



New Beginnings Project - Evaluation Report

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Front Cover:

We have worked with individuals from 75 nations and their flags are shown on the front cover. Some of these nations are not officially recognised e.g Cabinda, Karen, Kurdistan and Palestine but the identity is important to the individuals.

The individuals from France, Iceland, Portugal and Spain applied for asylum in those countries and were granted citizenship.

Executive Summary

1. Background

- 1.1. The New Beginnings project started in 2004 as part of Voluntary Action Sheffield's Volunteer Centre, with the aim of providing specific support to asylum seekers and refugees to become volunteers. For the last three years it has had funding from the BIG Lottery for two part-time posts. This funding will continue until May 2011.
- 1.2. The evaluation of the project was conducted in November and early December 2010 by two freelance consultants, Emma Rattenbury and Mandy Bryce. This is a summary of the full report, copies of which can be requested from the project.
- 1.3. The findings were drawn from:
 - Existing project data, including both volunteer and host organisation questionnaires
 - Two focus groups with 20 volunteers
 - 10 interviews with host organisations, including two visits to projects where other volunteers were also interviewed
 - 5 interviews with key partner organisations.All participants are listed in Appendix I
- 1.4. An evaluation framework was agreed with the project at the beginning, which identified four specific aims which the report focuses on.

2. Key Findings

- 2.1. The evaluation amply illustrated the effectiveness of this small, well-targeted and exceptionally well-delivered project. It supersedes all its targets, and there was a wealth of evidence to show the achievement of the project's four aims. In addition, it was clear that this project has a wider ripple effect in terms of community cohesion in Sheffield. There is no doubt that without the intensive specialist support that the project offers, the impressive outcomes summarised below could not be achieved.
- 2.2. The project's first aim is **to increase clients' readiness to enter employment**. To date, the project has placed over 640 volunteers in local organisations. As a result of this, volunteers, host organisations and partners identified that clients have gained experience, skills, knowledge and confidence which significantly enhances their employability. In particular, improved English (written and spoken), IT skills, and an understanding of English systems and services were noted, as well as some sector specific skills. A number of volunteers have gained paid employment, some within the organisation that they volunteered with, and others have enhanced their cvs and gained qualifications and references from volunteering. As one volunteer put it: *'I stand on the first small step towards my career.'*
- 2.3. The second aim of the project is **to improve clients' mental health and well-being**. Asylum seekers and refugees are known to experience a high incidence of mental health problems, due to past trauma combined with the stress of the asylum seeking process and social isolation frequently experienced in the UK. Volunteers, host organisations and partners all commented on the benefits of volunteering for their confidence, self-esteem

and mental well-being. Several volunteers spoke of volunteering being their route to restoring past confidence and an ability to sleep well again. Key factors in this process were making friends and being able to contribute positively and give something back to the host community. Numerous examples were provided of the personal transformation which volunteering had wrought, of which the following is an example: *'I had very bad fear, post traumatic disorder, bad dreams, sleepless nights: though volunteering I have better dreams.'*

- 2.4. The third aim of the project is **to increase the social integration of refugees and asylum seekers**. In order to do this, the project prioritises finding placements for volunteers in mainstream (i.e. non-asylum seeker and refugee specialist) organisations. 41 out of the 48 organisations completing the project survey in 2010 fall into this category. Half of the organisations had never taken an asylum seeker or refugee as a volunteer before. Volunteers, host organisations and partners all gave examples of ways in which volunteering had helped clients to integrate into the Sheffield communities. This was seen as a process of two way learning, with volunteers increasing their understanding of British culture, and organisations increasing their understanding of other cultures and the specific experience of asylum seekers and refugees. This enhanced mutual understanding extended to local Sheffield volunteers within host organisations as well and had some positive spin offs in terms of wider community cohesion. *'It gives you the opportunity to belong to society'*.
- 2.5. The final aim of the project is **to enhance inclusive practice in Sheffield in relation to volunteering**. The project's success in placing volunteers in mainstream organisations has in itself increased diversity in those organisations. It has also helped some with specific targets for asylum seekers and refugees to achieve these. There were a number of examples of specific roles being created for asylum seekers and volunteers, which made good use of their skills, e.g. languages. In addition, there were examples of NB clients gaining team leader and other responsible roles, as well as of volunteers developing roles which played to their strengths and particular interests, such as a cooking club and marketing work.
- 2.6. The evaluation also sought to identify what the **factors** were which had enabled the project to be so **successful** in achieving its aims. New Beginnings acts as a very effective example of an 'intermediary organisation', as defined in Volunteering England's report, *'A Part of Society: refugees and asylum seekers volunteering in the UK', 2006*. This report sees such organisations as key to enabling asylum seekers and refugees to volunteer within mainstream organisations. The key factors found in this evaluation endorse that finding.
- The Volunteer Co-ordinator's (himself a refugee) **intensive support for clients** builds up trust, but also realistic expectations.
 - This is matched by the Project Manager's **intensive work with organisations**, which enables a good match between volunteer and organisation to be achieved, as well as an assurance of quality placements.
 - The project focuses on **removing barriers** for asylum seekers and refugees to volunteering, both through their own practice and through encouraging good practice by host organisations. This includes provision of all expenses, establishing a system for clients to get CRB checks, and production of good practice materials.
 - This work is complemented by solid **follow up** work to ensure that placements are working out and to maintain relationships with host organisations.

- The project also works effectively in **partnership** with other asylum seeker and refugee organisations in Sheffield, to minimise duplication of effort and maximise positive outcomes for clients.
- The project's work is enhanced by a number of volunteer co-ordinators and project managers in host organisations, whose commitment to inclusion and diversity was impressive.

2.7. There were few criticisms of the project, but some areas identified **for improvement** in future:

- A need to take a wider approach to **promoting and marketing** the benefits of having asylum seeker and refugee volunteers in organisations, including in sectors where few have been placed to date, e.g. environmental organisations. In this way new host organisations can, hopefully, be identified.
- Considering doing more **outreach** in community settings and working in **partnership** with other refugee organisations in order to access more marginalized asylum seekers and refugees.
- Providing more **feedback to key referring organisations**, in order to maximise joint work to encourage clients to volunteer.
- Making more **use of the longer standing clients** as volunteer advisers, buddies and to market the benefits of the project.
- Developing **smarter ways to use the rich data** which the project already gathers to demonstrate the achievement of their outcomes and to support funding and marketing activity.

2.8. There was a consistent view that without this small, but dedicated and specialist project, many of the achievements outline above would not have been achieved. Interviewees were keen to do all they can to help the project to gain ongoing funding: *'I really hope the project can carry on....It needs a specialist post ...(without it) asylum seekers and refugees might get a bit lost and forgotten about.'*

Report of Evaluation of the New Beginnings Project December 2010

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To summarise the background to, methodology and findings from the evaluation of the New Beginnings project, conducted in November to December 2010.
- 1.2. To set out issues for attention by the project and its host organisation, Voluntary Action Sheffield, in order to help to shape the future development of the project.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1. The New Beginnings project began in 2004 as a single post within Voluntary Action Sheffield's (VAS) Volunteer Centre, focusing specifically on supporting refugees and asylum seekers to become volunteers, particularly in mainstream (i.e. non-refugee/asylum seeking specialist) organisations.
- 2.2. In 2007, VAS gained Big Lottery funding, which enabled the project to expand and recruit a part-time Volunteer Co-ordinator in addition to the lead worker, who became the project manager and Good Practice lead for the Volunteer Centre. The current Lottery funding will enable the project to function at full capacity until May 2011.
- 2.3. This evaluation was commissioned in November 2010 to assist the project and the Volunteer Centre to refine its thinking about and provide evidence for any future funding bids, as well as to consider any areas requiring improvement.
- 2.4. Two consultants, Emma Rattenbury and Mandy Bryce, were commissioned to undertake the consultancy, both of whom have considerable experience of evaluation and of working with diverse communities and voluntary sector organisations in Sheffield and the surrounding area.

3. Methodology

- 3.1. In consultation with the project staff, the consultants designed and agreed an Evaluation Framework, Outcomes and Indicators, based on the Charities Evaluation Service template. This was amended and sharpened up in the light of the emerging evidence from the evaluation. The final version is attached as Appendix I and II. The framework has identified three main specific aims for the project, together with a subsidiary one relating to good practice.
- 3.2. The time available for fieldwork was quite limited and several appointments arranged were disrupted by adverse weather. However, this did not prove a major obstacle, as the project team provided a wealth of data from their own records and were unfailingly helpful in accessing additional information on request.
- 3.3. The main sources of information used in this report are as follows. Each source has been coded below, so that where data is used in the report the source can be identified:

- Database of forms completed by volunteers at quarterly focus group meetings with the project staff from 2007 to 2010. This included a total of 95 entries. Code: NBVFG
 - Database of responses to annual organisation survey for 2009 – 2010. This included a repeat survey conducted for the purposes of this evaluation. A total of 48 responses are included in this, including two responses received from the same organisations. Code: NBOS
 - Write ups of two focus groups led by the consultants, which were attended by 20 volunteers in all. Code: VFG
 - Information from 8 semi structured telephone interviews with host organisations, together with data from visits to two host organisations, where the Manager and some of the other volunteers were interviewed. These organisations are listed in Appendix III and all except one are mainstream. Code: HOI
 - Information from 5 telephone interviews with partner organisations. These organisations are listed in Appendix III. Code: POI
 - Interviews with the project staff team and overall Volunteer Centre Manager. Code: NBT.
- 3.4. Other project data has been used to provide overall statistics in the next section. Background information was also gathered from the project's Good Practice publications and from relevant publications produced by Volunteering England, in particular *'A Part of Society: refugees and asylum seekers volunteering in the UK'*, Ruth Wilson and Hannah Lewis, Tandem, 2006.
- 3.5. The remainder of this report goes through the four specific aims which the project seeks to achieve, providing evidence to illustrate how well they have achieved these. Particular attention is paid in Section 6 below to the social integration outcome, as this is felt to be a key strength of the New Beginnings project, and also one where the project's success can be attributed to activities on a number of different fronts and at different levels. Section 8 highlights the key elements of good practice identified by this evaluation. Finally, the report considers areas for improvement in the future.

4. Enhancing employability

'I stand on the first small step towards my career'

- 4.1. The project's first specific aim (see Appendix I) is:
To increase clients' readiness to enter employment.
- 4.2. Many of the volunteers with New Beginnings held professional jobs in their home countries and all of them bring with them skills and expertise from their former lives. The process of becoming 'employment ready' in England, however, requires a lot from them. Those whose English is limited need to improve their spoken and written English skills. Qualifications gained in their countries of origin may not be recognised here, so may need to be re-gained. The organisational norms and systems here are unfamiliar. And on top of all this, they may have to overcome misconceptions and stereotypes about their status and nationality, in order to compete in a shrinking jobs market.
- 4.2. It was clear from the evaluator led focus groups that volunteers recognised **the value of volunteering** as a route to improve their chances of employment in England, as well as its value in other ways discussed in later sections of this report. The volunteers gave a range of reasons why they decided to volunteer. Specific employment related reasons featured large in this list, including:
 - *To improve my c/v, using experience in this country*
 - *To get references from work in England*
 - *To gain qualifications*
 - *To learn new skills*
 - *To improve my English*
 - *To get work experience to help me to get a job. VFG*In addition, volunteers mentioned the need to boost their confidence and to get to know Sheffield and English culture and customs as factors, both of which are important prerequisites to gaining employment.
- 4.3. Since the project started in 2004 with the single worker post, they have worked with over 1100 refugees and asylum seekers and successfully placed over 640 of these in volunteer roles. Many of these individuals have had more than one placement from the project. This is an impressive figure, given that for the first three years of the project, there was only one worker undertaking this work, and in itself represents evidence of effectiveness.
- 4.4. The evidence that volunteers are gaining **experience, skills, knowledge and confidence**, which will enhance their employability was strong:
 - 85% of the 95 volunteers who completed questionnaires in the project's focus groups between 2008 and 2010, said that they agreed or strongly agreed that their 'ability to get paid work had increased'.
 - 80% of the same respondents felt that their confidence in using English had increased or greatly increased.
 - Interestingly only 40% felt that their skills base had increased or greatly increased, which probably reflects the fact that many of them already had a strong skills base and relevant experience. NBVFG
- 4.5. Comments from these same questionnaires fell into two broad categories:
 - Improvements in English and communication skills, for example:
 - *this opportunity has helped me improve my communication skills and learning to work with other people.*

- *My confidence using English is better.*
- Gains in experience, skills and knowledge, for example:
 - *It equips you with the knowledge needed to move to the next stage of your life*
 - *It helps to put your skills in use, also learn new things which will help in the future*
 - *Like I stand on the first small step towards my career. NBVFG*

4.6. The evaluator led focus groups echoed these themes and put some flesh on the bones by identifying **specific skills** that people had gained from volunteering, including:

- *Experience of sales, marketing and administration*
- *Computerised accounting*
- *Welfare rights and advice*
- *Counselling skills*
- *Childcare skills*

In many instances, volunteering has been accompanied by pursuing further education and training, including to degree and post-graduate level for some. The commitment of the volunteers who participated in the focus groups to education and furthering their skill base was impressive:

'I have attended 15 different courses and now have qualifications.'

4.7. Volunteers at the focus groups also spoke of the benefit of volunteering in helping them to **understand English systems and services:**

- *I have gained a good understanding of other services and organisations in the city.*
- *Experience of disabled people and those with dementia and how they are cared for here*
- *About work procedures and policies, e.g. Criminal Record Bureau checks for vulnerable people and children, health and safety*
- *Made me aware of government policy and legislation. VFG*

4.8. The **host organisations** who completed the project's annual survey in April and also in November reinforce this view that volunteering is improving readiness for employment. 95.7% of the 48 organisations that responded agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *'Volunteers are becoming better prepared to enter employment.'* The following comments are illustrative of those given in questionnaire responses:

- *They have practical, caring experience, a reference from a reliable organisation, usually better spoken English, proof they can be reliable and part of a team.*
- *We provide a wide range of training in a number of administrative processes and we also provide free on-line courses to learn to use Microsoft Office packages such as Word and Excel to intermediate level. NBOS*

4.9. The interviews with a sample of 10 host organisations reinforce this picture. Interviewees cited new skills and specific training that volunteers get, including on fire safety, use of machinery, health and safety and customer awareness. They all commented on volunteers' confidence and English skills improving. Several mentioned that they have written references for volunteers for education courses, as well as for jobs, and several said that volunteers had gone on to get paid employment.

- *Some have gone on to get their status and have now got jobs, which is brilliant. HOI*
- *We see a real difference in the volunteers. For a start some of them get jobs which is great. They make really good friends and even if they get jobs they still call into the office to say hello and sometimes volunteer in the evening or weekends. HOI*

4.10. Unfortunately, the project does not have complete statistics on how many of their volunteers have succeeded in **gaining paid work**. However, the data available suggests that this is happening for a substantial number of them. Two of the participants in the consultant led focus groups are in paid work with the organisations they initially volunteered with and several host organisations and partners cited examples where

volunteers have gained paid work elsewhere. Clearly, gaining paid employment will be more challenging in the current employment market, but it was interesting that the volunteers at one focus group recognised the challenges of the current climate as being something that they share with the other residents of Sheffield:

- *The future is uncertain as there are going to be so many cuts, so this will make it hard for me and others*
- *I realise now that others are finding it hard to get a job too. VFG*

5. Health and well-being

'Through volunteering I have better dreams'

- 5.1. The second specific aim of the project is:
To improve clients' mental health and well-being
- 5.2. There is a solid body of evidence which demonstrates the high incidence of mental health problems amongst refugees and asylum seekers. This is due to the impact of traumatic experiences in their countries of origin, combined with the stress of the asylum process and the social isolation experienced by many new arrivals.
'Much of the distress experienced by refugees and asylum-seekers can be linked to events that led to the departure from their home country. However, there is strong evidence that mental distress is also a result of difficult living circumstances experienced in the UK.' A civilised society: mental health provision for refugees and asylum seekers in England and Wales', Mind, 2009.
- 5.3. Several partners commented on mental health and low self confidence being a significant issue for the refugees and asylum seekers that they work with, and on the benefits of volunteering to help to address this, as did the volunteers themselves at the consultant led focus groups.
- 5.4. The impact on **mental health and well-being and on personal confidence** of volunteering through New Beginnings is significant.
82% of volunteers completing the focus group questionnaire said that their general health and well-being had improved or improved greatly. Comments included the following:
 - *The volunteering I am doing has helped me to feel good about myself and give me the ability to work as a team*
 - *Now I feel much better*
 - *It has got a great effect on my personality. NBVFG*
- 5.5. The same questionnaires include 94% of respondents saying that their **personal development** (e.g. confidence, self-esteem, self-management) had increased or increased greatly. Comments included:
 - *I have built self confidence in inter-personal relationships*
 - *This has enabled me to handle difficult people without taking it personally. NBVFG*
- 5.6. The consultant led **focus groups** provided similar comments with respect to health, well-being and confidence.
 - *I have a positive outlook mentally, which I didn't have when I first came*
 - *At times, it has been very difficult, a struggle, because of different culture and I have got depressed, but now I am on the right path*
 - *I had very bad fear, post traumatic disorder, bad dreams, sleepless nights; through volunteering I have better dreams.*
 - *I used to be confident but it drained away when I first came here, now I have regained my confidence. VFG*
- 5.7. Factors which volunteers who responded to the questionnaires and who attend the consultant led focus groups identified as helping them to rebuild their confidence and mental well-being included **making friends** and **being useful/ helping others**, as the following comments illustrate:
 - *I feel very confident with this volunteering because it has introduced me to many other people, especially as a refugee I like to be a useful person in the UK. NBV FG*
 - *I am benefiting from a wider network of friends. NBVFG*
 - *I spend my time in the correct place, being useful - not just in the house or shopping. VFG*

5.8. Responses to the **host organisation survey and interviews** reinforce the evidence that the volunteering experience gained through New Beginnings has enhanced volunteer health and well-being. Just over 51% of respondents to the survey strongly agreed with the statement *'Volunteering has had a positive impact on health, well-being, confidence or self-esteem'*, and the remainder all agree with this statement. The following comments from responses and interviews endorse this:

- *Volunteers have also been referred by the Central Health Clinic. Socialising and meeting other women, feeling they are not alone or isolated is a really valuable part of the whole volunteering process. NBOS*
- *It goes without saying that volunteer roles usually centre around some requirement for compassion and understanding. Compassion has been scientifically proven to dramatically reinforce the immune system and provide a sense of well-being that endures through life's many ups and downs. Giving your time for free certainly builds confidence and self esteem, because by helping others you help yourself! NBOS*
- *B is now oozing confidence since volunteering, and A was very quiet, but now she is always smiling and very happy. NBOS*
- *I have seen their confidence increase – they come like a closed flower and start to open up and from this their competence improves. HOI*
- *Many asylum seekers have real depression but once they start to volunteer they gradually come out of it. I had the same experience, when I was an asylum seeker I got very bad depression but volunteering here made things better. HO/ POI*
- *The biggest difference is their confidence, they feel a part of things, they are valued and can contribute things so that gives them more confidence. HOI*

5.9. A number of **partner organisations** highlighted the benefits of volunteering to the refugees and asylum seekers whom they refer to New Beginnings, as the following comments illustrate:

- *I work with a lot of new arrivals who can't work. They become really isolated and their mental health deteriorates. They don't want to stay at home, so volunteering gives them a reason to get out of bed every day. I have seen a lot people with really poor mental health really improve through volunteering.
People feel they are contributing and are gaining some control over their lives, when as asylum seekers they have so few choices.*
- *Asylum seekers' situation is very poor, as they are excluded from work and from English classes for the first six months. This impinges on their physical and especially their mental health and well being. Having some purposeful activity to do is therefore critical. It enhances their self esteem, and improves their mental health. When they get a positive decision on their status, they also then have something they can use as references.*

6. Social integration

'The opportunity to belong to the society'

- 6.1. The third specific aim of the New Beginnings project is:
To increase the social integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Sheffield.
- 6.2. There was a wealth of evidence from this evaluation that the project is particularly successful in contributing to social integration at a number of different levels. It was recognised by the project team, by volunteers themselves, and by host and partner organisations that integration is a two way process, requiring flexibility and creativity from organisations, as well as from refugees and asylum seekers themselves. In return for this, there is evidence of the benefits for organisations, for individual volunteers and also in terms of wider community cohesion.
- 6.3. The project focuses strongly on integration through its work to identify placements for volunteers in **'mainstream' organisations**, by which it means organisations which are not primarily working with refugees and asylum seekers already. This approach is supported by the findings of the *'A Part of Society'* report, where *'it was felt widely that 'mainstream' volunteering promoted integration, whether or not the volunteer had received a decision on their asylum claim'*. Whilst some volunteers are placed with refugee and asylum seeker specialist organisations, the organisation survey shows that 41 out of the 48 respondents are mainstream in this sense. These organisations are diverse; including charity shops, health and welfare organisations, organisations working with a range of vulnerable groups and with children and young people, as well as environmental organisations and others where practical, hands on skills are required.
- 6.4. Some of these organisations take a diverse range of volunteers, and are well used to supporting volunteers whose English is limited, and/or who have particular needs.

Other organisations are much newer to working with diverse groups, and for some the New Beginnings volunteer is the first non-white, non-local volunteer they have had – these volunteers are true 'pioneers', although this is always of their own choosing. Overall, 50% of the survey respondents said that they had never taken a refugee or asylum seeker as a volunteer until they had contact with New Beginnings.

- 6.5. The **volunteers** identified a number of ways in which volunteering had **enhanced their social integration**, including being part of the local community, making friends from different cultures and learning about the host culture and customs, as well as about other cultures. The following comments are illustrative of this:
 - *It gives you the opportunity to belong to the society. NBVFG*
 - *Socialising, being part of the community you live in. NBVFG*
 - *I am discovering and understanding more of the English culture and I love it. NBVFG*
- 6.6. The focus group volunteers gave some illuminating examples of **aspects of British culture** which volunteering had helped them to understand including:
 - *How important punctuality is here... and keeping appointments on time – this is very different from my culture.*
 - *People here work as a team of equals – there is less hierarchy than in my country*
 - *That volunteering is more common here than in my country – my friends back home don't understand why I do it!*
 - *There's a lot of paperwork here – some is good, but sometimes it is too much*

- *I understand more about how to go about getting a job, there are hundreds of ways in this country – in ours it's more simple.*
- *There is more diversity than I expected amongst British people – they are not all the same.*

6.7. Host organisations commented on the many ways in which they felt the New Beginnings **volunteers had gained in understanding of** and participation in the **mainstream culture** from the experience of volunteering with them.

- *They have grown in confidence and their English speaking and comprehension has greatly improved. They mix with us differently too. For example, traditionally Muslim women would not sit down and drink or eat with us all, because they are used to serving, but now they do and they really enjoy this. They have been able to share their stories, as we encourage this and have been able to talk about very painful things. HOI*
- *They feel welcome in the project and their confidence increases considerably, including in speaking English. They feel more useful and integrated. HOI*
- *They are now able to have conversations with people so have improved their English, have a good understanding of hygiene standards expected in this country and how to serve people, also now able to add up in English as they handle the payments for coffee too. HOI*
- *They are more aware of our culture, the way we work, our language and the way we talk and perceive things. NBOS*
- *When they first come they are unsure of themselves even if they have been doing high profile work in their country, there is a different language and etiquette, so it gives their confidence back (once they gain this understanding). NBOS*

6.8. At the same time, host organisations' **knowledge and understanding of other cultures and of the experience of asylum seekers and refugees** is enhanced. This applies to all staff and volunteers in the organisations. 67.4% of respondents to the organisation survey said that their knowledge of other cultures has increased or greatly increased, and the following comments from the survey and interviews illustrate this:

- *In truth when I first heard about New Beginnings I was a little sceptical with regards to refugees etc. especially with all the propaganda surrounding it. But my perception and understanding has changed dramatically and I now have a renewed respect and positive attitude towards refugees and asylum seekers. They are hard working and DO want to contribute to society in a positive way. I have been struck time and again at how dedicated they have been and self motivating in getting back into their prospective career paths despite all the odds. NBOS*
- *I have talked to C at length and her housemates. They told me their circumstances. I was appalled at the cruelty they have suffered and the struggle they have just to be allowed to remain here. I didn't know that they have to sign on every month, that it takes so many years to even decide if they can stay....that refugees (sic) only have a bus pass and £5 a week to spend.... I learned a lot. NBOS*
- *I think it has given me and others more understanding of different backgrounds. Has opened my eyes in a lot of respects to what it is like for refugees and asylum seekers. I have learnt a few words of Burmese as well! I have huge respect for them and what they have been through. HOI*
- *He (our volunteer) has put us in touch with ASSIST...we have all learnt more about the reality of what it is like being an asylum seeker and their experience...We have seen the difficulty of the transition to becoming a refugee, sorting out accommodation etc. all from scratch. HOI*
- *We are more aware of the situation that our children are living with – (our school) has a high percentage of refugee/ asylum seeking children. HOI*
- *Many staff and volunteers would probably not normally come into contact with refugees and asylum seekers and contact with them rubs away at their misconceptions, eradicates the ideas they may have got from negative press that asylum seekers get. They learn about the asylum process and some are quite shocked by how hard it is. Whenever anyone gets leave to remain, everyone is thrilled and the team celebrates it together. HOI*

- 6.9. The two visits to host organisations provided an opportunity to speak to some **native Sheffield volunteers**, whose own comments endorse the responses cited above:
- *This has been an experience for me – it has opened my eyes*
 - *It gives people a better understanding of what's in the news about race, religions, faiths and customs*
 - *We get to know different types of people and hear different stories. It helps you to be more broad minded.*
- 6.10. The host organisation interviews also asked about the **impact on customers and service users**, resulting in positive responses:
- *I think customers notice how diverse our volunteers are and we have never had any negative comments. I think they quite like it and it brings more different people in, cos anyone feels welcome here.*
 - *A lot of our clients are older, isolated people, who never mix with people outside their family, so contact with diverse volunteers is very positive for them and breaks down a lot of fear and misconceptions.*
 - *It makes a massive difference to the children who are newly arrived and can't speak English – many are Somali or Arabic speakers and our NB volunteers have those languages, so can speak to them and make them feel more welcome and at home.*
- 6.11. In addition, there was evidence from the interviews and from the volunteer focus groups of **improved inter cultural understanding**, where volunteers from historically hostile countries were working alongside one another:
- *We have also learnt more about each other's cultures and countries – for example our two countries (Iraq and Iran) have been at war with one another for many years, but we are good friends now. VFG*
 - *We are all from different cultures, we like to be together, we are really friends to each other, we have coffee, socialise, it's brilliant and we have all found friends. We talk about our different cultures, customs, religions and enjoy learning from each other. HO/POI*
 - *We encourage people from religions and cultures that have been persecuted and have persecuted others to talk to each other and work through some difficult stuff....It's not all 'lovely, lovely', but we can be tolerant and agree to differ. HOI*
- 6.12. The evaluators were interested in finding out whether these changes in attitudes might have **impacted on the behaviour** of staff, local volunteers and communities. Evidence for this was inevitably limited by the time available for interviews. However, there were some powerful examples provided:
- *We have a women's retreat for staff and volunteers every year and last year the Burmese women were describing what happened to them in their country – it was very distressing, but it had a strong impact on us all. D, one of our long-standing volunteers (not present for visit, due to snow), has been transformed by the experience. She used to think asylum seekers got plenty of money and benefits and now knows this is not true. She lives on a white estate and an asylum seeking family moved in opposite her recently and they are getting some racist abuse. She is now supporting them and phoning the police and housing to get them to take action on their behalf. She says she would never have done this before. HOI*
 - *I help the volunteers out with issues outside work sometimes, do bits of advocacy with organisations and act as Power of Attorney for some of them. HOI*
 - *One of our Iraqi volunteers had a long and difficult conversation here in the shop, with one of our Neighbourhood Wardens who was a soldier in Iraq when the volunteer was fighting on the other side. From this they developed a deep understanding of each other and there was no animosity, though it was not easy. HOI*
- 6.13. Finally, partner organisations were asked to comment on the impact of the project on **community cohesion**:

- *Volunteering enables people to integrate more and become involved in the local community. It helps them connect with people who value them and treat them well, which balances their experience of the asylum process which is very negative. They discover that some people welcome their contribution.*
- *It is a positive visible sign of people giving something back to the community, which is important. It improves volunteers' confidence to participate actively in the community, and acts as a bridge to wider engagement.*
- *Working and volunteering alongside asylum seekers and refugees demystifies their experience for people who wouldn't otherwise come into contact with them.*
- *It breaks down barriers, stigma and discrimination from white communities, but also from longer standing resident BME communities.*

7. Inclusive practice

'Part of one big family and part of a wider community'

- 7.1. The fourth specific aim of the project is:
To enhance inclusive practice in Sheffield in relation to volunteering
- 7.2. The project's and, more specifically, the Project Manager's work on good practice relates not only to work to include refugees and asylum seekers as volunteers, but also to the inclusion of other vulnerable groups, since he is the Good Practice lead for the Volunteer Centre as a whole. For the purposes of this evaluation and report, the outcomes that relate to refugees and asylum seekers are primarily focused on, although inevitably good practice in this field will enhance inclusive practice as a whole.
- 7.3. This section of the report focuses on inclusive practice outcomes. The next section explores in more detail what work the project has done to achieve these, i.e. its own inclusive practice.
- 7.4. The success of the project in gaining placements for refugees and asylum seekers within mainstream organisations referred to in the previous section in itself demonstrates a positive impact on inclusion.
78.7% of respondents to the host organisation survey said that refugees and asylum seekers as volunteers had increased or greatly **increased diversity** in their organisations. The following comments illustrate this:
- *The Lunch Club has traditionally been dominated by white English speaking population, with some individuals who have little reason to encounter other cultures.*
 - *This is the first time a refugee or asylum seeker has applied for a volunteer post at my particular service. The usual group applying for positions have been white British people of varying ages and backgrounds.*
 - *Our customers and our shop benefits from the different language skills that volunteers bring, e.g. Arabic.*
- 7.5. The project has also worked to encourage organisations to be **creative about volunteer roles**, in order to make good use of the specific skills which refugees and asylum seekers bring. Just under a third of respondents to the organisation survey said that they have done this and the following comments relate to that:
- *The lady volunteering with me was very competent with programs such as Excel, so I designed tasks based around that as much as possible.*
 - *We have used the language skills of those volunteers that spoke the same mother tongue as some of our languages to improve the understanding between us!*
 - *Not yet developed specific roles, but I hope to get the more qualified applicants involved with a research/ evaluation project we hope to start in the future.*
- 7.6. Several host organisations interviewed were puzzled by the question about specific roles, as they felt it was a better mark of inclusive practice to enable refugee and asylum seeking volunteers to undertake **all the roles** in the organisation, including offering them **progression**.
- *We use them for everything. One of our NB volunteers has just become a Team Leader. HOI*
 - *They help with interpreting, admin and finances – we have about 7 in the finance team, and advocacy. HOI*
 - *Volunteer advice workers – we train them to this level but all can go onto a more specialist level if they want to. Same as all our volunteers in this respect. HOI*

- 7.7. There was clear evidence of organisations taking account of the expressed **needs of volunteers**, as well as of their limitations in determining what roles to place them in:
- *We use NB volunteers mainly for helping in Activity Sessions at our base. Most of them want experience of working with people in a caring context and it works for them to work with groups – this helps their English. HOI*
 - *They do all roles that don't require good English, i.e. they are not on the tills, but can do more or less anything else. HOI*
- 7.8. There was also evidence from the host organisation survey and questionnaires of organisations **enabling volunteers to develop roles** which played to their strengths:
- *Supervision brought out that volunteers also want to be involved in supporting women in detention centres, they want to start up a newsletter, and they are also interested in setting up a culture swap. Therefore the volunteers themselves have had a role in coming up with initiatives and designing their role. NBOS*
 - *It is very much led by what volunteers feel they have to offer to the children. The cooking club started because one volunteer wanted to do that. HOI*
 - *They have certificates in Marketing and are keen to interact with clients over the telephone to improve their skills, which we are looking to accommodate as far as possible. NBOS*
- 7.9. A key outcome in terms of inclusive practice is the frequency with which **friendships** were mentioned. This theme runs through all the data and the following comments from a range of sources illustrate its importance:
- *I have made good friends with people from different cultures. VFG*
 - *They make friends – we cannot underestimate the importance of forming relationships. POI*
 - *There is a lot of friendship here – it is like a family and they can have a laugh and a joke. They can be themselves here. English volunteer in HO*
 - *On the way back from our recent trip to Scarborough, everyone started playing with a little ball on the coach, throwing to each other and there was a real sense of being part of one big family, including the children that had come with us, and part of a wider community. Everyone was enjoying being playful together, which was brilliant given what so many of them have been through. HOI*

8. Success factors

- 8.1. This section outlines the main elements of the practice of the New Beginnings project and its key partners which were identified as contributing to the project achieving the significant outcomes documented above.
- 8.2. One of the key findings from the report, *'A Part of Society'*, was that for mainstream organisations to take on refugees and asylum seekers as volunteers, an **'intermediary organisation'** is critical to act as broker between the needs and aspirations of the volunteers and the expectations, awareness and capacity of the organisation. New Beginnings exemplifies such an organisation and was felt by everyone who contributed to this evaluation to be an essential part of the process, as the following comments illustrate:
- *In this contract culture, there are less and less client centred organisations, but they are one of the shining lights in this respect and their role as broker is invaluable. POI*
 - *I think it is good to have a special project focusing on volunteers and asylum seekers because they really need it – they would be lost without that support and link to volunteering. HOI*
 - *They know and remember us as individuals and remember everything that we have told them. VFG*
 - *They help you out there in the community – not just in an office. VFG*
- 8.3. The key theme that emerged from conversations with the volunteers themselves, host and partner organisations is of **mutual trust**. The importance of this cannot be underestimated. Refugees and asylum seekers may distrust British systems and authorities given their experience of the asylum process, and volunteering is still sometimes seen as a cheap option and a chance to place people in organisations without seeking to meet their specific needs.
- *They are very accommodating – you feel welcome. VFG*
 - *They treat you like human beings, as equals to them. VFG*
 - *They refer people who will benefit our shop. I know I can trust the volunteers from there, which is really useful. HOI*
 - *I really trust them to match volunteers to the roles I offer, because they meet the volunteers first and know them and their needs. I feel comfortable with anyone they send here – they don't expect us to take anyone and get them to do everything as some other organisations do. HOI*
- 8.4. This trust is gained largely through a rigorous and intensive process designed to **match volunteers to suitable roles and organisations**, which has several elements to it. The Project Manager, in part in his role as good practice lead for the Volunteer Centre, is responsible for sourcing and working with potential host organisations to ensure that the roles they offer are high quality and accessible by New Beginnings volunteers, as well as others from vulnerable groups. Tools and strategies he has developed to assist with this process include:
- Processes for refugees and asylum seekers to get CRB checks and encouragement to organisations to be creative about finding safe roles for volunteers while awaiting these coming through.
 - *'Good Practice Guidelines on Working with Asylum Seekers and Refugees'*, which includes information on the legal position around asylum seekers and volunteering, expenses, CRB checks, together with background information about the barriers that asylum seekers and refugees face to volunteering and some FAQs.
 - A how to guide for good practice in involving volunteers, entitled *'Nuts and Bolts'*, which includes a process for designing volunteer task profiles, as well as on recruitment and induction.

This guide has sample Volunteer Agreements and Application Forms as well as other documentation appended.

- Delivery of a regular training course for voluntary sector organisations as part of VAS's mainstream training programme, on 'Involving Refugee Volunteers'.

Organisations have been targeted that are wanting to improve the diversity of their volunteer base, some of whom have targets relating to this, as well as ones which already have a good track record via the Volunteer Centre in taking diverse groups of volunteers. The following comment illustrates the symbiotic nature of the project's relationship with some host organisations.

One of our targets is to have a % of volunteers who are refugees and asylum seekers. New Beginnings make it really easy for me to achieve this target, as they send volunteers to me, rather than me having to go out and look for them. HOI

- 8.5. The above work with organisations is complemented by **the Volunteer Co-ordinator's work with the potential volunteers** themselves. He (a refugee himself), or the project's Volunteer Advisers (refugee or asylum seeker volunteers themselves), meet with the volunteers and gather basic information about their background and aspirations from them. It was evident that the Volunteer Co-ordinator's own personal experience and the empathy of both workers was valued by volunteers who attended the consultant led focus groups:
- *Good communication – speak clearly and slowly so you can understand, even when you don't have much English*
 - *J understands the asylum situation fully because he has been through it himself and he understands how we feel*
- 8.6. The project follows their own guidance for host organisations by doing all they can to **remove barriers** which may prevent refugees and asylum seekers from contacting them and from volunteering. This includes being rigorous about paying travel and other relevant expenses and making themselves accessible and available to both volunteers and host organisations. The project's flexible approach and the personal style of the two workers was mentioned by many people spoken to for the evaluation, together with their ability to handle sensitive issues appropriately, thus giving partners great confidence in referring vulnerable clients to them.
- *I have no hesitation in referring clients to them, as I know they will get a holistic, client centred service.... I get lots of positive feedback from clients I have sent to them. POI*
 - *The clients I work with are very anxious about their HIV status being disclosed. The fact that this has never been an issue with NB shows how sensitive they are to these clients' needs. They feel listened to and heard and I have never had any negative feedback. POI*
 - *They are extremely accessible to refugees and asylum seekers because of their open door policy. POI*
 - *They are friendly, open and easy for asylum seekers to engage with. They are flexible and willing to try different ways of working. The fact that they provide travel expenses helps volunteers, as does the chance to get a meal when volunteering – asylum seekers have so little. POI*
- 8.7. Several interviewees also commented on the careful and considered way in which the team has introduced small, but important developments to their service in response to feedback from clients. In particular, the **IT workshops** which the Volunteer Co-ordinator now runs were welcomed by volunteers and partners alike.
- 8.8. The work of **matching volunteers to placements** is a major part of what the project does and can be challenging, as the volunteers may have unrealistic aspirations which

have to be carefully managed. By working together, the two paid workers seek to achieve the best match possible in terms of the opportunities that they offer to potential volunteers. For a percentage of people, this doesn't work and they decide not to go ahead with volunteering, but for those that do, there is higher chance of success because this groundwork has been done. The following comments are testament to this:

- *They listen carefully and take notice of your experience and wishes. VFG*
- *They try to meet your needs and take account of your previous experience, and don't just send you to any placement. VFG*
- *We have a good relationship with them, they make it possible for people to come. It's good to have a contact, a first point of call for asylum seekers and refugees, they will make the phone call while the person is there, it's the first step into the unknown and they will guide people through. HO/POI*
- *The way they develop placements makes volunteering accessible to all asylum seekers and refugees – they get organisations ready in advance and do the groundwork. POI*

8.9. The downside to this process is that it can be **very intensive**, and includes many interventions along the way, such as help to complete application forms, making phone calls to potential host organisations, helping clients to find the organisations and to get to appointments. The team recently conducted an exercise to determine the average number of interventions they make with each client. This came to 5, with 1 being the least and 28 the most, and it is their view that this is a significant underestimate, as they do not always record when clients drop in to the office or make quick phone calls. However, they manage to do this, without compromising on the number of clients they support. *Despite providing an intensive service, they work with a large number of people which is impressive. POI*

8.10. Once volunteers are placed, they and many host and partner organisations commented positively on the **follow up** that they receive. This includes annual reviews with host organisations, which were welcomed by those who mentioned them.

- *The service I have received in recruiting via the NB project has been excellent. I was provided with appropriate candidates quickly, and I received follow up information about how volunteers were finding their experience of working with (us). This was invaluable as... I feel that an independent party such as NB are better able to report on the true outcomes of the placements from the volunteers point of view. NBOS*
- *They provide follow-up once you start to volunteer, they don't just leave you there, they contact you to see how it is going. VFG*
- *I feel supported by them in taking the shop forwards. We had one lady whose health I was concerned about. She and I met with J and I knew he would look after her once she had finished here – I was giving her back into a safe pair of hands. HOI*
- *They are two exceptionally good workers. They follow people through and put dedicated time into providing them with appropriate options and get feedback on how it is working out. POI*
- *Their willingness to do follow up and work really hard to engage asylum seekers as volunteers. Once they are engaged, they try hard to provide interesting things for volunteers to do which take account of their aspirations and past experience. POI*

And those host organisations spoken to who had not availed themselves of this support commented that they knew it was there if they needed it.

8.11. A further success factor identified by a number of interviewees is how well the project **networks** in Sheffield. The Project Manager has fairly recently taken over chairing the Sheffield Refugee Forum and his work in bringing the sector together was commended by several partners. Both workers volunteer at Assist and attend drop-ins for refugees and asylum seekers as a way of accessing potential clients. Volunteers, host organisations and partners saw the project as key to effective, co-ordinated working to meet refugee and

asylum seeker needs in Sheffield, and recognised that their commitment to **partnership** maximises opportunities for their clients.

- *They arrange workshops, where different organisations come and advertise different opportunities. VFG*
- *They go beyond volunteering – help with other problems in your life, like accommodation, because they know who to talk to. VFG*
- *They link clients with other services in the city and are integrated into local service delivery, as well as being well known to the local refugee and asylum seeking population. POI*

8.12. The final success factor that emerged from this evaluation is the key role of committed **volunteer co-ordinators** or project managers within host organisations. This reflects the findings of '*A Part of Society*', where they use the phrase *volunteer co-ordinator as agent for diversity and inclusion*'. A number of the volunteer co-ordinators spoken to demonstrated a significant commitment to inclusion and diversity, which enabled them to go the extra mile to accommodate diverse needs, and to value and celebrate the richness of the skills and experiences that refugee and asylum seeker volunteers bring. It is worth noting that one of the key recommendations of *A Part of Society* is to ensure that organisations have sufficient funding to resource good quality volunteer management.

9. Challenges and areas for future consideration

- 9.1. There were few weaknesses of the project identified by this evaluation. Those that were identified, together with suggestions for consideration in terms of the project's future development are set out in this section.
- 9.2. The main difficulty cited by organisations who responded to the survey was in relation to **language and communication**. Several of these respondents accepted that the level of English they required was a barrier, so this was not necessarily intended as a criticism of the project. A minority of respondents cited unrealistic expectations and unreliability due to the nature of asylum seekers lives as difficulties.
- 9.3. Reading some of the comments from host organisations in the survey suggests that there is still some way to go to get all organisations to understand and be flexible in response to the needs of volunteers who are going through the asylum process. The Project Manager said that it is becoming increasingly **difficult to find new host organisations** for refugees and asylum seekers, as the market is becoming saturated with volunteers, so those who need more support tend to miss out on new opportunities. There are fortunate exceptions to this, but it is an issue requiring some creative thinking and wider promotion of the benefits of having refugees and asylum seekers in organisations in order to increase the number of organisations willing to take them on in future.
- 9.4. One area that both volunteers and one partner identified for future development is **private sector placements**. Some volunteers were interested in these, given their experience and skills from home. There was also evidence that some of the newer organisations in sectors where the project has less links, such as **environmental services**, had very low awareness of the wider work of the project and felt that there was scope to expand volunteering opportunities in their sectors.
- 9.5. A minority of interviewees and the team themselves expressed some concern that they are only **scratching the surface of need** for volunteering amongst asylum seekers and refugees in Sheffield, and that a significant proportion of their volunteers are from professional and well educated backgrounds. The number of adult asylum seekers in Sheffield is currently around 650, which is a significant drop from a few years ago when it was nearer 1600, but it is harder to estimate the number of refugees, though it is at least a further 900 (the number claiming JSA). Factors that mitigate against the project reaching the more marginalized asylum seekers and refugees include limited capacity, and the fact that many volunteering opportunities require a high standard of English.
- 9.6. There were mixed views from partners about the value of the project being part of and operating from the main offices of **VAS**. Most felt it was useful that they are part of the wider Volunteer Centre, but a minority of partners felt that the office could be quite intimidating and was not necessarily the best place for the project's physical base if they wanted to be fully accessible to refugees and asylum seekers. Being part of VAS also limits the project's funding opportunities, as the organisation is too large to be eligible for most charitable trust funding and yet the nature of their work is likely to be very attractive to several of those same trusts.
- 9.7. Some **joint work** is currently under development between the project and the Northern Refugee Centre who operate from a base in Castle Market and already place some clients

in private sector and manual roles. This includes a substantial funding bid, which if it were successful could offer a way to address a number of the challenges identified above.

- 9.8. Some partners and host organisations identified a need for the project to improve **communication** with them, which it is suspected is a result of the team's lack of spare capacity. Suggestions included:
- Feedback to host organisations when volunteers move on, as some organisations do not necessarily know and it would save them time chasing volunteers who are not intending to continue with them.
 - More regular feedback to referring organisations about whether clients referred to the project have taken up volunteer opportunities. Partner services felt that if they knew that clients hadn't done so, they could continue to encourage and promote volunteering as an option, but if they don't know, this probably won't happen.
- 9.9. The only other improvements which volunteers asked for was support with **job seeking**, and the only other improvement which one host organisation asked for is **basic skills training**. Both of these are beyond the current remit of the project.
- 9.10. The project is currently exploring the possibility of developing some kind of **buddying scheme**, which there is some evidence would be welcomed, and could reduce the pressure on the paid staff to undertake much of this work. There is now a substantial group of long-serving volunteers, who may be more than happy to support the project and their peers in this way. Some host organisations already do this in an informal way and others think it would be a helpful development.
- *I always make sure there is someone else here that speaks their language on the days that they are in. HOI*
 - *I think it would be a really good idea if our project has evaluated as a reasonably positive experience by previous volunteers, if there could be a separate volunteer role of accompanying refugee volunteers to find their feet in the club. NBOS*
- 9.11. Finally, this report amply demonstrates the wealth of data that the project already gathers and holds on its outcomes. However, it is not so clear that this data is being used as effectively as it could to demonstrate achievement of these outcomes outside the refugee sector. The consultants have had to wade through a lot of brilliant data to extract the key messages in this report. It is strongly recommended that the project use the Evaluation Framework (Appendix I) and explore simple ways of collating **headline data** to support it on an annual basis, including quantitative and qualitative information (i.e. selected comments).

10. Conclusion and Next Steps

- 10.1. This evaluation provides a strong endorsement for the effectiveness of this small, well targeted and exceptionally well-delivered project. There is clear evidence of it achieving its outcomes and having a wider ripple effect in terms of the social integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Sheffield.
- 10.2. This report amply demonstrates the need for dedicated provision in Sheffield to enable asylum seekers and refugees to access volunteering opportunities and thereby the associated benefits which accrue from volunteering; in terms of mental health and well-being, employability and social integration.
- 10.3. Host organisations and partners were consistent in their view that asylum seekers and refugees would be significantly worse off without a New Beginnings and the tailor made services that it provides to them and to the city:
 - *It would leave a big gap, because there would not be the capacity to follow through with clients and ensure good matching to placements. It needs a specialist post for this work. It would also mean the loss of opportunities for partnership work. POI*
 - *I really hope the project can carry on. I'm not sure it would work for the main Volunteer Bureau to take refugees and asylum seekers on – they might get a bit lost and forgotten about. HOI*
 - *This would mean yet another door closed to asylum seekers – there is not other organisation that specialises in offering them volunteer placements. This would increase stress and socially induced depression, which volunteering currently combats." POI*
- 10.4. Based on the challenges and suggestions set out in the previous section, VAS and the project are recommended to give attention to the following issues:
 - Prioritising funding applications for a minimum of one, and ideally two, fte posts to focus on continuing to provide intensive, specialist support to asylum seekers and refugees to take up volunteering opportunities.
 - Promoting and marketing the benefits of having asylum seeker and refugee volunteers more widely, particularly in sectors with few such placements at present. And utilising 'converted' host organisations as NB 'champions' to assist with this process.
 - Developing one or two outreach sessions in community settings, where project capacity allows, with the aim of accessing less skilled and confident asylum seekers and refugees.
 - Strengthening feedback mechanisms to partner agencies, with a view to maximising joint work to achieve volunteer placements for clients.
 - Exploring ways to involve longer-term clients more actively in NB's and the wider Volunteer Centre's service delivery, e.g. as buddies, volunteer advisers and to assist in reaching the more marginalized asylum seekers and refugees.
 - Getting smarter at making use of the project's rich data to illustrate the achievement of project outcomes on an ongoing basis.
- 10.5. Everyone spoken to was keen to do what they can to help the project to continue. This suggests that there would be considerable value in holding the proposed Stakeholder Workshop in the new year. This event could receive the findings of the evaluation, and explore options for maximising the continuation of the good practice demonstrated by the project.

Emma Rattenbury
with advice and input from Mandy Bryce
December 2010

APPENDIX I

NEW BEGINNINGS EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Overall Aim

Impact

To maximise the opportunities for and integration of refugees and asylum seekers into social and economic life in Sheffield

Outcomes

To increase clients' readiness to enter employment

To improve clients' mental health and well-being

To increase the (social) integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Sheffield

To enhance inclusive practice in Sheffield in relation to volunteering

Objectives

To recruit and identify the needs and potential of refugees and asylum seekers to be volunteers

To match clients to volunteer placements, and support them to access and retain these

To identify and work with mainstream organisations to prepare them for refugee/ asylum seeker volunteers

To design and deliver training for organisations in working with refugee/ asylum seeker volunteers

To develop good practice guidance on working with volunteers from socially excluded groups

Outputs

APPENDIX II New Beginnings - Specific Aims, Outcomes, Indicators and Data Collection

Specific Aims	Outcomes	Outcome Indicators	Data Sources, including for this Evaluation	Ongoing Data Collection
To increase clients' readiness to enter employment	<p>More refugees and asylum seekers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gain work experience as volunteers - Gain work related skills - Improve their verbal and written English - Gain paid work - (Increase their confidence and self esteem) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No of refugees and asylum seekers placed as volunteers - No of volunteers reporting improved work related skills + readiness for employment - No of organisations reporting volunteers being better prepared to enter employment - No of volunteers reporting increased confidence in English - (No of volunteers reporting increase confidence and self-esteem) 	<p>Project monitoring data</p> <p>Volunteer feedback questionnaires from focus groups Qs.5 + 8 Eval Focus Gps Organisation Survey Q.10 Eval Host Org interviews</p> <p>Volunteer feedback questionnaires Q. 7 Eval Focus Gps</p>	<p>Project staff quarterly</p> <p>Quarterly focus groups with project</p> <p>Annual org survey,</p> <p>Quarterly focus groups with project</p>
To improve clients' mental health and well-being	<p>Clients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase their confidence and self-esteem - Improve their mental health and well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No of volunteers reporting increase confidence and self-esteem - No of volunteers reporting improved mental health + well-being - No of organisations reporting improved volunteer mental health + well-being 	<p>Volunteer feedback questionnaires Qs. 4 Eval focus gps Volunteer feedback questionnaire Q. 5 Eval Focus Groups Organisation Survey Q.11 Host and partner organisation interviews</p>	<p>Quarterly focus groups with project</p> <p>Annual org survey</p>
To increase	- More refugees/asylum seekers	No of mainstream organisations offering	Project monitoring data	Quarterly monitoring reports

<p>the (social) integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Sheffield</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - involved in mainstream organisations - More mainstream organisations offering placements to refugees/ asylum seekers - Increased awareness of other cultures and the experiences of refugees/ asylum seekers - Increase in recognition of refugee/ asylum seekers' contribution 	<p>volunteer placements to refugees/ asylum seekers</p> <p>No of volunteers placed in mainstream organisations</p> <p>No of organisations + their staff/ vols reporting improved knowledge and awareness</p> <p>No of vols recognising own contribution</p> <p>No of organisations recognising benefits</p>	<p>Project monitoring data Organisation survey Q. 12</p> <p>Organisation survey Q. 13 Host and partner organisation interviews and visits</p> <p>Eval focus groups Volunteer questionnaires? Organisation survey Qs. 14 + 15 Host and partner organisation interviews</p>	<p>Quarterly monitoring reports Annual organisation survey</p> <p>Annual survey</p> <p>Annual survey</p>
<p>To enhance inclusive practice in Sheffield in relation to volunteering</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased awareness of other cultures and the experiences of refugees/ asylum seekers - More volunteering roles developed with refugees/ asylum seekers in mind - Positive impact on service delivery 	<p>No of organisations + their staff/ vols reporting improved knowledge and awareness</p> <p>No of organisations reporting improved diversity</p> <p>No of new roles developed with refugees/ asylum seekers in mind</p> <p>No of organisations reporting positive impact on staff, service users and community</p>	<p>Organisation survey Q. 13 Host organisation interviews and visits</p> <p>Organisation survey Q. 12</p> <p>Organisation survey + Project records</p> <p>Organisation survey Qs. 14+15 Host and partner organisation interviews</p>	<p>Annual survey</p> <p>Annual survey</p> <p>Annual survey + e.gs. identified by Project</p> <p>Annual survey</p>

APPENDIX III – Evaluation Participants

1. Volunteers who attended Focus Groups

Safia Ahmad	Hatina Guchu
Abdul Saleh	Evelyn Joseph
Amir Pourjabar	Mohammed Mehid Tankas
June Bonolo Ngazimbi	Simeon Karmara
Luc Magloire Zintchem	Rana Majeed
Lukman Hashim Al Mayhay	Oday Al-Hamadani
Phetili Mlalazi	Asfaw Mekonnen
Asmeron Zere Ghebrecristos	Khardijeh Alghassi
December Soe	Rodrigo Boniface Edema
Sithembisiwe Ndelbele	Yemane Asmergergish

2. Host Organisations interviewed/ visited

a) Visits

Yvonne Hayes + Andrew, Trudie, Kirsty and Margaret	Manager, Rainbows End Volunteers
Tracey Woolsey + Abou and Pauline	Manager, Bluebell Woods Charity Shop Volunteers

b) Telephone Interviews

Jason Briggs	Learning for the Fourth Age
Sue Rose	Green Estate
Zohreh	Assist
Daniel de Ariba	Project Buzz
Louisa Bruce	Mental Health CAB
Dyanne Midgley	Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind
Pauline Hancock	Victoria Hall Coffee Centre
Libby Thompson	Castle Advice Centre

3. Partner Telephone Interviews

Jim Steinke	Chief Executive, Northern Refugee Centre
Jane Burkinshaw	Hospital Social Worker, The Forge Centre, Royal Hallamshire Hospital
Rachel Westerby	Manager Asylum Team, Sheffield City Council
Joan Macfarlane	Nurse Consultant, Mulberry Practice + Head of Service for Vulnerable People, NHS Sheffield
Ruth Eker	Careers Adviser, Sheffield Futures