

Client Group: Refugees

Needs Analysis
(Refreshed December 2008)

'Supporting you to build an independent life'



CURRENT POSITION WITHIN WARWICKSHIRE

The Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Birmingham undertook a research study on behalf of Coventry and Warwickshire Learning and Skills Council to help identify the size, skills and needs of the ASR population, the issues they face and how best to support them with regards to these issues.

The survey identified 407 refugees with housing providers. The actual number is considerably higher and evidence suggests many refugees are housed as hidden homeless.

The report estimated the minimum total number of ASR population (number of adults and children of school age) living in Coventry and Warwickshire at the start of 2003 to be around 4,000. The report suggested that by the end of 2006:

- The ASR population would rapidly increase as the Home Office speeded up its application process, and as a consequence the demand on NASS to provide accommodation would also rise.
- Approximately 50% of asylum seekers would receive refugee status and choose to remain in Coventry and Warwickshire.
- The total number of ASRs in Coventry and Warwickshire could be as high as 13,000.
- The number of refugees is likely to begin to outnumber the number of asylum seekers.

Supporting People Client Database Information

Client record data contained on the Supporting People Client Database analyses people who enter a Supporting People funded service during a set period. Between April 2007 and March 2008 only four people with a secondary client group shown as “refugee” started using a service. No new service users had a primary client group of “refugee”.

Assumptions of Need

- Estimates of around 4,000 Asylum Seekers in Warwickshire and Coventry in 2003, 50% of whom will receive refugee status.
- The Asylum Seekers Project Team (ASPT) work with unaccompanied minors. As at December 2008 they were working with approximately:
 - 50 looked after children under 16 years.
 - 99 young people aged 16 – 18 years, including young people in care and those who have left care.
 - 52 young people aged 18 – 21 years. Some of these will be care leavers and for some contact may have ceased.
 - Therefore, approximate total of 201 young people at risk.
- Support from NASS ceases once refugee status has been given, therefore there is a need to estimate how many refugees will choose to settle within Warwickshire and require further support to maintain independent living. The professional view of the ASPT is that the majority of Warwickshire young people wish to settle in Coventry with Nuneaton the next best alternative. Coventry is more popular because young people feel less isolated and ‘oppressed’ there. All young people with refugee status would need support to maintain independent living.

QUALITATIVE INFORMATION

Implications for Service Unavailability

- Social isolation and exclusion
- Inappropriate accommodation can impact on other aspects of life such as health, employment and education.

Housing Support for Refugees

- Accommodation for asylum seekers is usually arranged by NASS. However, refugees are not able to receive support from NASS, but are eligible for housing and other benefits similar to those of a British Citizen.
- Research suggests that ‘the point of decision’, when an asylum seeker receives refugee status to remain in the country, is the critical stage at which housing and support options need to be available, with effective liaison between local agencies to prevent homelessness and subsequent destitution¹. When an asylum seeker receives refugee status they are then only able to receive support from NASS for another 28 days, although communication and administrative failures often mean this period can be as short as two weeks.
- Secure accommodation and continued support is one of the many factors necessary in ensuring integration into the community.
- Settled accommodation provides an address enabling refugees to take advantage of other support services, such as claiming benefits, training programmes, employment, the health service, and schools.
- A new Countywide generic floating support service has recently been established which is targeted at socially excluded groups including Refugees.
- Collaboration with other organisations, such as Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs), and housing bodies.

Specific Omissions in Provision

- There is little provision in county. This does not reflect the anecdotal evidence from young people that if they were to stay in Warwickshire they would more likely wish to live in Nuneaton. The private rented accommodation market in Warwickshire is generally more expensive than it is in Coventry and therefore asylum seekers and refugees who claim benefit are less likely to be encouraged to reside in Warwickshire.
- Many asylum seeking young people end up in Coventry not by choice, but because of the aforementioned availability of affordable housing to set up home in Coventry to limit their experiences of isolation and social exclusion. This is a cross authority issue and work needs to be done with Coventry to assess and address this.

³ John Perry (2005) Housing and Support Services for Asylum Seekers and Refugees: A Good Practice Guide. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

- It has been identified that most asylum seekers and refugees are placed in accommodation in Coventry as it is considered to be the most appropriate area to integrate immigrants given its multi-cultural diversity.

Feedback from Supporting People Big Event and the Partnership Day

- At the Supporting People Big Event, 1% of the total money allocated to client groups using the 'post box' exercise was received by the 'Refugees' client group.
- At the Partnership Day, using the same 'post box' exercise, 'Refugees' received 0.5% of the total money allocated to the client groups.