

START: STUDENTS AND REFUGEES TOGETHER

# Community Research: “Priority of needs”

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Spring 2012

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5/11/2012

## 1.1 Introduction:

Students and Refugees Together (START) creates innovative opportunities for students on professional work-like placements, to work alongside refugees living in Plymouth, to their mutual benefit. As a learning organisation it is important that the outcomes of the methods we use meet the needs of both refugees and students. An essential part of learning is listening. START uses a variety of methods to ensure that we are listening and using what we hear to change and improve our services.

This piece of market research focuses on refugee need and how people themselves prioritise these. It was designed to meet the following objectives;

- It fulfils an obligation under the Supporting People contract to conduct an annual review of need which maximises the involvement of service users in the process
- It develops a holistic template for future community research to enable comparison from year to year
- The collective results will inform a comprehensive review of the extent to which we achieve our mission statement.

## 1.2 Community Research:

In August 2011, we designed the research brief, taking the framework from the Supporting People contract, drawing on national research commissioned by the Home Office (Cebulla, Daniel and Zurawan, 2010) and expanding the scope to reflect START's whole service and local conditions. Particular attention was paid to potential language barriers and strategies for overcoming them.

During the autumn of 2011, a marketing student on a full-time 'year in industry' placement worked with the START management team to set the parameters of the research and develop the process. A questionnaire was produced consisting of three elements:

- 1 Basic demographic information about respondents' age, gender, nationality, status etc.
- 2 A series of pictures that represent areas of potential need (e.g. finding somewhere to live, getting a job, your health) for respondents to place in order of priority.
- 3 A series of follow-up questions about the chosen top priorities to capture people's own words.

The resulting process followed:

- Development of questionnaire and refinement following a pilot
- Production of an information leaflet for the community explaining the purpose of the research
- Launch of the process at the Cultural Kitchen (a regular meeting place for refugees)
- An invitation for people to participate through their contact with all aspects of START's services.

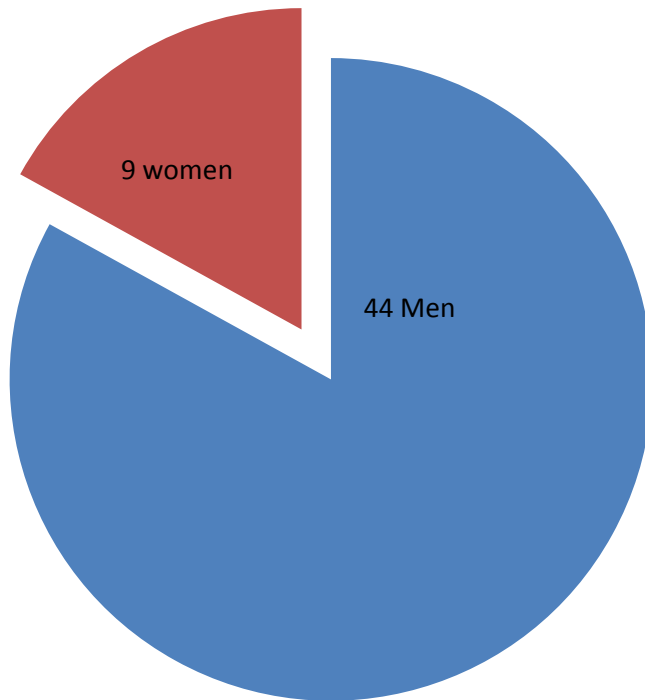
Two students from the Plymouth Global Exchange programme undertook the data collection as a specific placement activity to ensure that respondents did not feel a conflict of interest in relation to their access to services. The responses were then gathered, coded and anonymised by the marketing student who drafted this report in consultation with the management team.

Cebulla, A., Daniel, M and Zurawan, A (2010) *Spotlight on Refugee Integration: findings from the Survey of New Refugees in the United Kingdom*. Home Office

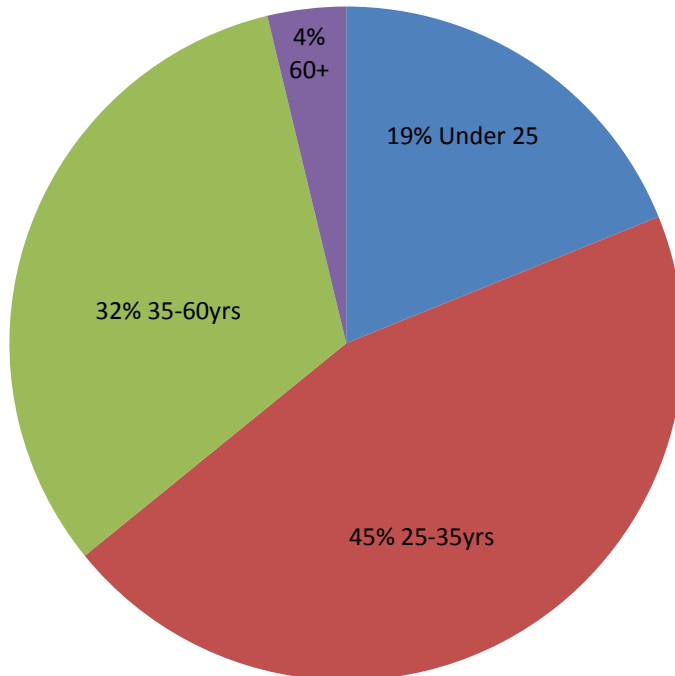
## 2.1 Research results: Basic demographic information

85 refugees were invited to participate in the research and 53 completed the whole process.

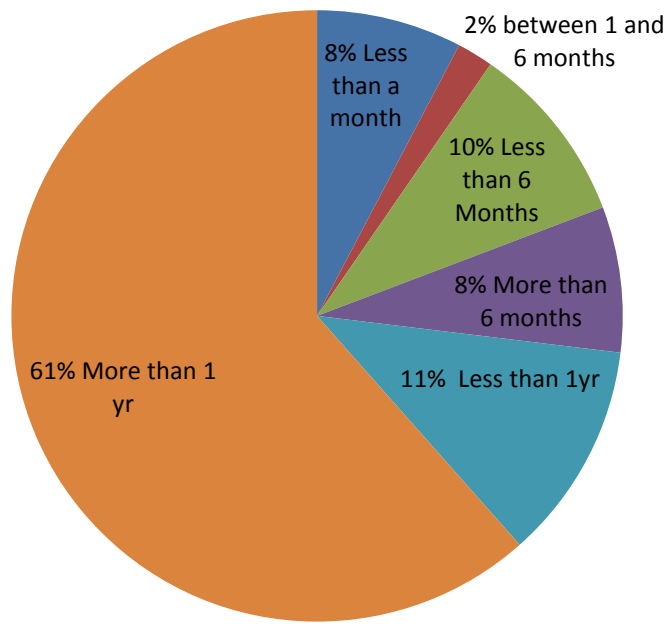
### Gender of Respondents



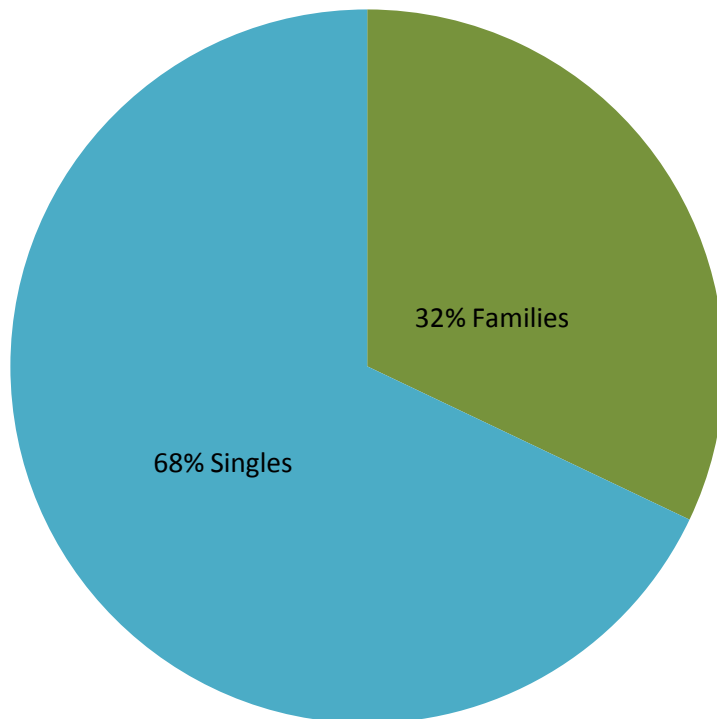
### Age of Respondents



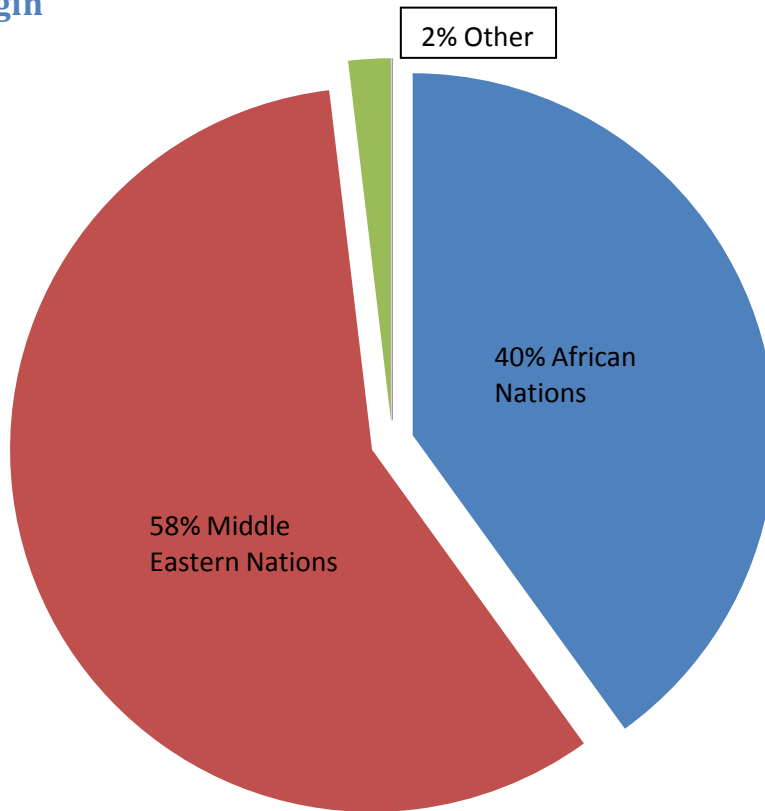
## How long people have been working with us at START



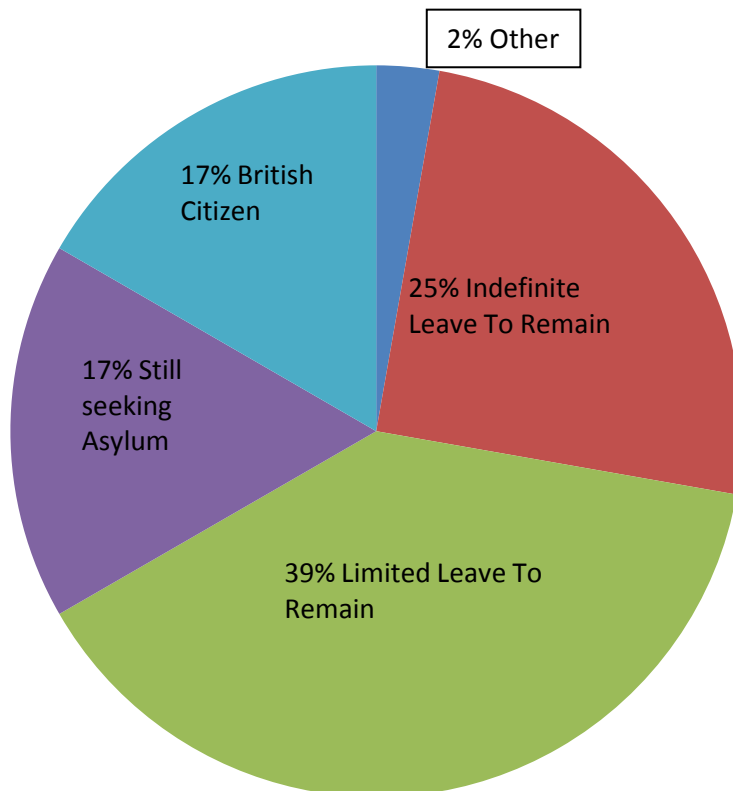
## Family Status



## Country of Origin



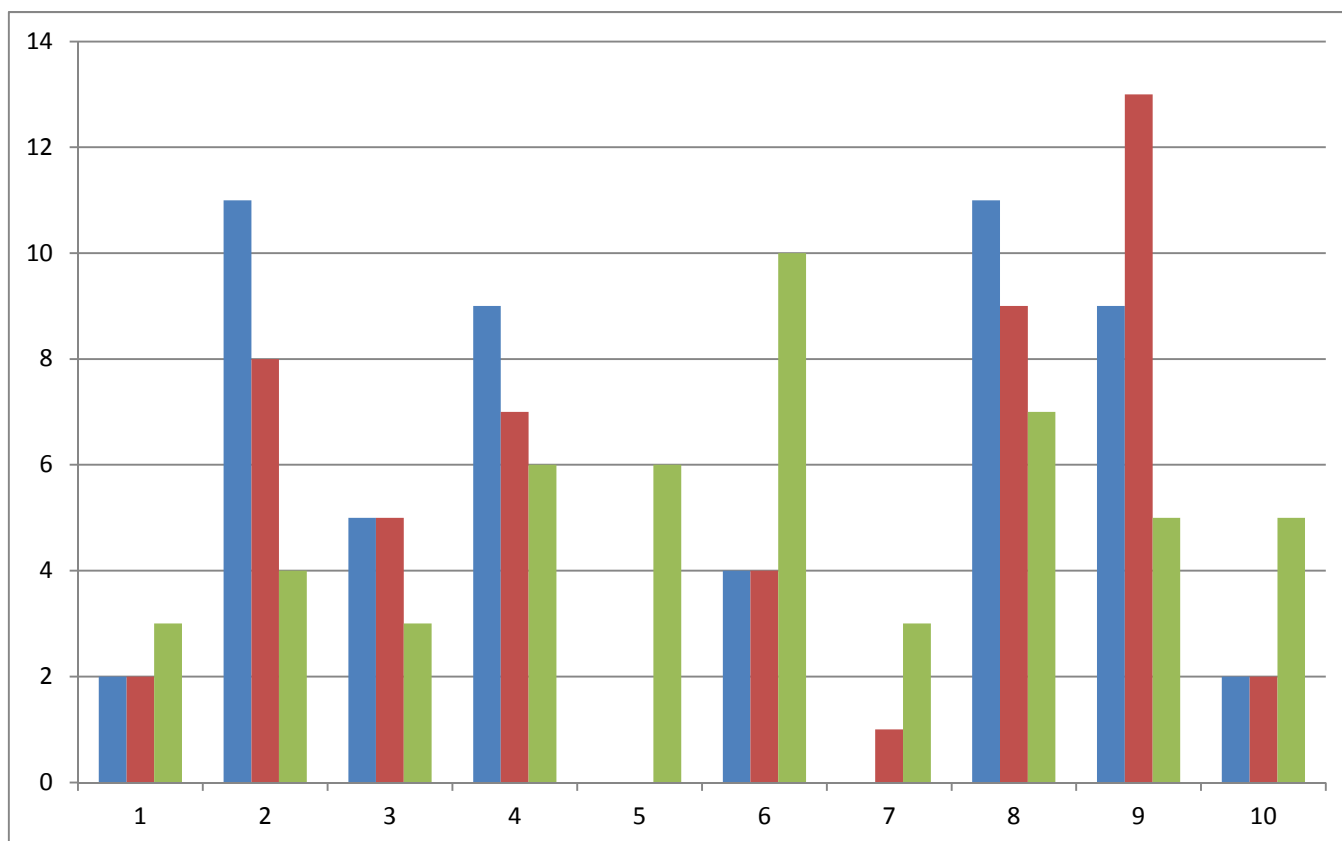
## Refugee Status



## 2.2 Research results: photographic selection

### Image Selection

This chart shows the 10 images (listed below) and the frequency with which they were chosen by respondents as their first, second or third choice. Colours indicate whether it was the first (blue), second (red) or third (green) choice. For example, moving away from Plymouth was the first choice for two people, the second choice for two others and the third choice for another three. The analysis uses the top three choices as the basis for identifying respondent priorities.



The number coding refers to pictures representing the following choices:

- 1 Moving away from Plymouth
- 2 Finding somewhere to live
- 3 British citizenship
- 4 Your Health
- 5 Being on the Right Benefits
- 6 Getting Education or training
- 7 Getting Legal advice
- 8 Learning or Improving English
- 9 Finding a Job
- 10 Finding Friends and Community

The top five picture results chosen as a first choice priority are:

- Learning or Improving English 11/53
- Finding somewhere to live 11/53
- Finding a Job 9/53
- Your Health 9/53
- British citizenship 5/53

However, when the first, second, and third choices are combined: the priority order changes and the top five results become:

- Finding a job 27/159
- Learning and improving English 27/159
- Finding somewhere to live 23/159
- Your health 22/159
- Getting education and training 18/159

### **2.3. Research results: qualitative responses**

The following statements are the participants' words and represent some of the views shared about each of the priorities. These are presented in the order in which they were ranked by participants:

#### **Finding a Job**

- Job very important : money, independence
- 5 years study at city college for English
- Search internet for sites help for job
- Go out to look for jobs
- It's difficult to live here without job
- Language problem, economic problem
- Lack of experience
- Low opportunities

A respondent said that they wanted to secure their future and improve their economic status. Getting a job would do this. However barriers such as language and lack of job opportunities get in the way. Their advice was to try and live within your budget and learn more English – this takes lots of practice. The respondent said that START and DCRS were really helpful with this.

#### **Learning or improving English**

- Open Doors the City College to learn English
- Easier to communicate with people
- English in the language so I want to more familiar with the people
- Got help from Refugee Action
- I want to understand more
- Try to speak English with friend
- There is no community help
- Language barriers
- 3 lessons per week not enough
- No understand the country- office, job centre
- Understanding the systems the country.
- Misunderstanding

'Learning English is the most important thing because without English you cannot understand this country, how the Job centre works – it causes lots of problems. The systems here are really complicated. There are not enough English classes in the week' explained one participant who chose this as their top priority.

All participants that chose this as their top priority expressed concern at the lack of available English classes in the week and would like lots more so that they could learn faster. However some people use the libraries, read newspapers and practise with friends to learn faster.

### **Finding Somewhere to Live**

- I have come to START for help
- Got a shared house
- Will go to sleepers' safe sleep providing
- 10 years in Plymouth still no house
- Has come to PATH first to find a house
- Homeless , poor quality of life
- No deposits, no money

One person said 'It is very important to find somewhere to live so that you are not homeless or destitute. When you find somewhere to live it is far from family and friends it is isolating and lonely'. The participant continued by expressing their gratitude for START and similar organisations that run community activities and felt that they would promote these to others in the community who felt isolated.

### **Your health**

- Important for life
- Secure your life health and safety
- Contact emergency support
- Moved to Plymouth, was referred to hospital
- Appointment delays
- Seen doctor about them for a long time not much better now
- No help from community
- The don't seem to listen if you are an asylum seeker

One participant chose 'Health' as their top priority because they felt that without 'your health' you cannot do much if you are sick. This person has suffered pain in their legs and back for a long time and seen the doctor many times since coming to Plymouth. They felt that it was important for Path and START to be here to help access medical support as there was little knowledge within their community about how to deal with these issues.

### **British citizenship**

- Reading everything, understand facts from people
- Feel safe in the UK good treatment being a woman, comfortable, safe, have children and privacy.
- Want a Passport to go to home country and come back
- Not enough money, difficulties getting the citizenship
- Not enough information given from Home Office complicated

For one participant becoming a British citizen would mean that '...you are safe in the UK and would feel secure especially as a woman. Whilst in the asylum system you feel stuck and frustrated. It is complicated, especially if you have children as you cannot work or go to college. The support you get is too little and not at all helpful and there is no readily available support from the community.'



### 3.1 Limitations of Research

We recognised three particular areas in which the limitations of the research impacted. These were as follows:

- 1 Explaining what the questionnaire was about. Many of the people asked had no construct of the idea of giving feedback. This was hard to translate across language and cultural barriers and made it particularly difficult to explain why we were asking them these questions.
- 2 Understanding what the images meant to the participant. The most common problem with this was misinterpretation, as some of the pictures were perhaps undefined and not culturally specific.
- 3 Explaining what the follow up questions meant. It was hard to explain the concept of the person's own community giving them help, especially with those people from smaller communities in Plymouth. The hardest question seemed to be "What advice would you give to others?" We overcame this by putting the person in the example of "If you had a friend in your situation what would you tell them to help them?"

These limitations highlighted the cultural and language barriers that can lead to the misinterpretation of information presented. We found getting people to see outside their personal situations was difficult and to relate their issues to larger broader themes. In conducting this research we worked flexibly to try and overcome the above difficulties and get as much data feedback as possible. However, this accounts for the relatively high number of people who did not complete the process.

### 3.2 Overcoming the limitations

Reflecting on the limitations, once we had finished our research we propose that, in future START should:

- 1 Translate a leaflet into many languages explaining what it is we are doing. Also translate the full questionnaire into the 3 most commonly spoken languages including English.
- 2 Work with some service users to take pictures representing the 10 most important things. This would improve their accessibility to other service users and reduce misinterpretation of the pictures. The images used would also be specific to Plymouth.
- 3 Some of the qualitative questions should be reviewed and changed so they are easier to understand.

We acknowledge that research is a new process for START and has been designed to maximise involvement of students and refugees allowing the voices of refugees to influence the services offered. There was no procedure set for data gathering and the benefits of the work are that it contributes to knowledge about service user priorities and develops a process that can be repeated each year to see any local patterns emerging.

### 4.1 Conclusions drawn from the research

The research suggests that whilst the majority of service users are single males from a Middle Eastern country, who has been given indefinite leave to remain, there is significant diversity of country of origin, family background and length of time in the service. The majority of single men come to START for help with learning or improving English, finding somewhere to live or getting a job.

The results show that when encountering a problem, many felt they could not rely on their communities as resource. Instead most felt they needed organisations like START to solve their problems surrounding their priority needs. The main issue for those who are refugees is that they do not understand the systems in place. Many believe that by learning English they could improve this. Theoretically this is why learning or improving English was such a high priority.

As expected, many come to START for help with finding accommodation as that is the focus of a major contract and what we have become known for within the communities. 'Finding a house', however, can mean lots of different

things. For some people, sofa surfing is a legitimate solution that enables them to look for work. This may account for the result that, when first, second and third choices are combined; housing is not the first priority.

For those who have utilised START for a longer time, their priorities shifted towards finding work and gaining British citizenship. Their priorities changed as they are more settled living in Plymouth and integration takes a different meaning.

### 5.1 Next steps

In April 2012, we presented this data at the Cultural Kitchen (The following pictures show this). We invited service users to agree or disagree with what we had found. We had a good set of responses from some of our service users. Many agreed with our data presentation and felt it was representative of their opinions.

