

# Refugee Community Organisations in England -

## Realising Potential

A research report prepared by the Refugee Council  
and Refugee Action

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
1.1 Background to the research .....	3
1.2 The BASIS programme .....	3
1.3 About the report .....	4
<b>2. RCOs and the wider voluntary and community sector</b> .....	<b>5</b>
2.1 UK voluntary sector in profile .....	5
2.2 Specialist refugee infrastructure .....	7
2.3 Refugee Community Organisations .....	8
<b>3. Improving RCO Infrastructure: A literature review</b> .....	<b>11</b>
3.1 Research findings.....	11
3.2 Barriers to funding .....	13
3.3 Recommendations.....	13
<b>4. Identifying RCO support needs: The primary research</b> ..	<b>14</b>
4.1 Research methodology .....	14
4.2 Findings .....	16
<b>5. Conclusion and next steps</b> .....	<b>33</b>
5.1 Recommendations.....	33
5.2 Future research .....	34
<b>6. Bibliography</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>Annex A</b> .....	<b>A1</b>

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Both the Refugee Council and Refugee Action are committed to delivering sustainable infrastructure support to RCOs. This report represents the findings of our research aimed at identifying and assessing the exact nature of these needs. The report has been designed to provide a useful guide to the RCO sector, combining knowledge gained previously with new primary research. As such, this report provides some benchmarking data for RCOs across each of the nine English regions. It also offers policymakers the opportunity to target infrastructure support in a way that can address the gaps identified and build on the strengths of the sector.

## 1.1 Background to the research

There have been refugee communities in England for hundreds of years. They have made an immense contribution, both culturally and financially, to UK society and its economy.

Refugee communities have a history of establishing Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs). Integration Matters, the national strategy for refugee integration, defines Refugee Community Organisations as “organisations run by and for refugees. They provide advice and support, often informally, and act as bridges to mainstream services and other local groups”. The large number of RCOs, estimated by some to be as many as 1,000, is a distinctive feature of refugee communities in the UK.

Dispersal of asylum seekers to the regions, introduced under the authority of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act and implemented in 2000, marked a significant change in how refugee communities live and work together. Such changes have inevitably had an impact on RCOs. Increasing numbers of RCOs have appeared in the regions and each organisation has faced the challenge of meeting a wide range of needs in an area where other support is still underdeveloped. In this situation, the support and capacity building infrastructure for RCOs is critical.

## 1.2 The BASIS programme

The Big Lottery Funds (BIG) BASIS programme aims to improve the infrastructure support available to all voluntary and community sector organisations in England.

BIG asked the Refugee Council and Refugee Action to research the organisational capacity of RCOs to access and manage funding as a development phase of a larger planned national delivery programme. The development phase aims to identify established RCOs in England and their organisational development needs. The delivery programme will address these needs in order to enable RCOs to continue their vital role in the reception, settlement and integration of refugees.

In addition to delivering support that builds on current provision and practice, the BASIS project can enhance the effectiveness of existing RCO infrastructure by complementing and filling gaps in that support. It can add further value by contributing to more effective coordination and promotion of the support available to RCOs. BASIS can also contribute to more effective coordination among both specialist and generic infrastructure organisations, as recommended by a number of studies.

## **1.3 About the report**

### **1.3.1 RCOs and the wider voluntary and community sector**

The first section of this report, in briefly summarising the key trends evident in the wider voluntary and community sector (VCS), positions the issues facing RCOs within the broader context. Funding pressure and the competition between the ever-increasing numbers of voluntary organisations are themes that echo among RCOs who also face particular challenges in gaining access to funding and support. The impact of the policy context is also examined in this section.

### **1.3.2 RCO support and development**

The RCO support structure is examined in the next section, including a review of recent literature on RCOs. This includes recent work funded by ChangeUp, which has substantially increased the number of studies that focus specifically on infrastructure for RCOs. Where there are pockets of excellence and detailed knowledge available in particular regions across England, this knowledge is used to highlight some consistent themes in terms of issues currently facing RCOs. RCOs have access to the same levels of national, regional and local support available to other organisations, but they also have access to specialist support which in turn has corresponding national, regional and local levels. For RCOs, specialist support exists alongside generic support and this is explored further in this section.

### **1.3.3 Identifying RCO support needs**

The next section of the report focuses on the research undertaken by the Refugee Council and Refugee Action, outlining the methodology. The primary research tools used were survey and interview.

Findings are presented in this section under a series of headings that include size, geography, composition, services offered, and importantly, the development needs of RCOs.

### **1.3.4 Conclusion and next steps**

The final section offers the conclusions of this research along with the key recommendations for the future. These underline the need for specialist support for RCOs and suggest measures for improving the design and delivery of RCO infrastructure support.

## **2. RCOS AND THE WIDER VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR**

Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) are part of the constantly evolving voluntary and community sector within the UK and are subject to some of the same influences and pressures. However, their response to these influences, and the implications for their support and infrastructure needs, are determined by specific characteristics that set them apart from the sector as a whole.

### **2.1 UK voluntary sector in profile**

The funding streams that exist across the voluntary and community sector in the UK are highly diverse. Voluntary organisations habitually manage income from private donors, charitable trusts, local authorities, central government departments, regional development agencies, member fees, user fees, and increasingly, revenues from commercial ventures. The most commonly used classification method is based on the origin of funds (Anheier, 2005): public sector payments, private giving, private fees.

In terms of the volume involved, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO, 2006) estimates that public sector payments or statutory income account for 38% of the total income of the UK VCS. Of that, 53% comes through fees and contracts with the balance coming in the form of grants.

Private giving is important to many voluntary and community organisations. During 2003-04, individuals contributed 35% of total income to voluntary organisations (NCVO, 2006). In comparison, charitable trusts currently provide 10% of the total income of the sector (NCVO, 2006). This income is declining, largely due to the impact on assets of decreased investment returns and low interest rates (NCVO, 2006).

NCVO estimates that 47% of the sector's income is now earned, compared with 45% received as grant, or voluntary, income (NCVO, 2006).

#### **2.1.1 VCS infrastructure**

A wide range of infrastructure services are available to voluntary and community organisations at all levels: national, regional and local. Some of this is generic in that it serves, in theory, all voluntary and community organisations, regardless of their specialism. For example, the main VCS infrastructure body, NCVO, provides a range of development resources that are directly available to all voluntary and community organisations. The NCVO is also the voice of the VCS at the national level.

Other national infrastructure organisations such as the National Council for Community and Voluntary Action (NACVA), formerly the NACVS, and Volunteering England may also provide resources for individual organisations but their main purpose is to support local infrastructure bodies such as CVS and Volunteer Centres.

Specialist infrastructure organisations also serve particular sub-sectors of the VCS. These sub-sectors may be quite broad or may be narrowly defined. An individual organisation may therefore belong to more than one sub-sector.

## **2.1.2 Infrastructure at the national level**

At the national level, there are specialist organisations for the community sector such as British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres (BASSAC) and Community Matters. BME, rural and faith organisations also have their own infrastructure bodies. The Community Sector Coalition brings together national and other community infrastructure organisations.

Community development is also supported by national infrastructure such as the Community Development Foundation, Federation for Community Development Learning and the Community Development Exchange (CDX).

## **2.1.3 Infrastructure at the regional level**

Generic networks of voluntary and community organisations serve the VCS and provide a voice at the increasingly important regional level. Specialist regional bodies also exist, including, in some regions, networks of BME voluntary and community organisations. Again, these deliver a range of infrastructure functions and provide a regional voice.

## **2.1.4 Infrastructure at the local level**

At the local level, the main generic infrastructure bodies are the CVS and Volunteer Centres, supported by the national bodies mentioned above. With regard to local specialist infrastructure, the picture becomes very complicated, with many providers delivering different types of support to different segments of the local VCS.

Nearly all of these generic and specialist infrastructure organisations are potential sources of support for RCOs. However, RCOs typically find it difficult to gain access to many of these infrastructure organisations and this is explored further in this report.

## **2.1.5 ChangeUp**

ChangeUp is the Government's framework for improving VCS infrastructure. Since its launch three and a half years ago it has created new infrastructure bodies and supported infrastructure functions at national, regional and sub-regional levels. ChangeUp is now managed by Capacity Builders, an independent national body set up for the purpose. Its work is informed by the National Infrastructure Partnership, and it oversees six national hubs supporting key infrastructure functions, as well as the activities of regional consortia.

At regional and sub-regional level, ChangeUp operates through consortia of infrastructure organisations both specialist and generic.

Although mainly aimed at enhancing generic infrastructure, ChangeUp has recently recognised and addressed the role of specialist infrastructure for faith, rural, BME and refugee and migrant organisations. Its 'Mainstreaming Diversity in ChangeUp Strategy' was launched in March 2006, and a new funding stream, 'Improving Reach', was announced in August 2006. The fund will allocate up to £6m to specialist infrastructure projects. Capacity Builders recently launched Destination 2014, its consultation document on the future of ChangeUp.

## **2.2 Specialist refugee infrastructure**

Specialist infrastructure for RCOs (and other voluntary and community organisations working with refugees) also exists at national, regional and local level. The Refugee Council and Refugee Action are the main national infrastructure organisations for the refugee sector, but others such as Praxis, the Housing Associations Charitable Trust (Hact) and the Evelyn Oldfield Unit have also engaged in infrastructure projects that are national in scope.

The Refugee Council and Refugee Action also operate at the regional level, including, in the case of the Refugee Council, London. A number of other organisations provide specialist refugee infrastructure at regional and sub-regional level. In two regions, the West Midlands and the East of England, there are informal regional networks of refugee organisations with dedicated workers managed by the Refugee Council. In both London and the North East, there are independent, constituted networks of RCOs that employ dedicated workers and provide a voice for RCOs. One is seeking to expand its infrastructure functions to include organisational development.

At the local level, the picture is again complicated. Support from the Refugee Council and Refugee Action is also available locally in many areas, though neither provides national coverage. A range of other local organisations deliver infrastructure functions that target refugee organisations. A directory of development resources recently compiled for RCOs in the West Midlands as part of a ChangeUp-funded project includes 100 entries, including 12 specialist agencies.

### **2.2.1 Co-operation and partnership in the refugee sector**

Specialist refugee infrastructure organisations frequently co-operate informally with other specialist and generic infrastructure bodies although, as is shown below, partnership working between generic and refugee specialist infrastructure should be intensified.

Recently more formal infrastructure partnerships have emerged that link RCOs and mainstream statutory or voluntary sector agencies. For example, Renewal is a partnership of RCOs and a local PCT which delivers infrastructure functions across six West London boroughs. This partnership was facilitated by the Evelyn Oldfield Unit, a specialist infrastructure organisation. Hact has also facilitated local housing partnerships that include RCOs and provide infrastructure along with direct services.

## 2.2.2 Refugee infrastructure functions

Specialist refugee infrastructure bodies such as the Refugee Council and Refugee Action deliver a range of infrastructure functions. These include:

One to one advice and support

Information and publications, including the Refugee Council's RCO News and Refugee Women's News

Training

Resources, including a specialist quality assurance system, QASRO, developed by the Refugee Council in partnership with other refugee agencies, and an RCO handbook published by the Refugee Council

Research

Voice and engagement with local, regional and national service providers and policy makers

Facilitating RCO access to generic infrastructure

## 2.3 Refugee Community Organisations

Integration Matters, the national strategy for refugee integration, defines RCOs as "organisations run by and for refugees. They provide advice and support, often informally, and act as bridges to mainstream services and other local groups".

RCOs play a significant role in supporting both asylum seekers and refugees in the UK. Estimates vary, but based on the number of RCOs known to the second tier organisations that work with them, and assuming that some will be unknown, there may be as many as 1,000 RCOs in Britain. The large numbers of RCOs and their role is distinctive to Britain and contrasts with other European countries. Key factors behind this may be the level and nature of state support for refugees in Britain, and the highly developed voluntary and community sector in this country.

### 2.3.1 Evolution of RCOs

RCOs typically begin as self-help initiatives among refugee communities. Based initially on the informal co-operation of leading individuals and volunteers, many go on to acquire more formal structures such as governing documents and management committees. The next step is registration as a charity, which often coincides with the decision to seek significant funding for their activities, and in particular for paid staff. A few go on to register as companies or take on other organisational forms.

Co-operation among RCOs through networks, partnerships, consortia and forums, usually local but increasingly sub-regional or regional, has long been a feature of the sector.

### **2.3.2 RCO activities**

The activities of individual RCOs are many and varied. Nearly all address the cultural, faith, social and recreational needs of the community. Many offer mother tongue classes and other instruction for children. A key role of many RCOs is the delivery of information, advice and advocacy that helps community members gain access to mainstream services and entitlements. This role often includes interpreting and translation.

Other RCOs are service providers in their own right, offering English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) instruction, vocational training, housing and other services. Services may focus on specific segments of the community such as women, the elderly or young people.

RCOs also introduce members to the wider community, orientating individuals to life in the UK and providing tangible links to wider society. RCOs also help promote public awareness of refugee communities and refugee issues, and assist service providers to deliver more appropriate and accessible services based on community needs.

### **2.3.3 Understanding the distinctiveness of RCOs**

Like other community organisations, particularly in the BME sector to which they belong, RCOs can be unstable and fragile. Also like BME communities, refugee communities are diverse and varied.

However, there are a number of factors that often distinguish RCOs from other community organisations. Some of these factors may also characterise other communities as well but, when taken as a constellation of factors, they serve to set refugee communities apart.

Like other migrants, refugees must adapt to an unfamiliar environment and, often, a different language. But they differ from other new arrivals in having fled persecution, an experience that is often severely traumatising and can have long term consequences. Arrival in the UK entails further uncertainty due to the process of applying for asylum, exacerbated by widespread public and media hostility to asylum seekers and refugees. In addition, the support system for asylum seekers is increasingly designed to deter asylum seekers, creating additional needs for the sector.

These needs vary. RCOs must serve communities whose recent arrival means they have a wide range of urgent immediate needs, including housing, employment or benefits, health care and learning to understand and speak English. In the longer term, RCOs must address needs such as education, training and the less tangible but equally important elements of building a fulfilling and productive life in a new environment.

Another important factor distinguishes many refugee communities. Refugees may be marginalised or excluded, sometimes for the same reasons as other communities, such as racism. But they may not be excluded for the reasons that other communities are excluded, such as lack of educational attainment, skills and bonds within the community. On the contrary, refugee communities include individuals with high levels of education, skills, experience and knowledge. Instead, they are often excluded for some of the reasons cited previously: lack of English, unfamiliarity with their new environment and the disruptive and precarious process of seeking asylum. This means that capacity building and community development may require quite different interventions that reflect the nature of refugee communities.

### **2.3.4 Impact of the policy context**

RCOs are therefore a distinctive and substantial feature of the voluntary and community sector, as well as an important component in the reception and settlement of refugees in the UK. Until recently, London was home to the majority of RCOs in the UK. However, since 2000, asylum seekers requiring accommodation have been dispersed around the country by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS). Since then hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers from hundreds of countries have arrived and been dispersed, with particular concentrations in the urban areas of the North and the Midlands.

The scale of dispersal has not been matched by support arrangements, and the system itself has often struggled to cope. New refugee communities arrived in communities which may have had little previous experience of refugees. Statutory and voluntary organisations struggled with the parallel service that is NASS.

Vulnerable people were left adrift in systems and neighbourhoods they did not understand and media hostility compounded the problem. Many voluntary and community organisations tried to respond to support these people and a significant portion of that response has come from refugee communities themselves through the increased establishment of RCOs. In the Birmingham area, for example, there were some 30 RCOs known to second-tier organisations shortly after official dispersal began in 2000; now there are more than 90. This pattern is repeated in other regions.

Like support for individuals, effective support for RCOs has also had to develop in areas with little previous experience. The Government recognised the role of RCOs in 'Full and Equal Citizens', its first strategy for refugee integration. Launched in 2000, it increased investment in specialist infrastructure. These services, however, are not uniformly available in all dispersal areas, and generic infrastructure is still learning to make its services accessible and appropriate to RCOs.

A further impact of asylum and refugee policy has been the increasing numbers of unsuccessful asylum seekers who are unable or unwilling to return home and have no access to state support. The Government makes a stark distinction between asylum seekers, whom it wishes to deter from coming to the UK, and refugees, whose right to remain is recognised and whose integration is promoted. RCOs, on the other hand, see only individuals who belong to their community, and their limited capacity is severely strained by the harsh regime for asylum seekers and unsuccessful asylum seekers. This also has implications for the funding and capacity building of RCOs.

### **3. IMPROVING RCO INFRASTRUCTURE: A LITERATURE REVIEW**

There has been substantial research on the role and activities of RCOs. Until recently, however, there has been little investigation into the development needs of RCOs, the support available to promote their development, or how to deliver more effective infrastructure for RCOs.

ChangeUp has changed that, beginning with 'Developing an Infrastructure for RCOs and Other Frontline Organisations Working with Refugees'. This was a scoping exercise carried out by the Refugee Council and Evelyn Oldfield Unit. Since then, ChangeUp has commissioned a 'Mainstreaming Diversity and Equality Strategy' which looked at how to ensure that ChangeUp met the potentially multiple needs of frontline refugee and migrant organisations and refugee infrastructure organisations, along with the needs of faith, rural and BME groups.

A number of regional studies, also commissioned by ChangeUp, have recently examined the availability and effectiveness of both specialist and generic infrastructure in meeting the needs of RCOs. In addition, there have been other studies, local, regional and national, that have examined the support available to RCOs as well as their ability to obtain funding for their activities.

#### **3.1 Research findings**

A study in the West Midlands<sup>1</sup> found that 54% of RCOs had accessed support from a specialist refugee infrastructure organisation, whereas only 29% had received support from a mainstream voluntary sector provider. The importance of specialist support, where available, was identified in most studies. RCOs had most access to specialist support, and tended to prefer it to generic support.

In general, studies found a wide range of support available, with specialist support and key generic organisations such as CVS seen as main providers. However, studies also found that significant numbers of RCOs reported receiving no support, and most complained that support was inadequate. Existing studies provide no basis for comparison, but this complaint might be echoed by community organisations in general. Such findings raise a number of questions: Why is it that support appears to be available yet RCOs complain that it is inadequate? Is it to do with barriers or inappropriate support, and is it really specific to RCOs or common to all community organisations? By speculating that it might be true for other organisations, we may be missing something that in fact is distinct to RCOs.

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<sup>1</sup> CSK Strategies, commissioned by the Refugee Council on behalf of the Regional Strategy Network, (2006) Commitment to Change: Improving Access to Third Sector Infrastructure for Frontline Refugee Organisations

All the evidence from RCOs show there is limited targeted specialist support available to them, in particular in regions outside London. Also, many RCOs are reluctant to seek generic support provided by mainstream support providers because there is a lack of understanding from these organisations about how RCOs operate. RCOs cite lack of time and capacity for them to attend training courses and it is therefore important that RCO capacity building support is delivered in a way which is specialised, meets their needs, and is accessible.

Interestingly, an important source of support identified in the West Midlands study (for 23% of respondents) was other local voluntary and community organisations, both specialist (i.e. refugee) or non-specialist. The East of England study found that peer support and mentoring by other organisations were valued by respondents.

Other studies made general comments that assistance was not accessible or available to RCOs, but also cited cost and lack of provision at appropriate hours as specific factors.

Recent research into infrastructure has highlighted the importance of specialist infrastructure but has also emphasised the need for better coordination among all infrastructure bodies, both specialist and generic. A number of studies have urged that specialist infrastructure agencies take the lead in coordinating services, sharing and defining effective practice in specialist provision, particularly the key role of one-to-one support. The studies have also urged specialist infrastructure agencies to work with generic infrastructure providers to improve RCO access.

Infrastructure organisations interviewed in a number of studies also reported that they did not sufficiently understand organisations to be able to provide effective help.

#### **Barriers to funding for RCOs**

- Increased competition for funding
- Funders in one study reported poor quality applications from RCOs, without specifying particular failings
- Funders also reported a high volume of applications from RCOs compared to other groups
- Language
- Proliferation of RCOs and perceived duplication of services, lack of coordination and communication
- Poor financial management, particularly budgeting
- Lack of understanding of volunteering
- Over-dependency on funders
- Poor governance
- Difficulty in providing evidence of need

*Figure 2*

## 3.2 Barriers to funding

Research findings were unanimous in their conclusions that RCOs found appropriate support hard to come by. Many studies explored the reasons for this, which can be summarised as the following barriers to funding:

Increased competition for funding

Funders in one study reported poor quality applications from RCOs, without specifying particular failings

Funders also reported a high volume of applications from RCOs compared to other groups

Language

Proliferation of RCOs and perceived duplication of services, lack of coordination and communication

Poor financial management, particularly budgeting

Lack of understanding of volunteering

Over-dependency on funders

Poor governance

## 3.3 Recommendations

The recommendations evident from a review of existing literature and studies looking at generalist and specialist support for RCOs can be summarised as:

Follow-up support, which continues throughout the setting up and delivery of funded activities, should be provided for successful funding applications.

Sustained one-to-one specialist advice and consultancy is the preferred form of support for RCOs.

Peer support, mentoring and skills sharing with other RCOs and refugee organisations are valued by beneficiaries.

Improved cooperation between infrastructure agencies is required so that respective roles are clear and duplication is avoided.

There is a clear role for specialist refugee infrastructure in working with generic infrastructure to improve access to and appropriateness of generic support.

Better signposting is needed on what developmental support for RCOs is already available.

Funders need better information about RCOs, their activities and the environment in which they operate.

There needs to be greater dialogue between funders and RCOs to promote better understanding of funders' requirements alongside RCO capabilities and limitations. Direction is needed on the steps that can be taken to ensure that funders better achieve the outcomes they seek and that RCOs fulfil their aspirations to serve their communities.

## **4. IDENTIFYING RCO SUPPORT NEEDS: THE PRIMARY RESEARCH**

The primary research undertaken in this study builds on the existing research; it is, however, differentiated by its sole focus on organisational development support and its specific targeting of information from 'established' RCOs and infrastructure organisations on the perceived organisational developmental support needs.

A key element of the primary research was to create a working definition of RCOs for the purposes of this project and the BASIS programme. Defining RCOs is a contested area. The existing research uses differing definitions which creates differing estimates as to the number of RCOs. As a strategy to help overcome some of these difficulties a working definition was used of an 'established' RCO which excluded individuals acting as community representatives and who are therefore not organisations. This working definition enabled the research to focus on those RCOs that would potentially need the type of organisational development support that the BASIS programme could provide.

### **4.1 Research methodology**

#### **4.1.1 RCO questionnaire**

The information collected during the fieldwork stage of the BASIS project was undertaken primarily through the use of quantitative research methods but it also included a small element of qualitative research. The primary instrument employed for the collection of statistical data was a questionnaire, devised by members of staff from both the Refugee Council and Refugee Action. There was also a small element of qualitative research conducted by some members of the project team who went to visit Refugee Community Organisations and undertook a series of unstructured interviews.

Having reviewed the literature available on the work of Refugee Community Organisations in the UK, it was decided that there was a need for more comprehensive statistical data relating to the support needs of RCOs so that the team could look at the scope and coverage of current support provided and see how this varied according to factors such as size of organisation, location within the UK etc. However, to supplement the broad perspective, fifteen qualitative interviews were conducted as it was felt that this would give the data more depth.

#### **4.1.2 RCO database**

The first step in conducting the fieldwork was to compile a database of RCOs known to both partner organisations by recording their details on a shared Excel spreadsheet. The Refugee Council and Refugee Action divided the responsibility of sending out questionnaires to both RCOs and second tier organisations, each focusing on the regions in which they normally work. Due to the large number of potential respondents, the questionnaire was sent out first by post and email as this was deemed to be the most cost and time effective way of distributing them.

### 4.1.3 Assessing the methodology

Despite having designed the questionnaire to be easy and relatively quick to complete, it was thought that leaving respondents to complete the questionnaires by themselves would yield a lower response rate. In order to remedy this, the teams in both organisations and eight community researchers embarked on a follow up stage which consisted of a two week intensive period of phoning the organisations who had not responded and, in some cases, visiting them in order to help them fill out the questionnaires. The guidance that the researchers were able to offer during the follow up stage and the fact that the project had an additional eight researchers over a two week period, many of whom were able to communicate with respondents in languages other than English, meant that the overall response rate was raised significantly. Out of the 1004 questionnaires sent out, 359 were received and analysed.

Whilst every effort was made to raise the response rate and improve the quality of the data by assisting respondents to fill in the questionnaires, there were nonetheless some acknowledged drawbacks to the methodology used. Firstly, the contact list used to identify respondents only included RCOs known to both agencies. Whilst this list was considerable and substantive it did not necessarily include the very recently set up organisations. In addition, some of the data for organisations in regions other than London was potentially incomplete. This means that the study cannot claim to represent the views of *all* RCOs in the UK.

Secondly, and adding to the previous problem, some regional response rates are significantly lower than for London based organisations. The reliance in some areas on other second tier organisations for contact details, which complicated distribution of the survey as well as follow-up, along with the well documented research fatigue in these areas may account for this. Capacity also played a role, as the more developed organisations found mainly in London would have been better able to respond.

Finally, it is difficult to identify from the data what support needs are prioritised by organisations on both an individual level and across the board because they were not asked to rank their needs in order of priority.<sup>2</sup> However, the fact that so many options were identified by all respondents may give a clearer picture to the extent to which support is lacking.

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<sup>2</sup> See questionnaire template – Annex A

## 4.2 Findings

Our research findings allow us to set out a unique picture of the national and regional established RCO sector, with analysis of the organisational support needs taken from RCOs themselves and those organisations providing support to them. The working definition of an 'established' RCO used in our primary research is an integral part of the findings; accounting for differences in estimates of RCOs in England.

### 4.2.1 Regional overview

From the 1004 organisations initially contacted, follow-up research enabled us to eliminate 336 organisations. Many of these entities had ceased to be operational, but many others were not established RCOs. Through this process of elimination and a parallel process of identifying new organisations, we developed a database of 668 RCOs in England. The regional distribution of these organisations is illustrated in Figure 3.

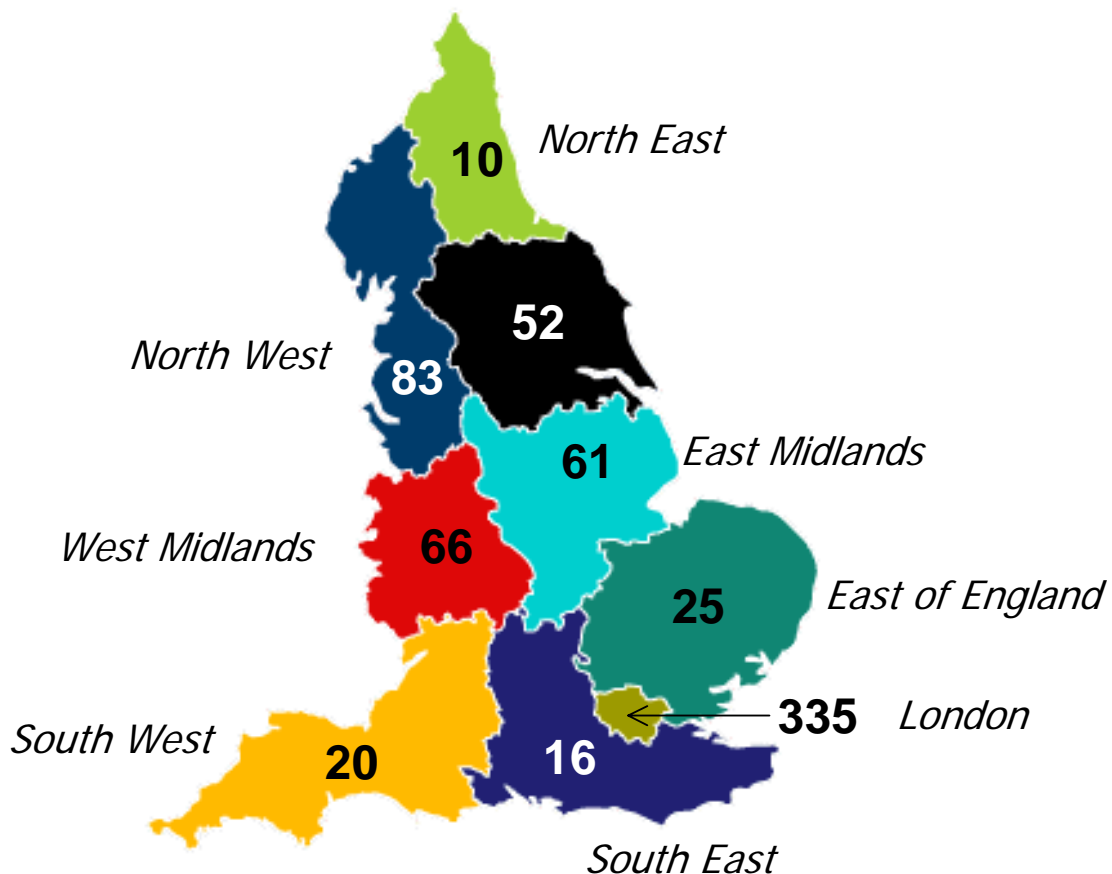


Figure 3: Distribution of RCOs identified through this study across RDA regions

We do not claim that this represents the totality of RCOs in the country, but it does represent the most substantial database of known established RCOs in England. The response rate to our survey represents 54% of this total. Regional variance in response rate is illustrated in Figure 4 below.

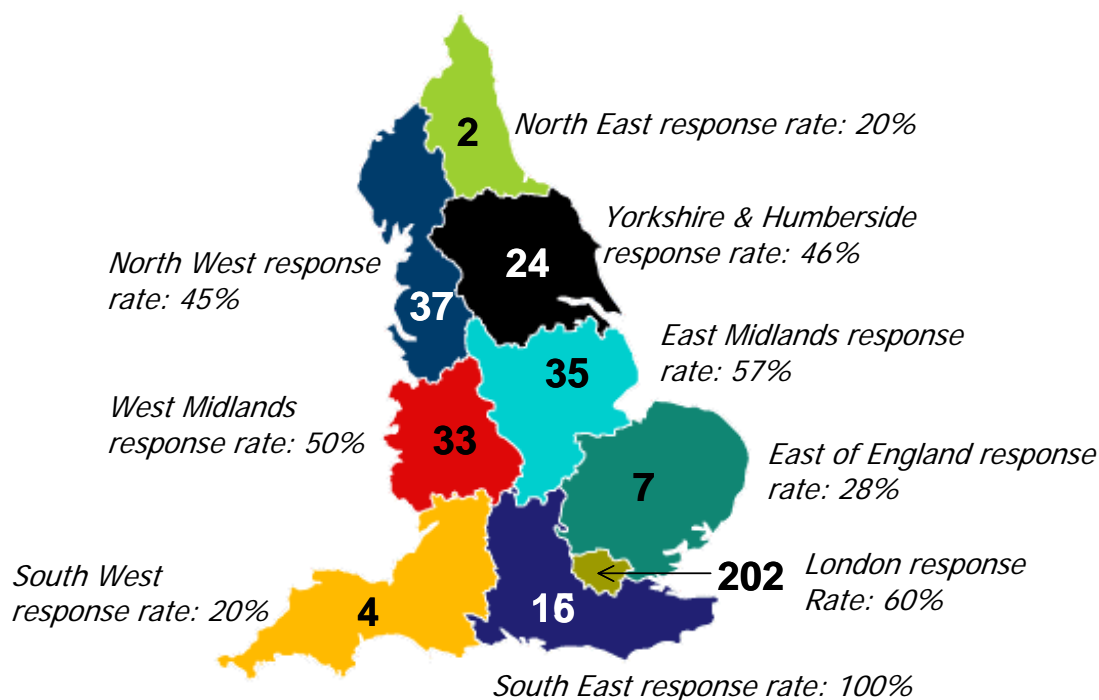


Figure 4: Distribution of RCO respondents by RDA region

The over-riding impression emerging from our research is that RCOs are not a homogenous group. This is consistent with the level of change the sector has seen since the implementation of dispersal in 2000. The summary table below indicates some of the differences evident from an initial regional analysis:

Region	Profile of regional Refugee Community Sector
East Midlands	<p>There are high numbers of RCOs in the region, mainly concentrated in the cities of Nottingham, Leicester and Derby but with some groups active in Northampton. This region does not have a long tradition of refugee settlement so almost all of the groups that exist date from the start of dispersal in 2000. This has led to a vibrant but slightly fragile refugee sector. There are few paid staff and quite low levels of group income.</p> <p>Using our working definition of an established RCO we identified 61 RCOs in the region. Of those, 57% RCOs (35 RCOs) responded to the survey. 18 of these RCOs stated that they had an income of less than £50,000 per annum; 16 respondents did not provide data. The majority of respondents (30) stated that the organisation had existed for less than five years. 2 of the 35 organisations have full-time employees and 34 of the respondents have volunteer contributions. There are 6 specific user service organisations amongst the region's respondents. The combined number of beneficiaries reached by those that responded to the question in the region is 6,097.</p>

East of England	<p>Relatively low numbers of asylum seekers have been dispersed to this region, but there are RCOs in a number of towns such as Peterborough, Luton and Bedford. A few are well developed, with funding and paid staff. These have developed despite relatively little specialist development support or assistance from generic infrastructure.</p> <p>Using our working definition of an established RCO we identified 25 RCOs in the region. Of those, 28% (7 RCOs) responded to the survey. 4 organisations reported an annual income of less than £50,000, 1 organisation reported an income of greater than £200,000 p.a. and 2 organisations declined to comment. 3 of the organisations have existed for less than five years; 3 others have been in existence for longer and 1 chose not to respond. 2 of the 7 organisations have full-time employees and all 7 respondents utilise volunteer time. There were no specific user service organisations among the respondents. The combined number of beneficiaries reached by those that responded to the question in the region is 1,570.</p>
Greater London	<p>Most of the RCOs in London were set up in the late 1980s/early 1990s in response to the arrival of a larger number of refugee communities. When compared with Refugee Community Organisations outside London, RCOs in London tend to be well established. They have been in existence for well over five years and there are more of them. As a result they have more experience in organisational development and service delivery than those outside London (this is with the exception of a small number of lead RCOs in the regions).</p> <p>Through this project, using our working definition of an established RCO, we identified some 335 RCOs in London. Of those, 202 (60%) responded to the survey. 121 organisations reported an annual income of less than £50,000, 39 reported an income of between £50,000-£200,000 and 21 reported an income of more than £200,000. 21 organisations did not provide data. This represents a heavy concentration of the largest responding RCOs in London. 127 of the respondents have existed for more than five years; 24 of those organisations have been in existence for more than twenty years. 85 of the 202 respondents report that they have full-time staff and all but three organisations reported that it uses volunteer time, with some organisations using as many as sixty volunteers. There are 53 specific user service organisations amongst the region's respondents. The combined number of beneficiaries reached by those that responded to the question in the region is 169,695.</p>

North East	<p>The North East is a major dispersal area where, according to the North of England Refugee Service (NERS), a high percentage remains when their asylum claims are recognised. Refugee Voice, the formally constituted regional RCO forum whose activities are coordinated by paid staff, has some 35 RCOs on its books. NERS provides some support for RCOs, and Refugee Voice plans to increase its capacity to deliver development support. At present few RCOs in the region have significant resources or paid staff, but the forum is active in raising awareness and seeking to influence policy and services.</p> <p>Through the research, using our working definition of an established RCO, we identified 10 RCOs in the region, of which 2 (20%) responded to the survey. 1 organisation has an income of between £50,000-£200,000; the other respondent did not provide data. 1 respondent has been in existence for more than five years, the other for less. Both organisations have full-time staff and one reported that it uses volunteer time. 1 respondent is a specific user service organisation. The combined number of beneficiaries reached by those that responded to the question in the region is 320.</p>
North West	<p>The region splits into two main areas, Greater Manchester (with parts of urban Lancashire to the immediate north) and Merseyside. Greater Manchester has been a major dispersal area, and whilst there have been refugee communities in the City of Manchester for many years, this has recently diversified. There are now many refugee-led groups in the surrounding boroughs (particularly Salford and Bolton) where there is no tradition of refugee-led groups (and in some areas little tradition of BME communities). Manchester Refugee Support Network is a refugee-led infrastructure provider operating mainly in the City of Manchester. Infrastructure support varies, with some generalist providers providing a high quality service, while others have less expertise in serving refugee led groups.</p> <p>In Merseyside, refugee groups are heavily concentrated in the City of Liverpool, which has a long history of refugee settlement and a reasonable level of infrastructure. There are a small number of groups in the surrounding boroughs.</p> <p>Through this project, using our working definition of an established RCO, we identified 83 RCOs in the North West, making the region the second largest region by number of RCOs. Of those, 37 (45%) responded to the survey. 20 organisations reported an annual income of less than £50,000 and 3 reported an income of between £50,000-£200,000, 14 organisations did not provide data. 24 of the respondents have existed for less than five years; 10 organisations have been in existence for more than five years. 3 of the 37 respondents report that they have full-time staff and all but 4 organisations reported that it uses volunteer time. There are 9 specific user service organisations amongst the region's respondents, covering a range of specialisms. The combined number of beneficiaries reached by those that responded to the question in the region is 4,600.</p>

<p>South East</p>	<p>Although the number of refugees and RCOs in the South East is only moderate, the geographical spread adds complexity. There are clusters of groups around Kent and Southampton and Portsmouth as well as groups around Brighton and as far north as Oxford and Banbury. There have been asylum support groups in the region which have existed for some time. These now blur the boundary between RCOs which are refugee-led, and support groups which have a more mixed leadership. In the main these latter groups are larger and better established than the purely refugee-led organisations.</p> <p>Using our working definition of an established RCO we identified 16 RCOs in the South East, of whom 16 (100%) responded to the survey. 11 organisations reported an annual income of less than £50,000; 2 organisations did not provide data. 9 of the respondents have existed for less than five years. 6 of the 15 respondents report that they have full-time staff and all but one organisation reported that it uses volunteer time. There are 3 specific user service organisations amongst the region's respondents. The combined number of beneficiaries reached by those that responded to the question in the region is 3,345.</p>
<p>South West</p>	<p>The South West region has a relatively small number of RCOs, mainly clustered around Bristol with some activity in Gloucester and Swindon. Although there is a long history of refugees and RCOs in Bristol, and some established groups, particularly in the Somali community, the majority of groups tend to be quite small, with little annual income and few if any paid staff. Infrastructure agencies in Bristol have some experience supporting RCOs but there is less experience of this in Gloucester and Swindon.</p> <p>There has been dispersal of asylum seekers to Plymouth and there are a small number of RCOs. However, if this develops further then it is likely to be difficult to cover on an outreach basis from Bristol and new RCOs with new infrastructure requirements will be necessary in the Plymouth area.</p> <p>Using our working definition of an established RCO we identified 20 RCOs in the South West, of whom 4 (20%) responded to the survey. 3 of the organisations reported an annual income of less than £50,000 and one did not provide data. All 4 of the respondents have existed for less than five years. 1 organisation reported that they have full-time staff and all of the organisations reported that they use volunteer time. There are no specific user service organisations amongst the region's respondents. The combined number of beneficiaries reached by those that responded to the question in the region is 435.</p>

West Midlands	<p>The West Midlands, particularly Birmingham, had sizeable refugee communities prior to dispersal, and has been a major dispersal area. The number of RCOs has grown accordingly, from an estimated 30 in 2000 to as many as 90 or 100 today. A wide variety of support is available, with some mainstream organisations such as the Birmingham Voluntary Service Council, actively seeking to work with refugee communities. Even so, a recent study funded by ChangeUp found that RCOs complained of inadequate or inappropriate support, compounded in part by a confusing variety of providers.</p> <p>Using our working definition of an established RCO we identified 66 RCOs in the West Midlands, of whom 33 (50%) responded to the survey. 27 organisations reported an annual income of less than £50,000; 2 reported income of between £50,000-£200,000 and 4 organisations did not provide data. 26 of the respondents have existed for less than five years. 10 of the 33 respondents reported that they have full-time staff and all but 3 organisations reported that they use volunteer time. There are 3 specific user service organisations amongst the region's respondents. The combined number of beneficiaries reached by those that responded to the question in the region is 16,833.</p>
Yorkshire & Humberside	<p>Yorkshire and Humberside is another major dispersal area, with four cities receiving large numbers of asylum seekers. Prior to dispersal there were established refugee communities and RCOs, particularly in Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield. Numbers have grown since dispersal began, but most still operate mainly with volunteers. There is specialist support in some areas but not in others, and some generic infrastructure organisations such as CVS work well with RCOs. RCO forums are active in 4 localities, supported by specialist development organisations, which also form a small regional practitioners' network that seeks to coordinate and engage in joint working.</p> <p>Using our working definition of an established RCO we identified 52 RCOs in Yorkshire &amp; Humberside, of whom 24 (46%) responded to the survey. 21 organisations reported an annual income of less than £50,000; 3 organisations did not provide data. 17 of the respondents have existed for less than five years, 1 has operated for more than five years and 6 survey participants declined to comment. Only 2 respondents report that they have full-time staff and 21 utilise volunteer time. There are 2 specific user service organisations amongst the region's respondents. The combined number of beneficiaries reached by those that responded to the question in the region is 4,961.</p>

Table 1: Overview of findings within each region

## 4.2.2 Reach

Although London accounts for 56% of RCOs responding to this survey, this data suggests that it accounts for 82% of the total beneficiaries of all respondents. As the effects of dispersal continue to percolate through to the regions, London's share of beneficiaries may fall as the regions host a greater number of refugees and asylum seekers.

Just fewer than 210,000 beneficiaries are reached by the respondents to the survey. 34% of this total (71,538) is reached by organisations with an income of less than £50,000. 27% (56,506) are reached by organisations with an income of between £50,000 and £200,000. 27% (54,951) are reached by organisations with an income in excess of £200,000. Since there are relatively few large organisations (22 earning in excess of £200,000) and quite a lot of smaller ones (225 reported incomes of less than £50,000), it is clear that the few larger organisations perform an important share of overall workload.

Older RCOs, whilst fewer in number, also appear to have good reach. 22% of total beneficiaries are served by the 183 organisations that have been operational for less than five years. 31% are reached by the 25 organisations that have been around for between twenty-one and twenty-five years.

In terms of staff, organisations without any full-time staff are serving 30% (63,397) of beneficiaries. Those with between 1 and 3 full-time equivalent staff (FTEs) are serving 32% of beneficiaries (65,666). Organisations with between 4-6 FTEs are serving 16% (34,194) of total beneficiaries and those with more than 6 FTEs are serving 15% (31,067) of beneficiaries. Again, far fewer organisations report many staff: 180 organisations reported no staff and 13 organisations reported more than 6 FTEs.

Of the 77 survey respondents providing specialist services, the most frequent specialisms are women, youth, elderly and people with a disability. In total, 39,667 beneficiaries are served by RCOs offering specialist services, representing 19% of total beneficiaries served.

## 4.2.3 Income

63% of organisations (225) responding to this survey report annual incomes of less than £50,000 per annum. 14% of organisations (49) reported incomes of between £50,000 and £200,000 per annum. 6% of organisations (22) reported incomes of more than £200,000. 18% of organisations (64) declined to answer the question.

Figure 5 below illustrates the distribution of income across those organisations that provided income information.

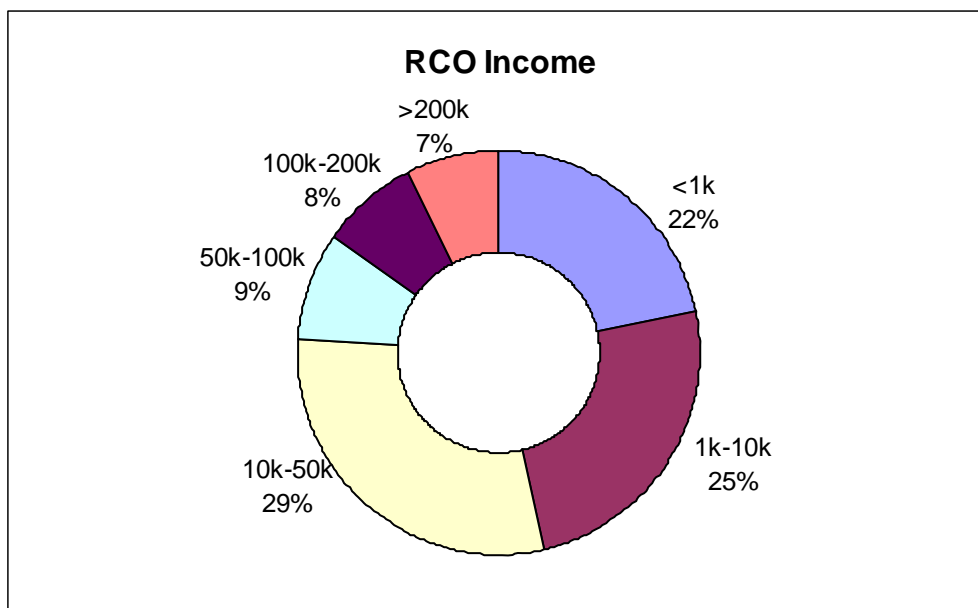


Figure 5: Distribution of income across RCOs, where stated. 82% of the total sample provided responses to this question.

Survey responses illustrate a concentration of sector income in London: almost 95% of organisations reporting an income in excess of £200,000 are based in London. The balance represents one organisation in East of England. 80% of organisations reporting an income of between £50,000 and £200,000 are also based in London. The remaining balance is spread across the country.

Unsurprisingly, higher incomes are concentrated in organisations that have been established for more than five years. Higher percentages of the total number of organisations established for between six and twenty years reported higher levels of income. The most even spread of income occurred among organisations that have existed for between sixteen and twenty years, illustrated in Table 2 below.

INCOME/AGE	0 to 5yrs	6 to 10	11 to 15	16 to 20	21 to 25	31 to 35	35+	age not stated	Grand Total
<£50,000	141	30	22	12	8	0	1	11	225
£50,000 to £200,000	7	11	17	6	5	0	0	3	49
>£200,000	1	3	5	4	8	0	0	1	22
income not stated	34	12	4	3	4	1	0	6	64

Table 2: Correlation of income and number of years RCOs have been established

Organisations with lower incomes have fewer staff: 80% of those organisations that do not have any full-time staff have incomes of less than £50,000 per annum.

In terms of those organisations (77 out of the total 359 responses) that provide a specialist service, most are at the low-income end of the spectrum. 40 organisations (51%) have an income of less than £50,000, 18% (14) have an income of between £50,000 and £200,000 and 10% (8) have an income of over £200,000. The balance of respondents declined to comment.

Given the diversity of local needs across RCOs, it is also useful to consider regional variation in average income and average numbers of beneficiaries served. This is illustrated below in Figure 6. We have not included data for the North East or South West where there is insufficient detail in the respondent sample. When adjusted figures for East of England are considered, resources appear to be tiered: London RCOs are generally best off, followed by the North West and then by the other regions. This may reflect existing levels of infrastructure in each region.

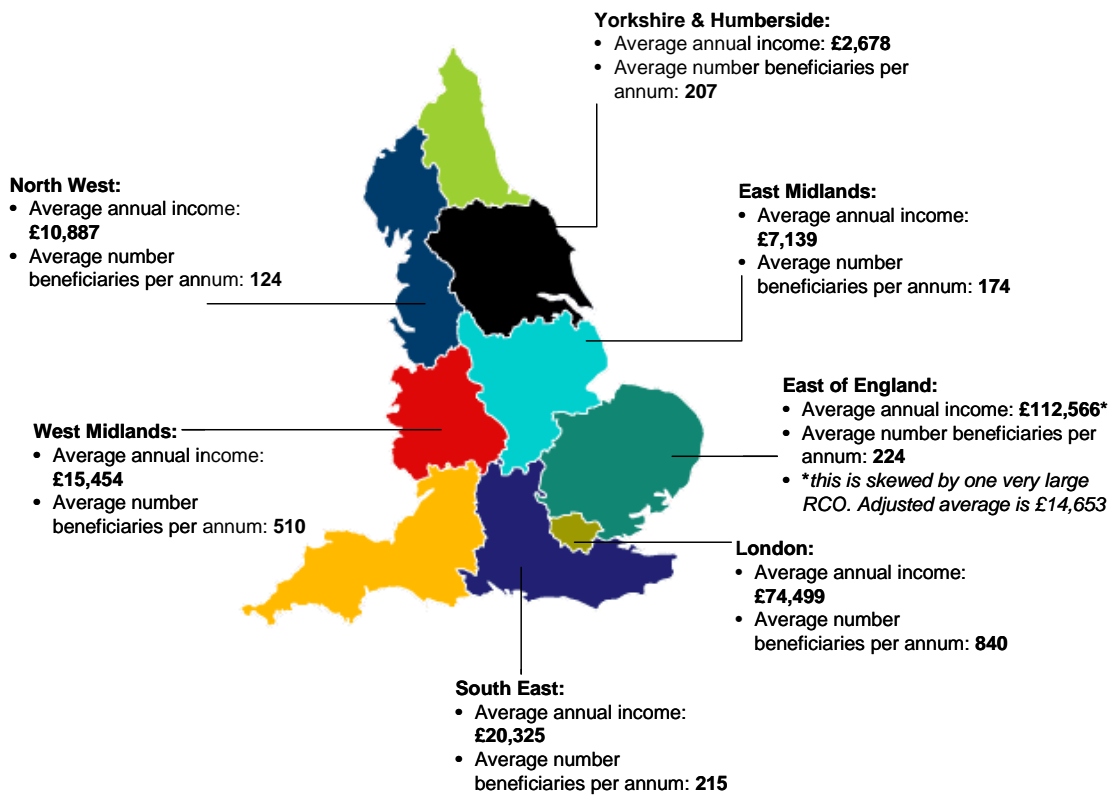


Figure 6: average income and average number of RCO beneficiaries by RDA region, where stated. These figures were arrived at by dividing the total amount of stated income per region by the total number of RCOs in that region.

#### 4.2.4 Staff and volunteers

Most RCOs are heavily reliant on volunteers. 50% of RCOs that answered the question reported that they have no full-time employees. 40% of RCOs reported that they have no part-time employees. Numbers of full-time employees are illustrated in Figure 7 below.

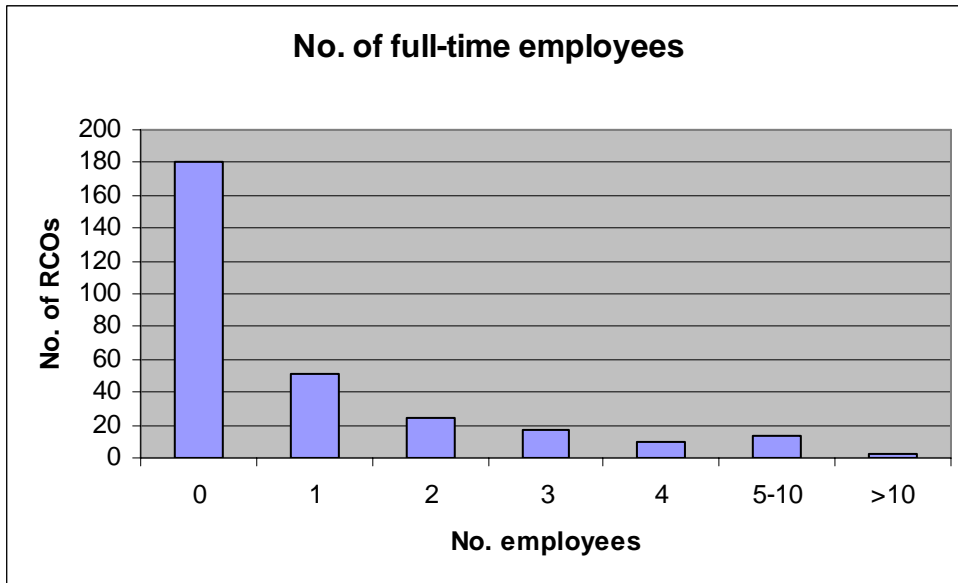


Figure 7: RCO full-time employees, where stated

A regional analysis of staffing levels supports earlier findings that most resources are concentrated in the London region. The next best-staffed regions as represented in the survey feedback are the West Midlands and the South East.

In terms of the correlation with income, unsurprisingly, the organisations with larger incomes also have larger staff teams; the least well-off RCOs are more likely to be without any full-time staff. Likewise, organisations that have been in existence for less than 5 years are far more likely not to have any full-time staff, however, beyond that no clear trend emerges from assessing staff levels in the context of the number of years RCOs have been established. Consistent with their apparent size, 48% of organisations that provide services to specialist groups have no full-time staff.

Volunteers are clearly a very significant resource for RCOs, with 75% of those that disclosed the information reporting that they have in excess of five volunteers working within the RCO. The distribution of volunteers is illustrated below in Figure 8.

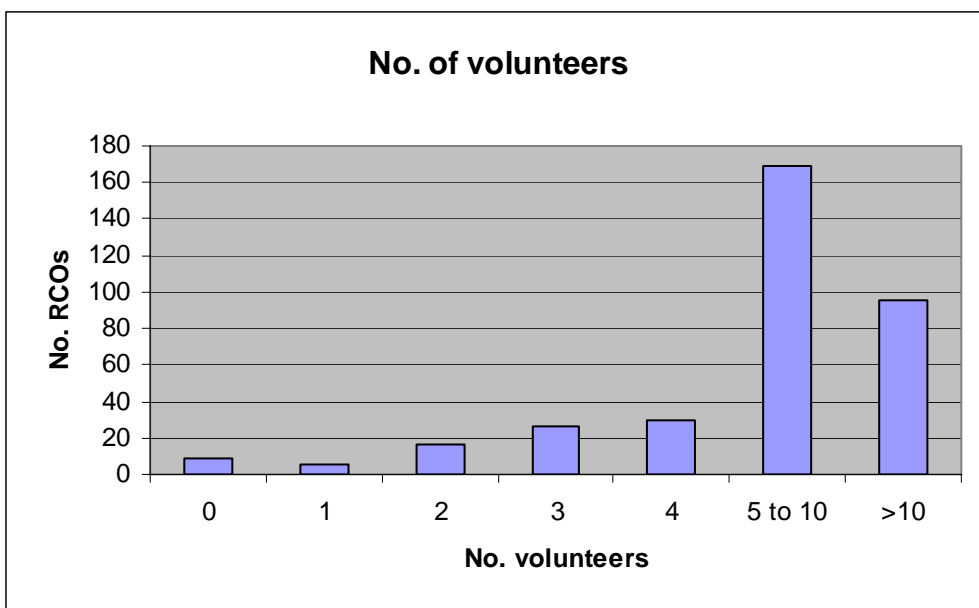


Figure 8: RCO volunteers, where stated

## 4.2.5 Number of years established

Organisations responding to the survey are relatively young, with 51% of respondents established in the last five years. Figure 9 below illustrates the history of RCOs in England. 80% were established in the years following 1991, reflecting the substantial increase in refugees seeking asylum in the UK since the late 1980s.

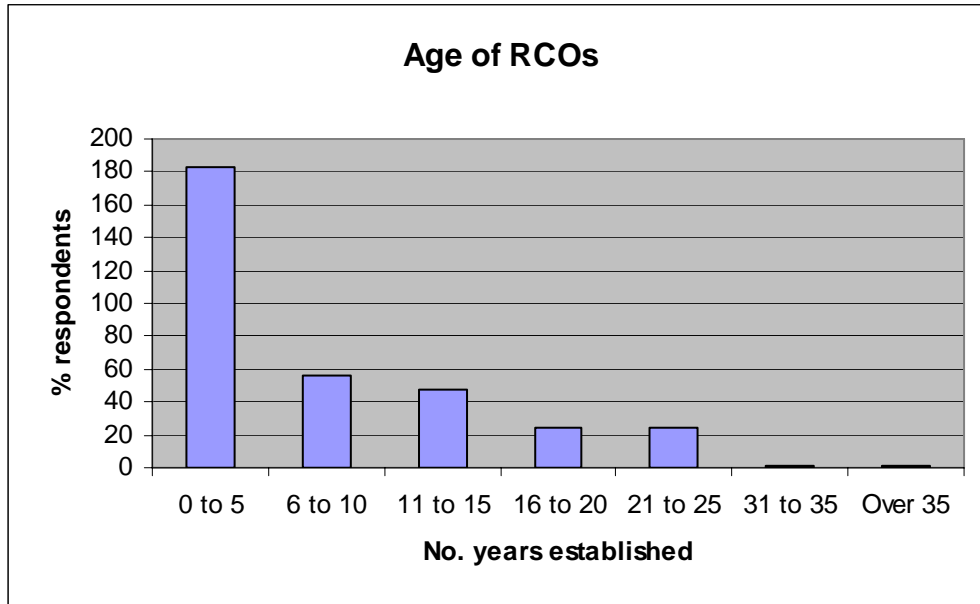


Figure 9: No. of years established, where stated

The oldest RCOs are located in London and the North West. The relationship between age and income was set out earlier in Table 2. There is no clear correlation between the number of years an RCO has been established, and its utilisation of staff or volunteers. 44% of organisations providing a specialist service were set up within the past five years.

### 4.2.6 Specialist focus

34% of RCOs responding to this question reported that they served a single nationality or ethnic group. An overview of the range of ethnicities served is illustrated in Figure 10 below.

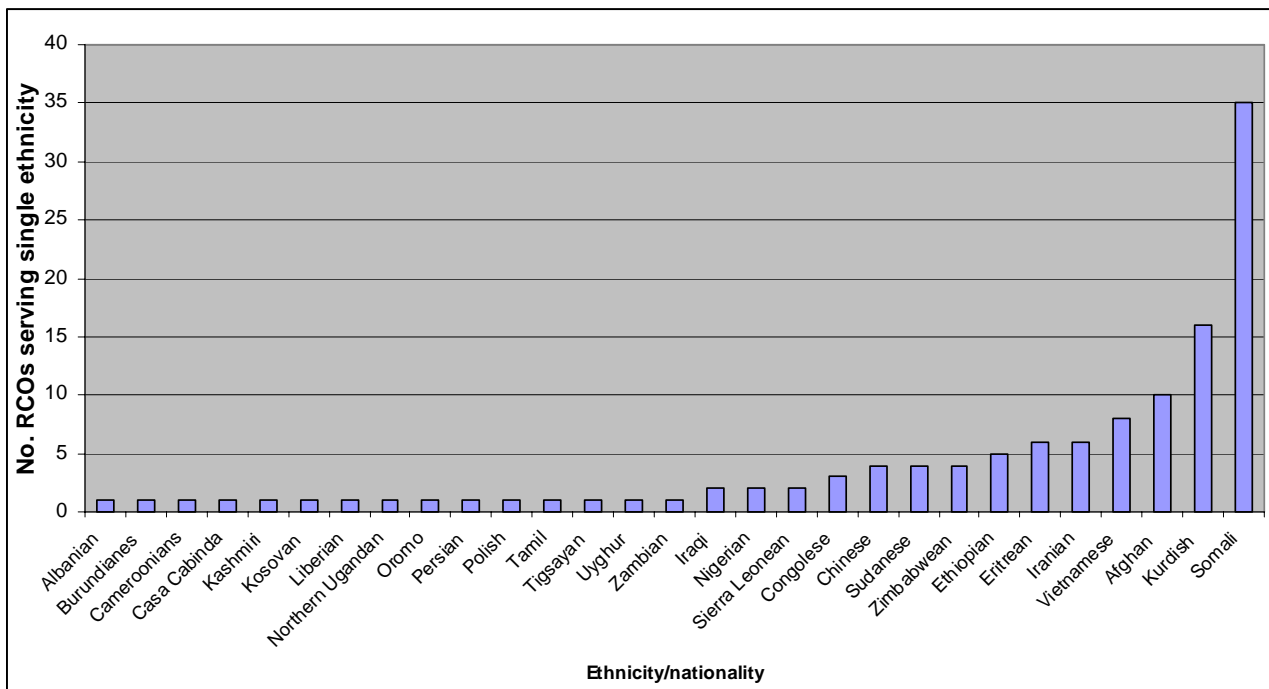


Figure 10: Profile of those specialist RCOs serving single ethnicity groups

22% of respondent organisations (79) stated that they served a particular user group, i.e. women, the elderly, disabled people etc. These organisations provide a wide range of specialist services, the most frequent of which are aimed at women (29 RCOs), young people (11 RCOs), the elderly (6 RCOs) and disabled service users (5 RCOs). As mentioned in the various sections above, organisations providing specialist services tend to have lower incomes and fewer staff. They are geographically concentrated in London (53 RCOs) and the North West (9 RCOs) and most have been established for less than five years.

### 4.2.7 Services provided

The RCOs in this survey offer a broad range of services, as illustrated in Figure 11 overleaf.

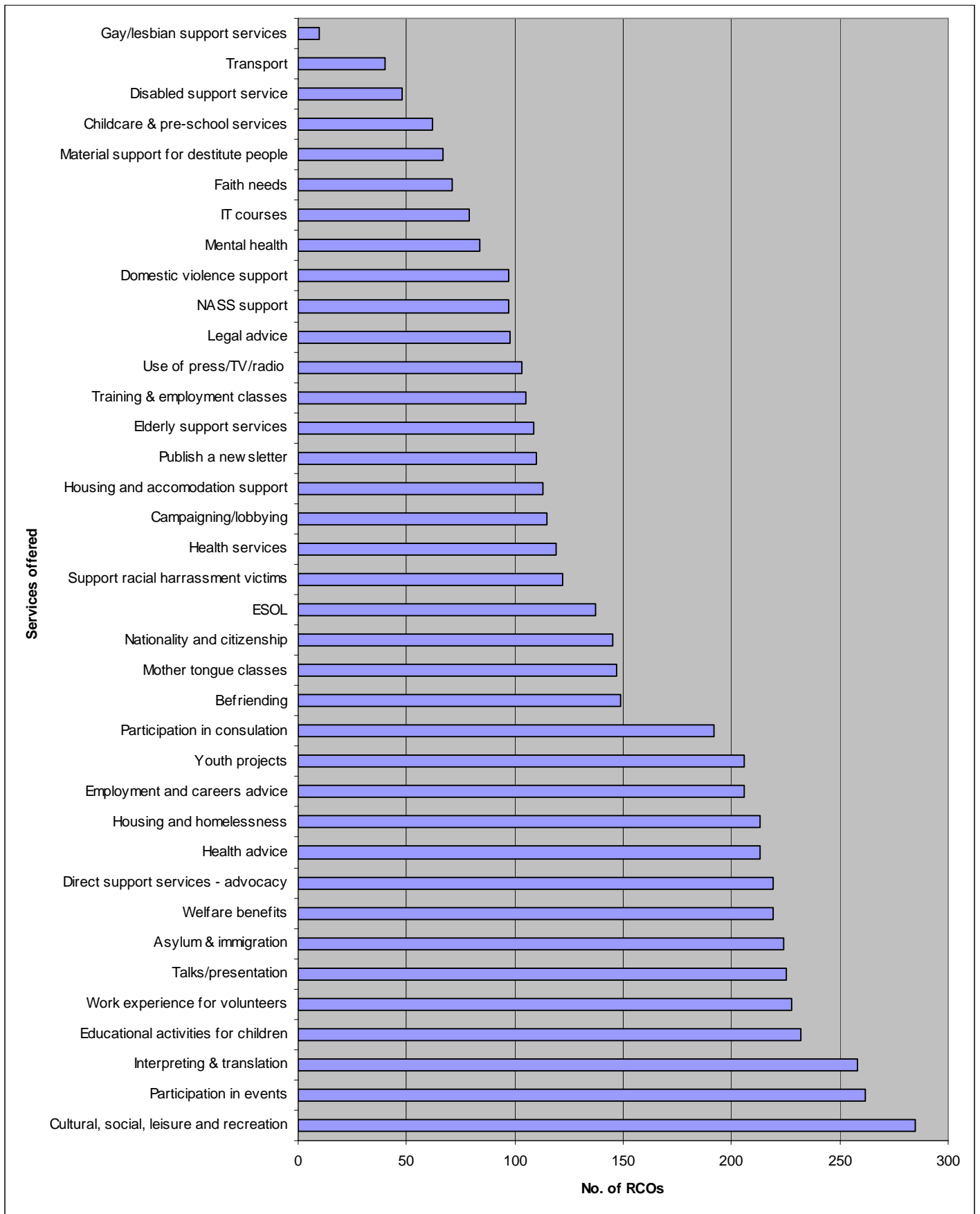


Figure 11: Services provided by RCOs across England

There is a lot of regional consistency in the services offered by RCOs:

Region	Services most frequently offered	Services least frequently offered
East Midlands	Interpreting and translation Talks/presentations Participation in events	Gay and lesbian services Disabled support services Training and employment
East of England	Asylum and immigration advice Welfare advice Interpreting and translation	Transport Gay and lesbian services Elderly support services
Greater London	Cultural, social, leisure & recreation Work experience for volunteers Participation in events	Gay and lesbian services Transport Faith needs
North East	Cultural, social, leisure & recreation Training and employment Talks/presentations	Campaigning/lobbying IT courses Transport
North West	Cultural, social, leisure & recreation Talks/presentations Interpreting and translation	Gay and lesbian services Disabled support services Training and employment
South East	Participation in events Talks/presentations Asylum and immigration advice	Gay and lesbian services Domestic violence support Disabled support services
South West	Campaigning/Lobbying Participation in events Talks/presentations	IT courses Training and employment Gay and lesbian services
West Midlands	Interpreting and translation Cultural, social, leisure & recreation Participation in events	Gay and lesbian services Transport IT courses
Yorkshire & Humberside	Cultural, social, leisure & recreation Participation in events Educational activities for children	Gay and lesbian services Children and pre-school services Transport

Table 3: Support provided by RCOs regionally

Services offered vary more by level of organisational income in the following way:

Income band	Services most frequently offered	Services least frequently offered
Less than £50,000 p.a.	Cultural, social, leisure & recreation Interpreting and translation Participation in events	Gay and lesbian services Transport Disabled support services
£50,000-£200,000 p.a.	Work experience for volunteers Cultural, social, leisure & recreation Welfare advice	Gay and lesbian services Transport Children and pre-school
Over £200,000 p.a.	Housing and homelessness Welfare advice Participation in events	Faith needs Transport Gay and lesbian services

Table 4: Support provided by RCOs by income band

There is little variation in service delivery when assessed by the length of time the organisations have been established. The number of full-time staff is important

however: organisations with more full-time staff appear to offer more advisory services around health, housing and welfare.

## 4.2.8 Support requirements

Many survey respondents selected many of the support needs listed, thereby making it difficult to establish priority of needs. In order to establish some degree of focus, the needs were analysed and an overall "Top 10" list of those needs most frequently occurring was developed. Those are listed below with the number of votes received by each in brackets:

- Fundraising (240)
- Website development (197)
- Project development and management (170)
- Financial management (160)
- Employing/managing staff (155)
- General IT (154)
- Marketing and publicity (151)
- Admin systems (150)
- Quality assurance systems (148)
- Monitoring and evaluation (147)

There is some variance across regions. This is illustrated in Figure 12 below. Data for the North East or South West has not been included as there is insufficient detail in the respondent sample. In many cases a number of services received the same number of votes. This is reflected below, where a minimum of the top five needs is identified. Additional needs are included where they scored the same number of votes. There is also some variation evident between RCOs with different levels of income. This is illustrated below:

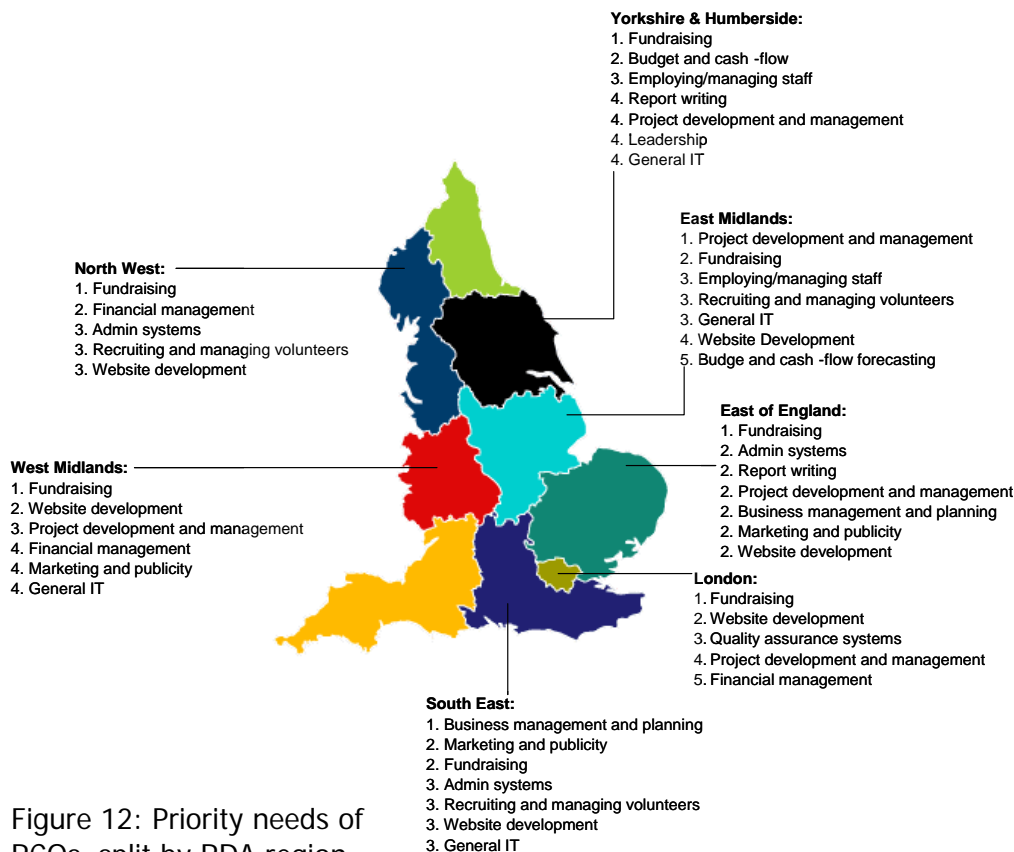


Figure 12: Priority needs of RCOs, split by RDA region.

Category	Income band	Top 5 support needs
Small	<£50k	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fundraising</li> <li>2. Website development</li> <li>3. Project development and reporting</li> <li>4. Financial management and reporting</li> <li>5. Quality assurance systems</li> </ol>
Medium	£50k-£200k	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fundraising</li> <li>2. Website development</li> <li>3. Employing/managing staff</li> <li>4. Quality assurance systems</li> <li>4. Marketing and publicity</li> <li>4. General IT</li> </ol>
Large	>£200k	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fundraising</li> <li>2. Monitoring and evaluation</li> <li>2. Project development and reporting</li> <li>2. Marketing and publicity</li> <li>3. Partnership working in the voluntary sector</li> <li>3. Budget and cash flow</li> <li>3. Financial management</li> <li>3. Trustees and management committees</li> </ol>

Table 5

There is no significant difference evident when needs are assessed by the number of years an RCO has been in existence, or by the number of full-time staff employed. Specialist RCOs also share the same main needs, outlined above.

Finally, when asked what “other” support is required, most respondents identified two types of support: networking skills and understanding UK systems. These two forms of ‘other’ support identified may reflect a difference in cultural understanding and background of a refugee community and host community. This may point to the need for host community-based organisations to understand and take into account these characteristics of refugee communities to enable them to understand UK systems and networking successfully. These two aspects of support-networking and understanding UK systems could be integrated into each area of specific support needs identified e.g. fundraising, website support, quality assurance systems.

#### 4.2.9 Second-tier support agencies

Through this research exercise we also surveyed second-tier support agencies. 72 responses to the questionnaire were received. Of those 19 were based in the North West (26%), 18 in Greater London (25%), 15 in the East Midlands (21%), 10 in the South East (14%), 7 in the East of England (10%), 2 in the North East and 1 in the South West.

The table below highlights services that are most frequently offered as well as those that are least frequently offered to RCOs by the second-tier agencies that responded.

Services most frequently offered	Services least frequently offered
Partnership advice	General IT
Fundraising support	Website support
Setting up a community organisation	Leadership support
Business planning/management	Report writing
Trustees	Employing and managing staff

Table 6

#### 4.2.10 Interview findings

To support the findings from the survey, we undertook interviews with a sample of twenty-five RCOs in London. The interviews covered a diverse range of organisations with differing development needs.

Most of the organisations interviewed expressed a view that they need support to improve internal infrastructure, policies, procedures, systems and processes. The general consensus was that limited funding and capacity should be directed to the provision of frontline services: as such, internal infrastructure is under-developed.

*"it also seems likely refugee organisations experience difficulty in obtaining generic support. A number of specialist second-tier agencies maintained that in competition for the limited support available from generic second-tier organisations such as CVS, services were less accessible to RCOs. This was borne out by the GOL study of BME infrastructure in London, in which organisations used a wide range of both specialist and generic support but fewer than 50% of respondents found the CVS fully met their development needs (though there was no indication of what the percentage was for non-BME organisations)."*

*Developing an Infrastructure for Refugee Community Organisations and Other Frontline Organisations Working with Refugees, The Refugee Council and The Evelyn Oldfield Unit, 2005 for the Active Communities Unit.*

Most of the organisations interviewed expressed the view that the available existing capacity-building support is not effective in developing the capacity of RCOs. This was partly due to the need for more targeted support that meets the needs of small new organisations as well as larger, more established RCOs. Interviewees identified one-to-one support, targeted training, high quality information resources and seminars as useful tools for the future. They also expressed a view that some of this support can be provided by local forums and second-tier organisations. As such, any new support offer should complement existing resources rather than duplicate the provision.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS**

Refugee Community Organisations provide a critical, frontline service in England. Their work plays a significant role in supporting excluded, marginalised and vulnerable individuals and families across the country.

However, the research carried out in this report shows that the RCO sector is underserved by existing mainstream infrastructure. Limited specialist support currently exists to support RCOs and that which is in place is unevenly distributed and inaccessible to many or most RCOs.

Significant investment is required to channel the right support in the right way to the right organisations. This report is an initial stepping-stone in understanding what that support should include and how and where it should be delivered. The Refugee Council and Refugee Action have now developed a database of RCOs to whom such support should be made available, as requested by the RCOs themselves throughout this research exercise.

### **5.1 Recommendations**

A comprehensive support framework is required to allow consistent support to be provided to RCOs across England.

Support must be provided in a tailored and bespoke fashion. Each organisation in this survey expressed distinct, individual needs. A one-size-fits-all approach will not succeed.

Support must differentiate between larger, more established RCOs and new, smaller RCOs.

Support must include the facilitation of networking opportunities between RCOs themselves, as requested through the survey.

Any new support system needs to take account of, and integrate with, existing local support on offer within each region.

Support must include a focus on the following areas: governance, fundraising, project development and management, financial management and marketing expertise.

Any support offered must strike a balance between London, where so many RCOs are currently concentrated, and the regions, where current infrastructure provision seems weaker.

## **5.2 Future research**

Further research to forecast likely RCO growth and development, and to consider how support plans can take account of likely future outcomes, would be a valuable addition to the existing literature. Crucial to this will be the monitoring of the broader voluntary and community sector, whose shift to contract culture and public service delivery will have an impact on RCOs, given their similarity in organisational structure and funding streams. It is not yet clear how this will affect RCOs, but it is likely that there will be an impact and targeted support provision should be aware of this.

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working with refugees to build new lives

Supported by



## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR REFUGEE COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Refugee Council is currently involved in an important project, run by the Big Lottery Fund. The Building and Sustaining Infrastructure Services (BASIS) programme, aims to discover the support needs of Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) across England, so that they can improve their capacity to manage and access funding.

Refugee Council is assisting the Big Lottery Fund in gaining this information, **which will enable you to better access local, regional and national funding of support to your community.** We would like you to help us better understand your needs by completing this simple questionnaire, detailing your current and future development and support requirements.

This questionnaire **should take no more than 20 minutes to complete**, and a stamped self-addressed envelope is included for you to return it to us. If you would like an electronic copy of the questionnaire mailed to you please email 'basis@refugeecouncil.org.uk.' Or it can be completed on-line at <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/basis>. If you require any help with filling in this form please contact: **The BASIS Project Team on 020 7346 1099.**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete in **BLOCK LETTERS** and return this form in the enclosed SAE to:

The BASIS Project Team  
Refugee Council  
240 – 250 Ferndale Road  
London  
SW9 8BB

Tel: 020 7346 1099  
Fax: 020 7346 6760  
basis@refugeecouncil.org.uk

### 1. ORGANISATIONAL DETAILS

Name of organisation/group: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of organisation/group: \_\_\_\_\_

**ANNEX A**

Town/City \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

When was your organisation set up? Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a Constitution or Memorandum and Articles of Association? Yes  No

Are you registered as a charity or a company?

Charity

Company

Neither

How many paid staff does your organisation have?

Number of full-time paid staff: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of part-time paid staff: \_\_\_\_\_

How many volunteers does your organisation have?

Voluntary staff: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of members/users that belong to you organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Total income in the last financial year? (April 2005 – March 2006): £ \_\_\_\_\_

**2. How would you describe your organisation/group?**

2.1 Do you provide frontline services directly to refugee communities? Yes  No

2.2 Does your group/organisation serve a single nationality (e.g. Congolese, Iranian)? Yes  No

Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

2.3 If you have answered NO to the question above please specify the nationalities your group/organisation does serve?

\_\_\_\_\_

2.4 Is your organisation/group specialist (for example, serving only women, elderly, disabled, mental health)? Yes  No

Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

2.5 Does your group/organisation provide support to other organisations or networks?

Yes  No

Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. WHAT SERVICES DOES YOUR ORGANISATION PROVIDE?

Please tick which of the following services are provided by your organisation:

(You can tick more than one if applicable)

#### **Advice and Information**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asylum and immigration              | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal advice                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educational activities for children | <input type="checkbox"/> NASS support (including Section 4) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment and careers advice       | <input type="checkbox"/> Nationality and citizenship        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health advice                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Publish a newsletter               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing and homelessness            | <input type="checkbox"/> Welfare benefits                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify: _____        |   |

#### **Direct support services**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy for individual clients | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing & accommodation support          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare & pre-school services | <input type="checkbox"/> Interpreting & translation               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disabled support service        | <input type="checkbox"/> Material support for destitute people    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic violence support       | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elderly support services        | <input type="checkbox"/> Support for victims of racial harassment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gay/lesbian support services    | <input type="checkbox"/> Transport                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health services                 |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify: _____    |   |

#### **Community Development projects**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Befriending & mentoring schemes                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Work experience for volunteers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural, social, leisure & recreation                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth projects                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faith needs   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other community development projects, please specify: _____ |   |

#### **Training projects**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education for children | <input type="checkbox"/> Mother tongue classes           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ESOL classes           | <input type="checkbox"/> Training and employment classes |

## ANNEX A

- Information technology courses
- Other training projects, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Awareness Raising**

- Talks/presentation
- Participation in Events/Conferences
- Participation in Consultation
- Campaigning/lobbying
- Use of press/TV/radio (e.g. Press releases, editorial letters)
- Other activities, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list any other services you provide if not covered in the above list:

## **4. ACCESS TO ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT**

If your organisation/group has access to organisational development support, please tick which kinds of support your group currently has access to, or has been able to access in the past:

### **ORGANISATIONAL START-UP AND SYSTEMS MAINTENANCE**

- Setting up a Community Organisation
- Administrative systems
- Business Management & Planning
- Quality Assurance Systems
- Monitoring & Evaluation
- Partnership working in voluntary sector
- Report Writing
- Project Development & Management

### **FINANCE**

- Budget & Cashflow Forecasting
- Financial Management & Reporting
- Marketing & Publicity
- Fundraising

### **HUMAN RESOURCES**

- Employing/managing staff
- Recruiting & Managing Volunteers

### **GOVERNANCE**

- Trustees & Management Committees
- Leadership

### **IT**

- Website development
- General IT

Any other organisational development support, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who has provided or is providing this support? Name of organisation (You can state more than one organisation if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## 5. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT NEEDED

Please tell us, what kind of organisational development support does your organisation still need?

### **ORGANISATIONAL START-UP AND SYSTEMS MAINTENANCE**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Setting up a Community Organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative systems                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management & Planning      | <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Assurance Systems               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring & Evaluation             | <input type="checkbox"/> Partnership working in voluntary sector |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Report Writing                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Project Development & Management        |

### **FINANCE**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Budget & Cashflow Forecasting | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Management & Reporting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing & Publicity         | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising                      |

### **HUMAN RESOURCES**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employing/managing staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Recruiting & Managing Volunteers |
|---|---|

### **GOVERNANCE**

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trustees & Management Committees | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership |
|---|-------------------------------------|

### **IT**

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Website development | <input type="checkbox"/> General IT |
|--|-------------------------------------|

Please detail any other development or training needs you may have:

Thank you very much for your help in completing this form. If you have any questions, please contact [relevant name] at [organisation] on [phone number].

ANNEX A

**Important! To ensure that we fulfil our legal obligations on data protection, please answer the following questions:**

1. **Do you give permission for your contact details to be given out?** (in the case of individuals or organisations requesting information on RCOs that they would like to contact)  
Yes  No
  
2. **Do you give your permission for your organisation's name to be published in a directory?** (for example, [name of org] would like to include details of organisations in resources and directories) Yes  No
  
3. **Do you give permission for your named representative to be published as a main contact for the organisation, in resources and directories?** Yes  No
  
4. **Do you give your permission for your contact details to be used for other purposes?** (for example, so that [name of org] can send you details on new services and training opportunities etc, or forward your details to other organisations that wish to contact RCOs)  
Yes  No