

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum

Annual Report 2001 / 2002



Dancing to Mas-Y-Mas at the Refugee Week event, June 16th 2002

**Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
Refugee Forum
Annual Report 2001 / 2002**

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Supported by Comic Relief



Chair's Report

The opening of our centre at the beginning of the year was a key marker in the NNRF's short life. It gave us an office but more importantly a base for our activities and a place for refugees and asylum seekers in Nottingham to meet, get advice and get involved. When the TGWU's Bill Morris formally opened our centre, he described it as symbol of hope. We hope that that is exactly what it will be.

When the centre opened, Mike Scott, our first chair, decided to step down and get on with all the things he'd had no time for over the previous eighteen months. I agreed to take over as Chair in February, and on behalf of the NNRF, I'd like to thank Mike for his time, hard work and determination in getting the centre up and running.

When the NNRF was set up two years ago, we knew that asylum was controversial, but I'm not sure we realised quite how controversial. Not only in the UK but across Europe, asylum seekers risk becoming a pariah group. The very language used to describe them seems designed to isolate and marginalise. This is not only a problem with the sales fixated popular press, but also with leading MPs from both main parties. David Blunkett's comments about asylum seekers 'swamping' local schools may have been unfortunate or calculated, but were either way unfounded and unhelpful. Likewise Kenneth Clarke's comments on the planned accommodation centre at RAF Newton that asylum seekers would "drift" into villages such as Newton, "getting drunk" and "committing vandalism" (Guardian June 18th) only served to fuel local anxiety about asylum seekers moving into the area.

But it's not only a matter of language. Many involved in the asylum rights movement talk of a 'war against asylum seekers'. The proposed accommodation centres seems to us to fit in with a European wide move to make things harder for asylum seekers. For this Government, it seems that the 'root cause' of the problem is not repressive regimes and poverty but simply people wanting to come here.

The irony is that whilst political leaders claim only to reflect popular fears about asylum seekers, a recent MORI poll (June 2002) suggested that people in the UK broadly sympathise with asylum seekers. At the same time, however, the poll showed that people overestimated the numbers of asylum seekers in the UK by about 10. On average people believed that nearly a quarter of the world's asylum seekers were in the UK, whereas the real figure is under 2%. The 72,000 asylum applications in Britain last year was equal to just 0.12 percent of the population. Why is there so much misinformation about? And who benefits?

The MORI findings, and the fact that the countries from which asylum seekers come to the UK - Iraq, Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Sri Lanka - are known to be places of conflict, would suggest that there is scope for a better informed, humanitarian approach to asylum, one that is uncompromising in its commitment to asylum, but also one that questions the easy distinction made between people seeking asylum from political oppression and economic migration. The UNHCR has made clear that the increase in global poverty is one of the main reasons behind migration. The whole question of asylum therefore has to be located within a broader understanding of the impact of globalisation.

The centre and the hard work of its co-ordinator and volunteer staff demonstrate the fact that there are people willing to give time to this unpopular cause. Some of our volunteers are long standing residents, others are recently arrived. To the people who say 'charity begins at home' - a rather charitable way of describing, say, some of the letters in the Evening Post - their involvement shows that for some the notion of home is not confined by language and national borders. This is as it should be. In tackling local issues but addressing the wider context, the NNRF tries to represent in practice the old idea **'Act locally, Think globally'**.

The NNRF has benefited from the support of the City Council and from the 'professionals' working in the field. But central to our success so far and to our future success is the voluntary commitment of local people - community activists, trade unionists and members of faith communities, as well as refugees, who continue to play an indispensable part in our work.

But we do need more help. We'd like to open the centre more. We'd like to put on additional drop in evenings and more advice sessions. Do please get in touch if you can help.

Rob Peutrell (Chair)

Secretary's Report

MEMBERSHIP

The NNRF currently has 121 individual members. We are also supported by 32 affiliated organisations:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amnesty International (Nottingham Group)• Beeston Amnesty International Group• Bulwell United Reformed Church• Burton and Burton Solicitors• Burton Joyce United Reformed Church• Chilwell Road Methodist Church• Church on Rise Park• Community of Reconciliation / Sisters of St Francis• Diocese of Southwell Social Responsibility Group• EMAG Department, Elliott Durham School• Emmanuel Church• Grangewood Methodist Church• Lady Bay Baptist Church• Medical Foundation for the Victims of Trauma (Nottingham Branch)• MSF Trent General• NATFHE (People's College)• Nottingham Anti-Facist Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nottingham Hostels Liaison Group (HLG)• Nottingham Jewish Socialists' Group• Nottingham City Arts• Notts County Unison• Nottingham and District Racial Equality Council• Nottingham Women's Centre (Training, Employment and Development Project)• Nottingham University Student Action for Refugees (STAR)• New Wine Family Church• Notts Socialist Alliance• Orthodox Church of the Holy Transfiguration• Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)• Roshni (Nottingham Asian Women's Aid)• St Matthew's and St Philip's Churches, Bestwood• Socialist Party (Nottingham Branch)• Unison (Nottingham Healthcare Branch)
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NNRF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The following members were elected at the July 2001 AGM:

Mike Scott (Chair), Bob Crane (Treasurer), Linda East (Secretary), Nawzad Awchi, Rajeev Nath, Gary Freeman, Myra Woolfson, Jeff Cohen, Jasim Gahfur, Rob Peutrell, Patricia Stoa, Debbie Ross, Sam Azad, Pete Lowenstein, Patsy Brand, Fatma Kayhan.

The following members have been co-opted during the course of the year: Roy Stansfield, Bea Tobolewska, Krista Blair, Carl Myers, Siya Sabir.

We were sorry to say goodbye to Mike Scott in February 2002. He did a great job of chairing the Management Committee through its formative stages and worked tirelessly to secure funding for the 118 Centre and to get the building ready to open. Thanks also to Fatma and Roy who have now left the Committee.

The following agencies are regularly represented at NNRF management committee meetings:

- Refugee Action
- Refugee Housing Association
- Nottinghamshire Police
- Nottingham City Arts
- Nottingham City Council (Housing, Social Services and Education Departments)
- Nottingham Health Authority
- Nottingham and District Racial Equality Council
- BEGIN

The Management Committee has met on twelve occasions between July 2001 and July 2002.

Linda East (Secretary)

Treasurer's Report

1. The figures for the year ended 31st March 2002 are, as can be seen from the attached accounts (Appendix), very much larger than they were for our first year. Income from members and supporters by way of subscriptions, donations and standing orders has doubled to over £6,000. Our thanks are due particularly to those churches that have continued to be generous in their support for the forum and the many individuals who have taken out standing orders.

2. Expenditure from these unrestricted funds has increased, but we still have had a surplus in the year of £3,719 which added to the surplus brought forward of £1,934 gives us a total to carry forward of £5,653. This will prove invaluable as we increase the activity of the 118 Centre and the work of our volunteers and paid staff.
3. The setting up of the Centre and its initial running have been funded largely by grants from several organisations. Comic Relief paid for the salary of our part-time coordinator and contributed to the other running costs. Nottingham City Council also made a contribution towards the running costs and grants for one-off equipment costs. We have also had smaller grants from many other organisations. The unspent balances on these restricted funds will be spent over the next few months as the work of the forum and the 118 Centre continues.
4. Subject to finalising a service level agreement we have been offered funding towards the running costs of the 118 Centre by Nottingham City Council and this will be for two years from April 2002 to March 2004. We are also in the final stages of negotiating a significant grant from the Community Fund, which would be for three years from August 2002 and would enable the Forum to increase the level of paid staff and activities. We are also negotiating for several other grants for specific areas of project work.
5. The need for our services is increasing at a very fast pace and we need to increase our resources to deal with that need. We can not move ahead in any area until the funding is assured and so the continued giving by our members and supporters is vital to provide a level of background funding which will enable us to continue with our vital work.
6. Our finances are currently sound but we do need to increase our resources significantly over the course of the next year if we are to meet the needs that we can only too clearly see.

(Bob Crane, Treasurer)

Fundraising

In 2001, NNRF made a successful bid to Comic Relief for a grant of £25,000. This has been used to employ a part-time co-ordinator and for the rent of the 118 Centre for one year. An additional grant of £3,000 was awarded by Comic Relief for the engagement of a consultant to help formulate a business plan and to advise on policies and procedures for the 118 Centre.

NNRF also secured the following grants in 2001/2:

- **Nottingham City Council.** 3 small grants to help with the set up costs of 118 Mansfield Road - £2,000 towards the running expenses; £3,000 for furnishings; £2,000 for toys and books.
- **Nottingham City Council Lifelong Learning.** £1,450 for small grants for individual adult refugees to cover the costs of further education courses, exam fees, books etc.
- **Fast Forward** (via the City Council). £8,000 to purchase educational equipment and materials (books, TV, video, white boards, OHP screen etc.).
- **Health Action Zone.** £3,500 for social inclusion for young people aged 18 – 25 for sports and social equipment and activities.
- **Karnival.** £500 from Nottingham University students for a refugee social event.
- **City Arts.** £500 for arts materials. £4,500 for arts activities, including a drama group, an art exhibition and various arts activities for children and adults.

Other funds amounting to over £6,000 have been raised through membership subscriptions, individual donations and benefits. In addition a Voucher Scheme raised £800 for gift vouchers for asylum seekers.

A unique partnership has been formed with the **Nottinghamshire Probation Service**. Cycles, which have been refurbished by offenders as part of a Community Service scheme, have been donated via the NNRF to individual asylum seekers.

Nottingham City Council, as part of their **Voluntary Sector Investment Programme**, have recently awarded NNRF £36,000 over two years from April 2002 to fund the core costs of running the Refugee Resource Centre.

At the time of writing, NNRF is awaiting confirmation of a bid to the **National Lottery**. If successful, this grant would fund the employment of a full time co-ordinator, a part-time administrator and other expenses for volunteers, training and running costs for three years from August 1st 2002.

These two grants from Nottingham City Council and the Lottery would secure the medium term future for NNRF.

Proposals are continuing to be submitted to fund a number of other projects, including a summer activities programme for asylum seekers, a worker for young asylum seekers, a development worker, education advice and a mental health needs assessment.

Jeff Cohen (Fundraising Committee)

Education and training

ADULTS

During the past year we have developed closer relationships with Nottingham City Council's Adult & Community Education Team, local FE colleges and other training providers in order to push for adequate and appropriate provision for asylum seekers & refugees, especially in the area of English Language programmes (ESOL).

1. The Forum is represented on both the Operational and Strategic groups co-ordinating ESOL provision across the City.
2. We are currently working with the City Council's team to develop and promote vocational training programmes for refugees, funded in part through the Home Office. We will soon receive a grant to purchase IT equipment and to pay for outreach and administration in order to build our capacity to do this work.
3. We are already informally providing education advice at the 118 Centre and have plans to extend this over the summer.
4. One of these programmes, Interpreter Training for Public Services, will be held at the 118 Centre from August to December 2002.
5. A grant from Fast Forward in January 2002 enabled us to purchase equipment for 118 to be used as an education centre. This included an overhead projector and screen, whiteboards, furniture, TV/video, cassette players, IT hardware and software, internet access and ESOL resources.
6. New College Nottingham has been running ESOL classes at 2 levels, twice a week since February. We hope to start IT classes soon.

CHILDREN

1. We have worked closely with NCC's Education staff, in particular Terry Humphries, to find places in school for asylum seeker children. We have achieved some notable successes where children had been unplaced for several months.
2. Several Forum volunteers have been supporting refugee and asylum seeker children with English in local schools or by visiting them at home.
3. In Refugee Week (June 2002) two refugees (Razia and Omer) visited Whitemoor Primary School and spoke of their experiences to groups of 10 year olds.

Patsy Brand (Education and Training Co-ordinator)

Emergency Food Provision at St Catharine's

We continue to receive people referred from Refugee Action, Refugee housing and also, since it's opening, from Sam Azad at the 118 Centre. The number of people requiring food has reduced over the last 6 weeks since changes were made to the voucher/benefit system for asylum seekers. Over the year we have provided food for an average of 50 people each month, including children. This has cost over £4,000 plus donations of food in kind. We want to acknowledge the generosity of the churches which have contributed to this fund and enabled this work to continue

Wendy Pearce (Southwell Diocese)

Campaigns

NNRF members have been involved in a number of campaigns over the year. The Alpdogan Family were successful in their campaign to be given leave to remain in the UK. We've also been working around the problems asylum seekers have experienced from private housing providers. This resulted in a court case at which one local manager was charged with harassment, and although the case was dismissed the court gave a serious warning about standards of behaviour. More recently we've set up the *Nottinghamshire Committee Against Accommodation Centres* to campaign against accommodation centres. This has involved a great deal of contact work in the Bingham area – leafleting and canvassing, speaking to Labour Parties, churches and local people generally. Should the centre be set up we intend to work with local people to establish a support network for the asylum seekers resident at the centre.

Rob Peutrell

Newsletter

3 newsletters have been produced in the past year, the most recent brought out in time for Refugee Week. Copies are distributed to community centres, libraries, City Councillors, the Trades Council, churches, the REC and to lots of small voluntary groups through the Nottingham Community Resource Centre.

Myra Woolfson (Newsletter Co-ordinator)

Appendix:

Annual Accounts, March 2001 - March 2002

Nottingham & Notts. Refugee Forum			2001/2002		2000/2001		Notes
Monthly Financial Accounts			March	2002			
Income:					£	£	
Unrestricted Funds							
	Membership subscriptions				445	298	
	Donations	General			4674	815	
		Standing orders			1157		
		Benefits	J Hardy		0	1203	
			Clarion Choir		0	388	
			Palm Tree		0	145	
			Street music festival		0		
	Other income		Bank interest		34		
			Other			56	
Total unrestricted income					6310	2905	
Restricted Funds							
	Grants	Comic Relief			28000		
		Nottingham City Council	1		3000		
		Nottingham City Council	2		500		
		Nottingham City Council					
	Voucher Scheme				420	195	
	Karnival				500	0	
	Small grants fund				750		
	Education centre				7369		
Total Restricted Income					40539	195	
Total Income received in period					46849	3100	
Expenditure							
Unrestricted funds							
	Postage & Stationery				465	183	
	Rent for clothing distribution				100	150	
	Rent for Tuesday Group				614	31	
	Bank Charges				20	15	
	Telephone Costs				90	0	
	Events	Social event for families			0	122	
		Refugee Conference			0	470	
		Refugee week event			472	0	
		AGM			75	0	
	Small Grants fund				521	0	
	Business plan				177	0	
	Other				57		
Total unrestricted expenditure					2591	971	
Restricted Funds							
	118 Mansfield Road				14565	0	
	Voucher Scheme				70	195	
	Comic Relief	(consultancy)			2350	0	
	Nottingham City Council				5268		
	Education Centre				7369		
Total restricted Expenditure					29622	195	
Total Expenditure					32213	1166	
Net Surplus			Unrestricted		3719	1934	

		Restricted			10917	0	
		Total			14636	1934	
Notes							
1	Events				Income	expend- iture	net cost (income)
	Refugee week event				50	522	472
	AGM				0	75	75
2	118 Mansfield Road:		Comic relief		25000		
			Payroll			5562	
			recruitment			182	
			training			20	
			Rent			6695	
			Rates			340	
			Insurance			263	
			Gas			37	
			Electricity			92	
			Water			0	
			Cleaning			0	
			telephone			581	
			photocopier			24	
			Other			769	
	Total				25000	14565	-10435
3	Equipment		Nottm. City		3500	5268	1768
4	Consultancy		Comic Relief		3000	2350	-650