



Refugee Support Group Devon

Evaluation of Pilot

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Acknowledgements

Many thanks go to all those who took part in this evaluation – particularly those clients and volunteers who took part in interviews or focus groups. Special thanks go to Hassan Daneshgar interpreter & translator, and Annette Hughes, Project Co-ordinator.

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Exec Summary

Background

The Refugee Support Group Devon

In 2001, the Refugee Support Group (RSG) was formed under the Devon and Exeter Racial Equality Council (DEREC) in response to people seeking asylum in Britain due to conflict in their own country. In May 2002, the RSG became an independent charity governed by a management committee which is an elected group of local people, asylum seekers and refugees. Much of RSG's funding now comes from the Big Lottery, which has enabled the employment of a full time project co-ordinator.

RSG's main aims are to:

- Promote the well being of all asylum seekers and refugees in Devon and to assist them in making informed choices about adapting to life in the UK.
- Encourage the positive participation of the wider community in the lives of resident asylum seekers and refugees, and to raise awareness of the general public about the misinformation and prejudice surrounding asylum seekers and refugees.
- Provide a voice for this community and make representations on their behalf on issues such as: the voucher system, UK immigration policy and UK dispersal policy.

RSG's main activities are: an information and enquiry service, English classes, access to leisure and sporting activities. RSG also offers practical support and resources, and personal support through volunteers and an emergency fund.

This Evaluation

The evaluation is partly being carried out to meet criteria of RSG's funders (The Big Lottery), and partly to ensure that the organisation can learn from its pilot and start up period to further improve the service it offers to refugees and asylum seekers in Devon. The evaluation is being carried out as a one-off review to assess the difference the RSG has made and to look at recommendations for its future. This evaluation is being carried out by two experienced external evaluators.

Methodology for the Evaluation

The evaluation methodology comprised of several different strands:

- Reading, analysing & summarising existing written records
- Analysing monitoring data
- Three focus groups with stakeholders (steering group members and service users; volunteers; and the English students group) to gain qualitative feedback on RSG and its services.
- 1:1 telephone interviews with users of RSG's services to gain further feedback on client's experience of RSG and its services.

Summary of Results

In total, this evaluation has captured the views of 9 volunteers and 19 customers of RSG (8%).

Analysis of Client Data

- 235 individuals were seen during the period March 2004 to April 2005. 58% of these individuals were asylum seekers, and 29% were refugees.
- The Refugee Support Group worked with clients from 20 different countries from March 2004 to April 2005, with the majority being Afghan (37%) or Iranian (36%).
- The majority of clients were men - around 9% were women
- RSG had 2,379 contacts with their 235 clients during March 2004 – April 2005, an average of 170 contacts per month.
- The majority of clients (62%) had less than 5 contacts with RSG. The average number of contacts per person, was 10, with the number of contacts per client during this period ranging from 1 to 120. Iranian clients had (on average) more contacts than those from other nationalities. Clients who were both refugees and asylum seekers had (on average) the most contacts with RSG.
- The most frequent type of contact with clients was for their use of RSG's office facilities (31%). Asylum queries and the emergency fund were the next most frequent reasons for contact.

Volunteers Focus Group

- The volunteers at the focus group had been involved mainly since the early days of RSG, and had involvement over a wide range of the organisation's activities
- The main things volunteers had gained from their involvement were: an understanding of the issues facing asylum seekers; job satisfaction; contact with a wide range of people and friendship.
- Volunteers have a good understanding of the activities and aims of RSG.
- Volunteers viewed RSG's achievements against the activities provided as generally good – particularly the English classes, signposting service, the talks for external organisations and the housing support.
- The volunteers came up with a wide range of potential improvements for RSG. The four main points were as follows: more awareness raised about the issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers, and their needs; improved profile of RSG; more understanding by RSG of refugee & asylum seekers' needs; improvements in the way RSG uses volunteers (including training, and more input).

Customer Focus Group

- The customers attending the focus group reflected RSG's general clients, in that they were all men and most were either Afghan or Iranian.
- Half those present had found out about RSG through Devon County Council Social Services, and half through word of mouth. They had first approached RSG for a range of reasons. The most frequently given being befriending, sport & leisure facilities and help with legal issues & asylum applications.
- 3 of the respondents had moved from customers to volunteers with RSG.
- Clients scored RSG's achievements against their services as relatively good on all counts. They felt the best achievements were against the sports & leisure activities and the development of volunteers, including customers.
- Customers came up with many potential areas for improvement within RSG. The following points being the most common/salient:
 - Need for all volunteers to be well trained & committed

- need for respect from all those using RSG
 - improvements needed in the English classes (organisation & resources)
 - there are problems with the housing advice/support available
 - the newsletter needs developing
- 3 of those present reported no impact on their lives from RSG. 6 said the organisation had a major impact on their lives and 1 that it had some impact – the impacts ranged from access to resources to major life-changing things including housing, health & social contact.

English Language Class Focus Group

- Feedback from the one person attending the English language class focus group, highlighted the fact that he did not know anything about RSG and what they offered (despite being present at one of its services).

Telephone Interviews with Customers

- Six telephone interviews were carried out with RSG clients. Five were with Iranians, one with an Afghan. All were with men. All interviews were carried out in Farsi.
- Interviewees had contacted the RSG for a variety of reasons, including issues around health services, access to sport & leisure activities, legal advice and translation.
- The help received from RSG covered a variety of things. One person had received no help, but all the others had received a mixture of services including: office facilities, legal support/advice, leisure & sport activities & financial help.
- Four of the interviewees reported a very positive benefit for themselves (and their families) from the support they had from RSG. One had received no support, and the other reported some small benefits
- Interviewees were asked about any other help they needed, which RSG couldn't provide. The most common response was a need for interpretation and/or translation services.
- When asked what would have made RSG's services better for them, a wide range of responses was made. The responses given by more than one person were: more staff; bigger venue; interpreters; privacy; better links with other organisations.
- The interviewees particularly liked the fact that the RSG treat everyone fairly, well and with respect (5 respondents). They also liked the feeling that those they met were doing their best to help (3 respondents).
- Three respondents reported that there was nothing they disliked about the RSG. One had no opinion. The other two responses mainly focused on the need for increased organisation and prioritisation.
- When asked what would make the RSG's services better for other people, the main responses related to increased resources for the organisation.
- Two of the respondents wished to say "thank you" to RSG for the support they had received, and two said how important RSG is, and what a blow it would be if its services did not continue.

Conclusions

The Refugee Support Group is providing an invaluable service to refugees and asylum seekers in Devon. It is making a big difference for many of its users.

Having a full-time co-ordinator has greatly increased the work of the organisation and its capacity to deliver services.

Generally, the quality of the services provided are viewed as good by users with some specific improvements needed in some areas.

Recommendations

- RSG need to improve the ways they capture and record client data. They should put in place some simple systems to ensure that basic data is kept on file on each client so that users do not have to repeat the basics of their situation, and so that the organisation has good data on which to base its planning
- RSG need to find some way of capturing feedback from users on an on-going basis to ensure their services are fully meeting needs
- RSG needs to increase its own profile both within the refugee and asylum seeker community and wider
- RSG need to look at providing an improved translation and interpretation service as a high priority
- RSG need to look at improvements within a couple of their services, particularly the English language classes, the housing support, and the newsletter.
- RSG needs to consider whether it wants to extend its work to do more work with women. They should investigate further the need for this support.
- Volunteers are at the core of RSG – their commitment; professionalism and training are of huge importance to the success of the service. Further development of volunteering within the organisation should be undertaken.
- RSG needs to ensure all users and volunteers treat others with respect and understanding – perhaps some basic ground rules for all those using RSG could be drawn up.
- RSG need to look at the analysis of client data included in this evaluation and plan their future services accordingly
- RSG need to identify ways to gain and maximise resources for the future

Introduction

The Refugee Support Group

In 2001, the Refugee Support Group (RSG) was formed under the Devon and Exeter Racial Equality Council (DEREC) in response to people seeking asylum in Britain due to conflict in their own country. In May 2002, the RSG became an independent charity. RSG is governed by a management committee which is an elected group of local people, asylum seekers and refugees who volunteer their time and energy.

Initially asylum seekers were arriving in Exeter under the governments National Asylum Support Services (NASS) and supported by Devon County Council. However, due to lower numbers of asylum seekers being supported in this way and the termination of the local authorities contract with NASS, RSG now assists asylum seekers who are supported by friends and relatives, or are by themselves, and growing numbers of refugees who have settled in Exeter or who migrate here from other cities. Many of those RSG work with are from Afghanistan and Iran, but also support asylum seekers and refugees of other nationalities.

Much of RSG's funding now comes from the Big Lottery, which has enabled the employment of a full time project coordinator. There are several other avenues of funding; Lloyds TSB, Allen Lane Foundation, John Paul Getty Trust, and The Home Office fund a specific 'purposeful activities project' for asylum seekers.

The RSG's main aims are to:

- Promote the well being of all asylum seekers and refugees in Devon and to assist them in making informed choices about adapting to life in the UK.
- Encourage the positive participation of the wider community in the lives of resident asylum seekers and refugees, and to raise awareness of the general public about the misinformation and prejudice surrounding asylum seekers and refugees.
- Provide a voice for this community and make representations on their behalf on issues such as: the voucher system, UK immigration policy and UK dispersal policy.

RSG's main activities are: an information and enquiry service, English classes, access to leisure and sporting activities. RSG also offers practical support to individuals in utilising resources essential in contacting the vital services they may require. RSG is also able to offer personal support through volunteers and financial assistance in terms of hardship through its emergency fund (from private donations).

The Refugee Support Group pilot project was set up initially to run for one year, funding was sufficient to run it for 18 months. The pilot project finished at the end of March 2005.

During that time it provided support to refugees and asylum seekers in Devon. Support included:

- meeting & greeting, befriending
- signposting to legal, housing, employment etc advice
- English-language classes
- advocacy & campaigning work
- housing support via volunteers at HAG
- sports and leisure activities

- information/talks/speakers for external organisations
- development of volunteers, including "customers" of R. S. G.
- volunteer placements for customers in other voluntary/community organisations
- a monthly-ish newsletter

RSG has a database of approximately 60 volunteers. About 60% of these are very actively involved in specific projects, and all are extremely committed.

The RSG rent office space from the Exeter Council for Voluntary Services (ECVS). Being under the same roof as so many other voluntary services has huge benefits. The main one being the level of expertise, knowledge and support that can be shared between organisations. RSG is able to make 2 computers available to volunteers and asylum seekers and refugees. There is also a telephone and fax available and a photocopier and laminator.

This Evaluation

This evaluation is being carried out by two experienced external evaluators. The evaluation is partly being carried out to meet criteria of RSG's funders (The Big Lottery), and partly to ensure that the organisation can learn from its pilot and start up period to further improve the service it offers to refugees and asylum seekers in Devon. The evaluation is being carried out as a one-off review to assess the difference the RSG has made and to look at recommendations for its future.

RSG agreed that the evaluation needed to address three aspects:

1. **Quantity** - the number of customers, their status, place of origin, nature of enquiry.
2. **Quality** - customer satisfaction with the service, gaps in service, improvements to service, unmet needs
3. **Impact** - the changes and benefits RSG has brought to their customers and other stakeholders

Methodology

The evaluation methodology comprised of several different strands:

1) Reading, analysing & summarising existing written records

This included annual reports, general promotional information and other written information held by RSG

2) Analysing monitoring data

This involved analysis of the day records and client records kept by the RSG.

3) Focus Groups

Carrying out three focus groups with stakeholders to gain qualitative feedback on RSG and its services. Groups were carried out with: steering group members and service users; volunteers; and the English students group. The aims of each focus group were to gain the same information, although slightly different methods were used depending on the group. A full copy of the focus group outlines can be found in Appendix 2. A translator was used at the groups where appropriate.

Focus Group Aims

From their experience of the RSG pilot, October 2003-March 2005:

1. What worked well?
2. What didn't work so well?
3. What improvements were needed?
 - o achieved so far?
 - o still needed?
4. What difference did RSG make to the lives of asylum seekers & refugees.

4) Telephone Interviews

Carrying out 1:1 interviews with users of RSG's services. All the interviews were carried out by Hassan Daneshgar using an interview schedule put together by the evaluators. He was an ex-customer of RSG, with the appropriate language and translation skills necessary for this work. Hassan then provided an English translation of the interviews for the evaluators. A copy of the schedule can be found in Appendix 2. It should be noted that these interviews were only carried out with customers for whom RSG were still in contact, had telephone numbers and spoke Farsi.

Results

The following provides a full summary of the data collected for this evaluation. A full copy of data is available on request from the RSG.

Background Data

Case Studies

The following case studies show how RSG works with refugees and asylum seekers. They give a clear picture of the problems faced by clients, and the type of support that RSG offer.

Family from Zimbabwe

Initially the father sought help for his family – his wife, and two teenage children. The mother had EU citizenship, and they were awaiting notification that the rest of the family could stay. RSG helped to find families for the children to live with, as the parents were by then homeless. They were in desperate need of financial help as they were at that point deemed ineligible.

RSG helped with job hunting for the wife (she was eligible to work) and signposting to Social Services for the children to be placed with families, and provided financial help from RSG emergency funds. It also put them in touch with the Salvation Army, who provided them with sleeping bags. The family got in touch with the Home Office using RSG's office facilities.

There was a lot of stress for the family, but the boy and girl both obtained school places. The wife found work, but the husband sadly died (he had cancer).

The family were coming to the office each day at one point for support, because they felt friendless and desperate. RSG support helped them get a new foundation for their lives, and guided them through bureaucratic hurdles. RSG helped them to establish a life here, helped them to stand on their own two feet.

17-year-old Iranian man

He was a minor at time of arrival, and needed to be taken care of. RSG found him accommodation (through Night Stop) and fought his corner with Devon County Council. RSG phoned the Devon Law Centre on his behalf and managed to get a Court Order from the County Solicitor for Social Services to house him. They did so in a Bed & Breakfast where he caught fleas! He was moved from room to room - 5 times in 3 days. RSG went back to the Solicitors, and he is now living with an English family, where he is much happier. RSG informed him about the benefits of volunteering, education and he is now attending English classes at Exeter College. RSG also supported his application for refugee status.

Although his case has still not been resolved, he is now a person with confidence and a future in England, understanding and participating in British culture and life. A happier and motivated, confident young man.

A family arrived in the office – mother, father and two children (16 & 18 years old). They were destitute and had been sleeping in a car. They had difficulty getting employment or help with housing as they did not have their documents with them – the had been retained by the Home office on their arrival. RSG office volunteers assisted the family to get legal help by telephoning to find a solicitor able to take the case on. Volunteers also contacted other charities to get help with accommodation. A sympathetic landlord was found who was able to house the family until the documents were sorted out. RSG was able to assist with financial support to buy food from the Emergency Fund. Fortunately one member of the family was entitled to support once her passport was returned from the Home Office and the solicitor assisted in obtaining permission for the whole family to be in the UK. RSG was then able to help the family to look for jobs, assisting in writing CVs, and signposting the family to employment agencies. Within a few months the family were self sufficient.

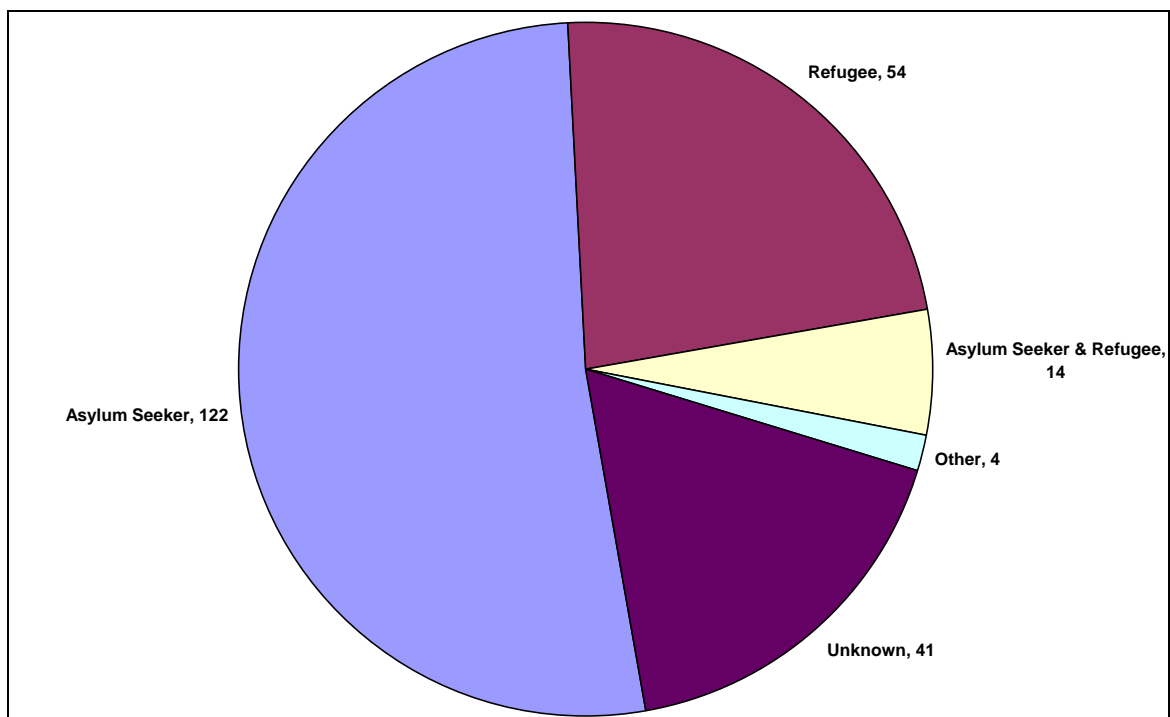
An asylum seeker arrived in the RSG office seeking help, having been released from an immigration detention centre with the support from London charities. He had come to Exeter to get help from a friend. This relationship had broken down and he no longer had a place to stay or financial support. This man had already been through the asylum application process which had resulted in a removal to his home country. However, when he arrived at this destination, the officials there would not allow him to enter and he was returned to the UK with the British security officers who had escorted there, and detained. RSG assisted him to get legal help and he was able to register with a local solicitor. RSG volunteers also helped establish his situation from the charities supporting him from London which resulted in a weekly allowance being issued to him from RSG. Through regular visits to the RSG office, he soon made friends and built a larger support network including a friend to provide accommodation. A year on, he is yet to have nay answers from the Home Office and is still living with financial support from the London charity through RSG. Volunteers at RSG support him by contacting his solicitor and helping to track further information.

Analysing monitoring data

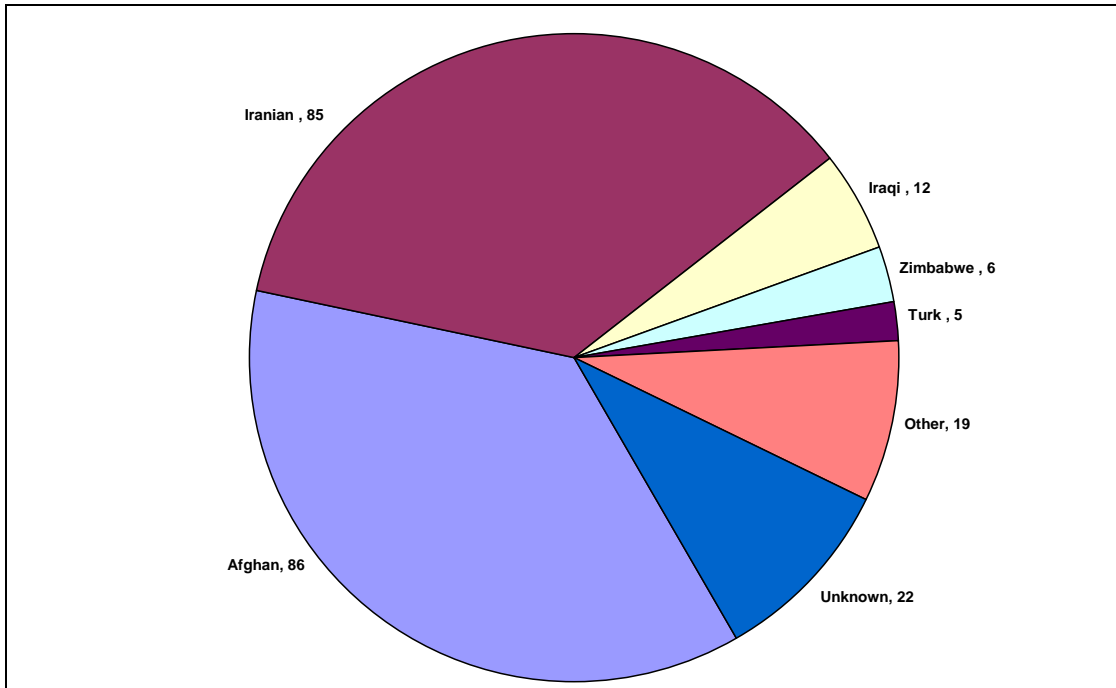
Warning: the evaluator wishes to point out that much of the data on which this analysis is based is incomplete. There are also many discrepancies in the data. These problems are partly due to RSG's wish to allow people to only give background information if they wish to, and partly to problems with the information management systems used. However, we believe that the information below does give a reasonable picture of the work of RSG over the period March 2004 – April 2005.

235 individuals were seen during the period March 2004 to April 2005.

58% (136) of these individuals were asylum seekers, and 29% (68) were refugees (nb 14 individuals were both). 2% of clients were neither an asylum seeker nor a refugee, and for 17% their status is unknown.



The Refugee Support Group worked with clients from 20 different countries from March 2004 to April 2005, with the majority being Afghan (37%) or Iranian (36%). The following Chart shows a further breakdown of country of origin.



Of those seen by RSG, the majority were men - around 20 (8.5%) were women. A larger proportion of the women were refugees (45%) than of the overall clients, with a smaller proportion being asylum seekers (30%). The status of 25% was unrecorded. The women were of ten different nationalities (the nationality of 4 was unknown). 15% of the women were Iraqi, 15% Iranian, 10% from Zimbabwe and 10% from Afghanistan. The remainder were of a range of nationalities including Chinese, Moldovan and Egyptian.

RSG had 2,379 contacts with their 235 clients during March 2004 – April 2005 – an average of 170 contacts per month.

The majority of clients (62%) had less than 5 contacts with RSG. The average number of contacts per person, was 10 over the 14 months, with the number of contacts per client during this period ranging from 1 to 120.

Numbers of Contacts with RSG

Number Contacts	Number Clients
One	77
Two – five	69
Six – ten	21
Eleven – Twenty	31
Twenty One – Fifty	31
Over 50	6

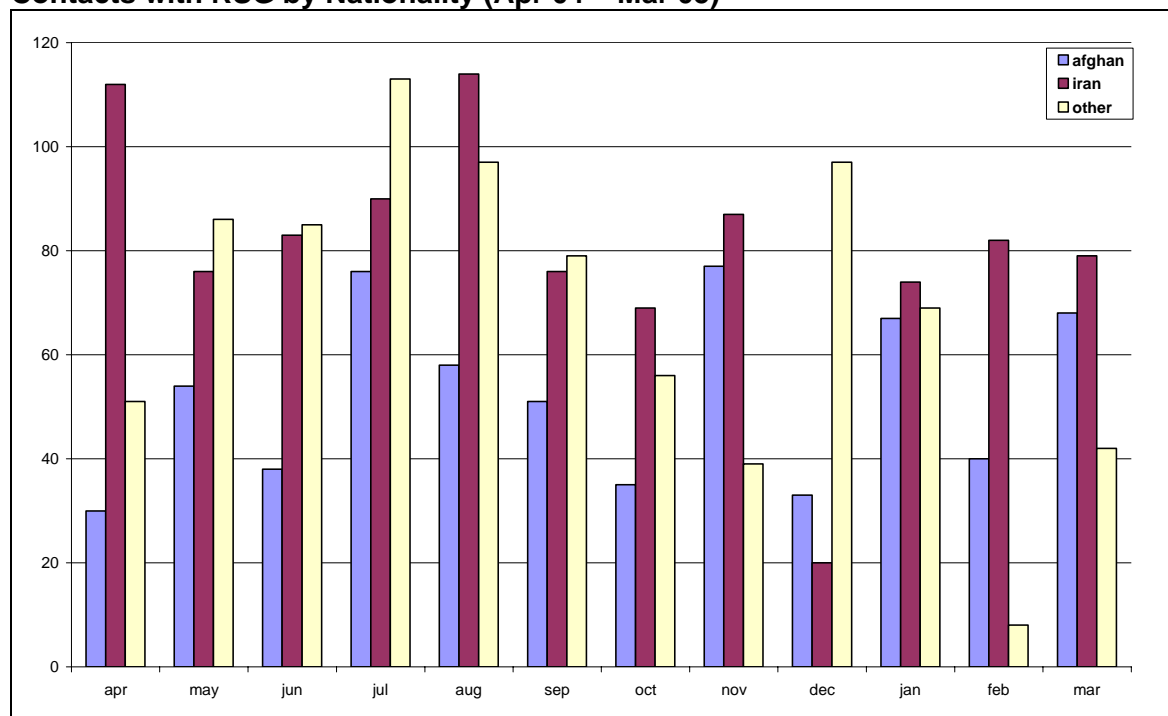
We can see from the Table below, that Iranian clients had (on average) more contacts than those from other nationalities. Afghan clients received around the average (10.8) and those from other nationalities were in contact far less than the average.

Contacts with RSG by Nationality (Mar 2004 – Apr 2005)

Nationality	Contacts	Clients	Average contacts
Afghan	929	86	10.8
Iran	1218	85	14.3
Iraqi	82	12	6.8
Zimbabwe	24	6	4.0
Turk	10	5	2.0
Other	71	19	3.7
Unknown	45	22	2.0

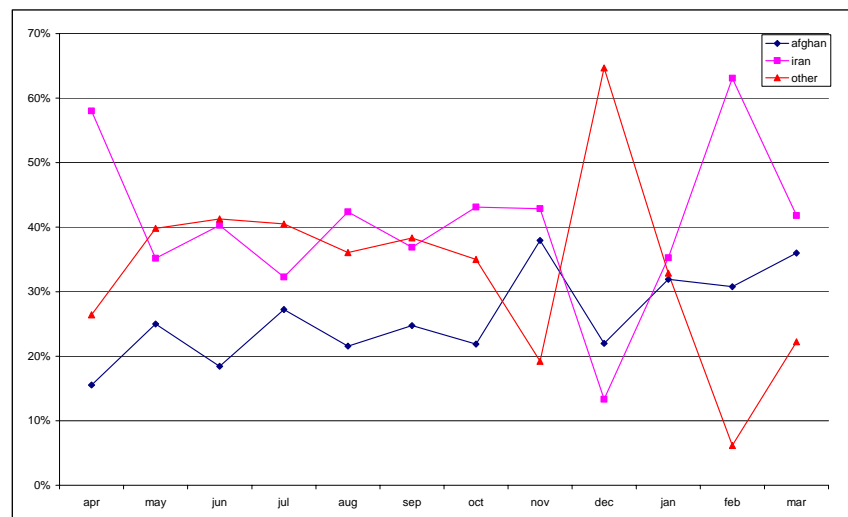
A further breakdown of the figures available for Apr 04 – Mar 05 from the daily enquiry sheets gives the following details of contacts over time by nationality.

Contacts with RSG by Nationality (Apr 04 – Mar 05)



Contacts with RSG by Nationality (%)

We can see from the Chart to the right that contacts stayed fairly constant until December 04, when things started to change in the different levels of contacts with different nationalities.



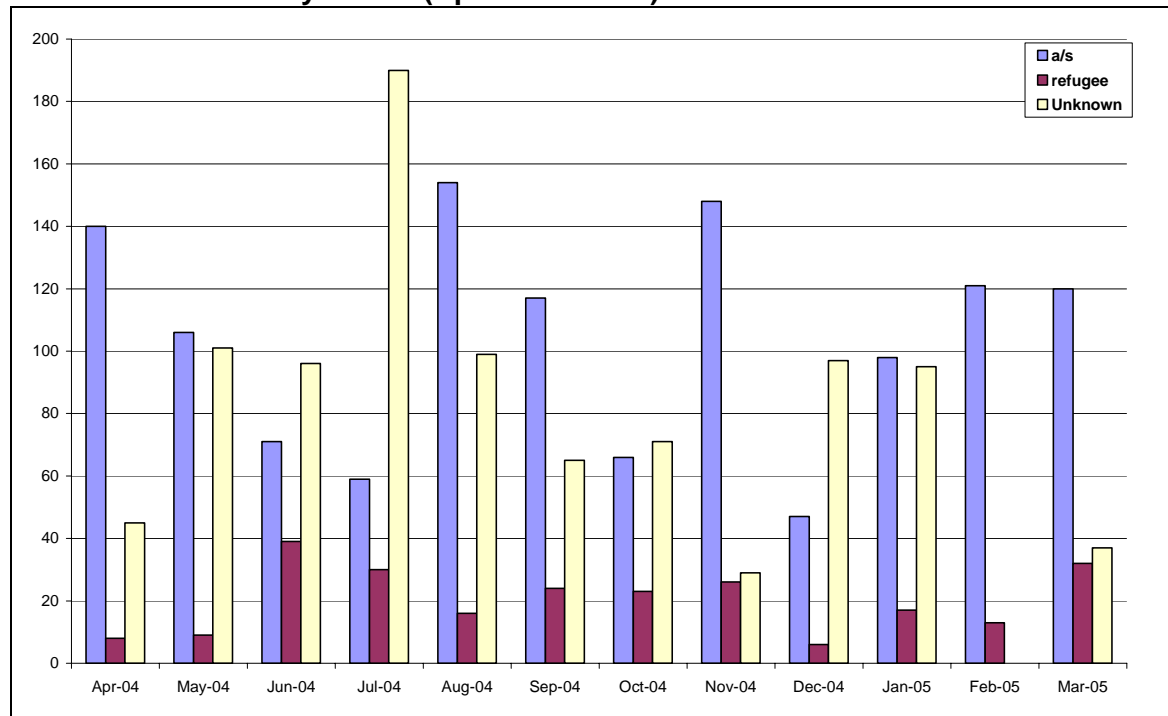
We can see from the Table below, that clients who were both refugees and asylum seekers had (on average) the most contacts with RSG. Asylum seekers had more than average contacts, whereas refugees contact with RSG was much lower.

Contacts with RSG by Status of Client (Mar 2004 – Apr 2005)

	Contacts	Clients	Average contacts
Asylum Seeker	1743	122	14.3
Refugee	211	54	3.9
Both	244	14	17.4
Other	5	4	1.3
Unknown	176	41	4.3

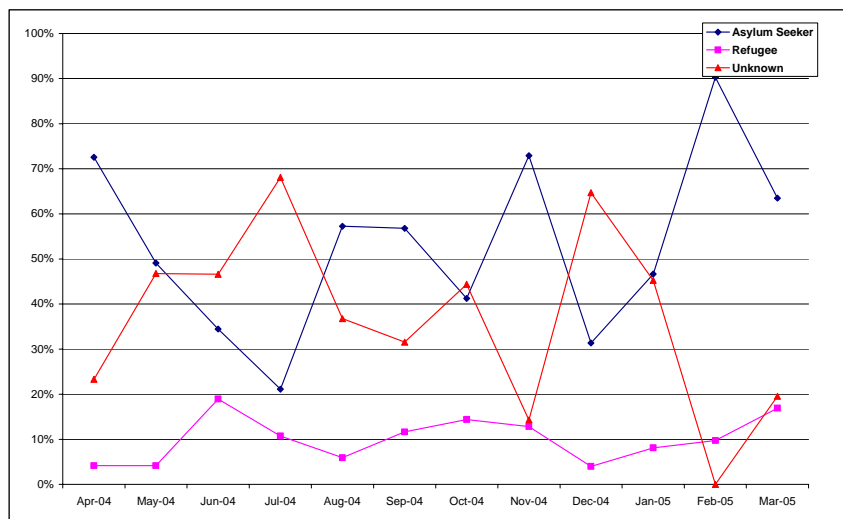
A further breakdown of the figures available for Apr 04 – Mar 05 from the daily enquiry sheets gives the following details of contacts over time by status.

Contacts with RSG by Status (Apr 04 – Mar 05)



Contacts with RSG by Status (%)

We can see from the Chart to the right that contacts stayed fairly constant, with an average of 53% of contact with asylum seekers and 10% with refugees.

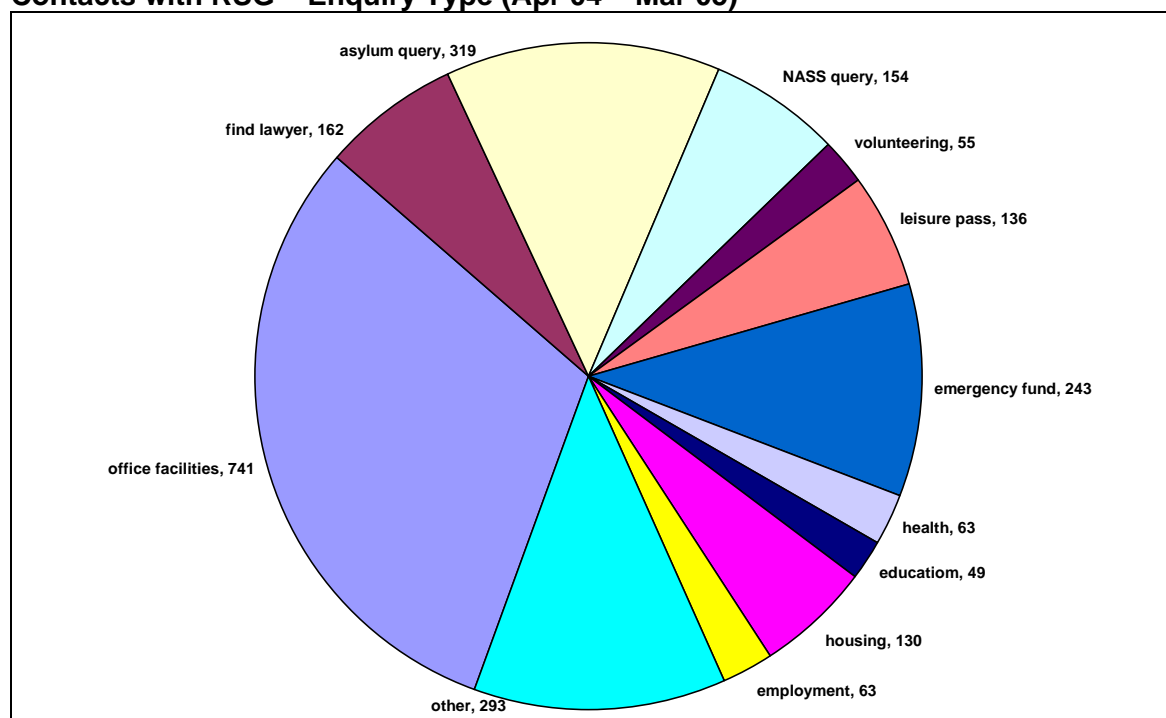


RSG keep day sheets to record the types of enquiries that clients make. The following table and chart show the contacts with clients during the 12 month period April 2004 – March 2005. (NB this is a shorter period than that to which much of the earlier data relates).

We can see from the data that by far the most frequent type of contact with clients was for their use of RSG’s office facilities (31%). Asylum queries and the emergency fund were the next most frequent reasons for contact.

Enquiry Type	Number Enquiries	% Enquiries
Office facilities	741	31%
Asylum query	319	13%
Emergency fund	243	10%
Find lawyer	162	7%
NASS query	154	6%
Leisure pass	136	6%
Housing	130	5%
Health	63	3%
Employment	63	3%
Volunteering	55	2%
Education	49	2%
Other	293	12%

Contacts with RSG – Enquiry Type (Apr 04 – Mar 05)



Focus Groups

Volunteers

9 volunteers attended this session. The following gives details of their involvement:

First contact with RSG

Most of the volunteers had been involved with RSG from their early days, but a few had more recent involvement.

Year got involved	No. volunteers
2001/the beginning	3
2002	3
2003	1
2004	1
2005	1

Contribution to RSG

Contribution	Number Volunteers
Helped in office	4
English language support	2
Organising activities	2
Housing advice session	1
Produced newsletter	1
Translation	1
Member of core group	1
Volunteer placements	1
Organising events/functions (eg AGM)	1

What was gained from volunteering with RSG

What volunteers gained	Number Volunteers
More understanding of issues facing asylum seekers	5
"Job" satisfaction	4
Contact with a wide range of people	3
Friendship	3
Confidence	2
Confronting own preconceived ideas	2
New skills	1

The following quotes give a further picture of the benefits volunteers felt they had gained from their involvement with RSG.

Enjoyed contact and experience with a lot of people from different and interesting backgrounds, with a wide range of needs

Gained much satisfaction, and knowledge, friends and new skills. Confronting own preconceived ideas and opinions, this is a continuous process

Gained satisfaction through helping & listening; meeting people and learning about different cultures

Stress. Understanding of other people's needs. Tolerance and satisfaction. Much more interest in people from different backgrounds

The volunteers were asked what services they believed that RSG delivered. They successfully identified the services, showing that the volunteers had a good level of knowledge of the overall work of the organisation, what it is trying to achieve and what it could provide for clients.

Those present at the focus group were asked to individually score RSG's level of achievement against the services the pilot had aimed to provide. The following shows the average scores for each service (out of a maximum of 5). We can see that volunteers viewed RSG's achievements against the activities as generally good – particularly the English classes, signposting service, the talks for external organisations and the housing support.

Planned Activity	Average Score
English language classes	4.3
Signposting to legal, housing, employment advice	4.0
Information/talks/speakers for external organisations	4.0
Housing support via volunteers at HAG	4.0
Advocacy & campaigning work	3.7
Sports & leisure activities	3.6
Development of volunteers, including "customers" of RSG	3.6
Meeting, greeting & befriending	3.4
Regular newsletter	3.3
Volunteer placements for customers in other voluntary/community organisations	2.5

The following provides ideas that were given for improvements to these services. We have included the full list, as they provide potential pointers for RSG's future development.

Meeting, greeting & befriending

- *Making sure the service users trust RSG as much as they should.*
- *understanding the nature of their needs*
- *more use made of RSG by refugees as well as asylum seekers*
- *need to know who have come to Exeter and their needs*
- *"orientation" befriending*
- *involving the families of refugees*
- *improvement could be made in accessibility, awareness, activities among women refugees and asylum seekers - often reluctant to come in, and sometimes isolated*

Signposting to legal, housing, employment etc advice

- *We must be careful not to impose what "we" think is best for "them"*
- *legal support or knowledge for asylum seekers & refugees*

English-language classes

- *More students*
- *better organisation*
- *more materials such as books, dictionaries, cassettes etc*

Information/talks/speakers for external organisations

- *more systematic push to develop network of contacts*
- *raising awareness regarding local, national and global issues facing asylum seekers & refugees outside RSG*

- *volunteers need help to develop their confidence at speaking about refugees outside RSG*
- *refugees arrived in Exeter needs to know about RSG Devon*
- *raising awareness→ better understanding→ less barriers→ more trust→ more volunteers→ better integration of asylum seekers and refugees*

Housing support via volunteers at HAG

- *Better understanding of refugee housing needs by Exeter City Council.*

Sports and leisure activities

- *More experience of southwest culture & environment?*
- *Volunteer to improve it e.g. through Ivy Project*

Regular newsletter

- *More input from asylum seekers & refugees*
- *More member contributions.*
- *Some feedback*

Development of volunteers, including "customers" of RSG

- *More volunteer consolidation e.g. through regular meetings -- praise achievements, points to raise etc*
- *clearer training about how to refer customers to other helping organisations needed*
- *core group decisions -- could be more in touch with volunteers e.g. brief reports in newsletter*

Volunteer placements for customers in other voluntary/community organisations

- *More space*
- *More admin assistance Annette (part-time, funded post?)*

The group discussed the suggestions, to identify which improvements had already been made, and those which still needed to be made. The group agreed that much progress had been made, but there was still work to be done against all improvements suggested, to make the service even better.

Service Users Focus Group

This session was run on the day that the steering group for the activities project would normally meet, to ensure some attendance at the focus group. Additional users were invited to attend on this occasion. The steering group was set up by the activity co-ordinator to get people involved in choosing and organising activities. As such those present are likely to over-represent users of this particular service.

10 people attended this session. The following gives details of their backgrounds:

Country of Origin

Country of Origin	Number respondents
Iran	5
Afghanistan	4
Iraq	1

First contact with RSG

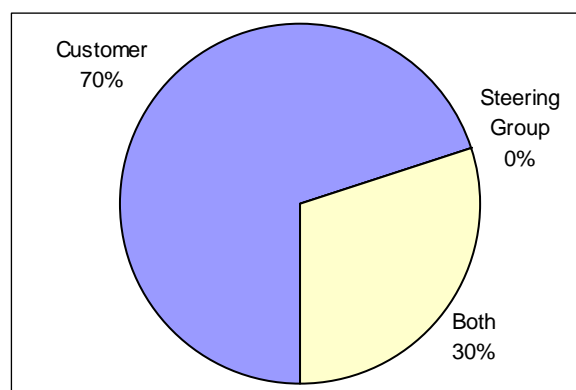
Year of first contact with RSG	Number respondents
2002	1
2003	5
2004	2
2005	1
Unknown	1

How they found out about RSG

How they found out about RSG	Number respondents
Devon County Council Social Services	5
Through friends/relations	3
RSG volunteers	2

Involvement with RSG

All the people present were customers of the RSG, and 3 were also involved with the steering group.



Help sought from RSG

Help sought	Number respondents
Befriending	4
Sport & leisure facilities	3
Help with legal issues & asylum application	3
Financial help	2
Improving English	2
Help with interpretation & translation	1
Help with appeal against HO decision	1
Housing advice	1

The following quotes give more flavour to the support RSG had given to some of these respondents:

Financial help for travel fare to London to see my solicitor as well as wanting to have free access to sport facilities

Help to do with making an appeal against the Home office decision, assistance with corresponding with the Home Office and other organisations

Help to do with legal issues regarding my asylum application and making use of internet facilities at RSG office.

I was homeless and in need of somewhere to stay and therefore was desperate for someone to help me whether to make some phone calls for accommodation or to give me some advice so I could find myself a job. I also needed a lot of help to do with my legal issues regarding my asylum application.

Contribution to RSG

3 respondents gave details of contributions they had made themselves towards RSG's work:

Doing something to help others & writing poems for the newsletter

Helping others with English language ability, doing some advocacy work & contacting other service users via telephone when RSG needed my Persian language skills

Interpreter, translator & cultural communicator

Those present at the focus group were asked to individually score RSG's level of achievement against the services the pilot had aimed to provide. The following shows the average scores for each service (out of a maximum of 5). As for the volunteers, clients scored RSG's achievements as relatively good on all counts. They felt the best achievement was against the sports & leisure activities and the development of volunteers, including customers.

Planned Activity	Avg Score
Sports & leisure activities	4.9
Development of volunteers, including "customers" of RSG	4.0
Meeting, greeting & befriending	3.9
Volunteer placements for customers in other voluntary/community organisations	3.6
English language classes	3.4
Advocacy & campaigning work	3.2
Signposting to legal, housing, employment advice	3.2
Information/talks/speakers for external organisations	3.0
Housing support via volunteers at HAG	2.8
Regular newsletter	2.8

The following provides ideas that were given for improvements to these services. All comments have been included here, to enable RSG to use the feedback in its forward planning.

Meeting, greeting & befriending

- *Sometimes volunteers seem to want to know too much about service users private issues*
- *There has been occasions when a service user's life is badly played with because the volunteer involved wouldn't care any less.*

- *Much better understanding of each other and each other's cultures are needed, and therefore, alongside with those who are already working, some one else, who has a good understanding of cultural issues and cultural misunderstandings whom can act accordingly and promptly, should be working in RSG*
- *RSG should organise some meetings so local people and the immigrants can meet up*
- *RSG needs more entertaining and equipment*
- *Sometimes there are some people who go to RSG who see themselves as superior to others, whether Afghan, Iranian or whoever, and they do not speak to others in the proper manner; they should not go to RSG.*

Signposting to legal, housing, employment etc advice

- *Much better communication and collaboration with other organisations are needed.*
- *There should be some people with legal expertise involved with RSG*

English-language classes

- *English teachers can make a file for each student so what they learn in each session can be recorded*
- *There are more facilities and materials needed (2)*
- *More materials and more efficiency are needed*
- *English classes are very good for the learners*
- *More books, cassettes, facilities as well as more hours are needed*
- *I do not know where and when these classes are held.*
- *English classes are not good and I am not happy with them.*

Information/talks/ speakers for external organisations

- *RSG should get involved with other organisations in order to make use of their experiences and to get some funding*

Housing support via volunteers at HAG

- *There has not been much help to do with housing support (2)*
- *HAG did not help*
- *The homeless are not helped by the HAG*
- *There are long interviews in the HAG, but when it comes to actual helping they do nothing*
- *RSG should apply to the Home Office for the homeless to be accommodated*

Sports and leisure activities

- *Sport and leisure activities need more organising*

Advocacy & campaigning work

- *There is a need for a better communication and collaboration with the Home Office (2)*
- *RSG needs to apply for more funding to employ more people for advocacy and also to make sure that it has a secure financial future*

Regular newsletter

- *Some of the newsletter should be in the language the service users understand*
- *Service users should be informed about events and activities in advance through the newsletter*
- *The newsletter should be send to service users as lots of them do not receive it*
- *A lot of people do not know about the newsletter*
- *The subjects issued in the newsletter should be changed as most of it is boring.*

Those at the focus group were then asked to think about the impact that RSG had made on their lives – how life was WITH RSG, what it would have been like without it, and any other comments they wished to make.

3 of those present reported no impact on their lives from RSG. 6 said the organisation had a major impact on their lives and 1 that it had some impact. The following quotes give a flavour of the difference RSG is making for these individuals.

RSG didn't make my life any better. The only thing they did was making some telephone calls for me.

Through RSG, I got to know some people with some of whom I have had a reasonable friendship. This resulted in the betterment of my English, which led me to have a better understanding of English culture. This gave me more confidence and enabled me to trust others more than before. All these helped me with my anxiety, and assisted me to integrate into the society easier and earlier. It made life a lot easier for me.

RSG is the hope of many asylum seekers and refugees in Exeter, and I am grateful for the services it has been providing.

RSG provided me with some recreational activities and this helped me to be a bit more at ease with my self while I was having a difficult time. It made my life happier.

Because of RSG I have a better health as they helped me with medical issues. I received a lot of help to do wit my asylum application as well as financial issues. They acted as a last resource for me and I knew there were some people who would take my problems seriously. Also, my English has improved through having known some people via RSG. They also helped me with finding somewhere to live. I would have had the following problems: No where to go; no one to know; health problems; homelessness; and even worse financial hardship.

I see RSG as friend

In RSG they help people if they can, but they are restricted and limited

One of the people present at the focus group, came back later with a written description of the difference he thought RSG was making for its service users. This can be found in Appendix 3. In summary, he felt that the funding that enabled the employment of a full-time worker, had made a huge difference to RSG – particularly in providing emergency help and support to asylum seekers with access to solicitors and liaison with the Home Office.

English Language group

Only one person attended this group. He did not know any thing about RSG and its services, and was not even aware that the English classes he was attending were run by RSG.

"I have been living in Exeter for about 3 years and I have not even heard the abbreviation "RSG", let alone having used their services", he said. "If you have come from another city, you would not get to know about what is available to you and that is why I didn't know about RSG".

He had used the RSG housing support based in HAG through some one he knew, without realising that it was a part of RSG services. He was asked about the English classes he had been using and if they had made any difference on his life for better. "My English, spoken and written, is getting better everyday", he responded. It was asked from him if there was any need for improvement in English classes. "They are good and one learns according to one's level of English", he replied.

Towards the end of the meeting, he seemed to be more aware of RSG and its services and he said several times that thereafter he would use their services in general, and their sport and leisure activities in particular.

Telephone Interviews

Six telephone interviews were carried out with RSG clients. Five were with Iranians, one with an Afghan. All were with men. All interviews were carried out in Farsi, and translations provided for the evaluators.

Interviewees first contact with RSG

Year of first contact	Number interviewees
2003	2
2004	2
2005	1
Unknown	1

Interviewees had contacted the RSG for a variety of reasons, including issues around health services, access to sport & leisure activities, legal advice and translation. The following quotes show a flavour of the reasons for contact:

Help with legal issues regarding my asylum application through my solicitor; financial assistance for my journeys to London in order to see my solicitor; interpretation and translation to do with my asylum case; using facilities such as faxing as to do for receiving important documentations and evidences from overseas; support to do with renewing my HC2, "which is NHS entitlement document for asylum seekers"; and help for making an appeal against the Home Office decision.

I first contacted RSG sometime in December 2003. I needed some financial help to do with cost of my journeys to London in order to see my solicitor. I also needed to use the telephone and fax facilities to do with my asylum application. In addition to these, I needed some recommendation regarding the language class I was seeking, getting to know some people and making some social contacts as well as making use of the sport and leisure activities which were offered for free.

I first contacted RSG at the beginning of the year 2004. I needed some help to with legal issues regarding my asylum application. I needed this help because the law firm that first helped me was closed down and I had to find myself another solicitor. I also needed some money for the cost of my journey when I had to go for my Home Office interview. In addition to these, I wanted to use their facilities such as internet for finding evidence to do with my case.

The help actually received from RSG also covered a variety of things. One person had received no help, but all the others had received a mixture of services. The table below shows those services most frequently accessed.

Services used	Number interviewees
Leisure & sport activities	3
Office facilities	3
Friendship	3
Legal support/advice	3
English classes	2
Financial help	2

The following quotes give more flavour of the support received:

I received most of the helped I wanted. Particularly, they, people in RSG, did their best when I needed help with making an appeal as I did not have a solicitor anymore, and

they managed to do all the work regarding it. Also, I was given free access to some leisure and sport facilities as well as having been taken to some outings.

I received my new HC2 medical form, used internet and photocopying facilities and attended an English class held by RSG. I got to know a family from whom I received a lot of help, including learning more about music, improving my English, learning about English culture and to do with my legal issues (asylum application).

I received the financial help I wanted, made use of facilities such as telephone and fax machine, went to some English classes in Exeter College through RSG, made use of the sport and leisure facilities, got to know some people and made some social contacts so I learnt more about English culture, and received some materials such as books and cassettes on English for free.

Four of the interviewees reported a very positive benefit for themselves (and their families) from the support they had from RSG. One had received no support, and the other reported some small benefits.

I had plenty of problems and difficulties with no one to turn to and no where to go to. In addition to that, I did not speak any English. Their help boost my morale and gave me confidence and hope. It had a positive impact on my life.

When it was time for making an appeal against the decision made by the court, my solicitor was not willing to take my case any further. Through RSG, Fran Jenkins helped me with this appeal which resulted in the Home Office providing me with support (money and shelter) for a longer period while I was waiting for another hearing. This caused me to be more hopeful and confident with a better morale. RSG is the only place a lot of asylum seekers have to go to; it is as a final resource for them. RSG is the only hope for such desperate people.

Improve my English and to adjust myself easier with a new, but totally different, lifestyle. It also helped me not to feel too lonely and I knew there were some people I could go to who would help me and who would, at least, listen to what I had to say. It had a lot of positive impacts on my morale.

Interviewees were asked about any other help they needed, which RSG couldn't provide. The most common response was a need for interpretation and/or translation services. All the responses are given below:

I had some problems with having myself understood as there was an interpreter available only sometimes.

When Devon County Social Services terminated their services regarding supporting asylum seekers and refugees, unwillingly we had to go to Bristol through the Home Office arrangements. RSG tried very hard to prevent us from being removed by force, but did not succeed.

I did not need a lot of help as I was supported by the Home Office.

I needed some very advanced English classes, but they couldn't even refer me to the right direction. I also needed some specific advice regarding medical profession as I was a doctor in my country, but they couldn't assist me with anything even guiding me to the right place.

My main problem was not having a solicitor and I did not have any money to be able to pay a solicitor privately. As I realised I was getting nowhere I decided to leave Exeter and disappear somewhere else.

They couldn't help me with the only thing I needed help with which was the translation of some important documents to do with my appeal. The reason they couldn't help me was apparently to do with financial restriction. I am still hoping to receive this help from RSG however.

When asked what would have made RSG's services better for them, a wide range of responses was made. The most frequently given responses can be seen in the Table below.

Improvements for Selves	Number interviewees
More staff	3
Bigger venue	3
Interpreters	2
Privacy	2
Better links with other organisations	2

The following quotes give more detail of these suggestions:

More availability of interpreters; more and better interactions with solicitors; having somebody in RSG who has expertise in legal issues; more money; and better interactions and more involvement with other organisations.

English classes need improvement; sport and leisure activities should be more purposeful and organised; there is need for a better and bigger place with some private rooms where service users can say what they have to say without the fear of being heard; there should be another person working there as some times there are lots of people who need to be seen to; the training that RSG provides should be taken more seriously by everybody including the volunteers.

The presence of an interpreter and translator in RSG who could help people accordingly; a bigger venue with a private room where people can comfortably say what they want to say; a few other permanent workers as there were, in RSG, a lot of volunteers, with good intention, with very casual and rather occasional work pattern. This would mean each time when one had to RSG for some help, one had to discuss everything about one's personal life or at least about one's specific problem with who ever in the RSG office. In other words there was no continuity regarding helping people. This wouldn't lead to anywhere and to anything other than some tension and frustration; if RSG were aware of other existing organisations, of the specialised ones in particular, and had a good connection with them; it would have helped me a lot. They had problems with referring people to other organisations as if not much work had been done in regard to signposting and campaign work.

They need to prioritise the need of their clients and the nature of their needs and help them accordingly. They also need to help the shiest and the most vulnerable first. This is not something difficult to achieve.

The interviewees particularly liked the fact that the RSG treat everyone fairly, well and with respect (5 respondents). They also liked the feeling that those they met were doing their best to help (3 respondents). The following quote sums up these feelings:

They would treat everybody fairly and well irrespective of their backgrounds; they would take people's problems and the fact that they needed help seriously and they would do their best to help.

Three respondents reported that there was nothing they disliked about the RSG. One had no opinion. The other two responses mainly focused on the need for increased organisation and prioritisation, and are below:

Sometimes, one's work was left until the last minute which wouldn't do any good to the client and could even put them at risk. Some times the volunteer would spend a lot of time talking on the phone about something insignificant while other people who needed urgent help had to wait until their telephone conversation was over: in other words the priorities were not taken into account. There were sometimes too many volunteers and not a lot to do which was only a waste of time and resources. There was also a lack of clarity regarding one's problems, the solution, the resources and the response to the problem. It seemed as if there was a cultural gap in need of urgent clarification. There were areas at which RSG couldn't do much to help with as they did not have the people who had the expertise. A good example of this problem was to do with legal issues regarding people's asylum application.

RSG was not as organised a group as it should have. Also, I was not helped which I found disappointing. If I was helped with what I wanted it could have changed the course of my life.

When asked what would make the RSG's services better for other people, the main responses related to increased resources for the organisation. Responses are very similar to those that would make the service better for themselves. The table below shows the most common responses:

Improvement for others	Number interviewees
Bigger venue	3
More staff	3
More resources	2
Longer opening hours	2
Improved collaboration with other organisations	2
Interpretation/translation services	2

The following quotes give a further feeling for responses:

They should diversify their services more and do try to do their work even better; financially, they should support some people more as there are people who are experiencing financial hardship; they should have better collaboration and cooperation with other organisations; and there should be more availability of interpreters.

Bigger venue; more working hours; more staff; more facilities and equipments; helping people to learn how to drive in the UK; playing some educational videos to do with what English way of life is like and how English culture is as this helps people to learn these things faster and enables them to integrate quicker.

If they were organised it would have made a big difference. Also, if they would have listened to people and to their problems more attentively it would have been much better. Other than the Lord, RSG is the only hope for asylum seekers and refugees in Exeter and if they can't help us, no one can!

Two of the respondents said they knew of people who needed RSG's services, but did not use the organisation. The following reasons were given for this:

There were some people whose English was not any good and as there was no one who could help them with interpretation, it would put them off and they would not go there again. This would make them disappointed.

Yes, I know a lot of people who do not use the RSG services. It is because a few people have made friends with some of the people working for and in RSG and they are the only people who make best of RSG services. I think RSG should help everyone within the framework of the law and without any discrimination.

Two of the respondents wished to say “thank you” to RSG for the support they had received. One respondent had nothing further to add. A flavour of the other responses can be seen below:

I would love to see this group continuing the services and I would not hesitate to do whatever I can to help. If the RSG services are terminated for whatever reason, it would result in asylum seekers facing many more problems than before which would lead to more social problems which would affect everyone in the society.

The RSG services have provided the clients and some of the local people with a better understanding of each other: it has acted almost as cultural bridge. They have supported a lot of people with numerous difficult problems and it does not matter how successful they were in that respect. What matters is that there has been a centre where some very desperate people have had to go to seeking support, advice, assistance and guidance. This issue is something quite invaluable and unique. I can't imagine what would have happened if RSG did not exist. It would have been a disaster for asylum seekers and refugees in Exeter as well as for the local people.

I wish every member of RSG well and hope that RSG becomes a more organised group so it can help asylum seekers and refugees better.

Discussion of Results

The majority of the results are self-explanatory. However, there are a couple of points which we wished to discuss in more detail, and these follow.

User vs Volunteer Views

If we compare the views of volunteers and clients on RSG's level of achievement against the services the pilot had aimed to provide, we see some marked differences. The largest differences are seen where clients view the sports & leisure activities and volunteer placements for customers far better than volunteers do, but see the housing support as much worse. The full comparison can be seen in the Table below. *NB. It should be noted that the group was held during a session directly linked to the leisure and sports activities which may have had some impact on the scoring of customers, who were more likely to have used this service*

Planned Activity	Volunteers Score	Customer Score	Difference
Advocacy & campaigning work	3.7	3.2	-0.5
Development of volunteers, including "customers" of RSG	3.6	4.0	+0.4
English language classes	4.3	3.4	-0.9
Housing support via volunteers at HAG	4.0	2.8	-1.2
Information/talks/speakers for external organisations	4.0	3.0	-1.0
Meeting, greeting & befriending	3.4	3.9	+0.5
Regular newsletter	3.3	2.8	-0.5
Signposting to legal, housing, employment advice	4.0	3.2	-0.8
Sports & leisure activities	3.6	4.9	+1.3
Volunteer placements for customers in other voluntary/community organisations	2.5	3.6	+1.1

We have ranked the scores from the above table, with the highest score being ranked "1", and the lowest "10". When we look at how clients and volunteers ranked achievement against the activities we again see their very different views (see Table below).

Planned Activity	Volunteers Rank	Clients Rank
English language classes	1	5
Signposting to legal, housing, employment advice	2	7
Information/talks/speakers for external organisations	3	8
Housing support via volunteers at HAG	4	9
Advocacy & campaigning work	5	6
Sports & leisure activities	6	1
Development of volunteers, including "customers" of RSG	7	2
Meeting, greeting & befriending	8	3
Regular newsletter	9	10
Volunteer placements for customers in other voluntary/community organisations	10	4

This highlights the need for RSG to ensure that it collects client feedback on individual services on a day-to-day basis, rather than assuming that the volunteers/workers know how users feel about services.

Women Users

As shown in the statistics, there are very low numbers of women using RSG's services. Up to the end of February 2005 RSG's NASS contract was for work with single (i.e. alone in this country) Farsi or Dari speaking men only. This has obviously had an impact on the work undertaken. There is also some provision by the Islamic Centre for women refugees and asylum seekers through their Olive Tree group. However, RSG does need to research the support needs of female refugees and asylum seekers and to monitor their contact with women.

Volunteers

Generally, the feedback on volunteers was very positive, but some comments were made concerning issues of prioritisation and "nosiness". The volunteers at RSG are fundamental to the organisation, its image and its success in supporting refugees and asylum seekers. RSG needs to ensure that there is a recruitment process in place to ensure that all volunteers can be interviewed/screened before volunteering begins. The training and support available to volunteers is also paramount – feedback from some volunteers suggested the training was very good, while others said they had not received any training. The role of the office volunteers is of particular importance as they provide the base for people to come to and generally deal with the day-to-day enquiries. RSG needs to ensure that if any users do have problems with a volunteer they can report this. The volunteers need to have clear guidelines on the amount of information they should get from a client, and on privacy/confidentiality. They also need to know that they have a system of back-up and support in place.

Appendix 1

Refugee Support Group. Evaluation Proposal

The Refugee Support Group pilot project was set up initially to run for one year, funding was sufficient to run it for 18 months. The pilot project finished at the end of March 2005.

During that time it provided support to refugees and asylum seekers in Devon. Support included:

- meeting & greeting, befriending
- signposting to legal, housing, employment etc advice
- English-language classes
- advocacy & campaigning work
- housing support via volunteers at HAG
- sports and leisure activities
- information/talks/speakers for external organisations
- development of volunteers, including "customers" of R. S. G.
- volunteer placements for customers in other voluntary/community organisations
- a monthly-ish newsletter

During that time daily records were kept of the name, gender, place of origin and status of customers, along with the nature of their inquiry. Customer case notes have not been kept, these were given to customers themselves, so they could make use of them when approaching other agencies. Monitoring data does not therefore contain contact details, customer feedback on the service, or its impact on their lives. However, many customers who have used its services maintain regular contact, either in person or by telephone. RSG holds the telephone numbers of some of its customers, who could be contacted for evaluation purposes..

RSG agree that the evaluation needs to address three aspects:

4. **Quantity** -- the number of customers, their status, place of origin, nature of enquiry.
5. **Quality** -- their satisfaction with the service, gaps in service, improvements to service, unmet needs
6. **Impact** -- the changes and benefits that support from RSG has brought to them

Evaluation Process Proposed To Address above:

Quantity -- an Excel spreadsheet is available from RSG, containing basic monitoring information and statistics on customers. This would be analysed to provide quantitative information on customer use.

If all monitoring information is contained in 1 Excel spreadsheet, costs for its analysis will be much reduced. If it is held across a number of spreadsheets, collation and analysis time and costs will increase. Costings given reflect this*

Quality & Impact – 3 focus groups would be held to gather information from previous customers, steering group (customers) and project volunteers (includes some customers). £5 Boots vouchers would be given to customer focus group members to thank them for their time.

Telephone interviews, conducted by an interpreter (also a volunteer/previous customer). Interviews would follow a schedule drawn up by us. We would provide the interpreter with training.

RSG has had direct contact with only a limited number of women customers. The project coordinator will seek to identify as many women as possible, who could be included in the evaluation, in order to give a fuller picture of its impact. As their numbers are likely to be very low, it would be most cost-effective to interview them by phone.

NB RSG would be best placed to invite customers to the groups, and request their co-operation in telephone interviews. A short article should be included in the August newsletter, telling customers more about the evaluation, its purpose and process.

If work on the above could begin mid-August, an evaluation report could be made available by mid-end October, depending on focus group & interview dates.

Angela McTiernan
July 29th 2005

Appendix 2

Research Tools

Users Focus Group - Plan

Time	Activity
10:30 AM	Tea & coffee
10:45 AM	<p>Aims of This Evaluation: Learn lessons from people's experience of the RSG pilot, October 2003-March 2005:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • find out how it was for its customers & volunteers, and learn from that • provide funders with evidence of RSG's work and benefits to refugees & asylum seekers • provide an even better service now and in the future
10:50 AM	Steering Group & Customer's Focus Group -- RSG Pilot. Thursday 15th September 2005, Wat Tyler
10:55 AM	<p>Introductions Introduce myself. Quick intros around group, & names on sticky labels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ date involved, ○ country of origin, ○ how you knew about RSG ○ nature of involvement -- customer +/- or SG member ○ if customer -- help you sought, ○ if steering group -- your contribution,. <p>Place on the wall, recap.</p>
11:10 AM	<p>Service aims of pilot Look at the services RSG aimed to provide Which of these services did you need? Go through each service & count user numbers</p>
11:20 AM	<p>Level of Success To what extent did the services meet your needs? Place crosses on the target to show levels of achievement. Centre = fully, outside circle = not at all, etc</p>
11:40 AM	<p>Improvements What would have improved its services externally & internally? Anyone missing? Write your suggestions on post its, stick on appropriate headings</p>

Volunteer Focus Group -- RSG Pilot. Wednesday 7th September 2005, Wat Tyler	
Time	Activity
10:30 AM	Tea & coffee
10:45 AM	<p>Aims of This Evaluation: Learn lessons from people's experience of the RSG pilot, October 2003-March 2005:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • find out how it was for its customers & volunteers, and learn from that • provide funders with evidence of RSG's work and benefits to refugees & asylum seekers • provide an even better service now and in the future
10:50 AM	<p>Aims of session From your experience of the RSG pilot, October 2003-March 2005:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. What worked well? 6. What didn't work so well? 7. What improvements were needed? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o achieved so far? o still needed? 8. What difference did RSG make to the lives of asylum seekers & refugees.
10:55 AM	<p>Introductions introduce myself & my sheet Your name, when you got involved, what you did, what you got out of it. Place on the wall, tell us your name</p>
11:10 AM	<p>Service aims of pilot What services did RSG aim to provide? Group brainstorm onto flipchart</p>
11:20 AM	<p>Level of Success Place spots to show levels of achievement</p>
11:40 AM	<p>Improvements What would have improved its services externally & internally? Anyone missing? Write your suggestions on post its, stick on appropriate headings</p>
12 noon	<p>Now & In the Future</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o tick any improvements you feel it has made o put red spots on any you feel it should make now
12:20 PM	<p>How RSG Has Helped People Write a thumbnail sketch of 1 person/family you worked with during October 2003-March 2005 , include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o their gender o country of origin o help they sought o how RSG helped o difference RSG made to their lives -outcomes
12: 40 PM	<p>Next steps -- interviews, focus groups, report & access Thank you for your time & your opinions, enjoy lunch</p>
1 PM	Lunch

English-Language Class Focus Group -- RSG Pilot. Monday 19th September 2005, DEREK	
Time	Activity
7 PM	Welcome Introduce myself. Quick intros around group, & names on sticky labels.
7:05 PM	Aims of This Evaluation: Learn lessons from people's experience of the RSG pilot, October 2003-March 2005: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • find out how it was for its customers & volunteers, and learn from that • provide funders with evidence of RSG's work and benefits to refugees & asylum seekers • provide an even better service now and in the future
7:10 PM	Aims of session From your experience of the RSG pilot, October 2003-March 2005: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. What worked well? 10. What didn't work so well? 11. What improvements were needed? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o achieved so far? o still needed? 12. What difference did RSG make to the lives of asylum seekers & refugees.
7:15 PM	Introductions ask people to write about themselves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o date involved, o country of origin, o how you knew about RSG o nature of your involvement - help you sought, Place on the wall, key themes?.
7:30 PM	Service Aims of Pilot & Level of Success Look at the services RSG aimed to provide Think about the services you used To what extent did the services meet your needs? Place crosses on the target to show levels of achievement. Centre = fully, outside circle = not at all, etc
7:50 PM	Improvements What would have improved its services externally & internally? Anyone missing? Write your suggestions on post its, stick on appropriate headings
8:10 PM	Now & In the Future Discuss suggestions. Have any been completely achieved? Do any need more work? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o (tick any improvements which have been completely achieved o put red spots on any which need more work)
8: 30 PM	How Your Life Would Have Been with & without RSG write 2 post its. 1 = how your life would have been without RSG (- RSG) 1 = how your life changed as a result of it (+ RSG)
8: 50 PM	Explain Next steps -- interviews, focus groups, report & access Thank you for your time & your opinions, phonecards
8:55	Finish

Refugee Support Group, Telephone Interviews - Schedule.

Country of origin:

Gender: of

1. When did you first contact RSG?
When you came to the Refugee Support Group, what help did you want from them?
2. What help did you receive?
3. How has their help benefited you (and your family)? How has it improved life for you?
4. Was there any other help you needed, that they couldn't provide?
5. What would have made their service even better for you?
6. What did you like best about The Refugee Support Group?
7. What did you like least about it?
8. What would make their service better for other people?
9. Do you know of people who needed it but didn't use it?
Why didn't they?
10. Is there anything else you want to say?

Appendix 3

Written Feedback from one User

One of the users (who had been heavily involved in RSG in a number of ways) provided additional written feedback following the focus group he attended, which described the impact of RSG on the lives of its service users as follows:

Before Annette was employed, RSG was nothing apart from an active group of charitable individuals in Exeter who would welcome a new group of asylum seekers arriving in Exeter if possible would provide them with some freshly prepared Afghan meals. Also, RSG would do its best to give asylum seekers a good time through organising some events such as leisure and sport activities.

Appointing Annette as a full time worker was a radical change for RSG. It was a radical change as RSG not only continued with the activities it was already providing, but also became an organisation from which people would go to and seek help in the event of emergencies.

For instance, there were lots of occasions when asylum seekers were asked by the Home Office to attend their asylum interviews or their court hearings to do with their appeals, but would end up with their journey tickets not being sent to them. The only place they had to go as a final resource was RSG and it would help these people either through making phone calls to do the Home Office discussing the issue so they would have their problem solved, or providing them with their journey fares. There were also times when the solicitor would deny taking their clients asylum case further a few days before the actual hearing. Naturally, the only people willing and able to help were Annette and other volunteers. They would do their best to contact other solicitors in Exeter and other cities and would seek for advice. This was an invaluable piece of support for those who would experience such emergency situations.

Without RSG with its current shape, all these would be impossible. Mentioning all the benefits and impacts of RSG on the lives of its service users is something beyond my imagination, but the least I can say is that the full time presence of a full time worker, Annette, in RSG supplied its service users with some peace of mind.