



Friends Meeting House
6 Mount Street
Manchester
M2 5NS
Administration Office: 0044-161-834-8221
Email: admin@rapar.org.uk
Website: www.rapar.org.uk

Identifying the needs of displaced people¹ in Greater Manchester: Let's Talk (1)

Purpose

RAPAR offers this preliminary, working document in the spirit of opening up a public and transparent discussion through which all interested parties can share what, between us, we know - don't know - and need to know - about displaced people in Greater Manchester.

In this way, we believe that it is possible to create a future where displaced people themselves, their wider communities and/or the service deliverers in Greater Manchester can plan for and secure effective, needs based, outcomes.

Currently, unevenness in monitoring, auditing and/or responding to presentations to services, and in evaluating or reviewing service delivery outcomes, make it difficult to assess, with any degree of certainty, what the amount, depth and nature of need is among displaced people.

This information gap leaves a vacuum into which ill-informed, backward and dangerous claims about displaced people can circulate. At RAPAR, we consider that it is far more healthy and productive for people who are displaced, and/or who are the neighbours and friends of displaced people, and/or are in jobs where they are trying to respond to presentations from displaced people, to puncture that vacuum and begin to fill in the missing areas in a co-operative manner. We hope that most, if not all, of the content of this document will be challenged and expanded upon, so that deeper, more accurate and therefore more meaningful understanding can develop about what needs to be done, how and by whom.

Current situation

We cannot locate any monitoring mechanisms nationally, or in the North West, or in Greater Manchester, that draw together intelligence about where displaced people are, where they are from, and what they are like (e.g. numbers of women cf. men, or age distribution of children). On the service delivery side, there is no way of knowing whether, or the extent to which, double, triple, or even quadruple counting may be taking place of the same people who are engaging with the same range of service deliverers.

These two factors highlight the twinned possibilities that: a) very large numbers of displaced people are outside of any information or service loops that might help them to begin to understand how to find out about their rights and responsibilities and how to act

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upon them; and b) service deliverers lack the meaningful information base necessary from which to develop comprehensive, proportionate and effective future plans.

We have made preliminary enquiries about the scale and nature of need amongst displaced people in Greater Manchester among experienced leaders who are connected with RAPAR and who are themselves doing ground level community development within their nationality groupings over several years. They have offered their perspectives on what the numbers of displaced people might approximate and the key needs.

This community-based perception of need indicates that there are at least 30,000 displaced people in the City of Manchester alone. They are from all over the world, but most notably from Pakistan, Somalia, Iraq, and Eastern Europe (including Romani people from all countries of Eastern Europe). Their needs range, for example, from having no place to sleep, being hungry, selling sex to survive, being acutely overcrowded, not knowing how to – or being denied - access to any form of education, employment or training, being sick but disconnected from any health system, being systematically and consistently exposed to the threat/reality of physical violence, and being very distant from any opportunity to become a part of solving policy, service development and delivery issues. One illustrative example is that of the Longsight area of Manchester where we believe there are at least 100 Romanian Romani households (averaging 10-15 people) with tiny numbers registered as working, and with very few children in school. This information correlates with the 30 Romanian people in Manchester documented as having acquired National Insurance numbers during 2007. It demonstrates the potential extent of the communication and development gaps that exist between the displaced people who are here and what is showing up about them, their needs and their aspirations.

There has been an increase in the number of countries from which people are coming to the UK, with the attendant implications for their linguistic and cultural needs and the challenges for communication with local people. The largest refugee/asylum voluntary sector agency delivering services in the North West is Refugee Action. It reports an increase from 27 to 44 in the number of countries of origin, as demonstrated through its client evaluation sample from early 2007. However, this organisation does not work with migrant people who are not classified as refugees or seeking asylum.

Refugee Action reported that, during the financial year 2006-7, 237 people accessed their Sunrise Project to enable the integration of people with refugee status who lived in Salford and Manchester. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a significant number of recognised refugees are not contacted by Sunrise, which is a Home Office-funded program. There is also the question of those granted other forms of status, for example humanitarian protection or discretionary leave, whom Sunrise does not contact.

Through the Gateway Project in Bury and Bolton a further 179 refugees from Sudan, Ethiopia and Mauritania were helped to resettle. However, we cannot locate any data that specifies where the people who were living in the North West and have since been granted some form of leave to remain, i.e. ceased to seek asylum, have settled. Therefore, there is no way of knowing the extent to which Refugee Action and Sunrise are connecting up with the full range of people who, having survived the asylum application process, are now trying to settle down.

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In relation to people still inside the asylum system (Asylum Statistics: 4th Quarter 2007, United Kingdom. Home Office. ISBN: 9781847266132) by the end of 2007, the North West had 20%(7118/35590) of the people seeking asylum who were in dispersed or initial accommodation. Of them, 94%(6715/7118) were in Greater Manchester and, of the people living in Greater Manchester, 19.5%(1310/6715) were in Manchester City and a further 13.5% (910/6715) in Salford. A further 560 people (excluding unaccompanied children) were in receipt of subsistence only support, 36% (205/560) of them in the City of Manchester.

However, of all the people reported by the Home Office as having been rejected for asylum, year on year, we cannot locate any official, contemporary data about how many of those who were living in the North West, remain here. Currently, up to 280 of the 350 people who are on Red Cross's list for Greater Manchester's destitution project reach it every week, present the correct paperwork (a form of ID and another document confirming that they have been rejected by the asylum system) and receive a food parcel. Anecdotally, about 25% of the clients are women and the ages range from 20 to 60 years. In the first quarter of 2008, 93 people presented to this project for the first time, representing a 26.5%(93/350) increase in a year. We have come across people living in Greater Manchester who were completely undocumented when they presented to us. As an example, a mother and four of her children from Pakistan had not claimed asylum when they first arrived and, as time passed, they had become increasingly frightened of claiming. The children therefore, had never been to school here. These clients are now inside the asylum system but there are other undocumented and, therefore, intensely vulnerable people.

This vulnerability is illuminated by findings from a modest Lifeline research project with sex workers in Manchester in spring 2007(Craig, D. 2007. A Revealing Massage. Manchester: Lifeline). Lifeline found that, of the mostly sauna based sex workers using their syringe and condom provision services who they questioned in 2007, 36%(33/91) self-defined as White European and a further 34%(31/91) self-defined as other than White British. Anecdotally, sauna workers have been reporting to Lifeline that they are working 72-hour shifts and, though the vast majority are not accessing injecting equipment, they are disclosing their use of cocaine, cannabis and other amphetamines to stay awake. At this time, we have no way of knowing the extent to which these women come from the categories of female, older and younger refugees, and asylum seekers dispersed to regional areas who are most vulnerable to unemployment, as identified by Bloch (Bloch, A. 2004. Asylum and migration working paper 2. London: Institute for Public Policy Research)

This vulnerability extends to interpersonal violence. We have come across some cases of systematic and relentless harassment, including the physical attack of people in their own neighbourhoods, because they are visibly "different", e.g.wearing a headscarf denoting Muslim religious identity, or having darker coloured skin, so thought of as not being "British". Greater Manchester Police Hate Crime Statistics for 2006-7 report that 79.8% (4525/5667) are motivated by race or religion where 58.8% (3332/5667) of the victims reported ethnicity is other than White or White British and almost half of the suspects remain unidentified. We also hear from people who feel let down by police action on race/religion hate crime incidents. Currently, the number of recorded

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complaints about this issue can only be accessed through a Freedom of Information request.

The extent of correlation between levels of physical attack and unemployment rates in any given area is debatable. However, with reference to formal un/employment rates amongst displaced people, it is possible to identify year on year, the country of origin of people in the North West who have been allocated National Insurance numbers. For 2007, out of the 11,370 people who received NI numbers in the city of Manchester, the largest numbers included 26.8%(3050/11370) Polish people, followed by 10.5%(1200/11370) from Pakistan, 4.6%(530/11370) from the Slovak Republic, 4.3%(500/11370) from India, 4.1%(470/11370) from China and Nigeria respectively, 1.3%150/11370) from Bangladesh and 1%(120/11370) from Latvia. However, the data does not offer gender, age range or dependant information. During the first quarter of 2008, in the North West, 75 people from Romania and Bulgaria (the most recent European countries from which people are allowed to come to work in the UK, known as the A2's) had become employed through the approved work permit and sector based schemes. Since it began its migrant workers project in 2006, Oxfam has directly interfaced with 378 migrant workers across the country. Anecdotally, the view is that only 10% of A8 workers are showing up through the Workers Registration Scheme. It is not unreasonable to suggest that even fewer A2 numbers are showing.

An ending for now...

Promoting inclusive communities is difficult to achieve when existing communities do not know of, are mis-informed about, and /or do not embrace the presence of people who they perceive to be from outside. We welcome the willingness expressed to RAPAR by the leadership of the North West Strategic Partnership on Migration, to talk with people on the ground as, and/or working with, displaced people – that's all of us.

Together, it is possible to catalyse a process whereby people from communities who are different, and currently not equal, can come to acknowledge each other and work co-operatively to secure and sustain each other's human rights.

RAPAR welcomes the opportunity to be involved in such a process, and advocates for a culture of learning which seeks, rather than apportion blame, to get to grips with the full range of needs as they relate to displaced people, and to find ways to answer them.

¹ Here, the term 'displaced people' covers refugees, people seeking asylum (failed by, or currently inside the asylum system) and any other people from beyond the UK who have been displaced physically and emotionally, for whatever primary reason including: underdevelopment in their home country; invasion; interpersonal violence; economic imperatives; civil war; and environmental disaster.

What do you think? lease contact RAPAR and let us know. You can email us at admin@rapar.org.uk or phone our office on 0161-834-8221 - And we can continue the discussion...

Acknowledgements

We have prioritised the process of distributing this document to the participants at today's conference. Thank you to everyone who gave their time and their thoughts to inform its content. We shall be getting back in touch specifically with people, in addition to those here, who were able to share some information, so that they also receive copies.

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