



Leading learning and skills



Advancing the Learning and Skills of Refugees in Bedfordshire and Luton



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*A Study by Equality Assurance Ltd.
January 2005*

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The research is carried out by Equality Assurance Staff in conjunction with local community groups supporting refugees and the report written by Mr. Ishaq Kazi, Dr. Yasin Rehman and Mr. Mir Mujeeb-ul-Hassan. The research was carried out by two part time and one full time researcher.

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GLOSSARY

LSC Learning and Skills Council

RCO Refugee Community Organisation

ESOL English for Speakers of Other Languages

NASS National Asylum Support Service

EA Equality Assurance

ELR Exceptional Leave to Remain

ILR Indefinite Leave to Remain

BRASS Bedford Refugee and Asylum Seekers Support

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Findings of the research:

- The five large refugee and asylum seeker communities in Bedfordshire and Luton are the Afghanis, Zimbabweans, Congolese, Eastern Europeans (Bosnian, Kossovan, Albanian and Serbs) and Asians (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, China and others) communities.
- There are between **3000 and 5000** refugees and asylum seekers are living in Bedfordshire and Luton.
- Many refugees and asylum seekers reside in socially deprived areas (Queens Park, Bedford, Bury Park, Luton).
- Majority of the refugees said that changing the negative image is essential. Some refugees identified their difficulty in securing employment and felt that they have been unfairly discriminated against.
- For refugee children and their families there were three main issues: the English language, racism, living as a refugee (overcoming bureaucratic complexities and psychological traumas).
- 64% of the participant indicated that there is no need for a Bedford refugee forum.

Learning and Training

- 44% of refugees had access to or had participated in English learning within Bedfordshire and Luton. 20% were females and 80% were males.
- 30% desired to learn English language through colleges, 21% through work base learning, and 16% self-learning.
- Research shows that ESOL provision in Bedfordshire and Luton is adequate. There is lack of awareness about ESOL classes and female only classes are desired.
- The feelings amongst interviewees were that ESOL classes need to be more practical and should be more appropriate to the level of the students.
- Some refugees asked for better provision in learning English, communication skills, writing in plan English, speaking in English and accent courses.
- Test for language competency is not available for refugees; training providers need to develop appropriate mechanisms to assess language skills. The current requirement for GCSE English is inappropriate for those entering the profession (such as teaching, nursing and others) for whom English is not their first language.
- Research shows that there is immediate need for language and communication skills

for the workplace - ESOL provision does not meet the needs of professionals. Opportunities for more intensive language learning are needed. These should be combined with exposure to the language of the workplace where language and cultural content are integrated.

- 66% of the refugees and asylum seekers interviewed had completed secondary school education or above.
- 10% had completed university education in their native countries
- 25% were at university when they fled their home country.
- 72% of those interviewed had undertaken education or training in the UK.
- Accessing education and training differed significantly between communities. Africans (Breakdown) and Afghans were more likely to have undertaken education or training than those from the Pakistani or Bosnians communities.
- 44% of the refugees and asylum seeker have taken English language as the highest-level course in Bedfordshire.
- Lack of financial support was also an issue, 16% of those interviewed said if the scholarship or grants were available they would go for full time learning or training.
- 15% of the refugees wanted some form of apprenticeship or work placement to enhance their skills.
- Focus group research shows that 40% were keen to start their own small businesses if they had business mentoring support and guidance.
- 32% of the respondents stated that they need a learning mentor to help them in the learning of new skills. 29% college and 15% would prefer work based learning.
- Individual interviewed wanted to learn more about British system such as welfare system, access to services, British culture and the roles and responsibilities.
- For most females, the key issue was the lack of childcare support to access education and training. Many also lacked the confidence to access education and other training due to lack of understanding of the process and system.

Employment in Countries of origin

- 29% were employed full time in their country of origin
- 27% of those who had fled their native countries were self employed
- 24% were students either at college or University.

Employment In the United Kingdom

- 70% of those interviewed have worked in Bedfordshire, 30% females and 70% males.
- Most of those working in semi-skilled jobs were professionals in their native countries. 30% stated that the media and the perception and image were barriers to decent employment.
- Most common those employed in professional capacity were admin, shop manager or restaurant manager. A large number of the refugees and asylum seekers were working in semi-skilled or manual employment in the United Kingdom than in their home country.
- Language skills also affect the chances of employment. 60% of those who had worked in the UK had English skills at intermediate level or above.
- Level of education also affected the likelihood of finding employment. 60% of those who had worked in the UK had completed secondary school or above.

Access to services

- Many refugees and asylum seekers were still unaware of many of the services available to them and did not have the confidence to access the services.
- The vast majority of refugees and asylum seekers in Bedfordshire rely on community organisations for information and advice.
- Some service providers have played the key role in co-ordination of information in Bedfordshire (BRASS).
- The standard of interpreters provided by local authorities was heavily criticized at the focus groups and some groups had complained that they have no organisation representing them.
- Their own community organisations were considered by refugees and asylum seekers to be the most helpful service providers. Some service providers such as (BRASS) and CAB (Citizens Advise Bureau), Law Centers were praised. The Home Office, NASS, local authorities (IAG) and job centers were criticised heavily as they did not cater for the needs of the refugees.
- Service providers, including several of those specialising in services for refugees and asylum seekers, were unable to estimate the number of refugees and asylum seekers in their locality.
- In general, refugees and asylum seekers in Bedfordshire are living in areas that are already deprived and in poor quality and inappropriate accommodation.

Integration

- Most refugees and asylum seekers said that they had very little opportunity to meet British people in a social setting. Out of 80 people attending focus groups only 8 said that they had English friends.
- Many focus group participants wanted classes to help them understand British culture and the roles and responsibilities of service providers such as the police and local authorities.
- English language was the main barrier to integration considered by some individuals.
- Younger refugees and asylum seekers (20+ age group) found it easier to integrate and make friends than older people.
- Many stated that living standards and other public services were very good and they were happy to be living in the United Kingdom.

Recommendations

One of the purposes of this research was to identify training needs of the refugees. In this regard, we have analysed the data and based on this analysis we recommend the following course of actions:

1. **Refugee Support Groups** - Most of the refugees we spoke to have clearly stated their preference of receiving support through their own community organisation. This in practical terms means setting up self-help group/organisation. The emergence of such organisations allows real learning to take place.

Action

Identify a named person within the community-based organisations who would provide information, advice and guidance on learning opportunities:

- Capacity building of their existing organisations
- Setting up structures, defining roles and responsibilities
- Recruiting and training volunteers for management committees
- Training staff
- Fundraising and bid writing for funding
- Providing training on financial management

2. **English Language** – There is a continuous demand for spoken and written English. ESOL provisions are highly regarded amongst the refugees and as such the colleges need to continue providing these services.

Women felt they could not access ESOL courses due lack of childcare provision.

Action

The LSC has to ensure that childcare provision is available to women who attend ESOL classes.

3. **Communication skills for the workplace** - Opportunities for more intensive language learning are needed. These should be combined with exposure to the language of the workplace where language and cultural content are integrated.

Action

The LSC through its training providers need to ensure that ESOL covers workplace culture.

4. **Business Skills** – Refugees wish to set up their own businesses as a large number of them were running their own small businesses therefore they already possess business skills. However they require additional knowledge, skills and cultural awareness. For example, the use of technology to set up simple systems, legal requirements.

Action

The Chamber needs to be made aware of the needs of the refugee communities and take actions to support the business needs refugee communities.

5. **Coordinating Information** – Currently the refugee community has no single point of contact to access information on learning and training opportunities. Refugees feel that information; advice and guidance services are not accessible to the refugee communities.

Action

The LSC should encourage the IAG to market its services to the refugee communities in their respective languages.

6. **Profiling** - There is no up to date information on refugee numbers at present.

Action

The LSC needs to set up a centralized database on refugee communities within Bedfordshire and Luton.

7. **Awareness of Services** – Research findings show that refugee communities are unaware of all the services and learning opportunities available to them.

Action

Organise a refugee information event to promote all services and refugee organisations

8. **Transferable Skills** - Research shows a large number of refugees are equipped with transferable skills and tacit knowledge. Most refugees feel that, current criteria for assessing minimum requirements for most professional jobs are not always clear and appear somewhat arbitrary.

Action

The LSC with its training providers need to set a mechanism that will assess skills and experience and issue appropriate accreditation. This will enable refugees to become employable in their relevant field.

9. **Exposure to the UK workplace** - Early exposure to work placement through visits, volunteering or placements can help individuals discover what role they want to play.

Action

The LSC can facilitate a work placement programme for refugees in conjunction with its partners, Chamber Business and local employers.

10. **Customized re-qualification routes** – Research shows there are some refugees who are professionals and require re-qualification to fill in the gaps that exist when matching their existing qualifications and experience to the needs of the UK workforce.

Action

The LSC should investigate into setting up a mechanism for re-qualification

- 11. Mentoring** – Findings from the focus groups identified a number of learning constraints: low motivation, lack of moral support, no guidance or advice, and lack of awareness of the system. Some of these factors can be overcome through a well planned mentoring intervention.

Action

The LSC should conduct a feasibility study to investigate the practicalities of introducing a mentoring programme.

- 12. Best Practice Model** – Research shows that in Bedfordshire the County Council's Minorities Achievement and Support Service (MASS) runs a programme that draws on the skills of refugees from teaching backgrounds. Linguistic and Cultural Mediators are recruited and trained to support refugees and asylum seekers new to the English educational system by providing linguistic, emotional and pastoral support.

Action

The LSC needs to support such learning and empowerment models in community and other statutory organisations. We recommend that a mentoring programme to train learning mentor from within the refugee community to support refugees.

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The past 14 years have seen the arrival of large numbers of people seeking refugee and asylum in the United Kingdom. In response to this the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) was set up in 1999 to co-ordinate and fund dispersal of asylum seekers around the UK. Bedfordshire and Luton is one of the areas that serve as a dispersal area for the region.

Until this research took place there were no exact figures of the number of refugees and asylum seekers living in the area, although estimates suggested that there were over 3500 - 5000 ASRs locally, many of whom were legally entitled to work. Similarly, details of the precise number of refugees and asylum seekers seeking paid work, undertaking training or education, or in paid employment were not available.

The large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers enquiring about work or wanting employment or training, information, advice or guidance (IAG) at Jobcentre Plus, and other agencies and organizations suggest that the figure is significant.

The Learning and Skills Council Bedfordshire and Luton commissioned this study to help identify the size, skills and needs of the refugee communities and the issues they face and how best to support them in relation to those issues.

Discussions and interviews were conducted with a range of service providers from Bedfordshire and Luton, including refugee organisations, community groups, training providers, colleges and other voluntary organisations. Literature and materials concerning the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom and in particular those living in Bedfordshire and Luton were reviewed.

This research sought to enable the Learning and Skills Council Bedfordshire and Luton on developing positive solutions to issues identified by examining the best ways to support refugees into employment, training and education.

1.2 Research Aims

1. Conduct a learning needs analysis of refugee community
2. Identify the key issues affecting refugee learning and
3. Suggest the most appropriate learning interventions to address the needs

In addition:

- Explore the number of refugees and asylum seekers living in Bedfordshire and Luton and to map where the main communities are residing.
- Identify experiences of refugees in accessing key services when it comes learning, training or education.

- Assess the skills development priorities of refugees, and their main aspirations and the support they need to continue into their former professions.
- Gain an understanding of the different learning needs, and barriers and constraints to participation in education, training and employment.
- Produce a database of organisations engaged in providing services to the refugee community.

1.2 Definitions

In order to undertake this research in a meaningful way it was necessary to define what the term refugee and asylum seeker mean. Refugees and asylum seekers whilst often discussed as one coherent group are in reality a disparate range of people from different cultures, countries and communities. The extent to which they form community groups even within their own ethnic/religious groups is highly debatable. It is important to stress that they cannot simply be described as a single, or even two separate groups.

There are important differences in the legal rights of asylum seekers and refugees which impact upon their access to education, training and employment. It is necessary to define these terms in order to undertake the research. Definitions were adopted from Thomas and Abewaw's (2002) report for LSC London North.

The past five years has seen an enormous amount of legislation determining the rights and entitlements of asylum seekers. This has led to a situation where different groups of asylum seekers are entitled to different levels of support and are provided for by different statutory bodies. Supporting agencies include the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) and a wide range of local authorities.

The study was commissioned to advise on the learning, training needs of the refugees living in Bedfordshire. It was stated that a clear distinction should be made between those who were 'refugees' and those who were 'asylum seekers'. In order to conduct the study it was necessary to first define what was meant or implied by each term.

In this study, the term 'refugee' applies to a person who, having applied for asylum has been given 'recognised refugee' status, 'Exceptional Leave to Remain' in the UK or 'Indefinite Leave to Remain' in the UK1.

The term 'asylum seeker' used in this study refers to those people who applied for asylum and whose applications are under consideration and have been allowed to remain in the country.

The remainder of this introduction focuses upon defining the terms asylum seeker and refugee and considers the key legislation impacting upon them and their entitlements.

Table 1. Asylum seeker and refugee entitlements at February 2003

Entitled to	Refugee ELR, ILR	Pre-July 2000 in country applicants awaiting decision	Pre-April 2000 at port applicants awaiting decision	Asylum seekers applying since 3rd April (at port) or 24th July 2000 (in-country)	Those whose cases have been rejected and are appealing	Those who have been rejected and have exhausted all their appeals or have been disbenefitted	Unaccompanied children (under 18)
NHS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Early years provision	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School (5-16)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Permission to work	Yes and early entry to New Deal for those with basic skills	Principle applicant who had been within the UK for 6 months could apply for permission to work until July 2002. After this date no asylum seeker can apply for permission to work. Can undertake voluntary work				No	N/A
Welfare Benefits	Yes	Vouchers for single people and couples or Child Support Act	90% of income support, 100% housing and council tax benefit only	75% of income support via cash vouchers	'Disbenefitted' – NASS assumes responsibility	No	No Responsibility under the Children's Act and entitled to benefits at the age of 16

Sources included: Asylum seekers excluded from National Assistance Act and Children's Act provision where need is based solely on destitution and excluded from some community care services. Sources2001 Asylum Seekers: a guide to recent legislation The new law and procedure by Mick Chatwin. (AET)

1.3 Refugees an Asylum Seekers

Previous research suggests that around 80% of refugees and asylum seekers, seek employment or want to work once they have permission to remain in the United Kingdom (Aldridge & Waddington 2001; European Commission 2001, Home Office 2001; Scottish Refugee Council 2001; Phillimore & Goodson 2001). Most refugees and asylum seekers viewed finding work or seeking training to help locate a career as a major step towards integration and acceptance into British Society.

From the current research we have found that some refugees and asylum seekers had experienced traumatic events in their countries of origin; they have been separated from friends and family. Many traveled to the United Kingdom under very difficult conditions and, on arrival, experienced "culture shock" finding different living conditions, customs and climate, hostility from some sections of society.

Clearly employment or training which enables refugees and asylum seekers to look forward, rather than back, and become fully integrated into society is a *need* for refugees and asylum seekers as well as, in many cases, their *right* as new citizens. This need and right is set out by the Home Office in *Full and Equal Citizens* (2000) and, more guardedly, in *Secure Borders, Safe Haven* (2002). Previous Home Office research shows that refugees experience acute unemployment or underemployment (cited in MRC 2001).

The 2000 Peabody Report focusing on London found that 51% of those who had been in the United Kingdom for 5-8 years were unemployed (cited in MRC 2001). Recent reports for Department of Work and Pensions (Haque 2003) and Bloch (2002) found that migrants generally fair worse than the UK born in terms of locating work, with those from industrialized countries doing better than those from poorer countries.

Employment disadvantages existed at all qualification and skills levels but the situation was more favorable for those from English speaking backgrounds. Bloch found that only 29% of refugees were working at the time of her survey (2002) and that they tended to be employed in low paid, temporary and unskilled work. There were also very low levels of participation in training and higher education.

A literature search undertaken by Equality Assurance Consultants found unemployment rates varied between 25% and 50% with only 15% of refugee women employed.

The research also shows that refugee women had high levels of skills but were amongst the most excluded from the labor market because they lacked the conventional support systems available to women in the United Kingdom.

Refugees and Asylum seekers already form a sizeable and growing community in Bedfordshire and Luton. Many will have chosen to remain in the county after they received a positive decision from the Home Office. Others may have decided to move to the area once they were able to exercise choice. A key issue for policy makers and service providers is that how Refugees and Asylum seekers can be enabled to progress through education, training and better employment opportunities.

1.4 Legislation

This section of the report outlines the key legislation that has impacted upon policymaking and service provision for refugees and asylum seekers in Luton and Bedfordshire. For the latest up-to date information see www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

1.5 Asylums and Immigration Act 1996

The Asylum and Immigration 1996 Act had three main objectives: to change asylum procedures so as to deal more quickly with allegedly bogus claims; to combat immigration racketeering, in part through new offences; and, to restrict the social security and other economic rights previously available. It introduced a notion of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' asylum seekers.

1.6 The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

This Act had aims to;

- (i) Reduce the flow of applicants
- (ii) Ease councils of the financial burden
- (iii) Relieve the housing and social pressures
- (iv) The National Asylum Seekers Support Service (NASS) began its work in April 2000.

1.7 2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act

Many of the measures contained in this Act were introduced in the Government's White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity* (2002). The Act announced the replacement of the voucher system by a cash voucher system set at a level of around 70% of income support entitlements. The White Paper emphasized the control and the removal of unsuccessful asylum applicants. The key changes are outlined below:

British Citizenship and Nationality: The (2002) Act introduces the requirement that some applicants for British citizenship pass an English language test and take a citizenship course. A recent report by Crick (2003) sets out the likely syllabus. It covers six broad categories including sources of help and information, employment; everyday needs, knowing the law, Britain as a changing multi-cultural society and British National Institutions. The syllabus will be taught through ESOL classes. Thus this new development has major implications for ESOL providers.

Application Registration Cards: (ARC) are currently replacing the Standard Acknowledgement Letter (SAL) as the identity document for asylum applicants in the UK. The ARC is a plastic smart card, which provides biometric data about the asylum applicant. It also states whether the cardholder is entitled to work and aids the transition to cash vouchers.

Removal of Automatic Support: This removed the presumption that all destitute asylum applicants should receive support from the National Asylum Support Service (NASS). This measure was implemented with effect from 8 January 2003. It may lead to a rise in homelessness and destitution of asylum applicants who do not immediately apply for asylum with the immigration authorities once they have entered the UK.

Access to Further and Higher Education: In common with overseas applicants from outside the UK, asylum seekers and refugees are entitled to access the further and higher education systems in the UK. One of the issues, which emerged throughout this project, was the lack of clarity around the issue of fees. **Learning and Skills Council Funding Guidance for Further Education 2002/3 listed asylum seekers in receipt of income based benefit and their dependants as entitled to fee remission at the full national rate.** The Refugee Council had interpreted this guidance as all asylum seekers being entitled to free further education. The position of ASRs regarding further and higher education fees is set out in the table above.

Working in the United Kingdom: Since 23 July 2002, asylum applicants are no longer able to work or undertake vocational training until they are given a positive decision on their asylum application. The Government justified this new policy on the basis the asylum application process would be speeded up and most decisions would be made in less than six months. This measure does not affect asylum applicants who were allowed to work before 23 July 2002, nor those who applied for their work restriction to be lifted before 23 July 2002. In addition the Government introduced stronger measures to tackle illegal working that may increase employers' reluctance to employ asylum seekers with permission to work.

Chapter 2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Methods

It was agreed that the research would be in Three Phases:

Phase 1 - Secondary Research – Web based and information reports data gathering.

Phase 2 - Primary Research - Consulting the key national, regional and local agencies and organisations concerned with Refugees/Asylum seekers in Bedfordshire and Luton

Phase 3 – Focus Group Studies – 6 focus groups of individual refugees were organised in Bedford and Luton to discuss their learning and educational needs.

We carried out the;

- Interviews with service providers and voluntary organisations to establish the level of knowledge about refugees, the main issues arising for organisations and to highlight both positive initiatives taken and where gaps exist.
- Interviews with refugees and asylum seekers to understand the main learning/training issues being faced by refugees and asylum seekers, to find out what is working well, what can be improved and how.
- Interviews with groups to pinpoint the learning and training needs, gaps and provisions for refugees and asylum seekers.

2.2 Phase 1 - Secondary Research

During the phase 1 of the project literature and materials regarding refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom were collected and reviewed. In particular, information was sought on issues of education, training and employment skills. The desk top research involved surveying all relevant published sources as well as asking all those contacted if they were aware of any additional materials, or if their organisation had conducted a study of its own which might be relevant. Sources included reports, books, journal articles, internet sources and official data sources. A detailed source listed is listed in appendix 1 for your information. NASS gave us an estimated number of refugees and asylum seekers in Luton and Bedfordshire 1000 people. However the snowballing techniques we used for our research gave us the estimate in the range of 2800 – 4500 individuals.

Part of the study involved identifying the main refugee and asylum seeker communities living in Luton and Bedfordshire. The desk research involved identifying all community organisations supporting or providing services for the refugees in the area. A list of these organisations is provided in the appendix. Most of the organizations were contacted and asked to estimate the number of refugees and asylum seekers from their community living in each borough.

Assessing the size and nature of the refugee and asylum seeker community is a difficult task and one that has always been difficult to estimate by the key agencies in the past. There are problems associated with seeking to assess Refugee numbers. The key issues include:

- The Refugee population (and asylum seekers in particular) tends to be transient.
- No Government agency keeps records of individuals when their status changes from Asylum Seeker to Refugee.
- Pre NASS asylum seekers are not entered on any central database because local authorities, prior to NASS, contracted directly with private landlords.
- Refugees are moving around the UK renting accommodation via non- ASR routes or living with friends. They are not present on any database
- The Refugee population fluctuates frequently and the databases are not sufficiently robust to reflect this.

The research was undertaken between December 2004 and January 2005. Given the range of research objectives and complexity of working with “hard to reach” groups a number of research methods were selected. These were undertaken in a series of phases, which are discussed below. Equality Assurance limited managed the project and data was gathered through desktop research and from the individuals and service providers.

2.3 Phase 2 - Primary Research

2.3.1 Interviews With Service Providers

During this Phase of the research it was agreed to draw up a list of the organisations serving the needs of the refugee community. List of organisations to interview was decided to be 40 organisations and a mixer of community, statutory, and voluntary groups.

- Up to 40 community and public sector service providers were contacted. In addition to this, some large national organisations were interviewed to get expert advices and opinions. For example an interview was carried out with the BRASS and Refugee Council in as an expert organisation in this field.
- Representative of the majority of the sectors working directly or indirectly with refugee’s seekers and asylum seekers, (statutory service providers, advice providers, signposting and support agencies and community groups) and any organisations who may potentially work with asylum seekers and refugees.

Format of the interview

- An Information sheet was produced to provide an outline of the research.
- Each organisation was asked to complete a questionnaire. This enabled a database of organisations and services to be produced.

- Where a face-to-face interview was not possible this questionnaire was forwarded for a written response.
- Interviews were semi-structured; open questions were used to allow for a range of responses. Participants were encouraged to expand on their answers.
- Where interviews were on record, it was understood that quotations could be used in the report.
- The interviewee's identity has been concealed in some quotations, as a matter of protection.

Statistics on organisations participated in the research:

Number of	Advice	Education	Employment	Refugee Support	Groups	Total
Statutory	3	5	2	3	0	13
Voluntary & Non Profit,	5	5	5	10	0	25
Community Centres	1	-	-	2	0	3
Community groups	1	-	-	6	0	7
Other	-	1	-	0	-	1
Total	10	11	7	21	0	49

Note: We contacted up to 50 organisations and received feedback from 29.

2.3.2 Phase 2. Interviews With Individual Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The research used sampling criteria listed below:

- Participants had to have been received through the dispersal system or arrived in area in the last 12 months. It was decided to limit the research to look at current issues being experienced when it comes to learning or skill enhancing in Bedfordshire and Luton.
- Location: Luton and Bedfordshire.
- Single and family status. Some different issues may be highlighted by both categories.
- Male and Female
- Age range 18 - 60+ years. The participants' age was noted during interview.
- Ethnic origin and language spoken were recorded to identify various groups of refugees.

The sample was randomly chosen from various community groups, as there is no authoritative source of demographic information on the refugees and asylum seekers population.

In order to achieve a sample of 140, respondents were asked to suggest the names and telephone numbers of other refugees and asylum seekers we could contact for individual

interview. This “snowballing” technique is often used in research to contact people who would otherwise be hard to locate. In this case, as the original sample is randomly selected, the method achieved further interviews with people also chosen via this random selection procedure. It means that researchers did not have to resort to interviewing in neighbourhoods where high concentrations of refugees and asylum seekers may be found. This snowballing technique was applied which allowed more candidates to come forward through initial interviewees.

Statistics on asylum seekers and refugees participants:

Participants	Luton	Bedford
Asylum seekers	5	6
Refugees	55	59
Males	30	44
Females	25	21
Total	60	65

Format of the interview:

- A guide to the topic areas was agreed
- Interviews were conversational and held in an informal setting. Interviews were held in English.
- Consideration was given to the costs that would be incurred by the refugees.
- Speakers with a good level of English were not given preferences over others.
- Interviewees were allowed to take the conversation forward as they wished and they were asked to fill the questionnaire.
- Where appropriate the questionnaire was read to the interviewee in their native language through an interpreter. Also, when required questions were explained in plain language.
- It was agreed to use quotes but not to reveal names of participants.

Difficulties experienced in organising interviews with asylum seekers and refugees:

1. Finding the participants due to several reasons, such as the criteria chosen and some organisations being protective of their clients.
2. Communication with non-English participants and the need for interpretation service; All interviews were held in English, with friends assisting with interpretation. The prospect of misunderstandings had to be taken into consideration especially as only few participants had English as their first language.
3. Choosing the appropriate format of data collection: one-off interviews and focus groups were considered to be appropriate
4. There were some refugees and asylum seekers who were unwilling to participate due to fear of being identified.
5. Timescale provided within this research was also very tight

The information obtained from both sets of interviews was entered on Microsoft Excel and Access spreadsheets in order to collate the data. The information gathered on the excel spreadsheet revealed some reoccurring themes. Two questionnaire used for the data collection are attached in appendix 1.

2.3.3 Phase 3 – Focus Group Meetings

Six focus group discussion meetings were held with refugees and asylum seekers from a wide variety of backgrounds. In this study focus groups were comprised of ten to seventeen participants. Focus group discussion meetings were held with refugees and asylum seekers from six different communities and ten different countries.

In total, three focus group discussions were held for refugees and asylum seekers living in Bedford. Two focus groups were conducted in Luton. A separate focus group was held for cross section refugee communities from Luton, Dunstable and Bedford. Also focus group was held for female refugees. Focus group discussions were held in community centers.

During each meeting key questions were asked to the participants for discussion to establish their experiences and needs in the United Kingdom. Participants were selected by refugee community organizations or by the community leaders in each focus group.

In some cases English was spoken during the discussions, but several of the focus group discussions required an interpreter. Providing an interpreter ensured that refugees and asylum seekers who did not speak English were included in the study. These groups explored in some depth issues that emerged from earlier individual interviews.

During this phase of the project the structured community interviews were carried out with various groups. This data has been used to estimate the number of refugees and asylum seekers in Bedfordshire and Luton.

As mentioned previously an innovative approach is required in conducting research amongst refugees and asylum seekers. These groups are often hard to reach and often suspicious of researchers asking questions.

On a practical point, unlike other hard to reach communities, there is often a lack of knowledge regarding their physical location. Furthermore, unlike established ethnic minorities' communities the likely lack of geographical clustering makes research and survey difficult.

During the discussion we focused on issues mentioned below:

1. The specific difficulties experienced by refugees and asylum seeker women seeking access to employment and education
2. The aspirations, goals and future needs of refugee learners
3. Issues underlying the low aspirations of refugees working in low skilled employment
4. The learning experiences of refugee's students.

During this phase of the research, each of the groups was set up using contacts developed through earlier stages of the research work. Care was taken to ensure that no refugees who had taken part in the earlier qualitative research was invited to the focus groups. Details of focus group participants can be found in later chapter. The topic guides used for the focus group discussions are available in Appendix 3.

From the previous tools developed by Equality Assurance Limited has shown that face to face interviews or focus group studies are the most 'inclusive' and suitable method given that the wide range of languages spoken by Refugees and asylum seekers. They can ensure thorough geographic coverage and do not preclude any residents from participating in the survey. Focus groups allow for in-depth questions to be asked, and are able to engage the respondent more fully in the issues. This level of questioning was required in order to meet the sponsor's objectives of producing a profile of various refugee communities, recording their experiences and problems and assessing their needs and use of (or barriers to using) services when it comes skills and learning.

Participants in Focus Groups

Country of Origin	Participants	Male	Female
Afghanistan	17	16	1
Albania	15	13	2
Zimbabwe	14	2	11
Kosovo & Bosnia	14	6	10
Arabic speaking	10	8	2
South Asia	10	8	1
Congo DRC	12	10	2
Other	8	7	1
Total	100	70	30

2.4 Research Analyses and Consulting

On the basis of the output from both primary and secondary research, data analysis, face-to-face structured and telephone interviews with organisations and service providers who are active and successful in the refugee sector service provision gave us a picture of the learning needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

2.5 Research Group

We employed three-consultant and 2 researcher to deliver this project. The names listed below are part of the final output. The project group at the onset of the research met at regular intervals to:

- Define the research in terms of time, methodology, geographical area
- Provide support in terms of information, knowledge and experience
- Agree all stages of the research and steps within this

Agreed Project Timescales

Activity	Start date	End Date
Project start date	29 th November	
Make contact and arrange interviews with organisations	29 th November	10 th December
Primary and Secondary research	29 th November	10 th December
Develop Sample Frame	29 th November	10 th December
Commence interviews with organisations	7 th December	12 th January
Commence Interviews with Refugees	December 15 th	21 st January
Interim report and presentation		14 th January
Final report & executive summary		26 th January
Presentation of findings		31 st January

2.6 Some Limitations

- The ideas and opinions expressed by the refugees and asylum seekers are those of a small number of individuals and do not represent the views and experiences of all asylum seekers and refugees in Bedfordshire and Luton
- One individual from each organisation was interviewed/spoken to and it is accepted that they only play one role within that organisation.
- Information has been used to illustrate patterns where appropriate either by quoting comments or through statistical data.
- The process of interviewing highlighted the willingness of asylum seekers and refugees to contribute to the local community, share experiences and provide suggestions.
- Due to the scale of the research, lack of time and resources, it has been difficult to make some concrete conclusions. However the research will be valuable to give an insight to learning/training needs of refugee communities.

Chapter 3

MAPPING

3.1 Introduction

Equality Assurance estimates that there are between 3000 – 5000 refugees and asylum seekers residing in Bedfordshire and Luton.

One of the tasks undertaken for this research project was to estimate the number of refugees and asylum seekers in Bedfordshire and Luton. A number of data sources were employed to estimate this number. Some of the sources used including:

- Data available from Bedford County Council and Luton Borough Council
- Refugee and asylum seekers community organizations and groups
- NASS database of individuals supported (2004)
- Luton Social Services information about supported individuals
- Bedford Social Services information about supported individuals
- Housing Association database of refugees housed (where refugee status is defined)
- Luton Refugee Forum
- Bedford Refugee and Asylum Support Services (BRASS)
- Follow on addresses for refugees residing with in Luton and Bedford

In addition, a range of other organisations such as Jobcentre Plus were approached but failed to respond to information requested.

The numbers of asylum seekers and refugees moving through the study area is constantly changing. Data sources, and particularly the NASS database, are acknowledged to be inaccurate. In addition the data sources quoted above relate to different dates. ***As yet there is no well-established and reliable method of estimating refugees and asylum seeker numbers in the United Kingdom.*** Whilst asylum seekers are allocated accommodation there is no guarantee that after arriving in their dispersal area they will remain in the housing allocated.

Once asylum seekers receive refugee status it is even harder to estimate how many remain in the area. This is because they are asked to leave their existing accommodation. Given the emerging shortage of social housing in Bedfordshire many now look to private landlords for housing. Even where social landlords are used they may not be aware of, or record, their tenant's refugee status.

In order to gauge the numbers of asylum seekers and refugees in Bedford and Luton we have collated the above data with a view to making an estimate of numbers at the current time. We have also sought to use Home Office data on the timeliness of decision making to calculate how many asylum seekers are likely to receive refugee status and to use these figures to estimate how many refugees are likely to be living in the Bedford and Luton area over the next five years. This latter calculation is based upon the assumption that the dispersal system

continues as present and that the number of units of accommodation contracted to NASS in Bedford do not increase.

3.2 United Kingdom and Refugees and asylum seekers

The Home Office publishes annual statistics on the numbers and origin of people seeking asylum in the UK, those being granted asylum and those being refused, there is still no commonly accepted figure on the total number of refugees and asylum seekers in the Country.

Most estimates of the numbers of refugee and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom have been derived from the figures produced by the Home Office and agencies such as the Refugee Council. The differences in estimates are very often due to how the Home Office figures are interpreted. In the mid - late 1990s, a number of studies estimated that there were between 215,000 – 300,000 refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. The Refugee Council (1997) for example, estimated 218,000.

In 1999, UNHCR estimated that 265,000 refugees and asylum seekers were living in the UK (UNHCR, 1999) while The Health of Londoners Project (1999), gave an estimate of 240,000 – 280,000. In 2001 the Greater London Authority estimated that there were 350,000 – 420,000 refugees and asylum seekers in London alone. UNHCR estimates for 2003/2004 are 276,000 asylum seekers in the country and when combined with refugees this figure is around 600,000.

3.3 Refugees and asylum seekers in Bedfordshire and Luton

It is extremely difficult to obtain data on refugees and asylum seekers at a local or county level. The data available tends to be national figures. Previous studies have sometimes used data from the 1991 Census of Great Britain to help estimate refugee and asylum seeker figures at a local level.

There are very few data sources that provide information on refugees and asylum seekers in Bedfordshire. The data available often do not include all categories of refugees and asylum seekers. Figures from the social services, for example, only represent those who applied in country and are being supported by social services departments. However, by comparing the data that are available, it is possible to calculate an average percentage of those who live in Bedford and Luton.

However, the most recently collected census figures are available but they fail to give a figure, which can be trusted. It is frequently suggested that at least 85% of refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom are living in London or the in the vicinity of London. Bedfordshire is close to London and this why number of refugees and asylum seekers is high. Also the 1999 legislation that introduced the dispersal system has increased the number of refugees and asylum seekers significantly in Bedfordshire.

Equality Assurance Limited also contacted all Refugee Community organisations and social groups in Bedfordshire and asked them to estimate the number of refugees and asylum seekers from their community living.

Equality Assurance limited estimates that there are between 3000–5000 refugees and asylum seekers residing in Bedfordshire and Luton. This figure has been obtained by asking questions to individuals from large refugee communities to estimate number of people from their own country of origin and then matching this number with regional figure and then taking an average percentage of refugees and asylum seekers in Bedfordshire.

The main concentrations of refugees and asylum seekers can be observed in the Queens Park area Bedford, Bury Park Area in Luton and Dunstable town center. Refugees and Asylum seekers in the study area originate from more than 67 different countries. Full details of all countries of origin are set out in Table 3.3.

Estimated number of refugees and asylum seekers in Bedfordshire and Luton

Country of Origin	BRASS (Bedford)	Community Organisation estimates	EA Estimates
Afghanistan	220	500	500
Algeria	2	10	10
Angola	24	200	40
Iran	20	30	20
Iraq	16	50	50
Former Suit Union	13	200	300
Pakistan	2	60	120
Sierra Leone	4	20	20
Somalia	23	50	80
Former Republic of Yugoslavia	140	900	950
Zimbabwe	14	500	800
South America	11	10	10
DR Congo	17	150	200
Kenya	14	20	20
Cameroon	12	10	20
Sudan	12	70	80
Chad	3	10	10
Rwanda	10	80	100
Burundi	7	60	60
Nigeria	4	40	40
Palestine	4	30	10
West Indian	4	10	10
Malawi	0	60	80
Others		100	200
Total	576	3170	3730

Sources: Refugee community leadership and groups, BRASS in Bedford, Luton Refugee Forum and Equality Assurance limited.

Chapter 4 IN DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH REFUGEES

4.1 Individual Interviews

This section is based on the findings of one hundred and thirty-three interviews with refugees and asylum seekers living in Bedford and Luton. The main aim of the interviews was to establish, the learning and educational needs of the refugees and asylum seekers in Bedfordshire. Also to map the range of qualifications and skills of refugees and asylum seekers have from their countries of origin.

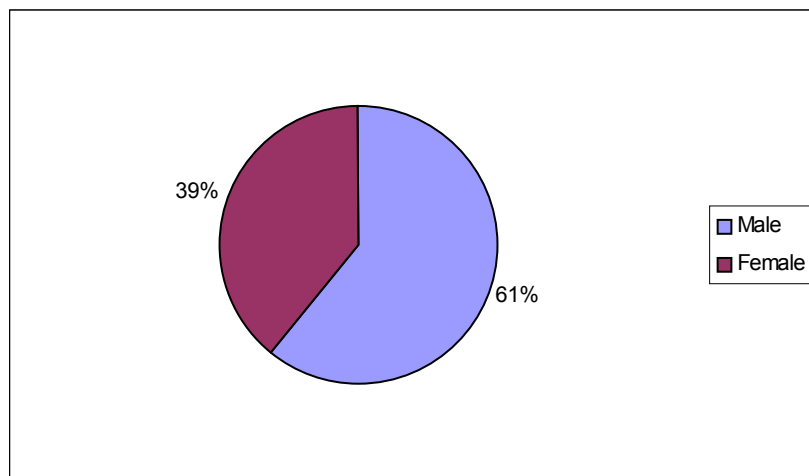
These interviews indicate how many refugees and asylum seekers from the Bedfordshire have accessed education and training in the United Kingdom. The interviews also provided information on the number of refugees and asylum seekers who had been in employment in their home countries and those who have been in employment in the United Kingdom.

4.2 Analysis of the Individual Responses to the Questionnaires

a) Percentage Male and Female Responses to the Questionnaires

Overall, thirty nine per cent of those interviewed were women and sixty one per cent were men. The proportion of women and men interviewed varied by community, as shown in Figure 4a. A larger number of women than men were interviewed in the Zimbabwe, Congolese and Bosnian communities but larger numbers of men than women were interviewed in the Afghani and Albanian communities.

Figure 4a. Percentage of males and females Interviewed (Question 1)

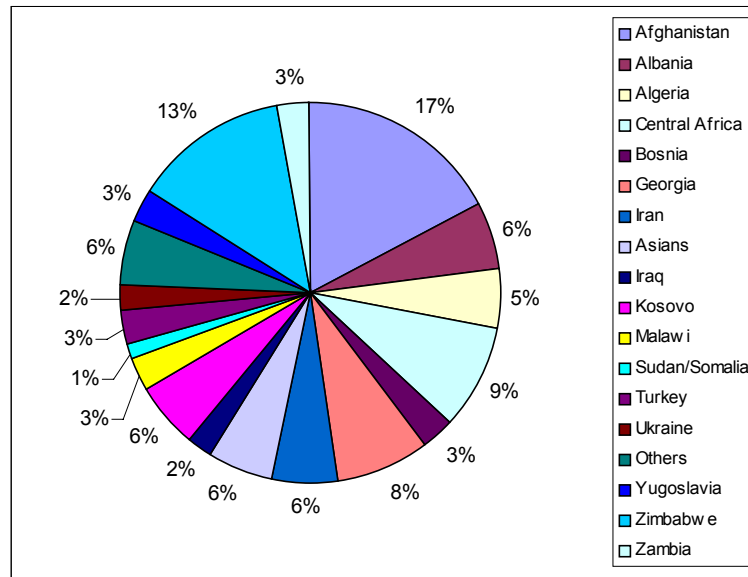


b) Percentage of responses received by Refugee Community Groups

Those responded to questionnaires came from the five main refugee and asylum seeker communities living in Bedfordshire, namely Central African (DR Congo, Rwanda, Malawi and others) Afghanis, Arabic speaking (Iraqi, Algeria, Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria), Asians (Pakistani, Sri Lanka, India, Burma) and Eastern Europeans (Bosnian, Kossovan, Serbs, Albanians, Georgian and Russians). Figure 6b shows the percentage of respondents from each

community.

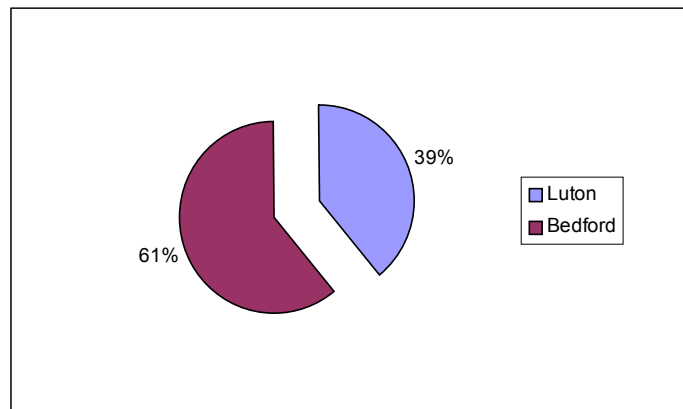
Figure 4b. Percentage of responses received (Q4 Country of Origin)



c) Residency in Bedford and Luton

Each of the refugees contacted for the individual questionnaire were from Bedford and Luton. For example, a larger proportion of Afghani lives in Bedford and most Zimbabweans live in Luton. Figure 3c shows the overall percentage of the people interviewed in Bedford and Luton.

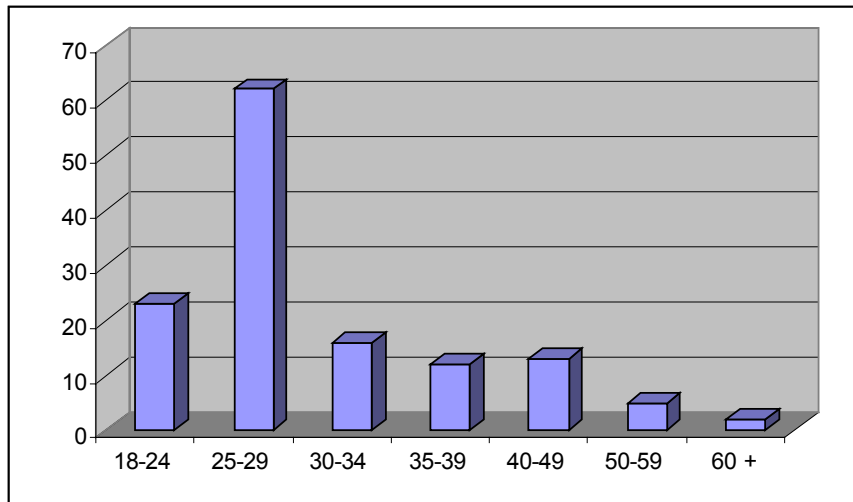
Figure 4c. Percentage Responses according to Locations



d) Individual Interviewed and the Age Groups

During the secondary research phase, it was to agree upon age categories that would be used during the interviews. It was decided that there were 7 distinct age categories of refugees and asylum seekers from all the communities who would have experience of education, training and employment. Those aged between eighteen and twenty-four, those aged twenty five to twenty-nine, thirty to thirty four, thirty-five to thirty nine, forty to forty nine and fifty to fifty nine.

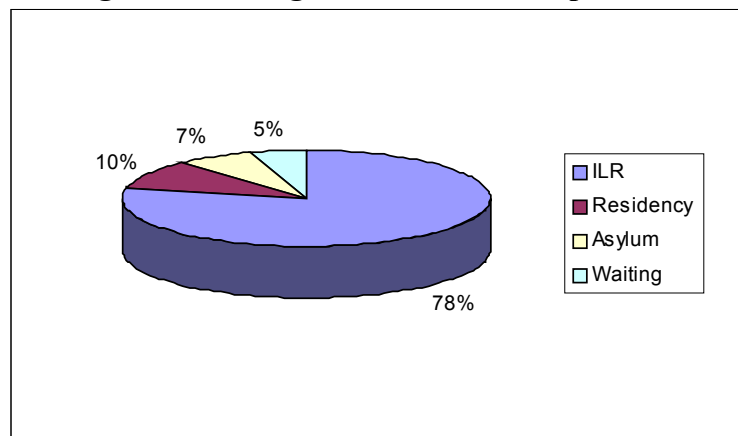
Figure 4d. Percentage interviewed and the Age Groups (Question 2)



e) Immigration status of Respondents

Seventy eight per cent (78%) of those filled questionnaires had recognized refugee status, exceptional leave to remain or indefinite leave to remain. A further 10% had arrived in the United Kingdom seeking asylum and after being recognized as refugees had been given residency permits. However, they still regarded themselves as refugees. 7% of those interviewed had their asylum application accepted. 5% of those interviewed applied for asylum and were either awaiting a decision or were appealing against a negative decision.

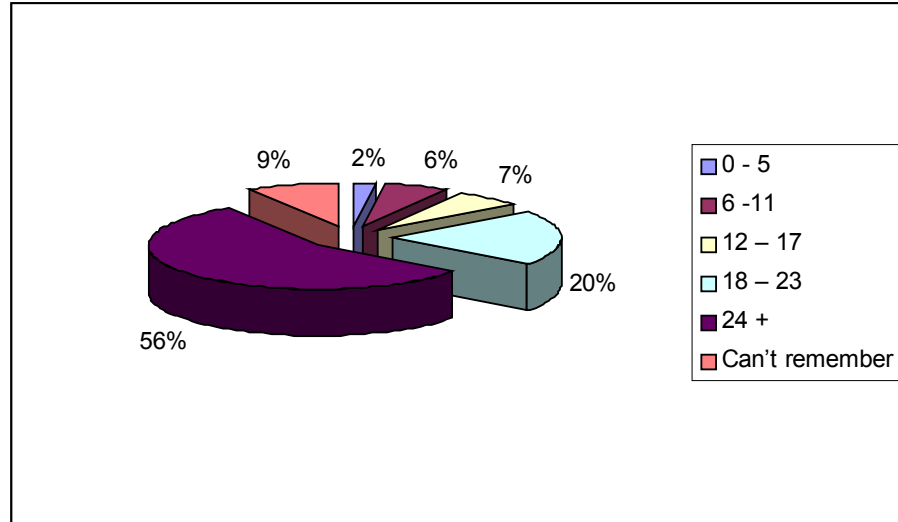
Figure 4e. Immigration status of Respondents



f) Number of Months lived in the Bedfordshire

Fifty six per cent of those responded have lived in the Bedfordshire for longer than 24 months. While twenty per cent of those interviewed had been in the Bedfordshire for 18-23 months and nine percent were unable to recall. The largest proportion of those interviewed had been in the Bedfordshire for between two and five years.

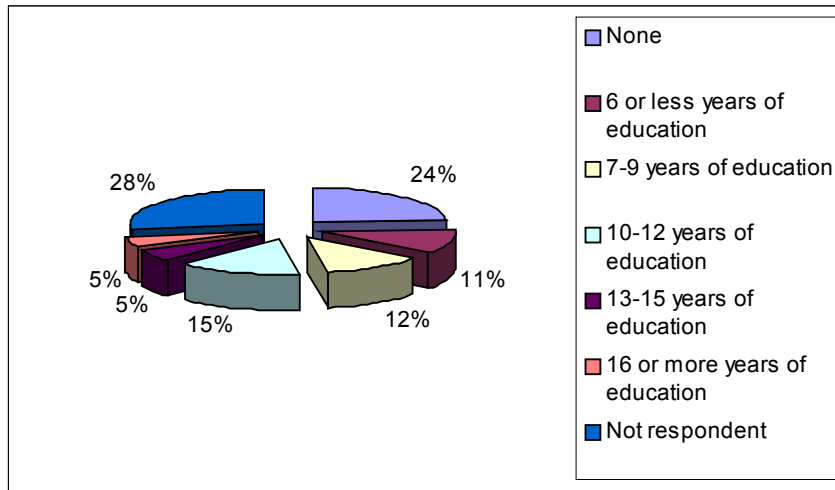
Figure 4f. Number of Months lived in the Bedfordshire (Question



g) Education Level of Respondents

Sixty six per cent of all those interviewed in Bedford and Luton had completed secondary education or above from their home country. 10% had completed university at either undergraduate or postgraduate level and a further 25% had been attending college in their home country.

Figure 4g. Education Level of Respondents (Question 10)

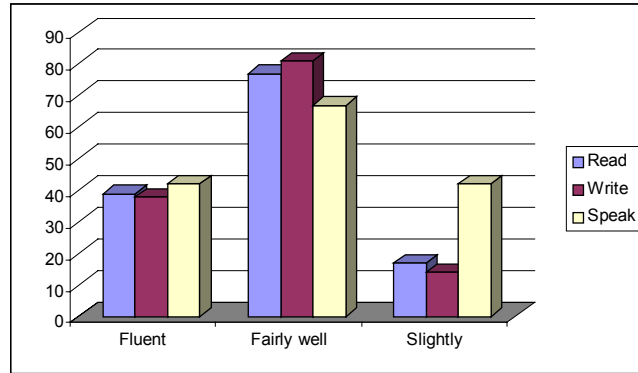


As Table 4g shows, the level of education of those responded depended partly on their country of origin. It is a well-known fact that from some parts of the world most highly qualified people are the one those get persecuted because they are considered a threat to those in power. While in other cases persecuted people have been denied access to basic rights such as education. However, as the community interviews show, there is a wide diversity of educational backgrounds between communities.

h) English language Abilities

English language skills were significantly varied amongst respondents. As shown in figure 4h, fifty nine percent of the respondents stated that they were able to read, write and speak English fairly well. Thirty per cent responded that they were fluent in English language. Eleven per cent of the respondents knew very little English language.

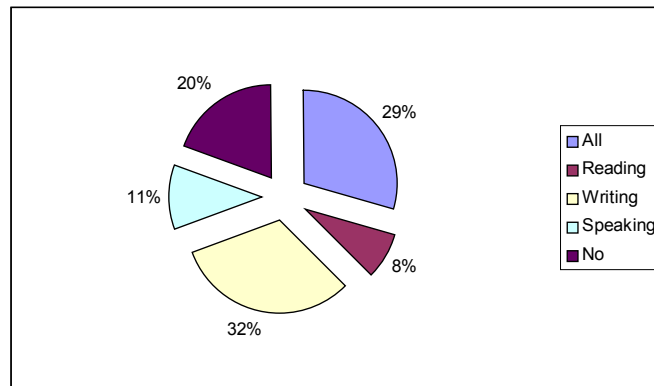
Figure 4h. English language Abilities (Question 6)



i) English language Improvement

English language skills were significantly varied amongst respondents. As shown in figure 4i, twenty nine percent of the respondents stated that they would like to improve their reading, writing and speaking skills. Thirty two per cent responded that they would like to improve their writing skills. Twenty percent feel that their English language is self-sufficient.

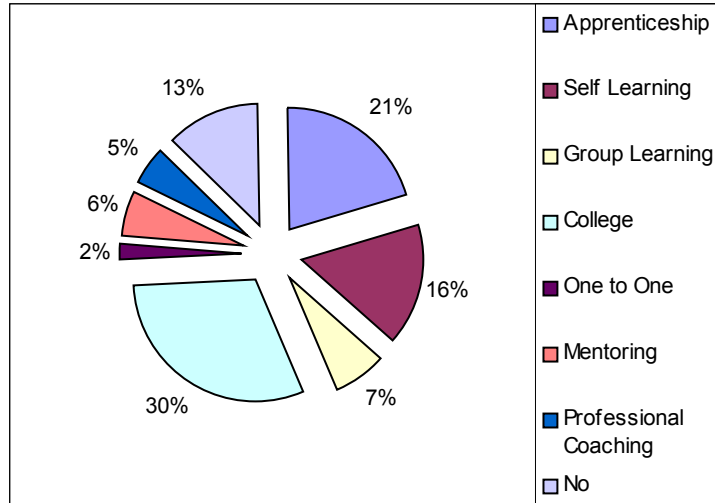
Figure 4i. English Language Improvement (Question 6)



j) Preferred Method of English Language Learning

When individual were asked what will be there preferred method of learning the English language, 30% stated that they would like to attend a college. As shown in figure 4j, 21% of the respondents stated that they would like to learn the language at work, through schemes such as apprenticeship.

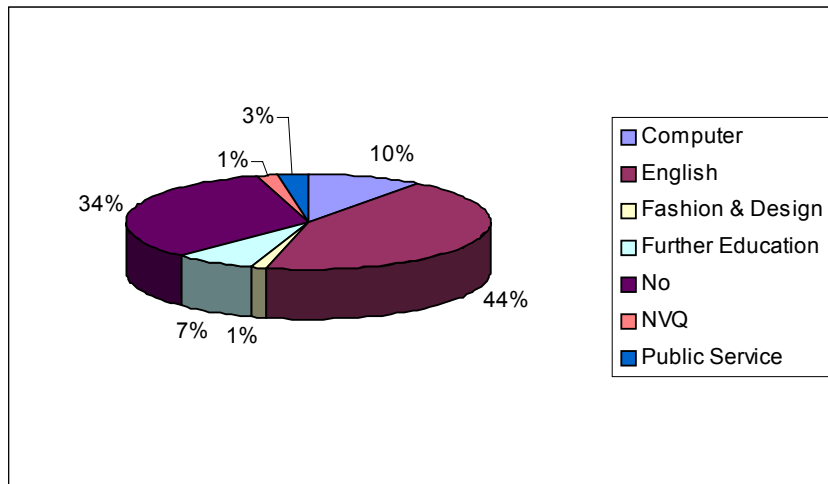
Figure 4j. Preferred Method of English Language Learning (Question 7)



k) After Coming to UK Education and Training

44% of the respondents have studied the English language in the United. Two hundred and fifty five respondents (72%) had undertaken education or training courses in the UK. Figure 6k shows the highest level of course respondents from each community have taken whilst in the UK and those who have accessed education or training in the UK.

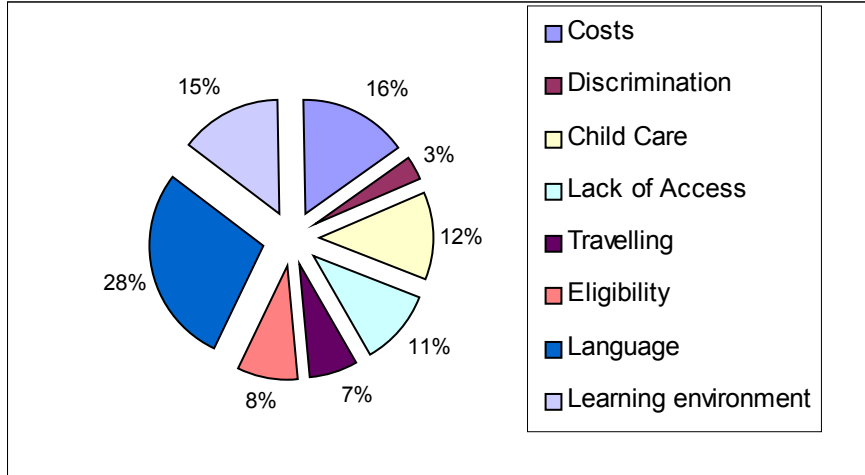
Figure 4k. After Coming to UK Education and Training (Question 12)



l) Key barriers to learning faced by the Refugees and Asylum in Bedfordshire

28% of the respondents stated that the English language was a key barrier to the learning and acquiring new skills. 15% mostly women stated the learning environment (venues of the courses) and 16% stated the cost of education plus the childcare is an issue when it comes to learning. 11% stated that they do not have access to information or are unaware of the opportunities or facilities.

Figure 4l. Barriers to learning faced by the refugees (Question 13)



m) How would they prefer to learn new skills?

32% of the respondents stated that they need a learning mentor to help them in the learning of new and useful skills. 29% want to study in the college to learn new skills, 15% would like to have an apprenticeship or industrial placement to require new skills. The preferred new skills refugees would like to acquire are figure 3mb.

Figure 4ma. How would they prefer to learn new skills (Question 16)

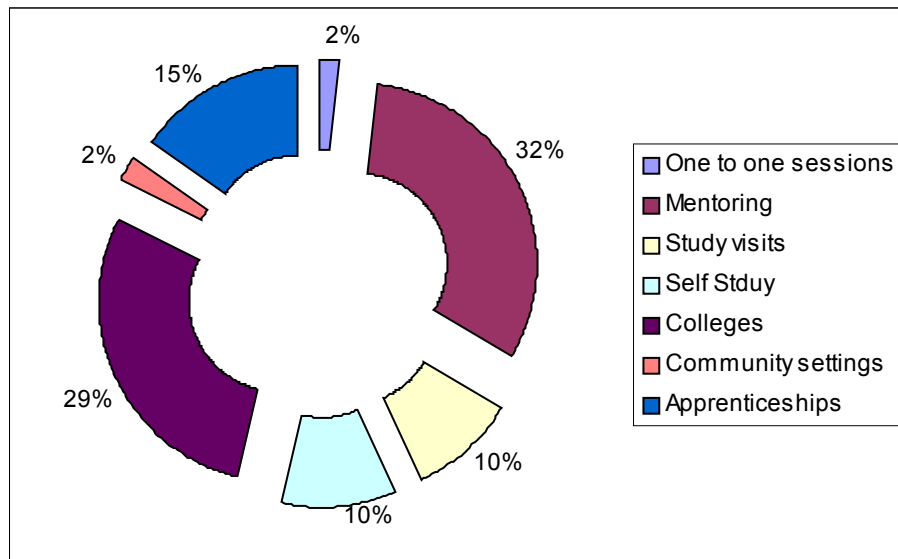
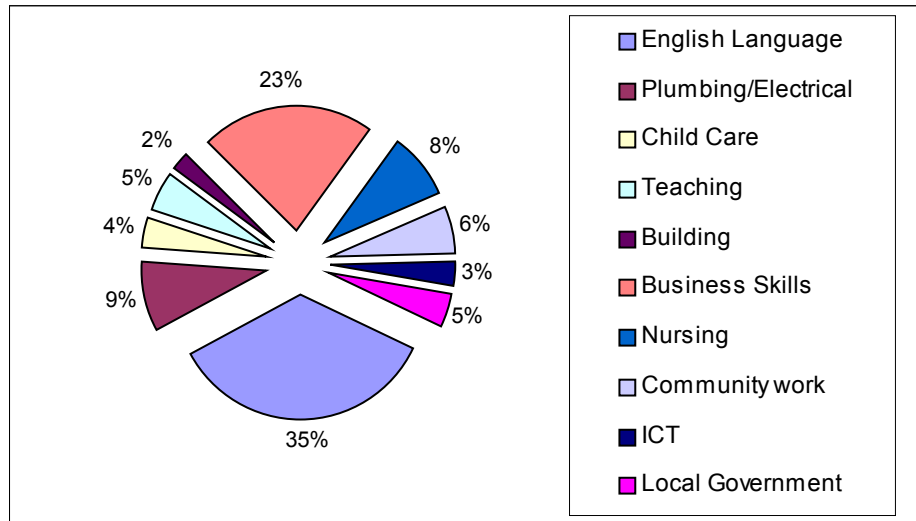


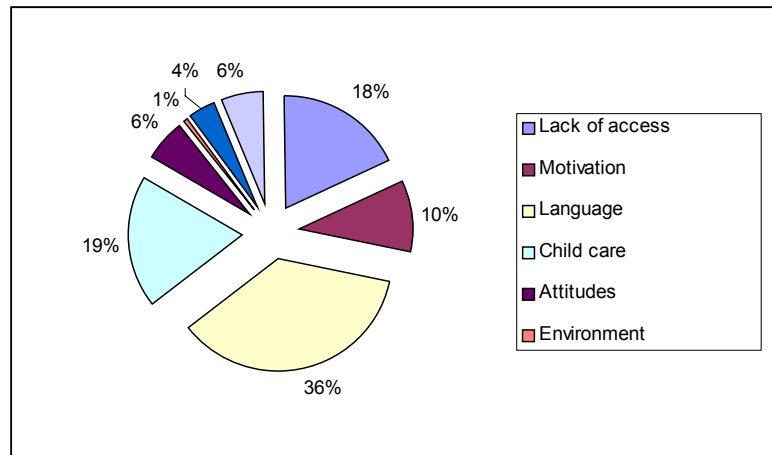
Figure 4mb. Skills would you like to acquire (Question 15)



n) Key Constraints while learning

Although question was designed to know what are the key constraints while they have enrolled for a course. 36% of the respondents stated that the English language was a key constraint. 19% stated the cost of childcare was an issue. Lack of childcare availability was key constraints for female refugees. Once again the lack of knowledge about opportunities and access to information about the courses and training opportunities is an issue.

Figure 4n. Key Constraints while learning (Question 17)

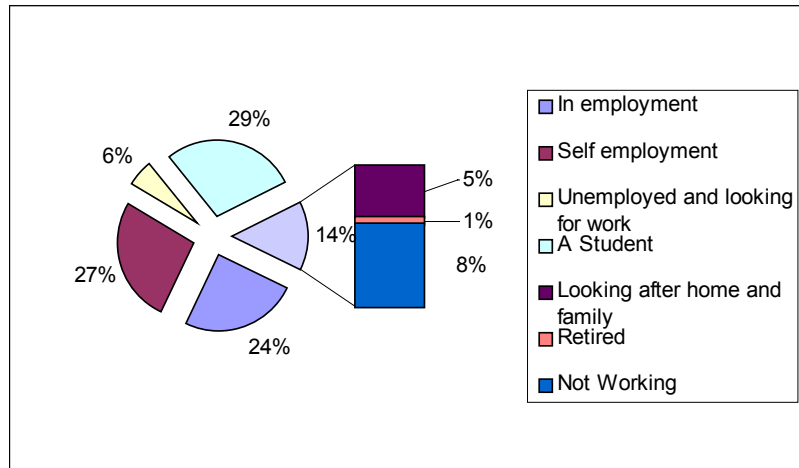


o) Employment before coming to the United Kingdom

Twenty four per cent (24%) of respondents had been in employment in their home country. Of those who had worked in their home country, 65% were male and 35% were female. 27% were self-employed, for example a large number of Afghans had their own small business (corner shops, workshops or fabric design businesses). 29% were student in their country of origin. 8% stated that they were unemployed i.e. working in agriculture or other sector in

their native country.

Figure 4o. Employment in home country (Question 8)



p) Employment in the United Kingdom

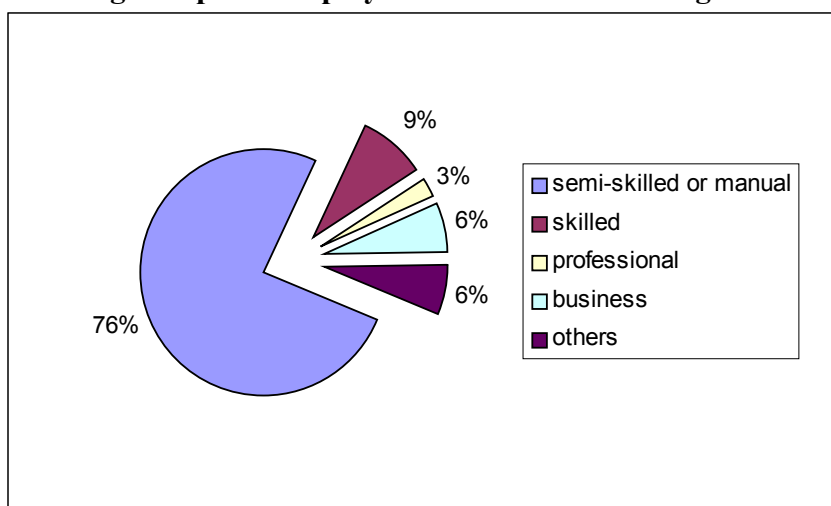
76% of those interviewed had worked in the United Kingdom. 30% were women and 70% were men.

Most of those working in Bedfordshire and Luton are employed in semi-skilled employment and some of them have qualification as accountants or engineers or other trained professionals. The most common employment of those working in skilled employment was in administration or as shop managers. The vast majority of those in semi-skilled or manual employment worked in shops or warehouses and in restaurants.

Table p show why some people were unemployed or were not looking for jobs. Most women stated that they had children to look after and this why they were unemployed; if the childcare were available they would seek employment or full time education. For men, the main reason was not being allowed to work in the UK. A significant number of men felt that there were no jobs available to them that they wanted to do. Most of the respondents who said ‘other’ reasons said that they did not work for medical reasons or in the case of several women, as they were housewife.

English language skills also significantly affected respondent’s experiences in employment. A vast majority of those who had worked in the United Kingdom, 60% described their English skills as being farewell. Almost 40% of the respondents employed in jobs in were fluent in English. 30% cent of those who had been in employment in the United Kingdom described their level of English as slightly. The conclusion is that the lack of English skills did not prevent people from finding employment in the low skilled job market.

Figure 4p. Employment in the United Kingdom



4.2 Summary of communities' responses to the Questionnaires

Afghani Community

Large numbers of the Afghani community lives in Bedford. A significant number had not received any education either in their home country or in the UK and were illiterate in both Dari and English (neet).

The most Afghani community is working class with little education and high work ethics. Approximately half had completed secondary education and a few of those interviewed had completed university either in Pakistan or Iran. Some Afghanis were attending education or training courses in Bedfordshire.

Most Afghani women had no access to education or training as due to the lack of support for childcare they are staying home looking after their children. More the 20% of the Afghanis were involved in business activities in their own country and they had a desire to start their own business if they knew the process. Afghanis are not well-established community in Bedford they need support to form their own active community support organization.

Congolese Community

Large numbers of the Congolese community live in Bedford and Luton. Unlike the Afghanis the Congolese community is well established in Bedford. They have their own community organization and a group of trained volunteers to serve the community with other African communities.

Most of those interviewed had completed secondary school and just over half had completed college or equivalent. 60% have or had accessed education or training in the Bedfordshire. Most of the community members are employed in low skilled industrial and warehouse jobs. However, most people had English skills of intermediate level or above.

Zimbabwean Community

Large numbers of the Zimbabwean community live in Luton and Bedford. Those from the Zimbabwean community have relatively high levels of education and good English skills. Over 90% had completed secondary school and 30% had completed university. A further 12% were at university when they were forced to flee Zimbabwe. A third had vocational training qualifications from Zimbabwe. The most common areas of training were in accountancy, mechanics and teaching, nursing and food processing.

Majority of them had accessed education or training in the Bedfordshire. 20% had accessed Further Education and 10% Higher Education. Most women had not worked in Zimbabwean but were employed here in the United Kingdom. Those who had professional jobs in the Bedfordshire worked as accountants or nurses. A significant number of men were looking for accessing education or training at higher level if the opportunities were available.

Chapter 5

FOCUS GROUPS

5.1 Introduction

Focus group is used at the preliminary or exploratory stage of study. It involves organised discussion with a selected group of individuals to gain information about their views and experience. The benefit of focus group research include gaining insights into people's shared understandings of everyday life and the ways in which individual are influenced by others in a group situation.

In focus group, individuals are selected and assembled to discuss and comments on, from their personal experience on the research topic. One of many advantages is group interviewing, which involves interviewing number of people at the same time and finding the overall responses and consensus on each question.

The main purpose of focus group research is to draw upon respondents attitude, feelings, beliefs, experience and reactions in a way in which would not be feasible using other methods, for example observation, one-to-one interviewing, or questionnaire surveys. These attitudes, feelings and beliefs may be partially independent of a group or its social settings, but are more likely to be revealed via the social gathering and the interaction which being in a focus group entails.

5.2 Questions for focus groups

During the focus group discussion following questions were asked:

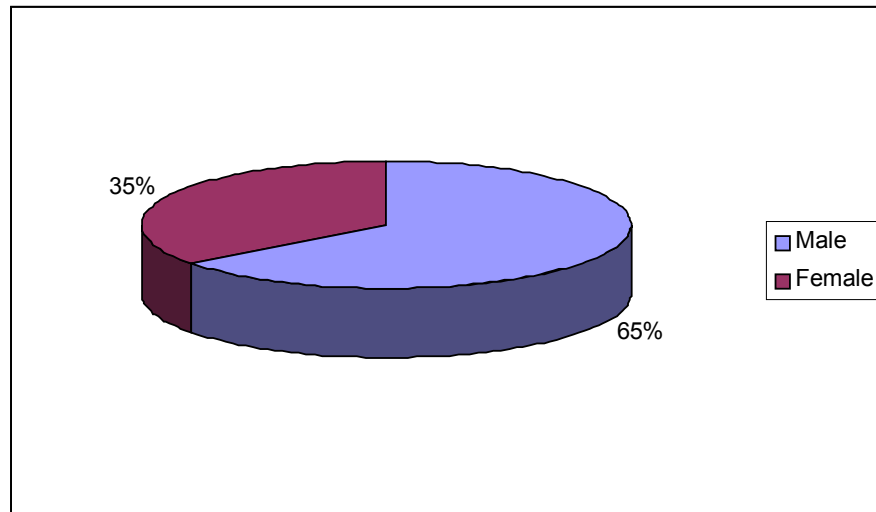
- What are the key issues facing you as a refugee in Bedford?
- What are the key skills amongst your community members?
- What are the key training/learning areas for the Refugees living in Bedford?
- How and where would you like to receive this learning and training?
- What good experiences and what bad experiences did you have when you first arrived in Bedfordshire?
- How did you find out about services such as employment, education and training? Which organizations proved particularly helpful or unhelpful in assisting you to find out about the services?
- What experiences have you had trying to access education, training.
- What experiences have you had trying to find employment in the UK?
- For those with qualifications and / or skills: What experiences have you had in getting the qualifications and skills you acquired in your home country recognized in the UK?
- How many refugees and asylum seekers from your community live in Luton or Bedford?
- What do you think are the main barriers refugees and asylum seekers from your community face in getting employment in the UK?

5.3 Focus groups Participants

The aim of this section is to emphasize the main points identified during the focus group discussions on the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers living in Bedfordshire and Luton. We will provide the details of the experiences and problems refugees and asylum seekers face in accessing education, training and employment in Bedfordshire.

Eighty-five refugees and asylum seekers participated in the focus group discussions. In this study a focus group comprised of an average of 12 –15 participants. Focus group discussion meetings were held with refugees and asylum seekers from 12 different communities.

Figure 5.3. Focus group participants by gender



Three focus group discussions were held for refugees and asylum seekers living in Bedford. Two of these focus groups were conducted in Luton. One focus group was held for refugees and asylum seekers from mixed communities from Luton, Bedford and Dunstable. One separate small focus group was held for female refugees and female asylum seekers. Focus group discussions were held in the refugees and community centers in Luton and Bedford

Most organizations contacted regarding the running of the focus group discussions were initially quite suspicious and reluctant to participate. In general however, the participants welcomed the focus group discussions as many felt that they had not previously had the opportunity to voice their feelings during research studies.

During each meeting key questions were asked for the participants to discuss to establish their experiences and needs in Bedfordshire (see section 5.2).

Participant Background

Focus group participants came from the variety communities, Afghanistan, Albania, Zimbabwe, Kosovo & Bosnia, Arabic speaking, South Asia, Congo DRC and others.

Majority of the participants came from a very wide range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and were aged between eighteen and sixty. While some had been in the UK for

less than eighteen months, others had been in the UK for over five years. Many had work experience from their home country but the vast majorities were employed in the United Kingdom as warehouse and factory operators.

Figure 5.3b shows that a 61% of the focus group participants have taken up secondary education in their country of origin.

Figure 5.3a. Focus Groups Participants and their Country or Origin

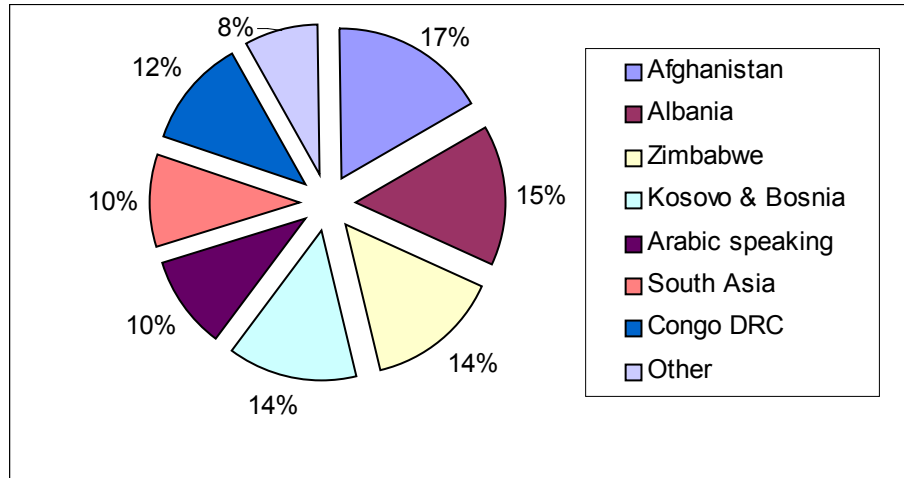
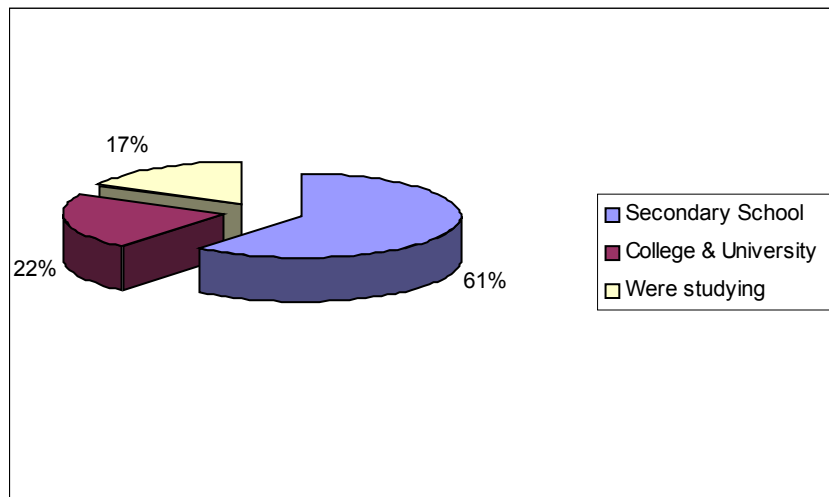


Figure 5.3b. Education and Training in the in their country of origin



5.4 Education in the United Kingdom and Experience of UK education system

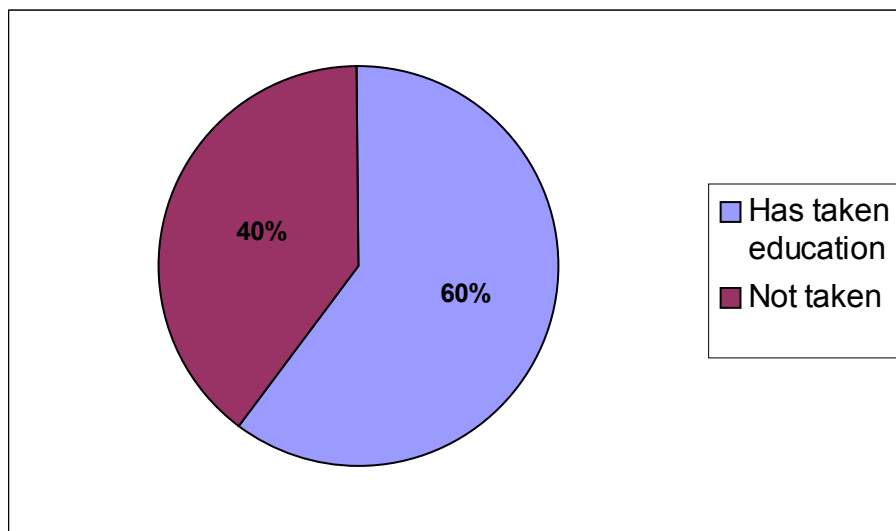
Participants had very different experiences of education and training. A vast majority was attending ESOL classes while working full time others were unemployed and just concentrating on their education.

Most participants had good words for British education system. They like the college education system because it enabled them to learn and meet other people. They also found

their lessons to be good fun and particularly enjoy business and technology classes with ESOL.

Most refugees stated that communicating outside their language groups was difficult describing mixing with other students as a *challenge*. This was partly because of their English language ability but also because they felt that refugee and asylum seekers were unwanted. Figure 7.4 show that 60% of the participants have taken educational classes in the United Kingdom.

Figure 5.4. Education and Training in the United Kingdom



Opportunities for learning English were very limited for those who were working. Some had located courses for two hours per week but said they were too basic and very little was achieved. Most wanted to continue ESOL but struggled to fit the courses around their work, especially when their hours of employment were so unpredictable (working through recruitment agencies).

Most people would like to attend courses close to their work if they were held within the workplace they had no problem. One points was raised about the practicality of the ESOL classes, they should be mad more practical and useful so that every day life skills can be learnt with English language.

5.5 Barriers and constraints to learning

For 29% of the participants the English language was a key barrier to learning. 35% stated that to learn they needed someone to motivate them. The entire female participant felt learning was critical to help them work towards a better and secure future in the United Kingdom but they had experienced a range of problems when trying to access learning and training. Some of the barriers were:

- Where ESOL or other learning was offered did not offer any crèche facilities.
- Child care was free in some locations it was charged at the large college .

- Motivation and guidance is not available
- We have no one to talk to who could help us to plane a career
- They did not know what courses were available
- They could not afford to pay for courses, and resulting travel and child care costs
- They did not have the language skills required to undertake a course
- A lack of information on available courses is an issue

Figure 5.5a. Barriers and constraints to learning

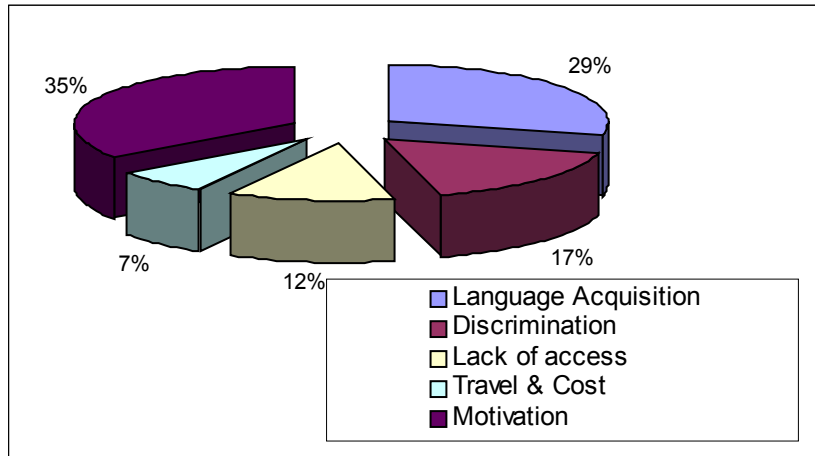
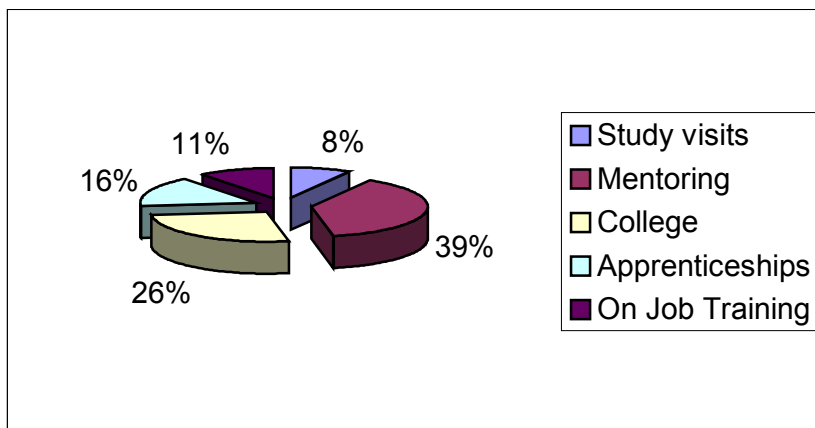


Figure 5.5b. Preferred methods of learning



5.6 Focus Group Discussions Case Studies

This focus group was held in Bedford, SKENDERBEU (National Hero), and Bedford Albanian Society. Organisations established on 5 Dec 2002. Membership 400, Structure – Management Committee – 8 members, Women’s subgroup available. Registered as a Society. **Attendees: 15 males 1 Female.** Age Group: 19 – 37.

Q) What are the key issues facing the Albanian Community living in Bedford?

We are a new not well-established, community in Bedfordshire, we need support and direction. Most Albanians are employed in warehouses and factories and some are in the construction profession. Areas we need help include;

Business Support and Mentoring

- For those involved in running their own business, there is no real business support tailored to the needs of the Albanian community is available.
- No business network
- No training available on business planning
- No training opportunities available for self-employment
- No mentoring or someone we could ask for help and advice

Discrimination

- Individual refugees are experiencing discrimination as one of the key barriers
- Educational qualifications are not recognised or mapped.
- Due to discrimination people end up with low paid jobs mainly in warehousing

Learning

- Opportunities offered by local institutions are on the whole inaccessible due to timing and location

Q) What are the key skills amongst Albanian Refugees?

Within in the community we have people of various skills, for example we have

- Doctors/Vets
- Building repairs and maintenance
- Management
- Bricklaying
- Teacher
- Wood carving
- Chefs/Cooks
- Construction industry
- Entrepreneurship

Language Skills – most Albanians speak:

- Italian
- Greek
- Yugoslavian
- Russian
- Polish
- Ukraine

Q) What are the key training/learning areas for the Albanian Refugees living in Bedford?

- Learning to speak, read and write English
- Business skills – inc. business planning, setting up Cos., legislation
- Re-training in their existing trades / professions e.g. building, repairs,
- Computing and IT and Internet
- Child care support for females
- Foundation course leading to academic qualifications

- Business support/ advice for self employment
- Teacher training
- Access to information on jobs/vacancy,

Q) How and where would you like to receive this training?

- English classes should take place within our organisation at a variety of times.
- These classes should be led by either a person who speaks and understand Albanian language or there should be two tutors. These classes should also offer a certificate at the end.
- Most refugees are in low paid jobs and as such they can not afford to take time off to attend classes. This is one of the key barriers to learning.
- Travel expenses should be also refunded
- Placements with employers and on the job training
- Business mentoring
- Child care training for women – placements with local nursery

5.7 Individual Case Studies

Mary (Sudan, Asylum Seeker, 36)

Mary's case demonstrates someone who has a lot to offer, although she is held back by her status, her housing conditions and trauma following the genocide of her family. She has been in the United Kingdom for five years. Educational attainment has always been important in Mary's family although as 'Christian' they experienced many barriers to accessing services in Sudan. She was community worker in Sudan; here she started working in a medical factory as a packaging assistant. She progressed to become a production operator and currently runs computerized tablets manufacturing machines. Mary completed her secondary school from Sudan and worked as community worker. She feels that having the certainty of her status would be a big weight off her shoulders, because she is terrified of having to return to Sudan. Once she will grant the refugee status she will like to be a social worker. She wants someone to mentor her, help her to gain education and qualifications.

Nadia (A 30 year old woman from Kosovo, refugee)

She has been in the United Kingdom for two and a half years. She is a single mother with one preschool aged child. She is receiving benefits and has leave to remain. She lacks confidence in all areas. She is doing an ESOL course with Administration. She has a very good attendance record and is very keen in classroom. She needs to work on all areas of her English as well as needing to develop her study skills. She wants to go to university in the UK. Her tutor should understand about her life in Kosovo. She needs help to build her confidence. She needs support with childcare, She needs language support also she needs someone to mentor her.

Chapter 6

SERVICE PROVIDERS

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this phase of the work was to map details of service providers engaged with refugees and asylum seekers and to explore their experiences and perceptions of working with these groups.

All service providers dealing with refugees and asylum seekers were located and contacted in Bedfordshire and Luton regarding the project and were given the opportunity to be interviewed. Emphasis was placed upon those providing education and training services. Service providers were asked what services they provided for refugees and asylum seekers and what perceptions they had of the needs and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in Bedfordshire.

6.2 Methodology

At the end of December 2002, a postal questionnaire was sent to 40 education, training, voluntary and statutory providers in Bedfordshire and Luton to explore existing and future provision for refugees in the area. The database was compiled using word-of-mouth referrals as well as information supplied by the LSC and various other organisations, including the Refugee Council. The questionnaire, which was developed by the project team, in consultation with the LSC Bedfordshire, covered the following topics:

- The number and profile of refugees accessing provision
- Availability of information, advice and guidance for refugees and asylum seekers
- Training, studying and learning provision offered to refugees and asylum seekers
- Learning support offered to refugees and asylum seekers accessing learning provision.
- Plans for future developments of provision. Following an initial poor response, copies of the questionnaire were redistributed to those who had not responded and the majority was also contacted by telephone. Contact was also made with key individuals to explore likely patterns of provision.

Despite the timing and tight timescale for the work, a good response was received from colleges and local authorities in the area. Private training organisations and voluntary organisations also responded quite well, although many simply said that they were not currently involved in delivering provision for refugees.

6.3 Refugee Service Providing Organisations

Some of the key organisations based in Bedford and Luton serving the needs of refugees were contacted and interviewed in detail. These included BRASS, African Community Association, Afghan Society, Albanian Society, Luton Refugee Forum, Bosnia Herzegovina Community Association, Luton Islamic Centre, Ethnic Minority Training Project, and various others.

Completed questionnaires were received from some organisation providing training, learning

and community services for the refugees. Each supplied information on the number and profile of the refugees accessing provision each year.

It was evident that little information on refugees and asylum seekers was actually collected by the local authorities. None of the Education Departments for example, could provide specific and up to date figures on the number or origin of refugee and asylum seeker.

Feedback received from service providers and refugees:

- do not distinguish between refugees and other learners.
- Provision is delivered in a range of venues Bedfordshire and Luton
- Providing childcare, particularly for women
- Providing additional support to cover costs such as travel and materials
- Creating publicity in languages other than English
- Working in partnership with local asylum seeker and refugee organisations
- Employing more specialised ESOL tutors

7.4 Awareness of services

The most common methods of finding out what education and training courses and other services were available was through word of mouth or through refugee community organisations. The importance of oral communication was emphasized during the focus groups. Extremely few of those who participated in the focus group discussions had ever used services such as Information advice and guidance (IAG). Several people at the focus groups commented that they would never have the confidence to approach such service providers without having a direct referral from their community group.

During the focus groups, the participants indicated a lack of awareness about all the services offered. Whereas the service providers felt that their services were well advertised.

Many of the service providers interviewed were not fully aware of the aims and activities of other service providers in the locality. This shows a lack co-ordination and communication between different providers. We propose a more coherent and co-ordinated approach should be adopted to serve the needs and aspirations of refugees in Bedfordshire and Luton.

The refugees felt that there was no centralized information system in their locality. Many refugees and asylum seekers are therefore heavily reliant upon the services within their locality.

Chapter 7 BEST PRACTICE LEARNING MODELS - MENTORING

7.1 Introduction

As part of the research, we investigated best practice models for learning aimed at refugees. These included work-based learning, college learning, action learning, one to one learning, and mentoring. Having considered the practicalities of each we have concluded mentoring to be the best model for refugee learning. Most refugees participating in the focus groups indicated that they were de-motivated, lacked inspiration, were de-moralised and always thought that if they had someone to advice and guide them they would achieve more from their learning and training. These factors can be dealt by employing a best practice-mentoring model. This chapter gives basic details of one such model.

7.2 Definitions

Mentoring is a process where a person (the mentor) provides support, training, and guidance to a less experienced, usually younger person (the mentee, mentoree, or protege). Some benefits of mentoring are that it enhances productivity and teamwork, it encourages continued learning, it improves the self-esteem of the mentee, and it improves the chances of success in the mentee's endeavors.

Mentoring is normally a voluntary one-on-one relationship between the mentor and mentee where neither is paid to be involved in the process. For mentoring to be successful there must be structure, and trust must be built between the mentor and mentee. Encouragement, constructive criticism, listening, coaching, guiding, and teaching are all necessary components of an effective mentoring relationship.

7.3 Organisational value and benefits of mentoring to Individuals

Recent research by the UK's Industrial Society identified mentoring as one of the fastest growing development activities in the UK. An increasing number of organisations are going down the route of developing formal, established mentoring programmes, and developing key managers within their number to carry out a mentoring role.

Mentoring is perceived as one way in which organisations can aim to satisfy various needs. As such, mentoring is seen as a good, effective way to:

- ❖ provide 'fast track' development for high achievers within an organisation;
- ❖ propagate information about organisational culture and values quickly and directly from senior management to influential key players;
- ❖ move knowledge through the organisation from the people who have the most experience and learning.

The potential benefits for the mentoree include:

- ❖ confidence in their ability, and confirmation of their career potential;
- ❖ accelerated learning and personal development;
- ❖ opportunities to learn about and develop a much broader awareness and understanding of the organisation, its aims and objectives;
- ❖ direct, frequent contact with influential individuals who have taken a personal interest in their careers;

Managing mentoring relationships - some key principles

The mentoring relationship needs to be perceived as valuable from the mentoree's point of view, as well as from the mentor's. Helping mentors to understand what their mentorees might want from the relationship is a first step in ensuring they are able to deliver the required values.

These included:

- ❖ asking questions to help mentorees formulate their own solutions, rather than telling them what to do;
- ❖ stretching discussions beyond the immediate problem or issue;
- ❖ offering new or different perspectives;
- ❖ asking challenging, thought-provoking questions;
- ❖ encouraging/helping the mentoree to develop their own views and opinions;
- ❖ clarifying the mentoree's ideas, through probing and discussing;
- ❖ listening to frustrations, and taking time to discuss these

7.4 Constraints.

The more personal nature of the mentoring relationship can lead to a conflict of interest when this is confused with the line management relationship, which needs to be strictly objective and job-focused.

The scheme requires careful and thorough planning as it has resource and cost implications. It requires commitment and partnership approach for it to be successful.

7.5 Examples of successful mentoring schemes

TimeBank

TimeBank, a national voluntary organisation promoting volunteering by giving time to causes and activities that help others. It offers one of the most successful schemes. It is currently running 'Time Together' a mentoring scheme aimed at refugees to help them integrate. A unique refugee mentoring initiative, developed by national volunteering charity TimeBank, will be introduced in three new cities by the end of the year.

Time Together was launched nearly two years ago in London, Birmingham and Glasgow, and so far more than 350 refugees have benefited from one-on-one mentoring relationships with volunteers. The scheme has been so successful it will now be rolled out in Plymouth, Manchester and Peterborough, due to generous grants from the European Refugee Fund, the Challenge Fund and The Big Lottery Eastern.

The initiative aims to help refugees integrate and to create ambassadors for refugees in UK communities. By encouraging and aiding integration Time Together also hopes to challenge misconceptions about refugees by promoting positive images of them in the media

According to Sarah Arnold, the Project Manager says:

“We have matched about 500 refugees over the last 2 years with volunteer mentors and recruited over 2000 volunteers who want to be involved in the scheme as mentors. We are currently piloting an e-mentoring scheme as well. In terms of best practice, the Home Office has awarded us beacon status (5 stars) and we have also been awarded Approved Provider Standard by the National Mentoring Network.

We are hoping that our ISB bid to the Treasury will be successful. We will hear by the end of March, at which point we will be looking to rapidly expand over the next 2-3 years into a further 17 locations, matching nearly 2000 more refugees with mentors”.

The Refugee Council - Employment Mentoring for Refugees

The Refugee Council employment-mentoring programme uses volunteer mentors who know about how to get a job in the UK to help and support refugees looking for work. Refugee, who is trying to get a job, or change job, is matched with a volunteer who meets with the refugee regularly to help find work. Mentors usually work on areas such as:

- Information and ideas on different types of jobs
- Information about UK work culture
- Planning how to get a job
- Reviewing and editing CVs
- Helping with job searches and looking for job adverts
- Helping with filling in application forms
- Interview preparation and practice
- Support when you have started a job

Chapter 8

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of this research, we have reached a number of conclusions relating to key learning areas for refugees:

- One of the key concerns most refugee and asylum seekers respondents had was lack of awareness about the learning and training opportunities. They did not where to go to access information; for example 90% stated during the focus groups that they have never heard of IAG.
- The second key concern amongst refugees is the lack of their own support organisation. This particularly so with Afghan and African communities. They felt if they had their organisation, a considerable number of issues can be dealt with more effectively because of, no language barriers to cope with, co-ordinating and organising activities according to needs and priorities at a time and place most suited to beneficiaries.
- Another key area of learning is how to set up own support organisation. This is felt to be the starting point for Afghan and Albanian groups. This then requires further training on, roles and responsibilities of management committee members, legal issues, membership, marketing, financial management and managing resources.
- Where there are refugee organisations, for example Bedford African Community Association, BRASS, they are heavily used and are over stretched due to insufficient resources.
- There are some groups/organisations who require training on Business planning and how to write bids for funding.
- Another area of concern is the language barrier. This appears to be universal amongst all groups of refugees and almost all of the refugees we came across find it disabling, although some are reasonably fluent in speaking and writing.
- A large number of participants in the focus groups were unaware of British system. When asked how this could be overcome. ‘Cultural and system awareness classes’ was a popular answer to increase their understanding of British culture and its norms. Also to understand issues such as the roles of service providers and their roles and responsibilities as “New British Citizen”. It was felt that practitioners/ teachers should run cultural classes from Local Authorities, police, and voluntary sector agencies to increase their understanding of the provisions.
- Lack of awareness and knowledge about the system and services available is a major issue amongst the refugee community. Being unaware of their rights and not knowing where to go for help is a major problem.
- Almost all of the above impact on their ability to gain access to learning/training.

- ESOL provisions are accessed and are found to be a real help in improving their chances of getting around the job market.
- Many of the learning opportunities provided by the local colleges are not accessed particularly by women and single mothers due to lack of or inadequate child care provisions, venue, timings, transport and cost implications. Other priorities such as keeping the job.
- Many of the Refugees feel they have a pool of skills and abilities but are unable to utilise them for number of reasons. These include: they are unable to have their qualifications assessed or mapped against qualification levels here; no practical mentoring provisions are in place or organization that can provide this type of intervention.
- Many of the refugees have entrepreneurial background and wish to continue to practice their business skills. Many of them were small traders and shop keepers in their own countries but after arriving here they were not able to do carry on due to: unaware of business support provided by various organisations; unaware of legal requirements for setting up own business, organisation or companies, how to raise finance, find staff etc.
- Two key learning areas identified through the focus groups held with Arab, Asian and mixed group. Many of the participants felt their key skills to be business skills. They felt strongly about learning from mentoring schemes offered for refugees by refugees as a tool of empowerment.
- Many of the professionals felt they wanted practical work placements as way forward to overcome their employment prospects. Many felt the NHS hospitals would be good places for learning. Others suggested voluntary sector organisations can offer work placements. These organisations can be major source of support for refugee learning and capacity building..
- Most refugees felt that ESOL programmes should offer curriculum incorporating
 - (a) basic skills
 - (b) thinking skills
 - (c) personal qualities such as responsibility, self-esteem, self-management, and integrity,
 - (d) communication skills read with understanding, convey ideas in writing, speak so others can understand, listen actively, and observe critically
 - (e) decision-making skills (use mathematics in problem solving and communication, solve programs and make decisions, plan);
 - (f) interpersonal skills (cooperate with others, advocate and influence, resolve conflict and negotiate, and guide others); and
 - (g) lifelong learning skills (take responsibility for learning, reflect and evaluate, learn through research, use information and communications technology).
 - (h) offering on-site and off-site classes with flexible schedules;

- (i) providing access to auxiliary support services (child care, health care, transportation);
 - (j) involving families in learning together;
 - (k) promoting lifelong learning;
- One of the most consistent messages from this research is that government funding bodies need develop strong private, public and voluntary sector partnerships to offer more integrated services to the refugee community. Also there is a need to create a comprehensive network of service delivery partners to address all the barriers that refugees face.
- When learning programmes are designed for refugees there are a number of personal factors that impact on refugee learning that need to be considered. These include:

Limited time to study.

During our research we found that although everyone recognizes the need to study English, many refugees find it extremely difficult to find the time and energy to attend classes since they may be working more than one job and commuting long distances while simultaneously maintaining a family and adjusting to British way of life.

Previous experience with education.

Some of refugees arrived with postgraduate degrees, others are unable to read and write in their own languages. Regardless of the amount of previous education, they all have a desire to learn. Effective ESOL programmes need to developed for not only for literacy levels and learning styles, but also for individual learning goals such as basic English for survival, English for housekeepers, or more advanced English to pass the admissions examination for a professional preparation course.

Psychological needs.

Most refugees we came across had experienced stress due shift in family dynamics. Roles change when women find work outside the home and when children adapt more quickly than their parents. ESOL providers need to create the conditions to enhance the mental well being of their students.

Other factors

It is evident that adult learners are more likely to remain in programs that help them set realistic goals, use varied instructional approaches, and are linked to support services such as child care, transportation, and cost Learners continue in programs when they:

1. have access to support services provided by programs (such as counseling, transportation, and child care);
2. attend day classes rather than studying at night; and
3. participate in computer-assisted learning labs or in instruction that includes independent study.

Chapter 9 RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the purposes of this research was to identify training needs of the refugees. In this regard, we have analysed the data and based on this analysis we recommend the following

Information and Guidance

- The qualifications, skills and previous work experience of refugees should be recorded, when they have been provided with accommodation or when they apply for ESOL courses. This will provide essential information to local education and training providers.
- Refugees should be provided with basic written information, in the relevant languages, to enable them to be aware of education, training and opportunities, and sources of advice.
- A system of dedicated careers and guidance workers should be available for the support of refugees and asylum seekers locally. These dedicated workers would enable refugees and asylum seekers, wherever they are, to gain the support they need to prepare for the future.
- A pool of mentor needs to be identified and trained from within the refugee community, so that they can inspire, guide and advice their community members.

Education, Employment and training

- All relevant staff in the training providing centers, Job Centre plus, careers, benefits and ESOL services including community organizations should be provided with clear guidelines about the rights of, and opportunities open to refugees and asylum seekers. At present, different interpretations are made in different localities and by different services.

Employment and Work placements

- The skills, employment experience and qualifications of refugees in local areas should be communicated to the Employment Services. As our research has indicated, refugees provide a pool of skills which could be drawn upon, but which is currently unknown.
- Work experience opportunities for refugees, once eligible for employment, should be developed.

Education, training and qualifications

- ESOL courses should be designed so as to integrate the needs of the refugees to employment, qualifications and skills requirements.

- A local scheme for the recognition of overseas qualifications and bridging courses should be developed so that qualified refugees can be employed.
- Requirement is for a 'local qualification fund', which refugees can draw upon in order to meet the fees and other expenses required to undertake bridging courses.
- The opportunities for refugees to undertake voluntary work

Women Refugees

- Dedicated services support for women refugees should be provided so that their participation into learning can be increased.
- There is a urgent need to provide childcare support to women refugees those have a desire to learn.

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APPENDIX 1

IN DEPTH QUESTIONNAIRE FOR INDIVIDUALS

The Learning Skills Council (LSC) Bedfordshire is carrying out some research to discover the learning needs and skills of the refugees living in Bedfordshire. The purpose of the research is to improve access to education and employment opportunities for Refugee Community.

We should be very grateful if you would complete the questionnaire and return it to Equality Assurance limited by 20th of December 2004. This questionnaire is for individuals only.

About you... ?

1. Are you?	Male []	Female []
------------------	----------	------------

2. How old are you ..?	18-24 years old []	35-39 years old []
	25-29 years old []	40-49 years old []
	30-34 years old []	60 years or above []

3. How long have you been living in the UK?	0 - 5 months []	18 – 23 months []
	6 -11 months []	24 months or longer []
	12 – 17 months []	Can't remember/ don't know []

4. What is your country of origin ?	Afghanistan []	Pakistan []
	Algeria []	Sierra Leone []
	Angola []	Somalia []
	China []	Sri Lanka []
	India []	Turkey []
	Iran []	Former Republic of Yugoslavia []
	Iraq []	Zimbabwe []

Advancing the Learning and Skills of Refugees in Bedfordshire

	Other (please state)

Your Language Skills

5. What is your main language ?	Arabic	[]	Ndebele	[]
	Dari	[]	Peshto	[]
	English	[]	Portuguese	[]
	Farsi	[]	Shona	[]
	Kurdish	[]	Somali	[]
	Kurmanji	[]	Sorani	[]
	Other (please state)			

Language	Read		Write		Speak		Listen	
6. Main Language <hr style="width: 50px; margin: 5px 0;"/>	Fluent	[]	Fluent	[]	Fluent	[]	Fluent	[]
	Fairly well	[]	Fairly well	[]	Fairly well	[]	Fairly well	[]
	Slightly	[]	Slightly	[]	Slightly	[]	Slightly	[]
	Not at all	[]	Not at all	[]	Not at all	[]	Not at all	[]
7. English	Fluent	[]	Fluent	[]	Fluent	[]	Fluent	[]
	Fairly well	[]	Fairly well	[]	Fairly well	[]	Fairly well	[]
	Slightly	[]	Slightly	[]	Slightly	[]	Slightly	[]
	Not at all	[]	Not at all	[]	Not at all	[]	Not at all	[]

Your Employment History Before Coming to the UK

10. Before coming to the UK what was your main activity.?	In employment	[]
	Self employment	[]
	Unemployed and looking for work	[]
	A Student	[]
	Looking after home and family	[]
	Retired	[]
	Not working (please state reason) _____	

11. Before coming to the UK, what were your last two jobs, either paid or unpaid? Please state these starting with the most recent. If none please go to end of questionnaire.

Most recent Job Title:			
Start Date	___/_____ M M Y Y Y Y	End Date	___/_____ M M Y Y Y Y

Brief Job description	Please select one of the option			
	a) Employed	[]	Self employed	[]
	b) Full Time	[]	Part Time	[]
	c) Temporary	[]	Permanent	[]
	d) Paid	[]	Unpaid	[]
Reason of leaving:				

Job 2 Job Title:			
Start Date	___/_____ M M Y Y Y Y	End Date	___/_____ M M Y Y Y Y

Brief Job description	Please select one of the option			
	a) Employed	[]	Self employed	[]
	b) Full Time	[]	Part Time	[]
	c) Temporary	[]	Permanent	[]
	d) Paid	[]	Unpaid	[]
Reason of leaving:				

Your Education Level

12. Before coming to the UK how many years of Education did you receive.?	None	[]
	6 or less years of education	[]
	7-9 years of education	[]
	10-12 years of education	[]
	13-15 years of education	[]
	16 or more years of education	[]

13. Before coming to the UK did you have any Qualification.?	Yes	[]
	No (go to question 17)	[]

14. After coming to the UK what training/studying have you undergone?

15 Please tell us if you found any barriers to your learning?	Costs	[]
	Child Care	[]
	Lack of knowledge about opportunities	[]
	Travelling	[]
	Eligibility	[]
	Language	[]
	Learning environment	[]
	Training methods	[]
Other (please state) _____		

16. What is the biggest barrier to your learning?

Advancing the Learning and Skills of Refugees in Bedfordshire

17. If learning /training opportunities are available? What skills would you like to acquire, please tick	English Language	[]	Building	[]
	Plumbing/Electrical	[]	Business Skills	[]
	Child Care	[]	Nursing	[]
	Teaching	[]	Community work	[]
	Medical	[]	ICT	[]
	Training	[]	Personal development	[]
	Benefit System	[]	Setting up self-help group	[]
	Other (Please state) _____			

18. Please tell us how you would like to learn new skills?	One to one sessions	[]	Colleges	[]
	Mentoring	[]	Community settings	[]
	Study visits	[]	On the job training	[]
		[]	Apprenticeships	[]
	Other (Please state) _____			

19. What would be the key constraints to your learning in acquiring these skills?	Lack of access to training	[]	Attitudes	[]
			Motivation	
	Language	[]	Travel	[]
	Child care	[]	Attitude of training/learning providers	[]
Other (Please state) _____				

20. Would you like to see a refugee forum in Bedfordshire? If yes please state

APPENDIX II

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

The Learning Skills Council (LSC) Bedfordshire is carrying out some research to discover the learning needs and skills of the refugees living in Bedfordshire. The purpose of the research is to improve access to education and employment opportunities for Refugee Community.

We should be very grateful if you would complete the questionnaire and return it as soon as possible via return e-mail.

1. Your Details

Your Name				
Name of your Organisation				
Status of your Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> FE College	<input type="checkbox"/> HE Institution	<input type="checkbox"/> Partnership, Forum or Consortium	<input type="checkbox"/> Training Provider
	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited Company	<input type="checkbox"/> Government Agency	<input type="checkbox"/> Charity
Address				
Telephone				
Fax				
E-mail				

2. Your Organisation

(a) What services do you provide to Refugees/Asylum Seekers? Please describe:	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
(b) On average how many individuals do you serve on weekly/monthly basis?	
Male	Age group
Female	Age Group

(c) Please describe the Nationality of the people you serve:			
Afghanistan	[]	Pakistan	[]
Algeria	[]	Sierra Leone	[]
Angola	[]	Somalia	[]
China	[]	Sri Lanka	[]
India	[]	Turkey	[]
Iran	[]	Former Republic of Yugoslavia	[]
Iraq	[]	Zimbabwe	[]
Former Soviet Union	[]	North America	[]
Other Please state			

3. Services you provide to refugees

(a) Access to Basic Skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)	Yes	No
(b) Access to Further Education	Yes	No
(c) Access to Higher Education	Yes	No
(d) Access to Volunteering	Yes	No
(e) Access to Self-employment and Entrepreneurship	Yes	No
(f) Raising Awareness of Employers	Yes	No
(g) Supporting Employers to Recruit Refugees	Yes	No
(h) Capacity Building	Yes	No
COMMENTS		

4. Needs of your Organisation

a. In order to serve the refugee community more effectively, what are your needs?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

b. What can be done to make your service more accessible to Refugees?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

c. What do you perceive to be the main difficulties Refugees experience when accessing learning/training/education/

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

d. Are there any Refugee Groups who are particularly hard to reach & Why?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

e. Are there any education and training needs that are not currently being met?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

f. Are you aware of other organisations that deal with Refugees and in what ways do you work with those organisations?

g. How do you get informed about what education/training/learning opportunities are available to Refugees?

5. Refugees Learning Needs

(a) What learning/training opportunities do you offer to refugees? Please describe!

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

(b) What in your opinion are the key skills that refugees, you work with, offer?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

(c) What are the key learning / training needs of the refugees you work with?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

(d) What are the best learning/training methods that should be used?

e.g. mentoring, one to one sessions, on the job training etc

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

(e) How frequent should this training be?

(f) How would you measure the effectiveness of the training?

(g) Who/where would the trainees be referred to, in order to progress their learning further?

FURTHER COMMENTS

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

APPENDIX III

**Refugee and Asylum Seeker Service
Provider Contact List**

ORGID	ORGANISATION	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
2	Asylum Team	Luton Borough Council, Stuart Street 37 upper George Street Luton LU1 2			
	CONTACT	POST			
	Sarah Albert	Team Manager	01582 547 521		sarah.albert@lbc.gov.uk
	Bryan Lynch	Housing Officer	01582 547 492		lynchb@luton.gov.uk
3	Bedfordshire African Community Centre	15 New Bedford Road, Luton LU1 1SA			
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Bony N. Shamalo		01582 484 807		africancentre@freeuk.com
4	Bedfordshire Congolese Community Links	Chaucer House, 107 Biscot Road, Luton LU3 1AX			
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Miguel Jose	Principal	01582 730 487		bcclinks@yahoo.co.uk
	Memory Kupe	Volunteer	01582 730 487		
	Daniel Kupe	Volunteer	01582 730 487	07951 503 522	
5	Client Care Team, The Lodge	4 George Street, Luton LU1 2BJ			
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Alison Harbron				
7	Luton Lifelong Learning	Learning Support Centre, Stranger Ways, Luton			
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL

ORGID	ORGANISATION	ADDRESS			
	Rona Grabowski	Co-ordinator	01592 510031	07919 378 962	Ronaathome@aol.com
9	Green House Mentoring Project		16-22 St Thomas's Road, Luton LU2 7UY		
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Sue Pirks	Mentoring Project	01582 898 883		chloe@stopsley.net
11	HIV Client Care Services		The Lodge, 4 George St West, LU1 2BJ		
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Alison Harbron	Senior Client Services	01582 511025		lodgeclientcare@nhs.net
14	LuBYA (Luton and Bedfordshire Youth		Dunstable Young People Centre, Manchester Place Dunstable LU6 1HT		
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Andy Calvert		01582 660 144	07970 016 765	linfo@lubya.co.uk
15	Luton Borough Council		Town Hall, Stuart Street 37 upper George Street Luton LU1 2BQ		
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Mark Turner		01582 54 63 53		turnerm@luton.gov.uk
16	Luton Child Team 3, Social Services		Unity House, 111 Stuart St. Luton LU1 5 NP		
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Tom Keating	Team Manager	01582 547 469		keatingt@luton.gov.uk
19	Luton Council of Faiths (LCOF)		LLRC, Strangers Way, LU4 9ND		
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Ranjit Singh	Co-ordinator	01582 618004	07780 695715	faiths2003@aol.com

ORGID	ORGANISATION		ADDRESS		
23	MENTER (East of England Black & Minority)		62-64 Victoria Road, Cambridge CB4 3DU		
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Anna Allen	Regional Partnership	01223 355034		anna@menter.org.uk
24	Refugee Council, Eastern Region		4-8 Museum Street Ipswich IP1 1HT		
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Fathiech Yazdi		01473 297 900		fathieh.yazdi@refugeecouncil.org.u
	Christina Tarine	Event Organiser	01473 297 905	07799 644 142	
28	Voluntary Action Luton		15 New Bedford Road, Luton LU1 1SA		
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Levi Habashanti	Ethnis Development	01582 733 418		levi.habashant@valuton.org.uk
	Mike Halward		01582 733 418	01582 733013	info@valuton.org.uk
29	Zambia and Malawi Awareness		66(I) Britannia House, Leagrave, Road LU3 1RJ		
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Fidelis Mando			07958 792 131	
33	Bedfordshire Refugee & Asylum Seeker		St Luke's United Church, 26 St Peter's Street, Bedford MK40 2NN		
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Bryden Keenan		01234 211381	01234 211381	bryden.k@ntlworld.com
34	Albanian-English Society "Skenderbeu"		46 Luke Place Bedford MK42 9XL		
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Landi Xheka		07766 643123	01234 317037	albengskenderbeu@hotmail.com

ORGID	ORGANISATION	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
35	Jobcentre Plus	55 Guildford St. Luton, Beds			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Lynda Marshall		01582 744011		
36	Bedford College ESOL Department	Cauldwell Street, Bedford MK42 9AH			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Carmen Williams		01234 291000	01234 342674	cwilliams@bedford.ac.uk
38	Zama Awareness Forum	Suite 6 G(I), Britannia House, Leagrave Road, Luton Beds			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Fidelis Mando	Fax. 01592 727788	01582 727788	07958795431	zamaforum@yahoo.com
39	Marsh Farm Community Development Trust,	Cerc building, The Moakes, Marsh Farm, Luton Beds LU3 3QB			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Nicole John		01582 894016/7	01582 894056	businessenterprise2000@yahoo.co
40	United Pakistan Welfare Association	9 Argyll Ave, Luton Beds LU3 1EG			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Masood Akhtar		01582 727262	01582 722928	masood.akhtar@ntlworld.com
41	Bedford Jobcentre Plus	Wyvern House, 55 Bromhum Road, Bedford MK40 2EH			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
			01234 361500		
42	Bedfordshire Congolese Community Links	Suit 107 (ii) Chaucer House, LU3 1AX			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL

ORGID	ORGANISATION	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Jenny		01582 730487		bcklinks@yahoo.co.uk
43	Bosnian & Herzegovina Community	Marsh House, Birmingham Road, Luton Bedfordshire, LU3 2SR			
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	E Hrapovic		01582 491441		lutonbih@btconnect.com
44	Dunstable & District Citizen Advice Bureau	Grove House, 76 High Street North, Dunstable LU6 1 NF			
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	N Doyle		01582 665629		bureau@dunstablecab.net.org.uk
45	Greenhouse Mentoring	The Greenhouse, 16-22 St Thomas Road, Luton LU2 7UY			
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Cloe Stirling Smith		01582 898883	01582 418357	chloe@stopsley.net
	Sue Pirks		01582 528213		sue.pirks@stopsley.net
47	Learning for Life	4th Floor, Central Library, St Georges Square, Luton LU1 2NG			
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Paul Harrison		01582 547447		
48	Lewsey Farm Learning Centre	Tomlinson Avenue, Lewsey Farm, Luton LU4 0PG			
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Helen Garwood		01582 691990		heneng@lfct.org
49	Luton Law Centre	28 Clarendon Road, Luton LU2 7PQ			
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Gillie Sharp		01582 481000	01582 482581	

ORGID	ORGANISATION	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
50	Luton Mentoring	68 Stanton Road, Luton, LU4 0BJ			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Project Manager		07732 333362		anjparmar8@yahoo.co.uk
51	Luton Multi Association and Friends	26 Whitwell Close, Luton LU3 4BS			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Nazia Khanum		01582 566468	01582 619715	nkhanum@aol.com
52	Luton Women's Aid	144 Wardown Crescent, Luton LU2 7JU			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Jenny Moody		01582 391856	01582 725045	jennymoodylutonwomensaid@ntlw
54	Barnfield College	Rotheram Avenue, Luton LU1 5PP			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Branfield Technology		01582 492928	01582 492928	
	Westbourne Road	Bedford, MK40 4PQ	01234 332300	01234 344118	
	New Bedford Road		01582 569600	01582 572264	
	Rotheram Avenue		01582 569739	01582 726214	
55	De Montfort University	The Gateway, Leicester LE1 9BH			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Enquiry		08459 45 46 47	0116 257 7533	enquiry@dmu.ac.uk
56	Bedford College	Cauldwell Street, Bedford MK42 9AH			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL

ORGID	ORGANISATION	ADDRESS			
	Main site	01234 291000	01234 322674		
	Luton Learning Shop	01582 414178			
	Enterprise House	01234 291200			
	Bedford Learning Shop	01234 357505	01234 358143		
57	Bedfordshire Student Support	The Award Section, County Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford, MK42 9AP			
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Helpline		08456 077 577	01234 408010	student.support@bedscc.gov.uk
58	University of Luton	Park Square, Luton Beds LU1 3JU			
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Enquiry		01582 734111	01582 743400	enquiries@luton.ac.uk
59	Bedford Kempston Regeneration Partnership	The Place, Bradgate Road, Bedford, MK40 3DE			
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Victoria Pieteron		01234 353 335		
60	Luton Rights	15 New Bedford Road, Luton LU1 1SA			
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Caroline		01582 453373		
61	African Community Association	26 St Peters Street Bedford MK40 2NN			
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Chris Mubalama		01234 216888		

ORGID	ORGANISATION	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
62	Bedford Racial Equality Council	36 Mill Street Bedford MK40 3 HD			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Carl Rose		01234 350 459		brec@ssmail.net
63	Independent	16 Baker Street, Lighton Buzzard LU7 1BL			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Patrick Gavigan		07944953373		
65	Luton Foyer	63 Interman Street, Luton Beds LU1 1JD			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Rosanna Frezza		01582 401366	01582 651244	info@lutonfoyer.org.uk
66	Afghan Society	24B Bedford Road, Kempston Bedford MK42 8AH			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Azizullah Farhang		01234 302692	07957460607	farhangah@yahoo.co.uk
67	Bosnian & Herzegovina Comm. Assn. Beds	Marsh House, Bramingham Road, Beds LU3 2SR			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	E Hrapovic		01582 491441	01582 491441	lutonbih@btconnect.com
68	Dunstable & District Citizen Advice Bureau	Grove House, 76 High Street North, Dunstable, LU6 1NF			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	N Doyle		01582 665629	01582 665629	bereau@dunstablecab.net.org.uk
69	LLRC-Multi Agency Aylum Forum	LLRC Strafer way, Luton LU4 9ND			
	CONTACT		TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL

ORGID	ORGANISATION	ADDRESS			
	Rona Grabowski	Co-ordinator for	01582 510031	07919378962	grabowskir@luton.gov.uk
70	North Bedfordshire Council for Voluntary		43 Bromham Road, Bedford, MK40 2AA		
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Diane Wynne-Powel		01234 354366	01234 347503	diane@hotmail.com
72	Luton Multi Cultural Women's Coalition		19 Blandford Avenue, Luton LU2 7AY		
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	Nazia Khanum		01582 566468	01582 619715	nkhanum@aol.com
73	Ibad Ar-Rahman Welfare Trust		226 Selbourne Road, Luton Beds, LU3 8LU		
	CONTACT	POST	TELEPHONE	MOBILE/FAX	EMAIL
	M Ahmed		01582 619805	01582 619805	