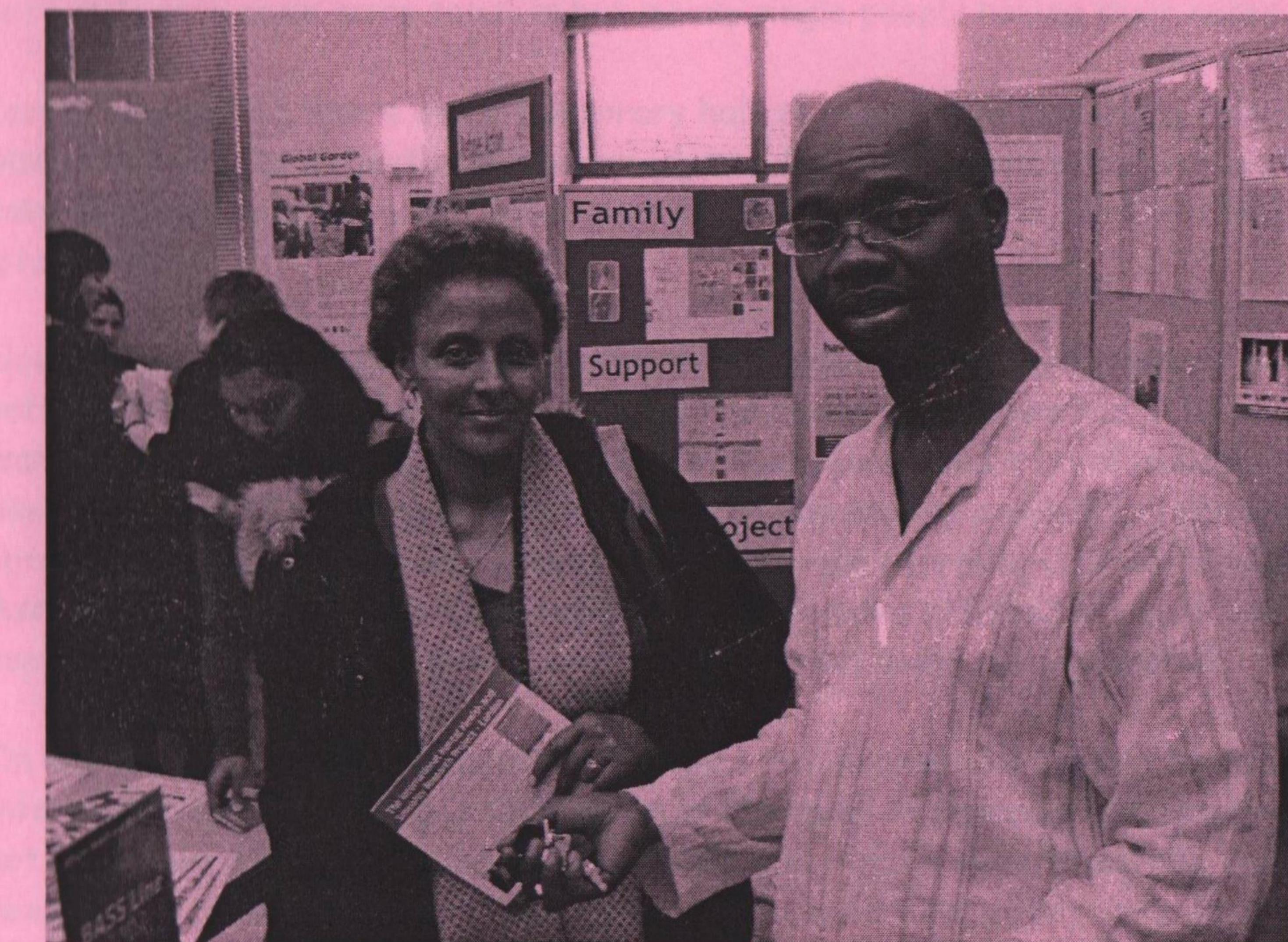


Annual Report 2008



NOTTINGHAM AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE REFUGEE FORUM
THE SQUARE CENTRE
ALFRED STREET NORTH
NOTTINGHAM
NG3 1AA

REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1121560
COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE NO. 5352679

Nottingham & Nottinghamshire REFUGEE FORUM

Chair's Report

2008 has been yet another busy and crowded year at Refugee Forum. Alongside the wide range of activities that have grown up over the past eight years to support asylum seekers and refugees, there have been several new developments in response to emerging needs.

One event, outside our control, but a cause for celebration, was as a result of the Home Office setting up a Case Resolution Directorate tasked with clearing the backlog of an estimated 350,000 asylum cases, up to seven years old. The first effect of their work locally was the granting of Indefinite Leave to Remain to about 150 families between December 2007 and March 2008. These were mainly from Iraq, Iran and Turkey. The Forum had been involved with many of these families for a long time and it was great to see them at last able to move on and start to rebuild their lives. City Council set up a support service to assist their transition in the initial stages, but advisers at the Forum were rushed off their feet for several months helping with housing and benefit problems. The nick-named 'Legacy Case' programme will continue until 2011 with some more families but mainly single people having their cases determined.

During this period, there was a temporary halt to new asylum dispersals to Nottingham, although there was some increase in Section 4 accommodation for persons whose cases have been refused but who may have an appeal or fresh claim pending or whom it is not possible to return home. Dispersal restarted in the late summer.

New asylum cases are usually being determined within a few months which means that those granted refugee status (with 5 years limited leave to remain) have often had little time to adapt to life in the UK, learn English or build up social networks and therefore need a lot of assistance in the early stages. We have continued to assist people at all stages of the asylum process and for those granted leave to remain, through an extended period of resettlement. Through forming a consortium with Tuntum Housing Association and Cooperative Community Action we have obtained a 3-year contract to continue to provide support to refugees in obtaining, settling-in and sustaining accommodation.

On any day the Centre's visitors may include a new arrival who needs a bed for the night, a bus ticket and information about how to get to Croydon or Liverpool to claim asylum, someone whose NASS support has not been paid, a newly refused asylum seeker who doesn't understand the reasons for refusal, people needing letters explained or phone calls made to solicitors, utility companies or the Job Centre and those needing help with accessing benefits and services to which they are entitled. We see people at all points on the spectrum from the destitute refused asylum seeker, to an increasing number of people who have Indefinite Leave and after five years' residence are eligible to apply for British Citizenship and British passports.

The Centre has continued to be in regular use six days a week, with an increased use by Refugee Community Organisations at the weekends. This is partly a result of resources that we have been able to

put into supporting emerging RCOs with information advice, assistance with funding applications and facilitating the development of an RCO Network. Fridays has remained Women's day at the Forum, and the self-organising Refugee Women's Group has had a dynamic, enjoyable and informative programme of events plus crèche provision for their children.

A continuing problem for asylum seekers has been the difficulty of obtaining legal representation in the City; the few local providers able to offer Legal Aid usually have long waiting-lists. To help address this situation, our Centre Manager, Charlotte, set up a major initiative which ran from October 2007 to April 2008, offering basic legal advice sessions run by volunteers, many of whom were Law students, who were trained to meet the standards required by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner at Level 1. Our good links with solicitors and Refugee Legal Centre in Nottingham have enabled referrals to be made in many cases.

In addition to the several hundred refused asylum seekers in the City who are receiving Section 4 Support there are many others who are without any means of support and our Anti- Destitution Group has assisted them throughout the year, funded by a large number of generous donors. The donations have enabled us to continue the Saturday food distribution plus provision of a hot meal, plus small cash payments and emergency grants. This work is carried out entirely by volunteers many of whom are themselves asylum seekers and refugees.

Our team of dedicated staff is augmented by a large cohort of volunteers - over 100 in the past year - who help to run the organisation and its many activities. Our volunteers, 40% of whom this year have been refugees and asylum seekers, come a wide spectrum of ages, ethnicities and backgrounds and all learn and benefit from the interaction between themselves and other centre users.

Life at the Centre is often emotionally stressful for those involved, dealing as they are on a daily basis with people whose lives are often in turmoil. This is at its worst when people known well to the Forum are suddenly detained and threatened with rapid deportation, sometimes before due legal process has been completed. Linking with other groups, both locally and nationally, Forum members do what they can to provide emotional, practical and legal support to those who are detained.

As in many other charities, the matter of funding is constantly on the minds of the Management Committee. The Big Lottery grant which has provided a large part of our Centre management and core costs for several years comes to an end in November 2008. Some other grants will finish in March 2009. We have spent much effort this year in writing bids, resulting in several disappointments and some successes; outcomes on other bids are expected in December 2008. Officers are still hopeful of finding funds to continue the wide range of activities that a recent Planning Event and opinion surveys indicate members and users consider important.

Patsy Brand
Chair
October 2008

Governance and management

Since it was established, NNRF has grown and changed out of all recognition, and changes since we moved to The Square Centre have continued to come thick and fast. We now have around a dozen full and part time paid staff working in the building performing a wide variety of tasks, many of which are described in this report. In addition, there are up to 100 volunteers at any time doing an even greater variety of jobs and on whom we have always depended as they form the core of the organisation.

Up to now, the Management Committee, or practically perhaps some of its members, has effectively managed the whole organisation, taking direct responsibility for staffing, policies, service delivery and fund raising, among other things. The Management Committee recognised that at a time when major funding streams were running out and Charlotte had left to travel the world, the time was ripe to take a good look at how NNRF is organised and what changes might be needed to ensure that it continues to operate effectively and is in an even stronger position to meet the challenges facing refugees and asylum seekers. And always, of course, we must ensure that everything we do is founded on our commitment to the core values of NNRF.

During 2008, Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) was approached to undertake a consultation on NNRF's 'organisational health'. Part of the conclusion was that the way we have grown is no longer sustainable, and that urgent consideration needs to be given to strengthening both the governance (i.e., the role and effectiveness of the Management Committee) and the management of the organisation. The consultant recommended that the Management Committee should become more of a strategic body, less concerned with day-to-day management, which should be devolved a senior management person or chief executive, who would also have representational and other roles.

Charity and company law is changing, and it is essential that trustees are well versed in the new rules. For that and other reasons, the Management Committee is committed to ensuring that all trustees undergo training within a short time of their election. The shape of the Management Committee will change, too. It will always have both a guaranteed elected majority and representatives of refugees and asylum seekers, the Memorandum of the Company formally empowers it to co-opt people with particular skills which might be useful to the organisation from time to time, e.g., legal, financial or fund-raising. Although the elections to Management Committee are being held under the old arrangements this year, subject to AGM agreement, next year's elections will reflect the new shape of the Management Committee. That shape will be kept under review, however, and if it becomes necessary to change it, we shall seek to change our Memorandum and Articles to allow such changes.

NNRF has always been committed to the development of its staff and volunteers. To ensure that NNRF can continue to grow sustainably and remain effective, it is important that Management Committee members should also be trained and accredited where relevant. We also have to take account of standards imposed on us, e.g., OISC, or which we voluntarily wish to achieve, e.g., MATRIX accreditation. Similar voluntary standards already exist for trustees. While these may seem onerous at times, it is good practice to make the effort to achieve them, not least because funders expect us to be able to demonstrate our competence in relevant areas, including governance.

Andrew Wilson

Attendee	Number of meetings attended [of 9]
Karwan Alan	1
Navid Anthony	4
Patsy Brand	8
Chris Cann	6
Patrick Essalo	4
Vera Hau	5
John Henson	2
Dave Hewitt	7
Leo Keeley	5
Joan Matthews	1
Richard McCance	3
Patricia Stoat	7
Bill Walton	5
Lynda Wilson	7
Andrew Wilson	8

Attendance at management committee meetings by members of the 2007/8 committee. Note: the June 2008 meeting was cancelled. In July 2008 no note was made of who attended.

In memoriam

We remember with sorrow and gratitude Marguerite Howard, who died during the year. She was an indefatigable campaigner for asylum rights and committed supporter of refugees and asylum seekers in Nottingham. We also remember Masivi Olido (1972-2008) 'a man with a big heart who died too young'.

City of Sanctuary

This is a relatively new movement which started in Sheffield and has spread to a number of other cities. Its aim is to encourage a culture of welcome and inclusion for refugees and asylum seekers and to encourage cities to become officially recognised as a City of Sanctuary. City of Sanctuary is a broadly-based, grassroots movement which operates by building coalitions of organisations from all sectors (faith groups, voluntary, business, educational, civic etc.) in each city.

For official recognition to be gained, cities need to meet several criteria: -

1. to gather resolutions of support and commitment from a widely representative proportion of local groups and organisations;
2. to involve local refugee communities, including representation on the local group;
3. to secure a resolution of support and commitment from the City Council; and
4. to develop a strategy for how the city is going to work these ideals out in practice.

Nottingham has quite recently got on board and formed its own City of Sanctuary group which is seeking to gather widespread support and push the agenda forward. Several members of NNRF are already involved.

Why the name 'sanctuary'? Because recent research by the Independent Asylum Commission has shown that outside refugee circles the public at large has come to view the terms 'asylum' and 'asylum-seeker' in quite a negative way, whereas it views individuals needing to find 'a place of safety' or 'sanctuary' much more positively.

Watch this space!

John Henson, Vice-Chair, Nottingham City of Sanctuary Working Group
john.henson3@ntlworld.com

Membership Report

NNRF currently has 379 members. Of these, 342 are individuals/couples, and 37 are organisations. 76 members are kind enough to fund us with monthly standing orders.

279 members have given us their email addresses, which makes quick communication easier and cheaper. (If you are a member, and not on our email list, please send your address to chriscookcann@yahoo.co.uk)

Members are a great support to NNRF: financially, practically and in many other ways - it is very rare that a plea for any kind of help is not met with a response. Many members are volunteers too. Our grateful appreciation goes out to every one of you.

To join NNRF, forms can be downloaded from our website:

<http://www.nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk/index.htm>

Standing Order and Gift Aid forms are available here too, and from the Centre. Or you can join by returning the form on the last page of this Report.

Finally, a big thank you is due to Stuart Brown, who has taken over the task of sending out regular emails to members.

Chris Cann

The web site

www.nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk

NNRF staff, volunteers and members still do not make enough use of the web site, which is a valuable resource, available to everyone involved with NNRF. At the moment, news is gathered and edited by the web site team mainly from the e-mails sent out to members or from the media. It is not often that anyone sends in text and/or pictures of their own about a particular topic for inclusion on the web site. As I wrote in last year's report, there are members out there learning all this fancy, new-fangled web design programming; if they care to write a page, I would be happy to put it up on the web site (not too many Kurdish dancing girls please!) - even better if they agree to update their page regularly. However, in the probable absence of ideas from anyone else, there will be a page devoted to children in detention and

also a page about detention and deportation countermeasures, new on the web site in the next few months. And maybe a page about what really caused the Titanic to sink.

An important part of the web site resource is the links page and the arts access page. Most of the stuff on these pages is now pretty old, so everyone could help by reporting any broken or out of date links that they find here (or in other parts of the web site). I would also like to know of new links that might be useful (e-mail web site at rms.titanic@hotmail.co.uk).

Bob Cann
Web site administrator

One Stop Shop Advice Project

It has been a busy year for the One Stop Shop. Since October 2007 the total number of visits to the project was 975. I see people from diverse backgrounds with a whole range of needs and often the initial reason a client comes for advice can branch off into a completely different area. No one day is the same.

People accessing the service may come with a one-off enquiry which can be dealt with during the appointment or I may be involved in complex casework which may take many months to resolve and involve a range of agencies. I visit people at home who may find it difficult to get to NNRF and can accompany people to outside agencies, for support them or to advocate on their behalf, such as Housing Aid, solicitor appointments, police stations and Disability Living Centre. The project focuses on providing advice in the areas of health, education and housing.

As part of the One Stop Shop Yvonne Rowbottom covers two advice sessions each week. Every Wednesday afternoon she focuses on providing employment advice, having made good contacts with training centres, employment agencies and the job centre, and keeping the NNRF Jobs and Training board updated with new vacancies and opportunities. Yvonne's work with the One Stop Shop has allowed me to get involved with some aspects of NNRF Access Development work. I am now a regular attendee at a number groups which meet to focus on the specific needs of refugees and asylum seekers in relation to health, children's services and one group centring on The Meadows. I have also been involved in the evaluation of homelessness services and contributed to research projects examining the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. I am getting to grips with the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for vulnerable children, having undertaken some training earlier this year with a member of Refugee Action Nottingham and I'm developing links with Children's Centres to ensure that children of refugees and asylum seekers are getting the support they need.

So that the One Stop Shop can increase its capacity to provide advice I have set up an additional weekly advice session which is led by volunteers and overseen by myself. I have trained a group of volunteers who now see clients on Thursday mornings giving advice on how to access services and help to complete applications. This gives volunteers an opportunity to develop their skills, knowledge and experience and has helped to free up my time to work on some of the more complex cases I am involved with.

United Kingdom Borders Agency's [UKBA] Case Resolution Directorate (CRD) continues to work through the backlog of unresolved asylum cases and during the early part of 2008 under a project agreed with Nottingham City Council approximately 150 families in Nottingham were granted Indefinite Leave to Remain. This was an extremely busy time for everyone and was a very anxious period for the families

involved. I met many families, spending time to explain what would happen next and supporting them through the process. Initial priorities were housing, welfare benefits, transferring schools, nurseries and GPs, furnishing new properties, applying for school bus passes or EMA and registering with utility companies. During this time NNRF's Benefits Advisors, Floating Support team and the OSS worked very closely together to ensure that families were receiving the support they needed.

I continue to visit Walter Halls Children's Centre every month to provide advice to the women who attend the asylum seeker and refugee women's group. I have also accompanied new women to the group who may be nervous about going alone or do not know where it is. I have built up good relationships with the women, many of whom now come to NNRF for advice and support independently. I also call on the workers who run the group for advice, and vice versa. It was particularly useful to share information with them about the Case Resolution process so they could reassure families, and the families themselves knew where they could come for help. A similar group is now running at St Anns Children's Centre where I attend. Earlier in the year I provided outreach advice at Satellite in Meadows.

I still see a very high number of single people who are homeless, either people with Leave to Remain who are entitled to but cannot access housing, or people whose asylum claim is refused but are not entitled to UKBA (NASS) support. There are no firm figures for numbers of hidden homeless who fall into these categories but the knock on effect on people's health, emotional wellbeing and ability to get on with their lives is plainly evident.

The opening of The Nottingham Arimathea Trust's first house, which offers accommodation to women whose asylum claims have been refused, is a welcome resource for this group of people where so many doors remain closed. Nottingham Night Stop continue to accept referrals from NNRF and have helped immensely by agreeing to house young people who have been dropped off in Nottingham having recently arrived in the UK. Recently Yvonne referred a young Iranian man and he was placed with a family who spoke Farsi and agreed to take him to the station the next morning so he was able to travel to Liverpool. I often call on local Refugee Community Organisations who are always willing to help where they can in cases of emergency.

I have developed good relationships with statutory and voluntary housing services. I am frequently contacting private landlords and lettings agencies to try to secure accommodation for single people and families but barriers remain. Some landlords are reluctant to take tenants receiving benefits, agency fees remain high, owner occupier guarantors is often a requirement, or people do not have money available to cover a deposit and rent in advance. I help people to access Nottingham City Council's rent deposit scheme and budgeting loans but timing is crucial and success does not always follow quickly.

Lack of childcare continues to be a major problem. Statutory nursery provision is good and the pilot nursery programme for 2 year olds is very successful but I still meet too many women who have been offered a place at college but cannot enrol because they are not entitled to funding for childcare.

I see a continuing trend of people, both families and singles, arriving in Nottingham because of links with families and friends or the reputation of established community support and services, which serves to show that Nottingham can be proud to be a city which welcomes refugees.

The current funding for the One Stop Shop ends in March 2009. A further bid to Nottingham City Council for ongoing funding to allow the project to continue has been submitted and we hope to hear whether we

are successful in December. I continue to report quarterly and the OSS Steering group meet regularly which has representatives from Children's Services, Housing, Health and Community and Leisure.

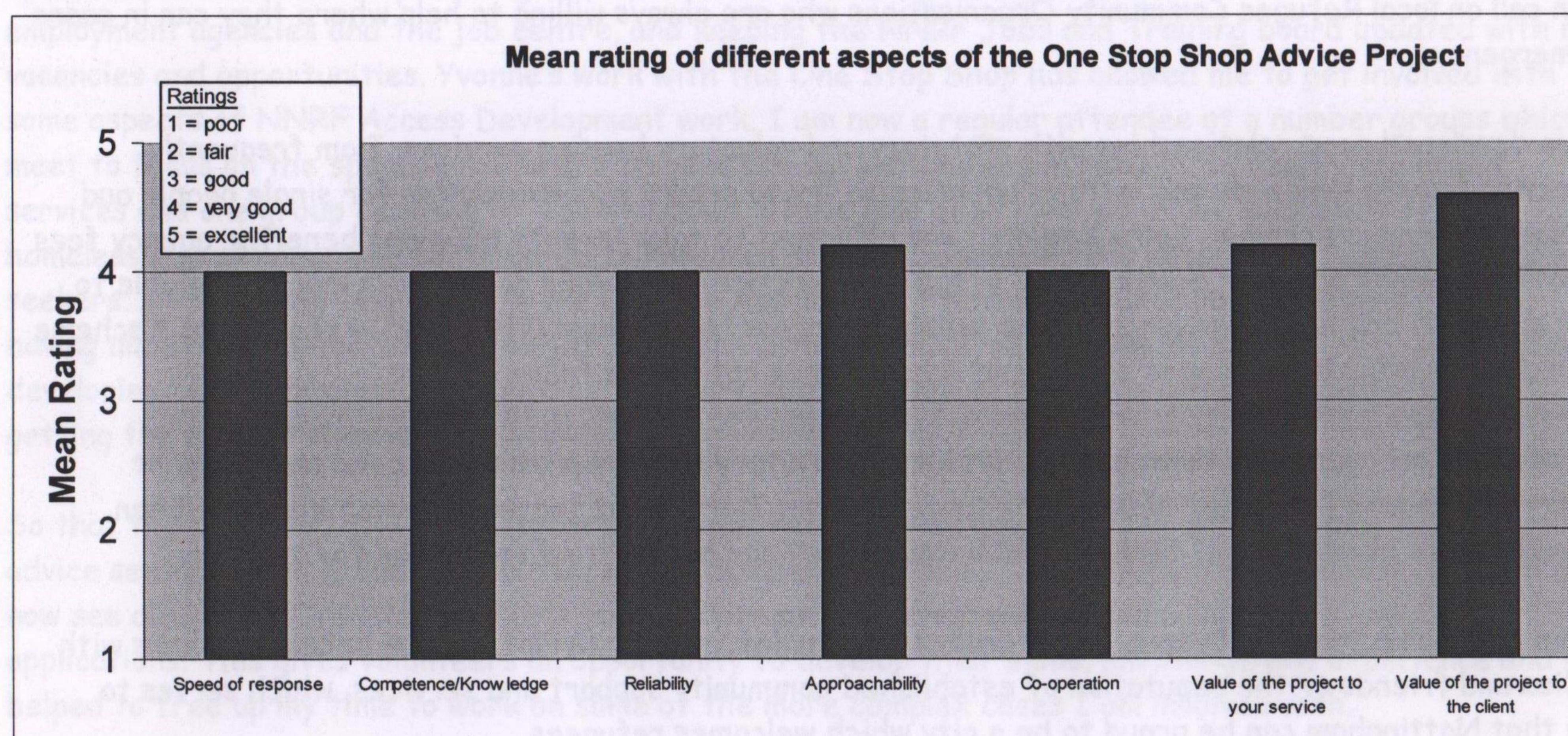
Fiona Broome

October 2008

Agency Survey

In January 2008 I sent out a survey to eighteen agencies that I worked closely with in 2007. Five were returned. The table below details all the ratings given by the agencies who responded and the graph illustrates the average ratings of the responses to each of the seven questions asked.

	Children's Services	Time Together	Nott'm YMCA	Refugee Support	Nott'm City Gateway Team	Average rating
Speed of response	5	3	3	5	4	4
Competence/Knowledge	5	3	4	5	3	4
Reliability	5	3	3	5	4	4
Approachability	5	3	5	4	4	4.2
Co-operation	5	4	4	4	3	4
Value of the project to your service	5	5	4	5	2	4.2
Value of the project to the client	5	5	5	5	3	4.6



Suggestion for improvements were

- More resources in order to benefit the high numbers of people accessing the service
- Picking up on the idea of developing outreach advice in Aspley

Other comments were

- I have always found the OSS an extremely valuable resource
- OSS is quick and efficient in alerting the appropriate member of the asylum seeking team when their input is required
- OSS is the only agency in the city that we have found that we can rely upon to signpost refugees who may benefit from our service
- I feel that your service is an invaluable one for refugees in the city as they can access it on an ad hoc basis as opposed to signing up for a whole support package.

One Stop Shop Case Study

Mr D was referred to OSS by Refugee Action where he had been for advice about returning to his home country of Guinea. Mr D has been granted Humanitarian Protection until 2011. When we first met Mr D was very dispirited and he described himself as having very bad luck. At the time Mr D was living in hotels, funded by the insurance company of his private landlady, after a fire had damaged the shared house he had been living in. He was being moved to different hotels around the city at short notice and had no access to cooking facilities. He was waiting for repair work to be finished so he could move back in, but he said what he most wanted was his own place all to himself. He described feeling very depressed and had recently spent time in London with friends contemplating what he should do.

First I spoke with Broxtowe Borough Council who explained that as Mr D was not homeless or at risk of being homeless they were unable to house him. I spoke with Mr D's landlady to find out when the property would be ready for him to move back in. I also negotiated a repayment plan for Mr D to pay off his rent arrears. Mr D was already registered with Home Link. I explained to him the banding system and how to bid and gave him a Home Link Guide. I contacted private landlords enquiring about one bedroom properties and arranged viewings for Mr D. Sometimes Mr D would call me from work with details of flats he had seen in the paper which I would call. Eventually Mr D found a flat himself where he has now settled.

When we first met Mr D was claiming Job Seeker's Allowance but by our next appointment he had started work with a construction company where he had worked previously before he went to London. I advised Mr D that he needed to inform the Job Centre that he was working and I spoke with a job centre advisor to check he had received the full amount of JSA which he was owed and that they knew he was now working.

Mr D had received a payment into his bank account but was not sure what it was for. I spoke with the Housing Benefit department who confirmed it was an outstanding HB payment and the dates it covered.

Mr D has an engineering degree from his home country and would like to re qualify in the UK, preferably studying at home. I sent for some information from the Open University and we spoke with the Nottingham branch where drop in advice is available on course information, career routes, funding and enrolment. First Mr D needs to have his qualifications converted, a service offered by Connexions with links to NARIC, where Mr D has made an appointment. Once Mr D knows how his qualification is recognised in the UK he can decide on what course is best for him.

Mr D saw a poster at NNRF for SIA training and licensing but at the time funding was not available for people in paid employment. Since then the training programme has run out of funding.

The last time I saw Mr D he told me that his wife has now joined him in the UK. I told him of NNRF's women's group and No English, No Problem drop in ESOL classes and gave him fliers to pass onto her to encourage her to come to Refugee Forum. I suggested she come in on a Friday so I can introduce her to

the women's group, help her to register for other ESOL courses and to talk about what else we could help her with.

I gave Mr D details of local GPs in his new area where he and his wife can register and advised that he take in his medical card.

Since I first met Mr D in June this year his mood had brightened and he has real enthusiasm for his future. He was feeling very disillusioned and could see no way out of the hole he felt he was in, hence giving real consideration to returning to a country from where he had been granted protection. All credit goes to Mr D who found strength to plough on, to go out to get information on how things work, to find out his options, so he has the tools to begin to carve out his own life here in Nottingham.

Of the OSS project Mr D says "I have been to so many services before I came here and could not find the solutions. Did I tell you I was ready to go home?"

Tenant Support Service ('Floating Support')

During the past year, NNRF's Tenant Support team of Julie, Amdani, Jasim and Saeed have continued to assist refugees and other people with Leave to Remain when they have obtained their first tenancies, whether in social housing or the private sector. The support includes helping with all the initial needs of registering with utility providers, obtaining furniture and planning how to budget to pay household bills and also advice on coping with the many issues that can arise in rebuilding their lives. Support may last from a couple of months up to two years depending on individual needs and vulnerability.

Between October 2007 and September 2008, the team assisted 132 tenants plus in many cases their families. These came from 29 different countries. NNRF was contracted to provide support to 29 tenants at one time but demand has always exceeded this and on average the team have had 40 people on their books.

The service has been provided under a contract with the City Council's Supporting People team, with funding coming from Central Government to provide assistance to vulnerable tenants. Our contract was due to end in early 2007 but re-commissioning delays resulted in the new contract not starting until 29 September 2008. NNRF formed a consortium led by Tuntum Housing Association and with Cooperative Community Action, to bid for a new contract. The consortium, called '**Refugee Futures**', learned in January 2008 that it had been successful and we are now after a frustrating delay, operating under this banner - as the only specialist provider of Floating Support for refugees in Nottingham.

How the FS team helped Mr H

Mr H was allocated to my case load and had many problems which I had to resolve.

He was refused a Community Care Grant which was originally claimed by YMCA and I appealed on his behalf and won £785.

I interviewed Mr H on a weekly basis as he had been given a new council property and I organised series of home visits to ensure that all the amenities were in place. I discovered that Mr H required a new bathroom suite and kitchen sink. Unfortunately the Council did not hold any records on the condition of the sink and bathroom suite.

As I felt that the repairs were urgent and the Council would not give me a definite date to replace the items, I decided to make a stand and contact the Complaints Department.

Basically Mr H should not have accepted this property as it was unfit in its present state for tenants to live in. Obviously Mr H was afraid that if he did not accept this tenancy he would forfeit his chance of finding a home.

In conclusion I have arranged for all defects to be remedied in the near future. I liaise on a regular basis with the repairs department and hopefully everything should be completed very soon.

Julie Whitehead

Refugee Futures will also be able to assist people with positive decisions in finding somewhere to live when they have to leave their NASS (UK Borders Agency) accommodation.

The NNRF Refugee Futures team has recently been joined by Simon Breen as team leader. Simon has several years experience of working with asylum seekers and refugees at Refugee Action, latterly as a Family Support worker.

Sadly, Amdani Juma, a highly valued member of the team for the past three years, has had his right to work removed while he is fighting the threat of deportation to Burundi after his period of Humanitarian Protection came to an end. He is continuing to support the work of the team on a voluntary basis and we all hope that he will soon be able to restart paid employment.

Patsy Brand



Case study: Building confidence

Miss N is a female refugee, she came to the UK about 3 years ago leaving behind her entire family. Miss N was a primary school teacher in her home country. Since she moved to Nottingham she has been a regular at NNRF and participated in most of our activities including social events and the women's group. Miss N has been experiencing feelings of lowliness and isolation specially when she was moved out of YMCA and moved to her own rented flat. She found it very difficult to cope with the paper work, bills and dealing with every day problems. When she got her property she was supported by Refugee Housing, but because of a poor communication she came to Refugee Forum seeking for help, and she was referred to me. When I started supporting her, I found out that she was in a mess with utility bills; she was very confused about how to top up gas credit. She was very depressed, felt lonely and was missing her family, her application for family re-union is refused as she is not working and also all of her children are aged over 18. She wished she has never moved to her property as at least she had friends at YMCA but now she is on her

own all the time thinking about her family and crying fully depressed. As well as her emotional experiences she was complaining about her property as it is very draughty and cold. In my home visit to her house I saw for myself her emotional status and also the state of the property; it was very cold damp and messy, the furniture she has is old and smelly and shouldn't be used for health reasons. It is very costly for her to heat the house all the time. I have referred her to one of the charities to get some furniture. As well as my support and help in encouraging her and explaining how the system works, now she feels more confidence and relaxed. I am in the middle of sorting out the damp and the draft problems and helping her to make a contact with her family.

Jasim Ghafur

Refugee Community Organisation support work

There are 16 formally constituted Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) in Nottingham. Apart from the Afghani Community Association and the Refugee Forum's Women's Group, all the others represent nationalities from Africa: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Dhafur, Nigeria, and Eritrea. Of these organisations one is an African Women's Group, and another an umbrella organisation representing all peoples from the African Diaspora living in the city. Some are far more active than others and have a good track record of providing advice, running training workshops and supplementary educational classes. Others are less established and are struggling to make an impact. All are volunteer-led and have no paid workers.

Following an informal 'needs' audit of most of these organisations earlier on in the year it became apparent that there were real concerns about their future sustainability, specifically in relation to long term funding and suitable premises. Many wanted to offer more services and support for their communities but did not have the funding to deliver them. All wanted secure premises and access to a large social space that they could use regularly for a programme of community events and activities. Nearly all the larger, more established groups have undergone capacity building training and are actively involved in NCISE, an organisation formed to support social enterprise initiatives amongst refugee communities.

However most are still very critical of a system that espouses empowerment and good governance and yet can only offer more training, when what they urgently need is a degree of financial security, a validation of the skills and knowledge they already have, and committed support to help them deliver more services to their members and communities.

Shortly afterwards BASIS came on stream - a five year England-wide capacity building programme delivered by the Refugee Council and Refugee Action - which most of the organisations, despite their reservations, promptly signed up to. Faced with these real concerns, coupled with the current political and economic crisis (which does not bode well for the future), the overall approach of the Forum's work in this area has been to focus on:

1. Supporting individual funding applications in order to address the short to medium term financial problems.
2. Offering advice and support in developing community and educational projects.
3. Providing regular updates and information on all immigration issues and local services.
4. Bringing all the community organisations together to develop a long-term strategy and action plan that caters for all their needs, and that complements and strengthens (rather than duplicates) existing provision and services across the sector. The aim is to get the action plan supported by all the agencies in the city so that it can then form the basis of future funding applications.

With One Nottingham having just announced a tender for a piece of Action Research into the support needs of BME Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations then the task of bringing RCOs together becomes even more vital. In order to add weight to their views then 'speaking in one voice' and uniting around key concerns is going to be crucial if they are not to be marginalised in this research exercise and the subsequent recommendations that emerge. We have made good progress this year and although the work is not without its difficulties and frustrations, the task of 'uniting the groups' and developing an action plan has to be the primary focus for the months to come if RCOs are to survive and flourish.

Stuart Brown
NNRF RCO Support Worker

Stuart's part-time post has been funded by a Capacity Building contract from City Council's Supporting People Team (part of DASHH). This funding will end in March 2009. The Forum is seeking fresh funding to support the valuable work he is doing.

NNRF Education and Training Report 2007-2008

During the year we have been able to offer the following courses:

- **ESOL Entry 1** Tutors Andy Burrell and Kathryn Smale
- **ESOL Entry 2** Tutors Naomi Jemmet and Kathryn Smale
- **ESOL for Women (with crèche)** Tutors; Gina Musa and Naomi Jemmett

As last year, the ESOL Entry 1 and 2 courses, for Listening and Speaking, Reading and Writing have been funded by a grant from the Nottingham and Notts Learning and Skills Council made available to us via **enable** (Nottingham and Notts Voluntary and Community Sector Learning and Skills Consortium). The contract is dependent on outcomes and outputs, that is. on:

- numbers of students enrolling
- those undertaking first steps learning
- employment status

- increased motivation
- exam success, and
- moving on to further courses or employment.

These courses ran from March - July for four hours per week. Having learned in the previous year that, with one exception, this was not long enough to move students from Entry 2 to take an exam at Entry 3 level, from September 2008 we have increased the number of hours offered to students. From September - October we have offered two hours for three days and after half term we will offer eight hours per week.

Because of funding constraints it has not been possible to offer separate classes for Entry 1 students who are not literate in their first language despite this having been one of our aims as mentioned in last year's report. We are fortunate to have volunteers who support our staff and learners in class.

No courses in IT, Driving Theory or evening classes have been offered this year.

We are delighted to have begun a **Women's only ESOL class with free crèche provision** funded by the Oaklands Trust. The grant helps to provide lessons for women who are doubly discriminated against and we hope that if we are successful a second year of funding may be forthcoming. Many Refugee and Asylum Seeker women cannot access college provision because they have no one with whom to leave their children. This class runs for four hours per week at Playworks, across the road from the Forum. This provision is very expensive as the ratio of crèche workers to children depends on the age of the children and most of the women attending have children under the age of 12 months for whom the ratio is one worker for two children.

On all our courses we continue to monitor the reasons for non-attendance. These are:

- Reporting to Loughborough
- Refugee Status granted
- Housing allocated
- Section 4
- Destitute and sleeping with friends or in the open
- Pregnancy
- Child care
- Court cases
- Solicitors' meetings
- Job Centre plus appointments
- No or little previous experience of learning
- Getting a job
- Moving away
- Offer of place at FE college or training provider.

Plans for next year

- ESOL Listening and Speaking, and Reading and Writing
- ESOL for Women + crèche provision
- Befrienders who have ESOL teaching experience supporting individual students.

Lynda Wilson
September 2008

Benefits' Advice Service

During the past year the Forum's Benefits Advice service has been funded mainly by the City Council's Welfare Rights Department, with some additional funding from NNRF reserves, in order to meet the high level of demand. Both Janet Hannay and Yvonne Rowbottom have been working at full stretch, especially from January till April when the full effect of the Legacy family cases was felt.

Although the benefit system has been rapidly changing and indeed more changes will be implemented in November, we have been successful in assisting a large number of refugees to move more or less seamlessly from NASS support to benefits they are entitled to. We have interviewed approximately 950 clients to date and also 69 families, who under the Legacy System were given Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK and were able to access the benefit system.

Yvonne has also assisted in processing benefits for clients, but has expanded her role into helping refugees to obtain the employment that so many are desperate to achieve - and in which she has had good results.

To illustrate what we can achieve we have compiled several examples.

Janet Hannay

Benefits Case Study : Settling down in Nottingham

In May 2008 Mrs. P. and her 3 sons came into the Forum upon receiving Indefinite Leave to Remain as one of the Case Resolution Directorate's Legacy Cases. The Decision date was 06.05.08 and NASS support was to end 02.06.08.

After seeing the One Stop Shop Adviser the family was referred to me for Benefit advice. At this time, the nominated support worker at Refugee Support was inundated with Legacy Cases and unable to complete Benefit applications on time. Mrs. P. claimed Income Support as a lone parent, Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits and her non-dependent son claimed Job Seeker's Allowance. An offer of accommodation was made at the same time and accepted by Mrs. P. This in itself caused the family financial difficulties as it was too early to claim a Community Care Grant. A Crisis Loan was applied for to purchase essential items - a cooker and beds - but once again due to government bureaucracy, this was delayed and NNRF organised a repayable grant to purchase these items.

Over the next few weeks further grants were given, as due to the high volume of Benefit claims it was taking the Department of Work and Pensions approximately 20 weeks to process claims.

When eventually Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit and Income Support were in payment I ensured that we applied for a Community Care Grant through our Floating Support team. I was impressed by this family as when they received their first Benefit payment they immediately paid back all loans given to them by NNRF.

My next step was to remove all barriers preventing them from gaining employment. Mrs. P. decided to attend a "Care Training in the Community" programme and her son was given help completing job

application forms, one being employment at Asda. The two younger brothers were still students and keen football players. The Forum's Five-a-Side Team were informed that the boys were enthusiastic to play for our team.

I was elated when I next met Mrs P.'s son who had obtained employment as a Chef at Asda. He informed me that his mother was still attending the Care programme and that his young brothers had been spotted by a local professional football team and were now playing football for their Youth Team.

Following a stressful few months - a much deserved happy conclusion for this family after years spent in limbo.

Yvonne Rowbottom

Employment Case Study

Mr. O. is a refugee who completed a part-time Security Course at South Notts College and achieved a Door Supervisor Certificate. His problem was that he was unable to afford the £200 for the SIA Licence (Security Industry Association) and without this he would be unable to get employment in the Security Industry.

I was aware that Apricot Training had funding for the SIA Licence and knew that Mr. O would fit the criteria for this. I assisted Mr. O. to complete the Apricot application but because he had only lived in the UK for 3 years and the Criminal Record Bureau Check had to be for 5 years, he had to swear an Affidavit in front of a solicitor in replacement for the CRB check. I advised him to make an appointment with Paragon Law and Legal Aid was granted. Following this the Affidavit document was returned to Apricot and an application for the Licence was made to the SIA.

The processing of the Licence took several months and numerous telephone calls were made to SIA both by Mr O and myself. The processing of the License was taking place but the validation was taking longer because Mr. O. had only been in the UK for 3 years. Eventually in August 2008 Mr. O received his long awaited Licence.

He is now employed as a full-time Security Officer with a local security company and because he has been claiming Job Seekers Allowance for one year, I advised him that he was entitled to a £100 Job Grant plus 4 weeks' run-on Housing and Council Tax Benefit.

The moral of this story could be that 'Everything comes to he who waits!' But it also demonstrates the obstacles faced by a refugee who was desperate to start work - and the value of having specialist advice and support for refugees, to help them navigate the system.

Yvonne Rowbottom

Case Study : keeping good records pays off

Mrs A. had separated from her husband and moved to the Nottingham area. She had reported all changes to the various agencies and was surprised when she received notification that she had been overpaid £3200 in tax credits.

I immediately contacted Inland Revenue who informed me that she had not contacted them in time and that the overpayment still stood and she should make an effort to repay the debt.

Fortunately I had made notes in the lady's file with the date of contact and even had the Officer's name from when we had notified Inland Revenue of the change. Inland Revenue had to waive the overpayment which removed the worry from my customer.

Janet Hannay

Benefits Advice : Income support arrears secured

Mr. B. lived in Wakefield but had heard about the work we did from friends in Nottingham

Mr. B knew he was entitled to back-dated Income Support and was surprised to receive a letter from a Team Leader stating that he would not receive any payment as NASS support payments exceeded the amount of Income Support due to him. Mr B. queried this decision on several occasions and indeed received a short, snappy note from the same Team Leader stating that his view was correct and Benefit would not be paid.

I immediately noticed that this information was wrong as Income Support no longer included a sum of money for children and therefore, the Team Leader had used an incorrect figure in his calculation. I spoke to a Manager in Wakefield who agreed with my findings.

Mr. B. received a backdated payment of £5000 when the Benefit was recalculated.

Janet Hannay

Immigration advice and OISC Project

The Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) regulates all who give immigration advice in the course of their business, whether or not the advice is charged for. This means that it is illegal for NNRF or any of its advisers to give any immigration advice unless they are registered at an appropriate level by OISC. NNRF is registered at Level 1 to do immigration and nationality work, e.g., Travel Document or Naturalisation applications. At the time of writing, we have one member of staff and two volunteers registered at this level, with three volunteers in training. This number is barely adequate for the size of the task, however.

More acutely, there is a desperate need for advice for refused asylum seekers. Because funding for solicitors doing this work is now severely restricted by the Legal Services Commission (LSC), it is difficult if not impossible for commercial firms to survive when they may not get paid if cases don't have a good chance of success or if they are complex and require extra time, so they tend not to take those on. A service which can review such cases and help to decide whether there are grounds for appeal would help to fill this gap. Similarly, people need help to gather new evidence and have it assessed so they can submit a fresh claim. Cases which have a good chance of success because essential research has been done can then be referred to solicitors and should be funded by LSC. Work of this type has to be done by those registered by OISC at Level 2 or Level 3. Currently, no-one at NNRF is qualified at those levels.

During 2007, Charlotte introduced a pilot project using students of Nottingham Law School's *pro bono* programme to see if we could begin to address these areas. Some Students achieved Level 1, but many of them have naturally moved on to other things. In its own terms, the project was a success and the Management Committee wants it to be run again. OISC came to do a routine audit of our procedures in summer 2008, and a number of areas, especially that of supervision of trainees, were highlighted in their report. Since then, we have been concentrating on getting our procedures to the point which OISC can accept before going ahead with the next phase of the project. NTU is very keen to be involved again, and discussions are under way about how we could increase their involvement.

The Management Committee decided that sufficient funds are available to recruit a caseworker at Level 3, and that it is an essential step because of the need to help refused asylum seekers who cannot get help anywhere else. This is a very exciting development not least because it will release Barrie's talents in a way which has not been possible up to now. I am very much looking forward to the next phase of the OISC project!

Patsy Brand



Partnership Working and Networking

Our achievements in supporting asylum seekers and refugees have been greatly enhanced by the quality and range of our partnership working with both statutory and voluntary sector organisations.

- We have good working relationships with City Council staff in Housing, Supporting People, Nottingham City Homes, Housing Benefit, Community & Culture department, Children's Services, Welfare Rights, Adult Social Services, Library Services, SureStart, Programmes and Strategy, the Racial Harassment Team and the Police.
- Our relationship with Refugee Action in regard to asylum seeker support problems and in supporting women and families has been especially fruitful this year. Our staff and volunteers have also benefited from their training and updates on recent changes to the asylum system.
- In regard to English language training we have worked in partnership with ENABLE, maintain regular contact with BEGIN and liaise with local FE colleges, New College Nottingham & Castle College.
- On asylum accommodation issues we have liaised with Refugee Support (Refugee Housing Association) and Priority Properties North West. In the difficult search for accommodation for those granted leave to remain, we have worked with the Hostels Liaison Group (HLG), NACRO, YMCA, Salvation Army - and most of all, the City Council's Homeless Gateway.
- Our work with destitute failed asylum seekers has been greatly aided by support and donations from churches and other faith groups, and schools. We have close links with the Rainbow Project based at St. Stephen's (Bobbersmill) and the Nottingham Arimethea Trust
- New refugee tenants are referred to Family First, the Trent Vineyard's Arches and the Friary for furniture, household goods and equipment for children.
- Playworks and Greenfields Children's Centre have been our partners in providing crèche provision and rooms for the Refugee Women's Group meetings and our ESOL classes for women.
- Health service links have continued to be important - with GPs, health visitors, NHS Direct, the HIV/Aids team and mental health workers. We are members of the Primary Care Trust's Refugee & Asylum Working Group.
- In addition to links with Paragon Law and the Refugee Legal Centre, the Forum's advisers and volunteer interpreters work closely with other immigration solicitors both in Nottingham and elsewhere.
- A close working relationship has continued with the Advice Centre in St Ann's, an area where many refugees are now living. We have also participated in the development of the Advice Nottingham consortium.
- NNRF has continued to take part in relevant forums including the City Council-led Multi Agency Asylum Seeker & Refugee Forum, the Police Consultative Forum, the East Midlands Consortium on

Asylum Seekers and Refugees (EMCAR\$), the Meadows Asylum & Refugee Group, the Floating Support Providers' Forum, Nottingham Community Network.

- Close working relationships have developed over the past 15 months with our partners in the new Refugee Futures consortium which is now providing Floating Support.
- It is important that Forum staff and volunteers keep up-to-date with national developments relating to asylum and immigration issues. We rely heavily for this on bulletins from, among others, the Refugee Council, Refugee Action, the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC) and the National Consortium News.
- Other organisations that we are pleased to have collaborated with this year with include Long Journey Home, Careergrad, Connexions, Groundworks, the Red Cross and the Children's Society.

We are grateful to all these and other agencies and organisations involved in working with refugees and asylum seekers for their support and co-operation over the past 12 months.

Patsy Brand

What one of the refugees said:

"I have been volunteering with the Cash Group for some time. It would be difficult to say that I enjoy it, as we are dealing with people in such difficult situations and we can do so little to help them. I can say that it is always interesting and that I often feel very humbled by the kind and courteous attitudes of people who have undergone such terrible traumas in their country of origin and here are made destitute and have to rely on charitable giving. At a recent session a destitute refugee from Zimbabwe who relies £2.50 a month from the cash group, said:

"I'm grateful for the Refugee Centre. What seems like little, to me is very big"

VISITORS TO NNRF

During the year there have been many visitors to the Centre from Nottingham and further afield, keen to find out more about our work.

We were especially pleased to welcome the following:

Jon Collins - Leader of Nottingham City Council

Jane Todd - Acting Chief Executive, Nottingham City Council

John Heppell - MP for Nottingham East

Andrew Balchin - Chief Executive, One Nottingham.

We thank them for the interest they have shown in the work of the Forum and in finding out about the issues of concern to refugees and asylum seekers living in the City.

Reception

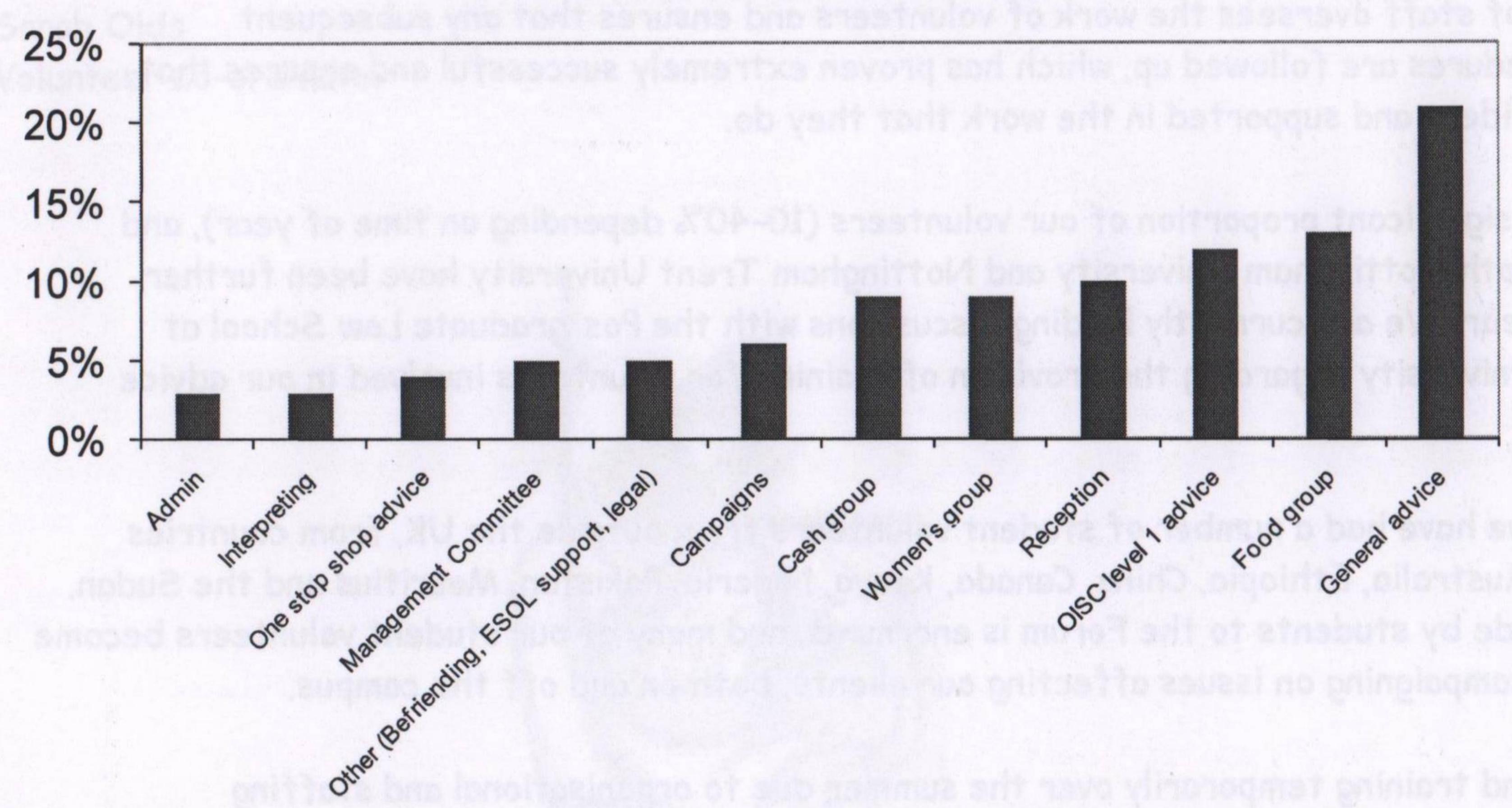
We'd like to express our thanks to Ravi for all his work as a volunteer in Reception. Ravi has now left for university, and we miss him and wish him well. NNRF Reception is a tough place to work. We're grateful to all the volunteers who take up the challenge, dealing with people from many languages and cultures, often people who are frightened or distressed - and who answer the telephone and do the filing as well - and stay calm and friendly and organised through it all.

Volunteer Activities at NNRF 2007-2008

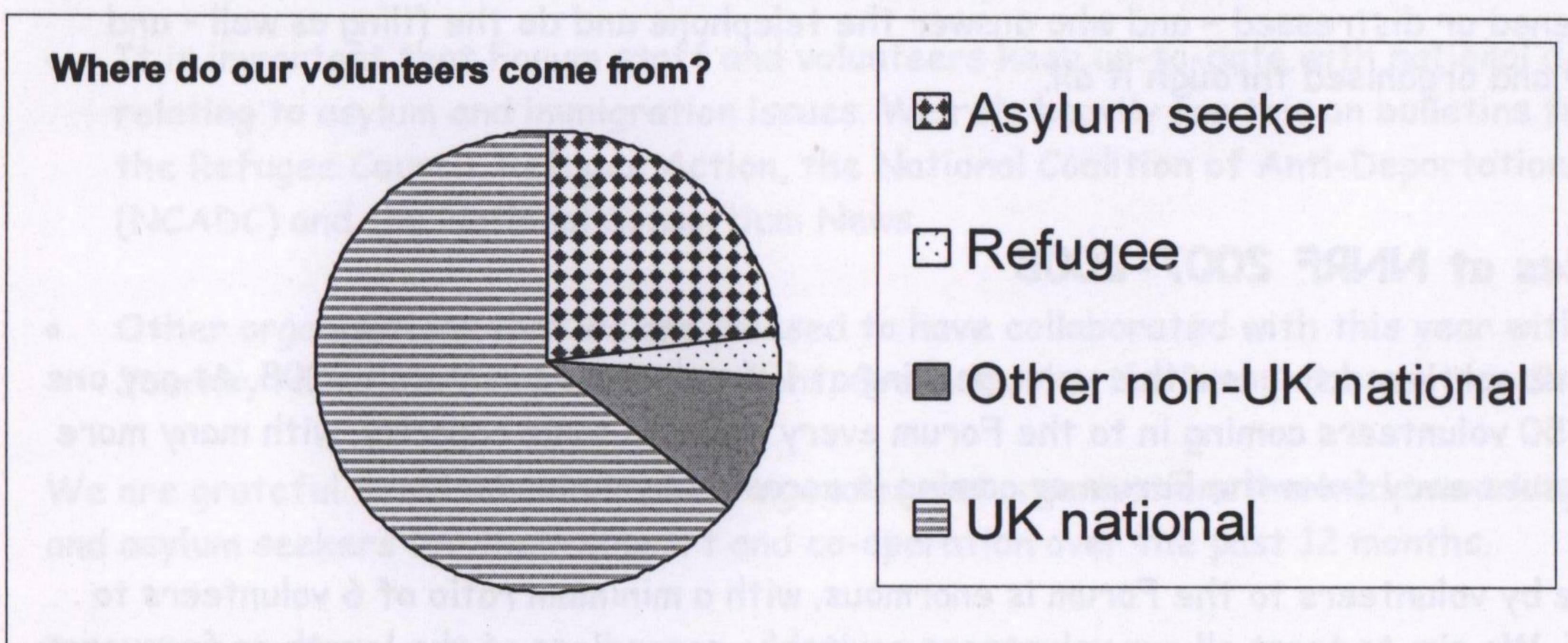
Volunteer numbers have continued to grow this year, peaking at 136 volunteers in March 2008. At any one time we have at least 50 volunteers coming in to the Forum every week, in some capacity, with many more involved in campaign issues away from the Forum or coming in occasionally to lend a hand.

The contribution made by volunteers to the Forum is enormous, with a minimum ratio of 6 volunteers to each member of staff. We aim to treat all our volunteers equitably, regardless of the length or frequency of their commitment. Without the contribution of each and every one of our volunteers we would not be able to continue to offer our current range of services or assist as many clients. Some volunteers are able to commit to weekly rotas; others help out once or twice a month or "virtually" through e-mail and letter-writing campaigns. Volunteers are involved in most of the services we provide: advice, anti-destitution (Food and Cash groups), administrative support, reception, campaigning, research, interpreting and befriending, as well as undertaking Management Committee duties, and helping with social events and one-off projects such as the re-vamping of the advice hall and reception areas earlier this year. Many volunteers take on two or more roles, coming in several times a week to wear their different "hats"!

What do our volunteers do?



What the numbers don't convey is the diversity of our volunteers. We have volunteers of all ages, from all walks of life and employment situations and from all over the world. We actively encourage asylum seekers and refugees to volunteer with us, and many of them choose to do so, bringing a vibrant mix of cultures and languages. We now have one of the largest multilingual volunteer communities in Nottingham, with a combined total of over 30 different languages spoken by our volunteers.



Over the last year two new advice projects have been launched, both drawing on the skills of our volunteers under the guidance of a member of staff. The first of these initiatives, the OISC (Office for the Immigration Services Commissioner) level 1 advice project, was rolled out in January, providing a vital bridge between general advice sessions and referrals to legal representatives. Following a brief interruption due to organisational difficulties we hope to resume these sessions in the very near future. Building on the success of this initiative, the One Stop Shop project was started in April of this year, providing back-up to our One Stop Shop Advisor, Fiona Broome, by allowing certain clients to be seen and assisted more quickly.

Each of the three different advice sessions [General, OISC Level 1, One Stop Shop] is based on a model whereby a member of staff oversees the work of volunteers and ensures that any subsequent administrative procedures are followed up, which has proven extremely successful and ensures that volunteers feel confident and supported in the work that they do.

Students make up a significant proportion of our volunteers (10-40% depending on time of year), and existing links with both Nottingham University and Nottingham Trent University have been further strengthened this year. We are currently holding discussions with the Postgraduate Law School at Nottingham Trent University regarding the provision of training for volunteers involved in our advice projects.

Over the last year we have had a number of student volunteers from outside the UK, from countries including the USA, Australia, Ethiopia, China, Canada, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Mauritius and the Sudan. The contribution made by students to the Forum is enormous, and many of our student volunteers become actively involved in campaigning on issues affecting our clients, both on and off the campus.

Having had to suspend training temporarily over the summer due to organisational and staffing difficulties, we are now in a position to offer training to all volunteers, covering a variety of issues relating to the Asylum process and NASS support systems in conjunction with Refugee Action. Forthcoming training at NNRF will cover issues such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and gender-related

persecution. Volunteer inductions are now offered within a month of starting and individual training plans have been introduced for trainee advisors, in an effort to make overall training approaches more consistent. From November 2008 all volunteers will be offered regular reviews to provide opportunities to feedback on their experiences and identify training needs.

Volunteers come to us for a variety of different reasons. Many of our volunteers are hoping to gain experience in specific areas and increase their employment potential. We actively seek out training opportunities through outside organisations, so that our volunteers can acquire new skills or improve on existing ones. Recently, for example, we have been able to arrange for some of our volunteers to enrol on an interpreters' course. We also help volunteers to satisfy work experience requirements leading to qualifications such as NVQ, by providing structured placements on a short-term or longer-term basis in conjunction with their further education provider. In addition to acquiring work experience, many of our volunteers discover a passion for the work we do and decide to follow career paths or enrol on Postgraduate or other courses relating to Human Rights or Immigration issues.

On average, we receive between 15 and 40 enquiries about volunteering every month, with applications peaking in September/October at the start of the academic year. Any applicants whom we are not able to place in a suitable role at the Forum within a few weeks of applying are placed on a waiting list or signposted to other organisations with volunteer vacancies. We are currently establishing links with Vinvolved, an organisation aimed at increasing volunteering amongst young people aged 16-25, and are hopeful that many of our clients will be provided with interesting opportunities through this organisation.

The coming year is likely to provide even more opportunities for volunteers to get involved, with plans to create a student campaigns group to assist in providing an immediate response in reaction to detentions. We are also hoping to get more volunteers involved in children's play activities at the Women's Group as well as providing extra support to ESOL students and help with CV writing and applications for job-seeking clients. There are also plans to involve volunteers in the work of the Floating Support Team and to broaden the remit of the befriending and mentoring roles.

Sarah Olds
Volunteer Co-ordinator



Keeping hope warm by jjasim

Why do people volunteer with NNRF?

Sanch:

NNRF is a home for homeless and leisure centre for homed people.

The sole idea beyond my voluntary work here is to give and to take. I do two roles at NNRF: One day a week, I work as a receptionist, greeting clients in different languages (English, French and Arabic), signing people into the building, transferring calls, and allocating files. This has given me both the opportunity to improve my interpersonal and inter-cultural communication skills and extensive experience working as a front line person.

Also, after a successful training in One Stop Project, I have gained excellent knowledge on housing, health and education. This allowed me to contribute in the betterment of our community by providing advice on issues affecting our clients both refugees and asylum seekers.

Finally, I exercised my language skills. I interpreter spoken communications during meetings and interviews using French, Arabic and Mandingo. I also translate written materials such as posters, signs and correspondence.

Ayesha said:-
"Volunteering at NNRF taught me a lot about the asylum process and the difficulties facing refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, from issues relating to support and housing, to problems with their legal claims. Not only has my experience provided a link with a marginalised and ill-treated section of the community, but has also allowed me to develop invaluable skills which have helped find a job in the sector."

Jean C:

In September 08 I started as a volunteer with NNRF, giving advice. Staff and volunteers are very helpful, courteous and infinitely patient in trying to sort out the great variety of problems and requests for assistance that clients bring to the forum. There is a genuine atmosphere of dedication and calm professionalism. There is a good ambience of people working together for the common purpose of social justice.

The forum is very varied in the projects and activities it undertakes. Both staff and clients come from many varied backgrounds, cultures, countries and tongues, and the forum is very rich in diversity.

The clients are very positive and patient given the frustrations they face and the distress that some may have experienced. They are very grateful even if volunteers may not always be able to resolve their issues.

I have been involved in some of the campaign work and written letters about people who are detained or to be deported.

The forum offers varied and interesting opportunities for volunteers to contribute to asylum seekers' issues.

Shi Na:

The original reason for me to volunteer is that I am looking for a way to create a meaningful life, not only living for myself, but also for others. I have learnt a lot from my volunteering experience as an advisor. All staff and other volunteers are very supportive. I learnt how to work with people from different cultural and regional backgrounds and how to deal with issues related to refugees and asylum seekers. I developed the idea of customer orientation.

Campaigning Report 2007/8

There have been three main issues this past year that campaigning work has focused on:

- The proposal to make refused asylum seekers pay for primary health care,
- The elections in Zimbabwe and the consequences of the re-election, or not, of Robert Mugabe for Zimbabweans living in Nottingham,
- The detention and deportation of Nottingham citizens.

The 'never formally announced' proposal to charge refused asylum seekers and so called 'health tourists' for primary health care met with widespread opposition from the moment the consultation process was announced. Health professionals, refugee/asylum seeker community organisations, primary care trusts, charities, MPs, educational institutes and many more protested loudly at the unfair and blatantly discriminatory nature of the proposals. Many in health care openly stated they would defy the plan if implemented while report after report showed that the detrimental effects on individuals in particular and society as a whole far outweighed any alleged benefits to the state. Just a few weeks ago it was announced, again not formally, that the proposal was being quietly dropped.

Earlier this year it was clear there would at last be elections in Zimbabwe although the integrity of the election process, let alone the result, was always in doubt. Nottingham's Zimbabwean community held several colourful, lively, noisy and well attended demonstrations in the Market Square at least one of which was featured on local television news programmes. They made it perfectly clear how they felt about the possibility of another presidential term for Mugabe both before and after his 're-election'.

Nottingham has had several of its citizens snatched, detained and, in some cases deported, this past year. There had been a paucity of campaigning on this issue locally but once the detentions began that all changed. It has to be acknowledged that while this type of campaign is essentially a reactive response and fought from a position of weakness, it is always easier to campaign on detention and deportation when there is someone, a name and a face, to focus attention. We have achieved a very high profile through some of the work done in 2008 and can be rightly proud of the hard work, passion and commitment of all those involved. Not least we also have to acknowledge and pay tribute to the tremendous support of the people of Nottingham. When called upon they showed the humanity and concern for others that we perhaps sometimes feel has disappeared altogether from British society, as it most certainly has from those that deem to 'lead' us.

Detention and deportations are not going to go away. Most likely they will increase but, as a result of the lessons we have learned this year, we are more experienced and knowledgeable, in a better position and have the networks in place to be able to respond more quickly and effectively to any future threat.

Dave Hewitt, on behalf of all the campaigners.

Friends of Amdani : resisting deportation, challenging injustice

Our good friend and worker in our Supporting People team was detained by the Border and Immigration Agency 30th of May when he signed on at Loughborough Immigration reporting centre. He was due to be removed to Burundi on June 4th.

The Friends Of Amdani Juma organisation had been supporting (for many months) Amdani in his aim to secure Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK and immediately sprang into action to prevent his removal.

We got massive community support for Amdani; within 6 days of his detention, there were 3 local rallies, 2500 petition signatures were gathered. Over a hundred supporting letters were sent by friends and colleagues in local and national organizations. An electronic petition has had 2700 signatures from people all over the country.

Local MP Alan Simpson and Council Leader Jon Collins have appealed to the Home Office to exercise discretion and other MP's including Nick Palmer are supporting the campaign.

Full details of the campaign can be found on our web site and the fight goes on. We managed to prevent Amdani's removal and his case is now under Judicial Review.

Because his official status is "failed asylum seeker" we and his other employer the Terence Higgins Trust are no longer allowed to employ him but he continues doing his work for both organisations as an unpaid volunteer.

Leo Keely

Destitution (Cash) Group 2007

The Tuesday morning (Cash) group continues to distribute cash, lunch tickets and referrals to the Food group. It has now done so for a total of 226 weeks (more than four years), during which time it has distributed over £75,000. This money has been raised through voluntary donations from individuals.

Destitute asylum seekers whose claims have failed, and who have no other source of income (and are not allowed to work,) are given £10 per month (£20 if they have severe health problems), plus a choice of referral to the Saturday Food Group or tickets entitling them to two hot meals a week in community restaurants.

Many others are also in desperate situations, but as limits to our funds mean we have to restrict our giving to those in most dire need, we are unable to help, for example: asylum seekers on Section Four who survive on £35-worth of supermarket vouchers weekly - and no fares to help them reach the supermarket.

The whole Anti-Destitution Project is voluntarily funded. We are not allowed to use any public funds, so the support of well-wishers is essential. The money we raise covers: the Tuesday Cash support, the Saturday Food Group support, and occasional one-off small grants made at times of special need by advisors. Once again, NNRF's members and supporters have been incredibly generous. We have a solid

base of standing orders to fund the support we can give to destitute asylum seekers, and this is augmented by many one-off donations, some very large. Without your help, we could not have continued to assist some of the most vulnerable people amongst us. Even a tiny amount of cash is important for human dignity, affords people some level of choice, and helps with phone calls or bus fares or other special needs.

As well as handing out small amounts of cash and referrals to the Food Group, the Cash Group has also, during our regular interviews with asylum seekers, been able to refer people to other services or advisors, soup kitchens, etc. The Group is shortly to undergo interview training so that we can pick up on needs and ways of helping with these needs more effectively.

In the past year (from start October 07 to end September 08), we have:

- Made 922 separate payments (1336 previous year)
- Handed out £14,339 in cash payments (£17,725 previous year)
- Handed out 1074 lunch tickets (costing us £3 each) (1140 at £2.50 previous year) costing a total of £17,561 (£20,575 previous year).

We have had to tighten our criteria to fit our cloth; hence the slightly reduced level of giving in the current year. However, if giving by members and supporters continues as it is now, we hope that we are able to continue at the present rate. Each April, we also make a giant Gift Aid claim, and this is a great help - so may we remind givers who have not yet signed up for Gift Aid, and who are tax payers, that Gift Aid forms are downloadable from the NNRF website or available from the Centre.

The people we support originate from a whole host of different countries. To give a clearer idea of the current situation: in the last four weeks of September 2008 (the last month for which we have full data) we supported 60 people:

Afghanistan: 2 people	Algeria: 2 people
Angola: 2 people	DR Congo: 9 people
Eritrea: 2 people	Guinea: 1 person
Iran: 15 people	Iraq: 5 people
Jamaica: 1 person	Kenya: 1 person
Korea: 1 person	Malawi: 2 people
Mongolia: 1 person	Pakistan: 4 people
Sudan: 2 people	Syria: 1 person
Zimbabwe: 9 people	

Of these:

3 were born in the 1940s	}	When looking at these birthdates, please
4 were born in the 1950s	}	bear in mind the aging process caused
11 were born in the 1960s		by deprivation, fear and suffering.
21 were born in the 1970s		
20 were born in the 1980s		
1 was born in 1990		

12 were female and 48 were male.

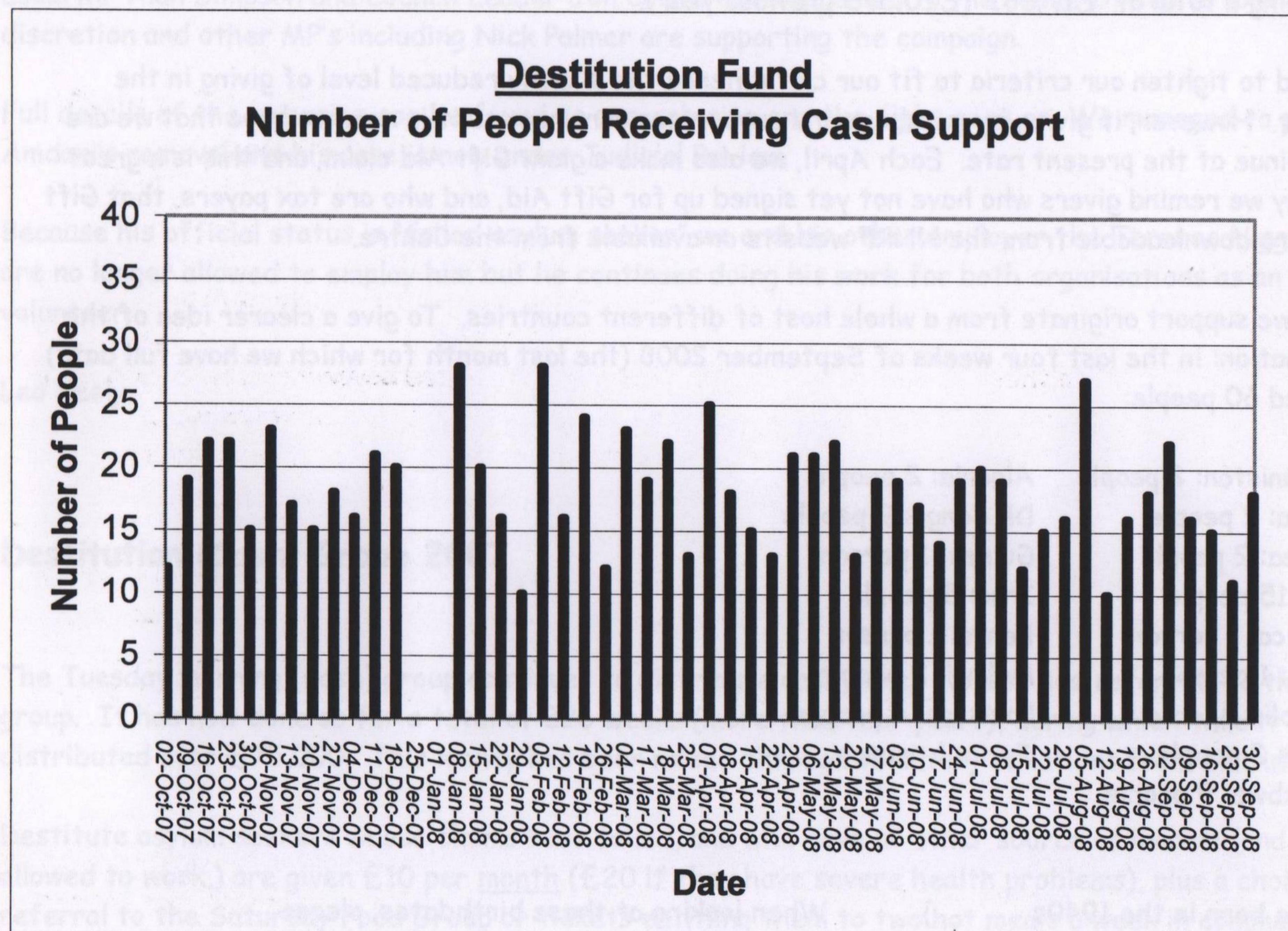
1 received no cash, only a referral to the Food Group;
1 received £2.50 as a single week's payment;

30 received £10, the standard amount:

27 received £20 because of bad health in 24 cases, pregnancy in 1 case, unsupported children in 2 cases;
1 received £40, as he is blind and unable to access the Food Group or use lunch tickets.

As well as causing destitution on a horrifying scale, the prohibition of work for asylum seekers also contributes to boredom; lack of contact with the host community; loss of skills through non-use; and mental health issues, including problems with self-esteem. And for the host community it causes the loss of potentially very valuable contributions - asylum seekers come with all manner of skills and experiences. They can be doctors, engineers, artists, teachers, gardeners, etc - yet the craziness of the asylum system refuses to let them use these skills, and forces them into destitution instead.

The following chart shows the numbers of people coming for cash each week over the previous year (there was a gap as Xmas and New Year fell on Tuesdays, but people were given their money for these dates the previous month):



The Square Centre 2007-8

On average more than 270 people have used the centre every week. Between 90 and 150 of those come to the general information and advice sessions which are run three times a week. We are very keen to ensure that we are helping refugees and asylum seekers from all communities with the very diverse problems they face, and for this reason we monitor who comes to the centre.

- This year we have recorded 71% male and 19.2% female;
- 9.8% of the people coming to the centre are children [under 18];
- We have seen people from a large number of countries and continents.

The following table shows the percentage of people from different continents who have used the centre this year. The following table shows the percentage of people from different continents who have used the centre this year.

○ East Africa	28%
○ Central Africa	19.52%
○ West Africa	1.70%
Africa In Total	49.22%

○ Far East	1.13%
○ Russia	0.49%
○ Middle East	40%
○ Other	9.16%

We have also found that we are being accessed by people from a variety of postcodes throughout the city. Most of our users come from:

- NG2
- NG3
- NG7

We conducted a client survey in the spring and summer of 2008, where we asked people about the services provided at the Centre and their quality. We asked about the Centre itself and about the response they received from staff and volunteers. The survey was designed to ensure that it was possible for respondents to be critical as well as complimentary. The feedback was very positive and some comments have been taken on board and incorporated into the centre services.

Status of Centre Users at drop-in advice sessions:

Refugees	47%
Asylum Seekers	26%
'Refused' Asylum Seekers	15%
Others/not specified	12%

Requests for support

- Travel document form
- Making calls to and appointments with solicitors
- NASS support problems
- Benefit queries
- Help with utility bills/phone/TV
- Section 4 enquiries

Health and safety

Charlotte, the admin team and volunteers have continued to work tirelessly on the health and safety issues in the building. The Management Committee approved a revised Health and Safety policy and appendices and the inspector verified that we have made excellent progress in achieving our targets. Ensuring that staff are working in a safe environment is a top priority as this means that visitors too are safe.

Risk assessments are carried out for the centre as a whole and specifically

- each room
- work station
- work environment
- each activity
- fire risk assessment

In addition we keep under review:

- Food hygiene (Women's group and Food group)
- Equipment testing
- Fire signs
- Fire drills
- Fire alarms

Lynda Wilson

Lynda Wilson has been a key member of the Forum since its inception. Registration no. 5302672

Charlotte Robinson

Charlotte was our Centre Manager from March 2005 to August 2008.

She brought lots of knowledge to the job having worked at Refugee Action and with the Red Cross Victim Support Service. We benefitted particularly from her hands-on Immigration and Asylum Process training, as did other organisations. As soon as she began a session people were confident that their trainer really knew her stuff. She relished updating her knowledge and successfully took OISC exams at levels 1 and 2.

She was very committed to ensuring that our volunteers were recruited, trained and supported to ensure that they, as well as the asylum seekers and refugees with whom they worked, benefitted from and enjoyed their time at the Forum. Charlotte's popularity with staff and volunteers stemmed from a real desire to help and a very good listening ear. She thrived on complex cases, finding case law and in-country evidence which would support individuals and groups.

Our policies and practices are in a much better state now and she has done much of the ground work which will ensure the Forum meets criteria needed to ensure good governance. So impressed was the Health and Safety Inspector that he offered her a job!

Latterly Charlotte's health was not good and she worked part-time so we hope that her trip to Australia will help recharge her batteries and we wish her lots of success in the future.

Lynda Wilson

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On average more than 1000 people use the centre every week. Between 90 and 150 of these come to the general refu

Statement of Values and Aims

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum is a voluntary organisation that defends the rights of asylum seekers and refugees, supports asylum seekers and refugees in practical ways, and campaigns for a just and generous response from Government to people who seek asylum in the UK. We oppose the oppressive treatment of people who claim asylum in the UK, whether their claims are accepted or rejected; we challenge the negative images of asylum seekers presented in the media; we support asylum seekers and refugees in their efforts to rebuild their lives in a safe and secure place.

We aim to:

- Provide practical and effective support to asylum seekers and refugees;
- Create a welcoming Centre where asylum seekers and refugees feel valued and respected;
- Encourage asylum seekers and refugees to volunteer, and participate as activists, workers and committee members;
- Work together in an inclusive, open and democratic way so that paid staff, volunteers, asylum seekers and refugees, share in policy and decision making;
- Campaign for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees;
- Support refugee community organisations and networks;
- Develop good practice in employing people; recruiting, training and developing volunteers; and in governance;
- Encourage asylum seekers and refugees to access training and employment to make use of their qualifications and experience and acquire new skills;
- Value our members and supporters and keep them informed and aware of our work.

- Travel document issues
- Making applications for asylum and other forms of protection
- NASS support problems
- Benefit queries
- Help with utility bills/phone/TV
- Section 4 enquiries

Treasurer's Report and Summary Financial Statements

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum

**The Square Centre
Alfred Street North
Nottingham NG3 1AA**

www.nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk

**Registered Charity no. 1121560
Company limited by guarantee. Registration no. 5352679**

Treasurer's Report for the Financial Year ended 31 March 2008

The Accounts enclosed are a summary of the full accounts which run to 14 pages. The full accounts form the basis of our annual report to the Charity Commissioners and Companies House and will be available to funders and any members masochistic enough to want to wade through them.

The overall situation for the period is, I hope, clearly shown on the Profit and Loss statement and Balance Sheet amplified with what follows. I will, this year, be available, at the AGM, to answer questions.

Income.

Our total receipts amounted to £391471, £29000 less than the previous year but still a substantial amount and, given that we made a very small loss in the year, which I will deal with later, sufficient for our immediate needs.

Obviously the bulk of our income comes as a result of agreements with the Nottingham City Council and I, for one, am appreciative of the level of financial and other support provided to refugees and asylum seekers by the City.

We have a series of bids going through the City's scrutiny process that, if successful, will give us a degree of security over the next couple of years. However, your new committee will have to be continually on the lookout for new sources of funding if we are to maintain and extend our activities. We have to ensure that

these bids reflect the full costs of the work that we are bidding for and be prepared to miss out rather than take on work that overstretches our finances.

The three year funding cycle with the Big Lottery has concluded and we are preparing a fresh bid that, if successful, will enable us to recruit/retain management and administrative staff and the new Management Committee will have to determine what staffing structure we will need.

Donations

Once again the generosity of our supporters is shown. Individual donations amounted to almost £47000 (including one anonymous donation of £10000) and our Destitution group has been able to continue its invaluable work as a consequence of this.

Expenditure

Consistent with the reduction in income, our expenditure was £35000 lower this year as against the previous year and this reflects the diligence the staff and Trustees apply when considering our spending.

Loss.

We are not a profit making organisation but the accounts have to reflect the net position after the 12 months financial activities. This year shows that our costs exceeded income by £3325 (a loss). However £20000 of our expenses is only on paper, being the amount of the writing down of the value of our assets (normal accountancy practice). These assets are predominantly the improvements we carried out to the premises together with furniture and equipment. The new committee will again have to decide what reserves should be set aside to cover dilapidations and the upgrading of equipment.

Our financial position.

Our cash reserves at the year-end were £118000 and this is a satisfactory position only if we are successful in a number of our bids for funding. I am, however, confident that these reserves will take us forward into the next financial year even if this is not the case. So we have a six or eight months cushion before we would have to wind down our activities.

I close by paying my usual tribute to the dedication and professionalism of our admin staff, Gina and Teresa and those, like Tina, who have supported them. To this tribute I offer my thanks to Patsy Brand who makes a massive contribution to our fund raising.

Leo Keely
Treasurer

Balance Sheet to 31st March 2008 [Summary]

ASSETS

Fixed Assets

Buildings Capital works	00,100.25
Buildings Provision	-24,040.25
Buildings Capital works - Other	83,149.34
Total Buildings Capital works	59,109.09

Computers

Computer Provision	00,100.25
Computers - Other	28,911.68
Total Computers	0.00

Fixtures and Fittings

F&F Provision	00,100.25
Fixtures and Fittings - Other	27,656.89
Total Fixtures and Fittings	9,688.50

Total Fixed Assets

68,797.59

Current Assets

Other Current Assets

Other debtors	51,788.00
Total Other Current Assets	51,788.00

Cash at bank and in hand

CafCash	44,546.74
Co-operative Bank	15,141.69
Destitute Fund Bank Account	2,268.87
Destitute Fund Float	180.00
Petty Cash	1,570.28
Total Cash at bank and in hand	63,707.58

Total Current Assets

115,495.58

Current Liabilities

Other Current Liabilities

Accrual	7,389.07
Total Other Current Liabilities	7,389.07

Total Current Liabilities

7,389.07

NET CURRENT ASSETS

108,106.51

TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES

176,904.10

NET ASSETS

176,904.10

Capital and Reserves

Restricted Funds

Driving Theory	505.35
----------------	--------

Access Manager	3,847.58
Advice Worker	18,234.27
Community Fund	51,783.81
Nottingham Works	23,852.24
Notts Community Chest	2,567.00
Photo Project	12.25
Renewal Trust	500.00
Total Restricted Funds	101,302.50
Unrestricted Funds	75,601.60
Total Unrestricted Funds	75,601.60
Shareholder funds	176,904.10

Profit and Loss Account to 31st March 2008 [Summary]

	TOTAL
Income	
Translation	1,546.85
Bank interest	2,807.91
Donations	46,994.09
Grants	336,785.97
Membership Dues	587.00
Room Hire	2,750.00
Total Income	391,471.82
Expense	
accommodation	65.00
allotments	90.31
Bank Service Charges	16.00
Books and Publications	341.71
Communication costs	12,458.73
Computer Support	3,876.22
creche facility	2,290.20
Depreciation Expense	20,043.46
Destitution Cash Payments	
Destitute Fund Food	12,953.64
small grants	4,715.41
Destitution Cash Payments - Other	14,573.62
Total Destitution Cash Payments	32,242.67
Equipment, repairs & renewals	
events	164.50
food	1,339.89
Gifts, donations & flowers	4,089.32
Insurance	262.68
Interpreting	2,738.65
Miscellaneous	946.20
	38.15

non domestic rates	372.68
Office Supplies	7,417.81
Payroll Expenses	232,276.92
Premises maintenance & security	6,534.93
Printing and Reproduction	4,388.94
Total Professional Fees	8,184.50
Refreshments	340.75
Rent	18,951.75
Room Hire	386.00
Subscriptions	233.38
Total Supplies	1,794.40
training	3,232.59
translating	625.00
Travel & subsistence	2,201.07
Total Utilities	9,891.01
Volunteer Expenses	10,310.60
Total Expense	388,146.02

Profit for the Year **-3,325.80**

NNRF IS GRATEFUL TO ALL THE ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS WHOSE GENEROSITY
ENABLES US TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES IN
NOTTINGHAM AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

Nottinghamshire County Council

Police Friends

Personal Trust

Total Restricted Funds

Unrestricted Funds

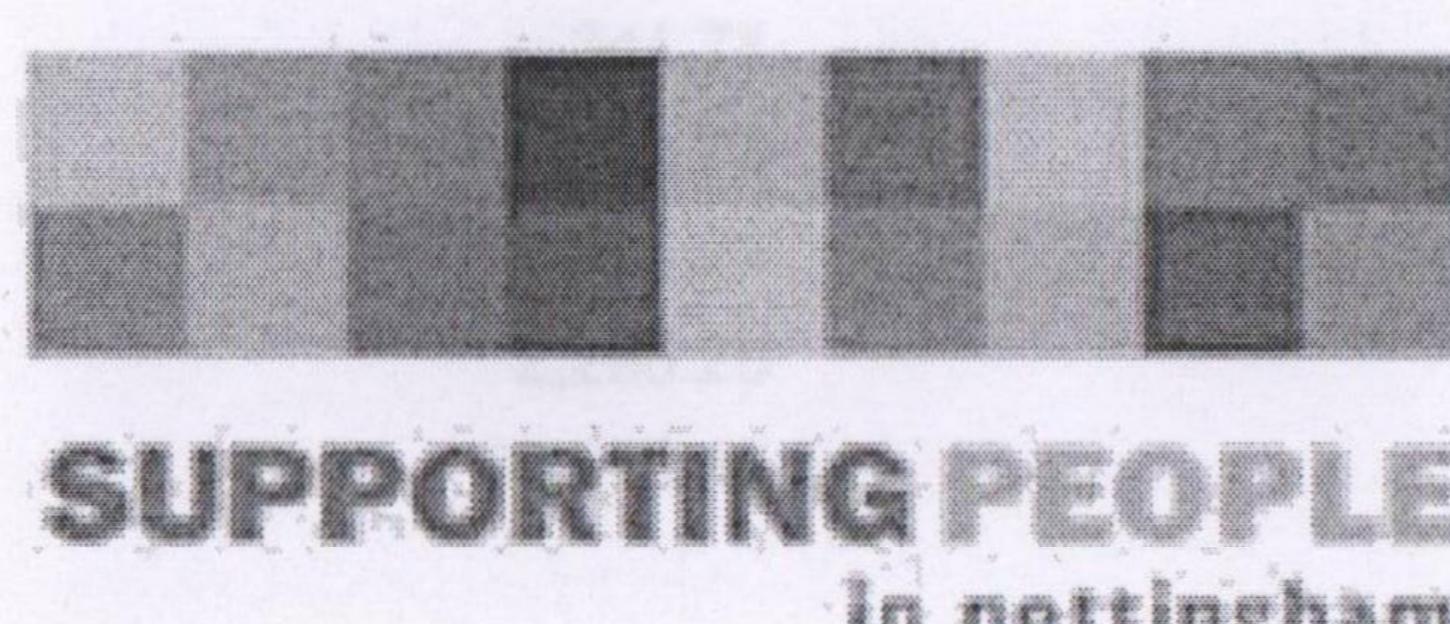
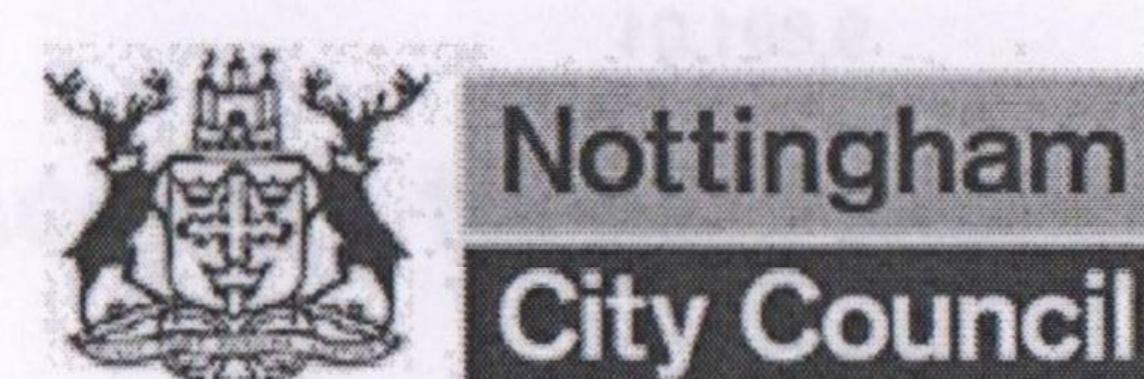
Supporting People

Total Unrestricted Funds

Shareholder Funds



LOTTERY FUNDED



Nottinghamshire
Community
Foundation

WHO'S WHO AT REFUGEE FORUM 2007- 08

Executive officers:

- **Chair:** Patsy Brand
- **Vice Chair:** Andrew Wilson
- **Secretary:** Patricia Stoa
- **Treasurer:** Leo Keely

Management committee members:

- Karwan Allan
- Chris Cann
- Vera Hau
- Dave Hewitt
- Nabil Musa
- Lynda Wilson

David Anthony
Patrick Essalo
John Henson
Richard McCance
Bill Walton

Staff

- **Centre Manager:** Charlotte Robinson
(For health reasons Charlotte worked part-time for several months. In July she left NNRF in order to spend a year in Australia).
- **Bahman Mohammed:** Assistant Centre Manager
- **Centre Administrator (ft):** Gina Musa
- **Admin. Assistants (half time):** Teresa Pacey Devlin & Tina Patel
- **One-Stop-Shop Adviser (ft) :** Fiona Broome
- **Benefits Advisers :** Janet Hannay (0.6) and Yvonne Rowbottom (0.4)
- **Tenant Support Team ('Floating Support')**
Julie Whitehead
Jasim Ghafur
Amdani Juma
Saeed Hussaini
■ **Team leader from October '08 - Simon Breen**
- **Interpreters**
Ismael Alwan
Anwar Mohammed (pt)
- **Stuart Brown:** Refugee Community support worker
- **ESOL tutors**
Naomi Jemmett
Kathryn Smale
- **Volunteer Co-ordinator**
Sarah Olds (pt) volunteer



The Nottingham and Notts Refugee Forum

Membership Form 2008

Membership fees: Free unwaged / low waged / volunteer
£10 minimum organisation / waged individual

Please note that your information will be stored on a computer database

Please tick as appropriate:

I / we would like to join the NNRF
I / we would like to renew my / our membership of the NNRF
I / we would like to make a donation to NNRF and enclose £.....
I / we would like more information on how we can help NNRF

I want the charity to treat this and all donations I make from the date of my first donation until I notify you otherwise as Gift Aid donations (sign)

Name:

Address:

Email:

Home phone:

Work phone:

Mobile phone:

Date:

#####

Total amount enclosed: £.....

Please make cheques payable to: The Nottingham and Notts Refugee Forum and return this form to Chris Cann, Membership,

NNRF, The Square Centre, 389-394 Alfred Street North, Nottingham NG3 1AA
0115 9415599 chriscookcann@yahoo.co.uk www.nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk/index.htm Registered
Charity No 1086962