

Refugee and Asylum seeker Participatory Action Research (RAPAR)

C/o Faith and Justice Commission, Salford Diocese, 61 Leicester Road, Salford, M7 4DA

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MINUTES FROM THE REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (RAPAR) MEETING HELD ON 22.1.02 AT 10.00am, CATHEDRAL HOUSE, CHAPEL STREET, SALFORD

Present:

Mark McDonald (Salford CVS), Nilofer Shaikh (Community Health Project), Anne Marie Fell (Revive), Maria Thornton (Salford PCT- MINUTE TAKER), Mike Fairclough (Clearsprings), Bill Davies (Manchester Asylum Seeker Team, Social Services), Carl Mugan and Mike Fairclough (Clearsprings Management), Louise Kay, Amanda Jones-Said (Red Cross), Fasih Jamal, Latif Ebadi (Iranian refugees), Cath Maffia (Health Visitor, Salford PCT), Phil Davies (Refugee Action), Mo Lamb (Communities that Care/Surestart), Gary Carr (Salford Volunteer Bureaux), Bernadette Lynch (Manchester Museum), Hermione Lovel (School of Primary Care, Manchester University), Zoltan Mohamed (Afghani asylum seeker), Ameen Hadi (Community Safety, Salford Council), Ali Namegoshaye (Greater Manchester Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers), Rhetta Moran (Revans Institute for Action Learning and Research, University of Salford, CHAIR)

Apologies: Simon Aldridge (Salford PCT), David Botham (Revans Institute), Zeinab Mohamed (Refugee Support Group/Robert Darbishire Practice), Mohamed Nazri and Abdullah Rahmatullah (Afghani asylum seekers), Steve Young (Salford Mental Health Trust), Bogusia Temple (Institute for Health and Social Care, University of Salford)

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING, 18.12.01

1.1. Dr Lovel's name was omitted from the list of people present. Otherwise meeting minutes were accepted as a true record

1.2. Using the contacts developed within RAPAR, Salford Police have been approaching asylum seekers for their translation skills. Given the fact that more translators are needed than those available this important issue must be handled sensitively and care must be taken not to impose on people. The RAPAR community meeting of 21.1.02 for example, as with all other RAPAR community meetings, did not need to go outside the group for interpreters, as this resource was already available within RAPAR.

Action - Phil Davies and Ameen Hadi will liaise with the Police over this matter.

1.3. A copy of RAPAR's submission to the Department of Health re the draft Guidelines for working with refugees and asylum seekers is available from Rhetta Moran.

2. **FUNDING BIDS**

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|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| SRB5 Funding | - no information yet |
| ESRC | - no information yet |
| Community Fund | - still being worked on |
| Scarman Trust | - no information yet |
| Community Empowerment Fund | - £10,000 received. |

3. **FEEDBACK FROM THE MEETING ON 21.1.02**

The meeting held at Broadwalk Library on Salford Precinct was well facilitated by Library Staff and attended by 30 adults and 9 children from a range of different communities in the Salford area but mostly from Afghanistan.

An asylum seeker-led analytical-descriptive report of the event is being compiled and in the interim, feedback was led by Zoltan:

3.1. Education

There were issues around children's education as asylum seekers' children are not being accepted for nursery school places

The available resources are gendered resulting in less access for women. Access to sport is limited and mums are unable to attend courses because they cannot access childcare places.

Access to college courses is difficult because many courses are full. The classes can be inappropriate because they combine people with basic skills with those with more advanced skills, also some asylum seekers are illiterate in their native language. The teachers would benefit from the assistance of asylum seekers. There is a push to encourage Afghans to train as EFL teachers. There was a suggestion to arrange a Saturday school and two volunteers are ready to set this up.

RAPAR decided to work in smaller groups of 4-5 people, with professionals, to take the lead on behalf of RAPAR in the areas of access to nursery places, access to secondary school, language classes for adults.

The WEA in Trafford have lottery funding for adult education and provide a range of courses, including introduction to interpreting course, life-skills and English as a foreign language. It was suggested the WEA in Salford be approached.

Action - Mark McDonald to take the lead for Adult Education and to work with Zoltan to identify interested people

With respect to secondary school education there is a problem with 14-16 year olds that cannot access school. It was suggested Linda Caulfield in Salford be approached re the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Services in Schools initiative.

Action – Amanda Jones-Said to take the lead for Secondary School Education and to work with Zoltan and Fazil to identify interested people

With regard to nursery children, Mo suggested Sure Start in Salford be contacted. The boundary for Sure Start is the same as the Health Action Zone.

Action – Mo Lamb to take the lead for Nursery School Education and to work with Zoltan and Fazil to identify interested people

There was a feeling that the communities could do something but it is difficult to get together and organise things. There is a great fear of losing culture.

There are issues around asylum seekers' personal safety and a lack of empathy from the Police. There is also a shortage of things to do in the evening and a lack of information on safe places to go.

6. Mental Health Conference

Mental Health is the number one issue for asylum seekers. Phil Davies, Zienab, Mr Farah, Hermione and Rhetta attended a meeting with the Mental Health Partnership, which is a Manchester based multi-agency forum on mental health. The group discussed the feasibility of a conference – see Appendix 1. The proposal is being put to the health sub-group of the Manchester Forum.

In addition, the Refugee Support Group want to put on some cultural awareness training by asylum seekers for professionals in the mental health partnership. They will then gain experience in presenting in preparation for a Regional Conference on Mental Health as a number of stories are emerging.

Concern was expressed about the possibility that asylum seeker's issues could be sidetracked under a health brief when education, housing and vouchers among other issues are still very problematic. There was a debate as to whether the group should aim at overall issues or specific ones. Rhetta is meeting with Eustace de Souza from the Manchester City Council and will explore the appropriateness for RAPAR to connect up at the strategic level with the Manchester Committee. While there are mental health problems some people are in danger of developing mental health problems because of their living conditions. It was decided the focus should be well-being and one aim of the Conference will be to expand the definition of the term mental health.

Pat Bracken, Psychiatrist in Bradford and RAPAR member has been invited by the Royal College of Psychiatry to lead a group looking at the best ways to help people surviving war trauma and torture. No one knows what it feels like apart from people who have experienced it themselves. He supports an approach of rebuilding communities, not simply working with individuals. He is the lead on a call for a Conference in Bradford in February and later in London. Rhetta has booked a place for the London event and RAPAR will sponsor a place for an asylum seeker.

Action: Contact Rhetta for details.

7. **CONSTITUTION ISSUES**

On the 13th February 2002 at 10.00am there is a meeting to formalize the constitution. The notice is being sent out this week, also translated into Farsi, contact Rhetta and let her know if any other languages are required.

Currently the proposed slate is Salford Primary Care Trust as the secretariat, Mohamed Nasri an Afghani economist student as Treasurer is Assri, Zeinab Mohamed Somali Midwife from Refugee Support group and Bill Davies from Manchester Asylum Seeker team as Vice Chairs, Hermione Lovel for International linkages, and Rhetta Moran in the Chair (for the next six months when the Chair will be reviewed). The slate reflects RAPAR's aim of crossing health, local authority and geographical boundaries and to include asylum seekers as officer.

Action: Contact Maria Thornton (0161 212 4199 or email maria.thornton@salford) with any other nominations.

RAPAR needs a Graphic Designer to design the logo.

Action: Latif Ebadi and Ali Nagroshayefard will work on some design

8. **Working within the Health infrastructure**

RAPAR have received a letter from Steve Young from the Mental Health Services of Salford and a meeting has been arranged with Sally Bradley, Director of Public Health in the area, on 5th February 2002.

Action: Contact Cath Maffia or Rhetta Moran for details.

RAPAR has a link with Manchester public health via Joanne Miller and they are producing a report, which includes a description of the work of RAPAR and a recommendation to Manchester Primary Care Trusts that they support the work of RAPAR

9. **Accommodation**

A general discussion took place around the problems asylum seekers experience when they obtain refugee status. Once refugee status is received people have four weeks to move, they should receive a move on letter 7 days prior to being asked to move but often this does not happen. Clearsprings cannot accommodate people with refugee status, but will continue to do so if they can show they are making efforts to move. Refugees are unaware of how to access accommodation and often end up living in homeless people hostels between alcohol and drug users. Asylum seekers can be in a better position than refugees. Revive can help but not everyone is told of the system.

When the letter arrives confirming refugee status people should act immediately and seek job seekers' allowance. The letter should be accompanied by a letter confirming IND status, a national insurance number and a NASS 35 from the Home Office. People do not understand the letters and sometimes they do not receive all the documents necessary to acquire new accommodation, for example there is a three months' waiting list to issue national insurance letters. After Christmas there was less local authority housing as the accommodation was occupied owing to family breakups so even though people had a right to accommodation there was none available. Refugee Action is producing a procedure booklet detailing people's rights.

Local authorities and Clearsprings offer properties to NASS and when a decision is made on status that person has to move out because someone else is moving in. Clearsprings does not receive money for people who have refugee status. Currently this issue is overcome because several people share rooms so a refugee can double up with an asylum seeker, however, under a new ruling there is no sharing of bedrooms allowed. Sometimes becoming homeless and moving to a hostel can help. Clearsprings would welcome information of people's rights.

It was suggested RAPAR can work with housing providers: local authority, housing association and private sector, and promote dialogue as they need to have mechanisms to house people with refugee status.

Often people have been in emergency accommodation for several months so it becomes their home and then they are relocated at very short notice. One asylum seeker reported that his neighbours had complained about him and he was moved from Longsight to Ashton with no rights to complain. He reported that it felt like being persecuted as the Jews were in Germany. Asylum seekers have no rights to complain about their treatment by NASS either. There were issues around the transition time for accommodation. There needs to be advice on the benefits available, for instance families have received council accommodation but then they have not known how to access benefits for furniture. However, it was also recognised that they are some cases where the transition has worked very well and families have been moved into good accommodation and are settling

Action: Refugee Action, Bill Davies, Carl, Latif Ebadi and Anne Marie Fell to pursue

10. HEALTH PROJECT SUBGROUP

An evidence base of asylum seekers' stories with a health focus is being created. There is a meeting on 28.1.02 at 4.00pm at Rusholme Health Centre to talk about the identification of health issues, barriers, and what will improve well being. A 4th year medical school student may use the information for his project.

Action: Anyone who is interested is welcome to join a small project collecting information which will finish in July. See Hermione Level

11. SPORT SUBGROUP

A drop in has been set up aimed at providing sports to people on low income and outdoor pursuits this has been extended to include asylum seekers and is well attended. There are a large number of asylum seekers in the Precinct area and they are looking to expand this scheme at Clarendon Leisure Centre. There was a suggestion that this could be linked to the Salford Sports Development initiative.

Action: Ameen Hadi, Community safety officer will co-ordinate this group.

12. Improving communication networks

A leaflet is being produced to enable the asylum seekers resident in Salford to get to know one another and it was suggested a website could be established in different languages via GMR Smart Group to store information on safe places to go.

Action: give your email address to Phil to join Smart Group.

13. Financing sub groups

It was suggested RAPAR provide the subgroups with £50 for transport and telephone allowance. However, it was felt important to still hold one group a month for asylum seekers as the social support element is useful. 4.30-7.00pm is fine for college students but may not be appropriate for mums with children.

Action: Mo Lamb will lead on arranging the next asylum seekers' group meeting on Monday, 18.2.02 at Langworthy Cornerstone, 4-30pm.

Louise Kay is establishing a store of cooking pots and pans that can be accessed by asylum seekers in Salford.

All subgroups are to feedback to RAPAR at the next meeting and keep RAPAR informed.

14. Events

A social event: welcoming people to Gorton Community Centre, Abbey Hey Lane is being held this Saturday at 12-4.00. Travel expenses will be reimbursed.

Manchester Museum are working with Somali and Afghan refugees creating an oral history combining English language and art and crafts over the next 7 weeks. It has only just started so there is still time to join. Participants can get a bus, arranged by Refugee Action. A lot of museums are interested in getting involved with work of this nature. In June/July this model is to be expanded to young men and they can learn English as part of the programme. It is open to all asylum seekers.

Action: Give Hermione names, addresses and contact numbers.

Contact Louse for an event on 9.2.02 at Salford Playhouse

Contact Cath Maffia for news of a party on 2.2.02 at Cross Street Chapel Manchester, at 2pm.

Date and time of forthcoming RAPAR organization and development meetings, both at Salford Cathedral House, Chapel Street, Salford:

**Tuesday, 26.2.02
16.30-18.30**

**Tuesday, 26.3.02
10.00-12.00**

**Action: Anne Marie Fell to book the rooms
Agenda items/apologies to Maria Thornton**