
**Final Welcome To Your Libraries Report
– North Tyneside Libraries and
Partners**

Contents

Vision statement for Welcome To Your Library

North Tyneside Libraries' objectives for the WTYL project

	Pages
Report Overview	4 - 5
Difficulties and lessons learnt	4
Achievements	4 -11
1. Integration	7
▪ Orientation	
▪ Multicultural events	
▪ Consultation	
2. Teaching of English	7 - 8
▪ Boosting individual confidence	
▪ Conversational skills	
▪ Teaching English language	
▪ Museum visits	
3. Organising placements	
▪ Arranging placements	
▪ Introducing RAS groups to the culture of work in UK	
4. Partnership working	9 - 10
▪ Volunteering	
▪ Good practice	
▪ Mentoring	
▪ Capacity building	
▪ Resource sharing	
Progress and outcomes	10 -11
The future of the projects work	13
Personal testimonies	14 - 15
Appendix	15 - 17

Vision statement for Welcome To Your Library

Welcome To Your Library (WTYL) is a national project, which aims to increase opportunities for participation by connecting public libraries with Refugee and Asylum Seekers (RAS) and by improving access to and quality of public library services for everyone.

North Tyneside Libraries' objectives for the WTYL project

North Tyneside libraries identified the following objectives for their work with the 'Welcome To Your Library' Project

1. Identify and eradicate barriers to enhance library usage by RAS groups and ethnic minorities.
2. Identify staff training needs and provide skills training in order to prepare them to understand and deal with diversity with confidence.
3. Identify other service providers working in the area in order to network with and share information and good practice
4. Profile the WTYL project to RAS groups and other service providers through participation, partnerships and advocacy.
5. Build appropriate stock and projects through consultations with RAS

Report Overview

The final North Tyneside report focuses on two areas - the difficulties and progress made by the library in working with partners to achieve agreed goals. There is commonality between the aims of the library, North Tyneside Community Network, WTYL and those of North of England Refugee Services (NERS) (Appendix 1) and our partnership hinges on these.

Difficulties and lessons learnt

The progress made by the library in providing an accessible service to the diverse groups that form its user community, identifying issues and difficulties that arose on the way and how we tried to overcome these has equipped us with skills that could be used for any other group. At the end of the project we gained ground on the following: -

- A better understanding of ourselves,
- Ways of tackling our problems
- Choosing appropriate partners, with similar goals as our own
- Setting realistic and achievable targets
- Realising the purpose of evaluation and using it to develop further
- Visualising benefits of partnership working
- Highlighting our strengths and weaknesses and the impact this has on our work
- Working across organisational cultures and maintaining communication with each other
- Helped us understand that priorities will shift from time to time as partners' budgets shrink or run out, resulting in disruptions in our goals. This has taught us to be flexible.
- Realised the importance of planning

Achievements

1. Integration

- Orientation
- Multicultural events
- Consultation

2. Teaching of English

- Boosting individual confidence
- Conversational skills
- Teaching English language
- Museum visits

3. Organising placements

- Arranging placements
- Introducing RAS groups to the culture of work in the UK

4. Partnership working

- Volunteering
- Good practice
- Mentoring
- Capacity building
- Resource sharing

1. Integration

Orientation

On arrival in North Tyneside, RAS seekers are offered an information pack regarding services offered by their local libraries. The library has transformed into a more interactive venue that does not only provide information but acts as a social space, that provides safety, exchange of ideas, community education, and meeting space for refugees and advisers on Immigration matters. It is from these meetings that the refugees and asylum seekers start integrating with the host community. This aspect of the work is discussed further under partnerships.

Multicultural events

The library embraces everyone living in the borough as evidenced by the celebration/commemoration of multicultural events. Multicultural events are now an integral part of our calendar; this is reflected by the following events: Refugee Week, Multicultural Christmas and Black History Month events. In addition there is an increase in the budget for foreign languages, funding for speakers to give talks on topical multicultural issues like slavery. The multicultural events are supported by book, CD and DVD themed displays. In some cases these are complemented by talks and artistic projects.

Consultation

In the past those seeking information focused on the same individuals all the time, we have adopted a different approach for consultation. The team has now widened its net to reach not only the refugees and asylum seekers but to encompass other immigrants who do not come in through the asylum route. Individuals get introduced to the libraries and the team explains why there is a need for them to participate in the affairs of the library. The library has not had remarkable success with this but it is a step in the right direction. Individuals are asked to raise their concerns, which are documented and relayed to the appropriate forums. The Frontline Workers Group is one such forum that has been used by the council to feed into the strategic partnership document. This is one way of getting RAS groups to articulate their views. The aim is to have them actively involved in discussions with the wider community, which will only be possible once they acquire language skills and gain confidence.

2. Teaching of English

Boosting confidence

Individuals that come to the drop in sessions have varying degrees of confidence. The role of the team is to help with confidence building, developing and nurturing a relationship of trust. If these experiences are well managed we find that the groups settle in very well and have a sense of belonging and work together as a team.

Conversational skills

Individuals are encouraged to talk about general topics, ranging from their experiences, how they got to the library, to reading road signs. This exercise helps the tutor to establish their different levels of ability. The groups are then divided into groups accordingly. Conversational skills also help to develop vocabulary, pronunciation and tenses, and also focus on politeness.

Teaching English As A Foreign language

Tutors have volunteered to help with English Language teaching in response to library requests to work with the community. The library went into a partnership with North of England Refugee Services to help RAS groups settling in North Tyneside, to help their integration process. This was on the understanding that people can only integrate into a community if they can communicate, and participate in activities going on around them. An agreement was reached to work together to help non-English speakers with language skills, and promote community integration.

The library bought materials for learning and teaching of English as a second language, which were not being used by the RAS groups. Special collections that include the Raw and numeracy materials and easy reads form part of the "Get on collection". Activities and exercises were planned to entice newcomers to utilise the stock. This was a step in the right direction but we acknowledge that we still have some way to go and will continue to persevere. The team explored different approaches, including library tours to advertise different services and highlighted the foreign fiction collections. We did not get the commitment we anticipated, hence the drive for partnership working.

English Language sessions run weekly each Tuesday morning from 10.00am – 12 noon for 6 weeks. The initial sessions were used to pilot the initiative and following the success of the first session this was adopted as standard practice.

Who attends the classes?

The sessions ran weekly each Tuesday morning from 10.00am – 12 noon initially for 6 weeks. The sessions were used to pilot the initiative and following the success of the first 6 weeks the group was then extended for a second 6-week period.

People attending come from Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Guinea, Syria, Angola, Ecuador, India, Bangladesh, Poland, Bangladesh, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Croatia and Kuwait and lately there is a noticeable rise from Burma.

To date (Oct 06-07) about 55 of the attendees have completed the six week session and some have progressed to colleges in the region - Gateshead, Newcastle or North Tyneside. We have lost contact with the majority of the people we worked with because of the transient nature of the groups. A number of them have left the region for a variety of reasons. We have issued Inspire passports¹ to two doctors, one dentist and two engineers to enable them access university libraries.

¹ INSPIRE PASSPORT is a credit card size membership card issued by libraries in the North East. Inspire North East is an agreement between library and information services across our region. It means the holder can go to any another library in the North East. It facilitates access the 12 councils, five universities including other special collections.

4. Partnership working

Partnerships/Links

Libraries have realised the importance of working with partners in a world of limited resources. The benefits of partnership working have had a significant impact in our work, some of which are discussed below. In choosing our partners we focused on prospective agencies, their track records and objectives. NERS was very impressive: they had the appropriate skills needed for the RAS groups that we were working with as well as the experience and access to the group. In addition there was North Tyneside Community Network offering services to the same target group. Consequently the three came together to form a partnership.

The partnership opened several doors for the library; we managed to tap into the community from a different angle. Volunteers were recruited by NERS who also manage the contracts, CRB checks, codes of conduct and ethical issues. This made supported the library in that volunteering is not yet well developed in libraries. Volunteers were sought for different roles; namely tutors and mentors. Tutors run ESOL classes at the library while mentors work with individuals at home. (Appendix 2).

This fed into the integration and orientation discussed above, in that the host community assist the newcomers with their bills, mail and taking them around to show them the area in which they live. The tours are also determined by individual needs, i.e. women with children would be taken to preschools and play centres, while teenagers are taken to local colleges and universities. These tours also include visits to cultural centres namely museums, art galleries and coffee bars.

North Tyneside Community Network was instrumental in negotiating placements for the newcomers. The benefits of this are threefold; firstly it introduces newcomers to the work culture in the UK, secondly it helps them get references when they eventually get permission to work and it also helps them keep abreast with developments in their occupations.

This is one of the most successful partnerships where good practice has been shared and lessons learnt. The partnership encountered several problems before we got to it working. Below are some of the lessons we learnt:

- Capacity building – given the financial constraints, partnership working has led to the pulling together of resources and working towards similar goals. This has given the library additional members of staff with varied skills and experiences that would not be found in a library.
 - 2 Teachers of English as a second language
 - NERS officer to deal with immigration issues
 - A Volunteer coordinator
 - Interpreters when needed, housing adviser etc

- Need for flexibility - the need to adjust when one of the funding partners' run out of funds. The other parties need to be flexible both in their planning and expectations and make plans to sustain the project. This disrupts not just the service; it also has an impact on peoples' lives and the relationships they build with organisations and amongst themselves.
- Provided a variety of skills and services, transforming the library to a one-stop centre for physical, psychological, cultural, recreational and information needs.
- Challenged people's attitudes about the role of the library
- Raised the awareness of employees about the existence of other organisations with similar goals as the library.
- RAS advice brought to the library
- Helped to boost library usage by RAS groups
- Improved resource allocation

Progress

Increase in number of people coming to the drop-in-sessions

We currently have the highest number of attendees referred to us by other agencies, that are aware of the work we do. It has taken more than a year to get to where we are. We have made progress through word of mouth, which indicates that print media is not the best for the groups we are targeting. Our advertisements were not effective. Individuals bring in friends; this reflects that they value what they are getting from the sessions.

The increase in figures of attendees coupled with the different joining times has meant that there are new people all the time, above those in the established group. This has necessitated the recruitment of a second tutor to facilitate the other group. We have observed that the students rely mainly on their relationship with the tutors, if there is a change of tutor this results in a loss of some members of the group. On the whole there is a lot of enthusiasm, attendance is good and the established group can confidently communicate in English, this gives us a lot of joy and impetus. Their attendance is also remarkable. Despite the disruptions by other pressing demands e.g. lawyers' appointments, attendance has been exceptionally good.

Notable Outcomes

One of our first attendees has been offered a job as an interpreter by Refugee Services. The team is very happy about this development. Our volunteers also managed to get two Russian teenagers into formal education. We referred a number of RAS to appropriate agencies that would deal with their enquiries and had a NERS officer to follow up those cases.

Integration

The language skills acquired from the drop in sessions facilitate the integration process. People can only play a meaningful role in a community if they can communicate. In addition to the communication, the links that they build with individual mentors, tutors and institutions help them achieve a sense of belonging and security. Information is crucial for their integration as it is to their livelihood and North Tyneside libraries put this in the forefront.

More spending on foreign literature

North Tyneside libraries have had different nationalities coming in as either migrant workers or refugees and asylum seekers. Collections have been built to cater for these groups. This has resulted in collections – Albanian, Farsi, Cantonese, French, Polish, Portuguese, Russian and Bengali. These collections are available for use through out Tyne and Wear and beyond.

Tyne & Wear resource sharing policy

- The Tyne & Wear consortium has put together a borrowing policy that allows the different authorities to share their stock at no cost. Barriers were identified and removed to facilitate ease of borrowing and encourage usage.

Good practice

- A realisation of joint working, cultivating and embracing good practice
- Making good use of collected data for performance and project management

BME events

- Multicultural work an integral part of the library calendar
- Artists from BME involved in library events
- Inculcating a reading culture to children from oral backgrounds

The future of the projects work

RAS groups to take up volunteering

Hopefully members of the RAS group that get granted leave to remain status will continue to work with the library from a different perspective. The individuals that have gone through this scheme could make good volunteers/mentors in that they could empathise with the newcomers; possibly speak the same languages as them.

RAS groups to play an effective role in organising their activities

- It is envisaged that RAS groups will eventually take charge of organising events linked to their commemorations, national days, and other artistic events. The library is currently talking to different groups with a view of coming up with forums that would help choose book titles to buy in their respective languages. This is also meant to build and nurture relationships with the groups so as to sustain the links. I am currently working with the different groups to identify storytellers, artists, drummers and singers in the North Tyneside area.
- Plans are underway to record/document stories of all the newcomers in order to feed into the local history archive and for genealogy purposes. The need for this is going to be greater for the third generation onwards who would go to the library expecting to establish their lineage. If the library does not adopt a proactive role now, there is no way this information is going to be captured.
- Once the RAS groups get settled it is hoped that they will then fully participate in all community activities and bring in their experiences as well as celebrate their cultures. This is slowly happening, in some quarters and we hope to see more of it in libraries and museums.
- Plans have reached an advanced stage to purchase the Life in UK 2020 software and licences to help migrant and BME communities in the borough to learn about citizenship. The software will cost us £1500 and will be available in different venues.

This has been an interesting project to work on and the teams has developed practical ties, knowledge about each other's organisations as well as a broader picture of migration. The current work is satisfactory and the benefits of the work will be noticed with time. The following quotes from project beneficiaries complete

this report and serve to indicate the positive effects the project has made on many peoples lives.

Personal testimonies

Tutors of The ESOL Group

Overall I think the six weeks have been successful and enjoyable (certainly for me). I was initially concerned about meeting the individual needs of the wide range of English levels, but I think the small size and friendly nature of the class helped overcome this problem.

I was very pleasantly surprised how much more than learning some English language the students got from the class and it was great to see their confidence grow over the weeks.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the six weeks and am looking forward to continuing the classes in May. I only wish I was not so far away and could do more informal work to help supplement the classes.

I really enjoy the classes. I think I get as much from them as the students. I have really enjoyed working with the class and meeting people from al over the world.

I have learned so much from the group. I really enjoy working with the group and I think their English has improved so much as well as their self-confidence.

Students

The classes gave academic structure to my learning.

I enjoy grammar and structure of language is very important to me. These classes five me an opportunity to learn more and more.

I like it – it takes me back to my youth in a happy school. Not everyone can teach well and be friendly – Elspeth teaches us right

I enjoy it – no I really enjoy it and I'm improving my language.

She has helped everyone, she has brought past exam papers for us. It has helped a lot. It is better than college because it is more friendly and I feel safer here.

I think I like it. I think she is a good teacher.

I like Caroline and she has helped me a lot and she has taught me many things, like to improve my English and how to go to the doctors and how to ask for things in shops. It has been much fun and I have leant a lot

I have joined the library and now I can use the library lots of places

The library is good. I go in North Shields now. It is warm and I like it because I can read the papers and I can use the computers and work on my English everyday

The library is free; I did not know this before. Amazing.

I use the library now to take books. I have an Arabic dictionary and it is my best friend.

I like to come here on Tuesdays. I like to see my new friends. I learn more every week.

I can put my child and come. I learn and I laugh a lot.

Appendix

1. Background to North of England Refugee Service

The North of England Refugee Service (NERS) was established in 1989. It is an independent, charitable, not for profit organisation, which works to improve the conditions of life for all asylum seekers and refugees. It provides free, confidential and impartial assistance, advice/information and support to:

- All people seeking asylum
- Those people granted Exceptional Leave to Remain or Humanitarian Protection
- Those with Refugee status
- Refugee Communities

All NERS activities are aimed at assisting the integration and equal contribution of its clients within British society. It represents the interest of its clients by advocating the rights of its clients and promoting recognition within the voluntary and statutory

agencies of the support needs of asylum seekers and refugees, so that they are given equal access to services free from discrimination.

Advice they offer:

- assist new arrivals in accessing emergency support, welfare, housing, legal representation and health care
- assist in making applications for support to NASS
- contact NASS on behalf of our clients if there are any complaints or concerns about support
- offer information and advice on rights, and help in securing legal representation for applications for asylum, renewal of leave to remain, asylum appeals, travel documents,
- promote clients' interests with other organisations if wished.
- Support in detention, assisted voluntary return.

NERS Work With EASI

Asylum seekers bring a wealth of skills and knowledge from a wide range of employment and cultural backgrounds. As a partner of the EASI-DP, the North of England Refugee Service is working to empower asylum seekers to be able to use the time they are waiting for their decision positively and to enable them to build for a positive future in the UK.

Essential to this work are the following;

- Working with Asylum seekers to enable their integration into British society,
- Improving their communication (language & literacy) skills
- Improving their confidence
- Developing their understanding of the UK Labour Market.
- Encouraging and arranging volunteering opportunities.
- Employing mentoring as a tool to support, enable and encourage them to realise their aims.

The project aims to and enable asylum seekers to build on their personal skills, education experience and self confidence so that if given a positive decision they will be more able to gain rapid transition to the labour market once they have been recognised as refugees. If they do have to return to their home country it is hoped that our project will have also enable them to build a new life on their return.

Appendix 2

Part of the EASI project's aims is to match asylum seekers to people in their local community with whom they will develop a supportive, encouraging and trusting relationship.

Mentors provide the asylum seekers and refugees they are working with the following;

- General information and guidance about relevant issues and support and enable them to access any appropriate professional services provided by NERS and other agencies.
- Enable them to learn about local facilities and services and systems and how and where to access these services.
- The opportunity to improve their English and gain a better understanding of British culture and customs.
- Enable them to identify what activities they would like to pursue and enable them to achieve their goals. These goals will vary from person to person but could include accessing leisure activities, community facilities, educational training and voluntary work.

An additional outcome of the ESOL Group at Wallsend library was that **10** of the attendees were matched with a mentor to support them in their new lives in the UK.