

Refugee Arrivals Project

Annual Review 2003





At RAP we work in a constantly changing environment...

Every day, new asylum seekers arrive, many of them traumatised and in need of shelter and support which we provide. At national level, government policy impacts on our clients and the kind of help we can give them. And internationally, we are acutely aware of war and instability in different parts of the world as we monitor the changing pattern of new arrivals.

RAP is expert at reacting swiftly to change. This year, we have expanded our teams and premises. We have reorganised, strengthening areas of specialisation, developing our support for people with special needs, and improving overall the quality of the service we offer. We have worked to influence government policy on behalf of asylum seekers, based on our experience and expertise. Moving forward, we are exploring the needs of asylum seekers in West London, to see if there are ways we can extend our support service to give them help.

Our clients are among the most vulnerable in the UK, and we are the only charity helping them as they arrive at the airports of South East England. My thanks go to the many partner agencies, volunteers, staff, interpreters, trustees and funders who enable us to be consistent through challenge and change."

Elizabeth Little

Executive Director, Refugee Arrivals Project



I didn't realise what the clients would have gone through...

.... when I began volunteering with RAP. Some of it is horrific. But I love helping people here. There's a strong support system for staff and volunteers. The host society is often hostile, so I keep coming to RAP so asylum seekers know we are here for them."

Miranda

Refugee Arrivals Project volunteer



Meeting new arrivals

Waiting for decisions: RAP clients need support on arrival and while waiting for the Home Office to tell them where they will be sent.



I had problems in Iraq...

I am Kurdish, and faced persecution. So I escaped across the mountains into Turkey, and then I travelled in the back of a lorry. There were 27 of us in the lorry, we were there for eight days. There was no fresh air, and I was ill.

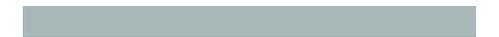
When I got to England, the police sent me to the Refugee Arrivals Project. I was frightened and confused. But everyone helped me at RAP. First they got me soap to wash, and clothes, because I was very dirty after four weeks of travelling. They got me somewhere to sleep.

That first night in a bed, I was very happy. I was in a democracy. I knew I was with an organisation that was helping people from all over the world, whatever they had been through or fled from.

RAP gave me food and advice. They helped with filling in forms and explained what was happening. With my illness, I ended up needing major surgery, and they helped me. I am very grateful."

Asylum seeker

Iraqi Kurdistan



Refugee Arrivals Project works with asylum seekers arriving at airports in the South East of England, including Heathrow, Gatwick, London City, Luton and Stansted. Immigration Officers refer to us any destitute, newly-arrived asylum seeker. Our Reception Team, based at Heathrow, meets all new arrivals, listens to their needs, and explains the system. They also help asylum seekers who arrive on lorries and are referred on by the police.

The Team deals with any urgent problems, and moves clients into RAP's emergency accommodation if they have no one to stay with.



Giving assistance and advice

RAP's Project Workers offer advice and help clients who apply for government support.



“I see newly arrived asylum seekers and advise them of their rights in this country...”

...their rights to education, health services, legal representation and so on. And I help them to apply for support from the government's National Asylum Support Service.

We try to see people on the day they arrive in the UK. Everyone I see comes from a different background and from different countries, so it can be quite difficult each time, finding the best way to help them understand the system in about 45 minutes.

Nearly everyone is worried and bewildered. They've left danger and difficulty, they don't know the culture and system here, most don't know the language, and there's all the media hostility. They don't really know who we are, and it takes time to explain it all.

I am an immigrant, not a refugee, but I can understand the difficulties people face. It gives me satisfaction when I help people cope.”

Sibel Sarikaya

Project Worker, Advice Team

Our Advice Team helps newly arrived asylum seekers apply to the government's National Asylum Support Service (NASS) for assistance. Most of the clients are in emergency accommodation in Hounslow, but others are staying with friends or family in West London and turn to RAP for help. The Advice Team also helps clients with a range of other issues.





When I first arrived it was hard for me...

I didn't know anyone to express myself to. I didn't know who to trust. I was staying with a friend, but I was never free – I couldn't eat the food, I was very ill. The solicitor said, 'send her to Refugee Arrivals Project'.

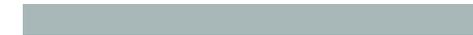
So I came here, and from that week I felt something very strong taken off my shoulders. The RAP Project Worker was the first person I told how I felt, all my pain.

RAP has helped me to meet new people in the same situation, to make friends. I've been able to tell my doctor my problems and not cry all the time. The Project Worker phoned other organisations to help me. They got me my own accommodation. I can eat the food here, I am able to cook for myself.

I thought my life had ended, but now I am able to walk alone again. I look forward to the future."

Asylum seeker

South Africa



The Refugee Arrivals Project arranges emergency accommodation for destitute and homeless asylum seekers: we use a number of hotels in the Hounslow area for this, and some of our longer term clients are in other rented accommodation.

People may stay with us for anything between a week to more than a year, and we help them throughout this period with advice, access to English classes, and other forms of support and assistance.





In the Support Team, we help with special cases...

...the people who've been tortured, people who have no solicitor, people with special needs such as disabilities, mental health problems, people who are seriously ill or who are HIV positive.

We talk to them, to find out what they need and what their problems are. Then we contact other agencies that should be able to help them. We have very strong links with the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture for instance. We help them make contact, and we follow things up to make sure they are getting the support they need.

Some of the work is traumatic. I try my best not to take it home with me, but sometimes you hear things that move you greatly. Sometimes we cry with our clients. People face a lot of hardship. They have left terrible situations. Some were very respected in their country of origin and here it's a very different situation, so they feel frustrated. Asylum seekers have a hard time.

We have a strong team, which helps. And you need to know not just about a wide range of entitlements, but also to have an extensive network of contacts to do this work well. We offer compassion and expertise, and we help in any way we can."

Fecadu Abraha

Project Worker, Support Team



RAP's Support Team helps clients with special needs, and also clients who are staying in West London and who turn to RAP for help. People living in the community often get less support than people in our accommodation, and this is a growing part of RAP's service. We also help newly released detainees and some other cases where asylum seekers have been in the area for some time, and suddenly encounter hardship.

The Support Team is expanding to include a new staff member who will work with children and families in emergency accommodation, where we know children can sometimes be isolated and not get the help they need.



Working with unaccompanied young asylum seekers

The RAP Young Person's Adviser visits the Heathrow arrival hall to meet young unaccompanied asylum seekers.



“Young people – some are as young as five or six – come off a plane after maybe weeks of travelling by lorry and then plane...”

They may arrive with an 'agent' who brings them to passport control, then disappears. In some cases, the children sit around for two or three hours not knowing what to do. Eventually an Immigration Officer will realise that something is wrong.

But the young people might not speak English. They are confused, tired, hungry and missing home. Some have witnessed their parents being killed. They may themselves have been abused. So they are scared: are the Immigration Officers from the secret service? Will they be arrested? Deported?

They are placed in a holding room, and that's when I'm likely to be contacted.

My first role is to comfort and to explain. I speak with them through an interpreter. The trafficking of women and children is a major concern to RAP, and I assess whether they may be victims of this. Then I stay with them throughout the airport process and make sure that when they are released they are safe and properly looked after.”

James Davies

Young Person's Adviser

“I consider this post is of vital importance.”

Chief Immigration Officer, Heathrow Airport

RAP's Young Person's Adviser Project is the only specialist initiative working to help vulnerable young people arriving without an adult at Heathrow and other ports in the South East. Within its first year, the Adviser worked directly with 260 young people, and gave indirect help to around 1,000 more through advising other professionals.

The project has helped to improve relations between Social Services Departments and Immigration, and to better practice all round. Currently working from a Heathrow base, RAP hopes the project will be replicated at other ports. The project is funded by the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund.

Arrivals





The main part of my job is interpreting Asian languages...

I speak Dari, Pashtu, Urdu and Farsi, and I understand Punjabi as well.

I am very busy because there are very few Urdu and Punjabi speakers. I work alongside the Project Workers who give advice – I work at all RAP's offices, including Heathrow.

I really enjoy my work. I enjoy dealing with different people from different countries. There are a lot of difficulties and it's hard to explain the rules and rights. There is technical language and it's very important that people understand accurately what is being said. It's quite a responsibility.

Working for RAP is also satisfying because the role of interpreter is respected and because it's more than interpreting. We have to be impartial, but when you see people disappointed and upset we are supportive, we calm them. I explain about my past. I came here as an asylum seeker, I have seen a lot of difficulties myself. It's about offering human support."

Wahidullah Samiee

Interpreter

Most of our clients do not speak English well – interpreters therefore play a vital role in making sure we provide a good service. RAP has 26 sessional interpreters, speaking 33 languages. All interpreters have a qualification in interpreting, and are given training in asylum legislation and related issues.

Languages spoken by RAP interpreters and staff

Afrikaans	Czech	German	Lingala	Pashtu	Serbo-Croat	Tigrinya
Albanian	Dari	Greek	Luganda	Polish	Shona	Turkish
Amharic	Dutch	Hindi	Macedonian	Portuguese	Slovak	Ukrainian
Arabic	English	Kiswahili	Mandarin	Punjabi	Somali	Urdu
Bulgarian	Farsi	Krio	Ndebele	Romanian	Spanish	Vietnamese
Cantonese	French	Kurdish	Nepalese	Russian	Tamil	



ようこそ

نورث آمد

Shalom

Swahili

Keliling (Hindi)

Creole

Welkommen

مرحبا

Bonjour

欢迎

Volunteering friendship

A volunteer on the Amigos scheme meets up with the RAP client she had befriended.



Being a volunteer with RAP's Amigos project is really interesting...

I've helped three different clients. What you do depends on the needs of the clients. I was helping a family with severe health problems, so I did a lot to put them in contact with different sorts of medical help.

Also I go once a week to one of the hotels RAP uses to distribute clothes. It's rushed. People arrive with nothing. Sometimes they only have slippers and need shoes. Sometimes they need underwear, or warm clothes for this climate.

The clients I've befriended are lovely people. I want my children and their friends to realise that all the negative stuff about refugees isn't true. That they are human beings.

I just think it's not fair. My life is so easy and for asylum seekers life is hard. It's good to know I'm doing something worthwhile."

Andrea
Volunteer



"I had no friend, no family when I came here..."

But now Andrea is there. She takes me around, to the shopping centre and so on. She put me in touch with people from my country here. She helped me at the library and with using computers. She phones me to ask how I am.

I had no clothes and she got me winter clothes. She got me shoes because I had no shoes. And she loves me and gives me support. I was isolated and had no one to speak to. She is a good person. I am happy."

Asylum seeker from Rwanda

Volunteers play a vital role in the work of RAP, and the support they provide to our clients is invaluable. There are a wide variety of volunteering opportunities, and we offer a specially designed induction and training programme to all our volunteers. The number of people helping us has increased significantly over the last year.

Our well-established Amigos volunteering project continues to provide extra support to our most vulnerable clients, including survivors of torture, single parents and people with complex health needs. Amigos is supported by the Community Fund.





“Our team helps people who are being moved on to other parts of the country...”

...and we also offer support to people staying in RAP accommodation while they wait to hear if they are going to be dispersed.

The government's National Asylum Support Service sends us lists of who is travelling a few days in advance. Our first task is to let people know. We talk to them one to one, to explain where they are going, where they can get help and advice, what to do if they are the victims of racial harassment, what the immigration procedures will be, and so on.

We make sure people are ready to travel on the day. We help them get everything on the coaches and give them the papers they need. The coaches leave three or four mornings each week – the Glasgow coach goes at 9pm, so we often work late. About 120 people leave us each week. Some have been with us many months, and you get to know them well.

It used to be hard to get people to travel, but people know now that they have no choice, that this is the government system. It's harder for families, especially when they have links in London. We try to fulfil our clients needs as much as we can. We can't make everyone happy and the system has its difficulties. When we manage to make things okay for people, it's a good feeling.”

Suraya Aziz

Senior Project Worker, Dispersal Team

RAP's Dispersal Team deals with a range of issues, including dispersal and arrangements that need to be made in cases where dispersal is not taking place, such as when clients gain refugee status or decide to stay with a friend or relative rather than travel. They also help clients who have to go to immigration appointments in Liverpool or Leeds.



Statement of financial activities

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2002

Incorporating the income and expenditure statement

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2002 £	Total 2001 £
Incoming Resources				
Government and other public authorities:				
Government and Local Government Income	–	5,844,125	5,844,125	5,000,404
European Community	–	–	–	140,242
Community Fund	–	21,794	21,794	62,951
Other income:				
Save the Children and trust funding	–	21,020	21,020	3,300
Donations	6,595	–	6,595	1,446
Interest receivable	18,789	8,022	26,811	63,550
Total incoming resources	25,384	5,894,961	5,920,345	5,271,893
Resources Expended				
Activities in furtherance of objects:				
Emergency Payments Fund	–	3,856,068	3,856,068	2,970,811
Refugee arrivals service	63,078	1,788,302	1,851,380	1,727,156
Planning & development project	–	90,443	90,443	145,540
Volunteer befriending scheme	11,998	47,267	59,265	56,271
BASIC Project	–	–	–	174,757
Young separated refugees project	–	17,055	17,055	–
Management and administration	–	38,109	38,109	12,361
Total resources expended	75,076	5,837,244	5,912,320	5,086,896
Net incoming resources	(49,692)	57,717	8,025	184,997
Transfers between funds	224,692	(224,692)	–	–
Opening fund balances at 1 April	164,076	560,159	724,235	539,238
Closing fund balances at 31 March	339,076	393,184	732,260	724,235

Trustees' statement

The summarised accounts set out here have been extracted from the full annual accounts prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985, which were approved by the Trustees on 30 January 2002. The full annual accounts have been audited and the auditors' opinion was unqualified. The accounts have been delivered to the Registrar of Companies and the Charity Commission.

Cumarasamy Sithamparapillai, Chair of the Board of Trustees, 31 March 2002

Further information

These summarised accounts may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the charity. For further information, the full annual accounts, the auditors' report on these accounts and the Trustees' annual report should be consulted. Copies of these can be obtained from the Finance Manager, Refugee Arrivals Project, 41b Cross Lances Road, Hounslow, Middlesex, TW3 2AD, telephone 020 8607 6934.

BALANCE SHEET 31 MARCH 2002

	2002 £	2001 £
Fixed Assets		
Office Equipment	161,309	193,354
Current Assets		
Debtors and Prepayments	160,489	769,550
Bank & Cash In Hand	1,433,555	447,478
Total Current Assets	1,594,044	1,217,028
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	1,023,093	686,147
Net Current Assets	570,951	530,881
Total Assets less Current Liabilities	732,260	724,235
Capital & Reserves		
Unrestricted Funds – General Funds	177,767	164,076
Unrestricted Funds – Designated Fixed Assets Fund	161,309	–
Restricted Funds	393,184	560,159
	732,260	724,235

Planning ahead

We value highly the security provided by the government grants we receive, and we will seek to maintain this important source of funding. We are also mindful that a healthy agency has diverse sources of income, and we are working hard to increase the number of trusts and other funders who support our work.

Our activities rely on funding over a period of several years to ensure the progressive development of humane and efficient reception services for new asylum seekers. By gathering reserves, we can commit ourselves to long-term development and protect our work against financial fluctuations.

Independent auditors' statement to the trustees of Refugee Arrivals Project

We have examined the summarised accounts set out here, which comprise the statement of financial activities and balance sheet.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and auditors

The summarised accounts are the responsibility of the trustees. Our responsibility is to report our opinion on the consistency of the summarised accounts with the full annual report and financial statements. We also read the other information contained within the annual review and summary accounts and consider the implications for our statement if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the summarised accounts.

Basis of opinion

We have carried out the procedures we consider necessary to ascertain whether the summarised financial statements are consistent with the full financial statements from which they have been prepared.

Opinion

In our opinion the summarised financial statements are consistent with the full financial statements of Refugee Arrivals Project for the year ended 31 March 2002.

Gotham Erskine, Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors, 31 March 2002

Corporate achievement



Over the last year, RAP has made significant progress in building strong internal management...

...to ensure high standards of service for our clients, good working conditions for our staff, volunteers and interpreters, and continuing constructive relations with the many agencies RAP works with.

The Board of Trustees has been focussing on new developments in governance arrangements to drive forward our strategic direction. We are confident that RAP's role in providing support to asylum seekers and refugees in need will continue to enlarge within the coming year.

I am pleased to take on the Chairmanship of the Board of Trustees at such a time. With the rest of RAP I acknowledge with appreciation the work of my predecessor, Cumarasamy Sithamparapillai."

Dr Girma Ejere

Chair of the Board of Trustees

The Charity Commission for England and Wales praised RAP this year when it conducted a Review Visit. Many aspects of our work were commended as examples of good practice, including our financial management, quality systems and monitoring, client feedback, equal opportunities and work carried out by our Human Resources Team.

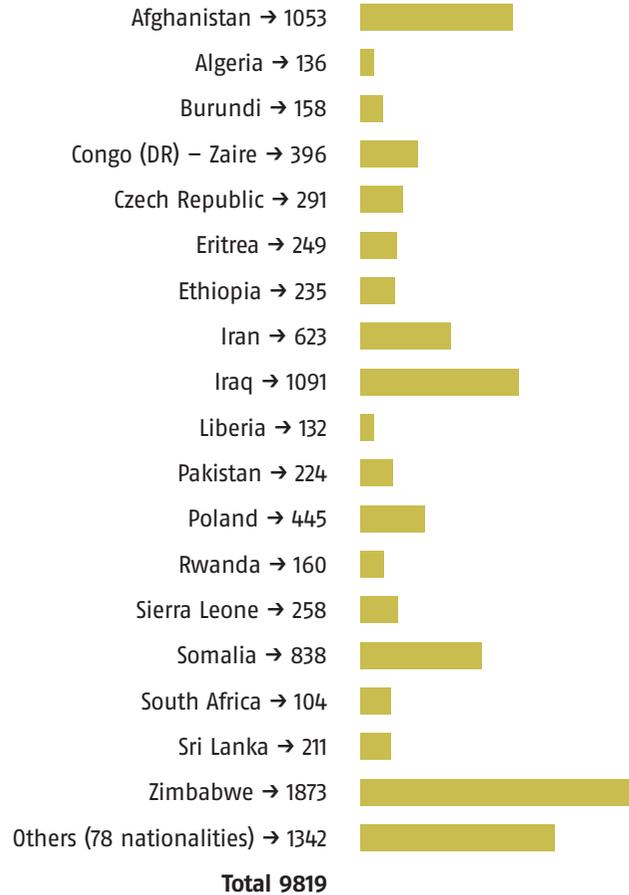
The Commission also praised the overall governance of RAP: we have worked closely with our trustees this year, reviewing all aspects of governance, and are benefiting from strengthened accountability and involvement.

We are continuing to develop our work in various areas. With increasing staff numbers, staff training and development remain central. We are looking at our communications strategy, and hoping to do more to counteract the negative image of asylum seekers in the media. We play an active part in many partnerships and networks examining policy and other areas of refugee work.

Statistics

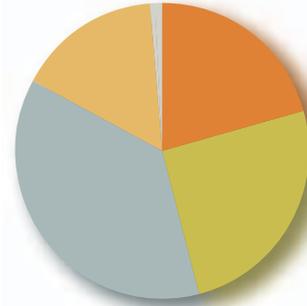
year ending 31 March 2003

NATIONALITIES



AGE GROUPS

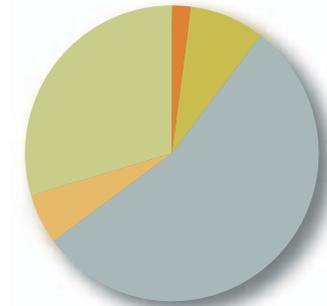
Age Group	Female	Male	Totals	%
under 18	941	1137	2078	21.5
18 – 24	807	1679	2486	25
25 – 34	1192	2431	3623	37
35 – 64	612	942	1554	15.8
Age over 65	36	42	78	0.7
Total	3588	6231		



NUMBERS OF SINGLE PEOPLE AND FAMILY GROUPS

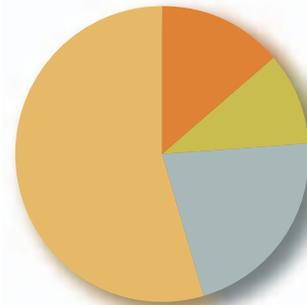
These figures show the number of applications to NASS for support, processed by RAP between April 2002 and March 2003.

Status	Number of applications
Couple (no children)	153
Family	606
Single 25 and over	4020
Single parent	406
Single under 25	2178



LENGTH OF STAY WITH RAP: SNAPSHOT

1 week or less	144	14%
1 to 2 weeks	107	10%
2 to 4 weeks	227	21%
More than 4 weeks	574	55%



SOURCE OF REFERRALS

Referred by	Singles	Families	Totals
City Airport	60	6	66
Gatwick	2104	181	2285
Heathrow	3456	678	4134
Luton	12	2	14
Stansted	73	33	106
All other agencies	2517	468	2985

Patrons: The Lord Hylton, Richard Allen MP

Board of Trustees

Dr Girma Ejere (Chair)	Individual member
Sarah Nansukusa (Vice-Chair)	Uganda Community Relief Association
Paddy Ross (Treasurer)	Individual member
Cumarasamy Sithamparapillai	Tamil Refugee Action Group
Emad Salman	Individual member
Perico Rodriguez	Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture
Dick Williams	Refugee Council
Andy Gregg	Refugee Education and Training Advisory Service
Jackie Parker	Individual member
Louise Williamson	Individual member
Helen Robinson	Immigration Advisory Service
Soudi Aram	Iranian Community Centre
Jabbar Hasan	Iraqi Community Association

Members

Eritrean Community in UK
Ethiopian Advice and Support Centre
Ethiopian Refugee Association in Haringey
Ghana Welfare Association
Ethiopian Community in Britain
Ghana Refugee Welfare Group
Immigration Advisory Service
Iranian Association
Kurdistan Workers Association
Omid Housing Association Ltd.
Refugee Action
Save the Children
Tamil Refugee Action
Uganda Asylum Seekers Association
World University Service

Honorary Members and Observers

The British Red Cross Society
United Nations High Commission for Refugees
Amnesty International



Community
Legal Service



Refugee Arrivals Project
Head Office, 41b Cross Lances Road
Hounslow, Middlesex TW3 2AD
Tel 020 8607 6888
Fax 020 8607 6851

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