



## Dear Community Group Representative

Welcome to the **February 2011** edition of the Regional Refugee Forum North East's e-bulletin to RCOs. Please forward this to your RCO members to share the news and opportunities with them.

In this E-Bulletin:

- A. News from the RRF (including training, jobs and volunteering opportunities at RRF)
- B. Government Policy updates
- C. Jobs advertised by other agencies
- D. Funding information for community groups
- E. Events/ Activities organised by other agencies
- F. Other news

Don't forget to check out the RRF's website. You can find it at [www.refugeevoices.org.uk](http://www.refugeevoices.org.uk)

***Got something you want to share with RRF members? Send an email to [joem.kamanga@refugeevoices.org.uk](mailto:joem.kamanga@refugeevoices.org.uk) with details of your news, event or activity to be included in the next e-bulletin.***

*Do you have suggestions for improving our e-bulletins? Please let us know!*

### **A: News from the RRF**

#### **RRF Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2011**

**Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> March. Starting 17.00**

At The Students Union, University of Teesside. Southfield Road. Middlesbrough. TS1 3BA

Our AGM is open to members of the RRF, and RCOs

Full details of the agenda and nominations process for election to Committee will be sent to all members soon

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**Skilled Project– finding routes for refugees to use their skills and experience in the North East**



Our Skilled project made great progress in January. 32 of Panganai's portrait photographs of our members were **exhibited at the Newcastle Arts Centre Gallery**, in the centre of Newcastle, from 19<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> January. Each photo was accompanied by a statement from our members, describing the work they and skills they had before coming to the UK, and their voices could be heard on a CD playing in the gallery. Our aim was to raise awareness of the wealth of valuable skills and ambition amongst refugees in our region, and of the barriers they face in applying them in the region. Many people visited the exhibition, and said that they had never realised how well qualified refugees were. The exhibition will go on display in Middlesbrough in April.

We also held our first **'Big Conversation' event** on 25<sup>th</sup> January, in the gallery space. 48 participants, including 8 of our Skilled project members, worked to identify practical steps that could enable refugees to find employment that matches their prior skills. Participants included officers from the JCP, Next Step, Gateshead and Newcastle City Councils, NESMP, EHRC, TUC, NHS, PNE, NERS, BECON, JET, Sunderland BME Employment Access Project, Job Linkage and others. We will now start to organise a Big Conversation event in Middlesbrough for April, to include Skilled project members in Tees Valley.

Contact us on [skilled@refugeevoices.org.uk](mailto:skilled@refugeevoices.org.uk)

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## TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT with members: Access - Empowerment – Advocacy



### Update

The RRF's Training & Development Project has started supporting members from the Region's RCOs. We are supporting participants to improve community access to the most appropriate support for training, employment and career goals, physical and mental health, and to promote greater safety and security in the areas in which they live.

The project is also empowering participants to be effective advocates and community representatives on unmet needs, barriers, disadvantages, inequalities and discrimination that they and others face in progressing these areas of life. We are supporting them to gather evidence and use it effectively through engaging in local policy and planning processes, and contributing to the RRF's sub-groups to present the Collective Voice at the regional level.

In addition we have started to support the development of greater awareness, understanding and skills within key service delivery agencies so that they can develop better and sustained relations with the refugee and asylum seeker community, and deliver a more accessible, appropriate and effective support to them.

### Please contact us to hear more about the support we can give to you

Herbert Dirahu, Project Manager [herbert.dirahu@refugeevoices.org.uk](mailto:herbert.dirahu@refugeevoices.org.uk) or phone 01642 232446 in Middlesbrough and 0191423 6255 in Gateshead.

Or just pop in to our offices at the Newport Neighbourhood Centre in Middlesbrough or to Design Works in Felling, Gateshead. Monday to Friday (9:00am – 5pm)

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## RRF supports regional campaign against UKBA change of contract for asylum seeker accommodation in the region

On behalf of all members, the RRF Committee have sent a letter to the Immigration Minister, Damian Green MP to demand the Home Office reconsider its new contracting arrangements for accommodation of asylum seekers in the North East. Other agencies and organisations across the region are also sending letters. Many of you will already have received letters from the UKBA informing you of their decision to end its contract with NECCAS (the consortium of local authorities in the North East). From April all accommodation will be contracted with the private sector company Jomast. This will affect very many of your community members.

The RRF Committee has also supported the campaign to save Newcastle's Asylum Seeker Unit by sending a letter to Newcastle Central MP, Chi Onwurah, to ask her to make representations in Parliament about the UKBA's ending of its housing contract with Your Homes Newcastle. The RRF can support RCOs in other towns to request the same action of their MPs. Please contact our staff for more information.

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## RRF urges RCOs to engage in the National Census 2011 - 27<sup>th</sup> March 2011

It is really important that RCOs encourage their community members to complete and return the National Census questionnaires, which will be posted to every house in the UK in March, ready for return on 27<sup>th</sup> March. It is important for everyone to take part because all local authorities and government departments use the National Census information to plan services and resources for local communities, such as schools, transport, health care etc – *so if they don't know how big your community is, they cannot plan accurately to meet needs*. The amount of money your council has to spend on services is based on information from the census. The last National Census was carried out in 10 years ago, in 2001. At that time Dispersal of asylum seekers had only just begun into the North East, so very few members took part in it. Now we need to register how significant the new communities are in the region. There won't be another chance for 10 years. (It is actually a legal requirement to complete the questionnaires as every householder must, by law, complete and return a 2011 Census questionnaire). You will have a choice to submit your answers to census questions online or by post. If you are away from home on the 27<sup>th</sup>, you can fill it in on your return, as collection carries on for a while. Anyone living in the UK for more than 3 months should fill in the census. Personal details remain confidential for 100 years.

There are also opportunities for **part time paid work** as Census Collectors in each local authority area. They are looking for members of the local communities to do this.

**Please ask our staff** for more information or copies of the Census information/guidance, which is printed in 56 different languages. We can also put you in direct contact with your local Census team, who can come to speak to your community or answer your questions about the process.

Or see more information at <http://2011.census.gov.uk/>

## B: Government Policy updates

### Save Newcastle's Asylum Seekers Unit

The decision by the Home Office not to award a renewal of the contract to the North East Contracting Consortium for Asylum Support (NECCAS) has left the provision of asylum seeker support entirely in the hands of the private sector. In Newcastle, this will mean that Your Homes Newcastle's provision of housing and support will end. The implications for this are set out in the specimen letters attached. They are seeking support for the campaign to lobby the Government to reverse this decision, which will have a lasting impact on both asylum seeker support and community cohesion in the region. You can write to:

- (a) Damian Green, the Immigration Minister (see attached document)
- (b) your MP - Chi Onwurah, MP for Newcastle Central (see attached document)

Source: TCAR

See also report by [Institute of Race Relations](#) on the impact of spending cuts on the dispersal system

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## Funding cut for Refugee Advice Services

Funding for vital advice services for refugees and asylum seekers in the UK will be slashed by over 60% from April 1st 2011. The UKBA is cutting its funding for refugee charities, including the Refugee Council, who today warn of the devastating impact this will have on people seeking safety in the UK, as well as the wider voluntary sector and society.

From April, funding for advice services for newly arrived asylum seekers will be cut by 62%, funding for initial accommodation services will be halved, and contracts for the [Refugee Integration and Employment Services](#) (RIES) will end completely from September.

The Asylum Support Partnership, which is made up of the [Refugee Council](#), the [Welsh Refugee Council](#), the [Scottish Refugee Council](#), [Refugee Action](#) and the [North of England Refugee Service](#) (NERS) is calling for the government to reduce the unprecedented scale of the cuts, and to give more time to implement the changes. They will keep supporters updated.

Source: [Refugee Council](#)

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## Ministry of Justice consultation on proposed reforms to legal aid

The Ministry of Justice's consultation on [proposed reforms to legal aid](#) ends on February 14<sup>th</sup>. The proposals will have far reaching implications for all areas of law including immigration and asylum. The Refugee Council has published a [briefing](#) highlighting concerns in particular about the proposed loss of legal aid for asylum support matters and the proposal to have a single gateway to access legal aid through a telephone helpline.

It is important that the government hears from as many people and organisations that will be affected as possible. You do not have to follow the consultation format necessarily – even a simple letter explaining how help from a solicitor has affected the outcome of your case or concerns about having to do this over the telephone – would be worth sending in.

Source: [Refugee Council](#)

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## Refugees set to lose out on English courses

Many refugees are set to lose out on English language classes under new guidelines put forward by the government for the next academic year. From August, funding for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses will be restricted to people on 'active benefits' - that is people actively looking for work. Refugees on income support such as parents, carers or elderly people, as well as those on low incomes, will be exempt from funding. The Refugee Council is putting pressure on the government to ensure that all refugees who need English language support can get it. [Read more on this story](#) . Source: [Refugee Council](#)

See the **Action for ESOL** website at <http://www.actionforesol.org>

[Sign the petition against ESOL cuts](#)

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## C: Jobs advertised by other agencies

See VONNE's website for details of jobs in the voluntary sector [www.vonne.org.uk/jobs](http://www.vonne.org.uk/jobs)

'Shared Interest' is an ethical investment co-operative based in Newcastle. They have some employment and volunteering opportunities. <http://www.shared-interest.com/>  
<http://www.shared-interest.com/work-with-us.htm>

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## D: Funding information for community groups

- North Tyneside [www.voda.org.uk](http://www.voda.org.uk)
- Gateshead [www.gvoc.org.uk](http://www.gvoc.org.uk)
- Newcastle [www.cvsnewcastle.org.uk](http://www.cvsnewcastle.org.uk)
- Sunderland [www.sunderlandcvs.co.uk](http://www.sunderlandcvs.co.uk)
- South Tyneside [www.southtynesidecvs.org.uk](http://www.southtynesidecvs.org.uk)
- Middlesbrough [www.mvda.info](http://www.mvda.info)
- Stockton [www.srcga](http://www.srcga)
- Darlington [www.evolutiondarlington.com](http://www.evolutiondarlington.com)
- Hartlepool [www.hvda.org.uk](http://www.hvda.org.uk)

Tyne & Wear Community Foundation <http://www.communityfoundation.org.uk/apply>

Tees Valley Community Foundation [http://www.teesvalleyfoundation.org/apply\\_for\\_funding/](http://www.teesvalleyfoundation.org/apply_for_funding/)

Paul Hamlyn Foundation: Education & Learning Grant

[http://www.becon.org.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=553&Itemid=181](http://www.becon.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=553&Itemid=181)

Other funding info for Voluntary & Community Action See PDF document attached

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## E: Services, Events & Activities organised by other agencies



**Aspen**  
CULTURE  
PROJECT

**National Conference**

Celebrating the centenary of International Women's Day,  
reviewing the achievements of our Project and launching our Training Package

8 March 2011, 10.00am - 16.30pm. FREE.

Discovery Museum, Blandford Square,  
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4JA

**The Aspen Culture Project**, part of the Youth and Community Projects of the North of England Refugee Service. The Aspen Culture Project is funded by Communities and Local Government, Tackling Race Inequalities Fund. We aim to find creative ways of overcoming inequalities of women to access, engage with and contribute to the local culture, arts and heritage. We're based in the North East of England and we work across the United Kingdom.

This conference will benefit organizations and individuals with an interest in migrant and refugee issues with a particular focus on themes of arts and heritage, social cohesion and gender equality.

**Aims and objectives**

- ◆ Promoting and sharing ways of working with diverse communities and groups
- ◆ Launching the Aspen Culture training package
- ◆ Celebrating the achievements of the Aspen Culture Project and sharing practice and learning
- ◆ Promoting the use of arts, culture and heritage as a tool for social cohesion

We are proud to have as guests and speakers on the conference day: Dr JUNG CHANG, author of the world best seller *Wild Swans* and SIRKKA-LIISA KONTTINEN author of the photographic book *Byker Revisited* on Byker Estate in Newcastle.

During the conference you will have the opportunity to participate in one of the six workshops we are offering:

- ◆ Gender and gender related issues
- ◆ Refugee issues
- ◆ Use of arts to promote inclusion
- ◆ Participatory photography
- ◆ How to use the Aspen Culture training package
- ◆ Our research and the use of participatory photography

For all enquiries and to book: Tel 0191 245 7311 ext 241, Mobile: 07584 233 384  
Email [hello@aspenculture.org.uk](mailto:hello@aspenculture.org.uk) [www.aspenculture.org.uk](http://www.aspenculture.org.uk)  
North of England Refugee Service, 2 Jesmond Road West, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4PQ

ASPEN CULTURE PROJECT IS PART OF  
North of England  
REFUGEE SERVICE

## The Aspen CULTURE PROJECT National Conference

8th March 2011 10.00am - 16.30pm Discovery Museum, Blandford Square, Newcastle upon Tyne,, Tyne and Wear, [NE1 4JA](#).

The [Aspen Culture Project's](#) National Conference on **8th of March 2011** takes place on the centenary of International Women's Day. The Aspen Culture Project aims at finding creative ways of overcoming inequalities of women to access, engage with and contribute to the local culture, arts and heritage. This FREE conference is a culmination of 15 months of events, research, group and volunteer work with women from diverse backgrounds. It aims to promote awareness of the advantages that sharing culture can bring and to address cultural inequalities in the North East. Guests and **speakers** on the conference day include Dr JUNG CHANG, author of the world best seller *Wild Swans* and SIRKKA-LIISA KONTTINEN author of the photographic book *Byker Revisited* on Byker Estate in Newcastle. This conference will benefit organisations and individuals with an interest in migrant and refugee issues with a particular focus on themes of arts and heritage, social cohesion and gender equality.

**CLICK AND REGISTER**

**For all enquiries:** North Of England Refugee Service, 2 Jesmond Road West, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4PQ

T : 0191 245 7311 E : [hello@aspenculture.org.uk](mailto:hello@aspenculture.org.uk) W : [aspenculture.org.uk](http://aspenculture.org.uk)



Welcoming new participants...

All Points North is a project for **all** young people aged 16-25 living in Tyne and Wear. It is an innovative personal and social development programme, where young people can come along to our weekly sessions to participate in a range of activities to build confidence, meet new people and gain new skills and experiences.

The group meet one evening a week and explore issues around culture, citizenship, mental health and wellbeing through group-work, media, music, sport and art. The project also aims to support and encourage Integration and a safe reception into North East communities for those newly arrived. Throughout young people will help influence local communities through creating greater awareness of issues of concern to them. Participants can also work towards achieving accreditation through the Youth Achievement Awards.

Travel expenses will be reimbursed, and snacks are provided.

If you know of any young people who could benefit from participating in a project like this, please don't hesitate to get in touch for further information.

**all points north**

**WANT TO MEET NEW PEOPLE, BUILD ON YOUR SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE WHILST HAVING FUN, WHY NOT JOIN AN ALL POINTS NORTH PROJECT NEAR YOU.**

**ALL POINTS NORTH IS A NEW PROJECT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 16-25.**

If you live in Tyneside, Wearside or Tees Valley areas and are interested please get in touch.

Learn about your community and how you can get more involved.

- Meet new people
- Build confidence
- Learn about different cultures
- Have your say

Get involved with fun activities

- Music
- Art
- Sport
- Media

Have the opportunity to have your contributions nationally recognised and accredited through Youth Achievement Awards.

**CONTACT US**  
Sarah Bell – Project Coordinator – 01642 217447  
William Melli (Tees Valley) – 01642 217447  
Katie Lambert or Jay Arnott (Tyneside/Wearside) – 0191 2457311  
Any questions or for more information please email: [info@allpointsnorth.org.uk](mailto:info@allpointsnorth.org.uk)  
[www.allpointsnorth.org.uk](http://www.allpointsnorth.org.uk)

LOTTERY FUNDED

North of England REFUGEE SERVICE

OUR NEXT PROGRAMMES START ON:

NEWCASTLE (Tyne)

Tuesday evening

15<sup>th</sup> February 2011,

SUNDERLAND (Wear)

Wednesday evening

16<sup>th</sup> February 2011,

5:30pm – 7:45pm

5:30pm – 7:45pm

Contact: Kate Lambert or Jay Arnott, All Points North Project, North of England Refugee Service

Tel 0191 2457311 Kate Mobile: 07584233383 Jay Mobile: 07534902591 E: [kl@refugee.org.uk](mailto:kl@refugee.org.uk), [ja@refugee.org.uk](mailto:ja@refugee.org.uk)

**Refugees into Teaching** (see info below). This special support programme is delivered in the North East by [JET](#) (Jobs, Education, Training) based in Newcastle . Contact them on 0191 2263 620. Email [admin@jetnorth.org.uk](mailto:admin@jetnorth.org.uk) [www.jetnorth.org.uk/](http://www.jetnorth.org.uk/)



**tda** The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) aims to make sure there is an effective school workforce and that there are enough people recruited to the teaching profession. The TDA encourages suitable candidates to apply for initial teacher training and gain qualified teacher status.

**REFUGEE COUNCIL** The Refugee Council is a human rights charity, independent of government, working to ensure that refugees are given the protection they need, that they are treated with respect and understanding and that they have the same rights, opportunities and responsibilities as other members of our society.

**Contact details**

To find out more about Refugees into Teaching:

Call us on 020 7346 1166

Email us at [rit@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:rit@refugeecouncil.org.uk)

[www.refugeesintoteaching.org.uk](http://www.refugeesintoteaching.org.uk)

Refugees into Teaching  
Refugee Council  
240-250 Ferndale Road  
London  
SW9 8BB

Helping you to develop a teaching career

[www.refugeesintoteaching.org.uk](http://www.refugeesintoteaching.org.uk)

British Refugee Council, (commonly called the Refugee Council) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales, (No 2727514) and a registered charity, (No 109092). Registered office: 240-250 Ferndale Road, London SW9 8BB, United Kingdom. VAT reg no: 936 519 958

OISC

REFUGEE COUNCIL



**Are you interested in becoming a teacher?**

**Are you from a refugee background?**

If you were a teacher in your home country or simply have an interest in becoming a teacher, 'Refugees into Teaching' can provide you with the support and advice you need.

Visit our website [www.refugeesintoteaching.org.uk](http://www.refugeesintoteaching.org.uk) to find out more about the work we do and how we can help you.

Through the website, you can:

- Register on to the National Refugee Teachers Database
- Use the assessment tool to see what route into teaching is best for you
- View practical guides designed to support your progress towards teaching
- See a list of organisations offering training and support in your area
- See the latest news and information in teaching

Call us on: 020 7346 1166

**Specialist advice and guidance**

Our experienced guidance workers can help you to understand the English state schooling system; provide you with specialist advice about your options for retraining and accessing employment; and ensure that you receive the support you need to progress towards your goals.

**National Teachers Database**

By registering on our database, you will be kept up to date on all the latest news, developments and opportunities.

**Overseas qualifications**

If you have gained qualifications overseas, we can help you to find out if they are recognised in the UK. We work with the National Recognition Information Centre for the UK (NARIC) to offer you free qualification comparisons.

**Training and events**

'Refugees into Teaching' organises conferences, events and training workshops to help you improve your knowledge, get your questions answered and meet organisations and employers.

**Mentoring**

Our new mentoring scheme matches you with someone currently teaching in the English schooling system who will offer you one-to-one support.

**Who does 'Refugees into Teaching' work with?**

**Schools and other organisations**

'Refugees into Teaching' has established excellent links with schools, providers of Initial Teacher Training, Institutes of Further and Higher Education and other organisations to support your access into training, work placements, events and employment.

**UK NARIC** The National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom

(UK NARIC). This national agency provides the recognition service and comparability information on international qualifications from over 180 countries. This service is available free to people registered with 'Refugees into Teaching'.

**Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit** is a part of London Metropolitan University. Working together we aim to provide you with tools and information you need to navigate the routes into teaching.

LONDON metropolitan university

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**Film Without Borders Season - February and March at the Star and Shadow Cinema, Stepney Bank, Newcastle, NE1 2NP**

All events in the season are free to people seeking asylum, and no one will be turned away through lack of funds. Cinema membership is £1. If you would like more information or would like to discuss group bookings you can contact us at [filmswithout@googlemail.com](mailto:filmswithout@googlemail.com)

*Border Crossings: USA/Mexico - Crossing Arizona (2006) Thursday 3rd March 2011, 7:30 p.m.*  
Directed by Joseph Mathew & Daniel DeVivo A collection of personal accounts of the experiences of people working around the Mexico / USA border. Screening followed by discussion with a former "No More Deaths" volunteer, and migrant rights advocates.

*Arrivals - 3 documentaries Wednesday 9th March 2011, 7:30 p.m.* Three documentaries looking at the experiences of migrants on arrival in European countries. Featuring Glasgow, Greece and Benwell, Newcastle. Followed by discussion.

- *From Brno to Benwell* – 21 minutes – 2007 Dir: Hugh Kelly – An insightful film following the journey of a group of people from Benwell, Newcastle, as they trace the story of the Czech Roma who have recently migrated to their neighbourhood.
- *Welcome* – 21 minutes – 2004 Dir: Camcorder Guerillas – Hundreds of refugees are being put out of their homes with no benefits and no rights to work. Unable to return to their countries they are in a stateless limbo on Glasgow's streets. This film was made to raise awareness about the issue of asylum seekers and refugees being made destitute and to give examples of what people can do about it.
- *Attica Square* – A shocking and revealing documentary about Greece's role as one of Europe's border zones and the situation facing refugees who seek sanctuary there.

**Freedom to Move! Film and Gig Saturday 12th March 2011, 7:30 p.m.** Moving documentary exploring the situations and attitudes of individuals living in Calais. The intriguing and often funny characters are presented and surprising stories are revealed in light of their past experiences and their attitudes to migration. Plus! From 9pm onwards join us for some brilliant live music brought to you by a selection of the finest local and world bands!!!

From [Ice & Fire](#): Exploring Human Rights Stories Through Performance

- *Asylum Monologues* – Middlesbrough 15 Feb @ 7pm @ St Mary's College Middlesbrough TS4 3JP. Free entry arrive early to secure a seat.
- *Asylum Dialogues* – Durham 23 Feb @ 7pm @ Durham University, St John College, 3 South Bailey Durham DH 1 3RJ. In conjunction with Durham [Student Action for Refugees](#). Free entry.
- *On a Clear Day You Can See Dover* – Newcastle 26 Feb 6.30pm doors open for 7pm start @ [Star and Shadow Cinema](#) Stepney Green, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 2NP. Free event but arrive early to secure a seat. In conjunction with *Films without Borders*.

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*If you do not wish to receive these emails please reply to this email with 'remove me' as the subject.*

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Registered Charity No. 1109815

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