

# Plymouth Asylum Seeker & Refugee Consortium



A community development research project – end report

By START on behalf of PASRC

June 2009

This report is an account of the work undertaken, in the spring/summer 2009, by START, in response to a required element identified within the current service level agreement between the Plymouth Asylum Seeker and Refugee Consortium (PASRC) and Plymouth City Council Social Inclusion Unit. That is to:

***'Identify and map out what is currently available in mainstream youth service provision for Asylum Seeker and Refugee (ASR) young people.'***

START is one of the three members of PASRC. START works in partnership with families and individuals to facilitate the transition of those refugee families and individuals from people in need to self reliant contributors to their local community. START has an experienced team and strong networks with other agencies within Plymouth. START works in a holistic way providing both one to one casework support and community activities for refugees and asylum seekers. START is a unique organisation which utilises the skills and strengths of students on placement to undertake this work.

It was identified that this piece of work would be suitable for students on placement at START to do. This was agreed by the members of PASRC.

### **The approach:**

START identified this brief as a suitable piece of work for first year undergraduate social work students to undertake as a community development project: a required placement element of the BSc Social Work course.

In February 2009, Lisa Dalton, Jess Pajak and Max Manning started this project at START, supervised by Isaac Kelly. Their placement finished at the end of May 2009.

### **The brief:**

The aim was to research, identify and map mainstream youth service provision for asylum seeker and refugee young people. This was split into two parts; firstly, it looked at what mainstream service provision is currently available, where these services are geographically, the ease of access to these services, and highlight any barriers to access. This included web based services too. Secondly, the project would look at the community and where they lived. Through interview and

questionnaire with both young people and their families, the aim was to gauge service take-up by this community and again identifying barriers to access.

The student team were required to

- map the services available, and compare with the dispersal pattern of the community,
- leaflet gather and compile an information pack,
- visit service providers,
- interviews of service users and providers,
- produce findings as a short report,
- present the work to START staff,

### **The Report:**

This report is in three parts:

**Part one:** mapping of mainstream youth services currently available.

**Part two:** research into the ASR community, Process of interview and questionnaires with service users and providers ascertaining possible barriers to service take-up by the specified client group.

### **Appendices:**

**Part three:** information pack - information and leaflets available to young people in Plymouth. This pack is designed to be taken to the Cultural Kitchen as a portable resource available to all who attend. It should be noted that this resource isn't meant to be a static set of documents and that it could be added to at anytime.

### Defining the terms of the brief:

- Mainstream youth service: Mainstream youth service is deemed to be services provided by, or in partnership with, the youth service of Plymouth City Council. Third sector and private provision are not deemed to be within the remit of the project.
- Young people: We identified the specific age range as 11-17.
- Asylum Seekers: Asylum Seekers are those currently seeking asylum and are still awaiting a decision.
- Refugees: Refugees are those who have been granted asylum.

## Part one

### Mapping the Mainstream Youth Services of Plymouth

The student team researched and collected information around what mainstream services are currently available in Plymouth, as defined in the brief.

They completed an internet search of services, and then used that information to make contact with the various youth teams in Plymouth. This face to face contact enabled the team to gather information about what was on offer geographically and specific to the locality of the youth service provider. It also offered an opportunity to explore the current use of these services by ASR young people with the providers themselves.

The locality of service provision was geographically mapped (see appendices)

The information gathered informed the mapping process, was categorised in a way that would be easy to construct and put together an information pack for ASR young people to use, and was presented to the START team.

The youth service in Plymouth engages in both direct and indirect provision of services to young people. It does this directly and in partnership with existing community provision. It engages with difficult to reach service users within the community on their own turf through detached forms of engagement.

Plymouth City Council Youth services have a curriculum framework that addresses the following issues:

- Me in a global society
- Health and Well-being
- Cultural awareness
- Spirituality
- Crime
- Education
- Equal opportunities and anti-discrimination
- Political education
- Accreditation

These issues are addressed under the five outcomes of the Every Child Matter policy document (Please refer to the Plymouth City council Youth Service Curriculum Framework for more information provided in the pack).

Following an Ofsted report in 2007, Plymouth no longer outsources youth service provision and has set up a centrally administered framework of provision, dividing the city into five geographic areas. Provision and commissioning of individual activities is administered under these five areas:

- Central and North-East
- South West
- South East
- Plyms
- North West

There is also a City-wide provision of detached engagement (Challenge and Support/Streetwise) based at Fairbairn House in central Plymouth. Business Support and Participation & Staff Development are both based at HQ in Stonehouse (Contacts for each division are provided in the Information pack).

Programmes of work for each area are provided in the appendices. However, it should be noted that the programmes are designed for use by the staff and do not provide service users with sufficient detail to access activities.

Some areas particularly the South-West area which includes Stonehouse, North Prospect and Honicknowle work largely in partnership with community groups and information regarding specific activities is in the process of development. Due to the disparate nature of this service delivery a detailed programme of works is still in the making at the time of writing this report.

Young people are actively encouraged to participate in decision making in regards to activities undertaken: in the planning, organisation and delivery of activities undertaken.

Plymouth youth service has commissioned Quality Education Solutions (QES) to provide a comprehensive database publically accessible on the internet that contains detailed information on individual youth services in Plymouth called [www.plymyouth.co.uk](http://www.plymyouth.co.uk).

What is particularly useful about this site is that all young people have access to the site to see what is available for them locally and citywide. The young people can interact with the service and search for activities that specifically interest them. Service providers can update information on their particular service at any time and the database is updated immediately. Each organisation can upload their logo. A default logo is presented where none is provided. Young people can rate the activity on line for others to see. An automatically updated notice board of events that **all** service users may be interested in.

Initially the online database was to be hosted on Plymouth City Council servers and accessed via their website, however for technical reasons this wasn't possible but the resulting user interface is by far more user friendly and accessible for young people than The Plymouth City Council website.

The website went live Friday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009 and Plymouth Youth services are soliciting feedback from all and anybody that uses it. Service users can rate the services that they attend on a 5-star rating system.

The following web shots are examples of the interface pages used by service users to navigate their way around the site. Service providers can amend and update their activities; examples of this process are included in the appendices.

In order to test this project put we have included The Cultural Kitchen as an activity on the database and registered START as a service provider.

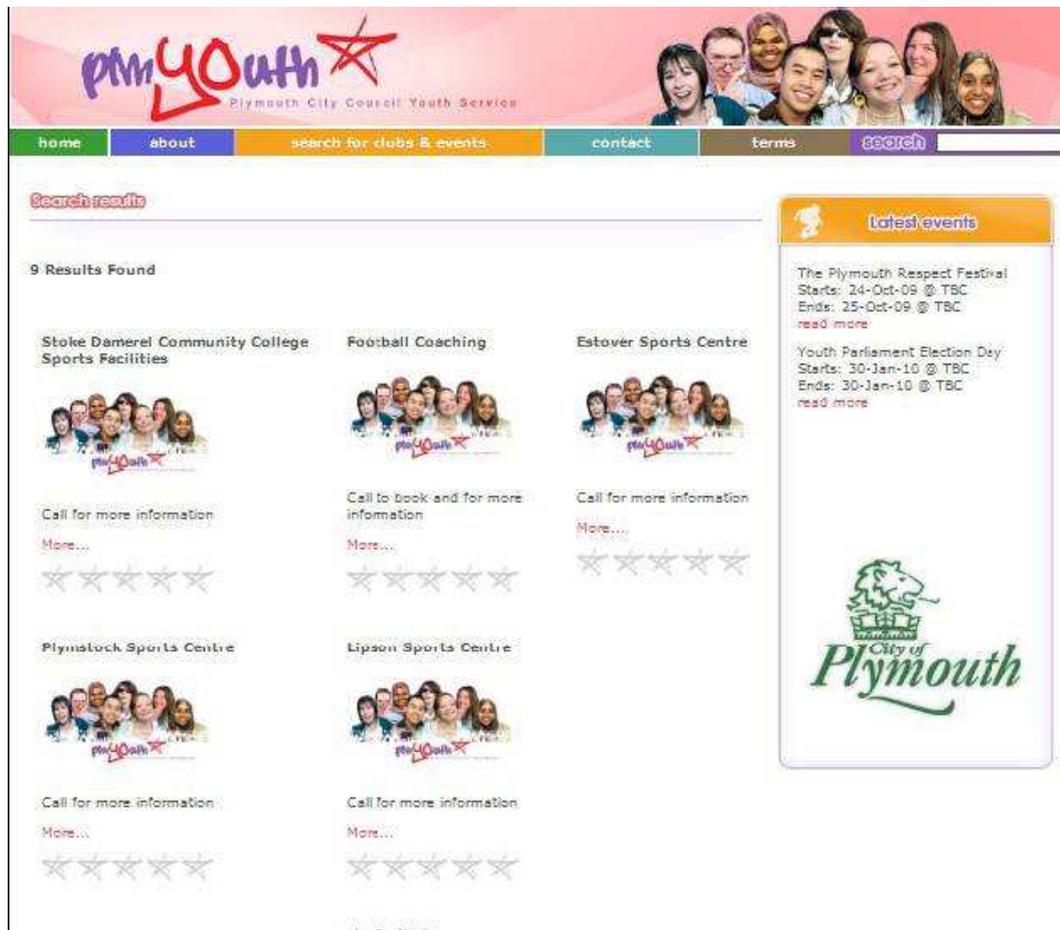
The [www.plmyouth.co.uk](http://www.plmyouth.co.uk) home page:



By clicking on the orange link in the link bar under the logo brings you to a search screen:



A search for 'football', leaving all other search terms blank yields the following results at the time of making the report:



This screenshot shows the first five results, of a total of nine.

Literature from individual mainstream organisations, e.g. Connexions and the Zone, are included within the information pack (part 3).

## Part Two

This section was tackled in two ways:

- (i) To research the dispersal of the community in Plymouth and to link this dispersal pattern to the locality of youth service provision in the city.
- (ii) To design a questionnaire and survey a section of the community, reporting and linking the findings to this project.

### **The ASR community:**

It is our current understanding that there is no publically available information describing the diversity and size of the asylum seeker and refugee community in Plymouth as a whole. Each organisation or service gathers diversity information and equality of access information to suit its need as and when it is needed. The quality and quantity of such information varies considerably, and reliability of such information depends on the context in which it is viewed. Most existing facts and figures provide snap shot views of the community, e.g. the number beds provided by Clearsprings as home office asylum support accommodation (NASS accommodation). The statistics held by Plymouth City Council with regards to the black, minority ethnic population (BME) does not differentiate and includes refugee and asylum seekers as part of that wider community. The last figures known to us were published in 2004.

Accepting that this research could only produce another 'snap shot' of the community, the team concentrated on the information available at START to gain a picture of the wider community.

START engages with a broad range of people from the ASR community, who access START through its various community development activities or who are referred for 1:1 support. It is a 'needs led' service.

To create a dispersal picture of Plymouth, The team looked at those who had received a 1:1 service from START from September 2007 until April 2009. This would form the background ASR group. They looked only at the geographic location of that service user's last known address. These addresses were then grouped by postcode

area, e.g. PL1, PL2 and PL4 etc. That postcode area represented a geographical location, which subsequently was used to produce a dispersal picture. To link this information to ASR young people and their families, the core information used to create the first dispersal picture was refined so that only the location of families with children was represented. These were plotted against the dispersal picture. See dispersal map (appendices).

*With regard to the map:*

*In both mapping exercises, no reference is made to any other aspect of diversity: religion, family make up, nationality etc, other than location in Plymouth. The source data has been anonymised. The 'markers' used on the map to represent families are sufficiently large enough against the scale of the map, and the map is sufficiently vague enough to protect the anonymity of the families that they represent.*

*It was felt that this provides adequate protection to the community but enables the research to highlight any findings pictorially.*

*Although START does not claim to work with the entire ASR community in Plymouth, the time frame chosen gives a reasonable cross section of that community (with the exception of the Chinese community). The data is based on a sample population of around 400 people which includes about 60 families.*

### **Talking to the community:**

The team designed and trialled a number of questionnaires, used to gain an insight into the uptake of mainstream youth services by the ASR community. They targeted young people and the parents and or guardians of those young people. The team attended the Cultural Kitchen and worked alongside START caseworkers on various other community development activities. The questionnaires were designed to be completed together with a START worker, who could explain any queries on the spot.

The design of the first questionnaire focussed on what people didn't or couldn't do and asked for reason why. After testing it, it was found that, if the respondent didn't feel that there was anything stopping them from accessing services then most of the questionnaire remained empty. The format of the questionnaire was not attractive to young people, being devoid of colour and rather 'dry' in appearance and content. The

questions were also too formal and the language used too academic.

The team redesigned the questionnaire to focus on what activities people did, used to do and would like to do, rather than what they didn't do. The questions were rewritten using informal language. There was a need to for another questionnaire aimed at parents.

The initial and final questionnaires are included in the appendices

During the process of using the questionnaire we encouraged the respondents to talk openly about the issue of youth services in general and used the questionnaire to direct the conversation.

We sampled both young asylum seekers/refugees and their parents, and where possible interviewed the young people out of earshot of their parents to encourage them to speak freely.

As a control we also sampled a similar number of young people and their parents who weren't part of this client group. On comparing the reaction from both client groups we found they each articulated similar barriers.

In conclusion:

This work has produces a number of interesting findings:

- The majority of young people questioned lived active fulfilled lives, where most activities were done in connection with their school.
- The biggest barrier expressed by both ASR young people and their parents to using mainstream youth services is the cost of attending an activity.
- The second barrier to attendance is 'getting there'. Although the map shows that provision is widespread, available, and where families live. It doesn't show whether what is specifically available and whether this is interesting to the individual living nearby. Transport costs incurred travelling to community activities across the city, inhibit participation.
- Through talking with the young refugees and asylum seekers we got the impression that this client group does not see themselves any different from

other young people in Plymouth accessing services, even if others do perceive a difference. The research raised the question of self-identity. In many cases, the young people questioned, questioned the term 'refugee', self-identifying as young Plymouthians.

- It should be acknowledged that this represents START clients, and their children, who *chose to speak to us* in English. From these conversations, we received the general impression that they don't feel that they experience any barriers specifically related to their status as refugees and/or asylum seekers or children thereof.
- Mainstream youth service providers do not profile their users, leaving little indication of the service uptake from this client group. Anecdotal evidence from the team leaders of several areas point to the fact that soliciting this type of personal information isn't conducive to establishing trust with the young people they come into contact with. It was thought one possible reason for this may be that those recently entering the country as asylum seekers may understandably be suspicious of state provided services and any figure of authority.
- There exists a need to improve the communication between mainstream services and third sector or voluntary agencies, so that opportunities that exist can be promoted to hard to members of hard to reach communities.

Our evidence is inconclusive as to whether there is a statistical basis for arguing that there is a disproportionately low uptake of mainstream youth services by young refugees and asylum seekers. This could be symptomatic of the fact that the young refugees and asylum seekers that we interviewed, were by definition already 'engagers' of services – as they had all been in contact with START.

This of course doesn't mean that barriers particular to this group in accessing these services don't exist, but equally it doesn't mean that they do exist.