

STOCKTON-ON-TEES REFUGEE INTEGRATION STRATEGY



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TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Introduction	pg. 4
Integration Framework	pg. 5
Demographics	pg. 6
Accommodation	pg. 8
Education and Training	pg. 10
Employment	pg. 12
Health and Social Care	pg. 14
Community Development	pg. 16
Conclusion	pg. 18
Appendix I - Mapping Current Service Provision	pg. 19
References	pg. 21

‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.’

Article 1. United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948.

I. INTRODUCTION:

The introduction of over 17,500 refugees from over 90 different countries to the North East has had a dramatic impact on communities including Stockton (Refugee Housing Project North East, 2002). Many neighbourhoods have also changed as a result. In Stockton, areas such as Parkfield/Mill Lane are already coping with a number of physical and social problems and they now face the additional challenge of being at the forefront for positive change and integration as refugees are continually dispersed to the area.

This paper proposes a refugee integration strategy from a national, regional and local perspective. It is structured to examine five key areas of integration: accommodation, education, employment, health and community development. Each focus area provides:

- A refugee case study example
- Demographics of the refugee and host community
- Recommendations for a local strategy inclusive of the national and regional framework

This proposal offers general recommendations and should serve as a framework in which local authority, service providers, community leaders, and those with expertise can establish further target objectives and action points.

The Refugee Integration Strategy must consider both national and regional strategies but provide a plan targeted for the distinct characteristics of Stockton. It is also designed work alongside other Stockton community initiatives such as Stockton Renaissance, the Borough's Local Strategic Partnership, and Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder for Parkfield and Mill Lane. These initiatives include a commitment to refugee integration.

This integration strategy is to ensure that refugees are part of the forward move in Stockton. Refugees must enjoy the same opportunities for belonging and community as other residents. It is through this refugee integration strategy that Stockton can more fully experience the enrichment and regeneration of our community.

I.1 Definitions and Terminology

Refugee: For the purposes of this paper the term "refugee" is used as a generic term to describe all persons who are in the process of seeking asylum or have received permission to live in the UK. Because of the negative representation often associated with the term "asylum seeker" the term "refugee" is used as a generic and collective term. It is not a term to be imposed on individuals, but rather a matter of self identification. There is no definition of when a person is or ceases to be a refugee.

NASS: The National Asylum Support Unit is a department of the Home Office that manages the UK asylum process (Refugee Council, 2003).

NECASS: (Refugee Council, 2003) The North East Consortium for Asylum Support Services is a regional partnership organisation that coordinates the housing and support of refugees in the region (Refugee Council, 2003).

Asylum Status: The outcomes of an asylum application are one of three (Refugee Council, 2003):

1. Refugee Status: a positive decision granted by the Home Office with the right to remain in the UK.
2. Humanitarian Protection: similar to the previous ELR status (exceptional leave to remain) which grants protection for a period of three years. If the person no longer needs protection at the end of three years, s/he will be refused further leave to remain.
3. Refusal: A negative decision by the Home Office. Persons are granted the right to an appeal. A successful appeal will lead to refugee status or humanitarian protection. Outcomes of an unsuccessful appeal lead to the arrangement for deportation.

2. INTEGRATION FRAMEWORK

The Home Office (2000) report “Full and equal citizens: A strategy for the integration of refugees into the United Kingdom” sets the national framework for integration strategies. The aims of “Full and Equal Citizens” are as follows:

- Include refugees as equal members of society
- Help refugees develop their potential and contribute to the cultural and economic life of the country
- Set out a clear framework to support the integration process across the United Kingdom
- Facilitate access to the support necessary for the integration of refugees nationally and locally.

From a regional perspective, NECASS has developed the North East refugee integration strategy. This strategy is to be used in conjunction with other local, sub-regional, regional and national strategies (NECASS).

The European Council on Refugees and Exiles defines refugee integration as a change process that is (Schibel, et. al., 2002):

- Dynamic and two-way: placing emphasis on both the refugee and the host community. The refugee adapting to the host community and lifestyle without having to compromise his or her cultural identity and the host community recognising refugees as part of the community and facilitating access to resources and decision making.
- Long term: begins at the time of arrival and is concluded when a refugee becomes an active member of a community from a legal, social, economic, educational and cultural perspective.
- Multi-dimensional: relates to the conditions for participations and the actual participation in the economic, social, civil and political life of a county. This includes the refugee’s perception of acceptance by the host community.

A refugee integration strategy for Stockton is needed for several reasons. Firstly, some refugee needs are different than the surrounding host community. For example, some refugees require specific help with adjustment to laws and customs, foods, and language. Also, experiences such as family separation, loss of homeland, and physical and emotional trauma make refugees a particularly vulnerable group.

Secondly, an integration strategy is needed because the majority of refugees want to remain in Stockton after they have been granted positive status. Figures for Stockton show that 60% of refugees choose to stay in Stockton (SBC/Tristar Homes, 2002). This is much higher than other community and regional figures as one study found that 43% of refugee respondents stated they would definitely, and a further 38% would possibly, like to remain living in the North East region when considering their move out of NASS accommodation (Refugee Housing Project, 2003). This has a positive impact on both the cultural and economic life in Stockton.

Finally, an integration strategy benefits the entire community. As seen in other disadvantaged communities, ignoring concerns of young people, the vulnerable and disaffected can magnify issues and ignite tensions in communities already facing socio-economic challenges. This leads to damaging effects on the community. (Ouseley, 2001). It is through a collective effort of community participation and integration that a sense of personal safety and well being is ensued.

‘Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.’

Article 14. United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948.

3. DEMOGRAPHICS

Case Study

Stephen is a refugee in Stockton from sub Saharan Africa. After his father, mother and siblings were killed, Stephen managed to escape to a neighbouring country. Life proved to be equally difficult there and the persecution continued. Stephen managed to survive both physical and mental torture and eventually came to the UK seeking asylum. Stephen was first moved to Birmingham where he received NASS accommodation, began ESOL classes, and received therapy for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Stephen felt hopeful in his attempts to rebuild his life.

In 2001, Stephen was dispersed to Stockton. Initially he felt positive about his move. He began a volunteer project, applied for his driving licence and began taking part in community activities. After two years of waiting for a decision on his status, Stephen now feels worried and discouraged about the outcome. He does however remain hopeful that he will receive a positive decision from the Home Office. What Stephen hopes for is to move out of NASS accommodation and have a house of his own. He would also like to continue his degree at Durham University. He says it is difficult to imagine what his life will be like. What he would like most is to begin thinking about the future instead of the past.

3.1 United Kingdom Refugees (Home Office, 2nd quarter 2003)

- In 2002, the UK had 84,130 asylum applications
- On asylum applications per 1,000 of population, the UK is 8th in the EU (1.8 applications per 1,000 of population, as compared with Austria (4.6 applications per 1,000 of population))
- Of initial asylum applications from 2002, 10% were granted asylum, 24% granted extended leave to remain and 66% were refused. (This is only based on initial applications and does not include appeal cases).
- Somali nationals accounted for the most applications (9%).
- The top nationalities of asylum applicants in the UK were as follows:
 - Somalia = 900
 - Zimbabwe = 815
 - China = 705
 - India = 645
 - Iraq = 635

3.2 North East Refugees

Prior to the dispersal program in April 2000, the North East received roughly 150 refugees. In the first two years of dispersal (April 2000-February 2002) this region saw an influx of over 5,500 refugees.

- In June 2002, the total refugee population in the North East was 17,500 making the region the 4th largest dispersal region in the UK (Refugee Housing Project North East, 2002)
- Iraqis comprise the largest group of refugees in the North East (930 persons) with significant numbers from Iran, Afghanistan, Czech Republic and Turkey (Wilson, 2002).
- The majority of refugees in the North East are young single applicants with 2180 single principle applicants and 690 families in the region (Wilson, 2002).
- In the North East, the largest group of asylum seekers were ages 18 to 35 (2,270 persons), with ages 36-60 (590 persons) and 61 and older (10 persons) (Wilson, 2002).

3.3 Stockton Refugees

An accurate figure on the total number of refugees in Stockton is difficult to obtain for many reasons. Once a person has been granted a status decision, they are not identifiable through any data information systems by the Home Office or any other government departments. Additionally, the term "refugee" is self defined. One person may consider him/herself a refugee for a matter of months, another for decades (Bow Community Projects Ltd., 2003).

Currently, Home Office statistics show 642 persons seeking asylum in Stockton. Estimates are that 425 of those persons live in NASS accommodation in the Parkfield/Mill Lane area (People Seeking Asylum, 2002). However, these figures are only those persons awaiting status decisions from the Home Office. It does not include those persons who have been granted a positive decision and choose to remain in the community or those given a negative decision and remain in the community but are untraceable.

Demographics of the refugee population in Stockton include the following: (Asylum Support Team, May 2003)

- There are a total of 53 different nationalities and 642 persons seeking asylum in Stockton
- The majority are young men. (34% = ages 18-25, 35% = ages 26-30, 10% over 40 years) (86% = male, 14% = female)
- Iraq, Iran and Zimbabwe comprised the top nationalities (21%, 9%, and 8% respectively)
- In 36 different nationalities there are less than 10 persons from the same nationality. This makes up 22% of the population
- 11 individuals are the sole representatives from their country of origin.
- As at January 2003, there were 98 children of compulsory school or nursery age in Stockton
- 20% of the population has lived in Stockton for over a year (29% = 7-12 months, 51% = under 6 months).

The Borough of Stockton and its Neighbourhoods

Stockton is a distinct community with characteristics that need to be included when planning an integration strategy.

- The population of Stockton is largely white (97%) and Christian (81.6%)(Census 2001).
- The largest ethnic group is Pakistani (approximately 1% of the population) (Census 2001).
- The Parkfield/Mill Lane area comprises a population of 7,338 and 30% of Stockton's black and minority ethnic (BME) population and a large number of refugees (Neighbourhood Management, 2003).
- 14 of the 30 wards (where 45% of the population reside) in Stockton fall within the worst 20% of deprived wards nationally (Community Strategy, 2002-2005).
- Eleven of the fourteen deprived wards are amongst the worst 10% (Neighbourhood Matters, 2002).

TABLE 1: Population Comparison

Demographics	National refugee population ¹	Stockton refugee population ²	Stockton resident population ³
Population	85,865 asylum applications	642 dispersed persons seeking asylum	178,400
Sex: Male Female	81% 19%	86% 14%	50% 50%
Marital Status: Single Married	Unknown	77% 23% (family) ⁴	28% 53%
Age:	Average age = 27 <5% are over 50	76% <30 yrs 24% >30 yrs	38% <30 yrs 62% >30 yrs
Country of Origin	Somalia = 9% Zimbabwe = 8% China = 7% India = 5% Iraq = 5% Other Nationalities Combined = 43%	Iraq = 21% Iran = 9% Zimbabwe = 8% Pakistan = 5% Afghanistan = 3% Other Nationalities Combined = 20%	1.6% = Black Minority Ethnic

¹Home Office Website www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk

²People Seeking Asylum (5/03), Stockton Borough Council Asylum Support Team Statistics

³2001 Census

⁴Applicants arriving as a head of family and not as single applicants

4. ACCOMMODATION

Case Study

Ben* has received positive refugee status and has been given a council house in Stockton. Because the house was unfurnished he had difficulty budgeting for and finding carpeting, furniture, and white goods. Like most people moving into council homes, Ben finds it difficult to save money for these household goods. Because he is new to the country, he also has difficulty understanding his council tax and how to pay for his television licence, gas and electric bills.

Local Demographics (Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, 2003):

- Mean house price in Parkfield/Mill Lane is £43,750 and £67,684 in Stockton as a whole
- 40% of households in Parkfield/Mill Lane are without central heating (10% in Stockton as a whole, 19% nationally)
- Principal housing tenure in Parkfield/Mill Lane is older small Victorian terracing, generally not attractive to first time buyers
- Parkfield/Mill Lane has an increased number of void properties such as Alliance Street with 49% of homes empty

Issues:

Access to affordable, safe, and attractive housing is a community wide issue. This strategy is designed to work in partnership with Neighbourhood Management and Stockton Renaissance to address the immediate refugee housing issues as well as a long term strategy for addressing the necessary housing and environment improvements mentioned in the demographics section.

In Stockton, NASS accommodation is given to most refugees awaiting status decisions. It is distributed by both the private sector and local authority. The largest private landlord is Roselodge. As at January 2002, Roselodge was housing approximately 68% of NASS supported refugees with both dispersal properties and a hostel for newly arriving refugees. The remaining accommodation providers are Lena Homes and the local authority (15% and 17% respectively) (People Seeking Asylum, 2002). This current NASS housing contract will complete in 2005. There is ongoing discussion regarding accommodation arrangements for the next contract with a focus on single strand housing, or one NASS accommodation provider. Although the outcomes of these discussions are not yet known, implications are that this may expand refugee housing in Parkfield/Mill Lane area and also allow for more consistent and organised service provision.

For many refugees one of the major difficulties with accommodation is experienced when given a positive decision. At this point, a refugee must then “move on” from NASS accommodation to other independent housing (Home Office, 2000). This raises the issue of access to and availability of appropriate move on accommodation for refugees. Local authority and refugee housing providers have recognised that there is a lack of support and information for many refugees to make informed decisions on housing options, welfare benefits, housing and tax benefits. In particular, Tristar Homes and the Asylum Support Team are addressing this need by providing community outreach and information sessions as well as the plan to appoint a move on accommodation worker

Additionally, the Stockton Homeless Strategy has outlined strategic objectives for addressing refugee needs. This strategy recommends some key action points including (Homeless Strategy, strategic objective 6):

- Employment of a move on/resettlement worker
- All services to maintain links with Asylum Support Team
- Develop nominated worker within housing for refugees
- Develop planning meetings on accommodation and resettlement for council accommodated refugees
- Produce housing material in key languages
- Ensure hostel provision/facilities are culturally appropriate
- Review current interpretation services
- Develop volunteer services to assist with move-on needs

National and Regional Integration Strategy:

- The national strategy in “Full and Equal Citizens” is to help refugees find adequate housing (Home Office, 2000).
- The North East regional strategy is to address the issues associated with Move on accommodation and to have involvement of refugees in the housing advice and housing provision sector (NECASS, 2002).

Recommendations for Refugee Integration Strategy:

- Move On Accommodation Support Worker to liaise with NASS housing providers, community and volunteer agencies to ease the housing transition.
- Develop and support a refugee led housing committee.
- Larger coordinated effort from all local refugee housing providers (public and private) to share information, and good practice. (i.e. housing providers to offer the same services and information to clients)
- Review of the NASS property portfolio with specific attention given to issues of community safety and community cohesion



‘Each Contracting State shall accord to refugees lawfully in its territory the right to choose their place of residence and to move freely within its territory subject to any regulations applicable to aliens generally in the same circumstances.’

Article 26. Freedom of Movement.

United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees 1951.

5. EDUCATION/TRAINING

Case Study

Ellen is fluent in four languages, and was working as a childcare provider in her country before fleeing. Because she speaks and writes fluent English, she does not participate in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses. She would like to receive a certificate in childcare so she can continue her profession. Ellen requested an application to begin a childcare course at the local college. The application requested a criminal background check, evidence of her previous qualifications, and two professional references that she has known longer than two years. She is unable to provide any of this information and is now unsure if she will be able to begin the course.

Local Demographics:

- 31% of Stockton residents have no education or training qualifications, (Census 2001 Statistics)
- 15% of Stockton residents have a Level 4 qualification (degree or above) as compared with 20% nationally (Census 2001 Statistics)
- 10% of students in Parkfield/Mill Lane leave school with no GCSE passes (3% in Stockton as a whole and 6% nationally) (Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, 2003)
- 18% of students obtain 5 plus (grades at A-C at GCSE) as compared with 46% in Stockton as a whole and 50% nationally (Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, 2003).
- 35% of adults in Parkfield/Mill Lane were recorded as having low numeracy skills (Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, 2003)

Issues:

Children:

In 2002, there were 33 school age children dispersed to Stockton. When children arrive in Stockton they are first given a framework assessment by the education social work services to examine circumstances that may impact educational needs. Next, a multi-lingual services assessment is performed to determine support requirements for the child. Feedback from refugee leaders and parents has generally shown positive responses to the integration of children into the schools. Parents can receive some material support, for example with school uniforms and other provisions. There is also support for cultural or religious provision.

Soon after the dispersal process began, one disparity initially identified by the council was the issue of housing providers placing families in different parts of the Borough which resulted in refugee children placed in schools where there is limited experience or support in working with refugee children or minority ethnic communities (People Seeking Asylum, 2002). Currently, there appears to be greater consistency and partnership working through the schools and council to address these areas of isolation.

Adult:

In Stockton, adult education and training is provided for refugees at various institutions such as Archon 2000 and Riverside College. College courses are offered free to refugees on a part time basis (up to 16 hours per week). English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) training is provided through these colleges and through the Stockton Borough Council at community centres around Stockton. Also, ESOL courses are combined with driving theory, job readiness, and computer learning. Community centres such as the Stockton International Family Centre that offer childcare facilities have also been successful in meeting the needs of refugee mothers and others that may have access difficulties. ESOL courses are accessed by many refugees in the Stockton community and are well attended. One barrier identified is that some education and training opportunities are not easily accessible for refugees who are awaiting status decisions. Therefore, many refugees awaiting immigration decision can go for months or years with limited access to educational and training opportunities because of the inability to pay non-resident tuition fees. It is only once an individual has been granted positive refugee status that he or she can receive financial assistance for education.

National and Regional Integration Strategy:

- The national strategy in “Full and Equal Citizens” recommendations include (Home Office, 2000):
 - Appropriate education for school age refugee children in relation to their age, ability, aptitude and special education needs.
 - Entitlement for refugees older than school age to attend further education colleges and have access to appropriate language training.
 - Opportunities are provided to take part in an orientation courses to increase understanding of citizenship and how institutions and authorities in the UK work.
- The regional strategy is to (NECASS, 2002):
 1. Develop regional training networks for refugees
 2. Encourage ESOL and language skills group
 3. Assess education and training needs by gathering information from colleges and using refugee community groups to survey needs
 3. Investigate issues on school placement and support by: collecting information on Local Authority placement, consider the translation and interpretation needs of schools and examine the training needs of teachers

Recommendations for Refugee Integration Strategy:

Children:

- Targeted training for educators and school workers on the backgrounds and needs of refugee children, and additional funding for schools affected by dispersal.
- Greater representation of parents from refugee families on school governing bodies.

Adults:

- Course development on citizenship and understanding of institutions and authorities in the UK.
- Examination of education and training opportunities for refugees awaiting positive status decisions.
- Greater co-ordination of ESOL provision among education providers to promote consistency and avoid duplication

‘1. The Contracting States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education.

2. The Contracting States shall accord to refugees treatment as favourable as possible, and, in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances, with respect to education other than elementary education and, in particular, as regards access to studies, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the remission of fees and charges and the award of scholarships.’

Article 22. Public Education.

United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees 1951.

6. EMPLOYMENT

Case Study

Mary* worked as a dental hygienist in her home country before arriving in Stockton. After receiving positive refugee status, she applied to NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom) and found her training was not comparable to UK qualifications. Mary now has to decide whether to re-train in the UK as a hygienist or to look for employment in another profession. Mary has received advice from employment agencies and is creating a CV and looking for job openings. Mary is also a single mother of two children and states that the financial, employment, and family pressures are the most difficult.

Demographics:

- Census 2001 statistics show the socio-economic classification of Stockton residents as follows:
 - 23% professional and managerial
 - 21% not classified
 - 13% intermediate and own account workers
 - 3% never worked
 - 2% Long-term unemployed
- The largest employment by industry group in Stockton is: 27% Public admin, education and health, 22% distribution, hotels, etc., 19% manufacturing (Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, 2003).
- The unemployment rate in Parkfield/Mill Lane is 11%, as compared with Stockton as a whole which is 5% and nationally at 3% (Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, 2003)
- The percentage of working age residents in Parkfield/Mill Lane who are in employment is 67% (72% the whole of Stockton, 76% nationally) (Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, 2003)

Issues:

First, it is known that there is a national and local benefit to the employment of refugees. As stated by one author, "There is little evidence that native workers are harmed by migration. There is considerable support for the view that migrants create new businesses and jobs and fill labour market gaps, improving productivity and reducing inflationary pressures" (Sargeant et al., 2001). From an economic perspective, it is estimated that people born outside the UK contribute an estimated £2.6 billion to the economy (Sargeant et al., 2001).

Secondly, it is also understood that many refugees come from highly skilled backgrounds. Surveys conducted by the Home Office found two thirds of refugees had jobs in their own countries and worked as professionals, managers, or in business. Another sample from Leicester showed that 85% had education or training qualifications (Sargeant et al., 2001).

In a survey of North East refugees, it was found that only 15% were currently eligible for employment under government regulations. 17% were involved in volunteer or unpaid community activities. However, prior to their arrival in the UK, 60% of refugee respondents were in paid employment. Upon examination of the barriers to employment, both refugee and stakeholder opinions revealed the primary barrier was ineligibility under Home Office rules. The next most cited barriers were lack of English speaking ability, lack of English writing ability, and lack of skills or experience. The least most mentioned barriers were requirements of religion or faith, and stress or trauma (Learning and Skills, 2003).

Despite the economic benefit and skill level, many refugees face multiple barriers in efforts to obtain employment. Some of the barriers include (Sargeant et al., 2001):

- Difficulty in recognition of academic or vocational qualifications
- Lack of references
- Little relevant UK work experience
- Inadequate language skills,

- Problems with cultural understanding
- Limited knowledge of the job market
- Difficulties with housing and family circumstances

Overcoming these barriers may take years of retraining or settling for a lower status job.

In Stockton there is limited information on refugees entering the workforce. This is partially due to the fact that there is limited monitoring once an individual is granted refugee status and is permitted to work. Secondly, those individuals who do go on to work do not necessarily continue to self identify as refugees and are thereby not classified as such. July 2003 figures from the employment services of Joblink show the following:

- 12 persons (self defined as refugees) have registered for employment services (Mill Lane 9, Other Stockton 3)
- Of those registered:
 - 4 persons are under 25 years and 8 persons are 25-49 years
 - 3 persons have entered employment
 - 2 persons have gone onto full time education

National and Regional Integration Strategy:

- The national strategy in “Full and Equal Citizens” discusses the following ideas(Home Office, 2000):
 - Develop a response to the wider employment needs of refugees.
 - Skill harnessing that leads refugees to gainful employment.
 - Develop programmes to help refugees return to their original or related careers.
 - Training sessions on refugee issues delivered to local communities and employment service staff to provide a more comprehensive service.
- The regional strategy includes the following (NECASS, 2002):
 - Gather more information about the skills of refugees
 - Ensure a supportive environment for skill utilisation. (skills of focus include appropriate language skills and knowledge of the working culture).
 - Strong support from regional employers.

Recommendations for Refugee Integration Strategy:

- Assessment of the occupations and skill levels of local refugees and creation of a local skills database.
- Proactive pursuit of employers to identify areas for practice placements and mentorship activities.
- Coordinated efforts of employment service agencies and refugee community groups to identify needs and gaps in service.
- Creation of a full time course that combines language, cultural studies, careers advice and orientation.
- Highlight the success stories of local refugee professionals and entrepreneurs such as physicians returning to medical practice, or area business owners.

‘Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.’

Article 23. United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948.

7. HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Case Study

Robert is HIV positive. He found this out while he was living in London prior to his dispersal to Stockton. He now receives specialist care. He has not told friends, family, or even other health care professionals about his HIV status because he says “people talk too much, I don’t need to be judged.” He was referred to Teesside Positive Action and states that this has given him support. Robert says that in Stockton he was surprised that people he meets are not informed about HIV.

Demographics:

- In a survey conducted by the North East Public Health Observatory examining the health needs of refugees, questionnaires revealed (Wilson, 2002):
 - 82% identified mental health as the most frequently encountered health issue, followed by dental health.
 - 79% of service providers felt the largest difficulty in planning and delivering services was refugees’ lack of understanding of health services.
- Sexual health research involving surveys with 250 refugees in Stockton showed the following needs (Elden, Bedding & MacDonald, 2003):
 - Knowledge
 - 68% did not know the location of the nearest sexual health clinic
 - Accessible and appropriate services
 - 40% had never obtained advice on sexual health
 - 33% had a problem accessing services due to location
 - Promotion of a safer sex culture
 - 43% have paid for sex in the UK
 - 50% would like more information in HIV testing
 - Counselling support and stronger community relations
 - Common feelings of loneliness, rejection and boredom
- Parkfield/Mill Lane and Stockton as a whole is higher in all chronic diseases including cancer, respiratory disease and CHD (Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, 2003).

Issues:

Evidence suggests that many residents of Stockton experience an unequal burden of poor health. This may be related to a genetic disposition, physical environment or lifestyle (Neighbourhood Matters, 2003). It is also necessary to examine the relationship between health and socio-economic factors, as it is well known that issues such as poverty, employment, education and housing all impact the community well-being (Burnett et al., 2001, Department of Health, 2003, Neighbourhood Matters, 2003).

Some of the strategies to tackle poor health (as identified by the Local Strategic Partnership) in Stockton include:

- Addressing health inequalities
- Community based health education
- Provision on childcare for young mothers wishing to return to school
- Audit of service provision related to health issues
- Support and advice for carers
- Support for people with mental health needs
- Ease of access
- Development of community based therapy and services
- Increasing participation in physical activities

It is also well understood that refugees face multiple health related issues. Some are health and nutritional issues which are endemic in their countries of origin. Upon flight from their countries, there are the additional health risks of physical trauma, endemic disease and malnutrition. After arrival to the UK refugees are then confronted with the effects of poverty, dependence and lack of social support. This all serves to undermine both physical and mental health (Burnett et al., 2001), (Cohen, 1998). Studies of refugee health in the UK have revealed that one in six refugees has a physical health problem serious enough to affect their life and two thirds have experienced anxiety and depression (Burnett et al., 2001).

National and Regional Integration Strategy:

- The national integration strategy in “Full and Equal Citizens” recommends the following (Home Office, 2000):
 - GPs provide an appropriate, effective, and comprehensive service.
 - National Refugee Integration Forum to examine gaps in provision to refugees such as raising awareness amongst health care professionals and refugees.
 - Additional resource measures will be provided to take account of refugees arriving to Local Authorities.
 - GPs be given incentives to devote extra time and resources to these patients on first attendance
- The regional strategy for integration is as follows (NECASS, 2002):
 - Improve information on health issues and make more easily available
 - Establish a system for collection and dissemination of information
 - Allocate more resources for mental health services including responding to mental trauma

Recommendations for Refugee Integration Strategy:

- Build upon good practice examples of community based health programmes serving refugees.
- Expand refugee specific initiatives to a health care needs assessment of refugees in Stockton. Identify areas for provision of health promotion initiatives such as access to services and education needs.
- Provide a comprehensive mental health service targeted for refugee needs (ie: addressing issues such as post traumatic stress, loss of family, victims of torture or rape)
- Develop partnerships with health professionals and refugee community leaders to encourage peer education programmes.
- Community-based health services and PCT to implement comprehensive health strategy that addresses the need for information, accessible services, and counselling and support.

‘The Contracting States shall accord to refugees lawfully staying in their territory the same treatment with respect to public relief and assistance as is accorded to their nationals’

Article 23. Public Relief.

United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees 1951.

8. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Case Study

Stephen* states that if he is given positive refugee status, he would like to stay in Stockton and continue his University degree. Overall he likes living here but has found life harder than expected. One concern for him is personal safety. Because there are many refugees near where he lives in Parkfield, Stephen feels that some people come there specifically to “cause trouble” [with refugees]. He described several racist incidents and said he did not report them because friends told him that contacting the police would not help. Instead, his solution is to stay with friends, not go out at night, or to stay near CCTV cameras. The most difficult part aspect of his life is waiting for a decision from the Home Office. He says that it makes him feel “trapped” and unable to move forward with his life. What he finds frustrating is the uncertainty of his future. He compares life in Stockton with his experience in a refugee camp. “At least in the camp, I knew the decision would come. Here, I have waited for two years and I still don’t know what will happen.” Stephen has received support from his church, college and voluntary agencies and feels this has helped. Stephen would like to socialise with more local people but finds it difficult because “some of them don’t like refugees”. Stephen would like to find more places where he could meet people and make friends.

Demographics:

- Between 25 and 50% of people surveyed in Parkfield/Mill Lane area mentioned action on crime as a major factor in improving their quality of life. Drug misuse and tackling drug dealing as important issues to address (Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, 2003).
- Household survey results from Parkfield/Mill Lane which included usual residents and asylum seekers showed that the majority of usual residents were either very dissatisfied (36%) with the area or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (33%). This contrasts with a majority (76%) of asylum seeker respondents who were fairly satisfied with the area (Parkfield Neighbourhood Management, 2002).
- The household survey showed that two thirds of usual residents wanted to move out of the area (75%) whereas nearly half of the asylum seeker group (47%) did not wish to move (Parkfield Neighbourhood Management, 2002).

Some examples of the household survey include the following (Parkfield Neighbourhood Management, 2002):

Survey Question: Has the area got better or worse in the last 3 years?

	Usual Resident	Asylum Seekers
Better	5 (7%)	17 (85%)
Worse	56 (74%)	0
Unchanged	12 (16%)	3 (15%)

Survey Question: Do you want to move out of the area?

	Usual Resident	Asylum Seekers
Yes	41 (75%)	1 (5%)
No	7 (13%)	9 (47%)

Survey Question: Is there a lot of community spirit in the area?

	Usual Resident	Asylum Seekers
Yes	17 (23%)	17 (81%)
No	46 (61%)	3 (14%)

Issues:

The above survey shows opposite opinions from the usual resident population and the refugee population with refugees having greater satisfaction and approval of the area than the usual resident population. This may be due to lower community expectations from refugees or higher expectations from the usual residents. Because integration is a two way process, further community development work should focus on understanding the differences in attitudes and perceptions of the usual resident community and the refugee community.

The Stockton Borough Council conducted a survey of 255 BME residents to examine quality of life issues. This survey included both local residents and refugees. Findings of this survey showed that (BME Survey, 2002):

Safety

- 42% of refugees reported experiencing verbal abuse with 26% reported having suffered from this
- 30% of verbal abuse cases and 48% of harassment cases stated the incident had been reported

Quality of Life

- 2% of refugees stated dissatisfaction with the Council (16% of residents stated dissatisfaction)

Education

- 56% of total respondents (residents and refugees) stated that there was nothing that made it difficult to further training or education. 13% of refugees mentioned language barriers and another 13% mentioned refugee status

Democracy and Citizenship

- 27% of residents knew who their Councillor was as compared with 2% of refugees
- 12% of residents had met their Councillor (0% of refugees had done this)
- 16% of residents and 7% of refugees stated having attended public meetings
- 15% of total respondents stated "information" as the main issue that would enable them to be further involved in community affairs.
- 29% of total respondents stated local meetings as the best way to hear the view of ethnic minorities (20% suggested surveys, 10% through religious groups or centres)
- 25% of total respondents stated they belonged or attended community groups. Groups mentioned were: Mosque/religious centre, SIFC, Five Lamps, Thornaby Muslim Association, and other sport or cultural groups.
- 8% of total respondents knew of the Council's Citizens Panel
- 20% of refugees stated they would not join because they were unsure of status.

National and Regional Integration Strategy:

- The national integration strategy recommends (Home Office, 2000):
 - Community groups to raise awareness of the particular issues facing refugees.
 - Ensure that refugees and other vulnerable groups are included into regeneration.
 - Community support is the key to successful integration
- The regional strategy for community development is as follows (NECASS):
 - Support the development of refugee community organisations (RCOs)
 - Foster continuing involvement of Police and Fire Services with local communities
 - Ensure consultation with young refugees and women groups
 - Continue involvement and support for refugee week
 - Encourage involvement of community and voluntary sector

Recommendations for Refugee Integration Strategy:

- Support RCOs and larger refugee network to address needs and rights of refugees. Forum should be a decision-making body addressing refugee specific needs in Stockton. The network should liaise with the Regional Refugee Forum (RRF) and National Refugee Integration Forum.
- Promote and support cultural celebrations such as Cultural Diversity Day, Teesside World Party, and Refugee Week.
- Audit of mainstream and refugee specific service providers to look at areas of good practice and to avoid duplication.

9. CONCLUSION

It is hoped that this paper serves to foster discussion and strategic planning on areas of refugee integration. It is to provide a broad overview of a variety of issues in many different sectors of the community. The recommendations in each category are purposefully made of general themes rather than specific action points. The dissemination and implementation of the Refugee Integration Strategy should be planned through a partnership of service providers and refugee community leaders. It should also include discussion on matching the Strategy with current LSP initiatives.



‘All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.’

Article 7. United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948.

10 APPENDIX I - MAPPING CURRENT SERVICE PROVISION IN STOCKTON AND THE PARKFIELD/MILL LANE AREA:

Accommodation:

Roselodge is the largest housing provider in Stockton. They have both a temporary hostel for newly arriving refugees and NASS accommodation for those awaiting decisions. The remaining accommodation providers are Lena Homes and the local authority (15% and 17% respectively (People seeking asylum briefing Jan, 2002). Currently, support workers and open advice sessions are provided at both Roselodge and Lena Homes accommodation. In local authority accommodation, individual support workers are provided for each newly arriving refugee or family.

Tristar Homes are an arms length management organisation (ALMO). They are a controlled company of the Council where the ownership of housing stock remains with the council with the local authority acting as a landlord. For those refugees granted positive status, Tristar are responsible for allocation of properties under the Council's Homeless strategy. Tristar currently liaise with SIFC and other organisations to develop cultural and language services and training that are responsive to the refugee communities needs (Tristar presentation, September 2003)

Tristar currently offer the following services:

- Weekly outreach information sessions at SIFC
- Staff training on cultural and refugee issues
- Customer liaison group to address refugee-specific needs
- Involvement in cultural celebrations and gatherings

Education/Training:

Education and Training provision is offered at various venues throughout Stockton. SIFC is the main venue for ESOL provision in the Parkfield/Mill Lane area.

English Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) training is provided through Stockton Riverside College, Archon 2000 and through the Stockton Borough Council at community centres around Stockton. The Council ESOL venues are primarily at SIFC but classes are also available at other venues. In the past year, the council ESOL courses ran a total of 63 classes at 7 venues. ESOL courses are also combined with other skills such as driving theory, job readiness, English for work, and computer learning. In addition to ESOL, TROC and NVQ courses in computers, childcare, community development and other areas are also offered at community venues such as the Stockton International Family Centre.

Employment:

Particularly in the Parkfield/Mill Lane area, Jobslink and Action Team for Jobs are two of the services providing employment information for refugees.

Jobslink provide employment support in a number of different areas including: applications forms, back to work grants, CV and interview preparation, training and career information. Jobs Link offices are located throughout Stockton in Parkfield, Hardwick, Ragworth, Norton Grange, and Thornaby. Outreach services are provided in Roseworth, Primrose Hill, Parkfield, and Central Stockton.

Action Team for Jobs provide employment advice and support as well as course and training information. Action Team for Jobs also offers a jobs matching service linking into Jobscentre Plus vacancies and Jobsearch support. They have assisted 365 persons into employment since October 2002. Community outreach services are provided in various parts of Stockton including: Hardwick, Roseworth, Parkfield, Portrack and Tilery, Mile House, and Newtown.

Health:

The GP Arrivals Practice provides health services for new refugees in Stockton. The practice includes a physician, 2 nurses and a support and healthcare team that include health advisers, health visitors and counsellors.

Stockton International Family Centre Sehat Health Project is an education, advocacy, and advice health service that works with the local community and provides specialist services to address health barriers in the BME and refugee community. Provides information in community languages, arranges services for interpreters and performs outreach education.

Asylum Support Team Nurse provides an outreach health advice and education service. This includes health drop-in clinics and refugee-specific health programmes. There is also assistance and referrals for refugees with health specific needs such as HIV/AIDS, mental health, and other specialist advice.

Community Development:

Stockton International Family Centre provides the following community development activities for the refugee community. The overarching aim of refugee activities at SIFC is community empowerment and integration. These targets are achieved by a focus on partnership working and refugee leadership. SIFC activities include:

Social and leisure activities:

- Weekly women's group - support and therapeutic leisure activities
- Saturday Drop In - community information and fellowship
- Stockton Refugee Network - facilitation and support of refugee-led body that providing community guidance on refugee needs
- SIFC Football Team - local refugee community that plays other area teams.
- You are Here workshops: Art therapy of an individual and collective focus exhibited in the community

Cultural Events and Celebrations:

- Cultural Diversity Day- Multi agency and community celebration workshops, exhibitions, and performances from many faiths and cultures
- Refugee Week - Celebration of the positive achievements of refugees (Including singing, dance, and musical performances from area refugees)

Advice and Support:

- Weekly advice sessions with North of England Refugee Service (NERS) on asylum and refugee issues
- Weekly volunteers and assistance for move-on accommodation
- Weekly food parcel programme for those without support
- Weekly clothing donations

Refugee partnership organisations with SIFC in the Parkfield Mill Lane area include:

Cleveland Arts, Stockton Voluntary Development Agency, National Coalition for Anti-Deportation Campaigns, Neighbourhood Management, Jobslink, Action Team for Jobs, NERS, Stockton Borough Council, Sure Start, Stocktons Learning Towns, Durham University, Teesside University, Stockton's Learning Towns, Cleveland Fire Brigade, Cleveland Police, Everyday Language Solutions, Stockton Online, as well as numerous faith communities and other voluntary organisations.

A number of churches and faith communities in the Parkfield/Mill Lane area offer support, fellowship, and community outreach. For example:

- Lightfoot Grove Church provides a Monday evening meal and social network for the refugee community, as well as outreach and case support for individuals.
- Hartington Road Mosque provides assistance, support and individual outreach
- Salvation Army Centre provides meeting space, support and food parcels for those in need
- Yarm Road Methodist Church, United Reform Church, Saint Mary's Church and many other faith communities in the Parkfield Mill Lane area offer community outreach and support.

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