



# welcome

to your library

connecting public libraries and refugee communities

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## What is Welcome To Your Library?

Welcome To Your Library is a national project connecting public libraries with refugees and asylum seekers. By increasing opportunities for participation, Welcome To Your Library aims to improve access to and quality of public library services for everyone.

## Our vision and aims

We will connect public libraries and refugee communities to nurture learning, well-being and a sense of belonging for all.

## We will achieve this through:

- PARTICIPATION of refugee communities throughout the work
- PARTNERSHIPS to raise awareness and increase public library use
- CONFIDENT, TRAINED library staff
- SHARING GOOD PRACTICE based on evidence
- ADVOCACY for public library work with refugees and asylum seekers



## What's the background to the project?

Funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and co-ordinated through the London Libraries Development Agency, the Welcome To Your Library pilot project took place in the London boroughs of Brent, Camden, Enfield, Merton and Newham in 2003-4.

In 2005, a further £250,000 from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation enabled Welcome To Your Library to extend the project nationally to the end of 2007. By this time we expect activities to have become an integral part of public library work.

## Who are the partners?

After a competitive selection process, five additional public library partners are participating in the national project:

- London Borough of Hillingdon working with Healthy Hillingdon and HOPE (Health Opportunities, Promotion and Education)
- Leicester City Council
- Liverpool City Council
- London Borough of Southwark
- Tyne & Wear (a consortium comprising councils in Newcastle, Gateshead, North and South Tyneside and Sunderland)

The Project Co-ordinator is also working closely with The Network ([www.seapn.org.uk](http://www.seapn.org.uk)) and many stakeholders.

Below, this page: Image taken from "Positive Contributions: Being a Refugee in Britain", a research study funded and commissioned by Refugee Housing Association. © 2005 Refugee Housing Association. [www.refugeehousing.org.uk](http://www.refugeehousing.org.uk)

Opposite page: Gordon Masiala, celebrated Congolese singer and dancer, is interviewed by Africa Vision TV, after his performance at Congolese Cultural Day at The Gate, London Borough of Newham, May 2005.



### Project structure

A National Policy Advisory Group supports the work. Members are drawn from:

- refugee community organisations
- government departments
- representatives from relevant sectors – education, housing, health
- Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA)
- Society of Chief Librarians (SCL)
- participating library services

### Project activities

The approach taken in the pilot project is being extended nationally and includes:

- Mapping of refugee communities and support organisations
- Identifying barriers to library use and ways to overcome these
- Awareness training for library staff on

- issues facing asylum seekers and refugees
- Developing local partnerships with refugee community organisations and others
- Structured taster visits and ICT sessions
- Simplifying joining procedures
- Providing ESOL, community language and reading support
- Acquiring new stock with input from refugee communities
- Storytelling and other events and workshops bringing together communities and cultures.

Continuing work in the boroughs that participated in the pilot project includes:

- Securing further funding
- New service developments such as library work placements for refugees
- Real participation in service planning, design and delivery by new communities.

In addition the national project involves:

- Development of an e-mail list, website and events to support shared learning and spread good practice
- More extensive resources to train and mentor library staff to support cultural change in planning, delivering and sustaining services for refugee communities
- Sharing lessons learnt from Welcome To Your Library so they can be applied to both policy and practice in other areas of service planning and development.



For more information about  
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(from January 2007)

For more information about Welcome To Your  
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**london libraries development agency**



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