

September 2011

# Investing In People and Communities

## 2010 – 11 Report

THE Community Centre based in St Matthew's Church Hall has been hugely utilised in two main areas of service which is as an office base and space for hosting activities.

### **Office space**

Four Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs), namely Investing in People and Culture, Tyne and Wear Eritrean Community Association, the Linking women of Africa (LWA) and the Somali community group use the offices on a weekly basis to plan and deliver activities to their respective beneficiaries. These organizations are usually the first point of contact for their members who are mostly from the refugee and asylum seeking communities and as such play a vital role in their integration into the wider society.

This in turn meant that the office space from which these organizations operate is crucial for refugees, asylum seekers, migrant workers and BME communities who are usually categorized as marginalized or hard-to-reach to receive the service they most need.

### **Hall**

The hall is being used by the above organizations for meetings, AGMs, trainings, graduation parties, baptismal parties, and birthday parties. Local indigenous people also use the hall for birthday parties. The softplay is very popular with the kids in the neighborhood and beyond. We usually receive positive feedback. Kids love the soft play. There is also currently a yoga fitness class every Friday evening.

### **Investing in People and Culture (IPC)**

IPC is a constituted forum that represents and coordinates the interest of over 20 community organizations that operate in the North east region.

IPC was founded in recognition to the need to work at a grassroots level and in response to the government's Big Society and Localism agenda. IPC now has a working partnership with more than 20 refugee led organisations including the Ethiopian community, Central African Voice, Congolese community, Sudanese community, Somali community organisation, Gateshead Refugee Support network, Linking Women of Africa, Golgotha Assembly, Maranatha Assembly, etc.

Over the last few months IPC's main focus has been to organize training sessions that has been identified by activities of member organizations. Recently IPC partnered with Northumbria University, Refugee Council, NSPCC, North of England Refugee Service

and Business Link to organise training sessions around Safeguarding children, Social enterprise, Fund raising, the Big Society, etc. All of the training sessions took place at the community hall and they were well attended. The last session for example was attended by 25 people from 13 nationalities and 12 refugee and migrant community organizations.

### **Awareness raising sessions**

Over the last few months we were able to organise a number of awareness raising sessions covering a variety of topics identified by research and the participating community groups. Just to mention some:-

#### ***Organ donation sessions:***

We had a number of organ donation sessions involving various communities of African background - all held at the St Mathews church hall. People from South Asian, African and Afro-Caribbean communities living in the UK are more likely to need a transplant than the rest of the population:

Black people are three times as likely as the general population to develop failure

The need for organs in the BME community is three to four times higher.

This is because people from these communities are more likely to develop diabetes or high blood pressure, both of which are major causes of organ failure.

Unfortunately, while the need for donor organs is three to four times higher than among the general population, donation rates are relatively low among black and South Asian communities, thus reducing the chance of a successful match being found.

This topic emerged from the need of organs within the BME community and the lack of supply for the same. The aim was to raise awareness of organ donation in the UK. It is a well known fact that there is a gross lack of knowledge regarding this topic especially within the black and ethnic minority groups. As a consequence, patients within these communities are dying needlessly. We believe as a result of the knowledge gained through the delivery of the sessions, people will be literally saved. The project was made possible by the partnership we were able to create between NHS Transplant and Blood Transfusion Department and the Newcastle City Council Science City Project.



This project was highly successful. The funders were interviewed in the BBC as a result and it is widely praised in the media as a pioneering project. Please view:  
<http://www.newcastlecommunityscience.co.uk/case-studies/eritrean-organ-donation-project>  
(St Matthew's PCC is not responsible for the content of external links.)

### ***Safeguarding children***

In partnership with the NSPCC, we conducted a series of training sessions to educate refugee parents about safeguarding children. The issue of safeguarding children is completely new to most refugees and it is imperative that they understand the law and the support services available.





### ***Social enterprise***

We recently organised a social enterprise event which went very well indeed. The aim of the event was to ‘train, motivate and guide’ potential social entrepreneurs on how to generate business ideas, identify opportunities and explain the legal aspects of setting up a social enterprises. Leaders from 15 RCOs were present and 14 nationalities were represented. 32 people (16 female and 18 male) from Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland and Middlesbrough attended.

The event was necessitated by the need of refugee and migrant communities in the region to sustain their community services in the wake of the current economic crisis and in line with the government’s Big Society and Localism agenda.

Investing in People and Culture organised the event in partnership with Northumbria University and also the Refugee Council. We invited senior lecturers and legal practitioners to speak.



## **Last year's sessions**

### ***Online application***

This session dealt with online school registration process to prepare parents and guardians to access the service. The session was an eye opener to most participants who did know nothing about the subject. The session covered:

Access information about online registration

The benefits of applying online

Various choices available

Accessing technical and professional help

Appeals process

Recommendation to improve the service.

Number of participants: 16

Age: parents

Gender: 3 male and 13 female

Delivered by

Val Chadwick,

Parent and Carer Participation Co-coordinator,

Children Services

Blackfriars, Unit 4, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4XN

Tel 0191 2606512

## ***Citizenship***

Refugees has to pass the new citizenship test to be eligible for British citizenship. This session covered question and answers to prepare participants for the citizenship course. A discussion was also had on the requirements needed for refugees who have been granted 5 years stay to transfer their status to Indefinite Leave to Remain. This is session was relevant and was well attended.

Number of participants: 24

Age: Adults

Gender: 20 male and 4 female

Delivered by

Ian Brigstock

Community Belonging Project

North of England Refugee Service

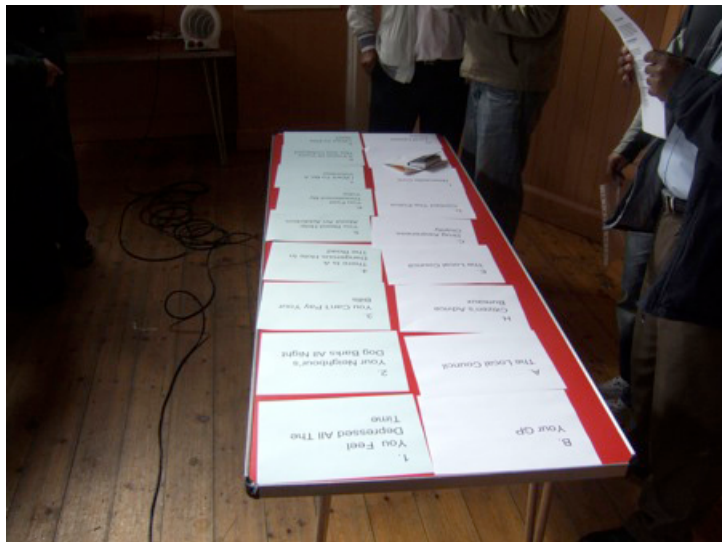
2 Jesmond Road West

Newcastle

NE2 4PQ

Tel: 0191 245 7311

Mob: 07584 233387



## ***Fire Safety***

This session raised awareness of fire regulation and fire safety measures. Participants asked a number of questions and made further appointments to have smoke alarm checked or replaced.

Number of participants: 14

Age: Adults

Gender: 13 male and 1 female

Delivered by

Gwen Adams

Crew Manager

(Prevention and education)

Newcastle south community Fire Station

Elswick, Newcastle upon Tyne

NE4 6HL

Tel: 0191 444 4404

## ***Community Development/ Function:***

The session dealt with the following topics:

How to plan and execute a project

Access voluntary and statutory support organised as a formal group-

Work in partnership with other likeminded communities and charities for a collective voice

Benefits and responsibilities of having a constituted group

Number of participants: 21

Age: Adults

Gender: 20 male and 1 female

Delivered by

Nasrin Ahmadi

Support for Community Action programme

Regional Refugee Forum North East

15, Design Works

William Street, Felling

Gateshead

Tyne & Wear NE10 OJP

Tel: 0191 423 6255

Email: [nasrin.ahmadi@refugeevoices.org.uk](mailto:nasrin.ahmadi@refugeevoices.org.uk)

***Small Library Service:***

For the first time we started a small Eritrean Library project as a pilot to introduce Eritrea to other communities in the region and to give Eritreans to start to read their own history and culture as seen by western authors. Eritrea has rich cultural, social and political history most people in the area including Eritreans themselves are not aware of. The main objective of the library project has been to acquaint other cultures especially the host community to know and appreciate Eritrean culture and history. The books will also encourage Eritrean refugees in the area to read their history in English. Our plan in the future is to include other cultures' books in the library.



On behalf of all that benefit from the premises, I would like to express my gratitude to the St Matthew's PCC for allowing us to use the space.

***Sirak Hagos***