

the INFORMATION CENTRE *about* asylum *and* refugees IN THE UK



ICAR

Media Image, Community Impact

Assessing the impact of media and political images of refugees and asylum seekers on community relations in London

Report of a pilot research study

Commissioned by the Mayor of London

April 2004

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ICAR is an independent information centre that exists to promote understanding of asylum and refugees in the UK context and to encourage information-based debate and policy-making.

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ICAR project team

About the ICAR project team

This research was conducted by a core staff team, based at the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees, with the guidance of an Academic Director based at the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies.

Advice was provided and/or additional work undertaken by a number of project advisers and by volunteers. Other agencies were also consulted for their expert opinions. The Greater London Authority (GLA) provided advice and support and set up a project advisory group which met twice to discuss plans and findings.

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Charlotte Hardie and Alex Perkins for compiling newspaper cuttings.

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National Union of Journalists

Press Complaints Commission

Refugee Council

Refugee Action

Refugee Women's Association

The Refugee and Asylum Media Project

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foreword by Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London

I am pleased to publish this independent report.

London has for centuries been a city of immigration. The most striking feature of this in recent years has been the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees from all parts of the world. Like those who came before them they are a tremendous asset for London and have much to contribute to London's economic, social and cultural life. We must do all we can to help them to settle successfully and I am pleased that what they bring to our city is valued by many Londoners.

But this is not always the case. Instead of feeling welcome many feel threatened and face daily harassment and persecution. Refugee community groups and other agencies working in this field have consistently linked this to intensive and largely hostile reporting of asylum issues by the media.

I have shared their concerns and in summer 2003 I commissioned the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK to explore the impact of negative reporting on refugee and asylum issues on community relations in London. Media coverage of refugee and asylum seekers issues has been researched elsewhere but the Media Images, Community Impact study is unique in that it explores the community impact of this media reporting.

Assessing the precise impact of the media on people's understanding of the world is a difficult task, and estimating the media's influence on behaviour is even more challenging. Nevertheless this report raises issues that are too important to be ignored. Its findings suggest that media reporting of refugee and asylum seekers does have an impact at community level and that the media needs to be more careful about the accuracy and fairness of its coverage of these issues.

The report makes a number of recommendations that will help to strengthen London's communities and the understanding that they have of refugee and asylum issues. This includes proposals for further monitoring, working with the media and establishing ways of making accurate information readily available to them. I will be exploring these recommendations with partner organisations and will bring the findings to the attention of those who control the media.



Ken Livingstone
Mayor of London

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Introduction

Background

The Greater London Authority (GLA) has a responsibility to work towards ensuring that London is a safe and cohesive community and can only achieve this through recognising and addressing the needs of the many diverse communities that make London a uniquely vibrant world city. London has for centuries been a city of immigration, and a very striking feature of this in recent years has been the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees from all parts of the world. Asylum seekers have a legal right to seek asylum in the UK guaranteed by the UK government through its signing of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Those whose applications are accepted by the Home Office have a right to remain in the UK.

London is experiencing a period of adjustment as it seeks to accommodate these new communities; there are inevitable stresses and strains associated with such changes. Service providers are striving to meet the needs of new arrivals and of existing communities, and long established communities are invited to welcome, or at least accept, sharing their locality with asylum seekers and refugees.

It has increasingly been brought to the attention of the GLA (and others, including those with an interest in community safety and those who work with asylum seekers and refugees) that asylum seekers and refugees in London are suffering harassment, although information on the scale of the problem is sketchy. It is in the interest of all London communities that factors which might lead to community tension and harassment are identified and action taken to improve community relations. Furthermore, there is a responsibility to safeguard the welfare of asylum seekers and refugees who have a legal right to be in the UK and are likely to have suffered victimisation already in their country of origin.

As numbers of asylum seekers have risen, there has been a greater interest in asylum issues in the media, particularly the national newspapers. Although there is some reporting which is sympathetic to the plight of asylum seekers and refugees and recognises the contributions they can make, many stories have highlighted the presence of what is commonly termed '**bogus asylum seekers**' who, it is argued, claim asylum even though they have not suffered persecution in order to seek '**a better life**'. Incidents of asylum seekers and refugees involved in criminal activity, benefit fraud, illegal working, forged documents etc achieve prominence in newspaper stories. Criticisms of the government for failing to ensure an effective asylum system regularly occur in newspaper articles; some argue that the system is too harsh, most that the system is too soft. Others concentrate on the inefficiency or cost of asylum procedures.

Inaccurate and unbalanced reporting is commonly suspected by refugee support agencies, community groups, local authorities, the police and researchers to contribute to racist attacks on asylum seekers and refugees and to being a barrier to integration because of the feelings of insecurity and isolation which it engenders in refugees. Even though many asylum seekers and refugees do not read newspapers and/or originate from countries where reporting is highly

inaccurate, reporting of asylum issues by UK newspapers is regularly cited by refugee support organisations as one of the biggest problems affecting the quality of life of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. One such organisation put it starkly:

'We have been told that a negative article one day equates to a fist in the face the day after'²

The culmination of this concern was seen last year when UNHCR expressed criticism of the British media in meetings with the Home Secretary.³

Assessing the precise impact of the media on people's understanding of the world is a difficult task, while estimating the media's influence on behaviour is even more challenging. Nevertheless, the opinion that certain newspaper reporting of asylum issues increases community tension is widespread among a diverse range of local actors – police, local authorities, community groups, youth workers, faith organisations, refugee support groups, even fellow journalists. In response, some newspapers say they merely present "the truth" and that their articles reflect public opinion.

Because this study was conducted in a short period covering the summer months (August-October 2003) when parliament was not sitting, it was not possible to explore fully the relationship between political images and media images, or between political images and community tension. It is notable that at the time the report was written the new session of parliament opened with a commitment in the Queen's speech⁴ to introduce further reforms to the asylum system, so leading to extensive political debate. Further study over a longer period might be fruitful in understanding the impact of political images.

This study is rooted in issues where competing rights are present – on the one hand the rights of a democratic society to freedom of speech and freedom of the press and on the other, the rights of asylum seekers and refugees to freedom from harassment and persecution. The need to balance these rights appropriately is addressed in our conclusions and recommendations.

² Reported by a representative of a leading refugee agency.

³ Report on UNHCR Website June 2003 *UK: UN concern over coverage of asylum seekers, discussed in more detail in the chapter **Existing research and other relevant literature***

⁴ 26.11.03

Aims and objectives

The Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees - ICAR is an independent information centre that exists to promote understanding of asylum and refugees in the UK and to encourage information-based debate and policy making. It was commissioned by the GLA to conduct a three-month research project to explore the possible link between media reports and community tension including harassment. In framing the context for the research project, the GLA set out the following aim:

To ascertain how far media coverage of refugees and asylum seekers, and political commentary about them represented in the media, contribute to:

- crime against refugees and asylum seeker communities living in London, and fear of crime amongst them
- racist attitudes and activity in London
- other risks (if any) to community relations in London

From this starting point, the ICAR project partnership developed the **hypothesis** that:

Inaccurate and unbalanced media images of refugees and asylum seekers cause misinformed and hostile views among members of the public and by doing so create tension within the communities of London boroughs which makes racial attacks on refugees and asylum seekers more likely.

The main research aim was to see how far it was possible to substantiate the validity of the hypothesis by:

- analysing coverage of refugees and asylum seekers over a two-month period in a representative sample of the national and local London press
- exploring the impact of the media on community relations in two London boroughs with significant refugee and asylum seeker populations by means of interviews with local refugee groups, officials and focus groups drawn from members of the public
- investigating the extent of harassment in the two London boroughs with significant refugee and asylum seeker populations by means of interviews and incident monitoring
- reviewing knowledge about the possible link between political and media statements, community tension, and incidence of racial harassment through an initial literature survey in the UK and beyond

This pilot research study employed a range of methods to find out more about the type of stories reported in the newspapers, their accuracy and balance, local perceptions of community tension, the extent of harassment of asylum seekers and refugees, and the responses of representative groups of the local population to newspaper reports on asylum.

These are extremely complex issues and inevitably within the scope of this project results suggest that we have identified some significant landmarks without being able to map the

whole area of investigation. Clearly, a larger project would be better able to provide comprehensive answers to the questions raised by this issue. That said, we believe this study has gathered sufficient information to provide pointers towards further research and has enabled us to make recommendations regarding media reporting of asylum issues.

Before beginning this research, we identified some of the key questions which we felt should be addressed:

- How accurate and balanced is reporting of asylum issues?
- What is perceived by key members of local communities to be the effect of inaccurate and unbalanced reporting on community relations and the incidence of racial attacks on asylum seekers and refugees?
- How extensive is harassment of asylum seekers and refugees and how far do victims of racial attacks and their community representatives believe that media coverage influences the perpetrator and increases community tension?
- Are samples of young people more or less influenced by inaccurate and unbalanced reports than samples of adults?
- How far can a link be shown between inaccurate, unbalanced and inflammatory reporting and racist attacks, in what way and with what limitations?
- What further research should be undertaken?

How these questions were developed into a theoretical framework is described in the next chapter.

Definitions of terms used in this report

Refugee

In this report *refugee* is defined as someone granted refugee status according to the 1951 Convention or someone granted complementary humanitarian status.

The United Kingdom is a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol to the Convention. According to Article 1 of the Convention, a *refugee* is defined as someone who:

‘Owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country’

A wider definition of the term refugee is commonly used also to include anyone who has been granted a legal right to remain in the UK on humanitarian grounds following an application for asylum or after arriving in the UK because of a humanitarian programme.

This wider definition is used in this report.

Asylum seeker

An asylum seeker is someone who has lodged a claim for asylum under the 1951 Convention and who is waiting for his or her application to be considered by the government.

UNHCR

United Nations High Commission for Refugees

A case study

This is an anecdote told to us by one refugee community leader interviewed during the research about his experiences of the impact of the media on his local community. It relates to some of the issues under discussion.

Text box 1: One individual's experience

'I live on a local estate. My neighbour in the flat next door reads the Daily Mail, he thinks all the problems in this country are caused either by the European Union or asylum seekers and refugees. He knows that I work for an organisation that deals with asylum seekers and refugees and so he often shows me his copy of the day's paper and says:

"You know all about this – what do you think about what's written here?"

He asks me what I think because what he reads worries him and he is not sure whether to believe it. The thing is, I am a refugee myself, and yet he keeps showing me all these terrible reports about things asylum seekers and refugees are supposed to have done. For some reason he doesn't think of me as being one of the people who are being talked about in the papers.'

Researcher: 'Why do you think that is?'

His colleague says: 'It's because he is so well respected in the community.'

Community leader: 'Perhaps that's true. On our housing estate, we had a lot of problems with a gang of youths, but no-one wanted to do anything about it. It was me who involved the authorities, on behalf of my neighbours, and helped to get the problem resolved. Because of that, people respect me. Also, they have known me a long time and they know that I go to work every day just like them.'

This case raises further interesting questions:

- Are the images of asylum seekers and refugees portrayed in some newspapers likely to lead to hostility and fear among readers, such as the neighbour described in this case?
- Are readers of such newspapers interested in finding out more reliable information about asylum seekers and refugees?
- Is local experience of living alongside asylum seekers and refugees more positive than the media images presented?
- How are asylum seekers and refugees affected by what is written about them in the newspapers?

It is hoped that this report goes some way to answering these and other questions.

Theoretical framework

The main purpose of this section is to make clear how the project design and method can be understood within a conceptual and analytical framework that is intended to deliver robust findings. It introduces the study of the media's impact in general before considering how this impact on attitudes to migration can be studied.

Brief introduction to the study of mass media impact

Before discussing the details of the theoretical framework it may be useful to make some key points about the study of media impact, in particular, about media analysis itself, the ways in which people read and interpret the media, and the outcomes of media communication.

Media analysis

An effective analysis of media should focus on the following:

- how the different parts of the media organise and relate items of information into themes
- how far media coverage picks up information from different communication sources-politicians, experts, the public, interested groups, and other sections of the media
- how the media develops a characteristic language or set of terms for handling its topics
- how the themes in news coverage are represented as major social and political issues that demand political responses from citizens, political parties and government

This is particularly important when considering the accumulation of media messages over a period of time about controversial topics such as migration and asylum-seeking. Patterns of coverage may be created that repeatedly cast issues in a certain light because of the number and character of the sources, the language used and so on. It becomes possible to identify persistent patterns that can be analysed and assessed against criteria of accuracy and balance.

Reading the media

The impact of the media is not straightforward: it is not possible to assume that a media report will lead to immediate consequences in terms of behaviour. Before examining impact, the readership's standpoint has to be understood. A series of questions has to be posed about the ways in which different audiences interpret what they read and how far the communication fits with their beliefs, perceptions and experiences. For example, where the communication touches on matters outside their experience, the impact may be somewhat different from where it refers to matters of local importance. Local experience can operate as a 'filter' affecting the reception of mass media communication.

Outcomes

There is evidence that information in the mass media can be influential. For example, mass media have an impact on people's use of health services:

"Despite the limited information about key aspects of mass media interventions and the poor quality of the available primary research, there is evidence that these channels of communication may have an important role in influencing the use of health care interventions." (Grilli et al 2000)

But mass media do not have the same effects in relation to every topic. For example, exposure to communications about violence is not associated with substantial effects on behaviour (Felson 1996). While the media can be powerful, a particular issue must be explored in depth before it can be concluded whether powerful effects have occurred in a particular instance.

Implications

Research needs to examine carefully the content and style of particular communications, to examine how far readers are exposed to different sources of information on a topic, and to explore intervening factors such as beliefs, perceptions and experiences that have an effect on the way the information is processed and therefore on the ultimate significance of the communication. These principles have influenced the methods adopted for the project. It was crucial to collect data about the media itself but also it was of paramount importance to find out how different groups in particular localities responded to media messages and interpreted their local significance.

Understanding the media's impact on social tension

We want to bring out some of the underlying concepts that have been used in the study of the media and its impact on social tension. As we shall see, such concepts have been around for some time and have been fruitful in a number of contemporary studies. As the brief given to ICAR identified issues for a broader community than asylum seekers and refugees, the focus here will be on 'migration' in general.

Media bias

We need to find out how far the organisation of news about immigrants carries hostile tones and uses ominous language. Thus, we might expect to see immigrants appear in some newspapers under 'problem' headings, employing terms that imply suspicion –'bogus', 'arrest', 'disorder', 'conflict with police', 'infection', etc. Similarly, we might expect that headings and terms that refer to harmony, achievement or success are less likely to be used. In particular, representing asylum-seeking as a self-interested process of economic migration undermines its legitimacy. A biased agenda of coverage is therefore maintained which might be defended as realistic. However the media do not operate alone; their coverage has social and political roots.

Moral panics and migration

Seeking asylum forms a contemporary example of the social conflicts centred on migration; indeed, as we shall see later in the findings, it is striking how often the debate about asylum-seeking has been transformed into one about economic migration. Migrants can readily become the targets of suspicion in societies unsettled by economic change and a fluctuating labour market. While migration is a basic characteristic of free markets, it is possible for immigrants, and the more recent in particular, to be blamed for the wider uncertainties and problems associated with economic change. Within this theoretical framework, in a racist society the concentration of political attention on immigrants from minority ethnic groups creates additional pressures, investing discourses about immigration with racist elements, both overtly and covertly. Political factors combine to generate crises about migration which amount to 'moral panics'. A moral panic can be defined as a critical phase in political communications where attention is focused on a problem alleged to be 'out of hand' which requires urgent action.

In a 'moral panic' large parts of the state, the judiciary and the media combine to portray an uncontrollable situation in which an accumulation of representations - many biased - promotes calls for severe and exceptional remedies. Exceptional cases are repeatedly used to strengthen negative stereotypes. The rhetoric of 'floods' and 'waves' of immigrants is the signal for official endorsement of 'tough' action to stem developments that threaten to bring alarming consequences.

The most comprehensive study of a moral panic featuring immigration is by Hall et al (1978) - an account of the 'mugging' phenomenon and its roots in the anxieties about migration that welled up in the 1970s. Arguing that concerns about street robbery were not simply based on objective evidence, the authors pointed to the symbolic location of the problems in areas of immigration. Press reports repeatedly stimulated official statements and drew attention to public anxiety.

It was found that the circle of communication among officials, politicians and the media amounted to a spiralling of communication (or 'signification') that highlighted how important the mugging problem was. In addition, the crisis revealed a deeper social agenda in which issues of race and class were intertwined. The moral panic questioned the consequences of continued immigration - especially from the Caribbean - by linking race and criminality. More recent studies of media bias have identified similar processes in Wales, Ireland and Australia (Speers 2001; Cullen 2000; King 2000).

Community relations and migration

In the examination of community relations, a focus on localities has been linked to housing markets that reflect the economic power of groups. The tendency for minority groups to be clustered in particular areas is well documented. Cultural factors also play a part in their pattern of residence.

The impact of newcomers has been represented as a source of problems. At the same time racial incidents have become local issues, with particular areas becoming the site of racist and antiracist debate and action. The immigrant is often denied a legitimate place, whether to live or work, and the importance of locality in defining these relations is therefore crucial (Bowling 1998).

More recently, questions about the dispersal of asylum seekers have given fresh impetus to this concern with localities. The recent report to the ESRC by Hewitt (2002) makes several important points about the local issues affecting the victimisation of refugees and asylum seekers. The report notes:

- the extent to which the negative press coverage creates a climate of secrecy, doubt and inertia among community relations networks
- the under-reporting of incidents against asylum seekers who have many barriers to obtaining redress including language barriers
- the importance of pro-active police strategies

Hewitt's report emphasises the need to explore the permissive impact of the media in weakening community defences against harassment and possibly emboldening hostile elements. The report states that while much content analysis of media coverage on refugee issues has been undertaken, there has been too little work on audience reception. In particular there is a need to differentiate the reception by particular groups, to examine conversation and rumour, and to understand the role of communication networks in the localities including refugee groups themselves. All these are issues that this research was designed to explore.

Signification and amplification spirals

Communications spiral when messages circulate with increasing frequency and strength. The basis for this model is interactive in the sense that we have to think in terms of different communicators - large and powerful newspapers, officials, local audiences, political groups - who respond to one another interactively. While each is aware of the others, each has a distinctive agenda. The model suggests that communications can share common elements that through contact with others are reinforced, or amplified.

We can identify these processes in terms of shared communication contents (or signification) and even more importantly through incorporating an action dimension in the model, in which the communication process prompts agencies and groups to act in ways they might not otherwise have done. Hence our framework refers to a **signification spiral** and to a **deviancy amplification spiral**. Media representations lie at the centre of the spirals and in the next section we look at how an image of migrants is constructed.

The media's unmasking of migrants' claims to consideration

If the hypothesis is correct, the bias in media coverage of migration is systematic. A central and powerful device in unifying and dramatising the coverage is the story of 'unmasking'. The role of deception in folklore stories is well known (Berger 1998). We would expect to find a simple structure of inversion: 'moral claims to consideration/unmasking of moral claims'. Several indicators are accumulated that serve to undermine the claims of migrants to consideration. Migrants are represented in terms of several threats of this kind which are communicated in a codified form.

Indicators of migration 'threat'

Examples of coded descriptions that indicate that migration is a threat are:

- cash in hand
- profitable conspiracy
- criminal masterminds
- forged documents
- migration of dependent population to UK
- begging
- language deficits
- cheap labour
- deception in NHS and welfare system
- terrorism
- action by police and customs

Reports are strengthened by agencies, groups and individuals who in effect confirm such threats by the way their comments are featured and labelled in the coverage. The stereotypical construct produced is of a *foreign conspiracy* which then becomes the template for routine reporting. In this way the 'conspirators' are perpetually 'unmasked'.

Agencies presenting positive indicators and comments are left with the task of combating not just the individual facts but the image as a whole. The accumulation and corroboration of stories from various quarters creates a signification spiral in which the seriousness of the 'problem' of migration is powerfully asserted.

Audience signification

As readers of the press, audiences do not simply accept what they are told. Audiences interpret national and local events through their own focal concerns. There is evidence that messages from the media have impact once they resonate with interests that have a collective dimension, such as wartime appeals for funds; they are less powerful if they are about specific interests such as votes for party campaigns (Philo 1993).

In the case of migration, anxiety centres on disturbing social events that appear to be echoed in the locality. Incomers can become the target of suspicion and anxiety, and the situation of incomers can then be read through the prism of the conspiracy model.

Rumours emerge when the stereotype is embodied in perceived events. So a migrant who accepts a lift in an expensive car can quickly become a newcomer made wealthy by an indulgent state. The theme of unfair access to resources or services is a major one that may impact on some sections of a local community that feel disregarded. As the negative pictures increase in volume and circulation, abusive statements directed at migrants draw upon the stereotype – 'waster', 'queue-jumper', etc.

The similarities in language suggest that a signification spiral has travelled the whole loop, from press to officials to popular audience, and may do so again, once the press again go out to interview citizens with concerns about migration.

'In the village shop, Mrs Ainsworth fears the refugees because: "I don't think they'll be satisfied with what they are given".

As evidence she quotes one of the more dubious tabloid scare stories of recent months, which claimed that the asylum seekers had been killing swans for food: "They're given money for food, but they're still stealing swans."

(Guardian 20.08.03 "Young guys won't sit behind fences all day long" by Jeevan Vasagar).

Audience resilience to media signification

There are countervailing factors to be considered, for example, when personal experiences undercut the stereotypes and make negative representations less believable (Philo 1993). These are likely to be greatest in areas such as London where the host population has frequent and varied interactions with asylum seekers and refugees. Direct contact with asylum seekers and refugees, or discussions with those who have had direct contact, creates alternative spirals – urban myths – which may correspond to or contradict those expressed in the media but are perceived to be independent of them. The extent to which audiences are resilient to biases in media signification depends too on how far they are sophisticated media consumers or 'critical readers', how reliable and relevant they believe the newspapers to be, including how far the papers are believed to be in tune with local concerns. Where audiences are relatively resilient

to media amplification, it might be expected that only newspapers which closely reflect local concerns are likely to impact upon local discourse and opinions.

Deviancy amplification model

Deviancy amplification involves an action dimension that adds momentum to the signification spiral. Examples include studies of drug-taking (Young 1971) and football hooliganism (Murphy et al 1990).

To assist an appreciation of what can happen, the following is an example of a hypothetical sequence of amplification and de-amplification. It is introduced here as a theoretical scenario that builds on previous research. It is not however a prediction of the findings of this research.

Social dynamics of communication processes about migrants and group relations

- a liberalised society with component interest groups is focused on negotiating and struggling over a dynamic hierarchy of privilege, status and rewards
- ethnic differences are coded into highly politicised racial categories
- migrants are a continuing part of this negotiation and conflict
- social concerns/anxiety about migrants pervade different groups to a different extent
- new migrants are forced to rehearse the low status of previous migrants
- there are problems in defining and describing the relationship between migrants and non-migrant 'hosts'
- press and media images and representations operate with a news agenda featuring a narrow set of attention-seeking topics that feed on popular anxieties
- audiences receive messages resonant with concerns, some of the messages being biased and inflammatory
- elements of audience - by no means all - respond and endorse press coverage, which is then reinforced
- key concerned groups (neighbours, jobseekers, local residents) receive predominantly biased and inflammatory messages
- official voices prevaricate, fearful of incurring press hostility and unwilling to challenge press estimation of public opinion
- positive political voices, migrant group views and official management voices fail to reach press and media

Amplification phase

- local community tensions appear as migrant groups arrive and interact
- local management of migrants fails to be communicated
- established local groups perceive 'incursions' into 'territory'
- invisible heightening of tensions occurs
- press reports letters; radio gives platform to anti-migrant views
- official views are muted by press reports of public concern
- particular reports are used as models and applied to local experiences by local observers and then embellished into local rumours

- elements associated with local anti-immigrant groups select targets that are perceived to carry stigma
- active elements (young males) feel that there will be no effective local opposition to their actions
- low-level antisocial behaviour (graffiti, abuse, noise) becomes more systematic, repetitive and damaging
- increase in fear among migrant groups occurs
- police receive more reports of incidents
- the media report tension
- police action is slow and partial based on weak links with refugees
- local anti-immigrant groups are reinforced by national groups and by elements of communities antagonistic to refugees
- a highly visible challenge to order occurs

De-amplification phase

- police intervene decisively with show of strength
- press and media widen discussion with new voices and in-depth profiles
- rumours are countered
- immediate concerns are addressed politically
- resources are invested in communication network
- tension is less visible
- anti-immigrant elements draw back
- tension is reduced

This is a scenario, which - at least initially - assumes the worst outcomes. However we need to recall the factors that may operate to insulate some sections of the public from the impact of the spiral. Some may be present in the model above, but as positive forces, when, for example, communicators behave with restraint. The research will examine evidence objectively with an awareness of what can go badly wrong as well as what may prevent it happening.

Method

Outline of investigation

Our theory explores how far communication spirals have created an active connection between communications of different forms and in different places and how far audience resilience creates a barrier to that influence. We investigate the hypothesis by collecting data from samples that relate to each part of the hypothesis.

A case study method has been chosen so that evidence of sufficient range, depth and detail will be collected which can then be compared and analysed (Yin 1994). Due to the short time available to conduct this pilot study, the research was limited to two areas of London. The cases are the boroughs in which data was collected.

We select cases in which there is a good chance that we can find evidence to illuminate and analyse the process under scrutiny. The evidence consists of media coverage samples, a sample of local views and accounts from a range of involved stakeholders, and the results of local incident monitoring.

Anonymity

In addition to anonymising individuals and organisations in this report, we have anonymised the boroughs – they are referred to simply as Borough A and Borough B. In doing so we recognise that we are not complying with one of our own recommendations – namely that sources of information on asylum issues should be specified whenever possible. Anonymity has been important in winning the trust of those involved in conducting research into these connections for the first time, but we would advocate that any further research on this subject should give more information on its sources. Further details about the choice of boroughs and other sampling issues are discussed in the appendices.

Media monitoring

Purpose and focus

In order to connect all levels of the communication process, we needed to have a sample of the press and news media that stretches from the national to the city-wide and the local press. The purpose of the media monitoring element of the study was to provide detailed information on stories published about asylum seekers and refugees in a wide range of newspapers for the core period of the study – August and September 2003. The press coverage over two months provided data that made it possible to see how key issues were articulated and then transmitted around the circles of press and political communication.

The following papers were monitored:

- The Sun and the News of the World on Sunday
- The Daily Mail and the Mail on Sunday

- The Independent and the Independent on Sunday
- The Telegraph and the Sunday Telegraph
- The Times and the Sunday Times
- The London Evening Standard
- The Metro
- The Voice
- The Asian Voice
- 4 weekly local papers from Borough A and 4 from Borough B

In particular, the media monitoring element explored the hypothesis that:

Newspapers often present images of asylum seekers and refugees that contain language, photographs and graphics likely to give rise to feelings of fear of and hostility towards asylum seekers and refugees among their readers. This effect is compounded by inaccurate and unbalanced reporting.

As well as recording the content of information, our hypothesis demands that we assess this information for accuracy and balance. Where information was known to be accurate or inaccurate, this was highlighted by the researchers. Where accuracy cannot be established without additional research, an assessment was made of whether the information was provided by named sources whose accuracy could be checked by readers. In the context of newspaper reporting, balance does not require neutrality; an article may express an opinion without being unbalanced, but balance does require that alternative views receive due coverage and background information is provided.

Given the volume of material generated in the monitoring period we have analysed the newspaper sample in two ways:

- the headline timeline - a series of tables that list chronologically headlines from all the articles that relate to asylum, which appeared in the sample papers during August and September
- content analysis of articles from a three week period from 11th – 30th August.

The content analysis coding system is an adaptation of that used by Article 19 in *What's the Story? Sangatte: a case study of media coverage of asylum and refugee issues*.

Local interviews with key representatives

Interviews with key actors make it possible to explore the process of communication as perceived by local representatives. Interviews were conducted with each local authority, and with the police, local refugee community organisations (RCOs), plus other relevant key actors in the two boroughs as time allowed. The local authority and the police were both contacted by letters to the Chief Executives and Borough Commanders respectively. RCOs were contacted by telephone. In addition, the views of other interested parties was sought, notably the Metropolitan Police Diversity Directorate and the Commission for Racial Equality. The questions used in the interviews are in the appendices to the report.

Incident monitoring

Monitoring evidence of community tension has taken the form of collating evidence from local sources, and this included collecting fresh evidence using newly designed incident monitoring forms to record harassment completed by a range of local refugee groups. To help design the form, advice was taken from the Monitoring Group⁵. Nine RCOs took part in the monitoring. In addition to sending back completed forms, they gave feedback on the experience of collecting information on incidences of harassment. Additional monitoring has been conducted by the harassment monitoring unit in one of the boroughs, by modifying their existing scheme.

Depending on the data available, we were originally hoping for some opportunities for quantitative analysis of incidents, for example, making comparisons between incidents against different refugee groups, between official data and our project monitoring results, between boroughs, and from month to month. Trend data would make it possible to explore whether an amplification process had occurred, though we recognised that a longer period of monitoring might be needed to provide convincing evidence. Just as importantly, we examined the language used in incidents to see how far it was imbued with identifiable prejudices highlighted in the media. In this respect evidence of a signification spiral was sought.

Focus groups

The use of focus groups allowed us to test responses to samples of media representations of asylum seekers and to examine attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees, in order to explore the extent to which the media influences these attitudes and, more generally, community tension. Focus groups were conducted in the two boroughs with four groups: one adult group (predominantly white British) representing settled communities, one similar youth group, one black and ethnic minority community group and one similar youth group.

The sessions were divided into (a) a discussion of responses to a press headline simply containing the word 'asylum' (b) an assessment of the group's previous exposure to the media (c) discussion of media sample material, and (d) discussion of community relations.

The newspaper sample materials included a photograph of a large group of asylum seekers, a report following results of an opinion poll on asylum, a report of a statement by a political advisor that BME communities are most affected by asylum seekers, and a report accusing asylum seekers of stealing donkeys from a local park. A short film giving accounts by refugees of their difficulties in the UK, including the impact of newspaper reports, was included to assess reactions to information direct from refugees. The script giving further details of the content of the focus groups is in the appendices.

⁵ www.monitoring-group.co.uk

Literature survey

The purpose of the literature survey was to ensure that the project was well informed about existing research and policy initiatives and to contextualise the research. The literature survey was conducted by circulating an email to a wide range of contacts asking for assistance in collating relevant literature. The following topics were presented as a guide:

- harassment of refugees and asylum seekers
- link between media reporting and racism/racial harassment
- link between media reporting and community tension
- link between media reporting and negative images of refugees and asylum seekers
- community perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers/community tension related to refugees and asylum seekers
- policy recommendations/ examples of good practice

Media monitoring

Introduction to the findings

Seventeen newspapers were monitored in August and September 2003.

This two-month sample of newspapers yielded so many articles on asylum that it was difficult to devise a monitoring scheme which was broad enough to give a sense of scale and at the same time compact enough to allow detailed analysis.⁶

First, we created two timelines. The first - **the news event timeline** - shows the issues which gained most coverage during the period. The second - **the headline timeline** - shows the scale and frequency of reporting of asylum stories in the sample newspapers. The headlines give an indication of which papers cover which stories and from which angle. The **headline timeline** is a large table and so is placed in the appendix.

Second, we conducted more detailed **content analysis** of a smaller sample – a three week period beginning on the 11th August. Content analysis is the examination and explanation of the content of newspaper reports. In this study our content analysis includes looking at factors such as who or what are the sources of information cited in the articles, what photographs are used and what words or phrases appear most often. The content analysis does not distinguish between articles from national, regional or local papers. It draws on tried and tested methods commonly used in communications studies, and is developed from the framework used by Article 19 in its analysis of reports on asylum.

⁶ Initially it was also intended that articles from the sample covering immigration, racism, racial harassment and community relations would also be examined. Although these have been collated the project has not been able to analyse them in the time available.

Media timelines

Summary of findings

Subjects reported

The **news event timeline** gives details of news events relating to asylum or which the press has related to asylum, and which have stimulated media interest during the period beginning on the 1st of August 2003 and ending on the 14th of September 2003. This table lists those events which have resulted in at least two reports either printed in the same paper or in different papers. Refugees and asylum seekers or asylum policy have been mentioned in all articles included in this timeline. The purpose of this timeline is to highlight what are considered by the media to be newsworthy events.⁷

The **headline timeline**, shown in the appendix, gives all the headlines of articles that referred to refugees and/or asylum seekers during the monitoring period. It is interesting to note that sometimes coverage of a particular issue in one paper generates interest in the same issue by other papers. In addition the headline timeline gives information at a glance of the type of headlines that appeared in the sample.

In terms of subjects reported, both timelines show that in this sample of articles about asylum, issues of health, crime, disturbance, policy failure, and concern about numbers predominate.

Frequency of reporting

The headline timeline shows clearly that there is frequent and extensive coverage of the asylum issue in the newspapers. In our survey the peak was **fifty-six articles on asylum in one week in the sample of seventeen daily or weekly papers**. The level of coverage of the issue varies between papers. Local papers notably give less attention to asylum. **There were nine articles on asylum in the seven week period in the sample of eight local weekly papers.**

By comparison, some nationals ran stories far more frequently. The Daily Mail/ Mail on Sunday ran stories on asylum up to six days a week in the seven week sample period, sometimes with several articles in one day. The Sun/News of the World ran stories on asylum up to seven days a week sometimes with several articles in one day.

⁷ The newspapers also often report on themes relating to asylum (eg effects of asylum policies) which are not generated by particular concrete events. For the sake of simplicity such reports have been excluded from this simple timeline. It is interesting however to consider such reporting since it gives an insight into the stance taken by the various newspapers on asylum.

Results

The news event timeline

TABLE 1: The news event timeline – a chronology of main events covered by newspapers surveyed

Time period	Event	Comment
Throughout the monitoring period	Implementation of Section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002	Various articles were written during the monitoring period which referred to the experiences of asylum seekers as a result of the implementation of Section 55.
Aug 1st – Aug 18th	Man helps immigrants to cheat on driving tests	Incident reported in the Evening Standard and the Daily Mail.
Aug 4th – Aug 18th	Tories call for health checking of all migrants	Reported in the Daily Mail on two consecutive days. These articles, or the statement made by the Tories may have led to an increase in reporting on what has been referred to by the media as 'health tourism' throughout the period monitored.
Aug 12th – Aug 22nd	Human smuggler jailed	This event was covered in most of the daily papers.
Aug 10th – Aug 23rd	The Ay family go into hiding	This event was covered by a number of papers including one local paper.
Aug 12th – Sept 8th	Blunkett's attempt to encourage asylum seekers to return to their countries of origin has not been successful	Reported in the Sun and the Daily Mail.
Aug 14 th – Aug 23rd	Asylum seekers jailed for involvement in the Yarl's Wood fire	This event generated a great deal of media interest during the course of the monitoring period. It was covered by almost all papers from a variety of angles.
Aug 15th – Aug 27th	An Iraqi refugee does exceptionally well in GCSEs	Reported in the Telegraph and one of the local papers.
Aug 16th – Aug 18th	The opinion poll commissioned by the Sun Newspaper on public attitudes on asylum issues	While the results of this poll were only given in detail in the Sun, the poll generated the interest of other papers.
From Aug 17th	The death of Idi Amin former President of Uganda	The death of Amin was widely reported. Certain newspapers referred to those who had arrived to the UK as refugees after having been forced to flee Uganda because of Amin. More coverage was given in the broadsheets than in the tabloids.
From Aug 19th	Some sort of disturbance in Butlin's holiday resort apparently involving asylum seekers	Reported in two papers.
From Aug 20th	John Prescott's decision on the accommodation centre in Bicester	This event was covered by about half the papers monitored and most frequently by the Sun and the Mail.
Aug 21 st – Aug 30th	A Judge expresses his anger after a refugee who committed a crime was not deported from the UK	Reported in a number of papers.

Aug 21st – Aug 22nd	Asylum seeker convicted of benefit fraud sues authorities for wrongful use of detention	Reported in the Sun and the Daily Mail.
From Aug 24th	Claims are made that the Home Office is not pursuing suspected illegal immigrants (who might claim asylum if caught) in order to keep asylum figures low	The release of the Home Office's asylum statistics and the lead up to their release generated press interest not only on the reduction in the numbers seeking asylum, but also in the theory that measures taken to reduce numbers would/were resulting in an increase in the numbers of illegal immigrants and other types of migrants.
From Aug 24th	Immigration worries British voters more than crime	Similar articles have been printed in a number of different papers after the release of the Sun Poll on asylum, and probably being related to the Sun Poll.
From Aug 25th	Increase in TB cases reported amongst immigrants	Several papers printed similar articles on this day.
From Aug 28th	Plans for recognition data to be included on UK visas	These plans were reported in the broadsheets but not the tabloids that were monitored.
From Aug 29th	The release of the Home Office's asylum statistics	Most of the papers that were monitored printed articles commenting on the figures.
Aug 29th – Sept 13th	Citizenship	The announcement by the Home Secretary of plans to introduce a citizenship test generated a lot of media interest, much of which related citizenship to asylum. A debate ensued following announcements which continued for some time. Both the tabloids and the broadsheets were involved in the debate but it was mostly in the tabloids that citizenship was related to asylum.
From Aug 30th	A council was ordered to pay for teenage refugees following court ruling	This was reported in the Times and one of the local papers.
From Sept 7th	Detention of asylum seeking children	Two articles relating to the detention of asylum seeking children were printed in the Independent.
Sept 7th – Sept 8th	The accumulation of asylum seekers in Calais	Reported in a number of papers.
Sept 11th – Sept 14th.	Berezovsky was granted asylum in Britain	This event was covered by a wide range of papers, including both the broadsheets and the tabloids covered by the monitoring.

The second timeline is in the appendix due to its size.

Content analysis⁸

Analysis is on the basis of the number of articles that occurred in the three week sample on the subject of asylum. A text box within a larger article is counted as a separate article. An article which runs to a double page spread is one article. A front page article which continued on page 4, 5 etc is counted as two articles.

According to this definition, the total number of articles on asylum in the three week sample of seventeen newspapers is one hundred and thirty-seven.

Sources cited in articles

Summary of findings

The monitoring scheme examines how far sources are identified and who they are. While it is recognised that journalists regularly rely on un-named sources to gather material for articles, when an issue has become so sensitive that reporting of it may be contributing to harassment of individuals, identifiable sources help to ensure accurate and accountable journalism.

The sources in the three week sample (TABLE 2) show that asylum is clearly an issue in the political domain with just under one in three of the named sources being a politician, political spokesperson or committee. Of these, as might be expected, the Home Secretary is the most commonly cited individual but as a group, sources from the Conservative party equal those from the Labour party at 33 each. Reporting of asylum in the newspapers sampled can be said to be dominated by political sources, in which both the Labour government and the Conservative party advocate greater controls to prevent asylum seekers reaching the UK. In particular, the Conservative sources regularly express concerns about the detrimental effect that the arrival of asylum seekers has on local communities and local services, and criticise the

⁸ Further notes on how the content analysis was conducted:

The approach used looks particularly at the language used in the articles. The coding system in some cases highlights specific words (e.g. **illegal**) and in some cases identifies a topic or a viewpoint which can be expressed using different forms of words (e.g. the box **asylum seekers/refugees presented as a burden or a strain on resources** would be applicable in a story about the NHS struggling to cope with rising numbers of asylum seekers or about local authorities not having enough accommodation to meet demand, even if the words **burden** and **strain** did not appear in the article). Where the coding scheme highlights specific words, these are counted every time they appear. When the coding scheme identifies a topic or viewpoint this is normally counted once in an article unless the article gives two distinct examples to illustrate one topic. So an article which described problems in the health service being due to **'illegal refugees'** would count once for **asylum seekers/refugees presented as a burden or a strain on resources** but might count three times for **illegal** if the word was repeated three times. If the same article continued to make a further point about housing shortages then it would be counted for **asylum seekers/refugees presented as a burden or a strain on resources** a second time.

We believe that the presence of a particular term or topic in an article that mentions asylum, asylum seekers or refugees, even if it is not explicitly related, is likely to have an impact on the information received by the reader. For example, in assessing the impact of association of asylum with criminality it is important to count not only instances such as "the **criminals** were **asylum seekers**" but also phrases such as "poor border controls are allowing in too many **asylum seekers, criminals** and drug dealers". In the latter example, asylum seekers are not called criminals, but there is an implied association.

government for the perceived failings of the current asylum system. The Liberal Democrats, who focus on the need to preserve the human rights of those fleeing persecution, are rarely quoted. There is rarely a reference made to information contained in UK asylum law or international instruments such as the 1951 Convention on the Rights of Refugees, and in none of the samples is UNHCR - the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - quoted.

Apart from politicians, the most commonly cited sources are central government bodies such as the Home Office and the Immigration and Nationality Directorate, judges, court reports and adult male refugees. The citing of sources representing central government vary from very specific (e.g. references to named statistical reports issued on a given date, or named personnel) to the more vague ("a Home Office official said"). Many quasi-governmental bodies with specialist expertise are cited as sources e.g. the Health Protection Agency. Use of such sources conveys legitimacy and statements attributed to them could be checked for accuracy through their websites etc. The use of vague references to official sources seeks to convey legitimacy and weight to a viewpoint without accountability, and such references are harder for readers to prove or disprove. Without specific reference to named sources, the accuracy of stories is open to doubt. Equally, in order for reporting of information from opinion polls to be confirmed as accurate guides to public opinion, information on how they are conducted must be clearly given.

The frequency of court reports and statements from judges as sources is linked to the interest shown by the papers sampled in reporting instances where asylum seekers or refugees are accused or convicted of crimes. In the articles sampled, judges are often reported as complaining that the system does not allow for the deportation of convicted criminals who are asylum seekers and refugees. In other articles in the sample, judges are quoted in relation to cases where asylum seekers have sought to challenge the system which allows them to be destitute or have appealed against decisions not to grant them asylum. This often incurs the criticism of the newspaper directed at the judge. It is interesting that court reports, judges and lawyers are frequently quoted and yet the laws within which they are operating are not.

The inclusion of seventeen instances where an asylum seeker or refugee is quoted allows readers to be informed from the perspective of those individuals at the centre of the debate; however, that only three female asylum seekers or refugees are cited suggests a lack of gender balance, particularly as most of these articles related to issues which were not specific to one named asylum seeker or refugee.

Aside from these main sources, a large number of diverse agencies and individuals are quoted as sources in the articles concerned and the inclusion of such a range tends toward balance. However, the most commonly quoted of the other organisations is Migration Watch UK which appears more often than the police, local government officials, NHS spokespersons or refugee organisations. Most of the quotes from the Refugee Council during this period relate to a group of asylum seekers who slept rough on the street outside the Refugee Council offices. Apart from this story, organisations like the Refugee Council and Refugee Action, which advocate on behalf of the rights of asylum seekers and refugees, are rarely quoted. Migration Watch UK has been more successful in getting its views into print, namely that the asylum system is out of control, government policy does not reflect public concerns, and not enough is being done to reduce numbers of asylum seekers. Some individual members of the public are quoted, including those involved in campaigns for and against asylum seekers. In this sample, on three occasions papers quoted reports by other newspapers.

In summary, the collective effect of the named sources is to present asylum as an issue which is of interest to a wide range of agencies and individuals, but is predominantly the concern of politicians and the courts, particularly criminal courts. The main arguments presented in opposition to government policy come from the Conservative Party, judges and to a lesser extent Migration Watch UK. When asylum seekers or refugees are quoted they are predominantly male. In the sampled survey there were seventeen cases where 'facts' are presented without a named source and a further seven cases where a source is alluded to in highly unspecific terms (e.g. plans we have seen). The accuracy of such information is harder to verify than information where detailed reference to sources is given.

Sources cited in articles

Results

TABLE 2: Details of sources cited in three week sample of articles, with frequency

Sources	Frequency of citation
Prime Minister Tony Blair	1
David Blunkett, Home Secretary	19
Other government minister, Labour MP, councillor, advisor or spokesperson	13
Ian Duncan Smith, leader of the Conservative Party	1
Oliver Letwin, Shadow Home Secretary	10
Other Conservative MP, councillor, advisor, or spokesperson	22
Charles Kennedy, leader of the Liberal Democrats	0
Simon Hughes, Liberal Democrat Home Affairs spokesman	5
Other Liberal Democrat MP, councillor, advisor, or spokesperson	1
MP or councillor – party not specified	2
Ken Livingston, Mayor of London	0
All Party Lords Committee	1
Independent political candidate	1
Total number of political sources	76
UK asylum law – Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act 2002	2
Other UK law	1
1951 UN Convention on Refugees	1
European Convention on Human Rights	1
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	0
Other part of United Nations (e.g. UNICEF)	1
Central government official or statistics (e.g. Home Office, Immigration and Nationality Directorate)	21
Local government official	7
Police	7
NHS	6
Group 4	3
Fire Service	1
Prison Service/Inspector	2
Religious leader	2
Teacher	1
Refugee Council	5
Refugee Action	1
Amnesty International	3
Immigration Advisory Service	2
Migration Watch UK	8
Campaign to Defend Asylum Seekers	1
Bicester Action Group	1
Refugee community organisation/other refugee group	4
Liberty	1
TUC	1
Local race equality council	1
National Criminal Intelligence Service	1
Health Protection Agency	1

Optimum Population Trust	2
British Medical Association	2
Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner	1
Office for National Statistics	1
Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre	1
Named academic	1
Court report	15
Solicitor representing an asylum seeker	3
Prosecutor/government lawyer	5
Judge	18
Refugee adult female	3
Refugee adult male	14
Campaigner supporting asylum seekers and refugees (not belonging to a specific organisation)	3
Campaigner opposed to asylum seekers and refugees (not belonging to a specific organisation)	2
Member of public named	3
Member of public unnamed	0
Undercover journalist	3
Opinion poll	6
Another newspaper	3
Sun	1
Telegraph	1
Total number of sources who are not politicians	173
Total number of named sources	249
Unspecified source (details)	1
legal expert	1
local people	3
critics say	1
plans seen	1
campaigners	1
No source	17
TOTAL	273

Visual images: Photographs, cartoons and other graphics

Summary of findings

There were eighty-four photographs, three cartoons and eleven other visual images, graphics etc relating to asylum in the three week period monitored. Most of the stories on asylum in the three week sample are not accompanied by photographs, cartoons or other graphics, however, such visual images, when included, are commonly believed to have a powerful effect on readers. The majority of the photographs are of politicians, and there are a number of pictures of judges and one of Sir Andrew Green of Migration Watch UK (total twenty-two photographs). These reflect the sources of stories as described above.

Photos of asylum seekers and refugees, as individuals or groups account for thirty-seven of the photographs. There are nine photos of asylum seekers or refugees smiling in a domestic or professional context or in the street, and a further four of groups in a similar setting. Such photographs present a sympathetic image of asylum seekers and refugees, smiling faces might be expected to illicit a warm response in the reader. Many of these are from local newspapers and accompany 'good news' stories about people who have overcome difficulties to pass exams etc. In the national papers, the majority of such photographs are inspired by the death of Idi Amin and show Ugandan Asians who have settled successfully in the UK, having fled Amin's regime in the 1970s (thirteen photographs).

There are three photos of groups or individuals looking serious or unsmiling, which present a neutral image. Six photographs show asylum seekers in transit entering the UK.

There are nine pictures of asylum seekers and refugees who have been convicted of crimes and a further one of a couple in hiding and three of convicted people smugglers. Sometimes these are police 'mugshots' of head and shoulders against a blank background, sometimes they are of individuals in the street, leaving court etc - there is a further picture of an individual being arrested and one of a group being arrested. Two photographs are shown of the Yarl's Wood detention centre ablaze as the result of a riot by asylum seekers detained there. Such pictures, while accurate records of events, could be expected to generate feelings of fear and hostility among readers (fifteen photographs).

Fifteen of the thirty-seven photographs showing asylum seekers or refugees present them as criminals.

The three photographs of Idi Amin and one of mass graves in Uganda are the only examples of photographs showing conditions in the countries of origin which led asylum seekers and refugees to flee, and these depict a historical rather than a contemporary refugee producing situation. A picture of an AIDS victim in Zimbabwe is also shown but it is not stated that the person intends to claim asylum. There is only one picture of asylum seekers sleeping rough in the UK as a result of the system of provision for asylum seekers.

Public opinion is shown by pictures of campaigners both for and against asylum seekers. Asylum stories are on six occasions linked to pictures of UK towns or institutions to emphasise the impact of the arrival of asylum seekers - such as the photograph of a local hospital.

In some cases photographs are used to emphasise the role played by the newspapers in the asylum debate. Previous newspaper headlines or pages are repeated, which both reinforces past messages and is presented as evidence that a previously expressed viewpoint has had an effect (e.g. the Sun juxtaposes copies of previous headlines with a photo of the Prime Minister and Home Secretary visiting the Immigration and Nationality Directorate – the inference being that the headlines had prompted the visit). The Sun also shows its journalist handing over a dossier of information on a legal advisor who told an undercover journalist how to work illegally to the Immigration Services Commissioners' office. Such techniques may increase the credibility of the newspapers with readers adding to the amplification effect.

Three cartoons appear. They give the message that asylum seekers are taking advantage of a system which is too soft, and they are detrimental to the traditional English way of life.

Of the other visual images shown in the sample, these are mainly factual information – graphs, a map, a table of costs. It is notable that a picture of the Union Jack is shown several times in association with stories on asylum – the effect being to emphasise that this is an issue which affects 'Britishness'. In one case a large graphic is shown reminiscent of the opening sequence to the classic TV show *Dad's Army*. This suggests that Britain is under attack from immigration.

Taken as a whole, the photographs are balanced to the extent that they show 'officials' – politicians, judges etc, and campaigners and asylum seekers and refugees. The pictures of asylum seekers and refugees show them in a number of different settings and so provide diverse information for readers about what asylum seekers and refugees are like although it is usually men who are shown. Pictures of asylum seekers and refugees convicted of crimes appear frequently and pictures of persecution involve only one country of origin, although asylum seekers come to the UK from a variety of countries.

In a close up photograph of a family of asylum seekers being taken by taxi to their dispersal address, at least one individual looks concerned at the presence of the photographer. In addition, there are three photographs showing where asylum seekers are living, which look as if they were taken with a telephoto lens, and so do not appear to have been taken with the consent of those concerned. One is an archetypal council flat which could not be easily traced, the other two are more distinctive properties that could be traced from the photographs.

Visual images: Photographs, cartoons and other graphics

Results

Photographs

TABLE 3: Photographs used in three week sample of articles

Photographs used	Freq'cy
Photograph of a politician/politicians	16
Photograph of a judge	5
Photograph of a campaigner – supporter of	1
Photograph of a campaigner – opposed to	1
Photograph of an asylum seeker/refugee in transit or entering the UK	0
Photograph of a group of asylum seekers/refugees in transit or entering the UK (on trains over fences etc)	6
Photograph of an asylum seeker/refugee as a victim of persecution in their own country	0
Photograph of a group of asylum seekers/refugees as victims of persecution in their own country	0
Photograph of an asylum seeker/refugee suffering hardship in the UK	0
Photograph of a group of asylum seekers/refugees suffering hardship in the UK	1
Photograph of an asylum seeker/refugee accused or convicted of a crime	9
Photograph of a group of asylum seekers/refugees accused or convicted of a crime	0
Photograph of an asylum seeker/refugee being arrested	1
Photograph of a group of asylum seekers/refugees being arrested	1
Photograph of a smiling asylum seeker/refugee in a domestic or professional context or in the street	9
Photograph of a group of smiling asylum seekers/refugees in a domestic or professional context or in the street	4
Photograph of an unsmiling asylum seeker/refugee in a domestic or professional context, or in the street	2
Photograph of a group of unsmiling asylum seekers/refugees in a domestic or professional context, or in the street	1
Photograph of Sir Andrew Green, Migration Watch UK	1
Yarl's wood burning	2
Idi Amin	3
Mass grave of Amin's victims in Uganda	1
The Home Secretary's guide dog	1
Convicted people smuggler	3
Asylum seeking couple "gone into hiding"	1
Hotel in English resort with group of male asylum seekers/refugees outside	1
Same hotel in English resort, from Edwardian photograph, with ladies in a carriage outside	1
Asylum seekers arriving at dispersal address with address clearly identifiable	1

A white Canadian woman leaving UK for breaking immigration rules (article contrasts her case with asylum seekers)	1
Bicester army base	1
Pretty English town	1
English holiday resort	1
Legal advisor "the advice shark"	3
Local hospital	1
AIDS victim in Zimbabwe	1
Photograph of a previous newspaper headline or article	3
Photo of an asylum seeker being "doorstepped" by a tabloid journalist	1
Journalist handing over dossier to Immigration Services Commissioner	1
Statue of Justice holding sword and scales	1
TOTAL	84

Cartoons

TABLE 4: Cartoons used in three week sample of articles

Man with phrase book asks police "excuse me where can I find free HIV treatment?"
Man at Dover conducting Sun's poll asks lorry driver "Do you think the government's losing its grip on asylum? To which several voices from inside lorry reply "No!"
A traditional English cottage surrounded by high wire fencing and the words asylum camp, with the caption "We've been refused planning permission for the car port again. They said it would be unsightly"

Other visual images

TABLE 5: Other visual images used in three week sample of articles

Union Jack	5
Graph showing numbers granted citizenship	2
Graph showing numbers granted settlement	1
Map of route of dispersed asylum seekers	1
Table of costs	1
Reminiscent of the TV show Dad's Army which showed ordinary people defending the UK against the threat of a Nazi invasion, a map of South East England patterned with the Union Jack being attacked by arrows with immigration statistics on each, and the slogan "Who do you think you are kidding Mr Blunkett?" which echoes theme song of the show "Who do you think you are kidding Mr Hitler?"	1
TOTAL	11

Presentation of numbers relating both to numbers of refugees and asylum seekers and costs of system

Summary of findings

As might be expected, much of the debate about asylum in the sample articles relies on the quotation of figures – whether in relation to the fluctuations in numbers applying for asylum or regarding the cost of the asylum system. Most of the articles in this survey make some reference to statistics. We examined the way in which those statistics are presented, whether they were used in an accurate and balanced way or presented in a manner likely to generate fear and hostility.

In the sample surveyed, while official Home Office statistics are frequently quoted, most of the numbers quoted were provided either by a politician or official, or were referred to in court, but without any further information about the source of the information. This appears to lend credibility to the information through association with an important figure or institution, but without giving enough detail to enable readers to judge the accuracy of the information. That a wide range of organisations and individuals are also quoted, albeit less frequently, can provide balance. The most common of these additional sources are figures provided by Migration Watch UK and by individual asylum seekers and refugees. Neither UNHCR nor the Refugee Council are cited as sources of statistics.

In the three week sample, on over a third of occasions where numbers are cited (fifty-eight out of one hundred and forty-four) sources are either not given or are highly unspecific - “official statistics say” etc.

Language used in relation to such numbers

The language used in relation to figures in asylum stories often includes generalised terms such as “millions”, “thousands” even “thousands and thousands” etc and this type of description is more frequent than the less sensational rising, falling etc. Less often, other terms are used to convey size of numbers including “massive” and “staggering” or increasing numbers “soaring”, “explosion” or that official figures are untrustworthy – “massaged”, “manipulations”.

Presentation of numbers relating both to numbers of refugees and asylum seekers and costs of system

Results

TABLE 6: Sources of numbers cited in three week sample of articles, with frequency

Sources of numbers	Frequency of citation
An official statistic e.g. Home Office	14
A UNHCR statistic	0
Quotation of a number by a politician or an official with no reference to the source	25
Quotation of a number referred to in court with no further reference to source	17
Local government	2
Prosecutor/government lawyer	2
Refugee Council	0
RCO	1
A refugee/asylum seeker	5
Health Protection Agency	2
Migration Watch UK	5
Group 4	1
Named transport companies	1
Optimum Population Trust	1
Quotation of a number by the police	2
Quotation of a number by the NHS	3
Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre	1
Quotation of a number by a member of the public	0
Poll findings	2
Another newspaper – the Sun (its poll)	2
Quotation by an unspecified source. These were: "it is said that", "a report", "critics", "plans", "figures published", "under-cover investigator", "official statistics"	8
Quotation of a number but no source provided	50
TOTAL	144

TABLE 7: Frequency of use of general terms to describe numbers

Generalised term such as most of them, half of them, rising, falling etc	14
Generalised term such as dozens, hundreds, thousands, millions	18
Use of terms influx, wave, flood, tide	9

The sample also contained the following terms which were used to indicate the significance of the numbers cited.

TABLE 8: Other terms used in three week sample to indicate significance of numbers

explosion	staggering	wasted
dramatic	significant	huge
tip of the iceberg	manipulations	soaring
massive	pouring in	massaged figures

Language used in the headline and text of the article⁹

Summary of findings

In three weeks, in seventeen papers, the words 'asylum', 'asylum seeker' or 'refugee' appeared in the headlines of articles fifty-eight times. The results show the relative frequency with which the message is given that asylum seekers and refugees are bogus and illegal rather than genuine, and that they are guilty of offences.

The next most commonly occurring terms used in the headlines are **'arrested, jailed, guilty' which appear in headlines fourteen times**. The words **'bogus, false, illegal, failed, rejected'** appear five times in headlines and one hundred and three times in the text of articles, while the words **'genuine, real, successful** (in terms of application), **accepted'** do not appear at all in headlines and appear only eight times in articles.

In three weeks, in seventeen papers, words or topics which appear over twenty times in the text of the articles sampled are: **'scrounger, sponger, fraudster, robbing the system', 'burden/strain on resources', 'illegal working, cheap labour, cash in hand, black economy', 'criminal (unspecified or non-violent)', 'criminal violent', 'arrested, jailed, guilty', 'mob, horde, riot, rampage, disorder', 'a threat, a worry, to be feared (terror, but not terrorism)'**.

Descriptions of the system which appear over twenty times in the text of articles are: **'system is collapsing, chaotic, out of control, in crisis', 'failure by government or named politicians, including failure to keep control or failure to fulfil responsibilities'**.

Contributions made by refugee community groups to serving their own community are rarely recognised. The terms and topics which occur least often - no more than once in a headline and no more than twice in the text - are **'refugee community organisations meeting community needs', 'affecting community relations/community cohesion', 'experiencing harassment /attacks/ racism'**.

There is little debate in the press about the importance of community relations with regard to asylum seekers and refugees or appreciation that asylum seekers and refugees are victims of harassment and attacks. One of the rare instances when these issues were discussed is in the views given in an interview by Tarriq Ghaffur, a refugee and Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police (text box 2).

In the long list of other words and phrases that characterised the three week sample, positive images such as **'refugee excels'** are outweighed by the number of terms which criticise asylum seekers and refugees and portray them as dangerous criminals, sneaking into the country, abusing our hospitality, while government asylum policy exhibits feebleness and complacency and ignores the concerns of ordinary people. At their most extreme, terms used borrow the imagery of violence and warfare. It is striking that the list includes **'war, race war, fight, brawl, battle, fighting machine, footsoldier, deadly, orgy of violence, fury, missile,**

⁹ The final categories for coding the language used were devised after testing out possible categories against some of the articles in order to find categories that reflected the most commonly used terms, as well as highlighting terms that might be expected to occur but in fact occur rarely. It was intended that the code should include terms that are both supportive of and hostile to asylum seekers but as the list shows, in order to reflect what is written, there are more hostile categories than supportive.

weapon, armoury, ruthless, monsters, destruction, ruin' taken from a range of stories reported over the three weeks. However it should be noted that the sample period covered the reporting of the Yarl's Wood court case which may have influenced the language used.

Previous research has shown that a causal effect is believed to exist between reporting and attacks on asylum seekers and refugees when reports record that harassment has occurred but do not condemn it.¹⁰ Two examples noted in this respect are: a report that local people were jeering at a group of asylum seekers and other immigrants and the report did not condemn their action (text box 3); and an article showing a photograph of the Nayland Rock hotel in Margate and complaining that the hotel is now being renamed an Induction Centre does not mention that asylum seekers staying at the hotel have previously been victims of physical attacks, including on the hotel premises, by local right wing extremists.¹¹

¹⁰ Esser, F. and Brosius, H.B. 'Television as arsonist? The spread of right-wing violence in German'. *European Journal of Communication*, Jun 1996, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 235 – 260

¹¹ *Our heritage is crumbling*, The Sun, August 19 p8.

Language used in the headline and text of the article

Results

TABLE 9: Categories of words and phrases used for analysis of language of three-month sample of articles, with frequency

Words and phrases	Headline	Text
Asylum seeker, refugee	38	All articles include either asylum seeker, refugee or asylum policy
Asylum (policy)	20	
Genuine, real, successful (in terms of application), accepted	0	8
Fleeing human rights abuses, horror, oppression, torture, war	1	8
Having legal right to seek asylum/human rights to be safeguarded	2	11
Are being or should be offered welcome, support, help	0	12
Being held in detention	0	16
Bogus, false, illegal, failed, rejected	5	103
As smugglers/traffickers or as victims of smugglers/traffickers	4	12
Scrounger, sponger, fraudster, robbing the system	5	30
Burden/strain on resources	5	26
Receiving preferential treatment compared with other British residents	2	17
Achieving financial success (legally)	4	1
Making large amounts of money from illegal activity	1	5
Facing poverty, deprivation and hardship in the UK	3	13
Educated, professional, skilled contributors to economy/society	6	18
Marginalised (problems getting work, learning language etc)	0	4
Illegal working, cheap labour, cash in hand, black economy	0	22
Refugee community organisations meeting community needs	1	1
Criminal (unspecified or non-violent)	10	28
Criminal violent	2	25
Arrested, jailed, guilty	14	35
Health risk, bringing disease	4	12
Swamping, risk to UK culture/way of life, Cultural differences preventing integration	3	8
Affecting community relations/community cohesion	0	2
Terrorism	1	6
Gang, gangster, army, invasion	3	12
Mob, horde, riot, rampage, disorder	8	40
A threat, a worry, to be feared (terror, but not terrorism)	4	23
Local activity by right wing groups	1	3
Forged documents	1	18
Escaping, hiding/run away	4	13
Requiring action by police/immigration	1	10
Victims of asylum policy	1	6
Experiencing harassment/attacks/racism	0	2
System is too harsh, tough, unfair to asylum seekers and refugees	0	7
System is too soft, too lax	2	20
Something must be done about the asylum system (now)	0	7

Failure by government or named politicians, including failure to keep control or failure to fulfil responsibilities	1	37
Government/named politicians ignoring or not understanding needs of local people/general public	4	20
System is collapsing, chaotic, out of control, in crisis	5	22
System disadvantages UK compared to other countries	1	5
System is shameful/fiasco because it doesn't reflect UK's commitment to human rights	2	4
System is shameful/fiasco because it makes UK look weak	2	5
System referred to as problem in other terms	4	3

Further words and phrases arising

These are a collection of descriptive terms that were used in the articles. They were chosen because they were felt to be eye-catching, evocative and memorable. In conducting this exercise terms that were both supportive of and hostile towards asylum seekers were looked for - however, the resultant list is overwhelmingly hostile.

TABLE 10: Other eye-catching, evocative and memorable words and phrases occurring in the three week sample of articles

one man fighting machine	overruled objections	civilised society	dangerous	"I can't argue with the Sun over asylum" (Blunkett)
armoury	steam – rolled	feebleness	disgrace	its one law for asylum seekers and another for the rest of us
chilling	promised land	draconian (policy)	like Victorian times	abdication of responsibility (for provision)
monsters	racketeer	money thrown away	makeshift refugee camp	turned the chapel of rest into a rubbish tip
underworld	immoral (policy)	snubbed	living rough	jabbering away in an unidentifiable language
footsoldier	vital investigation	ruin	sickeningly	a terrible impact on our community
the war against bogus refugees	grubby little crook	compassion	undeserving	housing of asylum seekers to cause "psychological" damage to neighbours fearful of crime"
inhumane	tornado riot control teams	concealing the truth	cowardice	ridden roughshod over the wishes of ordinary people
asylum activist	orgy of violence	sneaking	crackdown	damaging to the economy as a whole
backdoor	gipsy	destruction	lunatic (policy)	government "trampled all over democracy"
abuse	a huge unknown	overcrowded	hysterical female	so completely taken over by immigrant communities that they are no longer truly "British"
fight	blunders	brawl	contempt (for Britain)	"dream on Tony, while Britain goes to the dogs"
land paved with gold	inferno	huge battle	clampdown	"mopping the floor while the tap is running"
shock facts	claim of rape (no further details)	snakehead	complacency	we are all lumped together
fury	besieged	ruthless	broken promises	steals dead baby's identity
meltdown	battle	exploiting goodwill	sympathetic locals	abuse of our hospitality
up in flames	missile	no expense spared	paedophilia	heartbreak hotel (full of asylum seekers)
purge	disaster	stormed	ranting and raving	gangs "more organised than we are"
makes a	furious	hope for	breaking point	"this is the game of targets and statistics

mockery		youth		turned deadly"
outrage/ outrageous	pro-black, anti-asylum	behaved diabolically	we're mugs	does it make you angry? – tell us what you think
a stitch up	unpalatable	refugee excels	powerless to help (destitute)	"on the edge of a devastating race war"

Text box 2: reference to vulnerability of asylum seekers

One of the few times that the vulnerability of asylum seekers is alluded to is when a refugee is quoted:

' Unfortunately now there is unemployment, there is poverty in certain areas and there is a feeling that people are coming and exploiting good will. There is a huge amount of vulnerability among communities where most asylum seekers live. Within those there are very serious criminals who are exploiting their vulnerability. It is a small minority who are giving a bad name to all of them. Those communities want those people to be dealt with and that is what we must do.'

Tarique Ghaffur, Asst Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, refugee from Uganda. The Sun, 22 August 2003, p12

Text box 3: reference to harassment of asylum seekers

One of the few references to harassment is when a group which included asylum seekers are arrested for illegal working:

'The sorry looking suspects hung their heads in shame or covered their faces as they passed jeering local kids'

The richest town in Britain is swamped by illegals. The Sun, August 20 2003, p14-15

Analysis of the media monitoring

The evidence provided in the sample described in this chapter strongly supports the hypothesis that:

Newspapers often present images of asylum seekers and refugees that contain language, photographs and graphics likely to give rise to feelings of fear of and hostility towards asylum seekers and refugees among their readers. This effect is compounded by inaccurate and unbalanced reporting

That asylum is 'often' discussed by the national newspapers is shown in our timeline of sample headlines – 56 articles on asylum appeared in the 17 papers in one week, with some national newspapers running stories on asylum six or even seven days a week in one week of the two month sample.

Feelings of fear and hostility towards asylum seekers and refugees might reasonably be expected to be generated by images of asylum seekers and refugees as illegal, criminal, defrauding the UK.

These and other negative images were identified as frequently occurring in the sample, in the language used, in photographs and in graphics such as cartoons. For example, in the three week sample of seventeen newspapers, the words 'bogus, false, illegal, failed, rejected' appear five times in headlines and one hundred and three times in the text, 'arrested, jailed, guilty' appear fourteen times in headlines and thirty-five times in the text, 'criminal' (violent, non-violent or unspecified) appears twelve times in headlines and fifty-three times in the text, 'scrounger, sponger, fraudster, robbing the system' appears five times in the headlines and thirty times in the text. Fifteen of the thirty-seven photographs showing asylum seekers or refugees present them as criminals.

Although it is difficult to judge accuracy without researching background information on each story reported, our content analysis showed that there were numerous articles where facts were presented without a traceable source so that the accuracy of the story was unverifiable. This was particularly true for reporting of statistics. In the three week sample, on over a third of occasions where numbers are cited (fifty-eight out of one hundred and forty-four) sources are either not given or are highly unspecific - "official statistics say" etc. It was also found that numbers quoted such as numbers of asylum claims or costs of supporting asylum seekers were often reported in generalised terms (e.g. "massive increases", "soaring", "explosion") or official figures are implied to be untrustworthy ("massaged", "manipulations"). Such terms are likely to generate an emotional response in readers and make it difficult for them to form an accurate picture. We conclude from this that there is likely to be inaccurate reporting in relation to asylum issues, which could be more fully exposed by more in depth research.

The lack of balance in reporting is shown by the relatively low level of reporting of 'good news' stories relating to asylum seekers and refugees, for example how they have overcome persecution in their country of origin and become respected members of the community in the UK, compared to the level of reporting of problems relating to asylum seekers and refugees and the asylum system. This is also shown clearly by the table of words and phrases found in the sample – very few are phrases likely to elicit a positive response in the reader. Most could be said to be fear-inducing.

Cartoons are highly unbalanced in that those that appeared in this sample reflect an anti-immigration viewpoint and are likely to give rise to fear and hostility.

Sources are unbalanced because sources criticising the government from an anti-immigration perspective appear far more often than critics from a humanitarian perspective. The frequent use of court reports as sources of stories contributes to this imbalance as court reports cited are mainly of cases where an asylum seeker or refugee has been convicted of an offence.

We believe that in particular there are some elements of the reporting sampled which have the potential to give rise to extreme feelings of fear and hostility, and that if these feelings were acted upon, could increase the likelihood of harassment of asylum seekers and refugees.

Generalised images of asylum seekers and refugees as violent, dangerous criminals, use of terms such as 'war on asylum', 'battle', 'mob', 'fury', 'armoury', 'invaders', 'monsters' that evoke images of violence and warfare, and graphics such as the one which imitates the title of the TV show Dad's Army, imply that Britain is under attack from migrants, particularly asylum seekers and refugees.

A combination of such images with frequent repetition of the message that the system is in 'chaos', the government has 'failed to keep control', is 'weak' and 'shamed' may lead people to believe that they should take matters into their own hands – to 'retaliate' against the perceived threat. This effect is compounded by reports such as that in which harassment of asylum seekers is apparently condoned by a newspaper in the phrase 'the sorry looking suspects hung their heads in shame or covered their faces as they passed jeering local kids'.

Given this, we are particularly concerned by the use of photographs identifying asylum seekers and refugees and where they are living, without their permission, including shots of asylum seekers at a hotel which has already been attacked by racists. If it is the case that an individual is in danger of persecution in their country of origin then the publication of their photograph in a British newspaper may, in certain circumstances, lead to persecution of their family members who remain in the country of origin or may lead to persecution of the individual by agents of their country of origin operating in the UK. If it is the case that some members of the public are sufficiently hostile to asylum seekers and refugees to be involved in harassment, then identifying where they are living by photographs of their homes in national newspapers may make it easier for them to become the target of attacks.

We may consider that the sample gives evidence of media images likely to generate fear and hostility and of some images likely to generate extreme fear and hostility, but how far they have this effect on local communities can only be tested in the other elements of the research. One clue is given by residents of a rural location who are quoted in one of the articles surveyed as saying that housing of asylum seekers in their village is likely to cause 'psychological damage to neighbours fearful of crime'. They would appear to have been influenced by what they have read, given that they live in an area without asylum seekers and refugees. The other elements of this study will examine how far this is true for London, where local communities have daily experience of living with asylum seekers and refugees.

Perceptions in two London boroughs

(1) Monitoring literature distributed by far right groups

One issue of interest to this study is whether there is a link between stories in the newspapers and written material produced by extreme right wing groups. We were interested to find out what racist literature might be circulating in the boroughs studied during the time of the project. In particular we wanted to examine whether literature distributed bore any relationship to newspaper articles currently being monitored by the project.

The racial incident monitoring unit in one of the boroughs showed us samples of material delivered to BME religious and community centres by extremists. There was no evidence that right wing groups have recently produced information that reflects current newspaper reports. However, there is evidence that during the period of this project they have redistributed in Borough B information produced (and first distributed) several years ago.

An example is given below.

Text box 4: extremist literature circulated at the time of this project

A leaflet at the centre of which is a cutting from an article in the Daily Mail, to which has been added racist cartoons and symbols, and the following headline:

***Breeding like lice
Third world immigrants now make up a third
of London's population
Announced in the media recently
Don't say we didn't warn you***

In this case the substance of the paper's report is being used as a 'factual' springboard for a racist statement. This example is particularly significant because it shows that extremist groups find some articles written in the mainstream press are helpful in promoting their views and in such cases they will quote from them in their literature. The use of the phrase 'announced in the media recently' is interesting as it implies that such groups see certain media messages as lending credibility to their views. Hence the significant point here is that there exist local channels for the racist exploitation of media reporting in ways that appear designed to increase tension. Insofar as they might impact on local perceptions, such channels could pose a significant risk to positive community relations.

(2) Local interviews with key representatives

Introduction to the findings

This chapter gives the results of twelve interviews with community leaders – including local authority representatives, the police, a race equality council, refugee community organisations etc. Eight interviews with newspaper editors have also been conducted by The MediaWise Trust for the project partnership. The summary of these interviews is given in this chapter, while a more detailed account of the interviews is given in the appendix. The questions asked in both sets of interviews are included in the appendix.

The interviews are split fairly evenly between the two boroughs. Because of anonymity issues, the distinction between the two boroughs has not been made here.

Interviews with local community leaders

Summary of findings

Views on community tension and harassment

Community leaders were asked for their views on the extent of harassment of asylum seekers and refugees and on community tension. Commonly expressed views were:

"Anecdotally there is harassment of refugees and asylum seekers."

"There have been a number of attacks on Mosques and Asian looking people since September 11th."

"A large degree of diversity exists in this borough and because of this diversity, people celebrate the culture. The degree of diversity also gives people a voice and the police are more sensitive. There is a lot of support available and a lot of advocacy. People like coming here because it feels safer, despite overcrowding. But this doesn't mean that harassment doesn't happen."

"It is important to place harassment within the context of a crowded, stressed city. There is a high number of people put into multiple occupancy. Many people come from other London boroughs and there is huge tension about over-placement. The mobility and transience of the population affects service provision and the ability to improve."

"People like to feel that we are tolerant and liberal, but there is a perception in the borough that this is just too much, or why aren't the government providing enough resources without taking away from the host community. Then there is the question of how to have this debate without being racist."

One specific example of the type of harassment occurring was:

"We have had instances of refugee/asylum seeker families who have been to view a property before moving in and have been warned off moving in."

Some contributors perceive harassment to be linked to local rivalries while others believe there is organised racist activity aimed at asylum seekers and refugees:

"Inter-youth conflict exists. There isn't so much the existence of gangs but there is patch fighting involving for example young male East African refugees. The worst time for such fighting is between three and six in the afternoon just after school."

"There are many cases of existing black communities being abusive towards the arrival of newer communities because they feel threatened. While this type of prejudice is on the increase, it is not this type of prejudice which is the main problem in this borough. In this borough the main problem is that some white people are racist, and there is BNP activity."

Given the regularity with which stories linking asylum seekers and refugees with criminal activity appeared in the newspaper sample, we asked the police to comment on their perceptions of criminality among asylum seekers and refugees. A typical response was:

“Regarding crime committed by asylum seekers and refugees in the borough we have no idea, no statistics, no anecdotal information. The impression we have is that there are very few asylum seekers and refugees in the borough and the police have little or no contact with them. They are not really an issue for us.”

Views on the impact of the media

Local representatives strongly believed in the impact of the media on community relations, on levels of harassment, and on feelings of fear and insecurity among asylum seekers and refugees. This is shown in the following examples of views expressed:

“You hear people talking on the bus, the next day or a few days after something has been in the paper. Also service providers, you hear them commenting on what has been in the news if you are sitting in a waiting room waiting to be seen.”

“It is just not true that refugees and asylum seekers get the best of housing and services, but the media encourage people to believe this.”

“Refugees and asylum seekers do discuss stories about them in the newspapers and this means concerns spread through communities. It is often the case that in the wake of some newspaper stories about asylum seekers and refugees people from our communities feel that they might be attacked.”

“Any time there is anything in the media, subsequently there are follow-ups - there are incidents.”

The impact of the media is perceived to be least when it does not conform to local experience, and greatest when it echoes local experience or in areas where there is little experience of asylum seekers and refugees. For example:

“Where stories coincide with common perceptions, people feel justified in their views. The strongest effect is where national and local papers give information which is similar to information circulating by word of mouth about local experiences. Stories which do not relate to local experience have less effect. The media raises the temperature, stereotypes and polarises opinion, so it is difficult for ordinary people to raise concerns without being perceived as being racist.”

“There are problems in our borough, but they are not as bad as in dispersal areas where the media stories have got there before asylum seekers have.”

Local representatives named particular national newspapers as being most likely to cause community tension in the way they report on asylum issues. For example:

“The Mail and Sun are particularly bad when they write about refugees and asylum seekers, they try to incite people.”

The angle from which a story is reported is perceived to have an effect:

"A local mosque was broken into and lots of damage was done. However, it wasn't reported like this. Reports focussed on the likelihood of retaliation by Muslims, rather than the destruction of the mosque; this in turn causes more problem."

"There was an article in which a policeman is quoted as saying that refugees and asylum seekers are the most law abiding – that was helpful in counteracting some of the myths that are around in the papers. I do not think that the problem lies with the local newspapers."

Many participants agreed that there is a need for more balanced information:

"There must be education about this. There must be resources and effort must come from the top. Its not just about stopping negative portrayal, it is also about providing alternative sources of information."

Interviews with regional (London) and local (borough) newspaper editors

Summary of findings

Views on community tension and harassment

Editors were asked 'to what extent is racial harassment a problem for refugees and asylum seekers in this borough?' Responses varied from:

"It's a great problem"

to:

"(it's) not as great a problem for most asylum seekers as making ends meet and, for genuine refugees, putting the past behind them."

On the extent of community tension, and its relationship to asylum, there was a common view that:

"On the whole in London community relations are good. London is a melting pot, a cosmopolitan city that has richness in diversity."

However instances of community tension were mentioned – for example, in the view:

"If people are jealous and unhappy with their circumstances, one of the ways they can vent that is to turn on people who are different from them."

In relation to asylum seekers, one editor added:

"It's usually over housing. It's people who've been on the waiting list for housing for years and years, then when the house next door falls empty they see an asylum seeker family move in."

Views on the impact of the media

In some respects the editors believed that their papers are influential:

"We are the front line. People's views are formed by what they read."

"The press has a role to report what's going on. In reporting you are educating. It's about informed opinion and information."

Despite this, when asked whether inaccurate and unbalanced media reports increase community tension, influence perpetrators of harassment, and increase incidents of racial harassment, editors are more reluctant to see a link:

"Reporting is not going to change the way the man in the street thinks about things."

“Violent racists are not created by the media - nor do they need any encouragement to behave in the ghastly ways that they do. Exaggerating the importance of the press in these issues is simply blaming the messenger.”

Some editors believe that there is at least an indirect link:

“It must be one of the factors. If people read things in newspapers and believe it to be a fact that will play a part in forming their opinion. If it’s a factually incorrect story about asylum seekers it will colour their view and maybe give them a biased view.”

“I would imagine that it’s a small proportion of people who would take direct action as a result of something like that that they read in a newspaper. I think what newspapers do is one factor in creating views in people’s heads. I don’t think on their own they would lead to that happening. But if someone’s already thinking like that and they see something (in the paper) that reinforces it.”

“You’ve got people with these kind of leanings and all they need is an excuse to carry on spouting their nonsense about it. I wouldn’t say the majority of people would go out and assault an asylum seeker or a refugee on the back of reading. A lot of things would have to have happened before. Reading would just fuel it.”

In terms of the attitudes of their own paper, most of the editors are keen to express their neutrality on the issue:

“We have actually covered it really straight.”

“I can hand on heart say that we are straight down the middle.”

“We’re completely on the fence.”

Some define a neutral position as printing any issue reported to them by local people that appears interesting. Others emphasise the need to check the credibility of sources of information and evidence for views expressed, before writing articles on sensitive issues.

Some but not all of the local papers stress their role is to act responsibly and avoid inflaming issues likely to cause tension:

“We do take coverage of these issues very seriously. We’ve really sought to put the human face on it, so it’s resulted in quite a number of features for us. We are aware that it’s a sensitive issue and we are not in the business of stirring anything up.”

“(We are) aware of people’s motives for phoning us with stories. A lot of the letters go straight in the bin because they are racist. We have a responsibility and can’t incite racial hatred.”

This is linked to their reliance on the patronage of local communities:

“If we wanted just to appeal to all the racist, right-wing bigots in the area, it wouldn’t be a good policy because we’d alienate ourselves from most readers. We wouldn’t survive. We want our readers to be everybody.”

"I don't think you'll find local newspapers have a asylum seeker-bashing policy because it's populist and it might sell a few newspapers. They are much more close to their readers and more sensitive to the things they do than national newspapers are."

There is a general view among the editors that some national papers show less responsibility towards community cohesion:

"National papers can certainly stir people up. If a big story breaks around here and national go in and cover that story, they can be very good at upsetting people. They are not as close to the community as we are."

The editors are also able to cite instances when local stories have been reported by the nationals from a different perspective:

"I do think that they influence people. We recently had a story about swans (in our paper) – The Sun carried the story. We didn't mention asylum seekers but The Sun blamed them. The police said there was absolutely no evidence for that because they don't know who's doing it. It reinforces and exaggerates their views."

These interviews provide valuable insight into the relationships between on the one hand the local and regional papers and the communities they serve, and between the local and regional papers and their national counterparts. Further information on the content of the interviews is in the appendices.

Analysis of interviews with local representatives

Local representatives, including the editors of local and regional papers and other local community leaders, expressed a number of views which conform to the hypothesis that:

Inaccurate and unbalanced media images of refugees and asylum seekers cause misinformed and hostile views among members of the public and by doing so create tension within the communities of London boroughs which makes racial attacks on refugees and asylum seekers more likely.

In the first place, the interviews provided further evidence of inaccurate and unbalanced reporting. One community leader commented:

“It is just not true that refugees and asylum seekers get the best of housing and services, but the media encourage people to believe this.”

In addition, while the local and regional editors stressed that they are ‘straight’ in their reporting they could give examples of inaccurate and unbalanced reporting by other papers, particularly some of the nationals:

“We recently had a story about swans (in our paper) – The Sun carried the story. We didn’t mention asylum seekers but The Sun blamed them. The police said there was absolutely no evidence for that because they don’t know who’s doing it.”

Such stories were widely felt to cause misinformed and hostile views among members of the public. A number of editors saw themselves as opinion formers and agreed that inaccurate and unbalanced media images cause misinformed and hostile views:

“I do think that they influence people.... It reinforces and exaggerates their views.”

“National papers can certainly stir people up.... they can be very good at upsetting people.”

Community leaders agreed with this view – they felt some newspaper reporting did ‘raise the temperature’, and ‘incite people’. They could give their personal experiences of hearing views expressed based on newspaper accounts. For example:

“You hear people talking on the bus, the next day or a few days after something has been in the paper. Also service providers, you hear them commenting on what has been in the news if you are sitting in a waiting room waiting to be seen.”

Community leaders believed that there is a link between such media images and harassment of asylum seekers and refugees, as in the view:

“Any time there is anything in the media, subsequently there are follow-ups - there are incidents.”

Editors were more cautious about how far such media images were responsible for attacks on asylum seekers and refugees. They did not rule out the likelihood of a link, rather, views

expressed suggested that while 'the majority of people' would not be motivated to harass asylum seekers on the basis of hostile media images, it was likely to be 'one factor' influencing perpetrators of harassment, giving 'an excuse' or 'fuel' to their beliefs and actions.

As these comments show, the evidence from the interviews suggests that among a wide range of people in the areas studied, it is believed that there is inaccurate and unbalanced reporting on asylum which leads to misinformed and hostile views and that for those with a predisposition for racist violence such reporting will be one of the motivating factors behind attacks on asylum seekers. However those interviewed are clear about the limitations of a simplistic explanation and give importance to additional factors which they believe determine the impact of inaccurate and unbalanced media images on community tension and attacks on asylum seekers and refugees. These factors are highlighted below.

Whether media images are perceived to reflect local experience

The impact of the media is perceived to be least when it does not conform to local experience, and greatest when it echoes local experience or in areas where there is little experience of asylum seekers and refugees.

Whether national media images correspond to local media images

In this study a common view expressed by local editors was that:

"local newspapers... are much more close to their readers and more sensitive to the things they do than national newspapers are."

How far there is diversity awareness

In London, the impact of hostile media images of asylum seekers and refugees is perceived to be lessened because:

"A large degree of diversity exists... people celebrate the culture."

"London is a melting pot, a cosmopolitan city that has richness in diversity."

How far local people feel deprived of key services and blame asylum seekers and refugees for these shortages

Harassment may be triggered by deprivation in the 'crowded, stressed city', particularly around issues such as housing shortage:

"If people are jealous and unhappy with their circumstances, one of the ways they can vent that is to turn on people who are different from them."

Whether individuals have a predisposition towards racist violence

Different members of the community will interpret media images in different ways:

"Violent racists are not created by the media."

Whether right wing extremist organisations are actively promoting their views locally

"In this borough the main problem is that some white people are racist, and there is BNP activity."

In the light of these views expressed by local representatives about the additional factors at work we conclude that, although the hypothesis is substantiated by the information gained in the interviews, media messages should be understood to pass through a number of filters which affect the way in which they impact upon local communities. Some of the filters are highlighted here. These are emphasised and extended by the findings of other elements of the research as described in later chapters.

(3) Monitoring incidents of harassment against asylum seekers and refugees

Introduction to the findings

There is very little existing information on incidence of harassment of asylum seekers and refugees in London and there is a common perception that the problem is unrecognised because it is under-recorded. An important part of this study was the collection of data on the extent and nature of harassment of asylum seekers and refugees. The Metropolitan Police Service Crime Statistics do not record the number of harassment incidents involving asylum seekers and refugees. The number of reported cases of harassment for the whole community, according to MPS crime statistics, was seven cases in August and ten cases in September 2003 in borough A and ten cases in August and thirteen cases in September 2003 in borough B.

In order to find out more about incidents of harassment against asylum seekers and refugees within the time available, research was conducted in three ways.

Monitoring by RCOs

Firstly, nine refugee community organisations (RCOs) were approached and asked to participate in an incident monitoring scheme during the months of August and September 2003. This was based on the monitoring forms which are in the appendix. The RCOs asked users of their services if they had experienced harassment and if they were willing for the details to be recorded as part of the monitoring exercise. A total of fourteen forms were returned by five of the nine groups, representing incidents which were reported to them during the two months. The results are shown in the table below.

Monitoring by specialist monitoring unit

Secondly, as borough B has a specialist racial incident monitoring unit, the organisation was approached for help in conducting monitoring of incidents against asylum seekers and refugees by adapting their existing monitoring scheme.

Two principal methods are employed by the unit to collect data on racial harassment in the borough. The first, and the one which collects the greatest proportion of data, involves what is referred to by the unit as 'door knocking'. This involves calling on houses in 'hot spot' areas (areas where it is considered that high levels of racial tension exist) to ask local residents if they have been subject to racial harassment. The second method employed to collect data involves the borough council. Victims who initially report incidents to the council are advised to take the incident to the unit. If the victim is willing to do this the victim's details and details of the incident are forwarded to the unit who take the matter further.

Experiences reported by RCOs about incidents of harassment

Finally, the RCOs gave us background information on their experience of dealing with incidents of harassment that have occurred in their communities but which were not included in the monitoring forms. This information was collected both through interviews and through regular telephone calls during the period in which the monitoring took place. In particular this helped us to understand the level of underreporting of incident monitoring. Details are given in the appendices.

Monitoring by RCOs

Summary of findings

In the short period of time available to this project, the monitoring conducted by RCOs uncovered cases of physical and verbal abuse and attacks on property. Fourteen incidents of harassment of refugees and asylum seekers were recorded in detail by organisations taking part in the racial incident monitoring element of this project within the period beginning on the 1st of August 2003 and ending on the 30th of September 2003.

All of these incidents included name-calling, seven involved physical attack and two involved attacks on the victims' homes. In the majority of cases the perpetrator is described as white or English. Half of the perpetrators were known to be under twenty-five.

Terms of abuse included "immigrants", "bogus", "go back home", "milking the system".

Victims expressed their profound distress at being harassed. They feel scared, insecure, depressed, injured, and "disappointed" – implying that this was not how they expected to be treated in the UK. Some cases were reported to the police, others decided to "tolerate" harassment.

They also expressed how they are affected by media reports and how they feel perpetrators are affected by them. The victims believe that the media is "not supportive of those fleeing persecution", "inciting the hatred" and "empowering racism". The victims mainly attributed the harassment to "racism" (six of eleven explanations given) and to media reporting (five of eleven explanations given). "Politics" is mentioned once.

Monitoring by RCOs

Results

Fourteen incidents of harassment of refugees and asylum seekers were reported to organisations taking part in the racial incident monitoring element of this project within the period beginning on the 1st of August 2003 and ending on the 30th of September 2003. Half of these cases had been reported to the police. There were fourteen victims, aged between ten and fifty-five, and with a range of nationalities.

TABLE 11: Information on perpetrators of harassment provided by RCO monitoring

Information on perpetrators	Range/ Frequency
Total number of perpetrators	19
Age range (if known)	15-55
Number aged 25 or under (if known)	9
Ethnic origin described as 'White'	11
'Black British'	1
'English'	4
Unknown	3
Relationship to victim described as 'neighbours'	7
'school fellows'	5
'strangers'	6
unspecified	1

TABLE 12: Information on location where harassment occurred provided by RCO monitoring

Where incidents occurred	Frequency
In or near the home	6
In the street or other public area	4
At or on the way home from school	2
On public transport	1
In the local Benefits Agency	1

The fourteen incidents recorded were varied in nature. The frequency with which different forms of harassment occurred in the incidents were listed as follows:

TABLE 13: Details of type of harassment experienced, and frequency, provided by RCO monitoring (usually more than one type of harassment occurred in each case)

Forms of harassment experienced	Frequency
Name calling	14
Verbal attack	12
Physical attack	7
Bullying	5
Threats made	4
Attack on home	2
Other attack on property	1
Given offensive written material	1

Further information on the incidents, including the effect on the victims and their perceptions of the motive, of images in the media and their recollections of language used in the incidents, were recorded and are shown in the table below.

TABLE 14: Views expressed by victims about the effect of harassment

Effect of incidents on victims
Fear, but the family are new arrivals and will tolerate.
Fear, but they will tolerate.
He says he does not care.
Fear
Fear and insecurity
Depressed
Stress and feeling she may be attacked at any time again
Feeling insecure and physically injured
Shock, disappointment and physical injuries
Scared
Fear and insecurity
Disappointed and sad

TABLE 15: Victim's perception of motive for incident

Victim's perception of motive for incident
Told the father that this society is bad
Society is racist
These are racist
Racial
Racism of perpetrator, partly related to the media
She thinks it is racism between black and refugee children
He thinks it is media impact and general white racism
The victim believes that the motive is partly related to reports in the media
Politics, due to elections coming up
The victim perceives the motive for the incident to be related to reports in the media
The victim perceives the incident to be related to the media and for being a foreigner

TABLE 16: Victims' views on images of refugees and asylum seekers in the media

Victims' views on images of refugees and asylum seekers in the media
That they are not liked
That they are hated
Does not reflect well and is not supportive of those fleeing persecution
Thinks not good
Victim is a child. Parent thinks that the media has negative impact
Victim is very much aware that media is empowering racism
Think media is affecting the view of public in negative way only
Very bad. The victims feel that.
The media is the one inciting the hatred
Bad press are to blame

TABLE 17: Victim's recollection of language used by perpetrators, if known

Language used by perpetrators if known
Go back to your country
Go back to your country

Immigrants
"F" word
Bogus asylum seeker
F... asylum seekers. Go home
These foreigners are the ones who come to this country to milk the system.

Monitoring by specialist monitoring unit

Summary of findings

The specialist racial incident monitoring unit which operates in borough B was approached in July 2003 and asked to record incidents of harassment of refugees and asylum seekers over the same two month period beginning on the 1st of August and ending on the 30th of September. The unit did not previously record the immigration status of victims of harassment who reported to them but agreed to do this for the duration of the project. The results obtained are given below but it is interesting to note that because of the disproportionate amount of incidents against refugees and asylum seekers in borough B relative to the proportion of asylum seekers and refugees among the population, the unit has decided to continue recording the immigration status of victims of harassment who report to them.

Data generated by the unit details incidents against not only refugees and asylum seekers but also within the more general community residing in borough B. These figures highlight the extent of the harassment to which refugees and asylum seekers are subject compared with the total number of incidents in the borough. The figures refer to the number of households who have been victims of racial harassment.

Most of the households in the survey had been subjected to repeated harassment of more than one household member. There were fifty-one households in the borough who reported harassment between July and September 2003. Of these fifty-one households, sixteen households comprising asylum seekers and/or refugees reported harassment. Over 30% of the households reporting harassment to the monitoring unit were asylum seekers or refugees. For fifty-one households drawn from the general population, the total number of incidents of harassment against individuals was three hundred and one. For the sixteen households of refugees and asylum seekers, the total number of incidents of harassment against individuals was sixty-four. 20% of incidents of harassment uncovered by the monitoring unit's survey are against asylum seekers and refugees.

Although no figures exist for the number of asylum seekers and refugees living in the borough, they are a small minority - far less than either 20% or 30% of the population of the borough. Incidents of harassment can therefore be said to occur disproportionately against this group.

The unit has uncovered enough evidence about the scale of the problem to alter its monitoring methods in future so that it continues to record whether or not victims are asylum seekers or refugees.

Monitoring by specialist monitoring unit

Results

TABLE 18: Total number of households identified by monitoring unit as being harassed in Borough B, July – September 2003

Month	General population of borough	Of which refugee or asylum seeking households
July	17	5
August	14	6
September	20	5
Total	51	16

Experiences reported by RCOs about incidents of harassment

Summary of findings

The nine participating refugee community organisations were asked the question 'in your opinion to what extent is harassment a problem for refugees and asylum seekers in this borough (racial harassment can range from serious assaults to petty hostility)?'

Their responses show that it is a problem occurring:

"on a daily basis"

which some see as:

"the number one problem"

while others believe it is just one of many problems asylum seekers and refugees must deal with.

Examples are given of cases of harassment known to the communities, e.g.

"Just last week one of our volunteers was beaten up by a gang in the local park."

In explaining the nature of harassment experienced by their community, many organisations said that it is an issue involving youths particularly – both as victims and perpetrators.

Poor treatment by officials responsible for service delivery is mentioned by a number of RCOs as a common form of harassment which they believe is:

"institutional racism."

Nearly all the RCOs expressed their concern that there is underreporting of harassment where the victim is an asylum seeker or refugee, and this is attributed to fear (of the police, of immigration officials, of a local backlash) and to lack of knowledge about how to complain, particularly with poor spoken English.

It is also common for harassment to be accepted as normal:

"They think that it is part of living in a foreign country and that it is to be expected. Discrimination is a way of life. 'We were harassed in our own country and we feel that harassment is the norm.'"

RCOs also mentioned their own lack of resources and training to enable them to help improve reporting of harassment.

The more complete version of the research results regarding the experiences of RCOs around incidents of harassment is given in the appendices.

Analysis of incident monitoring

In helping to assess the validity of the hypothesis that:

inaccurate and unbalanced media images of refugees and asylum seekers cause misinformed and hostile views among members of the public and by doing so create tension within the communities of London boroughs which makes racial attacks on refugees and asylum seekers more likely

the main contribution of the information gained in this chapter is to assess the extent of harassment in the two areas studied, although further evidence of perceptions of its causation is also given.

It is widely recognised that monitoring of harassment against asylum seekers and refugees is inadequate and the figures that exist are unlikely to reveal the true extent of the problem. Even where data on cases of harassment exists, lack of reliable data on the numbers of asylum seekers and refugees in London's boroughs mean that it is impossible to quantify what proportion of asylum seekers and refugees are likely to be victims of harassment. That some refugee community organisations in the two boroughs surveyed believe that it is occurring 'on a daily basis' gives an indication of the possible scale of the problem and suggesting a higher frequency than was expressed by other local community leaders.

Although the size of London's population of asylum seekers and refugees is unknown, it is a small proportion of the total population. Monitoring conducted for this study by a specialist monitoring unit found that over 30% of the households that reported harassment to the monitoring unit were asylum seekers or refugees. This figure is highly disproportionate to numbers of asylum seekers and refugees living in the area monitored, relative to the local population. This is evidence that compared to other members of the community, asylum seekers and refugees are far more likely to be victims of harassment. This leads to the conclusion that asylum seekers and refugees are being specifically targeted for harassment, and even suggests that further comparative study may show that they are one of the sectors of the community most likely to suffer harassment.

Such levels of specifically targeted harassment against asylum seekers and refugees must be caused by factors relating to negative views among the local community about asylum seekers and refugees. This is shown by the use of abusive terms such as 'f... asylum seeker' and 'bogus asylum seeker' which occurred in the cases monitored for this project by refugee community organisations.

To establish conclusively the factors which cause negative views of asylum seekers and refugees to lead to action being taken against them would require research based on interviewing perpetrators of harassment. However it is significant that in the RCO monitoring conducted for this study, when the victims were asked for their perception of the motive for the incident they mainly attributed the harassment to racism (6 of 11 explanations given) and to media reporting (5 of 11 explanations given). In almost half of the explanations given, media reporting is believed by the victims to be a motive, suggesting that refugees and asylum seekers who are victims of harassment believe in the validity of the hypothesis.

(4) Focus groups

Introduction to the findings

This chapter gives the results of the focus group sessions in two boroughs. Four focus groups were conducted – one representing the general settled population, one representing black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, one youth group comprising mainly BME teenagers and one youth group comprising mainly white teenagers. In all, thirty people attended the focus groups. The groups were based on local social organisations which already held regular local meetings. It was intended that six focus groups would be conducted but there were difficulties in finding groups quickly that would agree to take part in the project because of its sensitive and political nature. This made it impossible to confirm meetings with further groups in the time available.

The format of the focus group sessions was based on the script included among the appendices.

At the beginning of the sessions the groups were shown the word ASYLUM as it appears in the newspapers and were asked for immediate reactions. They were asked:

- What is the first thing that comes into your head when you think of asylum?
- What words would you associate with articles in the newspapers?

Next, groups were shown a newspaper photograph of a group of asylum seekers. They were asked:

- What comes into your head when you see this photograph?
- What other images that you have seen in newspapers stick in your minds?

The groups were shown four other media samples. After each one they were asked the following questions:

- Is this similar to information that you have seen before? If so, how often?
- Does it tell you something you didn't already know? If so, what?
- Does it influence your attitude towards asylum seekers and refugees?
- Do you think the information given in this piece is accurate, balanced, trustworthy?
- If you read/saw something like this, would you discuss it with your family and friends, remember it but not discuss it, forget it?

The samples were:

- An article the *Sun* newspaper, giving information from its opinion poll on asylum and its "Sun says" column
- An article from the *Daily Mail* in which an adviser to the Shadow Home Secretary states that blacks should speak out against asylum seekers because they have most to lose from increased numbers of asylum seekers
- A short film showing two refugees talking about settling in the UK
- An article from the *Daily Star* reporting a local London story about the disappearance of donkeys from a park. It is reported that they have been eaten by asylum seekers.

In the final part of the focus groups, discussions were facilitated around a set of questions which related to the subject of the study, such as:

- What do you think has been the effect of the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees in your borough?
- Do you think there is community tension in this borough?
- Are there any issues related to asylum seekers and refugees that you think should get more newspaper coverage?
- What do you think should be done about some of the issues that we have discussed?

In the first part of this chapter we give the results of a questionnaire that was distributed during the sessions. The questionnaire assesses exposure to different sources of information on asylum seekers and refugees, particularly national, London-wide and local papers, and the extent to which participants are satisfied that the newspapers they read are accurate, balanced and trustworthy. In the second part of the chapter, the results of the discussions are summarised.

A more detailed record of the focus group discussions is available in the appendices. These have been edited, but only slightly, in order to give as full an account as possible of the discussions which took place and the views that were presented.

Focus group questionnaire

Summary of findings

The responses to the questionnaire show that the news media – national and local newspapers, TV and radio account for more than half of sources of information received on asylum seekers and refugees. Just under one in three (nine of thirty) of the sample rely on the news media for all information on asylum seekers and refugees. The greatest source of information is television, closely followed by national newspapers. The news media dominate the flow of information into the community about asylum seekers and refugees. Within the scope of this study we were only able to analyse the impact of newspapers, however the prevalence of television as a source of information suggests a need for further research on its impact.

There is however a range of other sources from which information is received. Most people get their information from more than one source, with over half the sample stating that they are exposed to between four and six sources of information. These included information flows from first hand contact, word of mouth from other people who have first hand contact with asylum seekers and refugees, cultural events, and educational sources of information through schools, colleges and training courses.

Written information from official sources or from the refugee sector scores lowest, and there is almost no exposure to information provided by local refugee communities. This suggests that the group participants are least likely to be exposed either to information which is supportive of refugees and asylum seekers or which gives factual information about Home Office statistics, asylum legislation etc.

Almost half of the participants read only one national paper. The most commonly read of the national and London-wide papers are the Sun and the Metro, which account for half of the papers read by the participants. Most read either one or two local papers in addition to their national and London-wide choices.

Three quarters of those surveyed (twenty-three out of thirty) were not satisfied that the information on asylum seekers that they get from the newspapers they ticked is accurate, balanced and trustworthy, with one person undecided. Nevertheless, they all read newspapers regularly.

Focus group questionnaire

Results

These are the combined results of the four focus groups. Each of the thirty participants completed a questionnaire. When asked the question *from which of these choices have you received information on asylum seekers and refugees?* the responses were as follows:

TABLE 19: Sources of information on asylum received by focus group participants

Source of information From which of these choices have you received information on asylum seekers and refugees?	Received information
Local newspapers	19
National newspapers	26
Radio	21
TV	29
Subtotal	95
Film – either video or cinema	5
Written information from the Home Office	3
Written information from refugee agencies	4
Written information from refugee communities	1
Information from school or college, training courses etc	11
Cultural events	12
First hand experience of talking to refugees or asylum seekers as customers, service users etc	10
First hand experience of talking to refugees or asylum seekers as neighbours, colleagues or friends	10
Word of mouth information from people who have regular contact with refugees and asylum seekers	14
Word of mouth information from people who have occasional contact with refugees and asylum seekers	8
TOTAL	173

Some people said they had received information from a number of sources, some from only one or two. This table shows the frequency with which people ticked different numbers of sources.

TABLE 20: Number of sources from which participants receive information on asylum

Number of sources ticked	Number of people
1	2
2	3
3	2
4	6
5	3
6	7
7	1
8	0
9	3
10	0
11	1
12	1
13	1
14	0

Nine people ticked news media information sources only (i.e. local papers, national papers, radio and/or TV). Everybody said that they read newspapers regularly. From a choice of the following national and London-wide papers, which corresponds to those studied in the media monitoring, participants were asked which they read.

TABLE 21: Newspapers read by focus group participants

Name of paper	Number of readers	Name of paper	Number of readers
The Sun	13	The Voice	3
The Daily Mail	4	The Asian Voice	0
The Telegraph	4	The London Evening Standard	7
The Times	7	The Metro	12
The Independent	3	Other (Guardian – 8, Mirror – 1, unspecified – 4)	13

Participants could tick as many papers as they liked. The following table details how many papers they said they read regularly.

TABLE 22: Number of national papers read

Number of papers ticked	Number of people
1 paper	14
2	6
3	5
4	4
5	0
6	0
7	1
8	0
9	0
10	0

From a choice of four local papers which are widely available in the borough, which corresponds to those studied in the media monitoring, participants were asked which they read. Because of borough anonymity, the papers are not named. The table below indicates how many borough papers people said they read.

TABLE 23: Number of local papers read

Number of local papers read	Number of people
1 of 4 choices ticked	9
2 of 4 choices ticked	9
3 of 4 choices ticked	3
All 4 choices ticked	0
Other local paper	2
None	7

The questionnaire asked *are you satisfied that the information on asylum seekers that you get from the newspapers you ticked is accurate, balanced and trustworthy?*

Twenty-three of the thirty participants said no, they are not satisfied that the information on asylum seekers that they get from the newspapers ticked is accurate, balanced and trustworthy. Six said yes, while one person wrote on the form '50-50'.

Those who said yes read the following national and London papers:

TABLE 24: Papers read by those who say their newspaper is trustworthy

One reads Times only
One reads Telegraph only
One reads Metro only
One reads Times, London Evening Standard and Metro
One reads the Sun, London Evening Standard, Metro and another unspecified paper
One reads the Guardian only

Focus groups discussions

Summary of findings

Four focus groups were conducted - one with an organisation whose members could be said to represent the general settled population of the area, one with a BME organisation and two with youth groups. One of the youth groups mainly comprised young people from black and minority ethnic communities, while one consisted mainly of white young people.

We cannot claim that the focus groups give a representative account of local views, but they do reveal the frankly aired views of a range of local residents. Views on asylum seekers varied widely between the groups. It is also the case that there were variations in views expressed within each of the groups. This can be seen in the more detailed account of the discussions in the appendix, which are almost entirely verbatim records of the meetings (three were tape-recorded and one was recorded by hand as one youth group requested that no tape-recordings were made). That said, there were clear patterns in the groups' responses. The BME group was the most supportive of asylum seekers and refugees and made a number of positive comments about their contribution to the local community. The BME group was the only group to stress the need to understand and address the international political and economic forces which generate flows of asylum seekers. They were also the only group to link newspaper reports with the activity of far right groups. The general group was critical of the numbers arriving in the area, the impact on local services and particularly the effect of the arrival of large numbers of people who cannot speak English, but at the same time had sympathy for individual asylum seekers and refugees and would like to see them integrated and accepted. The mainly white young people's group expressed mixed views but had in common misinformed beliefs about asylum seekers and refugees. The mainly BME young people's group was the most hostile to asylum seekers and refugees, convinced that asylum seekers and refugees have opportunities to make money which they are denied. Their comments reflect the difficulties of their own personal situations. This hostility was forcefully expressed by some members of the group, although other group members were more sympathetic to asylum seekers and refugees. All the groups made a distinction between papers which they consider themselves to be readers of and papers which they happen to see e.g. in public places, but would not regularly buy.

Responses to the materials presented were as follows:

All groups saw the word asylum as associated with scroungers, either in their own opinion or in the opinion of the press.

The photograph was commonly seen as poor people queuing for handouts. It is significant that the only person who remembers seeing it in the paper was able to recall the entire story associated with it.

The newspaper report of the results of an opinion poll was not felt to be a reliable view of public opinion because the motives of the newspaper were not felt to be impartial.

The article about black communities was resented by the BME group and the black teenagers in the young people's group. It had less of an impact on the mainly white general group and youth group.

The film gained a sympathetic response from the general and the ethnic minority group but not from the BME young people and a mixed response from the white young people. It was agreed that it is not a balanced view but all groups felt that it presents an image of asylum seekers and refugees which is different from that normally portrayed in the press.

The groups agreed that the donkey story is ludicrous, but equally that it is damaging to public perceptions of asylum seekers and refugees.

All groups said that they were unlikely to discuss the samples shown but that the subject of asylum was worth debating. They also said that they were likely to be influenced by information passed by word of mouth, if they thought it was credible.

Themes emerging from the views expressed

Views on media reporting of asylum

General inaccuracy and unbalance

There was common agreement that the newspaper samples shown in the focus group sessions were inaccurate and unbalanced. Most people felt that newspapers as a whole are inaccurate and unbalanced, and there was support for the view that balance is best achieved by reading a range of papers as no one paper can be expected to give a balanced view.

Reflection and exaggeration of public views

Papers were not felt to be totally inaccurate. The perception that papers are inaccurate and unbalanced is qualified by the belief that they do reflect certain elements of public opinion. Many participants felt that there is an element of truth in the information that the newspapers present but this has been amplified. They also argued that the papers are reflecting views that are reported to them by the public. This can be seen in the statements:

"All those statements I hear from ordinary people: from people on the streets."

"The feedback they get is from negative people. But the press are not just repeating what they hear, they are adding their own little bits."

"The papers reflect our views rather than coming the other way but do distort them a bit depending on their point of view."

"They are reporting this to increase the circulation, to please their readers. The Mail has a political bias, it reflects what its readers want to hear."

Over-generalisation and scapegoating

Participants believed that newspaper reports make over-generalisations which result in scapegoating asylum seekers. For example:

"In this article they are making it sound worse than it is because by putting the letter 's' on the end of asylum seekers it sounds like all asylum seekers eat donkeys."

Disrespect for media

Newspapers were held in disrespect, as shown by the repeated references to the newspapers as comics, rubbish, a joke etc. and comments such as:

"It looks like a tabloid – so I expect that it is going to tell me something fantastic, unbelievable, untrue."

"That article is rubbish."

"100% balls."

Out of touch with local experience

In explaining how their own views were formed, most participants were convinced that they were influenced largely by local experience, direct contact with asylum seekers and refugees and word of mouth information from those who have contact with them. Some participants stated that the media is out of touch with the experiences of their locality, and this was particularly true for the BME group:

"Media reports create problems where they don't actually exist."

"The point raised in this article - it is not an issue for us."

"All the positive things - contribution to the economy, achievements of children in school, skills they bring in - other papers should pick up on these things to counter the Sun, Star and Mail."

Lack of sympathetic images

The newspapers were not seen as a mechanism for dispelling hostile and misinformed views (except for the Independent newspaper according to the BME group) and all groups agreed that the film of refugees talking about themselves presents an image not normally seen in the newspapers.

Lack of understanding of BME communities

The article addressed to BME communities (Daily Mail) was perceived as lacking understanding by the BME focus group, with the effect of making them feel marginalised.

"It says carrying around the union flag – is that what it means to be British? In Islam we don't believe in nationalism."

"It implies ethnic communities are not committed to being British and need to prove themselves."

Gender imbalance

Gender imbalance was mentioned in discussions of commonly seen photographs of asylum seekers and refugees.

"Why is it all young males – no females?"

Thirst for information

All the groups had questions about asylum seekers and refugees and could identify issues about which they felt there is not enough reported in the papers. A number of participants stated that they would like to be better informed about asylum.

"I want to see statistics, concrete facts that are absolutely true. I want more information on why they are here."

Views about asylum seekers and refugees

Disempowerment

Participants in all the groups expressed the view that their opinions carried little weight in the asylum debate. Several participants expressed the view that the rise in numbers of asylum seekers was not something that they as individuals had any control over.

"We can't really do much about it."

Misinformed views, especially among youth

There was evidence of misinformed views among the participants, noticeably in the young person's groups.

"If they had come over here legally and done it properly in the first place, there would be no problem. Why don't they claim asylum the legal way instead of sneaking in – that's what I don't like about asylum seekers."

"They are just over here to get money and start their own business and things or to take back home."

"They are all fighting to get to this one country and when they get here all opportunities that are here for us get straight to them. All housing and jobs goes to them and we are left with nothing."

Lack of empathy

A further remark which shows a lack of empathy with asylum seekers by some of the young people:

"We should do like Ali G (a comedian) says – just let the good looking ones in and send the rest back."

Hostile views

There was also evidence of hostile views among the participants. In particular, the young persons group tended to direct hostility at individual asylum seekers and refugees in their community:

"Its disgusting."

"Ginnas." (local abusive slang)

"Send them somewhere else in the UK or send then back."

"I saw about 30-40 of them in one three bed house - like ants - women with babies, Jesus Christ."

Motivated to carry out harassment

There is also some indication that misinformed views can give rise to hostility which might be acted upon, as in the threat:

"I am not joking but if I was to speak to an asylum seeker he would give me money, he would give me money."

Assessments of media influence

Scepticism about media influence on their views

The media was felt to have some limited effect on participants, because of the frequency with which their views are repeated, and particularly when they are believed to reflect local experiences and concerns. A participant in the general group said:

"It must to some degree if you read that. Those statements are so bold, it must go into your brain."

Another counters:

"Yes, it goes in your brain but are you affected?"

To which he replies:

"It goes in as fact, to be sorted with other facts."

"And it's not just once or now and again, it is in the papers every day – the more you see it the more you get to believe it."

"It (the sample article) doesn't influence my attitude, but it does tell me what I know from my experience."

The other groups denied such an effect.

Belief in media influence on others

All groups believed that newspapers do have an effect on other people. They believed in particular that less intelligent or less critical people are likely to be influenced by what they read, and that newspapers were influencing the wider community even if they did not believe that they themselves were affected. In particular it was believed that while perpetrators of harassment are motivated by many factors, newspaper articles have a role in reinforcing their views. The BME group said:

"For some people, harassment is in their agenda – they have that intention in their minds. These reports give them an excuse to spur them further. It brings them into the mainstream if papers print views shared by right wing groups. The right wing can go door to door and say this is what the Sun says and this is what we say and that will have an effect on people. Maybe not many take them seriously but some do and that's the worry."

Shared language

It could be argued that the language of the papers provides the language of debate about asylum – terms like *"bogus"*, *"scrounger"* etc have been shown to occur very frequently in our media monitoring samples. But it is also the case that some terms of abuse e.g. *"ginnas"* are 'home grown.'

Placing asylum in the context of deprivation and shortage

All agreed that there are a lot of asylum seekers and refugees living in their area and that there is pressure on public services notably the NHS, but there was disagreement among the groups about the extent to which this is outweighed by the contribution made by refugee communities:

"Its in the hospitals that we have the biggest problem, immigration generally has overloaded our hospitals, when my mother was in hospital I saw big problems relating to new immigrants - delays calling translators for this person, that person, all from the public purse... Then my young grandson went to hospital... The waiting room was chock a block with immigrants and the administrator said these people haven't got a doctor, doctors won't take them because their list is too big - so it affects my family."

Hostility towards asylum seekers and refugees was referred to in relation to local experiences, particularly of deprivation and shortage. For example:

"When they were growing up, did they get their mothers saying "do you want something to cry for?" and giving them licks for stupidity like we'd get – they have problems but so do we."

As the quotations highlighted in this summary show, the results of the focus group discussions provided valuable insights into local views, albeit of a small number of people. The use of the focus group materials and the guided discussion provided rich data to assist in answering the central questions of the study.

Analysis of focus group results

Clearly the small number of people interviewed in the focus groups could not be said to be representative of the views of Londoners as a whole, but they do provide a snapshot of opinions and they are significant in that common themes emerge in the views expressed in the different groups, and because points made by the groups support the findings of the other elements of the research and improve our understanding of them. In brief, the findings of the focus group exercise substantiate the hypothesis that

inaccurate and unbalanced media images of refugees and asylum seekers cause misinformed and hostile views among members of the public and by doing so create tension within the communities of London boroughs which makes racial attacks on refugees and asylum seekers more likely.

But, as with the interviews with local representatives, they lead to the conclusion that consideration needs to be given to additional factors which determine the strength of the impact of media images.

The information generated by the focus groups shows a high degree of reliance on the news media for information about asylum seekers and refugees. The responses to the questionnaire show that national and local newspapers, TV and radio account for more than half of sources of information received on asylum seekers and refugees. Just under one in three (nine of thirty) of the sample rely on the news media for all information on asylum seekers and refugees. Almost half of the participants read only one national paper. Most read either one or two local papers. The news media dominate the flow of information into the community about asylum seekers and refugees, and from our media monitoring results we might expect that they have been exposed to frequent media images which are inaccurate and unbalanced, and likely to generate feelings of fear and hostility.

That said, unlike people living in areas with few asylum seekers and refugees, most of these Londoners get their information from more than one source. In particular, information flows from first hand contact, and word of mouth from those with first hand contact, with asylum seekers and refugees, from cultural events, and from educational sources of information through schools, colleges and training courses. This leads us to conclude that while the media might be expected to be highly influential, its influence is filtered by the effects of direct experience in a diverse community and word of mouth information, which might confirm or contradict media messages.

Written information from official sources or from the refugee sector scores lowest, and there is almost no exposure to information provided by local refugee communities. This suggests that the focus groups are least likely to be exposed either to information which is supportive of refugees and asylum seekers or which gives factual information about Home Office statistics, asylum legislation etc. We would expect such information to act as a filter to inaccurate and unbalanced reporting, and its relative absence makes hostile media images more powerful.

That individuals in the focus groups expressed hostile views on themes similar to those emerging in the media monitoring – e.g. “scroungers” – may indicate media influence. The evidence of misinformed views in the groups suggests that inaccuracy in reporting is having a local effect. Participants in the groups agreed that some reporting of asylum issues is

inaccurate and unbalanced, and generally held the view that uncritical readers of newspapers and those who are predisposed to violence are particularly likely to be influenced by inaccurate and unbalanced reporting, particularly if it is an exaggeration of a local event or a locally held opinion. In these respects, the focus group participants supported our hypothesis.

However, as with the interviews with local representatives, there is evidence that the effect of inaccurate and unbalanced media images is dependent on additional factors. The evidence from the focus groups suggests that the most significant of these are:

Disrespect and scepticism of media reporting of asylum by critical readers

All of the groups expressed disrespect for the press and identified themselves as critical readers able to identify inaccuracy and bias in the media. They perceived that this meant that they were less influenced by inaccurate and unbalanced reporting. We conclude that disrespect for the press and critical reading are effective filters against media images, and also that uncritical reading is likely to maximise the impact of media images.

Whether media images are perceived to reflect local experience or opinions

The impact of the media is perceived to be least when it does not conform to local experience or opinions, and greatest when it echoes local experience or opinions. Notable was the marginalisation felt by the BME group who perceived one of the samples to show lack of understanding of their cultural background and beliefs.

How far local people feel deprived of key services and blame asylum seekers and refugees for these shortages

In some examples, participants argued that their hostility to asylum seekers and refugees was based on local experience of pressure on local services, such as health and housing, which they felt was caused by asylum seekers and refugees. They did not perceive their hostility to be due to media reporting.

While the focus groups provided evidence to substantiate our hypothesis and participants expressed support for the hypothesis, they gave additional information on other relevant factors – filters to the impact of the media – summarised here as disrespect, critical readership, alternative information from local experience, and whether asylum seekers and refugees are blamed for local deprivation. These elements form an important part of our understanding of media impact which is given in the overview of the research in the concluding chapter.

Existing research and other relevant literature

Introduction to the findings

The bibliography contains the complete list of relevant literature suggested by advisers to the project. In the time available to the project it has not been possible to complete a comprehensive review but the following commonly occurring themes have been identified, which add to our understanding of the issues under investigation. The key texts within each of these themes are briefly summarised here.

The themes are discussed in the following order:

- international concern about the issues addressed in the study
- community cohesion
- discourse analysis of the presentation of race and asylum in the media
- myth busting of inaccuracies in reporting asylum
- the position of the PCC
- levels of public hostility
- responses of asylum seekers and refugees to the media
- understanding hate crime
- harassment of asylum seekers and refugees

International concern about the issues addressed in the study

One striking feature of the literature available to the study is the extent to which there is widespread concern about media reporting of asylum. Criticism of reporting of asylum in the UK has come from a number of sources, including high level international criticism. In particular, concern is expressed that reporting leads to a hostile climate for the asylum seekers and refugees living in the UK.

UNHCR reports that:

“United Nations officials have criticised the British media for their hysterical coverage of asylum seekers and urged moderation from the government, following talks in London between Ruud Lubbers, David Blunkett, Clare Short and Tony Blair. “The hysterical coverage in some sectors has been very damaging to the image of refugees” one UNHCR official said”¹².

The Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), in its Second Report on the United Kingdom, adopted on 16 June 2000, states:

“Particular concern is expressed at the consistent inflammatory attacks on asylum seekers and migrants coming to the United Kingdom, which have appeared in local but also in some national mainstream newspapers. The Code of Practice of the newspaper and periodical industry, whose enforcement is carried out by the Press Complaints Commission, contains rules against discrimination. However, these rules ... (are) ill-suited to countering the publication of articles containing general racist assumptions and stereotypes against particular groups of persons.... ECRI urges the British authorities to keep the effectiveness of the existing legal provisions prohibiting incitement to racial hatred under review. ECRI also encourages the promotion of positive publications on ethnic minorities, asylum seekers and immigrants.... ECRI is concerned at the general negative climate concerning asylum seekers and refugees in the United Kingdom. Opinion polls suggest that asylum and immigration issues feature increasingly high in the list of concerns of the British electorate. As mentioned above, the printed media particularly contribute to creating such climate.... The tone of the public debate on issues of asylum and immigration generated by such changes in recent years has also had a central role in this respect. ECRI notes that, regrettably, many politicians have contributed to or at least not adequately prevented, public debate taking on an increasingly intolerant line with at times racist and xenophobic overtones. Public statements have tended to depict asylum seekers and “economic migrants”, explicitly or by inference, as a threat to security, economic stability and social peace.... Episodes of racial attacks and harassment against asylum seekers, notably Roma/Gypsies, demonstrate, in ECRI’s opinion, some of the dangers which the increasingly negative climate of opinion can bring about.... ECRI is of the opinion that the adoption of increasingly restrictive measures in the fields of asylum and immigration and the tone of the debate around the adoption of such measures run

¹² Article on UNHCR world news UK:UN concern over coverage of asylum seekers, 13.8.03
<http://www.unhcr.ch>

*counter to these efforts and to the development of a genuine culture of tolerance and respect for difference.*¹³

In March 2000, the European Parliament examined a report to combat racism within the EU by British Liberal Sarah Ludford on combating racism and xenophobia in the EU. This made a number of recommendations for Member States, including that the media should draw up a code of ethics which relates to combating racism. and monitor compliance therewith.¹⁴

Amnesty International in its Annual Report 2001, covering the period January to December 2000, states:

*“very negative media coverage.... pandered to racial prejudice and created a hostile environment for many asylum seekers.”*¹⁵

Community cohesion

Recent changes to UK legislation relating to racial discrimination and harassment and government initiatives to reduce social exclusion, to integrate recognised refugees and to promote community cohesion are all intended to ensure the safety and inclusion of all members of local communities and clearly signal the government’s commitment to community cohesion. For example:

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 introduced racially aggravated offences, whereby additional sentences can be imposed for crimes such as assault and harassment if it is proven that the crime was motivated by prejudice. In its guide to the Act, the Home Office Race Equality Unit states:

*“The Government introduced these new offences in order to deal with the problem of racist violence and harassment. The Government recognises that racist crime does not simply injure the victim or their property, it affects the whole family and it erodes the standards of decency of the wider community. Trust and understanding built up over many years between communities can be eroded by the climate of fear and anxiety which can surround a racist incident.”*¹⁶

The Race Relations Act 2000 provides a general duty on public authorities to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote racial equality and race relations.

The stated aim of *Full and Equal Citizens: A strategy for the Integration of Refugees into the United Kingdom*, (Home Office, 2000) is that “opportunities are available to all refugees” “to rebuild successful, safe and happy lives for themselves and their families”¹⁷

More specifically, the Home Office Community Cohesion Unit produced *Guidance on Community Cohesion* (2002). In defining community cohesion it says:

¹³ <http://press.coe.int/press2/press.asp?B=62,0,0,105,0&M=http://press.coe.int/dossiers/105/E/e-uk.htm>

¹⁴ Reported in the ECRE Documentation Service May 2000

¹⁵ <http://web.amnesty.org/web/ar2001.nsf/webeurcountries/UNITED+KINGDOM?OpenDocument>

¹⁶ <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/inside/org/dob/direct/reu.html>

¹⁷ p1 Full and Equal Citizens: A strategy for the Integration of Refugees into the United Kingdom, (Home Office, 2000)

*'Community cohesion incorporates and goes beyond the concept of race equality and social inclusion. The broad working definition is that a cohesive community is one where: there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities; the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued; those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods. Community cohesion lies at the heart of what makes a safe and strong community and is, therefore, a key outcome for both local and central government to work towards'*¹⁸.

It says 'Many local authorities are all too aware of the power that local and regional press can wield' and it calls on the media to 'dispel ignorance' and 'promote understanding'¹⁹

In its report *Community Cohesion* (2001), the independent review team commissioned by the Home Office found that:

"there is an urgent need to promote community cohesion, based on a greater knowledge of, contact between, and respect for, the various cultures that now make Great Britain such a rich and diverse nation." ²⁰

and reported that:

"we did not solicit views about the role of the press and media and were therefore surprised to find that they were criticised in all but one case."

This led to the recommendation that:

"discussions (should) be held with a range of regional newspaper editors (and media representatives) to establish a voluntary code of guidance.... On all aspects of community cohesion" ²¹

Discourse analysis of the presentation of race and asylum in the media

Discourse analysis explores how the media builds a relationship with its audience and how its use of language in particular, is likely to affect its audience. One dominant argument which is relevant to this study is that the newspapers present themselves as the voice of the common man against the establishment – the dominant ideology - and yet at the same time are part of the establishment and are heavily influenced by political debates.

Stuart Hall et al. in *Policing the Crisis*, argue that the media appear to reflect reality whilst in fact they construct it. Hall presents an analysis of the signification practices of the media which is drawn on in our theoretical framework.

"in societies like ours, individuals often live highly segmented lives, embedded in local traditions and networks. But it is also true that, in such societies, the networks which connect are pivotal. Events and issues only become public in the full sense when the means exist

¹⁸ http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs2/cc_guidance2.html

¹⁹ http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs2/cc_guidance19.html#press

²⁰ Cantle, T. (2001)- *Community Cohesion Review team Report*, the Home Office p10

²¹ *ibid* p45

*whereby the relatively separate worlds of professional and lay opinion, controller and controlled, are brought into relation with one another, and appear, for a time at least, to occupy the same space. It is communication and communication networks that create the complex creature we call 'public opinion'.*²²

'The news' performs a crucial role in defining events, although this is seen as *secondary* to accredited sources in government and other institutions. The media also serve *'to reinforce a consensual viewpoint by using public idioms and by claiming to voice public opinion'* (as explained in Curran, James, Michael Gurevitch & Janet Woollacott (1982): 'The study of the media: theoretical approaches'.)

In 'Encoding/Decoding' (1980), Stuart Hall argues that the dominant ideology's *'preferred reading'* in a media text, is not automatically adopted by readers. The *social situations* of readers/viewers/listeners may lead them to adopt different stances. But the distribution of power in society, means some versions of reality have more influence than others.²³

Fowler explains how the press gain the interest of readers, and increase their influence, by narrowing the gap between bureaucratic and personal discourse so that political and technical information is conveyed in a familiar conversational style that draws heavily on perceived shared norms (e.g. 'everyone agrees that'), and categorises and stereotypes individuals and issues through repetition of familiar characterisations.²⁴

More recently, authors such as Paul Statham argue that the link between reporting and attitudes/behaviour exists but is less deterministic than it was believed to be by authors writing in the 70s and 80s.

For example, in the chapter on the United Kingdom by Paul Statham in *Racism and Cultural Diversity in the Mass Media*, states:

*"claims that the press is inherently racist, and a perpetrator of racism to the extent of even being a potential cause of racist violence, and promoter of 'popular' racist beliefs are highly contentious. Furthermore, they were often made (in the past) on the basis of scant empirical evidence, and at best, by repeating the same well known examples, without information on the extent to which such cases were representative of the norm. ... the major impact of this research was a political rather than an academic one – it popularised the message in the British 'race relations' and liberal-thinking circles that the media was strongly causally linked to the perpetuation of racism in society.*²⁵
P396-7

Increasingly there is an interest in how filters may limit the impact of media messages.

²² p1367 Hall, Stuart, C. Critcher, T. Jefferson, J. Clarke & B. Roberts (1978): *Policing the Crisis*

²³ . (Daniel Chandler Marxist Media Theory, UWA 1994)
<http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/marxism/marxism.html> Marxist Media Theory

²⁴ Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*. London: Routledge

²⁵ Statham. P.(2002). *United Kingdom, Racism and Cultural Diversity in the Mass Media – An overview of research and examples of good practice in the EU Member States, 1995-2000* European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia

Nevertheless, the case is made by Statham and others that while newspaper coverage of race issues has become more balanced – there is more recognition of the rights and contributions of BME communities in the UK, and an increasing number of journalists and other sources quoted are from BME communities - the exception to this is coverage of asylum issues.

He goes on to say that:

“One factor about which most commentators agree is that there has been a general overall improvement in the media coverage and representation of migrants and minorities in Britain” ²⁶

However, describing the run up to the election in 2000, he says:

*“To a certain extent, it appears that immigrants and asylum seekers now receive the same type of stigmatising coverage, which ‘Black’ and ‘Asian’ minorities received fifteen years ago. This suggests that the criteria for newspapers to include groups within their vision of the British community has changed over time and is now applied on the basis of citizenship, so that British minorities are no longer an ‘outgroup’ but to a certain extent are included in the ‘we’ who are defined in opposition to ‘them’ the foreigners.”*²⁷

This view is developed further in the article ‘In a Foreign Land: The new popular racism’, by Arun Kundani:

“Tabloid populism is... a managed populism, fused out of the twin imperatives of claiming to speak for ‘the people’, while at the same time remaining within ‘the mode of reality of the state’ and reflecting the state’s perspective. On asylum, the tabloids reflect the state ideology of suspicion and deterrence against asylum seekers. But they also go further, using the issue to effect a mood of populist outrage against an imagined ‘liberal elite’ who, it is claimed, have sold out the British people.... Over the last five years, the asylum seeker has entered the tabloid stage as a new stock character with a set role in the daily performance... they become a screen on to which all manner of evils can be projected, without fear of contradiction... The issue of anti-asylum seeker racism is then cut off from the issue of institutional racism as defined in the Macpherson report and none of the impetus to tackle the second is applied to tackle the first.” ²⁸

A detailed case study of how the press can present views likely to generate hostility and panic is given in a Dutch study. In the article the ‘Tamil ‘Invasion’: Semantics of a press panic’, Van Dijk defines ‘panic’ in press coverage as consisting of frequency of reporting, and frequent repetition of certain loaded terms, concentration on the illegality of entry into the country (the Netherlands) and how this is linked with an expectation of criminality, emphasis on the negative effects on the country, with a reliance on official sources, rather than the benefits, with few references to refugees or asylum seekers or their supporters as sources. He describes how certain loaded terms such as “flood” become “panic metaphors” emphasising that asylum seekers are “a threat or public danger”. This is similar to elements seen in the press reporting

²⁶ Statham (2002:P397)

²⁷ Statham (2002:P409)

²⁸ Kundani A (2001). ‘In a foreign land: the new popular racism’, in *The three faces of British racism*. A special report. Race and Class vol 43.2 2001 Institute of Race Relations p48 and p50

we surveyed. He also describes how the illegal means by which asylum seekers reach the host country is linked in the press to fears about the alleged predisposition of asylum seekers to illegal activity and fraud.

Van Dijk believes that in his case study

"the media adopted and magnified the politically dominant theme"

This influenced the views of the public, and as a result

"soon they reported – as a self-fulfilling prophecy – that the public (especially the people in poor inner-city neighbourhoods) would not tolerate more immigrants.... In other words, we (the political or media elite) are not prejudiced, but the 'public' is."²⁹

The impact of media reporting on actions (and not just opinions) is difficult to establish; however evidence of just such a link is given in a German article – 'Television as Arsonist'³⁰. This article explains how media coverage of locals applauding youths who set fire to asylum hostels has been widely recognised as directly contributing to an increase in the incidence of such attacks, and that the link has been confirmed using time series analysis. No such study has been conducted in the UK.

There has been a proliferation of studies conducted in recent years to examine in detail the elements of newspaper reporting of asylum which cause concern. For example, Tammy Speers in *Welcome or Overreaction?* found that in the Welsh press:

"most coverage examines how government representatives are 'managing' asylum seekers and refugees and how the police are preparing for their arrival, instead of reporting on conditions in countries asylum seekers are fleeing or the experiences they have had...(or) the contribution they can make to society in the UK."

And that:

"Asylum seekers are given little opportunity to voice their own views"³¹

Another study of a similar type by Article 19 finds:

"Problems in the use of labels are prevalent...From this analysis, and speaking to journalists who report on asylum issues, as well as press officers in refugee organisations, it is clear that the blurring of distinctions between economic immigrants and asylum seekers/refugees is not only present in media reporting, but has become part of the public policy debate. In fact, the asylum and immigration debate has become so confused that terms which do not exist in law, such as "illegal asylum seeker" and "would-be refugee" have become common currency – used by journalists and politicians alike"

²⁹ Van Dijk, T.(1988) 'Tamil 'Invasion': Semantics of a press panic' (*European Journal of Communication*, Vol 3 (p167-187)

³⁰ Esser, F. and Brosius, H.B. 'Television as arsonist? The spread of right-wing violence in Germany'. *European Journal of Communication*, Jun 1996, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 235 – 260.

³¹ Tammy Speers, (2001) Wales Media forum supported by Welsh Refugee Council, Barnados, Cardiff School of Journalism and others: *Welcome or Overreaction? Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the Welsh Media*, p4

"Factors in the asylum and immigration debate which could improve our understanding of the issues, but which are consistently underplayed in the media coverage include: the "push" factors for migration; the difficult dilemmas for, and pressure on, those who arrive in Britain, and the non-menacing, non-impoverished visual representation of refugees and asylum seekers as ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances" ³²

Some discourse analysis of asylum in the media, such as Oxfam's the *Truth Behind the Headlines*, asserts that there is a link between inaccuracy and imbalance in reporting and harassment although no evidence is given in that report of cause and effect. It states that:

"In some cases the outcome of this coverage has been ..(that) asylum seekers in poor communities have been harassed and intimidated by people who believe that their presence has affected the quality of services, access to housing, and even access to jobs (although asylum seekers are not allowed to work...)" ³³

In Hewitt's pilot study *Asylum Seeker Dispersal and Community Relations* he argues that the media is influential in forming public opinion of asylum seekers in the areas he studied but warns against a mechanistic interpretation and says that other factors influencing audience reception of information such as local environment, rumour and conversation need to be taken into account. He recognises that there is a lack of research that looks at content analysis in the context of how it interacts with local rumour, conversation and politics. He concludes that:

"The general climate of tension and fear created by the media and exploited by far right organisations has meant that much support work done with asylum seekers is done in relative secrecy. There is a general reluctance to adopt a more high profile in the local community, which makes it hard to break the cycle of hostility and misinformation that characterises much of public opinion..."

"There is a large body of research on the contents of media coverage of asylum and refugee issues. Very little, however, has been researched in terms of audience reception of such material, which is arguably determined, at least in part, by the social groups and social environments to which individuals belong. This creates a rather mechanistic view of the media, particularly the tabloid press. It is important that research is conducted about the relationship between media coverage and issues such as local rumour and daily conversation, local politics, awareness raising, refugee organisations' media strategies etc...." ³⁴

Myth busting of inaccuracies in reporting asylum

A number of agencies involved in human rights, race relations and asylum share the opinion that reporting of asylum issues in the UK is inaccurate and unbalanced. This can be seen in the number of 'myth busting' type publications available from UNHCR, Oxfam, CRE, National Assembly Against Racism, Refugee Council etc. which all quote from newspaper articles and present factual information that contradicts the views presented by the quotations. The fact that so many organisations are involved in systematically rebutting the views of newspapers in this

³² Article 19, (2001) *What's the story? Sangatte: a case study of media coverage of asylum and refugee issues*. (P17)

³³ Mollard,C (2001) *Asylum: the truth behind the headlines*, Oxfam (p4)

³⁴ Hewitt, RL (2002) *Asylum Seeker Dispersal and Community Relations – an analysis of developmental strategies* Centre for Urban and Community Research, Goldsmiths College

way is an indication of how seriously the problem is perceived. The Refugee Council (<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk>) says:

"Nailing press myths about refugees

The issue of asylum is rarely out of the British press. But can you believe everything you read? Take even a cursory look at the British press, (it) is liberally peppered with the use of negative language and misinformation around the issue of asylum in the UK. Here are a few of the most pervasive myths which appear in British newspapers, against a few facts which put the record straight."

The Commission for Racial Equality (www.cre.gov.uk/gdpract/refuge.html) says

"Much has been written about refugees and asylum seekers in recent months. Unfortunately, everything said is not always based on fact. This page seeks to clarify the truth."

Diversity online offer 'a rebuttal service for asylum stories in the media', at <http://www.diversity-onLine.org>

The position of the Press Complaints Commission

The Press Complaints Commission Code of Practice places a duty upon newspapers to consider issues relating to accuracy, privacy, harassment, intrusion into grief or shock, discrimination and public interest. Many of the points made by the Code are relevant to issues of concern in relation to reporting of asylum. For example:

"Newspapers and periodicals must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted material including pictures.

Newspapers, whilst free to be partisan, must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact.

The use of long lens photography to take pictures of people in private places without their consent is unacceptable.

The press must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to a person's race, colour, religion, sex or sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability.³⁵

There may be exceptions to some clauses where they can be demonstrated to be in the public interest.

In October 2003 the PCC issued guidance on reporting refugees and asylum seekers which only refers to one aspect of the Code:

"Editors should ensure that their journalists covering these issues are mindful of the problems that can occur and take care to avoid misleading or distorted terminology. By way of example, as an "asylum seeker" is someone currently seeking refugee status or humanitarian protection, there can be no such thing in law as an "illegal asylum seeker".

The guidance does also make reference to the danger that:

³⁵ The Press Complaints Commission Code of Practice <http://www.pcc.org>

"inaccurate, misleading or distorted reporting may generate an atmosphere of fear and hostility that is not borne out by the facts"³⁶

Levels of public hostility

It is certainly the case that hostile views towards asylum seekers and refugees exist in the general population and one indicator of this is opinion polls, although polls vary in their reliability depending on how their samples and questions are constructed.

The MORI poll: *Are we a tolerant nation?* (2000) highlighted the link between hostile views towards asylum seekers and mistaken beliefs about how many asylum seekers are in the UK and how much support they receive. This acceptance of misinformation may be linked to inaccurate and unbalanced newspaper reporting. Further polls have suggested a link between public attitudes and media images.

In the MORI survey *The Voice of Britain – A research study conducted for the CRE 2002*, 15% of the national survey say race relations is a major issue facing the country but only 5% say it is a negative feature of their local area. The most likely to be discriminated against are refugees and asylum seekers (60%). This figure has risen by 10 percentage points since May 2001. MORI concludes "this implies that media coverage rather than direct experience has a key role to play in informing how people view the issue.

In the poll *Profiles of prejudice. The nature of prejudice in England: in-depth analysis of findings*' Stonewall/Citizenship 21, July 2003 ³⁷ 50% answered asylum seekers and refugees are the people most likely to experience prejudice and discrimination in England. Those who express this prejudice are more likely to identify themselves as readers of the Daily Mail/Mail on Sunday (44%) or readers of the Sun/News of the World (43%). Londoners were the least prejudiced when regional variations were considered.

The poll finds that "the media are a strong influence on people who feel less positive towards refugees/asylum seekers." 40% of them are influenced by newspapers. No other prejudice is as influenced by newspapers as this. (23% said newspapers were an important influence on less positive feelings towards minority groups generally).

There is growing evidence that young people's views are more hostile than those of the population as a whole. The MORI survey – *Young people and Asylum, June 2003*, found "young people's views of asylum and refugees are largely negative". 58% disagree that asylum seekers and refugees make a positive contribution to life in this country. 48% feel that few asylum seekers in the UK are genuine.

A survey carried out by the Scottish Executive in October 2003 revealed that over a quarter of Scots think that there can be good reasons to be prejudiced against people from different ethnic or racial backgrounds.³⁸

³⁶ The Press Complaints Commission (2003) Guidance on reporting refugees and asylum seekers http://www.pcc.org.uk/reports/edit_detail.asp?id=20

³⁷ (http://www.stonewall.org.uk/citizenship_21/information_centre/multiple_discrimination/prejudice/index.html)

³⁸ Scottish Executive (2003) Attitudes to Discrimination in Scotland, Scottish Executive <http://search.scotland.gov.uk/search/search.asp?bDoSearch=1>

The impact of the media on asylum seekers and refugees

One clear effect of hostile media images is on asylum seekers and refugees. One study by an RCO states:

*"Negative portrayal (in the newspapers) may create or reinforce the negative stereotyping of asylum seekers as 'bogus' and 'scroungers'. Thus the Ethiopian refugees not only have to overcome the trauma of their past experiences but also have to cope with hostility in the UK. This may hamper their attempts to integrate and make a useful contribution to the country."*³⁹

The report *The Challenge of reporting refugees and asylum seekers* (2003) Presswise/ICAR concludes:

"In particular there is concern about the effect of this coverage on the lives of refugees and asylum seekers themselves and on community relations in the areas where they live. While each of these groups of participants have their own particular concerns, all perceived the coverage as predominantly unbalanced, poorly researched and hostile."

Understanding hate crime

This report relies on a definition of harassment which draws on that outlined by the report of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, that

*"A racial incident is any incident which is perceived to be racial by the victim or any other person"*⁴⁰

The research is conducted at a time when racial crime is rising. The Crown Prosecution Service says it dealt with 20% more racially motivated crimes in the year up to April 2002 than in the previous year.⁴¹

It is interesting to note that in its introduction to its work the Metropolitan Police Service Racial and Violent Crimes Taskforce offers an explanation of hate crime that relates to a belief in support from society, raising the question of how that belief is sustained:

*"Hate crime offenders operate from a position of perceived power. They believe society supports their views and gives them the power to attack 'outsiders' who do not share their faith, skin colour, or sexuality. Or to attack people they see as 'weak' such as the elderly or people with a disability"*⁴²

In his study of *Violent Racism* Ben Bowling argues:

'racist utterances – 'go back to your own country', for example – are not the result of the individual pathology of the offender, but reflect and reinforce accepted discourses of race and territorial ownership that are shared by a large proportion, perhaps even a

³⁹ Irena Papadopoulos and Alem Gebrehiwot, Middlesex University, Ethiopian Community Centre in the UK, (2002) the EMBRACE UK project, pxiv

⁴⁰ Macpherson The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, , www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm42/4262/sli47.htm

⁴¹ Home Office (2003) Statistical Bulletin Crime in England and Wales 2002/3 July 2003

⁴² " www.met.police.uk/athena/intro.htm

*majority, of the white English population. If violent racism is simply an aggressive distillation of wider discourse and practices then perhaps the most important strategic response is to challenge the production and reproduction of these discourse and practices.'*⁴³

Harassment of asylum seekers and refugees

The ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) Asylum Seekers Policing Guide states that:

'Asylum seekers are entitled to the same protection to live free from crime, harassment and intimidation as any other member of our society.... racist expressions towards asylum seekers appear to have become common currency and "acceptable" in a way which would never be tolerated towards any other minority group.... The power of the media, particularly at a local level should not be under-estimated'

and recommends that:

*Media spokespeople (should) be made aware of Section 19 of the Public Order Act 1986: Section 19(1) - A person who publishes or distributes written material which is threatening, abusive or insulting is guilty of an offence if - (a) he intends thereby to stir up racial hatred, OR (b) having regard to all the circumstances racial hatred is likely to be stirred up thereby.*⁴⁴

Some flash points have hit the headlines - just before this research began there was an outbreak of violence between locals and asylum seekers on a housing estate in Wrexham North Wales. In recent years there have been a number of reported attacks in southern seaside towns such as Dover and Margate where a number of asylum seekers are housed in cheap hotels. In Glasgow tension between locals and asylum seekers led to one individual being killed. Far more cases occur that are not widely reported. For example, during the period of this project an individual was charged with attacking an Iraqi asylum seeker in Plymouth.⁴⁵

Although this is an under researched area, some studies exist that show asylum seekers and refugees are suffering harassment, and that this is under-recorded and likely to be significantly disproportionate to their number in the community.

The *Young People, Big Issues* report by the GLA (2003) says 30% of 520 refugee and minority ethnic children questioned had "direct experience" of crime in 2002, with racial attacks and physical abuse being quite common.

Refugee Action's report: *Is it safe here?* concludes:

⁴³ Bowling, B (1998) *Violent Racism, Victimization, Policing and Social Context*, P307

⁴⁴ ACPO, *Asylum Seekers Policing Guide* www.acpo/police.uk/policies/Asylum_Guide3.doc

⁴⁵ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/devon/3072355.stm>

"A significant number of refugee women do not feel safe in the UK... many refugee women have direct experience of hostility from the community in which they are housed." ⁴⁶

A list of incidents of attacks on asylum seekers and refugees is given in the article Asylum Attacks and Deaths 2001-2003 on the BBC news website <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/uk/3087569.stm>

Research conducted recently by Northumbria University found:

"Asylum seekers often do not report incidents at the time that they occur. The majority of asylum seekers do not understand the roles and responsibilities of the police in the UK. Recording practices may or may not indicate that the victim(s) is an asylum seeker. Current practices render it difficult to disaggregate information about motive i.e. whether the incident occurred because the victim was an asylum seeker, because they are members of a black and minority ethnic community or whether it is a random incident that has no racial motive. Verbal abuse towards asylum seekers is much less likely to be reported and recorded. The number of racist incidents against asylum seekers is an estimate and it is likely that the true figure is significantly higher than police statistics indicate. Reasons for under-reporting include:

Fear that reporting may affect asylum applications

Perception that organisations will be unable to respond or will not respond effectively

Fear of further/repeat victimisation

The effect of reporting on family members

An unwillingness to 'complain' ⁴⁷

This suggests that the findings of the data collected in our small incident monitoring study are supported by those from other sources.

The results of the literature survey summarised here demonstrate that although research on the subjects of this study has not been approached in this way before, there is substantial information available from other sources to inform and extend our understanding of the issues. The literature survey also highlights where there is little existing information and allows us to draw conclusions about where further research is needed.

⁴⁶ Refugee Action: *Is it safe here? Refugee Womens' experiences in the UK*, 2002, p 20

⁴⁷ Northumbria University, (2003): Interim report on research on behalf of the National Refugee Integration Forum sub group on Community Safety and Racist Incidents

Conclusions and recommendations

Overview of the research project

This section summarises the work undertaken in this research project, assesses how far the data collected reflects the theoretical framework presented at the beginning of the report, and provides explanations for our conclusions, which are summarised in bullet points in the following section.

As explained in the introduction, in framing the context for the research project, the GLA set out the following aim:

To ascertain how far media coverage of refugees and asylum seekers and political commentary about them represented in the media contribute to:

- crime against refugees and asylum seekers communities living in London, and fear of crime amongst them
- racist attitudes and activity in London
- other risks (if any) to community relations in London

From this starting point, it was agreed that the ICAR project partnership should explore the hypothesis that:

Inaccurate and unbalanced media images of refugees and asylum seekers cause misinformed and hostile views among members of the public and by doing so create tension within the communities of London boroughs which makes racial attacks on refugees and asylum seekers more likely.

In addition the media monitoring element of the study explored the related hypothesis that:

Newspapers often present images of asylum seekers and refugees that contain language, photographs and graphics likely to give rise to feelings of fear of and hostility towards asylum seekers and refugees among their readers. This effect is compounded by inaccurate and unbalanced reporting.

In order to examine these hypotheses a theoretical framework was constructed, drawing on studies of the ways in which, within a competitive society, migrants - particularly from minority ethnic groups - have been repeatedly regarded with suspicion; in the past the media have been active in reporting news about migrants under 'problem' headings, employing terms that imply suspicion. The idea of a 'moral panic' was judged to be a useful tool in depicting how a social problem might be defined as 'out of control'. This would become possible through a communications spiral when similar messages circulated with increasing frequency and

strength among different communicators - newspapers, officials, local audiences, and political groups. In a deviancy amplification spiral, hostile action would be taken against a stigmatised group following the circulation of negative images; unless countered by positive local communications, media reports of tension and conflict would give encouragement to hostile elements. In this way negative action would be amplified. The theoretical framework suggested that local experiences would affect the ways in which messages would be received and acted upon. This study looks at how theoretical tools that have been used to understand attitudes to migrants in general may be appropriate for understanding attitudes to asylum seekers and refugees.

The hypothesis was the point of departure for the study. By drawing on relevant literature about other times and places, the theoretical framework provided a form of scaffolding around the hypothesis making it possible to establish plausible expectations. The theoretical framework was not meant to present an exact prediction of the findings; it was a framework, based on well-founded studies, showing the factors that were expected to be in play and indicating some possible scenarios. The hypothesis was specific in identifying the issues to be examined; the framework set out what might be found; the method was designed to gather evidence that would as far as possible substantiate the hypothesis and illuminate the theoretical framework.

The method of research sought to gather evidence from the relevant sources to explore the hypothesis. Media sources were selected on the basis that the national and local press were of similar importance and analysis would show how far consistent messages were being circulated. The media monitoring was developed from the Article 19 methodology in order to set clear criteria for the assessment of inaccuracy, bias and emotive reporting. Local interviews with key representatives in two boroughs with significant populations of asylum seekers were planned with the objective of examining community relations and eliciting informed and experienced views about the influence of the media upon victimisation. Incident monitoring would also indicate how widespread victimisation actually was. Interviews with the press were included in order to shed light on editorial policies and current community relations. Focus group sessions with people from different sections of the communities were aimed at discovering how they responded to particular examples of media coverage and whether or not they perceived any impact of the media on local community relations. Within the constraints of a pilot study this project has been successful in gathering rich data on a range of interrelated issues.

With the data collected, how far is it possible to state that the evidence was consistent with the theoretical framework?

The evidence of negative and unbalanced and inaccurate reporting likely to promote fear and tension is consistent with the theoretical framework. There was most evidence of this in the national press which reported on asylum issues far more frequently than either the local or black and ethnic minority press. The main parties dominated the political sources quoted in news stories. In contrast, there was little reference to legal instruments or to organisations working on behalf of asylum seekers and refugees. The portrayal of allegedly overwhelming but unspecified influxes from abroad was likely to bring apprehension to readers' minds while the frequent reporting of criminality among asylum seekers and refugees was likely to induce fear. The language of the press was found to be largely unbalanced negative and in some respects potentially alarming. In some feature articles it appeared that the collation of these worrying themes resembled the process of creating signification spirals in which disparate information

was welded together in a manner likely to alarm readers. Media claims that their views corresponded to or influenced political views are another example of spiralling signification.

Several factors in the community acted as filters or barriers against the dissemination of fear and tension. As the focus groups revealed, scepticism about the press created resistance to the more fearful implications of some newspaper reporting. A wide consumption of information sources put the press reporting into a different context. However attitudes were revealed that reflected concerns strongly featured in the press sample such as those about crime or financial motives for migration.

While concerned about the impact of press reporting, local representatives painted a mixed picture about the state of community relations. Though problems and tensions were identified, the experience of many Londoners as members of migrant communities living together appeared to be a positive factor. The multicultural awareness and celebration of diversity in London and some appreciation of the causes of refugee flows as expressed by people in the focus groups and local representatives seemed likely to insulate them from the effect of negative reporting. On the other hand it was perceived that asylum seekers and refugees were the object of scapegoating, made worse by the impact of deprivations on established communities. Accommodation provision was an often-cited example of a service given to asylum seekers and refugees which led to resentment or jealousy in some quarters. Networks circulating rumours added to frustration and tensions. Youth groups were seen as the most likely community members to be involved in conflict but negative interactions took place routinely within localities and involved service providers. The study found that there were differences in the nature of community relations between the two boroughs. In borough A tension was commonly linked to anti-social behaviour by youths whereas in borough B there was reported activity by right wing extremist organisations.

It is clear that the theoretical framework envisaged the possibility of a more overt scenario of emerging conflict than has been found by this project. It was originally suggested that media reporting might play a part in amplifying conflict by highlighting problems of disorder, so giving hostility a platform for communication and a stage on which hostile elements could perform before the public audience. The evidence of limited local coverage given to asylum and refugee issues, in contrast to the heavy coverage in the rest of the press, is one significant sign that local disorder has not been amplified. In addition, comments from local editors showed their commitment to follow local agendas in preference to national ones and by the same token to prevent local papers becoming easy vehicles for unrepresentative extremists. Comments from these sources also indicate that key figures in the local government network have been sensitive to the possible effects of alarming reports and have been known to intervene when this is felt to be an issue.

An example of the relationship between the national and the local press coverage gives some insight into the way in which the progress of a signification spiral was checked. Versions of 'animal stealing' stories appeared in the local press and a highly negative connection with asylum seekers and refugees was embellished in national newspapers. The validity of that connection was rapidly queried, notably through complaints to the police and to the Press Complaints Commission, temporarily halting a progression of the stories in the press, although the complaint against a named national newspaper article was not upheld by the PCC. From the focus groups, it appeared that a proportion of readers was impervious to the impact of this kind of story, even though some credence was given to stories of animal theft within the youth groups. 'Animal stealing' therefore remained a story capable of being turned into myth in

sections of the public but it was not elaborated in the press beyond a certain extent. However, during the timespan of this project, some community effects of these stories were evident. For example, meetings were held between local refugee community organisations and those responsible for community safety in response to concerns that these stories would incite attacks on asylum seekers and refugees. These reports also raised awkward questions for local police who were accused of supplying the information to the press that led to the reports.

The evidence of the local interviews and the results of local monitoring indicate that the asylum seeker and refugee population has experienced a significant amount of undocumented and unreported harassment and abuse. This secret and uncomplaining suffering has not emerged in the press to the degree it might have been expected to. Partly because of their silence, asylum seekers and refugees have avoided the spotlight of the media. Public conflict has not emerged in the boroughs concerned; instead low-level harassment and abuse remains a persistent problem of significant but unmeasured dimensions. There is evidence that refugees and asylum seekers are directly affected by the predominantly unbalanced and inaccurate newspaper reports – they feel unwelcome and fearful.

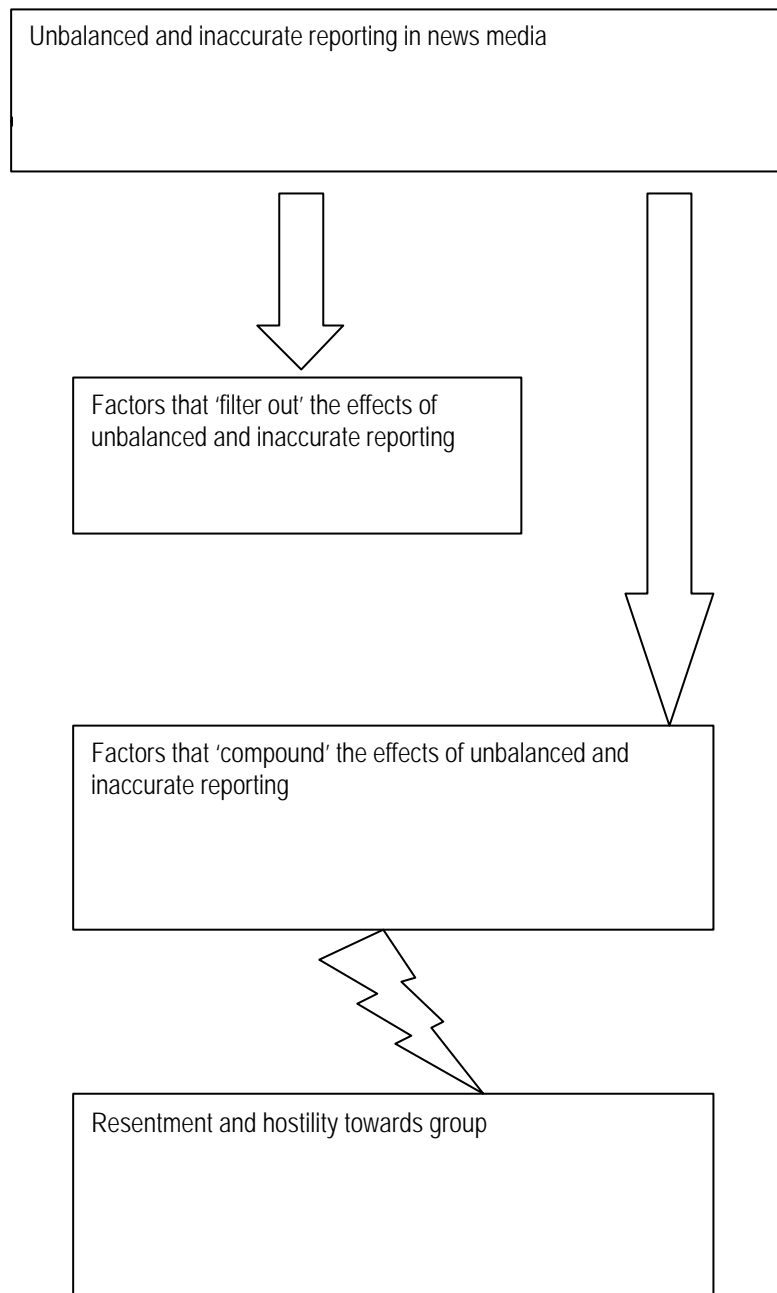
It can be concluded that the broad thrust of the findings supports the assertions that press coverage is unbalanced and lacking in accuracy in ways likely to increase tension and that in some circumstances tension exists between members of established communities and asylum seekers/refugees which leads to hostility and to harassment. The issues about which there is resentment reflect themes in press reporting. More evidence is needed to establish how far and in what ways reporting may trigger hostile action against the asylum seekers and refugees. Certainly cases have emerged in the previous literature; some informed people in the localities believe that a current link exists and the language used in actual incidents bears out this belief. The role of rumour in exacerbating resentment needs to be further explored.

It was to be expected that a small scale pilot study could not fully explore all these complex issues. That further evidence of direct links between media exposure and action remains to be gathered does not mean that the significance of current evidence may be disregarded, or that highly visible disorder may not occur in future. In the study of race and migration, the amplification effects of media images are attested, powerful and wide-ranging, with the potential to impact on community tension. In this study the resilience to them which weakens their impact is based on a series of filters, such as attitudes to the media and to social diversity. The existence of filters reduces the effect but not the potential to effect – if the filters weaken then media impact is more fully felt – and this may be most true for those most inclined to participate in harassment. Community resilience to media images should not lead to the conclusion that reporting of asylum does not need to meet higher standards.

This study has moved the debate forward by providing the first snapshot of harassment of asylum seekers and refugees in London obtained in recent years. In addition, while a number of researchers have conducted monitoring of media reports on asylum, this is the first study to juxtapose media monitoring with local points of view and cases of harassment.

The following diagram sets out schematically the relationship between communications and audience perceptions.

Figure. A diagrammatic model of the influence of unbalanced and inaccurate reporting



Factors that 'filter out' the effects of unbalanced and inaccurate reporting

- ⊗ Exposure to wide and diverse information from media and other sources
- ⊗ Critical attitudes to press
- ⊗ Diversity awareness – sense of diverse histories and situations in a context of racism
- ⊗ Awareness of local press coverage which is limited and restrained
- ⊗ Understanding extent of access of migrant group to basic resources and services

Examples

"My response to this article – just throw it in the bin!" (focus group)

"The impact of such media reporting may be less on this borough than it would be elsewhere. It could not be exploded by such reporting in a way that other communities could because it is a very multicultural borough." (local interview)

Factors that 'compound' the effects of unbalanced and inaccurate reporting

- ⇔ Exposure to narrow and sparse information from media and other sources
- ⇔ Uncritical attitudes to press
- ⇔ Lack of diversity awareness – little sense of diverse histories and situations in a context of racism
- ⇔ Awareness of local rumour
- ⇔ Concerns about 'injustice' when basic resources and services not readily available to all are obtained 'free' by migrant group

Examples

"They are just over here to get money and start their own business and things or to take back home." (focus group)

"The strongest effect is where national and local papers give information which is similar to information circulating by word of mouth about local experiences." (local interview)

Conclusions

Summary

ICAR concludes from a range of evidence that the hypothesis is likely to be valid. The findings support the hypothesis that some press coverage is unbalanced and lacking in accuracy in ways likely to increase tension, and that in some circumstances tension does exist between members of established communities and asylum seekers and refugees which leads to harassment. Resentment and language used in harassment reflect themes in press reporting and indicate a link, but more knowledge is needed to shed light on how far and in what ways the reporting may trigger hostile action against asylum seekers and refugees. Obviously the conclusion that further evidence is needed does not mean that a clear link might not be demonstrated in a future study.

The findings show that unbalanced and inaccurate media images are frequent and powerful, with the potential to increase community tension, but that their influence is on the one hand reduced by resilience and scepticism and by experience of diversity in daily life, and on the other amplified by uncritical reading of newspapers, a sense of resentment and injustice rooted in deprivation, and by low appreciation of diversity. Resilience to media images does not mean that it is safe to conclude that reporting of asylum does not need to be balanced and accurate.

ICAR concludes that the hypothesis is likely to be true, but that there needs to be further research into how the amplifying and modifying factors work in order for it to be fully proven. The filters which limit media impact and how these modifying factors affect outcomes for different sectors of the population need particular attention. More work is also needed to understand better the nature of harassment of asylum seekers and refugees, the effect of the press coverage on perpetrators and on asylum seekers and refugees and how coverage influences public tolerance of such harassment.

Conclusions about newspaper reporting of asylum

The survey of articles we sampled showed that asylum issues are frequently reported using emotive language. Readers perceive that much of the more contentious coverage may be inaccurate and unbalanced, but in less extreme cases it can be difficult for them to determine when coverage is based on reliable facts and figures.

Scepticism alone is insufficient to correct factual inaccuracies or the impressions given about particular events, statistics or individuals.

Newspapers differ widely in their presentation of news and information about asylum and refugee issues. For example, some appear willing to print articles based on information reported to them which they consider newsworthy without thorough investigation of the reliability of that information or its sources.

This research suggests that local newspapers are more likely than national ones to interpret their role as providing a balanced picture on issues that affect local people. Media impact is most powerful when national and local newspaper images coincide.

The role of television was not explored in this research. However, on the basis of comments made by several participants we believe that television clearly also has the potential to influence public opinion on asylum issues.

Conclusions about community cohesion and community tension

In general, Londoners, as represented by the community leaders and focus group participants interviewed in this research, claim to be highly resilient to media images of refugees and asylum seekers, partly because their opinions tend to be formed by everyday contact with a diverse local population which includes asylum seekers and refugees and other ethnic minority communities, partly because of widespread and strongly felt disrespect for the press.

Community leaders interviewed believe more strongly in the effect of the media on community tension than focus group participants. Individuals interviewed in focus groups may not concede that they are significantly influenced by press reporting of asylum, but they acknowledge a slight effect on their opinion and believe that it has an impact on community tension by influencing the views of Londoners in general, particularly those who read papers uncritically.

Hostile attitudes to asylum seekers and refugees and attacks on them are most likely when hostile media images coincide with local experiences of deprivation and competition for services in short supply locally e.g. health and housing.

It is commonly believed by many who provided information for this research that media reporting which is hostile to asylum seekers and refugees has a greater effect on those who are involved in racial harassment of asylum seekers and refugees, because it reinforces and legitimises their prejudices.

Responses from community leaders indicate a widely held belief that young people are influenced by the media even if they don't spend much time reading newspapers, because their views are influenced by family and friends who are newspaper readers.

Quotations from national and local politicians in the media are regarded as influential in forming local opinions but not much information on this point arose from the research. It could be more fully explored in further research.

Conclusions about community safety and harassment

Harassment of refugees and asylum seekers is occurring on a daily basis, according to refugee community leaders. ICAR's incident monitoring scheme shows that harassment is largely unrecorded and rarely reported to the authorities, and therefore unrecognised. There is anecdotal information to suggest that the incidence is increasing.

Police and local government are alert to the likelihood of and anxious about community unrest and harassment of asylum seekers and refugees following negative hostile and inflammatory press coverage and there is evidence that their policies have adapted to minimise the impact.

Refugees and asylum seekers who have been victims of harassment and representatives of refugee communities feel strongly that the press presents hostile images of asylum seekers and refugees, that this is in itself a form of harassment and that it increases the likelihood of local harassment of individual asylum seekers and refugees.

Conclusions about information needs

Newspapers continue to be widely read, despite the disrespect that is claimed to be felt for some of them. This suggests that Londoners are thirsty for information on current affairs, and focus group participants requested accurate information on asylum issues. In particular, young people in focus groups held misinformed views about asylum, which contributed to hostile views.

Recommendations and action points

Information about asylum seekers and refugees

ICAR recommends that the GLA presses for more accurate, balanced, and referenced information about asylum seekers and refugees in London to be made widely available, in a variety of formats, to address the information needs of the media and all sectors of the community. Media coverage often involves statements about asylum seekers which are not based on accurate sources or fact checking, possibly because there are no reliable information sources readily available.

ICAR recommends that the GLA finds ways of providing accurate, balanced and referenced information about asylum seekers and refugees in particular to young people in London, in appropriate and innovative formats, to counteract the misinformed views this research finds that they often hold. This information should answer the questions that young people ask about asylum seekers as well as challenging the misconceptions they hold.

The research finds evidence of frequently occurring racial incidents against asylum seekers and refugees, and underreporting of them. ICAR recommends that the GLA promotes monitoring of racial incidents against asylum seekers and refugees, consistency in monitoring conducted by different agencies and compilation of monitoring results from different agencies across the London area. This should be done after discussion with the Metropolitan Police, race equality forums, refugee community organisations and other relevant bodies.

ICAR recommends that the Home Office commissions a study that will promote better understanding of the involvement of asylum seekers in crime and the criminal justice system. This research suggests that some media coverage associates asylum seekers with illegal and criminal activities in a manner which is inaccurate and unbalanced. The lack of data on asylum and crime makes it difficult to sustain a complaint about this in spite of the fact that police sources claim that asylum seekers are relatively unlikely to be involved in crime and more likely to be victims of crime.

ICAR recommends that the GLA discusses with refugee support agencies how they might be able to provide information which takes into account both media deadlines and media interest in real life stories, in order to encourage the balanced use of sources in media coverage of asylum issues and asylum seekers.

Media coverage of asylum issues

The central issue of this research is its messages about media coverage. Because of the time limits on this project, we focused on newspaper reporting. ICAR recommends that further research is needed into the impact of political images, television and radio, none of which could be satisfactorily explored within the time and financial limits of this research - see below. The research finds that asylum seekers and refugees are vulnerable to many forms of harassment including physical attack and that press reporting of asylum issues is likely to increase community tension and particularly influence perpetrators of harassment. While respecting the freedom of the press and the right/duty of the media to raise issues of interest to their readers, ICAR feels it is important to balance their right to comment and report with the need to respect human rights and the safety and cohesion of communities.

Inaccurate use of terms

ICAR welcomes the Press Complaints Commission's guidance on the use of inaccurate terminology in reporting on asylum seekers and refugees published in October 2003. ICAR agrees with the PCC that confusion of asylum seekers with economic immigrants and people who enter the UK illegally is problematic and, following the rationale applied in this research, ICAR believes such reporting is likely to generate hostile attitudes to asylum seekers.

ICAR recommends that the GLA commissions independent monitoring of media compliance with this guidance, for at least a six month period. ICAR recommends that the GLA works with the PCC to discuss ways in which the scope of this guidance could be extended so that some of the additional concerns raised in this report can be addressed.

Fact checking

ICAR recommends that the GLA takes practical steps to facilitate greater accuracy in reporting of asylum issues in London by providing assistance to journalists seeking reliable sources of information. To this end, ICAR recommends that the GLA sets up an independent fact checking facility for the media's reports on London as soon as possible.

Other concerns

ICAR recommends that the Mayor of London discusses with the proprietors of national newspapers which regularly write unbalanced and inaccurate reports about asylum policy, asylum seekers and refugees, the following research findings:

- Relentless repetition of hostile epithets amounts to unbalanced reporting and is likely to generate hostile views among local communities.
- Reports referring to numbers of asylum seekers frequently use expressions which are vague, generalised and emotive without reference to verifiable sources. This is likely to produce or reinforce misinformed and hostile attitudes.
- Disrespect for the media was repeatedly expressed in the focus groups conducted in this study. Three quarters of those contacted were not satisfied that the information they got from newspapers was accurate, balanced and trustworthy.
- Focus group participants believed that although sensational stories are regarded as ludicrous, they influence attitudes to asylum seekers. Such stories appear on investigation not to be based on fact and are not checked before they are printed.
- Unbalanced use of sources encourages negative perceptions of asylum seekers. This research found that sources which argue for greater restrictions on asylum seekers are quoted much more frequently than sources which support or explain the UK treaty obligations under the UN Convention on Refugees.
- Frequent reporting of court cases involving asylum seekers risks criminalising and demonising asylum seekers when there is no evidence to suggest that asylum seekers are more likely to be involved in crime than the rest of the population.
- Terminology and graphics connected to warfare, e.g. war, army, invaders, etc. when reporting on asylum issues (apart, of course, from images of war in refugee producing countries) risks demonising asylum seekers and generating extreme fear among readers. Due consideration needs to be given to the risks of inciting racial hatred – see the Race Relations Act 2000.

ICAR recommends that the GLA invites each of the national newspapers which regularly write unbalanced and inaccurate reports about asylum policy, asylum seekers and refugees to offer a three month internship to an exiled journalist (see the Refugees, Asylum Seekers and the Media's Directory of Exiled Journalists at <http://www.ramproject.org.uk/directory/>) who will be able to advise on accuracy and balance in reporting of asylum.

ICAR recommends that, in recognition of the special vulnerabilities of people who are seeking protection from persecution, newspapers would be advised to avoid publishing identifiable photographs of asylum seekers or refugees or their accommodation without first seeking their permission, unless there is a demonstrable public interest (in accordance with the PCC Code of Practice as it relates to privacy and special measures for vulnerable groups).

Other recommendations to the GLA

ICAR recommends that the GLA recognises that coverage of asylum issues by local media is generally more balanced, and shows greater concern about the effect on their local community, than that of the national media.

ICAR recommends that the GLA should work with London's local community leaders, especially those responsible for community cohesion and safety, to develop and strengthen their strategies for discussing their concerns about links between media coverage and local community tension with the local, London-wide and national press.

Suggestions for further research

The ICAR research concludes that the findings support the hypothesis that some press coverage is unbalanced and lacking in accuracy in ways likely to increase tension, and that in some circumstances tension does exist between members of established communities and asylum seekers and refugees which leads to harassment. Resentment and language used in harassment reflect themes in press reporting and demonstrate a link but this may be the first piece of research to explore these links. It is not clear from this research how far and in what ways the unbalanced and inaccurate reporting may trigger hostile action against asylum seekers and refugees.

ICAR recommends that the GLA commissions further research into attitudes and experiences in other parts of London to assess how far these findings are representative of London as a whole.

ICAR recommends that further research is carried out on a range of issues which it was not possible to explore thoroughly in this research especially:

- the impact of political images of asylum seekers and refugees (originating from national and local politicians) on local perceptions
- the impact of television and broadcast media images of asylum seekers and refugees
- the extent and nature of harassment of asylum seekers and refugees in the London area
- the impact of hostile media coverage (particularly 'demonisation' and 'criminalisation') on asylum seekers and refugees themselves

- the effect of unbalanced and inaccurate press coverage on perpetrators of harassment, particularly young offenders
- how the amplifying and modifying factors identified in this research work on different sectors of the population, including perpetrators of harassment
- the origins of the most sensational media stories that have no basis in fact

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Appendices

Part One – Appendices giving further information on the data collected

Appendix 1.1 Interviews with local community leaders

Results

Appendix 1.2 Interviews with regional (London) and local (borough) newspaper editors

Results

Appendix 1.3 Experiences reported by RCOs about incidence of harassment

Results

Appendix 1.4 Full report of the focus group discussions

Appendix 1.5 Headline timeline

Appendix 1.1 Interviews with local community leaders

Results

Question 1

In your opinion, to what extent is racial harassment a problem for refugees and asylum seekers in this borough? (Racial harassment can range from serious assaults to petty hostility). Can you give any examples? Do you monitor cases/ keep records?

Responses from refugee community organisations to this question are given in the incident monitoring chapter. What do other interviewees say?

We do not have figures on this. We do not record whether or not the victims are refugees or asylum seekers for a number of reasons but mainly because we think that the experience of reporting such incidents and the incidents themselves are traumatic enough without introducing questions about immigration status.

There are difficulties in monitoring incidents of racial harassment in this borough for a number of reasons, the most obvious being that there is no common recording system for such incidents.

There is not a lot of information on harassment of refugees and asylum seekers in the borough. There is information around race, culture and religion from which relevant information can be gleaned. Anecdotally there is harassment of refugees and asylum seekers. This comes from things like CABs and voluntary groups.

There is a degree of hate crime in the borough. There is no easy neat information on it however. There is just a conglomerate of information which is fed back. They have implemented an anti-bullying mechanism in schools, but the monitoring is very simplistic.

Figures for the population of the borough as a whole show that last year there were 1300 incidents of harassment. Figures have risen since we began encouraging people to report, but are now falling as we can target the areas where there is the biggest problem. All the agencies involved have done a lot of work to reduce the number of incidents. Still however, people are reluctant to report.

There is not blatant racism in this borough. 67% of all victims of assault in this borough know the perpetrator.

LA explains that this is the case especially after September 11th. There have been a number of attacks on mosques and Asian looking people since September 11th.

Statistics that we collect are regularly compared with those collected by the police and there are variances. We have been making efforts to encourage people to report incidents to the police but they are reluctant to go to the police and there is sometimes a language barrier. This is particularly true for asylum seekers and refugees.

Victim support claim that approximately 700 incidents of harassment are reported to them yearly.

There have been cases of asylum seekers and refugees being victims of hate crime on some estates in the borough.

We have had instances of refugee/asylum seeker families who have been to view a property before moving in and have been warned off moving in

Question 2

How would you describe relations between different communities in your area? To what extent is there 'community tension' and if so how far is this related to asylum seekers and refugees? (i.e. generalised feelings of mistrust, fear, suspicion, and hostility on the part of the host population towards refugees and asylum seekers) What about BME communities? Do you think that 'community tension' is decreasing or on the increase?

General responses

A large degree of diversity exists in this borough and because of this diversity, people celebrate the culture. The degree of diversity also gives people a voice and the police are more sensitive. There is a lot of support available and a lot of advocacy. People like coming here because it feels safer, despite overcrowding. But this doesn't mean that harassment doesn't happen. Boroughs like ours could be a gateway where these communities can integrate into the UK, provided additional resources were allocated to carry out this role.

It is important to place harassment within the context of a crowded, stressed city. The average income in parts of this borough is as little as £100 a week. It is within this context that extra pressures on services are felt and harassment occurs – it is not systematic.

There is not a problem of 'community tension' in general, there are specific tensions between specific ethnic groups, in particular between the 2 particular local communities based on political differences in their countries of origin.

You do hear people from the ethnic communities who have been here a long time saying 'It is these people who have just arrived'. The newer arrivals are scapegoated. You hear this in public places, like on the premises of places providing services, you hear the customers saying things like this.

Sometimes it is hard to tell whether certain behaviour is as a result of racist attitudes or whether certain behaviour can be attributed to an all round general negative attitude.

Responses relating to specific services

Refugees and asylum seekers are housed in particular areas where previous residents are Afro-Caribbean. There is some tension – e.g. between Afro-Caribbean and some African refugees.

There is a high number of people put into multiple occupancy. Many people come from other London boroughs and there is huge tension about over placement. The mobility and transience of the population affects service provision and the ability to improve.

I would say that the main causes of hate crime involving asylum seekers and refugees are that they are put in hard to let property on poor estates in small flats with nowhere for children to play and poor soundproofing. In such situations people are having to live very close together and this leads to neighbourhood disputes. What we find is that normal problems between neighbours can quickly take on a racial element even though that was not the

original motive. However, there are some highly diverse areas of this borough where ethnic differences are obvious from different clothing etc, and I can't think of any cases reported to me where someone has been assaulted in the street purely because they were an asylum seeker or refugee.

There are issues with the Health service for example. GPs say that people can't register because there is no more space. But the council and the health board can organise interpreters well in advance. But GPs don't try to organise interpreters and so say that there is no space instead.

The statistics of refugees and asylum seeker accessing primary health care etc – it is overwhelming and the government aren't providing London with additional resources to cope with this.

The issues of transience in schools creates tension. People say things such as "My child's language development is down because so many people in his class don't speak English".

Children from our community have problems at school. Their cultural needs are not appreciated and they are classed with children from other ethnic groups who speak the same language, but who may be hostile to them.

The council try their best but it is when it gets to the front line staff there are problems because of racism between different nationalities and ethnic groups.

It would be hard to find members of the police service who will admit to it on the record but there is tension between the Immigration Service and the Police Service in terms of their relationship with refugee communities.

Specific information on local views

There are issues around perceptions that refugees and asylum seekers get better treatment. This is just not true.

The host community do complain about the new 'load' – this includes the Caribbean population and the white population. There are also inter-tension issues. For example, sometimes there are problems between Cypriot, Turkish against Somali, Caribbean and White. There are tensions between specific groups – blacks attacking Kurds, for example. Black on black racism between members of different BME groups is increasing. Eastern Europeans often harass Africans. Eastern European asylum seekers do not want to be considered as being part of the same group as Africans.

If you asked someone from my community what kind of Immigration Officer they would prefer to meet, they would reply that they would prefer to meet a white, English immigration officer – that indicates the level of fear of harassment by other non-white groups.

There are many cases of existing black communities being abusive towards the arrival of newer communities because they feel threatened. While this type of prejudice is on the increase it is not this type of prejudice, which is the main problem in this borough. In this borough the main problem is that some white people are racist, and there is BNP activity.

Tension is very much around neighbourhood disputes – noisy neighbours etc.

Inter-youth conflict exists. There isn't so much the existence of gangs but there is patch fighting involving for example young male East African refugees. The worst time for such fighting is between three and six in the afternoon just after school.

People like to feel that we are tolerant and liberal, but there is a perception in the borough that this is just too much, or why aren't the government providing enough resources without taking away from the host community. Then there is the question of how to have this debate without being racist.

There have been violent incidents between gangs from one ethnic group that includes both refugees and other migrants, the fear of crime however is disproportionate in relation to the statistics.

Question 3

In your opinion, to what extent would you say that inaccurate and unbalanced media reports increase community tension, influence perpetrators of harassment, or increase incidents of racial harassment? All of these things, or not?

Why do you believe this? If there is a link, how do you think the process works – is it as simple as someone reads an article and carries out an attack? – if not, what do you think is going on?

Responses

The media feeds the stereotypes.

The media are agitators and they create controversy.

People look at the headlines and it is on this basis that they make a decision whether or not to buy a paper. Race, immigration and asylum have been commercialised by the media.

TV is also a very powerful medium and also when you anecdotally speak to people. Expose type programmes such as that which was shown on asylum day are powerful. They are as powerful, if not more powerful than the press.

There has always been harassment, but when the media raises issues it gets worse. I notice this quite clearly. (KS -can you give examples?) You hear people talking on the bus, the next day or a few days after something has been in the paper. Also service providers, you hear them commenting on what has been in the news if you are sitting in a waiting room waiting to be seen, for example.

The media makes a difference – it represents refugees and asylum seekers badly, using language such as 'swamped', saying that asylum seekers receive up to £500 a week and getting free accommodation and so on.

Anytime there is anything in the media, subsequently there are follow-ups - there are incidents.

Anecdotally police will say there is an increase in incidents when certain stories appear

September 11th led to a new type of harassment. People were called "Taliban", 'Bin Laden' etc. This new type of harassment was a result of media imagery because it does not help the public to tell the difference between a Sikh and Muslim, who is or is not a terrorist, so everyone is a target. Now there have been incidents of people being called Saddam, in schools etc.

Where stories coincide with common perceptions, people feel justified in their views. The strongest effect is where national and local papers give information which is similar to information circulating by word of mouth about local experiences. Stories which do not relate to local experience have less effect.

The effect of stories about asylum seekers and refugees can be seen when service provision is poor locally, things aren't being done, repairs don't get fixed in the neighbourhood, because of a lack of money, and local people's response is "well we know where that money goes".

Younger people are very heavily influenced by media images even though they don't spend much time reading the papers. They talk on the street, the gangs hanging around, they see someone and assume that they are a refugee or an asylum seeker and they talk about what they have heard at home – "they get £500 a week and free accommodation, mobile phone, Mercedes". This kind of talk rubs off on the young people.

This borough is portrayed in the press as the race capital of London yet statistically race crime is lower than other boroughs, so we are portrayed in the press as something we are not.

Problems arise amongst youths as a result of boredom.

People in this borough have contact with refugees and asylum seekers and so their opinions are being influenced by people in the neighbourhood and then the papers are reinforcing this.

On a weekly basis we hear of cases of asylum seekers involved in criminality and yet these are rare cases and should be treated as normal human mistakes. But once they are caught there is such negativity in the way the case is reported.

The media raises the temperature, stereotypes and polarises opinion, so it is difficult for ordinary people to raise concerns without being perceived as being racist.

It is just not true that refugees and asylum seekers get the best of housing and services, but the media encourage people to believe this.

The impact of such media reporting may be less on this borough than it would be elsewhere. It could not be exploded by such reporting in way that other communities could because it is a very multicultural borough. However, negative representation should be stopped.

The war in Afghanistan is an example. One British soldier dies and there is backlash here against people who are perceived to be from Afghanistan, but the media make no mention of all the Afghans who die.

The media rarely give the British public the opportunity to understand the situations that create refugees, politicians are apathetic and do not act to help the public understand refugees and asylum seekers. Both the media and politicians are neglecting their social responsibility.

Stories in the papers saying that asylum seekers are receiving many hundreds of pounds and have a negative effect on community relations.

There is stereotyping of certain nationalities. Youth culture is human culture, but when an incident occurs amongst Somali youths it is because they are Somali and not because they are young. Albanians are characterised as being mafia, Nigerians as benefit fraudsters. The villains change, but asylum seekers are always unpopular.

It was recently reported story that donkeys had being eaten by asylum seekers in the local park. Such stories prepare the ground for community strife.

In Dover about 4 years ago there was stuff in the papers about asylum seekers and people arrived at the place where they were being housed with baseball bats and so the asylum seekers, who were a mix of different people had to prepare to fight back.

There are problems in our borough, but they are not as bad as in dispersal areas where the media stories have got there before the asylum seekers have.

A local Mosque was broken into and lots of damage was done. However, it wasn't reported like this. Reports focussed on the likelihood of retaliation by Muslims, rather than the destruction of the mosque, this in turn causes more problems.

Through my work, I hear refugees and asylum seekers talking about newspaper reports, so I would say that news goes around communities by word of mouth.

Those who don't read the papers, hear the media's message through work of mouth.

With the older people there is a problem. They have bad attitudes, they air it and other people act on it.

The way negative reporting works is that it builds up slowly in the minds of people.

People won't read something and then react. They will hold what they have read and each time they read something else this will build on what they have already read. Every time they read something new they will get angrier and angrier and then suddenly hatred will be established.

The elderly have the worst attitudes. They won't attack people but their attitudes are the most extreme. It is the young people who will attack people, if they get drunk and so on. It is the older members of families who are reading the papers, developing negative attitudes and passing the attitudes onto the younger family members who may then go out and carry out attacks.

The major problem in this borough is that the media run a story and then the BNP capitalise on the story. In this borough there is a BNP presence. When the media runs a story which represents refugees and/or asylum seekers in a negative manner, the BNP capitalises on this and subsequently attacks increase. They use items from the media in their literature.

As a result of a recent newspaper story blaming asylum seekers for a local crime the MPS Borough Commander needed to hold a meeting with representatives of various local communities who were concerned that there would be repercussions. As far as we are concerned the story is pure sensationalism.

Question 4

In your opinion, do different types of reports, i.e. those including statistics, or statements from politicians, or using particular language, etc. have a different impact? In what way?

Responses

Stories on the numbers arriving have an effect.

Stories which refer to the "numbers of people" or "people being here illegally" and "on the increase" have the most effect.

Negative statements by credible politicians have the most negative effects on attitudes.

Political images are most powerful as they represent the body politic climate.

What really annoys people is when a scam is uncovered and then the government pretends to be in control.

It is what the opposition party are saying – the Conservatives - that has the most effect on community tension.

People appreciate that Ken Livingston and Lee Jasper have come to the area to speak to people directly when there have been problems.

Even if politicians are not quoted in the media, they are often behind the stories.

Blunkett's statement that the UK needs qualified refugees has a positive effect.

There is always propaganda going on behind the scenes for next year's elections.

There was an article in which a policeman is quoted as saying that refugees and asylum seekers are the most law abiding – that was helpful in counteracting some of the myths that are around in the papers.

Question 5

Which kinds of newspapers do you think have the most impact on community tension – national, London, local? Do you have any examples of local stories?

Responses

I do not think that the problem lies with the local newspapers. The Mail and Sun are particularly bad when they write about refugees and asylum seekers, they try to incite people.

National papers are read more than local newspapers. The Sun is widely circulated. This is where the problem gets even worse.

One of our local papers is neutral because it has links with the council. One of the other locals prints some dodgy stuff and sometimes gives space to the BNP. The local papers are like the national papers – it depends on their allegiance.

The national and London papers are most problematic. Local newspapers are not always negative. For example they cover local events including those held by refugees. Also, the impact of local newspapers is not the same as that of national or London newspapers. People do not read or pay as much attention to local newspapers.

The Sun ran stories about asylum seekers stealing ducks – such stories give a bad impression. Asylum seekers aren't one race. If an asylum seeker is responsible it should be made clear that they are just one individual and not all asylum seekers are responsible.

I have found the local press helpful when I have met with them to discuss how they intend to report on certain stories which might have an effect on racial tension.

The national papers have more of an effect. Most people read at least one national newspaper.

There is pressure on local papers from local politicians not to publicise incidents of racial harassment because it presents the area in a negative light.

The following comments were made about the impact on asylum seekers and refugees of media reports

Asylum seekers and refugees take newspaper reporting seriously. It makes people more defensive rather than proactive in solving tension.

Reporting definitely has an effect on refugees and asylum seekers. It creates indescribable tension and fear amongst refugees and asylum seekers.

Our community don't talk about the newspapers as they try to avoid the problem rather than challenge it. There are many unaccompanied minors and young people in our community and it is fortunate for them that they don't read the papers.

I am convinced that the papers are a problem for refugees and asylum seekers and that they affect peoples attitudes towards them. Refugees and asylum seekers that I speak to think so too. They think: "Now we will be even more hated by the public."

Refugees and asylum seekers do discuss stories about them in the newspapers and this means concerns spread through communities. It is often the case that in the wake of some newspaper stories about asylum seekers and refugees people from our communities feel that they might be attacked

Asylum seekers and even people with ELR always live in fear.

The local authority feel they have to protect refugees and asylum seekers, from the press. For example, a football team of young local refugees went abroad to play in a competition and were successful. When they came back there was a celebration for them but on the advice of the local authority the local press weren't told because it was feared they would say 'so this is what the taxpayers money is spent on, sending refugees abroad'.

Comments made on what should be done

The problem could be resolved through education about different cultures etc. There has been a lot of positive feedback from young people to whom I have spoke about the issues involved.

There must be education about this. There must be resources and effort must come from the top. Its not just about stopping negative portrayal, it is also about providing alternative sources of information.

Tension could be reduced by positive portrayal, if there is the political will and the sense of social responsibility.

The media should start with positive contributions made by refugees to this country. The GLA should have its own newsletter where they disseminate positive stories. Or else the GLA should work with and educate the media because the media are often uneducated and have little understanding of these types of issues.

Question to police only

In your opinion, to what extent is crime committed by refugees and asylum seekers a problem in this borough? Serious or petty crime? Can you give any examples? Do you monitor cases/ keep records? Can you give me – accurate statistical information? Anecdotal, impressionistic information? How might these differ?

"In terms of involvement in crime, I am aware that youths from one particular refugee community have a high rate of exclusion from school and the result is there have been cases of them involved in disorder, robbery etc., however it is impossible to answer questions about proportionality because there are no statistics kept which record whether asylum seekers and refugees were either the victims or the perpetrators of crimes. We don't even know how many asylum seekers and refugees are in the borough, we don't know how many are in local authority accommodation, and we don't know how many have been sent here by other boroughs. It is particularly difficult to assess cases involving Eastern Europeans as they would just be counted as WHITE in our statistics."

"Regarding crime committed by asylum seekers and refugees in the borough we have no idea, no statistics, no anecdotal information. The impression we have is that there are very few asylum seekers and refugees in the borough and the police have little or no contact with them. They are not really an issue

Appendix 1.2 Interviews with regional (London) and local (borough) newspaper editors

Results

Question 1

In your opinion, to what extent is racial harassment a problem for refugees and asylum seekers in this borough? (Racial harassment can range from serious assaults to petty hostility). Can you give any examples? Do you monitor cases/ keep records?

Responses

It's a great problem.

There is a slight problem.

If you spoke to the police, they'd probably say that it is a problem. I think it is a problem.

Hostility, and isolated attacks, may be a problem in some cases. But not as great a problem for most asylum seekers as making ends meet and, for genuine refugees, putting the past behind them.

Racial harassment is a problem for ethnic minorities of all sorts, it's not exclusively a problem for asylum seekers.

Information we get from the police suggests that 50% of attacks or violence are racially-motivated or to do with asylum seekers. Two or three years ago it would happen about once a month, but now the police are saying 50% of them are.

In this borough there was a lot of activity about race and a few years ago there was quite an influx from one particular country and quite a number of cases where women from that country were assaulted. For assaults our sources are the police, the courts.

I don't think we've had that many stories in this paper about problems like that but I'm sure it is a problem here like it is anywhere. But I can't recollect any specific instances that we've reported on it. I can't recollect any attacks – I'm not saying there haven't been any – but nothing major or serious that we've reported in any detail. I know we have had racial attacks, there's always a racial element in a lot of crimes.

People of a different race and culture are going to stand out. It's a reflection of general societal ills.

Question 2

How would you describe relations between different communities in your area? To what extent is there 'community tension' and how far is this related to asylum seekers and refugees? (i.e. generalised feelings of mistrust, fear, suspicion, and hostility on the part of the host population towards refugees and asylum seekers) What about BME communities? Do you think that 'community tension' is on the increase?

Responses

On the whole in London community relations are good. London is a melting pot, a cosmopolitan city that has richness in diversity. Yes there is some mistrust and fear – on all sides. But generally the progress that has been made is a tribute to Londoners from all communities.

London is not on the verge of exploding into violence but it's more likely to be obvious here because of the scale of London. If people are jealous and unhappy with their circumstances, one of the ways they can vent that is to turn on people who are different from them.

It might be hard to believe, but for somewhere as multi-racial as this, I think there's a surprisingly low incidence of racial tension and racial crimes.

Community tension exists but it doesn't rise to the surface with any great frequency. This isn't an area of huge racial turmoil.

There are Greeks, Turks, Kurds, Albanians, Somalis and a few Indians here. Again, it's hard to say where the tension is. It's no worse than other parts of London.

In one area there's an Asian population. There's tension between that community and the neighbouring area, where the majority are white. There have been points where they've clashed a bit. Of course there's conflict within various groups.

It's usually over housing. It's people who've been on the waiting list for housing for years and years, then when the house next door falls empty they see an asylum seeker family move in. They bring their family over and their family over. It's based on a certain family on a certain streets and doesn't get cleared up: there's lots of private ones going on.

Then there's the youngsters, groups of youths, people are intimidated by them because they are not speaking English.

I think that community tension in this borough has decreased over the last four or five years. Due credit to the council which has organised a number of multi-cultural festivals. It has decreased but there are still those isolated incidents which can be quite nasty.

There's been some gang troubles between rival gangs from one ethnic community. That's probably stirred up some anti feeling against that particular community. There was a big gang-fight in one area recently involving 200 people, and someone got killed.

The Tories won the election here last year. The issue of asylum seekers was a big issue for a lot of Conservatives. They promised to hold a discussion panel. Many people thought it would give a platform for racists. A lot of people turned up and blamed asylum seekers for a lot of problems. Some people were there to tar all asylum seekers with the same brush. The police chief tried to calm it down a bit. It was difficult to write up – I just tried to take a non-sensationalist line.

The police have made very powerful moves to turn round any kind of enmity that existed between ethnic communities and the police.

There's a lot of fear about asylum seekers and refugees. You get people calling up and saying, 'This pub's been turned into this' or 'This youth centre has been turned into an asylum seeker refuge' and it just turns out to be unfounded. On the news desk the reporters from those areas will be ringing me and telling me what's happening. I will also be handling a lot of phone calls from the public, saying 'we've got this problem or that problem'. So I can get a general idea of what's happening where.

I haven't noticed an increase in people phoning up and knocking asylum seekers and refugees. I wouldn't say it's a huge problem either. I wouldn't say we are inundated with people phoning up and saying 'They are getting our jobs'. It's a few calls a month, and I've been here three years now. It isn't a major thing. You get letters from people, but it's mainly misinformation and fear. Down the pub someone will say, 'Have you heard what's happening down the road? They are going to build an asylum seekers' refuge.' and the whole thing spirals out of control. And that's when they get on the phone to us. We say we'll check it out but 99 times out of 100 it's not true.

We get information from the police and people are ringing in all the time – usually it's about their neighbour. Also from the council – it has quite a few meetings about them, and deals with anti-social behaviour orders and things like that.

We did one story on the government's new plans on registering asylum seekers – there were 28 people who set up camp in Brixton. In that case the community really rallied round and were taking them tea and food and really supporting them.

Question 3

How would you describe the views of your paper on this issue? Do you have a particular 'line' on asylum issues? What has led to this view?

Responses

You write it straight – that's the only way.

We have actually covered it really straight.

I can hand on heart say that we are straight down the middle.

We're completely on the fence.

Our stance is that we do our very best not to have any spin or bias. We are not pro or anti – we leave it to our readers to make up their own minds after reporting the facts.

Our idea of balanced is reporting the facts, not adding to the story. It's claim and counter-claim.

We will report the story based on how newsworthy it is. We wouldn't sit round a table and say, 'Let's have a go at asylum seekers'. Let's get the facts and report it.

It represents readers against authority, the council and things like that. That's where we are non-neutral. But we wouldn't favour one branch of the community against another. That would be wrong.

For a local paper especially you start to get into very dangerous territory if you start to take opinions on that sort of thing. We have done campaigns on various things, but never on anything as contentious as that.

We are on the side of our readers. If our readers have an axe to grind about something, we will give them a platform for that, within the bounds of legality and common decency and taking things in the right spirit. They phone us up, they write us letters on all kind of things. I, the deputy editor and the news editors would look into it and see whether there's any basis for what they [sources] are saying.

Fair, and aware of people's motives for phoning us with stories. A lot of the letters go straight in the bin because they are racist. We have a responsibility and can't incite racial hatred. So we run stories that are fair and worthy. We are anti-racist.

We tend, because it's such a hotly-contested issue, to damp it down. We try to present it factually – refugees aren't all criminals, they've suffered and come here for a better life. We try to look at it sympathetically. The BNP is trying to make inroads in one of our areas, so if anything we try to present things slightly more sympathetically [to asylum seekers]. There was a meeting recently to discuss the issue – some people say problem, we always say issue – and the views given there were verging on racist. These people [refugees and asylum seekers] deserve to have a chance.

We are printing what we think is news and what our readers are interested in. I don't have a personal or political agenda; and nobody here does. If we wanted just to appeal to all the racist, right-wing bigots in the area, it wouldn't be a good policy because we'd alienate ourselves from most readers. We wouldn't survive. We want our readers to be everybody.

We had one story recently. Apparently our local A&E unit was inundated by asylum seekers going there with a slight cut or something. Same with 999. We ran these stories but also pointed out that asylum seekers are new and don't know the system. They need education and help, rather than brickbats.

What we have tried to do is meet as many of the refugees and asylum seekers as possible and tell their side of the story. We've covered people who are alone at Christmas, people talking about their experiences as a refugee, we did something about three women who had had a terrible time and were living in a women's refuge. So we've tried to go out and tell their story, but it's actually quite difficult because of language barriers and sometimes you need an intermediary to help, but we are slowly getting those stories through now.

We do take coverage of these issues very seriously. We've really sought to put the human face on it, so it's resulted in quite a number of features for us. We are aware that it's a sensitive issue and we are not in the business of stirring anything up.

We've slammed the government in certain stories. One of our reporters went out and found out how difficult it was for them to get any help. We've always put the human angle on it. These people are part of our community and we want to tell their stories. The feedback we've had has been good and you get more interesting insight like that. It's because of the community we are in. We can't afford to take a strident approach to asylum seekers because most of our readers would be offended by it. We live in a very diverse area. We want to tell human stories.

We recently had an asylum meeting run by the council. The point was to tell people the truth about the number of people here – really to calm people down. But they got loads of BNP people there they weren't expecting. Our reporter came back and gave a very fair story, which mentioned that extremist right-wing groups were in attendance. Another paper reported it in exactly the same way, even though the BNP had taken up about 50% of the meeting. The people who were there might have said that it wasn't a true reflection of what happened at the meeting; but we chose not to give them a platform to do it. I think that's very responsible.

We believe Britain must maintain its traditional welcome to genuine refugees from persecution. However, we believe that economic migrants who abuse the asylum system are a problem that must be dealt with if the asylum system is to retain its integrity.

Your traditional local paper like ours is traditionally much more widely read by the indigenous white population than ethnic populations, because it's not a tradition they have of reading local papers, and in many cases they have their own West Indian, Greek and Turkish publications for their own community news and expression of their own community views. So they don't necessarily read our kind of local papers. I haven't got statistics, but my guess would be that the greater part of our readers are not ethnic. But then [again] we did a baby competition and we had people of all races entering.

Question 4

How can the press play a positive role in educating public opinion on these issues?

Responses

We are the front line. People's views are formed by what they read.

The press has a role to report what's going on. In reporting you are educating. It's about informed opinion and information.

It must tell the truth, neither pandering to clearly racist views, nor pressure groups on the other side.

It's part of our job to inform and educate and give balanced and fair coverage, but you're not getting that in some of the nationals and regionals.

We can give background about why lots of people are here and make it clear about the immigration system and all the problems with it.

It would be easy for the press to create a mythology about asylum that's not true. I think it should be fair and objective in all things. I don't think it's the local press' role to do a PR job for asylum seekers or the care of asylum seekers but I think it's the press' duty to be fair and balanced and factually accurate in these things, and not in any way creating a myth around asylum seekers that isn't true.

When last year there was all the talk of Zimbabwean refugees coming over, the whole white farmer issue, we spoke to the local refugee council and they put us in touch with a Zimbabwean refugee who told us about her experience and why she's living over here. From our part of view it was a very interesting read, which is what I'm looking for. I think that's the sort of responsible journalism we should be doing. I don't want to be in a position where we are London's conscience – we're here to report the news. If it's newsworthy, we'll cover it.

We run stories from asylum seekers' perspectives, telling people what life is like for them.

We've got a story this week from the chairwoman of the local Race Equality Council. She says that 80 per cent of her job is trying to change perception of asylum seekers. The issue is in there [the paper] almost every week.

Some journalists don't know where to get information on asylum - there is a lack of user friendly official information.

Questions 5

Are you aware of inaccurate and unbalanced media reports about refugees and asylum seekers? In your opinion, to what extent would you say that inaccurate and unbalanced media reports increase community tension, influence perpetrators of harassment, and increase incidences of racial harassment? How do you think the process works – is it as simple as someone reads an article and carries out an attack? – if not, what do you think is going on?

Responses

Reporting is not going to change the way the man in the street thinks about things.

Obviously, inaccurate and unbalanced journalism is poor journalism. But it is too glib to blame the media for isolated tensions between communities.

On a national level, you look at some of the tabloids and you do wince at some of the things they say. It's irresponsible. When The Sun had a new editor they had the new Mr Men: Mr Asylum Seeker and Mr Refugee, and it's just over the top.

The Daily Express a few months ago wasn't helping. It definitely influences people's opinions.

I do think that they influence people. We recently had a story about swans – The Sun carried the story. We didn't mention asylum seekers but The Sun blamed them. The police said there was absolutely no evidence for that because they don't know who's doing it. It reinforces and exaggerates their views.

Not in our paper. But you can tell. There's the Daily Mail. For example we did a story about wildlife going missing on the river. Then the Daily Mail picked up on it, and three months later the Sun picked up on it. When we did it it was very sensible, and one person said, 'I reckon the asylum seekers are eating them', but all the officials said, 'No, that's not the case' and had lots of reasons why they were going missing. Then we saw the way the Daily Mail and Sun did it, and that was based on the way they'd like everyone to think what was happening. (RC- Did they contact you?) No. They get all the locals and just pick the best stories.

You never know exactly how much people are influenced by what they read, but I think they are, and they expect us to tell the truth and tell it straight. We have to tell all sides to the story. There are always at least two stories. A news story hasn't got our opinions in it; if it's a comment piece it's clearly marked as such. We had a case of donkeys going missing in the local park. We did a story that said the donkeys had gone. Then a national paper picked it up and said asylum seekers had eaten them – that wasn't in our stories. We spoke to the police – they said we may as well say UFOs have taken them. We didn't run the story.

There's a linkage. But I think the sort of people that would react to that kind of reporting would be the sort of people who would be in the pub saying these things anyway. The reporting would be the spark that kicks it all off. I don't think that you'd have someone who has no views on it at all being turned into an anti-asylum-seeker. You've got people with these kind of leanings and all they need is an excuse to carry on spouting their nonsense about it. And if a paper is talking about 'Swan Bake' or the Mr Men, they will talk about it and keep the whole thing going. It fuels it. No. Well, you can't speak for the whole population. There'd have to be something wrong with the person to have it in them to do it anyway. I wouldn't say the majority of people would go out and assault an asylum seeker or a refugee on the back of reading. A lot of things would have to have happened before. Reading would just fuel it.

Absolutely. There's a lot of heated debate and inflamed opinion. Our reporter was pretty shocked when he went to the meeting about asylum seekers. We had to temper our coverage because it [the meeting] was so racist. We think of racists as a small minority of our community, but it is rising so that racism is acceptable for the man in the street. Before, it never really came to the fore; now it's much more acceptable.

As a local paper it would be very easy to stir up trouble, so we do have a responsibility and people do react to our stories. We've managed to persuade thousands of pensioners onto marches, so people do respond to the newspaper. They trust us and expect us to tell the truth.

Yes, I could think of examples of national newspapers: The Daily Mail. My paper's attitude, as far as I can make it so, is to be neutral on all issues. We'd don't have a political agenda, like many national newspapers, and I don't think many local newspapers do have a political agenda because we want to sell our newspapers to everybody who lives in the local area: old or young, black or white, ethnic groups everybody. It's in our interest to sell our newspapers to everybody. We don't want to take sides with anybody, because they won't buy our newspapers.

Obviously if there are anti feelings to asylum seekers that manifest themselves from our readers, that's not to say we won't report them in a neutral and objective fashion. But I can't think of any occasions when we have. We've probably had readers letters that have been complaining about something and may involved a comment, something like 'And this is because the number of asylum seekers coming here, putting pressure on housing or the benefits office,' that's relating to a problem, or partly blaming asylum seekers for a problem. We've had that on our letters page because that's freedom of speech, as long as it's within the law. We wouldn't not print it because it's someone's point of view that we disapprove of. But we would then publish a letter coming back at them saying they've got it wrong and it's not fair.

We do recognise there's a big responsibility on us not to inflame the situation. We have probably made our mistakes but we've learnt from them. But one of the other papers was called in by the police because they carried a very inflammatory front page – as a result of that all the local papers were called in to the police. I think it was after an incident at a mosque.

One's person's description of biased might not tally up with another's. We do our best to strip bias out. The coverage depends on your readership – you put together a paper based on your readership. As soon as you say something is unfair or biased you are getting into dangerous water. The definition of unfair and biased is key to making your research trustworthy. I would be astonished if it didn't. Particular papers will reflect very well the opinions of their readers. If you reinforce their opinions, they'll think 'I must be doing something right'.

I don't know. There are scum out there who will do this. They probably don't read papers – I hope they don't read mine. There's a great danger at pointing the finger at reporting. I think that if people are badly predisposed I don't think we do anything to influence their actions. The cause and effect analysis is difficult.

Violent racists are not created by the media - nor do they need any encouragement to behave in the ghastly ways that they do. Exaggerating the importance of the press in these issues is simply blaming the messenger.

No, because these people [attackers] don't read newspapers. That's the way they think already.

On balance, it probably does. I don't think it's just the papers that are their influences. I don't know what causes racial hatred, but it's not all down to papers.

There are bound to be a number of stories and attacks because the attacks take place and the stories go in. I've no idea whether there's a causal link.

It must be one of the factors. If people read things in newspapers and believe it to be a fact that will play a part in forming their opinion. If it's a factually incorrect story about asylum seekers it will colour their view and maybe give them a biased view. Prejudice against asylum seekers predominantly comes from word-of-mouth. That comes from somewhere originally – and where it comes from originally, who knows? But if a newspaper has printed something of that nature as if it is a fact and true then someone somewhere will believe that and the mythology will grow. Maybe there are dark forces at work that are pedalling this. Our newspapers would be very, very careful with anything like that. One story comes to mind: swans were disappearing at a fast rate; somebody connected this with the possibility that asylum seekers were hunting down the swans for whatever purposes, and I believe we did incorporate somebody's view to that effect in a story. In the same story was a comment from a group supporting asylum seekers saying this is an absolute load of nonsense, don't believe a word of it. That's a balanced story.

Somebody else might argue that we shouldn't have included that view that it might have been asylum seekers – that's a point of view. We didn't have evidence to disprove that theory; we didn't have evidence to prove it. It could have been true. But it was clear that it was just somebody's point of view. It wasn't a proven fact. *Was that picked up by the Sun?*

No. They did a front page lead but it wasn't that area. But you start to think is there some dark force somewhere pushing this? It's cropped up somewhere else, a similar kind of story in a totally different place. It wasn't our one it was somewhere else. So is somebody pushing this story around somewhere because it makes a good story and suits their political purposes? It's a possibility. What people read in newspapers reinforces their opinion, what they already think. 'See I knew it!' you know. It reinforces things. Do they then go out and attack somebody? I don't know. I would imagine that it's a small proportion of people who would take direct action as a result of something like that that they read in a newspaper. I think what newspapers do is one factor in creating views in people's heads. I don't think on their own they would lead to that happening. But if someone's already thinking like that and they see something that reinforces it.

Question 5

In your opinion, do different types of reports, ie those including statistics, or statements from politicians, or using particular language, etc. have a different impact? In what way? Which kinds of newspapers do you think have the most impact on community tension – national, London, local? Do you have any examples of local stories?

Responses

It does. It reinforces people's views.

Yes. It depends what you believe. People believe things from the council and government, whereas they probably think that the refugee lot are just telling fibs.

Yes, because of the perception of their importance. A local council story is dull unless they are doing something particularly outrageous. Home Office statistics you have to look at with a careful eye. Political parties are more interesting than local councils.

The weight of the story depends on the source. People give more weight to credible sources.

Responsible newspapers have a limited impact on community tensions.

National newspapers because they have massive readerships compared to local newspapers.

National papers can certainly stir people up. If a big story breaks around here and national go in and cover that story, they can be very good at upsetting people. They are not as close to the community as we are.

I've got two late middle-aged relatives who are Daily Mail readers. I saw them last year and all they were talking about was asylum seekers. And I asked them, 'So where do asylum seekers live near you then?'. And they said, 'They don't – but they are all coming.' I think the Daily Mail with its right-wing, let's scare-the-hell-out-of-Middle-England stories, drips into the consciousness of people like that.

In London, I couldn't say really. The Standard and Metro are pretty straight. The Standard has right leanings, but I cannot think of an example where I've sat down and thought, 'That's a bit out of order, that's a bit extreme.'

National papers? Yes. I'd point to the Daily Mail and the Express. The Express, I thought, was cynical – just to boost circulation. The Mail takes that line anyway. You know what you are going to read before you pick it up. The Express' line was probably prompted by a decline in circulation.

The Daily Mail. Nationals are part of the national identity and what people think of as national identity. But with a local paper, when people read it they don't have that in mind

I don't think your suburban, middle-class man would give much weight to 'Swan Bake', but he might give more weight to a story in The Daily Mail.

Here it's The Sun, The Mail and to a less extent The Express because they've made asylum their issue in the past. It's time for the media to wake up and recognise their responsibilities.

I read all the local papers and I think they've all got similar policies to our own. It's not our place to incite anything, it's our place to report local news.

Local newspapers tend to be unbiased – they don't have a political agenda or an axe to grind. They are neutral and balanced.

There's more trust in us. I think that local people do take more notice of us than The Express.

It's different for different issues. In the same way, local papers will report on a local level and be read in a different way than the nationals. Local papers appeal to a small group of people. Good locals are trusted. Nationals are a different mix. Trust is a huge thing with us. Our readers trust us because we have no bias.

We are a local paper, we are a community newspaper. That puts us a lot closer to the ground and what's going on and we take our responsibility very seriously. There are various checks in place to ensure our reporting is balanced and fair. In our experience, if we get something wrong people will ring up and let us know. They trust their local paper and expect us to get it right.

I don't think you'll find many, if any, local newspaper editors who have an asylum-seeker-bashing policy in their newspapers, because they just haven't. That's not to say they won't make mistakes or run a story that will have an effect they won't have thought about – that will happen – but I don't think you'll find local newspapers have a asylum-seeker-bashing policy because it's populist and it might sell a few newspapers. They are much more close to their readers and more sensitive to the things they do than national newspapers are.

[In terms of the neutrality of coverage] local papers are more like TV and radio news, in comparison to national newspapers. They take a much more restrained and neutral approach.

If we are saying that misinformation or prejudice might affect a small number of people to do something as a result of their prejudices then a paper with several million circulation, that small proportion is going to be a significant number of people, compared to if it's a small circulation.

On a local level, if something is reported it influences people in a strictly local area. You've still got a responsibility [for what you publish], I accept that. It's not just the people who read it, but other people they talk to. And from experience over many years, what people read in newspapers they usually get wrong. Half the complaints you get are from people who have misinterpreted what they've read. They don't read it carefully. The subtlety of many people in reading newspapers leaves a lot to be desired. What tends to happen is that they read the headline, that sticks and they don't always carefully read what goes underneath which balances, or adds a note of scepticism. Headlines are very crucial. If you have a very provocative headline on an issue like this people won't even bother with what goes underneath.

Appendix 1.3 Experiences reported by RCOs about incidence of harassment

Results

The views of the RCOs are explained more fully in this section. The comments quoted below are a comprehensive summary of the data collected.

Views on the scale of the problem

The problem is bad enough that it could occur on a daily basis; bullying in schools; street harassment; institutional racism and so on. Sometimes incidents might be reported to our organisation three times a week, sometimes it might not be reported once in a month. This is one of the safer boroughs but there are still problems.

Nobody is reporting incidents but it is actually a problem. People do not report it to us, but we know there is a problem. It is generally recognised as a problem by RCOs, but many of them do not or can't act against it for various reasons.

18 months ago our organisation carried a survey on clients where they were asked about their priority issues and needs. There were 200 participants, who were refugees and asylum seekers from various countries. The results of the survey indicated that racism was the number one problem faced by participants to the survey.

Black people in the area are the main perpetrators of street racism towards our community. There is tension between the youth of these communities. Our community spoke with people from the black community centre and there are no problems at this level – it is the youth. It is gang friction.

Because incidents are rarely reported to the police, the police might say that it is not a problem, but they would be wrong. It is a problem but it is not reported.

It is a problem, but our organisation doesn't often hear about it. If you don't ask you don't hear about it, but it is a problem everywhere. Sometimes our clients don't talk about particular problems but I know that it exists because of the way clients talk about their experiences.

The major problem is institutional racism (90%) as opposed to racism on the street (10%). Institutional racism is the biggest problem.

Examples given of cases

I heard of an attack on the local common a little while ago on a member of our community but the victim did not come forward to report it and I didn't want to push the matter.

A year ago a teenager from our community got stabbed but didn't tell anyone and I only heard about it two/three weeks ago.

Our community centre was burnt down in an arson attack four years ago.

Just last week one of our volunteers was beaten up by a gang in the local park.

One of our clients was attacked by a shop keeper after trying to return a faulty purchase some years back.

Recently there was an incident locally. Someone threw tomatoes and other things at a house where some refugees were living. The victims knew who it was. It was reported to the police and said they would not act without evidence about the perpetrator. In the end the victims moved house.

Many problems are in relation to service providers, but it happens everywhere; public transport; work place; neighbours; on the street. It happens day to day, especially in the workplace. People say things like: 'asylum seeker' or 'you just came here to work'.

Experiences of dealing with service providers

RCOs frequently advocate on behalf of members of their community with service providers. When asked about incidents of harassment many gave examples of poor treatment by service providers, even though the researchers did not ask them specifically about experiences of service provision. For the RCOs the treatment that members of their communities receive can amount to harassment.

I know that our members have been dealt with in a certain way because they are refugees or asylum seekers. Sometimes people are very rude.

Yesterday a youngster told me he had gone to the bank to open a bank account. The clerk had asked him for ID. When he saw the ID which said he was a refugee, the clerk made some excuses and would not let him open a bank account. He said there was a problem with the ID. He complained to the manager but the manager didn't do anything and so he had to go somewhere else.

One of my clients is a single mother, who is staying in a hotel with 2 children one of whom is very young. She has no cooking facilities and so she wants to move. She went to the Council offices last week. The housing officer said she would not rehouse the lady because she had ELR which would expire next year and so she would have to go back home to her country of origin. The officer was aggressive and rude and said she "didn't want to know about it". I explained to the housing officer that the lady's stay would probably be extended and this was the Home Offices decision and not hers.

Yesterday one of my clients had gone to the council offices to pick up a travel card so that she could go to Liverpool to meet with her solicitor. She was told that the person she needed to see was busy and she should wait. She had to wait there for hours and in the end, and when she enquired what was happening, was told the person concerned had gone home long ago. After waiting for such a long time she did not receive her travel card. This meant that she could not get to the appointment with her solicitor. I believe that the service provided had been so poor because of a negative attitude that the council staff had had towards my client because she was an asylum seeker from our country.

There are problems for patients in hospitals where interpreters are employed who, although they speak the same language as the refugee or asylum seeker, come from the national or ethnic group responsible for persecution in their country of origin. We know of some cases where patients received the wrong treatment because the interpreters won't translate this properly.

A single parent father with 7 children was receiving help from the council in the form of a home help for 2 hours a week. It was not always the same person who came to help. One day a woman arrived and when she saw pictures on the wall of political leaders from our country she started screaming "terrorist, terrorist" which scared the children.

Explanations given for under – reporting

All of the RCOs mention that there is significant under – reporting of harassment against asylum seekers and refugees. Here are their explanations:

If an incident happens, people don't want to report it and don't want to draw attention to it – they just want to forget about it. Our community don't really report incidents because no action is taken, or because they fear backlash. Asylum seekers keep their heads down. They just want to get on with their lives.

A lot of people do not report such incidents because they do not know how to. People hesitate to report to the police because it takes such a long time and nothing really happens. Where there are language problems, asylum seekers and refugees feel that they can't express themselves to anybody about these incidents.

People often accept it without talking about it. They think that it is part of living in a foreign country and that it is to be expected. Discrimination is a way of life. We were harassed in our own country and we feel that harassment is the norm.

Our community are often unwilling to report racist incidents to the police because of the Home Offices announcements about 'Immigration Hit Squads' in all police stations.

Most of our clients are asylum seekers and there are already so many other problems for them to deal with. For this reason our organisation is reluctant to raise the question of harassment with our clients.

Capacity of RCOs to record harassment

The community groups agree that under-reporting exists not only in the sense that asylum seekers and refugees will not report to the police, but also because in some cases they will not even report to their community group. Lack of resources and training also make it difficult for the RCOs to fully understand the extent of the problem. Comments made on this point include:

RCOs have limited resources and acting against racism is not a priority for them.

It would be helpful to have some training on how to conduct monitoring of harassment among our community.

It is not a problem that we have focussed on. There is frustration about this among the community but we do not have the resources to work on it.

Sometimes we only find out about things that have happened years afterwards.

Appendix 1.4 Full report of the focus group discussions

In the report below the responses of participants have been collated with minimal editing. For the sake of simplicity and clarity, the report of responses to each item or question is divided into sections entitled 'the BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) group said', 'the mainly white young people's group said' etc. Beneath these headings are listed the comments made by individuals in those groups. In most cases, a new line indicates a new person speaking. Exceptions are when people were asked to call out words that come into their heads – these are sometimes given in one line. Other exceptions are when one person immediately replies to another – contradicting or questioning them, rather than addressing a comment to the group. Such interchanges are sometimes placed on the same line.

Media Sample 1

Groups were shown the word ASYLUM as it appears in the newspapers and were asked for their immediate reactions. They were asked: what is the first thing that comes into your head when you think of asylum, and what words would you associate with articles about asylum in the newspapers

The group representing the general settled population of the area said:

It's taken on a derogatory meaning now. Its supposed to be about help, a place to hide, refuge, now it makes you think *"all the bloody asylum seekers coming"*. I agree, *"more spongers coming in"* rather than the real meaning of help and assistance

It looks like a tabloid – so I expect that it is going to tell me something fantastic, unbelievable, untrue. Most stories on asylum take a small angle and it's blown up out of all proportion.

The papers don't cover the whole subject as it affects local people.

It's from one of those comic newspapers isn't it?

The BME group said:

I think of refugees

I think of the Sun newspaper which repeats it again and again and again, often in big red letters

I think of the pictures of people hanging on the trains

Other words associated with asylum – Bogus, scroungers, scavengers – at least that's what the Sun uses

The mainly BME young people's group said:

It does not get my attention

Other words associated with asylum – Bloody hell, Immigrants, Scammers, They get free stuff, Ginnas

The mainly white young people's group said:

'Immigrants'

'Foreigners'

'Lucky people cause they get lots of money, cars, driving lessons for free'

'Scroungers'

'Thieves'

'Trouble'

Media Sample 2

Groups were shown a newspaper photograph of a group of asylum seekers. They were asked; what comes into your head when you see this photograph, and what other images that you have seen in newspapers stick in your minds?

The group representing the general settled population of the area said:

Why is it all young males – no females?

One person was able to recall in detail the story that accompanied the photograph: "It's Calais, queuing up for handouts since Sangatte closed, the French were supposed to have shifted them away from that area... etc."

The BME group said:

Looks like a picture of people on strike, as if they are picketing, shouting slogans.

They are queuing for handouts.

One image I remember seeing is men in their twenties hanging around on street corners.

The mainly BME young people's group said:

Its not right, they are all fighting to get to this one country and when they get here all opportunities that are here for us get straight to them. All housing and jobs goes to them and we are left with nothing. Other pictures you see are of poor asylum seekers – but they aren't poor they are rich. In pictures you see them begging for money and on the street you see them begging for money but then some of them have got gold teeth and good shoes.

The mainly white young people's group said:

I've seen the photography before

'poverty'

'poor countries'

I remember seeing photographs of 'people sewing up their eyes and mouth'

'at the end of the day, these people are worse of than we are and they come here to get a better life' [said in sympathetic tone]

The groups were shown four other media samples. After each one they were asked the following questions;

Is this similar to information that you have seen before? Often?

Does it tell you something you didn't already know? What?

Does it influence your attitude towards asylum seekers and refugees?

Do you think the information given in this piece is accurate, balanced, trustworthy?

If you read/saw something like this, would you discuss it with your family and friends, remember it but not discuss it, forget it?

Media sample 3

The groups were shown a sample from the *Sun* newspaper, giving information from its poll on asylum and its "Sun says" column. The following gives a snapshot of the discussions which ensued:

The group representing the general settled population of the area said:

I don't look at the Sun. Neither do I.

I saw it in a café which is the only place I see the Sun, I regularly see it when I go there.

Its all very well doing this poll but the only people replying are their readers, who are of a certain intellectual type, so it is a very biased piece.

Yes but they still have feelings don't they? I have heard those kind of opinions held by particular people.

There was general agreement among the group that it wouldn't influence them, but one person disagrees – It must to some degree if you read that. Those statements are so bold, it must go into your brain. Another counters – yes, it goes in your brain but are you affected? To which he replies - it goes in as *fact*, to be sorted with other *facts*.

The group is asked is it accurate, balanced and trustworthy?

Absolutely no say several – laughter – It's a wind up

But one adds - all those statements I hear from ordinary people, from people on the streets, at the golf club, throughout this organisation. To which another responds -you don't hear that from us.

I think this is such an insignificant piece of information (even though it is national paper) compared to the information you receive from people locally. Compared to everyday issues, information like this is totally insignificant.

I think it would stay in your head for a while then you would forget it.

The BME group said:

In the Sun you always see articles like this. The angle they take is against asylum seekers. The article gives a quote from the Sun poll but it is inevitable that Sun readers will say that because that is what they are fed. They are given information from that perspective and they just regurgitate what they have read, they are not well informed, they are misguided.

Sun has its own agenda in doing a poll like this – it is not fair, balanced or accurate. They just use it as a way to get their message across.

The group is asked is it accurate, balanced and trustworthy?

Never! Its 100% balls.

Some of the people who come here are forgers, criminals and solicitors will take them on. This brings the system into disrepute – so we have to accept this side of things as well. However, we must remember that asylum seekers need asylum and this article is not representative of that.

How many are genuine and how many are false? The papers say Britain is soft touch. Genuine asylum seekers don't get genuine treatment because of concerns about bogus asylum seekers. A minority is trying to manipulate the situation. If the bogus can be stopped the genuine will get better treatment.

Another person disputes this view-

But the debate is being led by phrases such as bogus. The papers have set terminology to define problems. Of course any system which provides services, be it welfare or whatever, is always subject to some abuse, but if debate only focuses on this one end of the spectrum you will get greater resentment of all asylum seekers. Right wing newspapers focus on this one issue of *bogus* and it's the genuine who suffer.

Under international obligations the UK has to give asylum to those fleeing persecution but the papers don't reflect this.

That comment underneath – *he points to part of article* - is not from the Sun, that is from the BNP – where it says about stealing our money and our character – they are encouraging those on the far right. The BNP campaign on this in their manifesto and they do quite well in some constituencies but really asylum is not that big an issue. Right thinking people know what the truth is but people who read the Sun are likely to have those opinions.

There is information available from refugee organisations giving statistics countering views such as those in the Sun but you do not see these very often.

The Sun is a comic. I wouldn't be bothered by what it writes but it has the biggest readership in the country and so it has an effect. That's what bothers me. Some people take it seriously, it's the only thing they read.

General agreement that they would not discuss the article if they read it in the paper.

The mainly BME young people's group said:

Its always verbal abuse when you hear asylum, that's all you hear. I have hardly heard anyone talk positive about asylum seekers.

You can't blame the press. The feedback they get is from negative people. But the press are not just repeating what they hear they are adding their own little bits.

They would not be writing that if it wasn't what people said.

Is it accurate, balanced and trustworthy?

No its biased.

I believe that quote – *points to part which says some cities are no longer truly British* – but I think the rest is biased.

If I saw that in the papers I would turn the page and read something else – just forget it.

I have no interest in it. I know what asylum seekers are.

I would not discuss this article but if the topic comes up in conversation I will debate peoples views.

The mainly white young people's group said:

I have seen it before (general agreement)

It doesn't really tell me something I had not known before

'Its biased, racist'

'It doesn't make you like them. I don't like asylum seekers, personally.'

'I wouldn't remember something like this'.

'It would not be something that would come up in general conversation'.

Media Sample 4

The groups were shown an article from the *Daily Mail* in which an adviser to the Shadow Home Secretary states that blacks should speak out against asylum seekers because they have most to lose from increased numbers of asylum seekers.

The group representing the general settled population of the area said:

It says if you are white and you say this you will be seen as racist but it isn't a racist issue so blacks and Asians should stand up. Immigrants are being dumped on inner cities which are already overcrowded and where lots of blacks and Asians are living. If asylum seekers are spread around the country they are not a problem but they tend to go and join their friends. In some areas no-one speaks English, schools are having a problem. In those areas someone has to speak out without being accused of racism. It doesn't influence my attitude, but it does tell me what I know from my experience – my shop clientele 20yrs ago was Greek, West Indians, Irish, now they are moving out and are asylum seekers moving in, and the Greeks and West Indians don't like it. They are as English as what I am. So I understand what this article is saying – they have to say something.

I would assume it is an accurate report of his statement, if I read someone quoted in a newspaper, I believe it as a factual report. But over the years I have been misquoted in newspapers and I think why on earth do I believe a single word I read in the newspaper! But unless you challenged me I would believe it as a factual account of his report.

They are reporting this to increase the circulation, to please their readers. The Mail has a political bias, it reflects what its readers want to hear.

I would forget this if I read it. I would not discuss it. The subject is worth discussing – people coming into this country from eastern bloc countries etc., but that's a different matter.

The BME group said:

I think the Shadow Home Secretary is racist. Commit to being British – what does that mean?

The Conservatives have a habit of making stupid comments like this which get reported in the press and then they have to apologise afterwards – it goes all the way back to the famous rivers of blood speech – Enoch Powell – so its not that surprising to see this article.

The problem of asylum seekers and refugees has been largely created by Americans and Western people – they must face it.

I think we should always have an opinion on what is written in the papers, not just read it without a view.

The point raised in this article - it is not an issue for us. The real issue is that we should be working towards a situation where there will not be any political asylum seekers – that means no war.

It says carrying around the union flag – is that what it means to be British? In Islam we don't believe in nationalism.

It implies ethnic communities are not committed to being British and need to prove themselves. My response to this article - just throw it in the bin!

The mainly BME young people's group said:

It is a bit harsh. It makes us (ie black people) look a bit bad. It makes us look like we are going out to totally destroy asylum seekers and not let them anywhere near us or near this country.

Even though I don't agree with asylum seekers I think that is a bit prejudiced, its rude, harsh.

I have no say in anything so there is no point having an opinion. You can go and try and have your say but you have no say in anything in this world.

Nothing is ever accurate in the papers.

I agree with the point about pressure on services but they are phrasing it wrong. It is not just black people affected, the pressure is on everyone.

The bit about the flag – *points at part of article that says black people should rally around the flag* – it's rubbish.

If I saw that in the papers it would affect me straight away and I would want to talk about it – its capitalisation. We are doing a status thing, making ourselves have the power.

What is it saying? Is it saying we must stay away from asylum seekers? It is about splitting them up from us. It's about power. What are we supposed to do with them if we don't help them? That is rubbish where it says we can't be accused of racism. That article is rubbish.

Why do they come to this country? – Why don't they go to France?

Some come for genuine reasons some don't but to put them all into one category and say they are all bad and all come here, that wrong.

I think they come here because it is the easiest place to make money I know because I am a street kind I see a lot of people come and go.

The mainly white young people's group said:

No one said that they had seen it before

'Why should blacks and Asians be the only ones who can complain without being called racist. Everyone has the right to come forward, not just blacks and Asians.' [Most appear to agree with this].

Most claim that this article, or this type of article would not influence their attitudes and opinions.

One of the participants explained that he had worked with asylum seekers in a carwash and that he felt sorry for them. He said that 'the media pushed forward into the limelight all the people going through the tunnel. This puts them in a bad light. Not enough genuine people come'.

The Mail is described as a 'dodgy paper'.

It is an accurate report because it is what he says'

'Maybe it has been taken out of context'

General agreement that this report would not be discussed further.

Media Sample 5

The groups were shown a short film showing two refugees talking about settling in the UK

The group representing the general settled population of the area said:

(after listening quietly)

I've seen things like that on TV.

The information given is not new to me but it emphasises that what we are forgetting and what the papers are forgetting is that many of them are very educated and particularly younger educated people, and as we are getting an older population the arrival of such people is an advancement for the country.

It reminds me of when our organisation supported a family from Sarajevo – they were highly educated, and their daughter spoke no English but became top of the school, and we paid for her fees at music college. They were smashing, a great asset, and they brought a lot to the community.

In general TV shows a more positive side. The papers are more negative about asylum but then they give the black side of everything, they thrive on gloom.

I saw a programme about a woman refugee from Rwanda – tracing her story up until she arrived in this country. What happened to her was horrendous – that really got to you. It was really dreadful, and it made you think how can we allow this to go on in the world.

This film is not giving a balanced view, it is just one view.

Most of the dodgy ones are not going to go on television.

A lot of them can't speak English and so can't give their views.

In this area we see unbelievable numbers of refugees.

I am more likely to remember this than the articles you showed - its real, they're real people, its personal, you are discussing individuals rather than a generalised statement.

The BME group said:

(after listening quietly)

It reminds me of my parents – they want to go back – I think all of our parents would like to go back

It makes me realise that deep down refugees dream of going home – and you know that if that is in their heart something serious must have happened in their life. Who would want to leave their country?

It tells me that genuine asylum seekers always want to go back, probably the bogus ones don't. But the bogus ones – even they leave for a reason – it must be something major – better standard of living.

The problems of the world are getting worse, due to the irresponsibility of world leaders, economic and social injustice, unfair trade, the policies of the IMF, these are all the cause of the problem, and how are people meant to escape from that situation? This film gives a different perspective to the debate – I would remember it.

The film is not balanced because it only gives their point of view.

The mainly BME young people's group said:

(Talking over the film as it is running)

When people think of asylum seekers they don't think of people like that

He's got a nice home, look where she lives (meaning it looks smart)

They are just over here to get money and start their own business and things or to take back home.

I want to know how they got over here

I saw something like that in school

I saw something like that on BBC3 – about how/why they got here

I still don't like them

Its not balanced. They are just defending themselves - talking to make themselves look good and from what they know or what they see. They don't know or understand other effects or why people are against them.

The mainly white young people's group said:

(most listening quietly)

'You don't often see their views, but I have seen similar things before'

'It is interesting that the woman feels that she can't make any long term plans'. I thought that they would feel secure, but obviously not. The woman changes my opinion'.

'This clip is biased and one-sided'.

'We get chased by Somalis. My phone was stolen by a gang of Somalis.'

'It is only a minority (who behaves like this)... but it gives asylum seekers a bad name.'

'I would change channels if I saw this on the television'

'I have had to do a lot of work with asylum seekers and I sit and talk to them and because of this I would be interested to watch it.

Media Sample 6

The groups are shown an article from the *Daily Star* reporting a local London story – the disappearance of donkeys from a park. It is reported that they have been eaten by asylum seekers.

The group representing the general settled population of the area said:

This is a paper for people who find the Sun intellectually challenging – laughter

It reminds me of the story about the swans disappearing from the Thames.

I've also heard it said that asylum seekers are eating our coarse fish – carp and bream etc. I have been fishing for years and I can't catch them – but supposedly they go down with primitive stuff and they catch them! How they do it I don't know but that's the story that's told.

I think the press is doing a service –(What! Say others in surprise) They are bringing issues before the public. I don't mean these sort of stories, I mean the reports in the big papers which are concentrating on numbers and how they are causing the country indigestion because we can't take too much change in one go.

Do you think this is accurate, balanced and trustworthy?

You must be joking!

I might discuss something like this in passing, for example I might say "have you seen this absolute rubbish?"

The BME group said:

Its stupid and shouldn't be on the front page of a newspaper

It's a joke. The whole paper is a joke

I might discuss it with friends for a laugh.

But it makes you think there is a serious problem with asylum seekers.

It's false information. It says Somalis eat donkeys but Somalis are Muslims and Muslims don't eat donkeys. We know that but Star readers probably don't know it. It might make people think that they are going to attack our dogs and cats next.

I think the Star is a paper is for uneducated people.

The mainly BME young people's group said:

I didn't know there are donkeys in this country (laughter – haven't you ever been to the zoo?)

I don't think that's true – because they got caught eating the swans now they are blamed for everything else that's going

I don't believe it

We saw the story about the swans in the paper

Its total rubbish. The paper is just trying to put blame on them.

It is not at all trustworthy, its stereotyping them

There's no evidence it was asylum seekers- another disagrees and a debate ensues. They got evidence of the swans – I saw a photo in the paper of a woman and 2 men attacking the swan – it was an asylum seeker. How do you know, the papers lie so badly? Well it looked like an asylum seeker.

The swans are disappearing all over – the asylum seekers can't afford food or nothing but they've got cars and they go and kill the swans – I like swans – why couldn't they kill the ducks?

In this article they are making it sound worse than it is because by putting the letter 's' on the end of asylum seekers it sounds like all asylum seekers eat donkeys.

The mainly white young people's group said:

'Yeah, they killed the Queen's swans'

'But there is no proof to say it was them, no mention of eye witnesses, they automatically assume that it was asylum seekers, that's discrimination'.

'Haven't seen this story before, but have heard about the swans.'

' if you saw the headline you would read it'

'It makes you more sympathetic to asylum seekers'

'It tells you something about the paper'

'But these papers are comics'

'There is no actual proof that it was refugees or asylum seekers'

'Yea I would discuss it - we'd have a nice laugh'

Open discussion 1

Several questions are asked to encourage an open discussion. The questions and the responses received are as follows:

What do you think has been the effect of the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees in your borough?

Are you more likely to believe something about asylum seekers if you hear it by word of mouth, from a friend etc. rather than if you read it yourself? If so why?

The group representing the general settled population of the area said:

Its in the hospitals that we have the biggest problem, immigration generally has overloaded our hospitals, when my mother was in hospital I saw big problems relating to new immigrants -delays calling translators for this person, that person, all from the public purse - and its not just one or two of them and that is affecting my family. Then my young grandson went to hospital at 9 o'clock at night because the doctor refused to come out to see him, he was told there would be a couple of hours or more wait. The waiting room was chock a block with immigrants and the administrator said these people haven't got a doctor, doctors wont take them because their list is too big - so it affects my family.

But you could say that's a criticism of the NHS not coping with the population around it. The NHS needs be improved to meet the needs of all the people in this country.

The BME group said:

Asylum seekers and refugees have boosted up our school reputation. A lot get very good grades - one boy got 8 'A stars' .

It was in the paper that some of the asylum seekers locally came out with best results. We have large numbers in our borough and our borough has benefited.

The national economy has benefited from asylum seekers and refugees by 2.5 million – which outweighs the expense they incur.

But there is a long wait at the doctors surgery – that is an effect.

There are a lot of Somalis in the area and the effect is very positive, we learn from them they are very humble. They are very hardworking people, good for the local economy, they create jobs, new facilities new shops, internet cafes.

The range of restaurants run by refugees adds to variety. If you stopped asylum seekers and refugees coming here then the restaurant, catering, cab services and buses in London would come to a halt

So many Muslims from all around the world coming together unlike anywhere else in Muslim world adds to our understanding of Islam mosques serve diverse communities

The mainly BME young people's group said:

Its disgusting

Asylum seekers are ginnas.

They opened another 24 hour shop down my road. I have been living here years and I don't have a shop. They have been here 10 minutes.

But they are here for a reason

When they were growing up, did they get their mothers saying "do you want something to cry for?" and giving them licks for stupidity like we'd get – they have problems but so do we.

Why do they all end up here?

They put them in the deprived areas, in the ghettos, because the housing is cheaper. Send them somewhere else in the UK or send them back

The council say no to people like us but do not have power to say no to them. If we want a house they say no go live with your parents – then they get a house

I saw about 30 – 40 of them in one 3 bed house - like ants – women with babies Jesus Christ

All the tramps on the floor every day the council could say lets have a hostel for them bums, all the asylum seekers are in the hostels.

I blame the asylum seekers for lying

Why don't they go to France?

The mainly white young people's group said:

'Negative on the whole,

'Higher crime....mobile phone theft has tripled'

'If they had come over here legally and done it properly in the first place, there would be no problem. Why don't they claim asylum the legal way instead of sneaking in – that's what I don't like about asylum seekers'.

'They know they got it easy if they come here'

'They are closing in on us'

'When you see them walking down the streets you see them in packs'

'If I went for a job they would pick them over me, because they are afraid to be called racist'.

'No they hire them because they can pay them peanuts'

'If you read something in the tabloids then you should not believe it, but if you read it in the broadsheets you should believe it, cause they are aimed at the people up there, businesses etc'

Open discussion 2

The following questions were asked:

Do you think that there is community tension in this borough?

How far does it relate to asylum seekers and refugees?

Is it on the increase?

Do you think that inaccurate and unbalanced media reports affect community tension?

Do you think that inaccurate and unbalanced media reports influence perpetrators of harassment and increase incidences of racial harassment and if so why do you believe this? How does it happen?

The group representing the general settled population of the area said:

Newspapers bring issues to public attention. If you accept the veracity of what you read then it will have an effect because the press is blaming asylum seekers. And it's not just once or now and again, it is in the papers every day – the more you see it the more you get to believe it.

Do the asylum seekers and immigrants read the papers?

You are more influenced by what you see in your general life.

The papers reflect our views rather than coming the other way but do distort them a bit depending on their point of view

If you read the Star and the Independent then you might get a balanced view

As I walked down the high street the other day I noticed 20-30 different conversations going on – none in English – a little experiment.

There are so many of them in this borough

The BME group said:

We don't think there is much tension. There were some incidents between Turkish factions a few years ago relating to politics in Turkey. There are a lot of support groups, and organisations to give them skills to find work. They recognise that asylum seekers and refugees bring in skills but are prevented from contributing by the language barrier.

Media reports create problems where they don't actually exist like that article about being British – make people think about whether they are British or not but not thought about it before.

The media are stupid and ignorant

Quoting government sources in papers has an effect because ignorant people won't question it. They think he's a government official or whatever so it must be right. They don't think for themselves.

For some people, harassment is in their agenda – they have that intention in their minds. These reports give them an excuse to spur them further. It brings them into the mainstream if papers print views shared by right wing groups. The right wing can go door to door and say this is what the Sun says and this is what we say and that will have an effect on people. Maybe not many take them seriously but some do and that's the worry.

The mainly BME young people's group said:

Everybody is racially harassed - blacks harass whites, whites harass blacks, there is black on Turkish crime, Turkish on Kurdish crime

Asylum seekers get racial abuse but not a lot

They bring it all on themselves – begging with babies in their hands and then they want people to respect them – why do that to yourself?

Some people actually believe the rubbish that is in the papers – so it does have affect on some people– not strong minded people.

The mainly white young people's group said:

The reason for there is community tension is because the press are telling half truths and those who are uneducated believe it and then the person who reads it takes on the view. (male youth leader)

'Its not just asylum seekers who beg, but when they beg it is highlighted'.

'There is tension between the refugees and the Asians, then they said to each other, we shouldn't be fighting, we should go after the white

All agree that the newspaper do have a big affect on community tension.

'Its just some people whose behaviour is affected'

It is the way that you have been brought up. If you go to an all white school, you will think that they are invading your space and then the papers affect you but if like us you go to school with people from a mixture of backgrounds then what you believe is based on what you have grown up with, not what the papers tell you.

Open discussion 3

The following questions were asked:

Are there any issues related to asylum seekers and refugees that you think should get more newspaper coverage?

What do you think should be done about some of the issues that we have discussed?

What if any role do you feel you have as citizens in relation to the situation?

The group representing the general settled population of the area said:

The newspapers should feel pride in writing about issues that help to integrate them.

I know a refugee who was a surgeon who couldn't practice because he spoke no English.

There are a lot of them in this area, they should be scattered in the country.

For genuine asylum seekers, I have no problem with barrack style accommodation like the one they burnt down, where they are taught English so they can work and earn money and then you can integrate them. Whilst they come in and can't speak the language then they become a problem. Put them somewhere where they learn our language and customs. English people don't care where you come from if you speak to us in our language and try and work for a living

They come from countries where there is no law and order – they are used to the law of the jungle so obviously they are going to cheat and tell lies.

I want more information on real illegals – dress factories/sweatshops we know are full of illegal workers – not paying taxes.

Now we have all these groupings fighting between themselves shootings, knives. West Indians hate Somalians. There is enormous racism between them.

There is a strong underground feeling against asylum seekers and this government not capable of addressing it.

How many of them are men instead of ladies? We are not allowed to integrate with the whole family community. If the women came out more it might change the atmosphere.

The BME group said:

All the positive things – contribution to the economy, achievements of children in school, skills bring in. Other papers should pick up on these things to counter the Sun, Star and Mail. The Independent does it – it gives real statistics. There should be more TV programmes. Papers don't give enough educational information that explains the situation to people.

Where human beings are involved journalists have a responsibility to show a balanced view. There should be more initiatives by organisations and government to get people into work, and welcoming and incorporating them into society.

The mainly BME young people's group said:

I want to see statistics, concrete facts that are absolutely true. I want more information on why they are here. There should be equal opportunities (KS- are there not at the moment?) – hell no, we come last

I am not joking but if I was to speak to an asylum seeker he would give me money, he would give me money

Because I can't beat the system I don't think they should be allowed to beat the system

The mainly white young people's group said:

'Yes, where they come from, why they leave, but not everyone has access to the channels which show the type of programmes that show where they come from and why they leave. They should show it in magazines because the young people would then respond' (youth worker)

'Young people are not interested in magazines with refugees and asylum seekers'

(Youth worker) I remember when a group of Kosovar youths came to play football last year. All the young guys from the youth centre really enjoyed playing football with them and liked them. Perhaps we should do things like that more often.

We should do like Ali G says – just let the good looking ones in and send the rest back.

'We can't really do much about it'

Appendix 1.5: The headline timeline

Week one

Paper	Aug 1	Aug 2	Aug 3	Aug 4	Aug 5	Aug 6	Aug 7
Independent							
Telegraph							
Times			On the trail of the Voodoo Child, p 15 + 16				Racist set fire to asylum-seekers' centre, jury told, p 13
Evening Standard	Scam helped immigrants to pass their driving tests, p 19						500 Liberian refugees to settle in the UK
Sun	Asylum Suicide, p 1						
Mail	"You cannot leave refugees begging", Judge's ruling puts Blunkett benefits policy in disarray	The man who helped illegal immigrants fiddle their driving tests		Migrants 'must face health checks'	Asylum Health Timebomb The three deadly diseases and what you pay to fight them Check all migrants for Aids, demand Tories Labour accused of cowardice for failing to act as London is named the 'TB capital of the	£500,000, a 142 – seat jet and 15 guards just to deport one family of five asylum seekers, p5	

					Western World'		
Voice							
Asian Voice							
Local Papers							
Metro				Tories to bar sick asylum-seekers, p 4	Tories defend asylum tests, p 6	'Barbarism' claim as Kurds fly out	

Total number of articles (excluding letters) = 16

Week two

Paper	Aug 8	Aug 9	Aug 10	Aug 11	Aug 12	Aug 13	Aug 14
Independent			'Terrified' Ay family go on the run, p 4			Jail for gang leader who earned millions by smuggling 10,000 people to UK in two years, p 6	Adventures in the black economy 'The gangs of new Britain' [Cover story of 'The review of the Independent'] Five illegal migrants die after boat capsizes, p 10 Asylum-seeker guilty over Yarl's Wood riot, p2 130 migrants held in prison, despite pledge, p2
Telegraph						Ruthless gang jailed for trade in migrants, p 2	
Times						Migrants escape, p 5	
Evening Standard					12,000 migrants sill in UK as smuggler is jailed. People trafficker gets eight years for £12m racket, p 2		
Sun						How Blunkett's bid to bribe asylum-seekers to go home ended in failure. Afghans 26,000 in: 40 out. Iraqis 50,000 in: 8 out. 8 years for rat who smuggled 12,000 Albanians, p 11	

Mail					Afghans and Iraqis decide they won't go home, even if we pay them, p4	Dream on, Tony, while Britain goes to the dogs, p 13 Gangster made millions sneaking 12,000 migrants into 'easy option' Britain, Judges order Blunkett to bring back deportee, p 19	A Belgian Lesson, p12 Illegals' pair given 2 years, p 38
Voice							
Asian Voice							
Local Papers						Concern as family goes into hiding	
Metro						Gang sneaked 12,000 refugees into Britain, p 9	Refugee found guilty of rioting, p 2

Total number of articles (excluding letters) = 18

Week three

Paper	Aug 15	Aug 16	Aug 17	Aug 18	Aug 19	Aug 20	Aug 21
<u>Independent</u>		Asylum – seekers jailed over Yarl's wood riots	Amin: the lapdog turned butcher', p 6 + 7 Church Speaks out about child refugees, p2			Immigration centre to be built despite local anxiety, p 7	
Telegraph	Iraqi refugee beats double handicap to gain top grades, p 7	Four years for asylum seekers in riot chaos, p 11	Blunkett in crackdown on criminal refugees, p 8		Thirty years on, immigration again threatens to swamp politics, p 18 Voters 'worry more about immigration than crime', p 18	Prescott ignores rural veto on new asylum centre, p 10	Asylum Centre: Why only Prescott's word counts, p 16
Times	Australia's asylum measures under fire, p 17 Gurkhas may win the right to live in Britain, p 9	Asylum-seekers jailed for the detention centre riot, p 2		Ugandan Asians reflect on 30 years of success. The death of Idi Amin has led the refugees he expelled 30 years ago to look back on how far they have travelled, p 6 Asylum escape, p 8			
Evening Standard	Blunkett law puts asylum seekers on the streets, p 5					Prescott backs 750-bed asylum detention centre, p 14	

Week three (continued)

Paper	Aug 15	Aug 16	Aug 17	Aug 18	Aug 19	Aug 20	Aug 21
Sun	Asylum – the shame that lives next door, p 13	Britain and the Asylum Crisis Next week: a vital Sun news investigation, shock fact: shock survey: don't miss it, p2	Asylum bungle, p 18 Asylum seekers' free £220 taxi, p 9	Halt the Asylum Tide Now. Shock Sun Poll: Your verdict on Britain's biggest crisis, p1. Asylum: the biggest crisis facing our country today. 'Stand by for Europe flood', £180K bill as deport bid flops, p6-7. Asylum: the biggest crisis facing our country today. This man teaches illegals how to cheat our system. The Sun Says Way of life is at stake. Shock Stats. Jumping NHS queues – how asylum seekers get priority on health, p8-9	Asylum riot at Butlins. Brawl after hols terror. AIDS 27% increase in HIV victims in a year. 80% of heterosexual cases from Africa. Sun Special on the biggest crisis facing Britain today. Our heritage is crumbling. The Sun says, p6-7 Elegant hotel now a refugee centre. Asylum: Britain's biggest crisis, The Sun says. Health Crisis, p8	Richest town in Britain is swamped by illegals. look who they found, 68 Brazilians, 17 Ulkranians, 2 Armenians, 1 Bulgarian, p 14 + 15 Labour have let us all down on asylum crisis (letters) p 33	Migrant horde in hospital rampage. Judge's fury as job gets to stay. UK is top spot for illegals, say cops. Passport fraudster suing UK for £100k, the Sun says, p8-9 Sun special on asylum: the biggest crisis facing the UK today, Tomorrow: the illegal immigrants up in court, p14-15
Mail	I'm bunkered (letters) p 67	Hospitals facing case crisis from bill for illegal migrants, p 31 Riot, asylum and a shaming, p 12 The night £100 m went up in flames,	Blacks must help stem tide of asylum seekers, says Tory aide, p9 Sly health tourists make us	You can't send 94 illegal workers back on one plane, Brazil tells Blunkett. It's too 'humiliating', oh, and the bill for the UK taxpayers could top	An open door to crime and terror (comment), p 12 I could have been a terrorist, p 6 + 7	Lone asylum children 'are arriving by the thousand' Judge attacks decision to let violent refugee stay, p17	

		p 4 + p 5	so sick, p 54	£400K. EU sparks migrant flood Top tips for Tories (letter), p 50			
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Week three (continued)

Paper	Aug 15	Aug 16	Aug 17	Aug 18	Aug 19	Aug 20	Aug 21
Voice				Story from hell. Survivor of Rwanda genocide takes his anti- prejudice message to young people, p 4. Wish they weren't here. Tories demand screening to stop overseas 'health tourists' clogging up the NHS and spreading diseases. Brits first, p 4 + 5			
Asian Voice							
Local Papers	Asylum fiasco, p 2						
Metro						Anger as rural asylum centre gets the go- ahead, p 2	Judge's anger at crook given unlimited asylum, p 7

Total number of articles (excluding letters) = 56

Week four

Paper	Aug 22	Aug 23	Aug 24	Aug 25	Aug 26	Aug 27	Aug 28
Independent				TB cases jump for black African children in UK, p 5		Stowaway teenager suffocates on journey, p 10	Recognition data to be included in UK visas, p 6
Telegraph							Biometric passport 'back door to ID cards', p 10
Times				Asylum warning, p 4 Jolie relieved, p 12			UK visitors may face fingerprint or eye tests, p 4
Evening Standard	'Snakehead boss faces jail over people smuggling, p 2						
Sun	Britain and asylum day 5: the Amazing Asians, Jaffer came to Britain with just £55 and ended up as Deputy Lord Lieutenant, p12-13 Britain must stop being the hospital for the world (letters) p 46	Blunkett owns up... 'I can't argue with the Sun over asylum', p2 Sorry Story. The Home Secretary threatens tough measures to crack down on asylum cheats, p6	Migrants 70 ft leap from ship, p 40 Asylum taxis are so un-fare (letters) p 54	TB soars 400% for migrants, p2		Asylum mum steals dead baby's identity. Fury at hostel row.	Finally Mr Blair does something on asylum (even if it is only visiting the migrants centre in Croydon) p19 The Sun says Numbers up p 8
Mail	Passport to folly, p 12 The £100,000 detention. Asylum fraudster sues for 'distress	£ 1 m asylum 'fun' bill Weeks at Butlin's and trips to the zoo, p 4.	Luxury for migrants in new centre.	Thousands are given back door key to Britain, p4 Tory fears over terror			

	and inconvenience', p 27			threat, p 4 The TB explosion, p 4			
Voice		Asylum 15 sleep out on streets, p 5					
Asian Voice		Asylum-seekers jailed for Yarls Wood riot, p 11 Immigration worries British voters more than crime, p 4 Scotland Yard targets identity theft, p 9 Dodging deportation, p 11 Asylum-seekers flee, p 11					
Local Papers	Lipman service, p 31 Asylum seeker's benefits fraud, p 4 It was just like Victorian times, p 16 'Scandal' over asylum seekers. Support for councillor, p 11					Refugee excels, p 5	Push to transform refugees into GPs, p 16 Council set aside lump sum for refugees, p 9
Metro					Cuts 'put refugees at risk', p 6		

Total number of articles from week four (excluding letters) = 39

Week five

Paper	Aug 29	Aug 30	Aug 31	Sept 1	Sept 2	Sept 3	Sept 4
Independent	Government on track to halve asylum applications, p 9 Justice for refugees is not a matter of meeting targets, p 18				Boy, 11, was treated like a slave and tortured, court told, p 2		Immigrants will have to pass test on Britishness, p 6
Telegraph	Passports for migrants hit peak, p 6					16 pc fall in claims for asylum in EU, p 6	Would-be Britons to sit written history test, p 6
Times	Tougher action on asylum 'is not working', p 4 'This is a good place to be. My family have a future', p 4	Council to pay for teenage refugees, p 9		Blunkett to close asylum loophole, p 2		Three injured as migrants in Calais, p 18	Immigrants to be tested on history and language, p 4
Evening Standard	Asylum seekers, p 11					Courage of the Iraqi children maimed by the war. Victims of war, p 16	
Sun	Murder, terrorism theft and violence. Three typical days in court for UK asylum seekers. How asylum crisis affects life in Britain, p14 So who do you think you are kidding Mr Blunkett? Asylum claims down but... New passports up 200%, Work Permits up 300%, Student visas up	Asylum thief to stay in UK				The Sun says: Test Case. What makes someone British? P 8	Test of British. Can you pass Blunkett's Britishness exam? P 17

	9%, Working holiday makers up 17%. Figures Hide the Truth, IDS vows Tories will stem tide of asylum, One door shuts... another opens, p13						
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Week five (continued)

Mail	As asylum figures fall, are migrants just going underground? Rush to beat the 'Britishness' test, p 19	Pay for asylum children till they're aged 24, council told. I won't deport refugee criminal, says judge					Britain still the world's asylum capital, p 10
Voice							
Asian Voice							
Local Papers							
Metro	Asylum-seeker claims fall 30%, p 2			New purge on refugees who commit crime, p 2			

Total number of articles from week five (excluding letters) = 25

Week six

Paper	Sept 5	Sept 6	Sept 7	Sept 8	Sept 9	Sept 10	Sept 11
Independent	Tony Blair should come out and tell the truth: he is a progressive politician'. Gay people instead of loving Blair, are – like everyone else who has benefited – convinced that he is just another Tory', p 15, (editorial)		Thousands of children being sent to prison, p 8 Young asylum seekers set to win release, p 8		Government ready to give way on EU constitution, p 2 Police chief: Asylum-seekers are good for UK, p 2		Berezovsky 'given asylum in Britain', p 13 Police on trial over death of asylum-seeker, p 13
Telegraph			Refugees converge on Calais as ferries struggle to stem tide. More than 800 asylum seekers aim to reach Britain despite closure of Sangatte camp, p 10	'Probation' for asylum seekers, p 1 Tory probation plan for asylum seekers, p 6. Wife of Briton who fled from Mugabe fight for visa, p 6	Man killed in asylum seekers' street clash, p 4		Tycoon given asylum, p 6
Times				Britain faces new wave of migrants, p 2			Asylum for tycoon threatens Blair's links with Putin, p 16
Evening Standard	Latest victory by BNP is 'a sad day for democracy', p 4						Russian billionaire wins UK asylum, p 15 Asylum granted, p

							1 Refugees on the run, p 12
Sun	Proud to be British, p 11			Illegals set up a new HQ, 6 Weeks.Exclusive: Tory plan to crack down, p13 Speak Up, IDS The Sun Says, p8. Immigration test fails to tackle real issues, p 35			Tory crackdown on bogus refugees is way forward, p 46

Week six (continued)

Mail			They're Back. The new asylum army massing in Calais, p1 Who needs Sangatte? P7		Only one in five failed asylum seekers is kicked out, Keep them on islands while their claims are processed, Tories urged, Farce of 'missing' migrants, p6		
Voice				Immigrants testing time. Government proposals for a citizenship exam whip up storm of protest, p 2 Citizen tests a step too far, p 9 (The Voice Comment) Asylum: The Pros & Cons. Is the split in the black community just another 'divide and rule'			

				government tactic? One in, One out – two asylum seekers speak of their struggle, p 10 + 11			
Asian Voice							
Local Papers							
Metro	Blair: It's been tough but we will win through. What he said, p 2				Police chief backs asylum seekers, p 2		Asylum-seekers on the run, p 2

Total number of articles from week five (excluding letters) = 33

Week Seven

Paper	Sept 12	Sept 13	Sept 14
Independent		Berezovsky will not be extradited, judge rules, p 12	
Telegraph		Cry Freedom. At the age of seven Francis Bok was kidnapped from his village by Sudanese militia and taken as a slave. After 10 years of beatings and abuse, he escaped to America. Now he is fighting for the liberty of the many thousands who weren't so lucky. [Telegraph Magazine, p 42, 43 & 44]	
Times		Russian tycoon beats extradition over 'death plot', p 12	
Evening Standard			
Sun			
Mail			Blunkett row over tycoon's asylum, p 23
Voice			
Asian Voice		Does citizenship test make the grade?, p12	
Local Papers			
Metro	Russian billionaire granted asylum, p 2		

Total number of articles from week six (excluding letters) = 6

Approximately 193 articles were printed in papers covered by the monitoring in the period beginning on the 1st of August and ending on the 14th of September (inclusive).

Part 2 – Appendices giving further information on the method used

- Appendix 2.1 Sampling for each element of the research
- Appendix 2.2 Questions for borough community leaders
- Appendix 2.3 Questions for editors
- Appendix 2.4 Questions for police
- Appendix 2.5 Questionnaire for focus groups
- Appendix 2.6: Focus group script
- Appendix 2.7 Incident monitoring form (separate file)

Appendix 2.1: Sampling for each element of the research

Choosing the Boroughs

The process of media influence is our target of investigation. Through working in a small number of sites we seek to find solid evidence about that process – but not about its volume or intensity in other sites. We shall conclude whether or not it is likely to occur in those conditions elsewhere but we cannot be sure how much or where exactly. As a short term pilot project, it was agreed that the research would be conducted in two boroughs.

Given what has been stated earlier about localities, it is clear that patterns of community relations may differ simply for reasons connected to the composition of local populations. Nonetheless, London is host to many communities and the relevance of asylum-seeking populations to community relations is a widespread issue. However, our main concern is with process and – at least, not in this study- with assessing the impact of the media in every London borough.

The most convincing procedure in a pilot study is to select study sites:

- where there is very likely to be evidence about the process
- where the demographics suggest that migrants are visible within the populations
- where some information is already being collected
- where there are networks from which evidence of views can be collected
- where community groups are willing to provide evidence
- where there is likely to be a range of community views

We call this critical case sampling in that, if there is evidence of processes and connections to be found, its presence will be uncovered and, if it were not, we would have to revise our assumptions. We expect to be able to arrive at a better understanding by thoroughly examining all the relevant aspects of the case study. The following information was available to us at the start of the project and formed the basis for our decision.

Borough A

Borough A is an ethnically diverse London borough. It is a mixed income borough, touching central and outer London, and it includes one of the largest populations of refugees of any London borough. There are large well-established refugee communities and several refugee community organisations exist; there are also many non-refugee BME communities. There have been racial incidents against refugees but in general the borough supports a diverse range of communities without a high number of racial incidents. The Local Authority website gives high priority to diversity, community and harassment issues and the local authority are well used to consulting refugee organisations and others through meetings relating to community safety and other issues.

Borough B

Borough B is also an ethnically diverse London borough. It is a mixed income borough, touching central and outer London, with a sizeable and growing refugee population, with numbers comparable with many other boroughs. Several refugee community organisations exist and there are also many non-refugee BME communities. There have been racial incidents against refugees, and against ethnic minorities in general, with a relatively high number of incidents recorded by the Metropolitan Police compared to other boroughs. The local authority and borough police are highly committed to dealing with racial incidents and run a number of innovative projects to promote community safety. A well-established local harassment monitoring group exists.

Reasons for choosing the newspaper sample

It was not felt to be necessary, or possible in the scope of the project, to monitor all national papers. Instead the following list was selected for monitoring during August and September:

The sample was randomly chosen from papers which were known to be widely read in the areas studied and which were considered to reflect a range of views on asylum. Owing to the need to prioritise research resources, the Express and the Star were not selected; nor were the Mirror or the Guardian. The resulting national sample was intended to be representative without being comprehensive.

The London and borough wide papers were chosen for their local viewpoints, the BME papers chosen for a BME viewpoint.

Selection of spokespersons for borough interviews

The selection of spokespersons for the local representatives interviewed was sometimes determined by the researcher being contacted by individuals in response to these letters, but largely by additional follow up calls by the researcher to the organisations.

Selection on RCOs for incident monitoring

Organisations were approached by telephone and email according to available information on RCOs in the areas studied derived from the RADAR database and other sources.

Selection of focus groups

The adult group and the youth groups were drawn from regular users of major community centres and youth centres in the boroughs. The black and ethnic minority community focus groups were organised with assistance from local black or Asian voluntary and/or community organisations.

Time and resource constraints made it impractical to generate focus groups from randomly selected individuals who were unacquainted with one another. Instead we approached existing organisations to ask if we could attend one of their meetings. The groups were selected from the many organisations active in the boroughs, identified through internet research and other sources.

The criteria for approaching organisations to take part were that they were:

A group with a local focus, involved in local community activity

Not involved in campaigning on the asylum issue – either for or against, or known to have a view on the issue.

Apolitical

Meeting regularly

Unknown to the researchers

Selection of focus group materials

The newspaper sample materials presented were NOT chosen because they were from a particular newspaper, but because they presented an image which is representative in some way of current reporting of the asylum issue, and which presents views that may be considered to engender feelings of fear and hostility towards asylum seekers and refugees

Appendix 2.2 Questions for the borough community leaders

1. In your opinion, to what extent is racial harassment a problem for refugees and asylum seekers in this borough? (Racial harassment can range from serious assaults to petty hostility). Can you give any examples? Do you monitor cases/ keep records?
2. In your opinion, to what extent is there 'community tension'? (i.e. generalised feelings of mistrust, fear, suspicion, and hostility on the part of the host population towards refugees and asylum seekers) What about BME communities? Do you think that 'community tension' is on the increase?
3. In your opinion, to what extent would you say that inaccurate and unbalanced media reports increase community tension, influence perpetrators of harassment, and increase incidents of racial harassment?
4. How do you think the process works – is it as simple as someone reads an article and carries out an attack? – if not, what do you think is going on?
5. In your opinion, do different types of reports, ie those including statistics, or statements from politicians, or using particular language, etc. have a different impact? In what way?
6. Which kinds of newspapers do you think have the most impact on community tension – national, London, local? Do you have any examples of local stories?
7. Do you have any relevant written information that you can pass on? (Policies, monitoring forms, reports etc)
8. Can you give us background information on your group? (i.e. how long you have been established, how many staff, how far resourced to take an interest in these kinds of issues)

Appendix 2.3: Questions for editors

1. In your opinion, to what extent is racial harassment a problem for refugees and asylum seekers in this borough? (Racial harassment can range from serious assaults to petty hostility). Can you give any examples? Do you monitor reports?
- 2a. How would you describe relations between different communities in your area? To what extent is there 'community tension' and if so how far is this related to asylum seekers and refugees? (i.e. generalised feelings of mistrust, fear, suspicion, and hostility on the part of the host population towards refugees and asylum seekers) What about BME communities? Do you think that 'community tension' is decreasing or on the increase?
- 2 b. Are you aware of inaccurate and unbalanced media reports about refugees and asylum seekers?
- 3 a How would you describe the views of your paper on this issue? Do you have a particular 'line' on asylum issues? What has led to this view?
- 3 b. How can the press play a positive role in educating public opinion on these issues?
- 4 a. In your opinion, to what extent would you say that inaccurate and unbalanced media reports increase community tension ?
- 4 b. to what extent would you say the reports influence perpetrators of harassment, and increase incidents of racial harassment?
5. If so ,how do you think the process works – is it as simple as someone reads an article and carries out an attack? – if not, what do you think is going on?
6. In your opinion, do different types of reports, ie those including statistics, or statements from politicians, or using particular language, etc. have a different impact? In what way?
7. Which kinds of newspapers do you think have the most impact on community tension – national, London, local? Do you have any examples of local stories?
8. What other comments would you like to make about the issues addressed by this research?

Appendix 2.4 Questions for interviews with police

In your opinion, to what extent is racial harassment a problem for refugees and asylum seekers in this borough? (Racial harassment can range from serious assaults to petty hostility). Can you give any examples? Do you monitor cases/ keep records?

Can you give me – accurate statistical information? Anecdotal, impressionistic information? How might these differ?

In your opinion, to what extent is crime committed by refugees and asylum seekers a problem in this borough? Serious or petty crime? Can you give any examples? Do you monitor cases/ keep records?

Can you give me – accurate statistical information? Anecdotal, impressionistic information? How might these differ?

In your opinion, to what extent is there 'community tension'? (i.e. generalised feelings of mistrust, fear, suspicion, and hostility) in what way does this relate to refugees and asylum seekers? What about the feelings of BME communities towards refugees and asylum seekers? Do you think that 'community tension' is on the increase?

In your opinion, to what extent would you say that inaccurate and unbalanced media reports increase community tension, influence perpetrators of harassment, or increase incidents of racial harassment? All of these things, or not?

Why do you believe this? Probe evidence, reports, cases, conversations

If there is a link, how do you think the process works – is it as simple as someone reads an article and carries out an attack? – if not, what do you think is going on?

In your opinion, do different types of reports, ie those including statistics, or statements from politicians, or using particular language, etc. have a different impact? In what way?

Which kinds of newspapers do you think have the most impact on community tension – national, London, local? Do you have any examples of local stories?

Appendix 2.5 Questionnaire for focus groups

QUESTIONNAIRE (2 minutes) Please complete both sides

<p>From which ones of these choices have you received information on asylum seekers and refugees?</p> <p>Everyone gets information from different sources. Please tick as many as apply. If you can't remember, leave blank. Please do not discuss with others – we will discuss some examples next.</p>	Received information
Local newspapers	
National newspapers	
Radio	
TV	
Film – either video or cinema	
Written information from the Home Office	
Written information from refugee agencies	
Written information from refugee communities	
Information from school or college, training courses etc.	
Cultural events	
First hand experience of talking to refugees or asylum seekers as customers, service users etc.	
First hand experience of talking to refugees or asylum seekers as neighbours, colleagues or friends	
Word of mouth information from people who have regular contact with refugees and asylum seekers	
Word of mouth information from people who have occasional contact with refugees and asylum seekers	

Do you read newspapers regularly?	Yes	No
If yes, tick which newspapers you normally read at least once a week		

National and London wide papers

The Sun		The Voice	
The Daily Mail		The Asian Voice	
The Telegraph		The London Evening Standard	
The Times		The Metro	
The Independent		Other	

Local papers

(Local papers have been omitted here for the sake of anonymity)

Are you satisfied that the information on asylum seekers that you get from the newspapers you ticked is accurate, balanced and trustworthy?	YES	NO
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Appendix 2.6: Focus group script

MEDIA IMAGE COMMUNITY IMPACT PROJECT FOCUS GROUPS SCRIPT

OPENING REMARKS (2 mins)

Thank yous etc. Introductions
Practical info (loos, teabreaks etc)
Help yourself to snacks and drinks

NB Letter of invitation/ Consent forms

The reason for this group is to **find out more about people's reactions to information in the media about asylum seekers and refugees**, as part of a research project being conducted by the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees at Kings College, London University, commissioned by the Mayor of London.

We want to find out - **how do newspaper articles and other sources of information affect what we think about asylum seekers and refugees?**

And how might the attitudes that people pick up from the newspapers be contributing to community tension in London boroughs?

We are looking at attitudes to asylum seekers and refugees in **two boroughs**. We are conducting research in a number of ways, interviewing the local authority, the police, community organisations etcetera. **The purpose of groups such as this is to get a better understanding of information received by people in the borough and what they think about it.** You have been asked to take part because you know the borough.

So, your views are a very important part of this research. Please be honest, there are no wrong answers. Also, please be frank in your views – no-one is going to judge you or criticise you for your comments. If your view differs from the person next to you, say so, but the object is not to win someone over to your point of view.

Also be assured that everything you say is **confidential**. We will be writing up the results of the group on the basis of the tape recordings made but we do not need to know any personal details about you and your names will not appear in the report. However, for the purposes of the group it would be helpful for people to introduce themselves by their **first names**.

This is what we will be doing in the group – we will start off by looking at one or two visual images – as a gentle introduction to the topic. Then I will ask you to fill out a short questionnaire. Then we will look at and discuss 3 newspaper articles and a short video. There will be some general questions at the end. The whole process will take around 40 minutes, to give everyone time to have their say. If you need any help just let me know. **Any questions?**

EXERCISE ONE: WARM UP DISCUSSION (2 mins)

image one

Lets write down your immediate reactions to these. What is the first thing that comes into your head when you think of asylum? What words would associate with articles on asylum in the newspapers?

Barbara image two

This is a newspaper photograph of a group of asylum seekers – what comes into your head when you see this photograph? What other images that you have seen in newspaper photographs stick in your minds?

EXERCISE 2. QUESTIONNAIRE (2-5 minutes)

Please spend 2 minutes filling out the questionnaire on where you get information on asylum. After 2 minutes – are we all finished? Thanks very much.

Expect up to here to take approximately 10 minutes in total

EXERCISE 3: LOOKING AT SAMPLES OF MEDIA (approx 20 mins)

Up to 5 minutes on each one

Kate Now we are going to look at some media samples and ask you some questions.

screen three up

SAMPLE 1: Sun says column

Is this similar to information that you have seen before? Often?
Does it tell you something you didn't already know? What?
Does it influence your attitude towards asylum seekers and refugees?
Do you think the information given in this piece is accurate, balanced, trustworthy?
If you read/saw something like this, would you discuss it with your family and friends, remember it but not discuss it, forget it?

screen four, five, six as they are finishing off last question for each sample

SAMPLE 2: Daily Mail article on black/asylum relations

SAMPLE 3: Video of refugees talking about their situation

SAMPLE 4: Local story about donkeys

3. CLOSING QUESTIONS, for discussion (20 minutes)

1. WHAT DO YOU THINK HAS BEEN THE EFFECT OF THE ARRIVAL OF ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES IN YOUR BOROUGH?
2. ARE YOU MORE LIKELY TO BELIEVE SOMETHING ABOUT ASYLUM SEEKERS IF YOU HEAR IT BY WORD OF MOUTH, FROM A FRIEND, ETC., RATHER THAN IF YOU READ IT YOURSELF? IF SO, WHY?
3. DO YOU THINK THAT THERE IS COMMUNITY TENSION IN THIS BOROUGH? HOW FAR DOES IT RELATE TO ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES? IS IT ON THE INCREASE?
4. DO YOU THINK THAT INACCURATE AND UNBALANCED MEDIA REPORTS AFFECT COMMUNITY TENSION?
5. DO YOU THINK INACCURATE AND UNBALANCED MEDIA REPORTS INFLUENCE PERPETRATORS OF HARASSMENT AND INCREASE INCIDENCES OF RACIAL HARASSMENT? WHY DO YOU BELIEVE THIS/HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?
6. ARE THERE ANY ISSUES RELATED TO ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES THAT YOU THINK SHOULD GET MORE NEWSPAPER COVERAGE?
6. WHAT DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT SOME OF THE ISSUES THAT WE HAVE DISCUSSED? WHAT IF ANY ROLE DO YOU FEEL YOU HAVE AS CITIZENS IN RELATION TO THIS SITUATION?

Notes for use. Please read carefully.

- Please use only if the victim is an **asylum seeker or a refugee**.
- **Please complete one form per victim, per incident.** So an incident in which 2 people are attacked means 2 forms, and a person who reports being attacked twice, in two separate incidents, means 2 forms. If any of the above were **group incidents** involving more than one victim or more than one perpetrator, please give full details. If several incidents occur against the **same victim**, please give details.
- **This form is for racial incidents against asylum seekers and refugees, or other incidents motivated by hatred of asylum seekers and refugees. Racial incidents** can be any incident perceived to be racist by the asylum seeker or refugee or any other person. This includes "white on white", "black on black" or "Asian on Asian" incidents if they are felt to be racist i.e. motivated by prejudice against the **ethnic group** to which the victim belongs. This form may also be used for **any incident motivated by hatred** where it is felt that an asylum seeker or refugee is targeted because of their immigration status rather than their race or ethnic group.
- **Please complete for incidents occurring during August and September.** You may include incidents which happened in the recent past (before August) if the victim is still in contact with you and still affected by incident. If so, remember to give a date when the incident occurred.
- Box: **Language used by the perpetrator** – if the incident included verbal abuse, ask the victim if they can remember what was said by the perpetrator.
- Box: **How victim perceived motive** – ask the victim what ideas they have about why the incident happened.
- Box: **Nationality/ ethnicity** - Please be specific as possible e.g. you might say an Ethiopian refugee with British citizenship, rather than British.
- Please print out **additional forms** as necessary, or call us for details. We have not asked for names of victims, but **you should not accept anonymous reports**. You need to keep a record of the reporter's name, but should make clear to reporters that the reports are anonymous. In order to avoid counting the same incident twice, please let us know if a case has also been reported to the local authority, the police, or any other organisation.

Thank you very much for your help!

This research has been commissioned by the Mayor of London and is being conducted by the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees, Kings College, London University. For more information see www.icar.org.uk

Appendix 2.7: Incident monitoring form

MEDIA IMAGE, COMMUNITY IMPACT PROJECT Incident Monitoring Form for racial incidents against asylum seekers and refugees, or other incidents motivated by hatred of asylum seekers and refugees, in Greenwich and Haringey, during August and September 2003

Please email this form to or fax to or phone us on with details. Please read the Notes for Use.

GENERAL INFORMATION		TYPE OF INCIDENT (you may mark more than one)	WHERE IT TOOK PLACE	FURTHER DETAILS -
Form completed by		Physical attack	In or near home	What language was used by the perpetrator(s)?
		Verbal attack	In the street, park etc (name)	
Date and time incident occurred		Name calling	On public transport	What has been the effect of the incident on the victim?
Date reported to you		Threats made	At work	
Nationality/ethnicity of victim		Attack on home	A place of education	
		Other attack on property (eg car)	A place of worship	
Age and gender of victim		Bullying of children	Leisure facility	How does the victim perceive the motive for the incident? Does he/she think it is related to reports in the media?
Is the perpetrator a stranger?		Refusal to provide a service	Licensed premises (a pub etc)	
Nationality/ethnicity of perpetrator(s) if known		Hostile, impolite treatment	Other business premises	
Age and gender of perpetrator(s) if known		Given offensive written material	A public office, e.g. a library, health centre or council office	What are the victim's views on the images of refugees and asylum seekers in the media?
Is this the first incident reported by this victim? If no give details	Y/N	Other (please give details)	Other – please state	
Was there more than one victim? If yes complete additional forms	Y/N			
Space for additional information – continue on the other side if necessary				Has this incident already been reported to the police, local authority or any other organisation? (give details)



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