

RAPAR

(Refugee and Asylum seeker Participatory Action Research)
C/o Faith and Justice Commission, Cathedral House,
250 Chapel Street, Salford M3 5LL

Date and Time of next meeting:

Tuesday 17th December

10 am

Cathedral House

250 Chapel Street Salford

Date and time of further meeting :

Tuesday 21st January 2003

4 pm

Cathedral House

250 Chapel Street Salford

Minutes of Information Sharing Meeting

Tuesday 12th November 2002, Salford Cathedral House

Present: Nilofer Shaikh (RAPAR Cahir) Rhetta Moran (Revens Institute, University of Salford) B. Temple (University of Salford) Miwanda Bagenda (RAPAR Salford Project) Donna Hewitt (RAPAR Salford Project Manager) Ali Namegoshaye Fard (RAPAR) Cath Maffia (Health Visitor Salford PCT Asylum Seeker Health Team) Martin Smith (WHBC - World Harvest Bible Church – minute taker) Nicky Vincer (Pendleton College) Suz Hindle (New Deal for Communities) Qamar Kashmiri (Awaaz Group) Zeinab Mohamed (Somali Communities) Anne Hayton (Social Services) Chris Storab (Citizens Advice Bureau) Parvin Amanpolek (Iranian community) Hermione Lovel (University of Manchester) Lynda Ledwith (Age Concern) Anne Daniels (Age Concern).

In attendance: Fazil Jamal Mustafa (Salford RAPAR Community Development worker – Kurdish community) Mike Scantelbury (Community Network, CVS Eccles) Francis Kaikumba (Community Network, CVS Eccles).

1. Apologies:

Received from: Scott Durelage, Mohamed Nazari, Molam Shenalovel, Linda Caulfield, Carl Mugen, Maria Thornton, Karen Whittaker, Steve Conway, Louise Kay.

2. New Agenda Items:

The following items were agreed as added agenda items:

- 2.1. **Student Volunteers – does RAPAR want one?**
- 2.2. **Community network lead on Personal Safety**
- 2.3. **Report to Salford PCT on health of Asylum Seekers from RAPAR**
- 2.4. **Report on a visit to an Asylum seeker in prison**
- 2.5. **Approach from Somali women to RAPAR**
- 2.6. **Report on Kurdish family requesting help.**

3. **Minutes of the meeting on 12th October 2002:**

- 3.1. The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a correct record

4. **Matters arising from the minutes**

- 4.1. Ref Item 3 – Report from EMTAS - The proposed correction to the EMTAS report was accepted. A corrected report will be circulated.

Action: Rhetta Moran.

- 4.2. Ref Item 4.1 – Abdullah Ramatullah who has helped RAPAR with contact with Afghan community, now deported to Vienna, and trying to return to Salford – Unusually, he has been allowed to work in Vienna, but only part time street sweeping, and he is concerned about a return to Afghanistan. He urgently needs visiting in Vienna. **Donations were requested to fund such a visit.**

Action: All.

- 4.3. Ref Item 4.2 – it was reported that the letter to the GMPA has not yet been sent

Action: RAPAR trustees to send the letter to GMPA

5. **Iraqi Kurds**

- 5.1. Ali Namegoshaye Fard has visited an Iranian Asylum Seeker (AS) currently in prison for robbery, and reported on his plight. He had been rejected twice in asylum application, lost all support including accommodation. In his desperation to survive he committed a robbery, was arrested, convicted and sentenced to 9 months in prison.

Ali's report outlines the desperate plight of many asylum seekers in similar situations. The Home Office asylum policies appear to be generating large numbers of AS's who, without any support, and facing dire consequences if deported, feel that crime is a reasonable option compared to their perceived alternatives of homeless starving or death! A Reverend gentleman in Wigan heard of his plight, did what he could, and asked for RAPAR's help. "Hard-case" support system was tried, but the known delays (approx. 3 months) render such support of limited value. Furthermore, the policy not to accommodate "hard-cases" in the local area, but dispersal to YMCA's is seen as counter productive where some local support exists.

- 5.2. There was wide ranging discussion including:

- 5.2.1. Unacceptable personal situations created by conflicting Home Office policy e.g. Iraqi Kurds being given notice to leave UK in 7 days, yet Home Office policy being to refuse to allow flights to Iraq!

- 5.2.2. An urgent and desperate need for more coordination of Public bodies to avoid conflicting advice to AS's,

- 5.2.3. An urgent need for a "Safety Net" to operate where individuals have failed to connect with support agencies.

- 5.2.4. Concern over the growing incidences of racial attacks, graffiti, and signs of growing racial unrest – e.g. impromptu notes of protest about AS's left on chairs at the CAB

- 5.2.5. Salford City Council – one office issuing and implementing eviction notices, another refusing to deal with the people thus made homeless. This leads to more desperation initiated by disjointed public authority actions.
- 5.2.6. Possibility of groups of AS's getting together to fend for themselves outside any recognised framework – becoming “untouchable”.
- 5.2.7. Evidence that when a family were issued with a notice of limited leave to remain, and the ruling was challenged, it was overturned – policy appears to be written “on the hoof” rather than being consistently administered in a cohesive way.
- 5.2.8. Concern of the high threshold level for Social Services to get involved due to huge case load. Children, in particular were felt to be at risk e.g. a mother and 5 daughters who had witnessed their father being executed, then suffered from a long journey, entering as illegal immigrants. Now in Salford with no social worker accessible. This is typical of many such people.

5.3. What can be done? Several actions were proposed:

Action list:

- 5.3.1. RAPAR to set up a Working Party with a brief to :
 - 5.3.1.1. Identify the specific issues involving lack of coordination of public bodies, with particular reference to issues about dispersal where children are involved.
 - 5.3.1.2. Hold a multi-agency meeting to report back on the issues
 - 5.3.1.3. To write letters to relevant bodies describing the situation and recommended remedial actions
 - 5.3.1.4. Working Party to consist of Cath Maffia (Chair), Nilofer Shaikh, Ann Hayton, Donna Hewitt, Francis Kaikumba, Chris Storab.
 - 5.3.1.5. If possible to send information to Rhetta Moran by 28th November for inclusion in a bid that is being drafted.
- 5.3.2. Salford City Council to be invited to institute a mechanism to support the children in Salford who have been traumatised, particularly recent immigrants. Salford Strategic Partnership? **Salford RAPAR team to progress this.**

5.4. Ref last minutes item 6 last paragraph, Nicky Vincer reported that whilst the Pendleton College situation remained the same with regard to the Kurdish students, the steps towards the College writing down the facts will be difficult ones. The possibility and advisability of an approach by RAPAR to the College governors will be considered and reported back. **Action Nicky Vincer**

6. **City Council meeting feedback** ? *No notes – sorry if I missed it!*

7. **Health and Inequality** ? *No notes – ditto*

8. **Hard-case payments**
Covered under 5.1

9. **Afghan event 24th October**
The event was well attended – approximately 100 people – good food and music – appreciated by all who went.

10. **Update on Salford RAPAR team**

10.1. Donna Hewitt reported on the form prepared by the Salford Race Hate Officer – the ambiguity on categorising Asylum Seekers separately from Ethnic minorities has been addressed – it was felt to be “a good effort”.

10.2. Donna Hewitt reported on 5 Iraqi Kurds who had been refused asylum, lost all support and were homeless. They must leave the country but cannot go to Iraq! City Council have done nothing with them yet. It was estimated that there are 15 – 20 people in Salford, and another 20 in Bolton in this situation. NAS, Northern Iraqi hard-case provision, accommodation board all to no avail. Solicitor lost interest because no payment available – “Case closed!”.
Chris Storab offered to include any AS professional on his mailing list of relevant information which he sends out.

10.3. Cath Maffia reported concern over an AS who had been given notice to leave whilst in hospital being treated for TB. Had it not been for the diligence of the TB nurse, his case may not have been followed up. This type of incident appears to be followed up only on an individual basis – some specific policy is needed. It was proposed that RAPAR write to the Director of Public Health asking about infection control issues:

- what lessons have been learned from this case?
- what is going to be done to ensure that a more coherent policy is adopted to ensure that situations like this are adequately covered?

Particular concern was expressed that there are many TB cases, the existing mechanism is failing, and that children are particularly at risk.

Action: Nilofer Shaikh and Rhetta Moran to draft the letter.

10.4. Salford RAPAR team launch.

This is provisionally booked for Tuesday 14th January 2002 from 1-4 pm.

10.5. Current research is being carried out on personal safety of Asylum Seekers. There are many difficulties – continual emergencies – many people asking for support. There is serious concern for the health of the workers due to the stress of so many serious situations. Evidence is being gathered about the needs of people with a funded programme, focusing on the most acute issues – particularly those not on the agenda of agencies. Accurate picture emerging of where dedicated resources are needed.

For example, meetings with professionals are frequently interrupted while they go off to deal with another emergency – two hours in one case. Serious racist attack last Saturday – father and son seriously beaten and “bottled” by balaclava-ed thugs on the Hodsall estate. **Question for Salford City Council – Why are immigrants who have been granted asylum being housed on estates with known gang problems?**

10.6. Concerning these situations, there is a question of how, or indeed whether to bring these situations into the public domain.

On one hand because people don't know about it, it is hard for professionals to produce sufficient momentum for change.

On the other hand, with diverse political agendas, have we any friends or champions in the media to provide a balanced view of the real plight of AS's and of the potentially explosive situation that exists in many places?

It was recognised that media cover now is a minefield!

Salford City Council appear to be unable and/or unwilling to really deal with the problems. The political debate about dispersal versus Asylum Camps is polarising opinion – even a possibility of sponsoring thugs to force the issue of camps? Parvin Amanpour related her experience of arriving in the UK with her two sons, unable to speak English. She desperately needed just someone to recognise that she existed – before she needed help! – even a friendly smile. She said that this would have helped to avoid the depression she subsequently experienced, and all the consequent problems. Then somebody helped. Having now emerged from the problems, she wants to help others in the same plight.

Martin Smith outlined the work at WHBC on South Langworthy Road, with 70 Iranian people making up 50% of the congregation, and aimed at helping the situation described by Parvin. WHBC wants to work with existing agencies and guard against competing or Re-inventing the wheel”. With pre-school, language classes and advocacy services operating and open to all, it is planning to extend these services, and add a cafeteria/drop-in centre, employment training in interpreting, catering, building and vehicle driving and maintenance. **Contact number 0161 736 9422**

- 10.7. There has been a request to help with an application with the Immigration Service where a lady was too over-awed to describe details of sexual harassment in her first interviews with a male. She now would like help with her appeal. Can RAPAR assist? (*Salford PCT was mentioned – not sure what context!*)

11. Any Other Business

11.1. Student Volunteers – does RAPAR want one?

Student volunteers from Manchester University & UMIST available under “Reach Out”. RAPAR is happy to accept volunteers – there’s plenty to do.

11.2. Community network lead on Personal Safety

No discussion?

11.3. Report to Salford PCT on health of Asylum Seekers from RAPAR

Covered under item 10.3

11.4. Report on a visit to an Asylum seeker in prison

Covered under item 5

11.5. Approach from Somali women to RAPAR

No discussion?

11.6. Report on Kurdish family requesting help.

Reported under item 5.2

- 11.7. **RAPAR training day** is scheduled for Wednesday 11th December at 12.30 at “The Angel” with an objective to increase the executive.

Something was mentioned about the Housing Issue (Previous minutes Item 9) but I missed it.