

**Dispersal of Asylum Seekers and
Processes of Social Exclusion in England**

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requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the compulsory dispersal of asylum seekers introduced following the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999. This policy was formulated in an environment of mistrust towards asylum seekers, had an explicit deterrence element and was the first time refugees without secure status were dispersed across the UK. This thesis examines the formal and informal social exclusion inherent in this system and the specific impacts on the ability of asylum seekers to access services and maintain or create social networks. These were investigated in order to explore the sense of 'belonging', 'inclusion' and longer term effects on the process of resettlement for those awarded refugee status.

The main methods used were qualitative combined with Geographical Information Systems (GIS) software to provide a spatial analysis of dispersal. Field research carried out between November 2002 and February 2005 consisted of in-depth interviews, focus groups and participant observation with asylum seekers, refugees and key informants in three dispersal locations. Interviews were also conducted with policy makers and other key informants in London. A range of published and unpublished secondary sources have been utilised.

A key finding was that multiple forms of social exclusion of asylum seekers exist. These different forms relate to the declining entitlements of asylum seekers as well as the geography, structure and process of the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) system. A significant relationship between dispersal locations and areas of deprivation combined with the tensions of the structure and process of implementing dispersal results in a system that maintains asylum seekers in a state of limbo or liminality. It was found that the system offers limited space available for the restoration of social trust and virtually no space for the restoration of political or institutional trust.

It is concluded that the primary lens for understanding the experiences of social exclusion of asylum seekers throughout dispersal is policy-imposed liminality and that resistance to liminality is the way in which asylum seekers begin to acquire a sense of 'belonging' or 'inclusion'.

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Asylum and Dispersal Terminology and Acronyms

1951 Refugee Convention	Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951
AO Support	Accommodation Only support (accepting AO support means asylum seeker is expected to be able to support themselves using their own savings)
AP	Accommodation Provider
ARC	Application Registration Card (credit card sized card which proves identity of asylum seeker. Details on card include; name, date of birth, work permit status, nationality, fingerprint, Home Office reference number and NASS support entitlements)
ASA	Asylum Support Adjudicators (consider appeals by asylum seekers against refusal or termination of support by NASS)
Asylum Seeker	A person who has left their country and has applied for asylum and is awaiting refugee status determination
Dispersal	Compulsory dispersal of asylum seekers. Commenced April 2000.
DL	Discretionary Leave
EA	Emergency Accommodation
ELR	Exceptional Leave to Remain
Failed Asylum Seeker	Term used by Home Office to describe an asylum seeker refused status
Gender related persecution	Refers to the experiences of women who are persecuted because they are women
Gender specific form of harm	Refers to gender specific forms of abuse such as sexual violence, 'honour' crimes and female genital mutilation (FGM)
'Group' dispersal	Dispersal of a group of asylum seekers
HP	Humanitarian Protection

'Hard cases'	Term used by Home Office to describe Section 4 of the Asylum & Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Act 2004.
IAP	Inter Agency Partnership of six refugee agencies (Refugee Council, Refugee Action, Migrant Helpline, Refugee Arrivals Project, Scottish Refugee Council and Welsh Refugee Council)
IC	Induction Centre
ICAR	Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK
ICT	Inter Agency Coordination Team. Team in Refugee Council that administers the IAP and liaises between IAP and NASS
IND	Immigration and Nationality Directorate. The part of the Home Office which deals with immigration, nationality and asylum issues.
'Informal' Dispersal	Term often used by practitioners to describe the informal arrangements between local authorities in London and local authorities around the country where asylum seekers were dispersed prior to the commencement of the NASS system of compulsory dispersal
'Interim' Support Scheme	Support provided by local authorities because of their duty of care under the National Assistance Act 1948. Introduced on 6 December 1999 and initially expected to continue for 2 years but continued until 5 April 2004.
NAO	National Audit Office
NASS	National Asylum Support Service
NASS1	Form on which to apply for NASS support
NASS35	Laminated certificate given to all NASS supported asylum seekers who receive a positive decision on their asylum claim. Needs to be received before mainstream benefits can be accessed.
PAP	Private Accommodation Provider

RANS	Restricted Access to NASS Support. Term used by NASS in official documents to describe Section 55 of the 2002 Act
RCO	Refugee Community Organisation
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
RSLs	Registered Social Landlords
RSP	Refugee Service Provider
Refugee	A person who has been recognised as a refugee as defined by the 1951 Refugee Convention
Refugee Status	The award of 'refugee' status following RSD
SO Support	Subsistence Only support (accepting SO support means asylum seeker is not expected to live in NASS accommodation or undergo dispersal)
Section 55	Section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration & Asylum Act 2002. 'In-country' applicants ineligible for any form of NASS support unless claim made 'as soon as reasonably practicable'. Commenced 8 January 2003. Some exemptions.
'Self-write' dispersal	Dispersal of individual asylum seeker
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

Sources: Various

CHAPTER 1
DISPERSAL OF ASYLUM SEEKERS
AND PROCESSES OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

People seeking asylum in the UK currently encounter a whole range of legislative measures and policy mechanisms designed to deter, including detention, deportation, destitution and compulsory dispersal to urban centres outside London and the Southeast of England. This thesis is about one of these policy mechanisms – the compulsory dispersal of asylum seekers following the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999 with the term ‘dispersal policy’ referring to the implementation of this legislation. This study focuses on the processes of formal and informal social exclusion of asylum seekers during dispersal and the impact of this policy on the ability of individuals to access services, maintain or establish social networks and feel a sense of ‘belonging’ and ‘inclusion’ in the UK.

In this chapter the background and aims of contemporary compulsory dispersal are explored and related to ‘burden-sharing’ and ‘deterrence’, two well established concepts within refugee studies. Contemporary dispersal is compared to past examples of dispersal of refugees within the UK during the past century. It is argued that there are several key differences between past dispersal of refugees and contemporary dispersal of asylum seekers. Set within an historical account of dispersal, it is shown how these differences combine to create a qualitatively different environment for the dispersal of asylum seekers. Emergent literature on dispersal since 2000 is outlined and it is shown how an examination of the processes of social exclusion during dispersal is currently lacking in the literature.

Deterrence¹ is not new and has been an overarching feature of immigration and asylum legislation and policy in the UK for many years with exclusion of migrants being legitimised by legislation for over one hundred years (Bloch and Schuster, 2005; Cohen, 1994; Holmes, 1991, 1988; Kushner and Knox, 1999; JCWI, 2002; Solomos, 2003; Schuster, 2003; see also Appendix I for an annotated chronology of immigration and asylum legislation). What is new is the intensity of the debate surrounding the asylum ‘crisis’ and the way in which policy makers now consider individual policies to be components of an overall approach rather than being utilized singly (Van Hear, 2005:10-12; Crisp, 2003).

In 1954, the UK signed and adopted the 1951 Refugee Convention², providing the international legal definition of a refugee which was made universally applicable following the 1967 Bellagio Protocol³. Refugees falling within this definition benefit from certain rights – in particular the principle of *non-refoulement* which prescribes refugees cannot be returned to a country where they are likely to face persecution or torture (Goodwin-Gill, 1996). Other obligations of signatory states include Freedom of Movement⁴ and Social Security⁵. The ability to fit this definition determines how people are treated and how they are able to access services⁶. The Refugee Convention, plus the establishment of an international

¹ Deterrence, as it relates to asylum seekers and refugees, refers to policies that attempt to discourage future arrivals by imposing difficult living conditions and a lack of opportunities for resettlement from the date of arrival and is referred to as an ‘in-country deterrence element’. Within Europe, ‘deterrent’ measures include the increase in detention of asylum seekers, the restriction of social assistance and restricted access to employment as well as restrictions on family reunification (UNHCR, 2000:162).

² The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (the ‘1951 Refugee Convention’) provided the definition of a refugee 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; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence ... is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.’

³ The 1967 Bellagio Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (the ‘1967 Bellagio Protocol’) removed all geographical and temporal limits of the 1951 Refugee Convention.

⁴ Article 26.

⁵ Article 24.

⁶ A ‘refugee’ is someone who has moved across an international border and has been awarded the status of ‘refugee’ following a refugee status determination (RSD) process and fits within the definition and has been awarded Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). An ‘asylum seeker’ is awaiting RSD and may ultimately be granted other forms of status – previously Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR) and currently Humanitarian Protection (HP) or Discretionary Leave (DL). All of these connote those who all have a lesser status than a ‘refugee’ in terms of rights. ELR acknowledges the need for protection but meant that rights were less than the rights of a ‘refugee’. ELR and ILR have now been replaced with a system of Humanitarian Protection (HP) and Discretionary Leave (DL). HP is normally awarded for 3 years and whilst it allows full access to mainstream benefits and employment,

agency set up to promote protection for refugees – the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – in 1950, provided for the first time a formal structure for responding to the needs of refugees and devised standards for the protection of refugees under international law (UNHCR, 2000:2).

In Britain, the 1971 Immigration Act ended major, permanent primary migration from Africa, the Indian sub-continent and the African-Caribbean. The Act came into force on 1 January 1973, the same day the UK joined the Common Market, so immigration from Europe was opened at precisely the same time legislation excluded non-white migration (JCWI, 2002). This was an important moment – claiming asylum became a significant form of migration with the number of ‘spontaneous’ arrivals of asylum seekers to Europe beginning to rise in the 1970s (UNHCR, 2000:156) and becoming an increasingly significant issue in the 1980s (Duke, 1996). Until the mid-1990s ‘quota refugees’ and ‘spontaneous refugees’ also called ‘non-quota refugees’ were the two distinct groups of refugees identified (Duke, 1996:2; Carey-Wood *et al.*, 1995). The new social category of ‘asylum seeker’ from the mid-1990s is the summation of 20th century legislation with recent sub-categories of ‘deserving’ or ‘genuine’ refugees versus ‘undeserving’, ‘bogus’ asylum seekers or ‘economic migrants’ (Sales, 2002) a continuation of a process of recasting the image of refugees.

In recent years, the manifestation of the deterrence environment towards asylum seekers has been through Acts of Parliament in 1993, 1996, 1999, 2002, 2004 and, at the time of writing, a 2005 Bill. This legislation has gradually eroded the rights of asylum seekers, leading to what Carter and El-Hassan term ‘institutionalised exclusion’ (2003:10-11). Access to services such as housing has been restructured several times, with each restructuring excluding asylum seekers further. The 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act introduced new social security regulations and imposed severe restrictions on welfare entitlements using an ‘in-country’ and ‘at port’ distinction with the withdrawal of benefits from ‘in-country’ applicants resulting in social services authorities, mostly in London and the Southeast, having to provide support for destitute asylum seekers (Audit Commission, 2000:9). This

it does not allow the right to family reunion. DL is awarded for no longer than 3 years. It also allows

brought a shortfall of suitable accommodation in these areas and informal, *ad hoc* dispersal (hereafter referred to as 'informal dispersal') emerged. This Act also placed a requirement on employers to check the immigration status of potential employees, introducing other internal immigration controls such as immigration checks at the point of accessing services and other benefits. This represented a 'major shift' from a 'culture of service' to a 'culture of suspicion' by service providers, benefits agencies, social services, employers and other agencies (JCWI/Refugee Council/CRE, 1998:1-4). It was at this time that the phrase a 'culture of disbelief' became shorthand to describe the relationship between the Home Office and refugees. Zetter argued that the 1993 and 1996 Acts were formulated during 'peak' years of asylum applications suggesting an essentially reactive approach to asylum applications with the legislation introduced at times when applications rates were comparatively low (2003:91). Without this legislative foundation, the denial of permission to work for all asylum seekers from July 2002 would not have been feasible and in this way processes of social exclusion have been developing over time.

This thesis concentrates on the dispersal policy in England although the UK is not alone in utilising this policy mechanism. Several European countries including Sweden and Germany have had forms of dispersal for several years. In Sweden dispersal of refugees began in 1985 and developed into a 'Sweden-wide strategy' of compulsory dispersal a few years later (Hammar, 1993:110). In Germany a system for 'inter-Lander burden-sharing' began in 1974 (Boswell, 2002:5) with legislation in 1982 containing measures to 'lower the social conditions' of asylum seekers and were, as argued by Boswell, as much about 'deterrence and control' as they were spreading costs (2001:7).

The theoretical foundation for this study is based around social exclusion and forced migration with the concepts of 'liminality' and 'trust' acting as a bridge between these literatures. This research was based on qualitative methods combined with spatial analysis of dispersal using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) software. A variety of settings for the field research were selected from policy makers and

other organisations based in London to dispersal locations in Leicester, Lincoln and Bristol and field research took place between November 2002 and February 2005. The main methods used were in-depth interviews, focus groups and some participant observation in dispersal locations⁷. Ethical issues were a major concern, particularly in relation to accessing refugees and the potential role for ‘users’ to participate in the research. Secondary sources relating to contemporary compulsory dispersal, which were not widely or easily available in the public domain, were also sought.

DISPERSAL UNDER THE 1999 ACT

In July 1998 the then Home Secretary, Jack Straw, set out his ideas for a comprehensive approach to immigration control and new arrangements for supporting asylum seekers in the White Paper *Fairer, Faster and Firmer – a modern approach to immigration and asylum*. A key point was the introduction of new support arrangements separating asylum seekers from the mainstream benefit system (1998, para.8.18). Reference was made to minimising ‘the attractions of the UK’ of those asylum seekers not considered to be ‘genuine’ (Home Office, 1998).

The key objectives of this White Paper were elaborated in an ‘information document’⁸ setting out proposals for the new support scheme for asylum seekers in genuine need and inviting expressions of interest from potential support providers in March 1999 (Home Office, 1999). It spelled out how the new system would meet international obligations whilst ‘deterring’ those without a well-founded fear of persecution:

‘... those who are genuinely fleeing persecution are looking for a safe and secure environment which offers a basic level of support while their applications are being considered. Such people will not be overly concerned about whether that support is provided in cash or in kind, nor about the location in which they are supported.’ (Home Office, 1999)

⁷ The total number of participants was 48, of whom 27 were male and 21 female, from 15 countries. Just over half the participants were asylum seekers or refugees. Other participants included representatives of refugee community organisations (RCOs), refugee service providers (RSPs), local authorities (LAs), regional consortia (RA) as well as mental health professionals, doctors and solicitors working with dispersed asylum seekers.

⁸ The full title of which was: *Asylum Seekers Support: An information document setting out proposals for the new support scheme for asylum seekers in genuine need and inviting expressions of interest from potential support providers*.

Therefore, it was explicit in both the White Paper and the information document that the reduction of the total number of asylum seekers was to be achieved through a support system designed to deter. The information document also spelled out that dispersal never aimed to evenly distribute the ‘burden’ of asylum seekers to all council areas in the country – rather it was intended to disperse asylum seekers on a no-choice basis to relieve the ‘current burden’ on London and councils in the Southeast of England (Home Office, 1999).

The idea that the ‘burden’ of assistance to refugees can be shared has a long history and is well established in the global refugee regime (Thielemann, 2003; Betts, 2004; UNHCR, 2000). ‘Burden-sharing’⁹ can be about sharing or shifting financial and other costs. This term has been widely adopted by UNHCR, international NGOs, EU members, national governments, UK based service providers, the voluntary sector, academics and other agencies working with refugees globally, regionally, nationally or locally. A special edition of the *Journal of Refugee Studies* in September 2003, examined ‘burden sharing’ in a European context referring to how refugee burden-sharing issues had increasingly risen to the top of the political agenda at the *regional* level (Thielemann, 2003). Thielemann argued that the purpose of ‘burden-sharing’ was to ‘institutionalise redistribution’ in ways counter to how distribution would occur without intervention and he broke this down in three ways (2003:228). Firstly, the harmonising of refugee and asylum legislation he calls ‘sharing policy’. Secondly, the redistribution of resources he calls ‘sharing money’¹⁰. Thirdly, the re-allocation of asylum seekers or ‘sharing people’ which was considered to be the most effective but also the most controversial way to share the burden throughout the EU (2003:232). Proposals have, on occasions, been mooted for Europe-wide systems to disperse asylum seekers. The UK proposals in early

⁹ The ‘prejudicial connotation’ of the term ‘burden-sharing’ (Thielemann, 2003:225) has been highlighted by a number of academics and campaigning organisations. Alternatives such as the ‘equal balance of efforts’ (Thielemann, 2003:225), ‘the political economy of North-South responsibility-sharing’ (Betts, 2004), international obligations or ‘international solidarity obligations’ (term used by representative of Latin America UNHCR during speech at the 9th International Association for the Study of Forced Migration biennial conference, Sao Paulo, Brazil, 9-13 January 2005) have as yet failed to have any impact on the way in which refugees are debated.

¹⁰ The establishment of the European Refugee Fund in September 2000 is cited as a European example of how ‘sharing money’ is now occurring throughout the EU. It had a budget of E216 million over a period of five years (Boswell, 2003:331).

2003 for extra-territorial processing of people to countries outside the UK again shifted this ‘burden’ and, as argued by Betts (2004), was a logical extension of the perception by policy makers that the asylum system in the UK still requires ‘solving’. It was during the 1990s that the concept of burden-sharing was increasingly woven into national policy with policies of containment designed at an international level to deter ‘Third World refugees’ (Robinson, 1996 quoted in Robinson, 2003:5)

Following the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 in Britain, this institutionalisation of redistribution occurred with the creation of a separate, centralised agency run by the Home Office to organise financial support for asylum seekers – the National Asylum Support Service (NASS). A NASS Dispersal Strategy¹¹ (Appendix II) laid out how dispersal should function.

Another aim of dispersal was to avoid adding to problems of social exclusion and racial tensions as was the avoidance of secondary migration and adoption of ‘rough sleeping as a preferred method of survival.’ (Home Office, 1999:para.1.18). The selection criteria for locations included areas with ethnic minority populations, some supporting infrastructure and availability of accommodation. The benefits system was considered to be a ‘pull factor’ with a chapter on support packages outlining the proposed provision at 70% of the equivalent in income support levels (Home Office, 1999, para.4.19).

Expressions of interests from the voluntary, public and private sector were sought on the basis of these arrangements. Refugee service providers and refugee community organizations were considered to have much to ‘contribute to the new arrangements’ (ibid, para.7.4) and it was recognized that this represented a significantly greater role than the voluntary sectors’ current role (ibid., para.7.5).

The White Paper and information document formed the backdrop to the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999 which received Royal Assent on 11 November 1999. Local authorities were required to supply information about their housing accommodation as and when requested by the Secretary of State.

¹¹ Provided by email by representative of the Home Office, October 2002.

From April 2000, asylum seekers arriving in the UK and claiming support were ‘dispersed’ outside London and the Southeast of England to locations in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland¹². This was carried out on a compulsory basis if they sought financial support and accommodation and were classed as ‘destitute or likely to become destitute’ under Section 95.2 of the 1999 Act. Sections of this Act detailed how asylum seekers could share accommodation and dispersal was therefore to temporary and, potentially, shared accommodation on a ‘no choice’ basis to cities and larger towns which, at the outset, were selected due to their high prevalence of empty or unpopular housing. This ‘no choice’ basis encompassed both the location and type of accommodation. Housing contracts were awarded specifically for this purpose between the Home Office and private, public and registered social landlords (RSLs).

This compulsory dispersal for ‘destitute’ asylum seekers existed in parallel to a system whereby those able and willing to arrange their own accommodation with family or friends and who wished to remain in London and the Southeast could opt for ‘Subsistence Only’ (SO) support (financial support provided but no support for accommodation costs).

Dispersal, when initially outlined, was controversial and criticisms of the segregated nature of social support, the cost of implementation and the advisability of dispersing people to unsuitable locations were numerous. For example, the Refugee Council publicly called the arrangements ‘a massive experiment in social engineering’ (Robinson, 2003:126-127; Refugee Council, 2000). However, whilst publicly denouncing the scheme, there was no sustained campaign against dispersal from the voluntary sector who ultimately undertook a frontline role in the local level implementation of dispersal. The controversial nature of dispersal has since been surpassed – in the eyes of campaigning groups and sections of the media – by measures to deter and reduce the number of asylum seekers. These measures included denying permission to work¹³, the withdrawal of ‘in-country’ support for

¹² With the exception of asylum seekers being treated by the Medical Foundation or those with medical needs that can only be met in London (Refugee Council, 2004b).

¹³ The Home Office withdrew permission to work from asylum seekers on 23 July 2002.

those who did not apply ‘as soon as reasonably practicable’ for financial support (Section 55)¹⁴ and proposals to take the children of ‘destitute’ failed asylum seekers into care if they do not ‘voluntarily’ return to their country of origin. These regulations have been introduced whilst the voluntary sector has been implementing dispersal on behalf of the government. These developments can be seen as acting as ‘decoy policies’¹⁵ as campaigns from the voluntary sector focus on the most controversial aspects of new legislation, thus allowing other aspects to pass unchallenged.

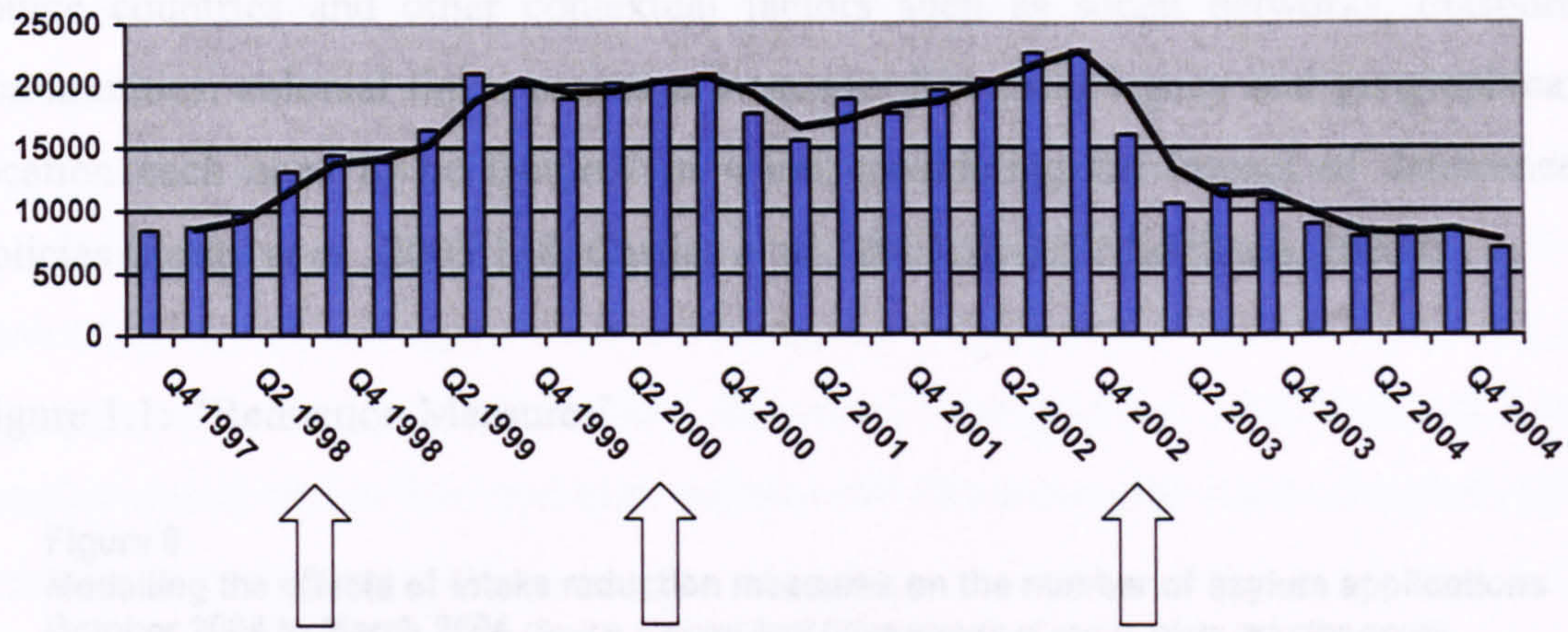
Initially, dispersal away from London and the Southeast raised a number of service issues, including access to employment, education, training, medical care, specialist care, housing, legal representation and language support (Audit Commission, 2000). It was also suggested that impacts were felt disproportionately by women who were cut off from support networks (Sales, 2002:467). Another characteristic of this dispersal was the privatisation of services to asylum seekers, in particular for accommodation. All accommodation providers were contractually bound to facilitate access to certain services for their tenants.

Graph 1 shows how the number of applications during the dispersal policy formation stage was steadily rising. Compulsory dispersal began when applications had already peaked in the second quarter of 2000 (Q2 2000) and remained relatively constant until the end of 2002. Thus in numerical terms there was no reduction in the number of new arrivals with numbers remaining relatively constant for some two years after its introduction. If anything, it was Section 55 that had the greatest impact on the numbers of asylum applications when during the first and second quarters of 2003 (Q2 2003) there was a drop in applications.

¹⁴ The Nationality, Immigration & Asylum Act received royal assent on 7 November 2002. Section 55 of the Act meant that as from 8 January 2003 social support for ‘in country’ applicants has been difficult to obtain. The Home Office refers to Section 55 as Restricted Access to NASS Support (RANS). A sustained national campaign by the voluntary sector to repeal Section 55 led firstly, on 17 December 2003, to ‘as soon as reasonably practicable’ being defined as 72 hours and, secondly, from June 2004, the relaxation of this controversial policy.

¹⁵ Informal conversation with former IND policy advisor, May 2005.

Graph 1: Asylum Applications, October 1997 – December 2004



Fairer, Faster, Firmer Compulsory Dispersal Section 55

Source: Home Office Asylum Statistics, view at:
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1sub.html>

Figure 1.1 shows a timeline of subsequent ‘reduction measures’ (Home Office, 2005:18). Whilst there is a common sense perception that there is a relationship between deterrence measures and numbers of new arrivals there is little evidence that this is the case (Zetter *et al.*, 2003; Schuster, 2005:163-165). The alternative argument, that generous social support acts as a ‘pull’ factor, is also unsupported by evidence. In fact, the assertion of direct links between asylum policy and its impact is something that requires extreme caution (Zetter *et al.*, 2003; Middleton, 2005). The model of ‘reduction measures’ provided in the timeline shows what is considered to be a direct link between policy and impact with the most dramatic drop being due to Restricted Access to NASS Support (RANS) which was commonly known as Section 55 from January 2003. The impact of Section 55 has been documented by refugee agencies (Refugee Council, 2002d; Refugee Action, 2003; GLA, 2004) and, as one representative of a refugee network commented: ‘a large number of asylum seekers who arrive in Liverpool are not being included in the figures because they miss a 72 hour deadline in which to register their claim’¹⁶. Thus, the number of registered claimants would not necessarily reflect the number of asylum seekers. Whilst it is impossible to disaggregate the statistics accurately, any discussion on the period from January 2003 needs to consider ‘reduction measures’

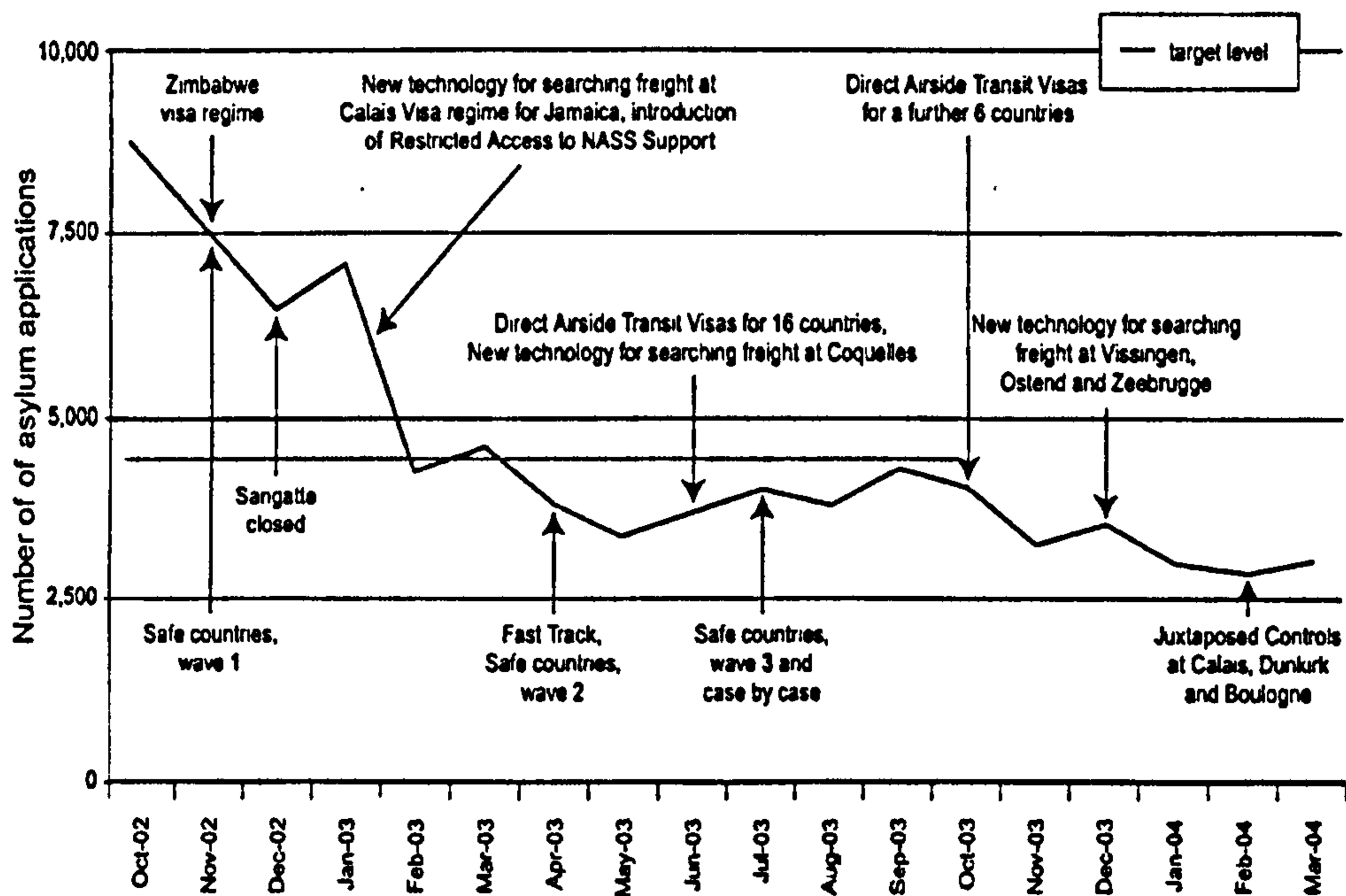
¹⁶ Hookham, M., *Asylum fall figures rejected by charities*, Liverpool Echo, 25 February 2004.

in this context as well as indicators of conflict in countries of origin. Conflict in source countries and other contextual factors such as social networks, diaspora communities, colonial links, common language, historical legacy and geographical location each need to be factored in when considering the impact of deterrence policies (Zetter *et al.*, 2003:118; Castles *et al.*, 2003:28-32; Middleton, 2005).

Figure 1.1: 'Reduction Measures'

Figure 6
Modelling the effects of intake reduction measures on the number of asylum applications
October 2004 to March 2004 (Source: National Audit Office analysis of asylum intake reduction model)

The Home Office has modelled the combined effects of various measures on the number of asylum applications



Source: Controlling our borders: Making migration work for Britain, Five year strategy for asylum and immigration, Home Office, February 2005, page 18.

Since the commencement of this study in September 2001 a number of events have influenced this research. Both 9/11 in New York and 7/7 in London have placed asylum seekers firmly onto national security agendas and more control of asylum seekers is considered to be a 'common sense' or pragmatic approach amongst policy makers. Gibney argues that the rise in numbers by the 1980s led to the democratisation of asylum policy in Western countries (2005:7). It was argued that a shift from 'high politics (matters of national security)' to 'low politics (matters of

day to day electoral politics, including employment, national identity and the welfare state)' were characteristics of this democratisation (Gibney, 2001:7). Gibney went on to argue that this shift meant political elites believed that controlling asylum was key to electoral victory and that the 'roots of restrictive asylum policies' lay in this perception (Gibney, 2001:7). Since 9/11 and 7/7, matters of national security have meant that asylum has again become a matter for 'high politics' but has continued, it is suggested, to remain a permanent fixture of 'low politics'. The issue is now simultaneously one of low and high politics and this means the issue of asylum has become more visible overall.

On 12 August 2001, shortly after his appointment as Home Secretary, David Blunkett announced an internal review of the NASS dispersal arrangements. This announcement followed discussions between the voluntary sector and the Home Office (see for example Refugee Council, 2001a) and the stabbing of a 22 year old Kurdish asylum seeker in Glasgow's Sighthill housing estate. It was clear by this time that dispersal was not running smoothly and there were concerns about the quality of housing. In a statement to the House of Commons on 29 October 2001, David Blunkett suggested that the dispersal system was: too slow; perceived as unfair by both asylum seekers and local communities; vulnerable to fraud; created social tensions, and put pressure on local services in dispersal locations (IND, 2001). He also stated that whilst the government believed that the principle of dispersal remained correct, it was their aim 'to phase out the current system of support and dispersal' (ibid., 2001). The 'radical and fundamental reform' (ibid., 2001) of the asylum system was to be discussed in further White Paper and implemented through subsequent legislation. The proposed structure of the new asylum system was to include a three tier structure of Induction, Reporting, Accommodation and Removal Centres¹⁷, the latter being for fast track removal with this system initially running in

¹⁷ Details during this announcement included: Induction Centres to accommodate new applicants for 2 to 10 days, enabling initial screening and health checks. Reporting Centres would mean that refugees could stay with relatives but would need to report on a regular basis. Failure to report would result in loss of eligibility for support. Accommodation Centres would initially accommodate 750 people in 4 centres throughout the country, i.e. 3,000 spaces. If successful, 10 further centres would be opened. They would be open access with full board accommodation. Education and health facilities would be provided on site. If a space was refused the refugees would not be eligible for further support. There are currently 2,800 spaces within Removal Centres (Detention Centres were renamed Removal Centres in the 2002 Act). Expansion of these being proposed to provide 4,000 spaces. Houses of Parliament, written Ministerial Statements.

parallel to the existing system of dispersal. Plans for accommodation centres were ultimately scrapped on 14 June 2005 by the recently appointed Minister for Immigration, Tony McNulty¹⁸.

PAST DISPERSAL OF REFUGEES

There have been several dispersal of programme refugees across the UK and the differing motivations and rationales for dispersal tell us as much about the national context into which refugees arrive in as the unique sets of needs refugees bring with them. Before 1967¹⁹, dispersal of refugees in the UK included Belgian, Polish and Hungarian refugees with approximately 250,000 Belgians arriving between 1914 and 1918; from the 1940s to the early 1950s, some 300,000 Polish displaced persons; and, around 20,000 Hungarian refugees fleeing communism post-1956 (Black, 2001; Kushner and Knox, 1999; Robinson, 2003a; Robinson, 2003b). The voluntary sector had a role in the implementation of each of these with government funding matched with charitable donations from the public. The expectation for the Belgians was, ultimately, that most would repatriate as their migration was seen as temporary (Black, 2001; Kushner and Knox, 1999). A key goal for the Polish dispersal employment (Robinson, 2003b) with the requirement for post-war labour meaning that schemes were put in place for European Volunteer Workers who were 'more 'racially' desirable' than Afro-Caribbean workers (Kushner and Knox, 1999:218). This was combined with a parallel policy of encouraging the repatriation or onward migration of Polish 'displaced persons' and in order to encourage repatriation 'uncomfortable reception facilities' (Robinson, 2003a:109) were provided in 265 camps across the UK. The avoidance of Polish 'ghettoes' to prevent a security threat was also a Foreign Office rationale for dispersal (Kushner and Knox, 1999:228, Robinson, 2003a:109). The Hungarians arrived during a time of labour shortages and when post-war housing shortages were less acute (Kushner and Knox, 1999:241). Their distribution across the UK was, therefore, led more by the availability of employment than accommodation. Barracks were again used prior to

¹⁸ Viewed on 15 June 2005 at: http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/cm050614/wmstext/50614m01.htm#50614m01.html_sbhd3

¹⁹ The year the Bellagio Protocol made the refugee definition international.

relocation to hostels across the UK and permanent resettlement was based on assimilation.

From 1967 refugees from outside Europe could also be considered under the 1951 Refugee Convention and between 1967 and 1989²⁰, Ugandan Asian, Chilean and Vietnamese ‘quota refugees’ were dispersed across the UK²¹. The Ugandan Asian dispersal is well covered in the literature (Robinson, 1986; Marett, 1993; Robinson, 1993; Kushner and Knox, 1999; Martin and Singh, 2002; Robinson, 2003a; Robinson, 2003b;). Robinson suggests that there was a different social and political context for the approximately 29,000 Ugandan Asians expelled by President Idi Amin in 1972 (Robinson, 2003b:6). Over half held British passports with rights of entry and abode (Kushner and Knox, 1999:269) and as Robinson suggests, they lacked any ‘myth of return’ (Robinson, 1986). In locations such as Leicester, where there was a growth of the National Front, the City Council took out adverts in the Ugandan press discouraging refugees from settling in the city (Martin and Singh, 2002:11). Leicester gained a reputation as the ‘most unwelcoming of all places’ to these refugees (Marett, 1993:248). This was in marked contrast to the perception of Ugandan Asians in the city at the end of the century, when they were described as ‘central’ to revitalizing the city and the rest of the Midlands, creating at least 30,000 jobs (Kushner and Knox, 1999:287).

The government relied on the voluntary sector to implement resettlement, distancing itself from the work through the Uganda Resettlement Board and military camps were again utilized to facilitate dispersal (Kushner and Knox, 1999; Robinson, 2003). A dispersal policy was incorporated into refugee resettlement with ‘red’ areas where refugees were not sent due to high minority populations and ‘green’ areas where they could be sent with low minority populations (Kushner and Knox, 1999; see also Bloch and Schuster, 2005:504). These areas were chosen on the basis of the size of the pre-existing ethnic minority population in an attempt to ‘avoid ghettoisation’ (Robinson, 2003b). Finding work for refugees was no longer a main objective, with acquisition of mainstream housing being a key aim (Robinson, 2003b:7). This

²⁰ 1989 was the year of the fall of the Berlin Wall and considered by some theorists and refugee agencies to be the reason for the rise in ‘spontaneous’ arrivals of refugees to Europe (UNHCR, 2000:158).

dispersal was not compulsory and resulted in only 38% being housed in the designated 'green' areas (Kushner and Knox, 1999:275).

Between 1974 and 1979, approximately 3,000 Chilean 'quota refugees' arrived (Kay, 1987; Joly, 1987; Kushner and Knox, 1999; Robinson, 2003). There was broad public support for this group and solidarity campaigns, leading one participant of this research to describe the perception of the Chileans as being 'the last of the romantics' in the sense that their arrival was at a time when a lot of people in the UK identified with the Chileans because of the 'romance of revolution and change'²² when their affiliation with trade unions and their socialist ideals met. This matching of political views plus the ability to have their previous employment experience recognized through accreditation schemes assisted the process of resettlement. Although not a formal programme of dispersal, availability of accommodation – based on the political biases of the local authorities involved – was the main rationale for the *de facto* distribution of Chileans across the country, with employment opportunities secondary (Kushner and Knox, 1999:300). Implemented by the Joint Working Group for Refugees from Chile (JWG), funded by the Home Office, this 'dispersal policy by default' (Robinson, 2003:114) led to disempowerment (Kay, 1987, cited in Robinson 2003b), difficulties with language, isolation and inadequate provision of services for those who had experienced torture (Robinson, 2003b).

The media representation of the Vietnam war and the Vietnamese 'boat people' setting out on precarious journeys across the South China sea plus the deterrence policies of Southeast Asian countries ultimately led to a recognition that a large scale resettlement programme was necessary to distribute the 'burden' of Indo-Chinese refugees. These programmes were set up through processing and transit centres in the region of origin. Largely perceived as refugees fleeing communism, small numbers²³ of this diverse population arrived in the UK between 1979 and 1981, virtually reducing 'Indochinese refugee resettlement to a single event ...' (Kushner and Knox, 1999:307-312; Refugee Action, 1993:10). Cases of family reunification

²¹ 'Quota refugees' were admitted in a group under agreed resettlement schemes.

²² D1; interview with female representative of RCO, London, November 2002.

²³ Some 11,500 people which amounted to 1.1% of all Southeast Asian refugees.

then occurred between 1983 and 1993 (Duke, 1996). These arrivals were through highly visible resettlement programmes (Jones, 1982; Hitchcox, 1987; Gold 1992; Duke and Marshall, 1995; Joly, 1996; Robinson, 2003a; Robinson, 2003b). Hale argued that resettlement policy had four main principles. Firstly, refugees were to be prevented from becoming dependent on external assistance and encouraged to enter into mainstream British life. Secondly, they were to be made job ready as soon as possible to regain independence. Thirdly, they were to use existing welfare mechanisms. Fourthly, they were to be dispersed throughout the country in clusters of four to ten families (Hale, 1993). This fourth principle, and most common reason given in support of dispersal, was based on the 'need to avoid ghettos' (Jones, 1982:40). A plan for clustering Vietnamese refugees fell apart during dispersal with the geography of resettlement being governed by the pattern of housing offers (Refugee Council, 1992; Tomlins *et al.*, 2002). The voluntary sector was relied on heavily with their own 'zones of responsibility'²⁴ (Hitchcox, 1987:13) across the UK with the Home Office again distancing itself from implementation. As Hitchcox argued, this role for the voluntary sector had disadvantages because agencies did not have control over allocation of funds, little influence over the policy and because they were partially funded by the government their function as pressure groups was constrained (1987:5).

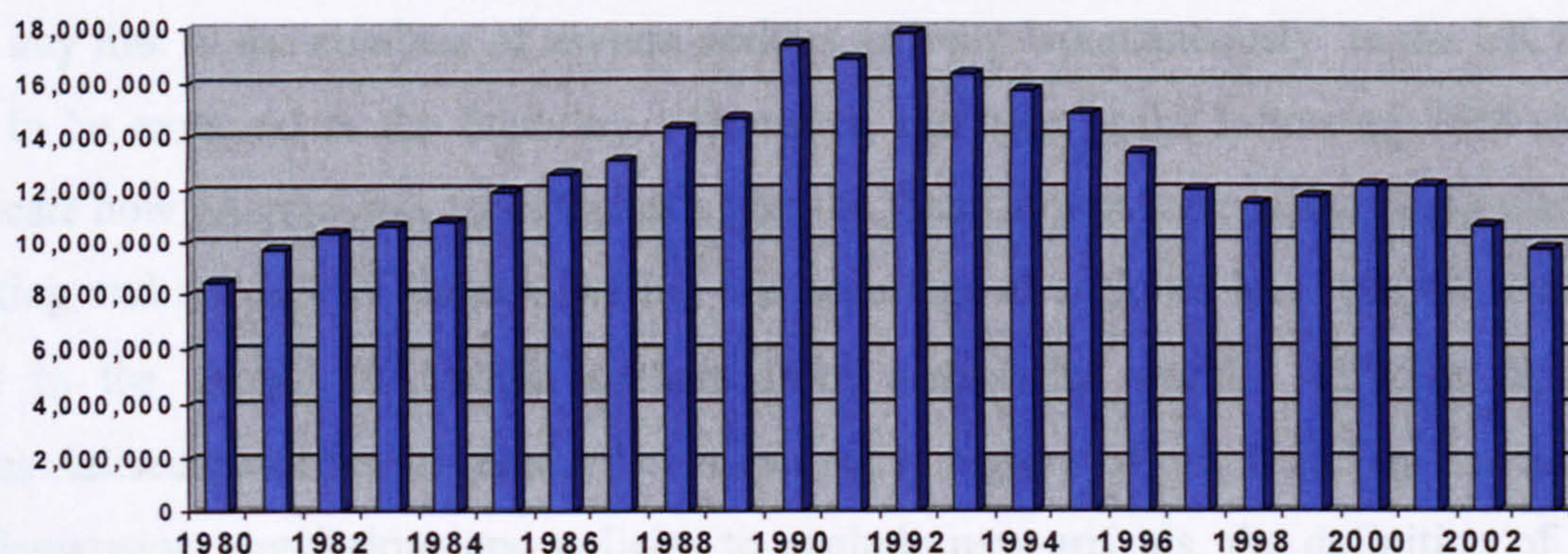
This *ad hoc* policy was described in a 1985 report by the Parliament's Select Committee on Refugee Resettlement and Immigration (SCORRI) which concluded that dispersal policies were 'almost universally regarded as mistaken' (quoted in Robinson, 1998:150) in that the refugees put their energies and efforts into 'secondary migration', i.e. relocating to communities with family and ethnic linkages rather than to settling in the localities where they were dispersed to. The report stated; 'It is hard to think of any problem facing the Vietnamese which would not have been less severe or difficult to resolve if the disastrous policy of dispersal had not been adopted.' (1985) As Jones suggested, the diversity of the population was a factor in this because refugee families were separated by ethnicity, class and religion

²⁴ The Refugee Council covered the South of England and South Wales; Ockenden Venture covered North Wales; the Northwest and the Midlands northwards. Refugee Action, which emerged out of the Save the Children Fund involvement, had operations in Scotland, Northern Ireland, the East and Northeast of England.

and that it was unlikely that relationships would develop due only to close proximity to each other (1982:41). ‘Community’ support could not, therefore, be assumed.

Even though internationally there were disproportionately high numbers of recognised refugees arriving in less developed countries and low numbers seeking asylum in industrialised countries, no further dispersal programmes of ‘quota refugees’ were arranged until 1992 when Bosnian ‘quota refugees’ were offered temporary asylum in the UK (Robinson and Coleman, 2000; Robinson, 2003a; Robinson, 2003b). Graph 2 illustrates the number of refugees²⁵ globally, from 8.5 million in 1980 to a peak of 17.8 million in 1992 following the end of the Cold War and from the mid 1990s total numbers declined to 9.6 million in 2003. Of this 2003 UNHCR total²⁶, approximately two thirds (6.2 million) were in ‘protracted refugee situations’ (PRS) in 38 locations around the world – 22 of which were in sub-Saharan Africa (2.3 million).

Graph 2: Estimated Number of Refugees Worldwide, as of 31 December 1980 – 2003



Source: UNHCR, (2004), Refugees by Numbers, Geneva.

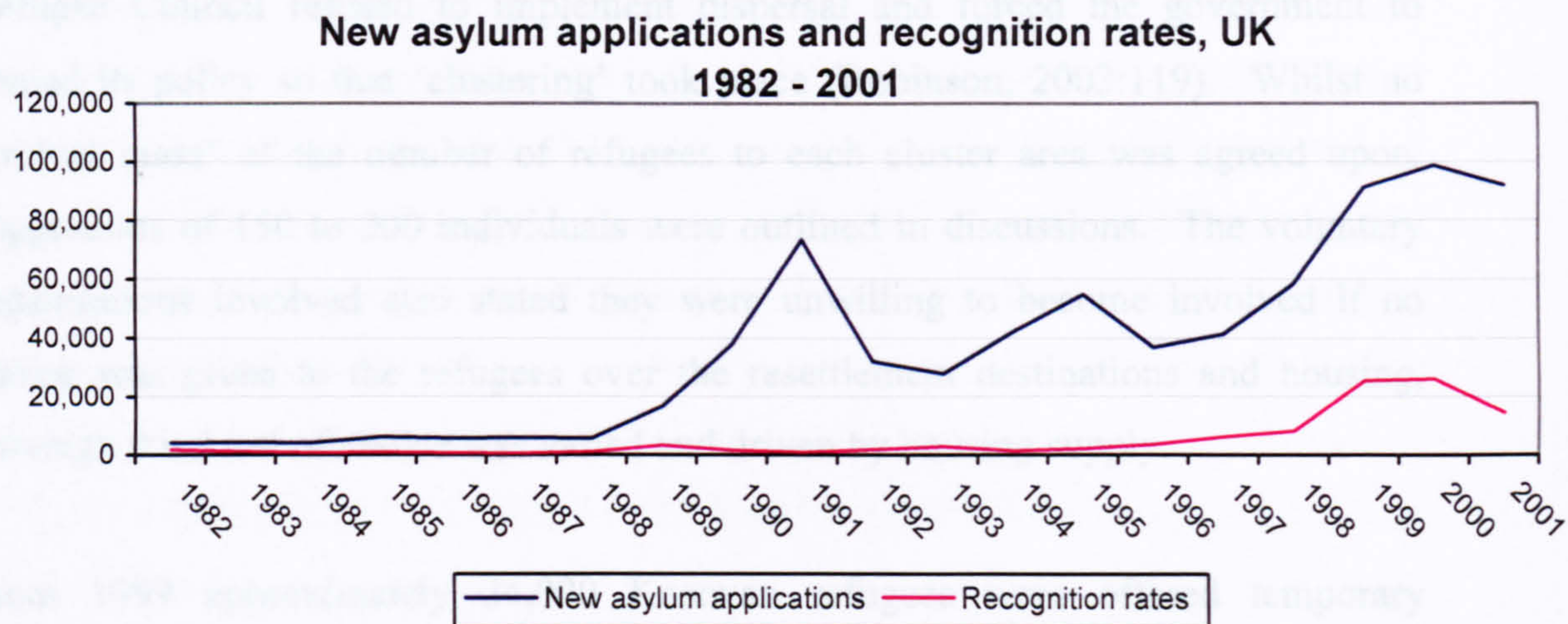
View at: <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/basics/opendoc.pdf?tbl=BASICS&id=435f891f2>

The number of refugees worldwide recognized by UNHCR and the number of applications for asylum in the UK both reveal peaks during the late 1980s and the early 1990s (Graph 2 and 3). Certainly, as can be seen in Graph 3, the number of

²⁵ UNHCR figures do not include Palestinians as they are covered by a separate mandated agency, UNRWA.

'non quota refugees' arriving in the UK was on the increase as the Berlin Wall fell with no centralized resettlement programme devised at this time.

Graph 3: New asylum applications submitted in the UK and recognition of asylum seekers under the 1951 Convention in the UK, 1982 – 2001



Source: Statistical Yearbook, UNHCR, 2001

The lack of any resettlement or 'quota' schemes for refugees in protracted situations and any link to the numbers of asylum seekers arriving 'spontaneously' in the UK is yet to be explored in the literature. However, the twin peaks following 1989 do indicate how programmes for refugees under the then Conservative government were lacking and the lack of burden-sharing and solutions at a global level played some part in the arrival of asylum seekers from across the world. Policies from industrialised countries emphasised containment in regions of origin and by drawing up legislation, regulations and policies to exclude new arrivals, the definition of a refugee became tighter over time.

Containment in regions of origin did not apply to refugees from Europe and between 1992 and 1995 a further dispersal of 2,585 Bosnian 'quota refugees' occurred. Robinson argues that the Bosnian resettlement programme was far more successful than previous programmes for 'quota refugees' because it incorporated lessons learned from past failures and that lessons from this programme could be considered

²⁶ The UNHCR definition of a protracted refugee situation is based on the criteria of a refugee population of 25,000 or more persons who have been in exile for five or more years.

in future policy even though this was a policy formulated in an ‘informational vacuum’²⁷ (2000:1218-1222). Whilst the Home Office wanted resettlement to occur in local authority, housing associations and private accommodation, the Refugee Council urged that: ‘private sector housing should only be used as a last resort since vulnerable people should not be left to the mercy of the market’ (2000:1225). The Refugee Council refused to implement dispersal and forced the government to amend its policy so that ‘clustering’ took place (Robinson, 2003:119). Whilst no ‘critical mass’ of the number of refugees to each cluster area was agreed upon, suggestions of 150 to 300 individuals were outlined in discussions. The voluntary organisations involved also stated they were unwilling to become involved if no choice was given to the refugees over the resettlement destinations and housing, although this level of choice was varied and driven by housing supply.

From 1999 approximately 24,000 Kosovan refugees were offered temporary protection in the UK. Considerable media coverage and the expectation that residence would be short term and temporary (Robinson, 2003a:120; 2003b) characterised this offer. Boswell suggests that the relative success of the approach of the Bosnia Project led to a ‘more systematic dispersal system for the reception of refugees from Kosovo in May 1999’ (2001:10). Generous funding by the Home Office, active participation of local authorities (ibid, 2001:10) as well as clustering ‘led to more successful settlement’ (Audit Commission, 2000:16). Leicester was one of the first cities to accept Kosovan refugees arriving as a part of this evacuation programme and now hosts a ‘substantial Kosovan Albanian refugee community’²⁸ (ICAR, 2005).

Evidence from these past dispersal programmes was not used when contemporary dispersal was being formulated, even if, as Robinson suggests; the evidence base is incomplete due to its ‘very localised’ (2003:3) nature. Such critical reflection on past cases of dispersal was important because, as Black, argues: ‘... work on the negative impacts of forced geographical dispersal of refugees in the United Kingdom in the late 1970s and 1980s helped to move UK policy away from dispersal for at least a decade.’ (2001:70). By the late 1990s, the failures of past dispersal policies

²⁷ Little socio-demographic data was available on the new arrivals.

²⁸ Viewed on 15 June 2005 at http://www.icar.org.uk/res/map/regions/eng_emid/leice/over.html

were not ‘fully mobilized in attempts to resist the new UK government policy of dispersal encapsulated in the National Asylum Support System (NASS)’ (Black, 2001:70). Given that the idea of Evidence Based Policy has been ‘in vogue’ (Young, 2003) since 1997 when New Labour came into power (Sanderson, 2002; Wyatt, 2002), this lack of critical reflection was surprising. In a speech by David Blunkett to the ESRC in February 2000²⁹ he stated that: ‘It should be self-evident that decisions on Government policy ought to be informed by sound evidence. Social science research ought to be contributing a major part of that evidence base. It should be playing a key role in helping us to decide our overall strategies.’. The evidence-base from past dispersals did not, however, lead to shaping the policy of contemporary dispersal.

THE ENVIRONMENT OF CONTEMPORARY DISPERSAL

There are several key differences between the past dispersal of refugees and contemporary dispersal of asylum seekers. Whilst there are clearly some continuities with the past, the overtly hostile political environment directed towards asylum seekers in recent years has affected the policy response as well as the experiences of asylum seekers.

In the past, *ad hoc* dispersal arrangements had been implemented for ‘quota refugees’ who had arrived *en masse*, following highly publicised emergency situations such as the Vietnamese ‘boat people’. The arrival of these ‘quota refugees’, therefore, was often seen as an ‘event’ that occurred between particular dates and the number of arrivals was subject to negotiation by the government. These programmes involved recognised refugees, whose legal status was not in doubt, and access to mainstream financial support was a key principle. Following the 1999 Act, for the first time, all nationalities of what Duke and Carey-Wood referred to as ‘non-quota refugees’ (Duke, 1996:2; Carey-Wood *et al.*, 1995), who did not hold refugee status or any temporary protection status, were dispersed to cities and large towns across the UK.

²⁹ *Influence or Irrelevance: Can Social Science Improve Government?*, speech made by David Blunkett, then Secretary of State for Education and Employment, to a meeting convened by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), 2 February 2000.

The countries of origin are more diverse and, with exceptions (IPPR, 2003³⁰; see also Zetter *et al.*, 2003:120), the arrival of these individuals or families has seldom been related to any ‘emergency’ in the country of origin by the media. The *ad hoc* dispersal arrangements of the past explicitly recognised refugee situations as individual historical occurrences, each with their distinct character, and policies – misguided or otherwise – were created around this. Contemporary dispersal is based around a much more ‘macro’ or ‘one size fits all’ approach that homogenises all nationalities into one category of ‘asylum seeker’. This does not recognize ongoing debates about the root causes of refugee-generating processes (Zolberg, 1983, 1989; Castles, 2003a:106) or the suggestion that restrictive measures are ultimately ineffectual in global terms (Castles and Loughna, 2005).

Asylum seekers are now separated from mainstream benefits support, provision of accommodation, employment and other ways in which would promote ‘inclusion’. Whereas previous dispersal programmes were not, with the exception of the Polish Resettlement Act 1947, backed by legislation, contemporary dispersal is firmly established in law. Again with the exception of the Polish dispersal, the UK government had distanced itself from the implementation of these policies by utilising the voluntary sector. The strong stance taken by the voluntary sector in influencing the cluster policy, as well as choice over destination and housing, with the Bosnian refugees is of note. Although the voluntary sector has also implemented dispersal on behalf of the government in the past, its role in implementation of contemporary dispersal is on a contractual basis. This places the voluntary sector in the pressured frontline role of implementing negative and punitive legislation, regulations and policies that run counter to their historic role of advocates of refugee rights. Local authorities are required by law to provide lists of potential accommodation to the Home Secretary upon request³¹.

³⁰ For example a link has recently been made in the media between the human rights situation in Zimbabwe and anti-deportation campaigns. It is not always the case that media reports link the arrival of asylum seekers with reports about the country of origin. An IPPR report did explicitly recognised the direct link between refugees and situations of conflict (Castles, Crawley and Loughna, 2003).

³¹ Section 100 of the 1999 Act.

The policy is an accommodation-led one and asylum seekers do not have any choice as to where or what type of accommodation they will be dispersed to. Whereas the political biases of local authorities influenced the *de facto* dispersal of Chileans, contemporary dispersal has been structured around regional consortia established in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to organise support for dispersed asylum seekers. These were local-authority led, but involved ‘partners’ including refugee agencies in an Inter- Agency Partnership (IAP), Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and a limited number of Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs). The role of these consortia was, however, strictly determined by central government policy and the ‘key characteristic of these regional bodies is that they have ‘responsibility without ownership’’ (Harrison, 2003). Local authorities are no longer required to provide one hundred percent of necessary accommodation – there is now a substantial role for the private sector housing market. Contemporary dispersal enables a role for private bus companies to transport asylum seekers to dispersal areas and private accommodation providers and their sub-contractors to accommodate them. The privatisation of services to asylum seekers and refugees is something that has been considered in the past to be insensitive to the needs of a vulnerable population.

How divergent the thinking on how locations are chosen for dispersal could not be more clearly illustrated than by comparing the response to the Ugandan Asian arrivals and the present. In the space of just 30 years, the ‘red’ (too many ethnic minorities) and ‘green’ (small numbers of ethnic minorities) areas have switched. Contemporary dispersal was, in theory, to areas with a pre-existing multicultural presence. In practice this was not always the outcome as will be explored in subsequent chapters.

The principles surrounding the Vietnamese dispersal were very much based around rapid assimilation. None of the first three principles identified by Hale (1993) of prevention from becoming dependent on external assistance, being made job ready as soon as possible and using existing welfare mechanisms would result in ‘social exclusion’ – it was only the fourth principle of dispersal of between four and ten families, which ultimately led to isolation and resulting secondary migration. Dispersal policies in the 1970s and 1980s for Ugandan Asians and the Vietnamese

have resulted in sizeable secondary migration to cities with ethnically, class or religiously linked communities. Robinson and Hale charted the secondary migration of Vietnamese households within Britain and whilst there evidence about 'secondary migration' in previous cases of dispersal (Robinson, 1989; 1994), the existing knowledge about 'secondary migration' in contemporary dispersal is fragmented and comes from information presented at conferences and anecdotal accounts.

Bloch and Schuster argue that dispersal is now one of the 'normalised essential instruments' of control along with deportation and detention of asylum seekers (Bloch and Schuster, 2005:491-512; Schuster, 2004). The requirements for asylum seekers to report in dispersal locations is a control mechanism, as is the contractual obligation for accommodation providers to notify NASS if the asylum seeker is absent from the property.

What has changed over time are the changes in policy from employment-led to housing-led dispersal which Hitchcox argued in relation to the compulsory dispersal of Vietnamese refugees reflected the state of the British economy at the time which 'moved from full employment in the 1950s, to nearly, four million unemployed in the 1980s' (1987:6). Whereas Hungarian refugees in the 1950s involved resettlement policies that reflected the availability of employment, the Vietnamese dispersal in the 1980s reflected the availability of housing (1987:5). From this point, contemporary dispersal that involves placing new arrivals in emergency accommodation before moving them to either public or private accommodation does not reflect the British economy or the availability of employment – in fact, the inverse of this is more accurate. Contemporary dispersal is operating in a context wherein 'deregulation, market testing and privatisation has shrunk the state and reduced its tendency to intervene to ensure social justice' (Robinson, 2003:22). It is ironic that, in this context, the creation of NASS has effectively increased the role of the state with social support now controlled separately.

Another characteristic is the high number of agencies involved and proliferation of agencies surrounding dispersal. For 'quota refugees', needs were met by statutory services in the same way as the general population. For contemporary asylum seekers accessing services involves identifying these parallel agencies.

Each of these differences combine to create a situation where involvement between NASS and the voluntary, public and private sectors is qualitatively different. It is in this context that an investigation of the social exclusion of asylum seekers is explored. In particular, the compulsory NASS process that redistributes people in ways that alternate from their own choice of destination and housing and the ways in which people either adapt or resist these systems imposed upon them are explored.

EMERGING LITERATURE ON CONTEMPORARY DISPERSAL

Early in the dispersal process, the Audit Commission produced a report on the implementation of dispersal that provided an overview of the new support arrangement, the role of regional consortia and how the national framework could be strengthened (2000). The aim of this report was to help local agencies make the policy of dispersal work and a series of findings and recommendations were included. Given the variety of the 'quantity, range and quality of services' for asylum seekers across the UK, a key element was a focus on how local agencies needed to address gaps in services in order to avoid a 'cycle of exclusion and dependency' (2000:45-80).

Two academic studies of dispersal have been published on contemporary compulsory dispersal – Robinson *et al.* (2003) and Griffiths *et al.* (2005). Robinson *et al.* provides a comparative analysis of dispersal in the UK, Sweden and the Netherlands. Arguing that asylum seekers and refugees have become defined as a 'problem' due to their spatial concentration, the book explores Europe's changing place in the global refugee system, past cases of dispersal of refugees, the prehistory of contemporary dispersal and aspects of the implementation of dispersal. Questioning the assumptions and central notions justifying dispersal, Robinson reached the conclusion that the 'problem' has been socially constructed during a time of 'moral panic' and 'the ability to maintain the purity of our national and local space' (2003:177), arguing that;

‘Dispersal is nothing more than the necessary response to appease a fearful white electorate and satisfy the local charge payers in those localities that naturally attract asylum seekers in the absence of planned dispersal.’ (2003:177)

Griffiths *et al.* focus on refugee community organizations (RCOs) and dispersal, in the geographical areas of London, and the regional consortia areas of the West Midlands and the Northwest. They examine the role of RCOs in integration, how asylum is within the ‘race relations’ framework of ‘racialised immigration control’ as well as networks and social capital (2005:7, 11-36).

An unpublished study³² of dispersal commissioned by the Home Office (Zetter *et al.*, 2002) was received at a late state in the production of this thesis but resonant findings have been included in individual chapters. This study was the final version of several unpublished reports commissioned by the Home Office early in the dispersal process looking at host community groups, provision of English language classes, legal and health services in dispersal areas. Some 44 recommendations on how to improve the dispersal system were provided. A Home Office online report by Anie *et al.* at the end of 2005 that explored factors affecting successful dispersal has also been included to corroborate the findings of this thesis.

There have also been more practitioner style reports written about dispersal that focus on specific geographical areas (Carter and El-Hassan, 2003; Wilson, 2001). To extract comparable data from these reports a ‘basic data extraction tool’ (see Appendix III) was used. Carter and El-Hassan focus on refugee housing and community development for various nationalities of asylum seekers in the Yorkshire & Humberside region³³, with the fieldwork taking place between July and October 2002. The report, commissioned by the Housing Associations’ Charitable Trust

³² Applied for under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and received in April 2006. The Home Office specified that this research ‘was conducted between 2000 and 2002 so its results reflect the views of respondents at that time. There are a number of limitations to this report including unclear methodology and recommendations that are sometimes not linked to research evidence. Therefore any reference to these findings or recommendations need to reflect these shortcomings.’ (cover letter, 10 April 2006). The main author also outlined caveats for using this report; ‘the work can be used and cited and quoted from only in relation to PhD research. It can be cited but not directly quoted from in published documents without the consent of the project director.’. When referred to throughout this thesis, this will be referred to as ‘with caveats’.

³³ Some 10,500 asylum seekers at any one point in time. The study focused on three cities – Hull, Sheffield and Wakefield.

(HACT), aimed to bring together the findings of a feasibility study commissioned by HACT to explore the impact on refugee housing and community development of the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999. The methodology included training community researchers who subsequently accessed participants for the study ‘cross-community’. Several ethical considerations of research with refugees were addressed such as the importance of gaining the trust of communities; emphasis on how the research would ultimately be disseminated; and other standard issues of ethical research such as confidentiality, informed consent and stressing the independence of the research. It was found that despite every effort being put into designing an appropriate methodology there was still strong reluctance from refugees in areas of low community development activity and suspicion about being interviewed (2003:17). Gaining trust of the asylum population, therefore, was clearly an issue which required considerable effort.

Funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Wilson (2001) focused on services for various nationalities of asylum seekers in West Yorkshire³⁴ between December 1999 and March 2001 with the aim of identifying achievement and areas of provision where development was needed. Qualitative methods were utilised and the research found that dispersal could be an effective means of providing services and support to asylum seekers, explaining how several organisations in the region had responded to the system (2003:102). The Audit Commission’s earlier guidelines on good practice were incorporated into this report. Gaps and shortcomings in service provision, such as poorer legal representation and the varied quality of accommodation were identified with the main findings summarised with clear recommendations outlined (2003:8-9; see also Robinson, 2003:138-140 for a more detailed account of this report). This links to the findings of this thesis surrounding legal services and accommodation (*Chapter 7*).

Other geographically-specific accounts of dispersal are emerging (see for example Stansfield, 2001 for an account of dispersal in Nottingham; Temple and Moran *et al.* for an account of dispersal in Salford and Manchester; ICAR ‘mapping the UK’ project for accounts of individual cities across the UK; The Guardian *Welcome to*

³⁴ Some 2,100 asylum seekers at any one point in time in Bradford, Leeds, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield.

Britain, a special investigation into asylum and immigration, June 2001; Refugee Council, various reports and press releases). A gender sensitive report from Refugee Action – *Is it Safe Here?* – addressed refugee women’s experiences of living in the UK based on the views of 149 refugee women either living in NASS or emergency accommodation (Dumper, 2002).

There has been an emergence of ‘myth busting’ or ‘exploding myths’ literature surrounding dispersal. Across the country local authorities and RSPs amongst others have published material explaining ‘the facts’ about asylum, including defining who is an asylum seeker³⁵, how many asylum seekers arrive in the UK in proportion to other countries; how the UK is not a ‘soft touch’³⁶; how asylum seekers receive only 70% of the rate of benefits provided to the general population; and how asylum seekers do not drain resources from the NHS and other services³⁷. Gender-specific myths and facts have been addressed by the Refugee Women’s Resource Project at Asylum Aid, including the myth that women do not have the right to claim asylum in their own right but are dependent on their husband’s claim and that women are vulnerable to abuse during flight and after arrival in the UK³⁸.

NASS also published a fact sheet in May 2004³⁹ focusing on how; ‘asylum seekers do not ‘jump the queue’ for social housing that would otherwise be available to UK nationals’. This fact sheet points out that asylum seekers are housed under separate arrangements, funded and administered centrally by the Home Office and that accommodation is not better than that provided to UK nationals. They point out that their model contract with housing providers requires accommodation to be ‘fit for habitation’; have safe electrical equipment; have furniture of a ‘reasonable standard’; have gas, electricity and water; and ‘signpost’ asylum seekers to local services. It is pointed out that NASS does not require the provision of telephones, TVs, hi-fi

³⁵ See for example *Asylum Seekers ... The Facts*, Wigan Council, viewed on 8 July 2003 at: <http://www.wiganmbc.gov.uk/pub/council/asylum/asylumseekers.htm>

³⁶ See for example, Emms, P., (February 2003), *Asylum Seeking in Stoke-on-Trent: the Facts*, a report of the Elected Mayor’s enquiry into Asylum Seekers in the City of Stoke-on-Trent.

³⁷ See for example *Myths about Asylum Seekers*, leaflet produced by the Campaign to Stop Arbitrary Detention at Yarl’s Wood.

³⁸ *Myths and Facts Leaflet*, Refugee Women’s Resource Project, Asylum Aid, viewed on 15 April 2004 at: http://www.asylumaid.org.uk/New%20RWRP/RWRP_Campaigningandlobbying_Myths/

³⁹ *Dispelling the Myths, Telling the Facts*, A fact sheet from the National Asylum Support Service, Home Office, 10 May 2004.

equipment, new electrical goods, new furniture, cars, cleaning, gym or leisure club membership or computers. Cash payments to asylum seekers are detailed and there is a short section on the reasons why NASS would suspend dispersal, such as because of direct requests from the police and regional consortia.

These fact sheets are a clear manifestation of the very polarised debate on asylum in the UK and it is clear that misinformation and negative perceptions of asylum seekers dominate this debate. The IPPR noted the plethora of fact sheets and myth busting leaflets, commented that they did not have much impact on the general debate partly because they did not reach the right audience and partly because they were not ‘necessarily trusted’ (2005:47). They suggested that the publication of these fact sheets were frequently considered to be the whole solution.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Rather than providing a geographically-specific account of dispersal, this study aims to investigate processes of formal and informal social exclusion in compulsory dispersal and the specific impacts of dispersal on how asylum seekers access services and are able to maintain or create social networks.

Compulsory dispersal is now taken for granted as being entrenched as a policy and the founding rationale for its introduction rarely questioned which, as Robinson argues, means that the ‘apologists for dispersal are curiously silent about the rights of the asylum seeker’ (2003:165), the right of freedom of movement being the most obvious breach. That the dispersal policy is based on ‘a series of contestable assumptions’ (Ibid., 2003:167) is clearly worth further investigation. To do this, the ‘NASS system’⁴⁰ will be explored. The effect this process has on the sense of ‘belonging’ of those who are granted either recognition as a refugee under the 1951 Convention or some other form of status which allows them to remain in the UK will also be discussed.

⁴⁰ Asylum seekers requiring support are often referred to as going through the ‘NASS process’ or ‘NASS system’ by staff members of voluntary agencies assisting asylum seekers, other practitioners, local authorities and regional consortia. This thesis refers to this as the NASS system.

For this study, the term ‘asylum seeker’ will be used for a person who is currently in the NASS system, in receipt of SO and has not yet completed a RSD process. A ‘refugee’ will be used to connote a person who has been granted refugee or a lesser status. Asylum seekers who opt out of the NASS system prior to RSD will be referred to as ‘secondary migrants’ as this is consistent with earlier categorisations with refugees dispersed. There are several problems with the term ‘secondary migrant’, not least the negative connotations but alternatives such as ‘driftback’ (Audit Commission, 2000:16; Woube, 2002) would require further conceptualisation.

The aims of this study form the structure of this thesis and research questions include:

- What is the impact of the dispersal policy on formal and informal processes of social exclusion?
- How does dispersal impact upon access to services such as employment, education, training, medical care and accommodation.
- How does dispersal impact on the ability of asylum seekers to maintain or develop social networks?
- How do the above impact on the sense of ‘belonging’ or ‘inclusion’ of asylum seekers and does the dispersal policy have any longer term effects on the process of resettlement?

Chapter 2 will outline and discuss the theoretical and conceptual basis of this thesis. Relevant literature on social exclusion, forced migration, belonging and the bridging concepts of trust and ‘liminality’ will be provided. Alongside this, perceptions of refugees over time will be explored.

Chapter 3 will describe the research design, methodology and methods. This is based on qualitative methods combined with mapping using GIS. A section on access to participants and the ethics of research with refugees is included, including a discussion on ‘harm’ and strategies for ‘avoiding harm’.

Subsequent chapters present findings and illustrate how the deterrence context creates a ‘negative equation’ for newly arrived asylum seekers that runs counter to

ideas and strategies for 'integration' and impacts upon asylum seekers' ability to foster a sense of 'belonging' in the UK. It is argued that dispersal has institutionalised and entrenched the social exclusion of asylum seekers since its introduction in April 2000. This, together with other measures, separated asylum seekers from mainstream society. Prior to dispersal, mistrust of asylum seekers was already widespread and it is argued that dispersal involves multiple forms of social exclusion. This is due to the prehistory of mistrust as well as the structure, geography and process of the emergent NASS system.

Chapter 4 discusses the prehistory of contemporary dispersal and what 'evidence' informed the policy. The structure and implementation is examined along with the roles of agencies involved, in particular the voluntary and private sectors. *Chapter 5* maps the spatial character of dispersal and SO support from June 2001 to June 2004, which are compared with the Indices of Deprivation 2000. The exclusion of asylum seekers based on geography, due to the characteristics of the locations asylum seekers have been dispersed to is explored. *Chapter 6* explores the NASS system utilising qualitative data to illustrate each stage of the process. This 'micro' approach also allows for an illustration of what is lost, or not considered, in this process and how the imposed sense of 'temporariness' is met with resilience by asylum seekers who negotiate a path through this administrative system. Mistrust of this system is explored and individual perceptions of social exclusion outlined.

More specific impacts of dispersal are discussed in *Chapters 7* and *8*, with *Chapter 7* addressing access to services and presenting findings, in particular how political or institutional trust is not restored during the process and the impact this has on accessing services. *Chapter 8* presents the findings on how dispersal affects the ability of refugees to maintain or develop social networks as social networks are denied by the NASS system. This study at a 'meso' level will demonstrate how, when possible, policy-imposed liminality is resisted through recourse to social networks. The space for restoration of social, political and institutional trust is explored as this is relevant to theories of 'social capital'. This chapter considers how asylum seekers obtain a sense of 'belonging', as opposed to 'limbo', in the UK.

The *Conclusions* will outline the main findings in relation to the aims of research and comment on emerging themes that have arisen. These will focus on the future direction of asylum policy in the UK and areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND FORCED MIGRATION

INTRODUCTION

Because of the qualitative new environment outlined in *Chapter 1*, there are several key concepts that have not previously been linked to conceptualise the past dispersal of refugees. In this study social exclusion and forced migration are linked by the issue of trust and the anthropological concept of ‘liminality’. This chapter explores literature surrounding these to clarify the linkages between them as well as the relationship between this study and previous literature (Rudestam and Newton, 2001:56-57). ‘Social exclusion’ as it relates specifically to refugees has already been examined at a global level but there is a paucity of literature on the concept specifically in relation to refugees in the UK. This chapter will outline what is meant by ‘social exclusion’ and how it relates to dispersed asylum seekers. Literature relating to forced migration will then be explored, in particular the ‘meso’ approach of social networks. Drawing on earlier anthropological literature (van Gennep, 1960; Douglas, 1966; Turner, 1967), various anthropologists have discussed how refugees occupy a ‘liminal’ space in refugee camps (Bousquet, 1987; see also Kunz, 1973; Malkki, 1995; Turton, 2004). Liminality is used as a bridging concept between this existing forced migration literature and the social exclusion of dispersed asylum seekers. This is a new approach and is also linked to the issue of trust, which is central to any study on refugees (Colson, 2003; Daniel and Knudsen, 1995; Hynes, 2003; Voutira and Harrell-Bond, 1995). Both liminality and (mis)trust are outlined to provide a way to understand the NASS system.

Perceptions of refugees are examined and the oscillation between ‘celebrating’ refugees or labelling them ‘victims’ is avoided by using Turton’s suggestions around viewing forced migrants as ‘ordinary people’ (2003:9) who have been through extraordinary circumstances. This is done to avoid homogenising refugees (Turton, 2003:10) and is expanded with an addendum: *...and continue to experience extraordinary circumstances in their country of asylum.*

SOCIAL EXCLUSION

‘Social exclusion often means a situation of political powerlessness.’ (Castles and Davidson, 2000:109)

Castles defines ‘social exclusion’ as when individuals or groups suffer multiple types of disadvantage in various social sectors such as education, employment, housing, health (2002:18). Castles provides a definition of ‘cumulative exclusion’ as those people who are largely outside mainstream economic, social and political relations, and who lack the ability to participate which is crucial to full citizenship (2002:18). Levitas also suggests that the socially excluded are understood to be a group ‘outside mainstream society’, sometimes being considered to be ‘outside society’ itself (Levitas, 2000:358).

For the purposes of this thesis, social exclusion includes both formal exclusion from certain rights and informal exclusionary practices as a result of, for example, the structure of service provision or discrimination on the part of service providers and is understood to mean:

‘various processes which prevent individuals and groups from participating in the rights that members of a social and political community would normally expect to enjoy’ (Kofman and Sales, 1998:384).

In order to relate social exclusion to refugees the concept has to be understood in global terms as well as nationally and locally. As Castles and Loughna argue; ‘Globalisation is a process of differential inclusion and exclusion of different areas’, with the differences in levels of income and human rights being obvious causes for migration (2005:182). Richmond also argues that social exclusion must be understood in a global context (2002:40) and the usual definition of social exclusion does not recognise that countries such as the UK are the ‘affluent part of a world system.’ (2002:43). Middleton suggests that exclusion from citizenship in the country of origin leads to forced migration and he further suggests that once a refugee has faced this exclusion the journey to a country of asylum is based on finding inclusion elsewhere (2005:47). The process of becoming a refugee is itself a result of political processes that involve restructuring the social order of nation-

states, meaning that particular groups will be excluded, often forcibly (Zolberg, 1983, 1989).

In the UK, the term social exclusion became established in policy discussions during the 1990s (Anderson and Sim, 2000). It is considered to be a 'problematic' (Levitas, 1998:7) and 'contested' concept that has different meanings according to 'different ideologies' (Anderson, 2000:7). The shift from a focus on poverty to social exclusion and the lack of emphasis on inequality as the dominant structural dynamic in society have each been subject to debate (Levitas, 2000:13; Anderson, 2000:358). Levitas identified three discourses which use the idea in different ways (1993). Firstly, a redistributionist discourse (RED) emphasises poverty as a prime cause of social exclusion. Under this framework, the way in which poverty inhibits social participation and excludes people from ordinary living patterns (Townsend, 1979, quoted in Levitas, 2000:359) is highlighted. Social exclusion in the RED framework is complex, dynamic, multidimensional and accepts that discrimination and exclusionary practices cause poverty (Levitas, 2000:359). Secondly, a moral underclass discourse (MUD) that presents the social excluded as culturally distinct, focuses on the behaviour of the individual and is concerned with the issue of 'dependency'. Under MUD, there is a focus on the consequences of social exclusion for social order and emphasis on particular groups. Thirdly, there is a social integrationist discourse (SID) that emphasises paid employment as a main way in which integration into society is achieved (Levitas, 1993:2, 7-28). The socially excluded are the 'workless' or those at risk of this (Levitas, 2000:359). A central tenet of New Labour's thinking on social exclusion relates to getting people into paid employment as this is seen as a vital link to mainstream society (Sales, 2002).

Since New Labour came to power in 1997, social exclusion has become a central concept with the formation of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU)⁴¹ which defines it as occurring when:

'... people or places suffer from a series of problems such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, ill health and family breakdown.'⁴²

⁴¹ Initially based in the Cabinet Office and from May 2002 in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).

Burchardt argues that the SEU's approach of targeting specific groups – young people⁴³, rough sleepers and ex-prisoners – has the 'drawback' of 'inevitable omission' of other vulnerable groups (2004:219). This emphasis on particular groups and the 'rhetoric' surrounding the launch of the SEU has been rooted in the MUD framework (Levitas, 2000:360). Levitas also argues that social exclusion for the SEU that revolves around specific groups has three disadvantages – a danger of stigmatising the already 'excluded' groups; not looking at the reasons why these groups experience social exclusion in the first instance; and the numbers of those socially excluded according to the SEU focus being much lower than those affected by poverty (Levitas, 2000:380).

The link between social exclusion and multiple deprivation is difficult to separate analytically with the two terms used interchangeably in the literature and no agreed set of indicators to describe social exclusion (Levitas, 2000:365; Zetter *et al.*, 2003). The SEU works with the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) in order to tackle deprivation and commissioned the Indices of Deprivation 2000 and 2004 in order to measure deprivation for each ward and local authority district in England. These indices did combine indicators from a range of domains such as income, employment, educational attainment and housing into a single deprivation score⁴⁴. Funding for the 88 most deprived local authority districts identified by the SEU in 2001 was managed by the NRU which was set up to ensure the neighbourhood renewal agenda was implemented effectively. The spatial character of these 88 most deprived districts will be explored in *Chapter 5* and compared to the spatial character of dispersal.

Lupton and Power also suggest that the negative acquired characteristics of deprived areas are associated with a process of diminishing social capital because of smaller social networks and mistrust (2002:136). Mistrust of neighbours, service providers and authority figures is a broader feature of social exclusion beyond dispersal of

⁴² <http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/page.asp?id=213> viewed on 24 October 2005.

⁴³ Pupils excluded from school or truanting; teenage parents; 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training; young runaways; and, children in care.

⁴⁴ The Indices of Deprivation 2000 were constructed by the Index Team at Oxford University for the Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions.

asylum seekers and provides a link between social exclusion and forced migration that will be explored further in *Chapter 5*.

Asylum seekers have not been included in the work of the SEU as they come under the remit of the Home Office and NASS (SEU, 2004; see also Appendix IV for further clarification). Stewart and Hills (2004), from the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, have argued that the UK remains an unequal society with a number of gaps in the strategy of the government. One of the gaps and omissions identified by Burchardt (2004:219) was government policies for asylum seekers of whom 'the risks of exclusion are acute' due to legislation and policy interventions that have actively increased social exclusion in relation to employment, income and housing (Burchardt, 2004:209). Invoking a RED framework, it is highlighted how the restrictive welfare entitlements of asylum seekers create social exclusion with Burchardt commenting that even those eligible for support only receive 'one third of that required to be on the poverty line'⁴⁵ and asserting that asylum policy has not been an example of joined-up government (2004:226).

The element of being outside mainstream society was examined by Robinson who suggested that asylum seekers needed to be represented as 'outsiders' before the 'manipulation of their settlement patterns [could] be even considered.' (2003:108). This relates directly to the social exclusion of asylum seekers with no other group in the UK having their settlement patterns so tightly controlled or managed. That asylum seekers are perceived as a group 'outside' means that they become 'more visible as a group' (Sales, 2002:457).

For dispersed asylum seekers, RED provides a broader concept than poverty and allows for investigation of processes rather than static measurements as well as capturing the multi-dimensional character of social disadvantage. Crucially, it also allows for discrimination and exclusionary practices that cause poverty and hardship to be incorporated into the analysis. Traces of MUD are evident in official discourse about asylum seekers with the threat of asylum seekers also emphasised in sections of the media. The 'myth of dependency' in forced migration studies has already

been debunked (Waldron, 1987). As asylum seekers are excluded from paid employment until a less temporary status is granted, they are effectively excluded also from the SID framework.

It is clear that the process of social exclusion as it pertains to refugees can be seen as commencing earlier than arrival in the UK. Burchardt *et. al.* suggest that for social exclusion, 'bygones are not bygones but represent the starting point for the present.' (2002:8). For refugees and asylum seekers, bygones and individual past histories inform the processes of social exclusion encountered in the UK and this consideration of 'bygones' provide a link between social exclusion and forced migration. Understanding processes of exclusion and persecution already encountered in countries of origin and during the journey to the UK also avoids what Scholte describes as 'methodological territorialism':

'... the practice of understanding and investigating social relations through the lens of territorial geography. Territorialist method means formulating concepts, asking questions, constructing hypotheses, gathering and interpreting evidence, and drawing conclusions in a spatial framework that is wholly territorial. These intellectual habits are so engrained that most social researchers reproduce them more or less unconsciously.' (2004:20)

Whilst social exclusion was conceived without migrants in mind, it is a useful concept in understanding the experiences of dispersed asylum seekers. Asylum seekers in the UK are often viewed in purely national terms and this resonates with what Castles refers to as 'the tyranny of the national'⁴⁶ in research and the danger of framing research and any subsequent attempt to influence policy on refugees in only national terms rather than as a transnational issue. Castles considers that this is a key explanation as to why migration policies in industrialised countries so often fail to achieve their aims (2004). Therefore, social exclusion for asylum seekers and refugees needs to encompass not only their present circumstances but their 'bygones' and thus be temporally expanded. It also needs to be spatially expanded to include

⁴⁵ Whilst the UK has no official poverty line, Burchardt uses 60% median equivalised income after housing costs for the whole population.

⁴⁶ Castles, S., (2005), *Policy-driven research or research-driven policy? Challenges to, and dilemmas for, forced migration studies*, paper presented at the 3rd annual postgraduate student conference on forced migration, 'Seeking refuge, seeking rights, seeking a future', Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, 13-14 May 2005. See also Castles, S., (2004), Why Migration Policies Fail, in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol.27, No.2.

the human rights situation and different levels of income in their countries of origin. Social exclusion for asylum seekers going through the NASS system will be shown in subsequent chapters to be fluid dependent upon these temporal and spatial understandings.

THE STUDY OF FORCED MIGRATION

The 1951 Refugee Convention and the setting up of UNHCR provided formal standards for the protection of refugees. This also meant that refugees were essentially separated from other migrants and 'refugee studies', or more recently, the study of forced migration, has incorporated concepts and evidence about refugees that are based on this distinction. Defining the refugee is a complex task as there are legal, sociological, literary and various other definitions and understandings of what a refugee is. 'Refugee' is a label that conveys powerful and complex meanings (Zetter, 1998). Black argues that legal definitions cannot be utilised uncritically by social scientists in that displaced populations do not necessarily fall easily within the labels devised by policy makers (2001:63). In broader sociological terms, the 'refugee experience' (Baker, 1990) or 'asylum cycle' (Koser, 1997) is a process that begins even before a refugee moves across a border and takes on the legal labels of the international refugee regime. This longer term social process has its own dynamics (Castles, 2004) and adoption of the categories and concepts of policy makers can be unhelpful 'in the pursuit of scientific understanding' (Turton, 2003:1). The distinction between the legal and wider sociological understandings of refugees and 'asylum seekers' is therefore necessary. However, policies are exclusively devised for 'refugees' and 'asylum seekers' in the UK. The use of certain terminology has been identified to reify the 'refugee' in analysis (Bascom, 1998:4) and 'perpetuate reifications' (Lewis, 2005), in that the act of researching may itself actively implicate the researcher in the process of creating 'differences' between individuals and consolidate the labels assigned. These definitional issues aside, theory surrounding forced migration has evolved that is rooted in the distinction between refugees and other migrants.

Prior to the 1970s, forced migration was often conceived of as fitting into a simple 'push-pull' model. Kunz attempted to provide a more generally applicable theory of

forced migration in a model that differentiated between 'anticipatory' and 'acute' refugee movements (1973:128). He considered that identifying recurrent patterns would allow for advice and assistance to refugees to be provided more effectively. He also drew attention to 'vintages' of refugees, with each 'vintage' having its own set of political circumstances and therefore being different from previous or subsequent outflows of refugees, whilst arguing for the need to look at refugee situations not as individual occurrences but as recurring phenomena with identical causes (1973:141-146). Thus began a more complex understanding of the dynamics involved in forced migration that has since been extended by theorists such as Richmond (1994) by placing theories of voluntary/forced migration along a continuum of 'proactive' to 'reactive' migration and incorporating a recognition of agency (1994:55-56).

When Zolberg wrote about the 'formation of new states as a refugee-generating process', he focused on the analysis of persecution directed against groups – racial, religious, national or social – to which individuals belong by birth (1983:24). These root causes of forced migration arising from processes 'most prominently as a by-product of the secular transformation of empires into nation-states' and resulting in 'a particularly high incidence of massive refugee flows in the contemporary third world.' He argued out that political trends could explain the existence of refugees and that refugee situations were 'a general phenomenon that is as much a concomitant of world politics as ordinary migration is of world economics.' (Ibid, 1983:25).

In the literature on migration there is a debate on the 'nominalist perspective' versus 'realist perspective' (Hein, 1993; Koser, 1997). The 'nominalist perspective' stresses the more structural position of refugees in relation to other migrants, with the label 'refugee' being no more than a social construct with considerable similarities between refugees and other labour migrants. The 'realist perspective' seeks to understand the motivations and decisions of refugees at an individual level, viewing violence, flight and exile as definitive factors of the 'refugee experience' with the subsequent focus on trauma and 'victimhood' distinguishing refugees from other migrants. This approach also attempts sensitivity to particular refugee situations, emphasizing the unique nature of each situation and individual choices

made therein. Koser considers the 'nominalist' and 'realist' perspectives to be extremes of a single conceptual continuum and argues that any approach that adopts just one perspective exclusively can be considered 'analytically invalid' (Koser, 1997:606). He also argued that the category of 'so-called spontaneous asylum seekers' embodies this debate:

'The political assumption is that an actual distinction from within this category can be made between labour migrants and refugees, and the premise of this assumption is a realist perspective. In contrast, a nominalist perspective holds that the institutionalisation of the category asylum seeker simply serves the political purpose of excluding immigrants generally.' (Koser, 1997:592)

This tension is just one of many in studies of forced migration. As Indra argues, the epistemological tension between 'the universal versus the specific' may be a tension that is '... epistemologically unresolvable without much more middle range theory' but that:

'In the meantime, how it plays out and the centre of gravity actually reached in discourse and practice have important consequences.' (Indra, 1999:xiii).

If this tension is considered in terms of dispersal of asylum seekers and their social exclusion, the more specific approach would more closely follow a discourse where asylum seekers are considered to be distinct, not on the basis of their 'culture' *per se* but on the basis of their trauma, circumstances and experiences and subsequent, assumed or real, 'behaviour'. Asylum seekers in this way are distinct because their situational identity often requires presentation of a particular set of circumstances to access advice, support and other services.

From the 'realist' perspective, the 'refugee experience'⁴⁷ (Ager, 1999:2) is a term which has been widely used in the field of refugee studies to denote the human consequences – personal, social, economic, cultural and political – of forced migration. The 'refugee experience' has often been explored using process models. As can be seen from the discussion of social exclusion, research with refugees entails examination of not only UK based policy, but also spatial expansion to incorporate

factors from the countries of origin of asylum seekers. The artificial constraints of national research do not lend themselves to viewing the variety of socio-economic backgrounds and differences in terms of nationality, age, gender, etc. and in turn leads to a poor understanding of the impact of a national process. In order to understand a refugees' experience of settlement in a country of asylum it is also necessary to understand the causes of initial flight. Without this, any potential sense of the ability (enabling factors) or willingness (constraining factors) of the individual to 'belong' in a new country is speculative. Thus, whilst this thesis is concerned with a national policy, some attention is paid to the entire process of becoming a refugee because, as Joly argues, it is not possible to fully understand the refugee situation without viewing conditions in the country of origin, flight and reception in countries of asylum (1996:150). In order to understand the experience of resettlement in a country of asylum it is necessary, therefore, to understand the initial causes of flight. Baker (1990:67-68) outlines an 'eight phase process model' of such a 'refugee experience' (Figure 2.1):

Figure 2.1: Eight-phase process model

1. The Period of Threat	2. Decision to Flee	3. In Flight	4. Reaching Safety and a Place of Asylum	5. Refugee Camp Experience	6. Reception Into a Host Country	7. Resettlement	8. Post- resettlement
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Limitations with this process model include Turton's argument that forced migrants have distinctive experiences and distinctive needs and that emphasising the common experiences and needs of forced migrants means that there is a risk of homogenising refugees and perceiving them as a 'mass of needy and passive victims'. Turton also argues that there is no such thing as 'the refugee experience' and 'the refugee voice' and that there are only the experiences, and the voices of individual refugees (Turton, 2003:6). However, this model does assist in understanding the entire process of becoming a refugee. The compartmentalising of these different phases runs the risk of 'obscuring connections between them' (Van Hear, 2003:2) but categorisation is a useful tool for analysis (Van Hear, 2003:14). To view the NASS system in context,

⁴⁷ The term 'refugee experience' is used because it emphasises the centrality of refugees themselves in any analysis.

a nine-phase process model, adapted from Baker's model is provided to incorporate more specifically the experience of 'non-quota refugees' who have in many cases circumvented the 'refugee camp experience' (Figure 2.2):

Figure 2.2: Nine-phase process model

1. Period of threat	2. Decision to flee and survive	3. Flight or journey	4. Arrival in the UK	5. Period in emergency accommodation or induction centre	6. First dispersal location	7. Relocation	8. Decision on asylum claim	9. Re- settlement
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During the period of threat and whilst the decision is being made to leave the persecuting country of origin, the process of becoming a 'refugee' has already begun. Upon 'the decision to flee', the 'primary ontological security'⁴⁸ (Richmond, 1994:19) of a person has been vastly threatened if not taken away. The 'everyday life' that 'depends upon routine that, in turn, assumes a degree of predictability and trust in others (Ibid., 1994:19) has changed potentially forever. If a social contract exists between the individual and the government, an event may occur at an individual or societal⁴⁹ level that splits this. Once this split has occurred, flight is often imminent as the refugee no longer trusts his/her own government with his/her own life. Thus, trust at the primary and secondary ontological level is lost⁵⁰. At what point s/he decided to flee can mean the difference between life and death as well as whether international protection will be available. Kunz's distinction of 'anticipatory' and 'acute' forced migration (1973:131) is helpful here in that it categorises refugees into (a) those who anticipate persecution and plan their flight and (b) those who are coerced, often at gunpoint, and forced to flee. The journey, or 'flight' can range from walking across a physical border into a neighbouring country or flying to another country to seek asylum. During flight the refugee is forced to trust various agents, be they travel facilitators, passport brokers or other brokers. S/he does this as

⁴⁸ Primary ontological security refers to 'an individual's self-confidence, derived from a sense of the permanency of things and the reliability of natural processes. ... Becoming a refugee ... generates extreme ontological insecurity.' (Richmond, 1994:19)

⁴⁹ For example, the events of August 1988 in Burma where students watched as fellow students were gunned down by the military.

⁵⁰ Secondary ontological insecurity 'arises when particular spheres of social life are threatened' (Richmond, 1994:19), e.g. bereavement, divorce, loss of employment, etc. that 'generate extreme anxiety. ... The duration of the feelings of insecurity will depend upon the individual's ability to

a survival strategy and to ensure that ‘as few people know you are leaving is important, so you trust no one.’ (Robinson, 2002:64), often not knowing which country s/he will arrive in and what will occur upon arrival. From the point at which an asylum seeker arrives in the UK, applies for asylum and support, the process model includes the period in emergency accommodation (EA) or more recently an induction centre (IC); compulsory dispersal to an urban centre; potential relocation to another urban centre (this process may be repeated more than once); decision on the asylum claim, at which point resettlement can begin. This process will be addressed in depth in *Chapter 6*.

Forced Migration and Social Networks

The term ‘social networks’ in this thesis is used in a metaphorical sense rather than in the highly technical and mathematical language of network analysis (Scott, 1991:6-8), similar are the ‘relationship webs’ that Baker alludes to (Baker, 1990:64) and the ‘social worlds’ (the sum of all the migrants’ relationships and the forces that impinge on them at a particular time) that Emmanuel Marx describes (1990).

Marx (1990:189) pointed out the need to examine ‘social networks’ within studies of refugees. This shift in emphasis created an understanding of forced migrants being within ‘transnational social spaces’ (Castles, 2003:27; Boswell and Crisp, 2004:16). Marx drew on Thomas and Znaniecki’s (1918) seminal work on Polish immigrants in Chicago to chart the stages of resettlement and the establishment of formal associations. This included the way in which; ‘If possible they avoided contact with formal institutions provided by the host community, where they felt powerless to control outcomes’ (Colson, 2003:5), raising the idea that relationships with official agencies are based around power. The more ‘meso’ perspective of social networks means that a middle range perspective can be gleaned (Marx, 1990; Castles, 2003:27; Boswell and Crisp, 2004:10-17). Research on the role of networks in the process of integration has been lacking (Castles, 2002:76; Boswell and Crisp, 2004:16) and there have been calls for analysing forced migration as a ‘social process in which human agency and social networks play a major part’ (Castles,

restore normal routines, re-establish trust, and achieve confidence in himself and others.’ (Richmond, 1994:19).

2003:13). This approach allows interpretation of social linkages at local, national and international levels.

Marx (1990:189) combined 'network analysis' with the 'social worlds' of refugees, bearing in mind the whole of the social life of refugees because it embraced matters whose significance he could not appreciate and the network of social relationships of individuals (1990:193). This idea around the social world of refugees is not confined to a particular geography or territory – in fact, a territorial base can be dispensed with completely and in *Chapter 8* the social relations of asylum seekers are viewed through social networks which dispense with such a territorial base. Marx considered that the social worlds needed to be reduced to manageable proportions by 'looking at it from a particular angle' (1990:193). This meant that social worlds allowed for understanding of the reasons why people behave in a particular way whilst at the same time incorporating the social forces impinging upon them. This means that decision making and motivations can be investigated whilst at the same time gleaning an understanding of the wider, more structural, context. In this way both the 'realist' and 'nominalist' perspectives can be considered.

In relation to the social networks of refugees, Marx placed 'total destruction' whereby the social world of a refugee collapses completely at one end of a continuum and at the other end were those whose social worlds persisted as they moved (1990:196). Refugee groups who arrived *en masse* were more likely to be at this latter end of the continuum as some links are maintained whilst some new networks are created. Towards the centre there are those whose social world became 'more circumscribed' but were able to 'maintain some links or establish new ones' (Ibid., 1990:197). He argued that when a refugee's social network had been 'severely disrupted' they suffered a 'loss of social competence' similar to 'that of a newborn baby' (Ibid, 1990:197). Asylum seekers within the dispersal process are not a result of *en masse* migration and social networks are seldom taken into consideration throughout the process by NASS. Human agency, however, means that some social networks are maintained and others created. The policy of dispersal does not facilitate the maintenance of a refugee's social world but this does not mean that new social networks will not be created. Secondary migration, which often revolves around creating, reformulating or maintaining social networks is one way in

which individuals resist the imposition of exclusionary practices. In this sense, secondary migration is not a negative outcome as it is considered by policy makers, instead it is a positive outcome in that the individual involved has begun the process of 'belonging' in the UK.

Social networks are based on dynamic and fluid relationships, be they strong, weak, positive or negative, that interconnect people globally, regionally, nationally and locally. Granovetter laid great emphasis on the 'strength of weak ties' in relation to possible 'mobility' opportunities in a largely mathematical study of networks (1973:1360-1380). There is no single definition of social networks but one definition proposed by Koser and Pinkerton that incorporates this idea of weak ties (e.g. agents) of global networks being utilised during forced migration of asylum seekers is:

'Social networks comprise personal contacts with friends and family as well as commercial contacts with migration agents including labour recruiters, travel agents, smugglers and traffickers. Relations with networks can be voluntary and involuntary. Networks can facilitate migration in a range of ways, including by disseminating information. However, migration can take place in their absence. Networks exist and function across a range of countries, including origin, destination and also transit countries.' (2002:36)

In a study conducted for the Home Office on the social networks of asylum seekers and dissemination of information about countries of asylum, Koser and Pinkerton found that social networks were the most trusted method of obtaining information (2002:1).

Liminality and Trust

There is, within the literature of forced migration, considerable reference to refugees living in 'limbo', particularly in relation to refugees in camps (Bousquet, 1987; Kunz, 1973; Reynell, 1989; Hitchcox, 1990; Malkki, 1995; Turton, 2004). The term 'limbo' has also been used to describe the asylum and NASS systems in the media⁵¹

⁵¹ For example, see 'asylum seekers left in 'limbo'', BBC news, 20 October 2003. Viewed on 15 April 2004 at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/3209236.stm

and other refugee specific publications in the UK. This concept is explored to provide a way of understanding the NASS system and social exclusion.

Bousquet's study of Vietnamese refugees in closed camps in Hong Kong, *'Living in a State of Limbo'*, explored the 'intermediate state in which one has exited from the old but is not yet accepted elsewhere' (1987:34). Describing how the government of Hong Kong opposed attempts to improve camp conditions to retain the perception of the camp as a temporary holding centre and how the lives of refugees revolved around waiting (1987:43-47). Life in camp was considered by the refugees to be a continuation of the 'long process of alienation' in Vietnam and that refugees considered themselves to be expelled from normal existence (1987:49-52). This resonates with both the necessity of viewing the entire 'refugee experience' and the global character of social exclusion if related to refugees. Malkki, in her ethnography of Hutu refugees in Tanzania also explored how refugees 'by virtue of their "refugeeness" occupy a problematic, liminal position' (1995:1), quoting Turner's analysis:

'... transitional beings are particularly polluting, since they are neither one thing nor another; or may be both; or neither here nor there; or may even be nowhere ... and are at the very least 'betwixt and between' all the recognised fixed point in ... cultural classification.' (Turner, 1967, quoted in Malkki, 1995:7).

Thus, the position of individuals in the 'liminal stage', following a 'rite of separation' and prior to a 'rite of incorporation', was one of change for having crossed the threshold of one status whilst not yet having crossed into another. Because of this the individual was 'neither here nor there; beyond normal' making this liminal stage a 'zone of socio-cultural non-identity, non-existence' (Rapport and Overing, 2000:230). The treatment of individuals at this stage, as suggested by Rapport and Overing, was based around them being a threat to others:

'Individuals at this stage were often removed from everyday sight, or else treated as if invisible. They were often spoken about as dead or as dissolved into amorphous, unrecognizable matter ... [and] were often treated as unclean and polluting to those still going about their everyday lives; also as potentially dangerous ... Hence, initiates in the liminal stage were often the responsibility of certain ritual officers or experts who managed their lives

until the rite of reincorporating them into socio-cultural space, time and identity was to be effected.' (2000:230)

The theme of pollution was developed by Douglas in that: '... what was liminal and neither here nor there was at once polluting, dangerous and powerful' (Douglas, 1966, quoted in Rapport and Overing, 2000:230). Kunz considered that refugees occupied such a liminal state:

'At this stage the refugee still does not look forward, but already knows that the doors are closed behind him. His main preoccupation is therefore the redefinition of his relation towards his country of birth, family and friends. He is taking the first step that will change him from a temporary refugee into exile. He has arrived at the spiritual, spatial, temporal and emotional equidistant of no man's land of midway-to-nowhere and the longer he remains there, the longer he becomes subject to its demoralizing effects.' (1973:133)

The exclusion of asylum seekers from ordinary living patterns through exclusionary practices and the inability to restore normal routines during the dispersal process means that they also occupy a liminal space – they have left their country of origin but are not accepted in the UK. It will be shown how lives revolve around waiting and how they are 'betwixt and between' during the asylum and NASS systems. Although they are not treated as invisible in the UK, they are homogenised into one mass which has become perceived as increasingly threatening and potentially dangerous. They come under the responsibility of NASS and experts of different agencies involved in the NASS system until RSD and the rite of 'integration' occurs. Liminality acts as a bridge between the socially excluded and those undergoing forced migration because both demonstrate similar characteristics of living beyond a normal existence and being considered to be 'outside' mainstream society in some way (Levitas, 2000:358).

Daniel and Knudsen argue that; 'The refugee mistrusts and is mistrusted' (1995:1). They suggest that the success of government policies pivots on a fulcrum of trust (1995:4) but recognise that restoration of trust in countries of asylum is often limited:

'In the best of all possible worlds, at the point of a refugee's reincorporation into a new culture and society, trust is reconstituted, if not restored. The real world, however, is not the best of all possible worlds. ... Unlike life under 'ordinary' circumstances, or more correctly, under circumstances over which one exercises a certain measure of control, in the life of a refugee, trust is overwhelmed by mistrust ...' (1995:1-2)

With both the primary and secondary ontological security of refugees lost during displacement, control over everyday lives, normal routines and ordinary living patterns need to be regained.

Trust is an ambiguous term and has been considered to be a universal notion although there will be personal, gendered and cultural differences in the concept (Muecke, 1999; Peteet, 1999). For the purpose of this study it is divided into 'social trust' (Togoby, 2004:522), 'political trust' (Newton, 2006), 'institutional trust' (Demos, 2003:6) and 'restorative trust' (Voutira and Harrell-Bond, 1995:219; Daniel and Knudsen, 1995). 'Social trust' is understood as an individual being able to have confidence in another person; 'political trust' being around satisfaction with democracy; and 'institutional trust' about having confidence in political institutions and the processes that are required by an institution. This latter category is particularly gendered as it encompasses the public/private dichotomy in that in some cases, refugee women may have had very little experience of dealing with institutions as that is a role undertaken by men. 'Restorative trust' is understood to be a process an individual undertakes to regain social, political or institutional trust.

Mistrust that predominates in refugee 'communities' may be due to religious, ethnic, language or other lines of fragmentation that have occurred in a wider process of restructuring the social order of the nation-state in their countries of origin (Zolberg, 1983, 1989). It may also be due to the political economy of aid structures (Voutira and Harrell-Bond, 1995). Reformulation of 'social trust' and other forms of trust in exile is therefore complex.

Some 'social capital' theory places importance on there being an empirical association between generalised 'social trust' and measures of 'political trust, such as confidence in political institutions and satisfaction with democracy' (Newton, 2006). Trust is also a central feature of the Putnam's writing on the concept of 'social

capital' (1993, 2000), although Bourdieu (1986) does not explicitly address the issue of trust in his writings. The social networks of an asylum seeker are affected during displacement and therefore social capital, which relates closely to these networks, are also affected. The links between 'social exclusion' and other theories such as 'social capital' were, at the time of writing, poorly represented in the literature. An exception was a study by Griffiths *et al.* of social capital and refugee community organizations (2005). Dissatisfied with the 'definitional confusion' and 'competing theoretical perspectives'⁵² (2005:8) of the term 'social capital', Griffiths *et al.* utilised the term critically, considering it to be useful as shorthand to describe the benefits from participation in social networks (2005:8). They challenge what they term the 'integrative or dominant functional paradigm' (2005:4) wherein RCOs are viewed as essential to the integration of refugees. They argued that idealised and functional models of RCOs ran alongside unproblematic notions of community and that 'Conflictual relations within refugee communities or between refugee communities and the state' do not appear in the literature. Citing Anderson's 'imagined communities' (1983) – that all communities beyond face-to-face contact are imagined – the term 'community' was contested (Griffiths, 2005:21-22) and assumptions of unified communities considered to have disempowering effect on refugees overall.

In a study of Pakistani, Turkish and ex-Yugoslav groups in Denmark, Togeby concludes that whilst there is political mobilisation amongst some ethnic groups 'it would be an exaggeration to talk about generation of social capital' due to a lack of 'social trust'. Togeby cites Rothstein and Kumlin's argument that experiences with welfare state institutions can either build or erode social capital because people dependent on needs-tested and selective benefits lose trust in public authorities and institutions as well as in other people (2001; quoted in Togeby, 2004:522). This suggestion that experiences with institutions can erode social capital and that social trust is lacking are relevant because a 'destitute' asylum seeker in the UK is dependent upon such a needs-tested process and benefits that are provided are selective.

⁵² The neo-Marxist position of Bourdieu (1967), the rational-choice individualist model of social action of Coleman (1988) and the focus on norms and networks of trust of Putnam (1993).

Both liminality and trust provide bridges into forced migration and social exclusion. The link between forced migration and liminality already exists as does the link between forced migration and trust (or mistrust). Social exclusion of asylum seekers and the lack of the ability to re-establish normal routines during what will be shown to be a liminal period during dispersal relates closely to the creation of a space for trust.

Trust and belonging are inextricably linked. As Colson suggests;

‘Trust depends upon continuing links with a home place, a profession, or membership in some other grouping that spans localities and time.’ (2003:5)

For refugees, the connections and continuing links between countries of origin and asylum are covered in the literature on transnationalism. Castles (2003:20) argues that the result of transnationalism is ‘multiple affiliations which question the dominance of the nation-state as the focus of social belonging’. For Castles, migration networks are; ‘one of the unexpected and unplanned ways in which the South and North reconnect’ (Castles, 2004:212).

In this study the broader term of ‘belonging’ is used because it avoids any notions of assimilation. ‘Belonging’ refers to international, regional, national or local affiliations and thus incorporates international linkages or networks that allow the individual to connect in some way to their current locality. It can be temporally expansive, incorporating not only the present and future circumstances of individuals but also drawing on the past. Belonging begins much earlier than arrival in the UK, incorporating circumstances in the country of origin and membership of particular groups prior to leaving. For asylum seekers and refugees, persecution is based on such membership of particular social groups or political opinion. In this way it is an inclusive term – more inclusive than the nationally based modes of incorporation of *jus soli* (inclusion by birth) and *jus sanguinis* (bound by blood and the soil of the land with all others being ‘alien’).

Based on his influential study of French lifestyles, Bourdieu (1984) argued that every aspect of consumer behaviour – from holidays and choice of wallpaper to food preferences and clothing styles – say important things about where individuals

belong in society. 'Belonging' in this sense refers especially to class, education, ethnicity, religion, generation and the place lived in. Shared tastes also provide access to membership of desired groups. Thus, each sub-group expresses its own special 'habitus'. (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000:238). For Bourdieu, habitus referred to a set of cultural orientations of the members of a social group or sub-group. Through their life experiences they express and display preferences for distinctive tastes in consumption and lifestyles which allows for new practices to be generated.

The main problem with the term is that within the UK 'belonging' has become associated with debates surrounding immigration and asylum and can be a controversial concept. Castles is cautious about using the notion of 'belonging', since it 'seems to put too much emphasis on the subjective and cultural aspects of forced migration and to neglect its structural dimensions.' (2003:21).

However, the terms 'social inclusion' and 'integration' have no agreed definitions (Castles *et al*, 2002:73). Although the term 'integration' could indicate a more structural approach, the term is not utilised throughout this study as the Home Office use it to describe the process imposed upon refugees who receive a positive status determination. The term 'resettlement' is used as it acknowledges refugees had already been 'settled' in their countries of origin in terms of qualifications, jobs, social status and social networks, etc. (Castles *et al*, 2002:23) and as such is considered to be a more useful term than 'integration'.

The notion of 'home' has been invoked for many years in the international refugee regime to justify repatriation of refugees either voluntary or involuntary. As Demuth suggests, 'home' is a concept that often comprises diffuse *'feelings'* of home based on where an individual lives and belongs, or wants to belong (2000). The distinction must be made therefore between the actual geographic location of place and where an individual believes they belong.

PERCEPTIONS OF 'ORDINARY PEOPLE'

Linked to these theoretical issues, considerable diversity of descriptions of refugees exist within the literature on forced migration both globally and within the UK and

various labels have emerged (Zetter, 1988, 1999; Kushner and Knox, 1999). Perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers largely oscillate between positive or negative images. Positive labels include refugees being perceived as assets, a resource (Zetter, 1999), being agents of development, agents of democracy or agents of change in their countries of origin. Negative labels focus on refugees as a problem⁵³, burdens, dependent, threats, bogus or vulnerable or powerless victims. Refugees often need to portray themselves as 'victims' in order to gain status, advice, services or assistance.

Globally, the prevailing image of refugees is of large numbers of helpless, vulnerable, burdens who are dependent. It is argued by Zetter that this perception maintains the international refugee regime and its interests are 'best served by containing and controlling refugees' (1999:74). This focus on the characteristics of individuals avoids recognising that redistribution of resources is a factor and declining entitlements are a symptom of this. The result is that largest numbers of refugees remain in their regions of origin or first country of asylum and the 'burden' of refugee protection is therefore not borne by industrialised countries. Given this geopolitical constraint, he outlines the challenge of 'recasting refugees in a non-dependent image' and 'perceiving refugees proactively, as a resource', pointing out that 'refugees are demonstrably a positive economic asset, even where social and economic exclusion are the prevailing attitudes of the host community.' (1999:75). The caveat with this line of argument is that the promotion of rights for refugees who are not economic assets also need to be retained.

Arguing that framing refugees as clients reduced refugees to a 'situational career', de Voe suggests that the boundaries defined by aid agencies mean that the characteristics of individuals are forgotten once the one-dimensional label of 'client' had been assigned (1981)⁵⁴. Describing the lack of emphasis in aid structures on the

⁵³ One example of refugees framed as a problem was a conference on; 'The Refugee Problem and the Problem of Refugees', co-sponsored by The British Academy, Birkbeck, University of London, University of Cambridge and the Wiener Library, British Academy, London, 23 March 2004.

⁵⁴ de Voe applied the concept of a 'situational career' to Tibetans in exile and argued that framing the refugee as a client through particular criteria defined by the 'experts' of aid agencies meant that the refugee 'problem' had been identified and refugees were therefore forced to modify their behaviour to be perceived as clients and were therefore dependent upon others to provide solutions to their situation. He also points out that most of the agencies involved with Tibetan refugees were non-

difference with 'communities' or the emphasis members place on aspects of their own resettlement, de Voe suggests that seeing refugees as 'victims' does not reflect the reality of who refugees are. This links to issues raised earlier about needing to view the entire process of the 'refugee experience', expanding spatial understanding to incorporate factors from the countries of origin of asylum seekers as well as avoiding framing research about refugees in national terms so that variety of socio-economic backgrounds and differences in terms of nationality, age, gender and other facets of an individual's identity are not negated or equalised during the research process. As Waldron suggests in his influential essay 'Blaming the Refugees', refugees in camps are provided with aid to treat nutritional and health problems but are separated from political expression and become converted to 'clients of the relief effort' (1987:1). The reduction of individuals into 'clients' or 'cases' by those assisting with dispersal is also an example of this.

Within the UK prejudicial labels assigned to refugees and asylum seekers have framed debate within which policies are created. The polarised debate is reflected by the emergency of myth-busting literature as described in *Chapter 1* which perpetuates a disjuncture between representation and the experiences of asylum seekers. As well as this oscillation between positive and negative images there is also an arbitrary distinction between being 'undeserving' and 'deserving' (Sales, 2005:445-462). The prevailing image, promoted by the media, is currently one of refugees being a 'burden' or a 'problem' (Robinson, 2003), 'bogus', (Sales, 2002), 'scroungers' or a group dependent on handouts. During fieldwork, even representatives of RCOs, refugees and asylum seekers used terms such as 'soft option', 'genuine' and bogus and as such were clearly influenced by the terms of the broader debate.

The Refugee Council speaks of refugee 'champions'⁵⁵ as representatives of local strategic partnerships. RCO newsletters speak of the achievements and positive contributions refugees make. This includes the way in which refugees fight against the tightening of restrictions and loss of rights – not a positive in itself but demonstrating

Buddhist and did not fully understand the structures of Tibetan culture. This, he argued, created a mismatch between the providers and recipients of aid in terms of perceived need.

the resilience of refugees (Refugee Women's Association, 2003). Individual achievements are also highlighted, stressing the diversity of the refugee population, the differing needs and the subsequent diversity of achievements (Refugee Women's Association, 2003). Refugee community organisations (RCOs) and, in some case, refugee service providers (RSPs) provide a counter perception of refugees as being 'resourceful' or 'capable'. However, lack of financial resources, amongst other reasons, mean that the impact of these newsletters and campaigns have limited impact upon the prevailing image.

Robinson argues that the 'public mindset' of asylum seekers as 'burdens' needs to be challenged for local communities to assist those fleeing persecution and realise the benefits from having refugees in their communities (2003:175). He cites the example of the Ugandan Asians revitalising the local economies of cities such as Leicester. However, stereotyping in either direction can be dangerous as the portrayal of 'success' stories fail to highlight racism or the lack of welfare provision for particular groups (Robinson, 1993:245). On the other hand, the perception that refugees are 'scroungers', 'bogus', 'vulnerable' does not address their individual agency or resilience. Refugees are not a homogenous group – they are divided not only by race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion but by class, educational or professional background, social status, being single or married, *ad infinitum*. Figure 2.3 illustrates some of the positive and negative labels assigned to refugees over the past few decades⁵⁶:

⁵⁵ Term used by representative of the Refugee Council, workshop on Social Inclusion, Impact of Change conference, Refugee Council, London, 28 January 2003.

⁵⁶ These labels have been taken from the literature on past examples of dispersal of refugees as well as from contemporary discourse.

Figure 2.3: Positive and negative labels of refugees and asylum seekers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survivors ▪ Angels ▪ Anti-communists ▪ Assets ▪ Capable ▪ ‘movers and shakers’ ▪ Autonomous agents ▪ Agents of development ▪ Agents of democracy ▪ Agents of change ▪ Deserving refugee ▪ Champions ▪ A resource 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Victims ▪ Devils ▪ Communists ▪ Burdens ▪ Vulnerable ▪ Threats ▪ Problems ▪ Dependent ▪ Undeserving ▪ Terrorists ▪ Bogus ▪ Powerless ▪ Mobile
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Perceptions of asylum seekers and refugees oscillate between these poles. Spanning these poles, there are also descriptions of the ability to ‘cope in adversity’ (Colson, 1991) and resilience of refugees. The resilience of refugees within the constraints of the asylum process is one theme that emerges strongly from this research. Rather than this oscillation of being ‘victims’ or, on the other hand, causes for celebration of ‘diversity’, Turton proposes that refugees and asylum seekers are ‘ordinary people’ who have been through extraordinary circumstances (Turton, 2003). It is argued that currently in the UK and other western states this view can be expanded to:

ordinary people who have been through extraordinary circumstances in their country of origin and continue to experience extraordinary circumstances in their country of asylum.

The UK context of deterrence as an overarching factor in asylum policy creates this situation. Data generated from this study has demanded this expansion as a debate framed in the language of deterrence can only culminate in polemical images and inadequate policies based on inaccurate perceptions of asylum seekers. The social exclusion of asylum seekers is dependent upon the maintenance of negative perceptions of refugees. Amongst the general public in the UK the perception of the rights of asylum seekers, as found in a recent IPPR report, is that inequality was considered legitimate: ‘Even those who supported the principle of asylum did not

necessarily believe that asylum seekers should receive equal treatment.' (2005:27).

This same report also found that:

'Although other forms of racism are increasingly considered socially unacceptable, there is no social sanction against expressing extremely prejudiced and racist views about asylum seekers ...' (2005:44-45)

This clearly demonstrates the way in which asylum seekers are now seen as 'outside' society and not, therefore, able to receive equal treatment to others.

CONCLUSIONS

To adequately conceptualise contemporary compulsory dispersal, several key concepts have been outlined. In this chapter social exclusion and forced migration have been shown to link to both liminality and trust. Available accounts of dispersal have not linked these and this research seeks to address this omission. Whilst social exclusion was conceived without migrants in mind, it is a useful concept in understanding the experiences of dispersed asylum seekers. In *Chapter 4* it is argued that asylum seekers are socially excluded from participation due to the structure for implementation of dispersal. In *Chapter 5* the spatial link between dispersal and multiple deprivation using the SEU's indices of deprivation is examined.

Asylum seekers are unable to participate in the normal activities that others in the UK enjoy and are outside mainstream society because of the circumstances surrounding their arrival. Therefore, *Chapter 6* investigates the process of dispersal and illustrates how social exclusion of asylum seekers occurs over time that involves a liminal period. Mistrust is a characteristic of both social exclusion and an outcome of the experiences of refugees before and after arrival in the UK. Primary and secondary ontological security lost during displacement are not restored through new routines available to others and ordinary lives are not re-established.

A RED framework allows for the incorporation of exclusion practices inherent in the NASS system to be incorporated. Like the 'realist' perspective, the MUD framework focuses on the behaviour and, in this case, the victimhood of individuals. Therefore, *Chapter 7* examines the declining rights of asylum seekers and the less

tangible ways in which social exclusion occurs when accessing services due, in part, to this focus on victimhood.

Because this research is about refugees, concepts such as social exclusion and belonging need to be interpreted broadly. This involves temporal and spatial expansion to encompass individual histories and circumstances in countries of origin. This also applies to social networks and in *Chapter 8*, social exclusion and the way in which social networks are denied by the dispersal policy but act as a way of resisting the liminality of the NASS system are examined.

Negative perceptions of asylum seekers are perpetuated in a literature that oscillates between very positive and very negative images. Inaccurate representation of asylum seekers results in inadequate policy responses and the perpetuation of the social exclusion of asylum seekers is dependent upon these negative perceptions. It is argued throughout that asylum seekers are ordinary people who are simultaneously capable and vulnerable but who go through extraordinary circumstances both in their countries of origin and in the UK.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODS AND ETHICS

INTRODUCTION

Aims and research questions for this study were outlined in the introductory chapter and in *Chapter 2* key concepts to explore contemporary compulsory dispersal were discussed. This chapter explains the research design and choices made about methodology and methods to meet these aims. This includes how the multidimensional character of social exclusion has been approached.

The chapter begins by positioning myself within the research and the relative merits of qualitative research in relation to refugees generally and with asylum seekers dispersed within the UK are considered. To obtain a spatial understanding of the social exclusion of asylum seekers, maps were generated using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) software. To obtain data necessary to meet the aims surrounding the process of social exclusion as well as address the limitations of the maps, qualitative in-depth interviews and focus groups were conducted. Documentary analysis of secondary data supplemented these primary sources. The environment of deterrence towards asylum seekers meant that the social context for this research was extremely sensitive and research with dispersed asylum seekers involved particular access, methodological and ethical issues.

POSITION OF RESEARCHER

With the rise in the numbers of asylum seekers arriving in the UK, the number of studies, research projects, academic centres on migration as well as research undertaken by the Home Office have increased. As Robinson suggests, this 'new wave' of 'refugee research' needs to consider the methodological challenges in a reflexive way (2002:62; see also Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002:118-119; Temple and Moran, 2006). My own position in this research was based on my past involvement with refugees. My motivation for conducting research with refugees

comes from involvement with refugees which began in 1990 with Hmong, Lowland Lao, Khmer and Vietnamese refugees in Thailand. At this time I noticed that policies from both UNHCR and the Thai Ministry of Interior (MOI) for refugees in refugee camps were severely flawed in that the needs of refugees were invariably absent in their formulation and implementation. Time spent in the UK during which I was a visitor to Campsfield Detention Centre, Oxford, gave me a lasting impression that policies for refugees in the UK were also misguided. Further field experience with Burmese refugees from 1996 to 2000 along the Thai-Burma border and visits to Suan Plu Detention Centre in Bangkok reinforced this and my approach to research with refugees has been informed by these experiences. My experience of working with refugees in camps has provided me with the perspective that refugees are, as Turton suggests, 'ordinary' people (2003) and that the positivist approach of 'objectivity' and 'neutrality' (Jacobsen and Landau, 2003) are not possible – or desirable – in research with refugees. *With* refugees, rather than *on* or *for* refugees being the optimum approach, hence consideration of 'user' involvement becomes important. This is akin to the approach of 'hanging out with refugees' described by Rodgers as an approach in refugee research (2004:49).

Issues such as being 'inside' or 'outside' a 'community' are relative and constantly shifting. There are strengths and weaknesses of being an 'insider' or an 'outsider' when researching refugees as well as issues surrounding 'community' (Robson, 2002:382; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:109-112; Mason, 2002:192-193). Smith argues that indigenous people should initiate their own research agendas within their own communities. This can be considered a version of 'standpoint' theory wherein some form of epistemological privilege is given to researchers who are 'inside' a community (1999; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; May, 2001:22). However, the disadvantages of this approach include access to data that is sensitive within 'communities' as well as issues surrounding confidentiality. Mixed insider-outsider research teams are a way around this (Robson, 2002:328).

Between August 1996 to April 2000, my employment as a gatherer of human rights information with Burmese refugees in Thailand showed me that as an 'outsider' I was often privy to some information that other 'insiders' would not have been told when people wanted to tell their stories to someone outside their own 'community'.

On a number of occasions I was actively sought out to provide this role. On the other hand, there was information that I was not privy to due to my role as giver of aid and on one occasion when I had recently changed employment, I was told directly that I would now be allowed access to more information of a political nature due to the focus of my new organisation⁵⁷. This insider/outsider dichotomy was often discussed during this period with one human rights worker rhetorically summarising the role of outsiders as 'people who do everything – but they do not carry the dead – that is the difference.'⁵⁸.

Thus, there are varying degrees of being an 'outsider' and in Thailand, due to my appearance alone, I was always considered an outsider, the aid worker or the human rights interviewer. Working with the Refugee Women's Association in London, I experienced being the outsider in a different manner. My appearance alone did not distinguish me from the people I worked alongside but some individuals actively constructed themselves as 'insiders' due to having been through the 'refugee experience'. To these individuals I was an outsider unable to cross the 'border' into their experiences whereas others did not distinguish or actively construct the 'refugee experience' in this way. Because my encounters varied I found that I adopted strategies to deal with those who did not allow me to cross this 'border' – I would describe my previous role working alongside the Burmese pro-democracy movement in exile and a number of refugees considered this focus on the 'political' aspects of being a refugee a way in which I could know their experience. Even the fixed aspects of my personal characteristics such as gender could be transgressed under this 'political' focus. This bridge, or point of connection, to the 'refugee experience' was illustrative of aspects of identity not normally associated with the label 'asylum seeker'. This 'management of disclosure' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:92) of my personal characteristics was at times unconscious. It was only upon reflection that I have realized that it was the political aspects of my own 'situational identity' (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000:110) that were the most effective in discussions with refugees. Whilst some commentators suggest that there is no such thing as the 'refugee experience' and that this generalisation can be dangerous in the way it homogenises (Chimni, 1999:5; Turton, 2003), it was clear that the 'refugee

⁵⁷ Personal conversation with member of Burmese exile organisation, 1998.

⁵⁸ Personal conversation with grassroots human rights worker, 1999.

experience' was sometimes actively constructed. My own interpretation of this is that the active construction of the 'refugee experience' by asylum seekers was based on not feeling a sense of 'belonging', feelings of 'social exclusion' in the UK and the necessity to invoke a particular identity in order to access services.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Because of my past experience and perspectives that working *with* refugees was the optimum approach, my ontological and epistemological positions reflected this (Blaikie, 1993). These positions were that asylum seekers and refugees' knowledge, understandings and experiences are meaningful and that by interviewing asylum seekers and refugees directly, this would be a legitimate way in which to generate data reflecting this.

Contemporary compulsory dispersal necessitated a research design and methodology capable of conveying complexity. To capture the diversity of experiences, range of gender, age, nationality and other variables of asylum seekers as well as to have a breadth and depth of experiences, the design of this research was based mainly on qualitative research. The complexities of experiences as well as access to smaller populations not reflected within surveys were also best served by qualitative research (Hudson, 2006). Qualitative research allows generation of rich and nuanced data that illustrates the complexities and detail (Mason, 2002:3) and allows for new phenomena and social change to be investigated (Creswell, 1994:9). The study of forced migration has a strong interdisciplinary bias, something Mason suggests is suited to qualitative approaches (2002:3).

In this way the choice of methods were centrally related to the aims and research questions which were initially formulated based on existing literature – particularly in relation to the literature on forced migration and social networks. Reference was also made to the emerging literature and public discourse on dispersal which paid much attention to the way in which asylum seekers would access services during dispersal (Audit Commission, 2000). These research aims and questions were

refined to clarify terminology⁵⁹ and to encompass a more accurate description of the dispersal system and shifting political context (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). In this way, the research aims and questions have both influenced and been influenced by the study.

As dispersal was a recent policy, there was little known about the impact the system had on asylum seekers. When there is little available information about a particular topic, Creswell suggests that a qualitative study is better suited as quantitative research does not allow for investigation into particular contexts that forced migrants are embedded in and local conditions in dispersal locations (1994:10).

The aims and research questions revolved around processes and impacts and qualitative methods were influential in the design to allow for these impacts and the more intangible forms of social exclusion to be investigated. In particular, it was recognised that research with dispersed asylum seekers involves; 'qualitative change, multiple causation or multiple outcomes' (Hakim, 2000:13) and that the diversity of reasons for claiming asylum, socio-economic background and other variables may well lead to multiple outcomes.

When carrying out research on the subject of forced migration, refugees or asylum seekers, qualitative research is also appropriate for practical reasons. Access to accurate or reliable statistical data, geographical distribution or social-demographic characteristics of refugees at a global, national or even local level are difficult to obtain (Robinson, 1998; Bloch, 1999; Stewart, 2004). The debate surrounding reasons for the rise of restrictive policies for refugees arriving in industrialised countries is largely focussed on rising numbers of applications (Castles, 2003:106; Gibney, 2001:3). This focus on numbers by governments of Western Europe has created a 'tendency to be very selective in their presentation of statistical data' to 'justify the introduction of a more restrictive asylum policy' (Crisp, 1999:14). Bloch suggests that even if information on settlement of refugees was available it 'would not be a useful indicator of settlement patterns because of the high mobility of refugees and the pattern of secondary migration'. Whilst there is a body of evidence

⁵⁹ For example, 'integration' has been replaced by the terms 'inclusion' and 'resettlement'.

about secondary migration in previous cases of dispersal (Robinson, 2002), the existing knowledge in contemporary dispersal is fragmented and comes from information presented at conferences and anecdotal accounts. It is often the assumption of RSPs that asylum seekers secondary migrate to London and large cities. This 'diet' (Stewart, 2004) of data sources creates practical and theoretical challenges. Since dispersal began in April 2000 the Home Office has, from December 2001, produced quarterly statistics on the dispersal of asylum-seekers in the UK⁶⁰. However, the comments Bloch makes about 'mobility' and 'secondary migration' remain valid.

Much has been written about the features, principles, strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative research (Hakim, 2000:12-14; Silverman, 2000:1-12; Becker and Bryman, 2004:89-97). Simply put, quantitative data deals with numbers while qualitative data deal with meanings. With notable exceptions less has been written about the relative merits of qualitative and quantitative research in respect to refugees (Bloch, 1999; see also Krulfeld's discussion on the interpretive-reflexive, qualitative approach of Omidian and the positivist, quantitative approach of Boone, 1994).

Because contemporary dispersal is recent, there is a lack of literature discussing the relative strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative research in relation to it, something which Castles *et al.* highlight as necessary (2002:78). This study combines mostly qualitative research with mapping dispersal utilising official statistics. The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods is not straightforward due to the problems surrounding 'validity' of data generation and data interpretation (Mason, 2002:190). Validity is another word for truth (Silverman, 2001:34, 232) and originated in quantitative research. In terms of data interpretation it refers to the precision of a research reading. Mapping allowed for a more 'macro' view of dispersal and social exclusion which provides what is often considered to be 'hard, rigorous and reliable' (Bryman, 1988:103) data as opposed to the rich and deep, or more 'soft' data of qualitative methods. It also allowed for a broader picture of the

⁶⁰ These show the total number of asylum seekers supported by NASS in the eight English regional consortia outside London, plus Scotland and Wales. They show total numbers dispersed to the

phenomena of dispersal to be drawn. 'Validity' of data interpretation of both these so-called 'hard' and 'soft' data was carried out in a reflexive sense. Using both qualitative and quantitative techniques also assisted in obtaining 'generalisation' (Silverman, 2001:249). This 'macro' view is then compared with a 'micro' view to allow for the consequences of Indra's 'centre of gravity' tension to be explored (1999:xiii).

'User' Involvement: a.k.a. All in an Attempt not to 'Miss the Point'⁶¹

Research into refugee situations has often been disempowering for refugees and, since the early 1980s, there has been a call 'insisting that refugees must be allowed to represent their own claims, interests and concerns and make more vigorous input into the configuration of aid structures (Indra, 1989:223). Chambers (1983) called for 'reversals' in gaining knowledge about rural populations in the third world when arguing that rural people should themselves be considered experts of their own environments rather than experts flown in to solve their development issues. This perspective has already been extended into refugee studies – a number of practitioners and academics putting the case for this succinctly (Indra, 1989:223; Harrell-Bond, 1992). Social research often concentrates on marginalised or powerless groups (May, 2001:53; Beresford, 1996). Beresford argues that the research process has been out of the control of users of welfare and social care services users and because of this the research agenda has not accurately reflected their concerns, experiences or aspirations (1996:41-42). This is clearly the case with refugees who seldom have any influence other than as participants in research projects⁶² and, due to multi-layered mistrust and the in-country deterrence element of asylum policies, potential user-involvement in policy making is not an option in the UK.

regions who are in receipt of subsistence only support and those supported in NASS accommodation. The totals are not cumulative.

⁶¹ Title created following discussions with RWA staff, May 2003.

⁶² Dona, G., (2005), *Policy-driven research or research-driven policy? Challenges to, and dilemmas for, forced migration studies*, paper presented at the 3rd Annual Postgraduate Conference on Forced Migration, Oxford Brookes University, 13-14 May 2005. It was suggested that refugee-driven or user-led research would enable policy to be more 'refugee-driven'.

This issue was identified during the time I was employed by the Refugee Women's Association. To explore issues surrounding resettlement and to begin to access participants for the study, from October 2002, I volunteered one day per week at the Refugee Women's Association in north London. In November 2002, this organisation asked me to become a part-time employee to be editor of their newsletter whilst they advertised the position⁶³. By immersing myself in the environment of a user-led refugee service provider, I gained a particular perspective on how services were provided to refugees and asylum seekers. Writing articles for the newsletter meant I needed to rapidly adopt the perspective of the organisation itself. This was very much a rights-based approach that oscillated between the image of a refugee as someone denied their rights due to structural conditions and the resilience of refugees.

During the period with RWA, the 'charitable' or 'controlling' approach of a number of larger, non user-led organisations, was often subject to criticism by organisations I came into contact with. It was also considered that researchers – of which 2-3 per week requested access to participants through RWA – often 'missed the point' in their research and involved RCOs too late in the research for any user-involvement or consultation process to be meaningful. Upon leaving RWA there were proposals afoot to produce an issue of the newsletter entitled 'A Rough Guide to Research' detailing this issue to spell out how 'arrogant' requests in exchange for £50 facilitation fees were not enough to make them want to stop providing educational classes and other services for their clients in return for convening a focus group for an academic who may ultimately forget to send them a copy of the findings. This 'research fatigue' (Robinson, 2002:65) ran parallel to another main question that came out of my time with RWA, which was; *'why don't people research what is relevant to us?'*⁶⁴. In order to explore this, 'user' involvement in the research process was charted (Appendix V). User concerns and experiences in this way consciously influenced this research. These charted conscious influences correlated with themes emerging from transcripts of interviews and focus groups, showing

⁶³ During this period I edited four issues of the Refugee Women's News – issue 19 (*Refugee Women & Protection*); issue 20 (*Partnership: The Way Forward?*); issue 21 (*Asylum in the UK: Out in the Cold?*) and issue 22 (*Against All Odds: Achievements & Refugees*). I handed over articles and contacts to the new editor in May 2003 for issue 23 (*Women Speak Out Against 'Honour' Killing and Crime*). I wrote several articles for these issues which are included in the bibliography.

some of the tensions experienced between user-led and non user-led organisations within the dispersal system. During the fieldwork I became more conscious of the specific needs of women refugees and the heterogeneity of asylum seekers. Some of the gaps in the provision of services in dispersal areas were identified prior to conducting interviews in the regions due to the telephone calls made to London based organisations. Also, the importance of social networks became clear before interviewing began. Challenges to the dominant negative perception of asylum seekers emerged during the period of RWA but also through interviews, focus groups, comments made at conferences and with naturally occurring data.

Outlier Considerations and Selection Criteria for Dispersal Locations

A variety of settings were selected for the field research. Whilst the selection criteria did not mirror the way in which dispersal was to a total of eight English regions, several other criteria (see Appendix VI) and the availability of contacts established through the Refugee Women's Association meant that locations in the East Midlands (Leicester and Lincoln) and Bristol in the Southwest were chosen.

The locations in the East Midlands were also selected because there was a functioning regional consortium whereas the consortium in the Southwest had disbanded early in the negotiations with NASS and individual agencies in each dispersal city acted independently of each other. Early discussions highlighted the strategic role undertaken by regional consortia who were considered to be key in the creation of an effective system. Leicester was an examples of a medium sized dispersal location with an office of a RSP and Lincoln a smaller dispersal location without a RSP. Bristol was an example of a small dispersal location with an office of a RSP. Leicester and Lincoln offered a comparison between a city with an emphasis on multi-culturalism and 'diversity' of its population⁶⁵ and a less 'diverse' population. Refugee Action was the specialist refugee service provider in both Leicester and Bristol, meaning that the different 'cultures of working'⁶⁶ of Refugee Action and the Refugee Council would not impact upon the research findings.

⁶⁴ Comment made by staff member of RWA, London, 2002.

⁶⁵ It is considered that more than a quarter of the population of Leicester is made up of ethnic minorities.

⁶⁶ Comment from refugee service provider, January 2003.

There were a number of cities which were considered to be particularly bad examples of how dispersal was working – Hull⁶⁷, Glasgow and latterly, Sunderland – due, in part, to the murder of asylum seekers under NASS in those cities. The question of outliers was therefore considered. It was considered that particularly bad examples should be avoided and areas chosen should be of a more ‘neutral’ nature. Whilst a journalistic or campaigning account of dispersal would potentially actively seek out these outliers, it was considered that an academic piece of research needed to be more about the ‘unremarkable’ (Silverman, 2001:300). The decision to research the Southwest to avoid outliers occurred before an unpublicised murder in private accommodation managed by a PAP (see *Chapter 6*). In the East Midlands, a death had occurred in the International Hotel, also run by a PAP, which I only became aware of whilst conducting the fieldwork. Even given these deaths, these locations were not considered (by asylum seekers or representative of service providers) to be particularly bad examples or outliers but it was clear that the ‘neutral’ or ‘unremarkable’ character of these cities was relative.

METHODS

In order to investigate the multi-dimensional character of social exclusion during dispersal a range of methods were employed. To map the geography of dispersal GIS software and secondary statistical information was used. The structure of dispersal involved accessing and interviewing key informants (national level policy makers in London and representatives of various agencies in the regions) and analysis of secondary data such as policy documents, reports and statistical information. Primary data to explore the process of dispersal involved interviews and focus groups with asylum seekers and refugees. Investigating access to services and social networks was also based on interviews, focus groups and other qualitative methods. The link between the secondary statistical data used to map dispersal and primary data exploring individual and group level revealed the weaknesses of using only a quantitative approach.

⁶⁷ Telephone conversation with Refugee Council, October 2001.

Mapping National Social Exclusion

At the outset and throughout this research, various actors⁶⁸ commented on how dispersal correlated, or at least overlapped, with maps of deprivation. This widely perceived link between areas of deprivation, high unemployment and dispersal was therefore explored utilising GIS software. Statistical information from the Home Office, the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), the UK Population Census 2001 and other service providers was transferred into GIS. As listed by the SEU, the 88 most deprived local authority districts eligible for Neighbourhood Renewal Funds (NRF) were compared to dispersal and Subsistence Only support (see Appendix VII).

Tables, graphs and maps utilising the Indices of Deprivation 2000⁶⁹ illustrate the most deprived local authority districts, employment and income scales as well as local concentration, or 'hotspots', of deprivation at a district level. Maps were created in order to graphically illustrate the geographical characteristics of the dispersal policy, to assist contextualisation of qualitative data and to allow for 'triangulation' of the perception of deprivation in dispersal areas (Becker and Bryman, 2004:98). The use of different data sources and therefore different ontological and epistemological positions was reflected upon during this 'triangulation' exercise (Mason, 2002:190) and care was taken not to decontextualise subsequent data from interviews (Silverman, 2001:248). The alternative system of the provision of financial support to asylum seekers – Subsistence Only support – that operates in parallel to the dispersal system was also mapped, allowing an exploration of the link with deprivation in areas of resettlement.

⁶⁸ Telephone conversation with employee of Refugee Council, October 2001; telephone conversation with independent consultant, November 2001; interview with representative of regional consortia, January 2004; other conversations.

⁶⁹ The Indices of Deprivation 2000 are utilised rather than the 2004 indices to more closely illustrate the patterns of deprivation at the commencement of the 'interim' dispersal arrangements from 6 December 1999 – 31 March 2000 and dispersal by NASS from April 2000 (Refugee Council briefings).

There are limitations with the maps generated. Firstly, the spatial characteristics of dispersal of asylum seekers in England as of June 2001 to June 2004⁷⁰ and the parallel option, Subsistence Only support, as of June 2003 and June 2004⁷¹ are provided but these maps are necessarily a 'snapshot' of dispersal and SO support as there are no cumulative totals available. Maps showing fluctuations during dispersal between specific dates have been included to understand change over time but the same caveats apply.

Secondly, national data sources that were publicly available were selectively presented (Crisp, 1999). Detailed data about dispersal was provided to me by the Refugee Council on the basis that they could provide this if asked for it directly. Locally in dispersal locations, data was less accessible. Two ward level maps of Leicester and Bristol are provided showing the areas in which asylum seekers are provided accommodation and how multiple deprivation occurs at a ward level in these two locations⁷². During interviews with key informants in the regions, questions regarding the wards that asylum seekers were accommodated in were posed, based on the ward structures of the Indices of Deprivation 2000. Although specific percentages of asylum seekers per ward could not be ascertained in this way, this data was of interest in that different agencies identified different areas accommodating asylum seekers. More detailed mapping would have provided useful information for local authorities and necessary knowledge for the provision of services but was beyond the scope of this piece of research. Information that could not be obtained was quickly identified, both nationally and locally.

Thirdly, mapping did not allow for the process of dispersal as explored in *Chapter 6* to be understood. The maps represent a static view of dispersal that does not incorporate the heterogeneity of asylum seekers or the issue of 'methodological

⁷⁰ Figures for June 2001 are the earliest breakdown available and were provided by the Home Office upon request. From June 2002, the breakdown of dispersal locations were available online. From June 2003, dispersal statistics of asylum seekers supported in NASS accommodation began to include districts in Greater London and the Southeast of England.

⁷¹ A full breakdown of SO support statistics commenced in June 2003. Prior to this only regional percentages were publicly available.

⁷² Scores ranked from the 8,414 wards across the UK and 354 districts (Department of Environment, Transport and Regions, Indices of Deprivation 2000). The Overall Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2000) is made up of six domain indices – income; employment; health deprivation and disability; education, skills and training; housing; and geographical access to services.

territorialism' already outlined in the previous chapter (Scholte, 2004). In *Chapter 8*, networks of relationships illustrate how this static representation is inadequate.

Chapter 5 involves a discussion on how maps contribute to the homogenisation of asylum seekers by perpetuating centrally imposed reifications (Lewis, 2005) in the same way that mapping of minorities is considered by some academics to be double edged. In relation to this, the maps do not show the contrast of socio-economic backgrounds that occur between neighbours. On one floor of one tower block in one 'pocket of deprivation' in one dispersal city, a former Minister was living next door to nationals from a neighbouring country who were pre-literate in their own language. Both were asylum seekers and the dangers of thinking that the 'refugee experience' united them any more than class, nationality, gender and religion divided them was particularly stark. Maps of dispersal, like the dispersal policy itself, homogenise asylum seekers in this way.

Fifthly, Appendix VIII shows the densely populated areas of the UK are also areas with high deprivation and unemployment levels and disaggregating these factors from maps alone was therefore problematic.

However, these maps do provide an overview of the structural limitations of the areas to which asylum seekers are dispersed. In this sense, 'places' are viewed as containers of social processes (Thrift, 2006) but the importance of 'place' has not been over-emphasised. Because of the limitations of this static representation of dispersal and reliance on secondary quantitative data, qualitative data exploring the processes, heterogeneity and networks of relations across space and time were necessarily sought.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Field research took place between November 2002 and February 2005 in London and the three dispersal cities. A total of 24 in-depth interviews, 4 joint-interviews and 3 focus groups were conducted. The total number of participants was 48, of whom 27 were male and 21 female, from 15 countries. Early on a conscious decision was taken not to approach this study from the perspective of a single

nationality of asylum seeker but rather to approach it in the same way as the policy, i.e. a 'one size fits all' approach. Just over half the participants were asylum seekers or refugees either within or having recently left the NASS system. Dates of these interviews as well as gender, location and countries of origin are shown in Figure 3.1:

Figure 3.1: Interviews conducted

No.	Int. Date	Ref.	M/F	Location	Country of origin	Brief Description
1	Nov 2002	D1	F	London	Anonymous	Interview with female representative of RCO and refugee
2	May 2003	B1	F	London	UK	Interview with female representative of Refugee Council
3	May 2003	B2	F	London	UK	Interview with female representative of Refugee Council
4	May 2003	D2	M	London	Ethiopia	Interview with male representative of RCO and refugee
5	June 2003	B3	M	Bristol	N/A	Joint-interview with male representative of voluntary sector
		C1	M	Bristol	N/A	
6	June 2003	D4	F	London	Turkey	Interview with female representative of RCO and refugee
7	June 2003	G1	M	Bristol	UK	Interview with male representative of sub-contractor to PAP
8	July 2003	A1	F	Bristol	Congo	Focus group with female participants
		A2	F	Bristol	Burundi	
		R1	F	Bristol	Burundi	
		R2	F	Bristol	Iran	
		R3	M	Bristol	Burundi	
9	July 2003	A3	M	Leicester	Iran	Focus group with male and female participants
		A4	M	Leicester	Iran	
		A5	M	Leicester	Libya	
		A6	M	Leicester	Albania	
		A7	M	Leicester	Afghanistan	
		A8	M	Leicester	Somalia	
		A9	F	Leicester	Lebanon	
		A10	F	Leicester	Somalia	
10	July	B4	F	Leicester	N/A	Focus group with female

	2003					representatives of voluntary sector
		B5	F	Leicester	N/A	
		C2	F	Leicester	N/A	
11	July 2003	K1	M	Leicester	Liberia	Interview with male representative of FE college
12	July 2003	H1	F	Bristol	N/A	Interview with female solicitor
13	Aug 2003	L1	F	London	UK	Joint-interview with male and female representatives of the Home Office
		L2	M	London	UK	
14	Aug 2003	B6	M	London	N/A	Interview with male representative of Refugee Council
15	Sept 2003	D5	F	Bristol	Albania	Interview with female asylum seeker
16	Sept 2003	M1	M	Anonymous	UK	Interview with male representative of regional consortia
17	Oct 2003	E1	F	Anonymous	UK	Joint-interview with male and female representative of RSL
		E2	M	Anonymous	UK	
18	Nov 2003	A11	M	Bristol	Sudan	Joint-interview with male asylum seekers
		A12	M	Bristol	Sudan	
19	Nov 2003	A13	M	Bristol	Sudan	Interview with male asylum seeker
20	Nov 2003	A14	M	Leicester	Iran	Interview with male asylum seeker
21	Nov 2003	A15	M	Leicester	Somalia	Interview with male asylum seeker
22	Nov 2003	A16	M	Leicester	Iran	Interview with male asylum seeker
23	Nov 2003	A17	F	Leicester	Congo	Interview with female asylum seeker
24	Nov 2003	R4 – David (int 1)	M	Lincoln	Zimbabwe	Interview with male refugee
25	Nov 2003	N1	M	Lincoln	UK	Interview with male representative of voluntary sector
26	Jan 2004	M2	F	Anonymous	UK	Interview with female representative of regional consortia
27	Mar	J1	F	London	UK	Interview with female

	2004					doctor
28	Nov 2004	A18	M	London	Sudan	Interview with male asylum seeker
29	May 2004	R4 – David (int 2)	M	Lincoln	Zimbabwe	Re-interview of male refugee
30	Aug 2004	D6	M	London	N/A	Interview with male representative of Kurdish and Turkish RCO
31	Feb 2005	B7	F	London	UK	Interview with former employee of Refugee Council

Legend

A – Asylum Seeker	18
B – RSP employee/non-refugee	7
C – RSP employee/refugee	2
D – RCO employee	6
E – RSL employee	2
F – LA employee	- (see below)
G – PAP representative	1
H – Solicitor	1
J – Doctor	1
K – Further education provider	1
L – Home Office representative	2
M – Regional consortium representative	2
N – Voluntary organisation volunteer	1
R – Refugee	4

The reference column relates to the identity or role of the interviewees (A, for example, was an asylum seeker and R a refugee). Whilst only 4 people are listed as 'refugee' there was overlap with other identities (2 refugees working for RSPs; 6 RCO employees; 1 refugee working for a FE college).

'Naturally occurring data'⁷³ (Silverman, 2001:159-161) was also utilised with a representative of a local authority in a dispersal location (F1, various dates); a former IND policy advisor (L3, various dates); a female and two male Burmese asylum seekers (A19, A20 and A21, various dates); staff members of the Refugee Women's Association; and other representatives of agencies involved with dispersal

Several conferences about refugees, migration and human rights were attended throughout the course of the study (for a full list see Bibliography). Comments made during these conferences that resonated with those made during interviews and focus groups have been utilised to supplement primary data and provide background.

Access to Participants and Negotiating 'Informed Consent'

During the time at RWA, I fundamentally reconsidered access issues as I was told, quite categorically, that asylum seekers and refugees sometimes use RCOs only at '*a certain point in their lives*' when they need assistance but after this time may not wish to return to this negative or painful period in their lives and may, in fact, wish to '*completely forget that period of their lives*'⁷⁴. Access through RCOs alone would mean my perceptions would be different to those if participants were accessed through other, more positive, channels. This also applied to access through RSPs because of their role in implementation of negative policies. The offices of RSPs were often unwelcoming places with security guards⁷⁵, security checks including personal searches on entry or locked doors with limited opening hours⁷⁶. It was also suggested that RSPs are '*close to the system of benefits that asylum seekers are desperate to move on from*'⁷⁷, something corroborated by research by Sepulveda *et al.* (2006). Asylum seekers approach these organisations at a 'low' point in their lives. The issue of the stigma surrounding these organisations would make an interesting future research project.

Due to these considerations access to the majority of my participants was not through RCOs or RSPs. Alternative points of entry were used to gain a different perspective. Snowballing techniques enabled these different points of entry to be identified. Access was gained in contexts where asylum seekers were actively rebuilding their lives and/or voluntarily educating themselves in order to balance the more obvious issues of loss, lack of status and lack of funds with the agency of

⁷³ This term is used with caution as it is unlikely that I would have 'naturally' been in the office of the local authority asylum team, a conference about migration, an immigration solicitors office or a Home Office appeals court had I not been researching the issue of asylum.

⁷⁴ Personal conversation with representative of RWA, London, 2002.

⁷⁵ Some RSPs are more welcoming than others but security guards are generally present.

⁷⁶ For example the opening hours of a RSP in one dispersal location only totaled 13½ hours per week and at other times the doors were locked.

⁷⁷ Personal conversation with representative of RWA, London, 2002.

individuals. This 'balance' was an attempt to reflect the research context and ultimately generate data that encompassed the extremes. The use of alternative gatekeepers was therefore intended to explore the capabilities as well as the vulnerabilities of asylum seekers. Castles also suggests that gatekeepers should be sought from non-traditional sources so as to avoid research fatigue (2002). Bloch discusses the importance of recognising the dangers of 'over-dependence on one network' when snowball sampling (1999:374). Paying attention to this idea of multiple, or alternative, gatekeepers meant that a wide variety of perspectives were gleaned. Access through gatekeepers did mean a need to adopt a 'flexible' approach to fieldwork (Bloch, 1999:378) because of the many demands RCOs and RSPs have placed on them on a daily basis, making researchers a low priority. All the key informants interviewed were busy individuals and negotiating access therefore required patience and diplomacy.

At any given time there were between 40-50,000 asylum seekers in NASS accommodation and accessing participants who had not already been interviewed for other studies was considered an optimum research strategy. Multiple gatekeepers in research with refugees are necessary for other reasons. During one interview with a representative of a RCO, I was assured that participants for the study could be accessed through the organisation. However, after some time and email correspondence, participants were not forthcoming. The power imbalances in research with refugees means that strategies to build 'trust' and conducting research ethically were not always enough to access participants. In accordance with the design principles, emphasis was placed on having interviewees who were in the NASS system and an attempt was made to balance gender and provide a range of experiences (Indra, 1989:221-242). This was, however, interpreted differently by different gatekeepers. For example, having set up interviews through a professional male translator in Bristol, interpretation of my selection criteria became the different length of NASS support, the different stages of immigration proceedings and the language abilities of the interviewees which he considered to affect their ability to access support.

A written and verbal explanation of the research project was provided to each person to be interviewed, stressing the research was not linked to official government

agencies and participation was completely voluntary (see Appendix IX and X for information sheets). The use of an information sheet and informed consent form had the effect, on more than one occasion, of causing barriers to access. On other occasions, the provision of information and an informed consent form prior to the interview meant that the interview was productive from the beginning as individuals were aware of the ethical considerations in the research process. Participants were not asked to sign the informed consent form as this may have deterred asylum seekers from taking part. This question of 'informed consent' was an ongoing ethical dilemma.

Consent from individuals being interviewed was sought and participants were told that they were free to decline to answer any questions and stop at any point during the interview. This was also outlined on a non-obligatory 'informed consent' form. As per standard research practice, anonymity was assured, particularly to asylum seekers who on occasions perceived that their claim for asylum would be affected if they were interviewed. Whilst it was clear that asylum seekers were glad of this, refugees with status sometimes did not feel they needed anonymity. For example, when I mentioned anonymity, one refugee commented; *'Oh, whatever. Why? Come on, I am not scared.'*⁷⁸ This occurred a few times, with another refugee commenting that she did not feel this would be necessary, something taken as an indication of how 'secure' she felt within the UK. Of all the refugees and asylum seekers who filled out the 'informed consent' form, all but one did not include their name on the form, whereas addresses and email addresses were supplied. The only exception to this was a refugee who posted the form back to me and, again, this was indicative of how 'secure' status was considered to be.

In order to assure anonymity of asylum seekers and key informants, the three dispersal locations have also been anonymised when particular sets of circumstances may lead to individuals being identified. However, dispersal locations have been identified when this does not occur or when information is already in the public sphere. It was not possible to have translations of the research aims and ultimate dissemination strategy and this was a limitation.

⁷⁸ Comment made by female participant in focus group, dispersal location, July 2003.

Obtaining information about the role of the private sector in dispersal was difficult and relates closely to the research context in which '*secret contracts*'⁷⁹, '*commercial sensitivities*' and issues of confidentiality meant that participation of this sector was limited to just one interview. Involvement in dispersal for one representative of a PAP was considered a '*thorny and sensitive issue*'⁸⁰, so much so that the public relations officer in the head office was contacted prior to see if participation in a focus group was appropriate, with the representative ultimately pulling out. The public relations officer suggested that I send questions to their office but that the reply would involve '*sanitising the wording*' of answers. It appeared that the problem with participation stemmed from the information sheet I had sent to them, particularly the dissemination strategy: 'It is also anticipated that sections of the research will be published in publications pitched at a wider audience of practitioners and those interested in refugee matters outside the academic world' (see Appendix IX). That the research was '*not just for a dusty academic piece*'⁸¹ was cited as a reason for not participating. Some information regarding the operation of the PAP was promised⁸² but ultimately did not arrive and an email outlined how:

'Unfortunately we will not be able to provide you with information for your research due to Clause 35 in [name of PAP] contract with the Home Office.'⁸³

The discovery of obstacles to access 'itself provides insights into the social organisation of the setting' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:55). Several attempts were made to interview other PAPs to no avail. Following the only interview I managed to conduct with a PAP, letters were sent to the head office of the main contractor, to request a copy of an induction pack mentioned during the interview but no reply was received. Data regarding the role of the private sector was therefore obtained from the public domain⁸⁴. As of July 2003, the websites of several PAPs

⁷⁹ The contract between NASS and agencies providing services in the dispersal system were commonly referred to as 'secret contracts' by representatives of RSPs and RCOs.

⁸⁰ Telephone conversation with representative of private accommodation provider, May 2003.

⁸¹ Telephone conversation with public relations officer of private accommodation provider, May 2003.

⁸² Report and accounts were also not provided due to the Home Office contractual arrangements.

⁸³ Email correspondence, July 2003.

⁸⁴ This included Hansard; minutes of local authority meetings and regional consortia; media reports and special investigations; websites.

were either 'under review', being 'updated' or provided limited information. In August 2004 it was announced that contracts between the Home Office and two PAPs – Accommodata Ltd and Roselodge Ltd – were to be terminated due to a 'decrease in asylum intake leading to a surplus of accommodation'⁸⁵.

The expectation of being a 'critic' was inevitable when attempting to access PAPs. The assumption was that a critical stance would be adopted towards them, which in the words of one refugee was inevitable: *'They know they will be criticised, because their services are not good.'*⁸⁶. The one PAP interviewed asked me several questions about NASS policy and the way in which refugees arrive in the UK and the 'expert' expectation was evident throughout the interview.

Requests were also made to a private organisation that provides transport to asylum seekers throughout the dispersal process to no avail. Through the Post Office, the private company – Sodexo – that operated the voucher system and was contracted to NASS for a period of 5 years to provide services replied to an enquiry regarding contractual issues.

Interviews

Emphasis was placed on interviewing asylum seeker on a face-to-face basis to overcome the issue of mistrust. Individuals within organisations were also often quite cautious about agreeing to be interviewed. Some representatives commented on how they had previously been misquoted and were therefore sceptical about being interviewed and I found that, as a researcher, an expectation of being either an 'expert' or a 'critic' of dispersal was often evident (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:77). The former expectation was especially problematic at the outset and clashed with my own expectations of obtaining and subsequently generating data. The role of 'critic' on the other hand had a geographical dimension to it and was directed to Londoners generally, including London based researchers:

⁸⁵ Viewed on 2 September 2004 at:

http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/en/home/applying/national_asylum_support/accommodation.htm

⁸⁶ R1; focus group participant, Bristol, July 2003.

*'People in London don't think people in the regions capable of doing dispersal. There is an assumption that all refugees want to be in London and it gets on my nerves that Londoners assume we can't do it well.'*⁸⁷

Interview guides were based on the research aims and questions and focussed on contextual issues. Each interview lasted between 60 minutes and 2 hours.

The guide for RSPs and other agencies (Appendix XI) was followed depending on context. From the NASS Dispersal Strategy a number of questions were devised prior to interviews with key informants (Appendix XII) and again, not every question was asked on each occasion but were selected based on their appropriateness in relation to the interviewees.

The initial interview guide for refugees and asylum seekers (Appendix XIII) was refined mid-way through the fieldwork to allow for the present situation of asylum seekers to be explored first, then their past situation and finally their future (Appendix XIV). The aim of interviewing was to elicit information about the experience of the NASS system and future plans. The remembering of pasts and imagining of futures (Connerton, 1989, Anderson, 1991) is a common theme in refugee studies and has illustrated how history is used to make sense of the present in refugee situations (e.g. Malkki, 1995). The revised interview structure incorporated this focus on the past and future. This avoided imposing a view of the passivity of their current liminal situation and allowed asylum seekers to portray their experience in an engaged and active way. This also accommodated the emphasis placed on their immediate survival needs, their transnational characteristics and individual histories and comment about their future in the UK, including possible secondary migration. Although the questions appear specific, these interviews were more of a discussion than an interview to maintain an 'informal' and non-threatening atmosphere.

Telephone calls received from clients in dispersal locations and conversations with staff at RWA influenced this research. This background work, plus ongoing contact with organisations associated with RWA meant that prior to fieldwork, several issues

⁸⁷ Personal conversation with representative of local authority and RSP, November 2003.

surrounding dispersal had been identified. The number of interviews with asylum seekers and refugees subsequently conducted were a reflection of this.

Repeat interviews were conducted with one asylum seeker in the NASS system during and after status determination. This allowed for comparisons to be made between the time spent in the liminal period and once permanent status was granted (*Chapter 6*). Whilst this did not constitute a case study *per se* (Esterhuizen, 2004), this interviewee did represent a typical example of the experience of the NASS system with several themes emerging that were consistent and matched David's experience during other interviews and focus groups.

It was clear that during the final few interviews with asylum seekers and refugees that 'saturation' point had been reached (Robson, 2002:192). This saturation point was experienced whilst conducting interviews and being able to predict answers to questions as well as during analysis with diminishing returns from the data.

Translators and Language

The use of translators was only necessary for three interviews, although at the outset it was anticipated that they would be required throughout. Implications for cross-language research was therefore anticipated (Temple and Young, 2004; Temple, 2002) and the choice of translator in this instance was made bearing in mind political affiliations, age, gender and other identifying factors that may have influenced the translation process. The issue of translation during research also relates to the insider-outsider debate of which Temple and Young suggest the boundaries are not easily drawn (2004:168). If the presence of a translator is acknowledged beyond the current practice of being 'ghostwriters – there, but generally unacknowledged' (Temple, 2002:846) then the advantages and disadvantages of insider and outsider research apply. It cannot be assumed that speaking the same language constitutes being of the same 'community'. Time needs to be allocated for the 'insiders' of the 'community' (the interviewee and the translator) to speak to each other to go through details such as which area of the country of origin they originate from, the date they left, their individual politics, religion and other ways of knowing each other in order that some sense of trust in each other can form. An 'outsider' may not need to go

through this and issues surrounding research may be the basis of the formation of trust and rapport.

For these three interviews, a professional male translator was asked to set up some interviews and in this way the local social networks of his 'community' were also illustrated. A request for 50:50 male/female participants was not met. The three interviews conducted using this method were of the same nationality and religion as the translator. A high degree of trust was apparent between these individuals and the last interview was a particularly good example of how local social networks are mobilised in emergency situations as he was in the process of being evicted from his private accommodation. It was clear during these interviews that there was a point when the interviewee began to speak without prompting. It was at this point that trust within the triangle of researcher, interpreter and interviewee had been gained.

Whilst English was the second language of many of the asylum seeker and refugee participants of the study, understanding the 'meaning' of what was being said was rarely an issue. It may be the case that my previous experience of working with populations that have English as a second language assisted me in this instance. It was, however, certainly the case that language was a barrier to communication during one of the focus groups, with one Iranian male asylum seeker clearly looking 'pregnant with words'⁸⁸ and wishing to articulate something. This individual was interviewed separately at a later date and on that occasion communication was enabled by a friend who sat in during the interview.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are now considered a useful tool for social science researchers as they are 'particularly suited for obtaining several perspectives about the same topic' (Gibbs, 1997) and to explore the ways in which groups work together and develop collective views (Boaz, 2003; Robson, 2002; Silverman, 2001).

Two focus groups were formed by refugees in order to avoid the tensions inherent in putting strangers into a group together. This method also allowed for the group to

continue to discuss the issues raised once the focus group was over and I had left the 'field'. This is not to say that I would have been uniquely qualified to deal with all issues raised during the discussion but having other participants in the group who were not leaving the 'field' gave some continuity should traumatic issues be raised.

The first of these was set up through a female Burundian refugee in her home with all female participants from Burundi, the Congo and Iran. The group took place in a dispersal location where there was no identified RCO for any of these nationalities. Asking a refugee to set up the group again had the effect of illustrating local social networks. This was indicative of how gender was a strong identity marker for setting up a group, more so on this occasion than nationality. It was also clear from this group that educational background (university level) and socio-economic status was another way in which this group 'connected'. These participants were at various stages of the 'refugee experience', some of whom were still within the NASS system and some of whom had been in the UK for a number of years. This did not hinder the discussions as having people at different stages meant that questions were asked by other participants as well as myself. This group provided some of the most candid contributions to this thesis, particularly surrounding the tension between RSPs and individual asylum seekers as well as the politics of asylum. I provided food and drink and the group took place in her home. The main drawback with this focus group was that, although I had offered funds for childcare, there were several children present who were told to play in another room. There were occasions when the children came in and the subject under discussion was abruptly halted or changed. Some participants were more vocal than others.

The second focus group was set up by a male refugee who was working as a coordinator of the ESL programmes at a FE college in a dispersal area and took place during term time. Although a 50:50 male/female request was made, there were only two women out of the eight participants. His interpretation of my selection criteria was based on language level, the accommodation provider (local authority, registered social housing or private providers), the willingness to participate, plus their position in the NASS system. Each of the participants was at the college to

⁸⁸ Comment made by focus group participant, Leicester, July 2003.

study ESL and the coordinator had organised it so that the ESL teachers had been through the information sheet I had provided as a study tool. Some people had words translated on the sheet and I assumed from this that the information had been understood and 'informed consent' was therefore adequately covered and everybody arrived knowing what to expect.

This group was very willing to talk but did not demonstrate the same levels of trust that I had noted in the first focus group, concentrating more on the NASS system and the problems they had encountered. There was a strong sense that dispersal had added an extra layer of liminality to the already difficult asylum process as they described being 'sent' to dispersal locations, being 'relocated' several times and how their 'temporary' status meant they were only able to access services temporarily. There were a few occasions during this group when other participants asked their own questions which were revealing – for example one participant asked another how they would actually get to the court in another city where the case was being heard. Questions were asked regarding access to services with the added method of providing cards to 'rank'. These cards were used as a prompt when discussion did not flow immediately and were useful as this is similar to the techniques employed to teach ESL. The cards also meant that all the group participated from the beginning and it was clear from the questions clarifying the meaning of the categories on the cards that this method was engaging.

It was apparent that the 'depth' of participation was at times limited when less 'neutral' topics were being discussed. What was being said in front of others and the limitation of what is not being said could not be easily pursued. These silences were highlighted by a discussion between the two Somali participants about whether or not different clans would be able to share accommodation during dispersal – one participant thought they would be able to and the other not – the discussion was brief but continued at the end of the group in the corridor (in Somali).

It was clear from both of these focus groups that the way in which asylum seekers had been accessed affected the interview. In the first group high levels of trust created an atmosphere where subjects were discussed without fear of reprisals of any kind and the focus group generated its own dynamic over which I had little 'control'

(including not being able to stop everybody talking at once). The group lasted well over two hours and one participant commented on leaving that she had really enjoyed the discussion as it was the first time she had been able to 'really talk' about the subject. During the second group it was clear that the individuals were actively engaged in rebuilding their lives and the focus on regaining control and seeking a more permanent status, clearly illustrated how an approach of viewing refugees as 'capable' rather than 'vulnerable' led to much more positive elements emerging from the data. This one lasted around 90 minutes and the dynamics of this group again dictated length.

A third focus group, with a RSP in a dispersal location, was set up to include the manager of the office, the EA and Group Dispersal Coordinator as well as the only Community Development Worker in the region. Upon arrival I sat at a desk for 15 minutes that was covered with papers including leaflets about the National Front and the 'invasion of immigrants' in the city. It was a busy office in a community centre and there was a feeling that employees were working hard, at times against the odds, for their clients.

SECONDARY SOURCES AND DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

As well as the statistics utilised to generate maps, a range of secondary sources have been used, many of which were not generally available and were requested directly from the various actors involved in dispersal. At each stage, interviews were supplemented by collection and analysis of available documentation. The main source of statistical information was provided by the Home Office and other government departments.

Secondary source material such as published research, refugee community organisation information and other 'grey' literature was referred to and analysed. Several documents that were not generally available were requested directly from government departments, RSPs and other organisations. These included the 'information document', the NASS Dispersal Strategy and the study by Zetter *et. al.* (2002) referred to in *Chapter 1*, although several unpublished reports by academics commissioned by the Home Office on dispersal were requested but not obtained (see

Appendix XV)⁸⁹. Policy documents represent the power structures of the organisations that publish them and information from these documents was utilised with this in mind (Silverman, 2001). These documents were produced for other purposes and particular attention was paid to this during this 'unobtrusive' method of content analysis (Robson, 2002). Both the information document and the White Paper predating dispersal were documents produced with a particular purpose and revealed the intentions and structure and role of agencies in dispersal (see *Chapter 4*).

The analysis of previously collected data such as official statistics is seen as subsumed under quantitative research (Bryman, 1988). The main source of statistical information was the Home Office and other government departments but statistics from other organisations were actively sought and have been included. Enquiries were made to the Home Office about the statistical information and profiles of refugee populations available. It was pointed out that profiles of the nationality, age, population per head of local population and gender were not publicly available at a local level and that an attempt should be made to gain these using local authority data. It was suggested by the Home Office representative that in order to glean the population of asylum seekers per head of local population the 2001 Census should be referred to and compared with asylum statistics. This was not done but a subsequent report from the mayor of Stoke-on-Trent (2002) had calculated these figures for Bristol (hosting 1.1 asylum seekers per 1,000 population) and Leicester (4 asylum seekers per 1,000 population).

DATA ANALYSIS

Ramazanoglu and Holland argue that producing knowledge through research is not the same as 'acting as a conduit for the voices of others or assuming that experience can speak for itself'. They argue that interpretation 'is a key process in the exercise of power' and that it is not possible to set aside the researchers own understandings during this interpretation (2002:166). Weight was given to these considerations during data analysis and it was recognised that my own background and motivations for carrying out this research were an inevitable part of this.

⁸⁹ In a telephone conversation with representative of the Home Office following my request for these unpublished papers (February 2006) it was decided that the final study (Zetter et. al., 2002) would be

Glaser and Strauss argued that in order to generate theory, concepts needed to be discovered directly from the data (1968). This 'inductive' process meant that it was systematically mined data that generated theory (Blaikie, 1993). This process has been used to analyse the data for this study.

All interviews and focus groups were tape recorded (with agreement after discussion on ethical issues) and fully transcribed for analysis. Data for this study included these transcripts of the minimally edited in-depth interviews and transcripts of focus groups. It also included field notes written directly before and after interviews and focus groups; field notes from participant observation in dispersal areas; reflections on notes in a research diary compiled from the commencement of study; notes from conferences attended; notes from telephone conversations, informal meetings and informal conversations.

During initial data analysis prior to formal coding and memoing⁹⁰ (May, 2001:138; Silverman, 2001:228,293; Miles and Huberman, 1994) of the qualitative data a number of themes emerged, both directly and indirectly relating to the aims of the study, requiring a more systematic approach. An example was the tension between asylum seekers and refugee service providers in receipt of funding from the Home Office to assist in the dispersal process. These themes were influenced by 'the immediacy of the initially striking or memorable events' (Mason, 2002:152) and it was clear that a cross-sectional indexing exercise would need to be carried out to assist 'distancing' (Ibid, 2002:152-154) from these memorable aspects of the research and generate a way of selecting and retrieving elements of the 'data for the purpose of presentation and dissemination' (Ibid, 2002:153). Indexing meant that data was reduced and emerging themes were generated in a 'grounded' way (Glaser and Strauss, 1968).

To do this a 'literal reading' (Mason, 2002:149) of the content of the qualitative data was carried out in order to consider and subsequently extract emerging themes. As the transcripts were read, 'codes' (May, 2001:138; Silverman, 2001:228,293) were

sufficient as the initial papers had not influenced or informed subsequent NASS policy.
⁹⁰ 'Memoing' is understood here to mean ideas that occur whilst coding.

typed into an excel spreadsheet and the exchange number⁹¹ noted under a column heading of the interview number. However, care was taken not to allow the codes to 'decontextualise sections of data' (Mason, 2002:158) and for this reason putting only numbers and not text in the excel spreadsheet forced return back to the original transcripts to create and retrieve 'flexible groupings' or 'unfinished resources' (Mason, 2002:158) of data assigned to a specific code. Reference to the transcripts was considered important so that sections of data would not be decontextualised but also to retain the idea that sections of the data were part of a social process and a complex phenomena that spanned culture, gender and the other categories of the 1951 Convention of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. This 'holistic' (Mason, 2002:165-168) approach meant that different forms of data were considered. The intention was therefore to move 'back and forth' (Mason, 2002:159) between the research aims and the data, or the 'etic' (concepts of the researcher) and 'emic' (concepts of the researched) concepts during analysis (Silverman, 2001:227). New categories or 'codes' on the excel sheet ceased to increase significantly once eight interviews had been entered and a 'saturation' point had been reached. Themes were then grouped into sections and then ultimately into chapters and a number of concepts emerged. For example, the concept of 'liminality' emerged as a direct result of one of these groupings of sections surrounding the NASS system/process. An 'interpretive reading' (Mason, 2002:149) was also made in order to consider what the meaning of the data was and what could be inferred from it.

The 'reflexive reading' was made in recognition of my inevitably implicated role in data generation (Mason, 2002). 'Reflexive' was understood to mean an attempt 'to make explicit the power relations and the exercise of power in the research process' covering attempts to unpack knowledge contingent upon my own social situation and how the research process was designed and funded (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002:118). This reflexive reading was considered important in order to challenge my preconceptions and to provide 'a greater understanding of the interviewee's 'point of view'' (May, 2001:124).

⁹¹ Whilst typing transcripts an 'exchange number' was given to each question and interviewees answers.

The transcripts were read several times as an ongoing process during the writing up. Questioning why some data was used and not others was continuously carried out. Several times the presence of several 'weighty' topics in just one exchange meant rereading the transcripts.

Whilst data analysis occurred mainly at a distance from the data collection stages, ongoing discussions with some participants occurred for clarification purposes and complete detachment for purposes of reflection and analytic memo-writing occurred at the very end of the writing up period (Blaikie, 1993). It was not the intention of this clarification to obtain 'respondent validation' (Silverman, 2001:233) but rather to trial the perspectives of other interviewees.

Analysis of documents enabled the prehistory of dispersal to be incorporated and assumptions contained in these texts checked against actual outcomes and experiences of asylum seekers during interview and focus groups. In this way both the content analysis of documentary evidence and use of secondary data for mapping and other purposes supplemented the primary data. In this way, it was primary data of interviews and focus groups that generated concepts that ultimately led to the logic of the thesis involving an intimate link between data and theory. Secondary data, documentary analysis and mapping backed up this grounded approach. The various methods were therefore linked during the analysis with emphasis on primary rather than secondary sources as the main generators of the research. *Chapter 5* provides the main example of this. Maps were generated from secondary data following identification of the link between dispersal and deprivation from primary sources.

RESEARCH ETHICS IN A LANDSCAPE OF LOSS AND REBUILDING

There are several ethical guidelines available for research in the social sciences including the Social Research Association (SRA)⁹², the British Sociological Association (BSA)⁹³ as well as the Economic and Social Research Council's

⁹² See <http://www.the-sra.org.uk/ethicals.htm> viewed 10 January 2006.

⁹³ Initially viewed on 26 November 2001 at: <http://www.britisoc.org.uk/about/ethic.htm>. Revisited on 10 January 2006 at: <http://www.britisoc.co.uk/>

(ESRC)⁹⁴ Research Ethics Framework (REF) introduced in January 2006. More specifically related to research involving forced migration and refugees are the ethical guidelines produced by the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford⁹⁵. These guidelines have been referred to frequently throughout this research although they have not been referred to as a set of ethical 'rules', more a reference point in the development of a 'culture' of ethical thinking in respect to this study.

Conducting research with refugees in a landscape of past losses and present rebuilding of lives is fraught with ethical dilemmas at personal, practical, theoretical and many other levels. Selecting what to research, what theory to utilise, what spatial framework to work within, the appropriateness of methods and approaches, how to interpret data as well as, ultimately, strategies to disseminate the research each bring new ethical considerations. Dissemination of research is itself an 'ethical imperative' (RSC guidelines). As ethical considerations are most visible and have the most consequences at the stage of publication, a dissemination strategy was considered to be paramount from the outset. Whilst it was initially anticipated that ethical considerations would be most necessary during the fieldwork stage of the research, it is clear that developing a culture of ethical thinking and being reflexive at every stage of the research is methodologically essential in research with refugees.

There is also a need to be sensitive when researching refugee issues with the sensitivity of a topic being largely defined by the social context within which the research is conducted (Lee and Renzetti, 1993). Refugees and asylum seekers have fled regimes that may have violated their human rights, unlawfully detained them and possibly tortured them for information. The definition of being a refugee surrounds persecution and psycho-social considerations are also necessary. They may be negotiating massive obstacles in order to live in third countries which, in the case of the UK, are not necessarily responsive to the problems they encounter. Given these considerations, interviewing refugees and asylum seekers for the sake of academic research raises a number of ethical considerations and structures of, real or

⁹⁴ See http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/opportunities/research_ethics_framework/ for explanation of Research Ethics Framework and http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/ESRC_Re_Ethics_Frame_tcm6-11291.pdf for actual REF. Both viewed 10 January 2006.

perceived, power need to be borne in mind. The inequalities of political rights, economic positions, decline in socio-economic status and other social/cultural factors between the 'researcher' and the 'researched' all require consideration.

The RSC guidelines mention a 'fair return for assistance' when carrying out research with refugees. There is a 'silent taboo' that surrounds the issue of giving financial assistance to people interviewed for research (Lammers, 2005:2) and the 'gift' as argued by Mauss, 'not yet repaid debases the man who accepted it' (1970). This resonance with the avoidance of harming the dignity of individuals through adopting a 'charity' approach outlined, meant for this research that a 'fair return for assistance' was a continuous process of negotiation. My basis for reciprocity was that the people I was interviewing were in some way assisting me with my future career. In return I offered travel expenses and, in order to access women, I offered childcare expenses for female participants. This was seldom taken, mainly because children attended the interviews, but also because of issues surrounding 'dignity'. For most focus groups and interviews I provided food and drink.

Ethical dilemmas and considerations were ongoing. This section explores two of these considerations in detail – firstly, the issue of trust (or mistrust); and, secondly, the idea contained within every guidelines on research ethics, of 'avoiding harm' and the balance between 'harm' and 'benefit' to participants during and as a consequence of research. These two considerations were particularly relevant ethical dilemmas for this study. The 'realist' and 'nominalist' perspectives are utilised to explore these (Hein, 1993; Koser, 1997). It was found that the UK context of disbelief, mistrust and overarching deterrence environment towards asylum seekers impacted on both these ethical considerations.

Mistrust and Avoiding 'Harm' in Research

'The word itself, 'research' is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary. When mentioned in many indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful.' (Smith, 2002:1)

⁹⁵ Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice, Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford.

Central to any research with refugees is the issue of trust during the research process (Bloch, 1999; Robinson, 2002; Hynes, 2003; Middleton, 2005). The above quote outlines the difficulties inherent in this expectation. Several strategies to build trust were adopted and every attempt was made to ensure that the asylum seeker being interviewed understood the rationale behind the research (see Appendix XVI and XVII for details of ethical points read out prior to each interview). However, there were still occasions when individuals did not trust my explanation. Emphasis was placed on the limitations of the research in order to avoid raising expectations. Robinson and Segrott, whilst conducting research for the Home Office, operated under a 'policy of full disclosure' and a conscious attempt to 'give trust' (2002a:14-15) to interviewees was made in order to build rapport throughout the process. My research was not funded by the Home Office and emphasis was placed on separation and independence from 'officialdom' (Robinson, 2002; Hynes, 2003:15).

Within the asylum system there was little space for trust to be created. Some initiatives and face-to-face projects addressed this but it was still the case that refugees and asylum seekers were unlikely to trust 'authority' figures or 'officialdom'. One of the emerging themes was the tension between asylum seekers and RSPs, and 'officialdom' therefore included refugee agencies contractually bound to the Home Office.

Mistrust towards asylum seekers in the RSD system, whilst not directly relating to the dispersal system meant that, without exception, asylum seekers and refugees interviewed felt their accounts were not being believed by the Home Office. This high level of disbelief throughout the process – from the initial screening interview to ultimate status determination, was another reason to emphasise a distinction from 'officialdom'. To do this, interview guides for this research were designed in such a way as to not replicate the method of interviewing for immigration purposes with official bodies such as the Home Office. Avoiding replication of past negative experiences meant that questions such as the date of arrival in the UK, countries they had travelled through and 'what is the capital city of your country' were avoided – the latter being used as evidence about the credibility of claims. Disbelief, in the

words of one asylum seeker who had outward physical signs of torture and medical documentation to back his claim of persecution, meant that:

*'Before they listen to your case, they warn you. If we don't believe you we will send you back. So they give you that feeling that they are not going to believe you anyway. They give you the feeling that they are suspicious of you and don't believe you. Most cases are like this. They ask you if you are telling the truth. There is no reason why I should lie.'*⁹⁶

This was a consistent theme with another asylum seeker commenting:

*'I get the feeling that the Home Office and the court, their main target is to not believe you. To disbelieve you. This is their attitude always, you have that feeling, in their mind they don't believe you, whatever you say, whatever you do.'*⁹⁷

If the 'realist' perspective is adopted, the 'refugee experience' focuses on past traumas which can include torture and the implications of torture for individuals and wider 'communities' (Duner, 1998). Trust and the 'nominalist' perspective relate more to the political context and structural reasons why refugees are mistrusted. The creation of trust during the research process relates closely to the research context. The sensitivity surrounding the asylum issue in the UK meant that both the 'realist' and 'nominalist' perspectives required attention.

Gaining the trust of asylum seekers required showing 'belief' in the accounts they were giving. It has been suggested that the telling of their stories, with people 'bearing witness'⁹⁸ - a term coined by the Medical Foundation which means to listen and believe the accounts of events being recalled – assists with the mental health of refugees. Emphasis on trauma and suffering creates a tendency to pathologise refugee's mental health and not consider structural issues that contribute to the mental health of individuals. Consideration of the more structural issues that create asylum seekers in the first instance in some way assist in the explanation of an individual's response. Ethically, the avoidance of any tendency to pathologise refugees' mental health is clearly necessary. Consideration has to be given that

⁹⁶ A13; interview with asylum seeker, Bristol, November 2003.

⁹⁷ A11; joint-interview with asylum seekers, Bristol, November 2003.

⁹⁸ Presentation from the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, Mental Health & Refugees Conference, London, 8 October 2003.

refugees may be suffering from depression or be labelled as suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD⁹⁹) and that, in the words of one mental health professional, this may be *'a normal response to an abnormal situation'*¹⁰⁰. In these terms it is questionable whether or not it is ethical to ask an individual to recall their past histories if it means unintentionally opening or reopening a hidden psychological wound. On the other hand, refugees are quite often glad to talk, particularly if they have politicized their experience and recognize it in a political context. As a researcher, a trade-off between critical examination and the need to believe accounts provided was therefore necessary.

Given the deterrence environment in the UK and the recent 'non-arrival' and 'deterrent' aspects of national policies within Europe, research with refugees in industrialised countries requires the concept of 'harm' that is dominant in ethical guidelines to be interpreted broadly. The RSC guidelines emphasise the balance between 'harm' and 'benefit' in research with refugees, stating that:

'Anticipating harms: Researchers should be sensitive to the possible consequences of their work and should endeavour to guard against predictably harmful effects. Consent from subjects does not absolve researchers from their obligation to protect research participants as far as possible against the harmful effects of research'

'Harm' was more easily anticipated with the 'realist' perspective. For example, the psycho-social position of individuals was an obvious outcome of a focus on trauma. The economic disadvantage due to asylum seekers only receiving the equivalent of 70% income support and not being allowed to work in the UK meant that anticipating negative impacts on the household economy – in the form of food or drink being provided – during the research was a consideration whilst interviewing asylum seekers in their own homes. However, a common theme surrounding the 'dignity' of individuals was apparent:

'It is like that kind of attitude where you are looked at from a 'pity' point of view rather than looking to resolve the problem, or find the solution. So you end up getting very well meaning citizens or other organisation, that

⁹⁹ Psychologists have argued that because the concept of PTSD implicitly endorse a Western ontology and value system, its use with non-Western groups should be at most tentative (Bracken *et al.*, 1995)

¹⁰⁰ D1; interview with female representative of RCO, London, November 2002.

*definitely give. But it is always going to be at a 'pity' level and not in any positive way.*¹⁰¹

This quote links these two perspectives, showing how the emphasis on the suffering of refugees can itself cause 'harm'. When utilising the 'nominalist' perspective of asylum seekers in relation to other migrants, 'harm' was less easily anticipated. Disbelief and mistrust of asylum seekers as well as a 'charity' approach adopted impacted on the dignity of individuals. In one instance, a vicar who pronounced; *'you must be hungry'*, took a group of asylum seekers to a local bakery to eat. When they arrived, the vicar told everyone in the bakery that they were all hungry asylum seekers and that *'these poor asylum seekers'* needed food. The interviewee recounting this story, a former manager of a medium sized company in his country of origin, could see the value and good intentions behind his actions but found this 'charity' approach demeaning¹⁰². 'Harm' invoked because of emphasis on the 'refugee experience' was a common experience and, in the words of another refugee:

*'And you know what, even those who are our friends, those who are with us. Still they do it through a charity point of view. They still treat you with pity. Please don't. Just defend my right to seek asylum. Defend my immigration right. Don't think the poor woman she has to flee so let's get her some second hand clothes, and some for my children. This is the way they look at us. But if you only see, it is my right to live wherever I want.'*¹⁰³

This appeal to defend the right to asylum lies well with the approach of Rodgers which he considers reveals 'how political struggles of everyday life are linked to relationships and processes of global significance' in relation to the global refugee regime (2004:49). In this case, 'harm' was caused by not considering the more structural, and global, causes of refugees.

Refugees themselves may consider that researchers have a particular perception of what a refugee is, how they should behave and what they are expected to say. A common opinion of asylum seekers, refugees and representatives of RCOs encountered pointed towards the 'resilience' of refugees or the fact that they are not a group to be automatically pitied, be on the end of a 'charity approach', be labelled

¹⁰¹ R2; focus group participant, Bristol, July 2003.

¹⁰² R4; interview with asylum seeker, Lincoln, November 2003.

¹⁰³ R2; focus group participant, Bristol, July 2003.

as 'vulnerable' or 'victims' (Baycan, 2003:22). Some credit for the 'individual's ability to overcome'¹⁰⁴ was a strong message throughout.

This research explored the idea of 'belonging' and questions were compiled bearing in mind the possibility that questioning belonging may actually create a situation whereby people begin asking themselves whether they will ever belong. The direct question 'do you think you will ever belong in the UK?' was too politically loaded and was thus avoided. My focus on 'social networks' also required sensitivity. On one occasion whilst discussing the location of family members during a focus group, one participant recounted how most of her family had been killed during a massacre but that some contact was maintained with remaining family members over email. The combined topics of 'belonging' and 'social networks' thus left the individual in a position where she had been asked to consider an aspect of her life that she would not necessarily have chosen to dwell upon. One of the characteristics of refugees is that they may have suffered loss of family members and may feel guilty about leaving family members behind. Verbalizing such a scenario on this occasion had the effect of creating distress and sensitivity was necessary. 'Harm' relating directly to research topics was therefore another consideration.

There were several other ways in which possible 'harm' was encountered. Asylum seekers living in harsh living conditions and have eviction notices served on them was encountered on a number of occasions. My role as researcher in these cases was frustrating as the only suggestions I could make were to visit the RSP, whom I suspected would not necessarily be able to assist due to their contractual obligations under the legislation. Not having the ability to appeal against decisions, living conditions or eviction notices meant that research was conducted in an environment beyond the control of individual interviewees. Therefore, as a researcher, even if belief in the individual was demonstrated, structural issues surrounding 'harm', 'dignity' and the wider context of mistrust had considerable impact upon this study. These themes, although recounted here in relation to methodology, also pertain to the findings of this thesis.

¹⁰⁴ Statement made during workshop on 'Housing & Homelessness', Home Office UK National Integration Conference, 29-30 June 2004.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter design principles and specific methods to meet the aims of the study have been outlined. An integrated research design that utilises primary qualitative data supplemented by secondary quantitative data has been provided. Social exclusion is multidimensional and this mix of methods allows for a thorough understanding of the geography, structure and process of contemporary compulsory dispersal. In this case qualitative research is particularly appropriate and this study combines this approach with GIS software.

The power imbalances inherent in refugee situations always make research with refugees challenging. Positioning myself within this research highlights my own role in the generation of data and knowledge and allows a reflexive account to be generated. The environment of deterrence towards asylum seekers meant that the social context for this research was extremely sensitive and issues surrounding avoiding harm and dignity were interpreted broadly to encompass the indignities of the NASS system. Negotiating the minefield of ethical dilemmas in research with refugees affects choices of research design, methodology and methods. Ultimately, the balance between 'harm' and 'benefit' during academic research is based on social context. Forwarding knowledge in a context where research will not necessarily change policy is itself a major ethical consideration. Justifying research into people's lives if there is no change in policy in the short term means that the research will not have any effect on the lives of the people you interview. In this context dissemination of research becomes an ethical imperative.

Influencing the debate using evidence grounded in data will enable a wider benefit of getting issues discussed without reliance on the polemic categorisations and misrepresentations currently prevalent.

CHAPTER 4

STRUCTURE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF DISPERSAL

INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the structure and implementation of contemporary dispersal, drawing upon documentary analysis and primary qualitative data. The in-country deterrence element that was explicit in policy documents meant that tensions were inherent from the outset. The role of supporting asylum seekers, which had previously been undertaken by local authorities, effectively became centralised by the Home Office and ultimately administered by NASS. This centralisation as well as the speed of implementation of dispersal did not allow for adequate consultation or planning.

Separating asylum seekers from the mainstream system of welfare provision created a more visible group and entrenched the distinction between asylum seekers and recognised refugees. It is argued that this separation and the provision of parallel services specifically for asylum seekers is a form of social exclusion. The high number and conflicting roles of agencies involved meant power imbalances and tensions between organisations in the NASS system and the hierarchical structure of dispersal did not allow for adequate representation of asylum seekers and this represents another form of social exclusion.

PREHISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY DISPERSAL

As outlined in *Chapter 1*, contemporary dispersal emerged from the political exigencies of the newly elected Labour government and was formulated within an overarching context of deterrence of asylum seekers. Prior to formulation of formal dispersal arrangements, policy debate on asylum was considered within the Home Office to be a national issue:

*'A lot of the political rhetoric at the time was that asylum was a national issue and we needed a national solution. So dispersal, if you like, is the embodiment of that.'*¹⁰⁵

The inherited backlog of cases and the need to *'be seen to be doing something'*¹⁰⁶ about asylum generally led to the idea that responsibility for both support and RSD should come under the *'umbrella'* of the Home Office, providing an internal *'incentive'*¹⁰⁷ to turn cases around faster. The evidence that a policy of dispersing asylum seekers nationally could work came from several existing informal arrangements between local authorities in London and the Southeast. The LGA lobbied government for a national dispersal system that would redistribute asylum seekers away from these areas:

*'... using their existing experiences of sending asylum seekers to places like Birmingham, Newcastle and the seaside towns as evidence that such a system would work.'*¹⁰⁸

These 'informal dispersal' arrangements were a result of a lack of temporary accommodation in London and had been formed following the 1996 legislation. In 1998, areas close to ports and airports in the UK such as Dover¹⁰⁹ were considered by the LGA to need pressure eased on their local population and transferring responsibility for asylum seekers to the Home Office rather than local authorities would enable this. This was a prominent consideration during formation of the policy (see also Robinson, 2003; Fekete, 2001).

The Refugee Council had been involved in policy making with central government and local authorities from the mid-1990s when a policy team was formed within the organisation. Before NASS came into operation formally, the deputy chief executive of the Refugee Council was seconded to the Home Office, to work on the development of the NASS system. At a staff conference in July 1999 to discuss Refugee Council policy towards NASS, the general view was that if the Council did

¹⁰⁵ L1; interview with representative of the Home Office, London, August 2003.

¹⁰⁶ B7; interview with former employee of Refugee Council, London, February 2005. This same phrase was used during interviews upon the appointment of a new Home Secretary in 2001.

¹⁰⁷ L1; interview with representative of the Home Office, London, August 2003.

¹⁰⁸ B7; interview with former employee of Refugee Council, London, February 2005.

not become involved, it would '*consign itself to oblivion*' and that if they did not bid for contracts, services would be provided by '*Group 4 or the British Red Cross instead*'¹¹⁰.

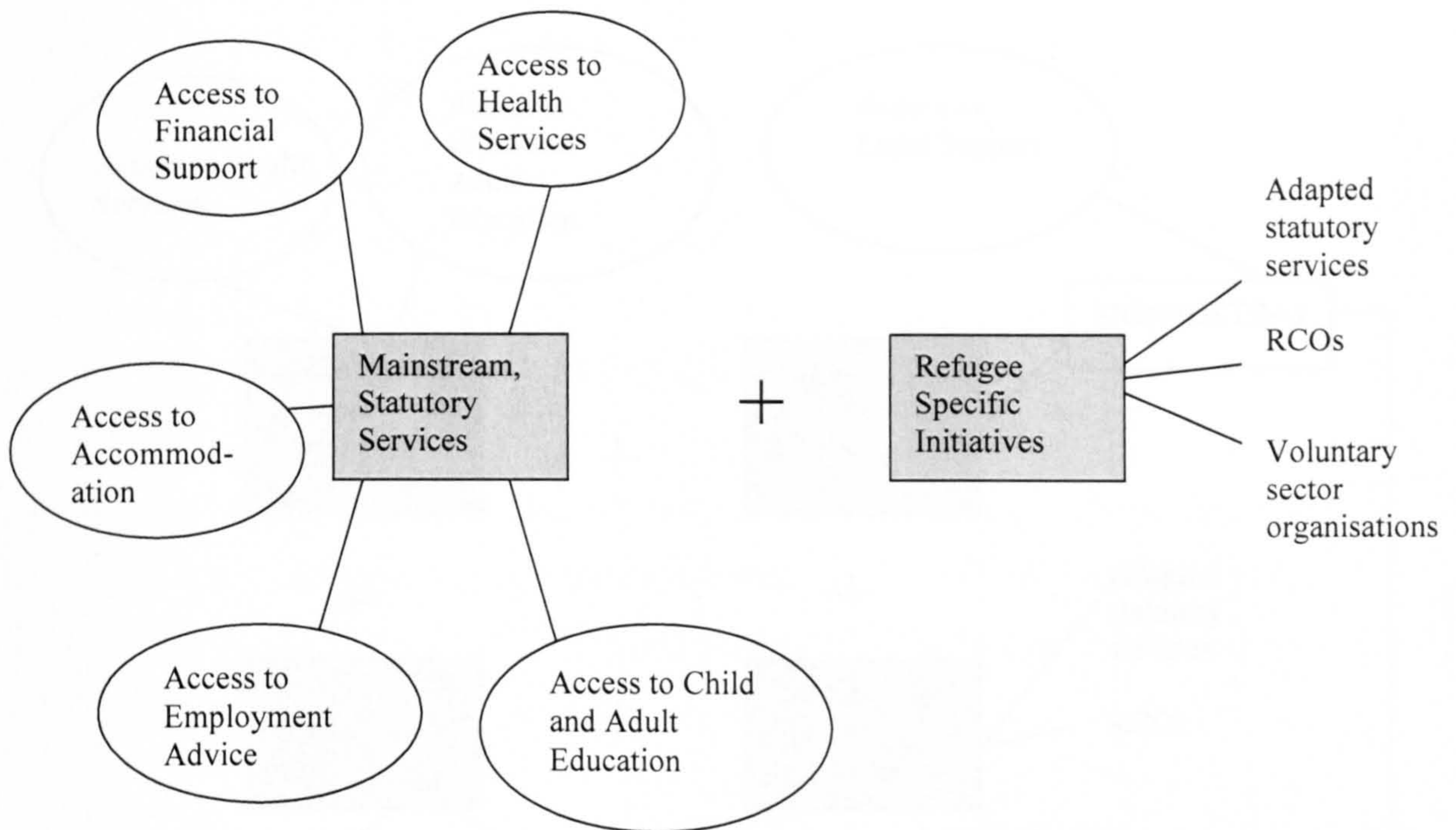
STRUCTURE OF DISPERSAL: PAST AND PRESENT

Until the mid 1990s, refugee resettlement policy for recognised refugees was 'based on two key approaches in social policy; equal access to general state provision and the support of community self-help' (Duke, 1996:7). As Duke outlines, statutory services met the needs of asylum seekers and refugees in the same way as the needs of the general population were met. There was 'no permanent, central programme for the resettlement of refugees' (1996:7). Access to financial support, accommodation, employment advice, health and education services were each through mainstream statutory services with 'refugee specific initiatives' (1996:13) from specialist voluntary organisations, RCOs and adapted statutory services for those needs that could not be met through mainstream provision alone (Carey-Wood *et al.*, 1994). Figure 4.1 represents this past structure of provision diagrammatically:

¹⁰⁹ The concentration of asylum seekers in Dover is considered to be highly significant in 'prompting the introduction of a dispersal policy in the UK' (Robinson, 2003:7); L2; interview with representative of the Home Office, London, August 2003.

¹¹⁰ B7; interview with former employee of Refugee Council, London, February 2005.

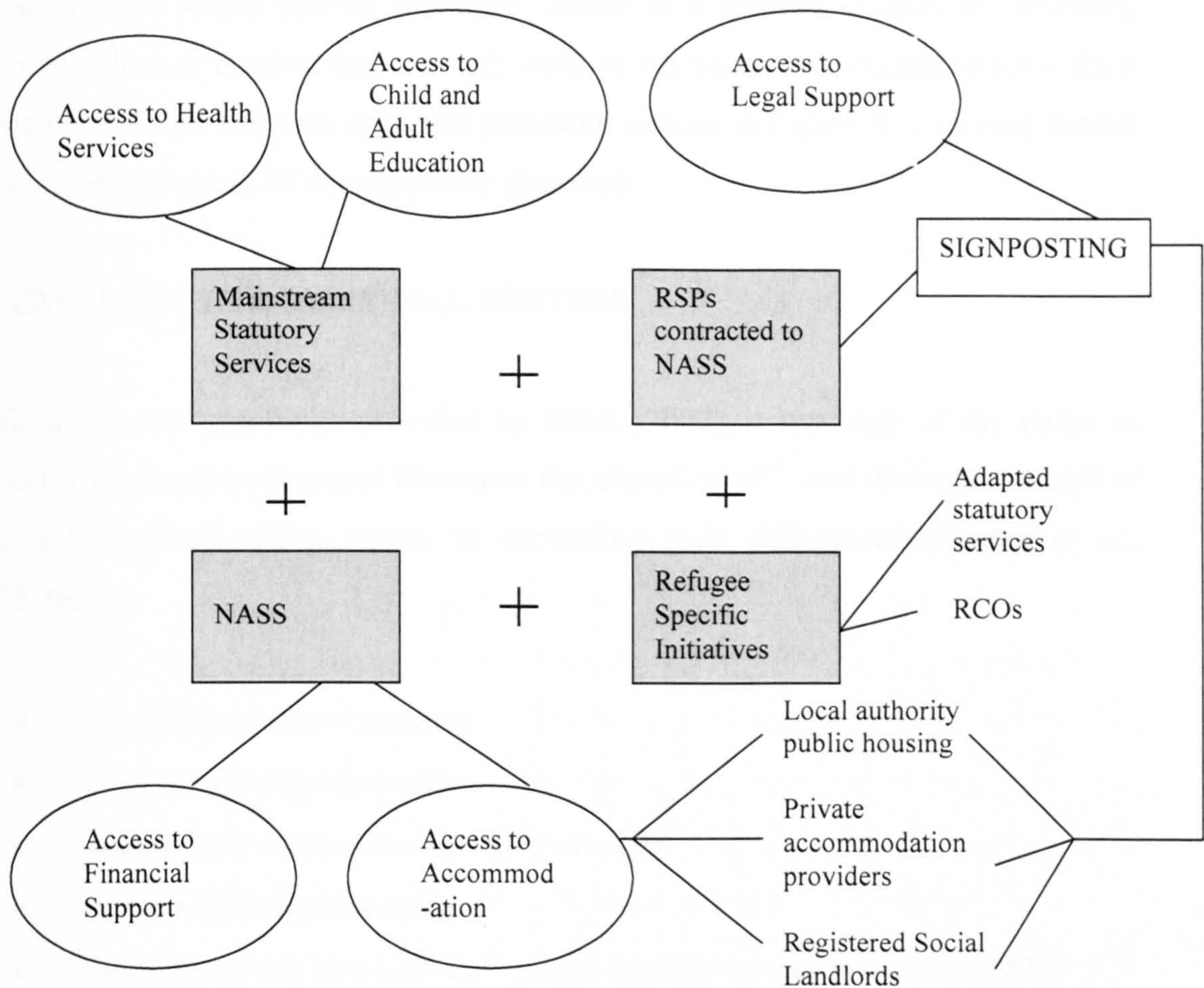
Figure 4.1: Past Structure of Provision for Refugees



Source: Adapted from Duke, 1996.

The introduction of dispersal represents a departure from this structure, with asylum seekers negotiating a more complex system prior to becoming recognised refugees. For asylum seekers, equal access to state provision ended with the creation of NASS. The support of community self help was limited due, initially at least, to the lack of RCOs in the new dispersal locations across the UK. Lack of funding for RCOs was also a factor. The availability of mainstream services to refugees kept the number of agencies involved in past cases of refugee resettlement relatively low. Whilst it is difficult to represent the current structure of service provision diagrammatically due to the proliferation of agencies, an outline of contemporary structures is provided in Figure 4.2:

Figure 4.2: Present Structure of Provision for Asylum Seekers



As can be seen, this complex system involves a number of organisations within the structure of contemporary dispersal. Service provision to asylum seekers carried out by ‘partners’ in the public, private and voluntary sectors under contract to NASS and asylum seekers are ‘signposted’ to essential services. A number of non-refugee specific organisations have also become involved over time, ranging from mainstream service providers to faith-based organisations. Access to legal support, which for ‘quota refugees’ was not a necessity, now occurs through ‘signposting’ from accommodation providers and RSPs.

Dwyer discusses what he terms the ‘hollowing out’ of the welfare rights of forced migrants (asylum seekers; those with HP, DL or refugee status; failed asylum seekers and overstayers), charting the complex situation in Leeds for each of these

groups. He argues that; ‘The state’s allocation of a specific sociolegal category is itself an instrument of governance defining an individual forced migrant’s welfare rights’ (2005:630). These hierarchies of status and the power to define welfare rights based on legal status will be examined further in a separate chapter on accessing services. Here, it is noted that it is only once an asylum seeker is granted some form of status that they are able to access provision similar to Figure 4.1, leaving behind the complex structure of contemporary dispersal.

AGENCIES IN THE DISPERSAL SYSTEM

Building on the groupings provided by Sales (2002), a typology of the range of agencies involved in dispersal illustrates the complicated¹¹¹ and divergent groups of agencies involved which assists in explaining their differences (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003:248):

- *Central government agencies*
- *Public sector organisations*
- *Public sector mainstream service providers*
- *Private sector organisations*
- *Voluntary sector, non user-led refugee-specific service providers (RSPs)*
- *Voluntary sector, user-led, refugee-specific organisations (RCOs)*
- *Voluntary sector, not-for-profit accommodation providers*
- *Voluntary sector, non refugee-specific service providers that may have refugee-specific projects*
- *Voluntary sector, campaigning organisations that involve users and non-users*
- *Faith-based organisations*

¹¹¹ Comment that ‘the system is complicated and there is a complicated range of organisations in the system’, made during workshop on housing and homelessness, by regional representative, *UK National Integration Conference, What Works Locally? Balancing National and Local Policies*, London, 29-30 June 2004.

There are considerable power imbalances between these groups, a full analysis of which is lacking in the literature (Griffiths *et al.*, 2005:5). Outlining their respective roles allows for some of the tensions that have emerged to be explored.

Central government agencies

Central government agencies include the Home Office and NASS. NASS is part of the IND and before the establishment of NASS there was no separate programme for asylum seekers with *ad hoc*, temporary programmes developed for groups of 'quota refugees'.

Public sector organisations

Regional consortia and local authorities are the main public sector organisations involved in dispersal. Regional consortia were established at the commencement of dispersal to facilitate inter-agency coordination and bring together agencies in each region to share expertise, information and resources. Although there are regional variations in the membership, size and character of the consortia, they are generally composed of representatives of local authorities as well as representatives from health authorities, housing providers and the voluntary sector agencies dealing with dispersal. The range of organisations involved have different priorities and experience of working with refugees. Local authority representatives, who lead the consortia, may prioritise the interests of their individual cities.

In the East Midlands, the *East Midlands Consortium for Asylum Seeker Support (EMCASS)*, was formally constituted in March 2000 to respond to dispersal. It is a partnership between local authorities, the Refugee Housing Association, Refugee Action, refugee organisations and voluntary organisations, with Leicester City Council as the lead authority. In the Southwest of England, the initial regional consortia disbanded but an informal organisation, the *South West Asylum and Refugee Forum (SWARF)* emerged from members of the disbanded consortia.

Public sector mainstream service providers

Public sector mainstream service providers include the NHS, schools and FE colleges. Access to these services is through 'signposting' by RSPs and accommodation providers. Access to financial support, initially through vouchers issued by a private company, Sodexo, was through Post Offices. This system later transferred into a system whereby cash vouchers are provided which must be redeemed at Post Offices because the contract for 5 years did not allow NASS to stop using this method.

Private sector organisations

Prior to dispersal, the private sector were involved in the detention of asylum seekers. The role of private sector organisations expanded considerably at the commencement of compulsory dispersal as private sector provision of services, through contracts with the Home Office, created a role for this sector in transporting and accommodating asylum seekers. There are several private accommodation providers (and sub-contractors) who have contracts with the Home Office to provide accommodation to asylum seekers in dispersal locations. The contracts with PAPs often involved shared housing with shared bedrooms, although 'warring factions' (see Dispersal Strategy, Appendix II) are not meant to be accommodated together. The contracts also incorporate an obligation to 'signpost' asylum seekers towards health, dental, educational and legal services and specify the properties need to be '*in certain areas close to post offices, local facilities and close to support groups, so they are all within 5 miles of the city centre*'¹¹².

At the time of this research, private accommodation providers in Leicester included Accommodata, Roselodge, Angel, Clearsprings and Leena Corporation and in Bristol accommodation was provided solely by Adelphi Properties Ltd (and sub-contractors) and Clearsprings.

¹¹² G1; interview with sub-contractor of PAP, Bristol, June 2003.

Voluntary sector, non user-led refugee-specific service providers (RSPs)

The Refugee Council and Refugee Action are the main formally constituted organisations with charitable status working on behalf of refugees. This sector expanded at the commencement of dispersal with a number of offices of RSPs and teams within RSPs were set up specifically for dispersal such as the Refugee Council's regional development team in preparation for dispersal with funding from the Home Office¹¹³, whilst at the same time publicly lobbying against the proposed system. They are run by professionals and employ refugees and may involve refugees in specific projects. They also deploy volunteers in a range of activities. NASS funds RSPs to undertake 'reception assistant' and 'One Stop Services' roles. The 'reception assistant' role is to give advice and information on the NASS system to asylum seekers and help clients examine all the options available. It also incorporates completion of a NASS application form, provision of emergency accommodation, referring 'clients' to specialist care if necessary and providing briefings on dispersal (Refugee Council, 2004b). The 'One Stop Services' role differs in that it is about providing advice, information and 'signposting' to asylum seekers already dispersed and provision of 'a focal point for local voluntary and community effort within cluster areas' (Refugee Council, 2004b).

At the commencement of dispersal the Refugee Council formed the Inter Agency Partnership (IAP) of agencies contracted to NASS to coordinate the work of the voluntary agencies funded by NASS¹¹⁴. The Refugee Council was the dominant agency involved with the planning and subsequent implementation of dispersal and is based in London, with regional offices. The other major agency involved in dispersal is Refugee Action which is a member based organisation and registered charity founded in 1981 to work with refugees. Refugee Action has a more regional history than the Refugee Council, having played a major role in the Vietnamese, Bosnian, Montserratian and Kosovar programmes. It also runs the 'Choices' project providing information to asylum seekers and refugees on the Voluntary Returns Programme.

¹¹³ B6; interview with male representative of the Refugee Council, London, August 2003.

Voluntary sector, user-led, refugee-specific organisations (RCOs)

RCOs tend to be based on existing communities and, therefore, existed mainly in London and larger metropolitan areas where the majority of asylum seekers were living (Carey-Wood *et al.*, 1995; Audit Commission, 2000), often in areas with high levels of deprivation. The term RCO is understood in this thesis to provide shorthand for the 'complex, diverse and fragmentary social forms' (Griffiths *et al.*, 2005:11) organisations set up by and for refugees. They vary considerably in size, scope and range of activities and expertise on which they can draw, but are largely informal and depend mainly on voluntary work by members of their community. The majority focus on providing advice and information for new arrivals as well as providing a safe meeting place where people can speak their own language and celebrate their own cultures. Some provide formal or informal support to members seeking employment in local ethnic business and in gaining access to housing. Kelly describes RCOs as 'contingent communities' in that they are 'a group of people who will, to some extent, conform to the expectations of the host society in order to gain the advantages of a formal community association, but the private face of the group remains unconstituted as a community' (2003:41). This was based on research into refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina but the term does assist in the explanation of the ambiguous and contested notions of 'community' plus factionalism within refugee populations versus the existence of formally constituted RCOs.

RCOs are increasingly involved in service provision in partnership with other agencies (Zetter and Pearl, 2000:676). Funding for RCOs is obtained primarily through charitable funds and 'special' statutory funds which tend to be short term, insecure and often subject to annual review. Some of this is channelled through the Refugee Council.

Voluntary sector, non-for-profit accommodation providers (RSLs)

¹¹⁴ Members of IAP are the Refugee Council, Refugee Action, Migrant Helpline, Refugee Arrivals Project, the Scottish Refugee Council and the Welsh Refugee Council. The IAP publishes a monthly newsletter giving details of updates of NASS policy bulletins, changes to regulations and other news.

The Refugee Housing Association, other RSLs¹¹⁵ or housing associations also provide accommodation to asylum seekers in dispersal locations and in some areas also manage properties for local authorities. As well as providing 'single sex'¹¹⁶ accommodation for single asylum seekers and 'family'¹¹⁷ accommodation, some RSLs are contracted to NASS to signpost asylum seekers to essential services. Allocation of accommodation for asylum seekers is carried out by placement officers who are dependent upon the institutional knowledge of the particular RSL in order to avoid 'warring factions' being housed together. These organisations house asylum seekers on a temporary basis and thereafter may offer tenancy support services or 'floating support' teams for recognised refugees.

Voluntary sector non refugee-specific service providers that may have refugee-specific projects

The Citizens Advice Bureau or legal advice centres that were established before dispersal as well as projects such as the Red Cross Orientation Project that was set up for dispersal are examples of these agencies.

Voluntary sector campaigning organisations that involve users and non-users

Organisations focussing on a specific theme (anti-deportation, detention, the media or gender) are examples of these . These may be locally based or national campaigns with their thematic characteristic drawing a broad spectrum of individuals and organisations.

Faith-based organisations

There are some organisations associated with religious organisations that have been set up to provide advice, support and assistance in emergency situations to individuals as well as some campaigning work. Issues around insurance policies and

¹¹⁵ RSL is the technical name for social landlords registered with the Housing Corporation.

¹¹⁶ E1; interview with representative of RSL, dispersal location, October 2003.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

the legality of providing support to asylum seekers have imposed some limitations on the work of churches¹¹⁸.

IMPLEMENTATION AND TENSIONS

Tensions between these agencies during implementation of dispersal was a common theme that emerged from interviews, focus groups, from comments made at conferences as well as conscious influences at other stages of the research (see Appendix V). The conflicting agendas of agencies involved were summed up by an individual who was closely involved in the early stages of planning dispersal:

*'You have got refugee advocacy values among Refugee Council staff but everything that the Home Office was doing was bad. It was nasty, repressive organisation, which had no commitment to the welfare of vulnerable people. Then you had essentially administrators in NASS making operational decisions with targets from their own organisation and then you had private landlords who basically wanted to make money with the least possible hassle.'*¹¹⁹

The power imbalances and different interest of agencies are clear within this quote. It is unsurprising that a representative of a RSP does not believe the Home Office to have the best interests of asylum seekers at heart as is the criticism of private accommodations providers.

The *'hierarchical'*¹²⁰ relationships between agencies within regional consortia emerged, as did a hierarchy of agencies nationally, particularly those involved in influencing policies. At the pinnacle of this latter hierarchy was the Home Office and NASS, the centralised power for creating and maintaining policies. The regional consortia emerged next with the highest level of influence, although often tense, with the Home Office and NASS. Local authorities and accommodation providers vied for position below this. RSPs were low down and RCOs were included on an *ad hoc* basis, if at all. Voluntary sector organisations that campaigned directly on behalf of

¹¹⁸ The issue of asylum seekers sleeping on the floors of church halls was a prominent part of the discussion during a workshop on 'Support and benefits for asylum seekers: Section 55 and human rights' at *Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Human Rights – The Balance Sheet so Far*, British Institute of Human Rights and JCWI, London, 11 November 2003.

¹¹⁹ B7; interview with former employee of Refugee Council, London, February 2005.

¹²⁰ B4; focus group with representatives of RSP, dispersal location, July 2003.

asylum seekers and refugees were at the bottom of the hierarchy. Those with the most experience and knowledge about refugees who worked closest to asylum seekers had less influence on NASS policies than those higher up the hierarchy. This is not to say that attempts were not consistently being made by the voluntary sector, with ongoing attempts by RSPs through the IAP evident. Asylum seekers were effectively outside of this 'hierarchy' and had no participation in the structures of support and were not able to represent their own concerns (Indra, 1989:223).

Another participant suggested that RSPs were perceived as '*a bit liberal and woolly*' due to their '*hands on approach*'. It was also suggested that the regional consortia approach to RCOs was unrealistic: '*At the beginning they wanted one person from the community they could lift the phone and speak to*' and that '*in practice, RCOs are represented by the voluntary sector*'¹²¹. Some RCOs were involved in monthly meetings but the size and scope of this involvement varied dependent upon the specific region meaning that RCOs have not been able to develop an independent voice within this system and have tended to be marginalised (Zetter *et al.*, 2005). The central role of local authorities in implementation of dispersal was addressed by Cohen when he suggested that 'the integration of the local state into internal immigration controls' transformed 'local government into an arm of the Home Office' (2002b). Private sector organisations were largely outside the hierarchical structure with their own direct links to NASS (corroborated in the study by Zetter *et al.*, 2002). To consider how this structure of dispersal emerged, early negotiations between NASS, the regional consortia and the private sector will be outlined as will evidence on the issues of public, private and voluntary sector involvement in dispersal.

Negotiations between NASS, the Regional Consortia and the Private Sector

The wide-scale involvement of the private sector distinguishes contemporary dispersal from past cases of dispersal of recognised refugees with early negotiations between NASS and the public and private sectors operating at different speeds. In 1998, the Home Office invited local authorities to form themselves into regional

¹²¹ Ibid.

consortia in order that contracts for accommodation and support could be negotiated. A number of tensions during the negotiation of these contracts were evident. In some cases, negotiations between NASS and regional consortia took some months. In the meantime, contracts between NASS and private accommodation providers were being signed. This meant that, in many cases the contracts with the private sector were negotiated faster than those with regional consortia with the private sector already fully operational, creating tensions between central and local government (Harrison, 2006).

The East Midlands Consortium for Asylum Seeker Support (EMCASS) signed their contract for accommodation in March 2001 following negotiations and renegotiations over implementation arrangements, price levels and legal arrangements (Harrison, 2006). The Refugee Housing Association (RHA) was contracted by EMCASS to manage accommodation rather than individual local authorities allocating time and resource to this task. However, by the time the contract was due to start on 30 April 2001, private accommodation providers (PAPs) were already providing accommodation to asylum seekers. In Leicester, the International Hotel, run by Accommodata, had already been the scene of a suicide of an Iranian man in January 2001 whose asylum claim had been rejected (Hingorani, 2001:129). Other PAPs in Leicester included Roselodge, Angel, Clearsprings and Leena Corporation. In Nottingham and Derby there were also a number of private providers¹²².

In the Southwest of England, the regional consortium disbanded early on in the process due to lengthy negotiations with NASS breaking down. All the main local authorities who accommodated asylum seekers were involved in these negotiations from the early stages for around eight months. As a representative of the recently reformed South West Asylum and Refugee Forum (SWARF) commented whilst relaying the history of this:

'I don't think it is unfair to say that a lot of the time they [NASS] didn't have a clue how to negotiate with local authorities. Eventually a deputation of elected members and senior officers from the Southwest went up to meet with

¹²² M2; interview with representative of regional consortia, January 2004.

*the Home Office minister, to try and sort these things out. They got half way through the meeting and she said, well, I am not actually sure we need your accommodation anyway. ... So, that in effect, at that point in time, was the end of the consortium.*¹²³

The tensions between central and local government revolved around a lack of understanding of how local authorities operated with NASS approaching this from a centralised Home Office perspective. The willingness of local government to negotiate with central government to accommodate asylum seekers is clear from this quote. However, the lack of communication between NASS, regional consortia and individual local authorities who had latterly been invited to bid for contracts remained a feature of negotiations. Explaining how one county council's negotiations were proceeding, a representative of a regional consortia comments on this perplexing arrangement:

*'Ironically, the same day that I got a letter from NASS inviting [...] county council to reopen negotiations because they very much wanted NASS to work in partnership with local authorities, totally out of the blue I had a phone call from the police to ask if I had ever heard of Clearsprings. I said yes why? They said that apparently they are going to start bring asylum seekers here. Exactly the same day! Clearsprings had been given the go ahead by one arm of NASS. No consultation with us whatsoever.'*¹²⁴

That the private sector were able to negotiate their contracts with NASS more quickly than local authorities was not surprising. There were regional variations but the private sector filled the 'vacuum'¹²⁵ when NASS was either slow or unable to negotiate contracts with regional consortia. A considerable proportion of contracts negotiated by NASS in the early stages were directly with PAPs.

The lack of understanding by NASS of the regional variations in the UK was replicated with other regional consortia also unable to complete negotiations with NASS. A consortium made up of 21 councils in Wales who had agreed the terms of a contract, advertised and appointed staff, and were awaiting the signing of the contract, ultimately withdrew due to not receiving confirmation from NASS by April

¹²³ M1; Interview with representative of regional consortia, September 2003.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ B3; interview with representative of RSP, dispersal location, July 2003.

2002¹²⁶. By this time, Adelphi Hotels had a contract for around 70 'bedspaces' in Wrexham and Clearsprings were beginning to locate suitable accommodation in the area¹²⁷. Cardiff, Newport and Swansea also accommodated asylum seekers dispersed by NASS.

Whilst the regional consortia were seen as being 'powerful', having considerable 'clout' and giving 'credibility' and a 'higher profile'¹²⁸ to agencies within their structures, their ultimate role was, however, strictly determined by central government policy. One representative of a regional consortia broadly agreed with Harrison's characterisation that they had 'responsibility without ownership' of the policy:

*'We are consulted by NASS and we attempt to influence policy but we do not set the policy. It is government, Home Office, policy. There are a lot of difficult issues that NASS is still tackling and we constantly try to influence NASS to resolve these.'*¹²⁹

Frustration about the way in which NASS operated was evident across the board, bordering on total disillusionment. One representative of a regional consortia went so far as to comment: *'I think some time, somebody will make a film of NASS and, I mean, it can't be true, because nobody would believe it!'*¹³⁰. A representative of a RSP commented that *the general level of incompetence is high* and their inefficiencies were *'enough to make your jaw drop'*¹³¹. A representative of a voluntary sector organisation not contracted to NASS, laughing loudly, exclaimed: *'do you want to turn the tape off because you don't want swearing on it!'*¹³².

During 2002, NASS established a working party to look at the viability of regionalising its services, acknowledging that the dispersal system meant that its services should also be available nationwide. It has been considered that the remoteness of NASS from the impact of its service has limited the organisation's

¹²⁶ Press release issued by Wrexham council, April 2002.

¹²⁷ Email correspondence with Housing Department, Wrexham council, October 2002.

¹²⁸ E2; interview with representative of RSL, dispersal location, October 2003.

¹²⁹ M2; interview with representative of regional consortia, January 2004.

¹³⁰ M1; interview with representative of regional consortia, September 2003.

¹³¹ B2; interview with representative of Refugee Council, London, May 2003.

¹³² N1; interview with representative of voluntary sector organisation, dispersal location, November 2003.

effectiveness and the expectation is that an increased NASS presence closer to the point of delivery would improve efficiency¹³³. Regional offices were to be located in several cities¹³⁴ and some 440 NASS staff were to be located in these regional offices. NASS functions in these offices would be outreach; housing contract management; regional management service, and performance monitoring investigations¹³⁵.

The NASS system has been problematic since the outset and the focus on improving the NASS system by the voluntary sector in their campaigning work and attempts to influence policy were clearly necessary due to the inefficiencies and inadequacies of the process. Considerable energy and time was dedicated to this with several commentators arguing that this has meant refugee-centred services have now been marginalised¹³⁶.

The Voluntary Sector: Their Role and the Perception of Independence

Representation by the voluntary sector was another tension emerging from the study given their dual advocacy and implementation roles. Cohen refers to this engagement of parts of the voluntary sector in a punitive system as ‘dining with the devil’ (2002a). From a pre-dispersal position of being ‘advocacy’ (Refugee Action, 2003) and ‘care giving’ (Refugee Council, 2004b) organisations with considerable empathy for refugees, involvement with dispersal meant that RSPs took on the role of providing emergency accommodation (EA) and were placed in the front line of implementing the dispersal policy. Theoretically, they were meant to making sure that asylum seekers could access services, be given advice as well as ‘signposting’ them to services. However, in the words of one representative of a RSP, in practice what had happened was that RSPs in dispersal locations were;

‘... spending most of our time managing emergency accommodation and processing far more applications for NASS support than we ever expected to’
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¹³³ IAP News, April 2003.

¹³⁴ Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Peterborough, Dover and Croydon.

¹³⁵ IAP News, April 2003.

¹³⁶ *Impact of Change* conference, Refugee Council, London, 28 January 2003.

¹³⁷ B6; interview with representative of Refugee Council, London, August 2003.

This was common and with the available resources other services required by asylum seekers were low priority. Upon implementation of Section 55, the 'landlord' role placed RSPs in the difficult position of not being able to provide emergency accommodation to those clients approaching them who did not hold the correct documentation¹³⁸. This meant that RSPs were forced to turn away a proportion of asylum seekers in need of support or if asylum seekers were refused support and were not 'presenting' to the offices of RSPs for advice remained unknown to the agencies (Refugee Action, 2003). The processing of applications for support involved completion of a NASS1 form (Appendix XVIII). This form posed sensitive questions and, as one caseworker commented, the completion of NASS1 could be seen to replicate the role of the state as these same questions would have been posed by immigration and Home Office officials:

*'We help them to fill in NASS application form which is a big form in English – 13 pages. And there are some immigration questions as well that we have to ask – where did you come from? Did you pass any country before you came to Britain? What time did you arrive here? Have you claimed asylum in port? If yes, which port, if not, how did you claim asylum? And all these kind of questions that immigration ask are included on that form as well.'*¹³⁹

This led to difficulties in distinguishing their role from the Home Office and the difficulties in sustaining their independence in the eyes of the client group were also acknowledged: *'When people come here they can mix us up with immigration'*¹⁴⁰. This view that RSPs were seen as a function of NASS was recounted in interviews and focus groups with asylum seekers and refugees. The issue was commented upon by a member of a RCO, explaining why her organisation did not get involved in contracting for NASS, whilst also raising other concerns about the possible constraints on independence:

'Had we signed up for the NASS contract, then we would have become like a little branch of the Home Office. And no doubt they would want to have all sorts of information about the community. And we knew that if we had done that then the people would mistrust us and therefore we let it pass –

¹³⁸ Applications 'at port' needed to be in possession of a IS96 which is a document stamped by an immigration officer at port, a Standard Acknowledgement Letter (SAL) or an Application Registration Card (ARC) and/or 'in-country' applicants in possession of a letter from NASS

¹³⁹ B3; interview with representative of Refugee Action, dispersal location, July 2003.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

*although it would have meant getting one full-time worker and running costs.*¹⁴¹

Thus, while RSP staff stressed their independence from the Home Office and challenged this perception at every opportunity¹⁴², they were often perceived by refugees to be part of the system rather than as advocates. The term '*NASS in Brixton*' was often used by asylum seekers to refer to the Refugee Council's advice office. This mistrust was evident among refugees who had been in contact with RSP staff:

*'I appreciate their caseworkers, they are nice and caring people, but no, all they are is just a part of the Home Office.'*¹⁴³

This perception undermines the trust of refugees in RSPs, an issue which is crucial in work with refugees (Hynes, 2003). As a solicitor working in a dispersal area commented, this was also an issue surrounding the perception of the organisations:

*'It is not only whether they are independent but whether they are perceived to be independent. It is something that they are very aware of and they know that it is precious to keep this independence.'*¹⁴⁴

The tension between these roles was clear and, whilst they had no role in decision-making on applications for support, their role as a bridge to that service and their involvement in NASS contracts made it difficult to sustain the perception of independence from the Home Office. This is the same as what Hitchcox argued about the voluntary sector role with the Vietnamese dispersal when their function as a pressure group was constrained because of conflicting roles (1987:5). Contracts with NASS placed restraints on their activities and subsequently their real or perceived independence. One RSP representative, referring to the Compact with the voluntary sector, argued that there was no evidence that the government attached strings to contracts:

¹⁴¹ D1; interview with female representative of RCO, London, November 2002.

¹⁴² B5; interview with representative of Refugee Action, dispersal location, July 2003.

¹⁴³ R2; Iranian participant in focus group, dispersal location, July 2003.

¹⁴⁴ H1; interview with solicitor in dispersal location, July 2003.

*'I would say that no, there isn't. They recognise something, they have this voluntary sector compact, this government has been interested in promoting, which is about providing a framework for a better partnership between the voluntary sector and explicitly recognises that the voluntary sector is independent and needs to be independent.'*¹⁴⁵

This same representative later acknowledged, however, that working to contracts involves different forms of working, the representative suggested: *'If we are delivering a service on behalf of the government, then we have to deliver that to the specifications that are required by the contract.'*¹⁴⁶ The 1998 'compact'¹⁴⁷ referred to, meant to ensure that the impact on voluntary organisations is taken into account during policy formation, did not mean that their involvement and contact with the Home Office and NASS meant they were consulted on the introduction of Section 55 – the Refugee Council calling it a 'clear breach of the Compact' that 'undermines any intention it might have had to strengthen links with the voluntary sector' (Refugee Council, 2004c).

Refugee Agencies can – often successfully – carry out advocacy work while involved in these contracts. The Refugee Council was, for example, the lead player in the successful campaign against the use of vouchers and lobbied against forced returns to Zimbabwe. It also campaigned against Section 55¹⁴⁸ while simultaneously involved in negotiating new contracts. Balancing these two roles, however, creates tensions which can undermine the trust between voluntary organisations and refugees and thus limit advocacy work:

*'It is very limiting. And you do give the impression that you are not on the refugee service but rather the establishment's service. I think the XX [a Refugee Agency] has a very bad reputation within the refugee community and they do see them as agents of the government. They see them as a 'strainer' ... for the Home Office.'*¹⁴⁹

This tension for the voluntary sector between simultaneously campaigning against and implementing the raft of restrictive policies that have emerged over the past

¹⁴⁵ B6; interview with representative of Refugee Council, London, August 2003.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Home Office, (November 1998), *Getting it Right Together: Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England*, Home Office, London.

¹⁴⁸ Successfully overturned on appeal in August 2004.

¹⁴⁹ D1; interview with representative of RCO, London, November 2002.

decade has led to heated public controversy. At a conference at the London School of Economics in 2003¹⁵⁰, an allegation was made that the Refugee Council had asked *The Guardian* to omit a paragraph in an article which discussed the refusal of the Refugee Council to house asylum seekers refused support under Section 55 (Fesshaye, 2003). The spokesperson for the Refugee Council commented that they obtained funding both from the government and from fundraising activities and that the money raised through the latter was used to lobby the government on policy. A group of some 35 asylum seekers who had been refused assistance later set up camp in a car park behind the Refugee Council offices to demand support¹⁵¹. However, this was not forthcoming due to the restrictions of providing services.

Arguing that the benefit of contact and involvement with NASS provided 'added value' to asylum seekers who otherwise might be provided services by the private sector, representatives of RSPs considered that even under the terms and conditions of the contracts the voluntary sector was likely to provide a better service. The practical benefits of this involvement were presented:

*'Certainly we can demonstrate this – a lot of people would have lost their NASS support, were it not for appeals that caseworkers do. We do have an extremely good record on appeals, NASS do listen. So that is a lot of clients, still accommodated, still supported because we helped them.'*¹⁵²

Ultimately this tension manifests itself in situations where NASS requirements involve them in cooperating to refuse support to failed asylum seekers. In providing emergency accommodation, they are obliged to evict those who become ineligible, for example when an appeal is turned down. This activity requires them to be in agreement with, or at least to accommodate to, the criteria which dictate whether people get support or not. They are constrained to take on the norms of the system in which they operate, while often trying to make it better for individuals. While RSPs are not involved directly in deportations, their involvement with NASS has undermined their independence in the eyes of many refugees, so that they are in danger of appearing to be part of the system which forcibly returns people.

¹⁵⁰ Conference entitled *Humans Without Rights: Asylum Seekers in the 21st Century*, co-sponsored by The Guardian and the Centre for the Study of Human Rights, London School of Economics, 1 November 2003.

¹⁵¹ For more details see www.inhumananddegrading.info

Involvement in contracts creates an organisational interest in the continuance of the system, since jobs, and the future of the organisation become dependent on them. It also places more general constraints on how organisations operate and has implications for the priorities of the organisation. This includes an accommodation to the culture and expectations within the partnership, for example that staff should not criticise NASS¹⁵³.

Private Sector Involvement in Dispersal

Profit rather than any value of empathy or understanding of the unique needs of refugees is the primary motivation for the involvement of the private sector in dispersal. The privatisation of services for asylum seekers has gone largely unchallenged unlike health and education services for the general population of the UK. This is itself a comment on the social exclusion of asylum seekers as their needs are secondary, or below, those of the wider population.

In terms of private accommodation, the maintenance of properties was identified as the primary consideration. In the view of a representative of a voluntary organisation, in these terms their involvement was beneficial:

*'The sub-contractor is very good. In other areas it is the local authorities that provide housing whereas here it is the private sector. In this instance, the houses are brilliant. I mean, they are first class. They have spent a lot of money on them. They have their own maintenance team who turn up the next day mostly if something needs fixing. They are a property company so it is in their interest to have well maintained properties. When dispersal ends they will have good property to sell. That is a big motivation. It is not the right motivation but it does mean that asylum seekers get better accommodation here.'*¹⁵⁴

This was an isolated incident of praise for a PAP with the general consensus in other interviews and focus groups being private accommodation was inadequate and inappropriate. Dispersal ended in this dispersal location very soon after this interview with the property company mentioned above reallocating the housing to

¹⁵² B5; focus group with female representative of voluntary sector, dispersal location, July 2003.

¹⁵³ Information conversation with former IND policy advisory, June 2003.

students (the other body of tenants they had properties for). The asylum seekers who were moved out of these properties were relocated to alternative accommodation in other dispersal locations. The provision of accommodation to asylum seekers based on the fluctuations on the housing market was in this way capricious.

In Leicester, the use of the International Hotel to accommodate asylum seekers was widely criticised by interviewees. This hotel had been previously used to accommodate Kosovan refugees and had since been condemned. At the time of my visit there were some 400 asylum seekers accommodated there and there was an asylum seeker repeatedly kicking the lift button in the lobby. During a focus group a few days later it emerged that there had been no hot water in this hotel for over a week and two of the participants of the focus group had therefore not been able to shower for a week. This was one of many complaints about the food, the rooms and the painted over windows in the hotel. The private accommodation provider, Accommodata, has since had its contract terminated by NASS.

Further implications of private sector involvement was recognised by a regional consortia representative; *'They go to the properties to check maintenance. They would not necessarily be able to tell, or be interested, if an asylum seeker needed counselling or therapy.'*¹⁵⁵ Thus, whilst maintenance may be catered for in private accommodation, it is clear that the end of accommodation contracts and subsequent relocation was problematic. PAPs were not caregivers or advocates for refugees and their role in that sense was relatively straight forward. Significant variations in standards of private accommodation were a feature of dispersal (see also Zetter *et.al.*, 2002). The deterrence element of dispersal was also recognised by a sub-contractor to a PAP:

*'In a way it gives them a chance to find out about the country they are currently living in and asking to stay in. It may influence their decision as to whether to stay, because there is a programme, a voluntary programme to encourage them to go back.'*¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ N1; interview with representative of voluntary organisation, dispersal location, November 2003.

¹⁵⁵ M1; interview with male representative of regional consortia, September 2003.

¹⁵⁶ G1; interview with representative of PAP, dispersal location, June 2003.

This comment was made after a lengthy discussion of the difficulties and problems encountered by his company due to the client group, including burglary, violence and a murder. This focus on the behaviour of individuals suggested MUD framework of social exclusion, akin to government discourses. The awareness of the voluntary programme and use of the words 'encourage them to go back' was indicative of the lack of understanding about the reasons for asylum seekers arriving in the UK. The suggestion that the system 'may influence their decision' to return illustrated the implicit in-country deterrence element of dispersal. That a clear signal, through accommodation and other aspects of the NASS system, 'may influence their decision as to whether to stay' demonstrates this. That asylum seekers are 'asking to stay' and are only 'currently living' in the UK indicated a liminal state. Organisations new to the provision of services to asylum seekers commenced their involvement at this point when asylum seekers were provided with so-called incentives to return to their countries of origin. It is unsurprising therefore that these organisations considered asylum seekers as being temporarily in the UK.

Several other issues were identified emerging from the private sector role in accommodating asylum seekers and are explored in subsequent chapters. These included lack of privacy; problems with sharing rooms; having to sign papers each week to say they are resident in the property; a sense of obligation not to 'bite the hand that feeds'; the values of private companies; the serving of eviction notices; holding of keys; and, sanctions of not being resident in the property. The lack of understanding regarding 'warring factions' had major implications for every service provider but was during research with the private sector that revealed the least understanding of the complex patterns formed by refugee 'communities'.

RCOs: The Buffer?

Marx argued that 'refugees organise as 'refugees' in order to better negotiate with the state' (1990:201). That 'community self help' (Duke, 1996:7) has been a key approach in social policy was based on notions of 'diversity' and

'multiculturalism'¹⁵⁷ and with refugees this self help was through RCOs or what Kelly calls 'contingent communities' (2003:41).

Pre-existing RCOs in London and the regions were not considered as implementers of dispersal. RCOs knew the distinctions between members of refugee 'communities' that NASS, local authorities, RSPs and other agencies had to go through 'a steep learning curve'¹⁵⁸ to discover. They already knew about issues surrounding translation and interpreting. One RCO representative argued that they already had; '*a pool of interpreters talking three different dialects*' and knew about '*differences*' between what were perceived to be 'communities' from the outside, with one community worker commenting;

*'You might have a situation where Somali groups are unable to come together. Social services and refugee organisations funded by the Home Office, local government or institutions are unable to understand that. Similarly there was difficulty understanding Kurdish people from Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. They didn't understand that. We were not objecting to dispersal but we were objecting to the way they did not think it through. The host community was not prepared. They had never seen a Kurd before. They don't know the differences between Kurds.'*¹⁵⁹

At the outset of dispersal London-based RCOs – without additional funding – supported asylum seekers outside London. One large London-based RCO, for example, received 3,302 enquiries between April 2002 and March 2003 from locations outside London. This 'buffer' was not considered during the subsequent implementation of dispersal and funding for dispersal concentrated on advice and service provision to the detriment of community development activities across the UK. Several representatives of RCOs commented on receiving telephone calls from the newly set up dispersal areas. Having to resolve issues and telephone social services departments hundreds of miles away from dispersal areas was highly problematic. This unacknowledged and unfunded 'buffer' role for RCOs was replicated in dispersal areas.

¹⁵⁷ The term 'diversity' is used in a general sense and does not relate to the current debate surrounding 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2006). 'Multiculturalism' is used in its historical anti-racist sense rather than the current emphasis on identity politics and 'faith communities'.

¹⁵⁸ Phrase repeatedly used to describe how agencies had learnt about their 'clients' during the initial phase of dispersal.

¹⁵⁹ Y1; interview with male representative of Turkish/Kurdish RCO, London, August 2004.

In one dispersal locations the RSP had considerable links with RCOs in the city and directed newly arrived asylum seekers to their 'community'. Whilst this would appear to be a positive action, handing over the responsibility onto the RCOs meant that unpaid individuals worked lengthy and inhospitable hours to assist new arrivals access services. Calling on this sense of 'duty' of co-nationals, the 'voluntary work'¹⁶⁰ carried out by the organisation included locating solicitors, opportunities for further education, form filling and delivery of informal advice services. As a Sudanese asylum seeker commented on the way in which this operated:

*'It was very difficult the first time because we don't know how to use the phone either. So when we have been given the numbers to call we still didn't know how to use the phones. We found a Kurdish person who helped us to make the call to the Sudanese organisation. Once we were in contact they have sorted out a lot of problems through them. If we have any problem we go to them.'*¹⁶¹

The experience of this asylum seeker of being directed to their own 'community' for assistance and support was also recounted in other interviews. This approach certainly benefited this asylum seeker, giving them 'access to friends – we have a social life and everything'.¹⁶² He continued to explain that now he had contact with a Sudanese organisation he would no longer need to contact the RSP and could be supported by the RCO. As the representative of the RCO commented; 'if it is your community you can't just stand and watch so you have to do it'¹⁶³. Thus, whilst both the RSP and the asylum seeker benefited greatly from this arrangement, the representative of the RCO was left with the task of providing not only advice and support but access to social networks and, upon the detention or eviction of another asylum seeker from NASS accommodation upon termination of his support, alternative accommodation:

'I am sure that we can find him somewhere to stay. We have of course seen the same problem before. Sometimes we pay about £3,000 for someone for bail from detention. The community has to find it. We can manage to find him a place. This is going to be a short term solution, not a long term one. He is not going to be all his life living with people without permission to work.'

¹⁶⁰ Conversation with representative of Sudanese RCO, dispersal location, November 2003.

¹⁶¹ A12; interview with male Sudanese asylum seeker, dispersal location, November 2003.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Conversation with representative of Sudanese RCO, dispersal location, November 2003.

*Sometimes it is very difficult. There needs to be a long term solution really. But I am certain that in the short term we will find something for him.*¹⁶⁴

Thus, the system of handing over responsibility for co-nationals to RCOs is dependent upon the goodwill, sense of 'duty' and not being able to 'stand and watch' of what is perceived to be their 'community'. This direction toward and subsequent reliance on 'community' support was largely unquestioned. Whilst there are certainly benefits to this approach, the assumption that the particular 'community' will respond effectively to a telephone call made by a non-national on behalf of a co-national is questionable. Placing the longer term responsibility onto co-nationals also has the effect of steering newly arrived asylum seekers into a limited 'bonding' form of social capital. What is not considered in doing this is the potential mistrust a newly arrived asylum seeker may have in approaching an organisation that may or may not represent his or her political opinions or 'vintage' of migration. It is of interest in the case cited above that both RCO and the asylum seekers followed the same religion, spoke the same dialect and came from the same region of the country of origin.

Asylum seekers are outside the hierarchy of organisations involved with dispersal and RCOs offer the best possibility for what is sometimes referred to as a 'voice'. The 'voice' of asylum seekers in the punitive NASS system was not apparent. RCOs were clearly 'in danger of being sidelined by imposed policy directives and imperatives emanating from the centre and the organisational requirements of the large NGOs' (Griffiths *et. al.*, 2006). Although some RCOs have contracts with RSPs to provide culturally-specific services, they have remained largely unfunded for the volume of work they perform. Given the sheer numbers of different nationalities of asylum seekers dispersed to different locations, it is not possible that each nationality could set up an organisation in each dispersal location. Access to a RCO is therefore dependent upon several factors, including proximity. Several refugee-specific issues arising have been dealt with through RCOs rather than contracted agencies. The voluntary sector representing asylum seekers would not therefore necessarily be aware of all the issues RCOs have been approached to deal with.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

In a deterrence environment where there is little room to negotiate with the state to improve conditions for asylum seekers, it is unsurprising that ‘users’ of the system do not place emphasis on this type of organisation. Even if requirements of day to day survival would allow, formally organising as ‘asylum seekers’ would not necessarily bring benefits.

EVOLUTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF DISPERSAL

Over time, the original ideas around ‘clustering’ asylum seekers have disappeared. The way in which dispersal has operated has also changed from a system where more emphasis was placed on individual, ‘self-write’¹⁶⁵ dispersal to groups of asylum seekers being dispersed. These factors in evolution of the dispersal policy are outlined to show the changing roles of agencies involved.

Early in the design stage, it was suggested by the Refugee Council that dispersal should be to areas with unemployment levels at, or below, the national average (Refugee Council, 2004b). The right to work had not, at this stage, been denied¹⁶⁶:

‘The original idea was to pick areas that were relatively appropriate, in terms of being multi-cultural initially. Also we suggested using some basic criteria like employment rates that were lower than or at least at the average. But, as far as I know, the indices we suggested were never actually used.’¹⁶⁷

As can be seen in Appendix XX and XXI, patterns of employment deprivation and long term unemployed show similar patterns to maps of dispersal provided in the next chapter. None of the criteria other than the majority of dispersal locations being in multicultural areas were ultimately accomplished. The abandonment of language-clusters, the 1:200 ratio of asylum seekers per head of population, employment levels not below average and ‘warring factions’ being kept apart were each unfulfilled aspects of the initial design.

¹⁶⁵ The terms ‘self write’ (individuals) and ‘group’ dispersal originate from NASS and are used by RSP staff.

¹⁶⁶ Permission to work was denied from 23 July 2003.

Cluster Area Idea Abandoned

The idea of 'clusters' of asylum seekers based around available accommodation, multicultural environments plus supporting infrastructure and services was meant to be a major element of the design of dispersal (Refugee Council, 2004b). Suggestions were made by the Refugee Council and a document provided to me¹⁶⁸ outlined which cities across the UK would be suitable. In the East Midlands urban centres considered suitable were Leicester, Nottingham, Derby and Loughborough whilst Lincoln was not listed. In the Southwest, Bristol, Bath, Exeter, Swindon and Gloucester were listed (Refugee Council, 1999). The idea of 'clusters within clusters', i.e. specific cities within regions, was considered more practical than even distribution across regions.

A focus on language-based clusters was a logistically useful idea for local authorities and RSPs given the requirements of translation and interpretation. However, this became an ongoing tension between themselves and the Home Office (see Appendix XIX for agreed languages as of January 2006). A Home Office report published in December 2005 identified 'linguistic clustering' as potentially contributing to an emerging 'ghetto' of asylum seekers and refugees in deprived areas, in turn hindering 'refugees' future integration into communities' (2005:7). In Leicester in late 2002 an additional 5 languages¹⁶⁹ were being suggested to NASS for approval from the 12 agreed languages¹⁷⁰ already in operation. Arrivals of asylum seekers speaking other languages was prevalent in the city¹⁷¹. It was clear that clustering of language group had not occurred in any of the fieldwork locations. Graph 4 shows that at end March 2003, 63 nationalities¹⁷² of asylum seeker were dispersed to Leicester (Refugee Council, 2003c). This exceeded even the relatively high number of agreed languages that Leicester anticipated:

¹⁶⁷ B6; interview with representative of Refugee Council, London, August 2003.

¹⁶⁸ *Some Thoughts on Clusters*, Refugee Council, October 1999.

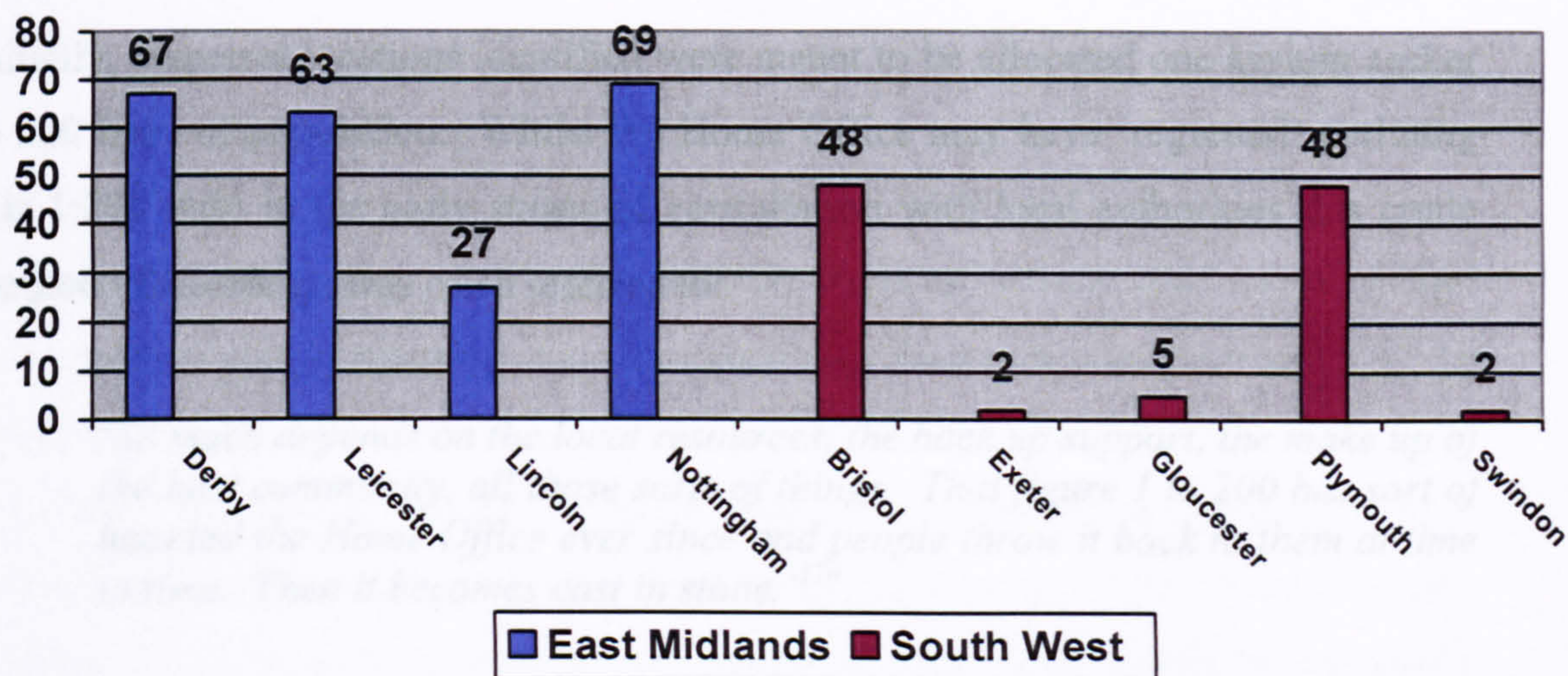
¹⁶⁹ Farsi, Dari, Arabic, Pushto and Czech.

¹⁷⁰ Gujerati, Polish, Latvian, Ukrainian, Kiswahli, Serbo Croat, Swahili, Hindi, Mandarin, Turkish, Somali and French.

¹⁷¹ Discussion with representative of local authority, April 2003.

¹⁷² Of a total of 1,217 asylum seekers in NASS accommodation.

Graph 4: Number of nationalities dispersed to cities in the East Midlands and the Southwest (as at end March 2003)



Source: Refugee Council, 2003c

Reducing the number of interpreters and translators would clearly benefit the agencies involved. However, the assumption that speaking the same language would make compulsory dispersal more sustainable in the longer term was fraught with difficulties, implying an imagined community based on language alone (Anderson, 1991). Such an idea would not account for historical antagonisms with bordering countries or factions within one nationality. The basis of an individual's asylum claim are often along religious or political lines that divide groups who speak the same language. One Iranian male interviewed for this research mentioned that he was sharing his room in Leicester with an Iraqi Kurd and whilst they spoke the same language, 'history' denied them the possibilities of conversing¹⁷³. This idea that 'warring factions' would be kept apart during dispersal was outlined in the NASS Dispersal Strategy (see Appendix II) to avoid 'any tension spilling over from their countries of origin'. Zetter *et al.* suggest that the idea of language-based clusters had only 'limited practical success' due to 'twin pressures of speed and economy with the socially and logistically complex task' involved in such an idea. The 'logistical' task was certainly complex and dependent on accurate information being available within the system. The 'social' task was just as complex and over-ridden by the

¹⁷³ A4; focus group with male and female participants, Leicester, November 2003.

accommodation and deterrence aspects of the policy which are expanded upon in subsequent chapters.

Initially, dispersal locations identified were meant to be allocated one asylum seeker to 200 head of population. Whilst the Home Office may have 'regretted' outlining this 1:200 ratio in the early stages of consultation with local authorities this crude method of allocation was often referred to:

*'So much depends on the local resources, the back up support, the make up of the host community, all those sorts of things. That figure 1 to 200 has sort of haunted the Home Office ever since and people throw it back to them at time to time. Then it becomes cast in stone.'*¹⁷⁴

This tension between national and local government and the number of 'bedspaces' according to this ratio became a political issue which on occasions resulted in suspension of dispersal to particular cities due to their exceeding the 'quota':

*'It has only recently emerged, when NASS has started looking at the actually number of bed spaces they have got contracted in each place, that they have contracted for far more bed spaces than their own guidelines.'*¹⁷⁵

The 1:200 ratio was also ignored to some extent because PAPs largely operated outside the hierarchical structure. The provision of accommodation by the private sector had a great impact on the implementation of dispersal with regional consortia and local authorities keen to incorporate private providers into the regional structures devised to implement dispersal. A common suggestion from representations of regional consortia and other agencies was that PAPs did not always take the 'quota' into consideration:

*'The private providers all piled in and bought up cheap rented property where they could, and offered it to the Home Office, those guidelines have been largely exceeded.'*¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ M1; interview with representative of regional consortia, September 2003.

¹⁷⁵ M2; interview with representative of regional consortia, January 2004.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

This vying for regional control was a clear demonstration of the tension between national and local government. Provision of services within the regional structures were difficult to plan due to this.

'Group' and 'Self Write' Dispersals

There are two ways in which dispersal was implemented – 'self write' of individuals and 'group' dispersal where groups were picked up from emergency accommodation. At the outset, 'self write' dispersal of individuals was the main method utilised. The idea being that each individual would be provided with a set of instructions from NASS along with a dispersal pack containing information about dispersal, their address and containing vouchers and tickets if they were travelling on public transport or arrangements as to who would be meeting them in which location. This method, however, proved difficult to implement because NASS found allocation of individuals to specific accommodation difficult in practice. The NASS database did not contain information regarding family members who may already be in the country in a different dispersal location. NASS staff did not meet asylum seekers face to face and made paper based decisions about where to send people.

This system gave way to 'group dispersal' with asylum seekers picked up mainly in London and Dover. Explaining this system, a representative of a RSP commented:

*'Group dispersal contained coaches arriving outside the emergency accommodation and, if accommodation had been allocated for 20 Iraqi single men, then 20 Iraqi single men would be assigned to this coach and they would drive to wherever. The accommodation provider would meet them and they would allocate individual accommodation when they actually got there as to who would share with whom, who did not want to share with anyone, etc. ...because NASS did not have that information available to them whether these two are brothers, or these two are best friends or whatever. They weren't making that type of decision.'*¹⁷⁷

The potential for problems and outcome of this system were often summed up in one phrase – 'failure to travel'. This term used by NASS and RSPs described how

¹⁷⁷ B2; interview representative of Refugee Council, London, May 2003.

asylum seekers would 'fail' to turn up to be dispersed. This occurred for a multitude of reasons, one of which was suggested by a representative of a RSP:

*'Because people couldn't travel with their friends or because they were being put into a shared room and they didn't want to share, they were not travelling. Which is why the system started to break down.'*¹⁷⁸

This focus on individuals not wanting to share rooms rather than the more structural aspects of the dispersal system such as not being able to maintain social networks due to dispersal was often apparent. The imposed constraints of the system were in this way often disregarded in favour of focussing on the behaviour of individuals.

The switch to group dispersals did mean though that two Iraqi friends in emergency accommodation could choose to get on the same coach knowing its destination. Another representative of a refugee service provider in a dispersal location also commented on the reasons and method involved in this switch from 'self write' to 'group' dispersals, suggesting that it was effectively the inefficiency of NASS that pre-empted this shift:

*'So the number of people in emergency accommodation waiting to be dispersed started to rise and went up so NASS asked us. They said we have to do something about it. We have to lower the number of people in emergency accommodation, so you have got the people in emergency accommodation, you have got the names, can you just make the list. For example, 20 people, and we'll send a coach and we'll disperse all these people together somewhere. And we did that, and after that then they started to develop this group dispersal system. They sent us a timetable of group dispersals in that whole week.'*¹⁷⁹

This switch was due to NASS being 'unable to cope'¹⁸⁰ and greater involvement from the voluntary sector was required to make the system work. This new method allowed RSPs some 'room to manoeuvre' in that the 'choice' of the 'place' to send 'singles' or 'families' was given to refugee service providers. However, the choice of people was more complicated as RSPs were unable to refuse dispersal and 'had to

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ B5; focus group with female representatives of voluntary sector, dispersal location, June 2003.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

fill in the people to go'¹⁸¹. The perceived benefits of this were that RSPs knew the clients because they worked closely with them and therefore knew who was likely (or fail) to travel:

*'We know if someone really doesn't want to travel because they have got friends or family and then we don't put them on the list at all. We wait until we have got in-region dispersals. Then we disperse those people.'*¹⁸².

For asylum seekers, forming relationships with the new decision-makers, RSPs, became necessary if preferences were to be taken into consideration. These agencies, operating *'not exactly a gentlemen's agreement, but trying to accommodate preferences'*¹⁸³ were able, therefore, to try to put people together. That *'good relationships around the country'* between RSPs, local authorities and city councils could be utilised to move asylum seekers who are *'desperate'* to move. This put RSPs in a position whereby they did most of the negotiations amongst themselves due to the inadequacies of the NASS system. The dual advocacy and implementation role of the voluntary sector were further entrenched due to the evolution of the dispersal system. An even more complex dynamic – of providing the best service to their clients whilst at the same time making decisions on where they would ultimately be dispersed to – emerged.

Regional variations in approaches, based on local conditions and relationships between NASS and local implementers of the policy, meant it was difficult to make generalisations. For example, a representative of a PAP was unaware of any shift from *'self write'* to *'group'* dispersals, stating that both *'group'* and *'self write'* dispersal operated simultaneously with individual dispersal being the prominent way in which asylum seekers arrived to their offices¹⁸⁴.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter it has been shown that evidence from past dispersals was not listened to during policy formulation – rather pressures in the policy arena provided the

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ B2; interview with representative of Refugee Council, London, May 2003.

evidence that contemporary compulsory dispersal could work. The history of the dispersal policy was framed by deterrence and therefore involved an inherent exclusionary logic. The lack of consultation, speed at which the policy was designed, planned and implemented meant that dispersal was flawed from the outset. These deficiencies at a national level had great effect on implementation at a local level. Past dispersals placed refugees into mainstream service provision but contemporary dispersal separated asylum seekers and other migrants from mainstream services. The power to define access to services based on a complex hierarchy of centrally devised statuses is a form of social exclusion that cannot be overcome at a regional or local level.

Widespread disillusionment with NASS was a strong theme emerging from this research. The seeds of this disillusionment were sown even before contemporary compulsory dispersal began and continued to remain a feature of subsequent negotiations. The proliferation of agencies, including the decision by the voluntary sector to take part in a punitive system for asylum seekers and a new role for the private sector characterise this dispersal. This high number and conflicting roles of agencies meant that tensions were inherent in the relationships between NASS and other agencies. Power imbalances between agencies have played out through a hierarchical structure with those agencies at the top of the hierarchy least likely to be involved with asylum seekers and agencies working locally on a face-to-face basis with asylum seekers having the least influence on policy. The emergent hierarchies were led by central government and were framed by deterrence. The legislative base for dispersal meant that agencies could not break the law by refusing to provide information to the Home Secretary or implement dispersal once contracts with NASS have been signed. Whilst contracts between public, private and voluntary organisations specified clear responsibilities towards asylum seekers, power imbalances, as well as lack of communication between agencies holding conflicting values, have meant that tensions are built into the structure of dispersal were difficult to address at a local level.

¹⁸⁴ G1; interview with representative of sub-contractor of PAP, dispersal location, June 2003.

Redirection towards the asylum seekers' own 'community' for support was an unquestioned assumption with the role of RCOs in 'buffering' dispersal largely unrecognised and unfunded and little emphasis on using this channel to support subsequent integration strategies.

The position of asylum seekers is outside the hierarchy of the NASS system. They are represented by the voluntary sector who undertakes dual roles of 'advocacy' and 'implementers' of dispersal. The voluntary sector is effectively at the interface between asylum seekers and in-country deterrence and therefore inhabit the most visible and contested space within the system. The tensions and replication of the role of the state by various agencies mean that an asylum seekers' experience of institutions – from NASS downwards – were seldom positive and did not provide space for the restoration of institutional trust.

A moral underclass discourse of social exclusion was evident from non-user led agencies when descriptions of the actions of asylum seekers were focussed upon. The imposed constraints of the system were in this way often disregarded in favour of focussing on the behaviour of individuals. 'Failure to travel' was the main way in which the behaviour of asylum seekers was described during implementation.

Evolution of the policy has seen the abandonment of the cluster area idea and a shift from individual to group dispersal. The latter shift meant a growth in the voluntary sector role during dispersal and incrementally shifted their role closer to the state.

The structure and implementation of dispersal does not allow for adequate representation of asylum seekers and this is a form of social exclusion. In the next chapter the geography of dispersal based on the availability of cheap and unpopular accommodation is explored to illustrate the structural limitations of dispersal. Then in *Chapter 6* the experiences of asylum seekers within the NASS system are outlined. The geography and process of dispersal represent further forms of social exclusion.

CHAPTER 5

MAPPING DISPERSAL AND DEPRIVATION

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the structure, implementation and hierarchy of agencies involved with dispersal illustrated one form of social exclusion of asylum seekers. This chapter follows on from this by outlining the geography of dispersal using GIS mapping¹⁸⁵ as, in order to analyse social phenomena, it is necessary to locate them in space (Massey, 1993:155). These maps provide a descriptive tool. They are time series maps showing how dispersal evolved geographically over time. The geography¹⁸⁶ of dispersal was a reflection of the exclusionary policy context and, in particular, the availability of unpopular housing. This chapter outlines the emergent spatial character of dispersal, 'Subsistence Only' support (SO support) and multiple deprivation. Dispersal and SO support were mapped because SO support can be regarded as a proxy-indicator of social networks and is mapped to illustrate the different pattern of settlement without the 'institutionalised redistribution' (Thielemann, 2003:228) of the NASS system. Multiple deprivation was mapped to highlight the relationship between dispersal locations and the 88 most deprived districts in England. The link between dispersal and deprivation is also mapped at ward level in Leicester and Bristol. The link between dispersal and deprivation is then explored utilising qualitative data from interviews and focus groups with asylum seekers and refugees. This is done to illustrate the impact of formal and informal social exclusion on asylum seekers. It is argued that the link to multiple deprivation is a key element of the social exclusion of asylum seekers and that dispersal is a form of social exclusion based on geography due to the character of dispersal locations.

¹⁸⁵ All maps in this chapter can be viewed full size in Appendix XXII.

¹⁸⁶ 'Geography' refers to the spatial patterns generated by the allocation of accommodation to asylum seekers.

UNPOPULAR HOUSING: A 'BEDSPACE' LED POLICY

The geographic concentration of social exclusion has a long history in the UK as has the degree of concentration of minority groups (Lupton and Power, 2002:118; Mohan, 1999:128). The inferior quality of housing available to minority groups through 'residential clustering' has been a distinctive feature of accommodation patterns (Lee, 1977:1; Mohan, 1999:129; Sim, 2000:93). Dispersal of minorities has also been a part of 'the racialized social policy interventions that occurred in response to the black post-war settlement in Britain.' (Bloch and Schuster, 2005:203).

As well as concentrating on particular groups, the SEU uses social exclusion in a geographical sense to implement social policy interventions by identifying geographical areas that require regeneration or renewal. In 1999 the availability of low demand accommodation or unpopular housing had been subject to an investigation by the Policy Action Team of the SEU. The published report, *Report by the Unpopular Housing Action Team* (1999) (hereafter 'the PAT report')¹⁸⁷ identified low demand housing stock of local authorities, registered social landlords (RSLs) and the private sector. The PAT report showed that local authority dwellings in unpopular areas were concentrated in the North West, the North East, Yorkshire and Humberside and the West Midlands¹⁸⁸. Unpopular private sector housing was concentrated in the North West, the West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside¹⁸⁹. The distribution of RSL properties was concentrated in the Northwest, the Southeast, the West Midlands, the Northeast and Yorkshire & Humberside¹⁹⁰. Carter and el-Hassan suggest that RSLs were expected to take a substantial role in providing temporary accommodation but have 'been a relatively small player in the UK overall' in dispersal (2003:24). Graph 5 shows the

¹⁸⁷ Published by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and underpinned by a research project from Heriott-Watt University.

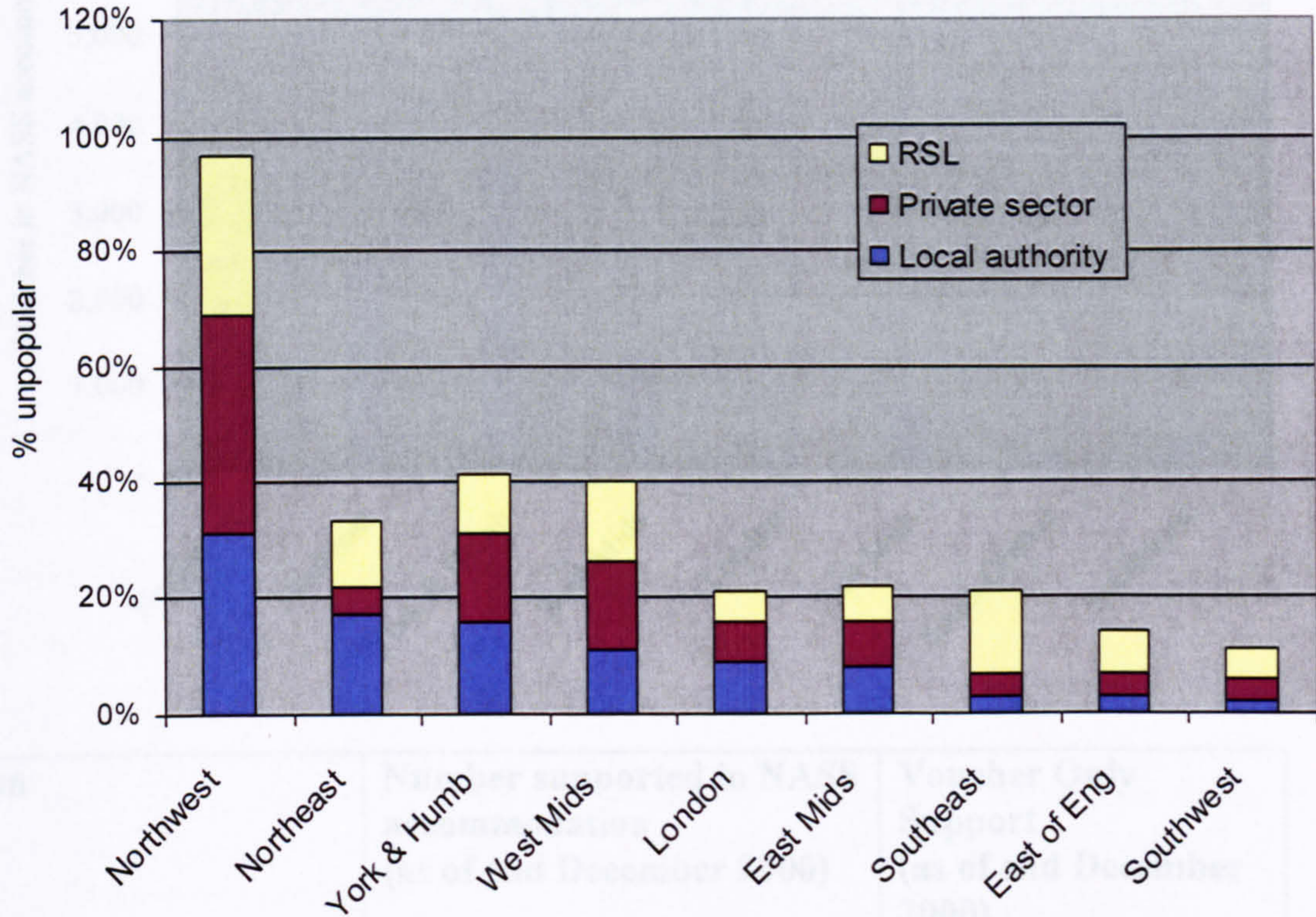
¹⁸⁸ 377,000 local authority dwellings in areas of low demand: North West (31%), the North East (17%), Yorkshire and Humberside (16%) and the West Midlands (11%) and the East Midlands (8%) and the Southwest (2%) accounting for just 10% of the unpopular local authority housing stock (DETR, 1999:3)

¹⁸⁹ 461,500 private sector properties were in the North West (38%), the West Midlands (15%) and Yorkshire and Humberside (15%), with the East Midland (8%) and Southwest (4%) accounting for 12% of low demand properties (DETR, 1999).

¹⁹⁰ 89,500 RSL properties in low demand were in the Northwest (28%), the Southeast (14%), the West Midlands (14%), the Northeast (11%) and Yorkshire & Humberside (10%). Low demand RSL properties in the East Midlands (6%) and the Southwest (5%) accounting for 11%.

distribution of local authority, private and RSL unpopular housing (see also Appendix XXIII for the overall concentrations of public, private and RSL tenure¹⁹¹).

Graph 5: Concentration of local authority, private and RSL unpopular housing



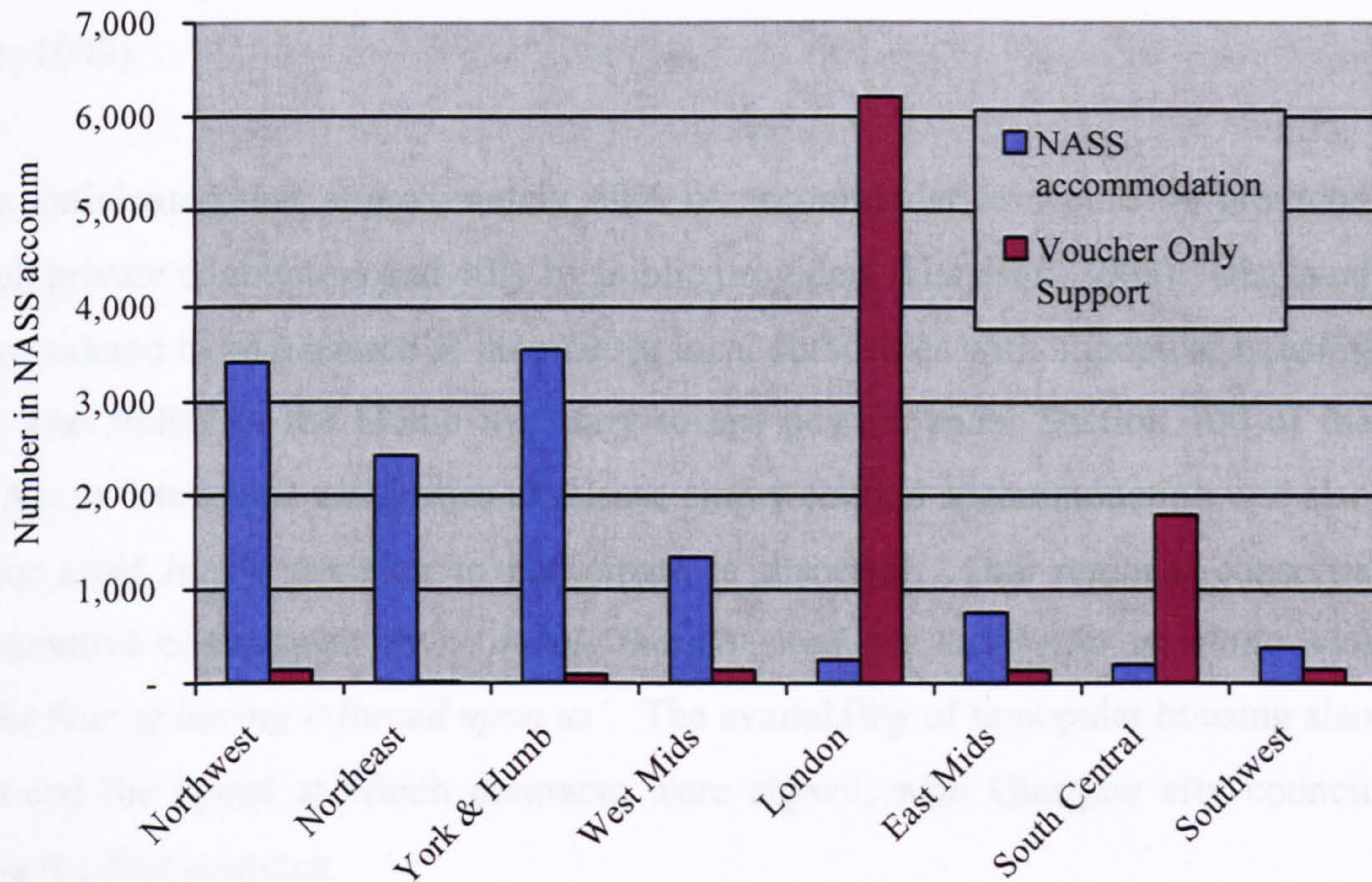
Source: DETR and SEU (1999)

Although a much smaller number than the 838,500 low demand public and private sector properties, the distribution of 12,320 asylum seekers by December 2000 reflects this pattern. Graph 6 shows this initial distribution of asylum seekers in Yorkshire & Humberside, the Northwest, the Northeast and the West Midlands. It also clearly illustrates how the asylum seekers opting for Voucher Only support (latterly SO support) and living in Greater London and South Central¹⁹² was just over one third of asylum seekers supported by NASS.

¹⁹¹ Whilst tenure shown by the 2001 Census is some months after dispersal began and does not show 'unpopular housing' it does provide an indication of national patterns of tenure.

¹⁹² South Central later referred to as South East.

Graph 6: Regional distribution of asylum seekers accommodated by NASS and Voucher Only support as of end December 2000¹⁹³



Region	Number supported in NASS accommodation (as of end December 2000)	Voucher Only Support (as of end December 2000)
Yorkshire & Humberside	3,550	90
North West	3,420	140
North East	2,420	20
West Midlands	1,350	140
East Midlands	760	140
Greater London	250	6,210
South West	380	150
South Central	200	1,330
East of England	0	470
Total	12,320	8,680

Source: Home Office, view at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html>

The similarities in regional distribution of dispersal asylum seekers and unpopular housing were a result of policy intervention. Lists of vacant properties were available in meetings between the Home Office and the Refugee Council before

¹⁹³ South Central encompasses East of England.

dispersal began¹⁹⁴. Team members of the PAT Report included the head of the pre-NASS team who subsequently became the first director of NASS and information being collected by DETR was also mentioned in the 'information document' (Home Office, 1999).

It was anticipated that approximately 60% of accommodation would be provided through private contractors and 40% by public providers (Harrison, 2003). Dispersal was considered to be a source of income for local authorities with unpopular housing stock. The ability of the Home Secretary to use powers under Section 100 of the 1999 Act to force local authorities to release empty council accommodation was also a factor cited in the decision to participate in dispersal. One regional consortia representative commented how: *'people thought, well, we had better go along with this, for fear of having it forced upon us'*. The availability of unpopular housing also influenced the speed at which contracts were signed, with Glasgow city council signing the first contract:

*'... because they had large amounts of housing. Tower blocks that they might otherwise consider demolishing if they hadn't had the contract with the Home Office. It brought in rent, council tax and revenue to the local authorities. It is like carrots and sticks.'*¹⁹⁵

The sticks referred to were the powers of the Home Secretary and the carrots the income to local authorities. Thus, a centrally devised policy to deter asylum seekers, i.e. sticks, became a policy of both carrots and sticks for regional consortia and local authorities when considered and implemented regionally. When originally allocated, there was public housing in Leicester that was 'hard-to-let' but this situation had changed over time alongside the housing market. In the Southwest of England the availability of public sector housing was low and the allocation of this was considered likely to create a *'political backlash'* if it were perceived that asylum seekers were being allocated housing that was *'already in great demand'*¹⁹⁶. Regional variations in the anticipated 60:40 private/public split meant that, for example, subsequent provision in Bristol was 100% private provision. Provision of

¹⁹⁴ B7; interview with former employee of Refugee Council, London, February 2005.

¹⁹⁵ M2; Interview with representative of regional consortia, January 2004.

¹⁹⁶ M1; interview with representative of regional consortia, September 2003.

accommodation to asylum seekers was clearly a political issue at both regional and local level.

Thus, formal dispersal emerged from 'informal dispersal' as well as the availability of low demand properties in the North of England and Midlands. As with the dispersal of Vietnamese refugees, contemporary dispersal was led by the availability of accommodation. However, contemporary dispersal was led by unpopular housing, procured through contracts with the public and private sectors and a small number of RSL properties. The basis of the contracts was provision of 'bed spaces' for 'singles' or 'families' and these were largely in shared accommodation which sometimes required sharing bedrooms.

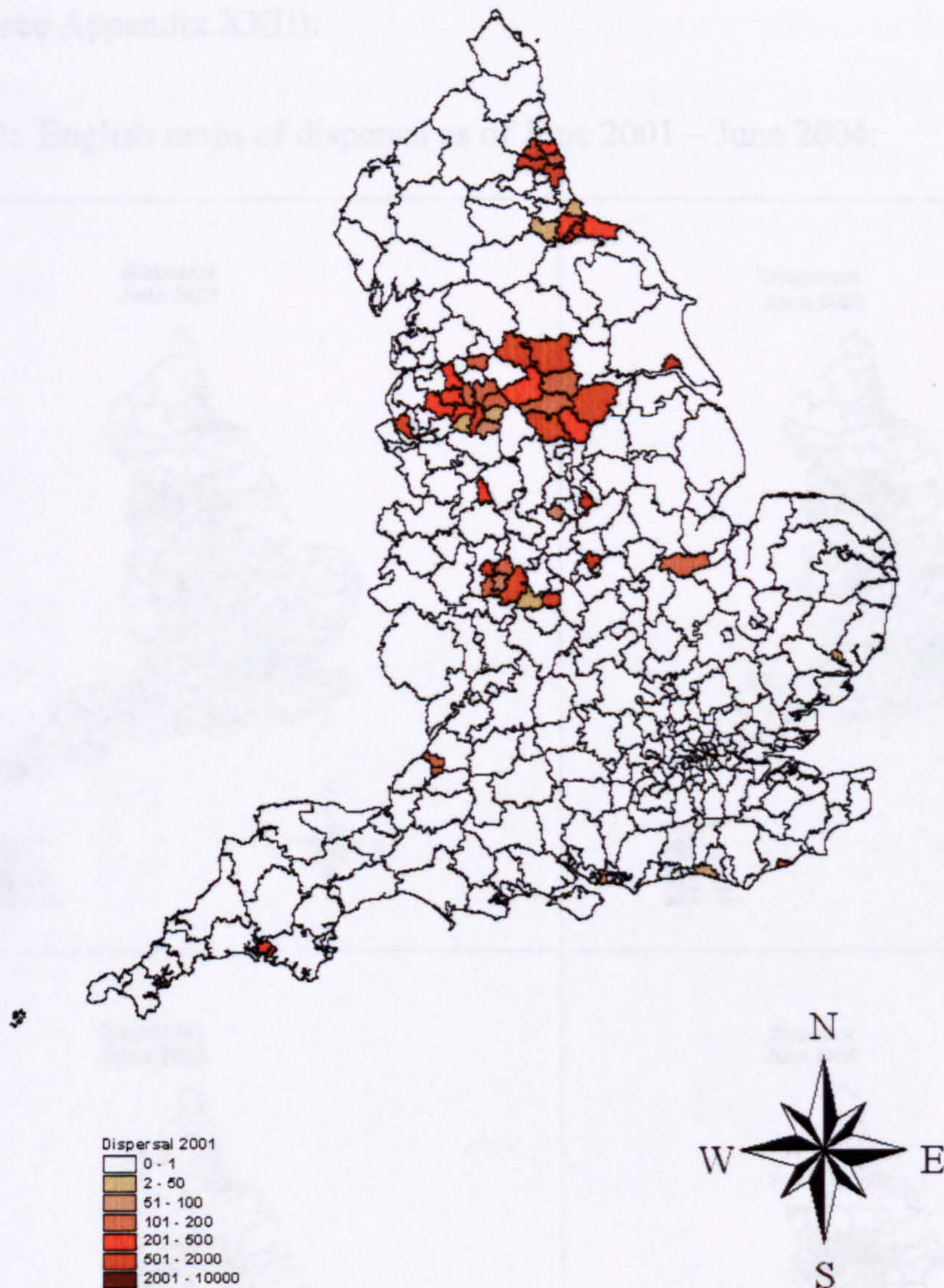
GEOGRAPHY OF DISPERSAL AND DEPRIVATION

Mapping Dispersal

By June 2001, dispersal in England had expanded in each region with 22,620 asylum seekers in NASS accommodation with the North West and Yorkshire & Humberside regions each supporting close to 6,000 asylum seekers. Both regions were involved in the Kosovan Humanitarian Evacuation programme and thus had recent experience to draw upon (Audit Commission, 2000:17). It was never the intention to evenly disperse asylum seekers to all districts across the country and by the early stages dispersal was uneven and had a marked urban-bias. As illustrated on Map 1, by June 2001 dispersal was to 54 local authority districts.

Map 1: English map of dispersal as of June 2001

Dispersal June 2001



Statistical Source: Home Office

By the end of June 2004 there were 37,070 asylum seekers in NASS accommodation

These concentrations of dispersal locations remained relatively fixed over time due to the contracts awarded¹⁹⁷. By June 2002 the number of locations had increased only slightly to 57 but by June 2003, 81 locations¹⁹⁸ were a part of the dispersal policy. Map 2 illustrates this by providing time series maps (for full page views of maps see Appendix XXII):

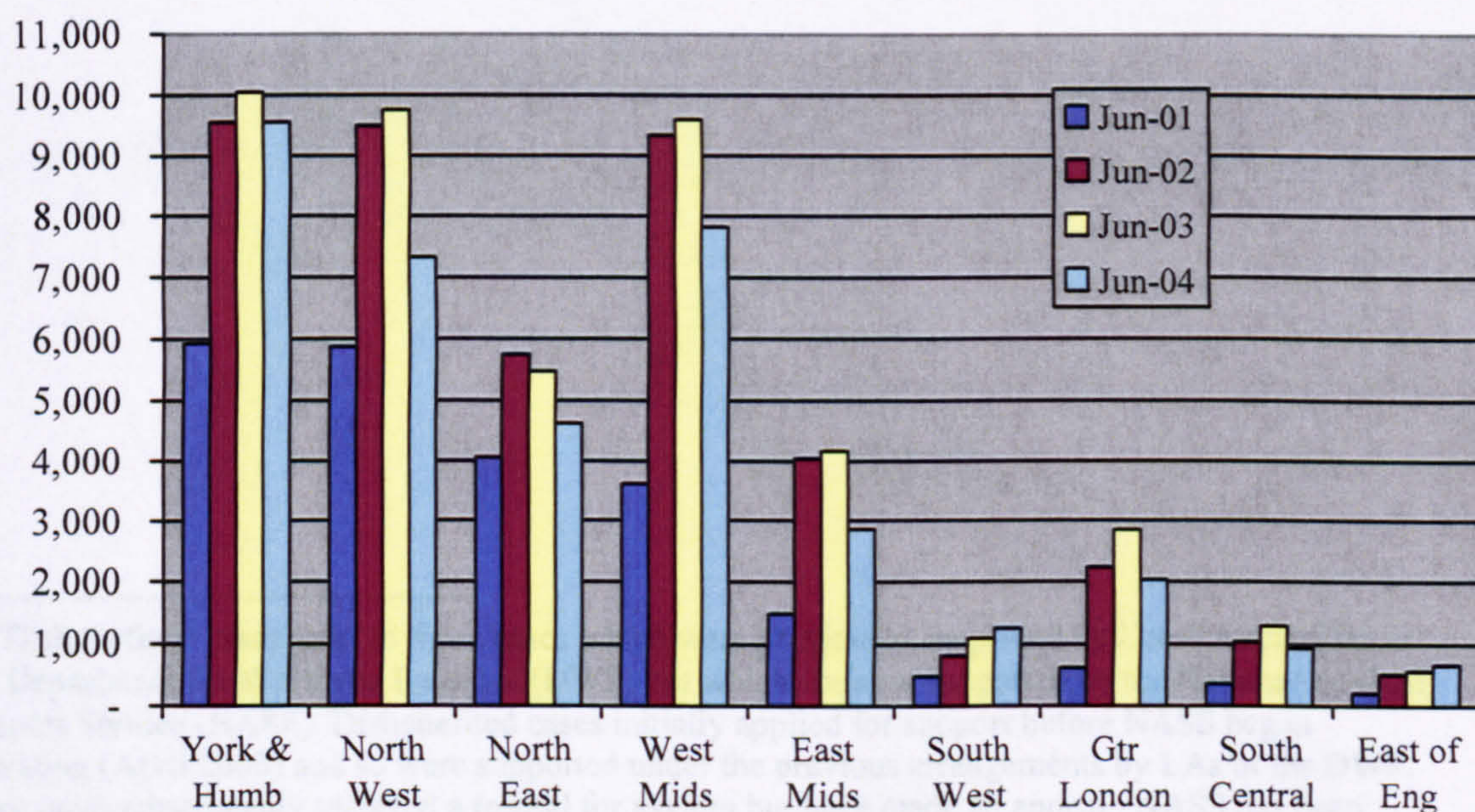
Map 2: English maps of dispersal as of June 2001 – June 2004:



¹⁹⁷ Contracts are generally awarded for periods between three to five years.

By the end of June 2004 there were 37,070 asylum seekers in NASS accommodation in 78 locations¹⁹⁹ in England and they remained concentrated in these same areas. The concentrations in Yorkshire & Humberside (27%), the West Midlands (22%), the Northwest (21%) and the Northeast (8%) accounted for more than three quarters of the total. The East Midlands (8%) and the Southwest (2%) accounted for around 10% of the total number. Graph 7 shows these concentrations as of end June 2001 to end June 2004, showing how the four main concentrations each increased numbers of asylum seekers until 2003/04 when numbers began to decline. This rise and fall also occurred in the East Midlands but numbers in the Southwest grew slowly over this time.

Graph 7: Regional distribution of asylum seekers in NASS accommodation as of end June 2001 – June 2004



¹⁹⁸ Including 12 Greater London dispersal locations.

¹⁹⁹ Including 10 Greater London dispersal locations.

Region	June 2001	June 2002	June 2003	June 2004
Yorkshire & Humberside	5,930	9,560	10,055	9,555
North West	5,870	9,500	9,755	7,325
North East	4,060	5,750	5,475	4,620
West Midlands	3,610	9,340	9,600	7,820
East Midlands	1,490	4,054	4,165	2,850
Greater London	620	2,230	2,845	2,035
South West	480	815	1,095	1,255
South Central	360	1,040	1,290	940
East of England	210	520	570	670
Total	22,620*	42,805*	44,850*	37,070*

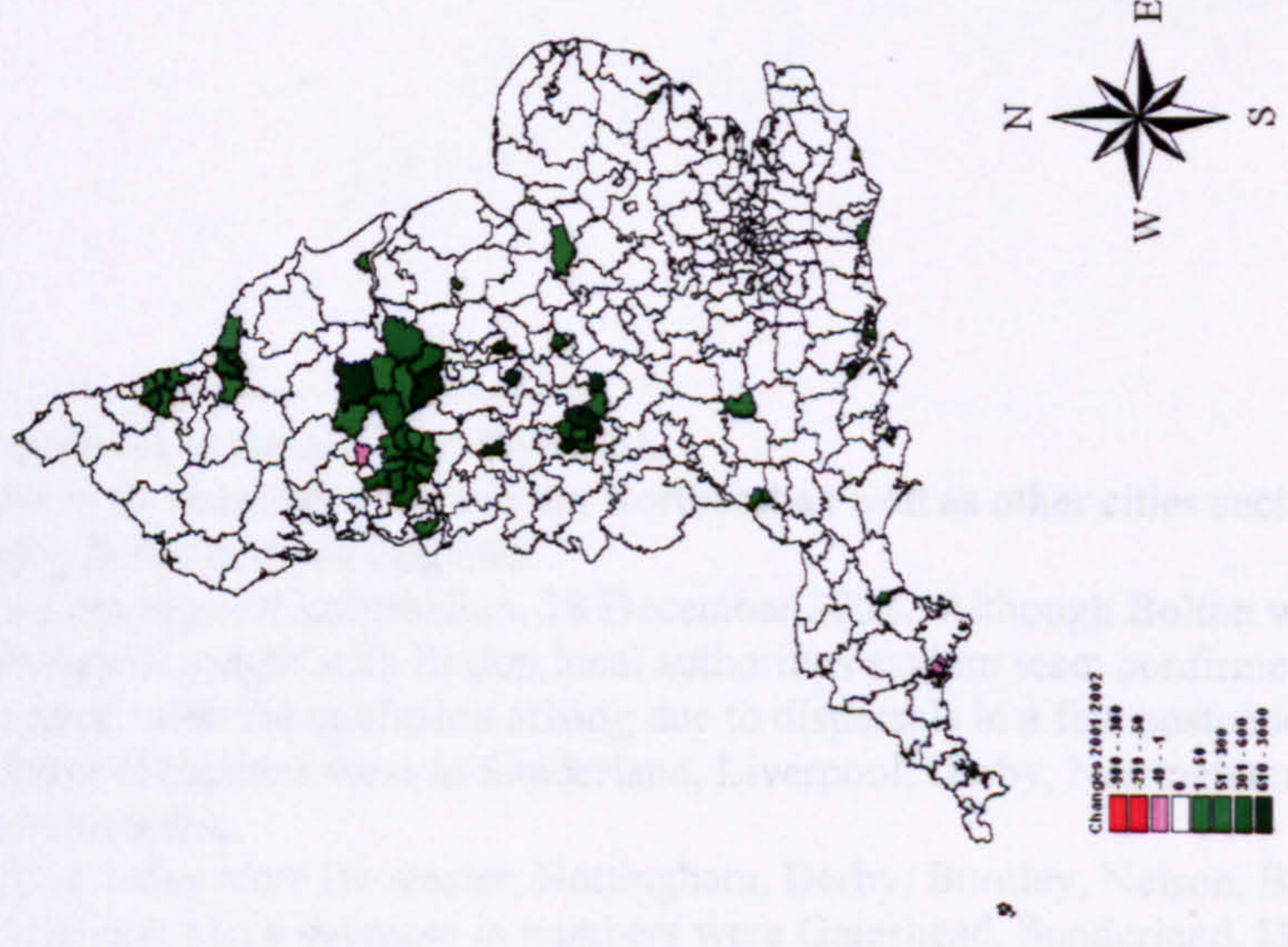
* total includes 'disbenefited cases'²⁰⁰ (Source: Home Office²⁰¹)

The changes between each of these 12 month periods are more clearly shown in Map 3 in the time series maps (see Appendix XXII for full page view):

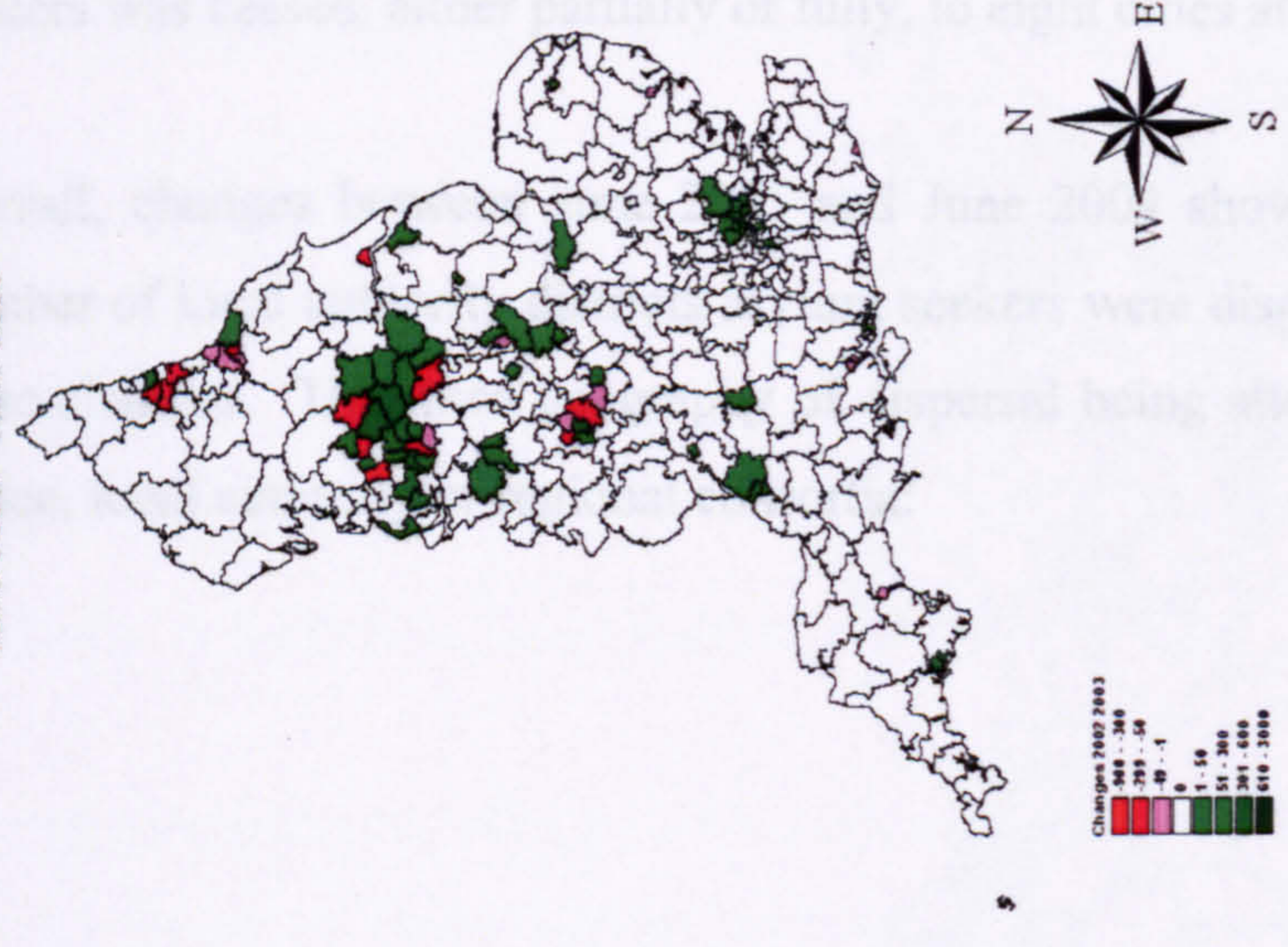
²⁰⁰ 'Disbenefited' cases refer to those cases which were previously supported by Local Authorities or the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) but which are now supported by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS). Disbenefited cases initially applied for support before NASS began operating (April 2000) and so were supported under the previous arrangements by LAs or the DWP. They have subsequently received a refusal for asylum but have made an appeal. NASS has been responsible for supporting appeal cases since September 2000. The appeal cases are allowed to stay in their previous accommodation. This means they will not all be in the cluster areas to which NASS now disperses asylum seekers requiring accommodation. The disbenefited cases can be distributed widely through each region.

²⁰¹ Figures for June 2001 provided by email from Home Office.

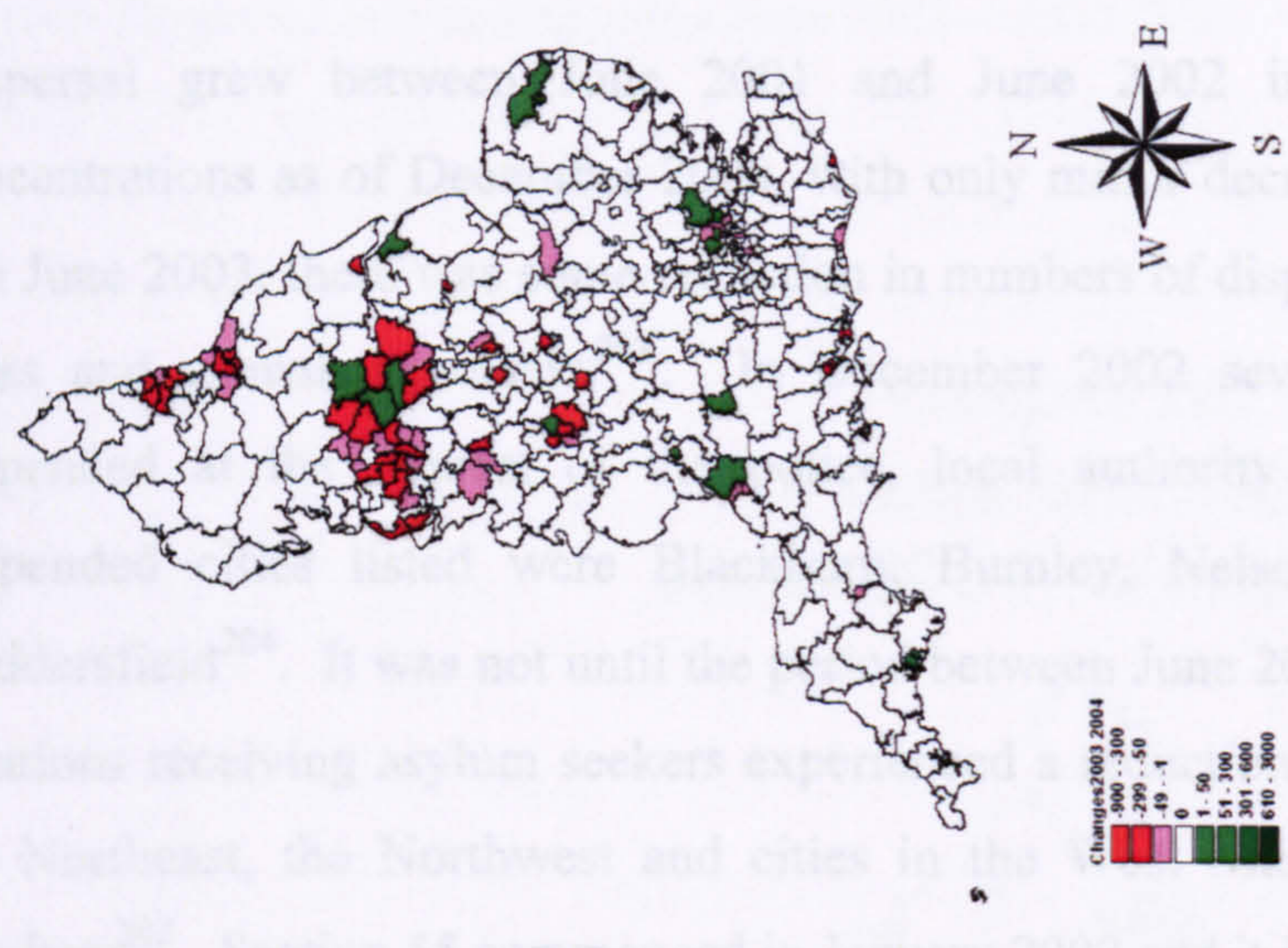
Dispersal
Losses and Gains
June 2001 - June 2002



Dispersal
Losses and Gains
June 2002 - June 2003



Dispersal
Losses and Gains
June 2003 - June 2004



Dispersal grew between June 2001 and June 2002 in areas around the original concentrations as of December 2000, with only minor decreases²⁰². Between June 2002 and June 2003, there was some reduction in numbers of dispersed asylum seekers in some areas and growth in others²⁰³. In December 2002 several dispersal locations were suspended at the request of the police, local authority or regional consortia. The suspended cities listed were Blackburn, Burnley, Nelson, parts of Manchester and Huddersfield²⁰⁴. It was not until the period between June 2003 and June 2004 that several locations receiving asylum seekers experienced a reduction in numbers. As can be seen, the Northeast, the Northwest and cities in the West Midlands all saw a reduction in numbers²⁰⁵. Section 55 commenced in January 2003 and it is likely that this reduction was partly a result of this. Shortly after this period in November 2004, dispersal of asylum seekers was ceased, either partially or fully, to eight cities at the request of the police²⁰⁶.

Overall, changes between June 2001 and June 2004 show an overall increase²⁰⁷ in the number of local authority districts asylum seekers were dispersed to and Map 4 illustrates these changes. The fixed geography of dispersal being altered only at the request of the police, local authority or regional consortia:

²⁰² Decreases in Burnley and Plymouth.

²⁰³ The main reductions were in the Northeast as well as other cities such as Bradford, Manchester and Burnley in the north of England.

²⁰⁴ Asylum support information, 18 December 2002. Although Bolton was also listed as a suspended city, confirmation sought with Bolton local authorities asylum team confirmed that dispersals were not suspended, with the confusion arising due to dispersals in a few postcode areas in Bolton being stopped.

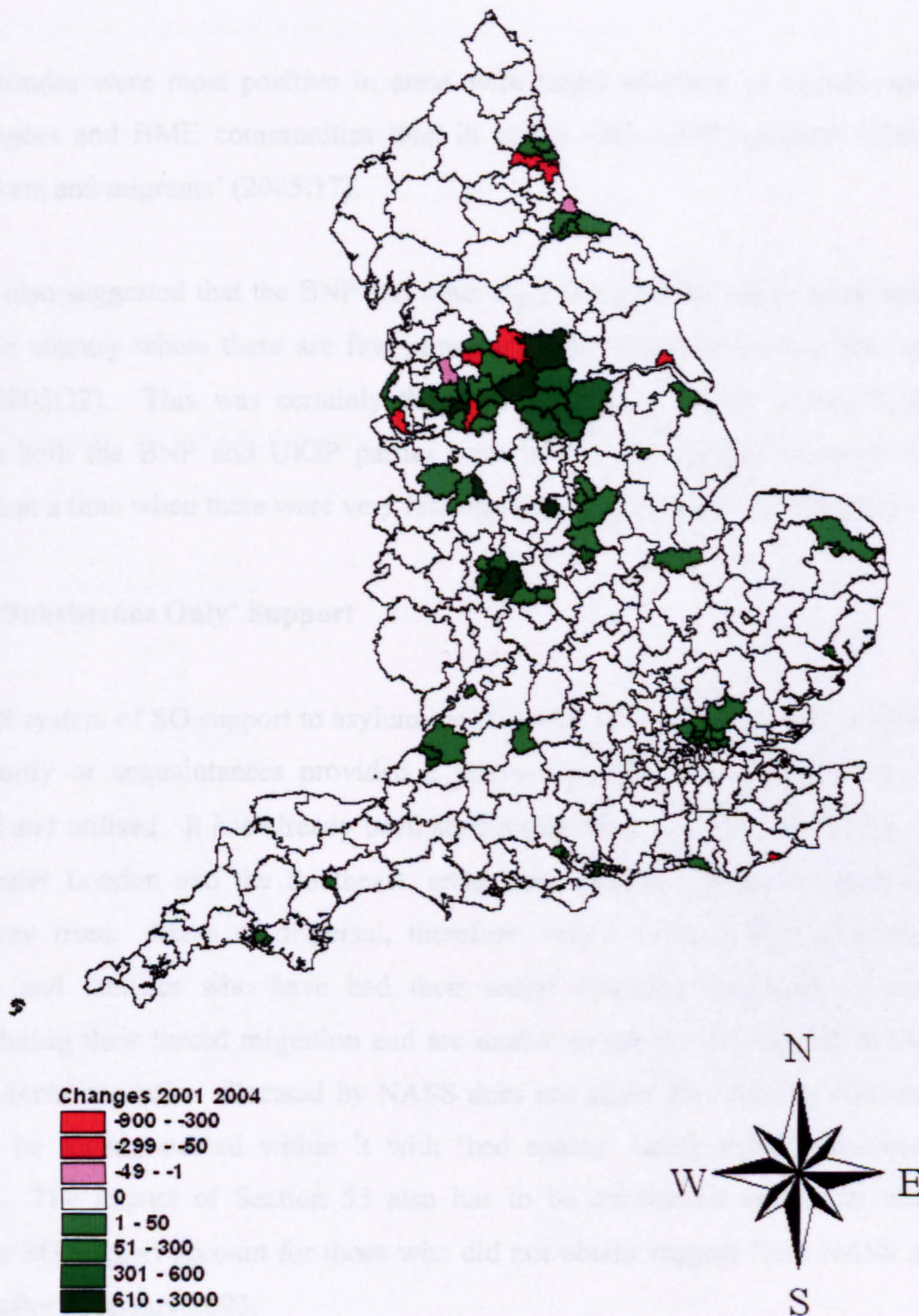
²⁰⁵ Larger reductions were in Sunderland, Liverpool, Derby, Nottingham, Coventry, Birmingham and Wolverhampton.

²⁰⁶ These cities were Doncaster, Nottingham, Derby, Burnley, Nelson, Bootle, Manchester and Swansea.

²⁰⁷ Cities that had a decrease in numbers were Gateshead, Sunderland, Hartlepool, Bradford, Hull, Blackburn, Burnley, Manchester, Liverpool and Hastings.

Map 4: Dispersal losses and gains June 2001 – June 2004

Dispersal Losses and Gains June 2001 - June 2004



Mohan suggests that there has been a welcome move from the mapping of minorities to 'charting the geographies of racism' by geographers since the 1960s (1999:128). Including suspended dispersal locations in such geographies of racism would require substantial further investigation as the relationship between racism and dispersal of asylum seekers is not straightforward. For example, a report by the IPPR found that concern about asylum seekers was often in areas where there were 'few or no asylum seekers' (2005:1) and that:

'Attitudes were most positive in areas with larger numbers of asylum seekers, refugees and BME communities than in places with small numbers of asylum seekers and migrants' (2005:17).

The report also suggested that the BNP and other right-wing parties were 'more active in areas of the country where there are few minority ethnic communities and few asylum seekers' (2005:22). This was certainly the case in Lincoln, where during fieldwork leaflets for both the BNP and UKIP parties were posted through the letterbox of one interviewee at a time when there were very few dispersed asylum seekers in the city.

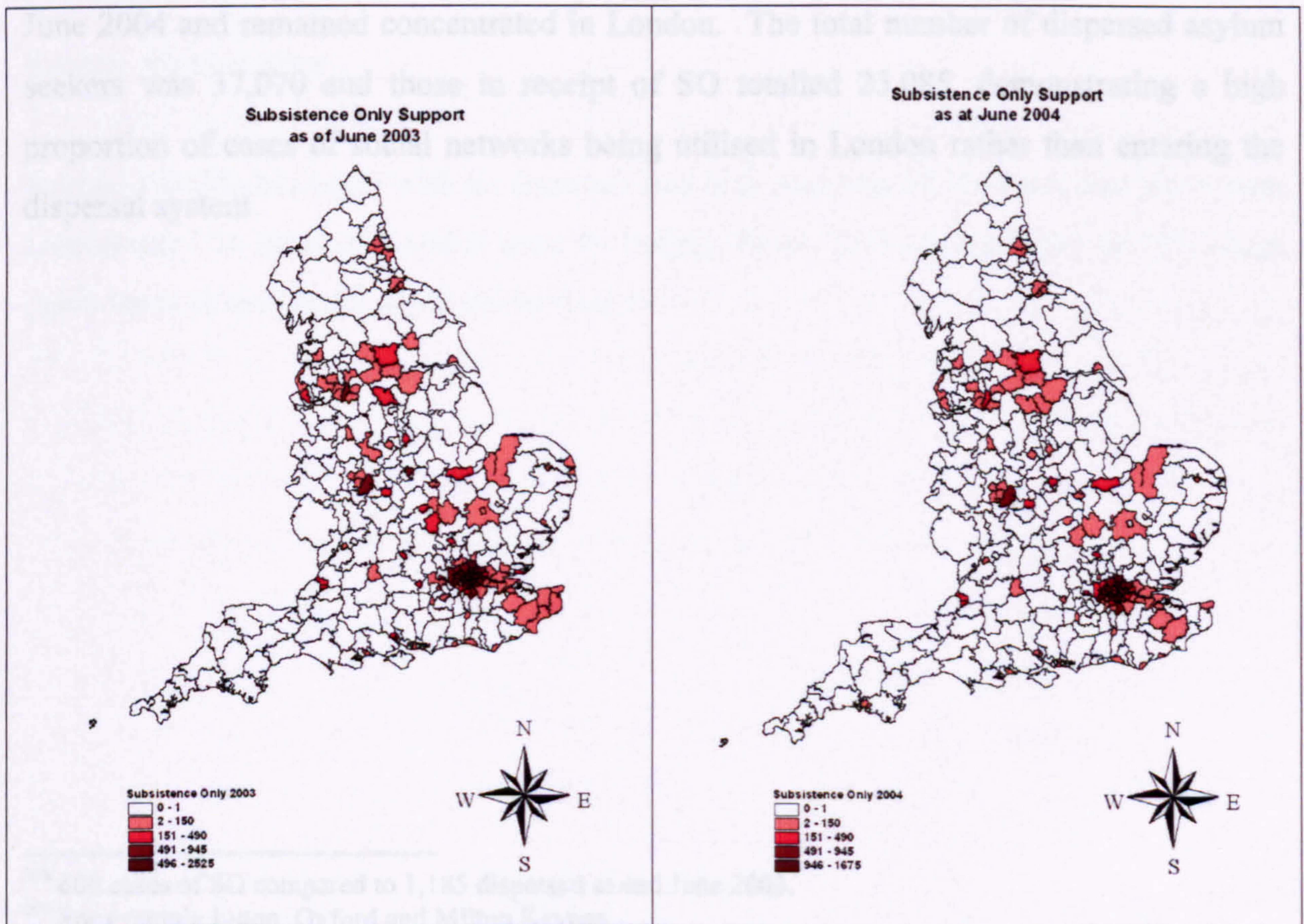
Mapping 'Subsistence Only' Support

The parallel system of SO support to asylum seekers who are able and willing to live with friends, family or acquaintances provided a proxy-indicator of social networks being maintained and utilised. It has already been shown that these networks are largely based within Greater London and the Southeast, areas that dispersal aimed to move asylum seekers away from. Maps of dispersal, therefore, may contain a high proportion of individuals and families who have had their social networks destroyed or severely disrupted during their forced migration and are unable to opt for SO support in the first instance. Accommodation allocated by NASS does not allow for relatives claiming SO support to be accommodated within it with 'bed spaces' being strictly allocated and monitored. The impact of Section 55 also has to be considered as neither maps of dispersal or SO support account for those who did not obtain support from NASS during the period after 8 January 2003.

The element of ‘choice’ – a word used cautiously here given the limitations of the NASS system – in opting for SO support shows a different pattern of settlement without the ‘institutional redistribution’ (Thielemann, 2003:228) of the NASS system of dispersal. The concentration of ethnic minorities in housing patterns has been explained in terms of ‘choices’ and ‘constraints’. Studies emphasising ‘choice’ focus on cultural preferences, arguing that minorities prefer to live within concentrations of their own groups for social and linguistic support. Studies focusing on ‘constraints’ surround the economic position of the individual and notions of institutionalised racism, arguing that minorities have been prevented from moving outside these areas because of, for example, discriminatory practices in the wider processes of allocation of accommodation (Lakey, 1997). This distinction resonates with the MUD and RED frameworks of social exclusion.

Maps of SO support as at end June 2003 and June 2004 were created (full page versions Appendix XXII) and when placed side by side the two maps show a consistent pattern:

Map 5: Subsistence Only support as of June 2003 and 2004:



The greatest incidence of SO support occurred in larger cities. For example, in Leicester virtually a third of the asylum seekers supported by NASS were SO cases²⁰⁸. There were also a number of larger cities in England that were not dispersal points but had cases of SO support²⁰⁹. If June 2003 and June 2004 are compared in detail, some new cases of SO support appear in a few cities²¹⁰ and cities with small numbers of SO²¹¹ are lost. In the Southwest the number of SO cases in Gloucester (50) is more than the number of dispersal cases (40) as of June 2003. In the East Midlands there was no incidence of SO in Lincoln, either in 2003 or 2004. In these terms, SO support also provides a proxy-indicator for where asylum seekers feel comfortable in the UK. The lack of a SO presence of asylum seekers was largely in areas without a history of hosting BME communities²¹². The issue of visibility, therefore, clearly affects the choices of locations asylum seekers made if left to disperse themselves.

The overriding characteristic of SO support was the concentration in Greater London, the Southeast and East of England. Greater London hosted the highest proportion of SO cases – 84% as of June 2003²¹³. As shown in Graph 8, it was still a main source of support as of June 2004 and remained concentrated in London. The total number of dispersed asylum seekers was 37,070 and those in receipt of SO totalled 25,085, demonstrating a high proportion of cases of social networks being utilised in London rather than entering the dispersal system.

²⁰⁸ 600 cases of SO compared to 1,185 dispersed at end June 2003.

²⁰⁹ For example Luton, Oxford and Milton Keynes.

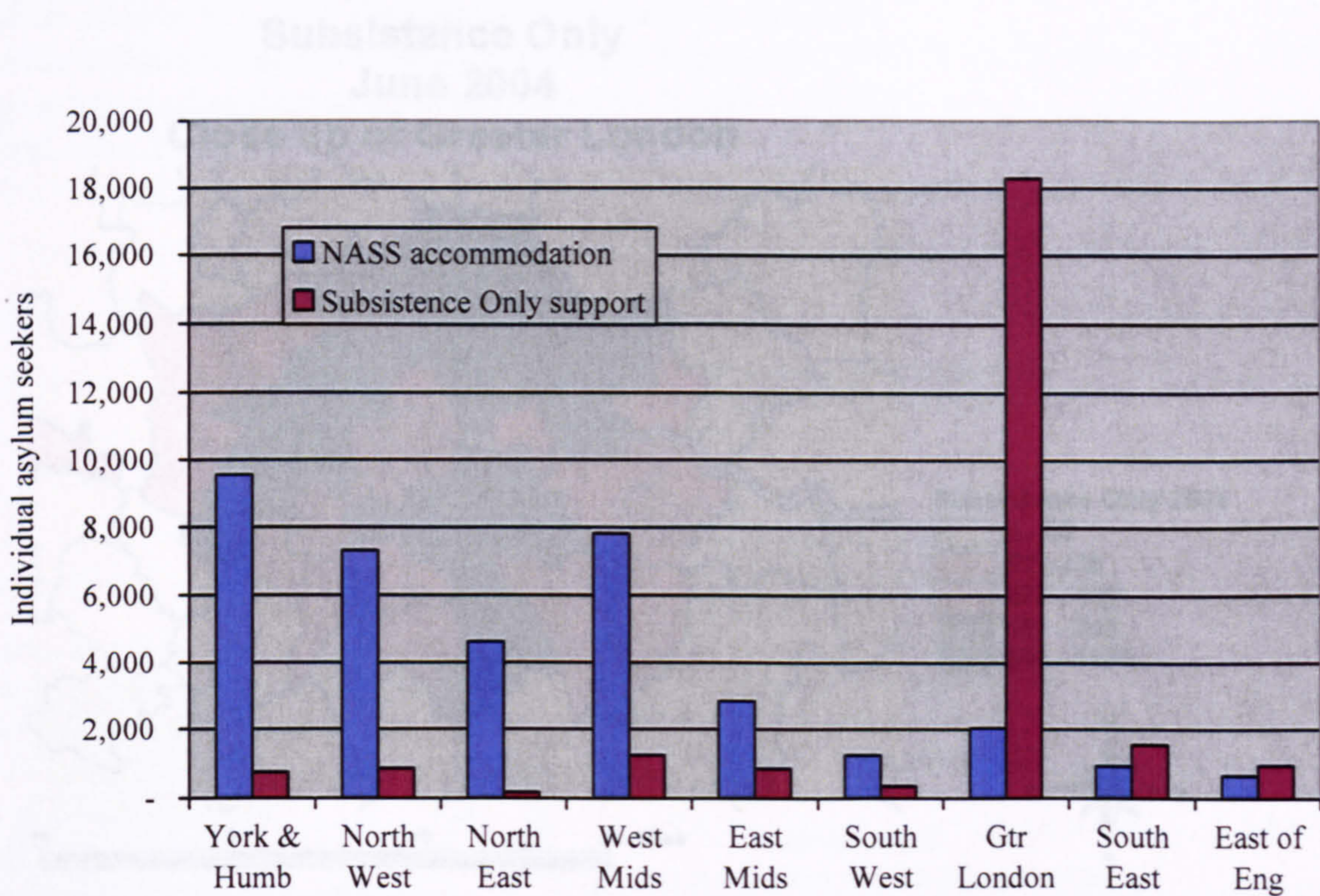
²¹⁰ Oldham, Pendle, Rotherham, Dudley, Plymouth

²¹¹ For example Wigan and York.

²¹² For example, Lincoln, Hartlepool, Redcar and Cleveland.

²¹³ Of a total of 27,350 in receipt of SO support.

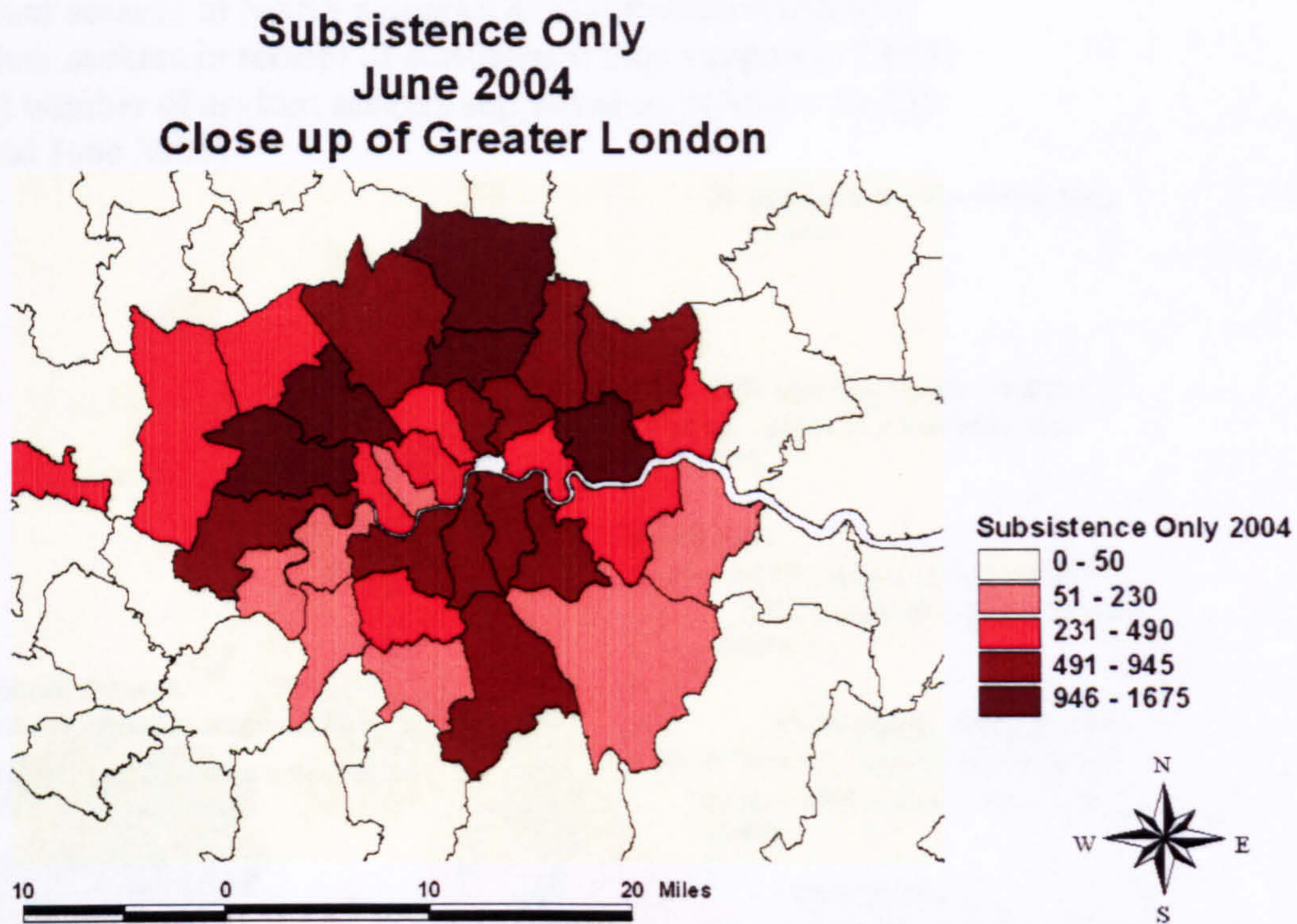
Graph 8: Regional distribution of asylum seekers in NASS accommodation and SO support as at end June 2004



Source: Home Office

Several London boroughs with no dispersal had high numbers of SO cases and these were concentrated in areas of London such as Ealing, Brent, Enfield, Haringey and Newham (each listed in the top 88 deprived districts):

Map 6: Subsistence Only support in Greater London as of June 2004

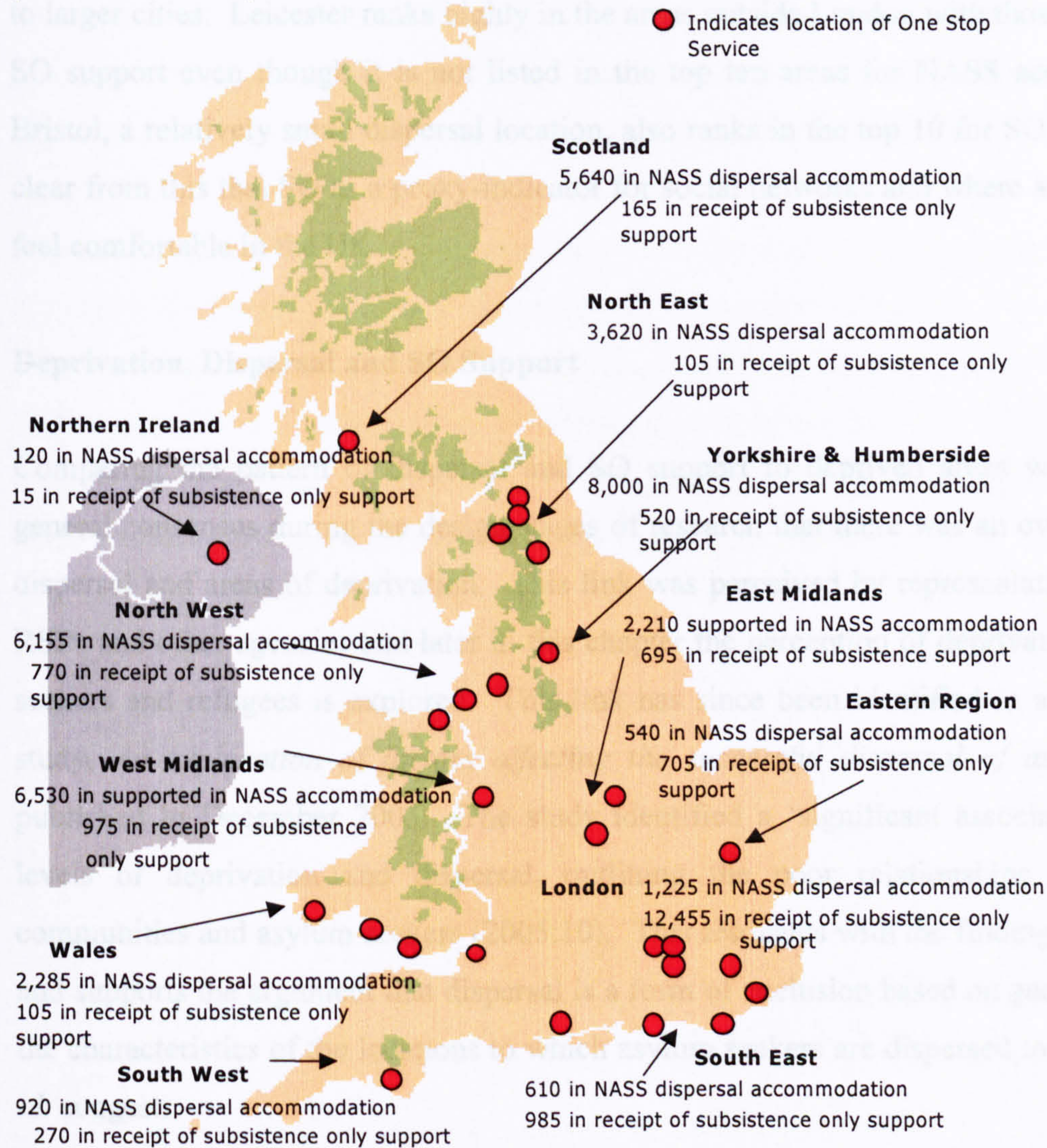


The Inter Agency Partnership (IAP) publishes a monthly newsletter giving details of NASS policy bulletins, changes to regulations and other news relevant to the ICT and, as shown below, a regional map of dispersal, illustrating the number of asylum seekers in NASS accommodation and the number of asylum seekers in receipt of SO support. This map illustrates distribution of asylum seekers by region and suggests a much more even distribution of asylum seekers across the country. It is shown here to illustrate the location of One Stop Services²¹⁴ and the listed cities outside London with the greatest number of SO support one year on from the maps generated for this study:

²¹⁴ One Stop Services are not located in every dispersal location.

Map 7: IAP map of dispersal and SO support as of June 2005

Asylum seekers in NASS dispersal accommodation (36,855)
 Asylum seekers in receipt of subsistence only support (17,665)
 Total number of asylum seekers supported by NASS – 54,520
 (at end June 2005)



10 areas with most asylum seekers receiving accommodation and subsistence		10 areas with most asylum seekers receiving subsistence only		10 areas with most asylum seekers receiving subsistence only (excluding London)	
Glasgow	5,640	Newham	1,165	Birmingham	540
Gtr Manchester	3,585	Haringey	1,130	Gtr Manchester	365
Leeds	1,980	Ealing	850	Leicester	255
Birmingham	1,610	Brent	750	Slough	190
Newcastle	1,220	Enfield	750	Luton	165
Sheffield	1,220	Hackney	605	Coventry	165
Nottingham	1,030	Waltham Forest	590	Leeds	165
Cardiff	980	Lambeth	545	Bristol	145
Swansea	895	Birmingham	540	Liverpool	110
Liverpool	885	Southwark	535	Nottingham	105

Source: IAP News, Refugee Council, August 2005, No.54

This map includes Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It shows how the greatest numbers of asylum seekers accommodated by NASS were in Glasgow but this was not reflected in the number of asylum seekers receiving SO support outside London²¹⁵. These lists of locations corroborate how the majority of SO support was to areas in London and to larger cities. Leicester ranks highly in the areas outside London with those in receipt of SO support even though it is not listed in the top ten areas for NASS accommodation. Bristol, a relatively small dispersal location, also ranks in the top 10 for SO support. It is clear from this that SO as a proxy-indicator for social networks and where asylum seekers feel comfortable in the UK.

Deprivation, Dispersal and SO Support

Comparing the pattern of dispersal and SO support to deprived areas was a result of general consensus during the design stages of research that there was an overlap between dispersal and areas of deprivation. This link was perceived by representatives of RCOs, RSPs and other agencies and later in this chapter the perception of deprivation by asylum seekers and refugees is explored. This link has since been identified in a Home Office study, *An exploration of factors affecting the successful dispersal of asylum seekers*, published in December 2005. The study identified a 'significant association' between levels of deprivation and dispersal, outlining the poor relationships between host communities and asylum seekers (2005:10). This resonates with the findings of this study and supports the argument that dispersal is a form of exclusion based on geography due to the characteristics of the locations to which asylum seekers are dispersed to. As Zetter *et al.* suggest:

'Arguably, an inevitable outcome of a procurement based on cost minimisation for accommodation contracts, is the sourcing of cheap accommodation in areas of deprivation and exclusion.' (2002:24).

In a report by the National Audit Office (NAO) in 2005²¹⁶, these financial costs of dispersal were examined. In the financial year 2003-04, contracts with 23 accommodation

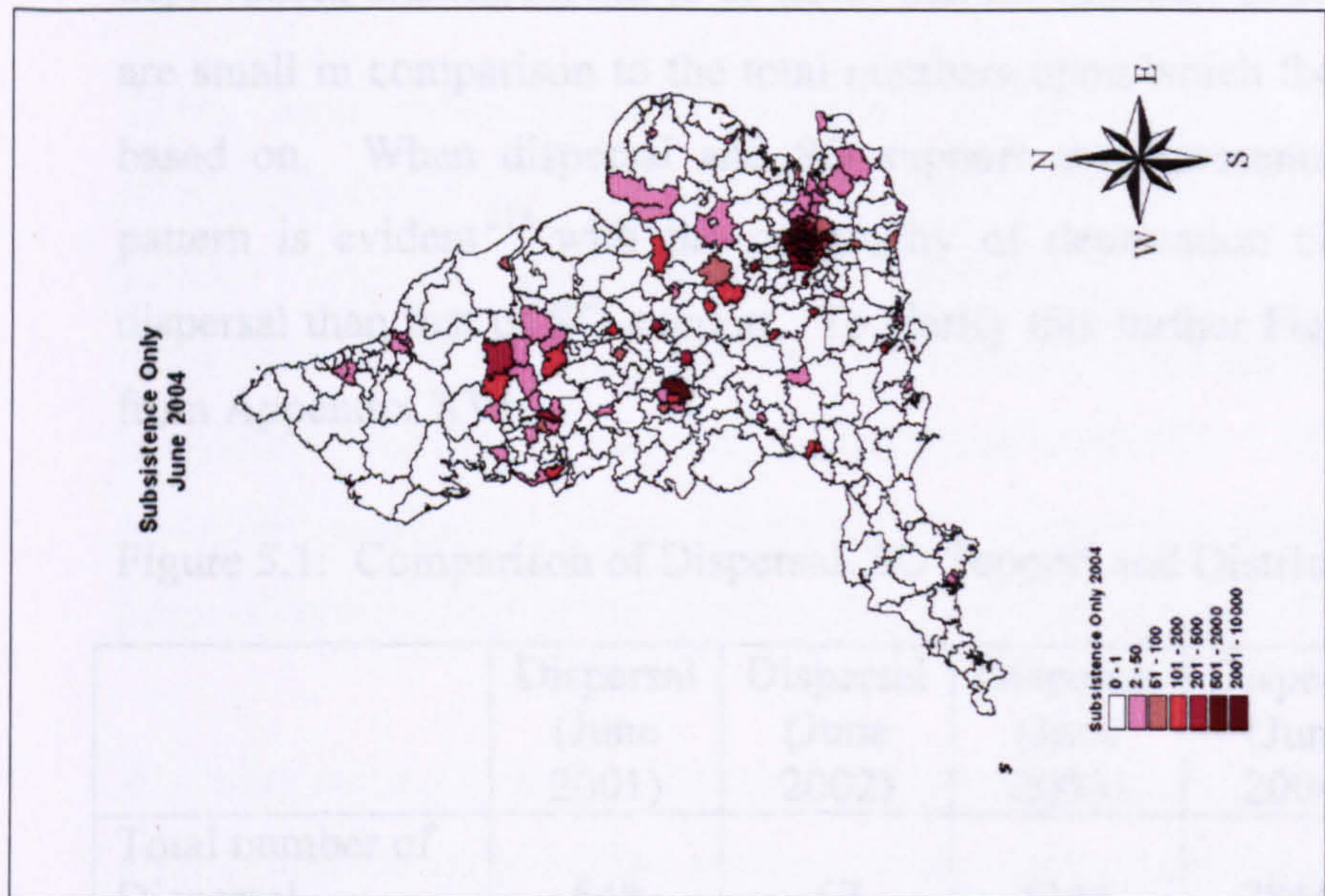
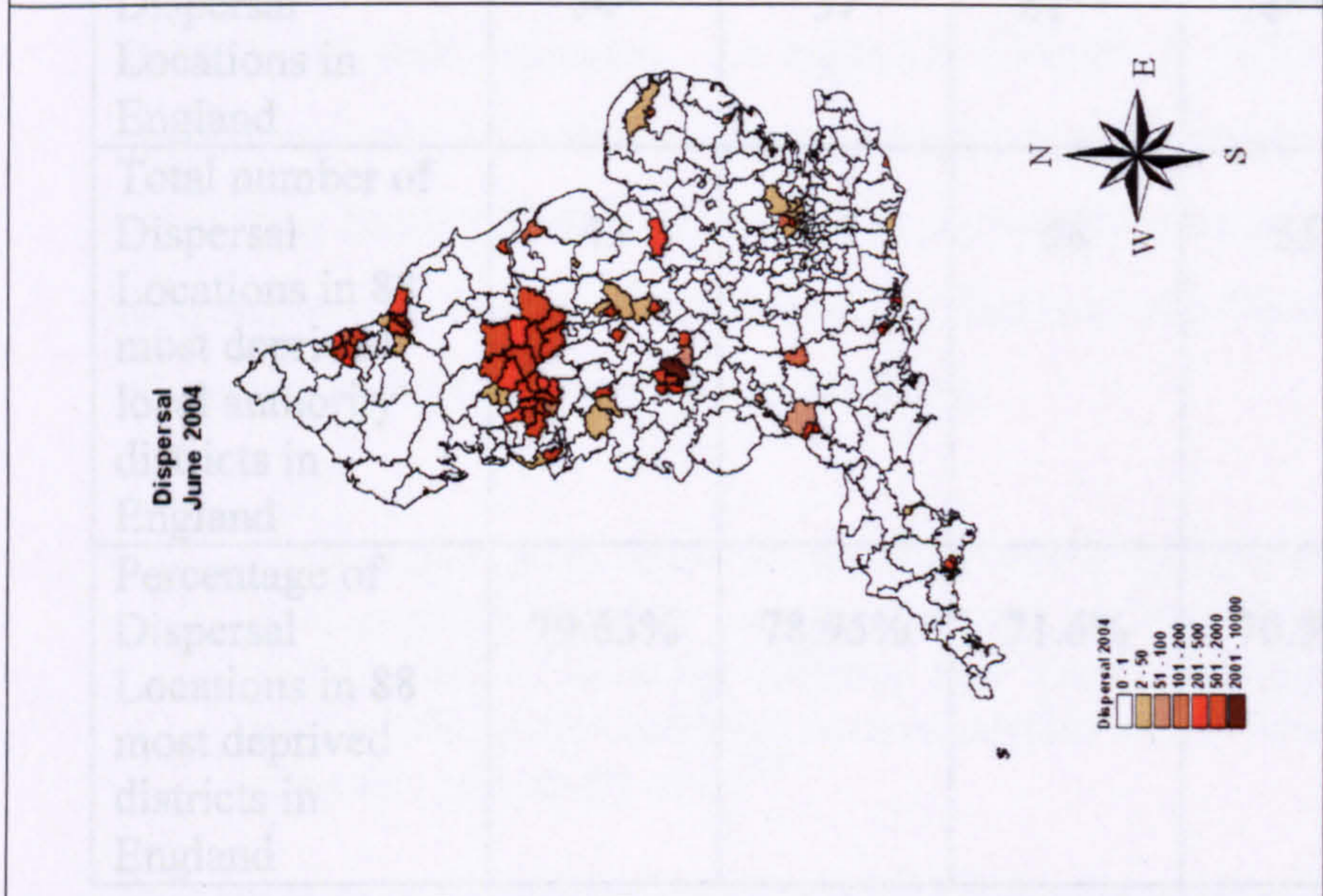
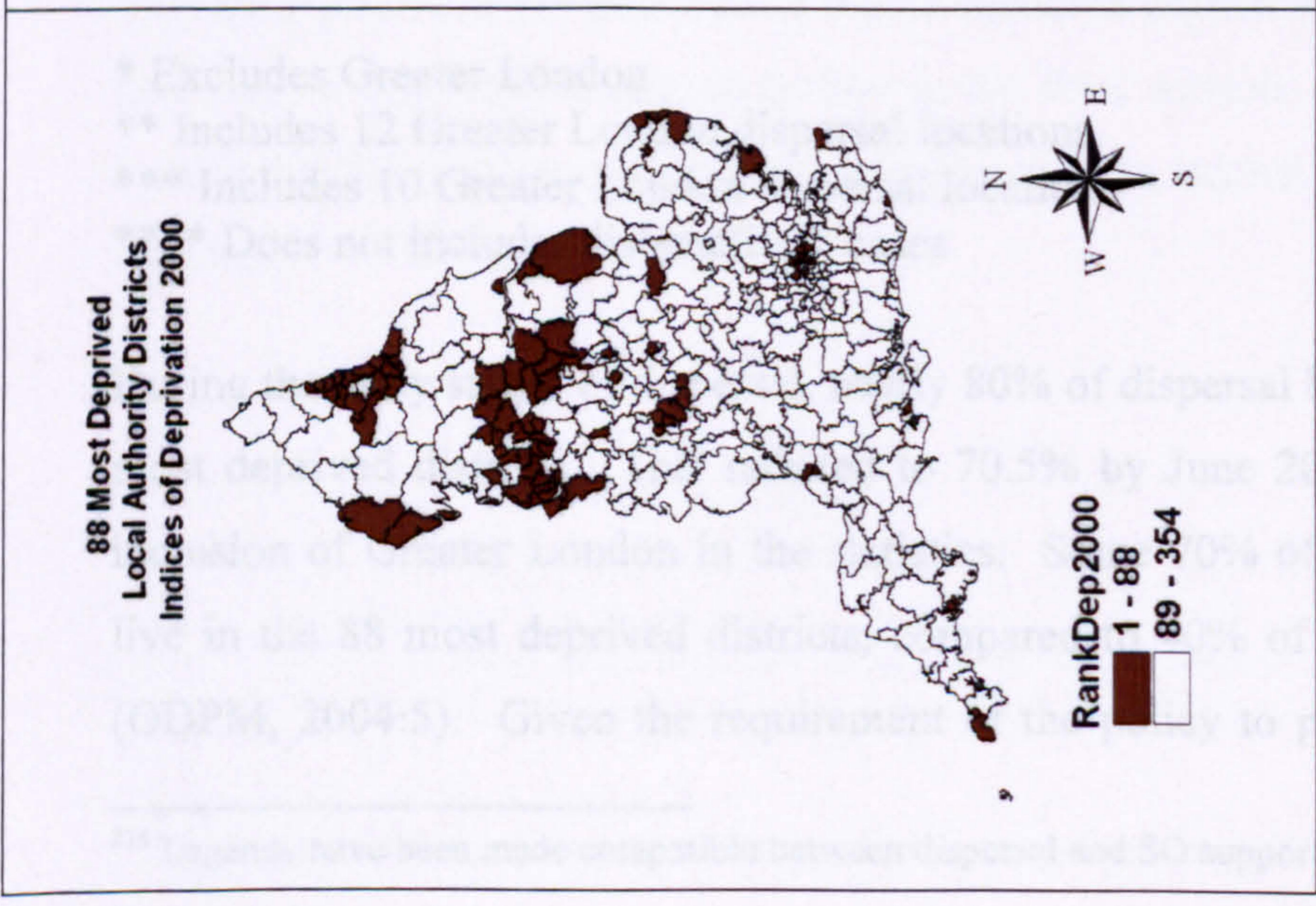
²¹⁵ The reputation of Glasgow and Hull amongst asylum seekers was particularly bad in terms of threats of racist attacks. Several asylum seekers mentioned these particular cities during interviews. Liverpool was also often held up as an area with particularly bad accommodation.

²¹⁶ *National Asylum Support Service: the provision of accommodation for asylum seekers*, published July 2005.

providers totalled £342.7 million. The prices NASS had paid for accommodation were considered to be 'not cost effective' (2005:19)²¹⁷ by the NAO. It was found that costs for private sector accommodation were generally close to market rates whereas all public sector prices were above market rates. Comparing the costs to market rates did not incorporate all the services contained within the contracts such as signposting to legal advisors but the report suggested that 'considerable savings could be made' (2005:23) based on the disparity between cost and market rate alone.

For this study, the 88 most deprived local authority districts in England were listed in Appendix XVI and incidence of dispersal and SO support indicated. These districts are often referred to in the literature on neighbourhood renewal and regeneration as per the SEU report *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: National Strategy and Action Plan* (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001:13). Map 8 shows the 88 most deprived districts in 2000 laid alongside dispersal and SO support as of June 2004:

²¹⁷ For example the cost of providing accommodation for a single person in Leicester ranged between £90 and £160 per week. In Bristol this figure was £80 to £110 (£80 was the lowest cost of accommodation for all regions). For a family of four the costs were £240 to £390 in Leicester and £250 to £460 in Bristol (£460 was the highest cost for all regions).



Sources: Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Indices of Deprivation 2000; Home Office

These maps illustrate the similar geographical pattern between dispersal and deprivation, although it has to be noted that the numbers of asylum seekers dispersed are small in comparison to the total numbers upon which the rank of deprivation is based on. When dispersal and SO support are represented visually, a different pattern is evident²¹⁸ with the geography of deprivation closer to the pattern of dispersal than that of SO support. To clarify this further Figure 10 shows the totals from Appendix XVI:

Figure 5.1: Comparison of Dispersal, SO Support and District Level Deprivation

	Dispersal (June 2001)	Dispersal (June 2002)	Dispersal (June 2003)	Dispersal (June 2004)	SO (June 2003)	SO (June 2004)
Total number of Dispersal Locations in England	54*	57	81**	78***	111****	98
Total number of Dispersal Locations in 88 most deprived local authority districts in England	43	45	58	55	57	57
Percentage of Dispersal Locations in 88 most deprived districts in England	79.63%	78.95%	71.6%	70.5%	51.35%	58.16%

* Excludes Greater London

** Includes 12 Greater London dispersal locations

*** Includes 10 Greater London dispersal locations

**** Does not include 'disbenefited' cases

During the early stages of dispersal, nearly 80% of dispersal locations were in the 88 most deprived districts. This reduced to 70.5% by June 2004 due, in part, to the inclusion of Greater London in the statistics. Some 70% of all BME communities live in the 88 most deprived districts, compared to 40% of the general population (ODPM, 2004:5). Given the requirement of the policy to place asylum seekers in

²¹⁸ Legends have been made compatible between dispersal and SO support.

multicultural areas it was not surprising that the dispersal policy resulted in a high proportion of the areas being in these same multiply deprived districts.

There were more locations receiving asylum seekers under the SO support arrangement than the number of dispersal locations. This suggests that asylum seekers disperse themselves more effectively than efforts at institutional redistribution. Whilst a number of these locations were also in deprived districts, the proportion was lower (50-60% rather than 70-80%). The element of choice, however, resulted in more distribution than through dispersal and showed that, proportionately, half of the areas chosen were not in the top 88 deprived areas.

Avoiding adding to the problems of social exclusion and creating racial tensions was a stated aim of dispersal but asylum seekers were placed in areas already designated as areas of social exclusion. As argued in *Chapter 4*, separating them further from mainstream support without adequate representation meant that asylum seekers in these areas became visible targets for exclusion. This was a commonly held view by representatives of agencies implementing dispersal at a local level and in the words of one representative of a regional consortia:

*'It was one of the unfortunate things that it was the more deprived areas that had available public sector housing. Councils saw that as an ideal opportunity of actually utilizing that vacant housing, getting some income and whole streets suddenly became asylum seeker areas. You are half way to disaster, you really are.'*²¹⁹

This perception that the presence of whole streets of asylum seekers equated to being half way to disaster is explored further in the final section of this chapter once the local level link between deprivation and dispersal in Bristol and Leicester has been explored.

²¹⁹ M1; interview with representative of regional consortia, September 2003.

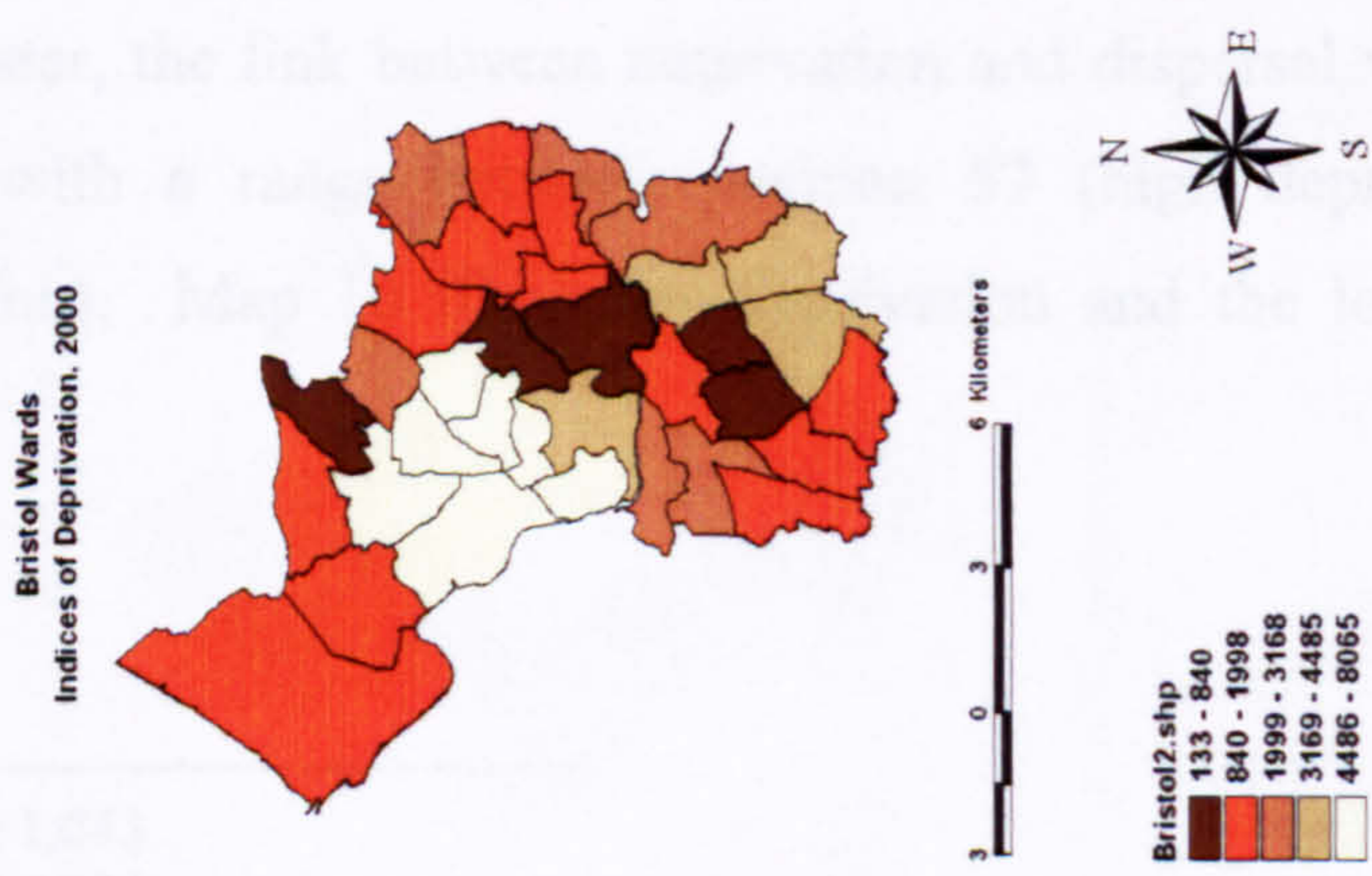
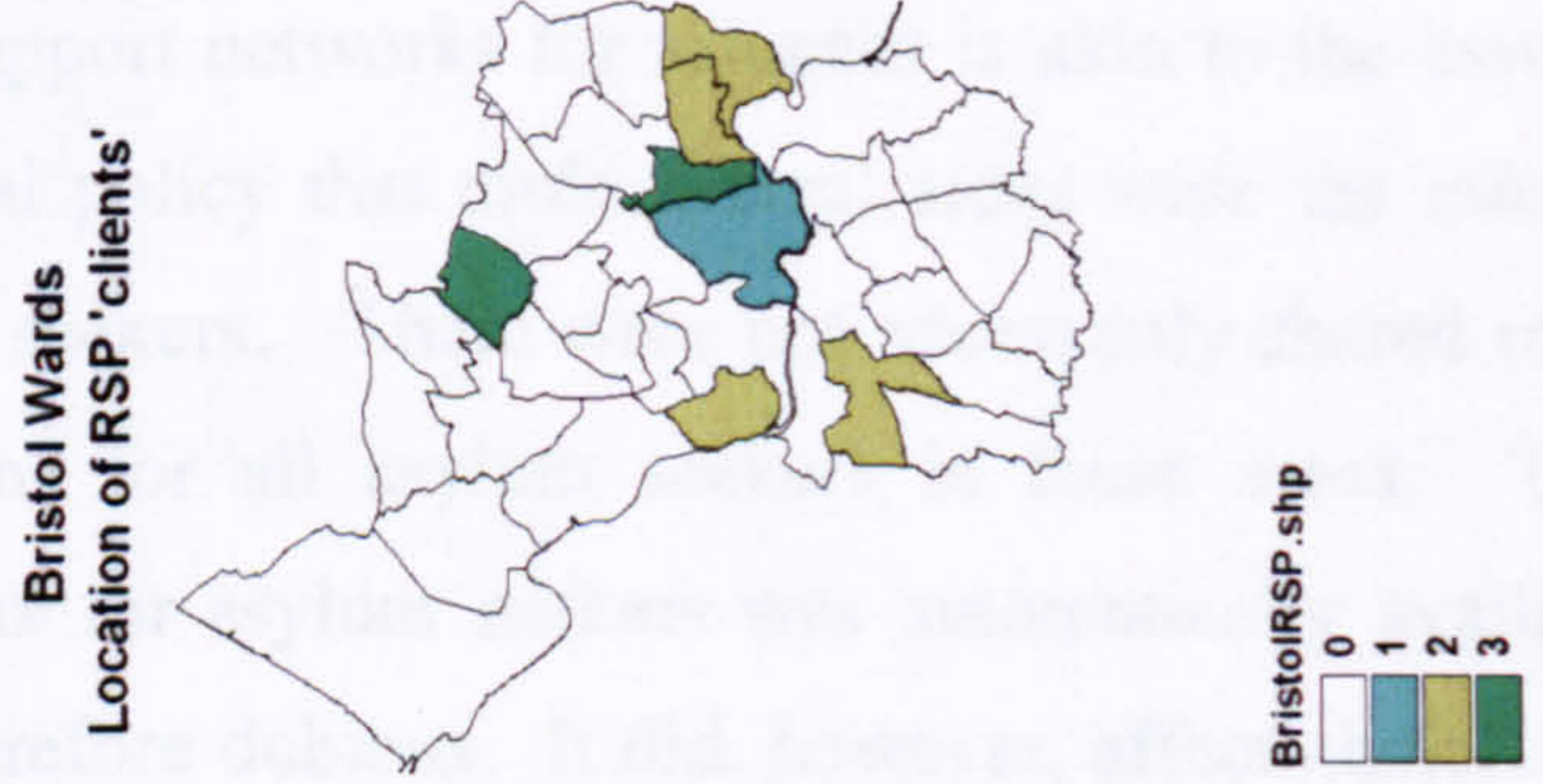
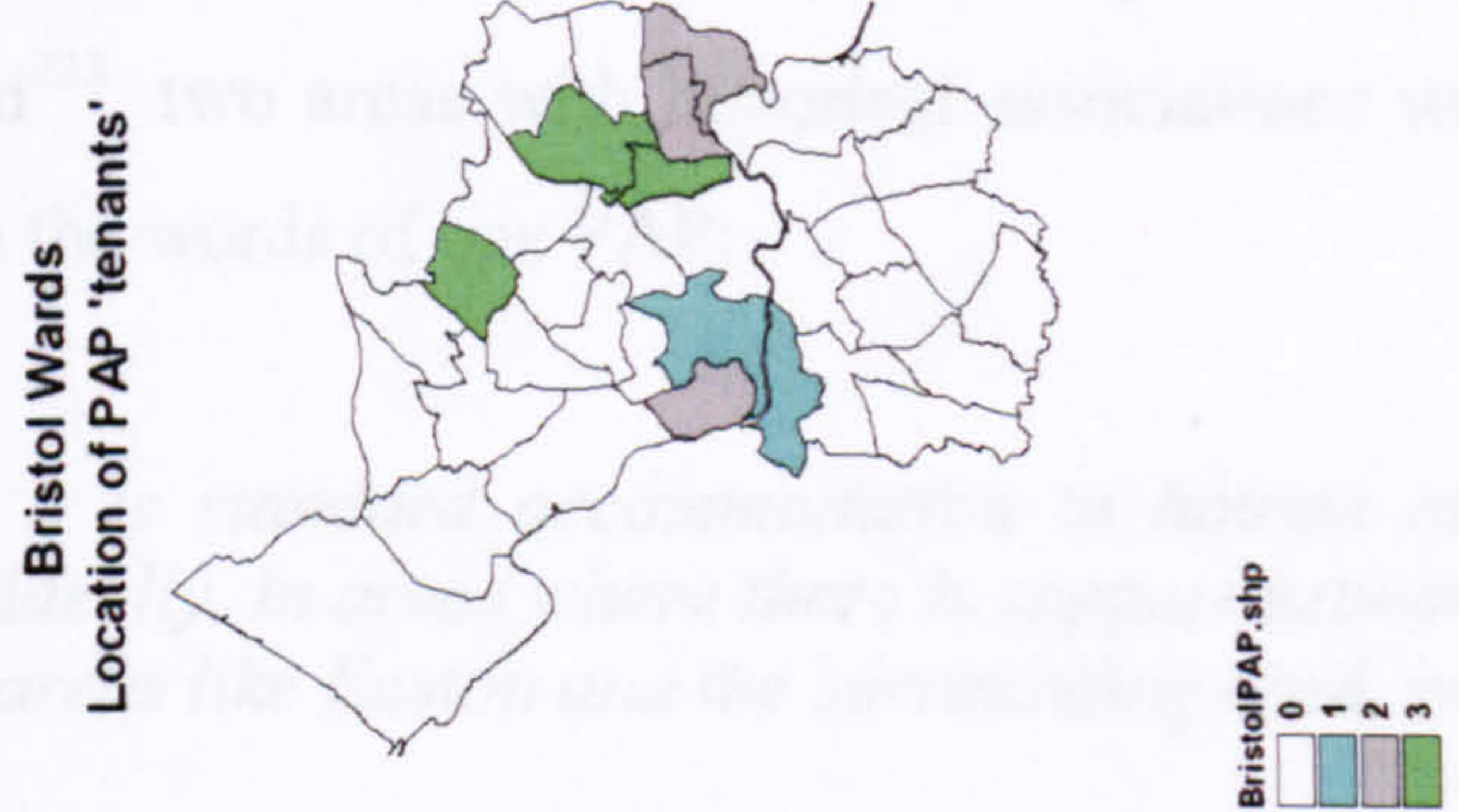
Mapping Bristol and Leicester

'Pockets' or 'hotspots' of deprivation are more easily identified with a ward level rank of deprivation²²⁰. In Bristol the overall rank of multiple deprivation showed a range between 133 (high deprivation) and 8065 (low deprivation). Map 9 illustrates deprivation and the wards identified by representatives of the RSP and a PAP²²¹. Only two private accommodation providers were operating in Bristol during the fieldwork and properties being used were spread across the range of deprivation. The areas which the RSP in Bristol considered asylum seekers to live in overlapped with only minor discrepancies with the PAP areas of tenants.

²²⁰ There are 8,414 wards across England, DETR, Indices of Deprivation 2000.

²²¹ The darker shade indicates the top 10% of deprivation, i.e. 840 wards.

Map 9: Ward map of Bristol

<p>Bristol Wards Indices of Deprivation, 2000</p>  <p>Bristol2.shp 133 - 840 840 - 1998 1999 - 3168 3169 - 4485 4486 - 8065</p>	<p>Bristol Wards Location of RSP 'clients'</p>  <p>BristolRSP.shp 0 1 2 3</p>	<p>Bristol Wards Location of PAP 'tenants'</p>  <p>BristolPAP.shp 0 1 2 3</p>
<p>Source: Rank of Deprivation, Indices of Deprivation 2000</p>	<p>Source: Interview with refugee service provider, June 2003</p> <p>Legend: 0 = nil 1 = low number 2 = unspecified number 3 = higher number</p>	<p>Source: Interview with private accommodation provider, June 2003</p> <p>Legend: 0 = nil 1 = low number 2 = unspecified number 3 = higher number</p>

Sources: Indices of Deprivation 2000, DETR; own research

Therefore, at a local level in Bristol, the link between dispersal and deprivation was not as evident as the earlier maps showing district level deprivation. The most deprived wards of Lawrence Hill and Filwood for example do not accommodate asylum seekers. A higher number of asylum seekers are found in Easton²²² and Horfield²²³, two areas with historical associations with immigration. Easton being used, in the words of one PAP:

'It is standard accommodation in houses in residential parts of Bristol. Ideally, in areas where there is support networks for refugees. So, typically, areas like Easton and the surrounding area, which is the Muslim area.'

This association between asylum seekers and Muslims bore little resemblance to the religious identities of individuals dispersed to Bristol. At the end of March 2003, there were 48 different nationalities in NASS accommodation (Refugee Council, 2003c), a high proportion of whom would not necessarily be Muslim given their countries of origin²²⁴. That Muslim areas were identified as those areas that would have support networks for refugees is akin to the assumption contained within the dispersal policy that multicultural areas were the most appropriate areas to house asylum seekers. There were not necessarily shared religious, linguistic or cultural traditions for all asylum seekers in these areas. The assumption that support networks for asylum seekers was automatically available in areas such as Easton was therefore dubious. It did, however, affect choices made about accommodation at a local level. The assumed preferences of asylum seekers to be accommodated in these areas again resonated with the MUD framework of social exclusion.

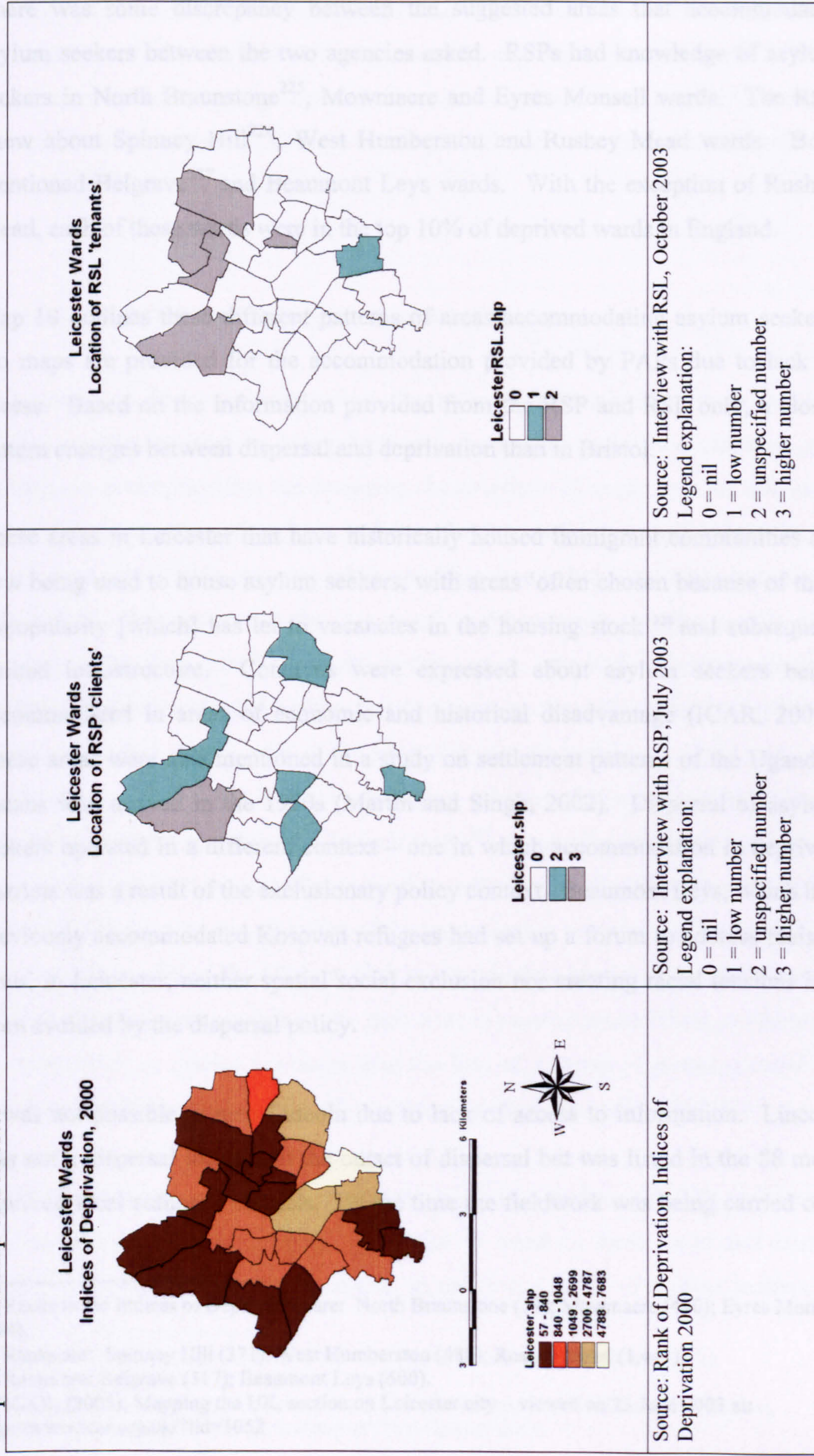
In Leicester, the link between deprivation and dispersal was more evident than in Bristol, with a range between position 57 (high deprivation) and 7683 (low deprivation). Map 10 illustrates deprivation and the location of RSP and RSL clients:

²²² Ranked 1,043.

²²³ Ranked 2,504.

²²⁴ Also, given that religion is a basis of persecution the number of non-Muslim asylum seekers originating from majority Muslim countries would need to be taken into consideration.

Map 10: Ward map of Leicester



Sources: Indices of Deprivation 2000, DETR; own research

There was some discrepancy between the suggested areas that accommodated asylum seekers between the two agencies asked. RSPs had knowledge of asylum seekers in North Braunstone²²⁵, Mowmacre and Eyres Monsell wards. The RSL knew about Spinney Hill²²⁶, West Humberston and Rushey Mead wards. Both mentioned Belgrave²²⁷ and Beaumont Leys wards. With the exception of Rushey Mead, each of these wards were in the top 10% of deprived wards in England.

Map 10 outlines these different patterns of areas accommodating asylum seekers. No maps are provided for the accommodation provided by PAPs due to lack of access. Based on the information provided from the RSP and RSL only, a closer pattern emerges between dispersal and deprivation than in Bristol.

These areas in Leicester that have historically housed immigrant communities are now being used to house asylum seekers, with areas 'often chosen because of their unpopularity [which] has led to vacancies in the housing stock'²²⁸ and subsequent limited infrastructure. Concerns were expressed about asylum seekers being accommodated in areas of economic and historical disadvantage (ICAR, 2003). These areas were also mentioned in a study on settlement patterns of the Ugandan Asians who arrived in the 1970s (Martin and Singh, 2002). Dispersal of asylum seekers operated in a different context – one in which accommodation in deprived districts was a result of the exclusionary policy context. Beaumont Leys, which had previously accommodated Kosovan refugees had set up a forum to address racism. Thus, in Leicester, neither spatial social exclusion nor creating racial tensions had been avoided by the dispersal policy.

It was not possible to map Lincoln due to lack of access to information. Lincoln was not a dispersal location at the outset of dispersal but was listed in the 88 most deprived local authority districts. By the time the fieldwork was being carried out,

²²⁵ Ranks in the Indices of Deprivation are: North Braunstone (57); Mowmacre (490); Eyres Monsell (594).

²²⁶ Ranks are: Spinney Hill (371), West Humberston (488); Rushey Mead (1,443).

²²⁷ Ranks are: Belgrave (517); Beaumont Leys (600).

²²⁸ ICAR, (2003), Mapping the UK, section on Leicester city – viewed on 23 June 2003 at: <http://www.icar.org.uk/?lid=1052>

this city was experiencing a '*mini-boom*'²²⁹ due to the expansion of the university and the rise in house prices in the city. It was felt that dispersal was ending due to this and because the city was not an appropriate area for asylum seekers²³⁰. What were perceived to be appropriate areas for asylum seekers were deprived areas and it was noteworthy that deprivation waning in Lincoln was considered a point at which dispersal should be ceased.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

The perception from a representative of a regional consortia that whole streets of asylum seekers equated to being half way to disaster requires exploration as it contains an assumption that the damaging characteristic of streets was the arrival and concentrated presence of asylum seekers. Lupton and Power call this a 'trigger point' – an identifiable moment when neighbourhoods begin to spiral into decline (2002:128). They argue that the 'nature of neighbourhoods actually contributes to the social exclusion of their residents' in three ways – the intrinsic characteristics of neighbourhoods; residential sorting that concentrates the most disadvantaged in the least advantaged areas; and that once this concentration of disadvantage is established, areas acquire more damaging characteristics which include the reputation of the neighbourhood. In their study²³¹, the decline of Thanet's popularity over time is outlined as a decline in tourism which meant hotels were converted to bedsits and hostels, seeing an influx of the unemployed, homeless and, most recently, asylum seekers. They identify how high levels of crime impact on people's sense of control over their own environments, their trust in neighbours and their confidence in the authorities to resolve problems and the loss of a sense of power, control and inclusion results in mistrust of public service providers generally (2002:134).

In this study asylum seekers often focussed on high crime levels in dispersal areas as well as mistrust of the ability of the police to assist in these areas and mistrust towards their neighbours. For example, in one focus group of asylum seekers, the

²²⁹ N1; interview with representative of the voluntary sector, Lincoln, November 2003.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ The dynamic processes of social exclusion in neighbourhoods in Blackburn, Birmingham, Caerphilly, Redcar and Cleveland, Leeds and Thanet are explored.

link between dispersal and deprivation was outlined by a female asylum seeker who described the area they had initially been accommodated in before being relocated to Leicester:

*'It was a very bad area. You see people drunk in the street. Very bad. That is why we have come here. If they throw stuff in our windows, we had to wait until they broke your head or something. The area was known to the police. The police came to our neighbours. When we rang them [the police] they said they would come but they did not come until the next morning and say, are you OK? They didn't like to come to this area because too many things happen. We had problems where we were. We were not sleeping at night. We didn't say where we want to move to, they moved us here. They moved us to a better area now – it is a very quiet area.'*²³²

This illustrates the characteristics of Lupton and Power's negative acquired characteristics of deprived areas (2002:134). They also associate a process of diminishing social capital with smaller social networks and mistrust (2002:136). Social networks will be explored in *Chapter 8* but what is relevant here is that mistrust of neighbours, service providers and authority figures is a broader feature of social exclusion with resonance beyond dispersal of asylum seekers. That an asylum seeker with no history of living in these deprived areas reaches the same conclusions in a matter of weeks or months was revealing about the experience of living in deprived areas. The loss of control over lives due to dispersal, if seen in this sense, entrenches mistrust of the police, neighbours as well as service providers. She described how teenagers in the area were causing trouble and how she did not want her own children to become like them. For this family, taking their children out of the environment of deprivation and social exclusion was paramount. All is resolved once the family are moved to a better, very quiet area, demonstrating how social exclusion was not static. The potential for restoration of social and institutional trust began for this family once they reached an area in which they felt comfortable. Mistrust is therefore a key concept in social exclusion as it is in forced migration. However, in this context it is less about the behaviour of individuals than their economic position and circumstances.

²³² A9: Lebanese female participant of focus group with asylum seekers, Leicester, July 2003.

Several asylum seekers interviewed had specific problems with the condition and type of accommodation allocated to them and there was a wide variety of types of accommodation encountered throughout²³³. Problems with the type of accommodation were a recurring feature of the interviews and for single asylum seekers accommodation in hostels was a persistent issue:

*'They sent me to Newcastle before I came here. They forced me, they put me with other people. All of them were smoking and drinking. I have a problem with that. You have no choice, you have to go. It was dirty.'*²³⁴

The wider link between deprivation and dispersal was also clearly perceived in a majority of cases. The impact of this link for another family who had received refugee status was ongoing. During the dispersal process they had been relocated a number of times and found that having several addresses in areas with 'bad' postcodes meant they had problems obtaining credit, bank accounts, loans, credit cards and mobile phones. The sheer number of postcodes they had to remember was also related to excluding them from job applications:

*'If you are a refugee, you have to have a good memory because you have to know your old postcodes. When you fill in the form they just assume that you only need three spaces because they can't believe that someone could move more than three times in three years. Every time when you apply for a credit card you fail. That is how this system is putting you down. ... They think you are hiding something.'*²³⁵

The impact of the postcodes of hostel and temporary accommodation recurred in other interviews with refugees who had obtained legal status. Given the historical associations of areas where asylum seekers were accommodated that emerged in both Bristol and Leicester this had a broad resonance. Asylum seekers also recounted a link between dispersal and deprivation in the areas where RSPs were located:

'They choose areas like Brixton. This area is a very bad area. I had a really bad experience there. One time I phoned my friend from a broken phonebox and someone put his hand in my pocket and took my wallet out of my pocket. When I opened the door, he punched me here, I didn't expect it, so I fought with them until he threw a bottle against me. I was very angry. I didn't know at that time that the number was 999. I was bleeding and I tried to follow

²³³ Including lack of privacy, damp, inadequate heating and sporadic hot water.

²³⁴ A5; Libyan male participant of focus group with asylum seekers, Leicester, July 2003.

²³⁵ A7; Afghan male participant of focus group with asylum seekers, Leicester, July 2003.

*them. Another person told me not to follow them. The police came. It is not a good idea to go to a bad area like this that is provided.*²³⁶

This brought to the forefront the structural aspects of the dispersal policy by recognising that deprived areas were an inherent part of the implementation. This comment was met with agreement in the focus group and was echoed in other interviews. Both of the offices of the RSPs in dispersal locations I visited were situated in areas undergoing regeneration.

The perception from asylum seekers that they were placed in deprived areas did depend on their socio-economic background, the length of time they had spent in the UK and their place in the status determination process. For example, two pre-literate single asylum seekers who were interviewed together in Bristol who were at the beginning of the NASS system did not have high expectations in terms of accommodation and commented that they were happy in their hostel. This contrasted to another co-national asylum seeker interviewed at his shared accommodation²³⁷ in a residential street in the Horfield area of Bristol who was at the end of the NASS system. Having just been served a strongly worded eviction notice to leave NASS accommodation in 6 days, immediate concerns were around survival about which he was pessimistic.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter the link between dispersal and deprivation has been explored using both national and ward level maps and the implications of this link explored from the perspective of asylum seekers. It has been shown how compulsory dispersal, particularly at the outset, was to areas of deprivation at a national level with between 70% and 80% of dispersal locations also included in the 88 most deprived local authority districts in England. This was because the geography of dispersal was based around the availability of unpopular or hard-to-let accommodation. This accommodation was largely in multicultural areas that already experienced a high degree of deprivation. Because of this the legacy of the NASS system affects the

²³⁶ A5: Libyan male participant in focus group, Leicester, July 2003.

²³⁷ The interviewee was Sudanese and others in the property were Algerian. The house had previously been used to accommodate students.

future social exclusion of asylum seekers because 'bad postcodes' affect credit ratings. The geography of dispersal in deprived areas has policy implications in that the SEU should include asylum seekers in their work to reduce social exclusion in the UK.

Dispersal was suspended or ended in particular cities upon the request of the police, the local authority or regional consortia and 'geographies of racism' are complex and warrant further investigation.

Overall, it is clear that larger cities and areas in London and the Southeast are more popular with asylum seekers claiming SO support. People feel 'comfortable' in areas they can become invisible and these are generally larger cities and areas in London and the Southeast.

Asylum seekers and refugees interviewed were conscious that the places allocated for implementation of dispersal were largely in deprived areas and the impact of this was already being felt by refugees who had received status. Mistrust of neighbours, the police, service providers and other officials are recognised as an indicator of social exclusion beyond dispersed asylum seekers.

Due to the heterogeneity of asylum seekers mapping was necessarily combined with a more qualitative, micro view to address the dangers of homogenisation explored in *Chapter 3*. Mapping dispersal did allow for national structural constraints to be conceptualised and for the link between dispersal and deprivation to be established. However, subsequent chapters utilise more qualitative data to investigate the process of dispersal, the experiences of asylum seekers, the ways in which asylum seekers resist imposed policy processes and the implications of deprivation on accessing health, education and other services.

CHAPTER 6

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE NASS SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

*'We have our roots in our hands. We carry them from place to place. Then we put them down and have to pull them out again. You are waiting for life for years. You have no rights to define what you do.'*²³⁸

It has already been argued that social exclusion of asylum seekers occurs due to the structure for implementation and geography of dispersal. This chapter explores the experiences of asylum seekers and processes of social exclusion as a result of dispersal. Each phase of the NASS system is outlined using qualitative data from asylum seekers and refugees. Once these stages have been explored the overall impact of the NASS system is discussed. The earlier stages of the refugee experience in countries of origin are considered to show how the focus on an administrative process does not allow for an understanding of the prior experiences and subsequent needs of asylum seekers.

It is argued that the NASS system is a study in liminality – or more precisely, 'policy imposed liminality' – because the top down, 'one size fits all' character of the NASS system has added an extra layer of liminality to the already difficult asylum process that asylum seekers negotiate. It is argued that this has implications for the restoration of social, institutional and political trust and that asylum seekers resist this policy imposed liminality using techniques that avoid direct confrontation with authority.

THE NASS SYSTEM

The nine-phase process model (Figure 3 in *Chapter 2*) assists in conceptualising the NASS system. Whilst asylum seekers did not always distinguish between the phases as rigidly as the model implies, exploring the process in this way does allow for the

²³⁸ R2; participant in focus group; Bristol, July 2003.

data to be disaggregated and for the terminology utilised to be outlined. Figure 6.1 shows stages 4-9 as these distinct phases emerged from the data.

Figure 6.1: Stages 4 to 9 of Nine-phase Process model

4. Arrival in the UK	5. Period in emergency accommodation (EA)	6. First dispersal location	7. Relocation	8. Decision on asylum claim	9. Re-settlement
<p>'spontaneous' arrival of 'asylum seeker' either 'at port' or 'in-country'</p> <p>Applies to Home Office for refugee status</p> <p>Applies to NASS for support and/or accommodation</p>	<p>'asylum seeker'</p> <p>Possible 'failure to travel' to dispersal location</p>	<p>'group' or 'self-write' dispersal of 'asylum seeker'</p> <p>Remains in first dispersal location until decision on asylum claim or leaves prior to decision</p>	<p>'asylum seeker'</p> <p>Relocation 'in-region' or other dispersal location</p>	<p>Becomes a 'refugee' and obtains 'ILR'</p> <p>Given temporary right to stay and obtains, 'ELR', 'HP' or 'DL'</p> <p>Not given right to stay and is termed a 'failed asylum seeker'</p> <p>Appeals process</p>	<p>'integration' of 'refugee' in dispersal location</p> <p>'secondary migration' or 'driftback' of 'refugee' to location other than dispersal location</p> <p>'failed asylum seekers' either deported or may 'go under-ground'/ become 'undocumented'</p>

In a small number of cases not every phase was experienced – for example, an asylum seeker may not experience relocation from their first dispersal location. In the following analysis one Zimbabwean man, David²³⁹, who was first interviewed when he was an asylum seeker and then interviewed again some months later when in receipt of refugee status is quoted often because he provided a typical example (Esterhuizen, 2004) of the experience of the NASS system from the period in EA onwards. Quotes from other asylum seekers interviewed and from focus group participants underlined David's experiences and the characteristics of the NASS system at each stage are outlined.

Arrival in the UK: "This is Where the Suffering Begins"

Upon arrival, if not detained, asylum seekers are required to apply to the Home Office for RSD and to NASS for either Subsistence Only support or financial support and accommodation which means compulsory dispersal. Finding information about these offices could prove difficult and asylum seekers were not

²³⁹ David is a pseudonym.

always informed of the right to apply for NASS support and even if they knew about this they may not know immediately how to claim this support²⁴⁰. The process of claiming asylum was and is confusing and the expectation that asylum seekers will know, or be able to distinguish which agencies were connected to or funded by the Home Office was unrealistic. One asylum seeker at the beginning of his process commented how difficult it was to know who was assisting him:

*'It is very difficult. You don't know what the process is. You know people come to you and say, this is from [rapid tone adopted] and you just know you need to follow. You can't do anything, because you don't understand the system.'*²⁴¹

When this asylum seeker adopted a rapid tone to denote the name of the agency, he demonstrated how agencies in the system were largely indistinguishable from each other. The same interviewee compared himself to a new-born baby who did not know anything about the world around him or, given the language barrier, how to ask for assistance. He added that he did not know what the problems with the process were and that:

*'If you are a baby, even if someone throws you in the river, you can't understand why they did that.'*²⁴²

The inability to predict what would happen next or where the process would lead, left him feeling as though he had no control over the process. This loss of 'social competence' is what Marx refers to when discussing 'severe disruption' of social networks (1990:197). For another individual, who arrived in the UK on his own, his first days in the country were, like many others, recounted as being extremely difficult:

*'The first day I didn't know where to go, where to sleep, where to live so it was very difficult for me. No place to live, no place to sleep.'*²⁴³

This confusion about the process can be dangerous. Describing how their new born baby was burned on their first day in the UK, another asylum seeker explained how she did not know the area they had been placed in or what to do in the case of an

²⁴⁰ C1; joint-interview with male representatives of voluntary sector, dispersal location, June 2003.

²⁴¹ A11; joint-interview with male asylum seekers, Bristol, November 2003.

²⁴² A12; as above.

²⁴³ A11; as above.

emergency. Exhausted from their journey to the UK, they ran into the street with the baby:

'English neighbours, they don't want to help us. They say sorry, sorry I can't help. We didn't understand why. The baby was shouting and he was crying, he was burned, it was an emergency'.

This comment about the mistrust encountered from their neighbours when they asked for help placed them in a position of extreme vulnerability. When they managed to find another neighbour to assist and get to a hospital they were disappointed with the response from agencies involved:

*'It was very hard those first days. We don't know where we are or which area we are in. Also, nobody has a telephone. Nobody came to come to get us from NASS, nobody came to get us out from the hospital. We didn't know where we were. We had no money. We didn't know our address because we arrived during the night. So the same neighbours they wait for us, they come and pick us up. We go from the hospital to the caseworker who was taking care of us. They said we can't come now; you can wait about 3 or 4 hours. We have the baby there. We cannot do anything, not eating anything, the baby was crying.'*²⁴⁴

Several issues arise from this. Their inability to distinguish whether the caseworker mentioned was from a RSP or from NASS, referring to them all as from NASS, highlights confusion about the agencies involved in the process and their roles. This was common with asylum seekers with comments such as; *'We don't know really who is giving us money.'*²⁴⁵, *'Maybe NASS, maybe the refugee agency, both are NASS anyway.'*²⁴⁶. That the NASS caseworker (who must have been the caseworker from the RSP) was unresponsive and they were subsequently reliant on a neighbour whom they had not previously met would not have given them confidence in the NASS system from the beginning. They did not know what to do in an emergency – this was a dangerous oversight on the part of whoever had allocated the accommodation and not knowing to call 999 was not an isolated incident. Not knowing their address or the area they were in was again indicative of loss of control over their lives.

²⁴⁴ A9; female focus group participant, Leicester, July 2003.

²⁴⁵ A11; joint-interview with male asylum seekers, Bristol, November 2003.

²⁴⁶ Comment from translator during interview with asylum seekers, November 2003.

Upon arrival asylum seekers will not know who they are able to trust. As one participant in a workshop on accessing legal advice commented: *'When you get here, you don't know who you can trust'*²⁴⁷. This was met with general agreement in the workshop and the survival strategy of mistrust (Hynes, 2003) was a common theme in interviews with asylum seekers, refugees as well as being mentioned by refugee participants in conferences. At a social event in one dispersal area, I was advised by a refugee who had been in the country for nearly three years not to try to speak to a Ukrainian woman who had recently *'arrived in a box'* (a container) because she would not *'trust anyone who started asking her questions'* and would *'just clam up'*²⁴⁸ if anybody attempted to speak to her. The explanation for this mistrust again referred to interviews with the Home Office which were conducted in an atmosphere of suspicion although mistrust was considered to be a feature of the experience generally:

*'People are mistrustful of everything. If you think that refugees are people running, running for their lives. They have had to do this to survive. They mistrust everyone, including their own community groups. Only once the basics are sorted, the basics for survival – roof and work – then they can begin looking around and seek additional support.'*²⁴⁹

The perceived power of the Home Office and NASS was ever present with one interviewee describing the Home Office as an unapproachable *'monster'*²⁵⁰. NASS was described as being as *'another head of the same creature'*²⁵¹. The Home Office and NASS were largely indistinguishable in the eyes of asylum seekers. The NASS system therefore commences at a point when the individual feels as though the Home Office disbelieves them and this was also pervasive in dealings with NASS. One refugee who had encountered problems with NASS explained how this mistrust manifested itself in the availability of original birth, marriage and death certificates:

*'When I first came I went to NASS. My father was killed sometime last year when the rebels took him away. And they said my claim was false because I could not get papers, let alone a death certificate. Where am I supposed to get references to prove my fathers death?'*²⁵²

²⁴⁷ Refugee participant in 'Access to Legal Advice' workshop, International Women's Day, Action for Refugee Women, London, 6 March 2003.

²⁴⁸ R4; informal conversation with refugee, Lincoln, May 2004.

²⁴⁹ D1; interview with female representative of RCO, London, November 2002.

²⁵⁰ D4; interview with female representative of RCO, London, June 2003.

²⁵¹ Talk by representative of London based user group, London, March 2004.

²⁵² K1; interview with male asylum seeker, Leicester, July 2003.

That NASS disbelieved the death of a parent illustrated the lack of basic understanding of the conditions from which asylum seekers are arriving from. This Liberian asylum seeker had given up attempting to access support from NASS and had taken employment before permission to work was denied. His perception was that *'the system is the barrier to integration'*²⁵³, elaborating by saying that the difficulties he had encountered had stopped him from wanting to belong in the UK. Another asylum seeker, despairing of the requirement to provide original certificates to NASS commented:

*'They said if he is your husband you must provide a marriage certificate. I was searching for my certificates – when you are in Africa you only get one copy of certificates, you have no copies, only the original. I didn't bring all my certificates with me.'*²⁵⁴

This lack of understanding of the circumstances under which asylum seekers arrive in the UK was common. Confusion about the agencies involved in dispersal and their roles, difficulties experienced during the first few days of arrival, the loss of control over their lives and not knowing who could be trusted characterise this early stage. The perception that arrival was the point at which *'the suffering begins'*²⁵⁵, whilst on the face of it dramatic, was an accurate reflection of this early stage.

Emergency Accommodation: Playing the Waiting Game

'Liminality' or 'limbo' is most clearly demonstrated during the period in EA. The provision of 'a bad roof or no roof' (with a shrug of the shoulders) was, until November 2003, used by representatives of RSPs to describe EA in London. The new role of 'landlord' from a 'care giving organisation' (Refugee Council, 2004b) was, after this date, affected by the decision of the Refugee Council to stop providing EA in London for new arrivals in order to improve the quality of their services. This decision was due to the anticipated time spent in EA escalating from an initial 7-10 days to 'months, if not years'²⁵⁶. Short term accommodation therefore became long term and the number beds rose from an initial 500 to over 4,500 people. Opposition

²⁵³ K1; as above.

²⁵⁴ A1; female participant in focus group, Bristol, July 2003.

²⁵⁵ B3; joint-interview with male representatives of voluntary sector, dispersal location, June 2003.

²⁵⁶ Email update from Refugee Council, 2 October 2003, via frank.corrigan@asylumrights.net.

to EA from local resident organisations may also have been a factor in this decision. In Finsbury Park in London, an area that has a long history of housing short term populations, planning applications for hostels in Seven Sisters Road, Queens Drive and Wilberforce Road were opposed by local residents due in part to lack of consultation (see Appendix XXVI). These hostels, run by a private accommodation provider, contracted by the Refugee Council, were previously hotels and were not identifiable as hostels from their appearance alone²⁵⁷.

A single asylum seeker may have a more difficult experience of the NASS system as they were more likely to be accommodated in hostels than families. David, who was within the mainstream benefits system upon implementation of dispersal in 2000 commented, in order to enter into the NASS system he was required to attend *'the Refugee Council and declare myself destitute'*. He considered this process to be *'dehumanising'*. He was told to go to Heathrow to join newly arrived asylum seekers from Dover and waited for four hours before being *'delivered to a hotel, allocated a room with two others in the same room on the third floor'* now that NASS had taken on his case.

Families, however, were also placed in EA. A female asylum seeker with a small baby commented that this was inadequate in many respects:

*'They put us together with singles, about four singles. And no-one knows how to clean or to take care of themselves. There was only one shower for all of us. The singles would sit in the sitting room, drink and watch television. They would watch football and not let the baby watch anything. Putting their legs up like this, putting things everywhere. Holding the baby, playing with him, we did not like it. We cannot keep him in the small room we had. It was a dirty place with no outside space for the baby.'*²⁵⁸

In this case, the first 'they' were the RSP and that the RSP had put them into this accommodation was clearly viewed as unsuitable. The description of no-one knowing how to keep the accommodation clean and it being a dirty place was indicative of liminality and loss of control, with a few interviewees commenting how this temporary accommodation was not cleaned by anyone, especially those

²⁵⁷ The hostels still looked like hotels with one hotel still exhibiting a sign saying 'tourist board approved'. They were, however, all painted the same and had the same yellow CCTV signs outside. Sites visited October 2003.

accommodated within it. Not being able to control their own environment or have a place where children could play resonated with the spatial social exclusion outlined in the previous chapter, although on a much smaller scale. During time in EA, asylum seekers were not required to pay for utility bills or food and they received £10 in cash per week.

Sharing a sitting room with four singles while waiting to be dispersed to more suitable accommodation proved to be frustrating and inadequate for families in particular and was a frequent complaint amongst asylum seekers.

Uncertainty and boredom characterised time spent in EA and awaiting dispersal was considered by many participants to be a waste of time. Few attempts were made by adults at this stage to access education or other services unless essential. As David commented:

'While I was in there, I never went to a GP. There were no signs to tell you how you were supposed to spend your time. The question of education did not come into it before dispersal, because the uncertainty of the length of time you were going to stay there. You never knew. Some people came; there was no particular definite length of time, no precision. Some people came one week and they went the next day. Some people came in and were like me. I was one of the longest. You don't know what is going to happen next. You could start by going to school today but then there could have been a delay. If I was to start college or school one day, I might be dispersed the next day.'

Not wanting to begin education or access medical services during this time was a clear indication of the sense of liminality being experienced. This uncertainty and the theme of wasting time created a sense of 'temporariness' that several participants recounted. It also resonated with the temporary character of the Vietnamese holding centres that Bousquet describes (1987) and the expulsion from normal existence encountered. The inhabiting of this liminal space and not crossing from one status to another (Malkki, 1995) was made worse by the unpredictability of time left prior to dispersal. People arriving and leaving in no particular order suspended normal activities.

²⁵⁸ A9; female focus group participant, Leicester, July 2003.

There was a pervasive perception by asylum seekers within the NASS system that time in emergency accommodation was about just being left by the agencies and NASS. The regulated character of days spent in EA were also a feature of this stage, with several asylum seekers using the phrase of not wanting 'to bite the hand that feeds' to describe the relationship between themselves and agencies involved.

The 'lottery' aspect of dispersal and lack of choice of the type of accommodation and dispersal location was problematic. Awaiting news about which dispersal city he would be dispersed to, David commented:

'Every morning at 9 o'clock, somebody would come in from the NASS, and pin up names, lists of names on the walls. Your name would be put against your NASS number and the area you would be going to. Good heavens! Whether they disperse you to Newcastle, Lincoln, we had no choice. But every day in the morning at 9 o'clock, you could come and look. You had to come in a check through a whole list. There used to be an average of about 150 dispersals every day. So you are looking at the movement of people coming and going everyday. I spent September, October, November, December, until the 6th of December. During that time, every day I looked. The rest of the day you go back to your room and just wait. Not very good system.'

This was a common experiences amongst interviewees. Again, he did not distinguish the staff of the RSP with NASS. Again, 'they' indicated the RSP and the 'we' were fellow asylum seekers. This lack of choice and element of luck involved was repeatedly raised. Asylum seekers often did not know who was accommodating them, just that they had been placed in accommodation. Even local community workers with considerable knowledge about the system and local areas often did not know the name of the landlords. Confusion over the agencies and their roles in the NASS process operated at many levels.

This system was inappropriate for individuals fleeing persecution and who had already lost control over their lives in their countries of origin. However, this uncertainty did provide the basis for a bond between people. However, these bonds and the social trust built up in this way were subsequently dispersed to different locations. Lists of names of those to be dispersed were pinned on the walls of the EA. For David, his experience is illustrative:

'You come down; you go through the list of about 100 names. They were never in alphabetical order for some reason. I don't know what criteria they used. Sometimes I would not go and search. Sometimes you build among yourselves friends, if you stay in a place like that you start getting people you identify with, people that talk to you, where if somebody saw my name they would come and let me know. Then, one day somebody came up to me and said your name is there. I couldn't believe it, I said now I am coming down. So I went there and I checked on the wall – Lincoln. I had never been to Lincoln.

Dispersed on a 'self-write' basis, he was not given any information about Lincoln but was given tickets and a printed timetable with details of train connections. Another asylum seeker who was in the International Hotel in Leicester commented on the lack of information provided:

*'I was in London when I arrived. I went to Refugee Action [sic] in London and they told me you must go to the hotel for 6 weeks and after that we must find house for you. I said OK. I went to hostel for 6 weeks and I was waiting. Waiting, waiting. It is going on 2 months. More than 2 months. I went to them and asked what was happening because I am waiting for a house. They said to me, would you like to go to Leicester? I said yes, yes, I go anywhere but not to a hostel. ... I don't like hostel, because I saw trouble there. They told me, you have to go to Leicester, you have to take the key, you have a house there. I said yes, I am very happy, I am very happy. [laughs]. When I come here, they said to me this is your house. International Hotel! I said this is hostel. That is not good.'*²⁵⁹

His mistake about the name of the agency in London illustrated the confusion over agencies involved in dispersal. He had been led to believe suitable accommodation was available in Leicester but upon arrival found himself in the International Hotel. Again, the 'bad roof or no roof' philosophy that stemmed from the contractual obligations between RSPs and NASS had resulted in uncertainty. Lack of control over finances and the ultimate destination of dispersal characterises this early stage of the NASS system. Asylum seekers within this system wait and subsequently have any social trust built up literally dispersed to different locations. A lack of institutional or restorative trust is clearly apparent between 'them' (NASS and the generally indistinguishable agencies involved) and 'we' asylum seekers within the system.

²⁵⁹ A6; participant in focus group, Leicester, July 2003.

First Dispersal Location: Dispersal, the National Lottery

Compulsory dispersal is a lottery and the odds are not good. Asylum seekers awaiting dispersal will not know which city they will be dispersed to. They will not necessarily be dispersed to a city where they have family or friends. They will be dispersed regardless of gender or age²⁶⁰. The city may have RCOs of the same nationality but these organisations may not be representative of the individuals' personal politics or may have its origins in a different 'vintage' or 'fate-group' (Kunz, 1973:138-141). The city may or may not be largely tolerant towards asylum seekers, have appropriate mainstream service provision or have a RSP presence. One participant had been dispersed to a city she could not even pronounce. The compulsory nature of dispersal was highly problematic. If an asylum seeker expressed a preference of location this could be taken into consideration by NASS but there was no obligation even for brothers to be dispersed to the same location (Refugee Council, 2004b). One asylum seeker commented;

*'Once I had my interview they sent me. It depends where they send you, sometimes [dispersal location], sometimes London, you don't know. Sometimes it is another town. It is just a matter of luck where you are sent.'*²⁶¹

The dispersal process for 'singles' and 'families' was similar in that both received one offer of accommodation, one opportunity to travel to dispersal accommodation and both were expected to live in dispersal accommodation until the outcome of their RSD process (Refugee Council, 2004b). However, if single asylum seekers 'failed to travel' without a 'reasonable excuse'²⁶², this led to termination of support and eviction from EA (Refugee Council, 2004b). Families who 'failed to travel' were also evicted from EA but the offer of support in the dispersal location would be kept open indefinitely which meant that the support was never discontinued and the family were therefore not, technically, homeless or able to appeal to the Asylum Support Adjudicators²⁶³.

²⁶⁰ Except in cases of extreme or special needs.

²⁶¹ A11; joint-interview with male asylum seekers, Bristol, November 2003.

²⁶² Medical Foundation or urgent medical problems with evidence from a GP.

²⁶³ The Asylum Support Adjudicators (ASA) are funded by the Home Office to adjudicate appeals regarding NASS support. ASA is the only place you can appeal to about NASS support.

Lack of control over finances was also an imposition of dispersal – with only 70% financial support provided for asylum seekers in NASS accommodation. Utility bills and council tax were paid for by the accommodation provider meaning that the experts managing the lives of asylum seekers were responsible for all aspects of budgeting at every stage of dispersal.

Setting off to his dispersal location and having been told that somebody would be waiting for him at the train station, David but found nobody there to meet him:

'I got there, nobody was waiting for me. Nobody knew I was coming. I did not have an address. It was the middle of winter, 6th of December. I had run out of money and I actually phoned [the RSP who had accommodated him in EA] to say I am stuck here, and I have been stuck here for about 3 or 4 hours and nobody has been waiting for me, I don't know where to go. They said, you are out of our hands. You have a new accommodation provider now to take care of you.'

That coordination between the RSP who had accommodated him in EA and his new accommodation providers had not occurred illustrated the type of problems that occurred due to the complexity of the structure of the dispersal system. The implications of this lack of coordination for David meant that he had to seek assistance in a police station and was able to do this because he could communicate fluently in English:

'I had run out of money on my mobile phone. I had to find a police station. It was very difficult. A black man stuck in a country environment like this in [dispersal location]. It was very difficult. I was very ill-equipped in terms of dressing for the weather. It was snowing. I was in a very sorry state. I had put on a very nice summer suit to arrive there. I must have looked a sight. I walked to the police station, the police helped me 4 hours later and I went to the address. They directed me to address I was supposed to go to. I went there. I was waiting outside, they hadn't opened the door. It was raining, my luggage got wet. I got wetter, I was angry. NASS had assigned me that accommodation.'

From this we begin to see how what Malkki calls 'strategies of invisibility' (1995:155) are regarded as a positive coping strategy for asylum seekers within the system. Arriving in a new city dressed in a suit could have meant that the label of asylum seeker was 'supplanted by a series of alternative identities and labels'

(Malkki, 1995:156). Attempts to negate the asylum seeker label by taking on new identities was a feature of interviews, focus groups and was recounted in conferences and this will be developed in *Chapter 8*. Compulsory dispersal also meant that the resourcefulness of this individual was the only reason NASS accommodation was located that day.

David's experience in Lincoln contrasted to that of asylum seekers interviewed in Bristol who were comfortable in the city due to the availability of a mosque, support from the community²⁶⁴ and the multicultural character of the city because: *'It is like a smaller London, you don't feel like an outsider here.'*²⁶⁵. The only beneficial aspect put forward about dispersal by a refugee was that they would ultimately be able to afford to buy a house in the city:

*'We would be able, let's say in five years time, to buy a property here. Because property is cheaper here than in London. Those who are able to get a job in London will struggle because of property prices. But now we can, if I am working, probably we can buy something. ... Dispersal is better for the second generation. Those who come the first time face trouble but those who come later will benefit.'*²⁶⁶

Another participant in this focus group was quick to point out how it was easier to live outside London but that the above participant *'shouldn't forget that they take away your right to choose'* where you live²⁶⁷.

Asylum seekers in Leicester were also comfortable, naming the *'multicultural'*²⁶⁸ character of the city. Several of these participants had been accommodated, had visited for immigration purposes or had been to court in other cities so were glad of this characteristic.

The same element of luck applied to the nature of accommodation provided. Prior to dispersal, the asylum seeker will not know if they are being accommodated in private or public accommodation. They will also be unaware if they will be required to share the same room in that accommodation. This means that the already difficult

²⁶⁴ A12; joint-interview with male asylum seekers, Bristol, November 2003.

²⁶⁵ R2; participant in focus group; Bristol, July 2003.

²⁶⁶ R3; as above.

²⁶⁷ R2; as above.

²⁶⁸ A5; participant in focus group, Leicester, July 2003.

process of awaiting a decision on an asylum claim is magnified due to the uncertainty around accommodation:

*'It is not easy here, especially for the children. You do not know where you will go, where they will put you. We do not know if our decision will be OK or not. If it is OK it will also be very hard because you don't know which house they will give you. Maybe it will be empty and dirty and you have to start from the beginning, painting and buying things.'*²⁶⁹

This suggestion that the end of the liminal period was the point at which NASS accommodation was no longer used and some ability to 'start' began. Again, 'they' are putting 'you' somewhere, there is no element of choice and again, a loss of control is indicated.

Complaints to NASS about the inadequacies of accommodation were met with disbelief. A Kosovan participant commented that *'They don't accept our problem, they don't believe us'*²⁷⁰. He pointed out that complaints would not be listened to and that even in extreme cases such as older people becoming ill because of the inadequacies of their accommodation, NASS would not listen. He cited the example of an elderly couple accommodated in the International Hotel in Leicester, several complaints to NASS and the RSP had not been responded to:

'They are very old. They told them that they would be living there for one week. They have been there for five months now. The woman is 65 and the man is 75 years old. The woman is very sick.'

As with the period spent in EA, in a number of cases, participants did not know who the landlord was, instead referring to the first name of the individual they had dealings with. Several issues emerged regarding the first and subsequent allocation of dispersal accommodation including privacy (landlords holding keys and entering accommodation unannounced); asylum seekers being able to cook and eat their own food; control over their own finances; sharing accommodation and bedrooms with other asylum seekers with conflicting views; the requirement to 'sign' for accommodation; making children 'sign' for accommodation in the absence of parents; as well as the feeling that they could not 'bite the hand that feeds'. Some of

²⁶⁹ A9; as above.

²⁷⁰ A6; as above.

these issues are addressed in the next chapter. Each of these issues involved issues of power and control and the imbalance of patron-client relationships.

Asylum seekers in dispersal were required to 'report' to police stations during dispersal which was something that separated them from other migrants or quota refugees. Letters from the Home Office detailed these reporting requirements and outlined their 'temporary admission', being provided 'emergency accommodation' and later 'temporary accommodation' pending their asylum decision. The centrally devised character of the policy thus continued to impact on the regional and local implementation of dispersal. The ability to assume new identities other than 'asylum seeker' being effectively denied. Attempts at avoiding the stigma of the label at a local level were dependent upon an interplay between the character of the city dispersed to and the type of accommodation allocated. There was an ability to restore some social trust at this stage but the 'them' and 'us' inherent in the system meant that any potential for restoration of institutional trust was limited.

Relocation, Relocation, Relocation

Numerous examples of asylum seekers relocating several times were encountered, sometimes up to five times. This compounded the sense of 'limbo' outlined above. Asylum seekers were 're-dispersed' either 'in-region' (within the regional consortia area) or to other dispersal locations across the UK. For example, interviewees had been relocated to three cities in four months²⁷¹; two cities in 16 months²⁷²; five cities in 3 years and 6 months²⁷³; three cities in two years²⁷⁴; and, for David, two cities in five months.

In a few of these cases, relocation was beneficial as they had moved from areas of high deprivation to areas where they felt more comfortable. These moves generally followed repeated requests to NASS, letters from solicitors and medical reports from

²⁷¹ A9; participant in focus group, Leicester, July 2003.

²⁷² A1; participant in focus group, Bristol, July 2003.

²⁷³ R1; as above.

²⁷⁴ A5; participant in focus group, Leicester, July 2003.

doctors. Filling out a 'change of circumstances'²⁷⁵ form to claim SO support meant that for one individual unhappy with his accommodation could move to stay with friends but by doing this forfeited any accommodation.

One of the main complaints about relocation was that it disrupted education of both children and adults contributing to future social exclusion and was recounted during interviews and focus groups as well as during conferences (see *Chapter 7*).

The issue of privacy was also recounted as a primary motivation for seeking relocation:

'Because sometimes he [the private accommodation provider] would come into my house. He didn't tell me before he came in. I knew that he would come in the house every morning to pick up papers. I must sign the paper every day. Like a prisoner, like a martyr. Sometimes my children sign it. [name of private accommodation provider] said to my children to sign it again. I said, why? He said you must sign. I say OK, no problem. I didn't like him because he come in my house anytime he wants. I had no privacy! In my house! Every time I go to school he went into the house to check everything. One day I was in the toilet. I knew my children were in school – British schools – so I took a shower. I was alone in my house. I only had a small towel around me and he was there! They used to come and see what you have inside your house. No privacy!'

The contractual arrangement between PAPs and NASS for tenants to sign to testify presence in the property was considered by this mother to be a unwanted regulation that made her feel like a prisoner and making her children sign was, she continued, one of the main reasons she needed to relocate. Her only recourse following this invasion of privacy was to tell the landlord that she was going to go to the RSP office to tell them about this. The power imbalance between landlord and tenant in this instance illustrates clearly how unmonitored use of PAPs opens up channels of potential exploitation. On this occasion, upon hearing that the tenant was willing to complain to the RSP the landlord said:

'I will send you to Bristol. Because my husband came there later. He said I will find you a big house if you would prefer and I said yes. The house in

²⁷⁵ There is a NASS form for changes of circumstances and asylum seekers are able to switch from receiving NASS accommodation and financial support to just Subsistence Only support if they are able to stay with friends. This is subject to approval by NASS.

[dispersal location in the West Midlands] *was too small. But NASS didn't know that we moved so we missed our money for two weeks.*'

These quotes illustrate not only the issues of privacy and control imposed by the contractual obligations between accommodation providers and NASS, but also the lack of communication between PAPs and NASS. The fact that NASS did not know that this family had been relocated highlighted this lack of communication. This was not an isolated incident and the high numbers of different nationalities in each location is partly as a result of this system of 're-dispersal' or relocation by, in particular, PAPs²⁷⁶.

Having to postpone education and change courses, 'start again when you move'²⁷⁷ and again when status is obtained ran through interviews. As one asylum seeker at the beginning of the process commented; *'I wish, I hope that they don't move me from Bristol. It is very hard to start again and find people to help you.'* Having established links within Bristol, this individual did not want to be re-dispersed, be it within or outside the region.

In Lincoln, the contractual arrangements for accommodating asylum seekers were highly problematic. During a visit to Lincoln in May 2004, properties let by a sub-contractor to the NASS contracted private accommodation provider were in the process of being boarded up and Lincoln had stopped being a dispersal location. Asylum seekers in these properties were being relocated to other locations with very little notice. Lack of communication was demonstrated when it became clear that the head of the regional consortia in the area had not been informed of this withdrawal. As shown in *Chapter 4*, PAPs and their sub-contractors operated outside the hierarchy of agencies creating such communication problems.

Relocation of asylum seekers was built in to the NASS system. By 2005, questions posed in contract negotiations by the Home Office to regional consortia showed how the management of these relocations had been transferred onto local authorities. Questions included how LAs would reduce the need for relocation within regions, how families with dependent children would be relocated locally to provide

²⁷⁶ Conversation with representative of local authority, dispersal location, June 2004.

²⁷⁷ A1; participant in focus group, Bristol, July 2003.

continuity of education, how disruption due to the process of relocation would be minimised for service users, the impact of relocations on local communities and how the relocation would be managed.

The summation of these factors illustrates how liminality was inherent in the NASS system. Unexpected outcomes of these relocations included the inability to obtain a credit rating that contributed to social exclusion for many years as outlined in the previous chapter. Relocations occurred both due to asylum seekers wanting to move and accommodation providers shifting their tenants. For an asylum seekers to move, considerable energy was necessary to effect this as NASS were generally unresponsive to such requests. This lack of control over where to live and how to plan the education of children clearly contributes to the social exclusion of asylum seekers. Any social trust restored through day-to-day or meaningful encounters prior to relocation was lost. Institutional trust was again not apparent.

Decision on Asylum Claim: An Existence Vindicated?

The decision to claim asylum is one of the biggest decisions a person may make in their lives and is therefore an intensely personal decision. For an asylum seeker the transition to becoming a 'refugee' and obtaining ILR or the more temporary status of ELR, HP or DL can be a cause for celebration and simultaneously involve a recognition of the 'victimhood' of their particular circumstances²⁷⁸. At a legal level, the individuals' existence in the UK may be vindicated but each individual may take many years to develop their own sense of vindication. For example, one Chilean refugee described how it was only after Augusto Pinochet was arrested that she personally felt as though she had her existence vindicated in the UK as a *'political refugee'*²⁷⁹. The legal process, however, may be extended by an appeals process if status is not granted straight away. This is a very stressful process for the individual, particularly if the proceedings are adjourned for any reason²⁸⁰. Issues surrounding the credibility of the asylum claim are addressed by the Home Office respondent during appeals and the overarching character of these proceedings are disbelief and

²⁷⁸ Assertion based on discussions with refugees, various dates.

²⁷⁹ DI; interview with female representative of RCO, London, November 2002.

mistrust of the individual by the Home Office. Questioning and doubting the accounts provided of lives, family backgrounds, links with the country of origin²⁸¹, time taken to apply for asylum and even the 'Christian name'²⁸² of individuals. For those who have been opposing human rights violations in their country of origin, this process and judgement as to whether their convictions are real or not is disempowering.

Unsurprisingly, it was evident that decisions on claims for asylum were a vital turning point in terms of liminality. With the exception of problems with the NASS system, asylum seekers in dispersal areas identified their difficulties as being largely connected to politics in the country of origin. It was clear that those interviewed who felt a sense of temporariness built bridges with the past in the sense that the content of their narratives was largely based on the country of origin. This building bridges to the past also indicated the forced nature of migration as time had not been spent planning new futures in the UK – rather the focus was on what had happened in the past. This added to the sense of temporariness and liminality being experienced due to the NASS system. One interviewee focussed on his rapid departure from Iran²⁸³; another focussed on the war in Somalia²⁸⁴; two Sudanese asylum seekers discussed political organisations in Sudan as the main reason for their migration²⁸⁵ and a Congolese asylum seeker considered that the French colonialists and globalisation to be the reason for her persecution as well as her choice of the UK as an asylum destination:

'My country was colonised by French people and when they come into power they take everything out of Congo. They start contracts with French people, American people and English people. French people come and put the war in Congo and there was a coup d'état and the new government took over democracy but they were not democratically elected. There is a big oil company because the country has quite a lot of resources. The government signed a new contract with the French oil company and the French

²⁸⁰ Discussions with individuals at Immigration Appellate Authority, Feltham and London, November 2004; interview with Liberian refugee, dispersal location, July 2003.

²⁸¹ Home Office country reports are available for the top 25 nationalities of asylum seekers.

²⁸² Home Office respondent's question on the credibility of the Buddhist Burmese individual's name, London, November 2003. In Burma the concept of a surname does not exist and questioning the credibility of a 'Christian name' from a majority Buddhist country highlighted a lack of basic country information.

²⁸³ A14; interview with male asylum seeker, Leicester, November, 2003.

²⁸⁴ A8; participant of focus group, Leicester, July 2003.

²⁸⁵ A11 and A12; joint-interview with two male asylum seekers, Bristol, November 2003.

*government are quite close to [name of oil company]. When the coup d'être happened, we had to flee immediately. Not to France because of political grounds.'*²⁸⁶

Social exclusion, or the feeling of being socially excluded, revolved largely around issues of immigration status, before RSD and also was raised by some as an issue after RSD. During one focus group with female participants in a dispersal location, questions regarding the difficulties of having a 'voice' for refugees from a user-group led to an animated discussion and a whole series of examples of ways in which asylum seekers feel socially excluded. The difficulty of forming a group with any remaining members of friends and family who had been dispersed across the UK was prominent in the discussion. There was also a feeling that asylum seekers may not feel as though they have the right to voice an opinion due to the lack of legal status and fear of deportation. As one refugee participant suggested, even after RSD this can be difficult:

*'Most of them are very scared and they prefer to keep quiet than speak out. Because they know, I don't have the right to speak out. I can be deported, or ... I may not be accepted. So maybe that is why. We think that we don't have rights. We need to come together and to form, and start. We need our rights. ... You know, one time, I felt as though we should speak out, but then I thought, oh, I could be in trouble, maybe with the immigration.'*²⁸⁷

Stressing the structural position of a refugee and phrased in the language of rights, this quote suggests how asylum seekers within the dispersal process, as well as refugees who had been through the process, adopt as a strategy the avoidance of confrontation, particularly with 'officialdom' (Robinson, 2002; Hynes, 2003). Notably, asylum seekers are referred to as 'them' and 'they', with this recognised refugee distinguishing herself from them but then referring to the 'we' of not having rights and needing to come together to 'speak out'. The reluctance to 'speak out' then becomes a personal issue as she refers to 'I' in relation to her status of 'refugee' being also a position of weakness. Thus, even after RSD, the impact of social exclusion for this individual meant that her ability to participate unhindered in the political process and rights that other residents of the UK expect were curtailed. This barrier to political participation was corroborated by another refugee participant in the focus group when real fears about personal security and the consequences of

²⁸⁶ A1; participant in focus group, Bristol, July 2003.

²⁸⁷ R1; participant of focus group, dispersal location, July 2003.

speaking out to defend others were voiced with specific examples of encounters with officials and institutions recounted. The ambiguity surrounding legal status and being able to defend themselves once status was granted was mixed with fear of repercussions. As David, upon receiving refugee status commented:

'Now that I have refugee status, I want to give something back, not just work and forget about everything that happened to me in the past 3 years.'

However, daily survival needs meant that he was unable to do this and he moved from Lincoln to a city where he was able to utilise past employment experience and move away from the negative experiences encountered during his time in the city. This focus on daily survival needs was a continuous theme, one refugee participant of the focus group, suggesting: *'To be realistic. You can't be a strong community because we struggle for our daily life.'*²⁸⁸

The shift from temporary to permanent status involved individuals focussing on different sources for their present difficulties. Those with refugee status interviewed generally perceived their problems in terms of the UK and wider discussions of global politics, history, the world capitalist system as well as the male structures of societies²⁸⁹. When describing her situation, one refugee went one step further by perceiving the problem to be due to the international relations and history between the UK and her country of origin:

*'I had to flee the regime that you [the British] have put into power. You enforce the Islamic regime in Tehran. Being here and what I have been through, made me regret why I didn't prefer prison, going back to prison [in Iran] rather than coming to Europe, England. ... Because of the wrong system, unfair system is ruling the world.'*²⁹⁰

This shift was particularly marked with David. Upon gaining refugee status, he asserted how his views had changed about the source of his problems:

'I used to look at it – from the inside – as it was NASS being the main body. But NASS is not the main body; it is not deciding. It is the Home Office. Somebody is deciding what to do. NASS comes in between. They are taking directions from the Home Office and ODPM [Office of the Deputy Prime Minister]. NASS does not move in diversity or cohesion or equality circles.'

²⁸⁸ R2; participant of focus group, Bristol, July 2003.

²⁸⁹ D4; interview with female refugee, London, June 2003.

²⁹⁰ Participant in focus group, dispersal location.

When I was in the system I thought NASS was the mother body but now I know NASS is just one organisation, that is not where the blame is. There is a more powerful source somewhere and nobody wants to talk about it. I am now looking from without, seeing that NASS is not to blame.'

The shift from temporary to permanent status had led, in this case, to a demonstrable engagement with the UK racism discourse. His view had changed about the importance of NASS and his view that there was a more powerful source directing the agenda on equality and cohesion. Theoretically, this changing viewpoint illustrates how any epistemological privilege assigned to 'insiders' means that the whole picture or process may be left out of any analysis. For this individual, his changing viewpoint illustrated how a 'user' of the NASS system, once out of the system perceived NASS differently. That users can be considered the experts of their own experience is without doubt but they may not be able to see the whole picture or process as they are learning the written and unwritten language of a different country and their views change over time. Another refugee asked me candidly why I didn't ask whether I thought '*the Home Office is racist?*'²⁹¹, another indication of engagement with the UK discourse of racism. David's argument about NASS having nothing to do with inclusion, diversity, equality and cohesion are particularly relevant to the ability of asylum seekers to gain a sense of 'belonging' as explored in *Chapter 8*.

Unsurprisingly, asylum seekers receiving a negative decision focussed on their immediate survival needs and the lack of quality or fairness in the RSD process. The impact of not getting refugee status and thus having to move out of NASS accommodation had an immeasurable impact. As an asylum seeker served with an eviction notice from his private accommodation provider commented:

*'You start getting on well in your life, you make friends, you talk about different topics ... you start having hope that you can be part of the society in a way. We talk about other issues, not related to the police or the immigration or whatever, we start living life. Suddenly you get a letter killing all the hope, it changes your life completely and you have to start thinking about the problem of immigration and police.'*²⁹²

²⁹¹ Conversation with female refugee, dispersal location, June 2003.

²⁹² A13; interview with male asylum seeker, Bristol, November 2003.

This killing of hope obviously did not lead to trust in the political systems of the UK. Again, the word 'lottery' was used by solicitors, asylum seekers, refugees, service providers and others to describe the RSD system. Confidence and trust in the asylum system was generally lacking both from asylum seekers and the general population.

This end of the liminal period for one individual was clear when he could not attend an interview because he had been given his status and a house that he had to clean and paint for his family before they could move in. Taking care of property for this refugee was indicative of the beginning of inclusion or belonging.

Starting to be a part of the society and the process of moving away from liminality is inextricably linked to this status determination process. This process and the NASS system are also linked but these two processes are dealt with by separate Home Office directorates.

Resettlement or Refusal: The End of NASS Support

Regardless of whether a positive or negative decision on an asylum claim was made, at the point of a decision, asylum seekers were required to move out of NASS accommodation. If the decision was positive, 28 days were given to leave the accommodation. At this point 'integration' and the many policy initiatives surrounding inclusion could commence. However, this process referred to as 'move-on' was problematic for asylum seekers at many levels:

*'NASS services are really awful. Once you have got your refugee status, they cut everything and you are almost paralysed.'*²⁹³

This sudden return to the past structure of provision of services for refugees (see Figure 8, chapter 4) means that NASS support was ended and mainstream services needed to be accessed. There was a distinct lack of information provided to asylum seekers about which services needed to be approached at this stage. Both financial support and accommodation needed to be sought as well as paperwork for employment:

*'When you finish with NASS, you go to the social security office and this is another problem. It is like a Home Office interrogation to have a NI number.'*²⁹⁴

Because of the lack of linkage between the NASS system and national integration programmes, for this refugee moving through the now allowed process was similar to that experienced when claiming asylum. A new set of agencies needed to be negotiated and the impact of the disbelief experienced by the Home Office during her asylum claim clearly impacted upon the way in which the social security office was approached and perceived. The loss of trust in institutions generally was clear.

Accessing accommodation following 'move-on' from NASS included putting names on waiting lists for public accommodation. Some 'move-on' teams slowly emerged in local authorities across the country to assist asylum seekers access accommodation once a positive decision was granted²⁹⁵. However, the other option, to move to an area close to existing friends or family did not attract such support and was actively discouraged in later legislation enacting a 'local connection' for asylum seekers to be accommodated within regions of dispersal.

Coordination between the Home Office and NASS was again an issue at this stage. Two interviewees received their NASS 35 (the letter saying that NASS support has terminated) without receiving their status determination letters. Support might be terminated upon receipt of a negative decision, with the Home Office not notifying NASS that an appeal had been lodged. If the decision was negative, an eviction notice from NASS accommodation was served on the individual by the accommodation provider. This drawing in of service providers into enforcing destitution was a highly questionable aspect of the NASS system. As one asylum seeker commented upon receiving a letter to leave his accommodation 6 days later²⁹⁶:

'I believe that you are not going to die until your day comes. I have been through lots of things so I am not scared about dying because there is a day I am going to die anyway. But I am thinking about whether I am going to

²⁹³ R1; participant in focus group, Bristol, July 2003.

²⁹⁴ A1; participant in focus group, Bristol, July 2003.

²⁹⁵ For example, Newcastle has a 'move-on' team and Sheffield has a 'floating support' team.

²⁹⁶ Accommodation providers receive 10 days notice of a negative decision and serve subsequent eviction notices.

*suffer from torture or whether I am going to suffer now that they have asked me to leave this room. If I am going to live in that cold weather. This is what I am thinking about. I don't care if I die. Everybody is going to die. But I am just thinking about that torture and suffering. The future is finished for me now. I am just thinking, what can happen tomorrow*²⁹⁷

This linking of past to present circumstances was a common during interviews with asylum seekers moving through the NASS system. The link for this individual was from past torture and persecution to his current eviction and the implications this would have for his future. For this individual, the period of liminality was not over and mistrust of the RSD process was clear.

A common assumption amongst asylum seekers, refugees and RCO representatives was that the link between deprivation and dispersal created the impulse for secondary migration. The study by Zetter *et. al.* (2005) also found that the experience of the process itself, conditions in receiving locations and the quality and location of accommodation were the main reasons behind secondary migration.

For this thesis, it was found that asylum seekers would 'secondary migrate' either during the process to opt for SO support and stay with friends or once their asylum application has been accepted or rejected and they were required to leave NASS accommodation. This wide variety of times and reasons for secondary migration were largely a reflection of the heterogeneity of asylum seekers. Those in receipt of a negative decision would either go 'underground' or become 'undocumented' – either way the potential for exploitation of their circumstances was great.

Thus, the end of the period of policy-imposed liminality of a positive asylum decision brings with it a new set of problems and issues that asylum seekers turned refugees encounter and the feeling that they are beginning again was present. A negative decision meant that beginning again was not an option with present and immediate survival needs taking precedence over other aspects of their 'future' or their 'pasts'. Institutional trust for both scenarios was found to be low.

²⁹⁷ A13; interview with asylum seeker, Bristol, November 2003.

For those with a positive outcome funding was provided by the Home Office through the European Refugee Fund (ERF) and the Challenge Fund for projects aimed at integration of refugees. However, in a report for the Home Office, Peckham *et al.* (2004) found that clients of the ERF and Challenge Fund services in 2002-2003 were: ‘... an extremely disadvantaged group – more disadvantaged than residents in even the most deprived areas in Britain.’ (2004:2). It was also found that the circumstances of these clients were ‘found to be much worse than those of residents in Britain’s New Deal for Communities areas and/or among black/ethnic minority residents.’ (2004:6). The link between dispersal and deprivation clearly had implications for refugees beyond the move-on stage.

IMPACT OF THE NASS SYSTEM

The main impact of the NASS system was a feeling of a loss of control over their lives and a sense of liminality imposed by the process. From the point of arrival asylum seekers did not know who they could trust and how agencies involved in dispersal could be distinguished. The complexity of the system resulted in little distinction being made between RSPs and NASS. It also resulted in a system that was characterised by waiting, not wanting to ‘bite the hand that feeds’ and an unwilling patron/disadvantaged client relationship. The compulsion inherent in the system and the perception that luck was involved in the process limited the potential for any form of trust to be restored, in particular institutional trust. Being made to feel ‘temporary’ and needing to report to the police on a regular basis meant that asylum seekers were unable to assume new identities once they reached a local setting. The stigma of the label of asylum seeker plus the type and location of dispersal were each factors in this. Relocation built into the system enhanced the liminality and sense of temporariness experienced, reducing the potential for the restoration of social trust and not allowing institutional trust to be regained. The turning point of the status determination process meant a shift from a focus on the country of origin to issues surrounding racism and history in the UK. Political trust at this point was dependent upon the perception of fairness of the RSD process. Generally there was little political trust in the asylum process from asylum seekers or from the general population during the period this research took place. The end of NASS support meant the end of the period of policy-imposed liminality but the

beginning of new difficulties with a new set of agencies and service providers. The impact of the NASS system was mainly surrounding institutional mistrust felt by asylum seekers due to the experience of being socially excluded and segregated. There was little space available for the restoration of social trust and when this did occur, relocation often meant that meaningful or day-to-day restoration of social trust was not continuous.

It is clear that the environment of mistrust in which the NASS system operates disregards the dignity of asylum seekers from the outset with the process being characterised by compulsion, control and inefficiency. For asylum seekers, the process involves loss of control; being kept waiting; being maintained in a liminal state; adopting mistrust of officialdom as a survival strategy; needing to negotiate a confusing and complex system involving several agencies funded by the Home Office; plus being provided temporary accommodation and services.

WHAT IS LOST IN THE FOCUS ON AN ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS

Understanding the initial three phases (the period of threat; decision to flee and survive; journey or flight) of the nine-phase process model allows for consideration of what is lost in the focus on the administrative process of the NASS system. Only viewing the latter stages once an asylum seeker reaches the UK means that an account emerges of a system that is certainly bleak and dehumanising. The outcome of such a model is a focus on the vulnerabilities of asylum seekers because the focus is on the 'loss of a place' throughout the process ignoring the 'struggle to *make* a place' (original emphasis, Turton, 2004:26). From this position that emphasises the negative aspects of the experience, acting on behalf of asylum seekers due to their unique needs is justifiable and setting up parallel services is one possible response. In contrast, asylum seekers' perceptions of their capabilities, resilience and ability to make their own place once the liminal period of the NASS system was over was apparent during interviews.

Malkki suggests that studies of forced migration must not 'dehumanize and dehistoricise refugees' (1995:224). The refugee quoted earlier who connected her claim for asylum in the UK to the history of British involvement in Iran asserted: 'It

*is my right to flee the hell you made for us*²⁹⁸. These words echoed the less forceful sentiments of other interviews with asylum seekers and refugees who referred to the histories of their countries of origin as well as to their personal histories and circumstances and reclaiming history was a feature of interviews. During the period of threat the basis of asylum seekers persecution was formed (Zolberg, 1989; Castles and Loughna, 2005; Richmond, 2002) and the decision to flee and survive, once made, involved complex decisions around which country to see asylum in and which family, friends or acquaintances would be in a position to assist. There were political considerations surrounding historical colonial connections as well as the 'new geographies' of migration due to new patterns of global trade (Koser, 2002). The flight or journey undertaken involved a number of issues around survival for which mistrust was used as a survival strategy (Robinson, 2002; Hynes, 2003). Attempts have also been made to reinstate considerations of class into analysis of forced migration and thereby consider how forced migrants socio-economic backgrounds determine the resources they are able to mobilise (Van Hear, 2004).

The status determination process by the Home Office was based on these first three stages and NASS on the latter stages. This artificial constraint of a national policy meant that the socio-economic backgrounds and differences in terms of nationality, age and gender of asylum seekers and refugees were disregarded by NASS. Whether an asylum seeker was a former Minister or a pre-literate farmer, there was effectively an equal distribution of deprivation imposed upon them by dispersal and this meant that individual vulnerabilities, capabilities, histories and socio-economic status were equalised and neutralised by the policy. This also applied to agencies contracted to NASS as outlined by a caseworker:

*'On the very first day, they have got no idea who we are, and they start to tell us everything, why they left their house. And we just have to stop and say, just tell me, do you need a shelter, do you need clothing, do you need food. We are there to assist as advisers. We can talk to them while we are signposting and we might discover that they need assistance with immigration or legal issues.'*²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ Participant in focus group, dispersal location.

²⁹⁹ B3; joint-interview with representatives of the voluntary sector, dispersal location, June 2003.

The implementation of dispersal therefore also involved RSPs in negating personal histories. Having to stop a client from talking about the source of their persecution to shift the focus onto immediate survival needs was a product of the limited funding allocated by the Home Office. It also indicated that asylum seekers were not distinguishing between agencies in the system. The period of policy-imposed liminality commenced and future *'hopes and needs'*³⁰⁰ were catered for by signposting to other services outside of the RSP.

An example of the personal history and unique circumstances asylum seekers have been through was described by one Sudanese asylum seeker who had been forcibly conscripted to the army:

*'The problem here is people when they look at your case they expect you to say exact dates, exact times and exact numbers. We have been living in the bush where there is no difference between days, you don't know what the time is and you don't know what the date is. You just live like an animal lives. Animals don't care about the dates because they don't need them. You don't get a salary, so how are you to know dates. So when people here expect you to give exactly dates, what the date happened to you, etc. It is very difficult to state that one very accurately.'*³⁰¹

This added factor of not knowing dates and times was clearly a factor for this pre-literate asylum seeker. The feeling that his history could not be understood by agencies because of the difference between his country of origin and the UK did not apply to the RCO he had contact with. However, as shown in *Chapter 4*, RCOs were rarely in a position – in terms of funding, 'voice' or ability to influence policies – to affect this administrative process.

Similarly, factionalism – often the basis of claims of persecution – was largely misunderstood. The NASS dispersal strategy discussed avoiding dispersing 'warring factions'. In practice, however, this was often the case and factionalism was not considered by NASS during allocation of accommodation and no guidance was provided to service providers on its implications. Different nationalities, clans and opposing nationalities were dispersed together. The same applied to those with different political opinions, religious views and membership of particular social

³⁰⁰ C1; as above.

groups. There was confusion and a lack of understanding as to what the term 'warring factions' meant. Using the example of whether Eritrean and Ethiopian asylum seekers being accommodated together, several different interpretations of the implications of this were encountered by service providers, leading to a variety of answers and some blank expressions from accommodation providers in particular. My own knowledge of Somali clan structure was limited during fieldwork but asking about this also illustrated how little understanding there was about the differences within refugee 'communities'.

At a local level this issue had been approached involving a 'steep learning curve' and the specific 'institutional knowledge'³⁰² of placement officers of the agencies involved. As one housing officer commented;

*'It depends on the staff. It is an ongoing process. We specialize in refugees so we know about factionalism. If there are 'warring factions' we move them. ... It can be something from 400 years ago that has been dormant but suddenly pops up.'*³⁰³

Having a dormant issue 'pop up' indicated a certain lack of knowledge about the issues that influenced the experience of the NASS system. Another provider discussed the 'shifting sands' of global conflicts that meant that tensions could not be foreseen between individuals. An opposing view from a mainstream service provider who had previously been a refugee was provided when it was explained how colleagues could not conceptualise this:

*'If you have had a gun pointing to your head and they didn't shoot you, you will never know what it means. I know cases where I have been caught in crossfire, come very close to being killed. All because of my ethnic group. If that person was thought to be from my ethnic group, your tribe, they would be killed. Just because of your ethnic group you could be dead. Someone can explain this to you but you will never understand it. We explain it to them [colleagues] they think it is a joke you know, I am making up or something like that.'*³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ A13; interview with asylum seeker, Bristol, November 2003.

³⁰² E1; joint-interview with accommodation provider, dispersal location, October 2003.

³⁰³ E2; as above.

³⁰⁴ K1; interview with asylum seeker, Leicester, July 2003.

Thus it would appear that the insider/outsider distinction had great bearing on this issue. For this individual, explaining the threat posed by a member of another ethnic group to someone who had not encountered this in their lives was clearly considered not possible in this instance. It was therefore unsurprising that the vague issue of 'warring factions' had not been given serious consideration during dispersal. These 'complex patterns'³⁰⁵ that asylum seekers operate within and form requires substantial further research.

Another reason why the process was confusing upon arrival stemmed from political conditions in countries of origin. Distinguishing between the voluntary sector and government agencies was not necessarily something which individuals had done before in countries with a limited space for civil society. Many of the countries from which people flee persecution may not have a vibrant 'civil society' or what could be regarded from outside the country to be a 'civil society' is actually operated by the relatives of the ruling regime. Given this experience, upon arrival in the UK asylum seekers may not separate the voluntary sector from the government in the first place making it understandable that RSPs and NASS were potentially confused from day one. This related closely to the issue of trust. As Colson suggests, 'Good intentions, even if perceived, do not earn trust' (2003:6) and a solicitor dealing with asylum seekers commented on how:

*'It is difficult for them to trust you. Because usually they don't have voluntary organisations in their own country. Usually there is no such separation between the state power and the oppression power. So it takes time to trust me and then they are moved, and then they have to start the process again.'*³⁰⁶

As outlined earlier, this issue of loss of institutional trust during relocation was recurrent. 'Trust' was also gendered and dependent upon the separation of roles in the country of origin and the new roles encountered in the country of asylum. In the UK, the process women go through when adapting to new power structures insider and outside the home was described by one refugee as 'cultural somersaults'³⁰⁷. The realisation that divorce from violent partners was possible or that financial support

³⁰⁵ B4; focus group with female representatives of the voluntary sector, dispersal location, July 2003.

³⁰⁶ H1; interview with solicitor, dispersal location, July 2003.

³⁰⁷ D1; interview with female representative of RCO, London, November 2002.

for children was not dependent upon remaining with fathers were examples of these cultural somersaults. The loss of political trust related to the assumption of fair treatment due to the democratic ideals of the UK. When this proved incorrect and exclusion was experienced, it led to anger:

*'That is fine having democratic rights provided they mean real democratic rights. ... There are some aspects about democratic rights that are at the moment ignored. Nobody would believe five years ago that they could be in operation in Britain. To detain someone without charged for indefinite periods. So what democratic values are we talking about? People are far smarter than what the politicians think. They can see the double standard – democracy and the hypocrisy of it.'*³⁰⁸

The hypocrisy of democracy was referred to by this solicitor and a dichotomy of rights for asylum seekers and others, based on status, being spoken about in conferences³⁰⁹. In this way, the 'them' and 'us' distinction that emerged during the NASS system had wider implications for the future inclusion of asylum seekers.

The expectation from NASS that asylum seekers would have time to collect all birth, marriage and death certificates before leaving also demonstrated an unrealistic image of the process of becoming a refugee. Refugees fleeing persecution and being accommodated for unspecified periods of time and therefore not being able to regain control over their own lives and finances also demonstrated a lack of understanding about the reasons for forced migration. The system did not take account of the negative or positive experiences people bring with them, nor did it take account of the qualifications arriving into the country. The focus on an administrative system was therefore detrimental to any recognition that asylum seekers may be resilient survivors.

This research also revealed that optimism at the beginning of this process was replaced by narratives devoid of optimism regardless as to whether the asylum decision was ultimately positive or negative³¹⁰. As one asylum seeker with a

³⁰⁸ H1; interview with solicitor, dispersal location, July 2003.

³⁰⁹ Comment that there are two separate human rights systems in the UK, one for the resident population and the other for asylum seekers, made during *Refugees, asylum seekers and human rights – the balance sheet so far*, co-organised by British Institute of Human Rights and JCWI, 11 November 2003, London.

³¹⁰ Interviews with various asylum seekers and refugees, various dates.

negative decision commented on his hopes of rebuilding his life, or making a new place in the world, being dashed by a notice of eviction served upon him. However, at the beginning of the process of claiming asylum and going through the NASS system there was clearly optimism about the process and the ability to consider the future, ending with difficulties at the end of the NASS system:

*'When I came here I was happy because I can start finding people and I felt that I was getting support and I could start thinking about the future. I could have new hope that there is a future. Now this has stopped. They have taken that hope from me now. Because in the past I had no future. Because there was killing everywhere, you don't think about the future. When I came here I start thinking about my life, my future. You know, I have retrained, I could get ahead. But suddenly now they have taken that. What is going to happen to me?'*³¹¹

Mistrust of the Home Office and NASS, the dependence on needs-tested, selective benefits (Rothstein and Kumlin, 2001; quoted in Togeby, 2004:522) destroyed institutional trust at the outset. The strong desire to move away from the NASS system and avoid the agencies involved in the process negatively impacts upon those who ultimately remain in the UK as refugees because of the lack of space for restoration of institutional trust. Resistance to policy imposed liminality was clearly identifiable throughout.

RESISTANCE TO POLICY IMPOSED LIMINALITY

In his seminal study of everyday forms of resistance in rural Malaysia – *Weapons of the Weak* – Scott (1985) illustrates how everyday techniques of evasion and resistance³¹² were utilised that avoided direct confrontation with authority. The silent struggle to define their own lives and the 'constant, grinding conflict over work, food, ritual – at everyday forms of resistance' (1985:xvi) resonates with general resistance to the asylum system and dispersal-specific forms of resisting 'policy imposed liminality' experienced during this research, although care has been taken not to over-romanticise these. Given the status and social exclusion issues

³¹¹ A13; interview with asylum seeker, Bristol, November 2003.

³¹² Everyday forms of resistance included pilfering, arson, subtle sabotage and desertion (Scott, 1985).

outlined above, formal resistance and direct confrontation were not generally utilised but resistance to the NASS system was apparent.

One dispersal-specific form of resistance to liminality encountered was, in the terms of NASS and RSPs involved, 'failure to travel' to dispersal locations. This was largely at the point of the process when they were in emergency accommodation and, at the early stages of dispersal, was a major factor in the Refugee Council's decision to cease providing emergency accommodation. The assumption that once allocated accommodation by NASS, asylum seekers would comply was found to be incorrect and thus '*secondary casework*' of those who had not travelled '*took NASS by surprise*', with some 'cases' returning 15 times across the desk of NASS employees³¹³. The lack of choice in dispersal location was clearly a factor in asylum seekers not wanting to 'travel' and other reasons included inadequate information provided about the proposed dispersal location, the existence of family or other social networks in London and various other complex motivations. A comprehensive account of the characteristics and profiles of those who 'failed to travel' would require further research but social networks were considered influential by those working closely with asylum seekers.

'Failure to travel' to the allocated dispersal location was a form of non-compliance as a form of resistance that avoided direct confrontation with authority, in this case NASS. As a representative of a private accommodation provider commented:

*'They usually don't bother to get on the coach if they don't want to go. A lot of them don't arrive when we go to meet them at the coach station'*³¹⁴

Some other more direct and well publicised forms of resistance to the asylum process were apparent in dispersal locations. These included extreme acts such as stitching up eyes and mouths in symbolic acts to register disapproval of the way in which asylum seekers were treated. In January 2001 asylum seekers in the International Hotel in Leicester took their beds out onto the streets to protest about inadequate heating and poor hygiene (Fekete, 2001). Hunger strikes against the general conditions of dispersal locations in several locations were another avenue of

³¹³ L1; joint-interview with representatives of the Home Office, London, August 2003.

resistance with occurrences including a Kurdish hunger strike in Liverpool³¹⁵ and an Iranian asylum seeker in London³¹⁶. Demonstrations were held in several cities across the UK in April 2005 involving asylum seekers and refugees³¹⁷. A well publicised case of an asylum seeker setting himself on fire in the office of Refugee Action in Manchester when he had been refused refugee status³¹⁸ and was unable to get a medical report because he had no permanent accommodation and therefore unable to access a GP³¹⁹. There have also been demonstrations outside the offices of the Refugee Council in London.

Some 'anonymous acts of resistance' (Scott, 1985:304) were recounted by the one private accommodation provider interviewed who was:

*'... teaching these people to live together and to keep the house clean. Maintenance has been a big problem for us – damage, malicious damage to property. We provide cleaning materials to asylum seekers and show them how to clean. We are trying to get on top of this at the moment which is quite a tough job.'*³²⁰

The cleanliness of properties was a complaint coming both from asylum seekers and the accommodation providers. Attempting to show asylum seekers how to keep properties clean was a manifestation of the lack of control asylum seekers felt they had over their lives. These direct and indirect forms of resistance were a manifestation of resistance to policy-imposed liminality. Resisting liminality was also evident in the way some individuals had already invested in the UK by learning the language, making new friends from the 'settled' population and participating in volunteering schemes in the absence of being able to take up paid employment.

Being able to 'opt out' of the NASS system was another form of resistance. To do this, social networks were necessary as was a willingness to provide accommodation

³¹⁴ G1; interview with PAP, dispersal location, June 2003.

³¹⁵ D6; interview with male representative of RCO, London, August 2004.

³¹⁶ *Asylum Seeker Goes on Hunger Strike*, This is Hertfordshire, viewed on 3 January 2004 at http://www.thisishertfordshire...asylum_seeker_goes_on_hunger_strike.php

³¹⁷ *Asylum Seekers on the March*, IRR News, viewed on 20 April 2005 at <http://www.irr.org.uk/2005/april/ha000008.html>

³¹⁸ *Refugee's Fireball Horror*, Manchester Online News, viewed on 25 October 2004 at http://www.manchesteronline.co.uk/news/s/134/134535_refugees_fireball_horror.html

³¹⁹ *Open Verdict on Asylum Seeker Who Slept in a Wheelie Bin*, Manchester Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers, viewed on 25 October 2004 at <http://www.asylumpolicy.info/notsuicideverdict.htm>

³²⁰ G1; interview with PAP, dispersal location, June 2003.

to individuals receiving Subsistence Only support. Asylum seekers were generally not arriving from countries that had any welfare state and upon arrival in the UK they did not wish to live on benefits any longer than they had to. One asylum seeker commented on his reasons for 'opting out' of the NASS system prior to the rule on permission to work being revoked:

*'I said this is useless. There was no reason to live off public money. I didn't feel good. So, I left the NASS and stayed with a couple of my friends. And then eventually became independent. It was factory work developing these mechanical engines, preparing the parts that are used to transport the fluid and things like that. It was a really, really difficult job but I didn't really mind because I was working and supporting myself. I have always preferred working and taking care of myself to living off benefits. I don't care for that at all. I don't know what would have happened if I didn't have permission to work. Right now I am contributing a lot of money to the public coffers - taxes are big and national insurance is big. When I think that I am going to go back home so the national insurance that I pay is going to be still here to pay for other people. The money can stay in Britain forever and I will go back.'*³²¹

Employment, as a method of resisting liminality, was for this individual a route to 'social inclusion' even though he anticipated ultimate return to his country of origin. The recognition that 'dependency' is due to structural impediments is closely linked to this as Sen argues; 'the rejection of the freedom to participate in the labour market is one of the ways of keeping people in bondage and captivity' (1999:7).

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter it has been shown how the primary lens for understanding how asylum seekers experience social exclusion during dispersal is policy-imposed liminality. At each stage of the NASS system a lack of control over the process, lack of space for the restoration of different forms of trust and the inability to assume new identities other than that of 'asylum seeker' create this lens. Both formal and informal processes of social exclusion clearly begin at the point of arrival in the UK and continue throughout the NASS process due to a lack of choice of dispersal location and type of accommodation. The mistrust of asylum seekers in the RSD

³²¹ K1; interview with asylum seeker, Leicester, July 2003.

process is replicated by NASS and the ensuing process of liminality begins. The NASS system involves an unwilling patron/disadvantaged client relationship.

In theory, dispersal imposed an equal distribution of deprivation on all forced migrants regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds and individual histories. Every destitute asylum seeker was dispersed without regard for the human resources and experiences they were potentially able to mobilise and this means that individuals were effectively equalised and dehistoricised by dispersal. This dehistoricising of asylum seekers was replicated by agencies funded by the Home Office. Dispersal as a 'one size fits all' policy demonstrates the consequences of Indra's earlier examination of tensions in the theories of forced migration. The centre of gravity on the macro side has important consequences and what is lost in the focus on an administrative process is the heterogeneity, resilience and capabilities of asylum seekers.

Resistance to this policy imposed liminality is the way in which asylum seekers begin to acquire a sense of belonging or inclusion in the UK. 'Integration' therefore occurs despite asylum policies and not because of them. Resisting policy imposed liminality was evident throughout this study with 'failure to travel' being the main dispersal-specific form. The foundations for future social and institutional trust are laid during the NASS process and the space for both forms of trust is extremely limited by the policy. Dispersal has added another layer of 'liminality' to the already difficult asylum process and institutional trust is not formed during the NASS system. Subsequent chapters explore how this policy imposed liminality occurs due to services being provided on a temporary basis and how asylum seekers resist, subvert and challenge this liminality with coping strategies, which include social networks.

CHAPTER 7

ACCESS TO SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

Dispersal away from London and the Southeast brought into question access to legal representation, language support, housing, medical care, education, training and employment (Audit Commission, 2000). *Chapter 5* outlined the link between dispersal and deprivation showing that mistrust of service providers and officials was indicative of the social exclusion of asylum seekers. In *Chapter 6* it was argued that the primary lens for understanding the social exclusion of asylum seekers due to dispersal was policy imposed liminality. This chapter will forward both of these arguments by viewing how dispersed asylum seekers access temporary services and the implications of mistrust. Formal exclusion from the rights expected by others and the relationship to remaining entitlements is the basis for this chapter.

To do this the changing entitlements of asylum seekers since the early 1990s are outlined showing how the power to define who can access what welfare and other services is now based on status. The obligations of agencies contracted to NASS to facilitate access to services are explored using qualitative data relating to specific services in dispersal locations. Once gender and the intangible barriers to access services have been explored, emergent issues in dispersal locations such as services for domestic violence and mental health are identified.

It is argued that the monitoring and reporting role of accommodation providers plus the temporary nature of services helps to maintain asylum seekers in a liminal state. It is also argued that the priority for good quality legal, accommodation and translation services is indicative of the weaknesses of the NASS system.

CHANGING ENTITLEMENTS AND TANGIBLE BARRIERS

There are separate human rights systems based on legal status with a decline in entitlements to rights for asylum seekers since the early 1990s. This has been a part

of an overall qualitative shift in the key principles relating to accessing national welfare rights with 'notions of need and entitlement' becoming secondary to 'issues of claim and contribution' (Dwyer, 2005:636). For asylum seekers, this shift has become particularly acute with asylum legislation progressively changing entitlements for accessing financial services, accommodation and the entitlement to work. These have already been charted by Burchart and are replicated in full with slight amendments for clarity:

Figure 7.1: Changing Entitlements of Asylum Seekers

	1993 Act	1996 Act	1999 Act	2002 Act
Benefits				
Claim made 'at port'	90% IS + all other	90% IS + HB + CTB only	No benefits. Excluded from 1948 and 1989 Acts. Vouchers (value 70% IS) + Dispersal	NASS cash support if applied 'as soon as reasonably practicable' and would otherwise be destitute (value 70% IS)
Claim made 'in-country'	90% IS + all other	No benefits. LA support through 1948 National Assistance Act and 1989 Children Act if otherwise destitute	As above	No benefits. NASS support only if denial would constitute human rights abuse
Housing	Housing Benefit. LA housing. Restricted access to homelessness assistance	Excluded from waiting lists for LA housing	All rights to social housing removed. NASS accommodation arranged through compulsory dispersal	'At port' applicants: induction centres followed by NASS dispersal 'In-country' applicants: NASS only if denial would constitute human rights abuse
Right to Work	No restrictions	Not for first six months	Not for first six months	Not for duration of asylum claim

Legend: IS = Income Support; HB = Housing Benefit; CTB = Council Tax Benefit; LA = Local Authority; NASS = National Asylum Support Service

Source: Burchart, 2004

The 1999 Act excluded asylum seekers from a number of mainstream benefits³²². Due to the separate NASS system asylum seekers do not qualify for several other benefits³²³ and these represent tangible ways in which asylum seekers are socially excluded.

One of the themes of interviews and focus groups was a reflection on this tightening of asylum legislation and several times direct comparisons were made between the contemporary situation for asylum seekers and the way in which refugees had been dispersed in the past. Asylum seekers survive in the UK without the permanent protection and associated rights of refugee status and legal status was clearly a major and discernable qualitative difference. A refugee who had arrived over a decade ago expressed this in clear terms:

*'When you look back in comparison to what other people have to do these days in order to seek protection, I was in a very privileged position. I think that if I was a young woman coming out of Iraq nowadays I wouldn't have a chance in hell.'*³²⁴

This of course relates not only to UK policies but to global dynamics of conflict and shifts in provision of UNHCRs 'durable solutions' (Crisp, 1999). However, these reflections highlighted the tangible barriers to accessing services due to the more restrictive entitlements and legislative framework. This was confusing for RSPs and asylum seekers alike as well as being described as 'harsh', 'unfriendly' and 'frustrating' by agencies. Several tangible barriers to accessing services such as access to interpreters and legal services emanate from this tightened legislation and will be addressed in turn below in relation to dispersal.

³²² Under Section 115 of the 1999 Act: 'No person is entitled to income-based jobseeker's allowance ... or to – (a) attendance allowance, (b) severe disablement allowance, (c) invalid care allowance, (d) disability living allowance, (e) income support, (f) working families' tax credit, (g) disabled person's tax credit, (h) a social fund payment, (i) child benefit, (j) housing benefit, (k) council tax benefit'.

³²³ Additional entitlements under the mainstream benefits system that asylum seekers are not entitled to include bereavement benefits, carer's allowances, incapacity benefit, industrial injuries benefit, maternity allowance, pension credit, retirement pension, statutory adoption pay, statutory maternity or paternity pay or statutory sick pay (Refugee Council, 2004b).

³²⁴ D1; interview with female representative of RCO, London, November 2002.

TEMPORARY SERVICES

Letters from the Home Office detail the ‘temporary admission’ of asylum seekers into the UK pending refugee status determination and letters from NASS replicate this wherein reporting requirements – to police stations at set periods – and temporary accommodation during this period of temporary admission are detailed. Letters relating to health and dental services also detail this ‘temporary registration’:

‘They give you an appointment. Not your real doctor – it is temporary. First I got a temporary doctor. When will I get a real one?’³²⁵

This asylum seeker had a letter from his GP regarding his registration which was shown in bold as being temporary registration pending the outcome of his RSD. Referring to when he would obtain a ‘real’ doctor was clearly a reference to when he would be able to be registered permanently. There was a consensus on this issue in interviews with asylum seekers, refugees, RCOs as well as RSPs. This impermanence of services was not necessarily known by local residents who did not know that a negative asylum decision would involve loss of accommodation and other services³²⁶.

The liminality of the NASS system was clearly reinforced by this temporary access to services meaning that central policy had a major impact on local level access to services. This temporary access to services had been institutionalised with separate teams for ‘asylum seekers’ and ‘refugees’ the norm in the voluntary and other sectors.

ACCESS TO SERVICES

If nationality, background, past socio-economic status, education, socialisation, religion and other variables of asylum seekers are considered, it is clear that asylum seekers are as heterogeneous as the existing population of the UK. In *Chapter 6* several aspects lost in the focus on an administrative process were identified emanating from the experience of becoming a refugee. Provision of services for this

³²⁵ A8; participant of focus group, Leicester, July 2003.

population was therefore an extremely complex and difficult task and this heterogeneity meant that it was difficult to generalise about accessing services with the broad consensus being that different areas and groups of asylum seekers often had a variety of needs:

*'The person might be ready for employment or they might need mental health services. It depends on the person.'*³²⁷

Disaggregating the data on this issue led to national, local and individual levels being identified. National policies and national media coverage of asylum seekers had considerable impact on access to services at a local level:

*'In Leicester, people who are at the very margins of society, have low income, have got high unemployment, they have got problems in their community – they see houses completely kitted out with all new stuff and then they see asylum seekers moving in, so they are up in arms that this has been provided, they are getting all this free. So you get the [name of national newspaper], a double page spread about all this new stuff that has gone into these houses in [name of deprived area] and one of the asylum seekers has complained that he hasn't got a TV, which is a corruption of what was said, the paper doesn't report the following week that these houses had been broken into and boilers had been stripped, fridges had gone, and that was the poor deprived people of that estate, you know.'*³²⁸

As shown in *Chapter 5*, dispersal was mainly to areas such as this deprived area being described. The area described above was one of high unemployment and social exclusion. The relationship between asylum seekers in this dispersal area and the 'deprived' existing community was clearly tense and coverage by a national newspaper had added to this tension. The cycle of social exclusion in this deprived area of one deprived district was maintained with asylum seekers at the centre. Negative media coverage was identified often and the impact of this on individual service providers was commented upon by this same interviewee:

'There is a tremendous amount of awareness and good work going on. But when it comes down to the individual you have to deal with very often they have a low level of understanding and a narrow knowledge. Asylum seekers are entitled to services just as much as anybody else. ... We have had

³²⁶ B4; focus group with female representatives of the voluntary sector, Leicester, July 2003.

³²⁷ D4; interview with female representative of RCO, London, June 2003.

³²⁸ B4; focus group with female representatives of the voluntary sector, Leicester, July 2003.

hospitals ring here [the RSP office] and say they are not entitled to access healthcare. Absolute nonsense. There is a lack of understanding. All this negative stuff that people hear. Regardless of whether someone is working in a certain capacity, they are still influenced by what they read and what they see on TV. And that does create problems.'

The same interviewee expressed how the new intensity and negativity in the debate plus the qualitatively different context within which contemporary compulsory dispersal was operating under compared with the arrival of Kosovan refugees to contemporary dispersal. Commenting how positive images on the TV during the Kosovan crisis created goodwill locally and affected access to services:

'People were working through the night to get accommodation ready. ... There was a lot of positive stuff in the media and that shaped how people were able to access services. ... It has changed. Even though we had a lot of existing forums and people were aware, the method, the legalities, it is completely different. People don't seem to equate people that came from Kosovo with the people who come now for example from Iraq, Afghanistan or even European countries.'

This link to the negative media and the inferred impact on local goodwill towards refugees was a topic referred to by several participants. The tangible effects of this on how asylum seekers access services related to the general perception of asylum seekers which had, as argued, its source in legislation and polemic images due to the deterrence context within which asylum policies were conceived.

Access to both health and educational services was also often referred to by representatives of agencies as being a part of a context of shortage of the general decline in these services for the rest of the population of the UK. Some reluctance from mainstream agencies to engage with issues of access for asylum seekers were balanced by other accounts that were completely opposite and considerable work had been conducted to facilitate this. The quality of services for asylum seekers was an issue being addressed in dispersal locations.

However, the main national barrier to accessing services was identified once again as immigration status and the implications of this status in terms of the 'charity' approach of some organisations. Again linking the impact of a national policy to the local level a representative of a RCO commented:

*'Apart from all the access issues there is always an issue of having the same rights to access these services. Even though your welcoming pack is saying you can enrol with the local GP, as soon as you settle yourself down and go to your local GP they say, sorry we are full. And there is no next step from that. Because you don't have the same rights as others there is always a barrier to accessing services.'*³²⁹

This issue linked to the quality, form and availability of information provided to asylum seekers. There was difference of opinion about how information should be provided with the then current practice being provision of written information. Outlining the difficulties with this type of written information, comments were made about how this did not take into account individuals with an oral history or visual learning background:

'There is no translated information. Even if there are information points they make it inaccessible for refugees. ... When they arrive they get a pack full of organisations, some of them translated into different languages. They get the pack and then [the RSP] say OK you are fine, you have all the information. This pack is useful for me as a professional but the first day you arrive in London, even in your own language, if you have a housing issue go to this organisation, etc. It doesn't say the organisation actually has a person speaking your language. Impossible.'

Factoring in considerations about the country of origin was largely absent with regard to these lists with several scenarios existing in relation to services in the countries of origin. Firstly, services similar to those on offer may not exist. Secondly, asylum seekers may not be aware of the services on offer. Thirdly, they may not be aware that they have the right to access these services so they do not seek them out. Fourthly, if they do wish to find a particular service there are other barriers such as childcare. For this RCO representative, the entire focus of providing written information was a wasted resource because it was not suitable for refugees who needed one to one assistance:

*'So giving them that pack does not do any good at all. Because the pack goes to the bin. You need somebody to go through one-by-one if they need to access anything.'*³³⁰

³²⁹ D4; interview with female representative of RCO, London, June 2003.

³³⁰ D4; interview with female representative of RCO, London, June 2003.

This was reiterated by another RCO member who commented how asylum seekers would arrive in their office with these lists of telephone numbers and addresses, asking for them to call hostels or accommodation providers on their behalf. An asylum seeker commented on how the list alone was not enough:

*'They [RSP] told me to go the solicitor. They gave me a list of solicitors on the paper. I went to my cousin and he helped me find a good solicitor.'*³³¹

The lists were clearly only the starting point to accessing services. Although translation of these lists and 'welcome packs' by some agencies was underway, it was clear that trusted family, friends and members of RCOs were sought out to assist in the process for those individuals not isolated during dispersal. Thus, whilst agencies contracted to NASS were fulfilling their contractual obligations to assist refugees accessing services, the way in which information was provided was not always suitable.

Refugee-specific services in dispersal locations had to play 'catch up' rapidly upon the initial implementation of dispersal due to speed at which the NASS system was set up. In particular legal services and access to health and education were issues not properly thought out prior to dispersal. It was therefore unsurprising that mainstream services were reportedly taking more time to provide good quality services. Representatives of RSPs and RCOs in London and the regions commented on how services followed dispersal³³² and the overall context of shortage of services. That there was a debate about whether or not asylum seekers should be able to access services was indicative of their social exclusion and 'outsider' status.

Relocation during dispersal had considerable impact on how asylum seekers accessed services. However difficult to generalise about services, certain issues were identified surrounding specific services and it was clear that asylum seekers placed priority particular services largely due to the deterrence context and the structure for implementing dispersal.

³³¹ A10; focus group participant, Leicester, July 2003.

³³² B5; focus group with female representatives of the voluntary sector, Leicester, July 2003.

Legal Services: The Highest Priority

Access to good quality legal services (my emphasis) came out as the most important and essential element of claiming asylum in the UK and was a high priority for every interviewee. The issue of relocation and trust in relation to legal services has already been touched upon in *Chapter 6*. There was consensus amongst asylum seekers, refugees, representatives of RCOs and RSPs that the current RSD process was not reliable. There was a lack of trust in the political system to obtain status and the institution of the Home Office was not trusted. Asylum seekers dispersed by NASS were therefore forced to obtain good quality legal advice due to this lack of quality in the RSD process.

There was a wide variety of quality in the legal representation available. Access to good quality legal advice was arbitrary and the asylum process, from the initial interview through to any subsequent appeal stage, was again referred to as a 'lottery'³³³, dependent upon the Home Office caseworker or subsequent appeal adjudicator. The importance, therefore, of good quality legal advice in dispersal areas was extremely high and asylum seekers were fully prepared, once they had found a good solicitor, to retain their solicitors in the original city they found themselves in upon arrival in the UK and subsequently travelled long distances to access these services even though no provision through NASS was made for funding this travel. For example an asylum seeker described how she preferred to travel to her original solicitor in Birmingham each time rather than get a new solicitor in Bristol:

*'My solicitor is in Birmingham because I was in Wolverhampton first and I don't want to change the solicitor because it causes a lot of problems. I travel every time.'*³³⁴

This was not an isolated case and for this individual who arrived in London, was dispersed to Wolverhampton, obtained a solicitor in Birmingham, attended screening interviews in Liverpool and had been relocated to Bristol the problems mentioned revolved around trust. She had found a solicitor she trusted and that solicitor had

³³³ Comment made by solicitor during asylum appeal case at Immigration Appellate Authority, Feltham, Middlesex, November 2004.

already been able to ascertain details of her individual case history in the limited time allowed for solicitors for each asylum seeker.

A solicitor working in a dispersal city commented on how the balance of legal work had tipped from immigration to asylum work since the mid 1990s and that this was causing some resentment within longer established BME communities:

'But asylum has taken over from immigration. As a result we sometimes have lots of queries from established [BME] communities, they say, 'how about us?', 'why can't you make an appointment for us?'. To some extent, a degree of hidden resentment has been created because of the meat that is created by the media – that asylum seekers come and take everything. Some of the established ones say, 'oh, it has become harder because of asylum seekers.'

As shown in *Chapter 5*, 70% of all BME communities live in the 88 most deprived districts (ODPM, 2004:5) and dispersal was mainly to these same areas. That resentment from the '*established*' BME communities was perceived was not, therefore, surprising. This added to social tensions. This solicitor also commented on how the sheer scale of asylum work being undertaken had an affect on their ability to campaign:

'Also, our campaigning capacity has been reduced because of the sheer volume of casework. Anything I do now is in my spare time.'

Restrictions on the number of hours they could spend on each case also meant that campaigning in spare time was not sustainable:

'At the moment, if we do more than 15 hours work on a case we have to get permission. On average we do between 35 and 50 hours or more. We do far more than we have been claiming for. They are closing the fence around refugees from different angles.'

The introduction of tighter restrictions had not been matched with more resources. Nor had they been matched with higher quality in the decision making process. This solicitor was, in fact, adamant that the quality of these decisions was much worse than a decade ago:

³³⁴ A1; participant in focus group; Bristol, July 2003.

'I can assure you that the quality of caseworker compared to ten years ago is phenomenally bad [solicitors' emphasis]. If you look at any decision made by the Home Office you can see they have just cut and paste from one file to another. They get names wrong, they get countries wrong, in one part of the decision it says you are to be removed to Iraq and in the next paragraph they are sending you to Turkey, then on the front page the nationality is Somali. What is this?'

Unlike the measured tone earlier in this interview, this comment was made in an animated and exasperated way. This resonates with the earlier discussion on the lack of space for political or institutional trust to be restored during the process.

Accommodation: A Policing Role for Landlords

Tomlins *et. al.* noted that the housing careers of Vietnamese refugees were disadvantaged by the dispersal policy (2002). They found that ethnicity played a greater influence on the location than tenure of housing and that ethnicity was a 'positive resource which Vietnamese households have used to address the shortcoming of governmental and bureaucratic public policy' with the official dispersal policy being counteracted by secondary migration (2002:518).

In a workshop at the Home Office integration conference in 2004 a question was posed about which agencies had significant influence on housing asylum seekers. After immediately dividing asylum seekers from refugees the group, mainly consisting of services providers, listed the complex array of agencies influencing accommodation patterns (see Appendix XXIV). What this annotated list shows is the importance, in second place after NASS, of contracted private accommodation providers, followed by local authorities and RSLs and a range of other agencies illustrating the number but less dominant influences on housing. For refugees, several different agencies such as the benefits agency were influential.

A key part of the network of monitoring of asylum seekers was carried out by these accommodation providers. The monitoring and reporting role included in NASS contracts involved reporting to the Home Office any injury, accident, serious illness or death of individual asylum seekers. It also involved reporting violent or aggressive incidents which may have a negative effect on the reputation of the Home

Office or individual accommodation provider. Accommodation providers were able to move asylum seekers out of properties if there was a dispute with local neighbours or agencies. A list of policing roles for the accommodation provider included suspecting asylum seekers of being engaged in criminal activities, living beyond their means, working for payment, fraud, allegations of sexual or physical abuse and theft of belongings. Any absences of more than a few days or persistent absences from the accommodation were also to be reported to the Home Office. By 2005, the management of minor anti-social and violent behaviour was recorded by accommodation providers and a record of incidents supplied to the Home Office and the local authority. Having tenants (or their children) sign to show their presence has already been touched upon in the previous chapter. This contractual obligation for accommodation providers to report an asylum seeker absent from their property was evidence of the control aspect of the NASS system although some housing providers were flexible in their interpretation of NASS rules:

*'[the sub-contractor] should report if he [an asylum seeker] isn't in the house for three days. If they have some evidence that he is not in the house they should report that to NASS. In reality they don't in this case. But other may do.'*³³⁵

Another contractual obligation was to facilitate access to educational, health and other services for asylum seekers with the location of bedspaces close to post offices, local facilities and support groups³³⁶. The 'lottery' aspect of dispersal again appeared in relation to this highlighting that the implementation of dispersal was characterised by a lack of consistency:

*'Having fought their way through all the bureaucracy to get what they need they are moved on. It depends very much on who is their accommodation provider. It is very much a lottery as to who is your provider and whether they get assistance or they have to do it over again themselves.'*³³⁷

For asylum seekers accommodation was a high priority and accessing accommodation that was not shared and was in areas without high levels of deprivation had been actively sought out by a number of interviewees.

³³⁵ N1; interview with representative of voluntary organisation, dispersal location, November 2003.

³³⁶ G1; interview with male representative of sub-contractor to PAP, dispersal location, June 2003.

³³⁷ B5; focus group with female representatives of the voluntary sector, Leicester, July 2003.

It was found that factionalism was not taken seriously during allocation of accommodation and in one case proved, quite literally, to be fatal. An unpublicized murder³³⁸ of a male asylum seeker due to two differing nationalities sharing the same room in private accommodation illustrated how the concept of ‘warring factions’ being kept apart had not been considered:

‘We have had trouble with the police for various reasons. We have had a murder – one asylum seeker has been arrested and accused of murdering another asylum seeker. We have had stabbings and attempted stabbings between asylum seekers.’³³⁹

Little detail was provided of the murder during this interview but in a subsequent focus group a refugee recounted the specific details who cautiously outlined how the murder had occurred over a religious dispute between two asylum seekers of different nationalities who were sharing the same room in private accommodation. It appeared that this dispute over religion had been basis of each individuals claim for persecution and because this had not been considered two individuals with opposing religious beliefs, were placed in one bedroom. The individual recounting the details of this murder was extremely cautious, choosing words particularly carefully to describe events. Commenting on the perceived consequences and real implications for their family if they were to ‘*put pen to paper*’ about this murder for a local BME newspaper they said; ‘*What consequences would I have for writing about this?*’. This caution was due directly to their status as a refugee in the UK and the involvement of the police in this case. Conflict emerged due to the way in which dispersal had been planned and it was the subsequent implementation of dispersal that had led to such murders, stabbings and anti-social behaviour.

Whereas in the past refugees were considered too vulnerable to be at the mercy of private landlords, dispersal was largely based on the privatisation of accommodation provision through a selection process that was not transparent. Dispersal was not only led by accommodation, it was led mainly by access to private accommodation and was, in the words of one RSP representative:

³³⁸ Details of the murder case did not reach even the local papers, dispersal location, June 2003.

*'All the accommodation is quite far away from the city where it is cheap, not central. Business wise that makes sense.'*³⁴⁰

During implementation by PAPs, dispersal was about costs and this meant that cheap accommodation, in deprived areas, was utilised rather than providing service or support.

Translators and Interpretation Services

Another high priority was access to **good quality** translation and interpretation services in the specific dialects of the individual asylum seeker. The rapid development of interpretation services upon implementation of dispersal was another example of how services had to catch up with asylum seekers. Unsurprisingly access to interpretation services throughout the entire process were considered by those unable to converse in English as a high priority. For asylum seekers who arrived in very small numbers such as the Burmese, dispersal still meant locating individuals in different cities where no interpretation services were available. As of March 2003 there was a total of 21 Burmese asylum seekers dispersed across the UK in 10 different dispersal locations. This provision of interpretation for smaller groups was commented upon by a PAP:

*'We have got the main languages but they do come from far afield – Vietnam, China. Sometimes we get caught out on languages.'*³⁴¹

Even when interpretation services were in place, dialects and the ability to trust interpreters were both barriers to access. An asylum seeker viewed himself as a *'victim of translation'*³⁴² in that his application for asylum had been turned down on a point of credibility that related to a translation error in his initial interview. He had said he was from the south of a particular town and the translator had mistranslated this to the south of the country. The translator in this case was Kurdish who spoke Arabic but did not speak the dialect of the Sudanese individual. It was clear that

³³⁹ G1; interview with male representative of sub-contractor to PAP, dispersal location, June 2003.

³⁴⁰ B3; joint-interview with representatives of voluntary sector, Bristol, June 2003.

³⁴¹ G1; interview with male representative of sub-contractor to PAP, dispersal location, June 2003.

³⁴² A13; interview with male asylum seeker, Bristol, November 2003.

dialects were not properly catered for throughout the RSD and NASS process with a solicitor in a dispersal location commenting:

*'We have confronted this issue many times. For example in Farsi, they do use the same language but dialects are very different.'*³⁴³

The trust of interpreters was related closely to the issue of factionalism. A Kosovan asylum seeker discussed how he did not trust the interpreter provided to him by the RSP in his dispersal city:

*'The translator is from Kosovo. I have a problem with that. The place where I live, yes, he is from Kosovo.'*³⁴⁴

Whilst the particular politics of these two individuals were not explored due to the limitations of the focus group context, it was clear from the emphasis he placed on this that he did not trust this interpreter. This was encountered a number of times with asylum seekers but was not a consideration with agencies interviewed.

Children of asylum seekers acting as interpreters at GP practices and other agencies was mentioned a few times during interviews and during workshops at conferences³⁴⁵.

Health and Dental Services

Access to health services and interpretation was clearly a problem in both Bristol and Leicester. In Bristol an asylum seeker discussed how he had been refused registration with the GP because he was at a hostel and had temporary status³⁴⁶. The power to define access to health services based on immigration was therefore clearly problematic. Another asylum seeker discussed how he was on a waiting list for a gall stone operation which had been discovered through obtaining medical evidence of torture³⁴⁷. Because he had come to the end of the NASS system and was being

³⁴³ Telephone conversation with solicitor in dispersal location, November 2003.

³⁴⁴ A6; focus group participant, Leicester, July 2003.

³⁴⁵ Access to health workshop, Action for Refugee Women, International Women's Day, London, 6 March 2003.

³⁴⁶ A11; joint-interview with asylum seeker, Bristol, November 2003.

³⁴⁷ A13; interview with asylum seeker, Bristol, November 2003.

evicted from NASS accommodation he did not know how he would be able to access medical support whilst homeless. Whilst this interview was conducted prior to April 2004 when refused asylum seekers were no longer entitled to ongoing medical support, this individual was under the impression that not having an address meant he would not be able to access any medical treatment. In Leicester this issue of continuity of care was also encountered earlier in the NASS system:

*'Ensuring continuity of care if they are on medication when they leave EA is difficult. Making sure they do not run out of medication before they have got set up in the dispersal area.'*³⁴⁸

It was also the case that in Leicester access to health services was problematic due to the closure of GP practices:

'Access to health is a big problem because GPs practices are closing down. There are some who will not take refugees and asylum seekers because they couldn't get an interpreter.'

Health services required access to interpreters and good quality translation could make the difference between diagnosis and misdiagnosis. It was clear from both service providers and asylum seekers that access to interpretation was a problem during dispersal in both Bristol and Leicester:

*'NHS doctors are supposed to provide interpreters for asylum seekers when they make an appointment but apparently they don't usually do that so they are not following the law as they are supposed to.'*³⁴⁹

*'Even, when I was in [another dispersal city] I would talk with the doctor and he said he would offer me a translator. They give me appointment but he [the translator] was not there.'*³⁵⁰

Because the services of GPs are arranged on a temporary basis, provision of good quality interpretation services was made more difficult. This also applied to access to dental services, again provided on a temporary basis:

³⁴⁸ B5; focus group with female representatives of the voluntary sector, Leicester, July 2003.

³⁴⁹ G1; interview with male representative of sub-contractor to PAP, dispersal location, June 2003.

³⁵⁰ A5; focus group participant, Leicester, July 2003.

*'We arranged to see a doctor but there was no interpreter. We didn't speak any English. We couldn't explain to the doctor what was wrong. We didn't go to the dentist until it was an emergency.'*³⁵¹

The difficulty of accessing dentists also meant that some asylum seekers kept their registration with a dentist in the original city they found themselves in prior to relocation:

*'I did not change my dentist because I prefer to travel each time. Because you must start again each time you move.'*³⁵²

One participant of a focus group in Leicester described how he had been in pain for three months because he was unable to access a dentist. He had not realised that a telephone number for a dentist had been included on the information sheet he was given two months earlier and even when he had found it could not use the telephone to call due to his lack of English. Several agencies in dispersal had been approached in an attempt to locate a dentist – his RSP (who talked fast and gave him another piece of paper), solicitor and accommodation provider – all in vain until ultimately he located one through his ESOL teacher on the day of my visit.

Research has been carried out on how asylum seekers access health services during dispersal which also identified how relocation made registration with GPs difficult and problems with interpretation due to the high number of languages in dispersal areas (Johnson, 2003).

Burnett and Peel have also discussed events during the 'refugee experience' such as massacres, detention, torture and rape in relation to the health of asylum seekers (2001). The background of individuals and their particular health requirements were not fully covered by the dispersal process. Physical health issues were sometimes dealt with but issues of depression stemming from the refugee experience were rarely considered upon the decision to disperse them. There is a long established recognition that poverty is a primary cause of ill-health (Pantazis and Gordon, 1997:135). That dispersal did not take into account the physical health issues that

³⁵¹ A9; focus group participant, Leicester, July 2003.

³⁵² A1; focus group participant, Bristol, July 2003.

asylum seekers arrive with before placing them into deprived areas was another aspect lost during its rapid implementation.

Different organisations were at different stages of understanding gender issues but there was evidence that RSPs were adapting their services to incorporate the needs of women:

*'Females from some countries are quite hesitant to go and see a male doctor so we try to arrange an appointment for them, at least a female nurse. If possible a female doctor but if not at least they are going to have a female person with them to make them more comfortable. ... We noticed that a lot of female asylum seekers felt so lonely and deprived from services and the facilities that the city can offer. Because of that they felt quite scared to go out and quite vulnerable to go out on their own.'*³⁵³

Issues such as women being isolated, lonely, scared and being threatened in dispersal locations were also highlighted by interviewees, focus groups, conferences and practitioner reports and were related to their general well-being (Dumper, 2002).

Financial Support: NASS

During interviews and focus groups it was clear that asylum seekers were disillusioned by NASS. The level of inefficiencies of NASS were well documented (Fekete, 2001; The Guardian, 2001). For example, a report from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) in October 2002 set out a 'catalogue of evidence demonstrating the deep-rooted problems with the standard of serviced provided by NASS' (2002b).

These errors in administration were still evident during the period of this research and during one focus group in a dispersal area, six errors had been or were still being experienced by participants. One participant had been granted support but her children had not and this had caused considerable confusion. She had been left for two weeks with no money with a computer omission in NASS being the cause of this. Another participant had also been told by NASS that she had a sister with the inference being that this sister would be able to support her:

³⁵³ B3; joint-interview with representatives of voluntary sector, Bristol, June 2003.

'I was on the phone every day to NASS. Another person told me I had a sister on their computer and that they couldn't give me money. I said you can't say I have a sister if I haven't!'.³⁵⁴

These mistakes were being made largely because of the lack of continuity within NASS; each time she contacted the office, another caseworker would be dealing with her file and she would need to repeat her requests another time. She had ultimately had her case closed by NASS without her knowledge because not all the documents requested had been received.

Education: Child and Adult

Castles *et al.* identified education and training as a gap in substantive research in relation to integration in relation to recent immigration (2002:81). This area requires considerable further investigation but several issues emerged as a result of dispersal.

Rutter mapped refugee education in the UK before dispersal began (1998) and in 2003 detailed the effects that the NASS system was having on children's education and well-being. These effects related to the long wait in emergency accommodation; inefficiencies of the processing of financial support by NASS; and poverty levels due to income support being below national levels. Rutter also found that school uniforms were beyond the budget of parents who were dispersed and that secondary migration to London was high.

Education for children was a high priority for parents with relocation being a main cause of disruption when children were in school, in terms of continuity of education, problems with admissions, certification and provision of uniform. This was identified during interviews and focus groups with asylum seekers as well as during conferences organised by RCOs and RSPs. In relation to the education of children it was clear that social exclusion occurred due to relocation which would have future ramifications. As one asylum seeker relocated from private accommodation in the West Midlands to accommodation held by the same company in the Southwest, commented:

*'Sometimes they tell you, you have two weeks and you must move. If you have children this is trouble. They move you when they want. It is not good for me or for the children because my child, she missed her technology exam because it was the middle [of the term]. She had nearly finished her programme and since we came here she hasn't gone to school. My son lost his highest level exams – he only did the highest level in French, not technology because we couldn't find a school. If you say no they stop the money so you must.'*³⁵⁵

The speed at which relocations occurred and the lack of continuity of education was clearly problematic. The syllabus in different areas of the country was also highlighted by this mother and others – with one mother deciding to keep her children in their original schools when she had been dispersed from Reading, which was not an official dispersal location, to Nottingham, which was³⁵⁶. Provision of financial support for purchase of school uniforms was not provided by NASS in these or other cases.

Admission to schools was also problematic. In Leicester, some schools had informally excluded refugee children through strict admissions criteria:

*'In terms of education some schools think they have enough languages and they have enough refugee children and they do not want any more. So there are barriers for the children who do not meet the criteria.'*³⁵⁷

Problems surrounding certification was also identified in relation to these barriers to accessing education for children:

'There can be problems with getting children into school. They do not have their birth certificates to prove their age. They don't know what year they were born in. They can't prove if they were born before or after September for the school term.'

For adults, admission clauses in FE colleges and universities meant that ESOL classes were often an option but vocational training and taking up degrees were not

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ A1; participant in focus group, Bristol, July 2003.

³⁵⁶ Female participant in Action for Refugee Women conference, International Women's Day, London, March 2004.

³⁵⁷ B4; focus group with female representatives of the voluntary sector, Leicester, July 2003.

possible until 'home' status was obtained after a period of three years in the UK³⁵⁸. This exclusion directly due to legal status was identified during interviews and conferences as one of the ways in which social exclusion was reinforced at a local level, adding to the liminality already being experienced due to the asylum and NASS systems. Whilst such issues surrounding status were not specific to dispersal the local perceptions of asylum seekers were influenced by these regulations. In one dispersal location an interviewee of a FE college commented on how these perceptions acted as an information barrier to education:

*'I have seen that on the campus there are cases when students come to apply for a course and they need a bit of language support. They get sent to ESOL because someone feels, oh well, this person is not speaking English the way I think they should so I'll send him to ESOL. I have received a huge number of forms from students applying to do computing, healthcare and other courses. But someone does not understand and sends them in the wrong direction. The general idea is that if you are a refugee you need to go to ESOL. Not all departments, but some people do misunderstand.'*³⁵⁹

This perception that asylum seekers should automatically be directed to ESOL classes rather than other vocational courses with language support was prevalent in government discourse about the educational requirements of asylum seekers. Some RCOs were providing classes for adult asylum seekers and refugees based on ESOL combined with IT classes with transport and childcare costs provided³⁶⁰.

As well as these structural barriers to education, particular difficulties due to the financial limitations inherent in the NASS system were apparent. One participant explained how she needed two buses to get to ESOL classes but no travel expenses paid by NASS or the college:

'They should understand that some of us are away from the college. We have to change onto two buses to get here. My husband and I, it is double, we have to pay every day.'

The location of accommodation in areas away from colleges was clearly an unresolved issue. If this situation is compared to a past case of a refugee with

³⁵⁸ Questions on enrolment forms related to this status.

³⁵⁹ Interview with male representative of FE college, dispersal location, July 2003.

³⁶⁰ D2; interview with male representative of RCO, London, May 2003.

nursing skills who arrived with very little English before the denial of permission to work and worked as an ancillary nurse in a maternity ward, carrying out basic tasks and learning relevant vocational English as she worked, social exclusion was clearly apparent. The relationship between past permanent status and rights as opposed to current temporary rights shows a complicated but sophisticated form of social exclusion. A former Minister may already be literate and multilingual and the challenges of learning English may be much less than those faced by preliterate individuals. The barriers to accessing education were therefore extremely variable.

Several interviewees commented on how the hardest things to learn in the UK were the idiosyncrasies, sense of humour and ironies of everyday life. These were not things that could be learned in a classroom but were essential for any form of 'integration' and employment was identified as the best route to this informal sense of inclusion. However, access to training for employment as well as employment advice for asylum seekers had essentially been removed from the equation in the implementation of dispersal due to the denial of permission of work. As discussed in *Chapter 5* and *6*, dispersal locations were in areas of high unemployment (see *Appendix XX* and *XXI*). Carey-Wood *et al.* argued that refugees learn to trust and rebuild their lives through stable accommodation and, amongst other activities, gainful employment (1995). However, this route to restorative trust was not available to asylum seekers.

The lack of training for employment ran alongside a widespread confusion amongst employers about the legislation and regulations of migrants generally³⁶¹. In Leicester, a poster on the door of an employment agency specialising in unskilled and semi-skilled labour spelled this out (see *Appendix XXV*). The formal exclusion of asylum seekers from employment meant that the social integrationist discourse of social exclusion that emphasises paid employment as a route to inclusion was not relevant. Asylum seekers did not gain work experience during the liminal stage and the absence of UK based references for future employment had future ramifications.

³⁶¹ Speaker at *From Immigrants to New Citizens: Becoming a Citizen in 21st Century Britain*, Sponsored by Learndirect and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, London, 18 November 2003.

INTANGIBLE BARRIERS TO ACCESSING SERVICES

When dispersal was planned it was explicitly about deterrence and this was understood by agencies that ultimately fulfilled the role of implementation of dispersal. The human cost of this focus on deterrence was commented on several times during interviews and related to several intangible barriers such as self-confidence and self-esteem of individuals. Directly relating the more tangible barrier of language ability to the less tangible levels of self-confidence, a refugee participant suggested:

*'I think one of the big problems is language barrier. We can't communicate. ... Even when we start to learn, in my case, there was no confidence. For years I was here, only a few years ago, we were running a campaign, with different people, I thought I had to say something so I spoke publicly. Before that, I was campaigning here and there, I was writing here and there, but I didn't have the confidence to speak in English.'*³⁶²

Encouraging another participant of the focus group not to be anxious about her level of English, this same participant stated that she had not '*opened her mouth*' for two years upon arriving in the UK³⁶³. Low levels of self esteem were an intangible barrier to inclusion and were often related to the deterrence context. In the words of one solicitor making a presentation to a women's network in a dispersal location;

*'These are difficult times and strength is needed to support each other. Everyday it is negative and this affects self esteem. Each person has a personal story but people do not see that. People see only the negatives.'*³⁶⁴

The image of a refugee in the media and in the perception of the population of the UK had, in the eyes of one mental health professional, major impacts on the mental health of individual asylum seekers. Commenting that every time there was a new headline about asylum seekers, she saw:

'Mental health takes a nosedive every time there is a negative headline. The collective perception that refugees are scroungers, or whatever, brings shame directly to an individual asylum seeker. And they internalise that.'

³⁶² R2; focus group participant, Bristol, July 2003.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Presentation to women's network, dispersal location, February 2003.

*Now refugees in the media are 'scum', they are the 'worst of the worst'. Nobody in their right mind would want to identify with that.*³⁶⁵

Given the negative perception of asylum seekers, some asylum seekers did not feel as though they had the right to access certain services due to their *'life pending'*³⁶⁶ status. Another refugee made a direct link between liminality and mental health by commenting that:

*'When I was only temporary I was naturally depressed about it. I didn't admit it but I was.'*³⁶⁷

The issue of self esteem was also related to how socio-economic status for many asylum seekers had declined rapidly upon reaching the UK. A representative of a RSL commented on this *'story not told'*;

*'Doctors, teachers and lawyers who have had a high standard of living but are fleeing because of being a specific religion or ethnic group. They have come from a high standard of living to nothing. This takes their self worth because they have to depend on people or the government for a small amount of money. No one looks at the positive contributions.'*³⁶⁸

That asylum seekers turned to their own groups in these circumstances was not surprising. What was surprising was that details of how asylum seekers would even prefer to pay for services from their co-nationals rather than access free services were related to me on several occasions, particularly in relation to legal services. For example, one Burmese asylum seeker had a co-national write his antecedent history for him (for payment) rather than access this service for free through registered legal representatives.

The attitudes of frontline staff during access to mainstream services were informed by negative media coverage and the negative perception of asylum seekers that emanate from the legislative framework. For example, asylum seekers recounted

³⁶⁵ Telephone conversation with mental health professional, February 2006.

³⁶⁶ Speaker at *Hear My Voice: Refugee Women's Involvement in Integration*, Amnesty International Human Rights Centre, London, 15 June 2006.

³⁶⁷ K1; interview with refugee; dispersal location, July 2003.

³⁶⁸ M1; joint-interview with representatives of RSL, dispersal location, October 2003.

encountering hostility from counter staff at Post Offices and other mainstream services providers.

Asylum seekers and refugees also presented the idea that those who provided services to asylum seekers did not understand needs fully because 'users' of the system were not involved in devising services:

*'But another thing I tend to see is that the people themselves who assist refugees. They don't understand what people are going through – what refugees and asylum seekers are going through. They think they need something in the same way that the newspapers think.'*³⁶⁹

Again this highlighted how perceptions and the image of asylum seekers had a major impact on access to services. The issue of this negative representation of asylum seekers in the media arose several times during interviews with refugees and emerged during employment by RWA. Comparisons were drawn to white people representing black people, men representing women and able persons representing disabled persons. However, the power structures surrounding refugees do not allow adequate representation of refugees with the voluntary sector undertaking this as outlined in *Chapter 4*:

*'They have representatives for black people, or women, or disabled people, all kinds of disadvantaged people but not refugees. I have to say discrimination because I am a black woman, I am a refugee on top of that. So this is too much. You have to have a disabled person to help disabled people. If you want to help black people you have a black person to do that. If you want someone who works with refugees he needs to be a refugee. He understands more what a refugee or asylum seeker needs.'*³⁷⁰

The focus of campaigns from the voluntary sector have been, understandably, on aspects of recent asylum legislation and on influencing NASS to make the dispersal process less inefficient. However, the RSP dual role of 'pig in the middle'³⁷¹ between asylum seekers and NASS is a difficult and did mean that certain issues were left off the agenda. This categorisation of being black, a woman and a refugee illustrated how issues surrounding status and discrimination were considered of

³⁶⁹ K1; interview with representative of FE college, dispersal location, July 2003.

³⁷⁰ R1; focus group participant, Bristol, July 2003.

³⁷¹ B5; focus group with representatives of the voluntary sector, Leicester, July 2003.

equal importance to campaigns to influence the NASS system. A more participatory and beneficiary-based approach (Kaiser, 2002) would therefore incorporate more than advocacy surrounding the NASS system and legislation.

RSPs clearly approached their role from a micro and 'realist' perspective, incorporating the idea of a refugee experience. From this perspective, refugee-specific barriers to accessing services emanating out of the refugee experience were emphasised. This led to a position where asylum seekers needed to be represented. RCOs and asylum seekers, on the other hand, tended to approach their role from a more 'nominalist' and structural perspective. Emphasis was on lack of rights in relation to others. One representative of a RCO who had recently been invited to a meeting at the offices of a RSP in order to set up a women's network commented on this tension:

*'During that meeting I realised that the attitude was that refugees do not have enough capability to provide services to themselves or run their own group. There was a women's group there, much more politicised, much more aware of their own needs and more active than women's groups I work with here [London]. But that organisation in [dispersal location] did not want to see them as capable of running their own thing. They wanted to push their own agenda. They had the attitude of seeing themselves as the dominant group, capable of making decisions on behalf of others. They could see no other way of doing things even though someone was in front of them saying, no, it is not the way you should do it.'*³⁷²

This inability to hear what others had to say about what they wanted from the group had clearly been a frustration as each participant in this same meeting had different ideas about what their needs were and what the group should be set up to do. For the English speaking group (made up of Iranian, Zimbabwean, Burundian and Columbian women) these needs were expressed as addressing social isolation and the need for an independent campaigning group whereas an Albanian speaking group prioritised 'equality within the community' with longer term settlement and rights issues and respect for women also identified. These more structural perspectives were put forward by asylum seekers as barriers to accessing services.

³⁷² D4; interview with female representative of RCO, London, June 2003; discussion about meeting with female participants in a dispersal location, February 2003.

Asylum seekers and refugees have been separated, to differing degrees, in the eyes of service providers contracted to NASS by the way they provide services³⁷³. This reification of differences (Lewis, 2005) between asylum seekers and refugees was another intangible barrier in that it reinforced the liminality imposed on asylum seekers by the NASS system. The barriers to accessing services were closely related to the issue of trust, both social and institutional.

GAPS IN SERVICES IN DISPERSAL LOCATIONS

The structure and speed at which dispersal was implemented did not enable gender issues to be fully incorporated. There was little consideration of provision of female doctors, domestic violence or culturally specific services for gender-specific forms of persecution such as rape, 'honour' crimes or female genital mutilation (FGM). Cross-cutting issues of mental health, childcare and advocacy for rights were also difficult as they were not the responsibility of one agency.

The issue of domestic violence was initially identified as a gap in services prior to fieldwork taking place in dispersal areas due to the telephone calls being made to RCOs in London. This issue therefore emerged from these grassroots organisation within refugee communities and was related to the declining socio-economic status issues and dependent legal status of women outlined earlier. NASS did have a policy bulletin on domestic violence³⁷⁴ but this was largely unknown to asylum seekers beyond the offices of RSPs³⁷⁵. The extremely limited access to culturally specific services for domestic violence or rape counselling was unsurprising given the high number of nationalities dispersed to each location. These high numbers made provision of culturally specific services difficult to identify as well as implement. During fieldwork in dispersal areas, this sensitive issue was not related directly to me by asylum seekers or refugees but some key informants discussed how this was a gap in services. This would require further research.

³⁷³ For example, refugee service providers may have different teams for asylum seekers and refugees. The way in which funding is provided is partly responsible for this.

³⁷⁴ Policy Bulletin No.70.

³⁷⁵ Speaker at *Hear My Voice: Refugee Women's Involvement in Integration*, Amnesty International Human Rights Centre, London, 15 June 2006.

The issue of 'honour' crimes against female asylum seekers and refugees emerged from women's RCOs in London at the beginning of the fieldwork period. It was argued by these London-based RCOs that the source of persecution often follows women to the UK because family members are the perpetrators of these crimes. Calls for awareness that legal practices in countries of origin surrounding protecting family honour were not relevant in a UK context were made by London-based RCOs. Asylum seekers living in '*close social circles*' were considered to have difficulties with the expectations of refugee communities in relation to this and other domestic violence issues³⁷⁶. By the time of writing, 'honour' crimes had also emerged as a national issue due to the campaigning efforts of those within refugee communities.

Mental health emerged as major issues not catered for adequately during dispersal and geography was still a barrier to accessing this service as they were still catching up by 2003:

*'Things like counselling for trauma are generally not available outside of London and the Southeast at the moment. Rather the clients have moved first and services are now starting to catch up.'*³⁷⁷

With mental health it was recognised that pathologising asylum seekers was something to be avoided³⁷⁸. This was a difficult issue as different groups conceptualise mental health in different ways and could take some time to emerge as practical issues of immediate survival were a priority upon arrival³⁷⁹.

In dispersal areas, in order to access psycho-social support an asylum seeker would need to access a suitable GP through their accommodation provider. This GP would need to be tolerant towards asylum seekers, have good interpretation services and recognise the need for such services. Given the link between dispersal and deprivation, GPs were generally located in areas of high deprivation. Payne has

³⁷⁶ Speaker at *Hear My Voice: Refugee Women's Involvement in Integration*, Amnesty International Human Rights Centre, London, 15 June 2006.

³⁷⁷ B2; interview with female representative of Refugee Council, London, May 2003.

³⁷⁸ Civil Rights and Psychiatry in the UK: Civil Rights and Mental Health, Social Action for Health, London, 16 January 2003.

³⁷⁹ Speaker at *Refugees and Mental Health conference*, City & Hackney Primary Care Trust, Social Action for Health and Social Services, London, 8 October 2003.

already argued that the relationship between poverty and deprivation results in poor mental health (1997:159).

The provision of accommodation to asylum seekers and its link to poor mental health was evident during interviews. For two individuals in a focus group in Leicester who had attended ESOL classes without having had a shower for one week due to lack of hot water in their accommodation, the effect on their well-being was clear and there was no need to deliberate over the lack of English to understand the meaning of their statement: *'In the International Hotel everybody is going crazy!'*³⁸⁰. Depression was also mentioned, with one asylum seeker commenting how dispersal policies caused instability and depression. The inference that dispersal and poor mental health were linked was present during several interviews and focus groups.

Addressing 'refugee experiences' a document produced as part of the campaigning work of the London based Refugee Mental Health Action Group, stated:

'Social and economic deprivation, unemployment, homelessness, past and present trauma, racism, discrimination and isolation are major factors affecting the mental health of refugees. Addressing these issues within the specific social context of each person who is experiencing severe psychological distress is the key to the recovery process of that person.'³⁸¹

What can be seen within this quote is that there is no distinction drawn between trauma in the country of origin and the country of asylum with circumstances surrounding trauma described in both the past and present.

This research identified a real gap in knowledge and the provision of information about family reunification and a lack of basic information in relation to services around family tracing. There was very little knowledge of the Red Cross tracing service or the ways in which family reunification through UNHCR could be obtained. The emphasis on deterrence was a reason for this but it was still surprising that asylum seekers were not provided with any information regarding these. On three occasions, I was asked about how to arrange family reunification and on one

³⁸⁰ A6; focus group participant, Leicester, July 2003.

³⁸¹ *Compulsory Treatment is Not Treatment*, Refugee Mental Health Action Group, Social Action for Health, London.

occasion about how to trace family members. During the NASS process there was no facility for this due to the temporary status of admission. It was found that information about family reunification was difficult to find even for those wishing to begin the process in the country of origin to register their families with UNHCR in anticipation of reunification sometime in the future. Policy implications of this include expanding the knowledge of the Red Cross tracing service and the UNHCR family reunification programme of which interviewees had no prior knowledge.

There was little knowledge of the only service available to appeal against refusal of NASS support – the Asylum Support Adjudicators – particularly in areas where there was no RSP presence. Some asylum seekers did not know to dial 999 in an emergency. An expansion of the Medical Foundation for the Victims of Torture into dispersal locations was also requested by some asylum seekers as they were perceived as being more political and interested in refugees than GPs.

Gender was also often identified as a big issue in relation to accessing services, regardless of which nationality was being discussed but gendered data was not publicly available by NASS (Kofman *et.al.*, 2005) and further research on the gendered experiences of the NASS system would be warranted. The dependent legal status of women on the main asylum applicant centred on power structures within the private sphere in the UK as well as gender roles imported from countries of origin. One interviewee spoke of the '*cultural somersaults*'³⁸² that women in particular had to go through upon reaching the UK. These somersaults referred to the process of realisation that dependency on the male head of the household and gender roles from countries of origin no longer applied in legal as well as social terms. This was a lengthy and ongoing process and varied, with some women coming from countries of origin with equal rights and bureaucratic systems accessible to women. This diversity meant that it was difficult to generalise. For example, the particular problems associated with being a single mother in the Somali community due to 'khat' use by men was mentioned.

³⁸² D1; interview with female representative of RCO, London, November 2002.

RCOs provided a more holistic service to women because they were able to cater for the particular nationality in relation to childcare requirements, the accessibility of venues, travel expenses, the timing of courses and support systems necessary. These different needs of women and approach were outlined by one RCO representative:

'We don't say this is the training and when you are finished our job is finished. The women come with different needs. Even during the training you have to provide advice on housing, advice on childcare, advice on parenting, different kinds of issues we have to fix up or refer them to appropriate services. It is not only our core activities of education and employment, we do so many things. This is service provision on a one-to-one basis.'

Gaps in services were very evident during discussions with RCOs and their buffering role (*Chapter 4*) was one reason the dispersal process could continue.

Childcare came up time and time again as a major barrier to accessing services during interviews with asylum seekers, refugees and RCO representatives, during focus groups with asylum seekers, representatives of RCOs and RSPs, as well as being brought up by asylum seekers and refugees during conferences. Identified continually as a barrier, this issue cross-cut the entire process of access to services. In Leicester, one mother discussed this in terms of socialisation for her child. She was not aware of toddler groups so the park and the crèche at the FE college represented the only opportunities the child had to socialise with other children. This was not an isolated instance with other interviewees also mentioning the needs of finding ways in which to socialise children.

*'You need a crèche so that you can be involved in a class. The way to find out is by talking to people. They [RSP] didn't help us with anything. But we are happy to come to college. We put him in the crèche so he is playing with other children for two hours. If it was not for him we would not come to English classes. He can have children to play with. It is a big problem for him to play with other children. We take him to the park but we cannot take him every day.'*³⁸³

There were also problems identified with the areas in which women with children were placed and the local link between dispersal and deprivation. In Leicester,

³⁸³ A9; focus group participant, Leicester, July 2003.

accommodation provided to women had not factored in socialisation of children or the safety of women:

*'There has been a problem with inappropriate accommodation given to women. Women with young children put in places where there are a lot of pubs and do not go out.'*³⁸⁴

By the time of writing, projects surrounding gender were established in both Bristol and Leicester. In Leicester a women's development project and a 'routes to learning' project were established by Refugee Action, the latter project linking local education providers and RCOs to tailor language course for women³⁸⁵. Social exclusion, therefore, had a gender aspect to it with understanding and responses to this varying considerably. The intangible barriers to accessing services and issues that emerged in dispersal locations also related to the lack of gender awareness during the planning stage of dispersal.

CONCLUSIONS

Tangible barriers to accessing services have been created through asylum legislation since the 1990s due to the link between service provision and immigration status. The material presented in this chapter illustrates how dispersal enforced a regime of temporary services meaning that social exclusion at a local level was an inherent part of a dispersed asylum seekers experience. Similar issues emerging in different dispersal locations show how this local level social exclusion was a result of government policy rather than local conditions. Dispersal did not cater for the heterogeneity of asylum seekers needs, partly due to the temporal focus on stages of the process in the UK rather than the broader issues relating to refugees generally.

The relationship between asylum seekers and their remaining rights and entitlements illustrated the weaknesses of the NASS system. The importance placed on good quality legal services was a result of the asylum and NASS systems as well as the wider deterrence context. It was often the case that solicitors were located in initial dispersal cities and asylum seekers would prefer to travel to and from their offices

³⁸⁴ B5; focus group with female representatives of the voluntary sector, Leicester, July 2003.

when relocated. That asylum seekers did not receive travel expenses but still undertook these journeys at their own expense during a period of hardship indicated resistance to the difficulties imposed by dispersal. It also showed how institutional trust, once gained, was not easily relinquished.

Because of dispersal the privatisation of services for asylum seekers expanded considerably, grew faster and was able to be controlled more easily by NASS than any other sector. The policing of asylum seekers by private and public sector accommodation providers represents a further step in the shift to a culture of suspicion and mistrust identified in relation to agencies previously involved in replicating the role of the state as outlined at the beginning of this thesis.

Another weakness of the NASS system was access to good quality translation and interpretation services across the range of agencies offering services to asylum seekers and continuity of health care and a lack of dental services related to this. The retention of dentists in different regions of the country was indicative of not being able to access services in dispersal cities due to imposed temporariness of an asylum seekers presence. This willingness to travel to both legal and dental services indicated resistance to the policy-imposed liminality of the NASS system. Liminality was also resisted for children when parents chose to put children into crèches to enable socialisation. Disruption of education during relocation was an outcome of dispersal and there were clear examples of schools informally socially excluding refugee children through admissions criteria and certification issues. The future social exclusion of those granted refugee status was formally and informally assured due to the denial of permission to work.

Gender awareness has slowly evolved in the parallel system set up for dispersal. Issues have been being identified and campaigned for from within refugee communities and those working closest to asylum seekers. This resistance to homogeneity occurred and was partly an outcome of the rigid temporal focus on the process of dispersal by agencies contracted to NASS. Services surrounding gender-specific forms of persecution were largely absent when dispersal began and issues

³⁸⁵ Speaker at *Hear My Voice: Refugee Women's Involvement in Integration*, Amnesty International Human Rights Centre, London, 15 June 2006.

such as 'honour' crimes and domestic violence were again those that involved temporal conceptualisation beyond the focus on the administrative system. Gaps in services were invariably cross-cutting issues such as mental health and childcare which were not the responsibility of a single agency and as such were indicative of a lack of overall coordination throughout the system.

Intangible barriers to accessing services revolved around status and media coverage and resulted in low self-esteem and retreat into communities where social trust could be obtained. The lack of user-involvement in informing the policies of dispersal was indicative of the power structures ensuring social exclusion. The tension between asylum seekers and RSPs was the most visible point of these power structures due to the frontline role RSPs undertook in the NASS system. Asylum seekers were compelled to access services through agencies by invoking the victimhood facet of their identity which meant they were forced to go through extraordinary circumstances in the UK.

The inability to access permanent services and doubts about rights to access services negatively affects any sense of inclusion in the UK. Dispersal was about control and deterrence and accessing services that maintain asylum seekers in a state of liminality was one part of this overarching aim. In the next chapter 'belonging' is explored by viewing the trajectory of social networks asylum seekers maintain and create in order to move away from the NASS system. Attempts to reject the shame and stigma of the asylum seeker label are outlined as is how formal and informal social exclusion imposed by dispersal over time is resisted. Calls for the socially constructed category of asylum seeker to be shaken off and for refugees to be seen as normal people will be explored.

CHAPTER 8

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND BELONGING

INTRODUCTION

*'Most importantly, as a human, you are a social creature, so you have to have social networks in order to feel human. Because the immigration law already makes you dehuman anyway. So you have to have people around you to make you feel that you are still human even though the Home Office do not accept that.'*³⁸⁶

*'Refugees are forced to lay bare the scars of their victimhood even if they just want to find work and have a normal life.'*³⁸⁷

*'My life is like a jigsaw. Now I need to find new pieces'*³⁸⁸

In *Chapter 5* SO support as a proxy-indicator of social networks has already shown how asylum seekers feel more comfortable in London, the Southeast and other big cities, with around one third of asylum seekers choosing this option involving no financial support towards accommodation. Both *Chapter 6* and *7* illustrated how asylum seekers are maintained in a liminal state during dispersal that affects the potential for restoration of trust. This chapter explores how asylum seekers resist the liminality of dispersal through maintaining and creating social networks. Marx's continuum from total destruction to persistence of social networks over space and time is utilised (1990). It is argued that, for those asylum seekers who are able to have recourse to social networks, this is the most important way in which asylum seekers and refugees create a sense of 'belonging' in the absence of political belonging. This involves a trajectory of different forms of social networks that, over time, shift asylum seekers away from the stigma and shame of the asylum seeker label. The assumption that secondary migration is a negative outcome of dispersal is therefore challenged. A link between social and political trust in theories of social capital is shown to be absent in relation to asylum seekers with experience of the asylum determination process and NASS systems.

³⁸⁶ D4; interview with female representative of RCO, London, June 2003.

³⁸⁷ Informal conversation with representative of refugee service provider and funding organisation, London, November 2005.

The main uses of social networks are for survival, information (including gaining awareness of rights), advice, as an insurance against crisis situations such as threats of deportation as well as to feel human within a dehumanised system. The quality of social networks is shown to be important in relation to this, particularly in relation to restoration of social trust. 'Belonging', for those with recourse to social networks, occurs despite the dispersal policy. Little institutional or political trust is restored in the process and this form of belonging remains largely outside the formal policies for social inclusion.

DISPERSAL AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

Undoubtedly, the wide variety of circumstances surrounding arrival in the UK meant that the disruption, existence and mobilisation of social networks were variable for participants. The dispersal policy effectively denies the importance of all but immediate nuclear family social networks. For asylum seekers who do not arrive *en masse* and may therefore be more likely to arrive without maintained networks during migration, recourse to social networks was already limited due to the form of migration. For those without existing social networks in the UK, an extreme form of social exclusion was often the outcome of dispersal due to isolation imposed by the system. For those who had pre-existing social networks in the UK, recourse to these occurred despite the dispersal policy. In both scenarios, the rapid creation, utilisation and mobilisation of social networks was often a matter of survival.

Perceptions of the meaning of the term social networks were varied. Asylum seekers immediately recounted concrete examples of family, friends and acquaintances, either in the country of origin or in the UK. They also mention members of more 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1991) such as co-nationals or members of a political party in the country of origin. Some of these more 'imagined' members had not been previously been met but the presence of trusted friends in common or shared religious belief facilitated this network. Acquaintances were often people who had been met very briefly (in emergency accommodation, on the street or in the offices of RSPs) but were often considered more trustworthy than representatives of

³⁸⁸ R4; re-interview of male refugee, Lincoln, May 2004.

agencies contracted to NASS in the provision of information on the negative and positive aspects of different dispersal cities. The concept of the ‘strength of weak ties’ (Granovetter, 1973:1360-1380) relates to these acquaintances and a shorthand term – ‘brief encounters’ – is used to describe these acquaintances. In *Chapter 2* Koser and Pinkerton’s definition incorporated the idea of weak ties, mentioning not only friends and family, but also ‘agents’ and other brief encounters influential during migration.

The transnational character of refugees is recognised in the literature on forced migration (Marx, 1990; Baker, 1990; Scott, 1991; Joly, 1996; Castles, 2003; Boswell and Crisp, 2004; Castles, 2005). Social networks of dispersed asylum seekers operated transnationally and it was not unusual for participants to have members of family in several different countries. For one interviewee, family were in Somalia, the US and other European countries. His extended family in the US had contacted the agent who helped him arrive in the UK – someone described as a person ‘*who brought me in and then he was gone*’³⁸⁹. He did not know anybody else in the UK and was keen to contact his family in Somalia. For asylum seekers social networks were described as positive and important.

Representatives of RCOs discussed a range of individuals in the network including GPs, teachers and other daily contacts. A representative who had been in the country a number of years commented at length on the characteristics of social networks:

‘First of all you leave everything behind. So you need to have a social network to get support, reduce the isolation and you have and try to feel that you are actually in a place that you can feel some familiarity. Social networks enable you to transfer your skills. They also make you aware of your rights because you generally get information through your networks and can start seeking your rights. I am not talking about community organisations, I am talking about putting you in contact with your neighbours. And then with your advisors and local representatives – whoever is going to be involved in the process that you resettle here. They are all part of that social network. You need the right social network to be cared for, to be empowered. For example, I wouldn’t take specialist medical care out of the social network, or your GP out of your social network. Every one of them has their responsibility of making you feel safe, comfortable and empowered. In

³⁸⁹ A15; interview with asylum seeker, Leicester, November 2003.

*terms of refugees, or people coming from other cultures, the social network includes everybody.*³⁹⁰

This illustrated that social networks were used for support, to reduce isolation, advice, information as well as the need to feel human. This wider, inclusive and positive interpretation of the term distinguished between contact with those with whom a sense of familiarity could be recreated and the professional services available to asylum seekers, but both were included in the term social network. Other RCO representatives included more negative and exploitative aspects of social networks such as ‘gangmasters’, relating this to the denial of the permission to work combined with how dispersal meant that paying back money to agents became impossible given the low levels of financial support provided by NASS.

Representatives of RSPs often discussed RCOs, voluntary organisations and sometimes idealised notions of ‘refugee communities’. This related to the issue of trust which was highlighted by a community development worker when she commented on how:

*‘Any relationship is based on trust and if you work with the client group in any way it is all based on trust. They usually go to someone who speaks their language first. They have to learn this is the way the system works’*³⁹¹

Seeking advice and information from their own ‘communities’ meant that relationships were based on this crucial element of trust within the deterrence environment.

Staff members of RSPs who had been through the asylum process themselves often found themselves in difficult positions due to conflicting interests of ‘professionalism’ (Baycan, 2003) and social networks. Because new arrivals did not necessarily distinguish between ‘professional’ and ‘social’ networks, notion of professionalism and boundaries were a cause of tension:

*‘In order to be professional you have to act in a certain way and if the person is a social friend you have to act in a different way. In many cultures that gap does not exist. In my culture there is not that gap.’*³⁹²

³⁹⁰ D4; interview with female representative of RCO, London, June 2003.

³⁹¹ C2; focus group with female representatives of voluntary sector, Leicester, July 2003.

The logic beyond the setting of professional boundaries was based around avoidance of burnout within a stressful and demanding environment. However, for another community development worker this dilemma was particularly acute. Keeping her distance from the community she was working with meant that members of this community had problems trusting her:

*'They do not trust me if I am apart from them. They do not understand why I should treat them differently to me.'*³⁹³

This creation of difference between the helpers and the victims, in her eyes, was disempowering and whilst she could understand the rationale behind such an approach she had found that it was not practical or useful for her own relationship with the community. Another refugee who had applied for a position as an interpreter with a RSP also heavily criticised this aspect of the training she was given for that role:

*'It is not very good but I want you to know how they care for asylum seekers. We were training and they said you need to keep your professionalism dealing with asylum seekers. You can't make friends with them, you need to be professional, distance yourself like a tape recorder. If we find that you get related to them emotionally, we have to put you out of our place. Yup, this is the care they have. The one who comes with no friends, no family, if I get close to them it was a crime and they will put me out of there. What they do is act on behalf of NASS here and think of it as a job.'*³⁹⁴

That representatives of RSPs, who were at the frontline of advice for asylum seekers were unable to make friends with asylum seekers effectively ruled them out of future social networks. It also meant that potential social trust that could have led to a greater trust in institutions was ruled out. This also applied to co-nationals with another representative of a RSP in a dispersal location discussing a particular nationality of community:

³⁹² D4; interview with female representative of RCO, London, June 2003.

³⁹³ Discussion with female refugee, Sheffield, January 2006.

³⁹⁴ R2; focus group participant, Bristol, July 2003.

*'It felt very difficult. I didn't want to disperse any [nationality of asylum seekers] because they all had family and friends and community here.'*³⁹⁵

For RSPs, the notion of social networks were not as inclusive as those discussed by RCO representatives. This could be explained due to the idea of professionalism and maintaining a distance between helpers and victims. Co-nationals were the exception to this in the case above.

As discussed in *Chapter 4*, other agencies with less daily contact with asylum seekers were often those with more power and influence over the NASS system. It was disturbing, therefore, that some of these agencies immediately associated the term social networks in a more negative and criminalising way. For example, the ability to find illegal work, the ability to form 'gangs' quickly by mobile phone during 'unfortunate incidents' and 'confrontations' between groups in dispersal areas was discussed by one representative of a regional consortia:

*'They can call in reinforcements from other cities to join the fray ... and the police found people from a number of cities ... as a result of this late night fight between two factions'. ... Inevitably, there are a lot of young single men who are largely quite mobile and they do have connections around the country. Many of them have got status but don't have anywhere to live and are literally moving around, living on people's floors.'*³⁹⁶

This quote illustrates the more negative forms that social networks take and how mobility was perceived to be a disadvantage. The perception that reinforcements could easily be contacted in a conflict situation was negative. The social networks of asylum seekers were in this instance intrinsically linked to the negative aspects of mobility which is a broader feature of the containment and control of refugees (Crosby, 2006). That mobility was perceived as being negative even for those with status was indicative of this. Mobility, through social networks, from city to city to locate accommodation was not considered beneficial. Discussions like this and those surrounding ratios and concentrations of asylum seekers were divorced from the idea of social networks being a method of integration or inclusion.

³⁹⁵ B3; joint-interview with male representatives of voluntary sector, Bristol, June 2003.

³⁹⁶ M2; interview with representative of regional consortia, dispersal location, January 2004.

These different interpretations of the term social networks revealed much about the power structures of the NASS system and relates to the form of social exclusion described in *Chapter 4*. Understanding of the term social networks ranged from very concrete face-to-face friends, family and those who could be trusted to groups of mobile young men who could not be trusted. If Marx's continuum between the total destruction of refugees' social networks at one end and the persistence of social networks at the other end is used this understanding of social networks is broadened. *En masse* arrivals more likely to be at the latter end due to some links being maintained during migration and others being created (1990:196). This continuum provides a useful framework for considering the social networks of asylum seekers in the NASS system.

Social Networks Destroyed or Disrupted

*'Refugees coming to live in the UK are devastated enough by leaving their homeland. The dispersal policy has negative impacts on asylum seeker's lives, such as depression caused by instability. They want to live among their own communities where they can get support emotionally and enjoy social activities.'*³⁹⁷

Richmond's discussion of primary and secondary ontological security (1994:19) as outlined in *Chapter 2* is relevant here in respect to both destruction of social networks before flight and disruption due to the NASS system. Before arriving in the UK refugees will have had their ontological security threatened and the permanency of social worlds will have been called into question. The re-establishment of trust through normal routines is framed by this.

The total destruction or disruption of social networks from the country or origin often relates to distressing circumstances. One asylum seeker recounted how her four brothers, mother and niece had been killed in a massacre in an African country. She had retained contact with the existing members of her family by email. The effect of the destruction of familial social networks meant that support networks were absent in both the country of origin and subsequently the dispersal location. She had been sent to a dispersal city that had only one other family with the same

³⁹⁷ Comment written on informed consent form by female refugee, dispersal location, July 2003.

nationality and, as such, found it difficult to socialise. Having children to care for meant that few opportunities to socialise were available and social isolation during dispersal was a factor for this mother and other interviewees³⁹⁸.

The lottery of dispersal was an isolating experience for asylum seekers who did not have recourse to social and support networks within dispersal cities. Describing how a co-national had been dispersed and did not know who she could trust or who she could contact, David commented:

*'I went to a girl from Zimbabwe, and she was living in a block of flats and she'd been in this block of flats three weeks and all she had was a sleeping bag, a blanket, a pillow and one chair. She had been there for three weeks. They are isolated as well. They don't have the backup you see. None of that backup.'*³⁹⁹

That relationships formed in EA did 'get split up fairly easily.'⁴⁰⁰ was a common complaint. The lack of space for social networks in the rest of the NASS system often meant that asylum seekers had nobody to share their individual histories with and this certainly created isolation. This was particularly the case with asylum seekers coming from countries that had a very small number of arrivals dispersed by NASS. An asylum seeker from Burma recounted her need to find somebody to who she would be able to relate to. She had spoken to many people who knew about the country she came from and about her basic circumstances but she had not found anybody who could relate to her individual history in the dispersal location and felt as though this had negated her (very active) past.

As Harrell-Bond observed in *Imposing Aid* (1986⁴⁰¹), her initial 'unrealistic and naïve faith in the power of the family system to buffer individuals undergoing stress' ultimately transformed into what she terms the 'over-socialized concept of man'. What she meant by this was that; 'the demands of individual survival undermined social values' with the time it took for new supportive social units to establish themselves in refugee camps not being fully understood by aid agencies who

³⁹⁸ Discussion during *Refugee Women in Bristol*, Refugee Action, Bristol, 25 February 2003; discussion with female asylum seeker, Bristol, November 2003.

³⁹⁹ R4; joint-interview with asylum seeker and voluntary organisation employee, Lincoln, November 2003.

⁴⁰⁰ B1; interview with representative of RSP, London, May 2003.

designed delivery of material assistance around this presumption. This was similar to the assumption that all nationalities of asylum seekers would automatically be able to obtain support networks in Muslim communities which was put forward by one PAP representative (*Chapter 5*). The assumption of support from co-nationals also relied on this over-socialised concept which related to a sense of duty to accommodate fellow nationals, which, in the words of one caseworker of a RSP was not a sustainable alternative to provision of full support to asylum seekers:

*'He says I'm going to accommodate you as long as you live here because it's my duty as a fellow country person to accommodate you. But after a month, there is someone living in your house, and they get fed up. They do. They get fed up and they say, well, just go to Refugee Action, do whatever you want, I really can't ...stand it any more. I thought you were a nice person. You are not. (laughs). These things happen, we tell them from the very beginning. We say, well, are you sure. They say, yeah, yeah, yeah that's fine. But they always, they can always come back and make 'change of circumstances' and then apply for accommodation.'*⁴⁰²

That the duty of co-nationals was ultimately inadequate was unsurprising if the over-socialized concept is considered in the light of the quality of relationships being tested by the NASS system. A Burmese refugee discussed how two co-nationals who had initially been dispersed to Newcastle and Sheffield were sleeping on his floor in London only because they had been members of the same political organisation in their country of first asylum. However, this was necessarily a temporary arrangement which was not sustainable in the longer term.

Social Networks Maintained

Interviewees were often in touch with families in the country of origin by telephone and email. One interviewee who had left Iran in haste to avoid arrest knew that the friend he had been with at the time of his avoided arrest was still in prison and that his brother had been put in prison due directly to his departure from the country. Another Iranian male discussed at length his rapid departure and knowledge of his families problems with the authorities due to his actions. This contrasted to another asylum seeker from Somalia who could not contact his family because telephone

⁴⁰¹ View at: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/migration/1-3-7.html>

⁴⁰² B3; joint-interview with representative of voluntary sector, Bristol, June 2003.

lines were down: *'I ring, I ring, it doesn't work'*⁴⁰³. For this individual who had family in three different continents, this was a major source of stress and his main priority was contacting family although he did not know how he could do this and what agencies could assist. I later provided details of the Red Cross tracing service to him. Most asylum seekers interviewed were not aware of tracing schemes available and maintaining transnational social networks was problematic given the lack of family reunification options for asylum seekers, even for husbands and wives. As one individual with refugee status commented, *'I cannot bring my wife here because she does not have a passport – the Refugee Council and UNHCR told me that she has to have a passport.'*⁴⁰⁴. Again, the lack of certification and documentation – a basic of the refugee experience – was the barrier according to the Refugee Council. Social networks were not easily maintained over distance. This related to the situation within the UK:

*'Refugees coming to live in the UK are devastated enough by leaving their homeland. The dispersal policy has negative impacts on asylum seeker's lives, such as depression caused by instability. They want to live among their own communities where they can get support emotionally, enjoy social activities and their own culture.'*⁴⁰⁵

The need to feel human or in other words emotional support was a clear feature of the social networks of dispersed asylum seekers. For the refugee who made this comment, loss in the country of origin had been compounded by not being able to live within her own community upon reaching the UK. She was also aware of a larger community of co-nationals based in Coventry and spoke about a friend who had been dispersed to Manchester who would:

*'Be able to provide you with lots of information about the disadvantages of dispersal'*⁴⁰⁶.

What she meant by this was that her friend was unhappy about being dispersed to Manchester and had been placed in accommodation that she was particularly displeased with. Having lived very close to each other in the country of origin,

⁴⁰³ A8; focus group participant, Leicester, July 2003.

⁴⁰⁴ Interview with Burmese refugee, 2006.

⁴⁰⁵ Comment written on informed consent form following focus group with asylum seekers and refugees in Bristol, July 2003.

dispersal to two different cities meant that the maintenance of social networks was, for this individual and others, carried out by email and telephone. Maintenance had changed from face-to-face contact to maintenance over distance. These distances crossed regions of the UK with friends being located in several different cities. The telephone, internet and email were also used to facilitate the maintenance of social networks with the country of origin. For those who had pre-existing networks in the UK, this aspect of the NASS system was unduly punitive. However, they generally did have contact with these networks and some connection within the UK was available based initially on nationality but later on socio-economic background, gender and other facets of the identity of the individual. For those without these pre-existing networks, social activities were a high priority and were mainly organised by RCOs in some of the dispersal areas.

The negative side of maintaining social networks was closely related to gender by interviewees. Asylum seekers living within close communities having issues surrounding the expectations of their gender roles in both the country of origin and the UK. Representatives of gender based RCOs, individual female asylum seekers and grassroots campaigning organisations related issues such as 'honour' crimes (see *Chapter 7*), domestic violence and isolation within communities to these close social relations. The issue of trust was closely related to this as invasion of privacy in the private realm of the home was identified as the greatest barrier to resolution of these.

The weaknesses of the NASS system and the additional roles undertaken by RSPs were part of the reason some asylum seekers were able to maintain social networks. This was framed as a direct result of the NASS system being unable to cope:

*'We can't refuse this dispersal. We had to fill in people to go. But in a way we know clients face to face. We work with them. We have got them here and we know potentially who is going to travel and who isn't. So we know if someone really doesn't want to travel because they have got friends or family and then we don't put them on the list at all. We wait until we have got in-region dispersals around the area. Because the system doesn't cope.'*⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁶ Telephone interview with previous interviewee, 2003.

⁴⁰⁷ B3; joint-interview with representative of voluntary sector, Bristol, June 2003.

The possibility for a RSP to argue for an asylum seeker to be dispersed close to their family was largely on the basis of particularly circumstances such as special needs:

*'NASS would say that you can make recommendations to try to get people to stay with their family or near their family and it has happened in certain circumstances, particularly for special needs or particular circumstances, you can actually argue to be dispersed to a certain areas'*⁴⁰⁸.

In practice, however, this possibility was extremely limited and most asylum seekers therefore needed to maintain social networks over distance.

Social Networks Created or Developed

The NASS system hindered the creation of social networks but those that were formed were dynamic and generally informal. There was a broad range of experiences of developing social networks which related to the heterogeneity and aspirations of asylum seekers. The disruption of social networks in countries of origin meant that creation of new networks within the UK took on an added importance. There was also a strong gender dimension with many women participants finding the creation of networks a difficult process due to childcare commitments⁴⁰⁹. In contrast, male participants were less likely to identify this as a problem, one of whom cited a pub specifically for ethnic groups where he was able to listen to music from his country of origin which made him feel *'at home'*⁴¹⁰.

There was little evidence that social networks were created solely on the basis of nationality although some aspect of duty to co-nationals was clear on occasions and some nationalities demonstrated ties based around ideas of *'brotherhood'*⁴¹¹. In other cases, co-nationals were not considered to be friends: *'Other Iranians are not my friends, no!'*⁴¹². Shared accommodation brought out such conflicts and was particularly tense in one case of a Christian Iranian sharing with a Kurd from Iraq. The Iranian asylum seeker considered that the Kurdish asylum seeker was noisy and

⁴⁰⁸ B1; interview with representative of RSP, London, May 2003.

⁴⁰⁹ Interviews and focus groups, various dates; speaker at *Hear My Voice: Refugee Women's Involvement in Integration*, Amnesty International Human Rights Centre, London, 15 June 2006.

⁴¹⁰ R4; joint-interview with asylum seeker and voluntary organisation employee, Lincoln, November 2003.

⁴¹¹ A11; joint-interview with two male Sudanese asylum seekers who were living in the same house and became *'like brothers'*.

⁴¹² A14; interview with male asylum seeker, Leicester, November 2003.

unaware of how to behave *'unlike Iraqi Kurds'* ⁴¹³. It is well known that discrimination against Kurds occurs in both Iran and Iraq and, like factionalism, research into how discrimination in countries of origin translates into a UK context would be warranted. This sharing of one room was a representative microcosm of the difficulties occurring within the system. In those areas with several households designated for asylum seekers, the complexities inherent in the interplay of backgrounds and aspirations of individuals were clear.

The most important factor for asylum seekers was to find some connection with people in their locality. Religious organisations were an important venue for the creation of social networks. Several asylum seekers mentioned mosques and churches as a source of friendships and a useful point of contact and place where social trust could be established relatively easily:

'I have been talking to one person who was forced to move from London because of the dispersal policy and he was sent to Leeds. He was telling me he is very happy because he socialises with people, he goes to church. Especially for the Christian people, they go to church and from the church they socialise with people who are not refugees.'

The Home Office has an immovable policy position that integration should not begin until a positive asylum decision has been granted⁴¹⁴. Socialising with people who were not asylum seekers was, however, a crucial element of resisting liminality and it was clear that the process of 'belonging' began at this point rather than when a positive decision was obtained. This resistance to the Home Office position was through social networks.

Another way asylum seekers found some connection was through further education. In both Leicester and Bristol, asylum seekers had found friends through studying. Building social networks through translating and interpretation for health visitors was another method identified for those dispersed prior to the denial of permission to work⁴¹⁵. Thus, one of the characteristics of the networks created during dispersal

⁴¹³ A16; interview with male asylum seeker, Leicester, November 2003.

⁴¹⁴ Jeremy Oppenheim, director of NASS, speaking at *Hear My Voice: Refugee Women's Involvement in Integration*, Amnesty International Human Rights Centre, London, 15 June 2006.

⁴¹⁵ Speaker at *Hear My Voice: Refugee Women's Involvement in Integration*, Amnesty International Human Rights Centre, London, 15 June 2006.

was that they were informal and emphasis was placed on making friends beyond the 'refugee experience'. Another characteristic was that they created the basis for autonomy and independence. In every case, interviewees mentioned how they were seeking a normal existence that involved finding routes to independent living.

The role of RCOs in creation of social networks was extremely complex and warrants more research. The high number of different nationalities dispersed to each location hindered the setting up of RCOs. It has been estimated that between 200 and 300 individuals were required to form a critical mass for the emergence of an organic association (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918). Inevitably for the nationalities with low numbers of asylum seekers this critical mass was not apparent in dispersal locations. For example, the small number of Burmese asylum seekers (21) accommodated in NASS properties in 10 different locations across England, Scotland and Wales were unable to form such an association. Even if every Burmese individual were in one location and no factionalism within the 'community' existed, by this estimate, the number would be too small for a formal RCO to form. For those with higher numbers, dispersal to more than 50 dispersal locations meant that this critical mass was also not reached although some RCOs had emerged in the larger cities. For example, Ethiopian RCOs⁴¹⁶ were established in Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and Sheffield for the 481 Ethiopians living in 45 different locations across the UK. From the higher number of 3,295 Turkish asylum seekers accommodated in 63 different locations RCOs were present in Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and Hull⁴¹⁷ as of end March 2003 (Refugee Council, 2003c). That in numerical terms alone, RCOs could not be available in every dispersal location was problematic.

RCOs even if present were not necessarily contacted at the beginning of the process but were sometimes considered in the later stages of the NASS process as another method of creating social networks. Rituals of the exile experience were catered for in this way:

⁴¹⁶ With the assistance of the Ethiopian Community in Britain, London.

⁴¹⁷ With the assistance of Halkevi, London.

*'We also organise social occasions for Ethiopians in different situations, related to the Ethiopian holiday and things like that.'*⁴¹⁸

These rituals of exile surrounding in this case Ethiopian holidays were also a way in which social networks were created. The changing role for London based RCOs involved more outreach to dispersal areas than had previously been undertaken. The perception by some London based organisations was that agencies in dispersal areas were not capable of assisting asylum seekers and therefore needed some sort of 'developing'⁴¹⁹. This role was referred to as a 'parent' role by one representative:

*'The parent community in London could not really give the necessary assistance and help outreach because of the limitations of manpower and funding. The alternative for those who are in dispersal in these places was for them to create their own social groups. We are encouraging them because it will enable us to give them any advice, either by telephone or by any one phone if we have a contact person, a contact point, instead of trying to cater for all.'*⁴²⁰

Within the NASS system, virtually no emphasis had been placed on empowering formal RCOs in London to assist in the development of RCOs in dispersal areas. In practice, this was happening, often informally and generally without extra resources being allocated towards this from official funding sources.

Of the complex array of agencies involved in the dispersal system and with the exception of public providers of education, it was mainly voluntary and faith-based organisations that had any impact on the creation and development of social networks of asylum seekers. The greatest impact was from the individual actions of asylum seekers identifying their own methods of creating and developing networks.

Social Networks Utilised or Mobilised

The denial of the importance of social networks in the NASS system meant that creating networks quickly in dispersal locations often became a survival strategy. For example, upon threat of deportation, social networks became considerably and rapidly broader than friends and family. At this point other acquaintances,

⁴¹⁸ D2; interview with representative of RCO, London, May 2003.

⁴¹⁹ Informal conversation with representatives of RSPs, dispersal locations, various dates.

⁴²⁰ D2; interview with representative of RCO, London, May 2003.

representatives of RSPs, advocacy and charitable organisations, journalists, solicitors, doctors, other professionals working with refugees, MPs, a Baroness, QCs and others were temporarily mobilised⁴²¹.

The main way in which social networks were utilised in the NASS system was for accommodation either at the end of the system when 'move-on' from NASS accommodation was necessary or prior to this as a result of opting out of the NASS system. They were also essential during the implementation of Section 55 and had a major effect on buffering, countering or cushioning the negative aspects and inadequacies of the system:

*'Social networks have got a very big role. So far, although the new legislation [Section 55] really has a very big impact on too many people but nobody [interviewee emphasis] in this city has been left homeless. Maybe, we had individuals who have spent a night or two outside but that was it, until they met somebody from their community. The community networks work very well. The communities took people without knowing them. If they spoke the same language they said, well, I have a little space in my kitchen, bring a sleeping bag.'*⁴²²

The conditions in which asylum seekers lived because of this were often poor. Having to sleep on floors or not having regular meals depending on the capacities of the communities assisting. It was clear that Section 55 made the role of community more important. That nobody was left homeless echoed the effect of new social security regulations introduced in 1996 when financial support for 'in-country' applicants was denied and local authorities became responsible for support if an asylum seeker would otherwise be 'destitute'⁴²³. As Reilly comments on this 1996 withdrawal, 'the number of cases that have been seen [by the agencies involved] ... are barely representative of the scale of the problem' (1996:4) and the reasons for the discrepancy in predicted numbers and those 'presenting' to refugee agencies were due to refugee communities 'bearing the greatest responsibility' with asylum seekers increasingly:

⁴²¹ List compiled following attempt to release Burmese individual from detention in 2005 when individuals were mobilised to take action on his behalf.

⁴²² B3; joint-interview with representative of voluntary sector, Bristol, June 2003.

⁴²³ Through the 1948 National Assistance Act and 1989 Children Act.

'going 'underground'... afraid to report to official refugee agencies, local government bodies or even to their own community organisations for fear of deportation or detention' (1996:5).

The assumptions that 'communities' took on the support of those left destitute did not promote any longer term solution or, like in the 1996 instance, a recognition of the unwillingness to approach official agencies for assistance (Reilly, 1996:5). In *Chapter 5* the relationship between dispersal and deprivation was outlined. That the communities assisting in this informal way would have been living in deprived conditions already was likely given this link. Placing social exclusion on top of social exclusion with up to 81 different nationalities in each dispersal location⁴²⁴ must have meant that some asylum seekers were without support of community and these hidden consequences remain unresearched.

Social networks were also utilised to access services in dispersal areas. For one Iranian asylum seeker, his only source of information about how to access further education and legal services were cited as being friends⁴²⁵. Basic survival was also often a result of the creation of networks:

*'I only have £10 per week. I have no money. For clothes, stuff for shaving and washing, everytime the pastor and his wife help me. To get all these things I need.'*⁴²⁶

Reliance on the church for this individual was therefore clearly a matter of survival. For those who depended upon their communities, some sense of confidence was considered by many to be an additional benefit:

*'He said it is better if they are from the same community. Social networks are very important. This is about social contacts and social groups. They give you more confidence to act in the community.'*⁴²⁷

Information regarding countries of origin and awareness of rights was also gleaned through these community networks:

⁴²⁴ 81 was the highest number of different nationalities dispersed to one dispersal location (Newcastle) as at end of March 2003.

⁴²⁵ A14; interview with male asylum seeker, Leicester, November 2003.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

[translates question and answer] *He said sometimes we have news in the community. If there is important news we get it from the community. He does not read so he has to get this by word of mouth.* [translates question and answer]. *If there is something important that affects him, people will tell him.*⁴²⁸

This relates to what Griffiths *et. al.* found in relation to the current role for RCOs which was described as ‘essentially defensive’ in that they were filling gaps in services, providing a basis for association and meeting essential needs (2005:201). Given the circumstances in which they are currently operating and the lack of funding provided to RCOs, this ‘defensive’ role reflects a wider lack of emphasis on community development in dispersal areas. During the period of this fieldwork there was, for example, only one community development worker attached to a RSP in the entire East Midlands whereas there were more than a dozen RSP staff dealing with dispersal.

A Trajectory of Social Networks

That refugees engage in an active process of ‘remaking’ belonging is often ignored in studies of forced migration (Turton, 2003). The feeling about networks was clearly that they were essential for survival, information, confidence and insurance against crisis situations. Some of these networks were clearly temporary pending future status determination, acquisition of language, future employment and other routes to independence. Social networks took on different forms dependent upon the position within the NASS system. At the early stages, temporary networks and brief encounters facilitated survival and fulfilled the gap in the provision of basic information about rights and conditions in dispersal locations. Later, more permanent social networks were formed. This was apparent when David described his time in emergency accommodation:

‘We ended up associating in terms of countries for obvious reasons, we spoke the same language, we came from the same social background, we could understand each other.’

⁴²⁷ Translated response during interview with A11, asylum seeker, Bristol, November 2003.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

Later in the process when he was in a dispersal area he commented on how he mixed with a similar '*strata*' of people rather than just co-nationals. This '*strata*' was based on his socio-economic background and was clearly an important characteristic of his social networks. This was typical of the experience and during a social event, a former surgeon from Iran with whom David was close explained to me how he had been volunteering at a local hospital because he was not permitted to work. One of his duties had been to mop the floor of the surgeries and he was visibly distressed by this. He asked David whether he should do this and a discussion ensued surrounding dignity ending with the view that this particular voluntary work was too demeaning. The former surgeon kept looking at his fingertips, despairingly exclaiming; '*These fingers can save lives and they ask me to mop the floor!*'. During this event it was clear that social trust was being generated between asylum seekers of varying nationalities based on their educational level. There was such a mix of nationalities that mistrust between factions was not an issue, although with those that had only recently arrived, mistrust was apparent.

Forms of social networks shifted from being largely based on nationality to those based on other 'connections' such as class, educational level and at times political. As these more diverse connections were identified over time during the NASS system, asylum seekers essentially redirected themselves towards a form of 'belonging' based predominantly on social trust. A solicitor in a dispersal area commented on this diversity:

*'If you put a group of asylum seekers together from different countries, what do they have in common? Except they are refugees. It is very difficult. With respect to my British friends and colleagues, sometimes they think that they can be grouped together. I said they can't. They are as much divided by class, gender and social background as you are. And then divided into different countries. I mean, I may not have any point of connection with someone else from [country of origin] except the language I use. Even that is questionable because they may be a minority group who use a different language. We would not enjoy the same things. There has to be political or social connections and they have to have time to find that.'*⁴²⁹

These routes to independence often involved moving to different cities and, as explored later, secondary migration could therefore be seen as a positive outcome of

dispersal in that moving away from the negative experiences of the NASS system enabled belonging.

SHAME, STIGMA AND WANTING TO BE NORMAL

The trajectory of social networks was also related to the stigma and shame of the asylum seeker label. Shame and stigma were major themes emerging out of interviews as was the desire to remove the asylum seekers label and live a normal life. Having knowledge about the right to access services was one difficulty already explored. Another was the feeling of having the right to do this and the impact of the link with deprivation was a factor in this as accommodation was in areas largely at the bottom of the market for rented accommodation:

*'You have got people living in the same street who are on social security who are they are at the bottom level of the economic ladder. They see all this new furniture suddenly going into this house, hotly pursued by a group of asylum seekers who are totally mystified as to where they are. Resentment starts to crop up. What we have done deliberately is say to the landlord you provide ... properties that are furnished, they are adequate, but it is mainly second hand furniture. It blends much more into that neighbourhood. What we will be providing is what is typical of that particular area. We would not be doing anybody any favours if a furniture van suddenly draws up and suddenly a whole load of furniture goes in when Mrs. Smith down the road is desperately trying to make ends meet on whatever.'*⁴³⁰

Thus, to avoid resentment by a social excluded Mrs. Smith, furniture for asylum seekers was second hand and other services of accommodation providers geared to blend into the neighbourhood. In this context, the feeling that the right would be available to other services was delicate.

The desire to live in peace and have a normal life was succinctly put by one asylum seekers when he commented: *'Somalia. No Peace. No education. No normal. War.'*⁴³¹ This desire to be normal meant that in some cases, aspects of personal histories, legal status and other issues that they felt brought 'shame' to them would be hidden or kept secret from friends or work colleagues:

⁴²⁹ H1; interview with solicitor, dispersal location, July 2003.

⁴³⁰ M1; interview with representative of regional consortia, dispersal location, September 2003.

*'I have friends who are working in mainstream organisations and private companies and they don't talk about being a refugee. If they have to say something they just say they used to be married to somebody and that is why they are in the country. So, marrying a British person and having that status is more acceptable than being a refugee and having that status. This is a huge thing – you are sharing an office with a person and you cannot even talk about your very existence in the country'*⁴³²

Thus, the 'skeleton in the closet' was being a refugee and the stigma and shame attached to this status meant that personal histories were hidden. That 'strategies of invisibility' (Malkki, 1995) existed at this personal level for refugees and asylum seekers in the UK was an indicator of the social exclusion experienced – in this case to an extent wherein individuals actively reinvent themselves to be socially included. A direct appeal to get rid of the social constructed category of asylum seeker came from a Rwandan refugee at a conference organised by refugee women to celebrate International Women's Day. She called for the 'mask' to be taken off and for refugees to be seen as people and remember that *'she is a refugee today but she was somebody'*, calling for people to *'look behind the mask'*⁴³³.

A humorous example of these issues was recounted by an asylum seeker from the East Midlands. The voluntary organisation had organised for a group of asylum seekers to go swimming at the local pool. Swimming trunks had been purchased by the organisation and the interviewee laughed as he recalled how six African men lined up to enter the pool in matching trunks. Behind this example lay issues surrounding visibility and the asylum seeker label. Further examples of how the organisation had taken a group of asylum seekers to see a play about the life of asylum seekers were recalled and were considered to be inappropriate and unnecessarily perpetuate the victimhood of individuals.

Asylum seekers were also criminalised through association with the functions of the state that control crime. Throughout the process, asylum seekers were made to feel different to the existing population in a variety of ways. Legislation regulating

⁴³¹ A15; interview with asylum seeker, Leicester, November 2003.

⁴³² D4; interview with female representative of RCO, London, June 2003.

⁴³³ Action for Refugee Women conference, International Women's Day, London, 5 March 2004.

asylum seekers and the lack of a normal existence, in the eyes of one asylum seeker denied the possibility of being the same as others in the UK:

*'To be a good citizen, means you have no problem with the police, you have no problems with the courts and you are a law abiding person. But instead here we find ourselves like criminals everyday we get a letter from the court, from the police, we have to report, why you are late. You know, you are like a criminal. Like you are doing something wrong. I have never done anything wrong. I have always tried to be a good person. This always holds you back because you feel that you are not like the other people. You have a problem, you are restricted and you can't think for the longer term. You can't see physical pressure on you but every time they tell you come to the court, come to the police, this also adds to your suffering.'*⁴³⁴

The requirements to attend court and report at police stations meant that this individual and other interviewees, felt guilty by association and therefore different to others. It was clear that this related to how different asylum seekers were made to feel:

*'I want to get a job, I want to live like anybody else. I am not scared of death because I have seen lots of people dying in front of me and that became normal in my life. I do not want to come to the point that going to court is normal in my life.'*⁴³⁵

This association with crime was taken one step further by another asylum seeker who did not know the word for court in English, calling it *'The place you go if you kill someone.'*⁴³⁶ Comments relating to stigma and shame from these individuals linked their experiences in the country of origin and the UK. From persecution in the country of origin to experiences in the UK of attending court as being their new 'normal' experience. This avoidance of shame and stigma was related by individuals as the way in which they felt they could have a normal life. A mother of four children who had attended court six times because of administrative errors was angry and had difficulty sleeping because of the stress involved.

⁴³⁴ A13; interview with asylum seeker, Bristol, November 2003.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ A15; interview with asylum seeker, Leicester, November 2003.

Secondary Migration

Attempts to move away from this stigma and shame were evident. One way this manifested itself was by asylum seekers demonstrating a strong desire to move away from the NASS system and agencies involved in the process. New networks were generated to do this and sometimes this involved secondary migration. Policy makers often attach negative connotations to secondary migration, focussing on how this can be prevented. This research identified that, in many cases, secondary migration was a positive outcome with the individual involved beginning a process of 'belonging' in the UK. In many cases it was the NASS system, associated stigma and resistance to policy-imposed liminality that created the impulse for secondary migration. In some cases it was the problems surrounding 'move-on' from NASS accommodation that created this impulse. Secondary migration often revolved around reformulating and creating social networks.

Secondary migration was based on several factors including perceptions of safety and feeling comfortable. As one refugee said: *'You identify where you belong'* in the UK and secondary migration was very connected to social networks.

The nature of the NASS system involved making asylum seekers travel from place to place – to Croydon or Liverpool for screening, to police stations in different cities to report, to courts in different cities to appeal, to solicitors in different cities because relocation and availability to good quality legal services – itself creating mobility of asylum seekers.

Freedom of movement for asylum seekers was already severely compromised by compulsory dispersal. It was clear that social trust was generated through secondary migration due to the social networks utilised for this. Institutional trust, once again, was not gained as a result of secondary migration – in fact the reverse was apparent.

Do Asylum Seekers Create 'Social Capital'?

As outlined in *Chapter 2*, in some theories of social capital, relationships of trust and reciprocity are paramount as is a link between social and political trust (Newton, 2006). In Putnam's concept of social capital, trust is a defining characteristic (1993).

Refugees mistrust and are mistrusted (Hynes, 2003) and others have argued that high levels of mistrust can be generated by the political economy of aid at a global level (Voutira and Harrell-Bond, 1995). Therefore, assuming trust as a starting point in refugee 'communities' is unreliable.

Griffiths *et. al.*'s initial 'positive orientation' to the concept of social capital reduced as their research progressed with the concept ultimately conceived only as a useful metaphor for the benefits of participating in social networks (2005:8). In this study it was also found that the concept of 'social capital' became less useful as a way of describing social networks in the NASS system as my research progressed, for a number of reasons that related to the characteristics of social networks in this system.

To begin with the argument by Rothstein and Kumlin (2001) that experiences with institutions influence social capital, it is clear from the data presented in *Chapters 6 and 7* that this system imposes liminality on asylum seekers and does not allow for the restoration of institutional trust and limits the restoration of social trust due to the compulsory character of dispersal and relocation throughout the system. Experiences with NASS and the Home Office were found to be largely negative and considerable suspicion and disbelief shown towards asylum seekers from these organisations.

Weak ties, or brief encounters, between asylum seekers were often the basis of social networks in the NASS system (Granovetter, 1973; Coleman, 1988). The 'duty' of co-nationals to provide accommodation for distant family members or asylum seekers of the same nationality or clan may mean that individuals sleep on floors, shifting from friends to acquaintances if they are in receipt of Subsistence Only support. One of the characteristics of this utilisation of social networks is that obtaining SO support is often about avoiding dispersal altogether with floors and 'moving around the houses' considered preferential. There is a danger of presenting an overly positive image of social capital when describing how social networks are utilised in this way. Stemming from a very negative set of circumstances, this was about immediate survival rather than the creation of reciprocal arrangements and/or trust.

Being able to access information about rights, mobilisation of networks to campaign against deportation and individuals making themselves busy in order to avoid considerations of the destruction of their family networks are all reasons why recourse to social networks occurred during dispersal. Recourse to social networks was clearly a coping strategy because of the hostile context of deterrence. Whilst social trust can be said to be generated in this way, institutional trust is not. Spaces for the restoration of trust are largely absent from the NASS system and in this sense, social capital is not such a useful idea.

Relations of power between the different agencies involved in the NASS system have been explored in *Chapters 4* and *6*. The broader deterrence context and hostile environment within which asylum seekers negotiate has also been detailed throughout. The structural limitations, competition for resources and NASS not having the obligation to accommodate friends or sometimes family in the same dispersal location clearly did not assist in the generation of social capital.

Dispersal of high numbers of different nationalities to a high number of cities was not conducive to the generation of social capital. Up to 81 different nationalities were dispersed to one dispersal location creating inevitable tensions due to the potential factionalism of these nationalities. The resulting small number of co-nationals in one dispersal location, for example, two families of the same nationality in one location, did not facilitate social capital. Added to this dispersal of an extremely heterogeneous population, although masked by the imposition of a one-dimensional label of asylum seeker, was also not conducive to generation of social capital. Asylum seekers did not necessarily wish to associate with the label and found ways to set themselves apart from others – the ‘refugee experience’ that emphasises the similar experiences of victimhood of refugees was largely the construction of agencies in the process. Relocation during dispersal as well as the requirement to ‘move on’ once refugee status was obtained again hindered any form of social capital. In some cases, asylum seekers wanting to move away from the ‘shame’ of being an asylum seeker created the impulse for secondary migration.

The summation of these factors meant that coping strategy rather than social capital was a better description of the outcome of social networks during the NASS system.

BELONGING: GHOSTS, SHADOWS, MASKS AND ORDINARY PEOPLE

*'When do I stop being a refugee? I define my own integration. I don't want you to do it for me or tell me what it is!'*⁴³⁷

'Without political belonging the displaced have no rights, only charity.'
(Skultans, 2005)

Social belonging for Castles (2003:20) involved multiple affiliations and it was clear that belonging in this study referred not only to the situation within the UK but also temporal and spatial expansion to include individual histories and circumstances within countries of origin. Asylum seekers and refugees interviewed demonstrated how these multiple affiliations meant that they simultaneously belonged in two countries at the same time. Diary entries for solicitors' appointments appeared next to the time the sun eclipsed the moon in Zimbabwe and declarations of refugees that they still belonged to their countries of origin demonstrated this. A shift from belonging to the country of origin to the UK was hampered by the policy-imposed liminality of the NASS system as well as the lengthy period spent waiting for status determination. During this time, belonging was sought through social networks which were initially nationality based but latterly based more on class and educational background.

Belonging was not an aim of dispersal – in fact the reverse was true with an explicit deterrence element as outlined in earlier chapters. The immovable policy position of the Home Office that integration should only occur once a positive status decision has been granted was resisted by asylum seekers and particular forms of belonging have been an outcome of dispersal. It was clear that belonging was being remade through surroundings that provide familiarity. The particular forms of belonging were mainly based around informal social networks created, utilised and mobilised by asylum seekers. These were based around social trust rather than any restoration of institutional or political trust.

⁴³⁷ Speaker from the floor at *From Immigrants to New Citizens: Becoming a Citizen in 21st Century Britain*, Sponsored by Learndirect and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, London, 18 November 2003.

As Skultans suggests, without political belonging there is only charity and asylum seekers in the NASS system were forced to invoke their victimhood in order to obtain financial support and access services. Adding to the complexity of this form of belonging, asylum seekers could be invoking their victimhood to gain access to services whilst simultaneously celebrating aspects of their culture and nationality. The ability to celebrate and be a victim at the same time demonstrating how the literature that oscillates between victimhood and celebration provides an inadequate image and is dependent on context. This dependence on different social identities and 'situational identities' (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000:110) meant that research with this population required immersion in contexts that viewed both the capabilities and vulnerabilities of asylum seekers. In the deterrence context of the UK, attempts to move away from the 'situational career' (de Voe, 1981) of being an asylum seekers and being framed as clients was an ever present dimension. A part of this was individual asylum seekers emphasising their difference from other asylum seekers and in doing so, the heterogeneity of their experiences was clear. Different identities were drawn upon as coping strategies with inclusion occurring in those areas where asylum seekers felt a sense of welcome. Visibility was another aspect of belonging:

*'We have a very big Somali community, they are very visible because of the way they dress. They have their own community group and people who can do things for them. There are other communities here. There is a French speaking community, an Iranian community, an Iraqi community. People are trying to blend as much as they can. Especially in a city like Leicester. It is multi-racial anyway. For me that is why it is easier to blend in.'*⁴³⁸

That asylum seekers preferred and were more comfortable in multicultural cities was a clear indication that 'strategies of invisibility' (Malkki, 1995) where asylum seekers could effectively hide from the stigma of the label were operating. That asylum seekers were able to 'blend in' to these cities was countered by the raft of policy mechanisms to separate asylum seekers from the rest of the population. Parallel services set up especially for asylum seekers, the culture of disbelief at the Home Office and NASS, the NASS process, the hierarchical range of agencies involved and the link between dispersal and deprivation all socially excluded in

⁴³⁸ C2; focus group with female representative of voluntary sector, Leicester, July 2003.

different ways. However, restoration of face-to-face social trust through social networks did begin despite these measures.

Asylum seekers were invisible to the populations of these larger cities but omnipresent during periods of threat. This ability to be everywhere and nowhere at the same time was a feature of the liminal period (Turner, 1967; Malkki, 1995). As one refugee in this research commented: *'They are like ghosts'* to their neighbours. What she meant by this was that asylum seekers were perceived as being everywhere and nowhere at the same time and were not perceived as being ordinary people. Another refugee commented how:

*'In three years all I have done is be under NASS. I'm a shadow of what I was'*⁴³⁹

Both these comments about ghosts and shadows demonstrated liminality and the perception of being socially excluded. The perception of social exclusion during interviews with other asylum seekers and refugees was also strong. The perception that they were being made to feel excluded from day one was clear. Belonging in this context took longer and was more directed towards refugee communities. Resistance to the discourse of victimhood and reference to the dynamic processes of survivors were created through this.

The social networks of refugees some 30 years ago were about resettlement, integration and inclusion and were made up of trade unions, student unions and academics. These networks addressed the political identity of refugees⁴⁴⁰. The qualitatively new context for asylum seekers did not address this political identity of asylum seekers. During this research, approached in the same way as the 'one size fits all' dispersal policy, heterogeneity became more and more clear and the setting up of parallel services for asylum seekers therefore less justifiable.

The question as to whether the 'refugee experience' exists or whether it is just a compilation of the 'bits and pieces' of information of a persons individual life history that are presented in order to gain refugee status has already been addressed

⁴³⁹ R4; joint-interview with asylum seeker and voluntary organisation employee, Lincoln, November 2003.

in the literature (Knudsen, 1995; Ager, 1999; Turton, 2003). The dangers of focussing on the trauma of the experience and 'pathologising' refugees and not balancing discourses of vulnerability with appreciation of the resilience of refugees has also been addressed (Ager, 1999; Harrell-Bond, 1999). Within the UK an 'asylum seeker experience' is sometimes actively constructed as a coping strategy by asylum seekers. This construction has to be seen in the context of the deterrence environment and resistance to policy-imposed liminality. Comments such as; '*You can never know what it is like*'⁴⁴¹, '*The English don't know*'⁴⁴² and '*She has experience – she has been through it*'⁴⁴³ detail the 'border' that is constructed between asylum seekers and those who have not experienced forced migration. An asylum seeker expressed this in another way when commenting on the way in which he considered himself viewed by 'British people':

*'People judge you according to their own scope and perspective. They have everything here, there is always water, they don't know about our life. They judge from their own scales. They don't look at our life there, how we have suffered there, what has happened to us. They can't do it, they can't because they haven't experienced it. Or maybe they do know, they do understand, and they just don't want people to come here.'*⁴⁴⁴

This constructed 'border' sometimes resulted in asylum seekers and refugees excluding themselves and placing themselves in a form of exile within the UK. The processes of social exclusion encountered upon arrival in the UK create this situation and the asylum and NASS systems combined are the barrier to belonging. The 'asylum seeker experience' exists but – and it is a big but – it is clearly an artificial imposition of policy and is used as a coping strategy for asylum seekers in a hostile deterrence environment.

That 'masks' were to be taken off to reveal the 'ordinary', or normal person underneath resonates strongly with Turton's arguments about refugees being 'ordinary people' who have been through extraordinary circumstances (2003). These ordinary people continue to go through extraordinary circumstances in the UK due to the asylum and NASS systems.

⁴⁴⁰ D1; interview with female representative of RCO, London, November 2002.

⁴⁴¹ A4; participant in focus group, Leicester, July 2003.

⁴⁴² A12; joint interview with asylum seekers, Bristol, November 2003.

⁴⁴³ R1; focus group participant, Bristol, July 2003.

CONCLUSIONS

As the quotes at the beginning of this chapter illustrate, in a deterrence environment asylum seekers find ways to make themselves feel 'human' and during dispersal social networks were utilised to retain a sense of being human within a dehumanised system. The uses of social networks also surrounded accessing information and advice about the asylum and NASS systems plus accessing services whilst within these systems. The reasons for mobilising social networks stemmed from negative circumstances relating to survival, access to information about rights and campaigning against deportation. As such there were a form of insurance against crisis situations. Overall, survival and resistance to the liminality imposed by the NASS system were the most important motivations for the swift creation of networks. Recourse to social networks was the most important method of resisting policy-imposed liminality. Whilst social trust was generated in this way, institutional trust was not. Spaces for the restoration of trust were largely absent from the NASS system and in this sense, the concept of social capital stemming from negative circumstances was not such a useful idea and the utilisation of social networks was better described as a coping strategy.

Social networks in relation to the NASS system were clearly based on dynamic and fluid relationships, be they strong or weak, positive or negative, which interconnected people globally, nationally and locally. Brief encounters with agents or acquaintances demonstrated the influence, strength and importance of weak ties during forced migration. Social networks destroyed and disrupted were not catered for by the dispersal policy often resulting in social isolation. Social networks that had previously been comprised of face-to-face contacts with family, friends and acquaintances were maintained over distance by telephone and email. There was evidence of maintenance of social networks over considerable distances ranging from countries of origin to different cities across the UK. Social networks in the UK also comprised a broader range of service providers, professionals working with refugees and other agencies but institutional trust could not be assumed due, in part,

⁴⁴⁴ A13; interview with asylum seeker, Bristol, November 2003.

to the conflicts of interest surrounding professionalism and boundaries. Members of an imagined community were also trusted by asylum seekers but to differing degrees.

The trajectory of social networks meant that, over time, asylum seekers moved away from the stigma and shame of the NASS system and associated agencies. This sometimes involved secondary migration and such actions were found to be positive methods of forming a sense of belonging. Refugees engage in an active process of remaking belonging and it was ultimately people rather than places that provided this belonging. Throughout this research the heterogeneity of asylum seekers became more and more apparent and any 'asylum seeker experience' was clearly a product of the parallel services set up for asylum seekers and a coping strategy due to the deterrence environment and requirement to resist the policy-imposed liminality of the asylum and NASS systems.

Asylum seekers have multiple identities and affiliations dependent upon their country of origin, gender, age, political affiliations. These identities were often the reason for persecution in the first instance. The connection point to 'inclusion' for asylum seekers was not only based on nationality, but also socio-economic background, gender and a multitude of other factors as diverse as the population of the UK. That asylum seekers were perceived themselves to be 'ghosts' and 'shadows' during dispersal, plus the call for people to take off their 'masks' highlighted how asylum seekers quest for a normal and peaceful life was dependent upon the image of asylum seekers and ways in which to shake off this label. Viewing the 'ordinary' person underneath these masks was one way to reject the socially constructed category of so-called 'asylum seekers'. For belonging to occur beyond the narrow confines of social trust based on recourse to social networks, the image of asylum seekers would need to be made more positive and a welcome provided that allowed for restoration of institutional and political trust as well as social trust.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis investigated the contemporary compulsory dispersal of asylum seekers following the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999. It is the first study exploring both dispersal and social exclusion. The dispersal policy was formulated in an environment of mistrust towards asylum seekers and had an explicit deterrence element. In the past, quota refugees fleeing persecution arrived with secure status and their dispersal around the UK involved obtaining secure accommodation, employment and other routes to 'inclusion'. Contemporary compulsory dispersal of asylum seekers occurs without this secure status and implementation of the policy led to an accommodation lottery based on 'bedspaces' and temporary access to services. Asylum seekers are denied paid employment and the exclusionary logic of the policy means that they encounter social exclusion in many forms. This thesis argues that contemporary dispersal of asylum seekers therefore operates in a qualitatively different environment to past instances of dispersal of refugees. This chapter concludes by revisiting the research aims which were:

- To investigate processes of formal and informal social exclusion in the NASS system
- To investigate the impact of dispersal on how asylum seekers access services
- To investigate the impact of dispersal on the ability of asylum seekers to maintain or create social networks
- To explore the overall effect of the three aims on the sense of 'belonging' or 'inclusion' of asylum seekers and the longer term effects on the process of resettlement

This research involved a particular form of research methodology and consideration of ethics. My own background and experiences of working with refugees overseas and the period of employment with a UK based RCO shaped this study. Immersion in a RCO meant that several issues had been highlighted prior to fieldwork. This plus a consideration of user involvement and influence during the process of research led to a multi-method approach so that a comprehensive and multi-dimensional account of dispersal could be produced. The emphasis on conducting the research ethically, reflexively and empathetically was also a strength. Interpreting the principle of 'avoiding

harm' more structurally beyond immediate circumstances meant that the dignity of individuals became a consideration. The question of how to gain trust with asylum seekers and refugees was also taken seriously.

FINDINGS IN RELATION TO RESEARCH AIMS

Processes of Formal and Informal Social Exclusion in the NASS system

The use of dichotomies such as 'exclusion' and 'inclusion' is always problematic. In the case of asylum seekers it invokes a distinction between 'members' and 'strangers' where the sense of belonging based on membership and shared social capital of residents is counterposed by the extreme exclusion of new arrivals into the UK. This thesis has explored how the absence of political belonging means that others forms of belonging are sought out. In the face of this extreme exclusion asylum seekers resist policy attempts to deny integration by creating their own forms of belonging.

A shift from a focus on poverty and its more structural causes to a discourse on social exclusion that focuses on the behaviour and distinctiveness of individuals has been discernable in government discourse over the past decades. As outlined in *Chapter 2*, Levitas identified three discourses of social exclusion – RED, MUD and SID (1998:27). The RED framework is the most helpful in explaining the social exclusion of asylum seekers due to dispersal although the MUD framework was invoked by some agencies who focussed on the behaviour of asylum seekers. It was clear that dispersal incorporated exclusionary mechanisms (*Chapters 4-6*) and the provision of only 70% of income support (*Chapter 7*) excluded asylum seekers from ordinary living patterns. 'Failure to travel' to the dispersal areas was the most prominent way in which behaviour was described with the emphasis on the asylum seeker not conforming to the imposed constraints of the system. Asylum seekers were seen as culturally distinct due to their circumstances. Asylum seekers were excluded from paid employment until a less temporary status was granted. This meant that they were not able to be included in what New Labour considers to be the primary route to inclusion – paid employment. The SID framework was therefore made redundant from the debate.

It was found that multiple forms of social exclusion existed relating to the declining entitlements of asylum seekers as well as the structure, geography and process of the NASS system. Each of these contributed to the social exclusion of asylum seekers during dispersal.

Social exclusion as a result of the structure and implementation of compulsory dispersal was examined in *Chapter 4*. The dispersal policy was designed quickly, with little reference to academic studies or lessons learned from past experiences of dispersing recognised refugees which showed how enforced dispersal policies were unsuccessful due to the agency and social networks of individuals. It was essentially a reactive policy, shaped by a small number of local authorities in London and the Southeast who provided evidence that a national system for the dispersal of asylum seekers could solve a national ‘problem’. The lack of planning and consultation during the design of the system led to an inefficient system that was ultimately implemented not by those who had designed it (civil servants in the Home Office) but by a range of agencies from the public, private and voluntary sectors. NASS was created to institutionalise redistribution with the support and service elements of their title coming secondary to the control and ability to monitor asylum seekers. This policy, seen within the wider context of UK social policy design has embraced market principles but has not placed a greater emphasis on user-involvement.

In principle, if carried out on a voluntary basis, the idea of accommodating asylum seekers in areas outside London and the Southeast could be viable given the commitment of numerous organisations and individuals across the UK. However, in practice, the contemporary NASS system that has evolved since 2000 is fraught with difficulties and conflicting agendas. Tensions were apparent from the beginning and the deficiencies in planning at national level had great effect on implementation at local level with efforts to make dispersal more ‘user friendly’ at a local level constrained because of the centrally imposed categorisation of asylum seekers as a distinct group.

The separation of asylum seekers from mainstream service provision created a more visible group and entrenched the distinction, in the eyes of the resident population and service providers, between asylum seekers and refugees. This distinction was then institutionalised by the creation of NASS as well as the high number of agencies contracted to NASS to provide services. The conflicting roles of agencies involved meant

power imbalances between organisations. The proliferation of agencies, including the decision by the voluntary sector to take part in a punitive system and a new role for the private sector, characterise contemporary compulsory dispersal.

A hierarchical structure for implementation of dispersal emerged with agencies at the top who were least likely to be involved with asylum seekers on a face-to-face basis having the most influence over the policy and those working locally with asylum seekers having the least. This emergent hierarchy was led by central government but the private sector largely operated outside local government structures. The voluntary sector was at the interface between asylum seekers and in-country deterrence and therefore inhabited the most visible and contested space within the system. The position of asylum seekers was outside this hierarchy and did not allow for adequate representation given the dual function of the voluntary sector that represented them to NASS.

Each organisation within this hierarchy sought to influence and control the process. NASS wanted to control the system and asylum seekers within it. Local authorities sought to decentralise NASS decision making, have some control over PAPs and, understandably, control the development of their cities in relation to the resources allocated to provision of services to asylum seekers. PAPs sought to control the maintenance of their properties and, because of their monitoring and reporting obligations, control asylum seekers. RSPs wanted to control and influence the process and the evolution of the dispersal policy saw the abandonment of the cluster idea and shifted the way in which dispersal was implemented from individual to group dispersals. This latter shift meant a growth in the voluntary sector role and incrementally shifted their role closer to that of NASS. Redirection of asylum seekers to their own 'communities' for support was an unquestioned assumption with the RCO role becoming one of 'buffering' dispersal. This was largely unrecognised and unfunded and little emphasis was placed on using this channel to support subsequent integration strategies.

Chapter 5 showed how the geography of dispersal was a reflection of the exclusionary policy context and, in particular, the availability of unpopular housing. There was a significant relationship between dispersal and deprivation and this was investigated at a national and ward level. It was shown how compulsory dispersal, particularly at the outset, correlated closely with areas of deprivation with between 70% and 80% of dispersal areas

located in the 88 most deprived local authority districts in England. Asylum seekers experiences of dispersal also illustrated the link between dispersal and deprivation and the knowledge that accommodation allocated to them was largely located in deprived areas.

Subsistence Only support illustrated a different pattern of settlement. It was clear that larger cities and areas in London and the Southeast were popular with asylum seekers claiming SO support. The need to feel comfortable and become invisible were satisfied by moving to these larger cities. The number of locations of those in receipt of SO support was also higher than dispersal showing how asylum seekers with social networks effectively dispersed themselves more widely than the institutional redistribution of the dispersal policy.

In *Chapter 6*, the experiences of asylum seekers and process of social exclusion as a result of dispersal were explored. The primary lens for understanding how asylum seekers experienced social exclusion during dispersal was policy-imposed liminality. The NASS system added an extra layer of liminality to the already difficult asylum process that asylum seekers negotiated. At each stage of the NASS system a lack of control over the process, lack of space for the restoration of different forms of trust and the inability to assume new identities other than that of asylum seeker created this lens. Both formal and informal processes of social exclusion began at the point of arrival in the UK and continued throughout the NASS process due to a lack of choice of dispersal location and type of accommodation. Social exclusion over time occurred as a result of the NASS system.

In theory, dispersal imposed an equal distribution of deprivation on all forced migrants regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds, country of origin, membership of a particular social group, political opinion, religion, gender, age or individual history. In practice, there was a wide variety of local conditions and standard of accommodation in dispersal locations. However, every destitute asylum seeker was dispersed without regard for the human resources and experiences they were potentially able to mobilise and this meant that individuals were effectively equalised and dehistoricised by dispersal. This dehistoricising of asylum seekers was replicated by agencies funded by the Home Office with the route to becoming a 'case' or a 'client' of NASS and the implementing agencies a

dehumanizing one. The situational identity of victimhood was invariably invoked to access the system, remaining entitlements and services.

Dispersal as a 'one size fits all' policy demonstrated the consequences of Indra's examination of tensions in the theories of forced migration (1999). The centre of gravity on the macro side has important consequences and what was lost in the focus on an administrative process was any attention to heterogeneity, resilience and capabilities of asylum seekers. The earlier stages of the refugee experience in countries of origin showed how this focus on an administrative process did not allow for an understanding of the prior experiences and subsequent needs of asylum seekers.

The Impact of Dispersal on Access to Services

As outlined in *Chapters 4 and 7*, asylum seekers mainly accessed services through their accommodation providers due to contractual obligations to the Home Office for the provision of these services. This had several implications, not least of which was at the 'move on' stage when those granted refugee status had to begin to renegotiate with mainstream agencies for support. For those given a negative RSD decision, dispersal meant that so-called 'failed asylum seekers' and 'hard cases' no longer received assistance in accessing services. In particular, access to health services for those with a negative decision has become more difficult since this research was conducted. The monitoring and reporting role of accommodation providers and privatisation of services for asylum seekers expanded considerably under dispersal and were more easily controlled by NASS than other sectors.

The power to define access to services based on complex hierarchies of centrally devised statuses was a form of social exclusion that could not be overcome at a regional or local level. *Chapter 7* focussed on the declining rights of asylum seekers and the relationship to remaining entitlements. Dispersal enforced a regime of temporary services meaning that social exclusion at a local level was an inherent part of a dispersed asylum seekers experience. This temporary access to services, the lottery of accommodation type and location as well as relocation built into the system each contributed to the policy-imposed liminality of the NASS system. The individual histories of asylum seekers prior to reaching the UK were not catered for by agencies and not factoring in the basis and

consequences of persecution meant that appropriate and adequate services were not always in place. Access to counselling, mental health professionals, assistance with family reunification and other emergent issues such as domestic violence were each services catching up in dispersal locations. Services surrounding gender-specific forms of persecution were largely absent when dispersal began and, as respondents suggested, issues such as 'honour' crimes were again those that involved temporal and spatial conceptualization beyond the focus on the administrative system. Gaps in services were invariably cross-cutting issues such as mental health and childcare which were not the responsibility of a single agency and as such were indicative of a lack of overall coordination throughout the system.

The relationship to remaining entitlements revealed the weaknesses of the NASS system and relocation during dispersal had considerable impact on how asylum seekers accessed services. During this time, asylum seekers may either be not aware of their rights to equal access to services or may not wish to take up these rights because of the stigma and shame surrounding the image of asylum seekers.

The qualitative different environment in which asylum seekers were dispersed meant that access to good quality legal services was a high priority. These legal services were not always in place in dispersal locations and retaining solicitors in initial dispersal locations was one form of resistance to liminality whilst acting as an indicator of the temporariness of current dispersal locations. Another weakness of the NASS system was access to good quality translation and interpretation services across the range of agencies offering services to asylum seekers. Disruption of education during relocation was an outcome of dispersal and there were clear examples of schools informally socially excluding refugee children through admissions criteria and certification issues. Liminality was resisted for children when parents chose to put children into crèches to enable socialisation.

Intangible barriers to accessing services revolved around status and media coverage and resulted in low self-esteem and retreat into communities where social trust could be obtained. Asylum seekers were compelled to access services through agencies by invoking the victimhood facet of their situational identity which meant they were forced to go through extraordinary circumstances in the UK.

The combination of discriminatory practices inherent in the NASS system and postcode discrimination in deprived areas impacted greatly on the present and future social exclusion of asylum seekers.

The Impact of Dispersal on Social Networks

Asylum seekers were not passive in this process and engaged in an active remaking of belonging mainly through social networks. *Chapter 8* illustrated how the most important way in which asylum seekers resisted policy-imposed liminality was through recourse to social networks. The dispersal system did not incorporate the social networks of asylum seekers and, for those who have not had their social networks destroyed *en route*, being able to maintain social networks was a motivation for secondary migration. The NASS system hindered the maintenance of social networks.

For asylum seekers who had recourse to networks of relationships across the UK, this was the most important way in which asylum seekers and refugees created a sense of 'belonging'. This involved a trajectory of different forms of social networks that, over time, shifted asylum seekers away from the stigma and shame of the asylum seeker label. This research challenged the assumption that secondary migration was a negative outcome of dispersal. For those who did not have this recourse and whose social networks had been destroyed *en route*, isolation was often the result of dispersal. There was considerable evidence of maintenance of social networks over distances with these distances ranging from countries of origin to different cities across the UK. When social networks had been destroyed in the countries of origin, further disruption due to dispersal in the UK resulted in extreme cases of isolation.

The main uses of social networks were for accessing information for survival, information and advice as well as acting as an insurance against crisis situations such as deportation. Another crucial aspect was to allow individuals to feel human which, in a deterrence environment, meant that during dispersal social networks were utilised to retain this sense of being human within what was widely perceived as being a dehumanising system. The uses of social networks also surrounded accessing information and advice about the asylum and NASS systems plus accessing services whilst within these systems. Reasons for mobilising social networks stemmed from negative circumstances relating to survival,

access to information about rights and campaigning against deportation. As such they were a form of insurance against crisis situations. Weak ties, or brief encounters with acquaintances, were a characteristic of these networks.

Overall, survival and resistance to the liminality imposed by the NASS system were the most important motivations for the swift creation or maintenance and mobilization of networks. Whilst social trust was generated in this way, institutional trust was not. Spaces for the restoration of trust were largely absent from the NASS system and in this sense, the concept of social capital stemming from negative circumstances was not such a useful idea and the utilisation of social networks was better described as a coping strategy.

Refugees engaged in an active process of remaking belonging and it was ultimately people rather than places that provided this belonging. Asylum seekers constructed their experiences and identities to negotiate the NASS system and this was clearly a product of the parallel services set up for asylum seekers and a coping strategy due to the deterrence environment. The creation, or remaking, of social networks was not always based on nationality, with gender and other individual connections or communities of interest allowing for 'inclusion' and 'belonging' to be created. This active creation of networks and remaking of belonging, whilst constrained by the dispersal policy, was clearly the way in which asylum seekers rebuilt their worlds.

Recourse to social networks did occur partly as a result of the negative circumstances of the NASS system and related directly to survival, access to information, the need to be 'invisible' and find a sense of belonging. The impulse for secondary migration was therefore a result of the negative aspects of the dispersal system as well as the positive benefits of social networks.

The Impact of Dispersal on the Sense of Belonging

'Belonging' is extremely complex and *Chapter 8* discussed the impact of dispersal on any sense of 'belonging' felt by asylum seekers. There is an immovable Home Office position that 'integration' should only commence once an asylum seeker obtained a positive RSD decision. The NASS system can therefore be seen as a very conscious effort to maintain asylum seekers in a liminal state pending this decision. Compulsory dispersal, initial and

subsequent negative treatment, being unable to seek employment as well as the disbelief and mistrust of asylum seekers created by past legislation all result in a 'negative equation' for asylum seekers. It is unsurprising that this is something that asylum seekers feel they have to move on from and secondary migration is one way to move away from this stigma and shame. Without political belonging, other forms of belonging are sought. Also without political belonging, a focus on victimhood and the need for charity is a result. In *Chapter 3* the issues of dignity and avoiding harm during the research process broadened this out to incorporate a more structural view.

As argued in *Chapters 6 and 8*, any aspiration an asylum seeker might have to live a normal, peaceful, independent existence is at odds with the asylum and NASS systems encountered by asylum seekers upon arrival in the UK. Separated, stigmatised and socially excluded, asylum seekers are made to proceed through a process that is characterised by waiting, being relocated, austere living conditions, having no control over the type or location of accommodation. Denying the opportunity to begin a process of resettlement, the NASS system creates policy-imposed liminality and this, plus any resistance to this extended period of liminality, means that asylum seekers continue to go through extraordinary circumstances in the UK. Arguably, it is the imposition of policy that distinguishes them from other migrants more than the experience of violence, flight and exile and other definitives of the so-called 'refugee experience'. It is not surprising that asylum seekers and refugees effectively hide from the stigma and shame imposed upon them by their status. To become invisible becomes a priority and in that sense, dispersal to multicultural areas (which are also largely deprived areas) does contain some logic. These strategies of invisibility do not, however, allow for institutional trust to be established. Social trust, in areas where they feel 'comfortable' is formed almost in opposition to the issue of visibility.

Asylum seekers do remake their belonging in the UK. Belonging begins before arrival in the UK and this concept needs to be temporally and spatially expanded to include the history and transnational character of the asylum process. Belonging largely occurs in a non-geographical sense through recourse to social networks as opposed to the evocation of belonging as attachment to a particular community or place. 'Integration', 'inclusion' and 'belonging' therefore occur despite asylum policies and not because of them. Resistance to policy-imposed liminality is the way in which asylum seekers begin to acquire a sense

of belonging in the UK. 'Failure to travel' to dispersal areas, retaining services in original locations prior to dispersal and maintaining social networks were all dispersal specific forms of resistance to this liminality.

Asylum seekers had multiple identities and affiliations dependent upon their country of origin, gender, age and political affiliations with these identities often the reason for persecution in the first instance. The connection point to 'inclusion' for asylum seekers was not only based on nationality, but also socio-economic background, gender and a multitude of other factors as diverse as the population of the UK. That asylum seekers were perceived themselves to be 'ghosts' and 'shadows' during dispersal, plus the call for people to take off their 'masks' highlighted how asylum seekers quest for a normal and peaceful life was dependent upon the image of asylum seekers and ways in which to shake off this label. Viewing the ordinary person underneath these masks was one way to reject the socially constructed category of so-called asylum seekers.

The main longer term effect of the dispersal policy on the process of resettlement is that it runs counter to subsequent integration strategies because of the negative equation described above. Experiences at the beginning and during the NASS system become something which have to be resisted and subsequently hidden from view. The 'skeleton in the closet' is the status of being an asylum seeker and not wishing to be associated with the NASS system.

EXCLUSION AND LIMINALITY

The concepts of liminality and (mis)trust acted as a bridge between the literature on forced migration and social exclusion and represent a contribution to knowledge. These concepts emerged during data analysis and proved key to understanding and illuminating the experiences of asylum seekers. The linking of these concepts and literature has not previously been applied to a study about asylum seekers in the UK.

Compulsory dispersal led to multiple forms of social exclusion. Asylum seekers were disadvantaged due to declining entitlements; the structure, geography and process of dispersal; tangible and intangible barriers to accessing services, as well as barriers to maintaining or creating social networks. In combination, the policy of compulsory

dispersal actively prevented asylum seekers from developing a new sense of belonging within the UK. I have argued that the main cause of this disadvantage was the liminality dispersal imposed on asylum seekers and the lack of trust inherent in the system of temporary dispersal.

Different forms of trust – social, institutional, political and restorative – were distinguished in relation to the NASS system. These disaggregated forms of trust also have broader relevance in debates surrounding social exclusion. Asylum seekers' experiences of institutions were seldom positive and did not provide space for the restoration of political or institutional trust. Socially excluded populations are also considered to mistrust neighbours, figures of authority, officialdom and services providers. Relationships of trust and reciprocity are also paramount in some theories of social capital (e.g. Putnam, 1993) as is a link between social and political trust (Newton, 2006). Mistrust is also important because community participation and user engagement depend upon the ability to build political and institutional trust (Demos, 2003).

The empirical data presented suggests a theoretical continuum between liminality and belonging. The finding that the primary lens for understanding the experiences of social exclusion of asylum seekers was the policy-imposed liminality of the NASS system illustrates how the policy pulled asylum seekers towards the liminality end of the continuum. The in-country deterrence element of the system and asylum seekers being maintained at a standard of living below that of the rest of the population contributed to this. However, asylum seekers resisted this policy-imposed liminality and actively remade belonging particularly through recourse to social networks even though the NASS system hindered their maintenance. Everyday resistance to the sense of 'temporariness' imposed resulted in forms of belonging that lay outside any subsequent formal mechanisms designed to promote 'integration'. This resistance was through routes that avoided direct confrontation with authority or official institutions whilst at the same time pulling asylum seekers towards the belonging end of the continuum.

This study incorporated the capabilities and vulnerabilities of asylum seekers rather than the usual focus on vulnerabilities alone. This acknowledged that asylum seekers actively remake their belonging rather than focussing solely on losses encountered during the process of becoming a refugee.

The image of asylum seekers is of people wanting something, seeking something, not having the rights of others. Refugees, on the other hand, do have those rights and there are obligations for these to be provided, however negative the connotations surrounding the label. Addressing the entire 'refugee experience' from the period of threat in the country of origin showed how the rigid legal distinction between asylum seeker and refugee and connotations surrounding the semantics used in the NASS system were artificial. This also meant that the prevalent polemic categorisations, negative perceptions and inaccurate representations of asylum seekers were challenged. The spatial and temporal expansion also allowed issues such as historic antagonisms and factionalism in the country of origin to be more easily understood and their implications during the NASS system conceptualised.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Relating the findings of this research to the governments' aims for dispersal was revealing. One aim was to redistribute costs away from London and the Southeast. Another aim of the policy was to deter new arrivals of asylum seekers and the policy was deliberately designed around the idea of deterrence. Provision of support outside the mainstream benefits system and exclusion from mainstream services was a conscious aspect of the design. Another aim was to avoid adding to problems of social exclusion and racial tension as well as the avoidance of secondary migration. There were several gaps between these aims and implementation. As shown in *Chapter 5*, asylum seekers claiming Subsistence Only support remain concentrated in London and the Southeast. Providing financial support outside the mainstream benefits system occurred and has resulted in social exclusion of asylum seekers due to the institutionalisation of the distinction between 'asylum seeker' and 'refugee'. As graphically illustrated in *Chapter 5*, placing asylum seekers in areas of high deprivation and existing social exclusion has meant that tensions have not been avoided. The process of social exclusion that asylum seekers experience was outlined in *Chapter 6*, and it was shown how this resulted in policy-imposed liminality. Secondary migration, whilst difficult to quantify, also occurred with asylum seekers moving to larger cities where they feel comfortable, invisible and away from the stigma and shame of the NASS system.

Two main implications for future policy were identified which related to liminality and (mis)trust. Firstly, the compulsory character of dispersal was highly problematic. Secondly, separating asylum seekers from the mainstream benefits system and setting up parallel services for financial support were at the root of social exclusion. Compulsory dispersal added another layer of liminality to the already difficult asylum process for asylum seekers with the provision of temporary accommodation and temporary services to asylum seekers contributing to this liminality. A mechanism to allow asylum seekers to maintain social networks would reduce such liminality experienced, as would reducing the number of times individuals were relocated. An important implication for future practices would be to pay attention and take seriously issues surrounding the individuals' basis for persecution when allocating accommodation as well as issues surrounding factionalism and historical antagonisms within or between nationalities.

The NASS system had implications for the restoration of all forms of trust because the foundations of future trust (or mistrust) were laid during this process. Overall, there was little space for asylum seekers to trust or be trusted – in particular, institutional and political trust was not restored. NASS replicated the culture of disbelief between the Home Office and asylum seekers and, consequently, 'officialdom' was something to be avoided. This 'officialdom' included the voluntary sector due to their dual advocacy and implementation roles and subsequent perceived lack of independence within the system. Importantly, the link between social and political trust in theories of social capital was absent in relation to asylum seekers with experience of the asylum determination process and NASS systems. Trust is a starting point and an essential component of community development, user engagement and community participation. This was neglected and under-resourced in the NASS system due to the emphasis on maintaining asylum seekers in a liminal state pending status determination. The NASS system and the management of asylum seekers runs counter to the social cohesion agenda and subsequent emphasis on integration once refugee status was awarded. When accessing services trust was important. In the case of legal services institutional trust, once gained, was not easily relinquished. The policing of asylum seekers by private and public sector accommodation providers represents a further step in the shift to a culture of suspicion and mistrust identified in relation to agencies previously involved in replicating the role of the state as outlined at the beginning of this thesis. Specific gaps in service provision were identified in *Chapter 7* and these gaps would require attention if the dispersal process were to be improved.

Taken as a whole, these findings suggest that there is a need to address the issue of trust during the NASS system. This would involve more funding and resources for concentration on processes of community development.

The finding that there are several forms of social exclusion experienced by asylum seekers suggests a role for the Social Exclusion Unit. If the debate is to be moved forward, a better understanding of the link between accommodating asylum seekers in NASS properties on a temporary basis and the requirement of other populations in multiply deprived areas needs to be developed. Policy for asylum seekers was managed by NASS and such a move would require a more joined-up approach from government agencies.

Although the NASS system was considered controversial prior to its implementation by public, private and voluntary sector agencies, dispersal became regarded as less of a priority by campaign organisations than more immediate or harsher forms of deterrence such as deportation and detention. However, dispersal socially excluded asylum seekers over time by distinguishing their rights to welfare and services from other migrants. This was a slower, less visible and sometimes intangible process of social exclusion.

Future Research

This research has thrown up many questions that warrant further investigation such as the hostility encountered towards new refugees from those who have previously migrated to the UK; factionalism and mistrust within refugee communities; how established and more recent migrations demonstrate Kunz's 'vintage' concept (1973); and the issue of discrimination given the added dimension of the status of 'asylum seeker'. Each of these would be relevant to the ongoing debates surrounding multiculturalism.

A key finding was that asylum seekers did engage in an active process of remaking belonging by resisting the policy-imposed liminality of the NASS system. A study that took as its starting point the idea of a liminality to belonging continuum will allow for the ideas contained in this thesis to be expanded. Interviews with individuals both before and after status determination would enable a more thorough understanding of this continuum. Interviews with refugees after status determination will potentially highlight how formal

integration policies commenced too late in the process. For belonging to occur beyond the narrow confines of social trust based on recourse to social networks, the image of asylum seekers would need to be made more positive and a welcome provided that allowed for restoration of institutional and political trust as well as social trust.

Since commencement of this study the trajectory of asylum policy in the UK has increased the chances of liminality being experienced by asylum seekers. The governments' most recent strategy on asylum now means that even individuals granted refugee status are reviewed after 5 years and, subject to conditions in their original countries, may lose their legal status if these countries are deemed safe. This extends the period of liminality experienced beyond that described in this thesis and warrants further research.

Additionally, a new Gateway programme for the resettlement of refugees with secure status is now in operation. However, the lack of planning, lack of consultation and inefficiencies of the asylum and NASS systems have left local authorities across the countries reticent to participate in this scheme. During the period of this research, planning applications for accommodation centres were vehemently opposed by local residents, a Screening Centre for asylum seekers in Portishead near Bristol was strongly contested by residents and various forums across the UK were set up to deal with the anti-asylum seeker feelings of local populations. In this way, the mishandling of the dispersal of asylum seekers could be seen as having the unexpected outcome of reducing the number of areas in the UK where the local populations will give the go-ahead for a building or new immigration centre, let alone populations of 'quota refugees' directly from protracted refugee situations in regions of origin. A comparative study of dispersal and the Gateway programme will be of particular relevance given this context and will allow for the continuum between liminality and belonging to be investigated in even greater depth.

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28 January 2003, *Impact of Change conference*, Refugee Council, London.

22 February 2003, *1st Annual Student Conference on Forced Migration*, St. Anne's College, Oxford.

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6 March 2003, *Action for Refugee Women, International Women's Day*, London.

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29-30 June 2004, *UK National Integration Conference: What Works Locally? Balancing National and Local Policies*, London.

15 October 2004, *Refugee Women – Rights and Wrongs*, seminar at the European Social Forum, London.

13-14 May 2005, *3rd Annual Postgraduate Student Conference on Forced Migration*, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford.

15 June 2006, *Hear My Voice: Refugee Women's Involvement in Integration*, Amnesty International Human Rights Centre, London.

Appendices

- Appendix I:** Annotated chronology of British legislation relating to refugees and asylum seekers
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- Appendix XVII:** Ethics sheet read out to refugees and asylum seekers
- Appendix XVIII:** Application Form for NASS support – NASS1
- Appendix XIX:** Agreed languages as per January 2006
- Appendix XX:** Rank of Employment Deprivation, Indices of Deprivation 2000
- Appendix XXI:** Long Term Unemployed, Census 2001
- Appendix XXII:** Full page maps
- Appendix XXIII:** Tenure Concentrations, 2001
- Appendix XXIV:** Housing/homelessness workshop
- Appendix XXV:** Poster on front door of recruitment agency, Leicester, July 2003
- Appendix XXVI:** Opposition to planning application for Emergency Accommodation in Finsbury Park

Appendix I: Annotated chronology of British legislation relating to refugees and asylum seekers:

Year	Legislation	Annotation
1905	Aliens' Act	Set up a new system of immigration control and registration and placed responsibility for all matters of immigration and nationality with the Home Secretary who had the power to deport immigrants considered to be criminals or paupers; refugees excluded from restrictive measures
1914	Aliens' Registration Act	Mandatory registration of all aliens over the age of 16 with the police; main target of legislation was Germans in the UK
1919	Aliens' Restriction Act	Renewed the requirement for aliens to register with the police;
1947	Polish Resettlement Act	Created National Assistance Board in charge of the resettlement of Poles; allowed Poles to access employment and unemployment assistance
1948	Nationalities Act	Permitted entry of 'Citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies' (CUKC) and the right to live in the UK
1962	Commonwealth Immigrants Act	Breaking of colonial ties begins; restricts entry of Commonwealth Citizens; distinction between 'Old' and 'New' Commonwealth
1968	Commonwealth Immigrants Act	Removes right of entry from those without 'patriality'; denies entry to East Africans settled in Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika
1969	Immigration Appeals Act	Created Immigration Appeals Tribunal
1970	Immigration Rules	
1971	Immigration Act	Subjects Citizens of New Commonwealth to further restrictions; ended major, permanent primary migration to the UK from Africa, the Indian sub-continent and the African-Caribbean; renewed the requirement for aliens to register with the police
1973	Immigration Rules	Eases entry for EEC nationals
1980	Immigration Rules	
1981	British Nationality Act	Restricts British Citizenship further
1984	Immigration Procedure Rules	Provides for Appeals to be heard by a single adjudicator
1985	Change to Immigration Procedure Rules	Introduction of visas for Tamils

1986	Changes to Immigration Rules	
1987	Carriers' Liability Act	Airlines fined for carrying passengers without correct documentation
1988	Immigration Act	Repeal of right of men settled in UK pre-1973 to be joined by their families
1993	Asylum & Immigration Appeals Act	Incorporated the 1951 Refugee Convention into domestic law; embedded the 'safe third country' removal process; restrictions on those who could apply for asylum in the UK
1996	Asylum & Immigration Act	Introduced sanctions on employers who gave work to unauthorized asylum seekers; imposed sever restrictions on welfare entitlements; reduced access to social services for certain asylum seekers
1999	Immigration & Asylum Act	Creation of NASS and implementation of dispersal for 'destitute' asylum seekers; introduced voucher system; imposed duties on registrars to report 'suspicious' marriages; strengthened powers of immigration officers; one-stop appeals; replaced 1987 Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act and extended liability to the carriage of clandestine entrants in any vehicle, ship or aircraft
2002	Nationality, Immigration & Asylum Act	Withdrawal of 'in-country' support; plans for induction, accommodation, reporting and 'removal' (previously 'detention') centres; introduced Gateway Resettlement programme for quota refugees; introduced Application Registration Card (ARC) with photograph, details and fingerprint of individual; repealed provision for automatic bail hearings; extended statutory provision for voluntary assisted returns programme; requires employers to ensure that employees are entitled to work
2004	Asylum & Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Act	Arrival in the UK without a passport or valid identity document made a criminal offence; tightening of credibility boundaries; withdrawal of basic support for families if voluntary return to country of origin not undertaken; community activities for 'hard cases'; 'local connection' to local authority area required if housing required;

		withdrawal of backdating of benefits and replaced by integration loan; unification of the appeal system; 'safe third countries' list expanded; criminal offence not to co-operate with deportation procedures; electronic monitoring
Proposed 2005	Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill	Intends to stop granting Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) to recognised refugees; strengthen border controls; introduction of an integration loan to replace integration grant for recognised refugees

Sources: Bloch and Schuster, 2005; Kerrigan, 2005; Kushner and Knox, 1999; JCWI, 2002; Schuster, 2005; see also Moving Here, viewed on 23 January 2006 at: <http://www.movinghere.org.uk/default.htm>

Appendix II: NASS Dispersal Strategy (as of 10 October 2002)

NASS is committed to a full consultation process with the regional consortia and has identified the language groups that each cluster area can accommodate. Ideally Asylum Seekers are dispersed to clusters that can accommodate their language group and have the relevant support services in place to meet their needs. NASS has also consulted with the consortia as to the number of asylum seekers that the cluster/region can successfully accommodate, both from the integration angle and without causing/increasing racial tension in an area.

The NASS Regional Managers constantly monitor the integration process within their region and report any racial unrest or other issues that arise involving asylum seekers dispersed to their area. Where incidents of violence occur the local Police view is sought as to the safety of a region for future dispersal, and the safety of asylum seekers is paramount in deciding whether to continue dispersal to sensitive areas. Warring factions are kept apart when dispersed to avoid any tension spilling over from their countries of origin.

The accommodation is chosen on the basis of suitability to house asylum seekers and their dependants within the cluster areas throughout the UK. The cluster areas are ideally based in towns and cities where suitable accommodation is available and where there is potential to provide a link with existing multi-cultural communities and to develop the support of local voluntary and community groups. NASS make the necessary travel arrangements for the asylum seekers and their dependants to travel to their allocated accommodation and for travel to certain interviews and hearings in connection with their case.

Accommodation is provided by both the public and private sector. Accommodation providers are contracted to provide various levels of support and service beyond the simple provision of accommodation. For example, they are required to supply advice on registering with statutory services such as schools and GPs. NASS send details of asylum seekers and their children to the relevant health and local education authorities so that they are aware of new arrivals in their areas. The provision of support services is the core activity of the Regional Consortia within the United Kingdom. The main areas of need are provision of general advice and information, access to services via signposting, interpreting and translation facilities, legal advice and access to health and educational services.

The standard of accommodation used by NASS is subject to monitoring to ensure compliance with contracts, and contractors are required to facilitate access to support services, the latter being notified of dispersals to the area as they occur.

There is a twin track approach to monitoring performance of contractors:

- NASS have contract managers in place that are responsible for monitoring housing conditions.
- NASS have a performance monitoring team wholly dedicated to ensuring that contractual responsibilities are being met fully.

This will include undertaking inspections of accommodation through either reacting to complaints made or through targeting accommodation either in certain areas or of a certain type, from time to time.

Appendix III: Basic Data Extraction tool

Details of Publication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author, (Year), Title, Press, Location • Author, (Year), Title of Article, in Title of Publication, Volume, Number • Institutional Affiliation? 	
Academic paper or Practitioner Report?	
Specifically about Dispersal? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which geographic areas? • Which nationalities focussed on? • How many refugees in the dispersal area? 	
Research Question <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Clearly stated aims and objectives?</i> • Focus • <i>Clear purpose?</i> 	
Study Design / Methodology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When was the fieldwork conducted? • Where? • What methods used? Methodologically sound? i.e. <i>Were the methods appropriate for the population being researched?</i> • Qualitative or Quantitative? • <i>Conducted objectively and rigorously?</i> • <i>Reported clearly?</i> • <i>Inclusion of sufficient original data to mediate between data and interpretation?</i> 	
Participation in the Study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target Population? • Inclusion Criteria? • Recruitment Procedures? • Characteristics of Participants? • Refugee-centred study? • RSP centred study? • Home Office centred study? 	
Theoretical Foundations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What theories were referred to in the research? • <i>Explicit account of theoretical framework and/or inclusion of literature review given?</i> 	
Ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What ethical procedures were followed? 	
Main Findings	
Recommendations	
Other information	

Adapted from: Boaz, A. and W. Solesbury, (2003)

Appendix IV: Reply from Social Exclusion Unit



Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister
Creating sustainable communities



Social Exclusion Unit

Natalie Proctor
Social Exclusion Unit
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
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Ms Patricia E. Hynes
School of Health & Social Sciences
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Queensway
Enfield
Middlesex EN3 4SF

28,October,2004

Dear Ms Hynes

Thank you for your letter of 28 September to Claire Tyler, Director, about the remit of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU). I am replying because some of your queries fall within the scope of the project I am working on. Apologies for the delay in my response.

The SEU helps to improve government action to reduce social exclusion by producing 'joined-up solutions to joined up problems'. The Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, in agreement with other ministers, decide the direction of the unit's work which is mainly on specific projects chosen following consultation with other government departments and suggestions from interested groups.

We work on issues that affect a range of government departments and very closely with departmental officials and ministers. We publish reports on specific issues and are involved in other cross-government policy relating to social exclusion. The Policy decisions in our reports are cleared through the appropriate government committees, and implemented by the relevant departments. Any policy changes proposed have clear follow-up action, targets, and evaluation plans.

The 88 most deprived local authority districts identified by the SEU in 2001, is now managed by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) which was set up by the SEU to work across government bringing together key departments to ensure that the neighbourhood renewal agenda is being implemented effectively. This includes working with the with the Home Office and other government departments on asylum, community cohesion and drugs issues.

I can confirm that from April 2000 the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) became responsible for the provision of support to asylum seekers. The Home Office is taking forward radical and fundamental reform of asylum policy, and the SEU does

not duplicate work being done elsewhere within government. However, the SEU did look at the issue of unaccompanied asylum seeker children as part of its project on children in care in 2002; and touched upon related issues in the Mental Health and Social Exclusion report published in June 2004.

The Unit is also currently undertaking a project on better service delivery for disadvantaged people who move, or are moved, frequently. The main focus of this project will be on the following four groups:

- People who have, or have traditionally had, a mobile way of life: Gypsies and Travellers, people who move regularly (often seasonally for example in rural or coastal areas) for short-term work.
- People in transition: people leaving institutions such as the care system, prisons, hospitals, and people leaving the Armed Forces and the asylum support service on being granted leave to remain in this country.
- People with unstable housing: triggered for example by family breakdown, domestic or racial violence, debt or substance misuse. Some people can become trapped in a repetitive cycle of moving on to escape social problems, but repeatedly fail to settle.
- People moved by government agencies: such as looked-after children, asylum seekers or people in temporary accommodation.

The project will focus specifically on the impact of frequent moving and building on existing initiatives to support these groups.

I hope that this information has been useful. You can find further information about the current programme of work on the SEU website: www.socialexclusion.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

**Natalie Proctor
Policy Adviser**

Appendix V: User Involvement in the Research Process

Stage of Research Process	User Involvement	Timescale	Conscious Influences on this Research
Pre Formulation of Research Proposal	Past experience with 'users'	1990 – 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grassroots approach using action research • Adoption of a 'rights-based' approach
Formulation of Research Proposal for Registration	Telephone conversations and informal discussions with RSPs	January – December 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice of location for study • Awareness that dispersal policy not researched • Awareness of rapid formulation and prehistory of policy • Aware of perception of the overlap between dispersal and deprivation
Maternity leave: January – September 2002			
Fieldwork	Voluntary and temporary paid employment with Refugee Women's Association, London	October 2002 – May 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscious of the specific needs of women refugees and the heterogeneity of asylum seekers • Tension between user-led and non user-led RSPs • How access to participants would have implications for the research • The importance of social networks, particularly when deportation threat required mobilisation • Made conscious of the importance of 'community' groups and how dispersal of small numbers of a particular nationality to each location makes formation difficult • Awareness of the gaps in provision

			<p>of services in dispersal locations due to telephone calls to London based organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees are just trying to get on with their lives and be 'normal' • View that researchers should not expect RCOs to arrange interviews • Childcare costs necessary to access women participants
Fieldwork	Interviews with asylum seekers and refugees in dispersal locations	November 2002 – February 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human cost of dispersal • Extra layer of liminality imposed by dispersal • Social networks important in resisting liminality • The tension between the contracted NASS role of RSPs and their traditional advocacy role and the implications for the relationship between individual asylum seekers and RSPs
Fieldwork	2 x focus groups with asylum seekers and refugees formed by refugee	July 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having refugee contacting participants for the focus groups allowed for less tense group as not putting strangers together • Allowed for continuity of the issues discussed once researcher left the 'field' • Demonstrated the significance of how refugees are accessed has on research. View of 'capable' rather than 'vulnerable' perspective leading to more positive elements explored.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher level of trust in group which led to more 'candid' contributions from asylum seekers and refugees. • Awareness of the tension between RSPs and individual asylum seekers • Made conscious of how social networks important in resisting liminality
Fieldwork	Interviews and focus group with policy makers and RSPs	November 2002 – February 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tension between the contracted NASS role and traditional advocacy role of refugee service providers • Demanding conditions of implementing dispersal • The limitations of contractual obligations • Structural issues of dispersal • Hierarchical character of agencies • Power relationships
Fieldwork	Interviews with other key informants	November 2002 – February 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues of trust when asylum seeker relocated several times • Barriers to accessing services due to funding constraints for asylum seekers • Temporary character of services
Transcription of tapes and initial examination of data	Clarification	May – July 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification sought regarding 'meaning' of terms used. • Awareness that trust increases if involvement is ongoing following the interview

Spatial mapping of dispersal	Nil	August 2004 – March 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
Examination of interview transcripts and data analysis	Engaging with data generated by users	October 2004 – March 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content of interviews • Themes • Research context • Reflexivity
Examination of research diaries	Nil	September 2001 – March 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of a 'tangible' and 'intangible' distinction of the impacts of dispersal on how asylum seekers access services • Awareness of 'temporariness' of services to asylum seekers
Writing-up	Refer back to some interviewees	February 2005 – April 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of the mobility of asylum seekers and the limitations of any potential informed consent
Dissemination of findings	Workshops with original participants; summary of findings; translation of summary	TBA	TBA

Appendix VI: Selection Criteria

	Bristol	Leicester	Lincoln
Cluster area/ Regional Consortia	South West (not functioning)	East Midlands	East Midlands
RSP	Refugee Action	Refugee Action	None, although Refugee Action, Leicester, contactable
In dispersal from beginning?	Yes	Yes	No
Main nationalities	40 different languages Large Somali community of c.4,000	Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey and Somalia	No information available
No being supported by NASS as of June 2001 (total in regional cluster area)	110 (480)	630 (1,490)	Nil (1,490)
No being supported by NASS as of June 2002 (total in regional cluster area)	395 (815)	1,115 (4,045)	90 (4,045)
Growth 2001-02 (total growth in cluster area)	+284 (+335) i.e. Bristol nearly 4 times as many; cluster area nearly doubled	+485 (+2,555) i.e. Leicester doubled; cluster area nearly 3 times as many	+90 (+2,555) i.e. Lincoln introduced as a new dispersal location
Number of asylum seekers per 1,000 local population (see Stoke-on-Trent report)	1.1	4	Not listed
'Successful'?	Refugee Action website points out diverse refugee population with about 40 different languages.	Refugee Action website points out that 6 private providers of NASS accommodation and huge variations in the service provided which can cause problems. Few RCOs and insufficient resources	Not outlined
Contacts	Yes, at outset of research	None at outset of research	None at outset of research

Sources: Refugee Action website; Home Office statistical information.

Appendix VII: The 88 most deprived local authority districts, Dispersal and Subsistence Only support

Local authority (England only)	Dispersal (June 2001)	Dispersal (June 2002)	Dispersal (June 2003)	Dispersal (June 2004)	SO Support (June 2003)	SO Support (June 2004)
Allerdale						
Ashfield						
Barking and Dagenham			✓	✓	✓	✓
Barnsley	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Barrow-in-Furness						
Birmingham	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blackburn with Darwen	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Blackpool						
Bolsover						
Bolton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bradford	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Brent					✓	✓
Brighton and Hove	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bristol, City of	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Burnley	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Camden			✓	✓	✓	✓
Coventry	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Croydon					✓	✓
Derby	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Derwentside						
Doncaster	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dudley	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Ealing					✓	✓
Easington						
Enfield			✓	✓	✓	✓
Gateshead	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Yarmouth					✓	
Greenwich					✓	✓
Hackney			✓	✓	✓	✓
Halton						
Haringey			✓	✓	✓	✓
Hartlepool	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Hastings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hyndburn			✓			
Islington			✓	✓	✓	✓
Kerrier						
Kingston-upon-Hull	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Kirklees	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Knowsley						
Lambeth			✓		✓	✓
Leeds	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Leicester	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lewisham					✓	✓
Lincoln		✓	✓	✓		
Liverpool	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Manchester	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mansfield						
Middlesbrough	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Newcastle upon Tyne	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Newham			✓	✓	✓	✓
North Tyneside	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Nottingham	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Oldham	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Pendle			✓	✓		✓
Penwith						
Plymouth	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Preston					✓	✓
Redcar and Cleveland	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Rochdale	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Rotherham	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Salford	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sandwell	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sedgefield						
Sefton			✓	✓	✓	✓
Sheffield	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
South Tyneside	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Southwark					✓	✓
St Helens			✓			
Stockton-on-Tees	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stoke-on-Trent	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sunderland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Tameside	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Tower Hamlets					✓	✓
Wakefield	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Walsall	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Waltham Forest			✓	✓	✓	✓
Wansbeck						
Wear Valley						
Wigan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Wirral						
Wolverhampton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

81 local authorities in top 50 on any of the six Indices of Deprivation 2000 eligible for Neighbourhood Renewal Funds (Source: Social Exclusion Unit, ODPM)

Local authority	Dispersal (June 2001)	Dispersal (June 2002)	Dispersal (June 2003)	Dispersal (June 2004)	SO Support (June 2003)	SO Support (June 2004)
Hammersmith and Fulham					✓	✓
Kensington and Chelsea					✓	✓
Luton					✓	✓
Portsmouth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Southampton		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wandsworth					✓	✓
Westminster					✓	✓

7 local authorities subject to transitional protection (Source: Social Exclusion Unit, ODPM)

Total number of Dispersal Locations in England	54*	57	81**	78****	111***	98
Total number of Dispersal Locations in 88 local authority districts in England	43	45	58	55	57	57
Percentage of Dispersal Locations in 88 deprived districts in England	79.63%	78.95%	71.6%	70.5%	51.35%	58.16%

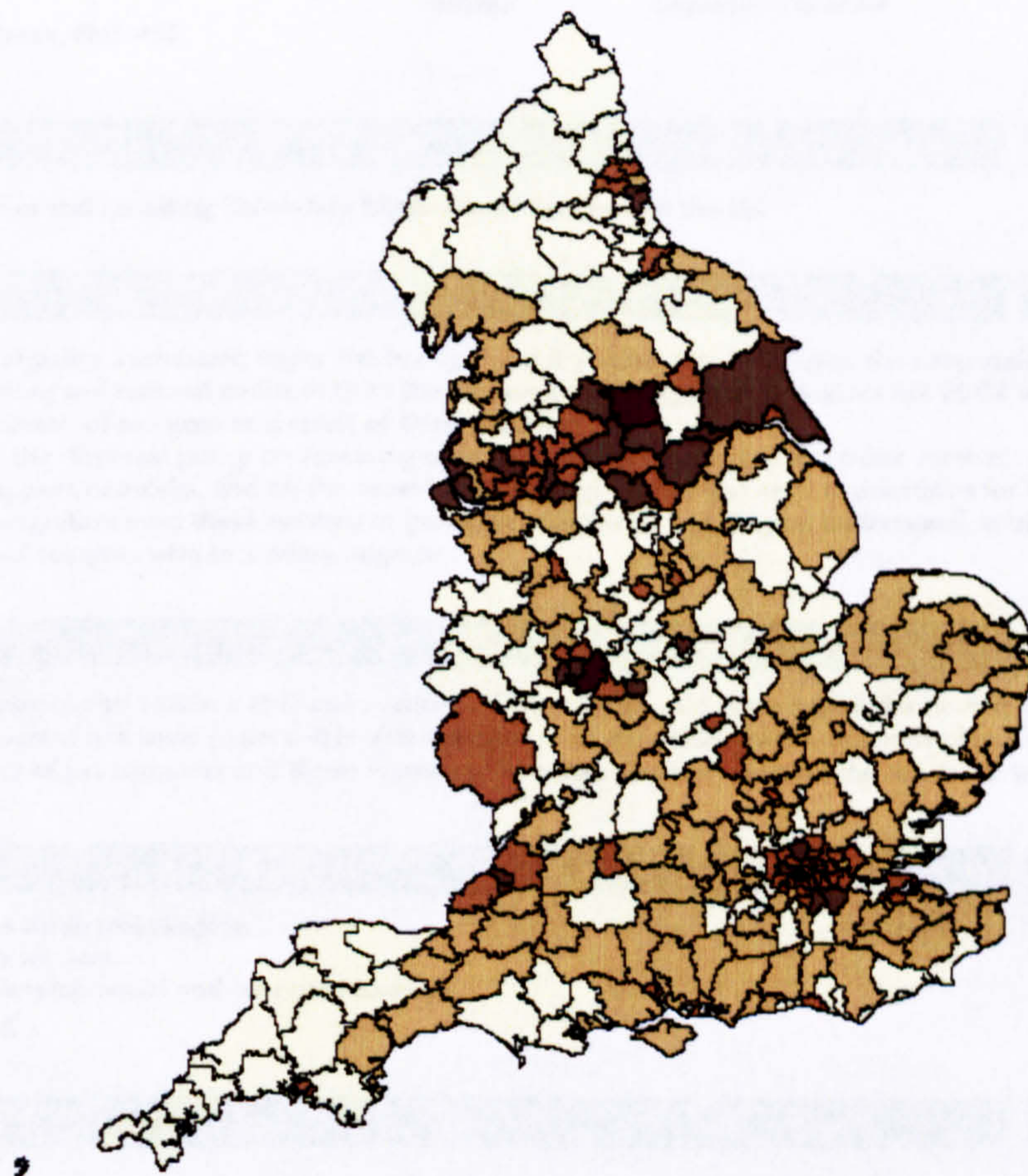
* Excludes Greater London

** Includes 12 Greater London dispersal locations

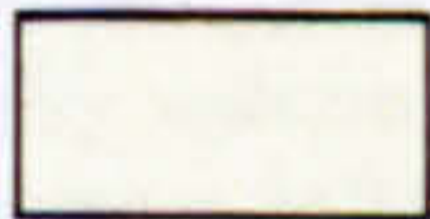




*** Does not include 'disbenefitted' cases

**** Includes 10 Greater London dispersal locations

Resident Population of UK Census 2001



Respop.shp

	2153 - 100739
	100740 - 169331
	169332 - 273559
	273560 - 513234
	513235 - 977087



Information Sheet - Interviewee (B)

Name & Address of Researcher

Patricia Hynes
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Middlesex University
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London.

University: 020 8411 5509
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Title of Research

Impacts of Dispersal Policies and Resulting Secondary Migration of Refugees in the UK

Aims of Research

- Investigate the dispersal policy introduced under the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999, plus the proposals for induction, accommodation, reporting and removal centres under the Nationality, Immigration & Asylum Act 2002 and investigate formal and informal social exclusion of refugees as a result of these systems
- Explore the impacts of the dispersal policy on accessing educational, training, health and other services; on the ability to maintain or develop support networks, and on the sense of 'belonging' and longer term implications for integration
- Investigate secondary migration from these systems to generate knowledge and deepen understanding of the characteristics and survival strategies of refugees who secondary migrate

Why is this research being carried out?

This research is being carried out to obtain a PhD and sections of the research will form a basis for presentation of papers at conferences and for the production of academic papers. It is also anticipated that sections of the research will be published in publications pitched at a wider audience of practitioners and those interested in refugee matters outside the academic world.

What topics will be covered?

This research will focus on three main topics:

1. Impacts upon access to services.
2. Ability to maintain or develop social and support networks
3. The sense of 'Belonging' .

Who is this research funded by?

The Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC) fund this research.

Who should take part in this study?

Individual refugees, representatives from refugee community organisations and representatives from refugee service providers are sought to take part in this study. People who have arrived in the UK and have lived, or are still living, in NASS accommodation are particularly sought as are people who have opted-out of the NASS system and/or have moved to a different city. Female and male participants are equally welcome to participate. Travel and childcare costs will be provided at a standard rate. If participants do not speak English, interpreters will be employed.

The methods to be mainly used will be mainly individual face-to-face interviews and focus groups.

Brief Biography of Researcher:

During the past decade, the researcher has previously worked with Vietnamese, Lao, Khmer and Burmese refugees in refugee camps and cities in Thailand and India.

Why is this research being carried out?

Within the United Kingdom, the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999 created a separate, centralized agency -the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) -run by the Home Office to organize social support to asylum-seekers. One option of accommodation is offered which is outside London and the Southeast and the asylum seeker must accept this one option if they wish to receive social support. Dispersal to regional consortia ('cluster areas') away from London and the Southeast brought into question access to employment, education, training, medical care, specialist care, housing, legal representation and language support (Audit Commission, 2000). The Nationality, Immigration & Asylum Act 2002 has laid out plans for induction, accommodation, reporting and removal centres throughout the UK. This brings into question access to essential services as well as access to community and social networks.

Past Dispersal Policies in the UK

Historically within the UK, dispersal policies have been put in place for refugees from Nazism in the 1930s, the Ugandan Asians and Vietnamese in the 1970s and with Bosnian refugee programmes in the 1990s. The rationale for dispersal policies has been to 'reduce social tensions generated by the concentration of asylum-seekers in particular areas, deterring potential applicants, and controlling the stay and return of asylum seekers' (Boswell, 2001: 1). Other countries throughout Europe have introduced some form of dispersal of asylum seekers. The non-compulsory dispersal of Ugandan Asians from 1972 resulted in only a 38% participation rate and secondary migration to London and the Midlands occurred to enable settlement in areas with established Asian communities (Kushner and Knox, 1999:275). From 1975, small numbers of Vietnamese refugees began to arrive in the UK through highly visible resettlement programmes. Policies of dispersal were put in place which, a 1985 report by the Parliament's Select Committee on Refugee Resettlement and Immigration (SCORRI), concluded were 'almost universally regarded as mistaken' (Robinson, 1998:150) in that the refugees put their energies and efforts into 'secondary migration', i.e. relocating to communities with family and ethnic linkages rather than to settling in the localities where they were dispersed to. By 1986, 'almost half of the Vietnamese refugees had moved to London because of the attractions of the metropolis and its large Chinese community.' (Kushner and Knox, 1999:319). Under a form of 'temporary protection', 'short-term stay' dispersal for 2,500 refugees under the 'Bosnia Project' was carried out by clustering 'at least 200 people and to urban areas, so as to minimise secondary movement' (Boswell, 2001:10).

Dispersal under Immigration & Asylum Act 1999

In the UK, the rationale for dispersal cited most frequently since the 1999 Act has been 'to relieve pressure on London and Kent' (Audit Commission, 2000:3).

The 1999 dispersal system is different contextually from previous systems in that:

- (a) refugees do not arrive with refugee status or any temporary protection status; and
- (b) refugees do not arrive en masse due to a highly publicised emergency situation -asylum-seekers from every country or origin are dispersed.

It is also different because:

- (a) dispersal was/is compulsory; and
- (b) social support was/is provided outside the normal system of welfare provision for residents -NASS carries out this role.

'Secondary Migration', 'Driftback' or 'Secondary Movement'

When people leave the cities they have been dispersed to it is known as 'secondary migration', 'driftback' or 'secondary movement'. Dispersal policies in the 1970s and 1980s for Ugandan Asians and the Vietnamese have resulted in sizeable secondary migration to cities with ethnically or religiously linked communities. Anecdotal evidence exists of contemporary secondary migration within the UK under the dispersal system implemented by NASS. Current speculation from refugee service providers is that secondary migration would probably increase under the new system of accommodation centers, since even less contact with the local community would be possible.

Informed Consent Form (B)

This consent form is to check that you are happy with the information provided about the research and that you wish to take part in this study.

Prior to interview taking place:

- | | |
|---|--------|
| 1. Have you read the information about the research? | YES/NO |
| 2. Do you understand that you are free to decline to answer any question? | YES/NO |
| 3. Do you understand that you may stop the interview at any time? | YES/NO |
| 4. Do you agree to take part in this research? | YES/NO |

Following interview:

Do you understand that you are free to give any feedback or comments about the interview at any stage? YES/NO

Any comments at present?

A summary of the research will be available once the project is completed. If you are interested in receiving a copy this can be sent to you by mail or by email. If you wish to receive this summary and/or the transcript of the interview, please provide an address or email address below:

Patricia Hynes
email: t.hynes@mdx.ac.uk
Mobile: 07930 314 622

Appendix X: Information sheet and non-obligatory informed consent form provided to refugees and asylum seekers

Information Sheet - Interviewee (A)

Name & Address of Researcher

Patricia Hynes
School of Health and Social Sciences
Middlesex University
Queensway, Enfield, Middlesex, EN3 4SF
London.

University: 020 8411 5509
Mobile: 07930 314 622
Email: t.hynes@mdx.ac.uk

Title of Research

Impacts of Dispersal Policies and Resulting Secondary Migration of Refugees in the UK

Aims of Research

- Investigate the dispersal policy introduced under the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999, plus the proposals for induction, accommodation, reporting and removal centres under the Nationality, Immigration & Asylum Act 2002 and investigate formal and informal social exclusion of refugees as a result of these systems
- Explore the impacts of the dispersal policy on accessing educational, training, health and other services; on the ability to maintain or develop support networks, and on the sense of 'belonging' and longer term implications for integration
- Investigate secondary migration from these systems to generate knowledge and deepen understanding of the characteristics and survival strategies of refugees who secondary migrate

What topics will be covered?

This research will focus on three main topics:

1. Impacts upon access to services.
2. Ability to maintain or develop social and support networks
3. The sense of 'Belonging' -

Why is this research being carried out?

This research is being carried out to obtain a PhD and sections of the research will form a basis for presentation of papers at conferences and for the production of academic papers. It is also anticipated that sections of the research will be published in publications pitched at a wider audience of practitioners and those interested in refugee matters outside the academic world.

Who is this research funded by?

The Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC) fund this research. The ESRC is an independent organisation set up in 1965 as a training agency addressing economic and social concerns

Who should take part in this study?

Individual refugees, representatives from refugee community organisations and representatives from refugee service providers are sought to take part in this study. People who have arrived in the UK and have lived, or are still living, in NASS accommodation are particularly sought as are people who have opted-out of the NASS system and/or have moved to a different city. Female and male participants are equally welcome to participate. Travel and childcare costs will be provided at a standard rate. If participants do not speak English, interpreters will be employed.

The methods to be mainly used will be mainly individual face-to-face interviews and focus groups.

Brief Biography of Researcher:

During the past decade, the researcher has previously worked with Vietnamese, Lao, Khmer and Burmese refugees in refugee camps and cities in Thailand and India.

Informed Consent Form (A)

This consent form is to check that you are happy with the information provided about the research and that you wish to take part in this study.

- | | |
|---|--------|
| 1. Have you read the information about the research? | YES/NO |
| 2. Do you understand that your name will not be used in the research? | YES/NO |
| 3. Do you understand that you are free to decline to answer any question? | YES/NO |
| 4. Do you understand that you may stop the interview at any time? | YES/NO |
| 5. Do you agree to take part in this research? | YES/NO |

Following interview:

- | | |
|---|--------|
| 1. Have you read the information about the research? | YES/NO |
| 2. Do you understand that you are free to give any feedback or comments about the interview at any stage? | YES/NO |

Any comments at present?

A summary of the research will be available once the project is completed. If you are interested in receiving a copy this can be sent to you by mail or by email. If you wish to receive this summary and/or the transcript of the interview, please provide an address or email address below:

Patricia Hynes
email: t.hynes@mdx.ac.uk
Mobile: 07930 314 622

Appendix XI: Interview Guide – Refugee Service Providers

1. Ask about what services organisation provides for refugees
2. Ask about relationship with refugees
3. How are your services tailored to take into account refugee's experiences prior to reaching the UK? i.e. what 'issues' are taken into consideration? (Period of Threat; Decision to Flee; In flight; Reaching Safety and a Place of Asylum; Refugee Camp Experience)
4. What is your service doing about harassment from local population?
5. Ask about relationship with Home Office
6. Thinking about the first few days in the UK for a refugee: (Reception into a Host Country):
 - what barriers exist to accessing services?
 - What do you think the impacts of dispersal are on services?Probe for health, education, further education, skills training, employment, housing, legal services, specialist medical care, community groups, church/mosque based organisations, interpreters, access to financial entitlements, ESL courses, etc.
7. Thinking about once a refugee becomes more 'settled' after they have been given 'status': (Resettlement; Post-resettlement):
 - What barriers exist to accessing services?
 - What is the impact of dispersal at this stage?
 - why different?Probe....
8. Social networks (where they think they are, what is the quality and what effect do they have)
 - What international networks do you think refugees retain? Who are they in touch with regularly outside the UK? Nationally? Locally?
 - Are they male or female?
9. Why do you think refugees move towns?
 - What role do you think a refugees own networks play in the process?
10. If time, discuss what important for 'feeling' included in society. Why makes refugees 'feel' included or excluded? How do you think your services assist refugees 'feel' included?
11. Timeline: best time/most difficult time?
12. 2002 Act: Idea of induction, accommodation, reporting and removal centres:
 - What do you think the implications are of the 2002 Act's proposals?
 - On services?
 - On social networks?
 - On 'belonging'?

13. Secondary migration: what do you think the scale of secondary migration might be? Do you know where people move to? Why do you think people move? How do they manage?

Appendix XII: Questions arising from Home Office Dispersal Strategy

1. Stated that NASS is committed to a full consultation process with the regional consortia – how does this work in practice?
2. Stated that NASS has identified the language groups that each cluster area can accommodate – how does this work in practice?
3. Stated that NASS has consulted with the consortia as to the number of asylum seekers that the cluster/region can successfully accommodate – how does this work in practice?
4. Ditto above: Numbers accommodated from an integration angle – how does this work in practice?
5. Ditto above: Numbers accommodated to not result in (‘without causing/increasing’) racial tension in an area – how does this work in practice?
6. Stated that the NASS Regional Managers constantly monitor the integration process within their region and report any racial unrest or other issues that arrive – how does this work in practice?
7. Stated that where incidents of violence occur the local police view is sought as to the safety of a region for future dispersal and the safety of asylum seekers is paramount in deciding whether to continue dispersal to sensitive areas – how does this work in practice?
8. Stated that warring factions are kept apart when dispersed to avoid tensions – how does this work in practice?
9. Stated that accommodation chosen on basis of suitability – how does this work in practice?
10. Stated that cluster areas are ideally based in towns and cities where suitable accommodation is available and where there is potential provide a link with existing multi-cultural communities and to develop the support of local voluntary and community groups – how does this work in practice?
11. Stated that NASS make necessary travel arrangements for travel to allocated accommodation and for travel to certain interviews and hearings in connection with their case – how does this work in practice?
12. Stated that accommodation is provided by both the public and private sectors – what are the proportions?
13. Stated that accommodation providers are contracted to provide various levels of support and service beyond the simple provision of accommodation – what are the various levels of support and how does this work in practice?

14. Stated that NASS send details of asylum seekers and their children to the relevant health and local education authorities so they are aware of new arrivals in their areas – how does this work in practice?
15. Stated that the main areas of need are provision of general advice and information, access to services via signposting, interpreting and translation facilities, legal advice and access to health and educational services – in practice are there any other areas of need found necessary?
16. Stated that the standard of accommodation used is subject to monitoring to ensure compliance with contracts – who monitors this? How does this work in practice?
17. Stated that contractors are required to facilitate access to support services – how does this work in practice?
18. Stated that there is a twin track approach to monitoring the performance of contractors (1) contract managers who monitor housing conditions, and (2) a performance monitoring team dedicated to ensuring that contractual responsibilities are being fully met. In practice, how often do (1) and (2) occur?
19. Stated that monitoring occurs due to ‘reacting to complaints made’ – are the complaints from tenants or RSPs?

Appendix XIII: Initial Interview Guide – Refugee

1. *Where in NASS process? Landlord?*
2. *Ask about life before coming to UK (Period of Threat; Decision to Flee; In flight; Reaching Safety and a Place of Asylum; Refugee Camp Experience)*
3. *Ask about journey to UK (when, why, how, where, who with, etc.)*
4. *Ask about first day of arrival in UK (Reception into a Host Country)*
 - *Who did you know here?*
 - *Where did you arrive?*
 - *What did you do?*
 - *Who did you speak to? Why?*
 - *Where did you go? Why?*
 - *When did you go to another town? Why?*
 - *Who did you contact there? Why?*
 - *What were your first impressions of the UK?*
 - *What was the most important thing you did on your first day?*
 - *How did you feel about the local population?*
5. *Thinking about your first few days in the UK what barriers to accessing services did you encounter?*
6. *Is your current accommodation suitable?*
7. *NASS process: What do you think about the NASS process? How could it be improved? What contact have you had with NASS?*
8. *Social networks (where are they and what is the quality/frequency):*
 - *What international networks do you have? Who are you in touch with regularly outside the UK?*
 - *What national networks do you have? Who are you in touch with regularly in the UK? Do they help you?*
 - *What local networks do you have? Who are you in touch with regularly locally? Do they help you?*
 - *Are the people you know male or female?*
9. *Later, will you or why did you move towns?*
10. *Ask about circumstances today. What barriers to services exist today? Probe for health, education, further education, skills training, employment, housing, legal services, specialist medical care, community groups, church/mosque based organisations, interpreters, access to financial entitlements, ESL courses, etc. or use cards. (Resettlement; Post-resettlement)*
11. *If time, discuss what important for ‘feeling’ included in society. Why made him/her ‘feel’ included or excluded? ‘Belonging’?*

12. 2002 Act: Idea of induction, accommodation, reporting and removal centres: Do you think it would have been better to go into an induction centre when you first arrived? And then on to an accommodation centre? Would services have been better or worse? Do you think you would you have been able to contact your friends/family more easily?
13. Secondary migration: how many people do you know who have moved from their dispersal accommodation to other accommodation? Did they go to other cities? Why? How did they manage?

Appendix XIV: Revised Interview Guide – Refugee (July 2003)

Present situation

1. **NASS process:** Where in NASS process? Are you still in NASS process? If no, why did you leave it? Can you tell me how you got to this point? What do you think about the NASS process? Any problems with it? Could it be improved? How? What contact have you had with NASS?
2. **Accommodation:** Is your current accommodation suitable? Who is your accommodation provider? What services do they offer? Who do you deal with? Have you met anybody from NASS?
3. **Access to services:** How have you managed to access services? e.g. health, education, legal services, etc. Which agencies have you worked with? e.g. refugee community organisation or Refugee Action/Council, CAB, etc. Probe for health, education, further education, skills training, employment, housing, legal services, specialist medical care, community groups, church/mosque based organisations, interpreters, access to financial entitlements, ESL courses, etc. or use cards.
4. **Social networks (where are they and what is the quality/frequency):** What international networks do you have? Who are you in touch with regularly outside the UK? What national networks do you have? Who are you in touch with regularly in the UK? Do they help you? What local networks do you have? Who are you in touch with regularly locally? Do they help you? Are the people you know male or female?

Past situation

5. **Country of origin:** Ask about life before coming to UK (Period of Threat; Decision to Flee; In flight; Reaching Safety and a Place of Asylum; Refugee Camp Experience). What did you do in X? Can you give a brief overview of the politics of X?
6. **Journey:** Ask about journey to UK (when, why, how, where, who with, etc.)
7. **Arrival in UK:** Ask about first day of arrival in UK (Reception into a Host Country): Who did you know here? Where did you arrive? What did you do? Who did you speak to? Why? Where did you go? Why? When did you go to another town? Why? Who did you contact there? Why? What were your first impressions of the UK? What was the most important thing you did on your first day? How did you feel about the local population?
8. **Initial barriers to access:** Thinking about your first few days in the UK what barriers to accessing services did you encounter?

Future situation

9. **Dispersal area:** Do you like the city you have been dispersed to? Will you stay here?
10. **Secondary migration:** Later, will you or why did you move towns? Why or why not? Do you know of many people who have moved from their dispersal accommodation to other accommodation? Did they go to other cities? Why? How did they manage?
11. **Belonging:** Discuss what important for 'feeling' included in society. Why made him/her 'feel' included or excluded? 'Belonging'?

Appendix XV: Letter to Home Office requesting unpublished academic papers

Social Policy Research Centre
Middlesex University
Queensway
Enfield
Middlesex
EN3 4SF

Tel: 020-8411 5509
14 December 2005

General Enquiries
Home Office
Direct Communications Unit
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Sir/Madam

By way of introduction, I am currently researching a doctoral thesis about asylum seekers in the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) dispersal system.

I am writing to ask for a copy of the following unpublished reports commissioned by the Home Office:

Bakewell, O., (2001), *Local ('host') community groups in dispersal areas*, Unpublished report, Home Office.

Fletcher, G., (2001), *Community groups in dispersal areas*, Unpublished report, Home Office.

Griffiths, D., (2001), *Provision of English language classes*, Unpublished report, Home Office.

Harvey, c., (2001), *Legal services in dispersal areas*, Unpublished report, Home Office.

Johnson, M., (2001), *Health services in dispersal areas*, Unpublished report, Home Office.

Johnson, M., (2001), *Synthesis and overview of dispersal foundation research studies*, Unpublished report, Home Office.

Robinson, V., (2001), *A review of the literature on the dispersal of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK*, Unpublished report, Home Office.

Zetter, R., M. Pearl, D. Griffiths, P. Allender, L. Cairncross and V. Robinson, (undated), *Dispersal: Facilitating effectiveness and efficiency – Final Report*, Home Office Research Paper, London.

Please let me know should you require any further information. I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours faithfully

Patricia E Hynes

To be read out to all interviewees

- This research is not linked to any agency.
- The interview will be recorded unless other arrangements are requested.
- Participation in this research is completely voluntary. Your 'Informed Consent' will be sought verbally before being interviewed. If you wish you can complete an 'Informed Consent Form' but this is not obligatory.
- You are free to decline to answer any questions and may stop at any point during the interview.
- This research has limitations. It is unlikely to change central government policy on dispersal. However, it is hoped that the findings of this research would be useful in future planning of services to asylum seekers and refugee community groups.
- This research is being carried out to obtain a PhD and sections of this research will form the basis for presentation of papers at conferences and for the production of academic papers.
- If any of the interview is to be used for other purposes, an attempt will be made to contact you first to make sure this is acceptable to you. An example of why this might happen would be if a quote from your interview is to be used in an article for the Refugee Women's News or other publication.
- It is hoped that this study will lead to publications from academic journals to publications pitched at a wider audience of practitioners such as refugee community groups and service providers for asylum seekers and those interested in refugee matters outside the academic world.
- A summary of the research will be available once the research is completed. If you wish to receive a copy please provide an email address or address for this to be sent to.
- If resources are available, sections of the findings of this research will be translated into relevant languages for the information of refugee community organisations.
- After the interview you are free to communicate further or make comments at any stage.
- You are free to give any feedback you wish.

Appendix XVII: Ethics sheet read out to refugees and asylum seekers

To be read out to all interviewees

- This research is not linked to any official government agencies.
- Complete anonymity can be assured.
- Complete confidentiality can also be assured.
- Your name will not be included in the research report or any subsequent dissemination of research findings.
- Pseudonyms will be invented and other measures will be taken to ensure non-identification.
- The interview will be recorded unless other arrangements are requested.
- Nobody, other than the researcher and yourself, will have access to the transcripts of the interviews.
- Participation in this research is completely voluntary and that your claim for asylum will not be harmed in any way due to participation. Your 'Informed Consent' will be sought verbally before being interviewed. If you wish you can complete an 'Informed Consent Form' but this is not obligatory.
- You are free to decline to answer any questions and may stop at any point during the interview.
- This research has limitations. It is unlikely to change central government policy on dispersal. However, it is hoped that the findings of this research would be useful in future planning of services to asylum seekers and refugee community groups.
- This research is being carried out to obtain a PhD and sections of this research will form the basis for presentation of papers at conferences and for the production of academic papers. If any of the interview is to be used for other purposes, an attempt will be made to contact you first to make sure this is acceptable to you. An example of why this might happen would be if a quote from your interview is to be used in an article for the Refugee Women's News or other publication.
- It is hoped that this study will lead to publications from academic journals to publications pitched at a wider audience of practitioners such as refugee community groups and service providers for asylum seekers and those interested in refugee matters outside the academic world.
- A summary of the research will be available once the research is completed. If you wish to receive a copy please provide an email address or address for this to be sent to.
- If resources are available, sections of the findings of this research will be translated into relevant languages for the information of refugee community organizations.
- After the interview you are free to communicate further or make comments at any stage.
- If it is appropriate and if you wish, a copy of the transcript of the interview will be available for the interviewee (although not immediately after the interview).
- You are free to give any feedback you wish.



National Asylum Support Service Application form

Please read the guidance notes before you fill in this form.

Please fill in this form in BLOCK CAPITALS using black ink.

Section 1	About you – please read note 1
Title	Mr <input type="checkbox"/> Mrs <input type="checkbox"/> Miss <input type="checkbox"/> Ms <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Please give details
Surname	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
Other names	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
Names that you have previously used	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
Date of birth	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
Nationality	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
Are you:	male? <input type="checkbox"/> female? <input type="checkbox"/> married? <input type="checkbox"/> divorced? <input type="checkbox"/> separated? <input type="checkbox"/> widowed? <input type="checkbox"/> single <input type="checkbox"/> other <input type="checkbox"/> Please give details
Which language is easiest for you to speak and understand?	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
Are you reasonably fluent in English?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Would you need an interpreter?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

NASS 1

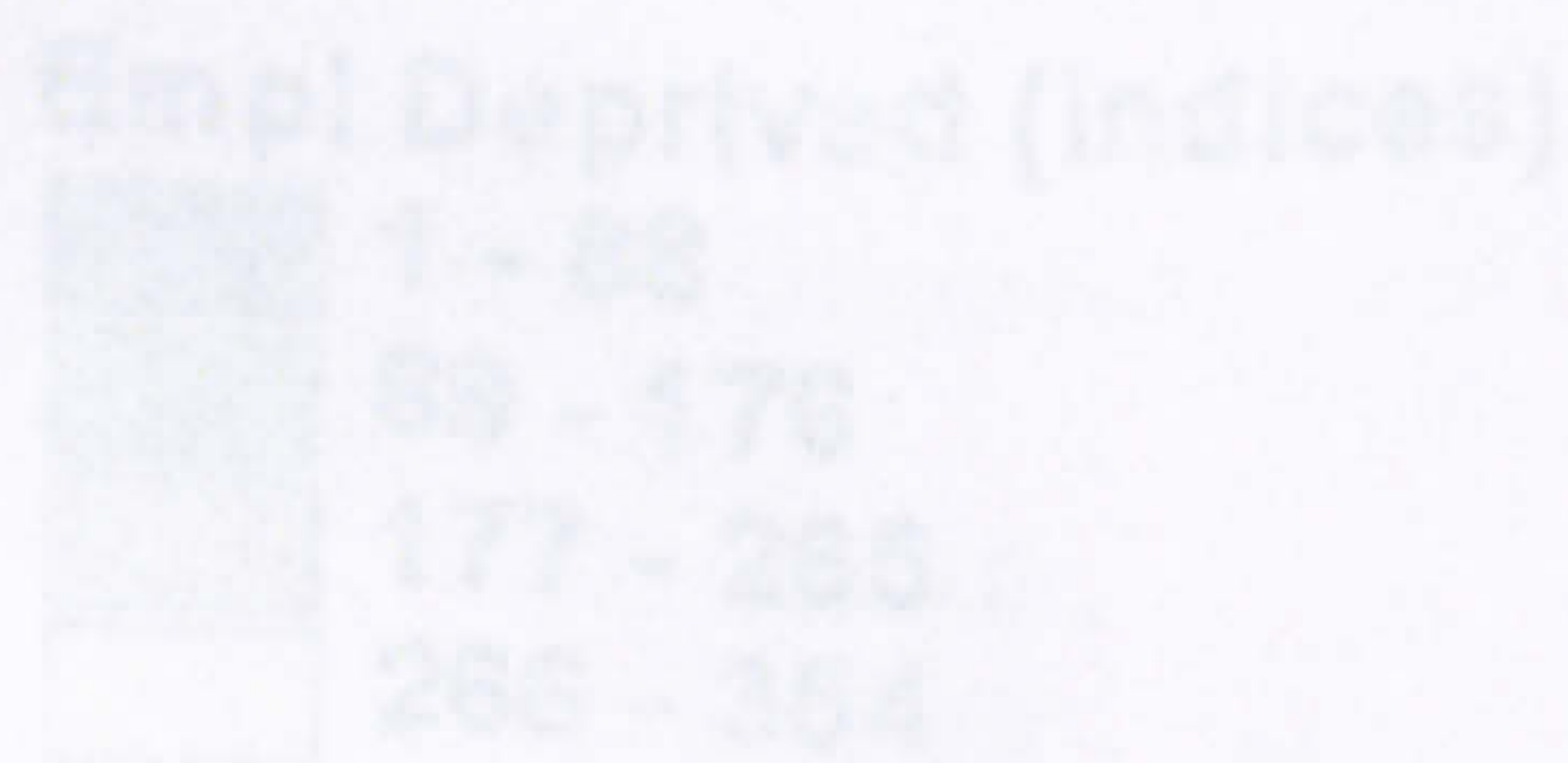
Appendix XIX: Agreed languages as per January 2006

NASS Region	Cluster (Local Authority)	Allocated languages
East Midlands	Derby	Punjabi, Hindi, Albanian, Ukranian, Polish, Urdu, Vietnamese, English
East Midlands	Leicester	Gujerati, Polish, Latvian, Ukranian, Kishwahli, Swahili, Serbo Croat (Serbian only), Hindi, Mandarin, Turkish, Romanian, French, Somali, Arabic, Pushtu, Farsi, Czech, Dari, English
East Midlands	Lincoln	Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, Farsi, Urdu, Kurdish, English
East Midlands	Nottingham	Gujerati, Hindi, Bengali, Albanian, Arabic, Cantonese, German, Greek, Italian, Mandarin, Polish, Portugese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese, Farsi, French, Amharic, Kurdish, Lingala, Somali, Swahili, Tigrean, Romanian, English
East of England	Cambridge	Bengali, Sinhalese, Romanian, English
East of England	Great Yarmouth	Dari, Hindi, Farsi, Kurdish, Punjabi, English
East of England	Ipswich (Suffolk)	Cantonese, Bengali, Hindi, French, Spanish, Albanian, Farsi, Pushtu, Dari, English
East of England	Norwich (Norfolk)	Mandarin, Tamil, Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Gujerati, Portuguese, Russian, Urdu, English
East of England	Peterborough	Serbo-Croat, Pushtu, Arabic, Bulgarian, Turkish, Urdu, Somali, English
North East	Darlington	Hindi, Arabic, Farsi, Turkic, French, Punjabi, Kurdish, Lingala, Bengali, Gujerati, English, Somali, Swahili, Sorani
North East	Gateshead	Farsi, French, Portuguese, Russian, Serbo-Croat (not Serbian), Spanish, Turkic, Kurdish, Dari, English, Tigrean, Arabic, Swahili, Somali, Lingala, Amharic
North East	Hartlepool	Lithuanian, Polish, Serbo-Croat, Russian, English, Arabic, Albanian, Hindi, Urdu, Farsi
North East	Middlesbrough	Albanian (Kosovo only), Tamil, Urdu, Bengali, Farsi, Kurdish, Shonal, Ndebele, Swahili, English, French, Russian, Spanish, Portuguese, Dari, Arabic, Farsi, Hindi, Turkish, Karamajong
North East	Newcastle	Farsi, French, Portuguese, Russian, Tamil, Spanish, Turkish, Amharic, Lingala, Arabic, English, Kurdish, Somali, Swahili, Sorani, Tigrean, Albanian, Mandarin, Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Bangali, Gujerati, Dari, Pashto
North East	North Tyneside inc. Wallsend	Russian, Albanian, Czech, Farsi, Portuguese, English, Spanish, Belarussian, Dari
North East	Redcar & Cleveland	Albanian, Tamil, Arabic, Urdu, Punjabi, Pushtu, Dari, Kurdish, Sorani, Portuguese, French, Farsi, English, Lingala, Amharic, Tigrean
North East	South Tyneside includes South Shields, Jarrow	Farsi, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Kurdish, Latvian, Lingala, Polish, Tigrean, Tamil, Arabic, English, Turkish
North East	Stockton on Tees	Punjabi, Urdu, Farsi, Arabic, English, Dari, French, Kurdish, Shona, Pushtu, Spanish, Sorani, Bandini
North East	Sunderland (Tyne & Wear)	Farsi, French, Gujerati, Portuguese, Russian, Serbo-Croat (not Serbian), Sinhalese, Spanish, Czech, English, Albanian, Amharic, Lingala, Arabic, Belarussian, Portuguese, Bengali, Dari, Hindi, Karamajong, Kurdish, Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Nebelle, Polish, Punjabi, Pushtu, Romanian, Shonai, Tamil, Tigrean, Urdu, Turkic, Turkish, Swahili
North West	Blackburn	Urdu, Gujerati, Punjabi, Polish, Bangla, Albanian (Kosovo only), Farsi, Arabic, Mandarin, Pushtu, Czech, Romanian, Lingala, Portuguese, Kurdish, English, Amharic, Tigrean
North West	Bolton	Arabic, Russian, Turkish, French, Kurdish, Romanian, Pushtu, Farsi, Lingala, Amharic, Tigrean, Dari, Urdu, Czech, Polish, Somali, Swahili, French (North African), English
North West	Burnley	Punjabi, Gujerati, Urdu, Hindi, Romanian, Mandarin, Czech, Bengali, English
North West	Bury	Urdu, Punjabi, Polish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Arabic, Albanian (Kosovo only), Turkish, French, Farsi, Somali, Pushtu, Dari, Czech, Spanish, English
North West	Liverpool	Bulgarian, Mandarin, Czech, French, Latvian, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Romanian, Somali, Spanish, Ukranian, Urdu, Georgian, Armenian, Tamil, English
North West	Manchester	Tigrean, Urdu, Gujerati, Punjabi, Cantonese, Mandarin, Bangla, Bengali, Arabic, Hindi, Somali, Pushtu, Farsi, Kurdish, Lingala, Amharic, Dari, French, Mongolian, Polish, Russian, Swahili, Tamil, English
North West	Nelson	Punjabi, Urdu, Romanian, Mandarin, Czech, English
North West	Oldham	Urdu, Gujerati, Bangla, Pushtu, Arabic, Kurdish, Farsi, Dari, French, Swahili, English, Amharic, Tigrean
North West	Rochdale	Urdu, Gujerati, Punjabi, Bangla, Bengali, Hindi, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Pushtu, Arabic, Kurdish, Kirundi, Dari, Swahili, Farsi, English
North West	Salford	Arabic, Albanian (Kosovo only), Czech, Tamil, Somali, Ukranian, Kurdish, Farsi, Lingala, Tigrean, Dari, French, Swahili, English
North West	Stockport	Urdu, Gujerati, Punjabi, Polish, Bangla, Bengali, Arabic, Albanian (Kosovo only), Turkish, Hindi, Serbo-Croat (not Serbian), French, Farsi, Portuguese, Spanish, Pushtu, Kurdish, Dari, Cantonese, Czech, Mandarin, Russian, Somali, Swahili, English
North West	Tameside	Urdu, Gujerati, Punjabi, Albanian (Kosovo only), French, Farsi, Portuguese, Bengali, Pushtu, Lingala, Dari, English
North West	Trafford	Urdu, Punjabi, Albanian (Kosovo only), Hindi, Serbo-Croat (not Serbian), Pushtu, Arabic, French, Kurdish, Nepali, English, Amharic, Tigrean
North West	Wigan	Albanian (Kosovo only), Russian, Turkish, Arabic, Farsi, Dari, French, English

Scotland	Edinburgh	
Scotland	Glasgow	Pushtu, Dari, Albanian, Mandarin, Farsi, Arabic, Kurdish, Estonian, Russian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Ukranian, Georgian, Punjabi, Urdu, Somali, French, Sinhalese, Tamil, Turkish, Serbo-Croat (not Serbian), English, Swahili, Eritrean, Lingala, Amharic
South Central East	Brighton & Hove	Mandarin, Hindi, Arabic, French, Somali, Swahili, English
South Central East	Hastings & St Leonards	Hindi, Mandarin, Turkish, Russian, French, Portuguese, Albanian, Spanish, Romanian, German, English, Farsi, Sorani, Dari, Tigrean, Pushtu, Arabic, Fula, Aramaic, Kurdish
South Central East	Portsmouth	Mandarin, Bengali, Hindi, French, Portuguese, Arabic, Albanian, Polish, Romanian, English
South Central East	Southampton	Pushtu, Dari, Tamil, Punjabi, Urdu, Czech, Somali, Arabic, Farsi, Turkic, Kurdish, Russian, Turkish, English
South West	Taunton & Bridgwater	
South West	Bath	
South West	Bristol (Bristol City)	Kishwahli, Somali, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Pushtu, Polish, Romanian, Spanish, Czech, Bulgarian, Arabic, Kurdish, Badnani, Sorani, Farsi, Turkish, French, French (North African), Albanian & English
South West	Exeter	Farsi, Dari, Pushtu, English
South West	Gloucester (Gloucester DC)	Mandarin, Hindi, French, Swahili, Serbo-croat (not Serbian), Arabic, Dari, Pushtu, Czech, Russian, Albanian, Gujerati, Urdu, English
South West	N. Somerset	
South West	Plymouth	Arabic, Hindi, Mandarin, Hakka, Cantonese, Portuguese, French, Albanian (Kosovo only), Serbo-croat (Bosnia only), Urdu, Kurdish, Turkish, Czech, Polish, Thai, Farsi, Somali, Spanish, Russian, English
South West	S Gloucestershire	
South West	Swindon	
South West	Torbay	
Wales	Bridgend & Porthcawl	Turkish, Cantonese, Korean, Hindi, Bengali, Japanese, English
Wales	Cardiff	Somali, Arabic, French, Farsi, Urdu, Bengali, Mandarin, Cantonese, Kurdish, English
Wales	Newport	Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Somali, Arabic, Albanian, Farsi, French, Cantonese, Bulgarian, Dutch, Russian, Spanish, Czech, English
Wales	Swansea	Bengali, Punjabi, Arabic, Cantonese, Urdu, Farsi, Albanian, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Turkish, Czech, Slovak, Polish, Kurdish, Sorani, Russian, Somali, English
Wales	Wrexham	Turkish, Italian, Polish, Arabic, Cantonese, Bengali, Urdu, Bulgarian, Philipino, Russian, Spanish, Thai, Turkish, Czech, Romanian, Shonal, Ndebele, English
West Midlands	Birmingham	Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Farsi, Gujerati, Hindi, Kurdish, Pushtu, Russian, Turkic, Urdu, Vietnamese, Serbo-Croat (not Serbian), Somali, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dari, Punjabi, English
West Midlands	Coventry	Albanian, Romanian, Arabic, Farsi, Swahili, French, Tamil, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujerati, Bengali, Czech, Kurdish, Lingala, Polish, Portuguese, Somali, Dari, German, Pushtu, Italian, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, Serbo-Croat (not Serbian), English
West Midlands	Dudley	Urdu, Punjabi, Gujerati, Arabic, Albanian, Bengali, Kurdish, Russian, Farsi, Polish, Chinese, Hindi, Pushtu, Serbo-Croat (not Serbian), French, Dari, Turkish, Tamil, English
West Midlands	Sandwell	Romanian, Russian, Somali, Pushtu, Dari, Farsi, Arabic, Swahili, Kurdish, French, Lingala, Gorani, Polish, Portuguese, Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Turkish, Shona, Ndebele, English, Serbo-Croat (Bosnian only), Albanian (Kosovo only)
West Midlands	Solihull	Kurdish, Arabic, Farsi, French, Lingala, Albanian, Pushtu
West Midlands	Stoke on Trent	Urdu, Turkish, Russian, Polish, Tigrean, Amharic, Arabic, Kurdish, Sorani, French, English
West Midlands	Walsall	Arabic, Urdu, Serbo-Croat (not Serbian), Farsi, Turkic, Krio, Kurdish, Lingala, Portuguese, Romanian, Swahili, Albanian, Armenian, Bangla, Berber, Bengali, Bahdini, Burundi, Chechen, Creole, Czech, Dari, Tigrean, Amharic, French, German, Italian, Latvian, Ndebele, Pushtu, Polish, Punjabi, Russian, Somali, Sorani, Sinhala, Shona, Tamil, English
West Midlands	Wolverhampton	Farsi, Pushtu, Dari, Albanian, Hindi, Urdu, Kurdish, Arabic, Bengali, Estonian, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Greek, French, Spanish, Serbo-Croat (not Serbian), Turkish, Pashai, German, Gujerati, Tamil, Latvian, Punjabi, Polish, Swahili, English
Yorkshire & Humberside	Barnsley	Albanian, Russian, Romanian, Czech, Farsi, Macedonian, Italian, Serbo-croat (Bosnia only), Kurundi, Kinyarwanda, Shona, Ndebele, Spanish, Azeri, English
Yorkshire & Humberside	Bradford & Keighley	Bengali, German, Hindi, Italian, Pushtu, Polish, Punjabi, Russian, Serbo-Croat, Urdu, Farsi, Kurdish, French, Czech, Dari, Ukranian, Arabic, Slovak, Swahili, English
Yorkshire & Humberside	Dewsbury, Batley, Huddersfield (Kirklees)	Bengali, Hakka, Farsi, Hindi, Kurdish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Punjabi, Urdu, Serbo-croat (Bosnia only), Swahili, French, English
Yorkshire & Humberside	Doncaster	Albanian, Urdu, Punjabi, Farsi, Turkish, Cantonese, Mandarin, English
Yorkshire & Humberside	Grimsby	Albanian, Cantonese, Mandarin, Polish, English

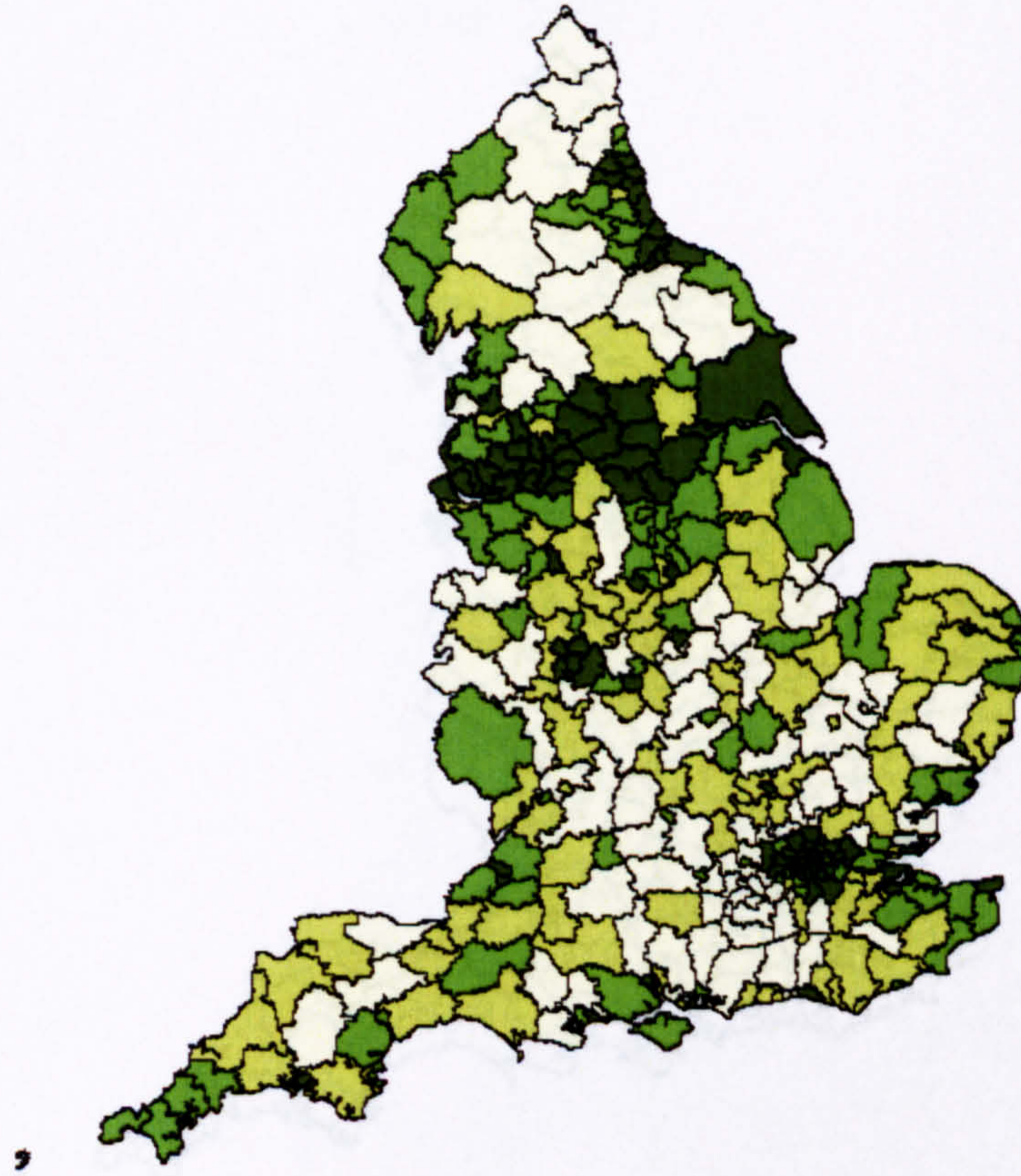
Yorkshire & Humberside	Halifax (Calderdale)	Arabic, Bengali, Farsi, Hindi, Punjabi, Pushtu, Russian, Albanian, Urdu, Somali, English
Yorkshire & Humberside	Hull (Kingston Upon Hull City)	Albanian, Kurdish, Pushtu, Farsi, Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Hakka, English
Yorkshire & Humberside	Leeds	Arabic, Bengali, Mandarin, Hindi, Polish, Albanian, Amharic, Farsi, French, German, Italian, Portugese, Punjabi, Somali, Urdu, Spanish, Shonal, Ndebele, Swahili, Tigrean, Russian, Pushtu, English
Yorkshire & Humberside	Rotherham	Punjabi, Urdu, Arabic, Albanian, Farsi, Portuguese, French, English
Yorkshire & Humberside	Sheffield,	Somali, Arabic, Dutch, Farsi, Bengali, Mandarin, Hakka, Cantonese, French, Urdu, Pushtu, Punjabi, Swahili, Portuguese, Spanish, Albanian, Kurdish, English
Yorkshire & Humberside	Wakefield	Albanian, Farsi, Kurdish, Sorani, Kurmanji, Polish, Romanian, Urdu, Punjabi, French, English

Source: www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk (as of January 2006)

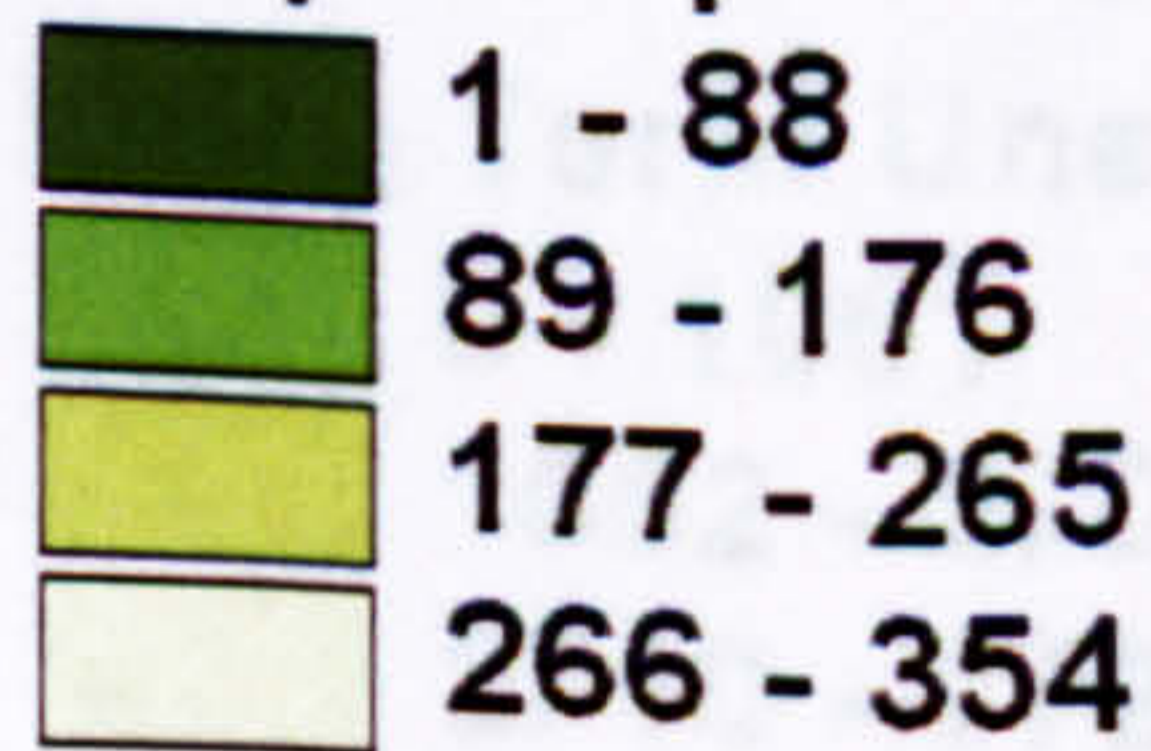


Source: South of England, Figure 1, Indices of Deprivation 2000

Rank of Employment Deprivation Indices of Deprivation 2000



Empl Deprived (indices)

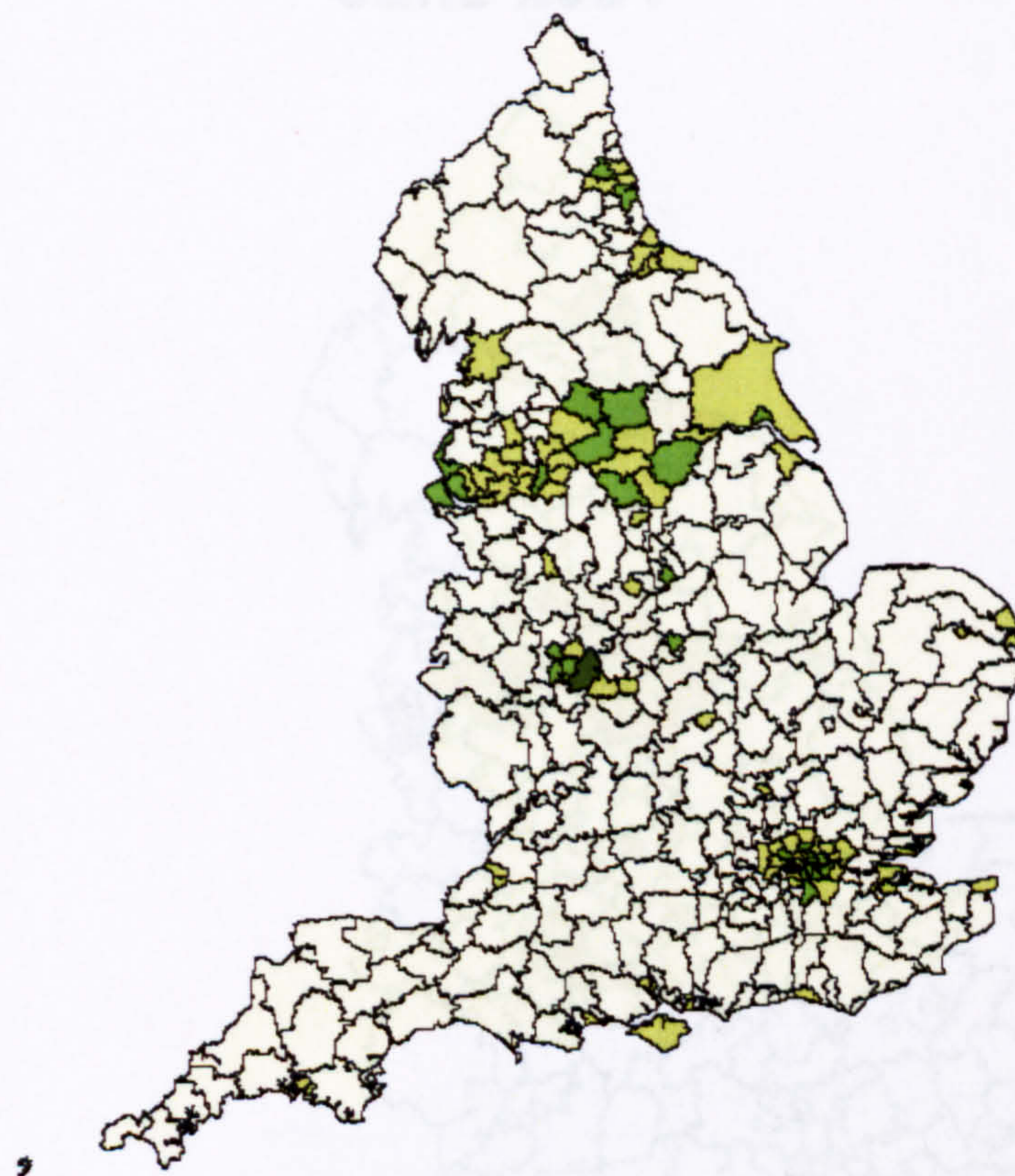


Source: Rank of Employment Deprived, Indices of Deprivation 2000

Map of dispersal in England as of end June 2002

Long Term Unemployed Census 2001

June 2001



Long Term Unemployed

	0 - 1061
	1062 - 2709
	2710 - 7729
	7730 - 14093

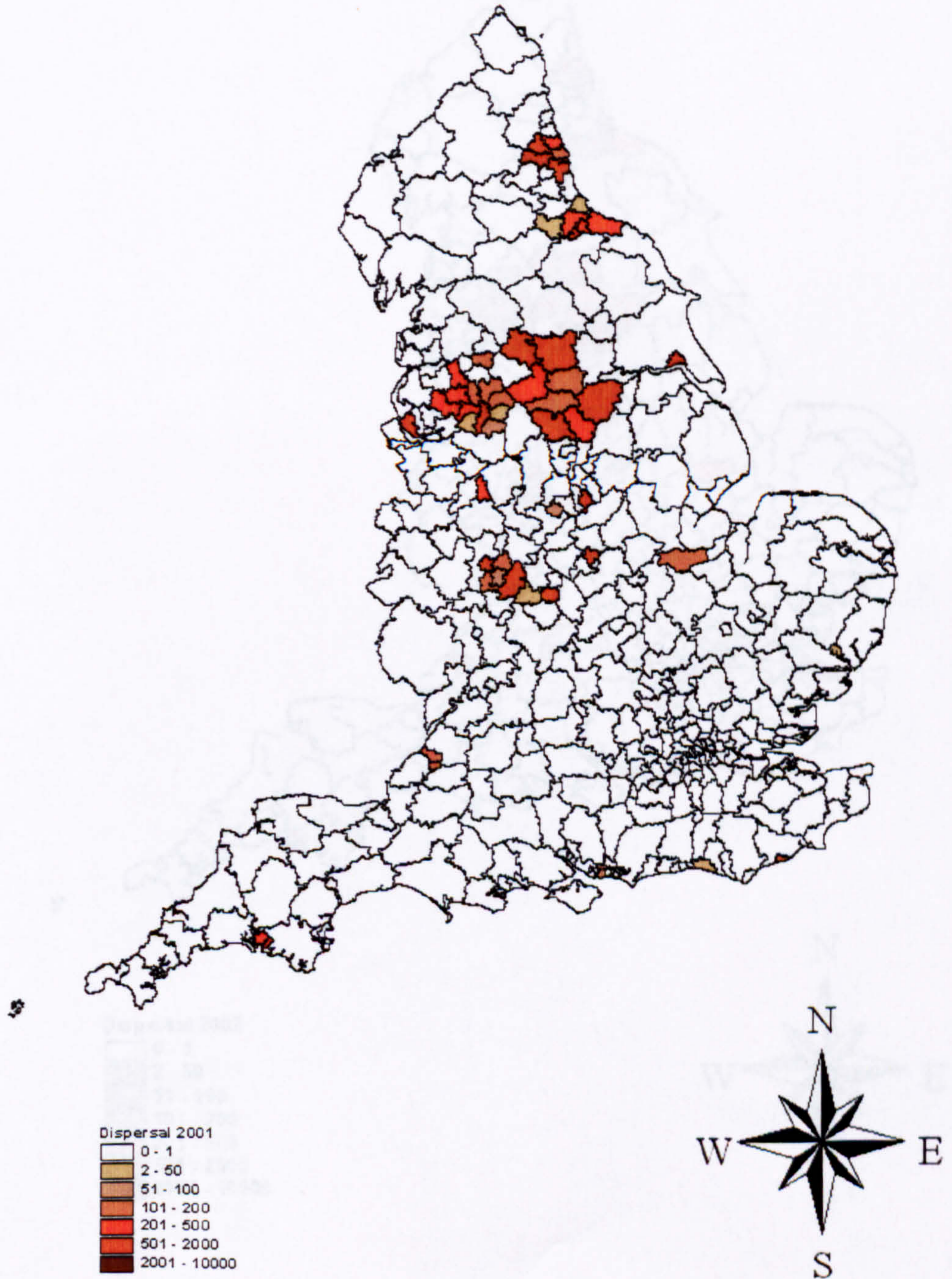


Source: 2001 Population Census

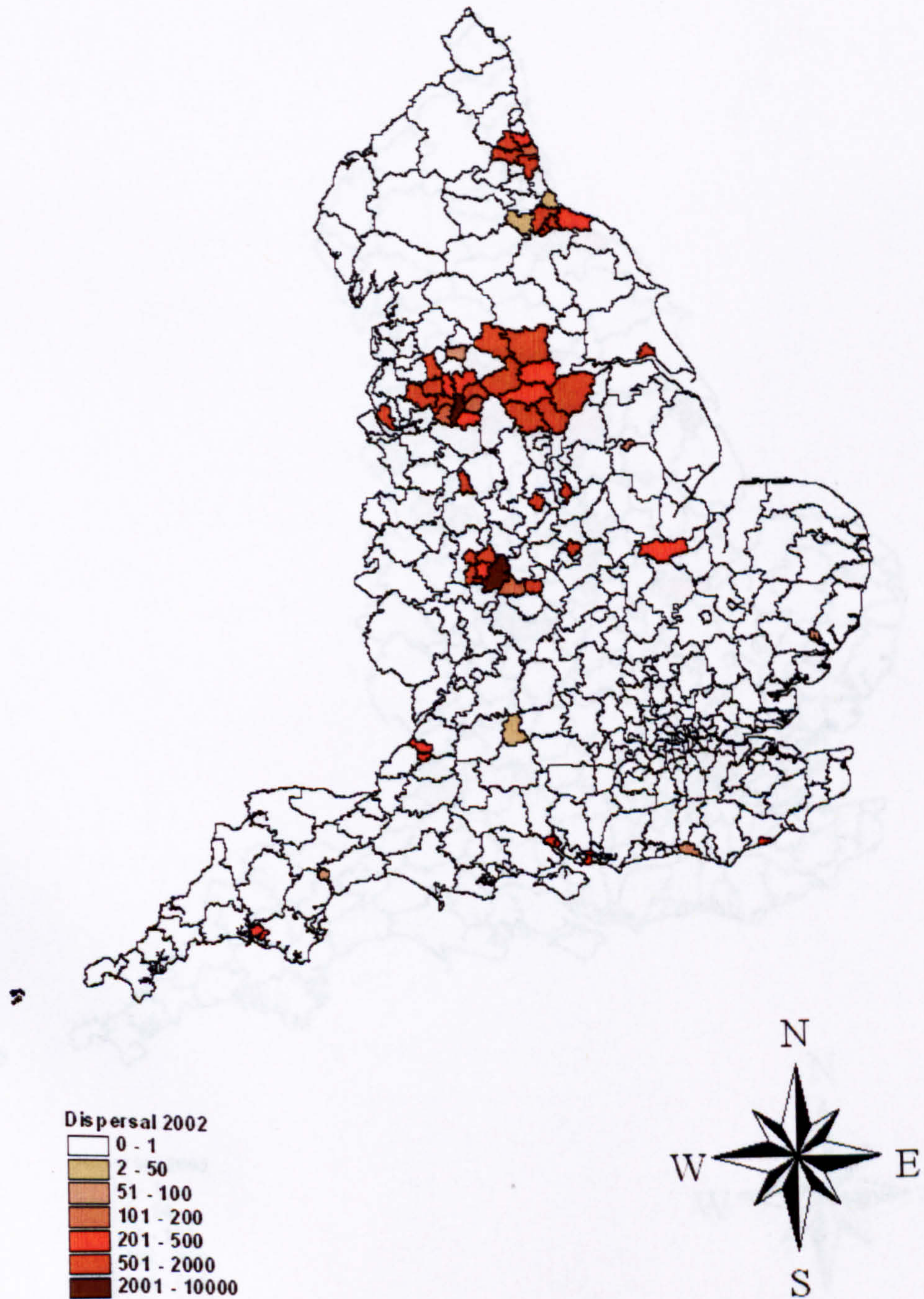
Appendix XXII: Full page maps

Map of dispersal in England as of end June 2002

**Dispersal
June 2001**

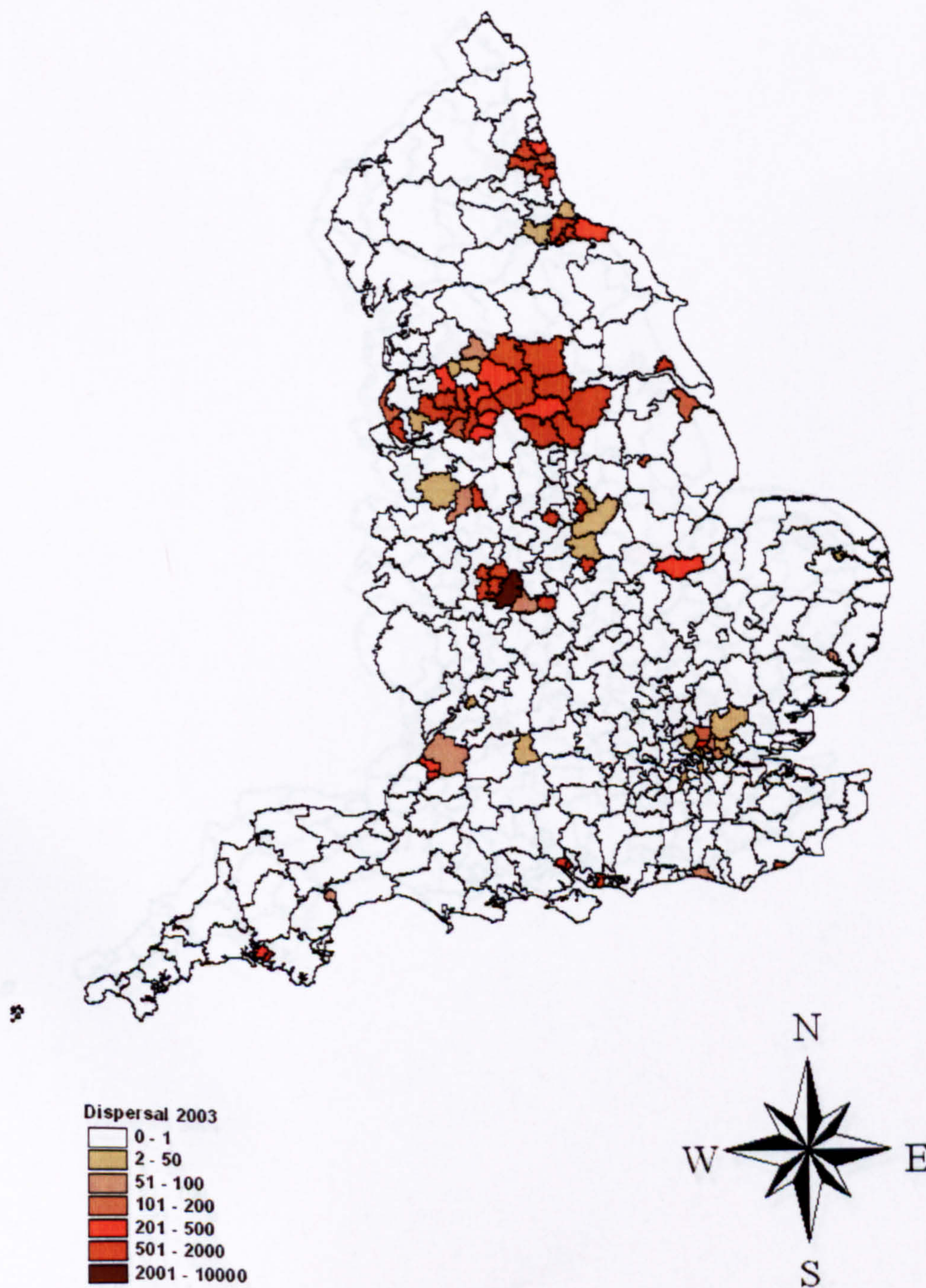


Dispersal June 2002



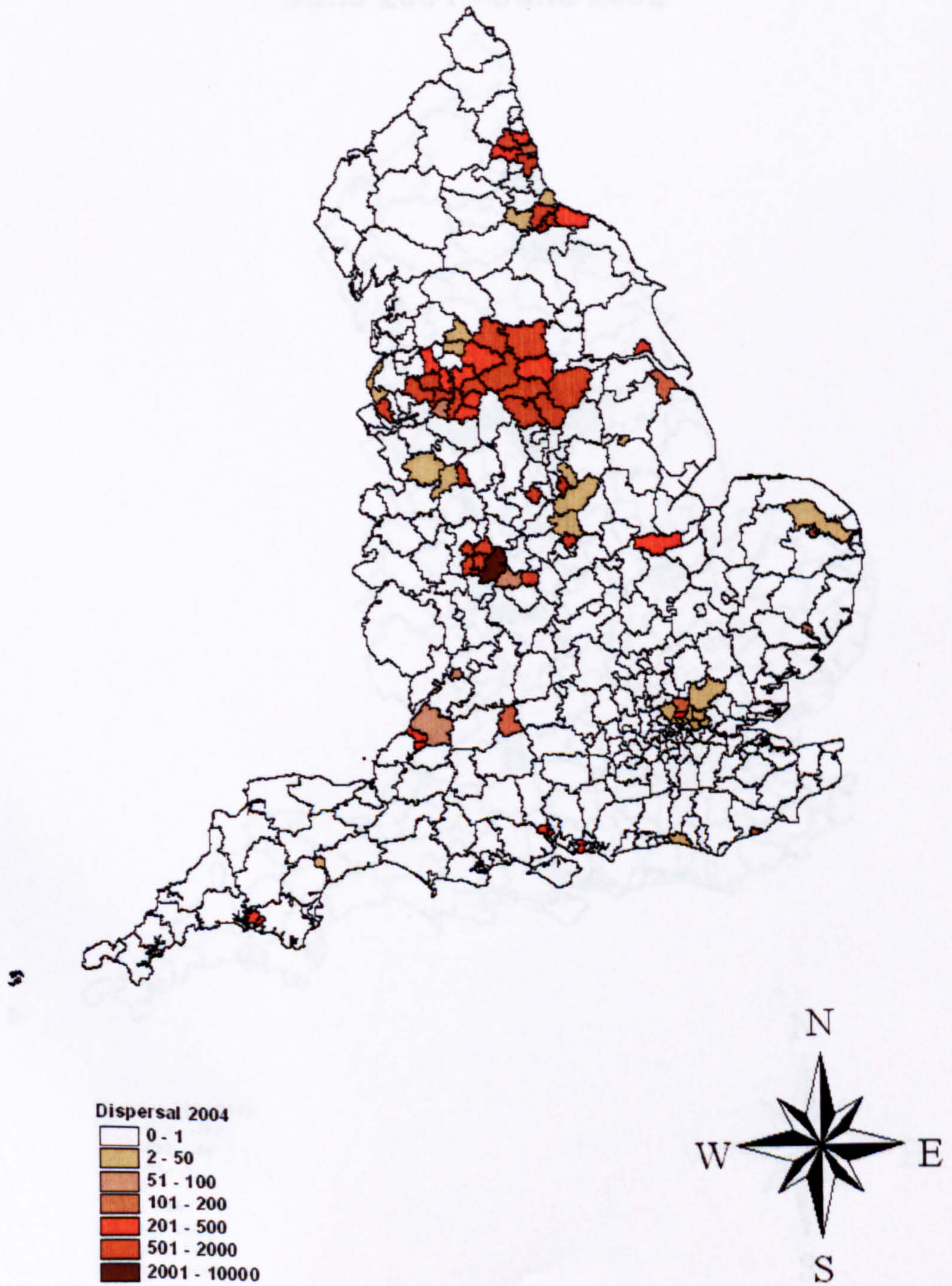
Source: Home Office

Dispersal June 2003



Source: Home Office

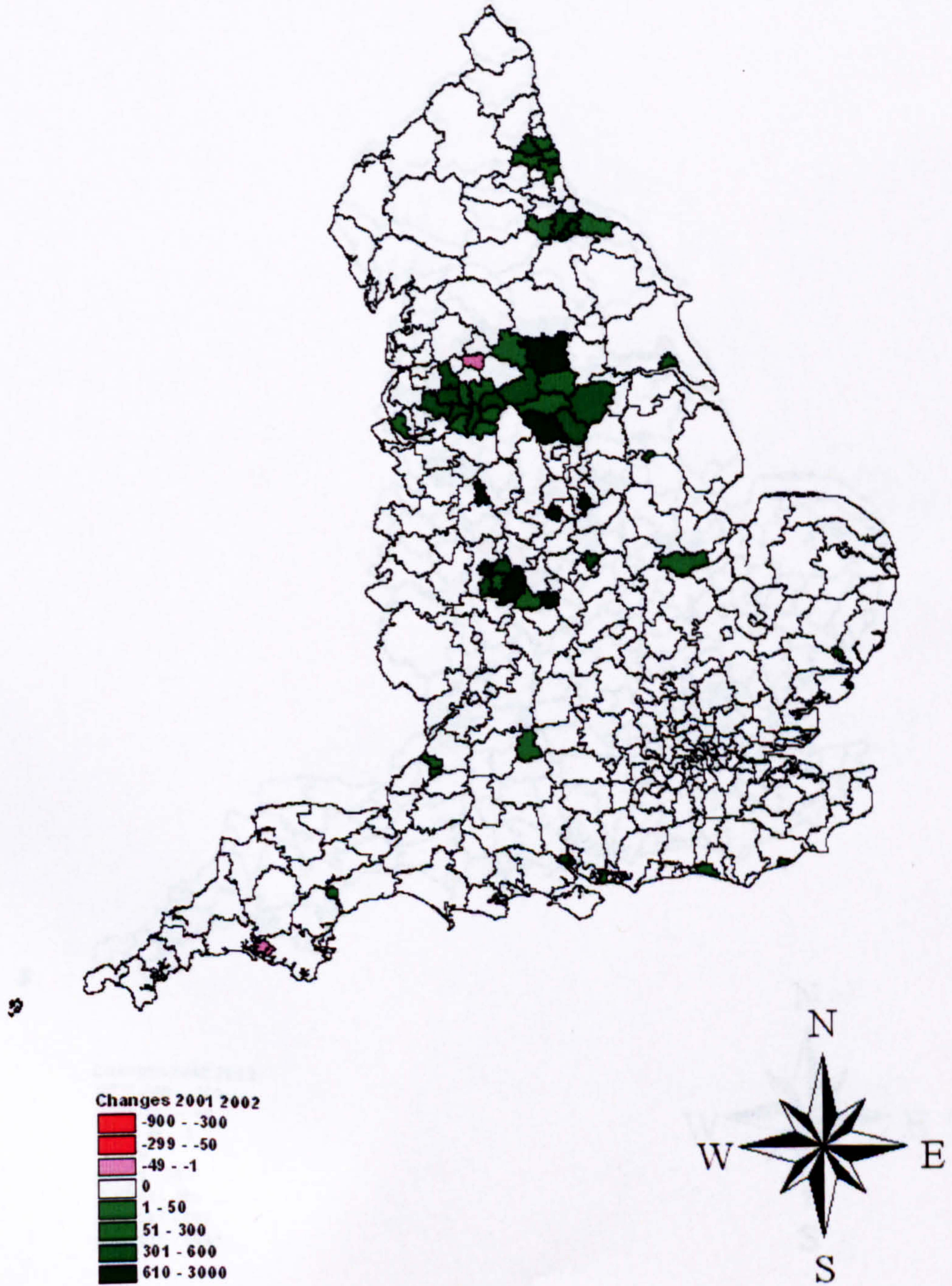
Dispersal June 2004



Source: Home Office

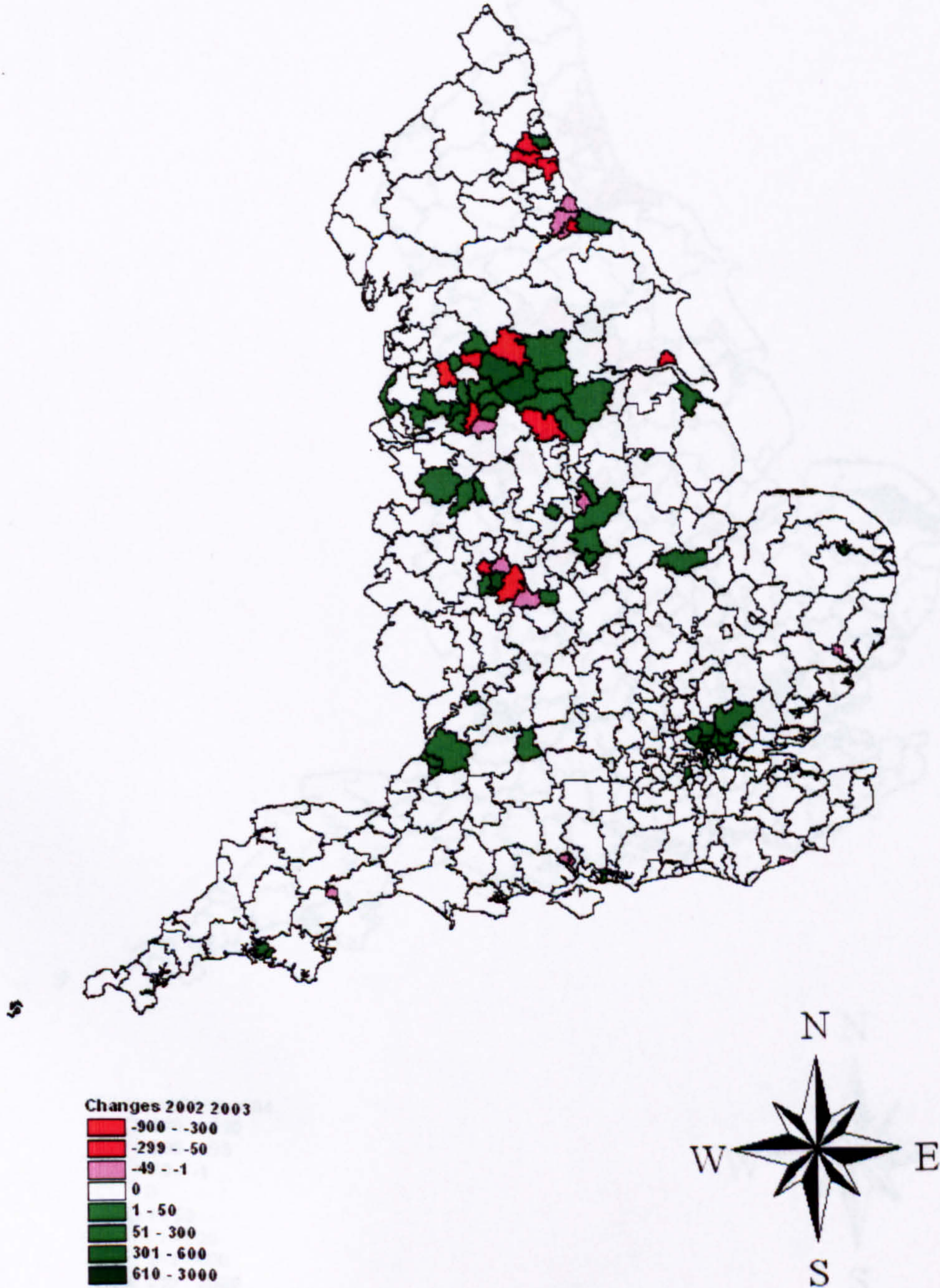
Map of dispersal losses and gains between June 2001 and June 2002

Dispersal Losses and Gains June 2001 - June 2002



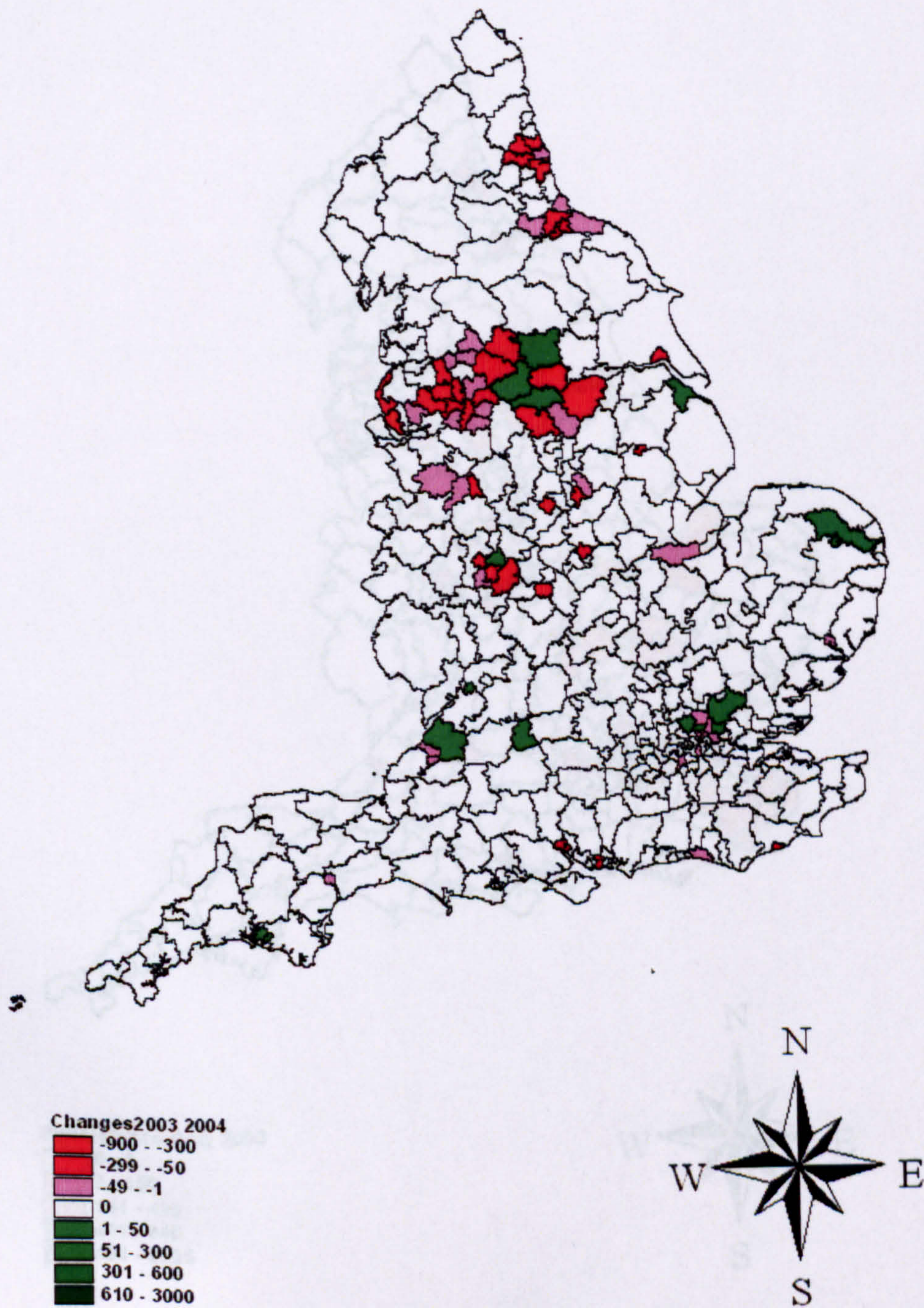
Map of dispersal losses and gains between June 2002 and June 2003

Dispersal Losses and Gains June 2002 - June 2003



Map of dispersal losses and gains between June 2003 and June 2004

Dispersal Losses and Gains June 2003 - June 2004



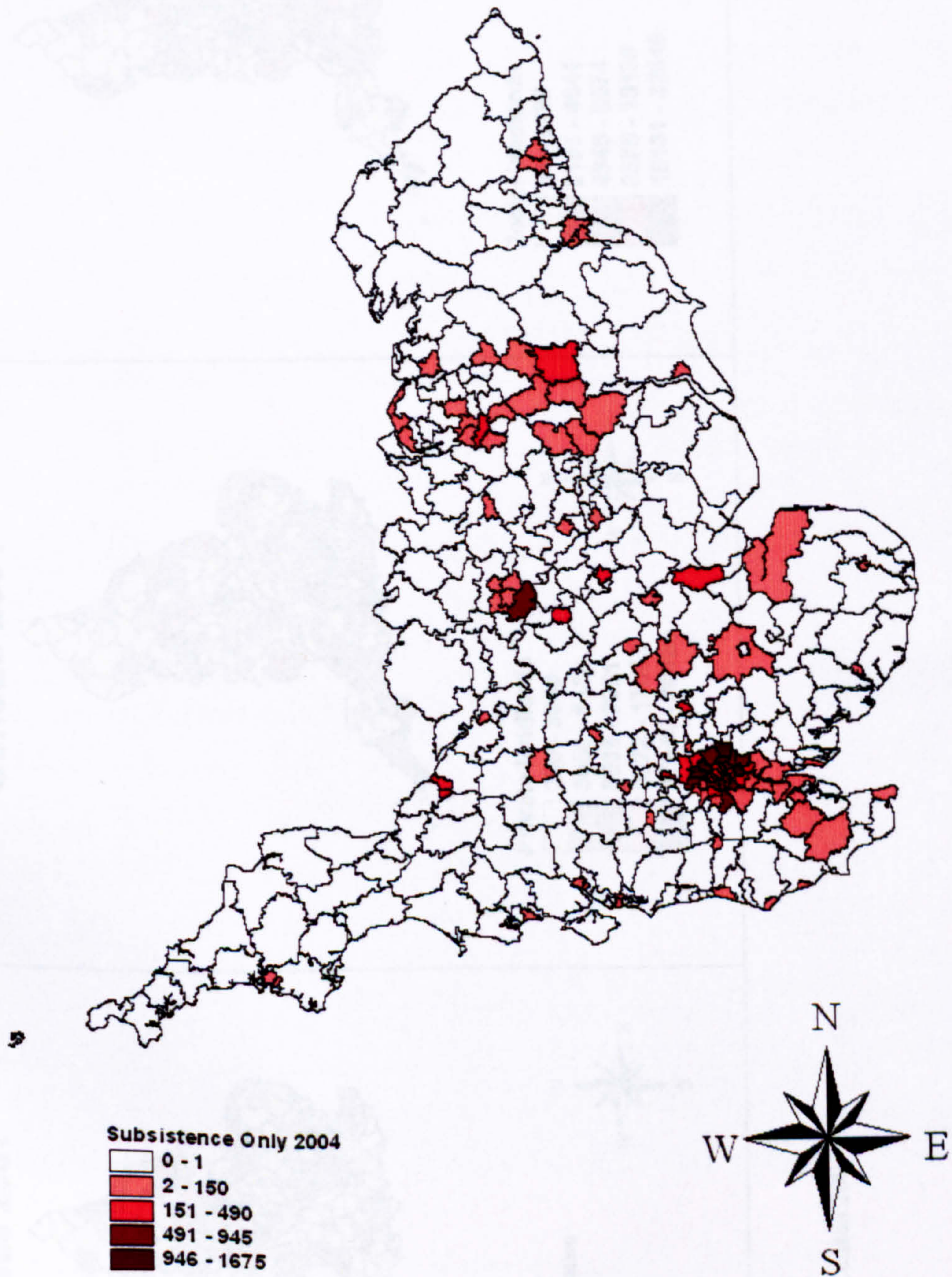
Map of Subsistence Only support as of June 2003

Subsistence Only Support
as of June 2003

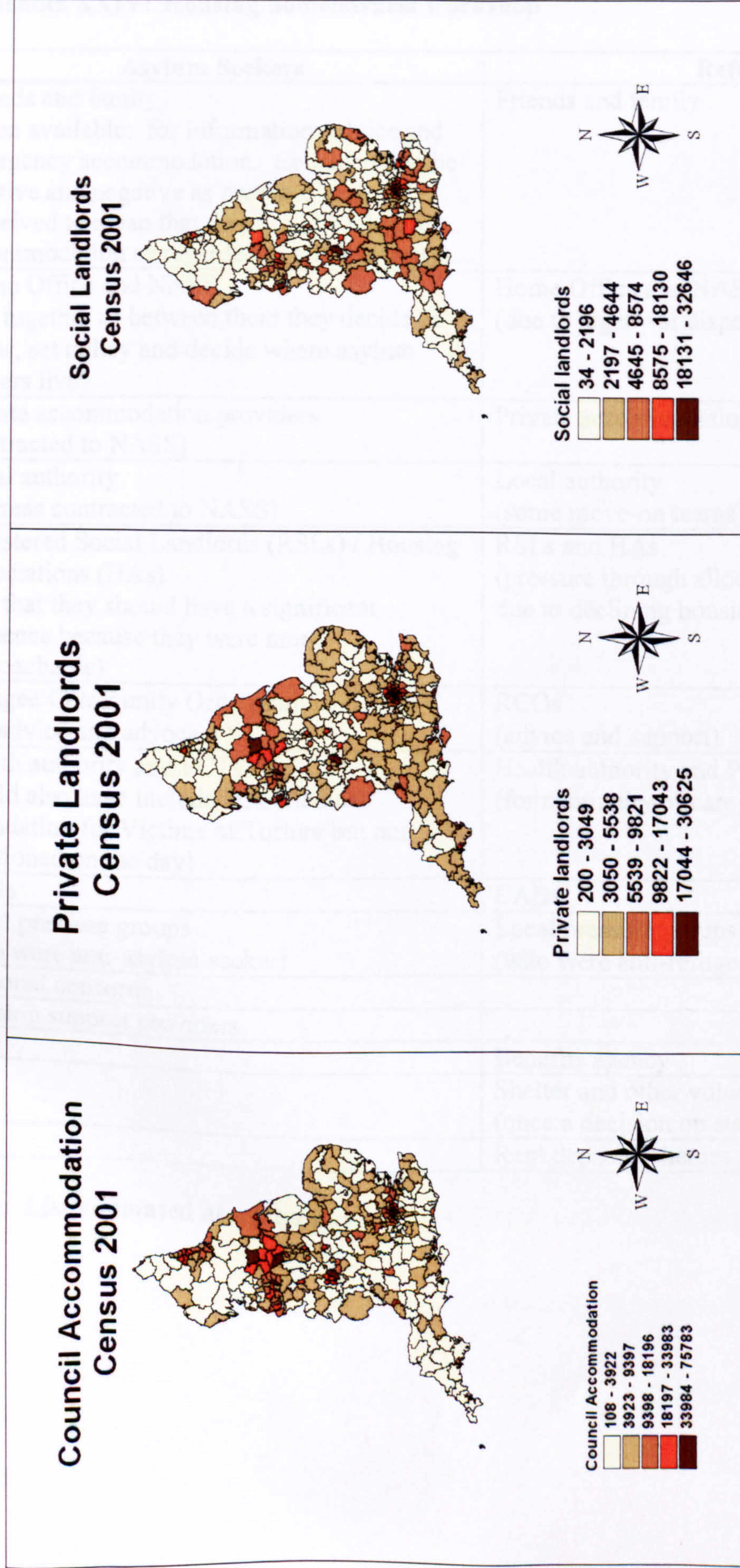


Map of Subsistence Only support as of June 2004

**Subsistence Only Support
as at June 2004**



Appendix XXIII: Tenure Concentrations, 2001



Source: UK Population Census 2001

Appendix XXIV: Housing/homelessness workshop

Asylum Seekers	Refugees
Friends and family (when available: for information, advice and emergency accommodation. Considered to be positive and negative as presence was perceived to mean that they could be denied accommodation or regarded as a low priority)	Friends and family
Home Office and NASS (put together as between them they decide on status, set policy and decide where asylum seekers live)	Home Office and NASS (due to legacy of dispersal allocation)
Private accommodation providers (contracted to NASS)	Private accommodation providers
Local authority (in areas contracted to NASS)	Local authority (some move-on teams)
Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) / Housing Associations (HAs) (felt that they should have a significant influence because they were more approachable)	RSLs and HAs (pressure through allocation in recent years due to declining housing stock)
Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) (for advice and advocacy)	RCOs (advice and support)
Health authority and PCTs (could also have included the Medical Foundation for Victims of Torture but not mentioned on the day)	Health authority and PCTs (for continuity of care in medical cases)
CABs	CABs
Local pressure groups (who were anti-asylum seeker)	Local pressure groups (who were anti-refugee)
Regional consortia	
Housing support providers	
	Benefits agency
	Shelter and other voluntary organisations (once a decision on status given or homeless)
	Rent deposit schemes

Note: List annotated at a later date



Agency specialising in unskilled and semi-skilled labour, Leicester, July 2003

Appendix XXVI: Opposition to planning application for Emergency Accommodation in Finsbury Park

BROWNSWOOD RESIDENTS

AGENDA

7.45pm, 22 July 2003
Methodist Church, Wilberforce Road, London N4

7.50pm	Welcome and Introduction. Purpose of this meeting	Meeting Chairman, David Vail, Secretary of Northwold Residents Association
8.00pm	Short presentation: Working with Hackney Planning Department and how a planning application led to the establishment of Northwold Residents	Gerald Laufer, Northwold Residents Association
8.10pm	Background to the planning application currently being considered by the Hackney Planning Department	Geraldine Bear, Wilberforce Road resident
8.20pm	As a individual – how to make effective comments about this application	Geraldine Bear, Wilberforce Road resident
8.30pm	As a community – what do we want to do about this application and how are we going to do it	Discussion for all, chaired by David Vail
8.50pm	Invitation to Councillor Eseoghene Okonedo to address the meeting	
9.00pm	Close of meeting	