

2002 to 2003

NER



North of England
REFUGEE SERVICE
annual
summary



Offices

Newcastle

NERS
19 Big Market
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 1UN

biggmarket@refugee.org.uk

Tel: (0191) 222 0441 & 0390
Fax: (0191) 2220239

Sunderland

NERS
19 Villiers Street
Sunderland
SR1 1EJ

sunderland@refugee.org.uk

Tel: (0191) 510 8685
Fax: (0191) 510 8697

Tees Valley

NERS
27 Borough Road
Middlesbrough
TS1 4AD

teesvalley@refugee.org.uk

Tel: (01642) 217447 & 211117
Fax: (01642) 210200

North Tyneside

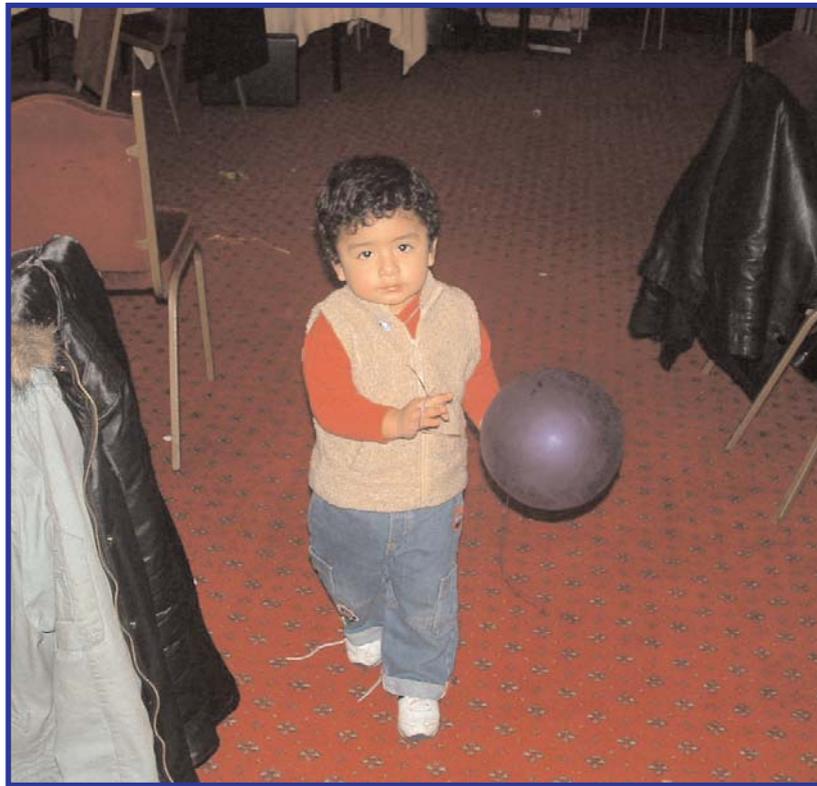
NERS
3rd Floor Forum House
The Forum
Wallsend
NE28 8LX

wallsend@refugee.org.uk

Tel: (0191) 200 1199 & 1108
Fax: (0191) 200 5929

**NERS, 2 Jesmond Road West,
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4PQ**
www.refugee.org.uk
info@refugee.org.uk

Tel: 0191 245 7311 Fax: (0191) 243 7320



“ everyone has a right to seek
and to enjoy in other countries
asylum from persecution ”

UN Refugee Convention Articles 13 and 14



“The contracting States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to public relief and assistance”

UN Refugee Convention Article 23

Development

During the year, the Board supervised the implementation of NERS' new structure and continued to develop its policies. This new structure served to support the fieldwork of its advice and support workers.

The new structure includes the Senior Management Team consisting of the CEO, Financial Controller and Operations Manager.

Though NERS continues to be proactive to developments in the refugee sector, it is not expected that the organisation will receive any substantial additional resources during the current financial year.

Quality

NERS made use of and contributed towards its quality work within the PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance Tool for Small Organisations) framework. Most policies are now up to date, which helped NERS to obtain the Legal Services Commission Quality Mark and an exemption from the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner.

Membership

NERS remains committed to becoming an accountable organisation. In the present financial year a membership survey will be conducted to monitor what potential members would like to gain from joining NERS.

It is the intention of the organisation to analyse the findings of this survey and frame a membership package devised to benefit those who offer their feedback and continue to work in partnership with NERS.

Partnership

NERS is actively seeking to develop new partnerships and community support. The overall sentiment of the region is supportive. Although the issue of asylum seekers was brought to the forefront of the political election campaign it did not decrease the level of support from the local communities, services and support agencies.

Partnerships with BECON and the various voluntary groups are leading to constructive and positive outputs for the engagement of refugee communities in the wider BME activities and social events.

NERS is working with the Tyne and Wear Community Foundation, The Community Fund, HACT, BECON, GONE (Government Office North East), NECASS and all the asylum teams of the Local Authorities to promote the rights and potentials of refugees in the development of business, arts, cultural and social activities throughout the North East.

Thanks

Thanks to all of our partner organisations, as well as all staff and volunteers for your support during this financial year and beyond, with special thanks to the Refugee Council's Regional Adviser, Maureen McCann for continued invaluable support, NECASS' Regional Manager Nadeem Ahmad and all Asylum Teams.

from the chair

Dr. Warren Adams



In presenting this Annual Summary, I am pleased, on behalf of the Board to report the conclusion of another challenging year responding to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees in the area. Sadly we have had to say goodbye to several members of the Board due to other commitments, however, we have been fortunate to find several new volunteer members whose experience and support has further strengthened the role of the Board.

The responsibility of the Board in fulfilling its role has been substantially aided since the end of the last Financial Year by the addition of several new senior staff appointments: Clinton Leeks, Operations Manager; Esther Jaiyesimi, Financial Controller; and Lee Hogan, Communications Co-ordinator. These appointments have made a major contribution to keeping the Board informed about current developments, ensuring improved administration of our increasingly complex programme, and helping to formulate strategic planning to meet changing circumstances.

Throughout this period, NERS has experienced a variety of stresses facing

our dedicated staff. There have been substantial legislative changes affecting our clients and our capacity to meet their needs. While we have been successful in meeting our clients' needs, we are aware that additional legislation is actively being proposed that requires careful planning for NERS' future activities.

We continue to work with our network of partnerships and supporters to formulate plans to cope with these anticipated changes.

In addition to our strong volunteer support, we depend heavily on the network of our partnerships and the collaboration of supporters to maintain our viable work programmes. We are confident that together we will be able to counter unfavourable media and public attitudes in meeting the needs of our clients.

NERS has an excellent reputation for its leadership and performance. The good work of our CEO, staff, volunteers and partners has made that reputation and gives us pride and confidence for the future.

Board

The trustees, who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 1985, are listed below:

Dr Warren Adams (Chair)
Rick Bowler (Vice Chair)
Dr. Candasamy Rajendran
Sunny Humphry
Colin Roberts
Sergei Savalev

David Campbell
Dr. Saeed B Mohammed
Alison Hiles
Steve Hill
Daoud Zaaroura (Secretary & CEO)

NERS Background

The origins of the North of England Refugee Service (NERS) date back to the arrival of the 'boat people' in 1981. They were assisted in their settlement by the local Citizens' Advice Bureau. In 1985, the bureau appointed a Refugee Co-ordinator to oversee the needs of the 'boat people' and the other refugees who had arrived in the area. However, the area's co-ordinator position was only funded for one year.

The CAB, along with other funders, applied to the Home Office for longer term financial support to sustain the work already done in the region. Subsequently, in 1989 NERS was established with an office in Newcastle. In 1993, NERS expanded and opened an office in Middlesbrough with a staff of two, including an advice worker.

Since the mid-nineties the organisation has continued to grow. In 1999, the organisation - now named the North of England Refugee Service Limited - was awarded the One Stop Service contract by the Home Office for the North East to manage the new dispersal programme.

The organisation now has four regional offices in Newcastle, Sunderland, North Tyneside and Tees Valley. Our head office is also in Newcastle and the organisation now employs close to 50 full time members of staff.

Mission Statement

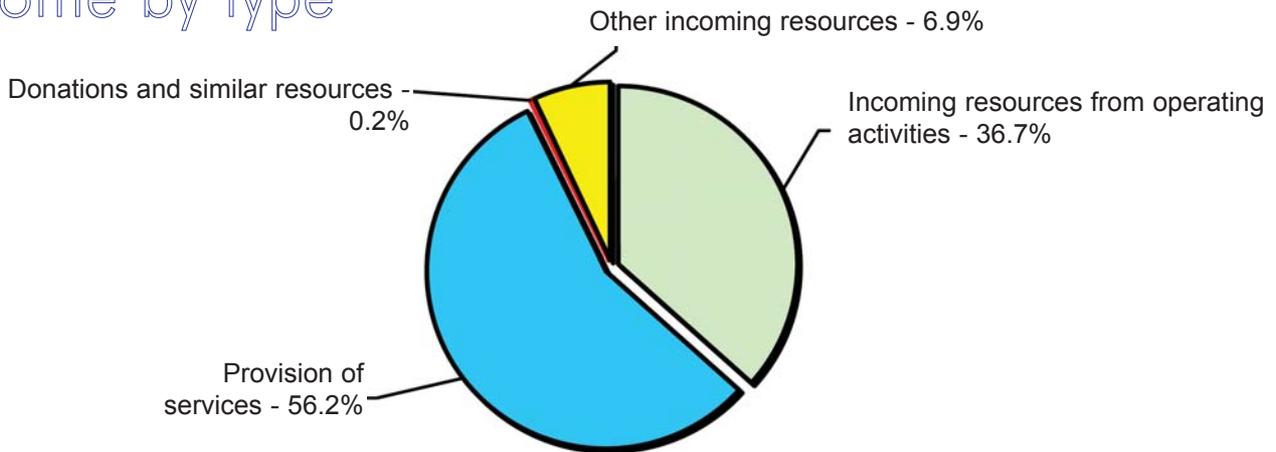
NERS is a registered charity and is constituted as a company limited by guarantee. It is therefore governed by a Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The charity's objects and its principal activities are to facilitate smooth settlement and integration into the mainstream of British society and to provide immediate and on-going support to refugees, asylum seekers and refugee communities throughout their settlement process.

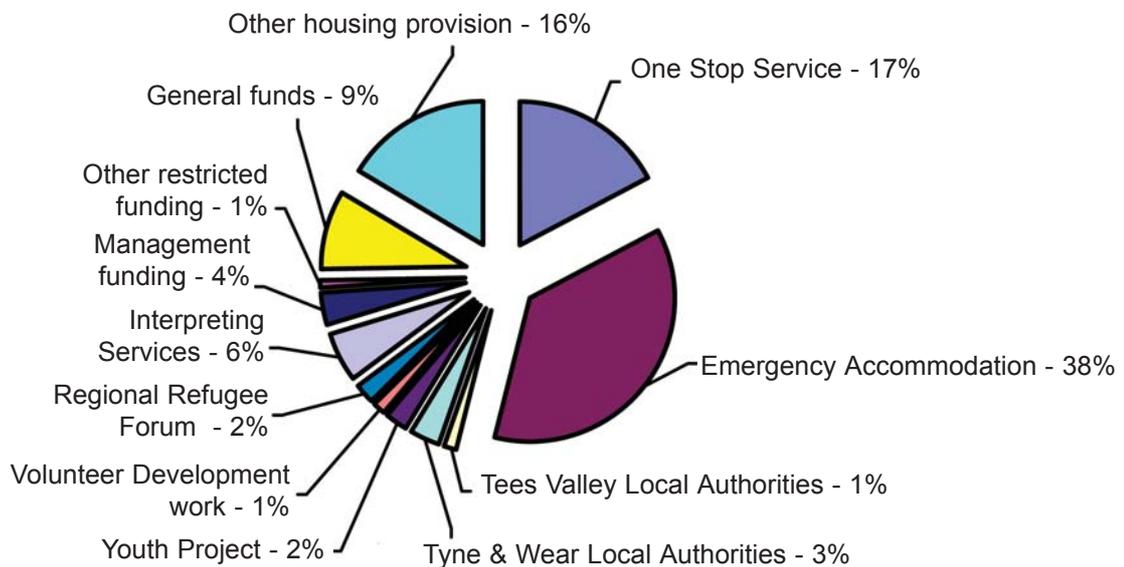
NERS continues to seek additional financial support to provide its services to refugees, refugee communities and new asylum seekers.

NERS is managed by a voluntary Board of Directors and provides its services in its offices throughout the North East.

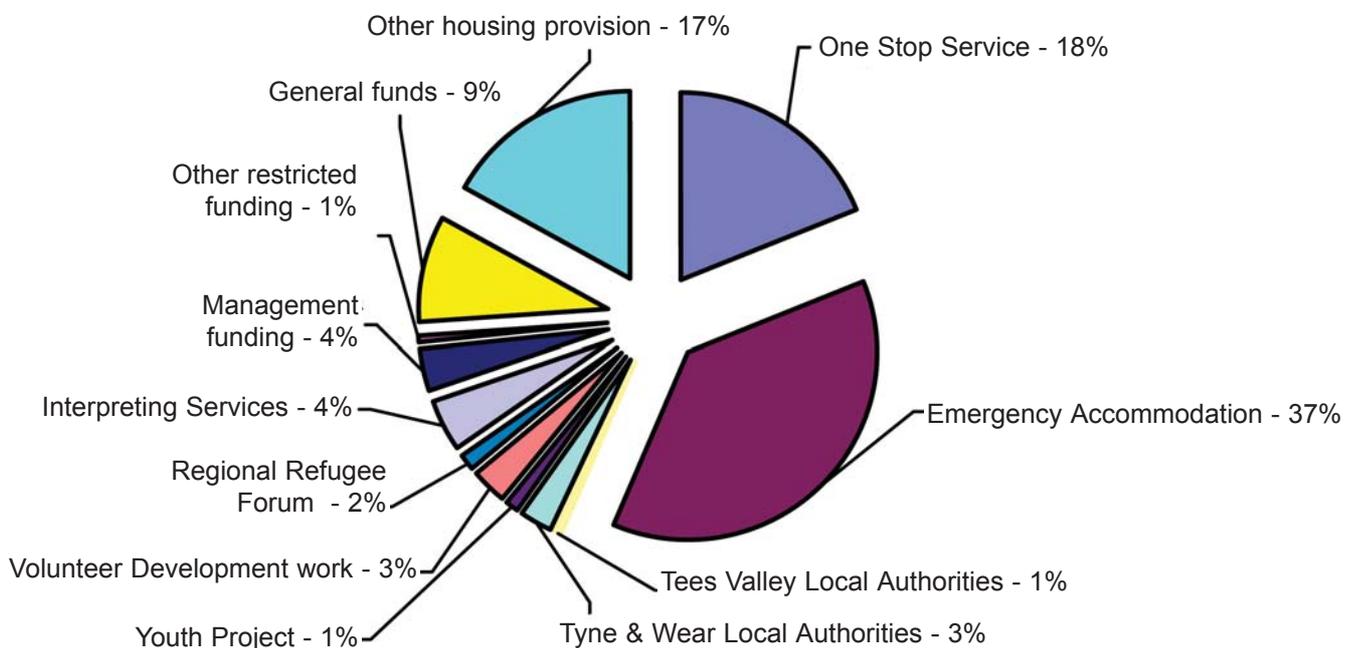
Income by type



Income by project



Expenditure by project



Finance

Good financial stewardship continues to be the focus of NERS. Proper financial management processes continue to be the aim of NERS.

In order to ensure a sound Finance strategy the Board have looked at the following areas:

- Appropriate organisational structure
- Recruitment and retention of staff with proper financial capabilities
- An effective and reliable financial system

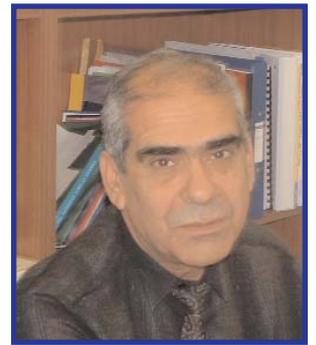
The implementation of the new management structure consisting of a senior management team and the appointment of a financial controller are evidence of the Board's commitment to implement a good financial system.

NERS is appreciative of the on going support of The Refugee Council Account department and the Refugee Council Regional Development Team. External Audits as well as external financial consultants also act as a useful check on our financial processes.

Summary income and expenditure account

	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	Total 2003 (£)	Total 2002 (£)
Incoming resources				
Incoming resources from operating activities in furtherance of the charity's objects	110,900	960,379	1,071,279	1,044,490
Provision of services	568,763	1,070,988	1,639,751	1,580,067
Donations and similar resources	6,553	-	6,553	2,671
Other incoming resources	47,123	153,439	200,562	95,683
Total incoming resources	733,339	2,184,806	2,918,145	2,722,911
Charitable expenditure	758,254	2,148,735	2,906,989	2,642,950
Net incoming resources	(24915)	36,071	11,156	79,961
Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-
Net movement in funds	(24915)	36,071	11,156	79,961
Total funds brought forward	189,450	251,977	441,427	361,465
Total funds carried forward	164,535	288,048	452,583	441,426

from the chief executive officer



Daoud Zaaroura

We have been working with increasing numbers of dispersed asylum seekers and refugees in the region.

Last year, the region dealt with over 6000 new clients and settled communities of refugees. Within the aims of NERS we have been engaged in new services and projects to facilitate the process of settlement.

We have focused on unlocking the vast potential and skills of refugees, enabling them to contribute to the social, cultural and business development of the North East.

At NERS we have provided a supporting role for young refugees in their active contribution to the economic revival of the regional economy and enriching the diverse

cultural wealth of this area.

Through our close working relationships with local/regional employment initiatives and with the Regional Refugee Forum we have been able to start new projects and partnerships with local communities and services.

We in NERS feel that through our close working relationship with the Home Office Refugee Integration Unit we have been able to highlight the importance of integrating refugees as full and active citizens in our region.

Our partnership with The Refugee Council has added strength to NERS and the voluntary sector in our aim to create an interactive and dynamic role for local groups.

One Stop Service

NERS has delivered a high quality service to asylum seekers through the One Stop Service. This service is a partnership with the Refugee Council and NERS, which has continued to provide and develop its system to the high quality and standards demanded by the terms of the contract. NERS has also continued to provide appropriate statistics and financial information to The Refugee Council and NASS (National Asylum Support Service) as appropriate.

NERS will continue to develop its services supported by a strong partnership with The Refugee Council.

Complementing Local Authority support

NERS is currently re-evaluating its structure and services in the North East sub regions. It is essential to look at the long-term support network of the local communities and the opportunity to participate in local government initiatives.

NERS is looking at a structure that will allow greater autonomy and independence to its sub-regional teams and will facilitate work with the relevant Local Authorities.

NERS will continue to work with the local authorities to complement their support and services to asylum seekers.

Work with the Newcastle Asylum Team is continuing and an improved system of consultation and co-ordination of information is in place.

Responding to changes in government policy

NERS has responded appropriately to the dispersal policy and, most recently, the introduction of the 2002 Immigration and Asylum Act and Section 55, by continuing to act in the best interests of asylum seekers and refugees. NERS was prepared for the consequences of dispersal, developing its structure to utilise its resources to ensure proper delivery of services to the influx of asylum seekers dispersed to the North East.

The number of dispersals arriving to the North East may begin to level off but, as usual, strategies will continue to be put in place to respond to any new initiatives or ideas by the Central or Local Government.

Our prime interest is to act in the best interests of asylum seekers and refugees.

Regional Refugee Forum



The Regional Refugee Forum North East is a project within NERS, funded by a grant from the Community Fund, which provides development co-ordination for a Forum to reflect the collective voice of the region's new communities. It was founded on the belief that Refugee Community Organisations have a unique, complementary and crucial role to play in supporting the process of social, cultural and economic integration of their communities and in realising the potential that these new communities have in contributing to regional Regeneration, Diversity and Community Cohesion.

Membership of the Forum has grown from the five founder member organisations to 29, reflecting the emergence of new communities in the region following Dispersal. The Forum provides the opportunity for the region's new communities to meet together and produce a collective action plan that will promote integration. It provides an organised interface for refugee communities and the statutory, voluntary and private sectors, creating a route for influencing policy and practice and for building partnerships. It participates in regional and national research projects, identifies and facilitates training for its member organisations, and ensures that RCOs are empowered through information circulation and networking.

Through one to one community development work, the Forum co-ordinator and NERS' Policy and Development Co-ordinator also provide support for emerging and established RCOs. In March 2003, after giving considerable thought during the lengthy drafting of the document, the membership signed and adopted a Constitution, which is unique in the UK. The Forum is the first such structure of its kind in the UK, and it has attracted national recognition as a successful model of integration.

Work will continue to support the development of the Forum towards becoming a fully independent and inclusive regional body.

Youth Integration Project



The Youth Integration Project North East is a new integration project established with funding from KPMG Foundation, GONE, Sure Start West Redcar and Newcastle City Council Youth And Play Unit. Three new workers were employed - Reuven Fletcher for Tyneside, Ben Chisanga for Wearside and Herbert Dirahu for Tees Valley. They began work in September 2002, working out of NERS' area offices.

Through promoting confidence and leadership skills and developing the talents and ideas of young refugees, this project aims to realise their potential to take a leading role in promoting their integration in the region, so that they can feel they belong here as members of the whole community of young people.

The YIP staff are working in partnership with young volunteer refugees to identify barriers which prevent equal opportunity to access and participate in youth services, structures and activities, and the factors which contribute to the isolation, exclusion and stigmatisation that too many young refugees experience. Our workers are supporting these young refugees to identify, plan, develop and fund actions which will tackle these barriers, promote a positive image of young refugees and assist their integration.



Newcastle

The past year has been a time of consolidation in the Bigg Market. In the One Stop Service, emergency accommodation was centralised into the Newcastle Office, and clear procedures were put in place. Our computer databases were developed to allow us to track cases more efficiently and comply with reporting requirements. It was a very busy year, with over 100 clients being seen each week, on top of the people being supported in Emergency Accommodation.

The supported housing continued to operate at full capacity in Walker and Elswick. The number of clients supported by southern authorities under the interim arrangements (the Dover Project) is gradually reducing, and most of them will be transferred to the responsibility of Newcastle Asylum Unit.

Specialist advice sessions continue to be held, operated by the Benefits Agency, Connexions and the Employment Action Team. A number of other refugee support groups and RCOs continue to meet in the building, as do the young refugee groups supported by our Youth Worker.

Sunderland

In addition to the direct delivery of service the office has continued to represent NERS in local meetings, seminars and conferences, raising issues of concern to refugees and their communities and contributing to local strategic planning. Furthermore, the office provides advice to local organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees.

The office is currently working towards developing new partnerships with local bodies. As a result of these activities the office now is now developing its own website specific for the Sunderland region, which was developed in partnership with ICT, Sunderland Local Authority. The site is still under construction but can be visited at <http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/coi/refugee/> . In addition to the website, PCs and a Broadband connection will be provided for clients to provide internet access in the office reception area.

North Tyneside

Our collaboration with the International Organisation for Migration has continued to develop and the Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP) scheme continues to be implemented at the Wallsend Office.

Development with community groups has also continued with the Farsi group, of which one of our volunteers is joint chair, growing and developing well. This included a visit to the Lake District to show people another side of what the UK has to offer, an Iranian Nooruz (New Year) event, Yalda (Day of the Sun Bird) night celebration, and an Eid celebration for Afghan people all organised by the group itself.

Funding was secured to run a programme of purposeful activities over the summer.

Wallsend's partnership working has progressed thanks to close work with the PCT Community Development worker on many projects and ideas, close work with the social worker with responsibility for unaccompanied minors who arrive in North Tyneside and the CPN for North Tyneside BME communities.

A referral system has been set up to provide support to NYA's Motor Project in North Shields which helps refugees find routes into employment in the motor trade.

Tees Valley

The NERS Tees Valley office covers the five boroughs of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton on Tees, with outreach services provided to each of the five boroughs as well as the main office situated in Middlesbrough.

As well as the day to day advice and support roles undertaken for people seeking asylum and settled refugees, the Tees Valley office has continued to extend its presence at meetings, seminars and conferences covering a whole host of issues and services including health, education, employment, benefits, immigration, policing, housing, etc. This high profile activity is complemented by regular media appearances and comments, awareness raising talks and workshops for the private, statutory, voluntary and faith based communities.

New developments include a cycle-recycle project in partnership with Cleveland Police, Middlesbrough Environment City's Cycling Taskforce, and New Deal participants to jointly train our service users on cycle maintenance, the Highway code and cycling proficiency. At the end of the project every person who has completed the training receives a certificate of cycle maintenance, the skills to ride safely, and of course the cycle they worked on.

Interpreting Service

NERS runs an interpreting service, which provides interpreters and translators to assist Support Workers at the One Stop Service Offices. This includes a telephone interpreting service for emergency support. The service is an integral part of assisting vulnerable individuals in the period immediately after their arrival in the UK.

The service is also available externally, to other offices, such as legal, health and social services that deliver support to refugee and cultural minority groups and individuals.

Refugee Week

Refugee Week in the North East continues to prosper, bringing with it a spectrum of colour and multi-culturalism. In July 2003 Refugee Week saw over 30 organised events including a Refugee World Cup organised by NERS and Show Racism the Red Card.

This year, the Refugee Week Steering Committee, of which NERS is a member, is once again looking at how to maximise positive publicity around this growing event.



Media

Press and public interest in asylum seekers remains high. Despite the overwhelming majority of national press reporting the issue negatively, in the North East we are fortunate that, on the whole, the issue of persecution is reported fairly, with respect and understanding.

NERS has a Communications Co-ordinator, who along with the CEO, will continue to deal with media enquiries relating to the work of the organisation and the work NERS conducts. The aim of progressing this strategy is to increase NERS' profile and allow the organisation to continue to fulfil its aim of advocating the protection and benefits of having asylum seekers and refugees in the North East.

Combating Racism

Sadly, Asylum Seekers in the North East continue to suffer racial harassment, ranging from verbal to physical abuse. NERS encourages all its clients to report racial harassment offences. NERS continues to work closely with all the region's Local Authorities, police forces and other voluntary organisations to prevent racial attacks.

There is also a racial harassment facility on the NERS website, www.refugee.org.uk, to encourage people to report incidents