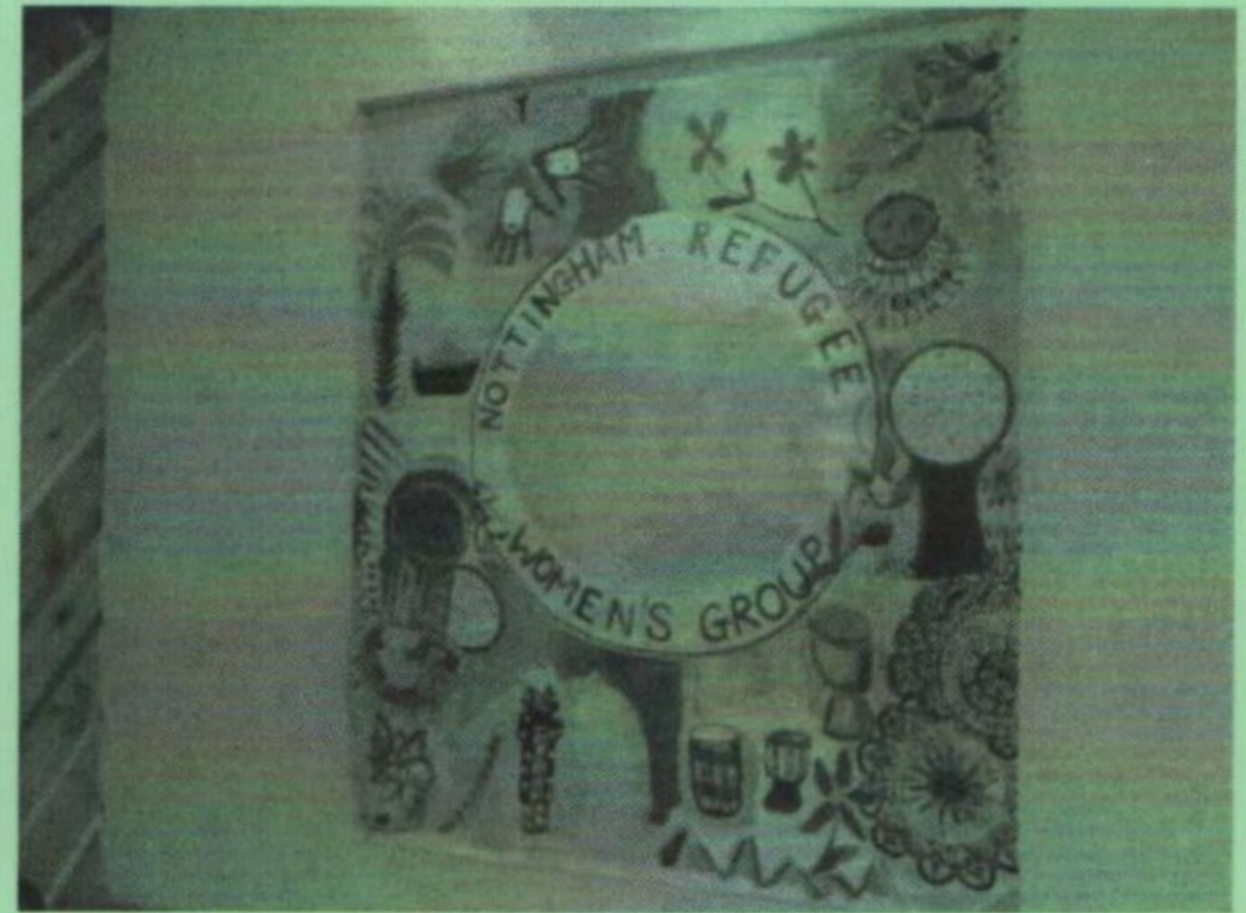


Visit by the Lord Mayor, Cllr Leon Unczer



2012



Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum

Registered Charity No. 1121560 Company Limited By Guarantee No: 05352679

Annual Report



Contents

Who is who at Refugee Forum: 2011 – 2012	2
Vision & Aims Statement.....	3
Chair's Report.....	3
Manager's Report.....	4
Centre User's Stats.....	6
General Advice Service.....	7
OSS.....	10
Benefits Advice.....	14
Immigration & Asylum Advice.....	16
Into the Mainstream.....	18
Housing Support Project.....	21
Refugee Futures.....	24
Anti-Destitution Report – Food Group.....	27
Anti-Destitution Report – Cash Group.....	29
Tuesday Night Project.....	32
Children & Families Project.....	32
Refugee Women's Group.....	35
Volunteer Coordinator.....	37
Nottingham Refugee Week 2012.....	39
Action by Nott'm Citizens for Sanctuary.....	40
New Website.....	41
Funding Report.....	41
RCO Support Wk & Routes Development Work.....	42
Culturebox Singing Club.....	44
Partnership Working & Networking.....	45
Evaluation Report.....	47
NNRF Membership Report.....	48
Public Benefit Statement.....	49
Treasurer's Report & Abbreviated Accounts.....	50
A Big Thank You.....	52
NNRF Membership Form.....	54
Gift Aid Declaration.....	55

Who's who at Refugee Forum: 2011 – 2012

Executive Officers:

Chair:	Patsy Brand	Vice chair:	Andrew Wilson* Nancy Bonongwe**
Treasurer:	Leo Keely	Secretary:	John Henson

*to May 2012 **from July 2012

Other Management Committee members (NB not all listed served for the full year):

Nancy Bonongwe	Pete Loewenstein
Dave Hewitt	Clara Ndlovu
Julia Howell	Allan Njanji
Phil Jackson	Seyed Shakeri
Maggie Jones	Laurent Tchouleng
Amdani Juma	

The Committee (which acts as the board of Trustees in terms of the Charity Commission and as Directors in terms of Companies House) met 12 times during the year.

Refugee Forum staff - 2011-12

Centre Manager:	Bea Tobolewska
Senior Adviser/Deputy manager:	Rakiba Khatun
Assistant Manager (Advice & interpreting):	Bahman Mohammed
Senior Administrator:	Imran Asif / Gina Musa
Administrative Assistants:	Teresa Pacey-Devlin & Tina Patel
One-Stop-Shop Adviser:	Fiona Broome
Benefits Advisers:	Mussie Kidane
Health project workers:	Kinsi Clarke & Eamon Collins
Volunteer Coordinator:	Wesal Afifi
RCO support worker:	Stuart Brown
Children's Worker:	Liz Burrell
Refugee Futures Support Worker:	Julie Whitehead
Housing Support Worker:	Simon Breen
ESOL tutor	Sheila Jones
Caretaker & Cleaner:	Azad Mohammed
Cover support staff	Jasim Ghafur & Sara Abraham

Our Vision & Aims

Working with asylum seekers and refugees in rebuilding their lives by

- Providing a welcoming community and advice centre, offering a place of safety and friendship, run by trained staff and volunteers, many of whom are refugees and asylum seekers.
- Offering advice and support services that are tailored to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees in critical areas such as housing, immigration, welfare benefits, healthcare and destitution.
- 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 and generous response to asylum seekers and refugees from local communities, government and statutory agencies.
- Advocating on behalf of individual asylum seekers and refugees in cases of extreme hardship and/ or injustice.
- Working in partnership with voluntary and statutory partners to provide holistic support.

Chair's Report

In this report you will read of the great achievements of the Forum's dedicated staff and volunteers in supporting refugees and asylum seekers over the past twelve months and, through the case-studies, learn something of the many and often complex problems faced by those they have assisted.

Between April and July a very thorough review and evaluation of the Forum's work over the past three years was carried out by a Montgomery Masters consultant who interviewed staff, users, volunteers, stakeholders and Trustees. The findings were very encouraging, revealing high levels of user satisfaction and demonstrating how our approach of combining the provision of advice and support with an open, welcoming community centre, meeting social needs and reducing social isolation, is appreciated by our users. The report also highlighted some areas for development and organisational improvements on which the Trustees are taking action.

After big adjustments following the funding cuts of 2011, we have experienced a fairly stable twelve months financially and, due to the unstinting efforts of our staff and volunteers, led by our indefatigable manager Bea Tobolewska, have managed to

maintain a wide range of services and meet new challenges such as the awarding by UKBA of the asylum accommodation contract to G4S.



We have continued to work closely with established partners, several of whom use the Forum as a base for their support work, and have developed new relationships including with Host Nottingham, Himmah, Citizens for Sanctuary, Framework Housing Association and Culture Box, enabling the expansion of the range of activities on offer at the Centre.

However threatening black clouds are once again hanging over the Forum while we await decisions on several

key funding applications and for the implementation of the City Council's new strategy for funding the voluntary sector, moving from grants to a commissioning model. The next six months will be crucial in determining the level and scope of support we will be able to offer over the next three years. The search for sustainable funding is an on-going preoccupation. The Trustees have established a Funding Committee to lead on the development of a funding strategy and make applications. This has already had some successes but much more remains to be done in this harsh financial climate.

These uncertainties are very hard on staff members who already work in a stressful environment. Our thanks go to all of them and our wonderful body of volunteers for their unfailing commitment – and also to the dedicated Board of Trustees who have pro-actively guided the work of the Forum throughout the year.

Patsy Brand

Manager's Report

I write this remembering particularly David Fenerty and Margaret Tuck, two valued and sadly missed volunteers and supporters of the Refugee Forum who have died during the year. Our deepest sympathies go to your family and friends.

The Refugee Forum has had another interesting and busy year, seeing many changes over the course of 2012. Despite the continued pressures upon funding and the demand for our services, the Centre continues to be a dynamic and interesting place to work.

The diversity of the services we provide in order to support refugees and asylum seekers is one of the many strengths that we possess and makes us the unique organisation that we are. I am immensely proud that we have been able to secure our varied projects for at least another year and beyond. Some of our successes of the year have been:

- securing the 'Into the Mainstream' Health Project for a further year thus helping to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers have access to health care services and that healthcare professionals receive training to support entitlement and equality,
- winning the NCC contract to provide Welfare Rights Advice and support to refugees until January 2014,
- being successful in our bids to Children in Need for 3 years' further funding and Lloyds TSB for funding our proposal for an Anti-destitution Support Coordinator post for two years. This will ensure that the most vulnerable individuals receive the assistance and support that they require to improve their situation and circumstances.

2012 has been a particularly busy year in terms of staff turnover. It is with some sadness that we have had to say our good byes to Vera Hau (Training and Employment Adviser), Imran Asif (Senior Administrator), Tina Patel (Administration Assistant), Wesal Afifi (Volunteer Coordinator) and Eamon Collins ('Into the Mainstream' Health Project Worker). On behalf of all the staff I would like to say many thanks for all your dedication, support and work. You are all greatly missed and we wish you every success in your new pursuits.

With these losses we have also gained the opportunity to welcome some new members to our Team. Gina Musa returned in June as the Senior Administrator. In September we welcomed Henry Muchiyani in the new role of Anti-destitution Support Coordinator and Gemma Pillay recently joined us in October as the Volunteer Coordinator. We are delighted that you have joined us. We have also welcomed back Jasim Ghafur and Sara Abraham giving temporary cover in Housing Support while Simon Breen moves across to cover Fiona Broom's maternity leave.

On a more sombre note, in May, following a financial review by Nottingham City Council, we were disappointed that our partnership with Hostels Liaison Group (HLG) for the 'Routes' Project was brought to a premature end. Funding cuts have meant that we have had to re-address how as separate organisations NNRF and HLG continue to work together to ensure that refugees living in the city are both consulted about changes and receive information about housing issues which affect them.

The biggest external impacting factor facing us this year is the new COMPASS contract for accommodating asylum seekers, now held by G4S. From the start this has caused grave concerns to all who work in this sector in the light of their previous track record in working with asylum seekers and also their recent experience of contract delivery. The transition between the old and new contracts has been protracted and littered with concerns about several issues: the locations of accommodation within the city despite reassurances that people would remain within their initial city postcode areas, the quality of the properties and the treatment of service users.

Highlights of the year have included the work that NNRF has done with others - in particular the Commission and research with Citizens for Sanctuary and many partner agencies resulting in the powerful and noteworthy 'Hope and Homelessness' Report. Further information about this work is found later in this publication.

As a requirement of the Big Lottery Funding in 2009, the Refugee Forum had to undergo a formal Evaluation. Between February and May we worked on this probing and in-depth process with Adrian Masters, leading to a positive report which has provided us with much food for thought. Thank you Adrian.

As the Manger of NNRF I continue to feel very privileged to work with and for such a diverse community of people. The Forum is made up of Staff, Volunteers, Management Committee and Services Users who never cease to surprise and inspire me. Thank you all for your commitment and enthusiasm.

I would also like to thank all our Volunteers, Members and Supporters for your continued financial assistance, donations and time. We really do appreciate this and hope that this report demonstrates that your contributions are both valued and valuable.

Bea Tobolewska
Centre Manager

Who used the Centre this year?

When refugees and asylum seekers visit the centre during the day Monday to Friday, reception volunteers record basic personal information so that we can monitor trends. NB. Figures do not include people who visit in the evenings or weekends.

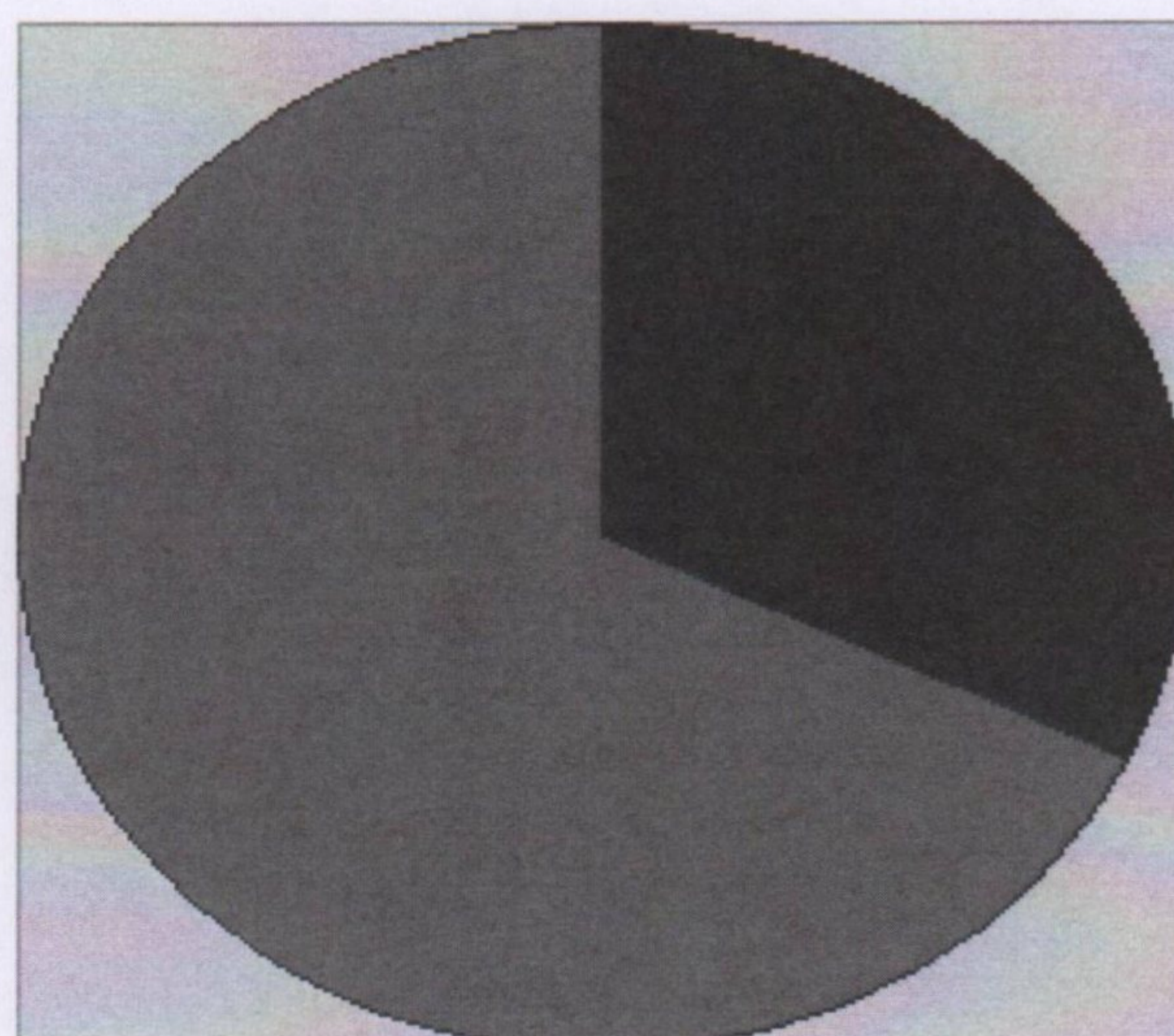
This information relates to the 12 month period October 2011 to September 2012.

Number of user visits: 8 048

NB. In the case of a couple or family, only one name (usually the man's) is taken, so the actual number of users (especially female users) was higher.

Male
68%

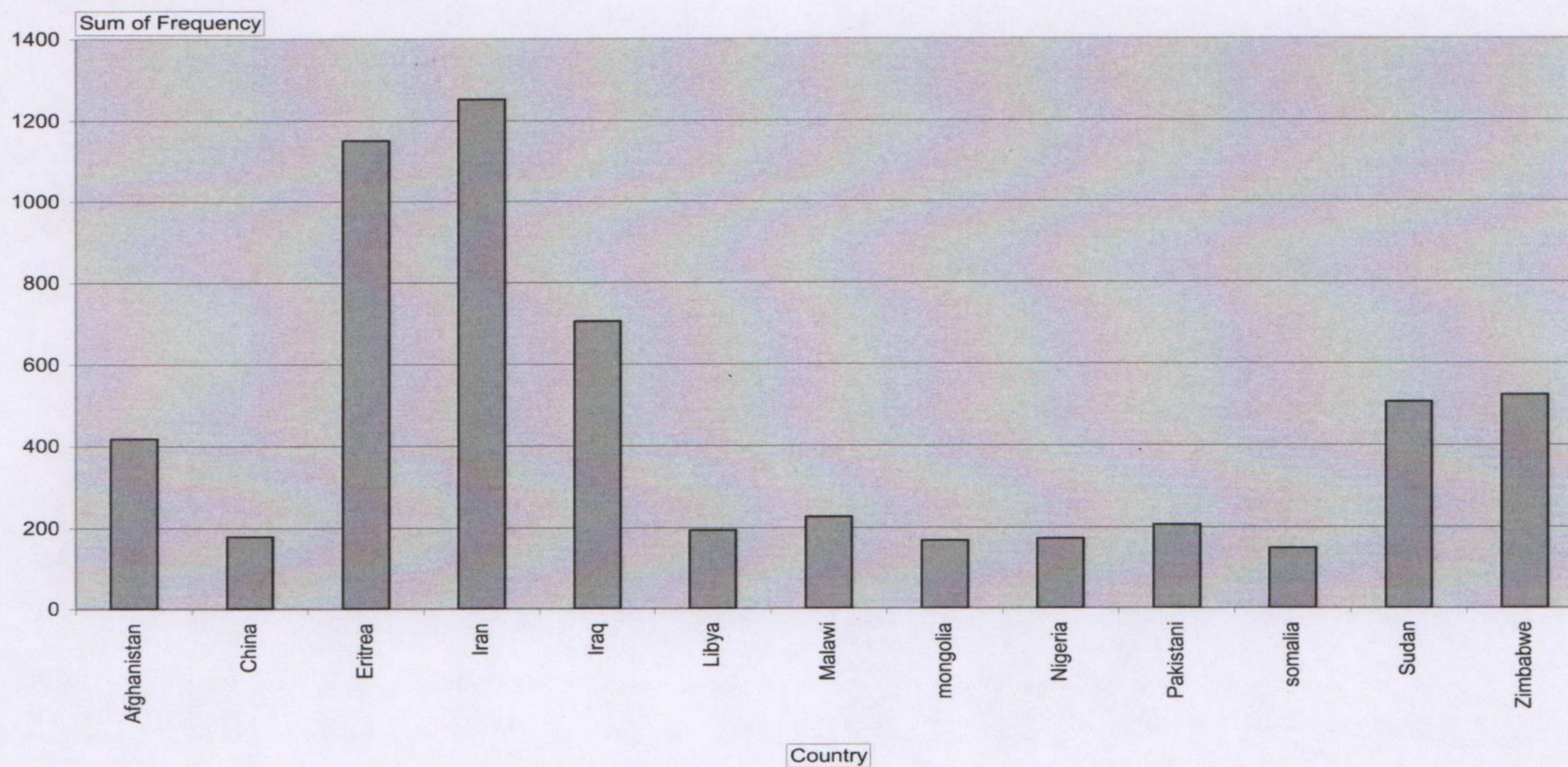
Female
32%



Country of Origin

90 different nationalities were recorded.

The top 13 of these were:



Where do our clients currently live?

In addition to serving asylum seekers and refugees from Nottingham, we supported people from Birmingham, Manchester, Coventry, Derby, Leicester, Nottinghamshire and Mansfield.

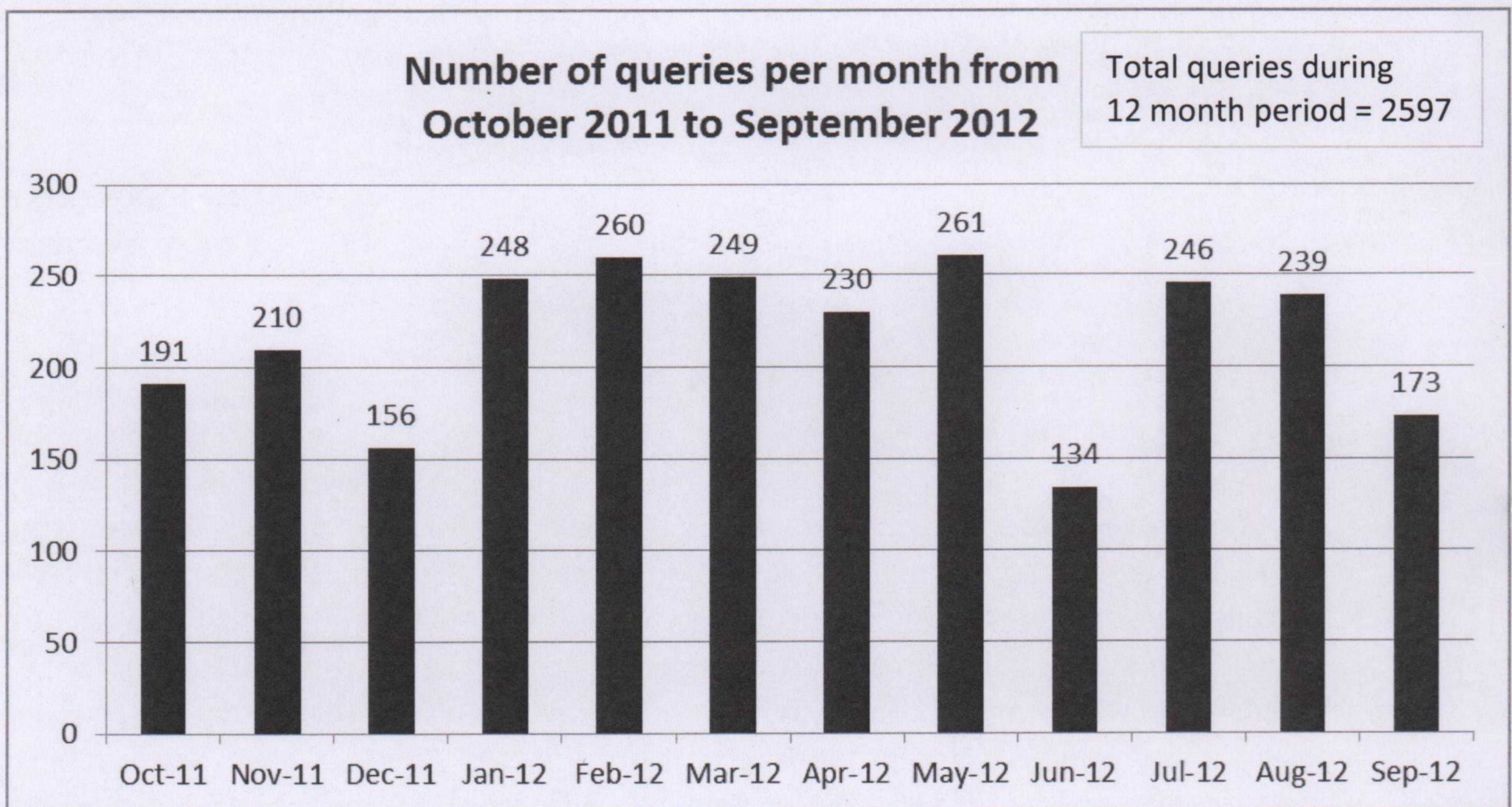
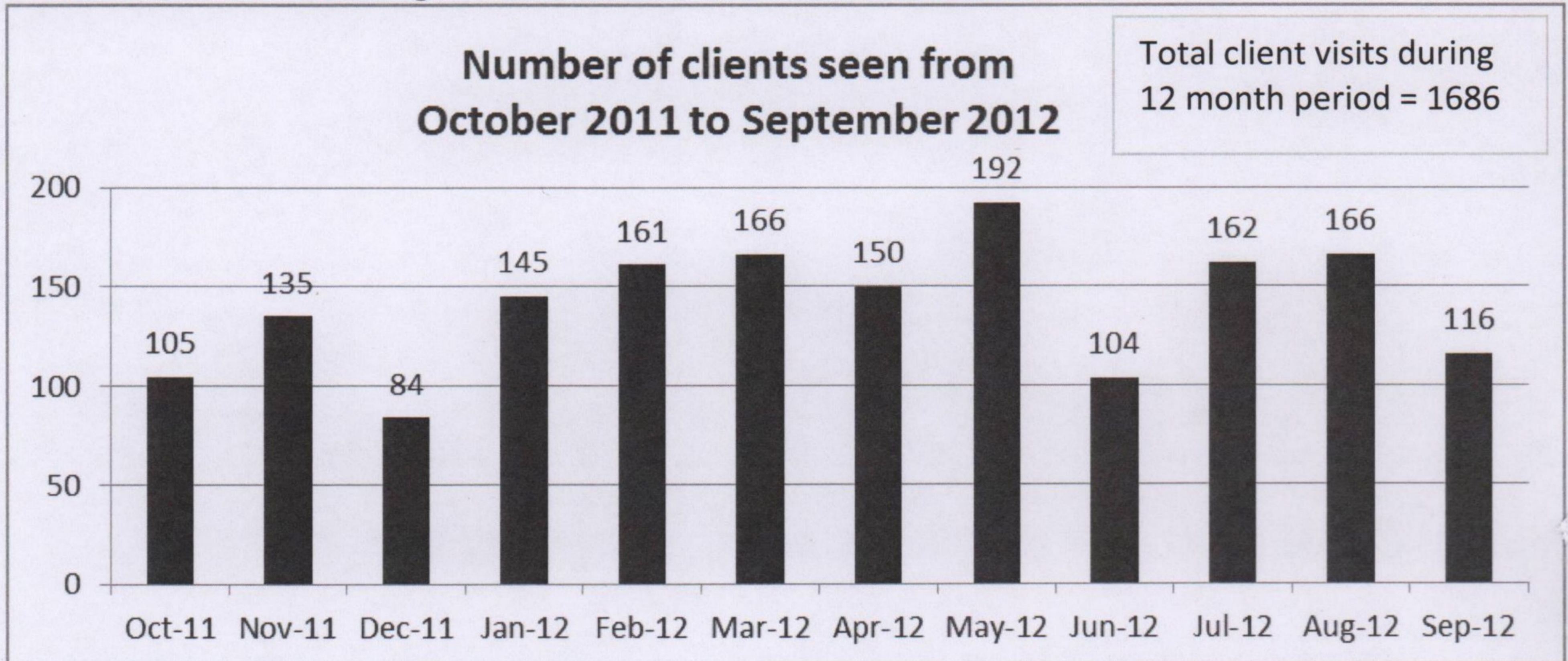
Bea Tobolewska
Centre Manager

General Advice Service

The general advice service continues to meet the needs of the Forum's service users with Volunteer Advisers providing advice, information, assistance and support on a wide range of issues including destitution, housing, benefits, health, legal and asylum support. The professional and informal atmosphere of the drop-in advice sessions is accessible and welcoming to our most vulnerable service users. The service is accessed by people from diverse backgrounds and the Volunteer Advisers have been able to gain an understanding of cultural and linguistic differences. The flexible approach to service delivery and to the provision of advice and support has been valued by both our service users and volunteers.

The general advice service is the main point of contact for new and existing service users, particularly as the internal specialist Staff Advisers have introduced referral systems. The referral systems in place for both internal and external services allow an efficient and streamlined service with Volunteer Advisers having a good understanding of the various projects, partner agencies and local service providers in order to signpost and make appropriate referrals. The service users also attend advice surgeries held at the centre by partner agencies such as British Red Cross, Refugee Council Children's Panel and Refugee Action.

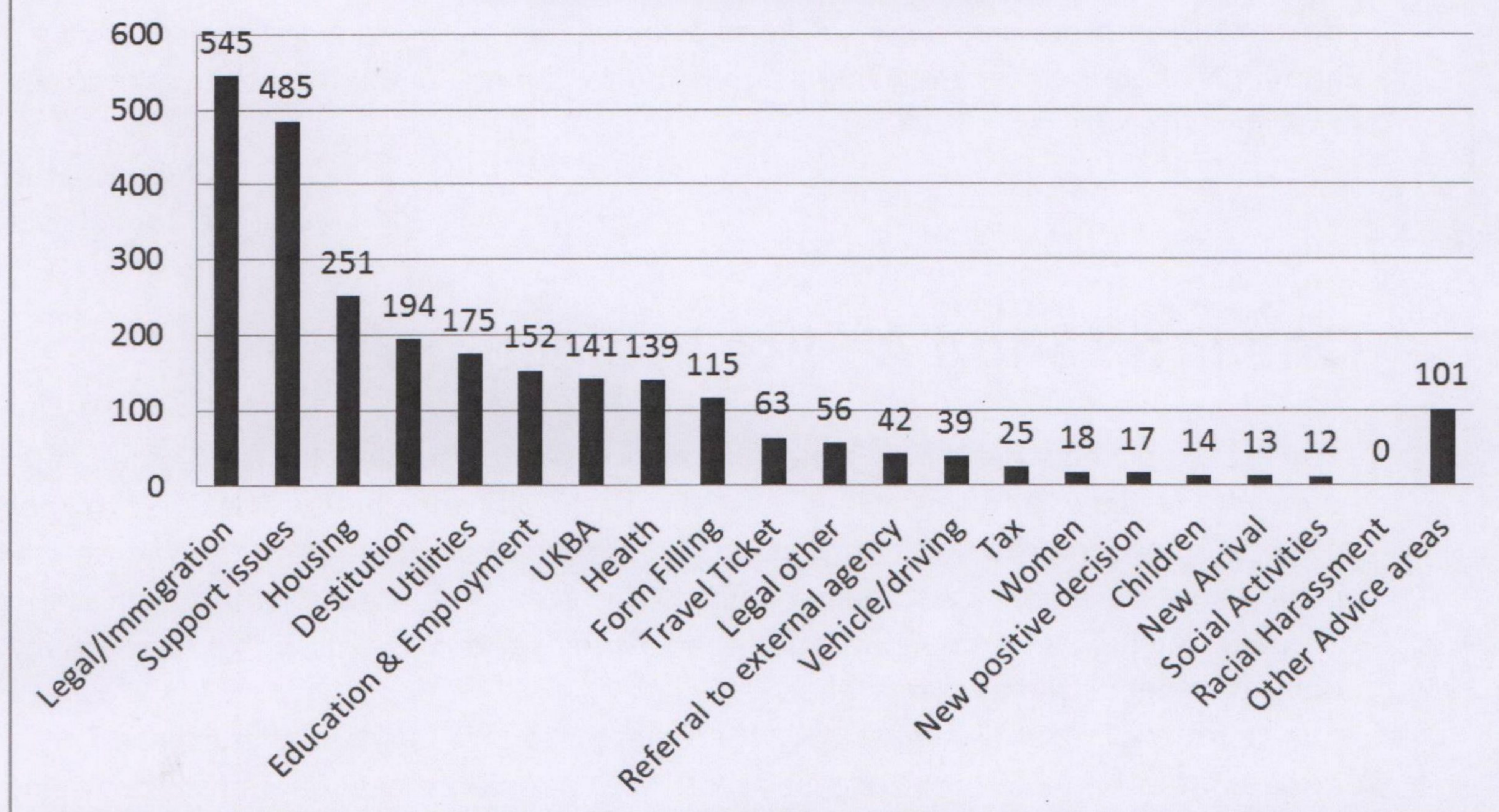
The high volume of service users accessing the drop-in advice service is shown below. The Volunteer Advisers have been able to deal with the multiple queries that arise during every step of the asylum process and following both positive and negative decisions. As well as monitoring clients' activities, additional advice and information relevant to the welfare rights contract has also been recorded.



The data has been recorded by the Volunteer Advisers throughout the advice sessions which was valuable to the external evaluation in not only assessing the demand for the service but also contributed as indicators of advice areas that could potentially be developed by the Forum.

(The figures only show the lead person attending the Centre – not family members who may accompany them).

**The types of queries from
October 2011 to September 2012**



The advice sessions continue to evolve and the demand continues to grow. Also, the project continues to attract a good number of volunteers and in the last 12 months, there has been a keen interest from University students joining the existing group of volunteers. As a result, opportunities to work in partnership with the universities in Nottingham are being explored.

In the light of the increased interest, an appropriate recruitment and training programme has been developed. Having attended an induction meeting, the newly recruited Volunteers begin by shadowing experienced volunteers during the busy advice sessions followed by a short training course. The training course consists of Asylum Process and Support which covers an overview of the asylum system, basic asylum support entitlements and eligibility criteria for support following an asylum decision. Further training is given on Adviser skills, covering working with interpreters, writing case notes and interview skills. The volunteers are offered the chance to work in pairs before becoming independent Advisers and are supported by long standing Volunteers Advisers.

For the existing volunteers, a refresher training course on the Asylum Process and Support was delivered by Refugee Action which was organised in partnership with the British Red Cross. A further core training programme is planned alongside a review of resources and processes in place in order to improve the efficiency and quality of the advice service.

The focus for the year ahead is to improve the quality of service delivery. The key emphasis will be on digitising client records and introducing an electronic case management system as well as gaining a self-assessment quality mark for information, advice and guidance, subject to successful funding outcomes. The current climate in relation to funding remains uncertain and this has had a significant impact on the services and projects offered at the Forum. Despite the decreasing resources, the drop-in advice sessions continue to be a successful and sustainable project.

The dedication and commitment of the volunteers have ensured the success of the project and it has been a pleasure to work with such an enthusiastic group. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our volunteers for their time and continued efforts. Furthermore, I would also like to acknowledge the hard work of our colleague Bahman Mohammed for the valuable contribution he has made over the years to the general advice service.

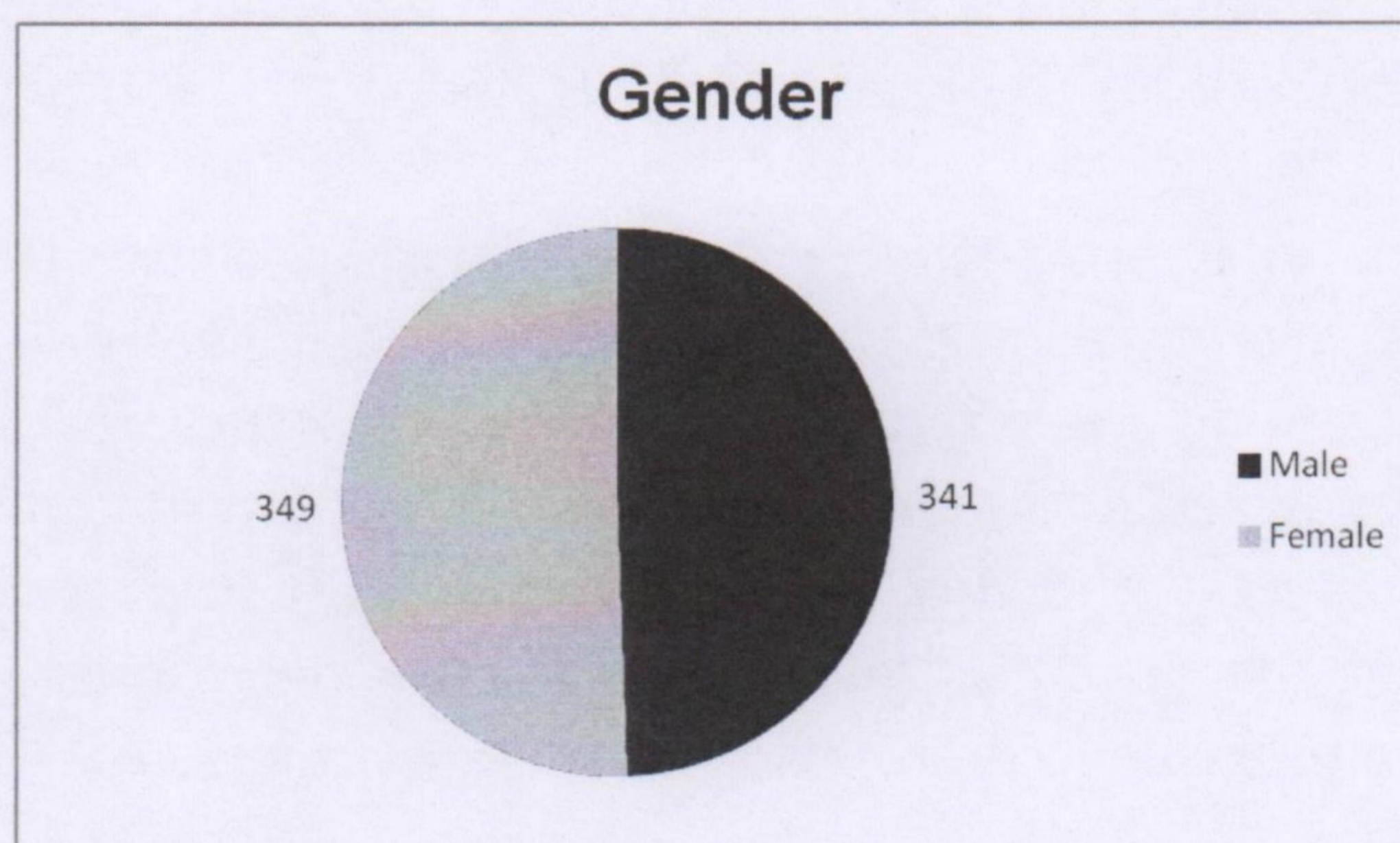
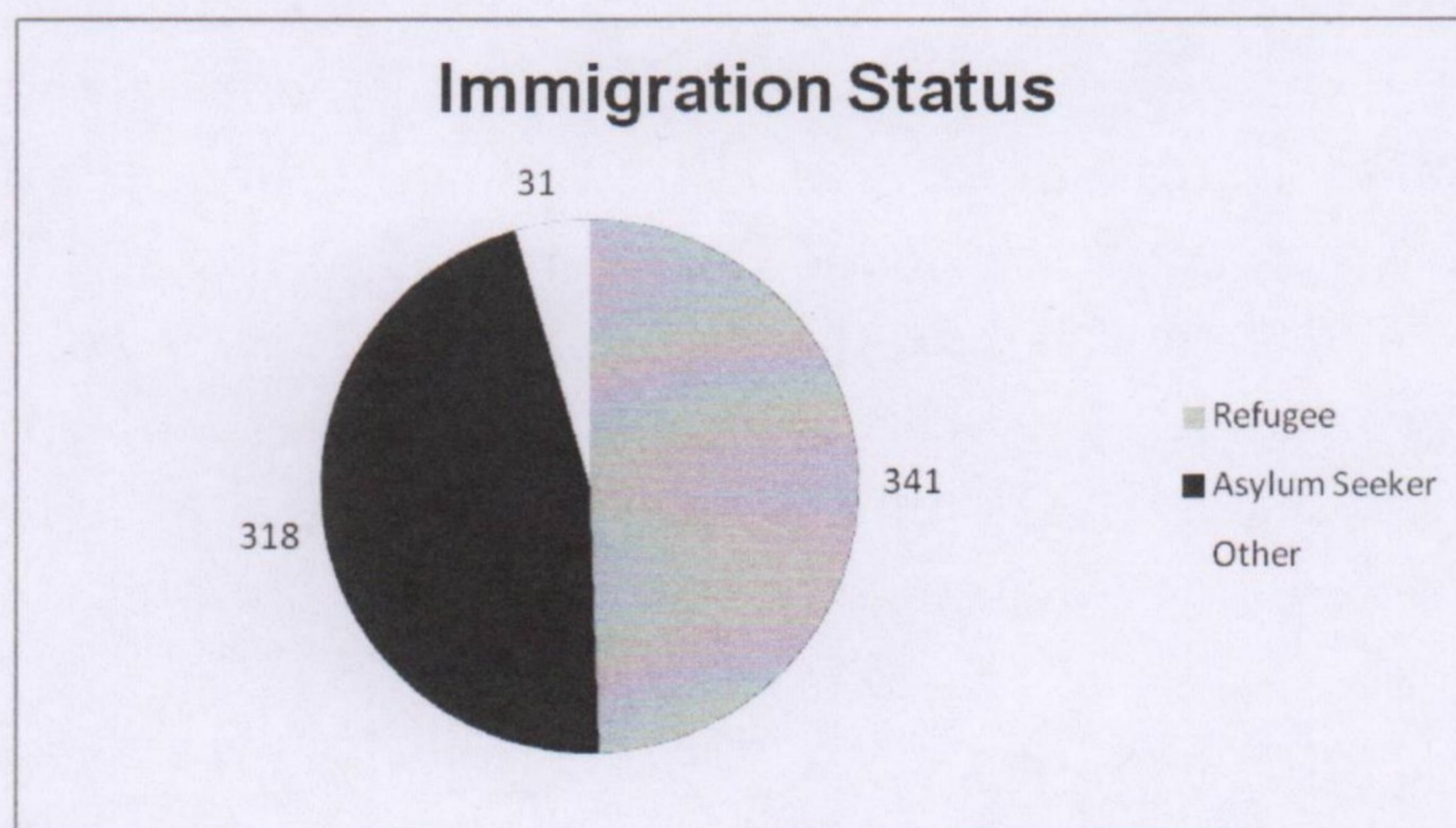
Rakiba Khatun
Senior Adviser

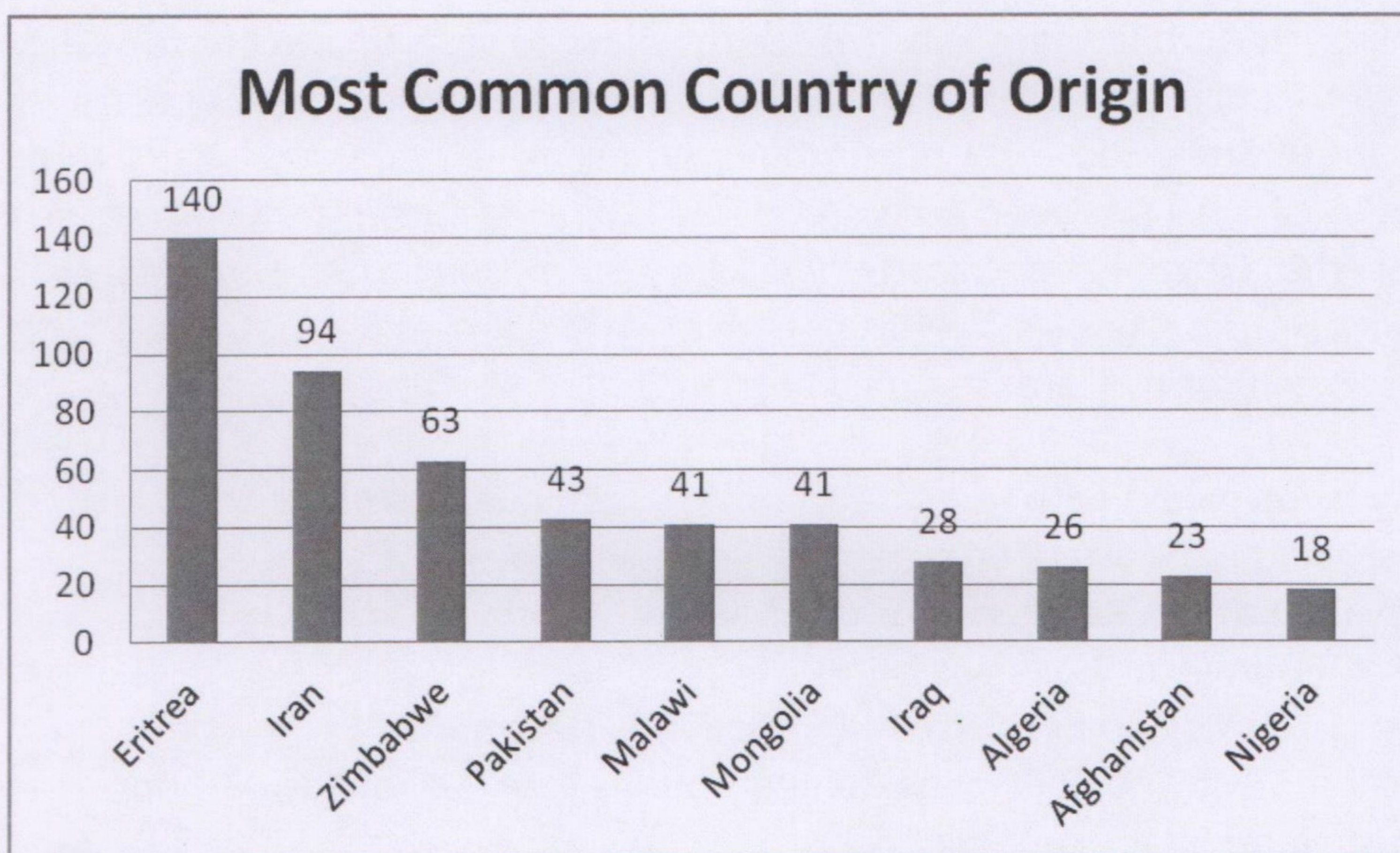
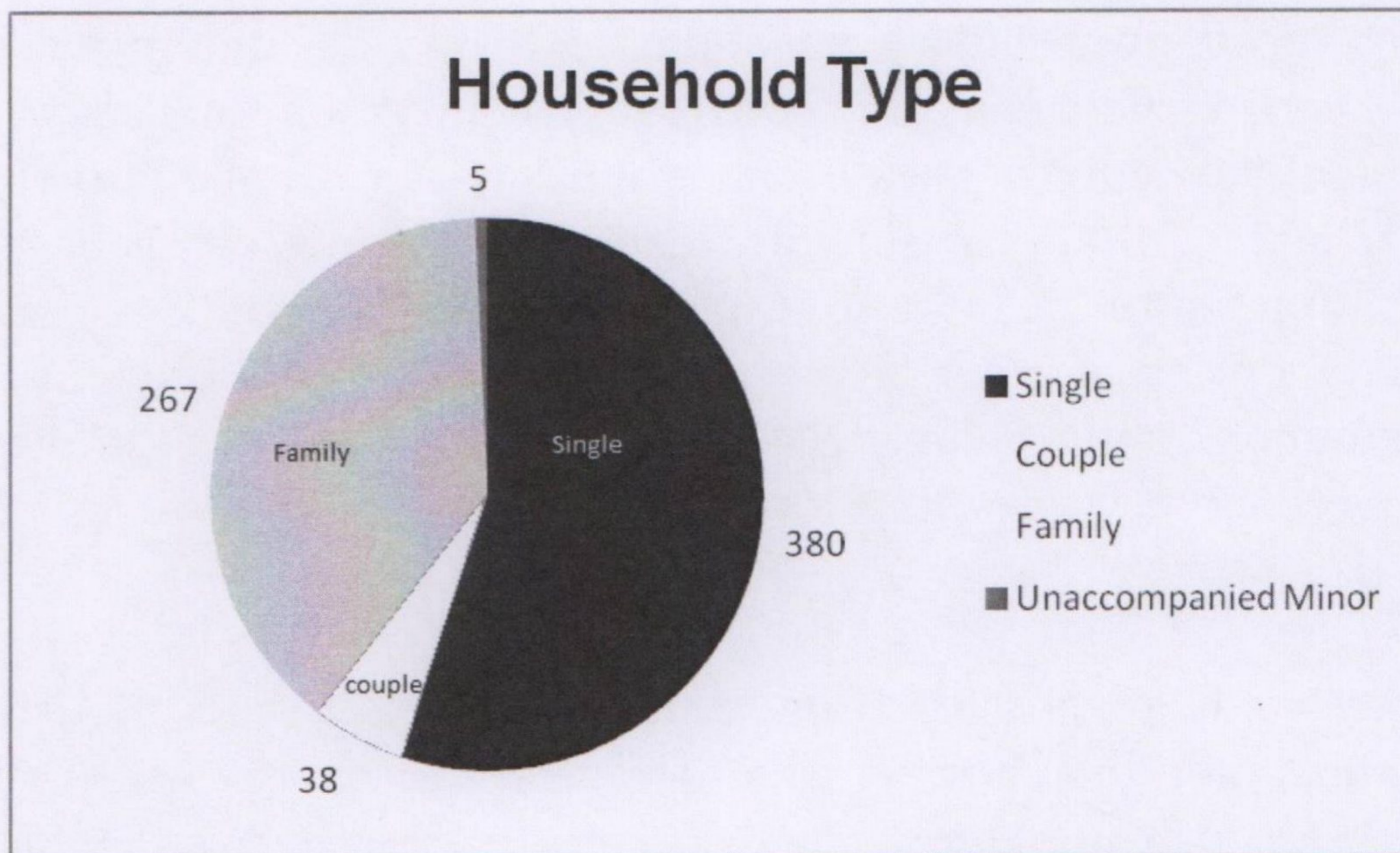
One Stop Shop Advice Project

The One Stop Shop Project is a flexible advice service funded by Nottingham City Council for refugees and asylum seekers living in the city and county. The OSS provides advice, support, information and practical help, predominantly in the areas of health, housing and education. I also develop links with agencies to share information about services, provide advice to organisations and attend various forums with a focus on the needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

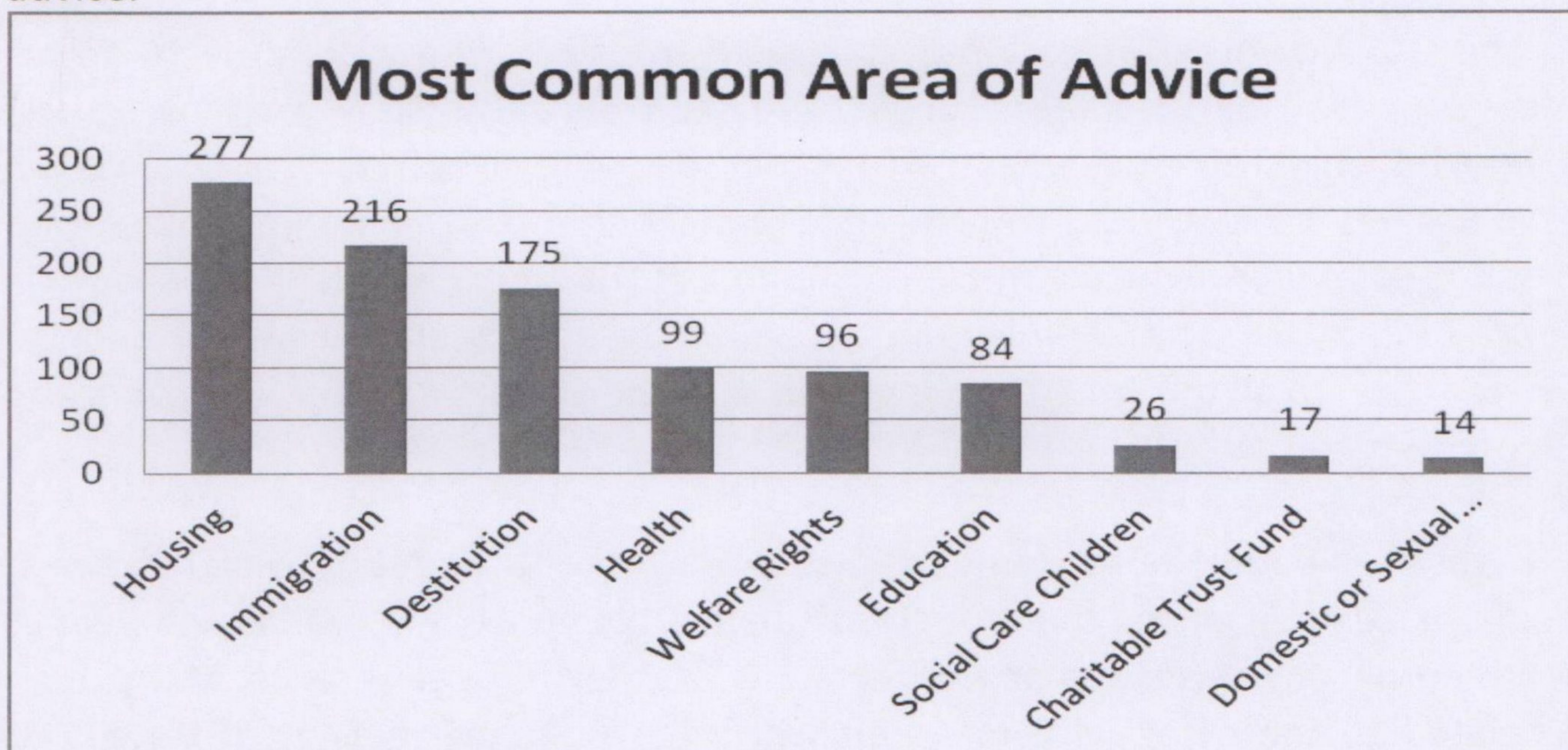
From October 2011 until August 2012 there have been 690 visits to the project. This is either a one-off appointment or I may work with people for several months providing in-depth casework. My role is about giving information, signposting, making referrals on to specialist agencies and guiding people through often quite complicated systems to help them access services.

Some details about the background of the people I have worked with over the year.





This table shows the most common areas in which people have sought advice.



My work this year has had a greater focus on support for people who are destitute. Concerns regarding dwindling donations to NNRFs destitution fund resulted in closer working between the food group, cash group and advice services. Regular monthly meetings have brought about better communication and clarification of whom NNRF can support, leading to a more consistency where provision is targeted to those most in need. We have developed a case review approach and looking at other areas where support is needed to assist people out of destitution. Unfortunately NNRF is unable to support destitute migrants but we work closely with other organisations to explore alternative avenues of support.

Homelessness is still a huge problem for destitute asylum seekers. Rough sleeping, sofa surfing, informal hosting and late night access to insecure addresses is routine for many asylum seekers who are referred to the OSS for housing. In the most recent review there were 43 men on the waiting list. Reality is dismal for those told there is no-where for them to stay but we are fortunate to have Nottingham Arimathea Trust, Host Nottingham and in Leicester, Refugee Action's Fresh Start House for destitute asylum seeking women. Since October last year 16 clients have been accommodated following such referrals. Also, as a result of the Citizens for Sanctuary Inquiry into Hope and Homelessness, Framework Housing Association has donated two properties for destitute people which will significantly increase capacity.

My involvement with regular forums has continued and over the course of the year I have attended meetings with the following groups:

- Asylum Seeker, Refugee and New Migrant Health Forum
- BMER Domestic Violence Forum
- East Midlands No Recourse to Public Funds Network
- Children and Young Persons Refugee and Asylum Seeker Task Group
- Host Nottingham Steering Group
- Voluntary Homelessness Forum
- Women's Aid Domestic Abuse Outreach Service and Zola Refuge Advisory Group

The OSS Volunteer Project has continued this year with a total of 34 advice sessions lead by volunteers. Clients are seen on a Thursday morning at pre-booked appointments which are made following a referral to OSS. Seven volunteers have worked with the OSS project this year advising clients with a variety of issues including move-on support at the transition stage of leaving UK BA Asylum Support, homelessness, school transport and accessing college. Thank-you to all the volunteers involved with the project for your hard work and commitment.

I visit Highwood House Homeless Hostel each month meeting with refugee families who have been placed there by Nottingham City Council. Also earlier this year I started a monthly advice session at Nottingham YMCA for refugee tenants. Many queries are related to the delay with move-on which leaves many feeling frustrated. Full-time work is unfeasible because of the colossal weekly rent and saving for a deposit for a private tenancy whilst on Jobseeker's Allowance is difficult. Last Autumn I was involved

with two Housing Information Events held at the YMCA for refugees, a collaboration between HLG, Home Link and NNRF. Although not what many wanted to hear it is crucial to provide factual information on housing options and to be honest about current housing policy in order to manage expectations which are often unrealistic and cause distress when reality dawns.

Simon Breen and I have been working closely together with the shared referral system for clients needing housing or OSS advice. His support is greatly appreciated and I wish him well as I pass over the One Stop Shops reins into his very capable hands.

Thank-you to everyone at the Forum. See you next year, funding permitting...

Case Study

Mr M is from Mongolia. He lives with his partner Ms B also from Mongolia. Mr M was granted Exceptional Leave to Remain which expired in 2007. A further application for leave to remain, submitted in time, was pending with UK BA. Ms B is a refused asylum seeker. Mr M has been working for several years and rented a room in a shared house. He supports his partner. In January Ms B contacted the OSS advice project for help. Mr M had had a stroke in December and was due to be discharged from City Hospital. His mobility and speech had been affected.

I contacted City Hospital and spoke to the occupational therapist (O/T) and social worker working with Mr M. An assessment of his accommodation had taken place and although not suitable Mr M was due to leave hospital with support from the Early Supported Discharge Team based at Mary Potter Centre. Mr M's room was on the first floor with the bathroom and toilet on the second floor. Mr M's landlord was not entirely satisfied about him returning to the property but agreed if it was to be temporary. He allowed an additional stair rail to be fitted but not to adaptations in the bathroom. Aids were delivered by the O/T team and Mr M returned home. At this time he could walk with support. Ms B was providing for all his personal care needs.

Shortly after Mr M returned home his landlord served notice and he had to leave the property at the end of February. Housing Aid became involved and the couple was moved to temporary accommodation. Mr M has now moved to a tenancy with Nottingham City Homes (NCH), a flat which has been adapted and suits his needs.

There have been complications with Housing Benefit because of the 'mixed household' issue (a couple with different immigration statuses). Rent arrears were accruing and NCH had served notice and court action was imminent. I referred the case to Nottingham Law Centre and with their expertise and support a Housing Benefit appeal was successful and all rent arrears at the flat and hostel have now been cleared and Mr M is no longer at risk of losing his home.

Since January I have met with Mr M and Ms B regularly, initially weekly and with contact by telephone. They mostly come to Refugee Forum and I have also visited them at home or met them at appointments with external agencies. Over the months my support has necessitated liaison with a large number of different agencies and organisations - something that would have been impossible for the couple to do for themselves.

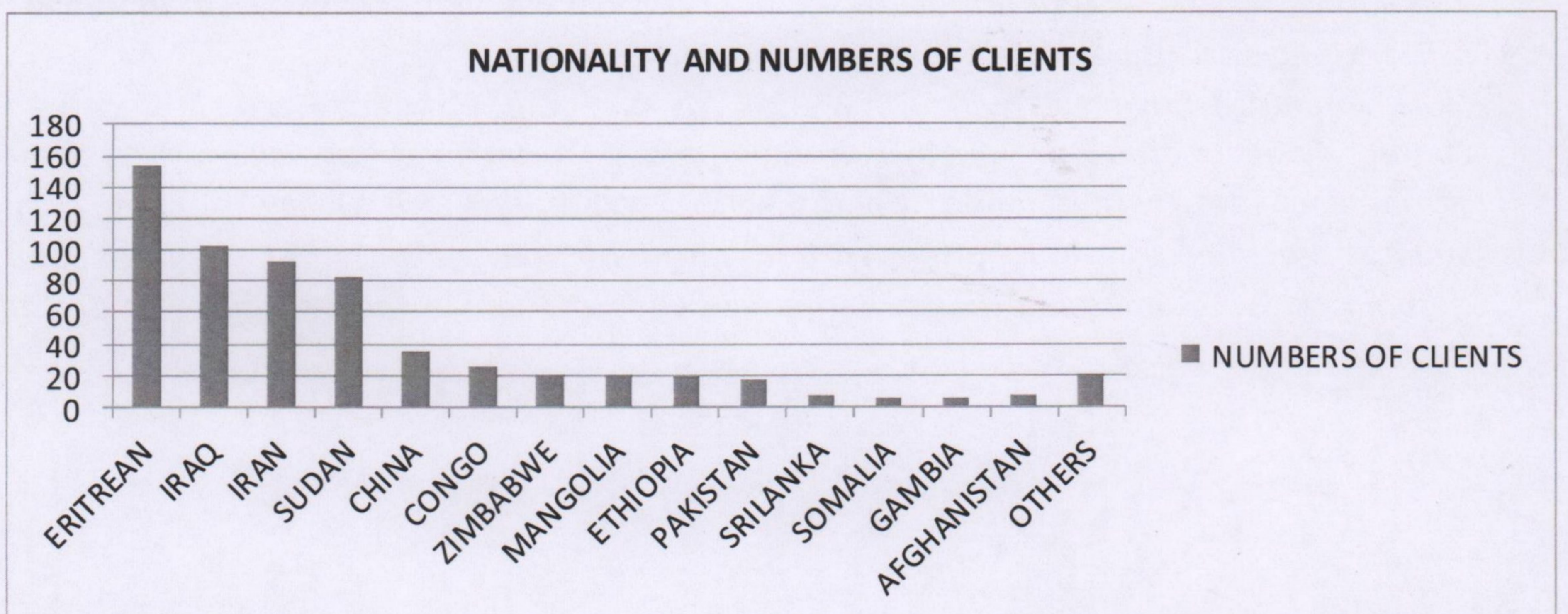
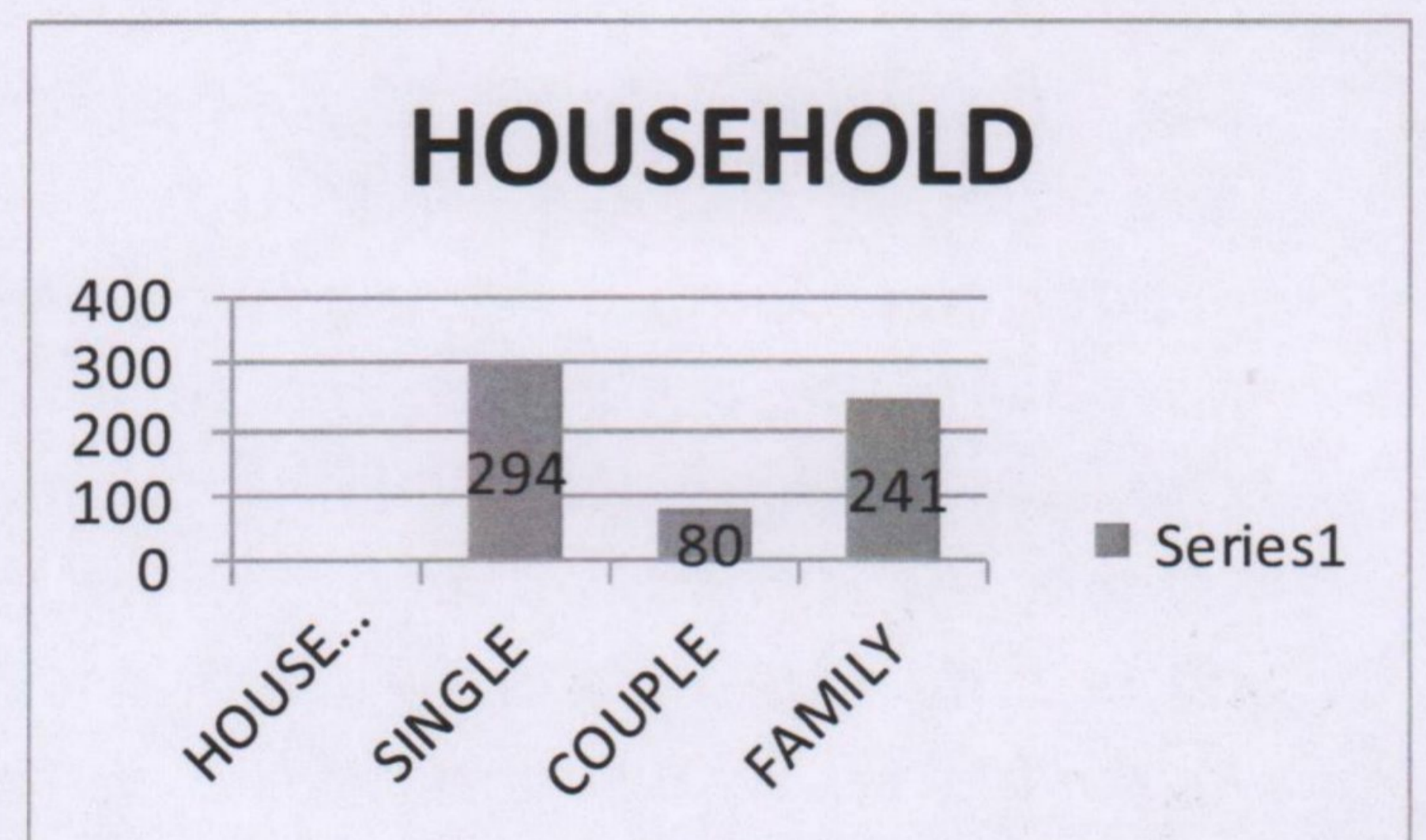
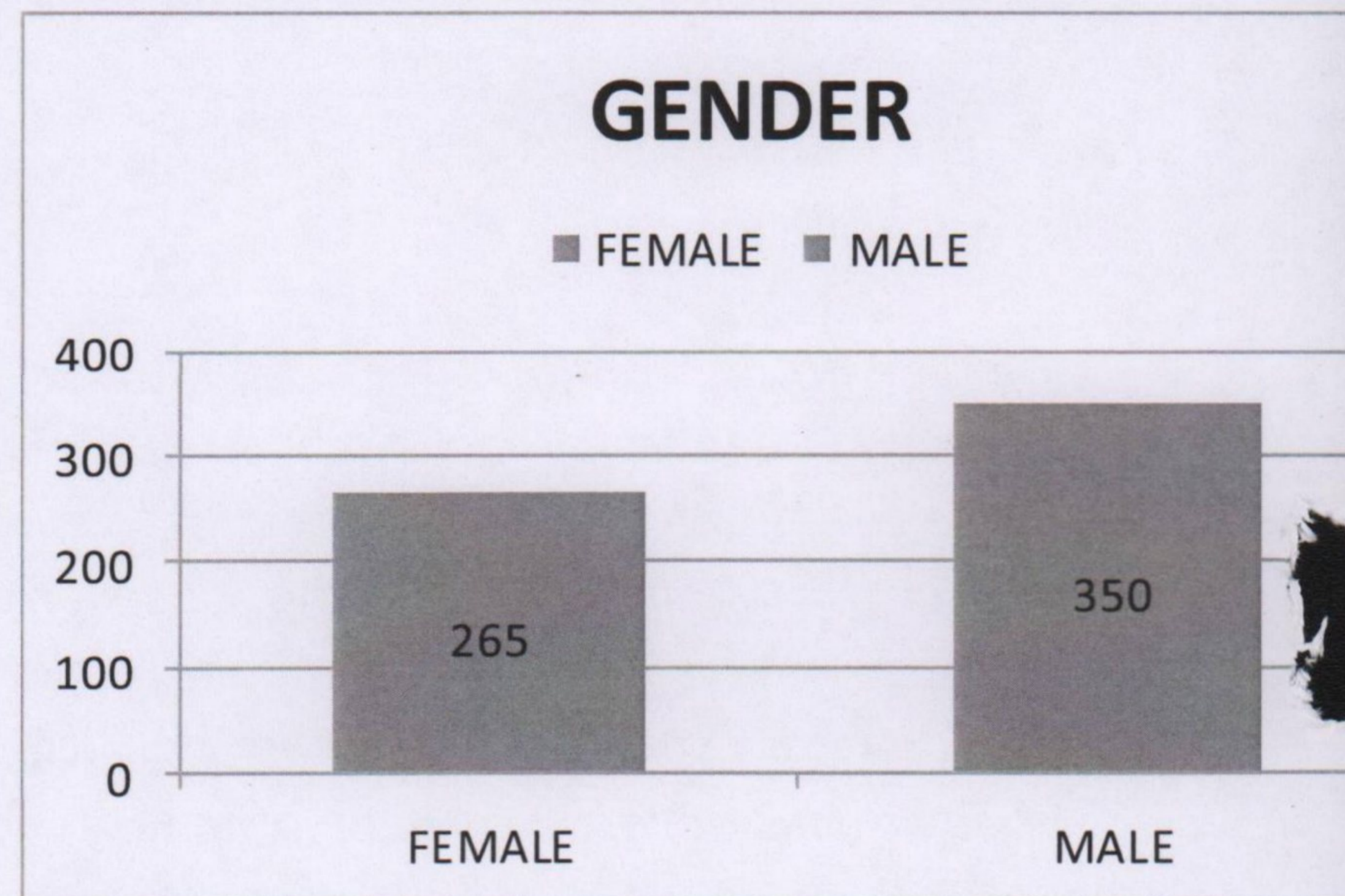
Benefits Advice

Firstly I would like to thank everyone at the Forum (staff and Volunteers) for their dedication and support in a year which has been very uncertain for many of us. It has been a pleasure to work with so many individuals who work passionately and tirelessly to improve the lives of asylum seekers and refugees.

It has been a busy year for the Benefits Advice with Welfare Reforms starting to show their impact on claimants. Refugees will be one of the most affected groups, especially refugees with three or more family members. Changes to Tax Credit and Housing Benefit allowances will have a significant effect on the lives of many families around UK. With the introduction of Universal Credit as well as the scrapping of Social Fund (CCG, Crisis Loan and Budgeting Loan) there will be a difficult time ahead. The group who will be the most affected will be refugees who have just been granted their status or refugees who are setting up their first home.

The Benefits Advice sessions have been running at full capacity between October 2011 and September 2012 and there were a total of 615 visits - 200 more than last year over the same period. Over the last 9 months

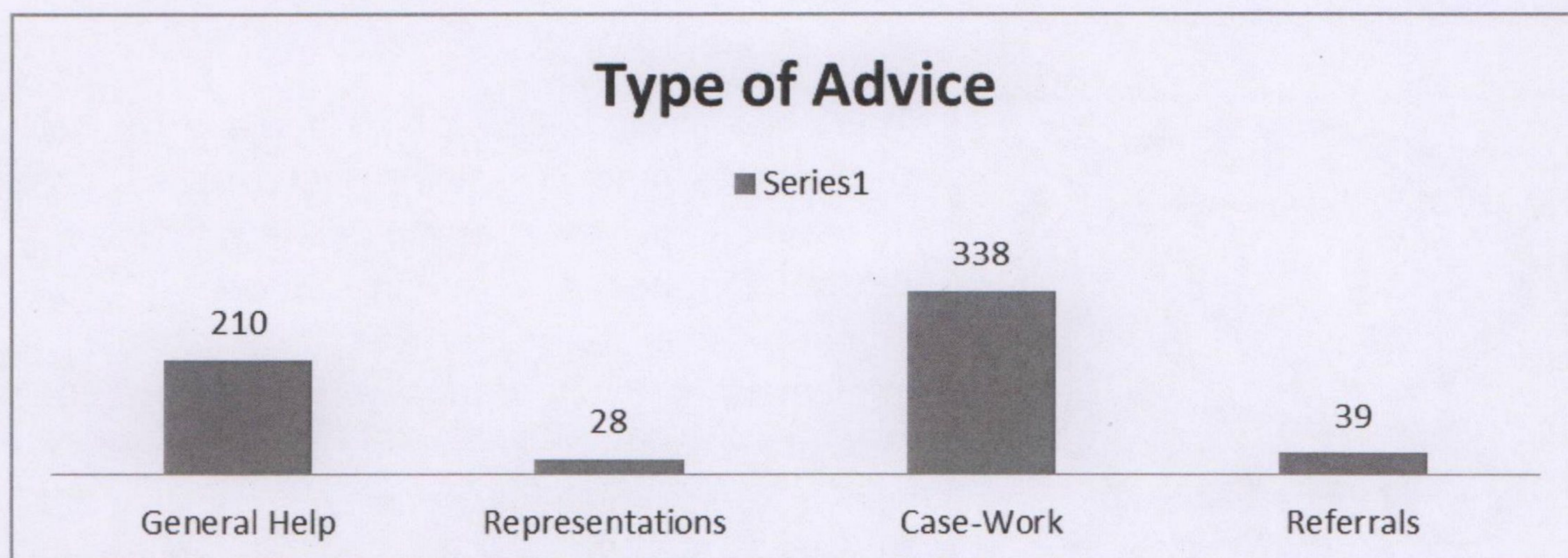
I have met with clients from 29 different countries; clients from Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, Sudan and China being the most common. The figures below show the detailed breakdown of clients according to their nationality, gender and household type. Once Leave to Remain is granted refugees are entitled to mainstream benefits. The majority of refugees are highly motivated to find employment and come off benefits; however they face various problems including language barriers, de-skilling as a result of years spent as asylum seekers and lack of specialist advice and support services which could enable them to prepare for employment.



When new refugees make first applications for Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support or ESA there is an average of 6-7 weeks waiting time before their Benefit payments are issued. One of the reasons for the delay is not having a National Insurance number. Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit claims take 12-24 weeks to process. The combined effect of this leaves refugees (especially families) in severe financial hardship during their first 2 months of being granted Leave to Remain. Social funds such as Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants are available for claimants in this period; however due to the Welfare Reform the whole Social Fund will be scrapped from April 2013. This will certainly increase the number of people who go into debt.

During the last year there have been other changes which have made the Benefits delivery process for refugees a touch more difficult. The changes to working regulations of UKBA when dealing with Settlement Visa Applications means that UKBA are no longer issuing clients with acknowledgement letters once they have received the application pack. Instead an invitation for a Biometric Scan is sent to clients 4-6 weeks after receiving the application. During this period all Benefit payments are stopped and clients are left with no income. In some cases the Benefit delivery office has refused to accept Biometric invitation letters as proof of entitlement.

ESA (Employment Support Allowance): this benefit is hugely problematic and it has been criticized nationally as being unfair. 99% of clients who apply for ESA fail their medical assessments. Once a client fails an assessment other benefits such as Housing Benefit are also suspended. This puts clients at high risk of getting into debt. Challenging ESA decision is made more difficult as the termination of ESA is immediate. There has also been a huge increase in Tax Credit enquiries this year. This is mainly a result of many clients who had been granted status through the Legacy Programme completing Tax Review forms for the first time. The most common issue faced by clients has been an overpayment notice and cancellation of awards due to non-returned review forms.



CASE STUDY

Mrs X is a refugee from Eritrea who is a single mother of two. She was dispersed to Nottingham by UKBA and granted Leave to Remain shortly afterwards and made application for Child benefit and Child Tax Credit as well as Job Seekers Allowance. After 6 months of signing on for JSA Mrs X was given contact details for an employer whom she had to make contact with and apply for the Job that was posted. She agreed

to do this and took the letter. However when she got back home and looked at the contact details there was only an email address. Mrs X is not computer literate and did not have her own email address or know how to operate a computer. On her next sign-on date she told the adviser that she did not apply for the job and explained her reasons. Following this, her claim was suspended for 'Failing to Take an Employment Opportunity', hence breaching her contract with JSA.

We put in an appeal and 7 weeks later the decision was overturned and she received backdated payments and she now continues to receive JSA. However Mrs X is just one example where an irrational and careless decision has put a family that includes two children in severe financial difficulty and hardship.

Mussie Kidane
Welfare Rights Adviser

Immigration and Asylum Advice

The Immigration and Asylum Advice Services offer free basic legal advice and are regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner. There are two sections to the project; the **immigration advice service** provides basic legal advice and assistance relating to citizenship and travel documentation. The **asylum advice service** provides basic legal advice to service users at different points of the asylum process and referral and liaison with legal representatives.

The Advisers are regulated at OISC level 1 and include the following staff members and volunteers, Bahman Mohammed, Tina Patel, Dave Hewitt, John Henson, Kate Mack, Pete Lowenstein, Bobbie Prime and Barrie Ward.

In order to comply with the Continuing Professional Development scheme set out by the OISC, the Advisers successfully completed the OISC e-learning courses earlier this year. This was supplemented by a training session on Legal Updates delivered by a Barrister from Lamb Building.



were completed.

There has always been a high demand for both the services, and in order to keep up with the demand and improve service delivery, an internal referral system was introduced. The administrative team provided assistance in implementing the referral system which resulted in improvements to the quality of the service for service users. In the last quarter, from July 2012 to September 2012, a total of 50 applications

This year there has been a significant increase in demand for the immigration advice service due to the introduction of Biometric Residence Permits and enrolment for biometric information as part of the application process. Also a large number of our clients have gained settlement following five years as a Refugee, requiring renewed Refugee Convention Travel Documents. As the majority of cases have been for existing or returning clients who continue to access the service, towards the end of the year

existing clients will become eligible to apply for citizenship, thus increasing the demand for the service.

The asylum advice service is delivered by a long standing volunteer, Barrie Ward, and he is assisted by Teresa Pacey-Devlin. Barrie has provided two case studies below which describe the nature of his work and his involvement in the cases:

CASE STUDY

X was a young Afghani who had fled Afghanistan in the face of threats to his life. His application for asylum had been refused and he had appealed. He was represented by London solicitors who prepared and submitted his statement to the Home Office. His case was complex and needed close attention to detail. The statement was so inadequately and poorly prepared (in places misrepresenting him) I advised him of its potential to harm his case. I also took the view that it was unlikely in the extreme that he would be competently represented, advised him to instruct alternative solicitors and assisted him to do so. I also assisted him in writing a formal letter of complaint to the previous solicitors. I continued to work with his new legal representative with whom I attended several of the lengthy interviews necessary for the case to be fully and properly prepared. At the hearing, which I attended, the fact and detail of the complaint to the previous solicitors became material to the successful outcome of the case and X was granted status.

For the third year running, staff members and volunteers have participated in the Nottingham Legal Walk - a 10k sponsored walk organised by the Midlands Legal Support Trust. The total raised was £4,376.00 and this will contribute towards the legal and training expenses fund.

There is a great deal of scope to develop the services, which have been slowed down due to the uncertainty of future funding and the limitation of our resources. However, in the event of a successful funding outcome, this service would be significantly changed not only to meet the demands of our service users but also to respond to the expected legal aid cuts in the coming year.

Over the past year the dedicated team of OISC Level 1 Advisers have worked hard to meet the high demand for this service. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their valuable contribution and immeasurable support. Furthermore, and on behalf of the team of Advisers, I would like to convey our appreciation and gratitude to Bahman Mohammed for his hard work on this project over the years which has been valued by staff members, volunteers and service users alike.

Rakiba Khatun
Senior Adviser

Into the Mainstream – Health Project

The Into the Mainstream Health (ITM) Project, funded by NHS Nottingham City to assist newly-arrived/dispersed asylum-seekers and refugees to access health services in Nottingham, continues to be an integral part of NNRF services. During the past twelve months the project has undertaken various activities and initiatives including core client work, forming partnerships, promoting community health, providing training for the NHS and the voluntary sector, instituting wellbeing projects and general advocacy. Some of these are outlined below under the relevant headings.

Linking clients to GP practices and other health services

Initially the project had three core strands - client work, awareness training and community health promotion. However, from February 2012, the project lost part of its funding which led to a reduction in staff working hours and necessitated the prioritization of client work.

By the end of September the project had received 505 referrals, 243 of which were received in the last twelve months. Of the latter, 165 were seen, assessed and linked to health and other services. 190 were single clients and 53 had dependants.

Source of referrals: Of the new clients in the last twelve months, 80 were referred by UKBA and 163 came from internal sources including NNRF and local housing providers, or from external agencies such as British Red Cross, YMCA and Refugee Futures. Due to the recent change of accommodation provider and resulting delays in the dispersal of new arrivals, ItM has had one of the lowest quarterly dispersal rates since it began operating two years ago. New dispersals to Nottingham have been on hold for the past six weeks whilst G4S is apparently in the process of securing appropriate accommodation in the city.

Client engagement with the project: ItM continues to send initial appointment letters to newly referred individuals/families to the address provided within two days of notification, and we generally aim to see all clients within two weeks. Clients with urgent or immediate health needs are assessed within one to three days. Clients of no fixed abode are given appointments by phone or in person if they are on our premises at the time of referral. If an individual fails to turn up, a phone call is made to them first; otherwise a follow-up letter is sent offering them a further opportunity to make contact. To widen participation follow-up letters have been translated into many commonly spoken community languages. Besides links to GP surgeries and other health services, ItM clients are signposted or directly referred to various internal and external services in an effort to support them holistically.

Difficulties around GP registration: registering certain groups such as refused asylum seekers, who are often also homeless and destitute, continues to be an issue as most GP practices insist on proof of address and/or entitlement to healthcare. The team has been working particularly hard on this issue. Over the past twelve months we have had various meetings with practice managers (at surgeries where clients faced difficulties in getting registered) with the head of PALS (the Patient Advice and Liaison Service) and complaints department, with Equality leads and other appropriate NHS officials. We also have submitted formal and informal complaints where appropriate. This is in addition to the

provision of awareness raising training for NHS staff (see below) and the project's general advocacy work. In spite of these problems, the project continues to secure GP registration for all clients referred without a GP.

Awareness training for GP Practices and their staff

This year ItM has received several requests from GP surgeries and other health professionals for training on refugee health and entitlements. In July we ran a workshop for a city-centre surgery which examined the rights and entitlements of refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants to access healthcare under UK law. We have also looked at practical issues such as how to help register a client from initial meeting, how to avoid complications and what to do where an individual is undocumented. Our upcoming workshops include a session with PALS in October, a further session with a city-centre surgery and 2 sessions with mental health secondary care services. These are designed according to need but in general cover the following topics: background to Nottingham's Asylum Seeker/Refugee Community, including definitions; access to healthcare; differences in eligibility & entitlement to primary and secondary care; the asylum process; the health care needs and experiences of refugees & asylum seekers; barriers to healthcare; torture, and local and national services. The project also compiled and distributed at each session a directory of resources to be used by health professionals.

Community Health Promotion

As a result of cuts in funding earlier this year, the health promotion element of the project was decommissioned from February 2012. Nevertheless ItM has organised or contributed to a number of community health promotion events in the past twelve months.



Women's Group dance session

We continue to work with partner agencies and organisations, both in the voluntary/3rd sector and the NHS, either by directly organising events and bringing specialists to cover particular topics, or by setting up promotional stalls and networking with professionals and community attendees. In the past twelve months ItM was involved in eight health promotion events with combined attendees of around 400.

Wellbeing projects:

Relaxation and Well-Being

Workshops. We work with psychological services in Nottingham to improve pathways into mental health services in the City. Step-4 psychological services in collaboration with ITM ran as a pilot, a 4-week relaxation and stress management workshop for clients facing stressful situations. Step-4 will continue the workshops in November this year as well as offering fortnightly drop-in sessions for clients with concerns around psychological health.



Bike project. We work closely with local charities to support leisure and social activities for asylum seekers and other migrants. We ran two 8-week bike maintenance workshops and now have our own bike-pool with 6 bikes and a new bike shelter open to staff and clients.

Community Gardens. ItM works with Ecoworks community gardens to provide opportunities for personal and interpersonal development. We are able to reach out to and support refugees and asylum seekers in the city experiencing emotional or psychological distress. Our support includes gardening activities, a chance to learn new skills and get healthy exercise in an enjoyable and peaceful environment.

New partnerships

Over the past twelve months ItM has formed various new partnerships and strengthened existing ones. These include Step 4 Psychological Health (part of NHS Nottinghamshire Mental Health Trust) with which ItM works closely for clients needing referral to mental health services. Since April this year, ItM has referred 21 clients to Step 4. Other partnerships include ECOworks and British Red Cross Bike project (see above) and NHS Nottingham Sexual Health Outreach Team (SHOT). SHOT has delivered three sessions at NNRF so far covering awareness raising and screening, and is anticipating holding regular sessions for NNRF Women's Group. ItM has also strengthened cooperation with the midwifery and health visiting teams in Nottingham to whom we regularly refer pregnant women and families. We are also working closely with the lead midwife for FGM (female genital mutilation) who runs FGM clinics at City Hospital and QMC, and who agreed to hold periodic sessions at NNRF via the Women's Group.

Volunteers

ItM has benefited from the input of past and present volunteers and both Eamon and Kinsi would like to thank them for their valued contribution. Currently there are three volunteers supporting the project, two of whom have joined us within the last five months.

Focus Group Report

Following consultations with NHS Nottingham PCT, ItM conducted a series of focus groups from different communities including Zimbabwean, Malawian, Eritrean, Somali, Kurdish, Iranian, Vietnamese, Mongolian and West African. These took place between February and June 2011 and 50 individuals participated in total. The aim was to hear directly from these community groups about their experience and perceptions of using health services in Nottingham, and for their views to be fed back to NHS service providers and commissioners. As a result ItM has produced a report, unique of its kind in this region, with findings and practical recommendations. We hope it will serve as a starting point for health service providers, policy makers and service commissioners and help to improve

the delivery and procurement of NHS services for refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants in the area and beyond.

Other Project publications

ItM worked with NHS Nottingham to produce an 'NHS Information Welcome Pack' for newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers. The Pack has been somewhat delayed, but happily earlier this year ItM secured sufficient funds to translate it into eight commonly spoken community languages as well as English. The Pack is available for clients and service providers electronically and in translated hard copies. In addition to the project leaflet, ItM also produced translated leaflets on the use of NHS services which have been well received by clients and professionals.

Conferences and other networking

Over the past twelve months the project team (staff and volunteers) attended numerous conferences and other relevant health events where issues affecting refugees and asylum seekers were discussed, contributing in a variety of ways. We have also sourced enough funds to host a Conference of our own on 'Refugee Health', scheduled for 1st November 2012.

As can be seen from the non-exhaustive list above, we have had a busy twelve months, with reduced working hours, and feel that the impact of the project is finally taking shape both locally and perhaps further afield.

Kinsi Clarke
Into the Mainstream Project Worker

Housing Support Project

The initial purpose of the project was to meet a gap in the service provision to refugees, especially with the changes to the Refugee Futures Contract in spring 2011, which initially resulted in many refugees being excluded from their service. After consulting with Nottingham City Council, the City Council agreed to relax the Refugee Futures service criteria allowing them to work with a broader range of refugees.

The Temporary Housing Support role was to originally intended to provide 'floating support and resettlement' to refugees who either had no local connection (came from outside the Nottingham area) or were signing for their second or subsequent tenancy. It quickly became apparent that there was little demand for resettlement work due to falling numbers of legacy cases and the fact that Refugee Futures was able to meet the needs of new refugees.

What was observed was an increasing demand for housing related support for refugees to sustain their and manage their tenancies. This mainly revolved around issues such as rent arrears, the slow processing of Housing Benefit claims, Housing Benefit overpayments, repairs to properties and repossessions/evictions.

There was also an increasing demand for help to find affordable accommodation for refugees with 'no Local connection' who have decided to move to Nottingham where they may have friends or relatives. This is particularly difficult area of work as they do not usually have any savings to afford a deposit or a month's rent in advance, nor can

they access the various rent guarantee or Bond schemes managed via Nottingham City Council's Housing Aid. It is almost impossible to find accommodation for someone without money for a deposit.

So the purpose of the role has moved from resettlement work to working with mainly housing, debts and benefits issues.

Over the past 12 months (Nov 2011 to August 2012) the project has had over 440 visits by 165 separate clients. Many clients required in depth casework resulting in numerous follow-up appointments. Some cases took in excess of 6 months to resolve, particularly major repair issues or complex benefit cases going to Tribunal. I have assisted 2 clients were facing repossession and eviction from their homes, in both cases due to systemic errors with Housing Benefits. It is shocking to realise that people could be evicted from their homes and made homeless through no fault of their own. One of the biggest successes of the project in the past year has been the effective development of joint referral system for both Fiona (One Stop Shop) and myself, which has enable us to work dynamically in partnership and support one another.

Volunteers

Over the past year I have been greatly assisted by Violet Ogden who completed her 2nd year social work Placement at NNRF. Over the course of 6 months Violet developed a high degree of skill and expertise in supporting clients, particularly in finding accommodation.

I was also very lucky to have 2 volunteers, Sara Abraham and Jasim Ghafur who are both highly skilled ex-members of staff with immense knowledge of housing related support and welfare benefits. At present Sara and Jasim have been employed by NNRF to job share the Housing Support role.

Case studies:

1. B. was facing eviction and had received a court summons. His Housing Benefit stopped and he was not in receipt of any other benefits. He been to NNRF general advice and been referred to other advice centres for assistance but the problems had not been addressed. He also had a mental health issue.

Action – Got JSA into payment, obtained an emergency payment (different from Crisis Loan). I identified issue preventing Housing Benefit being paid and resolved it resulting in back-dated Housing Benefit to cover all the arrears. I liaised with Nottingham City Homes explaining what I was doing and requested that they stop the repossession process. I ensured that B. took all the required evidence to Housing Benefit and that he was not charged for the cost of the court summons.

2. M. had had no kitchen in his flat for 2 years. He had removed it due to misunderstanding that Nottingham City Homes were going to replace and fit a new kitchen. The flat also experienced a flood due to a water pipe bursting and damaging most of the flat. There were constant problems of leaking pipes which created a very unhealthy living environment, with substantial mould throughout the flat. The client

was exasperated and depressed as he has been trying to get Nottingham City Home to remedy all the above issues.

Action – I went to view the property to assess the extent of the damage, contacted Nottingham City Homes and liaised with the correct department to escalate the repairs and damage as they were so severe. I liaised with Nottingham Law Centre to seek special help to get Nottingham City Homes to repair the flat and fit a new kitchen and completed a compensation application from Nottingham City Homes for the damage caused to the flat. I also liaised with Severn Trent Water to reduce the client's water bill as it was very excessive due to the flood and various leaks. All the repairs have now been completed and a new kitchen has been fitted. Severn Trent Water agreed to reassess the client's water usage and massively reduced his bill. He also received compensation for his damaged property from Nottingham City Homes.

One of my main areas of work has been accommodation-seeking for single clients which is both difficult and time consuming. Initially there is a reluctance to consider Private rented accommodation, with most clients determined to access the YMCA though this has now changing. I have assisted 8 clients to find private rented accommodation and settle into their homes. Both Fiona and I brief new refugees on the transition process, housing options and act as one of the main referral points for Refugee Futures.

Future themes and trends:

- Greater number of clients getting into serious problems with Housing Benefit or facing repossession/eviction. This trend is likely to increase with the prolonged economic downturn and Welfare reform, particularly the changes to Housing Benefit and the abolition of Council Tax Benefit.
- Significant increase of homelessness amongst single refugees (both men and women), difficulty in getting deposit, agency fees or rent in advance. This is particularly an issue for clients with no local connection as they cannot access Nottingham City Council rent guarantee or bond scheme.
- This issue of single homeless this is likely become even greater due to the demolition of the Lenton flats by Nottingham City Homes. This will reduce single accommodation within the city by 1000 units.
- Increase in waiting times for Homelink due to the above.
- Difficulty in getting appropriate help with serious repair issues.
- Longer delays in processing Housing Benefit or changes of circumstances, can take up to 8 to 12 weeks. This is totally unreasonable and causes considerable stress and hardship. Again this upsets landlords and reinforces negative perceptions about renting to people on Housing Benefit.
- Recent changes in Local Housing Allowance (Housing Benefit) means that clients under 35 years old cannot rent 1 bed flats; they are only entitled to shared accommodation rate.

- In 8 to 12 months' time, refugees who living in 2 bed flats will have their Housing Benefit reviewed and find that it has been reduced due to the above. This will result in client not being able to afford their rent, evictions and getting further into debt.
- Under occupancy of Social Housing (Council house) eg. a single person in a 2 bed flat or a couple with one child family in a 3 bed house, Housing Benefit will be reduced, as they will be viewed as being over accommodated.
- Abolition of Social Fund, no more Community Care Grants, Crisis Loans or Budgeting loans. From April 2013 the local authority will administer or fund this area of support.

The next 12 months look like they will very difficult and challenging for anyone who is working in housing or advice. From April 2013 significant change to the Welfare benefit system, particularly Housing Benefit and the phasing in of Universal Credit to replace existing benefits will cause an increase demand for advice amongst refugees

Debt Advice

Since January 2012 I have been funded for 1 day to provide debt advice to refugees. This has been another area of increasing demand as clients find that they are not able to manage their finances. To generalise most clients with a Housing Benefit problem have a debt issue too (overpayment of benefit or rent arrears will result in a debt). I have worked holistically with clients to address their debts and set up affordable repayment plans. In many cases I have had to negotiate with clients and explain their responsibilities in that they need to register and pay for utilities.

In 2 cases I have assisted clients to set up Debt Relief Orders which is similar to bankruptcy in that it wipes out up to £15000 of debts. This has been very effective for clients who are destitute and have No Recourse to Public Funds.

Simon Breen - Housing Support Worker



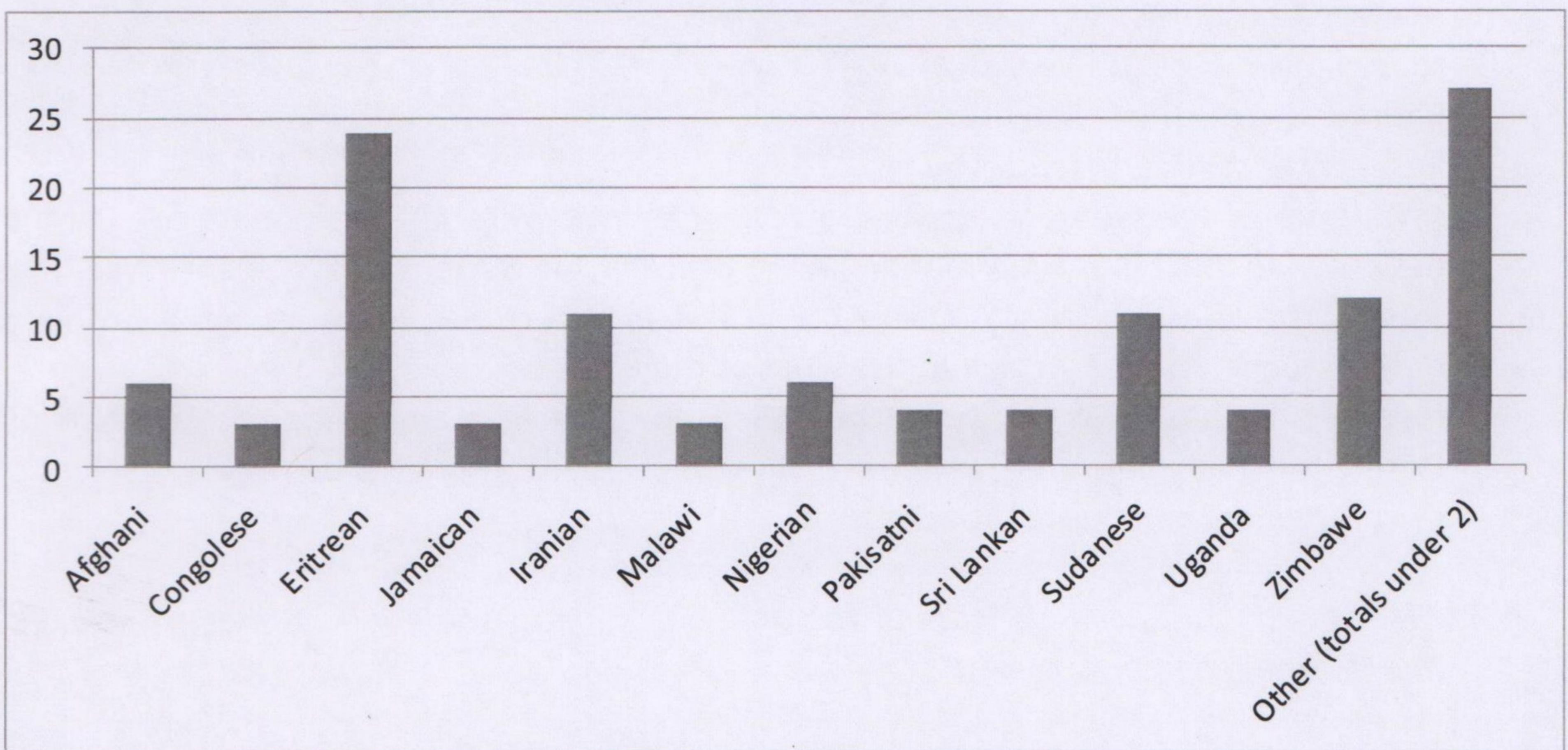
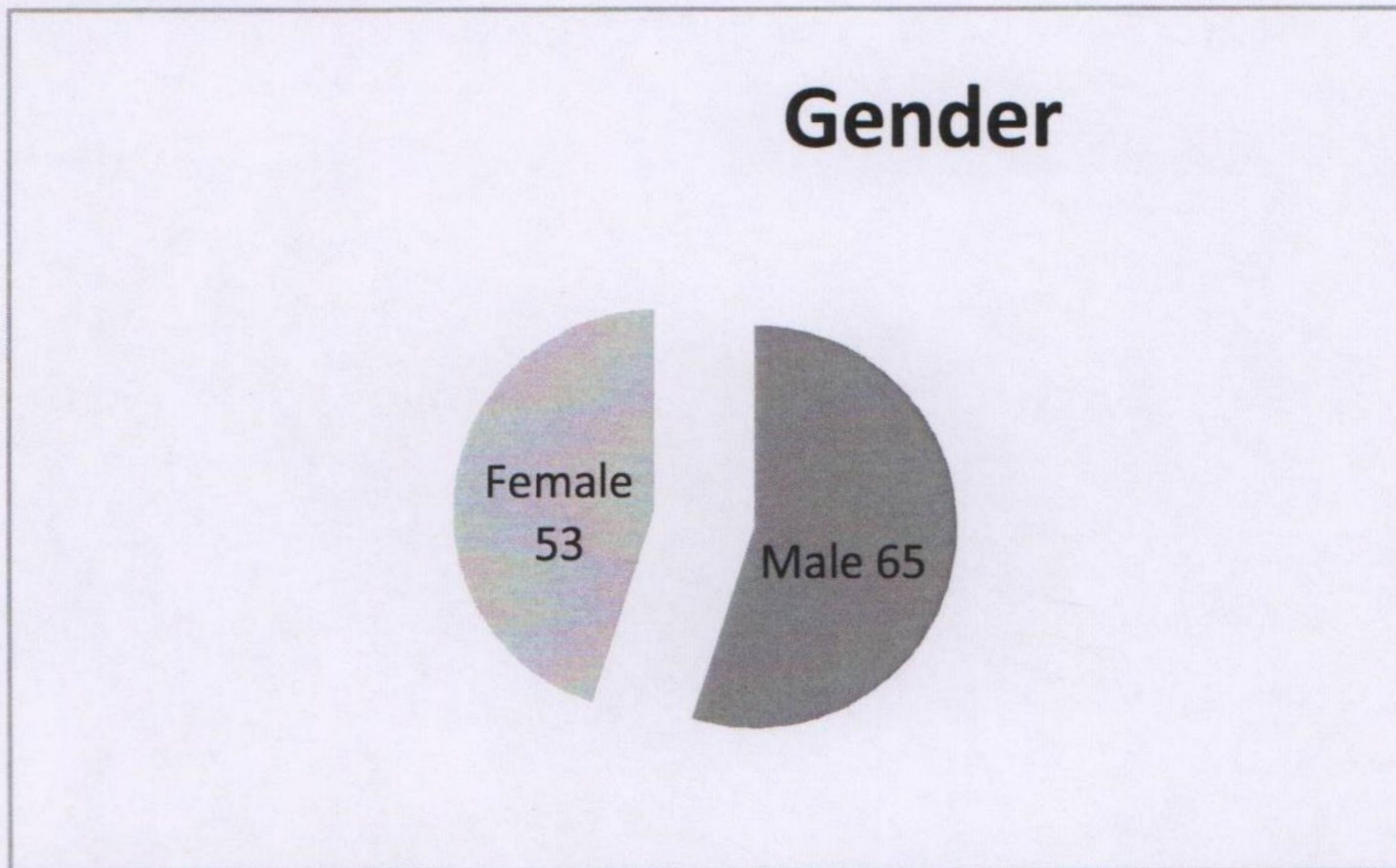
NNRF is a partner with Tuntum Housing Association in a contract from Nottingham City Council in delivering housing support (called 'Floating Support') to new refugees who were dispersed to Nottingham by the UK Border Agency. Funding for the contract was reduced in May 2011 by c. 70%. NNRF has one full-time member of staff, Julie Whitehead on the Refugee Futures team.

Since the last Annual Report, Refugee Futures has continued to meet the challenges of the new contract, working with people with new decisions within a six week period, offering four weeks accommodation-seeking support, and then three months tenancy support.

We received some good news in January 2012 that the funding was to continue until March 2013. This was very welcome as we had braced ourselves for another battle to keep the project going.

During the last twelve months we have supported a total of 118 families and single people, with single males remaining the dominant group, as indicated in the figures below.

Social Make up



People from the Eritrean community continue to be the largest nationality we support, with 'others' in the graph being made up of; Cameroonians, Chinese, Gambians, Ghanaians, Iraqis, Koreans, Kuwaitis, Mongolians, Somalis, Syrians and Vietnamese.

I am extremely grateful to be part of an amazing, hard working, committed team of support workers. Without the dedication of Julie, Seb and Sharon we would not have managed the many challenges we face on a daily basis. Without doubt the biggest challenge remains managing people's expectations. This is constantly mentioned at most of the meetings I attend. As the City adapts to the loss of single accommodation through the de-commissioning of the Lenton flats over the next few years, we know this will deeply affect our ability to resettle single people. The impact of the changes in Housing Benefit rules continues to affect the service users' ability to secure suitable accommodation across the city. Many single people do not wish to live in shared houses again, particularly as they may have endured a long time in shared asylum

accommodation. Trying to get this message across to our service users can be difficult at times; however staff work tirelessly with their service users to ensure they have correct up to date information on how the changes affect their choices.

Accessing benefits and applying for National Insurance Numbers is becoming more and more difficult at times, some of which is down to job cuts within DWP services and lack of awareness and training. We are also mindful of further benefit changes that are due to be rolled out from April 2013. These will have further impact on all service users and we predict continuing increases in poverty amongst our client group.

Part of my role is to nurture relationships with our partner agencies, and we see our relationship with NNRF as key to the future of the project. We continue to offer the 'Choice' bidding workshops at the Forum each Monday, and we have jointly organised two highly successful RefuTEA's in the last 12 months. Seb helped to organise trips to Wollaton Park and Yorkshire Sculpture Park with service users. The



setting up of the women's sewing group meant we were able to donate four brand-new sewing machines with money raised from having Social Work students. We hope this will be a lasting legacy. All of this work has in turn helped to raise the profile of both Refugee Futures work and the work of the Forum.

Having Julie based at our office has been an asset in maintaining our partnership. During the past year Julie has worked with 38 clients. The quotes below are a selection of comments from our feedback forms;

"Very good work because without the help and support someone can be just stranded and doomed, end up stressed".

"I personally think it is fabulous and I appreciated the help and support, it was excellent. So far so good, thank you so much".

"I have got everything I need so far; if I got the chance to say something I would like to say thank you everyone in your staff for the help I have been given so far".

"She was one the most professional support workers and I am very happy because she took everything in serious".

And so, as we face an uncertain future again, we begin the tendering process for our contract. We feel we have made a marked contribution to the recent Social Exclusion Review held by the City Council, ensuring that the needs of our clients are voiced, along with the impact of some of the decisions made around the current contract. It is

interesting to note that all the voluntary sector agrees that limiting the time people can work with service users does not save money; it impacts on all other areas of their lives, and that the need for specialist agencies such as ourselves is the way forward. We remain hopeful.

Dara Ivekich
Service Manager, Refugee Futures
Tuntum Housing Association

DESTITUTE ASYLUM SEEKERS.

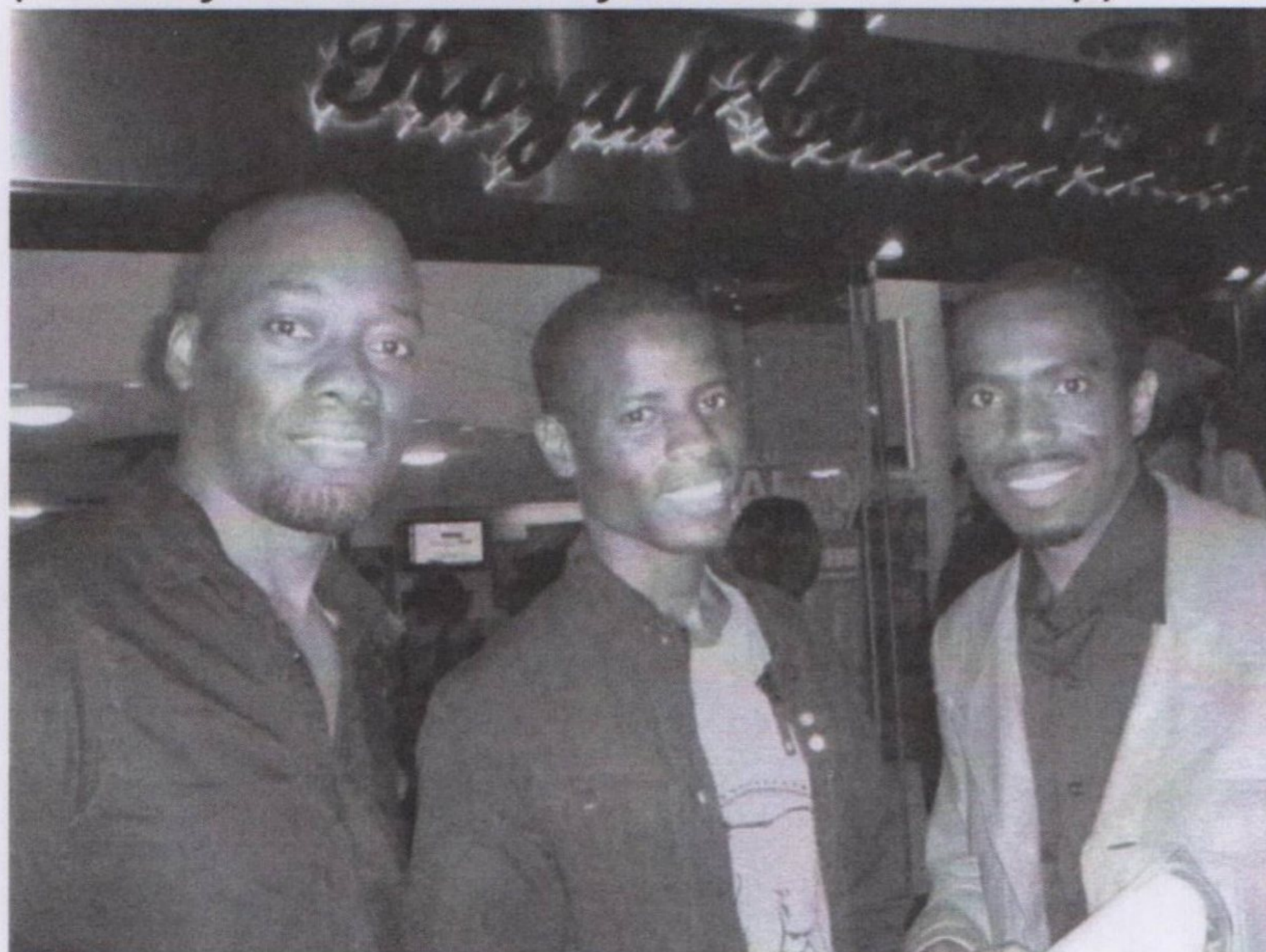
Asylum seekers whose cases have been refused or are in a 'state of limbo', are the most desperate and vulnerable people the Forum supports. They are terrified of the fate that will face them if they return to their country of origin and live in fear of being detained and forcibly deported. They are not eligible for any state support and unless they have friends who can help out, they are destitute and often homeless.

NNRF strives to address their multiple needs through legal advice, small cash grants, weekly food parcels, hot meals and social activities. We are entirely dependent on donations and fund-raising to pay for this support. We work closely with voluntary sector partners including the Nottingham Arimathea Trust, the Red Cross, Himmah and HOST Nottingham.

Anti-Destitution Report - Food Group

The Food Group has been meeting every Saturday for 10 years to distribute food to destitute asylum seekers. It is run by 20+, committed volunteers including many from the R/AS community as well as the host community. Students, Church and Muslim community group members have also joined together to help provide this very important service.

(Some of the Volunteers from the Food Group)



It offers a welcoming, family friendly, communal space where users can enjoy a hot meal together at midday and take away 2 bags full of food. It's also an opportunity to meet others & share skills e.g. cooking and volunteering.

We are totally dependent on donations for purchasing food and

we are very grateful to everyone who donates and contributes. Red Cross have recently introduced a new source of supply of fresh food from Costco which has considerably enhanced the supplies which we buy from a local greengrocer. Himmah, a grass roots Muslim, social justice organisation has also made a valuable contribution in the form of cooked meals once a month. During Ramadan, Himmah raised money to buy food and also had a regular evening spot every week for 4 weeks at Speakers' Corner in town where a short talk was followed by the distribution of food to anyone in need. At the beginning of September, Himmah provided a coach and packed lunches to enable service users and volunteers to have a very enjoyable outing to Cambridge for the day.

This year links have been formed and strengthened with the supermarket Asda, with whom we have a regular order for non-perishable foodstuffs. Their Community Liaison officer, Angie, is now a regular helper at the Food Group and her friendliness and willingness to get stuck in with whatever job needs doing are very much appreciated. With Angie's help, bag-packing sessions at Asda have been arranged and volunteers and service users from the Food Group will be packing customers' bags for 6 sessions running up to Christmas. Donations will go to Anti-Destitution funds.

Since April this year, numbers at the Food Group have been falling, averaging out at around 25 users per week. This is due to a number of factors including people getting Refugee status and lower attendance during Ramadan. Also, in line with the NNRF constitution, it was decided we should not be referring for support those who came to the UK on a time-limited visa which has expired. Negotiations are in hand for this group to be supported by Himmah, but they can also be referred to the NG7 Food Bank which was set up in July this year. Regular Case Review meetings are now held to look at users' eligibility for food support, to ensure that those in most need continue to have priority.

Our spending on food averages around £300 per week. Regular donations at present do not cover all this amount. When Jane Henson and Konnie Lloyd have spoken to local groups to promote the Host Scheme, there have been extra donations. George Gabriel of Citizens UK raised sponsorship by running in the Robin Hood half-marathon on behalf of the Food Group. In June a presentation of Asylum Monologues by Ice and Fire was organised by Lynda Wilson and Jane and the proceeds from this were donated to the Group; Ex-Libris has made several donations resulting from their book sales. New ideas and initiatives to raise money are always being sought.

A significant new development has been the appointment of a part-time Anti-Destitution Support Co-ordinator funded by a grant from the Lloyds TSB Foundation, and we are very pleased to welcome Henry Muchiyani to this role. Henry will work with the users of the Cash Group and Food Group to help them find a way through the appalling situation of destitution. He will also develop the work by reinforcing links with partner groups and representing the needs of the Anti-Destitution Projects to voluntary and statutory agencies.

We are indebted, as always, to our band of volunteers to enable the Food Group to function. They work hard as a team to set up the room on a Saturday, lay out the

foodstuffs including the sometimes huge quantities from Costco, make users welcome, cook and serve a hot meal and distribute the food to take away. Then, not least, they clear up and leave the room in order for Monday morning. Many thanks to all who give their time in this way and contribute to this vital work; I think most would say they get as much, if not more out of volunteering than they put in. At the time of writing, a Thank-You party for volunteers is being arranged for the end of October.

Maggie Jones
Volunteer

Anti-Destitution Report - Cash Group

The Cash Group has been busy again, trying to alleviate the destitution of refused asylum seekers by distributing small cash allowances.

Refused asylum seekers, many of whom are appealing their judgments, have no recourse to public funds and are not allowed to work, leaving them destitute and homeless, reliant on charity and the kindness of friends. People in this situation include the sick, the pregnant and the elderly, as well as torture victims. Anything we supply them with has to be raised by donations, as the state will not help.

We are therefore extremely grateful for the one-off donations, standing orders, membership subscriptions and fundraising events which continue to help us alleviate the depths of these desperate situations. We have been offering support for over eight years now; in this time we have distributed around £147,300, thanks to the enormous generosity of NNRF members and supporters. This year has been made easier for us and the people we help by invaluable added support from other organisations such as the Red Cross. The work of Arimathea Trust and Host Nottingham means that, although they can't always help, we can turn to them (rather than just looking sorrowful) when we hear about someone sleeping on the streets.

Unfortunately, we are only able to give each destitute asylum seeker £10 (or £20 if they have verifiable ongoing health/medical problems) every four weeks. This sounds – and is – minimal, but is in addition to food supplied by the NNRF Food Group (funded from the same pot), and allows some choice and dignity. We interview people regularly to find out if they have other needs we can assist with, and this often results in referrals to NNRF advisers or other courses of action. We also refer people to the Food Group.

We are all volunteers. We were sad when Sue felt she had to leave us earlier this year, but very happy to have Rosi working with us now. We distribute the cash on Tuesday mornings. Although we operate every week, cash is collected on a four-weekly basis, so only a quarter of those needing support turn up each week. The work is sometimes emotionally demanding and difficult, but also very rewarding.

Happily, some of our long-standing users have come off our books as they have gained Leave to Remain. They often come to express gratitude for the support they have had.

As a result the number of people we support has decreased, although there are always new claims. For the first time, we are now spending less than £1000 per month on cash support. (This is still a lot of money to have to raise!)

For people who are interested, here are some figures on who has been coming to the Cash Group from 4th October 2011 to 3rd October 2012.

What gender are our users? We had 132 males and 31 females (plus 1 unrecorded).

How old are they? 11 were aged between 53 & 62, 31 between 43 & 52, 48 between 33 & 42, 61 between 23 & 32 (the largest group), and 12 under 22.

How long have they been coming to us?

First visit	late 2004	2
	early 2005	1
	late 2005	2
	early 2006	2
	late 2006	1
	early 2007	1
	late 2007	1
	early 2008	6
	late 2008	3
	early 2009	3
	late 2009	5
	early 2010	7
	late 2010	24
	early 2011	23
	late 2011	38
	early 2012	31
	late 2012	14
		164

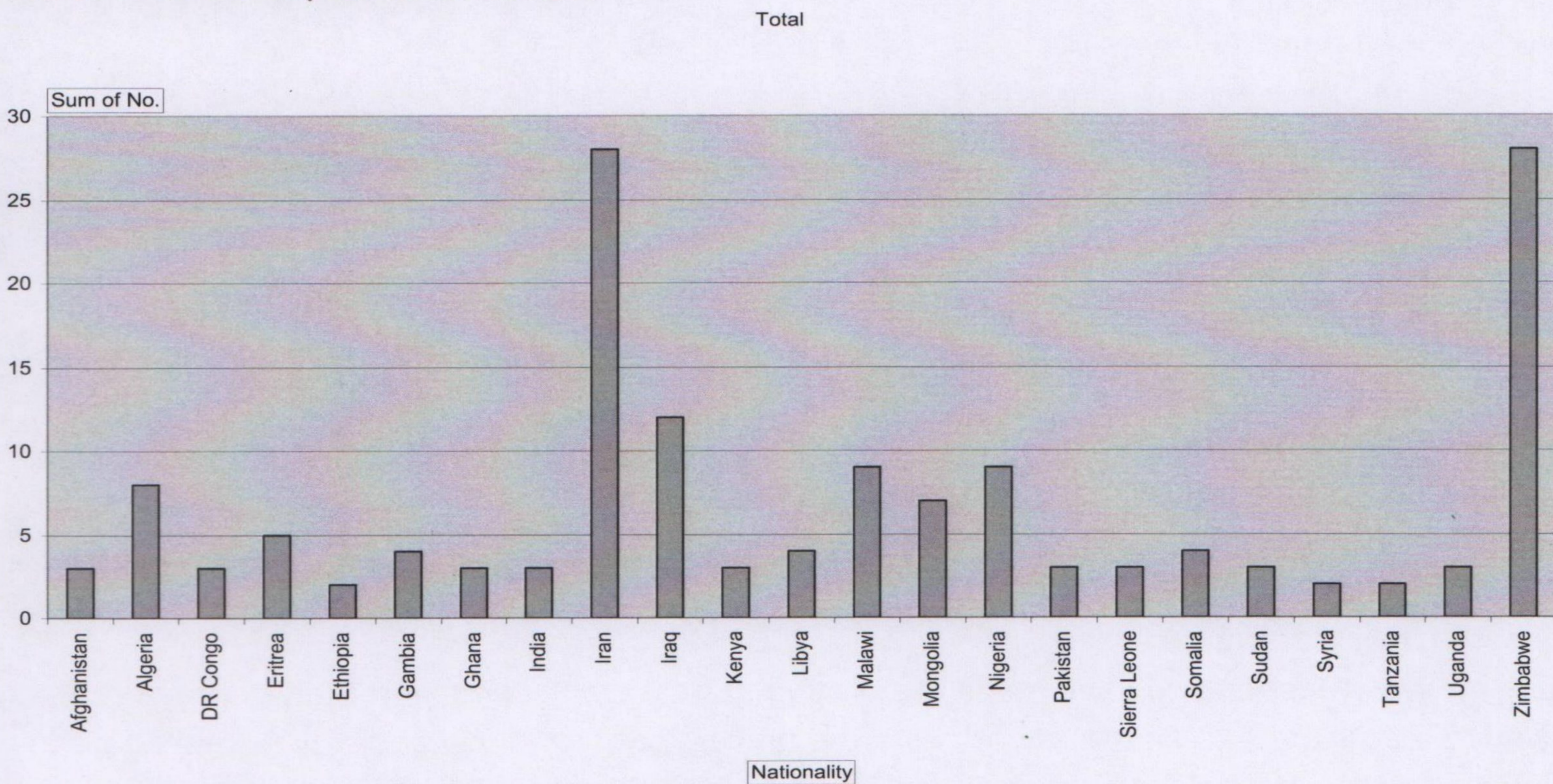
What amount were they given?

Amount Given	
£0	4*
£10	82
£20+	78
	164

★A referral to the Food Group, but no cash given.

A total of 34 nationalities were recorded.

These were the top 20 nationalities:



There were 789 individual visits in the year, from 164 different people. Iran and Zimbabwe are places many of our users come from, but a large part of the globe is represented. Of the 31 females, some were pregnant or had recently given birth. 48 people had medical problems and received an extra £10 for this reason. (In reality, most people seeking our help have some kind of health problem, the life possibilities of a failed asylum seeker not being conducive to good health, but we can only afford to give the most vulnerable the extra payment.) 11 were born in the 1950s; although this would not make them old in our culture, adding fear, torture, ill health, bad nutrition, hardship and uncertainty to the years means some can be considered elderly. About ten people have been destitute and needing our help for over five years!

In the last 52 weeks we handed out a total of £11,710 (previous year £13,210). Many people tell us how important the support is. As well as enabling them to catch a bus or top up their mobiles, it helps to give them some choice and gives them membership of the 'ordinary' world. We rely on your support to be able to continue this work. **We are so very grateful to everyone who has donated.**

**Chris Cann
Volunteer**

Tuesday Night Project

Over the past 12 months, the Tuesday Night Project has had a wide array of activities within its mix of asylum seekers, refugees, students and members of the local community. At the project we provide a platform for social integration, encouraging community cohesion through personal and group interactions which help in confidence building. We offer hot meals, English conversation classes, board games, pool, guitar playing, music, and promote the rich tapestry of cultural diversity within the participants. Other regular activities we have had include art workshops and banner paintings. We are always open to new ideas regarding how people want to use the space.

We have had celebrations such as Chinese New Year, Zimbabwean Independence, Malawian, Afghanistan, and Iranian nights. We were also fortunate enough to have hosted a Palestinian group whose members provided music, film and dance performances for us. We also hosted a Cuban night, where we had Aleida Guevara as a guest speaker.

We are grateful to Students Action for Refugees (STAR) from the University of Nottingham for organising and running the English conversation classes, and for

bringing in new students who have made the project quite a wholesome and lively event. In the new year, we anticipate to do more work with the university through collaborative events both at The Square Centre, and on the university campus. A large number of volunteers from our Nottingham community give their time in engaging with asylum seekers and refugees from different parts of the world, and for this, we are grateful.

We welcome donations from those amongst the participants who can afford, as all the money raised is put back in purchasing food ingredients complimenting the NNRF and the British Red Cross input.



**Allan Njanji
Volunteer**

Children and Families Project

The Children's Project started in September 2009 with the post of Children's Worker being secured through Children in Need funding. This was a 3 year grant which ran out this summer. We were successful in securing funding for another 3 years which extends the working hours of



the Project Worker. Last year we also received financial contributions from Red Cross to help run events as well as support from individual donors.



The project aims to improve outcomes for refugee and asylum seeking children and young people through the provision of activities that reduce social isolation as well as catering for children and young people's emotional and developmental needs. It also provides family support, advocacy and awareness raising and has developed good working relationships and partnerships with outside agencies. The scope of the new funding enables the project to do more case-holding and more

development work than we have done before. An area which we will expand on this year is work with teenagers as they have not had separate provision in the past.

Issues children face

The experience of being a child within the asylum process has far-reaching consequences. For these children and families their lives are characterised by uncertainty about their future and can be described as a *'life in limbo'*, of which older children are more acutely aware. Some of the many ways in which the experience impacts on family life includes financial deprivation, poor quality, temporary housing, social isolation and exclusion and the breakdown of wider family relationships or support networks.

The financial restrictions and deprivation only add to the social isolation that this group of young people experience. Many refugee children have very limited social circles and do not tend to access clubs, trips and activities. Accessing wider services is limited through multiple barriers such as lack of awareness, confidence and language. In terms of schooling children face multiple barriers such as long waits to find school places, the change in educational systems, disrupted provision due to frequent moves and language needs.

Without the support of extended family networks and lack of confidence in accessing or lack of knowledge of local service provision, parents are at high risk of experiencing anxiety, depression and other mental health disorders. Their levels of emotional and mental distress impact on their ability to respond to their children's needs. Many young refugees and asylum seekers often take on additional responsibilities in relation to supporting their parents and maintaining the home environment, such as interpreting for the family.

Project aims and attendances

The project widens the horizons of children by providing activities that reduce social isolation, giving access to leisure opportunities that families could not otherwise afford, as well as catering for children and young people's emotional and developmental needs. Peer interaction and play based activities are vital elements in ensuring that children feel settled and secure. The project takes a holistic approach, emphasising parental involvement and the establishment of community links to promote integration and access to wider service provision.



From September 2011 to September 2012 we worked with 195 individual children aged between 0 and 18 years old and had in total 1165 attendances by children at the project's sessions. Ethnic backgrounds include Eritrean, Sudanese, Somali, Nigerian, Zimbabwean, Chinese, Mongolian, Libyan, Sri Lankan, Algerian, Malawian and Pakistani.

Term time activities

During the school term we provided a crèche for women-only ESOL classes and for the weekly Women's Group, parenting support/advice and guidance through Worker support at the Friday sessions and a weekly 'Stay and Play' for under 5's, again as part of the Women's Group.

For many of our children, attending our crèche provision is the first experience they have of being separated from their mothers. We see many issues over the year related to attachment and separation. Our crèche staff are sensitive to the situation of our families. Behaviour and developmental changes are readily observed by crèche staff and parents. Evaluations show increased confidence, social skills and language development amongst the children. Settling in to the crèche is an important step and children are more prepared when they have a place at mainstream provision.

The 'Stay and Play' is supported by our play volunteer Victoria and gives children the chance to try new activities and get messy together! Outside organisations link with us and we regularly have sessions provided by the local Sure Start Children's Centre and by the Bookstart library team who come to do sing-a-longs with us.

Holiday activities and events

During school holidays our activity provision extends to older children. In the last year we have visited Stonebridge City Farm, taken families to the pantomime thanks to Nottingham Playhouse donating tickets, played in local parks and visited Wollaton Hall for a family fun day in collaboration with Refugee Futures. During the summer we held yoga classes and took coaches to a butterfly and wildlife park and to the seaside.

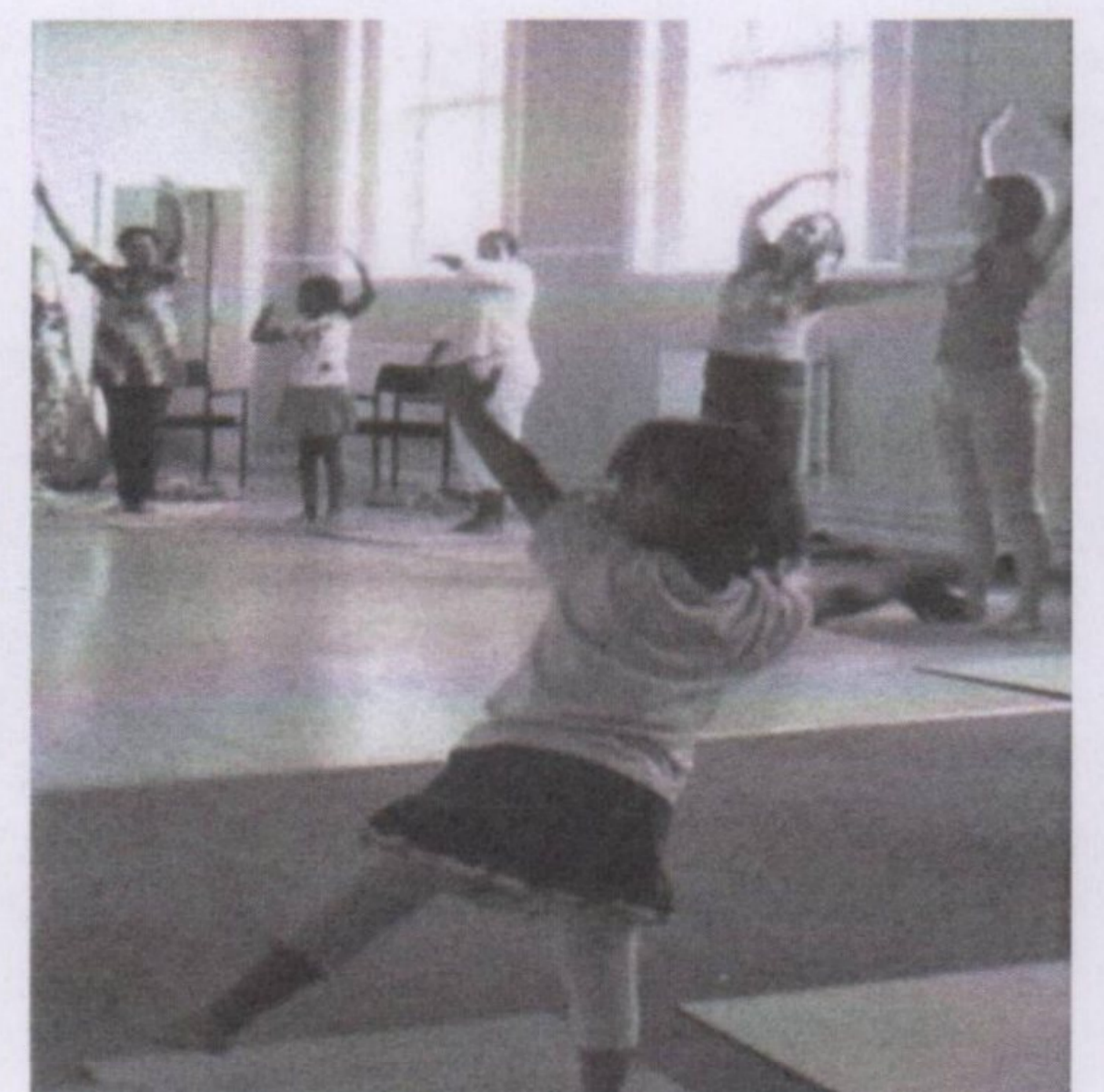


As I write, it's nearly the time of year again to start planning for the End of Year party held in December. Last year's party saw over 180 dance along to children's band 'Johnny and the Raindrops', enjoy stilt walkers, face painting, art and craft activities, and receive a present from Santa.



Through our sessions we see the establishment of friendship groups, particularly amongst our longer standing members. Friends meet up outside of our sessions and families often tell us that they have played together at each others' houses or gone on days out together. Parents have set up support networks with others in the group.

We work to address confidence, self esteem and children's ability to cope through a variety of means. Through children's comments on their experiences and discussions with parents we highlighted self esteem and relaxation as key areas to address. We worked in partnership with a yoga specialist trained in therapeutic interventions with children to provide both parent/child sessions and teenager activities over the summer. The teenage session brought together a



group of girls who will help us to plan more teenage activities this year.

Referrals

A substantial part of the project's work is direct family support through one-to-one case holding. This enables the project to work closely with individual children or families who need to address specific issues. In the third year of the project we have received 24 referrals and had 9 families we have worked with for extended periods of time. We have achieved changes for children such as raising the profile of destitute families and ensuring basic services are accessed, providing respite for young carers and lowering their levels of stress, increasing acceptance and awareness of additional needs within refugee community organisations and pushing for a diagnosis to enable one particular child to be statemented in order to attend a Special School.

Development work

The project also undertakes development and outreach with refugee community organisations and partner agencies, and provides training and advice for other agencies. To increase agency awareness of the needs of our client group we have worked in partnership with local children's centres, play and youth workers, schools and local voluntary agencies. We have given advice over the phone, attended staff meetings, forums and partnerships to share our good practice and guidance. We have also delivered training to family and community teams, specialist paediatric nurses and health visiting teams. We have worked alongside local organisations to ensure that our families know of their activities and services and to break down barriers to engagement. Agency feedback tells us awareness has increased and our support has aided the delivery of their projects.

Liz Burrell

Children & Families Support Worker



Nottingham Refugee Women's Group

The Women's Group at Refugee Forum has been operating since March 2007 and is a focal point for refugee and asylum seeker women to meet, make new friends, share skills and provide mutual support in a safe and welcoming environment. It also provides valuable advice, guidance and information. The group is open to all refugee and asylum seeking women and their children living in and around Nottingham.

The group is affiliated to NNRF but has its own constitution. It has seen big changes this year. As previous members had moved on and left the group, the Management Committee no longer existed and

we needed to rethink the purpose of the group. After some sessions exploring the roles and responsibilities of a Management Committee, ten women volunteered to step up and become part of the Executive Committee or Trustees. The wider group gave their approval and the new Management Committee was formed. Thanks to the opening up of discussions about the future of



our group there have been a lot of ideas and energy abounding this year. With the help of Refugee Forum, NCVS and Stuart Brown the group has received training, adopted a new constitution and a new name of 'Culture Exchange Women's Group' and are in the process of applying for funding.

Our membership

Currently the group has 144 women registered. Our members come from a diverse range of approximately 30 different countries including Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Eritrea, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Libya, Pakistan, Sudan, Egypt and Ghana. From September 2011 to September 2012 we had a total of 636 attendances.

When we meet

The group is held every Friday during term time. From 10-12 we go to Playworks where we run a programme of activities for the women while the children access crèche provision funded by the Children's Project and delivered by Greenfields. At 12 we return to Refugee Forum where women eat together and socialise while their children play. The One Stop Shop advice sessions operate a women-only drop in service on Fridays so members of the group can receive support whilst they are attending the Friday sessions.

Our activities

Friday mornings activities are a mix of skills sharing, information and advice from outside agencies, creative activities and therapeutic 'pamper' sessions. Recent sessions have included yoga, sewing classes, first aid, women's health and massage. The sewing classes have been funded by Refugee Futures who have given the group three sewing machines and arranged for a teacher to give us regular sessions. Together with Marion from the Community Nutrition and Dietetics team we continue to run the Healthy Eating Food Skills 6 week course. We ran this 5 times last year and will continue to do this as long as we have names on the waiting list. After completing this course, women are awarded an NHS certificate.



We worked in partnership with the Health Shop and the Women's Centre to attend a women's health day with information, workshops, yoga and massage. Many of our weekly sessions focused on confidence building and self-esteem and we worked with WEA and Bright Ideas to enable our women to be a part of the Women Leading for Change inspirational events and seminars. We have been consulted as a focus group on health matters and took part in surveys on women's sexual health services and family health visiting.

Successes – Building support systems and empowering women



The women's group provides invaluable support to the women who attend. Women, particularly those with young children, often experience high levels of social isolation which, coupled with the stresses associated with the asylum process, makes life extremely challenging. The peer interaction and supportive environment of the Friday group plays an important role in addressing these issues and it is this that comes across strongest in evaluations. Many women tell us that they

felt very isolated and alone but coming out weekly improves their emotional wellbeing, enables networks and friendships to develop and gives a focus to the week, particularly for those who have been unable to access other activities such as college due to funding issues and lack of childcare.

As well as developing networks amongst individual members, the group has also developed strong links and relationships with local organisations. Through these contacts we provide information on services for families as well as helping members link with services and other agencies to assist them in building new lives. Through having regular visits from staff from key agencies, women become familiar with local services. This has helped to increase their knowledge of wider provision, confidence in accessing support, and awareness of their rights.

With the new Management Committee in place, the group has been able to re-evaluate its purpose and tighten the aims of the group. As well as building friendships, reducing social isolation and easing integration, emphasis has been placed on enhancing women's skills and providing training to empower members to become more self-reliant.

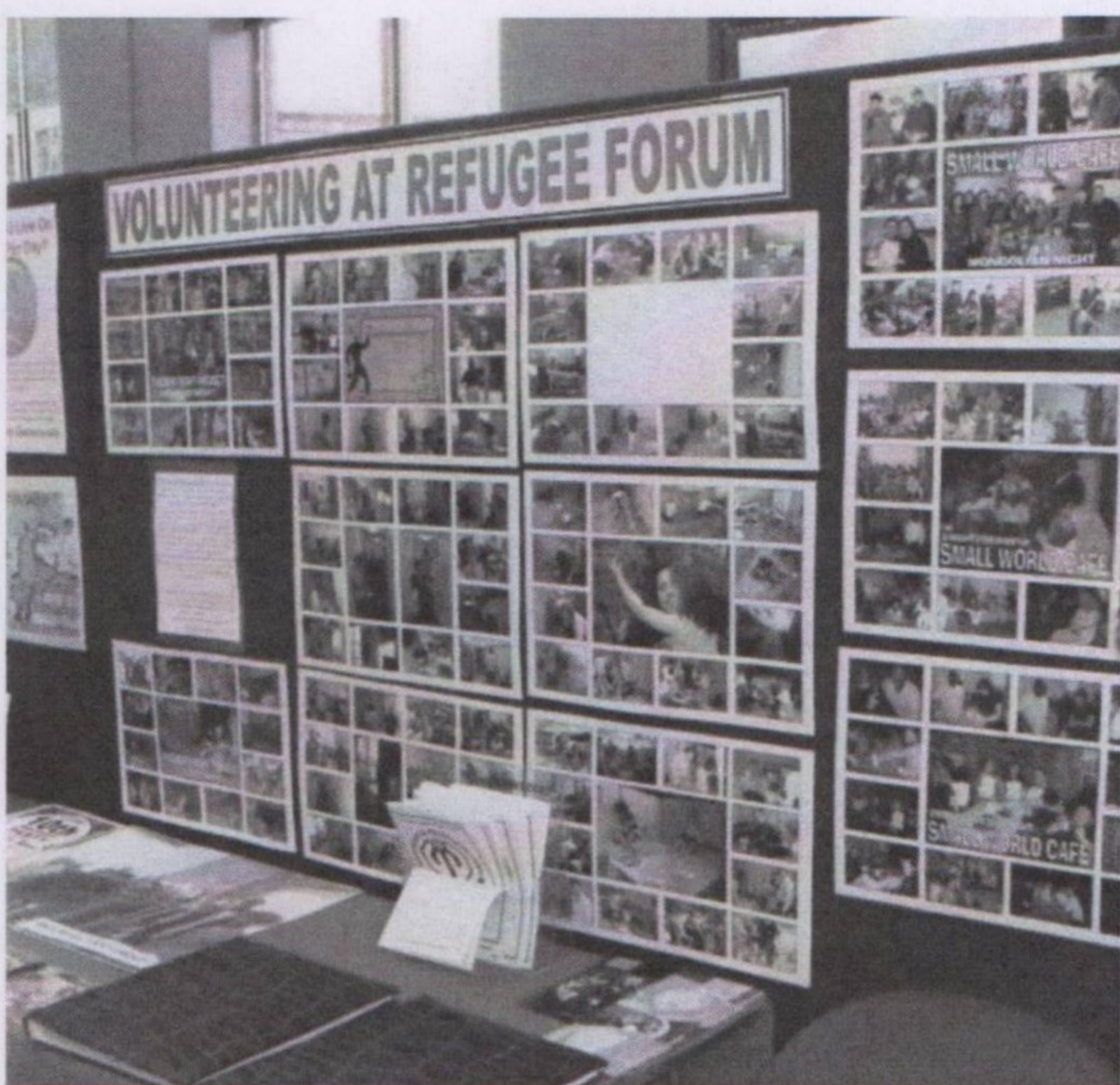
We have provided all members with food skills classes, first aid and are working with NCVS to look at more training for the Management Committee to enhance their leadership skills. We have worked closely with Red Cross and many of our group have been attending training in areas as diverse as massage, health and safety, food hygiene and safeguarding. This partnership will continue this year. We will also be working on whether the Women's Group can provide child care for learners, either through funding applications or by training volunteers.

Liz Burrell

Children & Families Support Worker

Report from the Volunteer Coordinator

NNRF's volunteers have continued this year in dedicating their time and energy to help deliver essential services to our client group. While each year sees new faces come and some older ones leave, we continue to have a fantastic core group of volunteers, some of whom have been with NNRF from the beginning. It is a testament to their dedication, but also to the feedback that we receive from clients about the difference that NNRF has made to their lives that keeps volunteers coming back each year.



Advice volunteers continue to form the bedrock of NNRF's volunteer services. The General Advice sessions remain as much in demand as ever with our client group and are often the first point of contact for many clients with NNRF. With 27 current members, this group delivers the often complex task of assisting clients with their queries or signposting on to more specialised services. Each year brings in new student or recently graduated volunteers from Nottingham Trent and the University of Nottingham - often students in Law or International Relations or another similar field. NNRF's advice sessions give these students the opportunity to experience first-hand the effects of the

asylum system on people's lives. From their feedback we know that it provides them a learning

opportunity that goes beyond the textbook. With the continuous cycles of students coming and leaving we hope to continue providing these tangible experiences while also spreading greater awareness of asylum seeker and refugee issues among the student population.

We have also seen several new faces in our Reception team who perform a core function at the Forum. Without their presence from Monday to Friday and from 9 am to 5pm, NNRF would struggle to handle the volume of calls, visitors at the door and filing tasks that need to be completed on a daily basis. Our long-standing Reception volunteers have been key to helping our newer recruits settle into their role, and we are happy to have welcomed 6 new volunteers onto Reception this year, including 2 students from Nottingham Trent and the University of Nottingham and 3 from an asylum seeking background.

The diversity of our volunteer base also means that we are fortunate to be able to draw upon volunteers' expertise and knowledge in various ways. The Into the Mainstream project has benefited this year by being able to take on board a retired GP, a postgraduate student in Public Health and most recently a retired social worker. The skills this group offers add a great deal to the ITM project and we are grateful that we can utilise their knowledge to deliver better services to clients.

Several key Forum activities are organised solely by volunteers – namely the Food and Cash Groups, working to support destitute asylum seekers – and the Tuesday Night Project which offers a place of welcome, a cooked meal and a wide range of social activities every week.

Despite the increased constraints on staff time and resources we have still managed to deliver key training to volunteers to ensure they are able to carry out their roles. Some of this training has included Domestic Violence and Abuse training delivered by Nottingham Domestic Violence Forum attended by 3 volunteers, an Adviser skills training delivered by Rakiba Khatun attended by 9 advice volunteers, Reception training delivered by Wesal attended by 9 volunteers, and Admin/accounting training delivered by Imran to 1 volunteer.

Some statistics on Volunteering at NNRF:

- Nearly 100 volunteers engaged in activities across all projects.
- Just over 50 volunteers engaged in projects that take place during weekday office hours (this excludes the Tuesday Night Project and the Food Group). Among these volunteers, 22 come from asylum seeking and/or refugee backgrounds.
- New faces at NNRF: it is always a pleasure to welcome new faces and 2012 welcomed 27 new starters among the various projects. Of these new starters, 7 have been from an asylum seeking and/or refugee background.

I am confident that NNRF will continue to utilise and rely on the time, energy and skills of our current and future volunteers, and the following statement from a long-standing volunteer illustrates what it means to give to the NNRF:

"I've found that volunteering can sometimes be demanding – especially on something like the Drop-In Advice when you never quite know what's going to come up next! But the amount you

learn in the process and the gains from working with such a diverse group of people make a really life-enhancing experience."

As I leave my post this year having completed nearly two years with the Forum, I feel lucky and privileged to have worked alongside such a diverse mix of people. I hold a great deal of respect for the many volunteers who give so much of their time to NNRF when their own personal circumstances are often in so much turmoil. It shows the great tenacity and kindness of the human spirit and I hope that volunteers in turn have been enriched by their time at the Forum.

Wesal Afifi
Volunteer Coordinator

Nottingham Refugee Week 2012

This year's Refugee Week was one of the most successful to date with the launch event that took place at Nottingham Contemporary being by far the most successful we've ever had. The numbers attending throughout the week were slightly lower than in previous years at around 800. Over 35 musicians and artists performed and exhibited their work. 65 volunteers contributed their time and 13 organisations were involved in the planning and programming with at least 25 different nationalities participating. 15,000 copies of a regional 32 page newspaper, ***Beyond Borders***, were distributed across Nottingham, Leicester, Derby and Loughborough. This year's paper also included a 4 page pull-out detailing all Refugee Week activities in the three major cities.

Highlights of the week included:

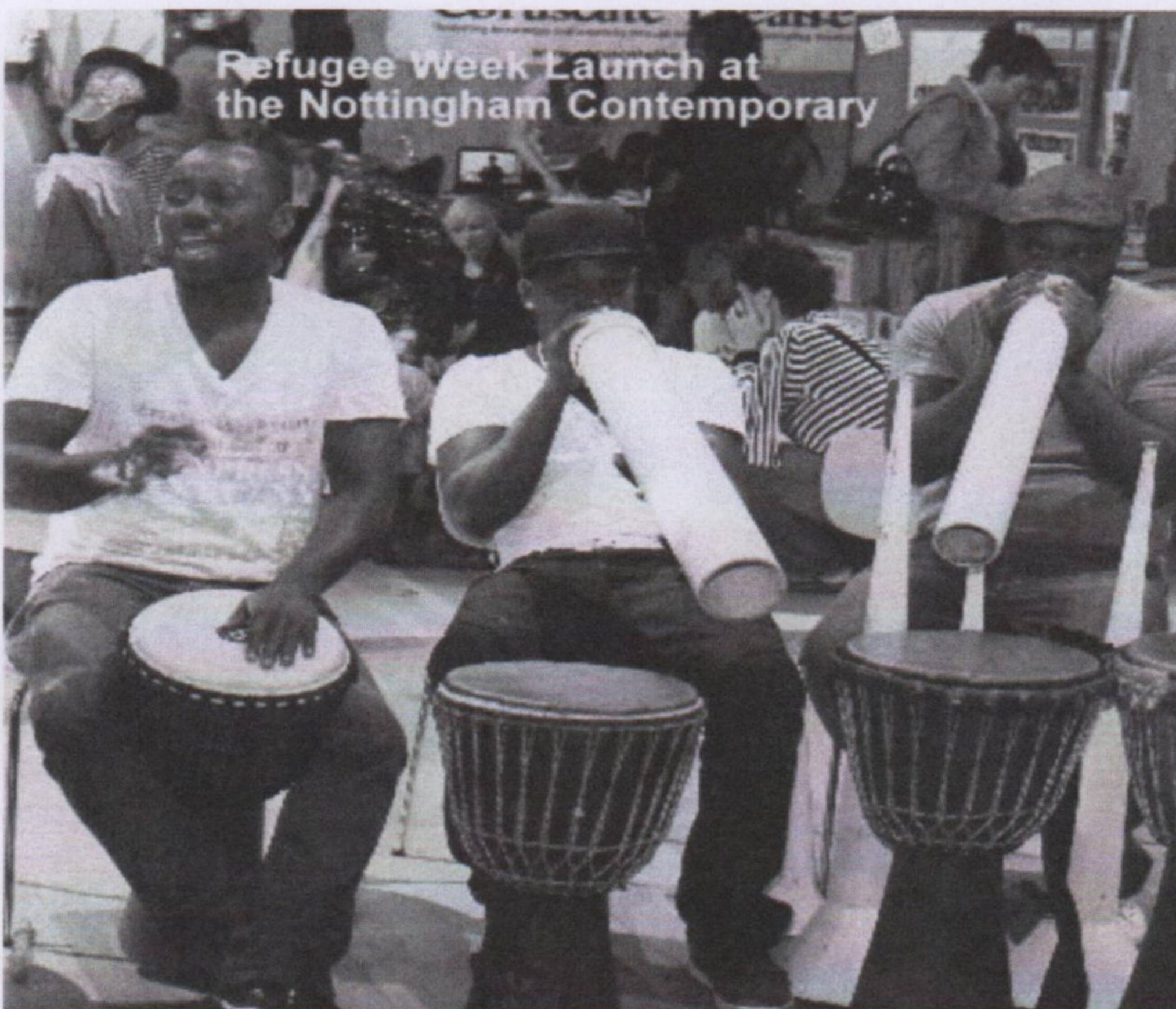
Celebrating Refugee Week launch event comprised an afternoon of family friendly arts workshops, dance & musical performances from both local and international artists; food, games, gallery tours and information stalls. The really positive aspect of holding the event at the Contemporary was that a significant number of 'ordinary' visitors to the gallery dropped in and joined in. Over 350 people attended.

"I thought that the Launch Event at the Contemporary was sensational - the musicians were brilliant and I loved the different instruments, the dancing and the whole vibe of support was animated and encouraging."

"I thought it was a fantastic event and the attendance was great. We had a constant flow of little ones coming up to our stall and making masks and puppets. The entertainment was fantastic and it was really well organised."

"I am really enjoyed. It was a lovely and beautiful day. I like it. Thank you to all of you."

"Today is my best day and I'll never forget that day."



The culmination of an eight-week project that took place at Nottingham Contemporary earlier on in the year provided the basis for the *Imagining a Better World* exhibition at the Central Library throughout the whole of June.

The *RefuTea* event at the Refugee Forum was extremely well attended with a significant amount of money raised for the anti-destitution fund. The same evening saw two more very successful events: *Crime Writing with a Conscience* at the Central Library with Danuta Reah, giving a talk about her work both as a crime writer and as a volunteer with ASSIST in Sheffield, an organisation that

supports destitute asylum seekers. She was joined by speakers from HOST Nottingham; and *The Art of Resistance* at the Refugee Forum where young people from the Palestinian Lajee Centre Dabka Troupe entertained a packed house with their spectacular dancing, music, films and photographs.

On the Friday two local bands - *Ngoma* from Zimbabwe and the *Baran Band* (a mix of Iranian and UK musicians) performed on the main stage in the Market Square as part of the *Night of the Festivals*. The weather wasn't great but both bands went down a storm! Shortly after Refugee Week itself, Ice & Fire brought their *Asylum Monologues* to Nottingham. The performance was based on personal testimonies of asylum seekers in the UK and was followed by a Q&A. Once again a significant amount of money was raised for the anti-destitution fund.

Funding for the week came from NNRF, Nottingham City Council and a significant increase in newspaper advertising revenue from sympathetic organisations and trades unions.

Once again without the hard work, dedication and commitment of everyone involved in Nottingham Beyond Borders, as well as other professionals in the sector, community groups and activists, Nottingham Refugee Week 2012 would not have been anywhere near as successful as it was.

Stuart Brown - Nottingham Beyond Borders

Action by Nottingham Citizens for Sanctuary

The Citizens' Commission into Homelessness and Hope is a community-led response to destitution among people seeking sanctuary in our city - a piece of work looking at the situation of some of the most vulnerable among us and seeking to ensure value for money for the taxpayer in the support offered by the state.

The Citizens' Commission was launched in March 2012 by six independent Commissioners – a small group of relevant experts, service users, taxpayers and civic authorities drawn from across civil society. Over a three month period, supported by a team of twenty advisers, this group of Commissioners went on to receive evidence from hundreds of people and to conduct the deepest piece of research into destitution in Nottingham to date.

The report outlines the Commissioners' key findings and practical recommendations for change and can be read in full at <http://www.citizensuk.org/chapters/Nottingham-citizens>

No introduction to this work would be complete without remembering the bravery of some of those seeking sanctuary in Nottingham who were indispensable in its success, whether they continue to wait in the shadows, have received refugee status and found sanctuary at last, or been returned by force to their country of origin.

Konnie Lloyd
Citizens for Sanctuary

New Website

The structure for a re-designed NNRF website was completed in April. The new site is completely different in style and colour scheme and incorporates some up-to-date web programming techniques which will make it easier to read across a range of platforms and browsers.

The beta version of the new website, containing sample text, photos etc., has been located in the existing website's hosting space. If you would like to look at it, please email rms.titanic@hotmail.co.uk for the URL.

Full deployment awaits comments by the Management Committee and content input (text, photos etc.) from the various groups within NNRF who it is hoped will in future be regular contributors.

In the meantime do have a look at our current site at <http://www.nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk>.

Bob Cann
NNRF web-master

Funding Report

Earlier this year the Management Committee established a Funding Committee composed of five experienced bid-writers and fund-raisers to take the lead in developing a funding strategy to meet the priority needs previously identified through a planning process involving staff and trustees with feedback from users and stakeholders.

Successful applications have been made to the following:

- **Children in Need:** a grant to continue our support for work with vulnerable children.

- **NHS Nottingham:** a year's extension to March 2013 for the 'Into the Mainstream' Project.
- **Lloyds TSB Foundation:** grant for a half-time post to co-ordinate our Anti-Destitution work with asylum seekers.
- **Nottingham City Council:** contract to provide Welfare Rights advice to refugees.

There are several further applications on which we are waiting decisions this autumn, notably to the Big Lottery's Reaching Communities Fund.

We are also waiting to learn about the City Council's plans for future funding for the voluntary sector in regard to groups such as refugees who are being defined as 'Communities of Interest'. It is expected that a commissioning services model will be adopted.

Our Anti-Destitution support is funded by donations – many in the form of standing orders. Over the past few months there have been very welcome one-off fund-raising activities including RefuTea, coffee mornings, talks to faith groups, the Ex-Libris book sales and a sponsored half-marathon which have helped to increase the pot of money available to support people who are destitute and homeless.

Patsy Brand

Refugee Community Organisation (RCO) Support Work & Routes Development Work

RCO Support

Work this year has included:

- Funding advice for the Eritrean Community Group, Cameroon Support Group and initial support for the formation of a Kurdish Community Group.
- Giving a talk about refugees and asylum seekers at a Community Cohesion Celebration event in October organised by the City's Community Cohesion Team.
- Support for the Nottingham Vietnamese Community Project both in terms of funding advice and specific issues relating to trafficked members of their community.
- Attending the final BASIS National Conference in Birmingham in January which, although useful in terms of contacts, put a gloss on what was, in my opinion, a failed 5 year project that did very little to support and help build the capacity of RCOs in Nottingham.

Routes Development

Routes is a partnership between NNRF and the Hostel Liaison Group (HLG), funded by the City Council which aims to improve the housing advice, access to housing and housing support available to people from Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BAMER) communities across Nottingham City. Given that there was a crossover between a number of the organisations that fell into the BAME category and those within the Refugee category e.g. both the Chinese and Vietnamese communities have both well established members and newly arrived refugees, the Routes team took a joint approach to all the communities.

Work undertaken throughout the year included:

- Organising two housing information events at the YMCA in October which proved to be very successful and well received by the 38 refugees from Eritrea, Tibet, DRC, Cameroon, Angola, Malawi, Sudan, Iran and Nigeria who attended. A brief introduction and context was given by Andy Brook from Nottingham City Homes (NCH) and Fiona Broome & Simon Breen (NNRF) which was then followed by a Q&A session.
- Organising to trial 'open' housing information events in the Meadows & Hyson Green in November and December in collaboration with Notts Housing Advice (NHA) and NCH and following the same format as the previously successful Signpost for Polish Success (SPS) Information event. Unfortunately, despite an extensive publicity blitz, only 7 people in total turned up for both meetings, and although the individuals who came were helped with their specific concerns, the events themselves were not successful and will not be repeated.
- Organising a briefing session in October for agencies working with A8/A2 Nationals regarding the benefits they are entitled to as well as developing strategies to address the growing issue of homelessness.
- Supporting a Nottingham Chinese Welfare Association Housing Information Session in March in partnership with NCH. 13 volunteers attended.
- Developing a 'volunteer & staff training' programme comprising housing, welfare benefits and health advice, mentoring & befriending, professional boundaries, confidentiality and managing challenging behaviour. This is a collaboration between NNRF, NAT, HOST Nottingham, and the Welcome Project with the training workshops open to all BAMER community groups including the SPS. (An application to the Hilden Charitable Trust was finally submitted in July 2012).
- Producing a basic housing information leaflet in partnership with NHA entitled '**Housing Options**' aimed at managing expectations in relation to social housing and which was translated into 8 community languages. These have been well received and circulated across Nottingham to mainstream housing and general advice providers, BAMER community groups, and both specialised and voluntary services as well as being available to download from HLG's website. A more substantial **Housing Guide** is currently in development and could well form the basis of any training that emerges later this year.
- Funding advice for **HOST Nottingham** (a group of people willing to provide temporary accommodation in their own homes for homeless asylum seekers.): Successful applications were submitted to the Church Urban Fund which has enabled the organisation to employ a part time worker until December 2012; and another to the Comic Relief / Notts Community Foundation for the purchase of bikes, emergency bus fares and mentoring training workshops.

In June of this year funding for the Routes project was cut and it is no longer a separate project in its own right. Substantially decreased funding has resulted in HLG absorbing BAMER housing support work into their general resource work, with a small amount of money being given to NNRF to undertake specific pieces of work throughout the year eg consultations on NCC's draft Housing Plan and Homelessness strategy.

In relation to both areas of work, I have attended / organised 59 meetings / events throughout the year and have circulated 352 emails (including the NNRF e-newsletter) to RCOs with information ranging from Voluntary Sector Partnerships & BME Forum meetings to education, immigration, housing and healthcare, training courses, jobs & volunteer opportunities, arts & cultural events, and funding opportunities.

Stuart Brown
RCO Development and Routes Project

Culturebox Singing Club

The Singing Club was inspired in September 2011 by an event at the Central Library Language Café, in which participants volunteered to teach a song from their culture to a group of strangers. The success of this 'experiment' led us to pursue an international singing club as part of Culturebox, a local organisation that generates diverse and creative communities based around intercultural learning and sharing.



Since then the group has gone from strength to strength to become a unique musical collective with proper arrangements, instrumentation and a number of successful performances to date.

We have learnt many songs: some beautiful, others powerful, some rousing, and some that move the dance floor. We have grappled, with varying degrees of success, with seemingly innumerable languages from Breton to Kurdish, Brazilian, Chinese, Romany Gypsy, Ukrainian and Georgian to name but a few. The group includes a range of voices, both male and female and instruments such

as guitar, saz, pandeiro, daf and harmonica. We are very lucky to have the regular participation of the highly esteemed Iranian percussionist, Mohammad Jaber, and the rapidly up and coming singer and guitarist, Aurelie Guinard. In our sessions we have also enjoyed the illustrious company of some of Nottingham's finest musical stars such as Rachel Foster, Petrica Bistram, Biant Singh, Iryna Muha as well international visitors in the form of Haiti's Rara Lakay!

Our first performance at Nottingham's Light Night in February quickly led to enthusiastic calls for others in a range of venues such as Market Square, Nottingham Contemporary and the Maze. Our most recent performance was at the Royal Centre as part of the extraordinary Breath of Sound performance, which united 300 voices in an experimental sound piece for The World Event Young Artist festival. It took everyone well out of their comfort zone but was well worth the effort.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Refugee Forum for their generous support in accommodating our singing sessions for the past year, without which the group may not have been able to continue and thrive like it has.

Singing belongs to everyone, and what we do in the group is very much about togetherness, friendship and wellbeing. You don't have to be the best singer in the world as long as you are enthusiastic and have a smile on your face! Culturebox Singing Club is open to all and runs every Thursday at the Square Centre, 6:30-8:00pm For more information contact Celine Djiakoua on 07940311414 or email celine@culturebox.org.uk

Juliet Line

Partnership Working and Networking

As resources and capacity diminish, our achievements in supporting asylum seekers and refugees this year have been greatly enhanced by the quality and range of our partnership working with both statutory and voluntary sector organisations. We have continued to develop our range of services and capacity by developing and jointly delivering services in partnership with other organisations;

We have good working relationships with **Nottingham City Council** staff in **Housing Aid**, the **Homelink Team**, **Nottingham City Homes**, **Community & Culture Department**, **Children and Families Services**, **Welfare Rights**, **Adult Social Care** and the **Race Harassment Team**.

NNRF is happy to enable **Refugee Action** to continue to provide regular outreach surgeries with regard to asylum seeker support problems, advice and support to those wishing to make a voluntary return to their country of origin, and support to destitute and vulnerable women. This relationship continues to be mutually beneficial with our staff and volunteers also benefitting from their training and regular updates on changes to the asylum system.

We are also happy to host a regular information and legal advice surgery for unaccompanied asylum seeker children (UASC) run by **Refugee Council**.

On asylum accommodation issues we have liaised until September 2012 with **Refugee Support** and **Priority Properties North West** and we are tentatively developing a working relationship with **G4S**.

In the difficult search for accommodation for those granted Leave to Remain, we have worked with private landlords and the **Hostels Liaison Group (HLG)**, **YMCA**, **Salvation Army**, **Mellors Lodge and Highwood House** and the City Council's **Homeless Gateway**.

Our partnership with **Tuntum Housing Association** for the **Refugee Futures Project** continues to offer support to individuals and families awarded a recent positive decision. The Refugee Futures Project has also been instrumental in working with us to host family trips and picnic events and 2 fundraising coffee mornings.

Further assistance of new refugee tenants is provided by referral to **Family First** and the **Vineyard Arches** for support with furniture and household goods as required.

Our work with destitute failed asylum seekers has been greatly enhanced by partnership working, food and financial assistance from the **British Red Cross** and **HIMMAH**. ASDA have also contributed to the Saturday Food Group and provided opportunity to raise funds by allowing volunteers to take part in bag-packing. Many local churches and other faith groups, plus a number of local schools have all generously provided food and financial assistance.

We continue to have positive links with **Nottingham Arimathea Trust**, **HOST** and the **Rainbow Project** where vulnerable, destitute asylum seekers can be referred to for support.

Culture Box, **STAR** (Student Action for Asylum Seekers & Refugees) at Nottingham University and **Beyond Borders** have made a great contributions to the life of the Forum this year by holding regular activities, supporting the regular Tuesday night social events and during **Refugee Week** and also by volunteering and contributing financially to further events at the Centre.

Playworks and **Greenfields Children's Centre** have been our partners in providing a crèche and rooms for The Refugee Women's Group meetings and our ESOL classes for women. **SureStart Children's Centre** have supported the Women's Group and individual mothers.

With regard to English language training we have worked in partnership with **BEGIN** and **South Nottingham College**.

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

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

The new Food Banks that have been set up across the city, for example the **NG7 Food Bank**, have been especially supportive of our most vulnerable clients and their families.

NNRF has continued to take part in relevant fora in the city including the **Multi Agency Asylum Seeker & Refugee Forum**, the **Asylum, Refugee and Migrant Health Forum**, and the **BMER Domestic Violence**.

It is important that Forum staff and volunteers keep up-to-date with national developments relating to asylum and immigration issues. We rely heavily for this on bulletins from, among others, the **Refugee Council**, **Refugee Action**, the **National Coalition of Anti-deportation Campaigns (NCADC)**, **The No Recourse to Public Funds Network (NRPF)** and the **East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership**.

Other organisations that we are pleased to have collaborated with this year with include **Long Journey Home**, **Connexions**, **ECOWorks**, **Stonebridge City Farm** and the city's network of **Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs)**.

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

Bea Tobolewska

Evaluation Report

Early in 2012 the Management Committee decided to commission a comprehensive evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of NNRF with two things in mind:

- 1 to assess outcomes against those proposed in the 2009-2012 Big Lottery Reaching Communities funding application, and
- 2 to identify areas for improvement and development in all aspects of the Forum's activities and to act as a strategic planning tool for the Management Committee.

The consultants Montgomery Masters were engaged, and Adrian Masters played the lead role in the process. Because of the complexity of NNRF's structure and activities and the need to involve Service Users, Volunteers, paid Staff, Partners and Trustees in the exercise, the research aspect (gathering knowledge of systems, activities, relationships, information and statistical data, opinions etc.) needed to spread over several weeks. The process included reviewing documentary evidence, a Service User survey, one-to-one interviews and groups with all categories of personnel mentioned above.

It was gratifying to note that **the final report reckoned that 4 of the 5 Big Lottery outcomes would be met or exceeded and the 5th would achieve 90% of the target by the end of October 2012.**

One of the issues underlying the research was to attempt an answer to the **question: Is NNRF essentially an advice service or a community centre?** Responses clearly indicated that both functions are similarly valued and should continue. This will help the Trustees seek a balance as they plan for the Forum's longer-term future.

While it was recognised that NNRF deals with a wide spectrum of Service Users from new asylum applicants through to settled refugees, overall their highest needs were immigration advice, anti-destitution support, housing, welfare benefits and health issues as well as personal support. **Users expressed a high overall degree of satisfaction with the Forum's service**, citing both its quality and its friendly approach. They felt that NNRF had played a large part in their integration into life in UK.

The report outlined both the **strengths and weaknesses of NNRF as an organisation.** Areas where improvement is needed include some clarification of roles, a better data management and record-keeping system, updating some of our policies and procedures, and encouragement to the Trustees to develop a stronger strategic plan. It was recognised, however, that this is not always easy in a situation where most of our funding is strictly time-limited and not guaranteed for the future.

The Forum would like to record its **gratitude to Montgomery Masters** for such a comprehensive and informative report which will help give it a sense of direction for the future. If anyone would like to see a copy of the Report, **it is available from NNRF electronically** and should soon be available in the Downloads section of the NNRF website www.nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk

John Henson

NNRF Membership Report

Since taking on the role of Membership Secretary last year I have tried to streamline the database as much as possible, as there was considerable doubt as to how many of those on it actually needed to be. There were names aplenty that no-one could put a face to or with whom we have had no contact whatsoever in many a year. I emailed everyone of doubt to ascertain whether they wished to remain on the database, and if so in what category eg. member, non-member, supporter etc. There was very little response. In the light of this I deleted all those of doubt from my working database. They are, however, still on record on another version if we should ever need their details.

I treated Standing Orders and Direct Debits similarly. The database showed many more people appearing to pay than the bank statements did. I contacted them all, sending the relevant forms just in case, asking if they would consider re-starting the payments in the light of their previously having had a regular payment. The majority did not reply; a handful did re-start and some replied offering their sympathies etc. but saying they could no longer financially support us for one reason or another. They were all thanked for their past support.

The current position stands as follows:

Membership	226 (see note a)
Management Committee	14
Volunteers	95 (see note b)
Non-membership	37 (see note c)
Organisations	9
Monthly SOs/ DDs	93
Amount range	£2 – £70
Total monthly amount	£1,680.17

NB Don't try adding figures together; you will only get confused, as there is considerable overlap between the categories, with many people appearing in more than one entry.

Notes

- (a) This is the total of everyone and every organisation on the database. Some of the 'individual' memberships are 2-person households. I have counted these 'joint memberships' as if they were individuals.
- (b) Volunteers automatically become Members, whether they voluntarily choose to pay membership subscriptions or not.
- (c) Non-membership is a category of people or organisations that do not pay membership subscriptions but wish to be kept informed of our work.

Our task should be to increase the membership, particularly paying membership, **as every penny donated goes into the Anti-Destitution Fund, all of which is desperately needed.**

Increasing the membership is an enormous job and one I cannot do on my own. I need help from all of you, as it is a long-term job, likely to progress only slowly.

I am therefore asking everyone who reads this to help spread the word about us and our work. If you know of any individual or organisation that might be interested in becoming a member, please write to me at NNRF or email me at dave.hewitt@nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk with their details and I will follow it up. In the case of individuals it is of course important to obtain their permission first. With organisations a contact name (if possible) is always very helpful.

Many thanks.

Dave Hewitt
Membership Secretary

Public Benefit Statement

The Aims of NNRF (Registered Charity no. 1121560) are expressed in the Objects of the Memorandum of Association, stated as 'the promotion and provision of any charitable purpose directed to meet the needs of refugees and asylum seekers living in the City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.' The activities of the Charity include the free provision of:

- Advice, information and support for refugees and asylum seekers**
- Premises where they may meet and enjoy social contact and recreation**
- Opportunities to extend their education**
- Small grants of cash and food to people in need**
- Campaigning about issues relating to refugees and asylum seekers**
- Opportunities to interact with members of the host community.**

We believe that this Annual Report, together with the annual accounts and financial statement of the Charity, will demonstrate that its income has been applied towards its objects.

Approved by Management Committee
October 2012

Finance Report

It is not an easy time, financially, for any organisation in the voluntary sector and NNRF is no exception. Uncertainty about funding worries us all but none more than our staff whose livelihoods are at stake and sadly we have recently lost Tina Patel who, understandably, needed more job security than we can offer at this time. Securing funding for staff salaries in order to maintain our range of services, is mine and the Management Committee's major task and worry. As I said, last year I did not become involved in this organisation to make people redundant but, after the loss of a major part of the Supporting People funding in 2011, we had to lose Jasim, Saeed, Sara, Simon, Amdani, Ismaiel and Victor, although we have been able to offer some work to Jasim, Sara and Simon.

About a third of our funding has, for the past six years, come from Big Lottery and that funding ceases in November. That threatens the jobs of Bea, Rakiba and Teresa and Bahman. Fortunately we are able to rebid for that funding and we await the result of that bid which we should receive in November. A delay in getting the bid together has made things very tight but at the end of the last financial year we had cash available of £93,364 and this has enabled us to extend the contracts of those four until March 2013. By that time we hope that we will have good news regarding the lottery and other bids that we have submitted.

Despite the competition for funds we have succeeded, since April, in bids to Lloyds TSB and Children in Need securing Liz's post and enabling us to appoint Henry as Anti-Destitution Co-ordinator.

I am confident that, despite the financial climate, we will end the current year with sufficient money to, at least, comply with our reserves policy and hopefully much more.

My thanks go to the Admin staff Teresa, Tina, Imran (who left the Forum in July) and Gina (whom we welcome back).

I still wish to vacate this job and try my hand at other Forum work so I appeal to anyone with the right level of numeracy and stupidity to put themselves forward for the post.

Leo Keely
Hon. Treasurer

Draft Accounts

Financial Year to 31 March 2012

Ordinary Income/Expense

Income

Bank interest	133.97
Donations & Subscriptions	37,472.27
Grants	460,179.41
Sundry income	2,417.98

Total Income	500,203.63
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Expense


Activities	1,705.95
Bank charges	78.54
Creche	9,636.25
Depreciation	9,871.64
Donations & grants awarded	26,421.21
Food & refreshments	20,855.36
Insurances	5,499.27
IT software & maintenance	2,882.17
Legal & professional fees	26,615.42
Materials & equipment	7,097.71
Other expenses	1,648.51
Payroll Expenses	81,429.14
Pensions	1,911.88
Photocopying & printing	10,042.71
Premises repairs & maintenance	2,608.37
Publications & subscriptions	4,742.35
Rent & services	38,944.14
Staff expenses	1,667.19
Stationery & office supplies	4,593.83
Telephone, post & internet	14,340.33
Training	2,367.63
Uncategorized Expenses	583.84
Utilities	8,564.36
Volunteer expenses	11,890.14
Wages & NIC	248,621.69

Total Expense	544,619.63
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<u>Overspend</u>	<u>-44,416.00</u>
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A Big Thank You

NNRF is grateful to all of the organisations and individuals whose generosity enables us to continue to support asylum seekers and refugees in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

 Lloyds TSB | Foundation for England and Wales



Nottingham
City Council



the
Tudortrust



working with refugees to build new lives



Photos courtesy of Imran Asif, Liz Burrell, Kate Mack, Azad Mohammed, Tina Patel, Bill Walton, Stuart Brown, Julia Howell, and other staff and volunteers of NNRF.

The Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum
The Square Centre, 389-394 Alfred Street North, Nottingham, NG3 1AA

Dear Supporter,

Thank you for your interest in the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum (NNRF). To continue helping us in our work, we wondered whether you might like to join NNRF. Membership gives you the benefits of: receiving occasional mailings, being able to vote at the AGM, receiving emails to keep you informed if you wish, and the chance to join yahoo or Facebook groups where you can post and read messages, photos, files etc. We get the benefit that our membership base is larger so we can speak with a louder voice, and we can disseminate information further.

We currently give small cash grants of £10 per month to each person who's destitute, or £20 for those with poor health. We also give each person a bag of groceries worth around £5 each week so they don't go hungry. The grocery parcels are improving in quality, and any contributions will help towards sustaining this small humanitarian gesture. All this work is done by volunteers, so the entire donations are used directly to help people who would otherwise starve.

If you would like to become a member, please complete and return the attached forms to The Square Centre.

Again, many thanks for your generosity,

Membership Secretary

The Nottingham and Notts Refugee Forum

Membership Form 2011

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

If you can afford more please consider a larger donation or why not set up a monthly standing order to help support destitute asylum seekers in our community

Please tick as appropriate:

- I / we would like to join the NNRF
- I / we would like to renew my / our membership of the NNRF
- I / we would like to make a single donation of £.....
- I / we would like to set up a monthly standing order of £.....
(Please complete the direct debit mandate form)
- I / we would like more information on how we can help NNRF
- I / we would like all donations to be eligible for Gift Aid
(Please complete the Gift Aid declaration form)

Name:

Address:
.....
.....

Email:

Telephone:

Mobile phone:

Date:

Group memberships:

Organisation name:

Number of copies of newsletter needed:

Please make cheques payable to: The Nottingham and Notts Refugee Forum. Return forms to Membership Secretary, NNRF, The Square Centre, 389-394 Alfred Street North, Nottingham NG3 1AA 0115 9415599
www.nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk Please note that your information will be stored on a computer database

STANDING ORDER MANDATE

Account holder(s)	
Address	
Bank sort code	
Account number	
To the manager of:	
Bank name	
Bank address	

PAYMENT AUTHORITY: Please debit my/our account in accordance with the following details:

Please pay The Co-Operative Bank,
PO Box 101, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester, M60 4EP
Sort code 089299 / Account 65226311

Monthly amount	£
Day of month for payment	
Starting from	
Until further notice in writing, or	
Date of last payment	
Signed (account holder 1)	
Signed (account holder 2)	

Please complete and return to NNRF.



GIFT AID DECLARATION

To
Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum,
The Square Centre,
389-394 Alfred Street North,
Nottingham NG3 1AA

Registered Charity No. 1086962

I (full name).....

of.....

.....

.....

Postcode.....

Telephone.....

would like all donations I make to the Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum from the date of my first donation to be treated as Gift Aid donations. I understand that I must be paying income or capital gains tax at least equal to the amount being reclaimed by the Forum. I understand I can cancel this Gift Aid Declaration at any time.

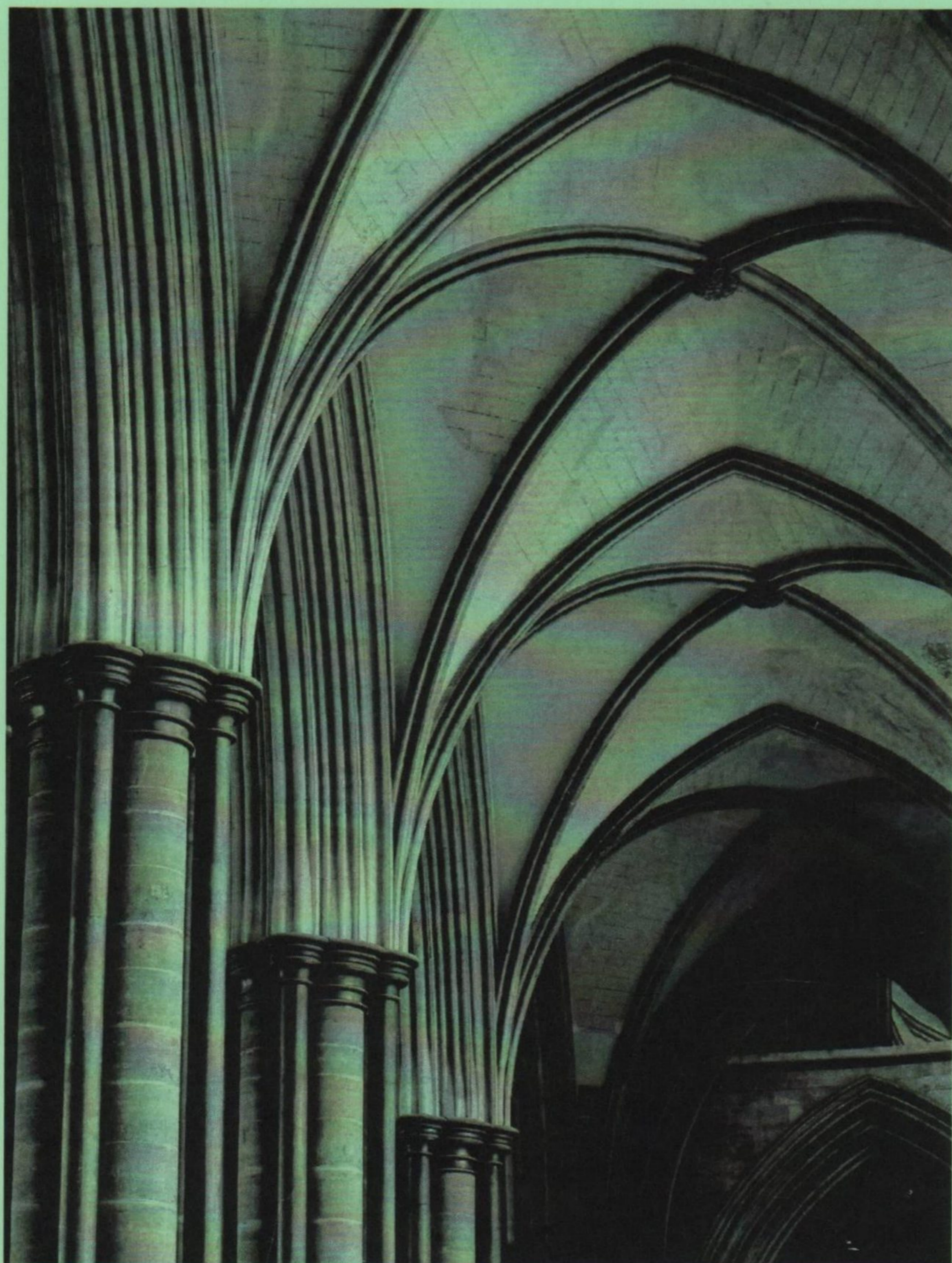
Signature of donor..... Date.....

Notes:

1. You can cancel this Declaration at any time by notifying the Forum.
2. You must pay an amount of income or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax that the Forum reclaims on your donations in the tax year (currently 28p for each £1.00 you give).
3. If in the future your circumstances change and you no longer pay tax on your income and capital gains tax equal to the amount the charity reclaims, you can cancel your declaration.
4. If you pay tax at the higher rate you can claim further tax relief in your Self-assessment tax return.
5. Please notify us if you change your name or address.

Please complete and return to: NNRF, The Square Centre, Alfred Street North, Nottingham, NG3 1AA
(www.nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk)

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Please see the matrix below for a guide to our pricing, and contact Mike Coates or Kate Fleet to discuss your printing plans.

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100 copies	£172	£186	£210	£234
200 copies	£280	£309	£358	£406
300 copies	£389	£433	£505	£577
400 copies	£498	£556	£652	£749
500 copies	£607	£679	£799	£919

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 Text: Printed in black only throughout
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 Delivery at carrier's charge only
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