across the county. In answer to this we have started working on a training package which we will be rolling out in the New Year, and we will also be holding a conference on January 8th, "Changing Narratives of Asylum".

Numbers have soared over the last twelve months and are likely to continue to rise, at least for the foreseeable future, and in addition the complexity and nature of the work also increases. Our interpreting bill alone has soared by two hundred percent in the last year. In addition to the rise in numbers we are facing challenges from the changing political culture and cuts in funding.

We have been lucky enough to be able to open our new legal project this year, which has tied us into a whole new series of networks, and we are working closely with partners to ensure that provision remains as strong as possible, despite the enormous challenges facing the sector. We have also approved a new three-year strategic plan that sees the organisation re-positioning itself as more outward-facing, whilst continuing to provide the holistic services that it is known for, and placing volunteers at the centre of its development.

Despite the somewhat bleak external picture, the Forum remains wonderful place to work, and our small victories, when a client, or perhaps a volunteer that we have worked with closely, receives status, or gets a job after a long struggle, more than recompense us for the difficult cases that we work with on a daily basis.

And finally, I would like to thank the staff, who continue to provide excellent services in an increasingly difficult situation, and of course all the volunteers, including the Trustees, without whom we would not be able to function.

Fiona Cameron - Manager

ADVICE SERVICES

The advice services at NNRF continue to be a hub of activity- with ever increasing demand and a trend for more complex cases.

In June 2015, NNRF's advice projects (General Advice, One Stop Shop, Welfare Rights) were brought together under the Advice Services Manager. The Children and Families and Young People's Project were also brought under this broad umbrella to form the 'advice team'. Whilst there is much separate work amongst the different projects, through working as a team we are starting to see some of the benefits of mutual understanding, shared expertise and better support for our clients. Each project has written their own contribution to the annual report.

Over the last year, there have been a great number of changes to the advice services and particularly to general advice, and it is thanks to the many committed volunteers that it has continued to respond to the needs it has encountered. Special thanks go to Maggie, Patsy and Dave, who have supervised general advice throughout the year and whose expertise and commitment is widely appreciated.

The general advice drop-in continues to be at the heart of the work undertaken by the Refugee Forum, and is the gateway to accessing more specialised services. A wide range of issues arise from a significant number of clients at each session. The drop-in continues to run 4 days a week, Monday- Thursday, and is seeing anywhere between 30 and 40 clients on each of these days, with an average of around 110 clients a week seeking advice through the drop-in. Over the past 3 months, there has been a significant increase in demand for help through the drop-in. Over the year, general advice has worked with 4150 clients, and well over half of these (2513) have been referred on for support from other Refugee Forum projects. The most common referrals went to One Stop Shop, Welfare Rights and the Legal Project.

General advice deals with an alarmingly high number of clients who have not been issued with their support from the Home Office on the date they should have been, and are therefore without money. Despite stating that they will send more money in the form of an 'Emergency Support Token' on a given date, a large amount of adviser time is spent chasing these, and charitable money spent on bridging the gap. We have also faced costs in time and money in relation to none-issuing of travel tickets for interviews and hearings, with a large number of clients coming to us for last minute help, often the day before they are due to travel. With such huge demand for our resources, both financial and human, these gaps in provision expected of the Home Office are particularly concerning.

In order to respond to the increase in demand, a 'triage' system was introduced in August. This aims to see all clients as quickly as possible after they arrive, to deal with straightforward issues immediately, shortening waiting times and freeing up advisers to deal with more complicated issues. There are still improvements needed to make sure this is a consistent service, but it is a step in the right direction for responding to the needs and managing the demand we encounter.

The general advice drop-in continues to rely heavily on the volunteers that make it possible. There are around 30 volunteers currently working with the advice drop-in, and we are about to induct a large number of new volunteers who I hope will help us to continue to improve the service.

One to one supervision of all advice volunteers will soon be underway, enabling proper feedback to be given to volunteers, and real dialogue about their experience at NNRF. It is hoped that this process will help us to better support those who give up their time to be part of the advice work at NNRF.

We recently started our 'Refugee Clinic', which aims to help refugees with simple benefit applications through volunteers. This was originally set up to respond to the closure of Refugee Futures to new clients, but will

continue to help staff advisers at NNRF manage their workloads, prioritising the more complex and needy cases.

Across the Refugee Forum, huge benefits are already evident from the introduction of our online case management system, AdvicePro. The system allows advisers to track, monitor and understand the interactions each client has had with the Refugee Forum. Although it has taken some adjustment, there is a broad consensus across advice staff and volunteers that it has been a valuable addition to our work, and is allowing us to work more efficiently.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all those members of the advice team- staff and volunteers- for their hard work and commitment to providing a good service to clients who rely on us. Without all of you, we wouldn't be able to respond and adapt as we have had to. There are many areas, where further improvements will be sought to help the service be more responsive to the needs of clients, the demand for service and the development of volunteers. I hope that by the time I write my contribution to this report next year, there will be many positive improvements to report.

Rebecca Wilson - Advice Services Manager

ONE STOP SHOP

One Stop Shop Advice have recently received a huge influx of clients needing our services following the 'spike' of asylum seekers, and refugees recently coming into the city. I will split this in two categories.

Asylum seekers

We have had a large number of single parents recently with no recourse to public funds facing eviction from their homes. This has enabled the OSS to liaise with the Children and Families team from Nottingham City Council, to be able to take social care referrals based on the duty to the children. There is a continual increase of clients reporting accommodation issues which has resulted in advocacy on behalf of the client to relocate or transfer to alternative accommodation with adaptations more suitable for disabled clients. There are challenges with regards to the decreased asylum support rate, which has impacted upon single parent families the most. Another issue to be raised are the challenges this client group faces in relation to education. For example, there have been challenges with regards to school uniforms from academies. Furthermore families have been struggling financially to meet essential needs, exacerbated by the little they receive from asylum support. Also, we have had to rely on clothing banks for limited clothing items for children.

Refugees

The transition from asylum seeker to refugee can be difficult and carries many risks such as homelessness, lack of budgeting skills, utility inexperience, not understanding their rights and responsibilities in their tenancy agreements or benefits. These combined factors may lead to debt. We came across clients who had been granted leave to remain status, but for months were unaware of what entitlements they had as refugees, thus had not applied for benefits, or obtained accommodation. Also, they had not accessed English classes to improve their chances of finding work, which resulted in increases homelessness and vulnerability. These are examples highlighting the lack of information and direction refugees face when granted status.

Timescales to process asylum claims vary, we have come across clients who have been issued BRP cards with no Notice to Quit (NTQ) date, and have been waiting months, on the other side of the coin, are clients who have been granted NTQ but no BRP cards, again this has been causing problems as clients face eviction without entitlement to benefits or being able to work/ go into further education. This has resulted in advisers liaising with asylum support and accommodation providers to extend clients asylum support tenancies, usually extended last minute, thus causing anxiety, panic and distress to clients.

We have also worked with clients who have been evicted without BRP cards, again resulting in a delay in claiming benefits and accessing housing. There has also been a rise of families coming through the family reunion scheme. The scheme has been challenging because of unrealistic client expectations, relating to what is available, for example, clients not having local connections, and having to rely on private sector accommodation, but, with no means to pay a deposit.

We have been applying for integration loans which can help with deposits or essential household items to refugees, but, again there has been up to ten weeks delay in getting these processed.

Overall it has been challenging and rewarding, in relation to the ongoing casework support the OSS offers, this enables advisers to advocate for clients with no time limit imposed on casework support.

I would take this moment to thank Ingrid Green who is the OSS long standing volunteer for her commitment and dedication at the project. I would also like to thank all staff and volunteers at NNRF for their continued advocacy, support and help given to refugees and asylum seekers in a welcoming and inclusive environment. This team work has positively changed lives drastically for our clients and is valued by the community.

Sonia Bilkhu- One Stop Shop Adviser

WELFARE RIGHTS

The Welfare Rights advice service has supported 198 refugees from different countries in 2015. Because of the language barriers and complexity of the benefit system, our service users are very vulnerable and are in crucial need for assistance and accurate benefits advice. Almost all refugees who are granted refugee status have spent a long time waiting for their asylum claim to be heard and being supported by NASS or charity organisations. As such, they often find it very difficult to manage their own affairs in the transitional stage of moving out from the care of Home Office/NASS to become independent and responsible for organising their income, bills, applying for benefits, grants and other relevant support for themselves and family members in order to settle and integrate in the new community.

As the new rules and restrictions have been enforced on benefit claimants, there has been a significant increase in benefit enquiries at NNRF. Our service is crucial for our service users as the complicated and confusing benefit system is difficult to understand even as professional and experienced advisers. The majority of the referrals to the Welfare Rights service have been about claiming benefits, dealing with debts and applying for support in hardship situations. The Welfare Rights service has been responding to benefit and debt enquiries and has helped apply for and resolve issues relating to:

Job Seeker Allowance (JSA), Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Income Support (IS), Personal Independent Payment (PIP), Disability Living Allowance (DLA) Pension Credit (PC), Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit.

But applying for these benefits is not a straightforward process and there is a significant waiting time where clients will be left with no money. During this time clients can be assisted to claim for **Hardship Support Scheme** from Nottingham City Council which provides short-term financial help with essential household goods. Clients can also apply for **Short Term Benefit Advance** at Job Centre Plus whilst they are waiting for their benefit to be assessed and paid (this payment has to be paid back, DWP will recover the payment by weekly deducting a small amount from their benefit until it is all paid back).

People on JSA or ESA working group may face **Benefit Sanctions** where their benefits will be stopped for a period ('sanctioned') if the claimant fails to follow what the work coach or employment scheme provider has asked them to do. When the client is sanctioned, they can request hardship payment (reduced benefit amount). The client has good reasons for not complying with the benefit requirements, they can then request

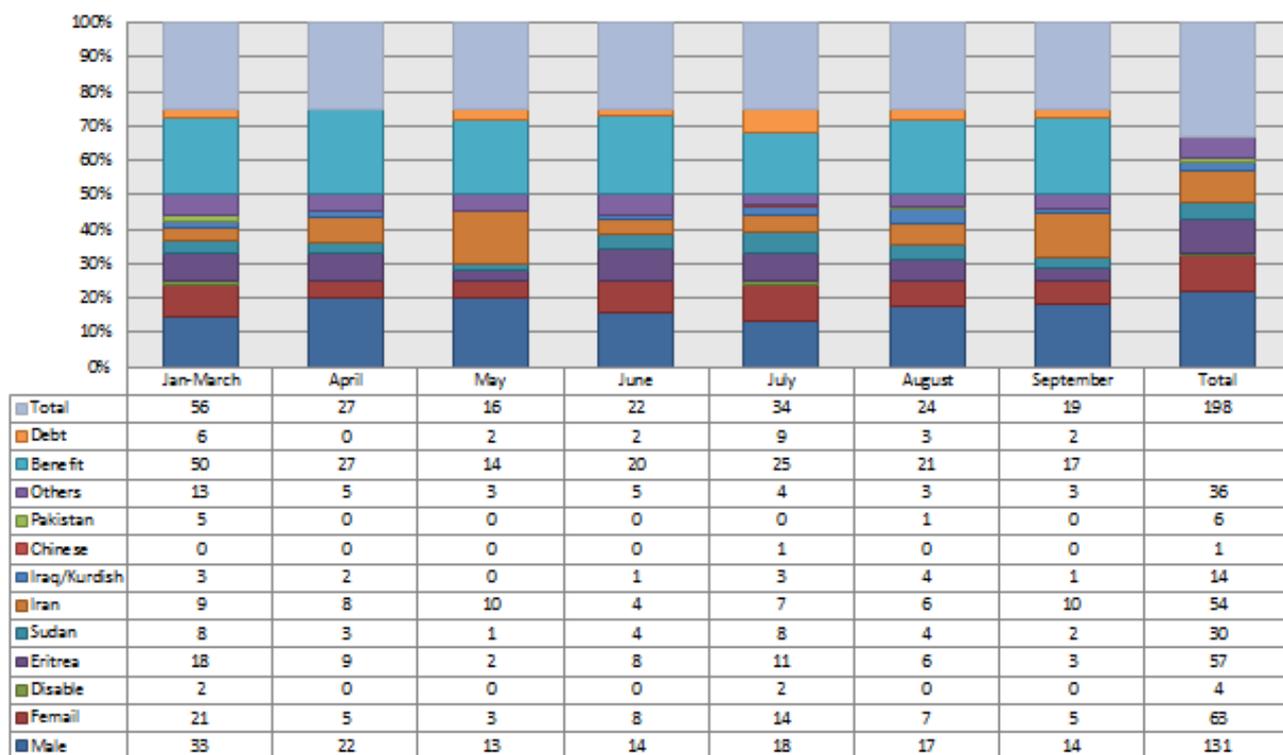
mandatory reconsideration. If this request is accepted the sanction will be lifted and the benefit will be reinstated, but if the request is rejected then client can challenge the decision by appealing if there is a good ground to do so.

Welfare benefit service has also assisted clients to apply for Sure Start Maternity Grant, integration loan and budgeting loan.

Debt Issues: The majority of the debt cases are caused by tax credit overpayments, unpaid utility bills, rent arrears, unpaid council tax. They almost all occur as a result of misunderstanding, not providing accurate information or not having adequate documentation. Clients will get help by explaining the source of the debt, creating a plan to address the debt and drafting a budgeting sheet to calculate the income and the amount that client can afford to pay towards the debt and to prevent further legal action. After negotiating with the creditors or agencies, the payment plan will be agreed. There are many occasions where the debt is caused by an error or miscalculation of the third party where after identifying the error, a request for recovery will be made and client will be credited with the amount.

Benefit updates: Although Universal Credit is aimed to be implemented across the country by May 2016, but one of the conditions to be eligible for UC is to be British, this means most of our clients (Refugees) will not be eligible to claim UC. Instead they can continue to claim the benefits in the traditional way.

**Welfare benefit, Client Access Record
January - September 2015**



Jasim Ghafur- Welfare Rights and Debt Adviser

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROJECT

The young people's project works with asylum seeking and refugee young people between the ages of 13-18, and up to 21 if the young person is a care leaver. Young people may be within families seeking asylum, children of refugees, unaccompanied asylum seeking children in the care of the local authority, or in private fostering arrangements. The work with young people aims to empower them to understand their rights within the immigration and care/welfare system, reduce social isolation through a programme of activities and events and facilitate their orientation to the local area and access to youth specific services in the city.

In July this year, the project was awarded a 3 year grant by Comic Relief, which enables a full time project worker to be in post to develop and co-ordinate the project. We were extremely pleased and relieved to secure this funding for the project which we are confident will have a beneficial impact on refugee and asylum seeking young people in Nottingham/shire. This year we have worked with 90 young people from 13 different countries. The majority of the work with young people is continuous and ongoing weekly contact which enables good relationships, trust and consistency to be established which we feel is incredibly valuable to this vulnerable group of young people.

Day to day work includes advice, case work, and advocacy. We have also started a monthly orientation day for newly arrived young people. This includes information about life in the UK and Nottingham, getting young people signed up with a library card, city card and NGY youth card, alongside visiting places of interest in the city. A large part of the project also involves running a variety of events and activities. Here is a selection of some of the things we've been up to this year...

Trips and activities: We have been able to arrange several trips this year which has enabled young people to explore places of interest locally and further afield. We have visited the Heights of Abraham in Matlock Bath, where highlights included going on the cable car and walking along Torr Cliffs. In March we were invited to take 4 young people to a youth camp at the Eden Project in Cornwall. This was a fantastic opportunity to meet young people from all over the UK and explore and learn about the Eden project. Despite the very blustery and wet weather, the young people had a fantastic time visiting this part of the UK.

We have also taken several groups of young people to Nottingham Playhouse to watch some interesting performances, including *Blood*, and *Ballet Black*. We are grateful to the Playhouse for their generosity in providing tickets for these performances which are greatly enjoyed by the young people.

To celebrate Christmas, we had an ice skating trip and also put on a Christmas party for young people at NNRF this year, with a surprise appearance by Father Christmas (AKA The current chair!)

In June, young people took part in a series of arts workshops hosted by Lakeside Arts alongside the artist Emily Allchurch as part of her current exhibition. These workshops were a fantastic opportunity for young people to learn about her work and explore and develop their own skills in photography and design. We made several trips to Lakeside Art gallery for the preview, workshops and the closing ceremony, and the young people's art work was on display in the gallery all summer.

Weekly Youth Group: We have continued to have a weekly youth session for young people delivered in partnership with NGY MyPlace youth centre in the city centre. This is a safe space for young people to meet each other, socialise and take part in a range of activities such as table tennis, basketball, gym and arts and crafts. As part of these weekly sessions we have also run some workshops for young people on topics of relevance or interest. These have included a session by the Red Cross on family tracing, and a session by Deirdre Sheehan, solicitor at Paragon Law, on understand the asylum system.

We are excited to be working alongside Nottingham Trent University outreach team this year, where Young people will learn more about the university, its departments and get the chance to visit all 3 campuses and meet student ambassadors. NTU has also been successful in securing 2 scholarships which are now available for asylum seeking students who wish to go to university but are unable to access student finance.



Summer Projects: This summer we successfully ran a range of activities for young people. This included weekly baking sessions in the NNRF café. This was volunteer led and was a great success, with many young people wishing to volunteer at NNRF once they turn 18. We also facilitated a 'money matters' course aimed at young people granted refugee status within leaving care services, to help them increase their understanding of money, debt, and benefits to support them with the transition post 18.



We also ran our first cycling workshops alongside Nottingham Bikeworks and Ridewise. These sessions taught young people basic bicycle maintenance skills alongside road safety. All who completed the course got to keep the bikes at the end of the course giving them a viable means of transport around the city. We have since secured further funding to run several bike workshops for young people throughout the next year.



10 young people signed up to complete the Bronze Arts award at Nottingham Contemporary over the summer. They attended a 2 week summer school and produced some fantastic work on the exhibition 'Treasures of Chatsworth'. Some of their work will be shown at the Affinity Arts festival in November so do look out for that! We are hoping to arrange a celebratory trip for all who completed the award to visit Chatsworth house before the end of the year.



The summer ended with a trip on the new tram to University Park, where young people got to enjoy spending time together, a picnic and boating on the lake.

In June we organised a course for current NNRF

staff and volunteers and other front line workers in the City “*understanding the rights and entitlements of refugee and asylum seeking young people*”. This was delivered by Coram Migrants Children’s Legal Project and was a very useful and informative day, allowing the chance to network with a range of other organisations in the city, including workers from local colleges, children’s services, and charities.

Thank you to our team of dedicated volunteers who have supported the work with young people this year, and also to all the agencies current working with us: Nottingham Trent University Outreach Team, NGY MyPlace, Nottingham Contemporary, Lakeside Arts, Sustrans, RideWise, Nottingham Bikeworks, YNotts, Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council, and Nottingham Playhouse.

Naomi Jemmett- Young People’s Project Worker



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES PROJECT

This area of work has been funded by Children in Need since the project began in September 2009. Liz Burrell, the previous children and families worker, left the organisation this year and a gap in staffing meant the work was suspended for a few months. Since March 2015 the work recommenced on a 3 day a week staffed post and therefore reports on the past 7.5 month period.

The project improves outcomes for refugee and asylum seeking children (under 16 years) and their families through the provision of activities that reduce social isolation, build stronger social networks and support emotional and developmental wellbeing of children and families. The project emphasises strong community links and partnerships to enable improved orientation, access and integration to wider mainstream services and provision. Children and family case work support enables better outcomes for children through a multi-agency framework of support.

Issues children and families experience:

The experience of being a child within the asylum process has far reaching consequences. For these children and families their lives are characterised by uncertainty about their future. Some of the many ways in which the experience impacts on family life includes financial deprivation, poor quality, temporary housing, social isolation and exclusion and the breakdown of wider family relationships or support networks, poor physical and mental wellbeing. The financial restrictions and deprivation significantly add to the experience of social isolation and access to wider services is limited through multiple barriers such as lack of awareness, confidence and language.

On 10th August 2015 the Government made significant cuts to asylum support for children, by introducing a flat rate of support for all asylum seekers of £36.95 per week, regardless of age. This represents a cut in financial support to children of £16.00 per week. This new cut will push some families onto rates 60% below the poverty line (The Childrens Society, 2015).

For children to grow, develop and learn effectively, additional resources are required beyond merely food, shelter and clothing however these cuts mean that children will be treated the same as adults and that there would be no recognition of their additional needs.

In practise, families are struggling to meet their own basic needs and numbers of referrals to food and clothes banks have subsequently increased. The start of the new academic year put considerable pressures on families to buy unaffordable school uniforms.



Project Activity:

32 referrals for **case work support**, which have involved a wide range of needs. Issues have included destitute families being supported into Social Care. Advocacy and support for families to access appropriate child and adult health and social care support, through both statutory and voluntary sector services, including mental health providers, specialists in bereavement support and young carers. Work with schools to support children's orientation and educational needs. Food and clothes referrals to meet basic needs, including support to housebound families during periods of health related isolation.

87 attendances at weekly play sessions for children under 5 years at NNRF.

Provided by Bulwell Toy Library, the provision compliments the peer support service for women, led by Women's Culture Exchange. Many mothers attend this group enabling 'a lifeline' of social support, access to educational workshops, knowledge and awareness of wider opportunities amongst partners across the city, including English classes, health and wellbeing activities.

317 attendances at a variety of holiday programme activities. (144 different children and adults)

- A five week creative programme for 10 families explored and developed personal strengths and creative imagination in the context of “Superheros”. Working with priority families in need and in partnership with Playworks.
- The project culminated in a world record breaking event at Wollaton Park, with hundreds of children coming together as costumed Superheros! A huge highlight for the children and parents! Was meeting Batman, who appeared from the top of Wollaton Hall!
- Other family events have been supported in partnership with St Anns Allotment Association, Lakeside Arts International Children’s Festival, Nottingham Contemporary and New Art Exchange.
- With partners support, we have enabled families to independently access film showings and leisure centre swimming activities. (35 and 300 individuals respectively).



University of Nottingham research:

A continuing link with the University’s Child and Childhood Network has seen our involvement in a global research programme, to see if young children’s early maths skills can develop with use of the one billion@ maths apps. Research so far in the UK and Malawi has shown exceptional learning benefits particularly for the first years of primary school. Led by Phd research student, Laura Outhwaite, 5 asylum seeking children participated in a 6 week community based pilot. The younger children showed improvements in maths skills over a short space of time, a very promising intervention to support children’s educational development.

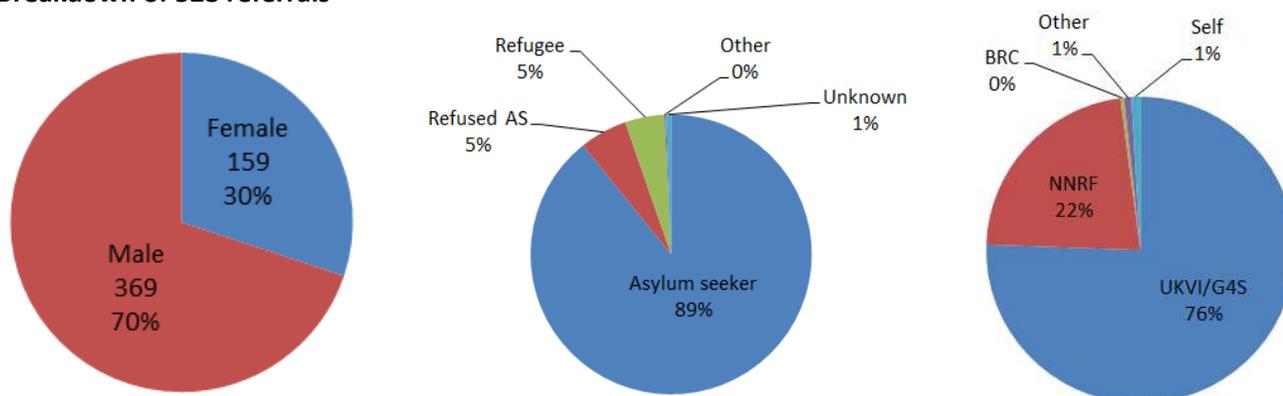
Thanks to Laura for also conducting semi-structured interviews with clients to support the project’s evaluation. The value of the practical support received and the significance of supported family activities were highlighted as very important for improving emotional wellbeing, reducing social isolation and helping people to cope. “ I didn’t have anyone in this country, now I have friends, they are my family”. One mother comments about her children: “before, they weren’t mixing with others, they were very isolated....through the forum’s children activities....they have met similar people in similar situations, they’re happier.” The children’s wellbeing having a direct impact on their parent “If my children are happy, I’m happy”.

Sarah Greaves - Children and Families Project Worker

INTO THE MAINSTREAM HEALTH PROJECT

The Into the Mainstream Health Project had its busiest 12 months yet, with **528** referrals, 82% of which were new to Nottingham at the point of first contact. The project has supported 712 individuals during the past 12 months, assisting them with a range of issues; mainly around access to health services but also supporting them with various other needs. 403 clients (and their dependents where applicable) were linked to primary health care, and 79 clients were referred to mental health services. Over 900 individual pieces of advice/interactions have been recorded including 417 consultations, 411 follow up calls and 73 extra sessions.

Breakdown of 528 referrals



Other highlights

The project delivered 3 training sessions for healthcare professionals (mental healthcare and GPs/primary care staff) in the past 12 months with a total of **87** attendees. In one session alone, 50 newly qualified GPs attended which is seen as a positive development for the project, to engage doctors and increase their knowledge and understanding of the needs of refugees and asylum seekers so early on in their careers. These are a few of the comments made by attendees:

“It was really helpful and a relief to realise that it is not our responsibility/role to 'judge' asylum seekers or have an opinion on immigration, but purely to provide medical care in a non-discriminatory fashion. Also that we are in a position to make a huge difference.”

“Very informative session. Useful to know about the services we can refer to. Extremely interesting. Upsetting but worthwhile.”

“Really useful day. Feel I have a better understanding in how the asylum process works & how best to help & work with those seeking refugee status. Thank you.”

Highlighting the need for specialist mental healthcare for refugees & asylum seekers

We have been continuously advocating the need for specialist mental healthcare for refugees and asylum seekers, including raising our concerns with the commissioners about the outcome of a specialist BME mental health service that was commissioned earlier this year. Although the desired end has not yet been achieved, the profile of the mental health needs of refugees and asylum seekers has been amplified both among community organisations and commissioners, and these discussions are still ongoing.

NHS complaints procedure

Being a member of the CCG's People's Council of lay representatives enabled us to advise the CCG of the need to produce a simple and translated NHS complaint's leaflet for all patients which is now in place.

Challenges ahead

Like the rest of the Forum, capacity has been a concern for the ItM as a result of the unprecedented volume of referrals, which increased from about 80 per quarter at the start of last year to more than double that figure in the last quarter; and all against a background of shrinking services and increasingly restrictive legislation. Parallel to this paradox are the changing complexities and needs of our clients, not least the fact that the vast majority of them are in need of language support to access any service. The introduction of the Immigration Act 2014 continues to have a negative effect on the accessibility of healthcare services for refugees and asylum seekers, both as a result of new restrictions and of growing uncertainty about eligibility on both sides - patients and providers.

ItM team

Kinsi would like to thank the ItM staff and volunteers for their hard work and commitment over the past year, during which there has been a great deal of pressure and strain on the team to keep up with the demand while maintaining the quality of the service we offer.

Kinsi Clarke - ITM Project Manager

ANTI-DESTITUTION PROJECT

Destitution work

We are currently seeing around 85 people at the destitution projects at the NNRF.

Whilst this is fewer people than in recent years, this does not necessarily mean that there are fewer destitute people in Nottingham. These figures are gathered via the two main projects: The Saturday Food Group and the Cash Group.

The current government has cut asylum support rates and propose further reductions. The position for refused asylum seekers looks set to become much more difficult with some of our clients receiving negative decisions on their cases at their reporting centres and being detained on the spot. Our nearest reporting centre is in Loughborough. Reporting is a requirement of temporary admission to the UK and people who have been refused asylum are still required to attend at a frequency set by the Home Office, fortnightly, monthly, three monthly – there is little known about why people are given particular reporting requirements. Refused asylum seekers are not given fares to get to their reporting centres, but are still required to attend. In Nottingham we are fortunate that the British Red Cross provide bus tickets for refused clients in order that they can travel to Loughborough which is a vital provision.

Detaining people who have no prior knowledge of the outcome of their cases deprives them of the time and access to resources which they will need to challenge these decisions. When detained, mobiles are taken from individuals and replaced with no-internet/camera phones. It takes time to translate documents, meet with solicitors and compile a case. Detention is an abuse of human rights, a barrier to justice and the threat of it is a constant terror to people who have committed no crime, but have fled the most unimaginable trauma.

Cash Group

The Cash Group continues to give individuals £10-£20 per four-week period.

This is a very small amount of money however this is all we can afford as an organisation to give.

During the period September 2014 – August 2015 we spent £9300 on this project.

When attending the Cash Group we spend time to update with clients and see what case progress has been made. If there is any work that can be done to help the process we liaise with solicitors, health professionals and accommodation providers.

This year two of our volunteers, Hedwig Schoonakker and Chris Cann left the project due to other commitments. Hedwig and Chris have been with the Cash Group for many years having contributed their time and energies to the destitution services. Chris set up our database and has also raised funds through Ex Libris for Anti-destitution work for many years. We wish them all the best but also would like to thank them for the many years they have worked at the NNRF.

Saturday Food Group

We have given food out at the Saturday Group – 923 meals and grocery bags - to an average of 18 people per week (last year 22 people average)

We have seen 65 individuals from 27 countries.

We are seeing fewer people at the Saturday Group which we have spoken to clients about informally and via a client-based focus group. The reasons for this seem to be the extra distance of the new building, alternative support from other organisations, and alternative support from their community or faith group.

We have been the beneficiaries of a number of very kind donations this year towards the provisions at the Saturday Group and this greatly reduces the amount of food that we have to buy. We are very grateful for this as this ensures the future of the group which is a vital service for all our clients.

The Saturday Group is part funded by Host Nottingham and we are happy to work with them to keep this project going.

Himmah have been providing cooked food on a Saturday every month for over four years now! We are always happy to receive our Himmah food and support the work that they are doing across the community in Nottingham. We attended their fundraising evening on 12th June 2015 and were delighted to receive an award for “Outstanding Contribution for Poverty Injustice” and a financial contribution to our work.

We have received an enormous amount of donations from people particularly since the summer. This helps us to save costs on food that we would otherwise buy. A massive thank you to all those who have dropped off food for us, this is a real help!

We were sorry to lose two of our long standing volunteers this year: Pawel Lukasik and Frank McMahan. Both Frank and Pawel have volunteered for many years at the Saturday Group and their work has enabled the group to run effectively because they both worked hard organising all our stock. Pawel has moved to a new



job in London and Frank is still working with destitute asylum seekers with a music project teaching and sharing guitar expertise in Nottingham.

We wish them all the very best and thank them for their contribution to destitution work in Nottingham.

Accommodation Partnerships

We continue to work with the Nottingham Arimathea Trust and Host Nottingham to provide temporary accommodation for destitute people.

We have recently collaborated with Host Nottingham in setting up a clothes bank which is has been a great success since we opened up referrals in September.

Nottingham Arimathea Trust
Accommodate 11

HOST NOTTINGHAM
(Local volunteers)
Accommodate 6

Moving On

The primary objective of the work that we are doing is to get people's cases re-opened and that they leave destitution.

Left Nottingham: 3

Section 4: 22

Detained: 2

Of these 27 people:

**Returned to destitution projects
following negative case decision: 3**

Granted Leave to Remain: 2

I would like to thank all the organisations who have worked with us over the last year:

Asylum Support Appeals Project, Bail for Immigration Detainees , Host Nottingham, Loughborough Town of Sanctuary, Himmah, The British Red Cross, Nottingham Arimathea Trust, The Rainbow Project

Gemma Pillay - Anti-Destitution Co-ordinator

LEGAL PROJECT

Since April 2013, there have been drastic cuts and restrictions to Legal Aid. These cuts have severely affected asylum seekers and refugees. I took the post of Legal Project Manager in May 2015. The aim of the project was to try as much as possible to mitigate the effects of the cuts.

The Legal Project operates from the John Forman building at the Sycamore Centre. The services of the Legal Project are regulated by the Office of Immigration Commissioners (OISC) who are registered to provide advice at various levels. The Legal Project has a team of 7 people. Bahman Mohammed, Jonathan Scott, Barrie Ward and Pete Lowenstein are regulated to provide advice at Level 1. I am regulated to provide advice at Level 3. Teresa Pacey-Devlin and Hanna Radwanska are the case administrators. The focus on the year ahead is to have all caseworkers regulated at Level 2 and the administrators regulated at Level 1. To this end Bahman and Jonathan have attended the OISC Level 2 training whilst Hanna and Teresa have attended the OISC Level 1 training. Having all caseworkers regulated at Level 2 will increase our capacity tremendously.

Level 3 advisor provides advice in the following areas

Family re-union applications | Indefinite leave to remain applications | Applications/Fresh claims based on article 8 | Legal representation e.g. lodging appeals, preparing appeals | Dealing with complex cases | Assisting clients with article 8 elements of their cases where they have mixed cases (asylum element - legal aid available and article 8 where legal aid not available)

At present, Level 1 advisors provide advice in the following areas:

Travel document applications | Citizenship/passport | Application/Replacement of Biometric Residence Permits | Applications for leave in line for a child of a refugee born in the UK | Naturalisation applications for adults | Registration applications for children | Liaising with solicitors with on-going applications on behalf of clients | Assisting clients with preparations for further submissions | Supporting clients with gathering evidence in ongoing applications

The Legal Project is funded by the Big Lottery. We should aim to assist 250 service users every year. Our targets are broken down as follows:

- Legal representation/asylum support - 100
- Citizenship - 125
- Family re-union - 25

We can confidently say that we hope to meet and exceed these targets by the end of year 1. Although the Legal Project should have started fully in May. This was not possible. Systems, staff and the building were not ready until July. Effectively we started operating as a full house in August. Regardless of this, as a team, we have assisted hundreds of people and are currently on target to achieving our set goals. The current breakdown of the people we have assisted is as follows:

- Travel documents: 121
- Citizenship/passports: 20
- Indefinite Leave to remain: 7
- Leave in line: 9
- Family re-union: 20
- Article 8: 6
- Biometric card applications/replacement: 5
- Legal representation: 34

Total assisted between June and September 2015: 222

We are now working closely with Red Cross and other organisations like Refugee Futures etc in relation to family re-union applications. When we complete making family re-union applications, immediately after submitting an application online, we alert British Red Cross as to the possibility of service users requiring their assistance in regards to cost of travel etc. Once in the country, we alert the other agencies to try and minimise destitution as much as we can.

We have noticed that there is an increase in the number of people we cannot assist because they are neither refugees nor asylum seekers. Once a month, we hope to hold an information evening which will provide such people with a quick guide as to the various options that may be available to them. Hopefully, this will enable

them to make informed decisions when progressing their cases. To assist in this regard, I have prepared an information evening booklet which will be used and issued at the end of the evening.

Another effect of the drastic cuts to legal aid is the effect it has had on local law firms. Due to the cuts, several firms have closed down and others can only take a small number of referrals; with others not taking any at all. This has resulted in us facing challenges when referring service users for legal representation. There is only a handful of firms we are working with at present. Our aim for the future is to work closely with other legal aid firms, even though they may be based outside our local area, we will hope to find some who can run surgeries from the forum.

All case workers are required to meet the Continuing Professional Development requirements set out by the Office of Immigration Services Commissioner. To assist us in this regard, Edward Mynott delivered OISC level 1 and 2 training. We will also have Asylum and Immigration Law training delivered by Keelin McCarthy on 25 November 2015 and 17 February 2016.

Caroline Kioi – Legal Project Manager

VOLUNTEERING

2015 has been an exceptional year when it comes to volunteering. Our services have been supported by 179 volunteers, out of which 81 have newly joined the Forum this year. Our volunteer body consisted of a diverse mix of backgrounds, skills and abilities. I've coordinated individuals from 38 nationalities who speak a fascinating 52 languages. 60% of our volunteers belong to the BME groups (23% black African, 13% white EU, as well as representatives from Arab, Persian, Asian, East Asian, Caribbean, Latin American and mixed backgrounds). The men:women ratio is at 40:60, much more gender balanced than in other local volunteer-led organisations. 31% of our current volunteers are refugees or asylum seekers which demonstrates good engagement from our past and current service users. I am nevertheless hoping to increase the proportion of asylum-seeking volunteers, and give them more opportunities to make use of their time, build new friendships, learn new skills and gain valuable experience for the future.

Our volunteers attended training in Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults, First Aid, Food Safety, Well-Being, Managing Challenging Behaviour, UK Asylum, Adviser Skills, Advice Pro and Community Interpreting (160 attendances altogether).

Volunteer-led ESOL classes and Job Club started this year, benefitting dozens of service users with free access to English lessons and one-to-one support with job searching, interview coaching and advice on setting up own business.



Volunteers benefitted from an updated Volunteer Handbook, Reception Manual and brand new Complaints Policy & Procedure for Volunteers. In addition, the Volunteer strategy 2016-2018 was written with the aim to put our volunteers in the spotlight and enhance their volunteering experience by introducing a rolling training programme and volunteer development scheme.

I hope many would agree that the most memorable event of the year were the VOscars – Volunteer Oscars – the glamorous celebration of our volunteers’ achievements during the National Volunteers’ Week in June. Volunteers, staff and service users voted for their favourite volunteers in ten categories. On the evening, complete with the red carpet, golden glitter, delicious buffet, ties and evening gowns, ten golden VOscar statues were handed out as well as “Thank You” certificates for each volunteer. Some of the highlights can be seen below (with thanks to Karolina Pearl for the wonderful photos).

Since this summer, probably for the first time since World War II, refugees have been in the media spotlight. This resulted in an unprecedented wave of positive messages and a steady roll of volunteer applications coming in from concerned Nottingham residents. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has offered to help. We are looking at ways to engage and inform the local community, and there will be additional volunteering opportunities available over the next few months.

I would also like to thank my colleagues, especially the VOscar Academy office members, for their help, encouragement and advice, and for always washing up the dishes after yourselves.

Last but not least, my greatest thank you goes out to all our volunteers, past and present, who make the Forum such a wonderful place to work at. You are the reason I manage to get up every morning (especially on Mondays) and meeting inspiring, motivated and dedicated individuals like you makes me want to be a better person – personally and professionally. I am grateful for every smile, cup of tea or friendly advice, and extremely happy that most of you describe your volunteering experience at Refugee Forum as “amazing”, “rewarding”, “fulfilling”, “enlightening”, “enriching”, “amazing” and “inspiring”. I will do my best to keep it that way.

Barbara Spreiz - Volunteer Co-ordinator



FUNDRAISING REPORT

At the beginning this financial year we hired Yvonne Colebourne as our community fundraiser to look into ways of increasing our unrestricted funding. Yvonne has had a lot of success in various areas of her work already:

Small grants

The Jones Trust and the Jesse Spencer Trust – have both donated money to help to the cost of refurbishing our community café to make it more comfortable and welcoming, and to provide money towards the cost of producing food in the cafe

Y Notts – to run a build a bike project with our youth and unaccompanied children's project

Reducing costs

Thanks to Yvonne's work we have started to source food for our destitution project and our café in different ways. Whether this is through food unused by food banks, buying more at the Cash and Carry or donations through churches, we are hoping to reduce our overall food bill by more than 50% in the coming year.

Awareness Raising and Partnership Work

Yvonne has been carrying out a series of awareness raising presentations in the last three months in places as diverse as schools and the Clinical Commissioning Group. Her myth-busting presentation is a great place to start if you don't know anything about asylum seekers and would like to start at the beginning. As well as being an income-generating activity, in recent months this is something that's really started to take off as increase in the refugee crisis is on the rise.

She has also set up a great partnership between ourselves and ASRA housing which we hope to develop in the long term, to ensure a better supply of housing to newly granted refugees.

Events

This year's Summer Fair was held on Friday 24th July from 2pm to 4pm in the main hall here at the Forum.

We had several stalls including: Cake Stall, Toys New and Used, Ladies' Clothes, Men's Clothes, Children's Clothes, Bric-a-Brac, Nursery Equipment and a BBQ outside. Two external organisations had a stall, Asra Housing and OSCAR and gave away freebies and information about the work they do.

There were four free activities for children: Story Time with puppets (10 children attended), Model Making (10 children attended) Colouring (8 children attended) and Play Workers (15 children and 10 adults).

The event was opened by the Sheriff of Nottingham and although the weather was not good, it rained for the entire event; we had around 300 people attend and received very positive feedback. *'Everything was good' 'Fabulous informative event, exceeding my expectations' 'Brilliant' 'Well done' 'Great Fun' 'Lovely atmosphere' 'Good turnout'*

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Since last year's report there have been a few changes with regards to membership; namely, who can be a member and a new membership development plan. The former means that staff are now eligible for membership and all are. They are entitled to vote in the management committee elections but cannot, however, nominate, second or stand for the management committee (as advised by the charity commission).

The latter involved a comprehensive review of individual/joint, organisation and affiliate membership rates, including what members can expect from NNRF in return. A lifetime membership category was introduced along with recommended annual rates for all categories. The final part of the development plan was with

regard to actively seeking to increase the membership. To this end we have a small team of people willing to go out to organisations and groups and speak to them about our work and what we do. This part is organised and coordinated by Yvonne, our community fundraiser. Asylum seekers are entitled to free membership, as too are volunteers whilst they continue to actively volunteer.

As of October we have the following, 2014 number in brackets;

Individual/Joint paying members: 103	Volunteers: 119 (163)	Lifetime: 1 (0)
Organisations: 2 (7) <small>*This fall is due to clarification on whether someone is paying on behalf of an organisation, or has simply stated they are a member of said organisation.</small>	Staff: 22 (0)	On line: 8 (0) <small>*regular donation made through our website</small>

The above numbers are not exclusive, there is some overlap as a few volunteers also pay, as does one staff member.

Standing order payments range from £2 - £100/month.

Dave Hewitt – Membership

TREASURER'S REPORT

Ever increasing demand for the Forum's services in times of decreasing public resources have forced us to dip deeply into reserves in recent months. No apologies are offered for this – reserves are meant for rainy days and it's already raining heavily. The need to dig deep was exacerbated in the year under review by the cost of moving from the Square Centre to our new premises, but anyone who has been present at the Forum on a weekday morning would be forced to agree that we could not have continued to offer the level and volume of services we provided in our constricted previous home. And in referring to the transfer to the Sycamore Centre, I really must pay tribute to the efforts of the management - the efforts of Fiona – to keep the costs of the move to the bare minimum. I'm sure that if she could have carried the office furniture on her back, she would have done so.

However, there's no time for self-congratulation. Grant income, on which we have relied in years past, is becoming harder and harder to find and, if the Forum is to continue to thrive and grow, it's becoming increasingly urgent that we find a reliable source of income of our own. Various possible sources have been suggested, but, as yet, without positive result, and the Trustees would welcome any further ideas and initiatives that members may have in mind.

In addition to Fiona and, of course, our lovely chairman, I must thank Zanele and Erica for their excellent work throughout the year. It was very unfortunate that Zanele apparently decided to attack a passing vehicle in Southern Africa, but she's happily recovering well – something which can't be said of the vehicle. Meanwhile, Erica has continued to work miracles, in a far from perfect environment.

I've already stated my intention to stand down as Treasurer at the Annual General Meeting. I've enjoyed my two-year tenure, but it's time to move on – not that I intend to break all connection with the Forum, but I think I'll be far happier as an ordinary volunteer.

Barry Clarke – Treasurer

PARTNERSHIPS

With further financial cutbacks affecting refugee services as well as other services this year, and with the cuts to legal aid provision we have found ourselves increasingly reliant on the partnerships that we have developed over the years with organisations both in the local area and more widely.

We continue to work very closely with several firms of Nottingham solicitors including **French and Co, Burtons, Paragon Law and Bhatia Best as well as developing a strong partnership with IAS, Leicester, who now hold regular surgeries at the Forum.** We continue to have good working relationships with **Nottingham City Council** staff in **Housing Aid, the Homelink Team, Nottingham City Homes, Community & Culture Department, Children and Families Services, Welfare Rights and Adult Social Care.**

We have this year taken over all the work surrounding Section 4 appeals since Refugee Action have not been able to continue this support. We have maintained our links with them around AVR, though sadly this too will be coming to an end as this work will be transferred to the Home Office at the end of 2015. We have continued to work very closely with the **Asylum Support Appeals Project**, whose invaluable support is very important for our clients on Section 4 support. We have also formed a good relationship with **Migrant Help** who have taken over the asylum support contract and who are holding surgeries at the Forum on Mondays.

On asylum accommodation issues we have developed a working relationship with **G4S**, the current contract holder for Asylum Accommodation. In the difficult search for accommodation for those granted Leave to Remain, we have worked with private landlords and the **YMCA, Salvation Army, Mellors Lodge and Highwood House** and the City Council's **Homeless Gateway.** Our partnership with **Tuntum Housing Association** for the **Refugee Futures Project** continues to offer support to individuals and families awarded a recent positive decision. Further assistance of new refugee tenants is provided by referral to the **Vineyard Arches** for support with furniture, household goods and clothes. We have also developed a new housing partnership with **ASRA** housing.

Our work with destitute failed asylum seekers has been greatly enhanced by partnership working, food and financial assistance from the **British Red Cross (see their report)** and **HIMMAH.** Many local churches and other faith groups, plus a number of local schools have all generously provided food and financial assistance. Our ties with **Nottingham Arimathea Trust** and **HOST Nottingham,** remain very important in the provision of services to our anti-destitution work, a group who are growing, and increasingly vulnerable.

We continue to work closely with **Playworks** on some very interesting projects with our children and families work.

Other partners we have been working with include **Nottingham Futures, Broadway Cinema, New Art Exchange, EcoWorks, Nottingham City Libraries Service, NGY Myplace, Base 51, YMCA Digital Media, Lakeside Arts Centre, First Floor Theatre Company, Nottingham Contemporary, Womens Centre, Nottingham Museums and Galleries Service, NCC-New arrivals community team, Forestry Commission, The Rainbow Project. St Ann's Children Centres, Nottingham Playhouse, and StoneyBridge Farm.**

Health service links have continued to be important – with **GPs, Health Visitors, Community Midwives, NHS Direct, the Positive Care Team, Terence Higgins Trust** and mental health teams.

Our General Advice, Debt, Welfare and Benefits advice services have continued to be supported by links with the **Advice Nottingham Consortium,** including **Nottingham Law Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau** and both the **St. Anns and Meadows Advice Centres,** all providing expert advice.

Not least is our partnership with the **Renewal Trust** who are not only our new landlords but work closely with us on other projects and opportunities.

This is by no means an exhaustive list and we apologise to anyone we may have missed out. We value all our partners, wish to thank them for their invaluable support and guidance and hope to build upon these relationships in the future.

NEW COMMUNITIES ALLIANCE (NCA)

Established in April 2014 as part of Nottingham City Council 'Communities of Identity' funding, NCA is a partnership of 18 community organisations representing, and working with, new & emerging and refugee & asylum seeking communities with NNRF as the lead organisation.

Funding from the two year contract enables NNRF to employ a One Stop Shop Advisor, admin support, a Partnership Coordinator and provides a significant contribution towards our rent. The funding also provides new 'advice' and 'development' workers for The Signpost to Polish Success and BELONG. The remaining partners all receive small amounts of money to, in most cases, help them survive and continue supporting their communities, in others to help them deliver specific services to their clients from new & emerging and refugee & asylum seeking communities.

NCA is managed by a Partnership Coordinator who provides support and advice to partners (as well as to community groups outside of the consortium), organises quarterly meetings, collates and writes the monitoring reports and attends relevant city-wide meetings.

Now in its second year NCA has been delivering activities and services that help people get the right support & advice, provide appropriate skills and confidence building activities, and enable them to become active citizens. We have also provided support to smaller groups and organisations through bespoke training / advice and a small grass roots grant scheme.

Over the last 18 months we have consistently exceeded our targets across all service areas. The only exception has been the 'future sustainability' target which relates to numbers of funding applications submitted and the generation of new income to support the activities of individual partners and the consortium as a whole.

Other achievements and developments to date:

- The Signpost to Polish Success have finished their research into the needs of other Eastern European communities in the city with the final report published last month.
- An African Consortium has now been formally constituted and is currently being registered as a charity. Regular members meetings and governance training are being planned.
- Nottingham Beyond Borders and Nottingham Sports Group both organised successful festivals earlier on in the year.
- The Eritrean Community in Nottingham and the Gambian Welfare Association have both moved into their own premises and have been organising far more activities for their community members. Many of our other smaller partners either have their own office or are sharing with other larger organisations.
- Inspiring Greatness organised a successful workshop on 'Income Generation' to four community organisations and are following this up with one-to-one advice and guidance sessions.
- Through the Small Grants Scheme, grants have been awarded to the following community groups: Senior Support Group - coffee morning room hires; Afghan Unity Association – room hires & community day event; Nyasa Daughters of Nottingham – contribution towards a series of domestic violence awareness sessions; Mojatu Foundation – a series of city-wide FGM related films and discussions; Insite Radio – publicity costs to raise awareness of the African community on-line radio station; and Hyson Green Cultural Festival which took place in August on the Forest. Funds have also been set aside to support initiatives and projects for the various, nationally-diverse Roma communities that are living in the city.

Over the last 18 months all partners have been experiencing an increase in demand for their services and there is real pressure building across the sector reflecting the harsh economic climate we're currently in. It is against this backdrop that we are pleased to hear that the City Council are committed to providing further funding for the new & emerging and refugee & asylum seeker sector and that a new 'contract for tender' will be announced shortly.

Our partner organisations are: The Signpost to Polish Success; BELONG; Emmanuel House; BEGIN; Nottingham Sports Group; Nottingham Beyond Borders; Inspiring Greatness; East African Education Centre; Eritrean Community Nottingham; African Institute for Social Development; Rainbow Project; Gambian Welfare Association; Nottingham Zimbabwean Community Network; Cameroon Support Group; Somali Unity and Cultural Centre; Nigerian Community Group; Nottingham Afghan Association.

Stuart Brown - NCA Partnership Coordinator

BRITISH RED CROSS

The British Red Cross refugee support team in Nottingham provides destitution and orientation support to refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants. The British Red Cross offers emergency provisions, bus tickets to Loughborough and casework appointments for a variety of needs such as family reunion travel assistance. We can also signpost or refer people to other British Red Cross services such as international family tracing and mobility aids.



2015 has been a year of change for our service; the five year Big Lottery funded project was successfully concluded, several new members of staff joined our team and our service has continued to evolve. We're delighted, as part of this process, to be working in ever closer partnership with NNRF, sharing case review meetings and joint training so that we are able better to respond to the changes and challenges and provide our best for the clients. We are also currently working on a joint need assessment which will inform future funding bids in partnership with NNRF.

The British Red Cross's family reunion travel assistance programme helps family members of refugees, who have been granted a visa to join their family in the UK but are unable to afford the cost of travel because they are on a low income. Advice and support with this process are also available from our outreach sessions at NNRF.

The International Family Tracing service works to restore contact between family members separated by war, conflict and natural disaster.

To find out more contact 0115 850 5940.

REFUGEE WEEK - NOTTINGHAM BEYOND BORDERS



'Refugee Week, 2015 was organised by Nottingham Beyond Borders, There were fifteen events which covered a range of different activities - film, music, talks, public meetings, food, and exhibitions. The Launch at Nottingham Contemporary, with a dozen stalls, music, dance and food attracted more than 500 people. All the other events were equally well attended, with the week-long film festival recording audiences well in excess of 300, and the music benefit raising a large sum of money for refugee groups in the city. Fundraising is a secondary concern of Refugee Week which is designed primarily

to showcase refugee talent, increase awareness of asylum and refugee issues, and encourage support from the local community. The fact that well over a thousand people attended the different events indicates that this aim was achieved. A very successful marketing and publicity strategy, the provision of space and facilities by the city's main arts and cultural venues, and generous donations from a range of organisations (including the NNRF, Tuntum Housing Association, the Red Cross and the New Communities alliance) made the wide range of activities possible.'

RIDEWISE

This year, with the help of a variety of City Council funding, the Refugee Forum has continued to work with local cycling charity RideWise to provide cycling instruction and loan bikes to clients.

Clients who cannot ride a bike or need to brush up on their basic skills are given off-road instruction at the local Sycamore Park. Clients then have the opportunity to learn on-road cycling skills, allowing them to understand how to cycle safely on local roads. This training is particularly important to Forum clients, who may rely on a bike as their main mode of transport around the city.

Once clients successfully complete the on-road lessons they have the opportunity to borrow a Citycard bike for three months. The loan bikes provide an important means of getting around for clients.

Over 50 clients have received training since January 2015, with a number completing on-road training and borrowing bikes.

Instruction is carried out by accredited RideWise cycle instructors.



WOMEN'S CULTURE EXCHANGE

The group has continued on its path to growth with the continued support from members of staff at the Nottingham Refugee forum, their Management Committee and various agencies in the community (women's Centre, Sneinton Community organisers, Oscar, Sharewear just to name a few) that we have developed through Networking and referrals.

Networking has greatly enhanced the way we work; refer our members and building confidence for our members to interact with different communities outside our own.

Our line-up for Friday sessions have been developed using notes from a focus group by the members, this helped us provide what they really wanted. For example, one of the major needs was English conversation and we were able to bring in someone for three sessions. We have also included it in our future sessions. This has proved to be the case as more and more women are turning up every Friday, our average attendance has peaked back to 26 from 10, where it had started lagging since moving to the Sycamore centre.

There has been a great increase in offer for support/volunteering with us since the Media's coverage of Calais, we have talked with a few to see where they fit in with us and if there support is appropriate.

Event participated

Women's group has really been known by many social and community organisation recently through referrals. As at last year we were at almost every social community event organised. However, this year we had selected a number of events to attend and organised; which included our annual celebration for International women's day with the Central Library and Melting pot at New Art Exchange.

- At some point, we had challenges, tension, pressure and emotional stress in our women as a result of the increased refusal of our member's application and detention from the home office. The refugee week 2015 event Launch served as a very special one. The event made the group feel a part of the community and gave us that sense of belonging and cohesion with people from different social and cultural background.
- In August 2015, the group organise a summer outing that was collaborated with the hyson cultural festival. Aside the women having the opportunity to come out with members of their family to have fun with refreshment provided by the group, members of the group volunteered in the event as a whole.
- Another amazing event the group has engaged in is; The Great African Bake. This is a project carried out by The University of Nottingham. Its aim was to understand the dissemination and uptake of Improved Cook stove in Sub-Saharan African. Our women participated fully; they had the opportunity to evaluate each stove by giving its advantages, disadvantage and how it can be improved.
- In September 2015, we attended the Female genital mutilation conference, to get more awareness of issues that may concern our women in that area.
- In September again, we attended the Community cohesion team event; which was a networking, workshops and information sharing for voluntary sector. This event also addressed Conflict management and funding issues and opportunities which is paramount to our group.
- The group also attended Sorting out money event organised by the university of Nottingham and Advice Nottingham. This event addressed how we can tackle money problems locally and improve our financial resilience within the St Ann and Sneinton community. It also gave our group the opportunity to meet with other local community groups.

NOTTINGHAM ARIMATHEA TRUST

"We work very closely with the anti-destitution worker at NNRF who makes the majority of referrals of destitute asylum seekers into our accommodation, which enables us to identify the most vulnerable and in need of our accommodation. The same worker also coordinates the weekly food group and cash group from the Refugee Forum, which is the main lifeline for our residents to be able to survive through the generous food provision and cash support on a 4 weekly basis.

We also collaborate with other workers in the Refugee Forum, such as the "Into the Mainstream" Health Project who have assisted with guidance and support over registration with GP practices which we have had difficulties with. The new Legal Project is also now starting to take on cases of residents we have who have lost their legal aid and also people recognised as refugees in bringing their families over under the refugee family reunion process. We also receive refugee referrals for housing from the general advice delivery at the Refugee Forum and we believe that our collaboration is beneficial to both Nottingham Arimathea Trust and NNRF, whose work is complimentary to one another".

A BIG THANK YOU



Without your support we couldn't do what we do.

NNRF would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of its supporters: from individuals who have taken on physical challenges for our cause or raised money through events, to those of you who have made personal donations.

Would you be interested in supporting our work through an unrestricted gift? This would help us improve the overall impact of our work by enabling us to use your donation where it is most needed.

For example: Enabling us to keep vital but underfunded projects open, ensuring we are able to continue to provide the range of vital services.

Yvonne will be happy to discuss ways you can support us, please call 0115 9601230.

If you would like to sign up as a member, make regular donations or one off donations please [visit our website to donate.](#)

OUR TEAM

Staff

Fiona Cameron – Manager
Erica Stirrett – Senior Admin
Zanele Ndlovu – Finance Officer & Adviser
Barbara Spreiz – Volunteer Coordinator
Yvonne Colebourne – Community Fundraiser
Rebecca Wilson- Advice Manager
Sonia Bilkhu – One Stop Shop Adviser
Julie Whitehead – One Stop Shop Adviser
Jasim Ghafur – Welfare Benefits Adviser
Naomi Jemmett – Young People’s Worker
Sarah Greaves – Children and Families Worker
Gemma Pillay – Destitution Coordinator
Kinsi Clarke – Into the Mainstream (ITM) Project Manager
Daniel Robertson – ITM Project Worker
Sayka Naz – ITM Project Worker
Caroline Kioi – Legal Project Manager
Jonathan Scott – Legal Project Caseworker
Bahman Mohammad – Legal Project Caseworker
Teresa Pacey-Devlin – Legal Project Admin
Hania Radwanska – Legal Project Admin

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