

An Evaluation of the work of



Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum

***'My life has changed since I know
this place'***

Arabic Speaking Service User

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SUMMARY

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum (NNRF) was established in 2000 with the aim of *'serving the needs of refugees and asylum seekers living in the City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire'*. At present NNRF offer a wide range of specialised services for asylum seekers and refugees, turns over £600k/annum and has 15 employees. Services range from specialist advice (eg housing, welfare benefits) to social/community support (eg Tuesday night social project) and anti destitution support. Some services are funded (eg Into the Mainstream Health Project) and some are entirely staffed by volunteers (eg General Advice/Drop In).

A wide ranging evaluation has been completed including reviewing documentary evidence, a service user survey, 1-2-1 interviews/groups with staff, volunteers, partners and Management/Executive Committees. The aim of the evaluation was to identify opportunities for development and improvement and to assess outcomes against those proposed in the 2009 -2012 Big Lottery Reaching Communities funding application.

The evaluation shows that NNRF is providing unique and extensive services to a particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable client group. These services are well used and much appreciated by the service users and clearly have a positive impact on their lives and integration into the UK.

It is accepted that NNRF's service users usually have complex needs. Many clients speaking no English at all and have no experience of a westernised culture. They are subject to a complex array of different rights according to their status and the whole asylum process can be confusing and have a disempowering effect. Some clients will have incurred trauma in their own country before leaving; many are in poor health, isolated and living under continual stress.

Feedback from Service User Survey. Those completing the service user survey indicated their highest needs were immigration advice, anti destitution support, housing, welfare benefits and health. Asylum seekers had highest demand for health, anti-destitution and immigration (refused asylum seekers) whilst refugees, in line with having achieved status, had higher demands for housing and welfare benefits advice.

Of the service users sampled 90% of those surveyed indicated the services delivered directly by NNRF were good, very good or excellent and 82% said NNRF services were often or always better than those from other agencies. The main reasons quoted for this were the specialist nature of the services and the ways in which they were delivered; particularly that NNRF services were more approachable, friendly and flexible. Service users were very positive regarding the social/community support and advice service mix with the vast majority stating they viewed the forum as quite like a home and quite like an advice service.

Service users would like to see more resources directed at the key areas of immigration, housing and welfare benefits advice as well as improved IT and improvements to the building.

Performance against Big Lottery Project Outcomes. Due to the number of services and the lack of a co-ordinated, IT based system to collect data, assessing performance was a challenge. However on the basis of scaling up more recent (and more detailed) information, 4 of the 5 Big Lottery outcomes will be met/exceeded and the fifth will achieve 90% of the target by the end of the project in October 2012.

Outcome Objective	'At a glance'	Forecast Achievement in October 2012
1. 3000 better life chances by improving access to services	Yes	4218 comprising 2448 individuals + 1730 dependent children and partners.
2. 350 improved skills and work readiness	Yes	351+ referrals to external courses and agencies
3. 12 RCOs sustainable	Yes	Support given to at least 16 RCOs inc. 4 'start ups'.
4. 80 gaining new skills and confidence via volunteering	Within 10%	72 gained skills through volunteering
5. 30 groups better informed/more welcoming	Yes	30+ talks plus events/PR and influencing activity.

The service users in the survey believe NNRF has had a large impact on their integration into the UK. They were asked how much they thought the forum had helped with each of the 10 indicators of refugee integration proposed by Ager and Strang (2004). There was a high level of agreement that NNRF had helped (ranging 71% to 93%) in 7 of the 10 indicators. The lower levels achieved in the other 3 reflect that these indicators are not relevant to asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers

Non Service User Stakeholder Views on NNRF. These believed NNRF strengths included; vision, values, commitment/passion of staff & volunteers, high awareness within asylum seekers and refugee communities, specialised skills and knowledge, empathy and understanding, extensive connections and an excellent reputation. Weaknesses were considered as lack of overall strategy/planning, policies and procedures, concerns about confidentiality and professional boundaries and a worry that, at times, the friendly approach could lead to dependency rather than empowerment of clients.

There were also concerns regarding data and record keeping, communication breakdowns due to a lack of shared understanding of committee and staff roles, and some concerns about the limitations of the building. Partners echoed many of these concerns but are extremely positive about what NNRF bring to their work and are keen to continue working together. Statutory partners recognised the invaluable work of the NNRF and that they gave their services a route to engaging a hard to reach client group.

Learning and recommendations. The mix of formal advice and community/social support appears to work well for this client group. This can be difficult to deliver and give rise to practical issues and wider strategic concerns, especially concerning the balance between empowerment and dependency.

The results from the service user survey suggest developments should focus on building capacity in the areas of immigration, welfare benefits and housing advice. Anti destitution support should be increased if possible and consideration given to providing direct services in the areas of training and employment support. Attention should also be given on improving how services are delivered and in particular how to better separate out aspects of the social/community support from the advice service, better managing of the empowerment/dependency tension, and improved integration of services including consideration of triage and duty staff approaches

In terms of organisational development suggestions include developing a strategic plan, clarifying the underlying theory of change, improving joint understanding of Executive Committee and staff management roles and communications routes, and upgrading the data and record keeping system.

Such developments need to be tempered by what is practical in the current funding environment, the tendency to overstretch needs to be moderated in order to ensure the staff and organisation do not find themselves in an unsustainable financial, physical and/or emotional situation.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Limits of the Evaluation

The primary purposes of the evaluation are:

- to identify opportunities for the development and improvement of services and the organisation.
- to assess the outcomes and impact of NNRF's work against those proposed in the Reaching Communities Big Lottery funding application.

The evaluation was part funded by the Big Lottery 'Reaching Communities' programme and part funded directly by NNRF.

The period evaluated commenced November 2009 (start date of 'Reaching Communities' project) to March 2012. Emphasis has been placed on assessing outcomes against those expected from the Big Lottery project and collecting the views of a wide range of stakeholders on NNRF's strengths, weaknesses and effectiveness. The evaluation does not constitute a full organisational analysis and does not, for instance, consider functions such as financial or HR management.

1.2 Methodology

A mixed method approach was used which included:

- Review of documentary evidence of the activities and outcomes of NNRF's projects
- A paper based survey completed by a sample of 95 service users in their own language, via one of 6 refugee/asylum seeker volunteers specifically trained for this purpose as part of the evaluation work. (the survey can be viewed [here](#))
- 1-2-1 Interviews with 15 staff members
- 1-2-1 interviews with lead individuals from 5 partner organisations
- A focus group with volunteers plus one 1-2-1 interview with a specialised legal support volunteer
- Facilitated sessions with the Management & Executive Committees and the staff team
- A facilitated session with the Women's group

Further details on the methodology and the make-up of the service user sample are contained in Appendix 1.

1.3 Outline of Report

The report commences by providing background information on NNRF and its services. This is followed with feedback from the service user survey about clients' needs, their use of NNRF services and their views on a number of aspects of NNRF.

The central section of the report reviews the project outcomes from the last 30 months and considers the impact of NNRF's work. Perspectives of non service user stakeholders are then explored before the identification of learning points and recommendations for future development and improvement.

Numerical data and participants quotes from the research are threaded through the report.

2 Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum (NNRF)

2.1 Brief History and Governance

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum (NNRF) is a voluntary led charitable organisation, established in 2000 with the purpose of '*servicing the needs of refugees and asylum seekers living in the City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire*'. The organisation was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee in February 2005

The organisation is governed by a Management Committee presently comprising 13 members of which 6 are or have been asylum seekers and refugees. As the Governing body of the charity the Management Committee is responsible to ensure the charity remains:

- **Compliant** with its own objectives, the regulations of the Charity Commission and Companies House and with appropriate law such as health and safety, children and vulnerable people.
- **Solvent**: balancing income & expenditure, maintaining positive cash-flow, approving and monitoring against budget and the management of reserves.
- **Effective**: having clear vision, mission, values and strategy. Monitoring performance against social objectives, managing the Centre Manager and ensuring policies and procedures are in place.

The NNRF Management Committee takes a highly active role in much of the fund-raising, finance and staffing issues. Much of this work is carried out by an Executive Committee presently comprising four Management Committee members, unfortunately none of these are, or have been, asylum seekers or refugees reflecting the practical difficulties such as the need for specialist expertise, the precarious nature of an asylum seekers position and the changed priorities once if immigration status is gained. The Management Committee and its Officers, including Executive Committee members is elected annually at the Annual General Meeting.

2.2 Current Scale and Financial Position.

The last published accounts (year ending March 31st 2011) show an income of £597K and an expenditure of £604k. Unrestricted free reserves appear low and the Management Committee have stated, in the 2011 Annual Accounts, that they are seeking to clarify their Reserves Policy during the current financial year.

The majority of income is restricted and major funders include The Big Lottery, Nottingham City Council and Tuntum Housing (the lead agency of the Supporting People consortium). Staff costs represent the largest share of expenses with an average weekly number of employees of 19 during 2010/11.

2.3 Vision, Mission, Values and Aims

NNRF have a 'Statement of Aims and Values' but this is not consistently presented or articulated. However it is very evident (see section 6.1) that most involved with NNRF share a common vision and value base.

Following discussions during the evaluation process and reviewing existing documents the mission of NNRF could be summarised as:

Enabling asylum seekers and refugees to rebuild their lives in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. This is achieved by:

- Offering a welcoming community centre and support services such as practical assistance in the case of destitution.
- Offering advice services that are tailored to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees in critical areas such as housing, immigration, welfare benefits and healthcare
- Working in ways that empower asylum seekers and refugees; encouraging participation and engagement with the broader asylum seeker and refugee community, with mainstream services and host communities in Nottingham.
- Campaigning for a just & generous response to asylum seekers and refugees from local government and communities.
- Advocating on behalf of individual asylum seekers and refugees in cases of extreme hardship and/or injustice

2.4 The Services

NNRF offer a wide range of services all of which are specialised to meet the needs of asylum seekers and refugees, these include:

Service	Description
General Advice/ Drop In	An afternoon drop-in service run on three afternoons every week and staffed principally by trained volunteers offering support/referrals across a wide range of needs
Immigration and Asylum Advice	An appointment service run once a week by trained volunteers and regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioners (OISC) at level 1. Additional appointments are available several days per week and provided by staff and a long standing legally trained volunteer.
Housing Support	A Floating Support service primarily funded by Nottingham City Council via the Refugees Future's consortium until April 2011. Service now reduced and focused on new refugees and the transition from NASS services to mainstream services.
Healthcare Project - Into the Mainstream	Designed to address barriers to healthcare amongst newly arrived/dispersed asylum seekers and funded by NHS Nottingham City. Working with both asylum seekers and healthcare professionals
One Stop Shop Advice	A flexible advice service funded by Nottingham City Council predominantly in the areas of health, housing and education, working with asylum seekers and refugees.
Welfare Benefits Advice	Specialised appointment based service for refugees.
English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL)	Classes ran directly at NNRF by sessional tutors plus referrals to other providers

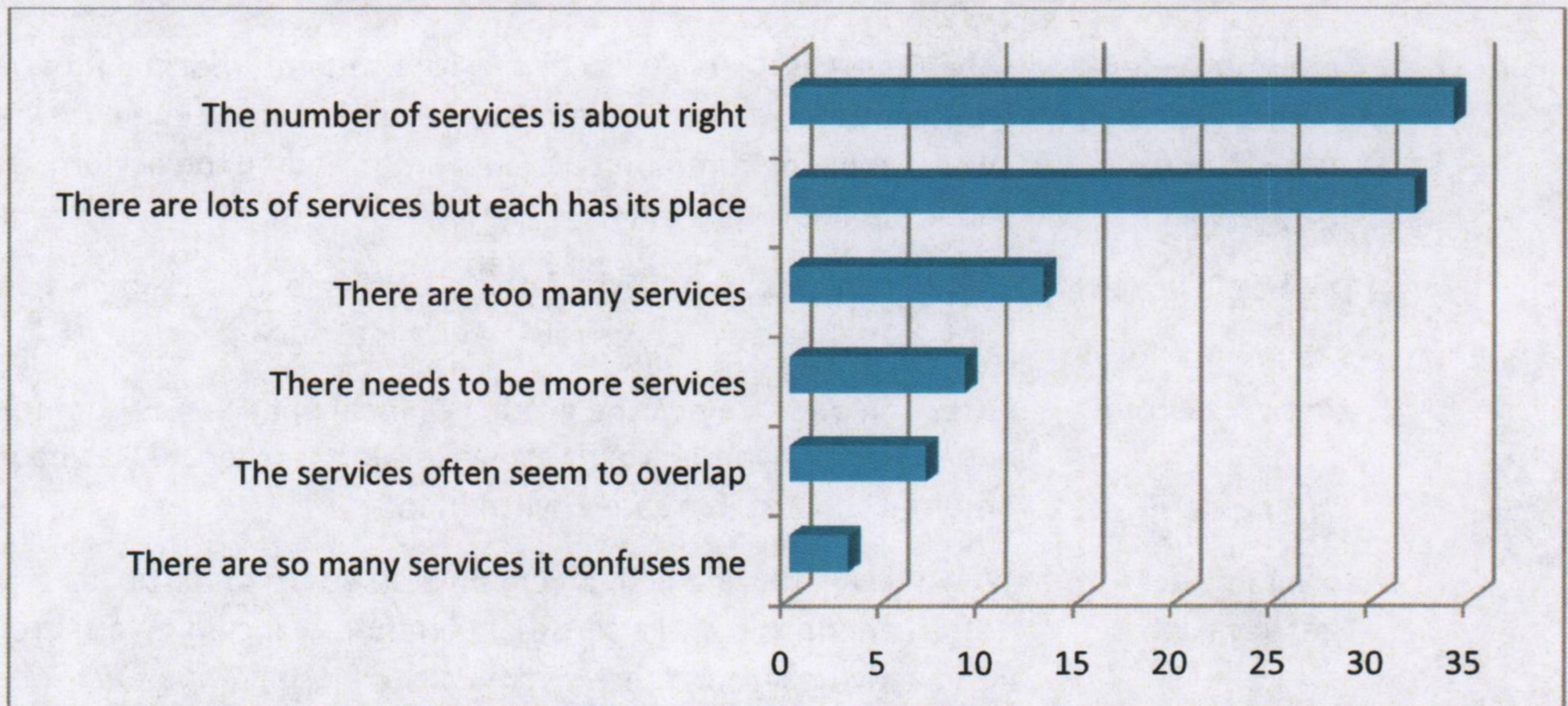
Service	Description
Training & Employment Advice	Initially an appointment based service aimed at helping clients assess their own achievements/abilities and to develop a career plan. Present support via referral to other agencies due to lack of funds and staff.
Community Centre	The Centre is widely used by service users for informal meetings and mutual support. Additionally the centre is used in the evenings and week-ends for community events organised by the asylum seeker and refugee community.
Children's Project	Funded by Children In Need and providing activities, family support, advocacy and awareness raising with outside agencies
Women's Group	Meeting once a week the group is a focal point for asylum seeking and refugee women to meet, make friends, share skills and provide mutual support in a safe environment
Social Project – Tuesday Nights	A weekly gathering with a very diverse group of participants which offers friendship and a sense of community including a shared meal and activities from dance and music to arts and board games.
Anti Destitution – Food and Cash groups	Both groups meet once a week to distribute support to those known to be destitute. Ran entirely by volunteers and donated money and food.
Volunteer Project	A particular focus on volunteering opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees to aid learning about UK culture, reduce isolation and offering valuable learning and work experience.
Refugee Community Organisation (RCOs) Support Work	Specialised capacity building support to RCOs. Focus now on a joint project aiming to improve housing advice, support and access for Black, Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BMER) communities.
Nottingham Refugee Week	Involvement in a week of activities and associated PR aimed at raising awareness of asylum seeker and refugee issues.

Campaigning and advocacy are not listed as individual services in the above table. This is because there are no dedicated members staff focused on this activity. However the Project Manager and other staff attend a multitude of forums to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees are considered in the ongoing formulation and implementation of local policy.

A good relationship exists with the national body Refugee Action and where possible NNRF provide information and case studies to support broader national campaigns. Additionally staff and volunteers take part in local advocacy and campaigning regarding individual cases of hardship and injustice.

The range of services is extensive and inevitably there is some overlap (usually due to the scope of individual funding sources). In the survey, service users were asked their view on the number of services.

How do you feel about the range of services at the Forum (please tick as many as you like)?



Of the responses 67% indicated that the number was 'about right' or that 'each service had its place', 23% felt there were 'too many', 'there was overlap' or it was 'confusing' whilst 10% believed there should be more services.

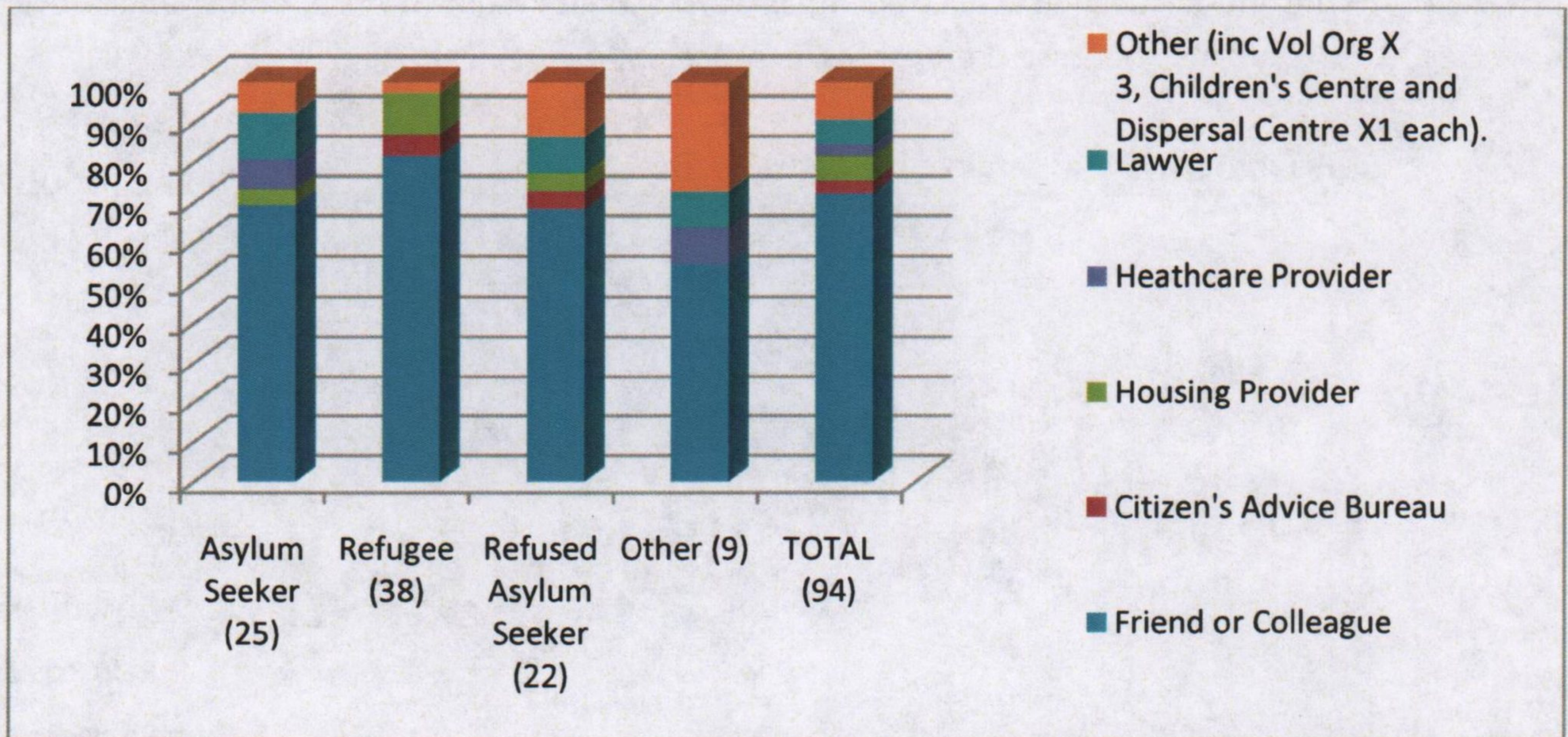
Analysing these results by immigration status (appendix 2) reveals that a higher proportion of refugees believe the number of services are 'about right/each has its place' than asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers. Refused asylum seekers are the most likely to believe there should be more services. It maybe that refugees have a better understanding of NNRF services (as they have been engaged for a longer period), whilst many refused asylum seekers are totally destitute (as they have minimal rights within the UK) so existing services will inevitably fail to meet their needs.

2.5 Referrals

When asked where they first heard about NNRF, the largest proportion (74%) of service users stated a friend or colleague. This is consistent with the staff's perception, who estimated that over two thirds of initial referrals come from within the asylum seeking and refugee community.

Internal referrals within NNRF are commonplace; it often becomes apparent that a client of one service has other needs that could be met by another service. There is no triage system as such though the General Advice service has a major role in signposting to other NNRF and non NNRF services.

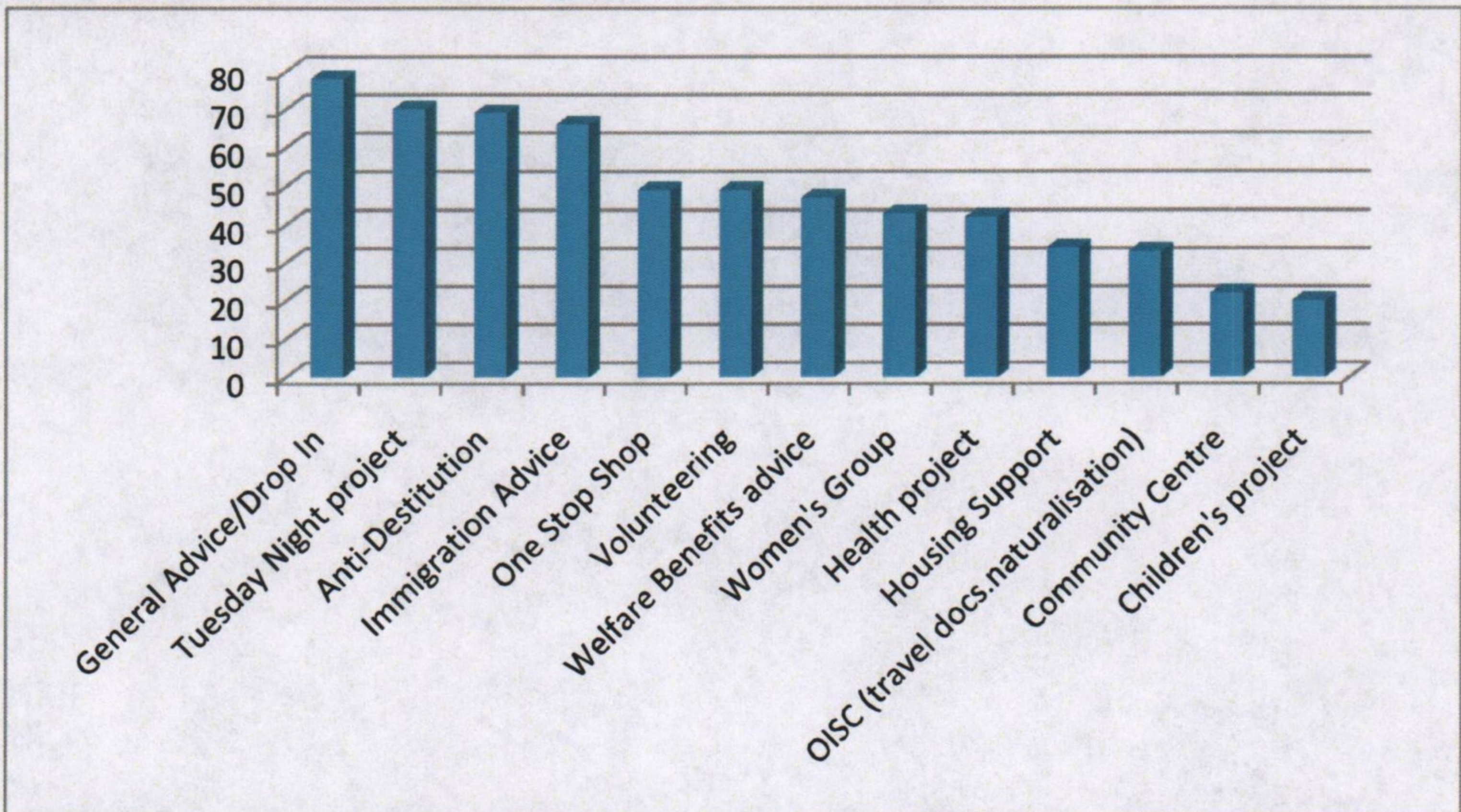
How did you first hear about the Forum?



2.6 Use of NNRF Services by the survey sample

On average the service users who completed the survey accessed 4.5 services each. The four most used services are extremely diverse ranging from general advice and social activity to anti-destitution and specialist immigration advice.

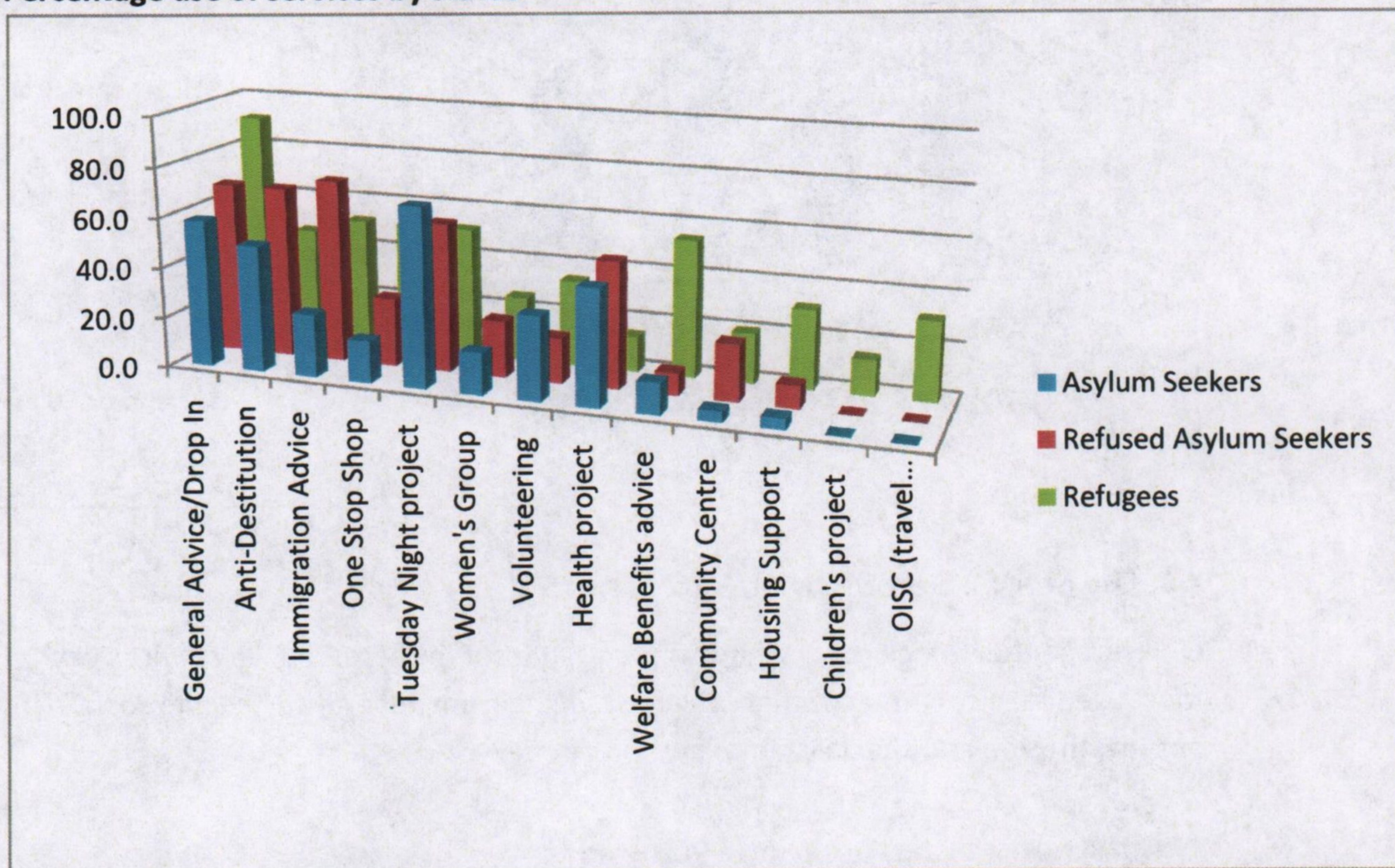
Which services at the Forum have you used?



Analysing by status shows high use of the General Advice service and Social Activities (Tuesday Night) irrespective of immigration status. Refugees, as would be expected, are the main users of specialist services such as Welfare Benefits Advice, OISC (travel docs /citizenship) and Housing Support (these are only relevant once refugee status has been awarded) whilst refused asylum seekers more frequently use immigration advice, anti-destitution and the health project as they seek to survive (with minimal rights to statutory

services) in the short-term and to re-open their immigration case. Asylum seekers also use the anti-destitution service and health project but are low users of immigration advice, presumably because their case is 'in process'.

Percentage use of services by status



3 The Client Group

3.1 Definitions

Refugee – someone who has been forced to leave his/her own country because of persecution and seeks safety in another country and has been given refugee status or leave to remain in the UK in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees.

Asylum Seeker – someone who has arrived in the UK and has applied to stay in the UK

Refused Asylum Seeker – An asylum seeker whose application has been refused – in this situation an individual has minimal rights and often endures a period of destitution while they attempt to represent their case. Refused asylum seekers are not generally deported to their country of origin but often become invisible and underground.

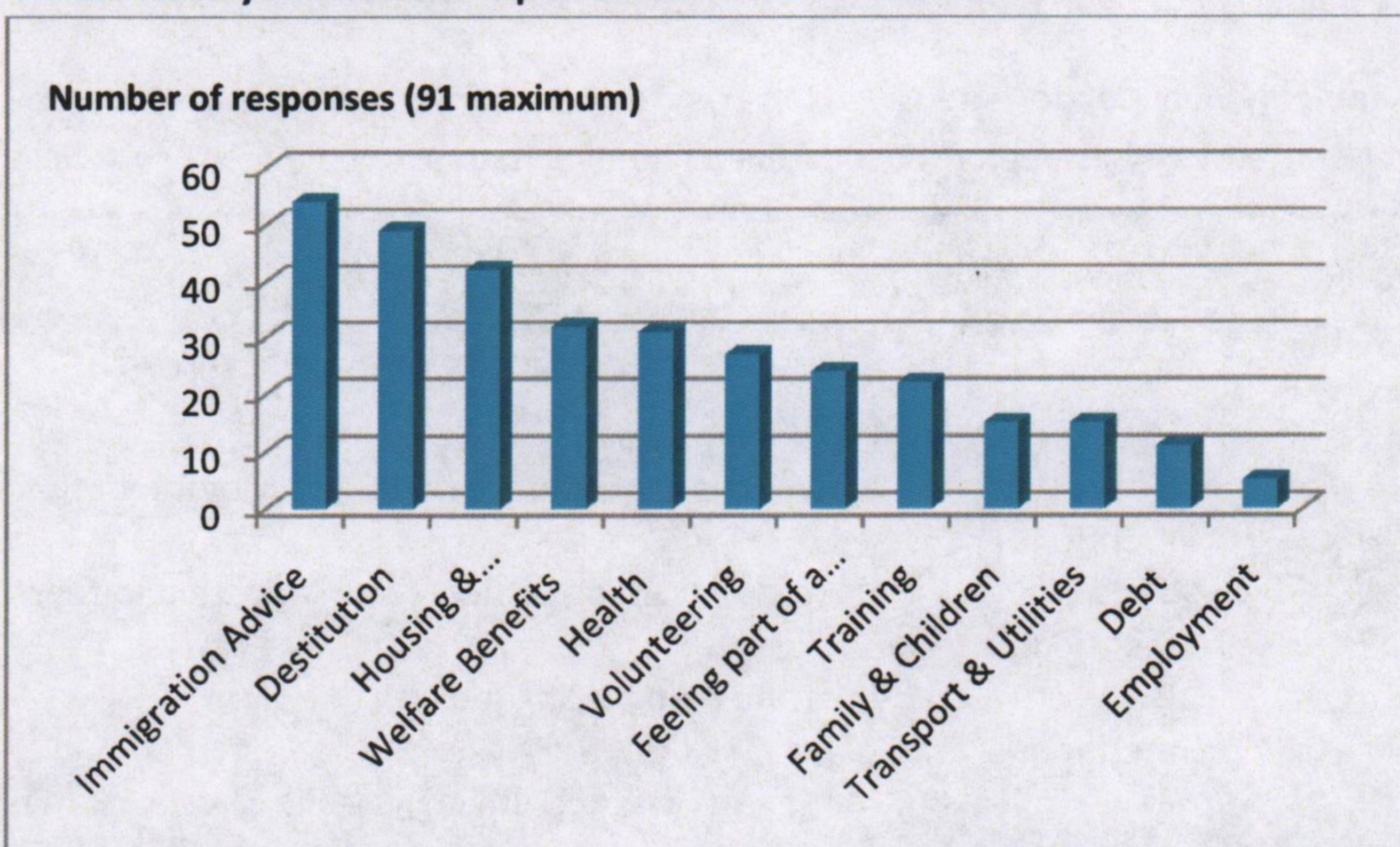
Other – Sometimes individuals are not recognised as a refugee but are given humanitarian protection or discretionary leave to remain. In this report, the category ‘others’ includes these and any other more less common status

3.2 Needs of the Survey Sample

Before considering the specific needs of the service user sample it is important to recognise that the client group has a unique set of disadvantages and needs. Many clients speaking no English at all and have no experience of a westernised culture. They are subject to a complex array of different rights according to their status and the whole asylum process can be confusing and have a disempowering effect. Some clients will have incurred trauma in their own country before leaving; many are in poor health, isolated and living under continual stress.

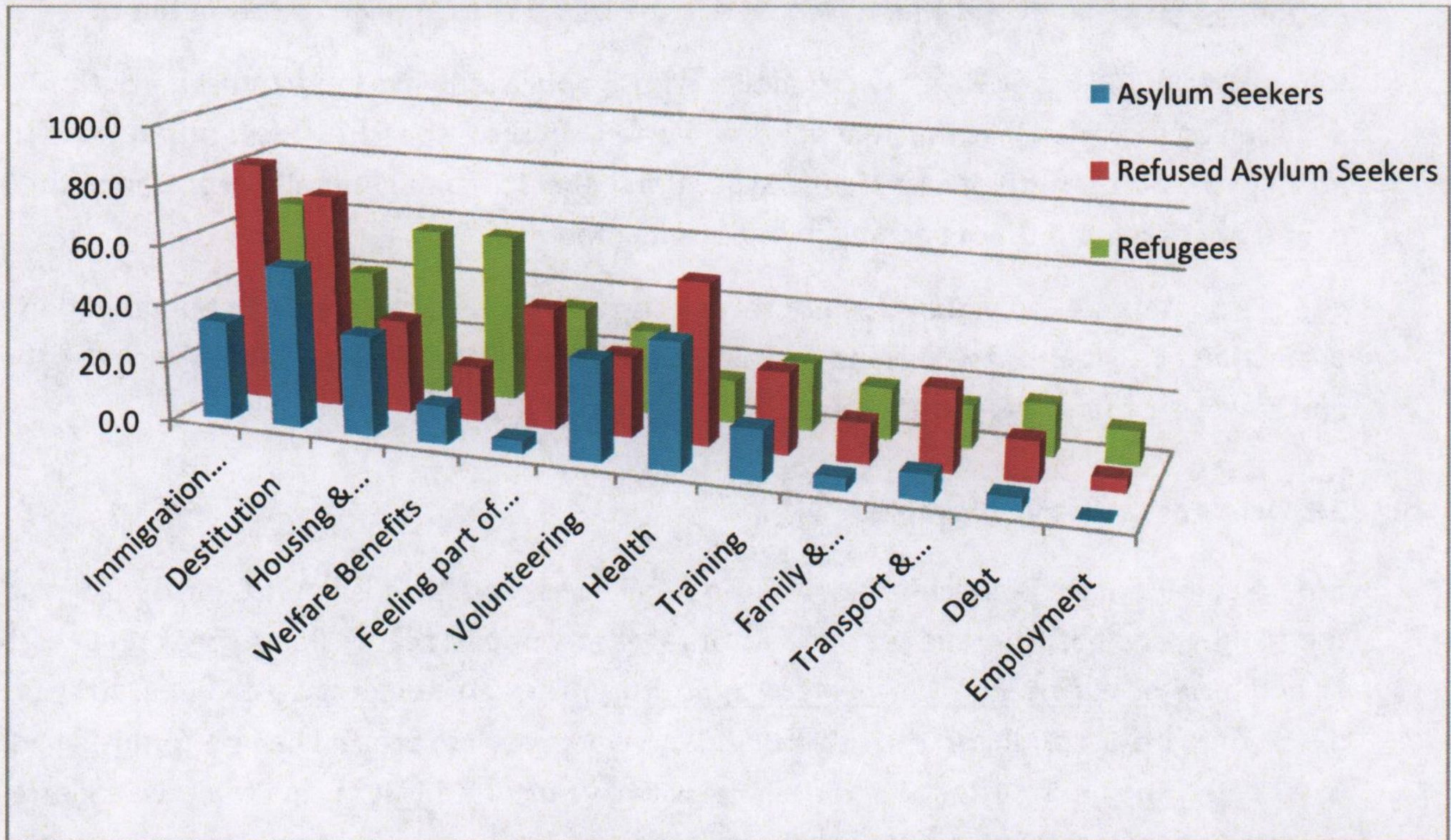
The most frequently mentioned needs by the survey sample were immigration advice and anti-destitution support. It could be suggested that these represent the ‘long-term solution’ (gaining refugee status) and the ‘short-term solution’ (having enough to live on) to the challenges faced by NNRF clients especially asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers.

Where have you needed help over the last 12 months?



Analysis by immigration status shows that refugees have a reduced demand for immigration advice, anti-destitution and health support with increased need for housing and welfare benefits. This is entirely consistent with the change in their rights following the granting of refugee status. Refused asylum seekers show a strong demand for immigration advice, anti-destitution support and health support and have the highest need to feel part of a community.

Where have you needed help over the last 12 months, percentage needing help by status



3.3 Unmet Needs

In the survey, service users were also asked to highlight any unmet needs that they had. Of the 95 participants, 29 responded to this question.

Immigration and housing are both prominent in the hierarchy of needs and existing services aiming to meet these needs at NNRF are well used. The fact that these are the highest scoring unmet needs suggests the need to increase in capacity in these areas.

Training and employment support are much lower in the hierarchy of needs but are areas where direct NNRF service has been reduced (due to funding issues) to below previous levels.

Need Area	No of mentions	Specific detail
Immigration	8 mentions	Requests for more advice of the type already given
Housing	6 mentions	Individuals in desperate need for accommodation
Training	5 mentions	Job based training & more training for volunteers
Employment	2 mentions	Jobs and help finding jobs
Others	8 mentions	Money, art project, driving lessons, sports, clothes etc

3.4 Correlation of Service User Needs and Use of NNRF Services

Combining the information from section 2.6 (Use of NNRF Services by the sample) with 3.2 (Service User Needs defined by the sample) indicates a good fit between NNRF services and client's needs. Where needs do not correlate well to services this tends to reflect either what actual legal entitlement exists and/or the limits of NNRF's own work at present (please see notes below the table).

Status	Top 5 Needs	Top 5 Services used	Comment
Asylum Seekers	Destitution Health Volunteering Immigration ¹ Housing ²	Social Anti Destitution Health ITM General Advice Volunteering	Three of top 5 needs and service use directly overlap. General advice would meet many of the Immigration/housing queries for asylum seekers
Refused Asylum Seekers	Immigration Destitution Health Part of.. ..Community Housing ³	Immigration Anti Destitution General Advice Social Health IITM	Four of top 5 needs and service use directly overlap General advice would meet many of the housing needs of refused asylum seekers primarily through referral to partners.
Refugees	Immigration Welfare Housing Destitution ⁴ Part of.. ..Community	General advice Welfare Benefits Social Immigration One Stop Shop.. ...(housing)	Four of top 5 needs and service use directly overlap. General advice would refer to anti-destitution if appropriate Housing support from OSS is targeted at refugees.

Notes:

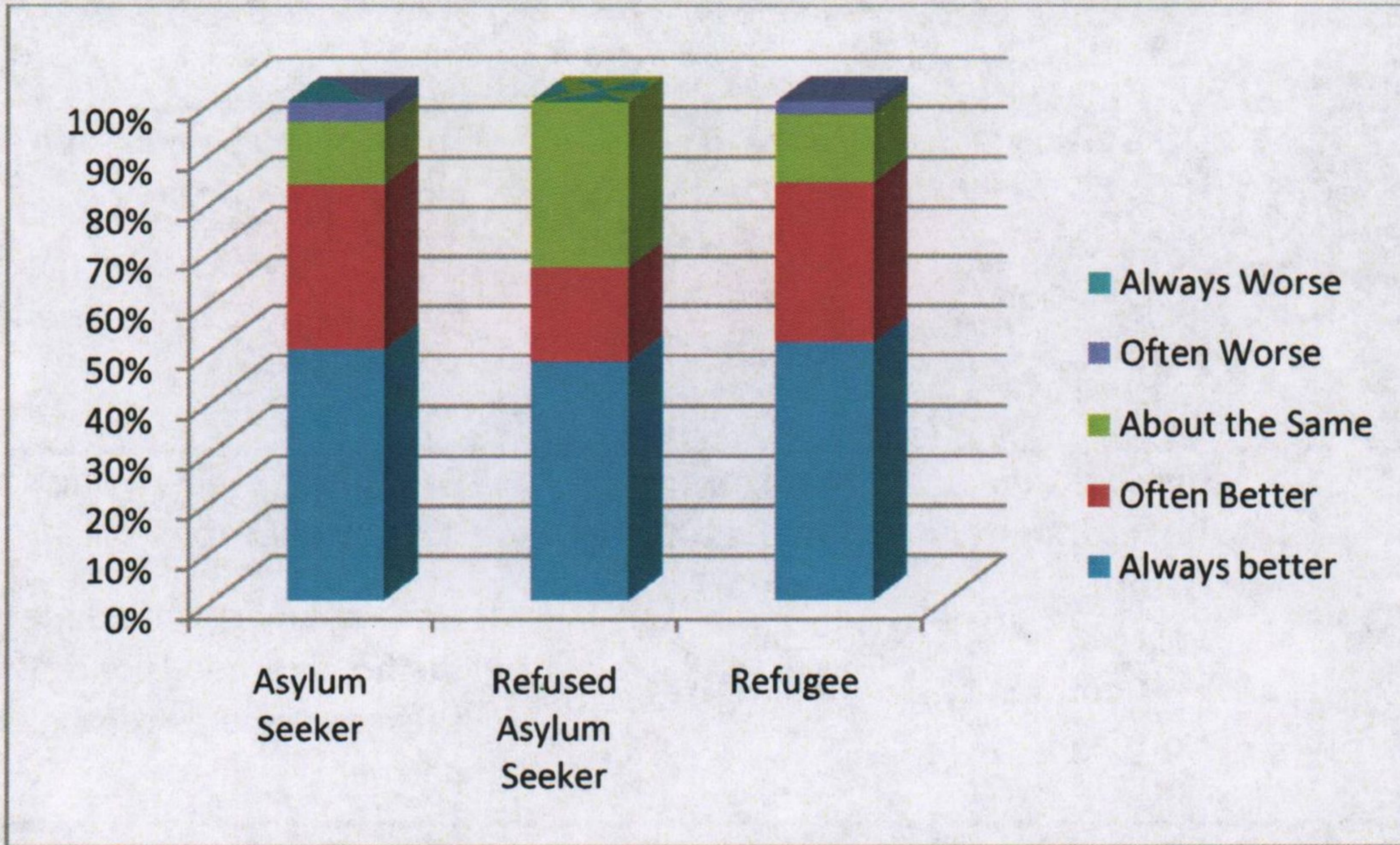
1. Assistance with claiming asylum can be accessed through General Advice. Once a claim is in process there is little support that can be given beyond encouraging patience and hope whilst the claim is processed by the Home Office.
2. Housing is provided for asylum seekers by NASS, other than support through General Advice for situations where there are problems with such accommodation (eg issues with other 'tenants' or utilities) there is little NNRF can offer.
3. Refused asylum seekers have no rights to housing and NNRF does not provide such housing themselves. NNRF will refer to partners, such as the Arimathea Trust who specialise in this area.
4. Theoretically refugees should not be destitute having obtained status however NASS give 28 working days to vacate the accommodation provided for Asylum Seekers and it usually takes around 12 weeks to arrange state benefits and alternative housing – this creates a period of acute destitution shortly after a refugee receives status.

4 **Service User Perspectives on NNRF**

The service user survey included questions on the quality of the NNRF services, how they were delivered and practical considerations such as the building and facilities.

In the survey 82% of service users stated that the services at NNRF were better than those provided by other agencies, 16% thought they were about the same and just 2% that they were worse.

4.1 How do NNRF Services compare with services from other agencies?



Refused asylum seekers appear slightly less positive about NNRF services than refugees or asylum seekers. Participants also left comments about why they thought the NNRF service was better or worse than other provider's services. Only two negative comments were left whilst 44 were received that described why participants thought the NNRF services were better. Many of these comments referred to the way in which services were delivered, the breadth of services available, the asylum seeker/refugee specialisation or that participants simply found NNRF more helpful.

Comments about why NNRF services are better or worse than other provider's services:

'It is a lot easier to communicate with staff at NNRF; they are approachable, flexible and understand our needs'

'NNRF staff understand immigration issues very well, it makes NNRF approachable for refugees and asylum seekers'

'I used another agency for 3 or 4 times but I never got help, instead my problems got worse. When I used NNRF I started to feel confident and got the help I needed'

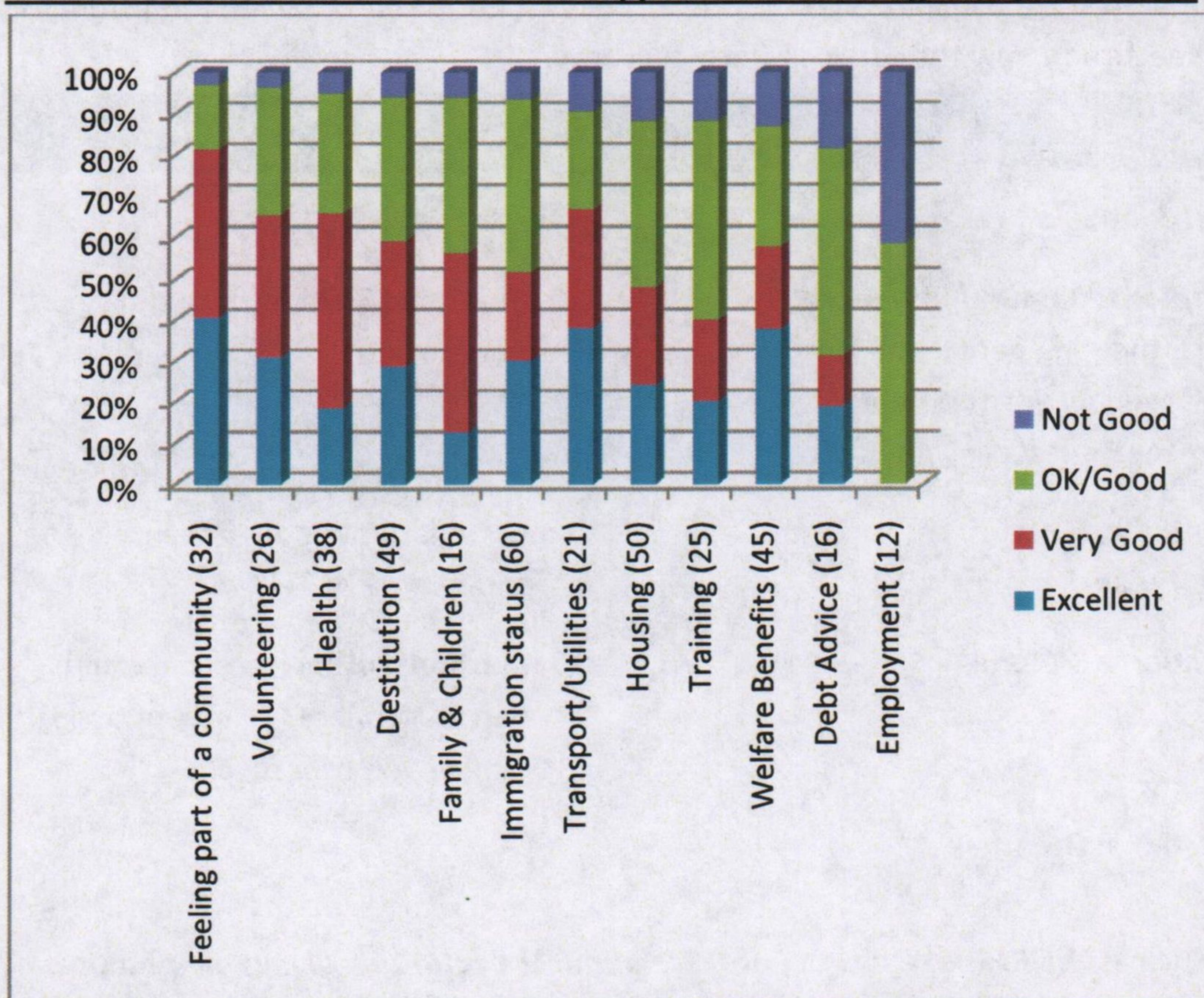
'They understand my problems without criticism or judgement'

'At NNRF people listen to you and treat you better'

'They understand immigration issues and have advisors in whatever you need help with'

'Importantly NNRF understand the vulnerability of refugees and asylum seekers'

4.2 How effective was the advice and support from NNRF against your needs?



Generally services are considered effective with half of the 12 areas of need scoring 90+% in good, very good or excellent ranking. The weaker areas, eg debt advice and employment, are issues that NNRF are not directly addressing at this time so the results are of little surprise, employment support has already been identified as an unmet need (3.3). There is most scope for improvement in welfare benefits, training and housing where over 10% stated the advice/support was 'not good'.

4.3 How could NNRF improve its services?

Half the respondents answered this question which allowed for specific ideas to be given for each service. The majority of comments relate to either increasing staff/volunteer resources and/or decreasing waiting times, especially with respect to OSS, immigration, general, housing & welfare benefit advice.

Of the 14 participants who commented on the anti-destitution work just over half requested more financial and food support. Three people thought General Advise volunteers should be better trained and two that there should be more training for the Women's group.

4.4 What one thing would you change at NNRF?

48 participants responded; 15 said they would change/improve the building with comments ranging from larger, more privacy for interviews, improve lift and redecorate, 9 requested better IT facilities including faster internet access. The remaining comments included increasing anti-destitution support (x3), improving reception (x4) and ensuring all are treated equally (X3).

4.5 What do you like or dislike about NNRF

A wide range of positive comments was received. Many mentions focused on the community and social aspects and how the services were delivered.

LIKE	DISLIKE
98% responded	44% responded
38 mentions: Community/social support , meeting people, making friends, friendly environment, welcomed, respected, valued etc	10 mentions: Building , including cleanliness (x3)
16 mentions; The services , specialist nature, breadth of	9 mentions: Not enough resourceswaiting times
16 mentions: Helpful	13 mentions: other , inc. concern re equality of services (4), reception (3), attitude of volunteers (2)
13 mentions: Other	

Comments such as *'NNRF make me feel positive about the future by giving me practical help and guidance'* and *'It would have been very difficult without the emotional and material support of NNRF'* reflect the mix of support offered by NNRF; the emotional, the practical (eg anti destitution work) and the more formal advice/guidance.

4.6 How do service users view the Forum?

How do you view the forum?



The response from the previous question indicated how both the advice service and the social/community support are considered important by the service users. In another question service users were asked if they saw the forum as a 'home' or/and as a 'advice centre'. In common with the staff (section 6.3) service users saw the forum as both, with a slight emphasis towards an advice centre.

Cross tabulation showed that there was little polarisation in responses; those that thought it was like a home also thought it was like an advice centre:

- 82% of those who thought it was very like a home also thought it was very like an advice centre
- 61% who thought very like an advice centre also thought it very like a home and 26% quite like a home

There was no significant difference in views by immigration status.

4.7 Welcome, consistency and trust

The participants from the survey answered specific questions on these topics. The results showed:

- 85% thought NNRF very friendly or friendly with no discernable difference between how participants felt on their first or later visits
- 82% thought that NNRF was always or generally consistent in how it treated service users.
- 85% thought they could trust NNRF completely or most of the time to treat them with respect
- 82% thought they could NNRF completely or most of the time to keep their information confidential
- 89% thought they could trust NNRF completely or most of the time to give the right advice.

Whilst these responses are affirming, a small proportion, (16%) of comments, were negative about the welcome. For instance:

'it depends who is on the front desk, sometimes it is not as welcoming as it should be' which contrasted with comments such as *'their friendliness gives me hope and strength to carry on'*.

A smaller proportion also expressed concerns about whether or not service users believed they are being treated equally. For instance:

'Help should be given according to needs. Those who need most should get most help. They do not do a proper assessment' and *'Some people who cannot speak English very well face problems getting help'*.

Given the breadth of ethnicities that NNRF are engaged with the fact that such comments are so limited is, one suspects, a considerable achievement.

Further details in Appendix 4

5 Achievements, Outcomes and Impact

5.1 The Big Lottery Project

The Reaching Communities, Big Lottery funding, received for three years from November 2009 underpins NNRF and allows the organisation to maintain the physical and management capacity required to run and co-ordinate a broad spectrum of specialised services for asylum seekers and refugees.

In particular the Big Lottery enables work to be co-ordinated and managed effectively by funding 3 key staff posts, the Centre Manager, Assistant Manager and the Administrator/Finance Officer. This is essential for the purely voluntary staffed services of General Advice, Anti Destitution, Social activities (eg Tuesday Night) and the Community Centre's reception. The roles also allow improved co-ordination and support to programmes part funded elsewhere including; One Stop Shop, Into the Mainstream Health Project, Volunteering Programme, Legal Advice, the Women & Children's groups and training including ESOL. The funding also supports the RCO capacity building work and contributes to other overheads such as rent and background work including financial management.

5.2 Outcomes from the Big Lottery Project

The outcomes NNRF achieve are the result of collaboration between volunteer and staff across a wide range of services and support, funded by a mix of grants and contracts. The Big Lottery funding makes an essential contribution; it acts as a catalyst and enabler for the organisation overall, without this support the majority of outcomes could not be achieved.

The outcomes defined in the application are:

1. **3000 refugees/asylum seekers have better life chances** over the three year period by **improved access to statutory and voluntary sector services** including accommodation, health, education and legal representation
2. **350 Refugees will have achieved improved skill levels and work readiness** by end of year 3
3. **12 Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) assisted to achieve sustainability** by end of year 3
4. **80 asylum seekers/refugees gain new skills and increased confidence, by volunteering at NNRF**, by end of year 3
5. **30 groups in local community better informed about asylum seekers and refugees** and more open to welcoming them in their midst.

5.3 Data Collection

Data collection at NNRF over the last 30 months has improved with an increased use of spreadsheets to enable easier and faster analysis; some projects are also capturing outcome data.

The broad approach taken for this evaluation has been to identify the most accessible and complete data (generally from the last 12 months) and forecast total outputs from November 2009 to October 2012 by mathematical extension. In completing the forecasts attention has been given to account for other factors (such as an extended period of staff absence) that would have impacted on the outcomes achieved.

Further information on the forecasts for key figures are contained in either the text of the report or in appendices. As an example of the process the General Advice service introduced a new monitoring system in mid July 2011. This is based on an Excel spread sheet and enabled easy access to the number of engagements and areas where advice was given. Previously this data would only have been accessible by reviewing paper records.

In the 8.5 month period (mid July 2011 to March 2012), 751 General Advice engagements were completed, there were no significant changes over the full 30 month period in numbers of advisers or frequency of drop in sessions. In this case a pro rata approach has been applied, backwards to November 2009 and forward to October 2012 resulting in a total forecast figure of 3181 engagements ((751/8.5) X36).

Full information on the derivation of any forecast is available from Adrian@montmasters.co.uk

5.4 Performance against Big Lottery Forecast Outcomes

Outcome Objective	'At a glance'	Forecast Achievement in October 2012
1. 3000 better life chances by improving access to services	Yes	4218 comprising 2448 individuals + 1730 dependent children and partners.
2. 350 improved skills and work readiness	Yes	351+ referrals to external courses and agencies
3. 12 RCOs sustainable	Yes	Support given to at least 16 RCOs including 4 'start ups'.
4. 80 gaining new skills & confidence through volunteering	Within 10%	72 gained skills through volunteering
5. 30 groups better informed and more welcoming	Yes	30+ talks plus events/PR and influencing activity.

Objectives were generally met although, as is to be expected, some milestones were missed or changed as the project developed.

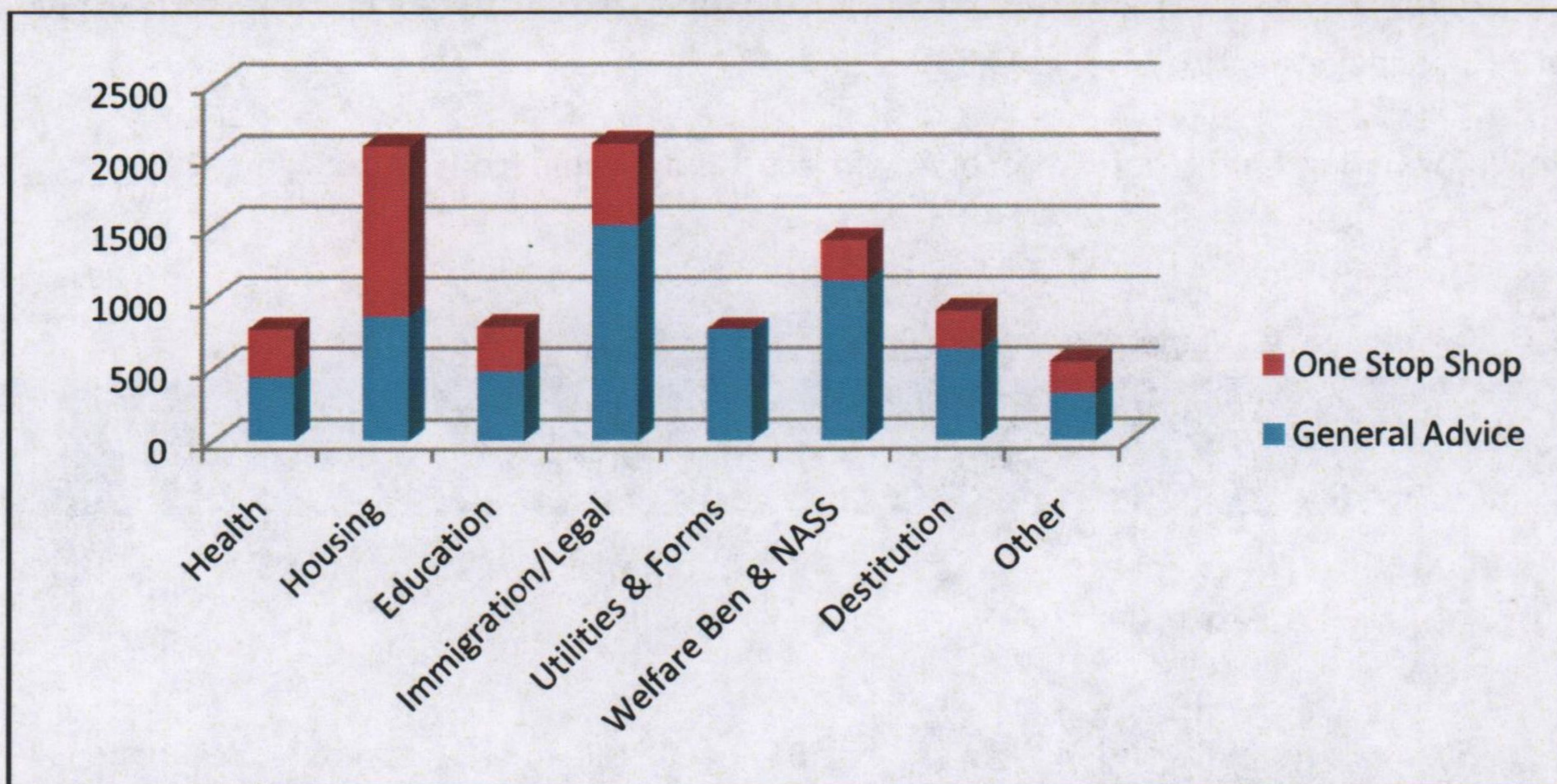
5.4.1 Outcome 1.

Objective	Forecast Achievement
3000 refugees/asylum seekers have better life chances over the three year period by improved access to statutory and voluntary sector services including accommodation, health, education and legal representation	4218 , comprising 2448 individuals plus 1730 dependents

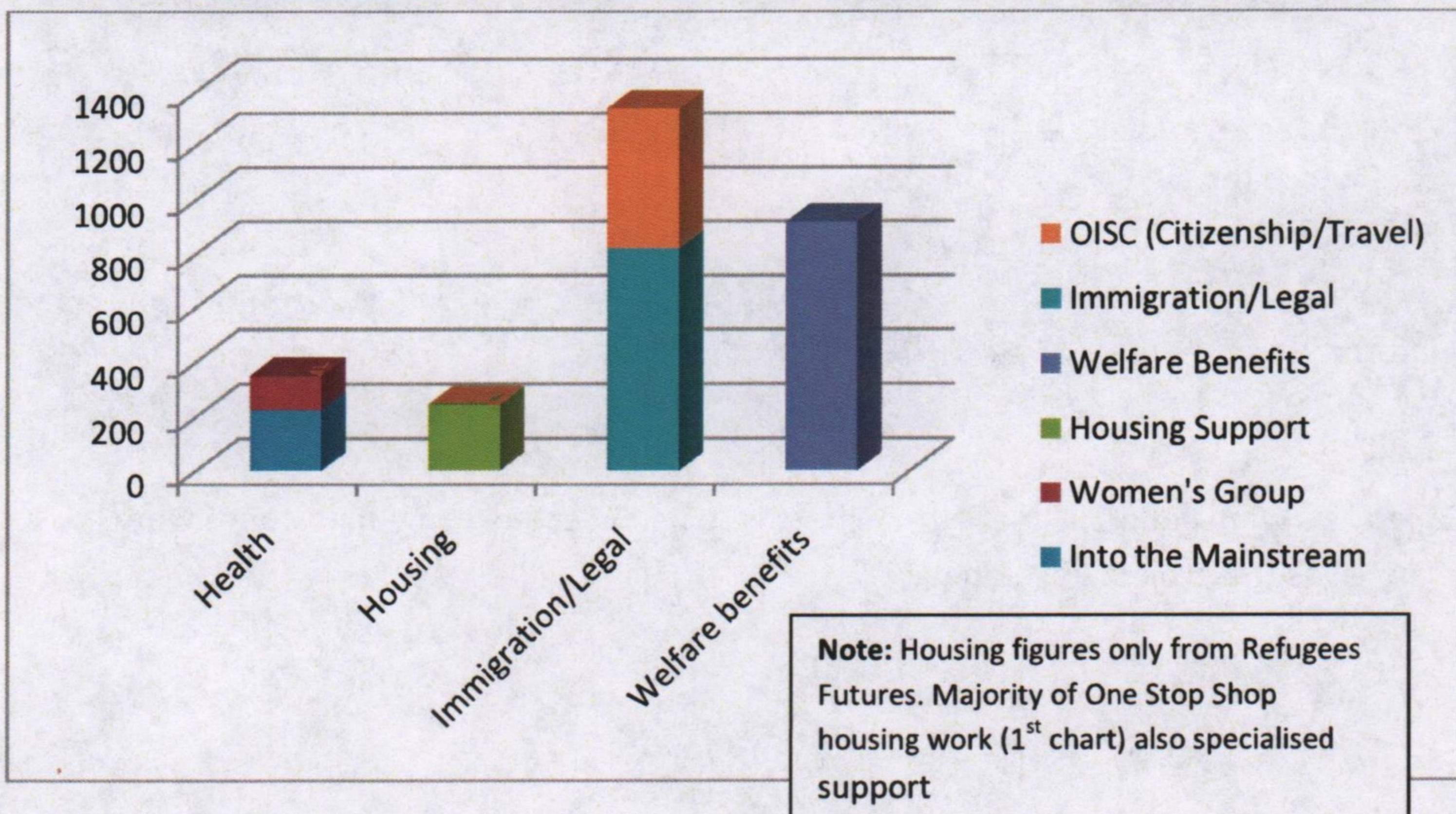
All NNRF's services contribute towards this outcome with the exception of anti-destitution support, social activities and RCO support. The number of services involved and the different ways in which data is recorded data presented a challenge in assessing performance. Detail on the derivation of the forecast achievement is included as appendix 5.

One Stop Shop and General Advice record the number of visits and the nature of support given whereas the more specialised services record the number of clients and not the number of total visits (most clients use these services multiple times). From these figures we can get a picture of the type of support offered/taken.

Total forecast engagements with General Advice and One Stop Shop over 3 year period



Total forecast number of clients engaged with specialised services over 3 year period



Comparing the data generated directly from the use of specialised services with the data from the service user sample (section 2.6) confirms the hierarchy of the use of specialised services as: Immigration, Welfare Benefits, Health, Housing support

Analysing the data from the use of the broader services (OSS and General Advice) shows a similar hierarchy; Immigration, Housing support and Welfare Benefits.

5.4.2 Outcome 2

Objective	Forecast Achievement
350 Refugees will have achieved improved skill levels and work readiness by end of year 3	351 plus referrals

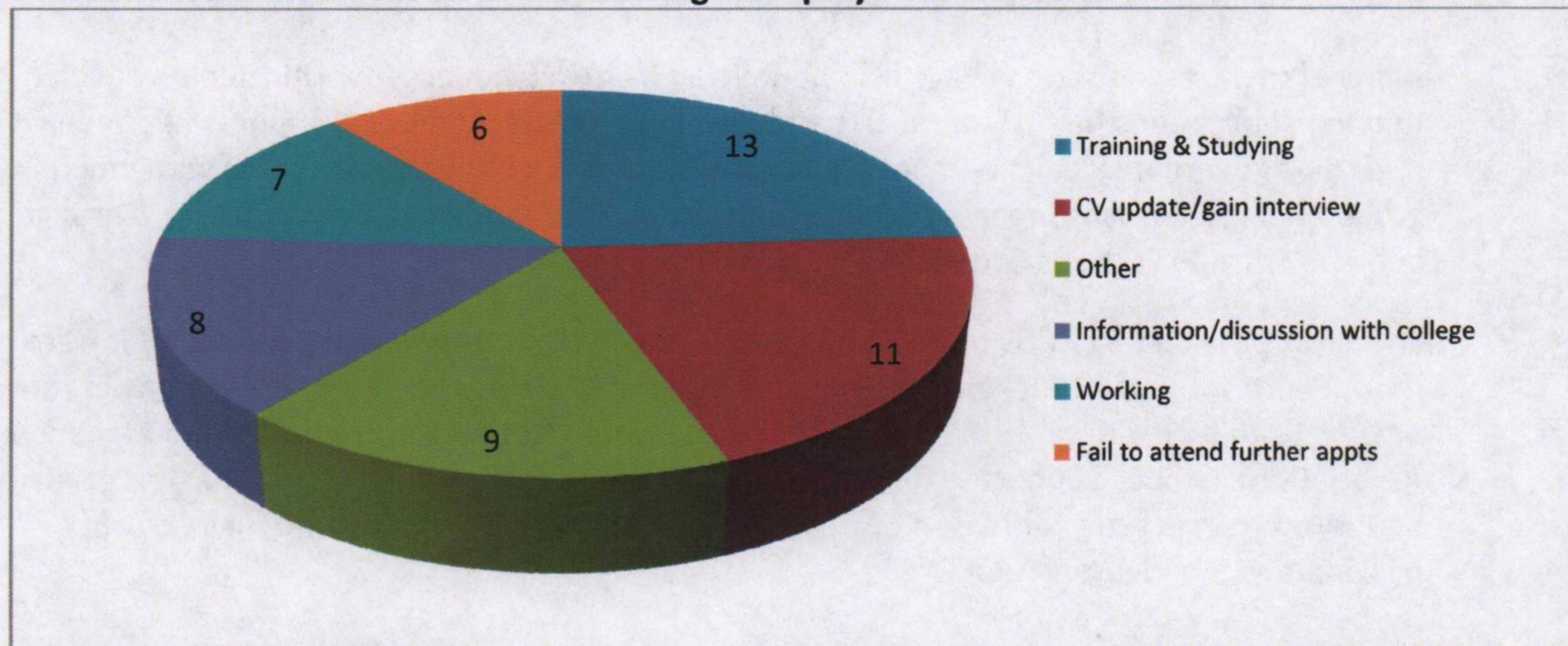
The NNRF services contributing to this outcome are; Training/Employment Advice and ESOL together with the Volunteer Programme and the Women's Group both of which include training as an integral part of their service.

Service	Forecast Outcome
Training & Employment Advice	87 plus referrals
Volunteer Programme	72
ESOL	141 plus referrals
Women's Group	51
TOTAL	351 plus referrals

Training & Employment Advice

During 2010 work preparation courses were run with 33 participants. Additionally over the 9 month period March to December 2010 the Training & Employment Advisor met with 54 different clients on multiple occasions. The post became vacant and due to difficulties in securing additional funding the alternative approach of referring to mainstream providers such as Connexions and specialised providers such as BELONG (a local African based community organisation) has been adopted. This has meant the milestones of 90 preparation courses and 90 individuals supported have not been directly provided as originally intended, however this has been offset by training provided to the Women's group and to volunteers.

Outcomes from the 54 clients of the Training & Employment Advice Service



The Volunteer Programme

The training for Forum's volunteers is designed where possible to help participants develop skills that can be applied to their lives in general rather than just the volunteering role. It includes formal 'classroom' training and more informal 'on the job' training.

From January 2011 a new Excel based recording system has been introduced following a change in Volunteer Manager. This shows that 31 volunteers, who are asylum seekers or refugees, were formally trained during 2011 and that each of these volunteers attended, on average, 2.8 training courses. Courses included First Aid, Health and Safety, Data Protection, Alcohol Awareness, Managing Challenging Behaviour, Adviser Skills and Reception Skills, all courses were delivered by NNRF or partner's staff.

All volunteers receive training and the minimum number of volunteers (who are or were refugees or asylum seekers) is forecast as 72 over the 36 month period (See 5.4.4).

ESOL

Since November 2009, 141 students attended 186 places on ESOL courses delivered at and/or arranged directly by NNRF. An additional milestone is the referral of service users to ESOL classes provided outside NNRF, because funding for ESOL classes at NNRF has recently become much harder to secure, referrals to other courses are currently increasing.

Women's Group

51 service users have attended and completed a six week cooking class delivered at NNRF by New College Nottingham.

Note: It maybe that some individuals have attended training delivered by more than one of these services, it has not been possible to cross reference the data to check for such overlaps.

5.4.3 Outcome 3

Objective	Forecast Achievement
12 Refugee Community Organisations assisted to achieve sustainability by end of year 3	Support given to at least 16 RCOs including 4 'start ups'.

Throughout the period generic support has been given to at least 15 RCOs through regular e-mail information bulletins, net-working opportunities and the use of the NNRF building for meetings by RCOs.

Many of these organisations have also benefitted from individual support including developing funding applications for interfaith, arts and training projects. Additional support has been given regarding governance development (eg constitutions and policies/procedures) with emerging groups such as The Nottingham Afghan Youth Group, The Kurdistan Community in Nottingham and The Eritrean Families Group.

Feedback provided by RCOs to NNRF includes '*we would not be where we are now if it were not for the hard work of NNRF*' and '*as a new build group NNRF has played a very important role in helping us to build our group*'. (Nottingham Zimbabwean Network and Nottingham Afghani Association). Groups supported have also fed back some frustration over lack of staff capacity and this is being partly addressed by encouraging further engagement with mainstream providers such as Nottingham CVS.

Additional work has been carried out in the last 12 months in partnership with local specialised homelessness and housing infrastructure organisation, HLG. In particular this work aims to help BMER voluntary/community organisations (including RCOs) be more effective in their approach to housing issues. Activities have included briefing meetings and development of strategies on the issue of homelessness

Some of the Refugee Community Groups supported by NNRF

Eritrean Family Group
Nottingham Zimbabwean Community Network
Nottingham Afghani Association
The Eritrean Community in Nottingham
Mongolian Support Group
Nottingham Afghan Youth Group
Cameroon Support Group
Sudanese Community Group in Nottingham
Ujama
PALOP (Portuguese speakers)
Nigerian Community Group
Nottingham Congolese Community
Somali Community in Nottingham
Cameroon Support Group
Nottingham Vietnamese Community Project
Kurdistani Community in Nottingham

During the second year much effort was directed at establishing an African Community Steering Group (ACSG) which had emerged from the network meetings and the 'Community and Skills Audit' completed in April 2010. The ACSG were supported by NNRF and Nottingham CVS to develop a strategy and structure, this was agreed initially as a 'loose consortium' and a 'frame of reference' and plans for a Outreach Volunteering Project were developed. As a precursor to further developing the project an 'Africa Unite Celebration' was planned as a trial activity to help the groups begin to work together at a practical level.

Unfortunately this event was very poorly attended and the main reason appeared to be a lack of commitment from the groups. The ACSG has since rethought its structure and agreed to elect officers with the aim of giving leadership and direction but the group continue to struggles. From NNRF's perspective the underlying problem appears to be a lack of willingness for members to come forward to lead and co-ordinate activities.

This has some similarities with the leadership development problems of Non Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs) in Africa. James (2008) says that many African leaders are failing to rise to the leadership challenge, his research identified a critical component in leadership development was a significant external event (such as the failure of a project) and a willingness on the part of the leader to reflect on how behaviour within that context contrasted with how they wanted to behave. This requires the self-confidence to face up to one's own weaknesses and failures; this may be difficult for refugees who often suffer low self-esteem.

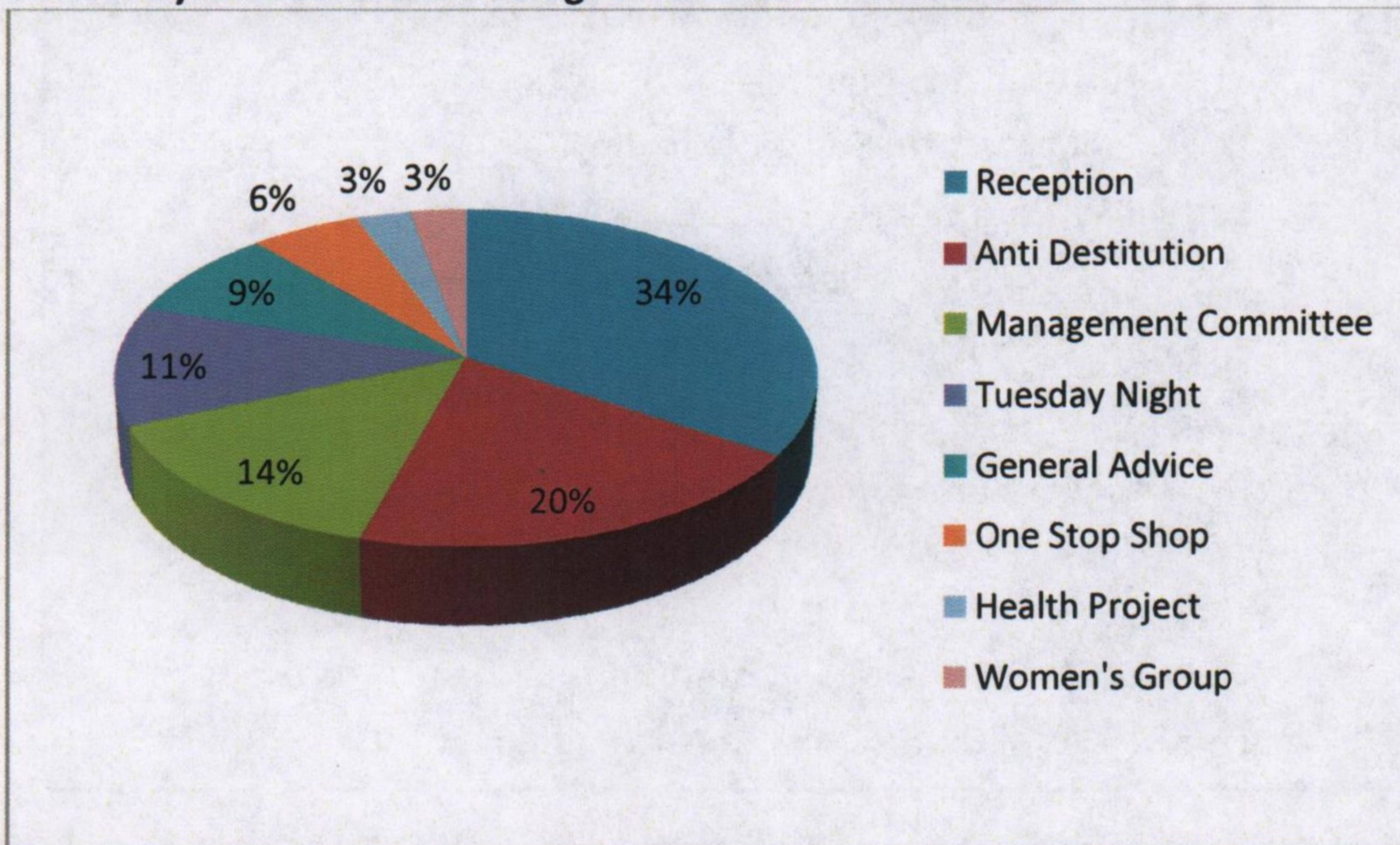
Over the period of the project RCOs have been supported and sustained. What is unknown is to what degree the groups will be sustainable into the future.

5.4.4 Outcome 4

Objective	Forecast Achievement
80 asylum seekers/refugees gain new skills and increased confidence, by volunteering at NNRF, by end of year 3	72

The volunteering programme at NNRF is of critical importance; firstly it is used as a mechanism to help develop the skills, knowledge and confidence of service users and secondly it adds to NNRF's capacity helping the organisation to deliver additional services where funding cannot be secured. Opportunities are varied and many asylum seekers and refugees undertake more than one volunteer role.

Where asylum seekers and refugees volunteer – March 2012



The new Excel based recording system mentioned previously, includes details of host community volunteers as well as asylum seeker and refugee volunteers.

In March 2012 there were 71 current volunteers of whom 27 were former or current refugees or asylum seekers. During the previous year 15 new refugee/asylum seeker volunteers had started and 7 finished volunteering.

Based on these figures it is forecast that 72 asylum seekers and refugees will have gained skills and confidence through volunteering at NNRF in the three year period. This is calculated by assuming a constant baseline of 27 and adding 15 new volunteers for each of 3 years.

Whilst the milestone on recruitment has been missed, leading to a total below the planned objective, milestones regarding training have been exceeded with all 72 volunteers receiving on the job and class room training.

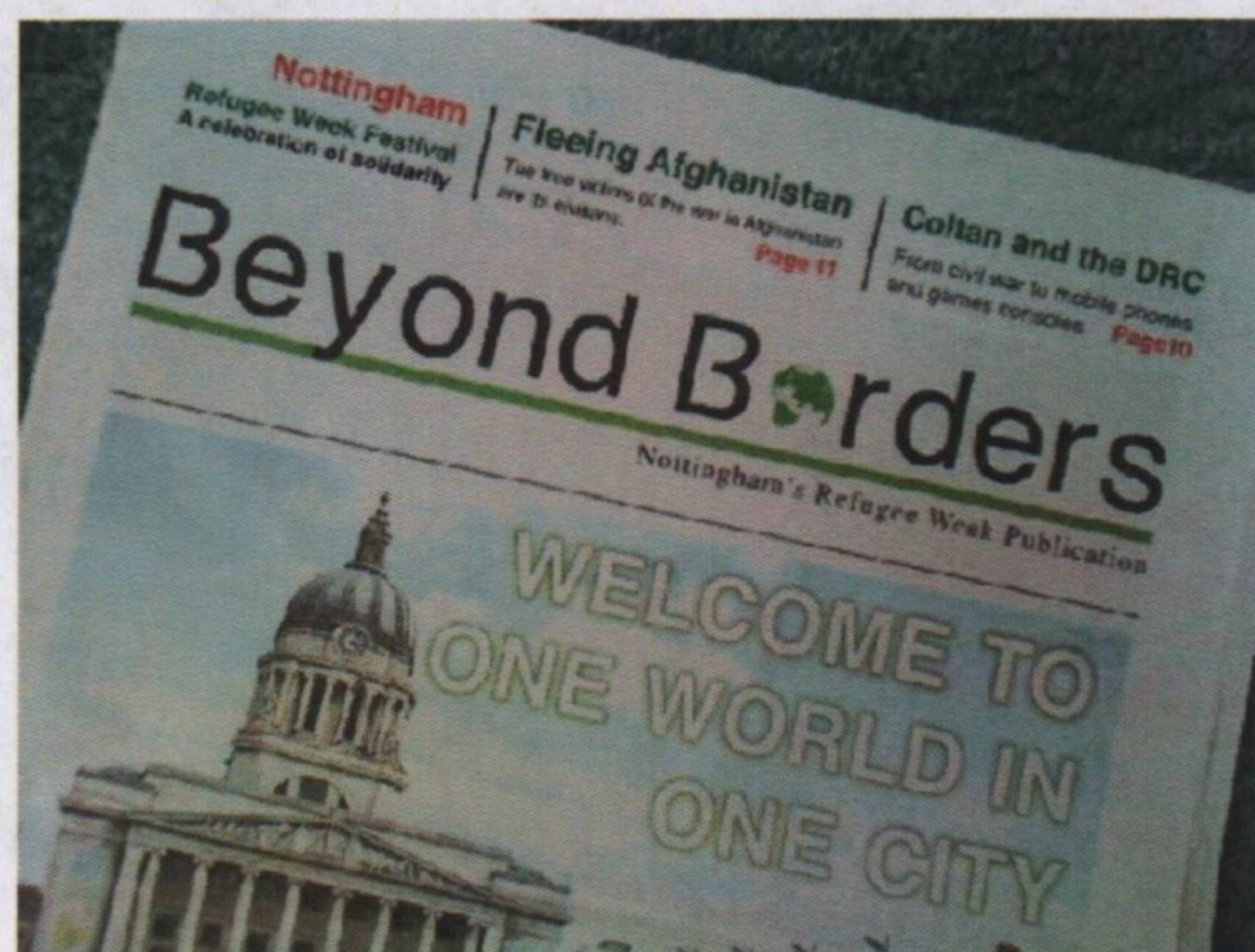
A further milestone was the appointment of five refugees or asylum seekers appointed to the management committee each year. In the current year there are six and in the previous two years there have been 5.

5.4.5 Outcome 5

Objective	Forecast Achievement
30 groups in local community better informed about asylum seekers and refugees and more open to welcoming them in their midst	36+ involvement in events and PR

Staff and volunteers from the forum have attended and spoken at more than 30 events since November 2009. These have included presentations to community groups such as churches, schools and a Parish Council. Opportunities have also been taken to talk to communities of interest through events held at Nottingham CVS, Credit Union Nottingham, University of Nottingham Social Work Course, a Community Cohesion Celebration organised by the NCC Community Cohesion Team, a regional Seminar on 'Refugee Community Organisations and Integration' organised by the Basis Project and Family & Community teams in the Radford and Hyson Green areas of Nottingham City. As reported in the 2011 report the formalised volunteer speaking panel (milestone 3) and pack (milestone 7) were shelved due to pressures on time and finance.

Instead emphasis has been placed on high profile opportunities to raise awareness of host communities, and challenge their thinking and beliefs, regarding refugees and asylum seekers. The Forum has been one of the lead partners in Nottingham Refugee Week and a part-time member of the Forum's staff has chaired the committee in 2010 and 2011. Across these two years Refugee Week held 20 events, achieved an attendance of over 2000 at the events and distributed 22,000 copies of a specially produced newspaper 'Beyond Borders'. The 2012 week is scheduled for June 2012 and activities will be additional to those itemised above. NNRF staff have also spoken or taken part in a number of May Day & Pride Festival events and hosted 'RefuTea' events at NNRF for public & other organisations. PR activity has included staff speaking on both Radio 4 and Radio Nottingham, coverage in the [Guardian](#) (1/08/10) and the Nottingham Post (5 times) since November 2009.



Staff at NNRF are also involved in many forums and committees throughout Nottingham City and beyond where they ensure asylum seekers and refugees are considered when local policy and its implementation is discussed.

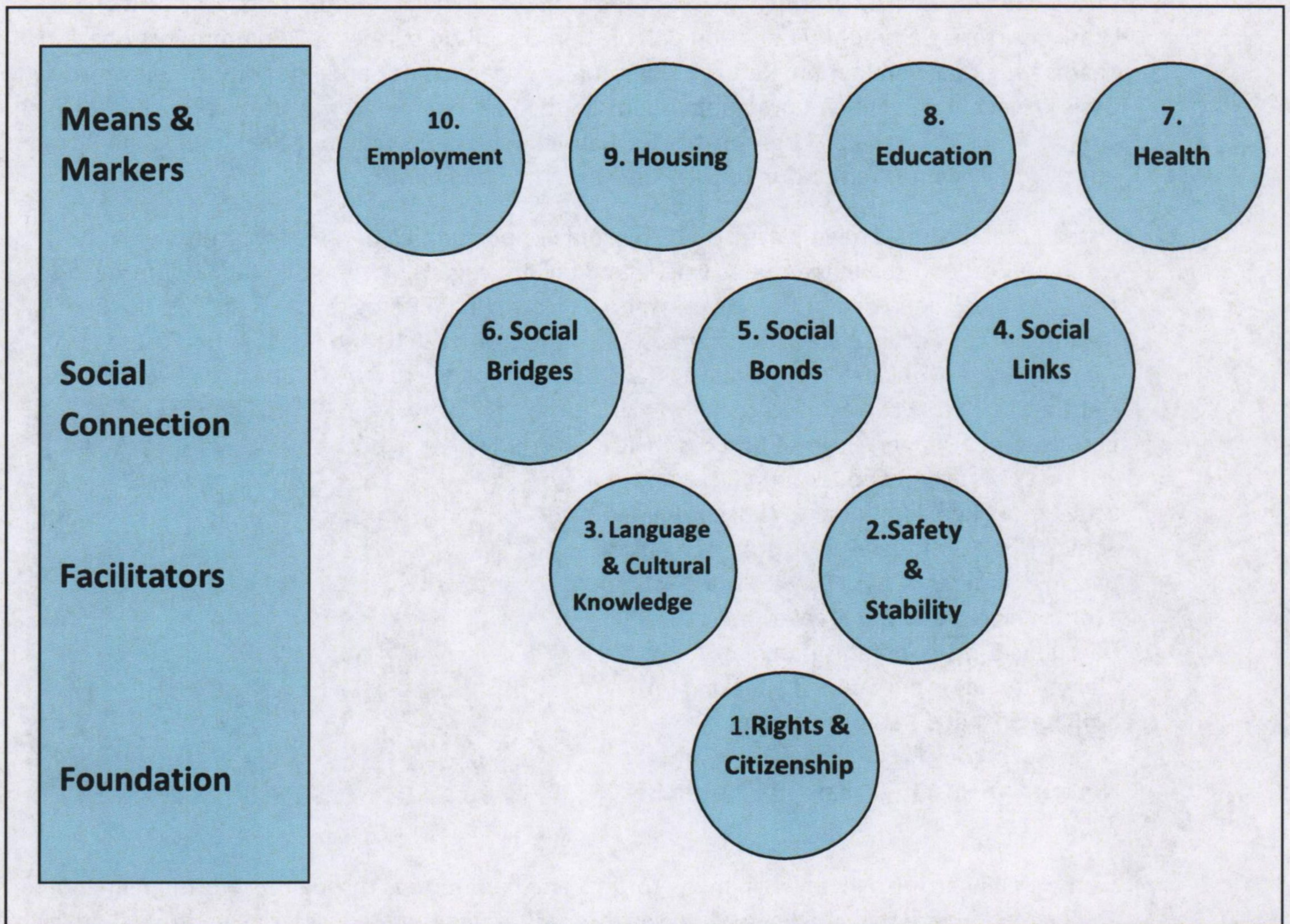
Examples of Forums and Committees with NNRF Attendance & Involvement

- Nottingham City Health Forum
- Asylum Seekers & Refugees Multi Agency Forum
- Women's Aid Integrated Services Advisory Group
- Asylum Seeker, Refugee and Migrants Health Forum
- BME and Refugee Domestic Violence Forum
- ESOL Forum
- BME Play Development Network
- CAHMS
- Citizens for Sanctuary
- Homelessness and Hope Commission

5.5 The impact of NNRF's work

Ager and Strang (2004), developed a framework for the integration of refugees on behalf of the Home Office. This was based on 10 indicators grouped into 4 different levels as indicated in the diagram below. As part of the service user survey a series of 10 questions, each based on one of the 10 indicators, was included.

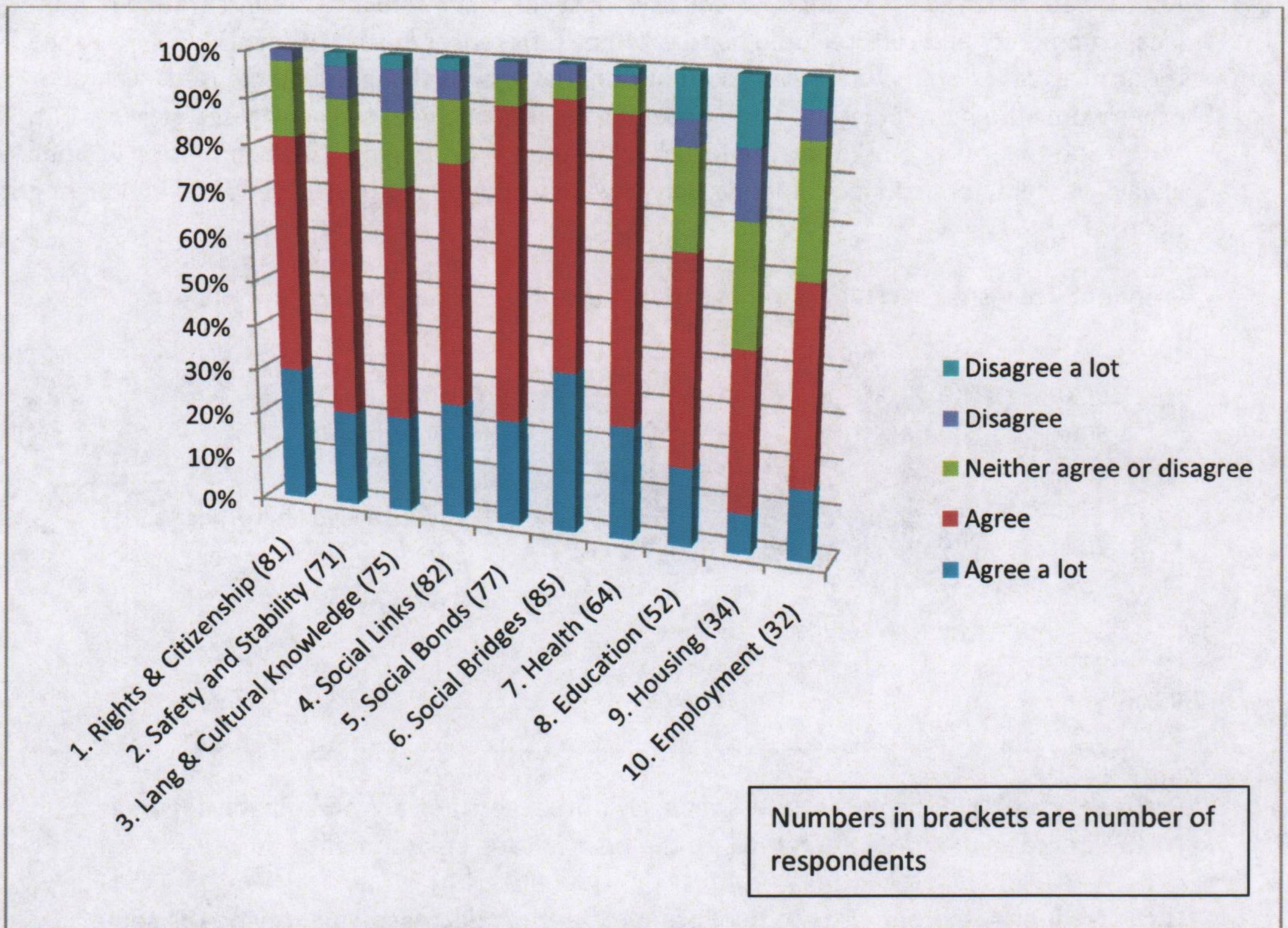
Within the context of a project evaluation these questions simply sought to identify how far service users believed the forum had assisted them in each of the 10 areas.



For each indicator participants read a simple statement such as, for indicator 6, *'the forum has helped me broaden my cultural understanding and make contacts with other ethnic groups'*. Participants had the choice of five levels from 'agree a lot' to 'disagree a lot' and an option of N/A (for instance employment (indicator 10) would be not applicable for an asylum seeker as they have no rights to work in the UK) and D/K for individuals who did not want to answer the question.

The table below indicates the level of agreement /disagreement for all respondents excluding N/A and D/K responses.

Levels of agreement to statements relating to the 10 indicators proposed by Ager & Strang.



High levels of agreement were gained for the first seven indicators. It is perhaps not surprising that the highest agreement relates to 'Social Bridges' (the development of relationships between communities), simple observation of any day at the forum shows a wide spectrum of service users, volunteers and staff all interacting across ethnic boundaries, as one survey participant says: *'I like that NNRF enables people to meet from different cultures and backgrounds'*.

Clearly service users believe NNRF has a significant impact in helping them develop the foundations, facilitators and connections that Ager and Strang suggest are required to integrate into the UK. The level of agreement is lower for the four (means and markers) indicators with the exception of health.

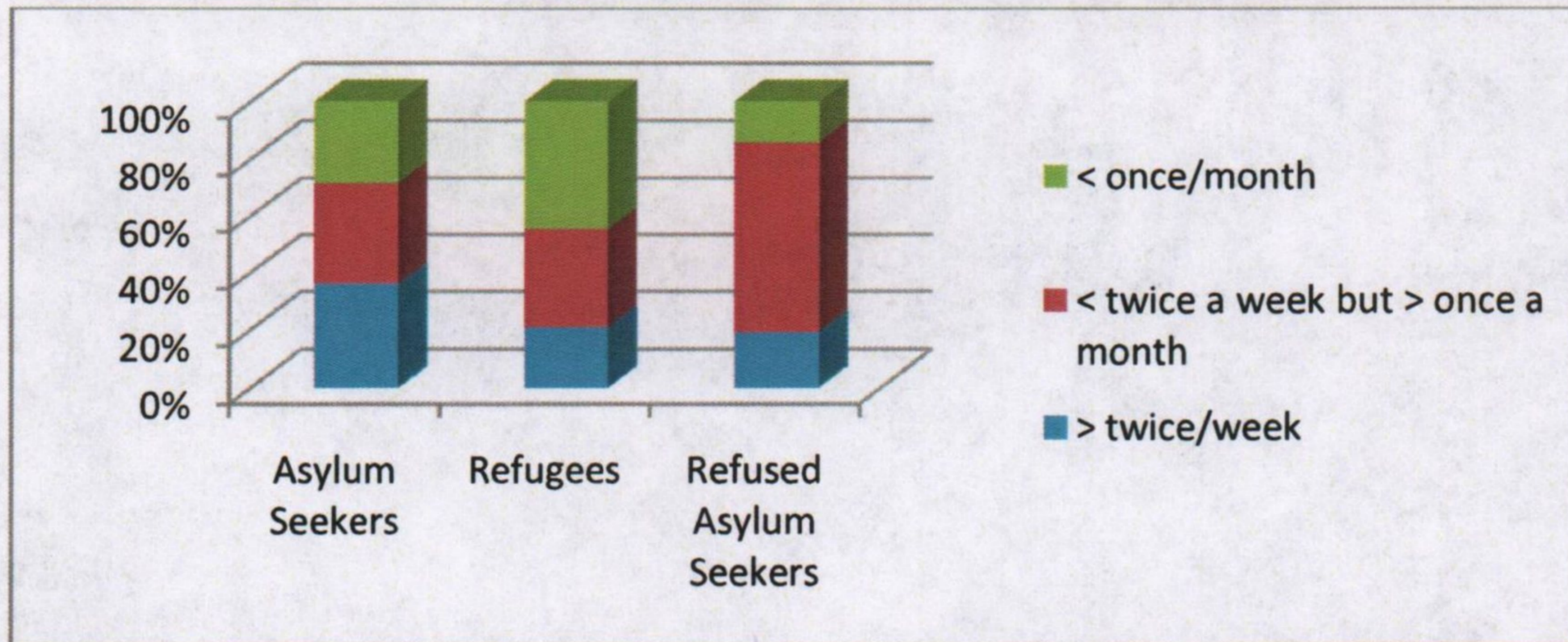
This is possibly because:

- There is a weaker direct link between NNRFs work and these indicators. For instance NNRF does not actually provide or control the supply of housing and jobs whereas it does provide direct opportunities to make, for instance, Social Bridges.
- The means and marker indicators are not relevant to all service users, for instance asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers user have no rights to housing and employment and are outside of the scope of the framework. This is confirmed in the significant reductions of respondents from participants with this status

Appendix 6 shows the results analysed by the three main immigration statuses. This shows a much reduced proportion of asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers completing statements on means and markers and that those completing the questions were more negative than refugees. A much higher proportion of refugees answered the means and markers questions than asylum seekers and levels of agreement were close to those they made for other indicators.

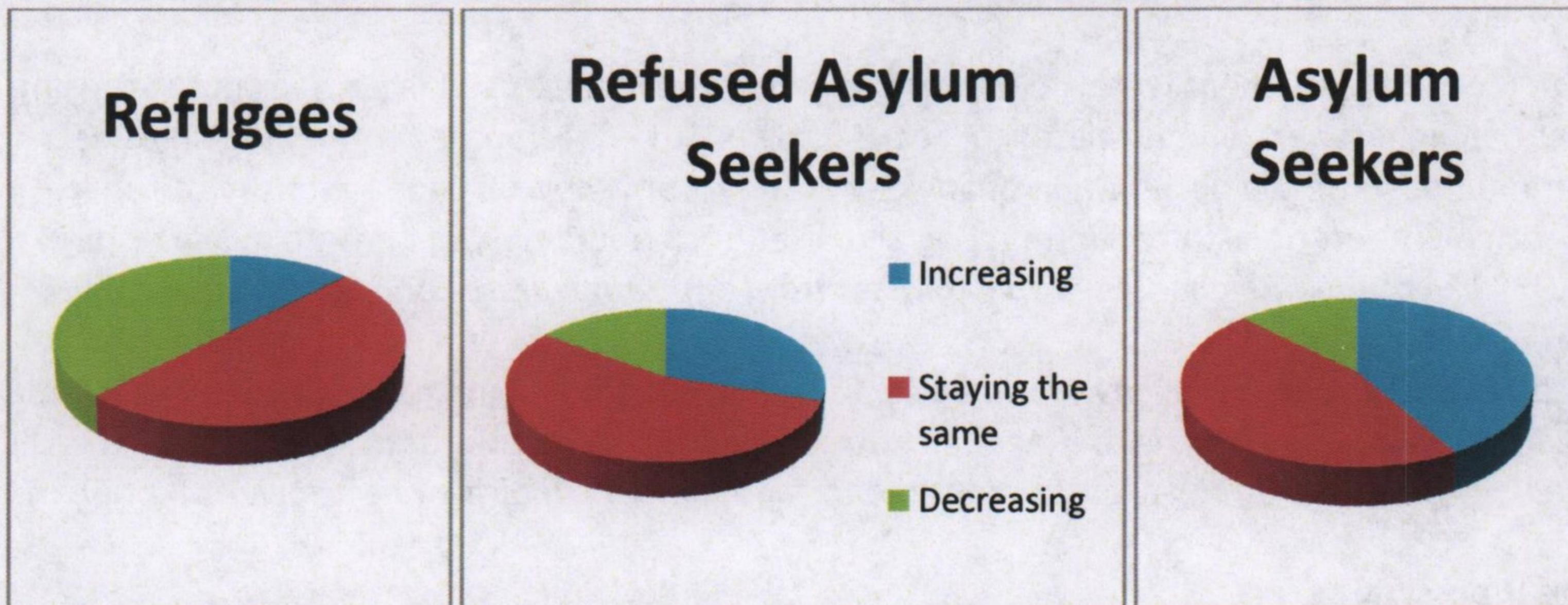
Another approach to assessing how well asylum seekers and refugees are integrating into the local community and culture could be to examine differences in the frequency of visits to the forum. This relies on the underlying assumption that less visits suggests increased integration. In other words the more integrated one becomes the less one uses the specialised services of the forum and the less one relies on the forum for a sense of belonging. This assumption will not always be valid, for instance someone may have developed health issues and can no longer get to the forum.

Frequency of visits to NNRF by Immigration status for the service user sample



Refugees visit NNRF significantly less than asylum seekers and are presumably less reliant on NNRF services and more integrated into the host culture/environment.

Is the frequency of your visits to the Forum increasing, decreasing or staying the same?



A higher proportion of refugees' state they expect to decrease their number of visits. Reasons given included gaining immigration status and gaining a job, both indicators of increased integration.

Asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers make more frequent visits to NNRF and more are expecting to increase these further, quoting reasons such as 'need more advice, my immigration case is at a standstill, making friends' and 'participating in activities'. It is through this process of ongoing engagement with NNRF services, activities and other asylum seekers and refugees that the facilitators and social connections develop. These foundations are essential to enable clients to take the full advantage of step changes such as receiving status.

This is confirmed by the answers service users gave an open question regarding the impact that NNRF had had on their lives since coming to the UK.

Many stated that the forum had given them the opportunity to increase their confidence, strength and skills, this enabled better integration into the UK and reduced isolation. Many took the opportunity to thank the forum for its support, surely another indicator of a positive impact on their life and well being.

A selection of quotes from the open question 'How has NNRF impacted on your life?'

'I learnt a lot from different background people about their culture. This knowledge greatly helps me integrate into UK Society'

'NNRF made me gain more confidence and a lot of strength to carry on when i was a destitute Asylum Seeker'

'The forum has helped me to be more confident and build my skills in any aspect of my life'

'NNRF helps me to gain confidence and to integrate into UK society. I no longer feel isolated since I started involving in the activities of the forum'

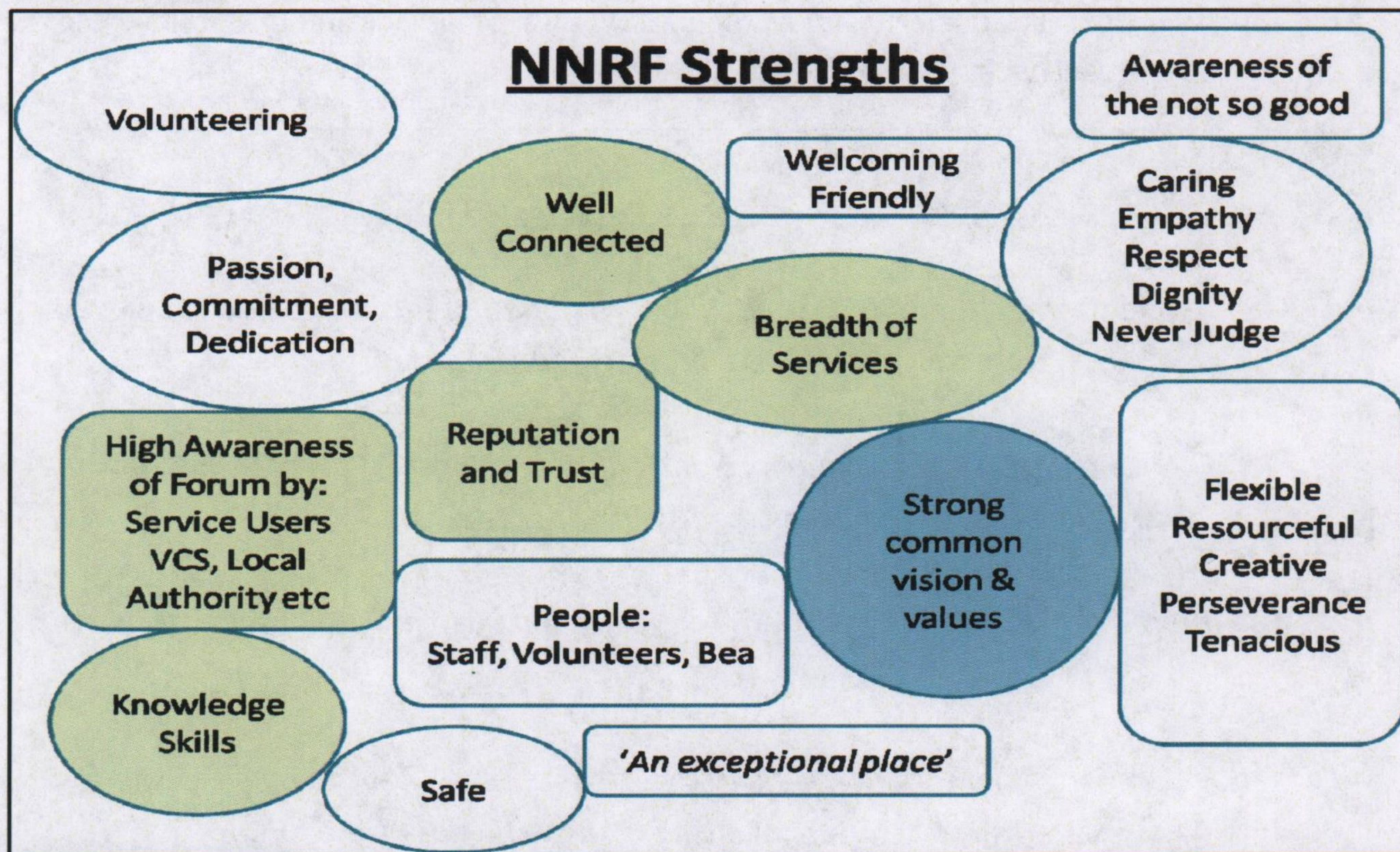
'I really thank the forum for everything I have been through and open the door for me'

'NNRF is a great service that gives a lot of positive change and hopes to destitute asylum seekers'.

6. Stakeholders perspectives on NNRF

Perspectives on various aspects of the organisation were collected from staff, volunteers, the Management/Executive committees and partners during the interview and focus group stages. The strengths and weaknesses of NNRF, as perceived by these stakeholder groups, are summarised here.

6.1 NNRF Strengths



Vision & Values

Almost without exception every stakeholder commented on the underlying values and motivations of those involved with NNRF in terms of justice and equality. Whilst there appears no consistent articulation of vision, mission and values there is evidently a strong underlying belief system that is shared by the vast majority of those involved with NNRF

The people involved and how they carry out their work

Stakeholders saw the staff and volunteers and how they approach their work as a major positive. Many of the strengths highlighted are values in their own right and inform how NNRF delivers its services. A participant from the service user survey also stated one of the reasons he liked NNRF was because of its diversity: *'most of the workers, volunteers and advisors come from different countries'*

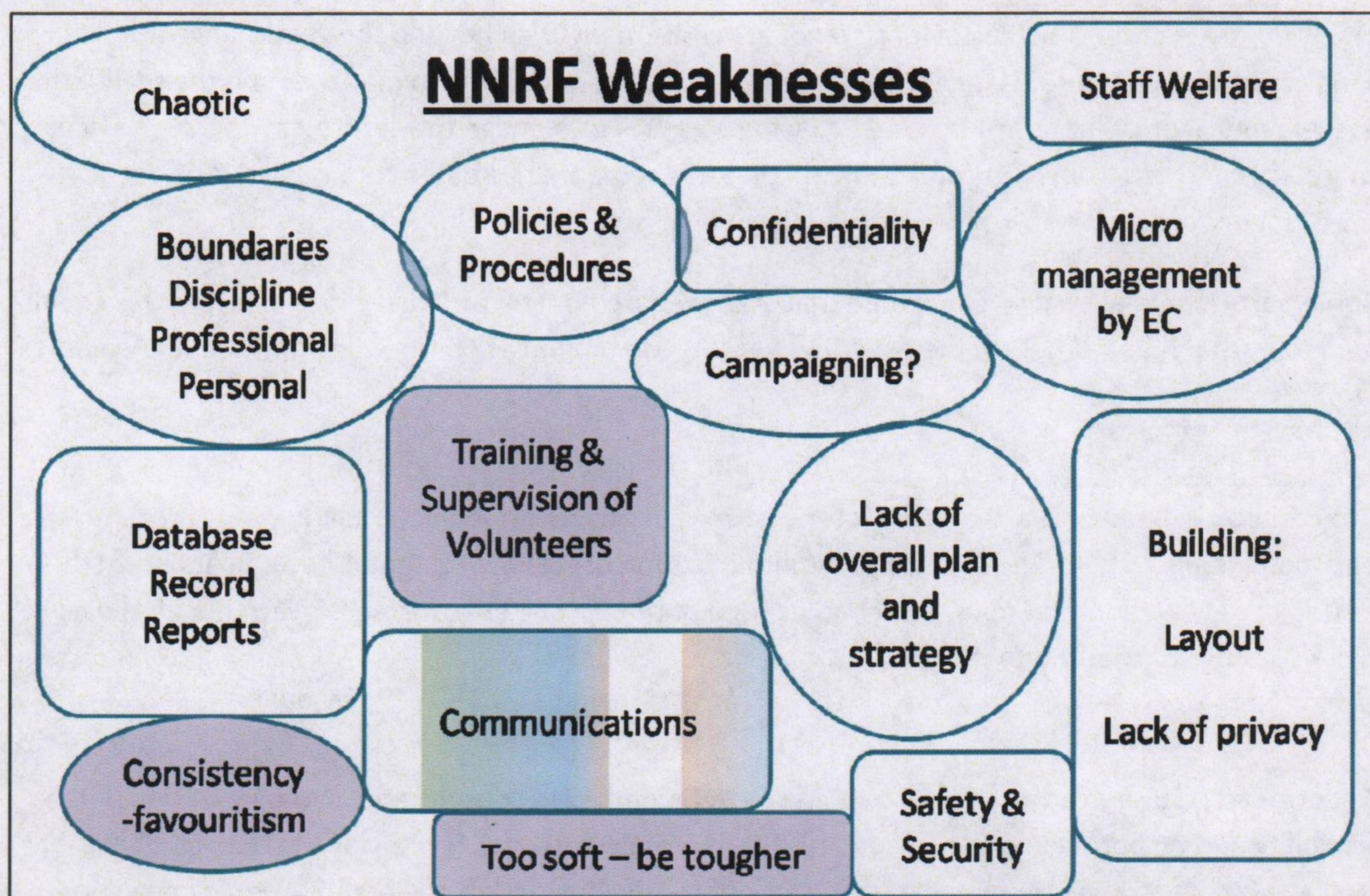
What NNRF has built up

Stakeholders say NNRF is widely acknowledged as having specialised knowledge and skills with its client group, it has built up a wide range of services and has earned awareness and trust amongst both asylum seekers and refugee communities as well as the wider Voluntary and Public sectors

Other

'Awareness of the not so good'. Like any organisation NNRF has weaker areas and analysis (6.3) showed that staff, volunteers, committees and partners were very aware of these and generally had a common understanding of what needed improvement. This is a significant strength as it forms an excellent platform for change

6.2 NNRF Weaknesses



Lack of overall structure

NNRF adopts an emergent approach to strategy and planning and has clearly enjoyed success with this method. There is no formal strategic or business plan (the last is dated 2008) and many staff member and partners commented on this issue; for instance *'NNRF are working hand to mouth, we are not really listening and analysing what is really needed'*. Many policies and procedures are dated though some have recently been updated.

Issues arising from lack of structure

The lack of formality has led to stakeholders, notably some staff and partners to voice concerns about professional boundaries and confidentiality. This whole issue is made more difficult by the way the forum functions offering both informal community/social support and more formal specialised advice.

Physical and tangible

The building also adds to this issue; it is frequently extremely busy and is considered by many to be too small. It has not been practical for NNRF to organise the space in the best way to deliver NNRF's mix of community/social support and advice; the current layout makes it extremely difficult to separate these aspects. Record keeping is another concern for many stakeholders; the main paper system currently used for client records makes it difficult to access client information and management information.

Management style

The Executive Committee have a long standing involvement, well beyond the governance role, in fundraising and personnel issues. This has arisen due to periods with no manager and the reality that a single manager cannot perform these functions as well as manage the centre day to day. However there are concerns from many stakeholders that this sometimes creates communication breakdowns, confusion and, at times, ill feeling.

Some participants were also concerned that staff welfare is disregarded at times and that this could lead to burn out and other problems. A few felt '*the Management Committee don't seem to value staff*'.

Communications

Communication issues relate to many of the issues already identified particularly overall structure and management style. One example of communication breakdown is that it became apparent during the evaluation that many staff had no idea of the Big Lottery outcomes even though their work directly contributed to it!

Other

Chaotic was also seen as a strength by some stakeholders who considered it a manifestation of the flexibility and responsiveness of the organisation to client's needs. Some stakeholders highlighted that the lack of strategic planning meant a lack of clarity on whether the organisation campaigned and its approach to partnership.

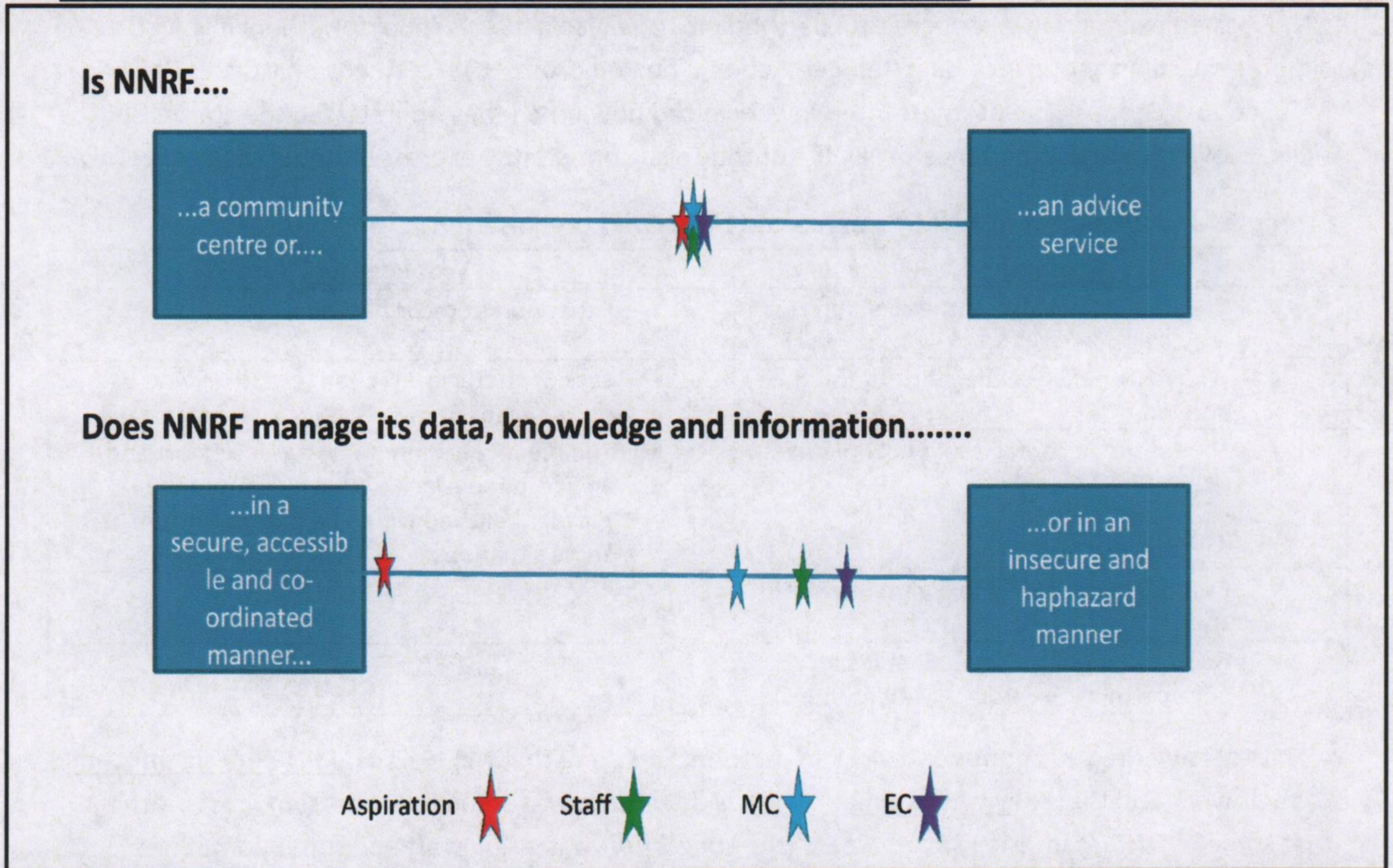
6.3 The Stakeholder Task

Early on in the interview process a number of issues and tensions emerged. To help bring these into focus a task was developed that was completed with a group of staff, a group of volunteers and the Management and Executive committees. The task was intended to encourage stakeholders to think and talk about issues and to enable a comparison of how different stakeholder groups viewed certain issues and tensions.

The task (with results) is attached as appendix 7. It comprised 12 statements, each on a continuum that represents a tension or issue raised early on in the evaluation process. For instance the first question was 'is NNRF a community centre (one end of the scale) or is it an advice service (the other end of the scale). When completing the task groups agreed, as a whole, what the ideal should be and then plotted where they thought NNRF actually was, as individuals.

The data for the ideal was measured and an average calculated across the groups and plotted on the continuum; the ideals were generally similar across the groups. The individual data was measured and averaged for each group and plotted on the continuum. Thus there was one overall 'ideal' and four 'perceived positions' corresponding to staff, the Management Committee, Executive Committee and Volunteers.

Example from the Focus Group Task (2 of the 12 statements presented)



The key points from the task were:

- The perceptions of the staff and Executive Committee were generally very close
- In many instances the Executive Committee believed NNRF were further away from the ideal than the staff
- The Management Committee and volunteers were consistently nearer to the ideal than the staff or Executive Committee, possibly due to them being more removed from the day to day running of, and responsibility for, the organisation.
- All groups were united in their ideal that NNRF is both a community centre and an advice service and all groups believed NNRF were very close to this ideal – an indication of the strong united vision and values
- The areas where the staff and Executive Committee believed there was the biggest gap between the ideal and where NNRF actually are were, in order:
 - Data and Record Keeping
 - Policies & Procedures
 - Communications
 - Governance and Management (especially the interface between staff and the Executive Committee)
 - Strategic Planning

It should be noted that although the last two points were given lower priority they are more 'fundamental' to the ongoing development of the organisation. Improving and sustaining improvements in other areas will be harder without first addressing these strategic issues.

6.4 Voluntary Sector Partnership

NNRF has enjoyed a range of successful partnerships and also acts as a ‘hub’ for others involved in support the client group including Refugee Action, The Red Cross, HOST, Friends of Morton Hall and Refugee Arts Groups. The partners interviewed voiced how much they appreciated the specialised skills, knowledge and experience of NNRF but they also consistently expressed underlying concerns.

Strengths and weakness of NNRF as perceived by partner organisations

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialist knowledge of the client group and their needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paperwork & record keeping
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wide experience of client group and their problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of strategic direction (including where partnerships fit in to NNRF’s future strategy)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extensive contacts and network of NNRF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The model of community/social support and advice led to a lack of toughness that the partner believed would be more appropriate in some situations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passion, motivation and commitment of staff 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good communications between staff once partnership/project established. 	

All partners wanted to continue to work in partnership saying that NNRF had added very significantly to their work and that they valued what they bought. There was some concern from most partners that some of NNRF’s internal stakeholders (the suggestion was a few staff and some Committee members) did not value what they bought to the partnership (eg structure, record keeping and a willingness to challenge clients).

Typical comments included:

- ‘They are too close to clients, there are boundary issues.....but they are improving’*
- ‘The partnership was a really positive experience but their lack of structure presented challenges’*
- ‘Information was shared between staff very well and they complemented each other well’*
- ‘An amazing opportunity and I have learnt so much and enjoyed working in and around so much energy’*

6.5 Statutory Partners

A recent stakeholder questionnaire confirmed the importance of statutory partners placed on NNRF and its services, especially helping to engage asylum seekers and refugees and providing specialist knowledge.

Quotes from statutory stakeholder questionnaire

NNRF provide a crucial link with hard to reach groups, many of which are at high risk of being marginalised, NNRF represents a crucial element in our community engagement process with hard to reach groups

Notts City Council Development Worker

The advisor I work with is very knowledgeable and experienced, NNRF help with NASS support, Section 4 problems and advice for those refused housing and asylum’

Nottingham City Council Links Worker

7. Learning

7.1 The importance of mixing the advice service with community/social support

The evaluation has provided evidence that asylum seekers and refugees have a high degree of satisfaction with NNRF services and the way in which these services are delivered. Furthermore service users strongly believe NNRF has positive outcomes on their integration into the UK.

Clients value the community/social support highly. The comments of the service user sample on why they preferred NNRF's services to other services suggested community/social support was every bit as important as the advice itself. This is further confirmed in how the majority of clients see NNRF; both as a home and an advice centre.

The importance of social support has been widely documented. Recently, in a formalised experiment with refugees and asylum seekers in Austria, Renner, Laireter and Maier (2012) found that *'social support (provided by individual sponsors (ie buddying approach)) significantly and consistently reduced anxiety, depression, and physiological problems over time and that this has a moderating effect on acculturative stress and improves refugees and asylum seekers physiological health and adaption'*.

Within NNRF these two approaches sit both separately; some services are clearly community/social support (eg Tuesday Night) and some are clearly advice (eg Immigration advice) yet they are also integrated together in the sense that formal advice is delivered in a supportive, even friendly way. Many participants in the survey made statements such as:

'I am visiting the forum every time because it is the only place where I can talk

The environment makes me forget about my stress – I am always relieved when I see my friends & staff at NNRF'

'When I come to the forum I feel myself at home, I can tell what I feel'

Their friendliness always gives me hope and strength to carry on in a difficult situation'

NNRF staff are very informal so we refugees don't feel frightened to communicate with them'

It is clear staff and volunteers agree with the importance of the mixed approach. As demonstrated in the stakeholder task all groups were clear that NNRF aims to, and delivers combined community/social support and an advice service.

7.2 Delivery of the community/social support and advice service mix creates practical difficulties

At a practical level this approach can create tensions because of the different characteristics normally associated with community centres/social support structures and those associated with more formal advice services. These could be summarised as:

Community/Social Support	Advice Service
Can just 'drop in' Warm friendly welcome Flexible – respond to needs as they appear Somewhat chaotic	Appointment only Official 'booking in' Inflexible, appointment only with distinct purpose Structured and business like
<i>We are always there for you – we'll do everything we can to help</i>	<i>Here is some advice – you can take it or leave it – you decide</i>

These practical tensions appear in a number of ways including:

- When does reception allow someone through to the main 'waiting' area so they can mix with others? Just before an appointment or earlier?

- Pressure to ignore boundaries – a staff member is engaged by a client as they walk through the waiting area, do you stop and listen or tell them to make an appointment (and you know the next available appointment will be in at least two weeks and they seem quite distressed at present).

The situation is exacerbated by the current building layout, the reception area (a community space) is small and in order to get through to the larger space (often used as a community space and/or waiting area) one has to pass through an area of smaller, but shared offices, where client interviews are conducted. This situation creates opportunities for interruptions and casual meetings

An additional issue may emerge with funding (contracts or grants) for advice services which are likely to increasingly impose strict quality standards. This will require more robust procedures and whilst this is to be welcomed care will need to be taken not to undermine the unique way in which NNRF delivers advice.

7.3 The relation of the community/social support and advice service mix to empowerment and dependency

The mix of the community/social support and advice service also relates to where interventions with clients are positioned on the empowering – dependency continuum. It has been documented that there are situations where social support can be detrimental and increase dependency. Morrisson and Bennet 2009 say, with reference to a health setting, *'over-caring can cause an individual to become overly dependent and overly passive in terms of their own recovery'* (presumably this could be similar for integration).

Some of NNRF's services, especially anti destitution, are delivered to those with minimal rights and who require their basic needs to be met; by definition such a relationship is likely to create some dependency as can only be expected with what is, in effect, emergency aid. However because of the underlying commitment to the element of social support there is always a risk that this might go too far in any service.

For instance could the survey participant who said they liked NNRF because *'they answer and solve my problems'* actually be a case of over support? Several staff talked about 'going the extra mile' and care must be taken that this really is appropriate; at times a 'tough love' approach, such as a parent might use with a teenager will be more helpful but harder to enact. Examples of this approach were given by many staff, for instance refusing to make a phone call on behalf of a client but being in the background to encourage and support as the client took, what was for them, a big step.

Some staff members were concerned that not enough was being done to ensure clients were empowered rather than made dependent; one felt the Forum could *'make much more of what asylum seekers and refugees bring.'*

7.4 Managing the mixed approach requires careful management and good understanding by stakeholders

All clients are unique and have had unique experiences and each will require differing amounts of community/social support. What it seems reasonable to assume is that the more disempowered an individual has become the more community/social support is required if they are to take full advantage of the advice and other opportunities on offer at NNRF and the UK. (A case history containing a typical case history that illustrates disempowerment is included as Appendix 8).

Initial assessment of clients, not just in terms of their practical needs but also in terms of their confidence levels and ability to engage in the process of integration is therefore critical. Generally the journey of NNRF's clients starts from a highly disempowered position so social/community support is proportionately high and helps clients to make the best of their situation. This further builds confidence and the journey progresses with decreasing reliance on social support and eventually even on the formal advice services.

In reality, assessments on exact support needs are being continually made by staff and volunteers as they engage with service users. Consistency can be difficult to obtain and is further confused by the staff/volunteer/community member's own level of self-awareness regarding how their own beliefs and needs impact on how they respond to a particular situation. Stakeholders must be willing to reflect on their own practice and be open to challenges from others.

So NNRF undertake a very necessary but difficult balancing act. Too much social support at the wrong time can lead to dependency and too little social support at the wrong time will lead to increased isolation and disengagement. Put another way it is balancing the demand from the client, inherent in the comment '*keep up the good work, you make us feel valuable*' with the comment from a staff member '*we need to decrease the support for those that are more self sufficient*'.

7.5 Other learning points include:

It is essential to fully understand the cultural context from which individuals have come in the design of services.

This can be difficult when delivering funded programmes with specific outcomes, for example

- Preventative Health Education – the health project struggled to gain engagement from service users on a series of preventative workshops such as women's health. Realistically many refugees come from an environment when healthcare interventions are limited to treatment with no resources to engage with preventative work. The concept of preventative healthcare is therefore completely novel to such groups; any attempts to deliver a preventative programme will need to consider very carefully how it is going to engage clients.

It can also be a problem in more general terms, for instance the issue of

- Advice Shopping – many service users come from a culture where 'the more you ask the more likely you are to get'. So service users will ask one adviser a question and, if the answer isn't the one they want they will carry on and ask the next staff/volunteers they meet. This has a major impact on how services should be co-ordinated and information shared.

The importance of leadership in RCOs

As mentioned under outcome 3 the 'stumbling block' for the growth of the African Community Support Group may echo the issues found in the NGDOs. In order to better facilitate leadership development James (2008) suggests, amongst other ideas, that a mentoring/coaching approach can be the most effective.

The critical role of Volunteering

Volunteering is of particular value at NNRF with a double bottom line, it helps service users with: learning about the UK and its culture, reducing isolation, developing informal support structures, and enabling the development of skills, confidence and the possibility of a reference

It helps NNRF to work efficiently through the addition of extra human resource - for instance the reception is presently entirely staffed by asylum seeker/refugee volunteers.

8. The Future: Services Development & how services are delivered

8.1 Service Development

Feedback from service users (section 3.3 and 4.3) suggests that priorities for service development are:

1. Develop the capacity of existing services to deliver:
 - Immigration advice
 - Welfare Benefits
 - Housing (both support and advice and actual provision of accommodation)
 - Anti –destitution
2. Develop new services:
 - Training
 - Employment Support

Further consultation with service users and stakeholders is required to clarify the exact nature of service development and this has to be undertaken in the current financial and funding context (section 10). It may require increasing capacity of generic advice services and/or specialist advice services.

Additionally there was a request for improved IT facilities and ideally some improvements to the building.

Priorities for service development need to also be informed by changes in policy and consideration of what impact these will have on service users. Such work is a critical part of the strategic planning process (see section 9) and is particularly important in the light of the many recent changes proposed/implemented by the Home Office. Anecdotal evidence suggests these changes have already increased the number of enquiries received by NNRF (as clients struggle to understand what the changes mean), there may be more demand for employment support given new earning thresholds for dependents to be accepted, and quicker decision making means methods have to be found to accelerate the integration process.

8.2 Developments in how services are delivered

1. It is essential to maintain the mixed approach of community/social support and an advice service. However increased separation between the two approaches in terms of procedures and physical space would be likely to increase efficiency and effectiveness by removing some of the opportunities for more casual engagements.
2. More consideration should be given to the how the tension of empowerment and dependency is managed. Improved separation will assist and staff/volunteers must be encouraged to have open dialogue about the tension. Methods should be developed to monitor service delivery with respect to this tension, enabling staff and management to review whether the balance is right at both individual case and broader organisational level. As one staff member described *'it is the looseness of the organisation that sets it apart....finding the right balance is the challenge'*.

3. The client group require a wide and complex range of advice services because of the breadth of their needs. Where possible the advice services need to be better integrated to avoid any duplication (funding unfortunately often makes this difficult). A triage could be introduced with a standard assessment used at first contact and regularly afterwards. One staff member talked about the need to *'reduce the random nature of the forum's work, how do we better connect the issue presented with the wealth of knowledge and experience in the building'*. A duty staff approach could be considered to deal with the more instant demands placed on the forum.
4. Increase volunteering and develop self-help approach. These approaches fit very well with the empowerment approach and, at a time of financial difficulty will assist NNRF to maintain services in the increasingly difficult financial environment. As previously quoted one staff member wonders *'if the forum could make much more of what asylum seekers and refugees bring'*.

9. The Future: Organisational Development

NNRF needs to consider:

9.1 Strategic Planning

Many stakeholders indicated the need for NNRF to clarify the broad direction of the organisation. A strategic plan should include vision (future you want for those you work with), mission (NNRF contribution to bringing about this vision), values (underpinning beliefs that define behaviour), analysis of the external environment (PEST) and organisational strengths and weaknesses. This information is reviewed and synthesized to create a series of strategic aims from which plans can flow.

The plan requires a high level of ownership from the stakeholders and they need to be actively involved in its development it is recommended that such an activity is externally facilitated (to keep in on track and help objectivity).

The plan will have objectives that are both externally focused (regarding the outcomes and impact NNRF are trying to achieve) and internally focused (about organisational development required to best deliver these aims). It will for instance give clarity on issues such as partnership and degree of campaigning.

It is understood, from the Management Committee, that over the past 18 months several strategic planning meetings have been held involving staff, volunteers and the Management Committee. However stakeholders have consistently voiced their concerns in this area; it is therefore possible the issue may be more about how the discussions/thinking from these meetings has been formalised and communicated to stakeholders.

9.2 Clarifying the underlying theory of change used by NNRF

Alongside the strategic plan the theories of change that underpin how NNRF approaches its work need to be clarified. Obvious links may include the hierarchy of needs approach, the importance of social support (as previously mentioned) and empowerment. Such thinking will enable NNRF to better communicate what it does and how, this will assist with external audiences such as funders and partners.

9.3 Clarifying the Management Committee, Executive Committee and Management roles

Discussions are needed to clarify the governance and management roles/boundaries and how these relate. Non governance work carried out by the committee members needs to have clear boundaries and communication channels in order to avoid communication breakdown, confusion (especially for staff) and the potential for ill feeling and stress. External facilitation may be beneficial, especially at the early stages.

9.4 Improving data management and record keeping

It is recommended that NNRF invest in, or seek funding for a client management system and the associated hardware to enable the staff and volunteer team to use to its full benefit.

The benefits of this will include:

- Improving management information available
- Quicker production of management reports

- Staff members and volunteers having up to date information on any client they are engaging. This ensures the best possible understanding of the current situation and will assist in reducing any service overlaps and/or advice shopping, reducing any tendency towards dependent behaviour.
- Improvement in operating efficiency
- Reduction in space taken up by paper files
- Opportunity to improve confidentiality of record keeping

A specification for such a system should be developed and a funding search (focused on trusts and corporate) to identify likely funders.

9.5 Clarifying of Outcomes and improved Organisational Performance Management

The strategic plan should give clear measurable outcomes and an appropriate system must be established to monitor these. There are many challenges to developing an appropriate system and it is suggested that a review of outcomes measurement by charities working in a similar fields should be carried out and some assistance from a local academic institution requested. One opportunity could be seek to work in partnership with others to develop a suitable outcome star tool <http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/>

The introduction of a triage system would give an excellent opportunity to collect the base line data from clients.

9.6 Other

Revising of Policies & Procedures

It is recommended a formal schedule of policy renewal be established and efforts taken to ensure policies are widely understood and used to inform work practice and decision making

Improving consideration for Staff welfare

Staff welfare needs to be prioritised by the staff themselves, management and the committee. Appropriate boundaries should be adhered to especially in relation to A/L so that staff have appropriate rest and respite from what is clearly a very demanding role and environment. The executive committee must encourage and adhere to the A/L entitlement of staff.

Increase meaningful Service User involvement at a Committee level

Service users' involvement in the overall strategy and managing of the organisation appears limited at present. The Executive Committee has no asylum seekers or refugees amongst its members and several stakeholders voiced concerns regarding the level of involvement at the management committee. An individual who had once been involved with the MC said *'you can invite me to any meeting but if you do not let me open my mouth, or note what I say, what is the point?'*

Building

The building is far from ideal and whilst 'making do' is a necessity at present, it is suggested that consideration be given to reworking the space and/or acquiring new space or premises. This will assist in the separation of the two types of service, better boundaries (including private interviewing space) and a more efficient and effective way of working.

10 Moving Forward

Many of the recommendations are not about work that directly supports asylum seekers and refugees. Rather they aim to develop the organisation's capacity so it can be more efficient and effective; this is essential if NNRF is to better serve those it seeks to support.

To implement the recommendations will require time and money and in the current climate this will not be an easy task. The critical task will be to prioritise the recommendations. This will be easier once a strategic plan is completed and will be aided by an exercise that maps 'ease of implementation' and 'contribution to mission' matrix.

At this point a funding strategy can be developed which matches the priorities against potential funding streams. Despite the difficult environment there are opportunities that are, at present, largely untapped by NNRF. These include:

- national trusts and foundations with a special interest in asylum seekers and refugees
- local trusts with a special interest in local issues
- individual donors including building on both the volunteer base and past service users
- corporate donors including benefits in kind
- possibilities of earning income through trading activities using the skills/capacity of clients (in return for training/experience etc) or the selling services (eg travel docs) to better established refugees.

At the same time NNRF must avoid the tendency to overstretch its existing resources. However well meaning, and whatever the level of need from the client group, continued over stretching is likely to end in an unsustainable situation with staff and the organisation becoming overwhelmed ultimately leading to a deterioration in the support offered to the client group.

Closing Comment

The Forum is providing unique and extensive services to a particularly disadvantaged group. These services are well used and much appreciated by the service users and clearly have a positive impact on their lives and integration into the UK, whatever their status.

If the forum was not able to provide these services it is unclear where such social/community support and specialised advice would be obtained by asylum seekers and refugees. Failure to receive such support would exacerbate the stress and problems experienced by the client group. This in turn would be likely to lead to a need for increased intervention of, for instance, healthcare services, social services and the police, increasing demand on public finance.

At present the forum achieves a very significant impact with the resources it receives, it adds much value through the addition of voluntary effort and the steadfast commitment of its stakeholders especially its staff, committees and volunteers. The forum is aware that services and support can be improved and now wishes to build on the strong community and service foundation it has established.

Demand for services are likely to be sustained, in the statutory stakeholder questionnaire a Nottingham City Council worker said '*other services are already stretched, it would be difficult to persuade other agencies to deliver this specialised work, it would require staff, training and funding and would be a greater cost to funders*'. NNRF's Manager would agree saying '*it is harder to find organisations to refer to....we are having to do more and make the most of what we've got*'.

The importance of NNRF continuing to develop itself cannot be underestimated. Failure to do so will have a highly negative impact on some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals in Nottinghamshire.

Throughout the evaluation process the definition of evaluation by Torres (1991) has been quoted:

The objective of all evaluative work is to promote insight, and the ownership of that insight in such a way that it promotes just and appropriate action'

It is hoped that this evaluation will achieve this, both within and outside the organisation.

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APPENDIX 1. The Service User Survey Sample

Survey Method

A major challenge to this evaluation is the fact that many service users do not speak English and this could not be overcome by the use of interpreters and/or translators due to budgetary constraints.

Informed partly by NNRF's focus on empowerment, the process adopted was to select 6 asylum seekers and refugees who were well known to NNRF and who spoke English and one or more of the major languages required (Kurdish, Arabic, Farsi, Amharic, Tigrinya, Shona and Mongolian).

Two training sessions were held to train/brief these individuals, this training included:

- 11 What is evaluation
- 12 About the NNRF Evaluation – Why and How
- 13 How do we decide which service users to engage
- 14 Trial run through the draft survey (amended following input from participants)
- 15 Discussion on how the interviewer might inadvertently influence the interviewee response
- 16 Importance of introductory page of survey where anonymity and confidentiality is clarified

The voluntary interviewers were asked to aim to engage 6 asylum seekers, 6 refugees and 6 refused asylum seekers who had used NNRF's services at least once within the last 12 months. They were given freedom in whom to approach but encouraged to make contacts as random as possible and to avoid mainly friends and family.

In the light of the personal circumstances of many of the interviewees a £5 Asda voucher was given as a 'thank you' to interviewees after the interview had been completed. The volunteer interviewers were also rewarded with a higher value token at the end of the whole interview process, they were not aware of this until all interviews had been completed.

The survey was completed on paper forms and the results inputted, by a volunteer, into Survey Monkey (on which the original was designed) to assist analysis and presentation.

A total of 95 service users participated. All survey users completed anonymously and the only individuals who know who was interviewed are the interviewers themselves.

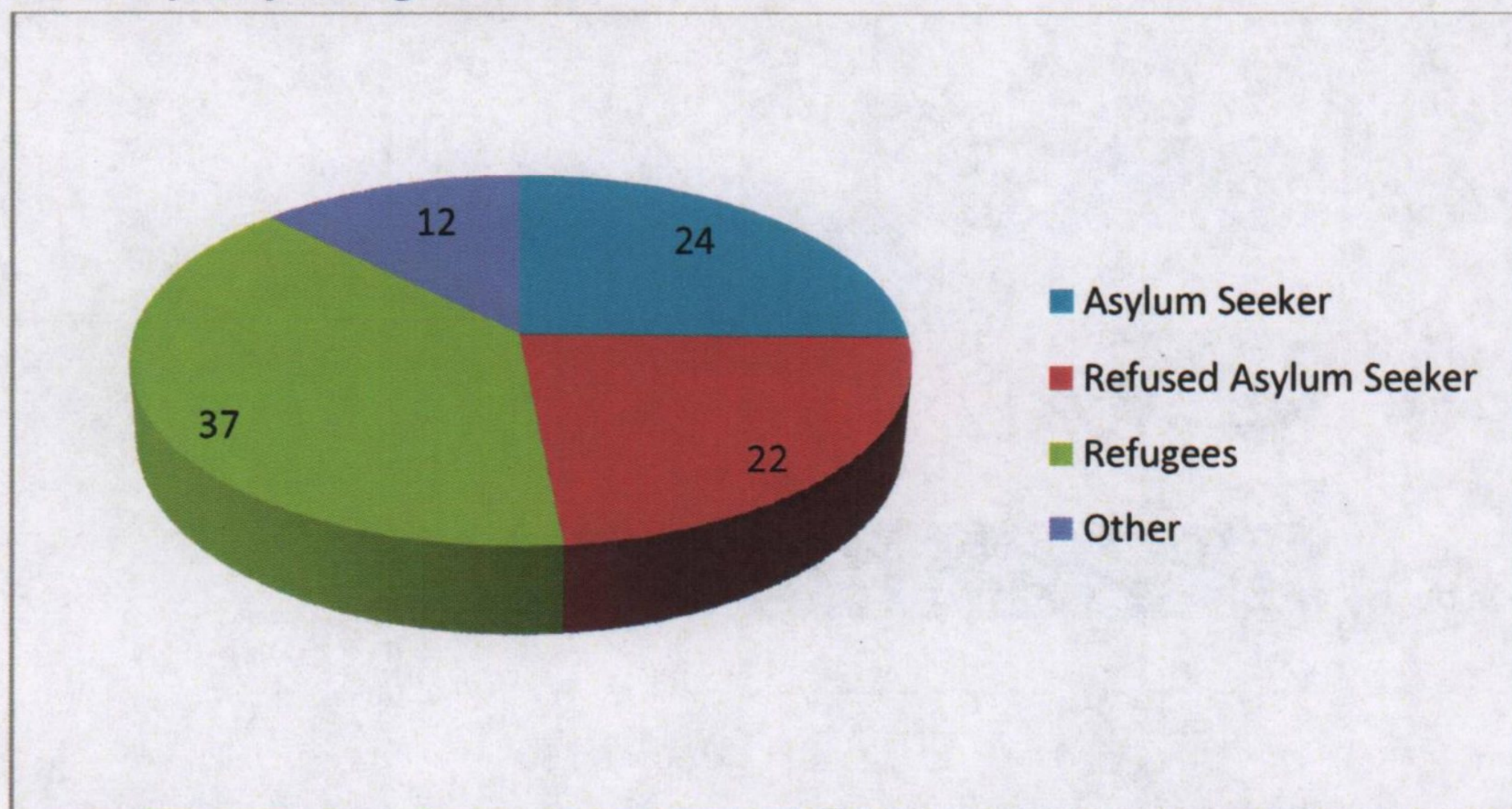
The following diagrams indicate the make-up of the sample in terms of:

- Immigration Status
- Age
- Gender
- Dependents
- When they first visited the forum
- Nationality

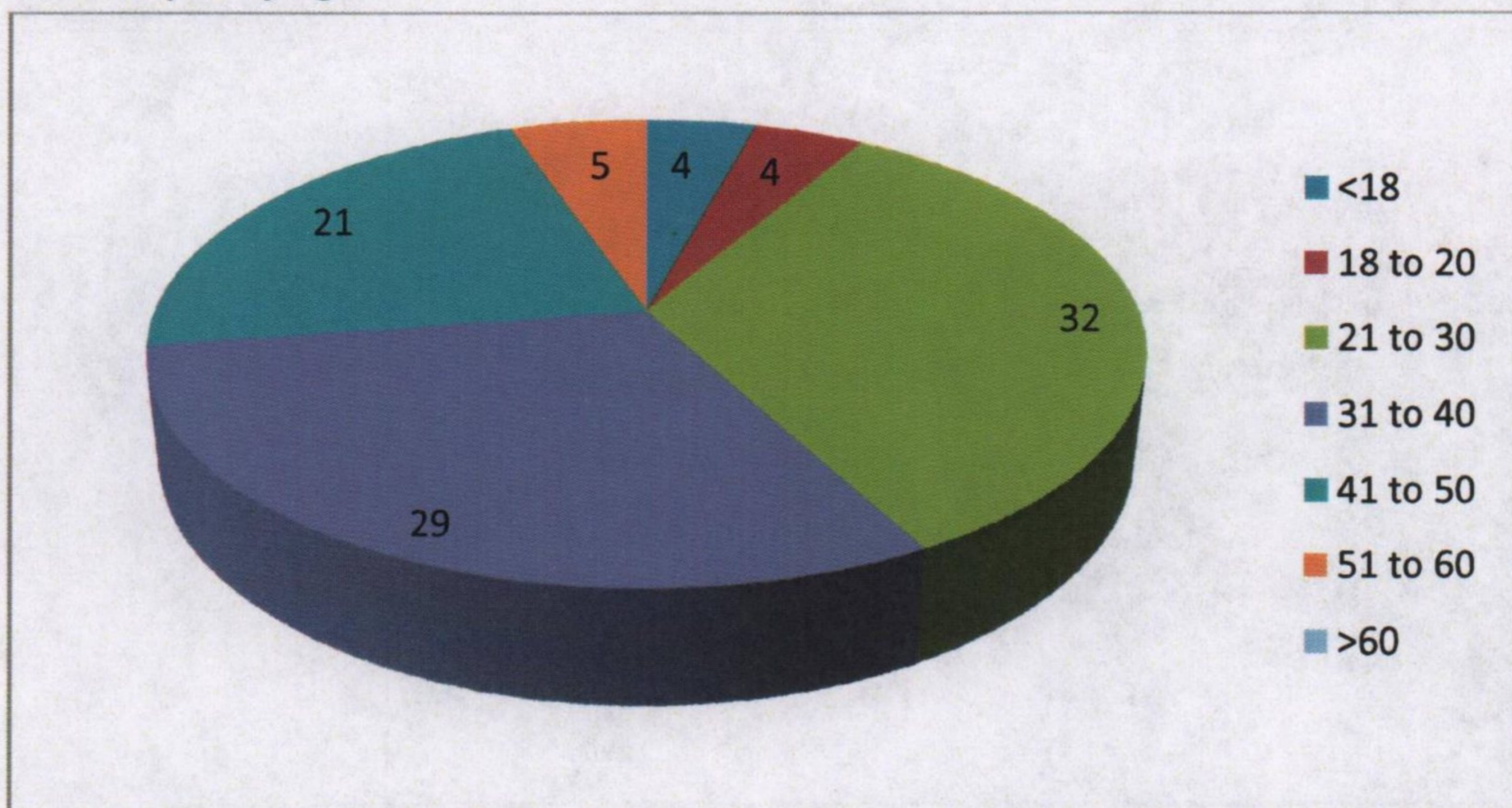
It has not been possible to compare this sample against wider refugee statistics (due to time) or visitor data from the forum (due to time and accessibility of data)

Broadly NNRF senior staff believe the sample is representative with the exception of Mongolians being over represented and Eritreans under represented

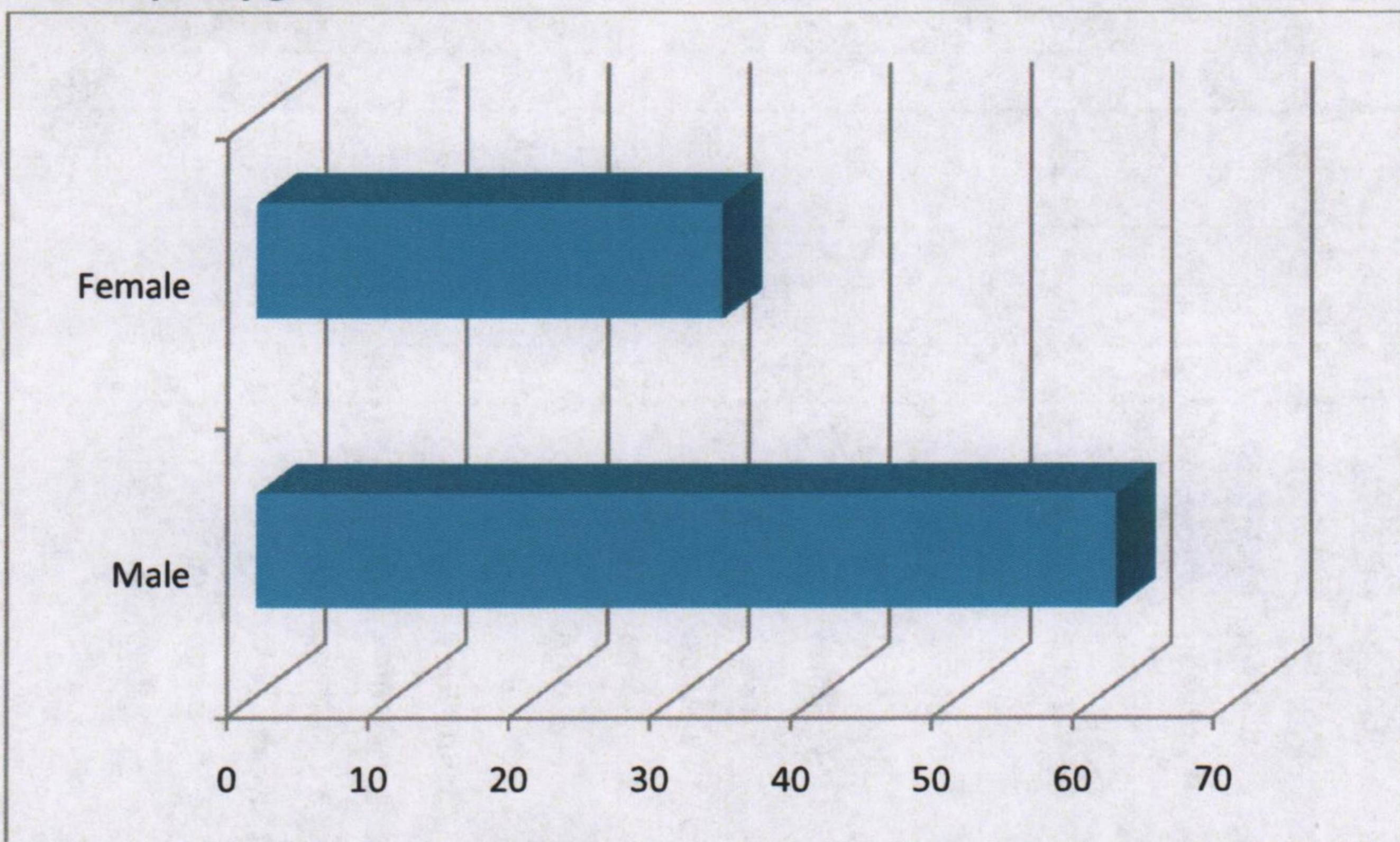
The sample by Immigration Status



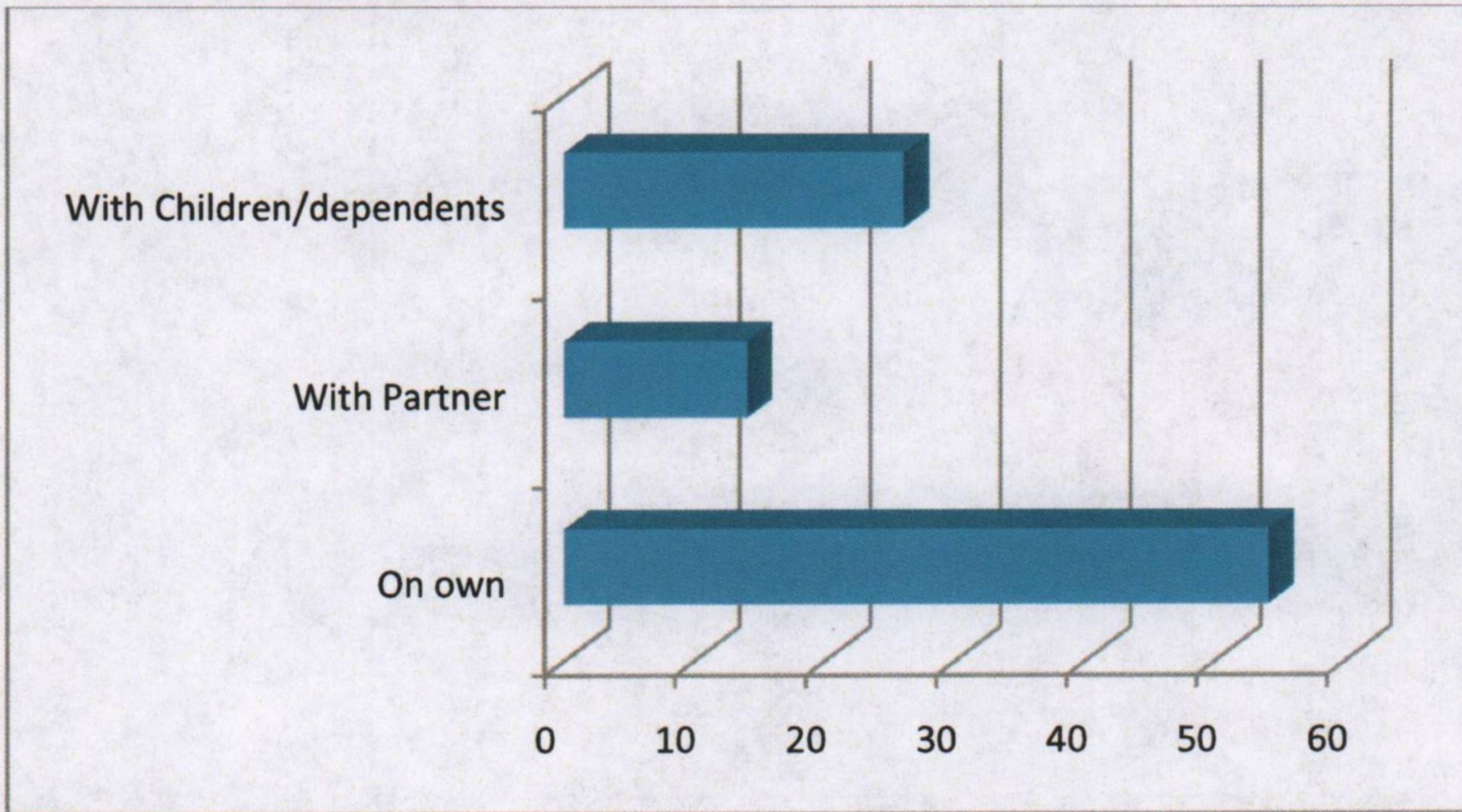
The sample by age



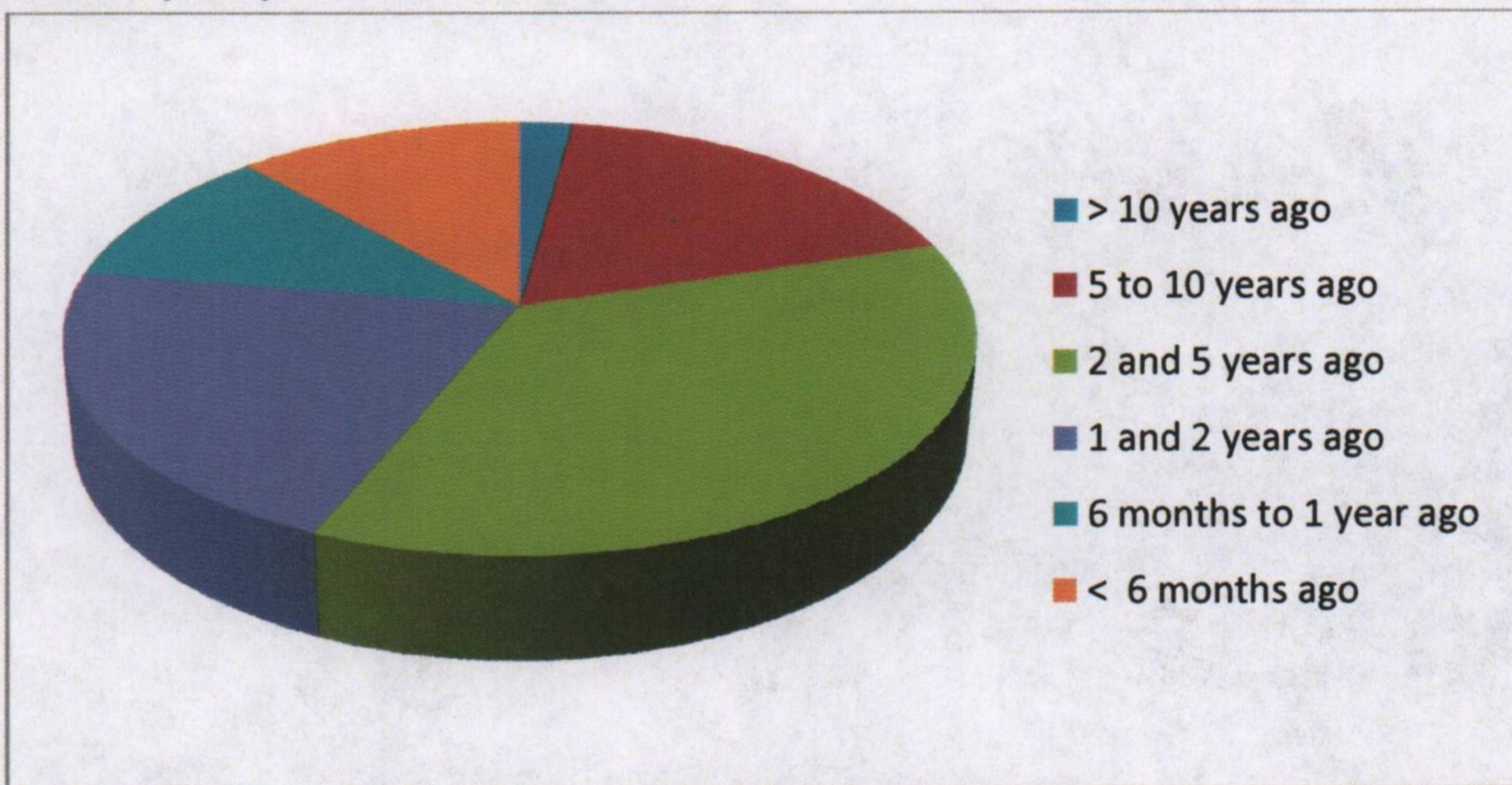
The sample by gender



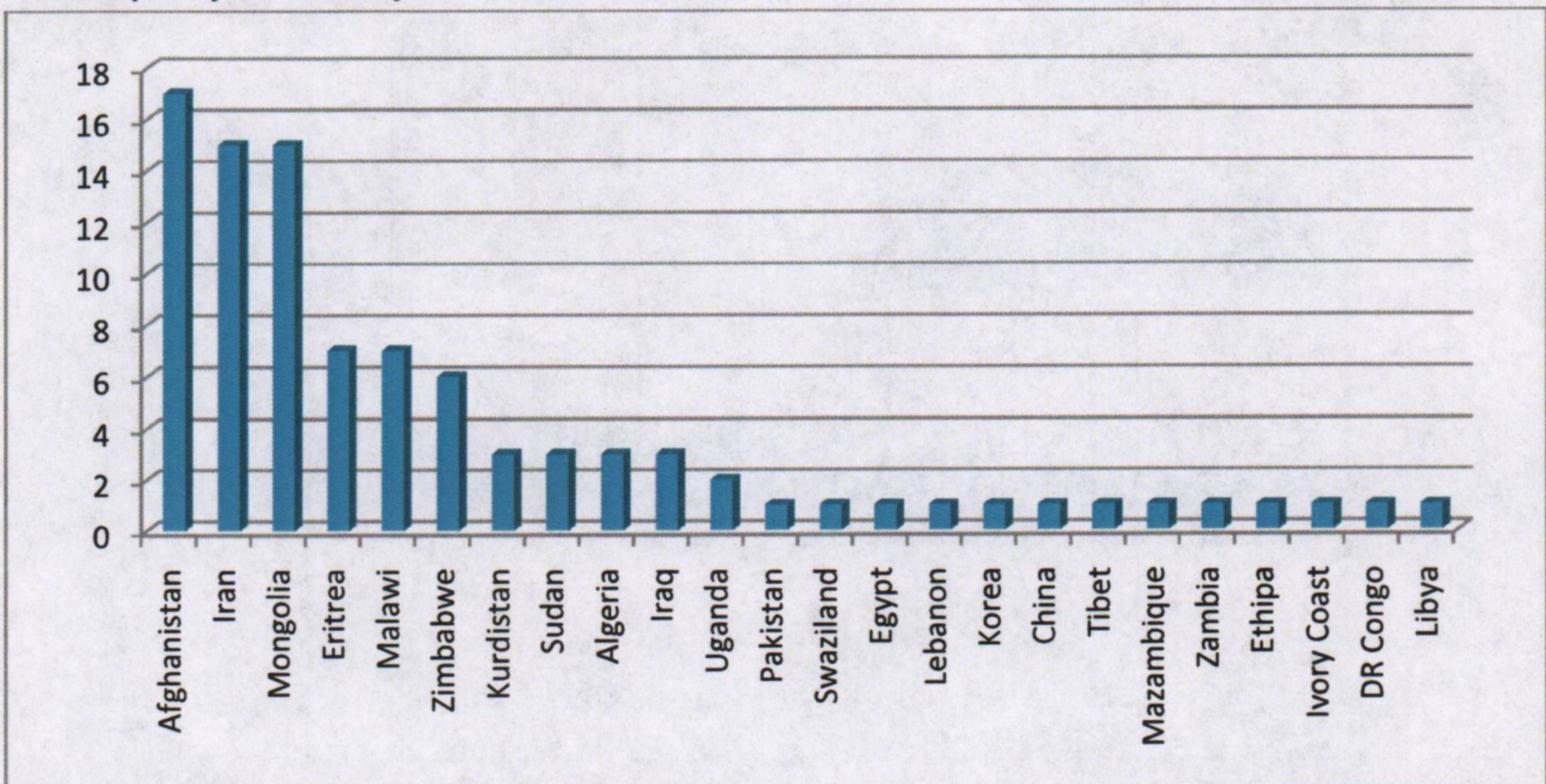
The sample by dependents



The sample by time of first visit

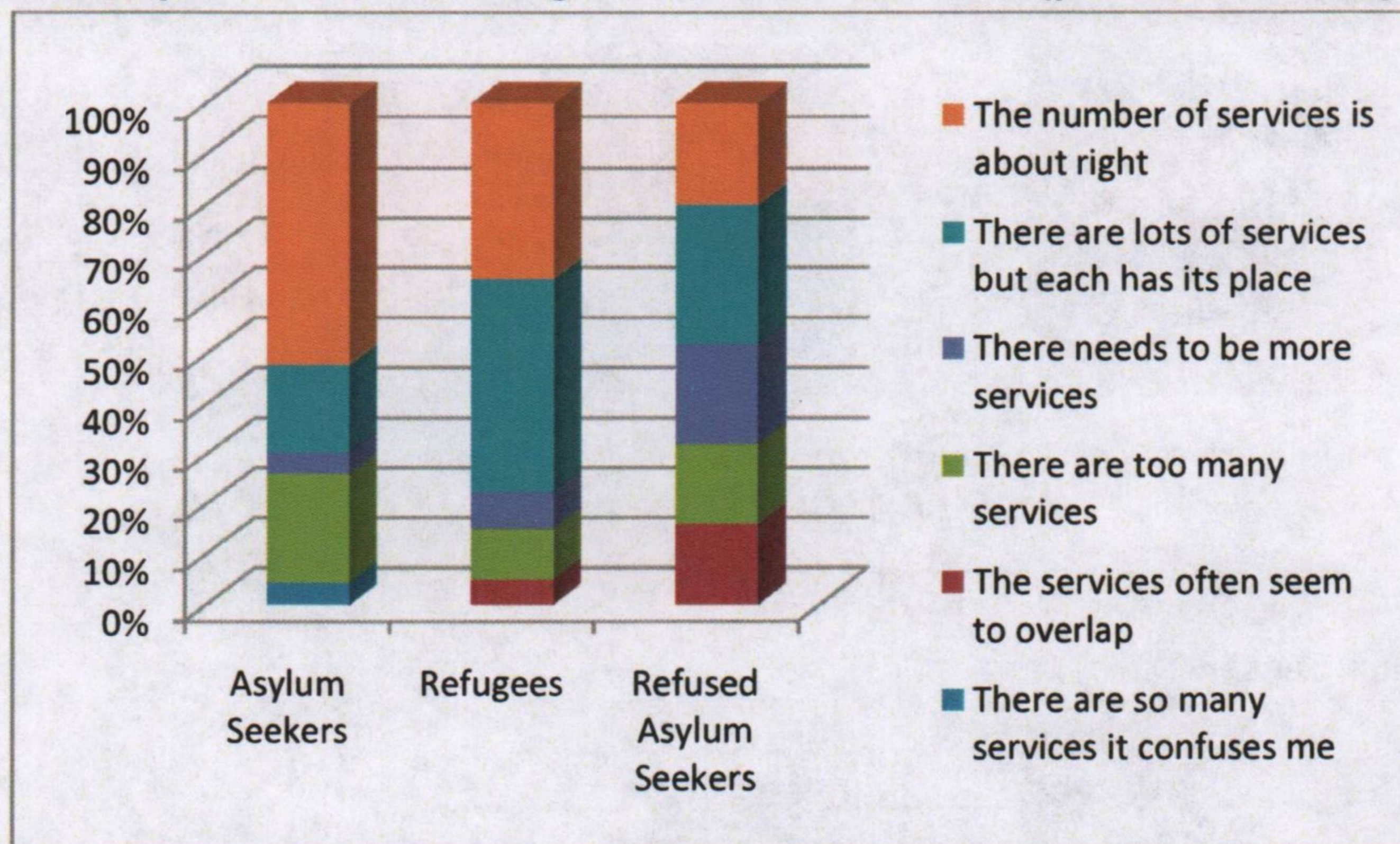


The sample by Nationality



APPENDIX 2. Attitudes to range of services by Immigration Status

How do you feel about the range of services at the Forum (please tick as many as you like)?

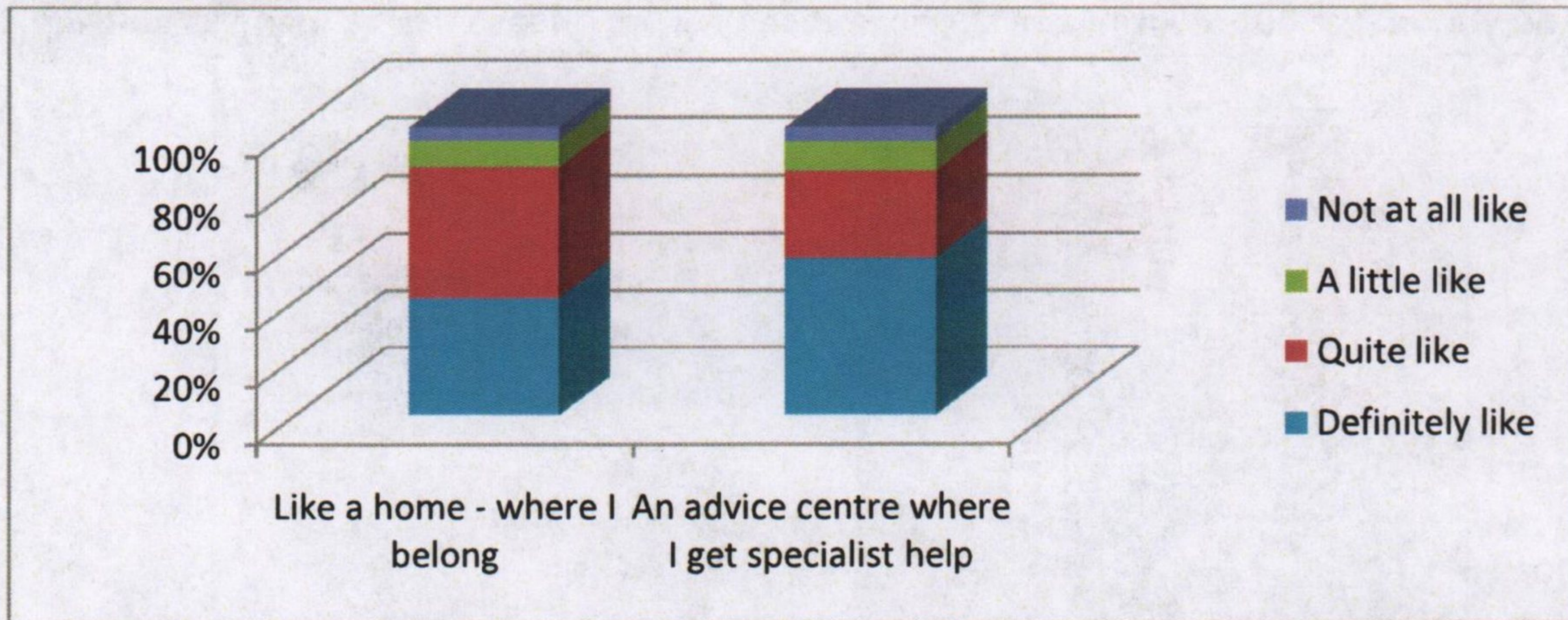


Number participating:

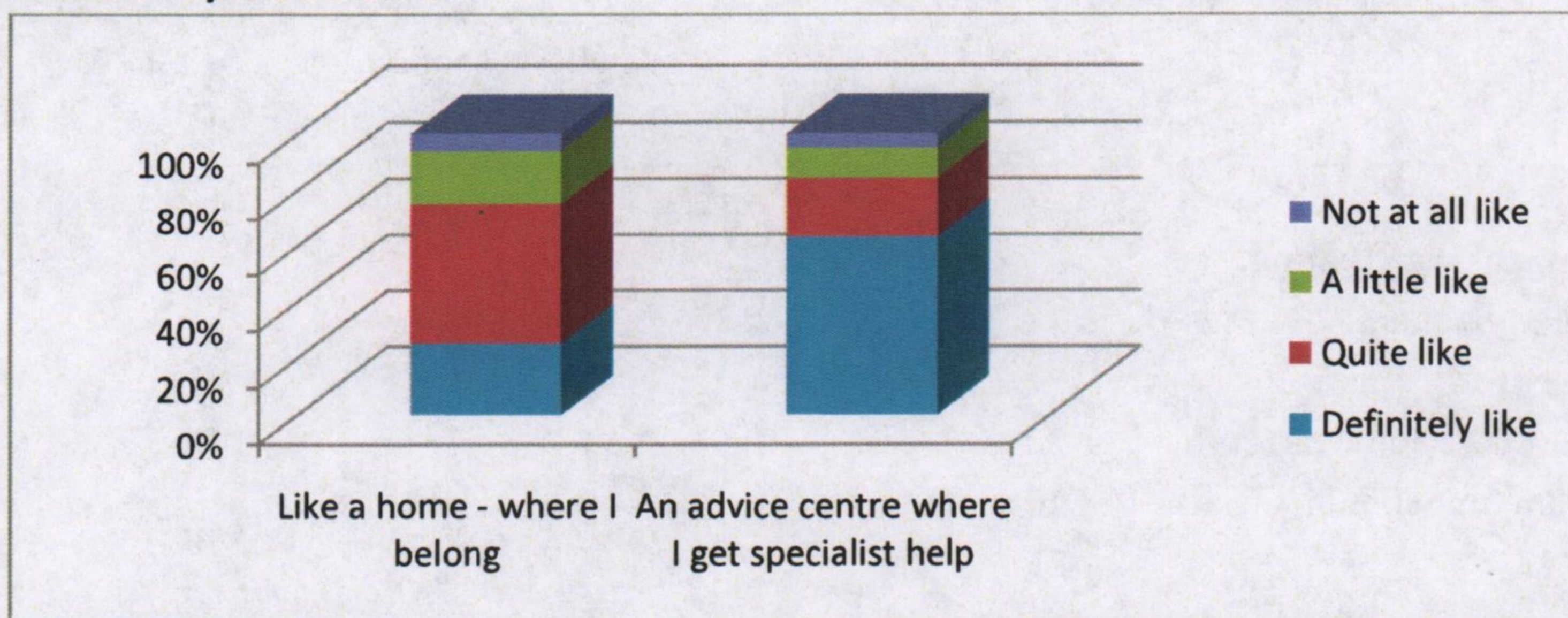
Asylum Seekers	21
Refugees	34
Refused Asylum seekers	20
Others (not shown)	10
TOTAL	85

APPENDIX 3. How the service user sample viewed the Forum

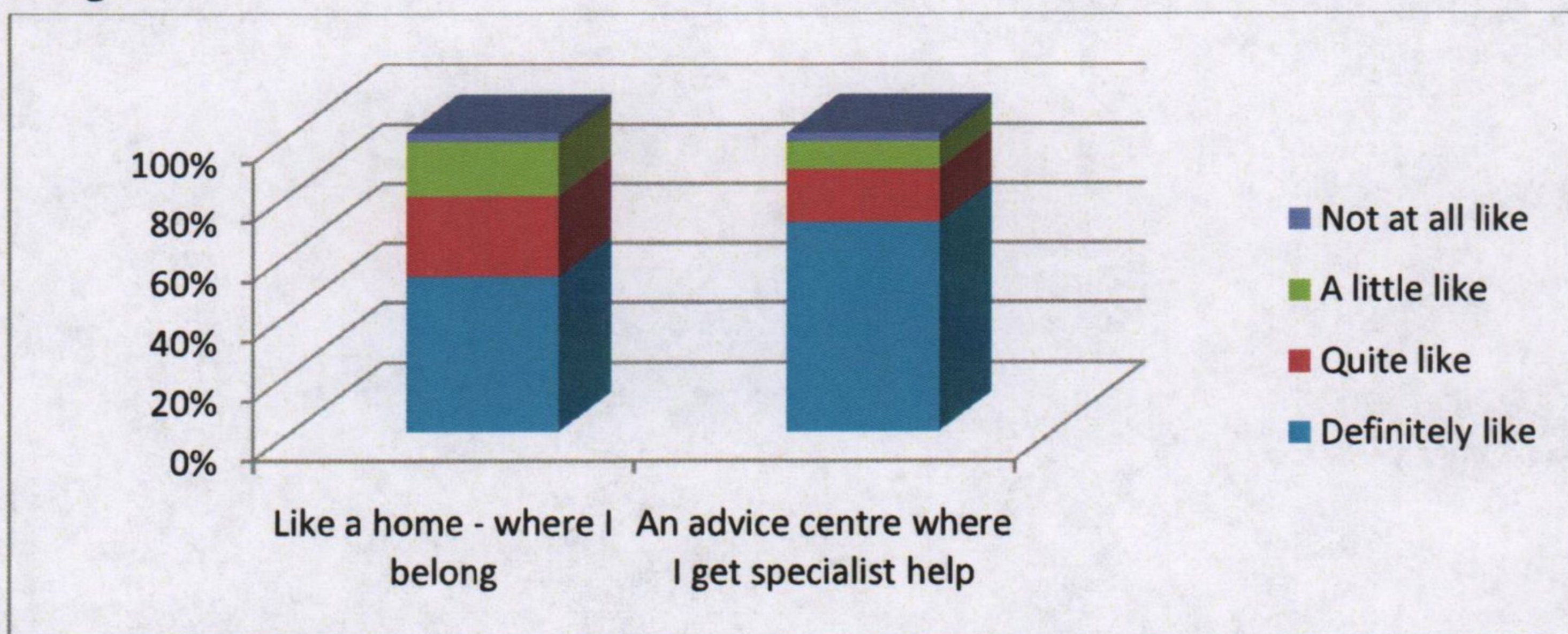
Asylum Seekers



Refused Asylum Seekers

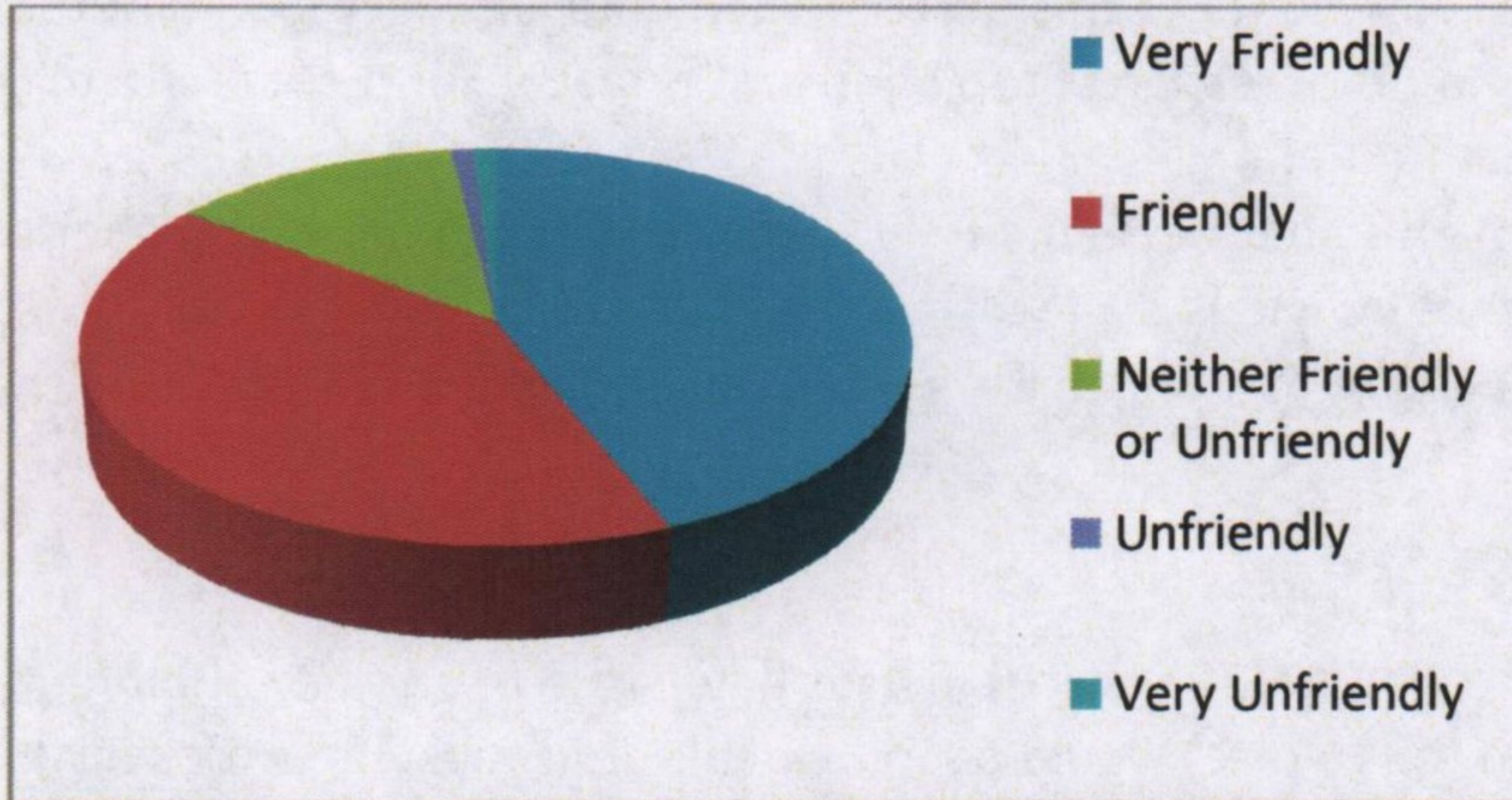


Refugees



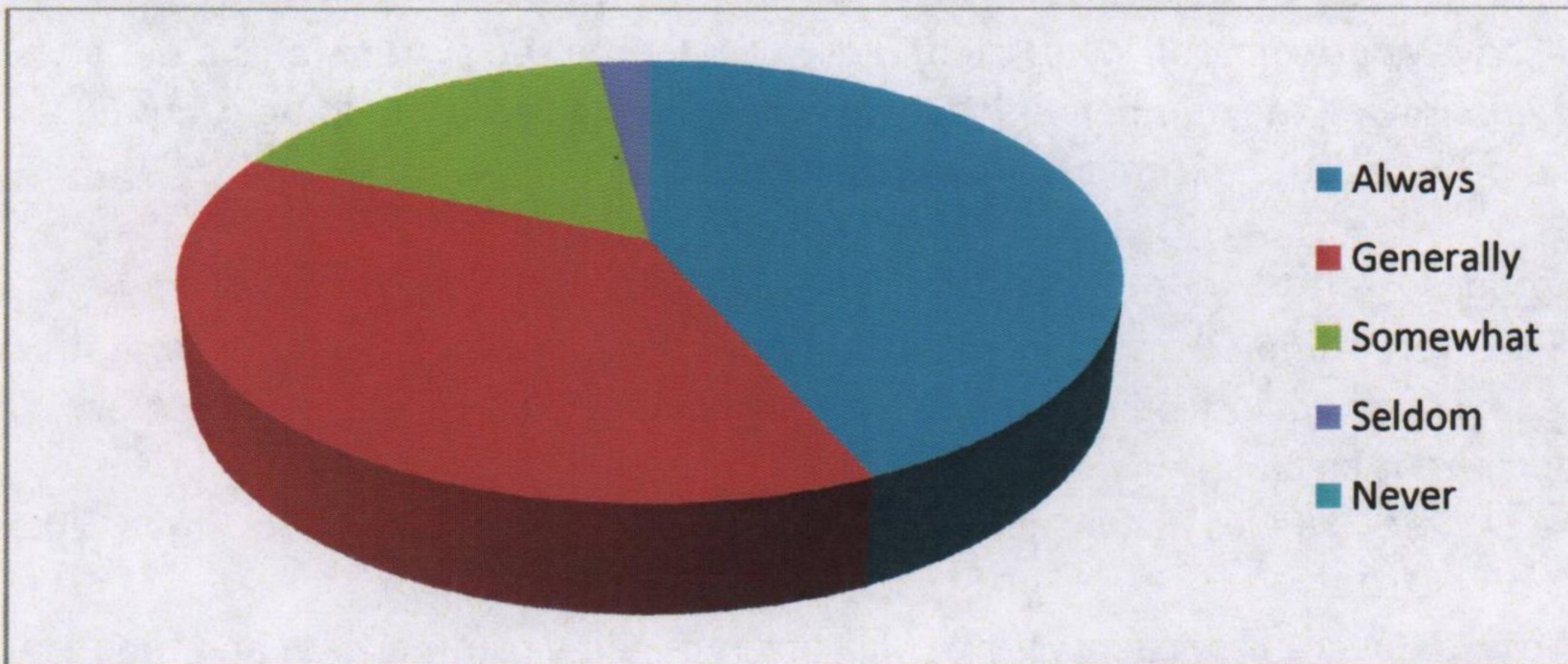
APPENDIX 4. Service User Survey – Welcome, Consistency and Trust

How would you describe the welcome at NNRF

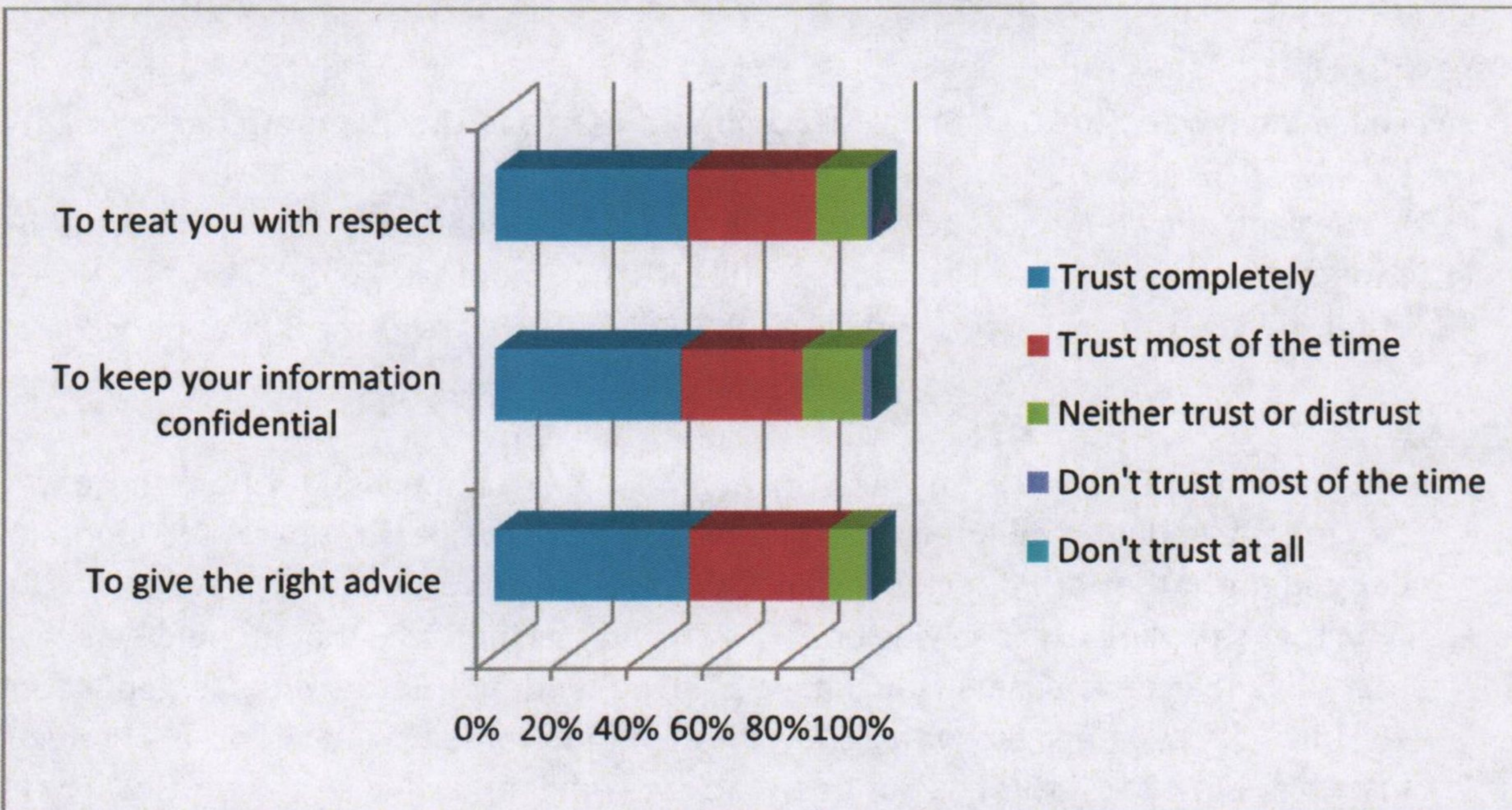


The question was asked about the first and subsequent visits – there was no significant difference in the results.

Do you feel the way the Forum treats service users is consistent?



Please indicate how much you trust or don't trust the Forum.....



A bench marking exercise would be useful with other service providers; it may be results, especially regarding confidentiality, are somewhat lower than ideal.

APPENDIX 5. Derivation of Forecast for Outcome Objective 1.

Difficulties encountered when trying to calculate this figure include:

- A wide range of services contribute to this outcome and data is collected in different ways for each service and often (eg One Stop Shop and Housing Support) relate to the demands from particular funders.
- Some projects collect the number of clients they have engaged, some the number of visits and some number of individuals and visits.
- There is no method of accounting for overlaps when one individual is using more than one service.

Approach to calculation:

- Service user that engage with NNRF services always have a file opened on their first visit. The only exception (quite rare) would be individuals only engaging with social activities or receiving anti-destitution support – these services do not contribute to outcome 1 and can therefore be discounted for this calculation.
- All other services at NNRF contribute directly to outcome 1 – without exception they focus on improving life chances and improving access to services delivered by NNRF itself, other voluntary organisations or statutory provision.
- NNRF have approximately 4000 client files in a paper based system (plus older archived files). Identifying the number with activity since the Big Lottery funding commenced would be a measure of progress towards outcome 1.

Method Adopted:

- The files were sampled on a 1 in 10 basis in April 2012. For each file a note was made if there had been activity before and/or after November 2009 (ie in the Big Lottery funded period).
- In the sample 218 files had activity in the 30 month period between November 2009 and April 2012.
- Of these 153 were new clients (since Big Lottery funding commenced) and the remainder, 65, were previously engaged with NNRF. The average number of new clients per month, in the sample, is 5.1 (153/30 months)

Forecast:

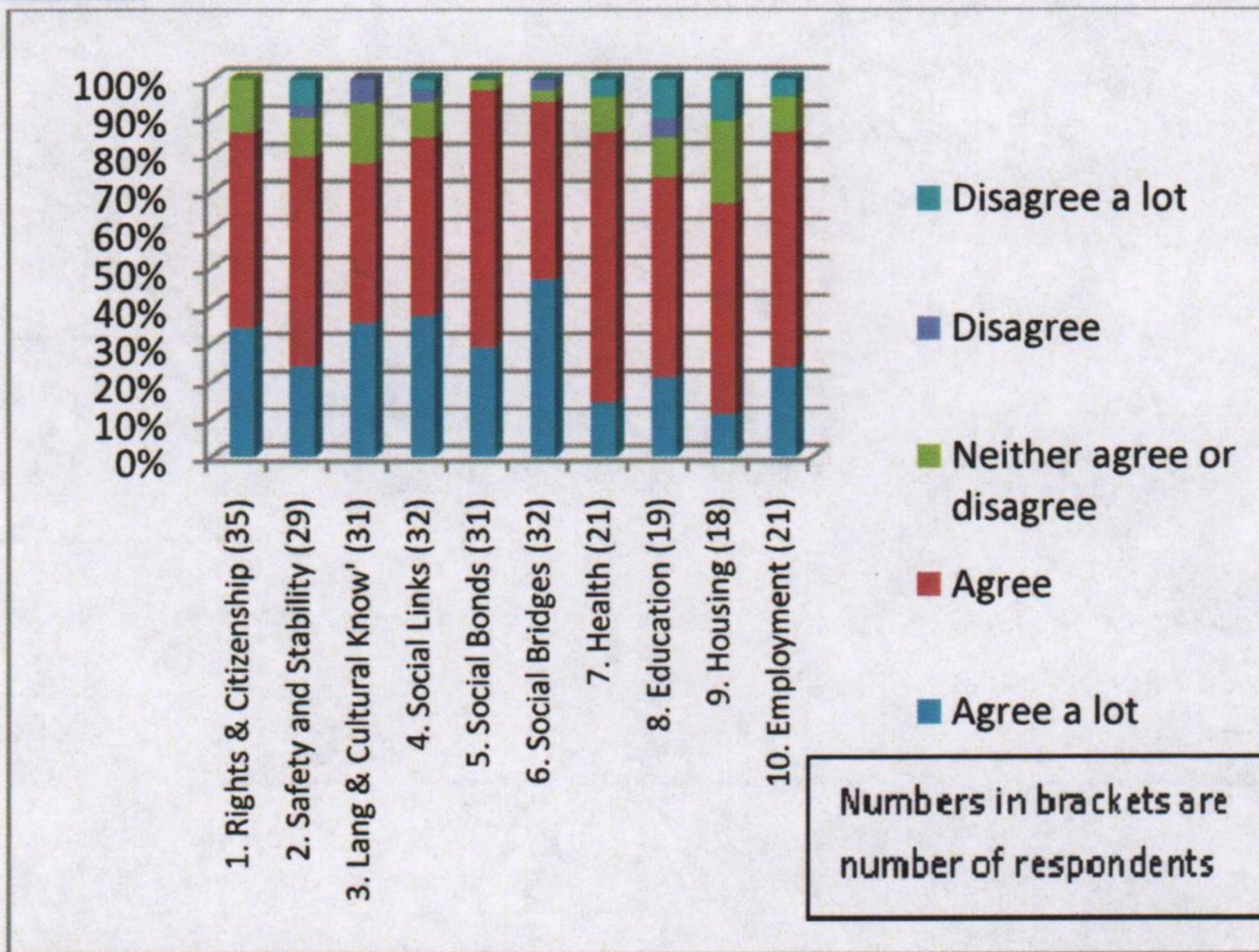
- The sample was 1 in 10 so the total number of clients in the 30 month period is 2180 (218 X 10)
- In the remaining 6 months of the funding (May to October 2012) it is reasonable to expect a further 308 new service users (5.1 X 10 X 6months)
- Total service users accessing services is **2488** (2180+308) over the 3 year period.

Dependents:

- Until mid 2011 files were only ever opened for the 'lead' individual where there were dependents (adult or children). Practice since then is to open a separate file for adult dependents if they are directly engaging with services.
- A further sampling exercise was undertaken and this indicates that it could be expected that the 2488 service users would have **1730** dependents. Some of these dependents will have directly engaged with NNRF (through the Women's and Children's Projects for instance) but even if this has not been the case adult and child dependents will have had 'better life chances' through the 'improved access to services' achieved by their parent/partner's engagement with NNRF.

APPENDIX 6. Service User Survey - Agreement to Impact Statement by Status

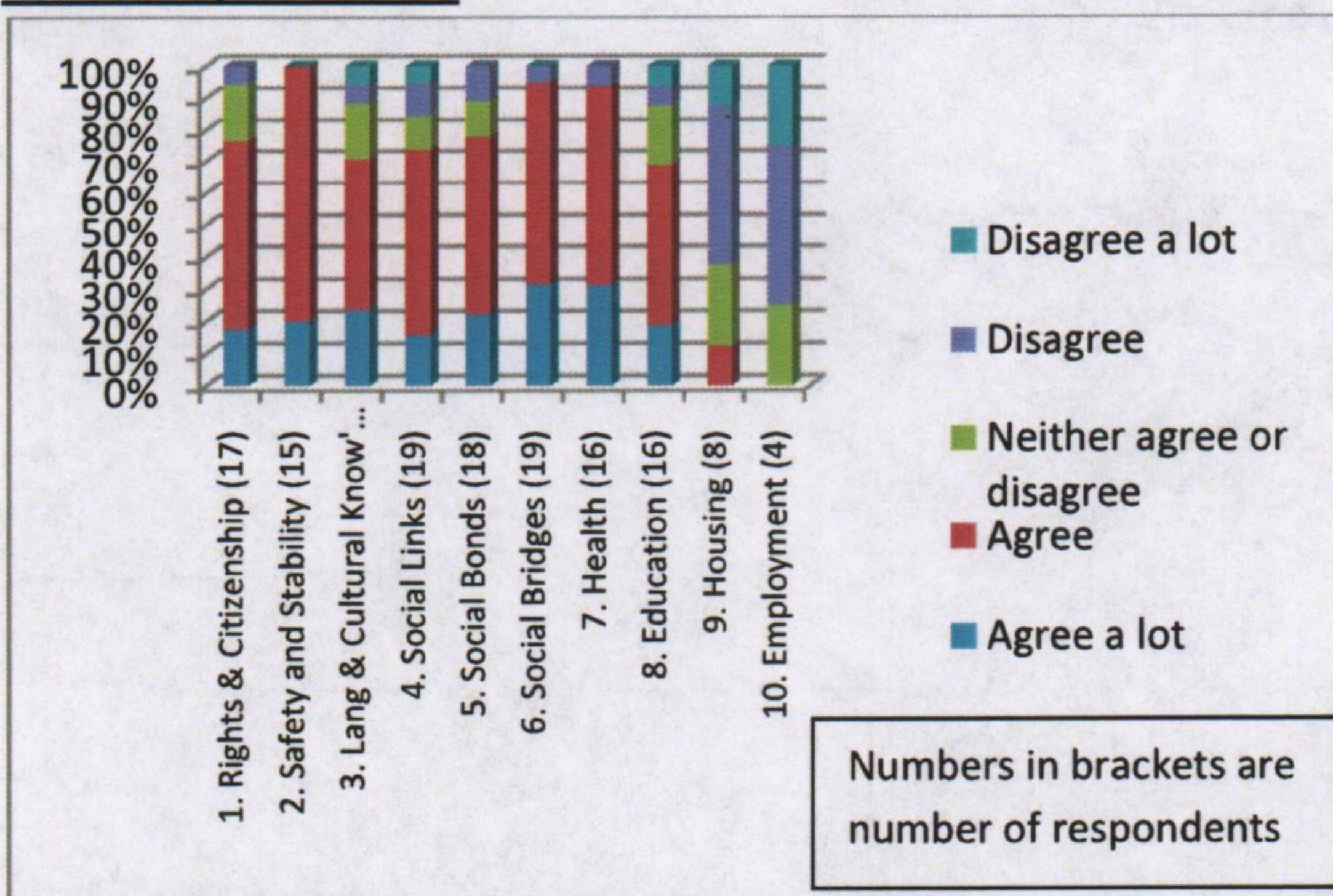
Refugee



Key Points:

- Overall a high level of agreement across all indicators
- Less response for 'means and marker' indicators (approx two thirds of refugee respondents).

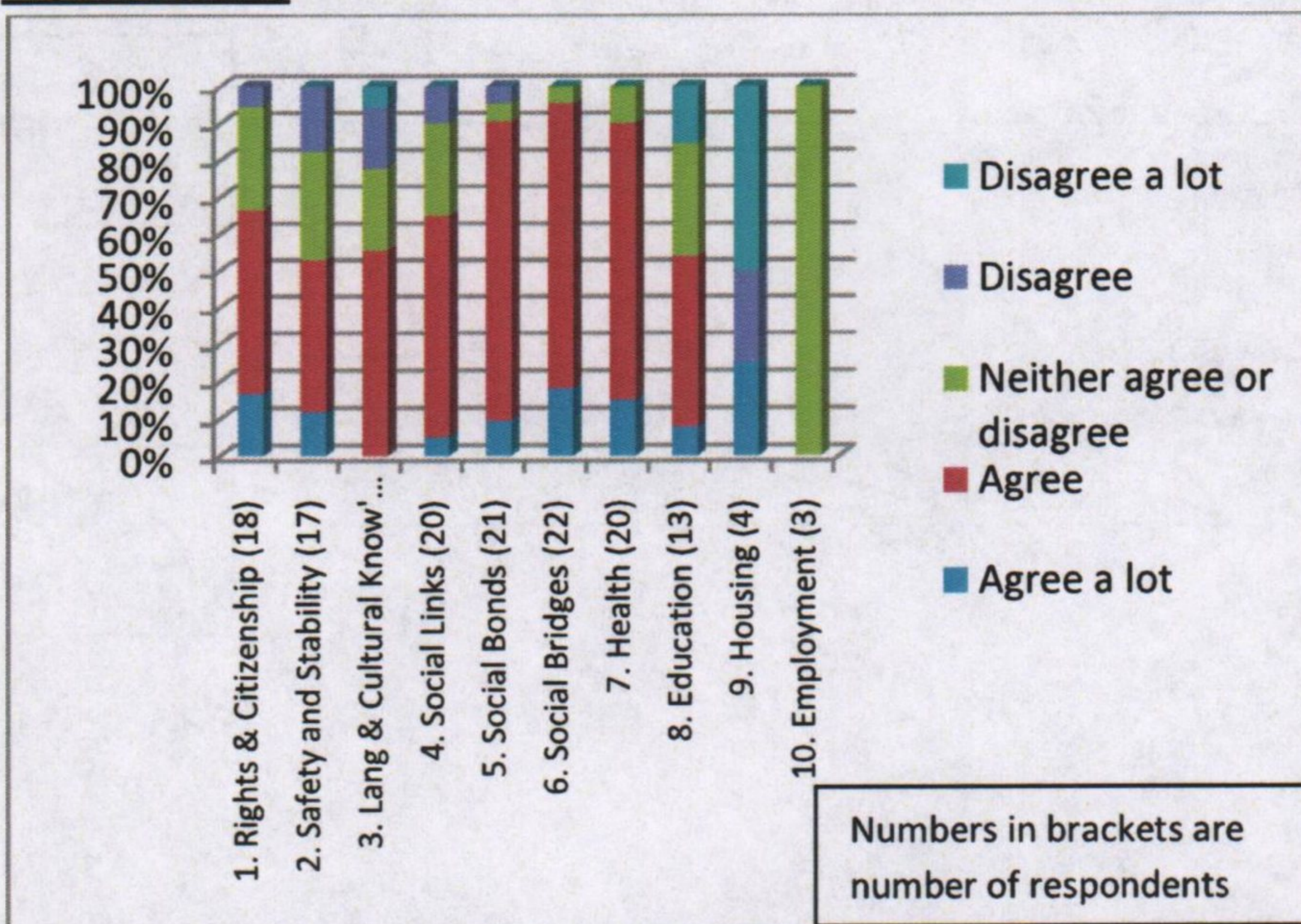
Refused Asylum Seekers



Key Points:

- Overall a high level of agreement except for employment and housing
- Less responses for housing and employment – between 50% and 25% of total refused Asylum Seeker respondents.
- Particularly high level of agreement with safety and stability indicator





Asylum Seekers



Key Points:

- A slightly more negative response overall, a pattern repeated elsewhere in the report.
- Less responses for education (two thirds of respondents), housing and employment (less than a quarter of respondents)

APPENDIX 7. Stakeholder Task and Results

1. Aspiration =  Man Comm =  Exec Comm =  Staff = 

1. Is NNRF....



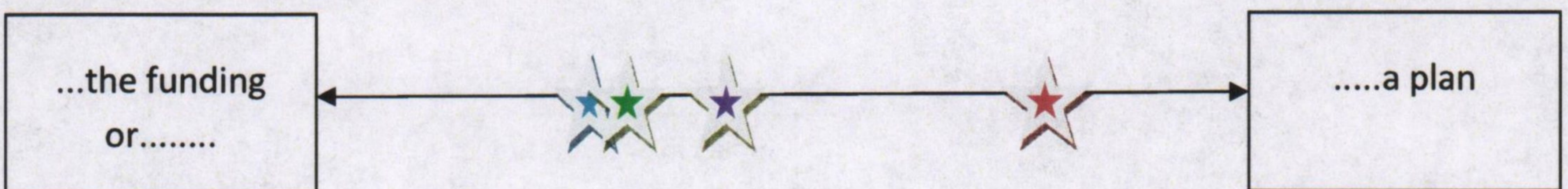
2. Do NNRF....



3. Is NNRF's overriding approach....



4. Does NNRF follow....



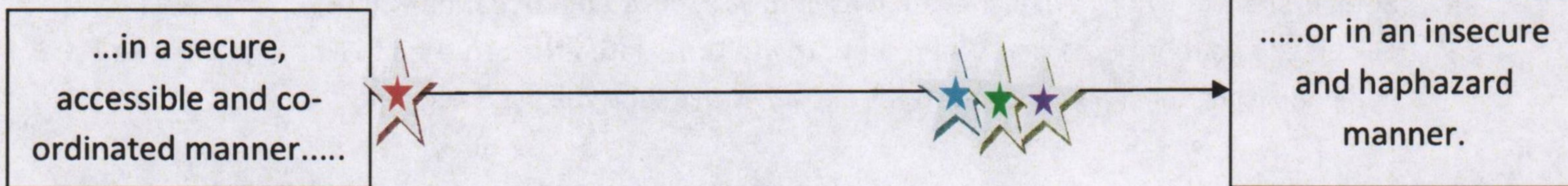
5. Does the NNRF MC and EC....



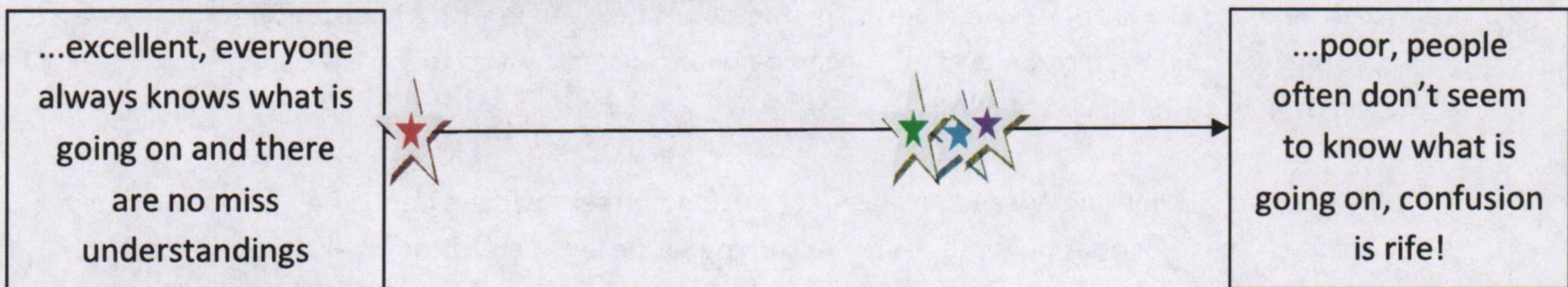
6. Does NNRF involve service users in.....



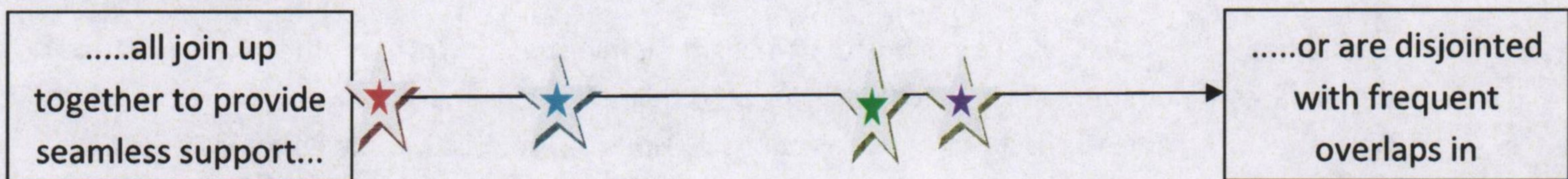
7. Does NNRF manage its data, knowledge and information...



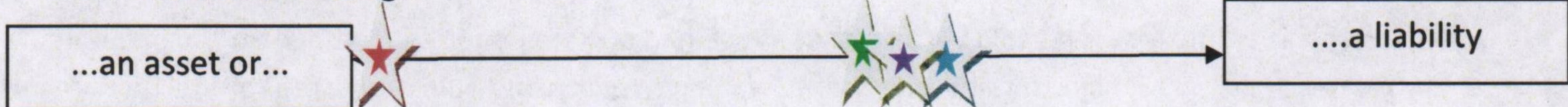
8. How good are communications within NNRF....



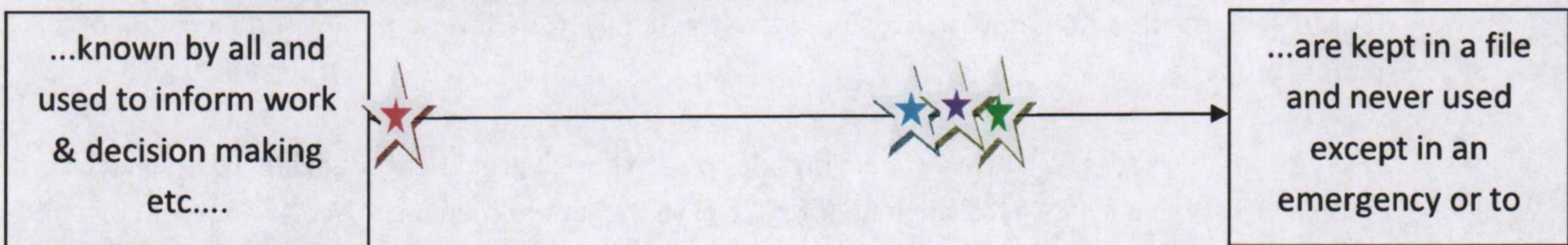
9. Do NNRF services.....



10. Is the NNRF building....



11. Does NNRF have policies and procedures that are...



12. Does NNRF have.....



Volunteers not shown

APPENDIX 8 CASE HISTORIES

A TYPICAL HOUSING SITUATION

Ms C is a refugee from Eritrea. She has a young baby. At the time when she was granted Leave to Remain she was living in Manchester in Asylum Support accommodation where she had been dispersed two months earlier. When support was terminated she returned to Nottingham where she had been living for 1 ½ years prior to dispersal. At this time she was pregnant.

Ms C presented at Housing Aid but was not accommodated. She was advised to return to Manchester, the area where she had a local connection. Not wanting or willing to return to a city where she had lived for just two months she temporarily moved in with friends. After her baby was born she was told by her friends that she could no longer remain with them. Ms C made an appointment with the OSS at NNRF.

NNRF contacted Housing Aid and arranged for an appointment with an interpreter giving the dates which Ms C had been resident in the city. According to the law if an asylum seeker is dispersed by UKBA this automatically gives them a local connection to that area but this does not override a local connection to a previous area if, for example, they were resident there prior to dispersal.

Subsequently Ms C was placed in a hostel pending their investigation into whether there NCC had a duty to accommodate the family. NNRF, OSS staff remained in close contact with Ms C during this time so as to be able to react promptly to actions by Housing Aid. Ms C would either visit NNRF or staff visited her at the hostel during outreach sessions.

After some time Ms C was told verbally that as she had no connection to Nottingham she had been referred back to Manchester and they were awaiting a response. NNRF requested this decision in writing and made Ms C an appointment with Nottingham Law Centre. The specialist housing advisor successfully challenged the decision that Ms C had been ordinarily resident in Nottingham and Housing Aid accepted their duty to accommodate the family. Ms C is now waiting for allocation of a suitable property.

This is a common scenario. Local Connection rules often cause a great deal of anxiety to refugees who may have been living in Nottingham for several years but are then dispersed to another city and granted status after a short period. The consequences impact greatly on the wellbeing of asylum seekers who have no choice when being offered Asylum Support and face losing their support network; education and healthcare is often interrupted and integration is hindered.

HEALTH RELATED

Case 1

27 year old **male from Sudan** brought a medical report to say that he had been tortured. NNRF, ITM project referred client to GP but he was denied registration. The exact reason was unclear. ITM later registered the client outside his catchment area with another doctor and he was referred to Medical Foundation for Victims of Torture.

Case 2

Young Iraqi male who had been in the country for about two months had difficulties in registering because he had no fixed address. NNRF ITM project provided one of our offices as a care-of address which was accepted. Project staff accompanied patient to GP surgery where staff asked to see copies of the Home Office documents showing his status before they could register him. When we asked staff if this was a general policy by the surgery, reception staff informed us that they were not allowed to register any asylum seekers without checking their eligibility/legality in the UK – they reported that this requirement was imposed on them by NHS Nottingham. The client was later registered having shown a letter from the UKBA.

Case 3

Young Syrian male with bullet shrapnel in leg moved from Hull and was without papers after NASS withdrew support and his possessions were removed when he lost accommodation. NNRF, ITM project accompanied patient to GP surgery. Reception staff informed patient that the system would not accept registration without the details of previous address and GP.

Case 4

Iraqi family with mother and her child refused registration. Patient's husband had refugee status. Husband took wife and child to GP where he was a patient. Practice would mother and child unless she could prove that she was living at same address as her husband. The husband explained that she arrived in the country 5 days before and showed her passport with the arrival date stamped and explained that she did not have a chance to receive any documents addressed to her at the address at that point. They were refused registration.

Case 5

Young Vietnamese male suffering severe pains in stomach attempted to register at GP. He was refused registration. He attended A&E, and was kept overnight. Regardless of the fact that the GP could have used discretion as with any other patient regardless of immigration status, this client was not even offered immediately necessary care.

Case 6

Pregnant Nigerian lady recently moved from London to Nottingham refused registration unless she provided photographic evidence. Pregnant women should always be registered as pregnancy is always considered "immediately necessary".