

RAPAR

(Refugee and Asylum seeker Participatory Action Research)

C/o Faith and Justice Commission, Cathedral House,

250 Chapel Street, Salford, M3 5LL

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Synopsis of housing related issues for black and ethnic minority refugee and asylum seeking people in Salford prepared by RAPAR for the BME housing consultation conducted by New Prospect Housing Ltd for Salford City Council on Wednesday 30th October 2002

Salford CC draft Refugee Housing Strategy has as its first aim to ensure that every person in the City lives in a decent home. At this time, and with particular reference to refugees and asylum seekers, this is simply not the experience.

The arrival of black and ethnic minority people who are refugee and asylum seekers into Salford has challenged the present housing system. (See appendix 1 for RAPAR submission of evidence about Salford accommodation problems dating back to January 2001) However, thus far, Salford housing has failed to adapt to their changing environment: they are continuing to use existing policies and procedures that do not meet the needs of this group and exclude them from accessing the service.

There are many factors that are contributing to this situation, some of which are listed below:

1. Communication around policies and accommodation issues affecting asylum seekers and refugees are not filtered down to the housing area offices. This has created a lack of knowledge whereby people are working in a vacuum and currently seem to be unable to offer appropriate information or accommodation to this client group (see Appendix 2 and 3 attached).
2. Literature and information about services in Salford are not available in the appropriate languages.
3. Workers within the Salford housing infrastructure are continually complaining about a lack of sufficient housing stock, a perception that is currently being contradicted by the Tenant Participation section. However, only about 30% of refugee and asylum seeking people are in public housing, the rest being in private accommodation that can be unsuitable and expensive.

4. NASS is dispersing people to hard to let areas or onto housing estates where they are culturally isolated. Unfortunately, for those acquiring refugee status, that process is continuing through the Council approach. This has led people to leave Salford and seek areas where there they can identify with people and feel safe.

5. Salford Asylum Team has a resettlement team, but that team is only dealing with those asylum seekers who have been housed in Council property up until the resolution of their asylum claim. Therefore, no-one moving from asylum seeker to refugee status and housed in private accommodation is qualifying for attention and action from the Salford Asylum Team. The team is, on a regular basis, turning people away. This process is excluding more and more people who have now become homeless and are adrift within the system with no dedicated agency within the City to help them. This is a key push factor in the situation whereby people either end up in overcrowded conditions, in very poor private accommodation and/or leaving Salford.

6. Salford City Council only has one homeless family unit, which is always full and never meets demand; another reason why this group leave Salford.

7. Anecdotally, RAPAR is aware that there have been many unreported racial attacks, harassment incidents and burglaries on asylum seekers and refugees in Salford. RAPAR opened up negotiations with the Salford Police District about this issue in the Autumn of 2001. Because of this abuse and apparent failure to date on the part of the police to take this issue on in a committed and serious manner, many people are leaving the area and in some cases they are becoming homeless. The newly emerging community safety/hate crime work and the work of the existing anti-social behaviour section of Salford CC are not currently meeting the needs of this highly vulnerable group.

There is a need for Salford CC to:

- Bring about awareness of the issues that are currently affecting this client group to practitioners and residents in Salford
- Provide those working with this client group, staff training around cultural awareness, policy shifts and legislative changes as they occur so that they can operate competently.