Widening the Welcome

Exploring experiences of refugee resettlement approaches in Scotland

Contents

The Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

What you need to know:

Summary of key findings

It is clear that a great deal of progress has been made in delivering resettlement in Scotland, with considerable numbers of refugees supported in many active communities and services learning from local experience of supporting refugees as their work progresses. In many locations, our fieldwork took place at an early stage in local resettlement and therefore some of our recommendations may be being implemented independently. However, we believe that bringing these together will assist local resettlement and integration planning based on the observations of a wide range of participants across a number of areas. Our intention is that this contributes to the implementation of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy across Scotland as a whole. Our key findings are summarised below.

1 **Independence, self-advocacy and collective empowerment should be a goal of resettlement support.**

Recommendation:

1. We must actively work for a better balance between providing crucial support for refugees, and supporting independence, self-advocacy and collective empowerment. Community development methods, which strengthen communities while supporting individuals, should be used when planning and implementing refugee resettlement and to enable the focus of support to be agreed between staff and refugees.

2 **Recognising and mobilising assets within refugee and receiving communities is key to integration.**

Recommendations

1. Those responsible for resettlement should recognise the potential of assets in both communities, and work to mobilise these when planning and delivering resettlement and integration.
2. That we take the opportunity to go further, working with community assets to take joint action on issues affecting all those in our communities.

3 **Greater importance should be given to involving receiving communities in delivering refugee integration. The principle being that Refugee resettlement should be 'delivered with' and not 'done to' receiving communities.**

Recommendation

1. Receiving communities should be supported to play a role in the planning and delivery of resettlement and integration support. An approach that widens the focus from refugees to the community as a whole will assist this.
2. More needs to be done to develop infrastructure, resources, skills and confidence to help receiving communities to play constructive roles in integration.
3. **Refugees should be supported to use their skills, along with people from receiving communities, to tackle shared issues.**

4 **It is important to tackle negative attitudes in communities and challenge associated narratives using accessible information.**

Recommendations

1. There should be proactive information strategies that support positive local stories about resettlement and feature the moral case for integration.
2. Local people should be supported to effectively deliver positive messages on resettlement and integration.
3. Staff and volunteers should receive training in how to work constructively and safely in tackling negative attitudes.
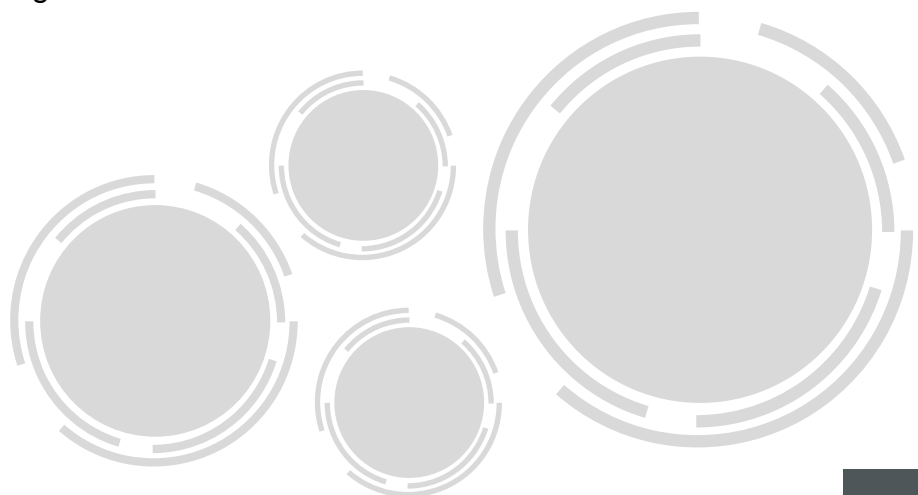
5 **Forming social connections through face to face "encounters" between refugees and receiving communities is an important element of resettlement. We need to build on these to include more reciprocal experiences that support meaningful integration.**

Recommendations

1. We should promote learning from experiences of encounters between refugees and members of receiving communities, using evaluations from across existing programmes.
2. Focus groups should be conducted to explore the experiences of encounters, in terms of their quality and the impact they had on people's lives.
3. We must build on this learning and provide communities with the resources to plan encounters as an important feature of sustainable community activity.

6 **Support for communication and English language skills is a crucial enabler of integration, without it refugees report isolation and are less able to contribute to their new community through formal work or community activities.**

Recommendations:

1. Mainstream language provision across Scotland requires further analysis as it is often viewed as insufficient or inaccessible by community based partners.
2. A new model is suggested that merges tutor-led mainstream provision and peer-to-peer support, which involves receiving communities. This is already emerging in some areas. The impact of new funding arrangements for ESOL should be reviewed to assess the extent to which they support or inhibit this.
3. Language support should also be provided in a community setting, with a focus on 'every day' English and delivered in a way that includes receiving communities and builds on their strengths.
4. Funding should be increased including for training of tutors and communities to facilitate more integrated approaches to language support
5. Translation and interpreting services should be equitably available for integration purposes for as long as is required

7 **The needs of refugees and receiving communities should be recognised and met across a wider range of key local planning processes which they are able to influence**

Recommendations:

1. Community based refugee integration activity should feature more prominently when asylum dispersal and resettlement programs are planned.
2. Refugee integration activity should be more visible in Local Outcome Improvement Plans and Locality Plans in areas where refugees are living. This should be proportionate, but address community cohesion issues.
3. Refugees should be supported to influence local planning for specific services such as Children and Young People or Health and Social Care services.
4. Planning for integration should be explicitly linked with planning for equality, including dealing with hate crime and wider community relations.
5. Community development support for refugee empowerment and community integration should be prominent in Community Learning and Development plans.
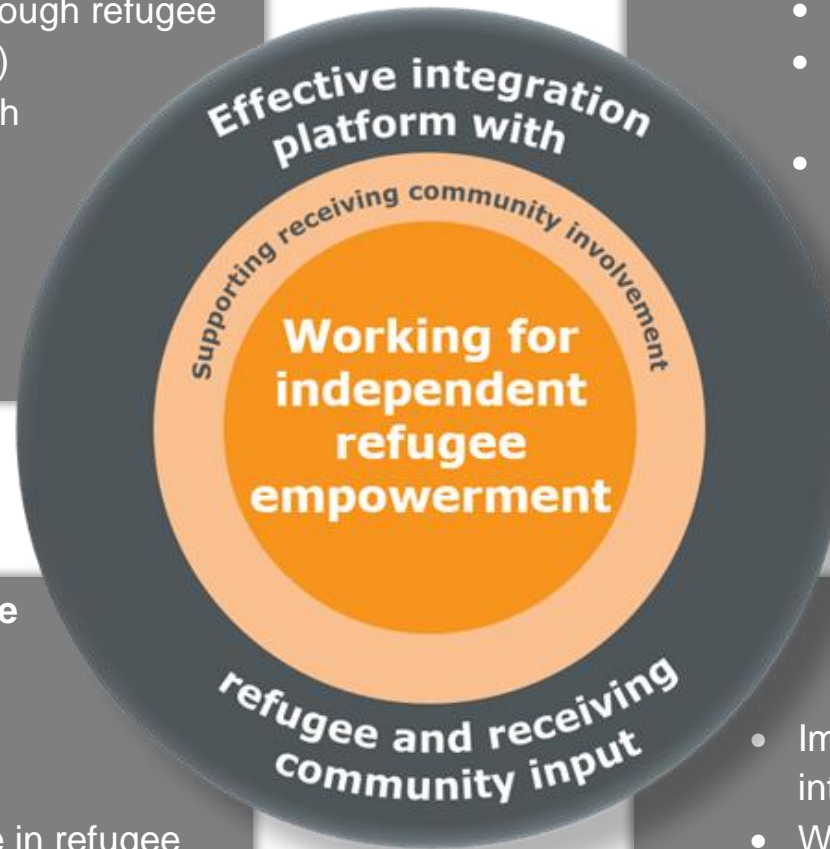
Proposed practice model for community development approaches to refugee integration

Refugees are fully empowered

- Enabling collective identification of issues and engagement with services
- Supporting self-organisation through refugee community organisations (RCO)
- Supporting self-organisation with marginalised refugees such e.g. women
- Helping build knowledge and skills for community action & alliance building

Deeper social learning shapes what we do

- Supporting development of a local learning process
- Promoting cross cultural learning
- Supporting practice sharing locally across Scotland
- Reinvesting learning in practice e.g. producing tools and publishing insights

Effective integration platform with

Supporting receiving community involvement

Working for independent refugee empowerment

refugee and receiving community input

Communities participate & influence resettlement & integration

- Ensuring that communities are consulted and engaged
- Maximising community influence in refugee specific planning
- Ensuring links are made with other relevant planning processes
- Working for adequate resourcing for community development

Building better communities

- Improving frequency and quality of intercultural encounters
- Working to combat racism and hate crime
- Promoting mutual solidarity through tackling common issues
- Supporting receiving communities to engage with wider refugee and asylum policy

This practice model is designed to provide those working in communities on resettlement and integration issues with a checklist which can be used to think about, plan, deliver or evaluate community development work on integration. However, it is not a blueprint for local activity in every resettlement area which will be affected by local circumstances.

It is intended to be dynamic and evolve alongside local practice and reflections on the work taking place across Scotland.

Introduction and methods

The project

Widening the Welcome is an action research project commissioned by Scottish Government and led by Scottish Community Development Centre. It explores the resettlement experiences of refugees, communities and those who support them in providing sanctuary in Scotland. Its main focus is on the role of community development practice within resettlement and integration efforts and the implications for future work. Through this project, organisations, agencies, refugees and volunteers were invited to share their experience, learn from each other and explore ways in which collectively, we can widen and strengthen the welcome we offer in our communities. This work has already seen a widespread mobilisation of public resources and volunteers who have made a massive contribution to providing sanctuary. This is testament to the character of those communities and the hard work of our public and voluntary services.

Background

With the most recent UNHCR figures identifying that there are currently 25.4 million people forced to flee their country of origin, refugee resettlement has worldwide significance. Asylum is a matter reserved to the UK Government but the Scottish Government COSLA and SRC have worked with refugees and others to

This research explores how current practice and past experience of refugee resettlement in Scotland can inform learning and practice for future resettlement programmes.

develop the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy. This describes how Scotland supports refugees and asylum seekers to integrate into our communities from the day they arrive.

In recent years Glasgow has been the only Scottish location for people seeking asylum and many of those we engaged in this project are supporting approximately 5000 asylum seekers in the city. Since the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS) started in 2015, over 2450 Syrian refugees have either already arrived, or will shortly do so, across all 32 of Scotland's local authority areas.

Scotland has therefore met its commitment to house 2000 refugees fleeing persecution two years into a 5-year UK wide Resettlement Programme. Politicians from all 32 councils in Scotland have supported the decision to keep the voluntary scheme open and refugees are continuing to arrive through the SVPRS.

The context

It is recognised that the SVRPS operates with significant constraints which local partners have limited control over. The speed of resettlement mitigated against intensive pre-planning or community preparation and the focus of the scheme on the "vulnerability" of refugees as identified by UNHCR, clearly framed how councils and their partners have planned to meet the immediate needs of those arriving. It is also recognised that councils, and their partners, are actively looking at how they strengthen resettlement working through various fora associated with the New Scots strategy and the CoSLA, Resettlement Officer Group to achieve this.

Our hope is that the findings of Widening the Welcome provide an effective focus for community development work which supports this effort and helps build the critical partnerships with new and existing communities essential to is success.

We note that many participants raised the challenge of reductions in resources for community development locally and acknowledge that some local authorities may not have resources of their own to deploy in support of the recommendations we make. This is a key driver for why refugee and receiving community needs should be visible across a range of empowerment and Community Learning and Development plans if the new Scots Strategy is to be successfully delivered.

The role of community development in a refugee integration context

Community development interventions are based on the Indicators of Integration framework2 which highlights the importance of the development of relationships and social connections within communities and specifically the development of:

• Bonds within communities (for example our work supporting refugee community organisations);

• Bridges between communities (for example enabling dialogue between new and receiving communities), and;

• Links between communities and services and government (for example enabling communities to access and influence services and to develop a collective voice in order to participate in decision making, both nationally and locally).

[*SRC Community Development strategy*](#)

The community development role

This research explores how current practice and past experience can inform future resettlement in Scotland. It makes the case that a community development approach is vital in ensuring that refugees and people in the communities where they live share their experiences across Scotland to help improve future resettlement and integration.

We also see this project as a practical contribution to strengthening the aspirations of the refreshed [National Performance Framework for Scotland](#) which calls for our communities to be inclusive, diverse and human rights focussed. These ambitious ideas require us to promote and strengthen the positive social relationships which make the process of seeking and providing sanctuary work for everyone involved.

Widening the Welcome takes a snapshot of practice and helps set an agenda to assist communities across Scotland to share learning and skills which underpin integration and contribute to its success. It does this by helping illuminate and categorise the experience of different community development stakeholders and makes recommendations for future practice. Insights from the research have already

informed SCDC's contribution to the development of the recommendations for the New Scots Strategy.

Based on our findings, we propose a community development practice model that will help staff and volunteers, from a wider range of organisations and backgrounds, to deliver this approach more consistently across the country. We also set out for debate, key elements of an ongoing programme of learning support that we believe would help implement this model and ensure that we value the experience of communities, staff and volunteers in implementing integration policy based on ongoing reflection from the realities of their day to day work.

Our methodology

The research project took place between February 2017 and March of 2018 using a range of methods, which gathered the views of 239 people with important insights derived from experience of supporting people in the asylum and refugee system, the implementation of the Syrian Vulnerable Person Relocation Programme (SVPRS) and the previous Gateway Refugee Resettlement Programme. It gathered views from those working in statutory services and local authorities, third sector organisations and from volunteers in local welcome and community groups. There was some overlap between these roles where, for example, someone with experience of being a refugee has gone on to work in a role that supports integration.

The project comprised 4 key stages:

**Stage one: 96 people responded to a survey**

An online survey gathered information from those working and volunteering with refugees and asylum seekers across Scotland. Its purpose was to:

- To begin mapping current community development activity supporting refugee integration.
- To better understand the different roles and kinds of activity which are supporting integration.
- To determine if people viewed their work as community development and their understanding of the social capital concepts of social Bonds, Links and Bridges (Agar & Strang, 2008).

- Explore links to wider equalities and anti-discriminatory practice.
- To identify practice support needs for community development on this area of work.

Most of those (74%) are working with Syrians who have arrived through the SVPRS. Of those, over half were also working with other people from other refugee backgrounds simultaneously, albeit as part of different support and resettlement systems. A much smaller number (11%) were working with receiving communities. Of those working with people under the SVPRS, over half were **also** working with people from refugee and migrant backgrounds as part of different support and resettlement systems. This illuminates the complexity of the settlement and integration environment in some local communities.

To view a full version of the questionnaire, click here.
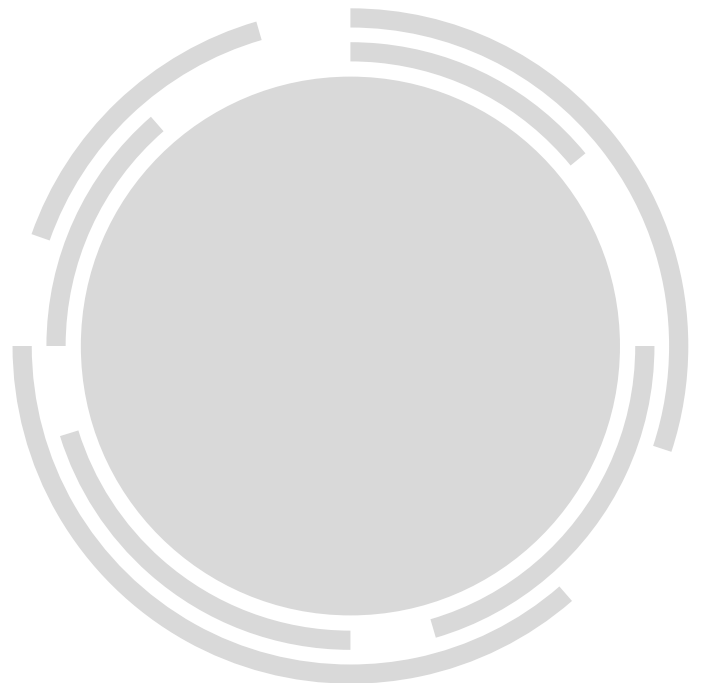
The table below summarises who responded to our online survey from the following types of organisation:

Councils	35	Of those who stated that they worked in Local Authorities: 13 people said they had a Community Learning and Development, Adult Learning or Family Support Children's Services roles (some overlap) - 8 said they deliver language support (including ESOL) - 7 said they had a refugee/ integration specific role - 2 said they worked in housing - 1 said they worked in employability - 1 said they were involved in Community Planning
Refugee specific organisations / integration networks	19	This included the Scottish Refugee Council, refugee women's organisations and organisations supporting victims of torture
Other 3rd sector/ and community organisations	12	This included Third Sector Interfaces, Community Development Trusts, generalist community projects, or national third sector organisations
Faith groups	11	This included churches, mosques and faith-based community organisations
Youth organisations	4	
Other	4	1 police officer 1 Social worker 1 University member of staff 1 individual
Not specified	11	Volunteers

Stage two: 10 'key informant' interviews took place with people who could offer important perspectives based on their experiences of refugee resettlement,

community development planning for integration and personal refugee experiences. This included refugees representing refugee community groups, local volunteers and third sector staff in specialist refugee support roles, including: CoSLA; community based Welcome Groups; faith-based networks; and public sector Community Learning & Development staff.

The co-inquiry events were designed to invite a response to the emerging themes and capture both evidence and insights to deepen our understanding of these findings.

Stage three: 133 people participated in 4 Local co-inquiry sessions. Each included refugees, local authority workers, people from statutory and third sector services, representatives from community and welcome groups:

- Glasgow - 41 people participated with experiences of many years of supporting asylum seekers and resettlement of refugees from various routes. It was supported by Glasgow City Council and a steering group of integration networks.
- North Lanarkshire - with support from North Lanarkshire Council, 19 people contributed experiences of the previous Gateway resettlement programme and the current Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme.
- Aberdeenshire - supported by a multi-sectoral partnership led by Aberdeenshire Council 23 people shared their experiences of recent resettlement though the Syrian Vulnerable Person Relocation Scheme.
- Renfrewshire – This area brought a different perspective to the analysis of how community development can be used to support refugee integration in the context of wider migration and black and minority ethnic community settlement. With support from Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership and Community Planning partners 50 people shared their perspectives and expertise based on recent SRVPS as well as wider immigration from a range of New Scots to the area.

This sample offered an opportunity to explore key themes in varied contexts in terms of types of location, level of experience in resettlement, numbers of people settled and approaches to the work. In order to further support learning in the sites, the co-inquiry events included a facilitated discussion to identify development needs and actions for participants to take forward local priorities.

Stage four: Analysis and development of recommendations: Our survey results identified emerging themes which were used to shape the interview and co-inquiry research methods. The co-inquiry events sought responses to the emerging themes and captured insights to deepen our understanding of the issues. On conclusion of the research phase, the results were analysed by categorising the findings from all research methods, the synthesis of which have informed our key messages in this report.

Terms we use in this report

For the purpose of this research, we were primarily interested in work to support refugees, in particular those arriving as part of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) so we primarily use the term 'refugee' throughout this report.

However, central to this research is the learning we can gather from experiences of participants who are working, or have worked, with a broader range of New Scots such as asylum seekers, refugees who are part of different relocation schemes or arriving from any country, unaccompanied minors, and in one case, other migrants.

Our approach

Online survey

- 96 responses from across 26 local authority areas

- Local authority, community and voluntary organisations, welcome groups, refugees, community representatives

- Method: Qualitative survey questions based on research outcomes

Key informant interviews

- 10 in-depth interviews

- With policy makers, community development managers and community representatives

- Method: in-depth interviews questions based on research outcomes and initial survey findings
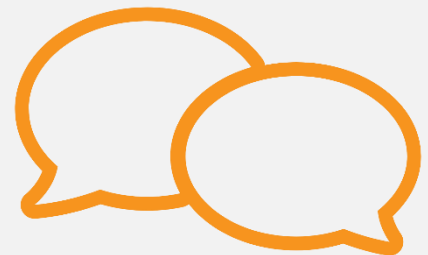
Local co-enquiry events

- 4 co-inquiry events in Aberdeenshire, Glasgow, Renfrewshire & North Lanarkshire

- 133 participants

- Local authority staff, community and voluntary organisations, faith groups, welcome groups, refugees.

- Method: exploration of key findings, deeper analysis and identification of implications for practice

Analysis & development of recommendations

- Analysis of findings

- Synthesis of key themes and implications for practice

- Development of recommendations and a proposed practice model

Our key findings

Independence, self-advocacy and collective empowerment should be a goal of resettlement support

- There is a fine balance between providing a holistic humane response to need and unintentionally creating over-reliance. There are risks that this inhibits integration and risks damaging personal outcomes if high levels of support are withdrawn when funding tapers off.

- Refugees have both individual needs and significant assets but are not inherently vulnerable despite many living through an often-damaging asylum process. Many refugees are amongst the most resilient people in our communities.

- In each stage of this research refugees and support workers raised concerns that we can get this balance wrong creating over-reliance on support which prevents individual and collective empowerment.

Recommendation:

1. We must actively work for a better balance between providing crucial support for refugees, and supporting independence, self-advocacy and collective empowerment. Community development methods, which strengthen communities while supporting individuals, should be used when planning and implementing refugee resettlement and to enable the focus of support to be agreed between staff and refugees.

The importance of independence and self-advocacy

Supporting communities to collectively recognise and address the issues which affect them is central to a community development perspective. This can be done through work which strengthens the confidence, knowledge and skills within communities, supporting them to influence decisions that affect their lives. The extent to which we support autonomy and agency of individual refugees and their family units is important. This matters since the ability to take effective collective action can be enhanced or impeded by how individuals are supported to deal with

individual issues (such as trauma) and therefore impacts on how they act together on wider issues (such as health, housing, relationships with services etc).

The SVPRS, by definition, has a focus on the vulnerability of those selected to benefit from its provisions and be offered the chance to resettle in Scotland. A recurring theme in this research has been a concern that in many cases, local workers and volunteers report responding to the "vulnerability" of refugees and that without a broader empowering perspective, this can create increased reliance on services. Focusing on vulnerability can reinforce the notion that refugees are unable to act autonomously, either individually or collectively in their own interest, until they deal with issues relating to trauma, immigration status and health. This is contrary to the 'integration from day one' approach of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022. It is also contrary to the approach taken by Freedom from Torture who told us of their community development approach where recovery from torture is supported through community integration activities.

There is a natural, human response for workers to seek to protect people who have already been through so much but on occasion this can go further. One key informant expressed this as:

"Some local authorities put a ring of steel around 'their Syrians'."

Creating a balance between support and empowerment

Participants questioned whether this rather linear view of the readiness of people to look outwards from their own lives and integrate successfully was a helpful one – particularly as it appears to have been mutually reinforced from a largely anecdotal, evidence base. We were reminded by many participants, including refugees, that they are not inherently vulnerable and, that as a result of having survived their experiences, many are amongst the most resilient people in our communities.

Some refugees described initial support through the SVPRS as 'overwhelming', and some agency participants felt refugees were sometimes treated "like children". Many called for a rethink based on approaches which encourage both individual and collective support using questions to refugees themselves about 'what is important to them?', 'what skills do they have?' or 'what is their experience of services?'.

Participants in Glasgow told us:

"Integration support should aim to support people to take control over their lives. We still need to develop and share the best ways to do this."

And also:

"It's not about just providing things for people."

Simultaneously, it is clear that the asylum process and other aspects of the treatment of people in the immigration system are traumatic and actively disempower people within them. This is recognised as having negative effects on health and wellbeing therefore requiring approaches which both emphasis empowerment to address these issues whilst supporting the wellbeing of individuals involved in this activity.

This is not to diminish the motivations of local authority and other workers and volunteers who have made remarkable efforts to meet the immediate needs of new arrivals. The emotional investment made by many of these individual staff, and the willingness to support people beyond what the mainstream housing and homelessness services would normally deliver to meet complex needs was recognised and welcomed. However, these issues were also raised by local authority workers in our research, some of whom reported that they felt able to help someone to reach a certain point in terms of their personal development, but that they "get stuck" when thinking about how to support wider community integration.

Valuing people's assets and supporting community-led action

It was argued that a community development approach could help to promote thinking and dialogue between refugees and those supporting them. This could help acknowledge and explore the difficulty in balancing promoting independence and empowerment with the complex needs and individual experiences of refugees.

Refugees themselves have called for more recognition of their rights to be involved in their own support and their abilities to self-organise to support themselves and each other.

Participants in North Lanarkshire told us:

"There's different levels of dependency depending when people arrived. The first Gateway arrivals are less independent than those who arrived some years later despite being in Scotland for longer. Later arrivals received less support and had to work things out for themselves more."

The approach used in Aberdeenshire offers a positive route forward, with participants reporting evidence of outcomes on empowerment and individual and collective independence which were highly valued. Participants linked this to the fact that leadership of the SVPRS process in the area was heavily influenced by a Community Learning and Development approach which located the needs of new refugees, not only in services they needed, but also to the networks of resources and relationships in the communities they were being housed in. For example, resettlement is linked to the local Community Learning and Development strategy and has provided direct support for the development of a refugee community organisation. Both refugee and receiving community-led representative community groups are influential in planning and delivery, as well as providing community activities and individual support and advocacy.

This approach was identified as a key variable in achieving positive results in Aberdeenshire. Calls were made to learn lessons from this, and other similar approaches, across Scotland and embed the essential supports for individuals and families in work to support positive responses within communities. This can underpin resettlement more generally and, irrespective of which agencies are leading locally, conscious planning can help support staff and volunteers in various roles to strengthen the community development perspective in how they deliver their support.

Strengthening voice and influence

Refugees themselves have called for more recognition of their rights to be involved in their own support and to self-organise to support themselves and each other. An interviewee from a refugee background, commenting on the influence of refugees in planning and delivering support told us:

"Refugee involvement in integration efforts can be tokenistic with not much meaningful participation."

As a contrast, Govan Community Project's Participatory Action Research programme was cited as an example of good practice. It provides refugees with sufficient time, and meaningful opportunities to think about their issues and propose solutions. The process helps refugees make their voices heard on issues throughout the asylum process and increases their role as agents of change. Although very small scale, it was suggested to have potential to be explored further as a method of supporting refugee-led dialogue about the design, reach and efficacy of services more generally.

Similar Initiatives have taken place in the past through the Framework for Dialogue in Glasgow where recent asylum seekers were enabled to engage with services, in the NHS where mental health providers engaged with a user group of refugees who were still in treatment and in the engagement activities of Freedom from Torture with their service users.

Recognising and mobilising assets within refugee and receiving communities is key to integration.

- Receiving communities comprise a wealth of formal and informal assets; a deep knowledge and links within the community, skills and talents, longstanding community organisations and structures.
- Refugees and other New Scots bring assets to the receiving community; skills, talents, resilience, energy, commitment and drive to contribute.
- Both sets of assets should be central to planning and delivering integration.
- Purposefully doing so unlocks community power that can fuel integration efforts and boost wider community action around community issues;

Recommendations

1. Those responsible for resettlement should recognise the potential of assets in both communities, and work to mobilise these when planning and delivering resettlement and integration.
2. That we take the opportunity to go further, working with community assets to take joint action on issues affecting all those in our communities.

There is a growing recognition that Scotland's communities are made up of people with valuable personal and interlinked assets made up of skills, knowledge and talents. We

Assets can flourish independently but are much more likely to thrive in a supporting environment.

know that these exist in all communities, including those communities under most strain. Successful community interventions are those that work alongside these assets, and that add to them where required. Participants across this research made the case that refugee resettlement and integration should works with the assets in both receiving and refugee communities.

Recognising and developing the assets of refugees

Throughout the research refugees expressed frustration that their skills and qualifications were not recognised in the UK. Participants discussed the importance

of having the opportunity to use and develop skills both individually – for wellbeing and personal development – and collectively, to form social bridges and demonstrate the assets that refugees bring to communities. Refugee participants called for opportunities to meet people in receiving communities who shared their skill or profession, in order to explore, update and build on these skills, and to aid employment opportunities by building networking links and improving workplace English. The community development dimension to this involves the establishment of mechanisms through which it can happen in a sustainable way.

"The Volunteer Liaison Officer works closely with the families, the volunteers and the wide range of service providers involved. Regular strategic and operational partnership team meetings are held at which refugees' skills, experiences and assets are discussed." (Volunteer Centre)

Assets can flourish independently but are much more likely to thrive in a supporting environment. In North Lanarkshire participants described the [Bestway Group](#) as an impressive mechanism for bringing refugee community members together with community planning processes. The Jasmine group, also in North Lanarkshire was given as an example where local people had been supported to use their assets and experience to develop a group which was having a positive impact on integration among refugee and local women.

In Aberdeenshire, participants described how an audit of the skills, assets and capacities of refugee communities, and receiving communities, could support an assets-based approach to integration. The [Devron project in Huntley](#) is amongst the initiatives that had already taken this approach.

However, too often, in the rush to meet immediate needs, the skills of New Scots are not recognised or supported. As an illustration, participants gave the example of a refugee with event management skills who had offered to organise events that would bring refugees together with the receiving community to thank people for the welcome they had received. It appeared that due to resource constraints, Council officers in this instance were unable to offer support, meaning that this refugee asset remained under used and possible positive outcomes were missed.

Refugees using their experience of the resettlement process to support others

Participants called for peer mentoring as a model that would support integration by using the skills and experiences of refugees who have lived in Scotland to support others who have newly arrived. Peer support was offered as a way for refugees who have established lives in Scotland to 'give back' or pass on support to newly arrived refugees, either individually, or via refugee community organisations. Specifically, ideas included sharing local knowledge at community level in order to help people to set realistic expectations, particularly around employment opportunities or how citizenship applications work. This kind of approach helps build bonds within refugee communities and helps people to develop confidence and skills. Others suggested that this can go further and result in refugees building bridges and links with receiving communities and raising awareness of refugee issues, through activities like film making or public speaking or taking on representative roles.

Raising awareness of the positive contribution of refugees

Across the research, there was a call for the positive contribution of refugees to be recognised and celebrated. An example of this was given where the volunteer commitment of young Syrian men in Inverurie has been recognised and shared through local media. Also in Aberdeenshire, examples were given of Syrian families helping at community events, which was celebrated and viewed as important both for the Syrian communities themselves but also help refugees be more easily viewed as an 'asset'.

There is potential for highlighting the contribution of individuals in these roles as part of carefully developed myth-busting materials, which challenge inaccurate or negative views. Such materials should be part of broader media campaigning which highlight positive images. These should be developed and implemented consciously as part of the implementation of the New Scots Strategy, building on work already done by the Scottish Refugee Council, Oxfam Positive Images Project and others.

Supporting receiving communities to use their assets

Across the research participants reiterated the point that the assets of receiving communities should be recognised and acted upon to help enable more effective and sustainable integration This was confirmed in the findings of 'Best practice for community involvement in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme' - a report produced by Refugees Welcome Scotland. This identified insufficient co-ordination of many of the statutory services and community-led organisations that can benefit refugee integration. This was reiterated in our interviews and co-inquiries, one refugee participant told us:

"Local people step forward to offer support to New Scots, especially during the refugee crisis in 2016, there were tens of thousands of offers of help, large and small but all important. These were largely wasted as we have no shared way of co-ordinating these offers. How do we turn offers of welcome into action? There is no mechanism."

In terms of how local community assets have been drawn on to support integration, examples were given of volunteering, sharing language skills, befriending and advocating. These volunteer activities have been coordinated and supported by agencies, faith and community groups. However, the value of support is limited unless it can be more effectively supported

> *There were examples in our research of where community development approaches had been used to strengthen the social capital of new refugee communities to engage quite quickly in activity which addressed community issues.*

and co-ordinated. There is therefore a need for volunteer training and improved coordination of volunteer activities. In particular it was identified that training and resources to support such roles needed to be timely in order to meet the needs of families on their arrival. Local audits of local volunteer and community-based skills and resources were suggested as one useful way to enable better coordination.

Community infrastructure as an asset

In Glasgow, it was noted that sophisticated engagement processes had previously existed where Framework for Dialogue Groups[1] worked closely with integration networks, however most had disappeared. It was suggested that we should learn from these to support the community infrastructure that exists now.

A planned approach to developing refugee community assets?

The research findings suggest that the idea of refugees as community assets would benefit from more dialogue with local service providers and those managing resettlement work as the focus largely remains on meeting more immediate resettlement needs such as housing and healthcare. This does not mean that these are not critically important supports and research, participants agreed that refugees need to stabilise their lives before they were able to focus on playing more significant roles as assets in communities.

"The refugees in our area have only just arrived in March and have very basic or no English skills. At present we are focussing on increasing their English and then we can focus on their skills, experiences etc" . (Service Manager, CLD, Council)

However, there were examples in our research of where community development approaches had been used to strengthen the social capital of new refugee communities to engage quite quickly in activity which addressed community issues.

"The work is not that different from normal community work, excepting the initial language issue, …. We got to know the group and what their aspirations were and what they were able to bring to the table. Our approach was based on the research of Agar, Strang and Quinn which pointed out that refugees mental health was better if they were able to contribute to the wider community, so as part of the resettlement process we learnt what we could and linked people into other groups or gave them the information which allowed them to make an informed decision about being involved in other activity." (CLD Locality Manager)

As part of the Glasgow co-inquiry, participants reflected on how the Framework for Dialogue process and the development of independent Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) from 2000 onwards facilitated vital contributions from people in the asylum process despite their having chaotic and unstable personal circumstances. We heard from members of Govan Community Project's community action research programme, who were living in destitution and in insecure tenancies but were contributing to collective efforts to challenge perceptions of asylum seekers.

[1] Framework for Dialogue – An engagement approach carried out in Glasgow which brought multi-lingual asylum seeker groups together with people from receiving communities via the Refugee Integration Networks in in the city. These functioned as sources of information and enabled engagement with service delivery agencies, the Home Office, Scottish Government and others. They also submitted their own evidence to the UK Parliament Joint Committee on Human Rights in 2006 and the Independent Asylum Commission in 2008.

Greater importance should be given to involving receiving communities in delivering refugee integration. The principle being that Refugee resettlement should be 'delivered with' and not 'done to' receiving communities.

- We need to actively support community groups to play constructive roles in advocating for resettlement and successful integration. Investing in community infrastructure is crucial.
- Receiving communities' skills and confidence may require support through capacity building.
- Working on common issues of concern was identified as a way to unite refugees and existing communities.

Recommendation

1. Receiving communities should be supported to play a role in the planning and delivery of resettlement and integration support. An approach that widens the focus from refugees to the community as a whole will assist this.
2. More needs to be done to develop infrastructure, resources, skills and confidence to help receiving communities to play constructive roles in integration.
3. **Refugees should be supported to use their skills, along with people from receiving communities, to tackle shared issues.**

Receiving communities

How local people respond to the arrival of refugees has a major influence on resettlement. Our findings confirm that there has been a massive mobilisation of goodwill, volunteers and community assets to provide a sympathetic and practical welcome. Although this has also been a feature of work in Glasgow since 2000 and North Lanarkshire since 2005, there has been a huge growth in activity across Scotland since the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS) commenced in 2015.

The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022 recognises the importance of this in its key principles for integration which calls for:

"... positive change in both individual refugees and asylum seekers and the host communities to lead to cohesive, multi-cultural communities. The New Scots approach recognises, that it is important that existing communities are supported and enabled to participate in refugee integration."

Despite this recognition, our research suggested much less community development activity was targeted at receiving communities, confirming that this is less of a priority in resettlement planning. This may be understandable in terms of how SRVPS resources are configured, but our findings show a need to invest in this work. It was a strongly held view that receiving communities must be much more involved in resettlement, building on the principle that refugee resettlement should be 'done with' and not 'done to' communities and that this should include both receiving communities and refugees alike.

Experience in Glasgow from previous programmes, suggests that communities, supported by integration networks and development workers, make a major contribution to resettlement and integration, and this experience is acknowledged as an exemplar of good practice across the UK and internationally. This approach has included ensuring that receiving communities are provided with the information they need to promote a welcoming environment and provide practical aid when people arrive. Over the years, this work was felt to have increased understanding of refugee issues and improved acceptance of diversity, and that this has largely been based on increasing contact between new and existing residents. An important finding is that, despite learning from Glasgow, more should - and could - be done to support this networking concept across Scotland, and that the benefits of community development need to be more widely recognised in supporting this. Even within those currently working in Glasgow, there was a recognition that this was a good time to reflect on current and future practice.

The wider social and geographical diversity of areas where people are settling under the SVPRS intensifies this need. Although Glasgow is experienced in settling

significant numbers of new refugees over an extended period, across Scotland refugees are predominantly housed in locations with little experience of BME settlement or of supporting traumatised survivors of conflict. In several instances, our research raised issues about the lack of existing social capital in some of the places where refugees are being resettled. Sometimes, prevalent deprivation and inequality mean that communities have limited access to resources to act on a range of shared issues, or to focus specifically on community cohesion. Research participants observed that, in these areas, there was a need to focus resources on 'community integration' more broadly, including on members of the receiving community who may be experiencing their own significant needs. Key informants also noted that additional integration resources should be deployed to receiving communities and used to create social and service benefits for all community members, lest they trigger counterproductive resentments where people already felt left behind. Some key informants felt that experience in Glasgow was particularly useful in understanding this context. This is significant for the roll out of the SVPRS in some areas across the country and for the process of Locality Planning in relation to the requirements set out in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act.

Practical activity on the ground

There were many descriptions of work aimed at creating "social bonds and bridges" in receiving communities with examples of how this was leading to relationships being built. These fitted into the following broad categories:

- Welcome Groups bringing committed individuals together to offer new arrivals practical support were an increasingly common feature in many areas across Scotland.
- Networking and co-ordination of work between services or across the statutory and third sectors - although issues of communication, and levels of resourcing require to be addressed in some areas.
- Awareness raising sessions with local groups, schools, sports clubs and churches to create a greater understanding of the refugee experience. Often delivered by refugees with support from a local organisation.

- Organised, one-off, cross community events between people from different cultures to bring together established and refugee communities, often for the first time. These include community meals and music events.

- Integrated activities which brought people together on a more regular basis leading to other forms of social connections.

- Specific 'peer learning' activities where people learned skills together or from each other like cooking or dancing. These were often run by integration networks and related projects and offered important informal opportunities to discuss issues.

- Some respondents described how existing youth work provided opportunities for bringing young people together utilising common cultural interests and curiosity to build bonds and bridges between young people with positive consequences for the future.

- Joint activity within or between existing faith congregations and new arrivals as an active manifestation of common religious values were cited as a feature in a number of the SVPRS areas.

There were fewer examples of bridge building with generic community groups, and participants felt strongly that this issue needed to be addressed. In one area initial support was provided in a town centre location with wraparound service delivery for new arrivals. In the longer-term people were moving to disadvantaged neighbourhoods where competition for social housing was considerable and there were fears that the initial positive response may not be maintained. Community development was viewed as a key approach in mitigating this. Generally, people recognised that failure to embed integration ideas and activity in mainstream community groups would undermine success in the longer term.

However, this problem can be overcome if the right trigger is identified as this observation suggests:

"Generally, we have found that if you can get people from different backgrounds together, people will build bridges, but the difficulty lies in reaching people who would not ordinarily be interested in building bridges with refugees. That said, we have had great success with helping people build bridges through some of our projects.

For example: we have found that people from established communities are more willing to engage with our food distribution as opposed to some of our other activities."

Across the research, participants valued opportunities to work with primary schools as a means of supporting a more personal experience of integration. This built on relationships between children and families across cultures and nationalities and enabled better understanding among parents who may then go on to be part of other community groups together. Similarly, good examples of practice within youth work settings were identified, but again this was felt not to be widespread, with gaps in youth provision more generally affecting the opportunities for it. One key informant observed that some lessons learned from Glasgow in working with young people on these issues may have been lost as pressures on generic youth work delivery from cuts in resources undermined systematic reflection on work which could inform future practice.

Building bridges from common issues

There was a recognition that increased partnership working and community contact could help identify "inter-community" issues and promote work around areas of common interest or concern.

In Renfrewshire participants identified how common concerns could help create positive connections. For example, they were keen to position refugee housing needs as part of wider social housing concerns rather than risk their rights to access housing being blamed as a cause of it. This group described collective organisation around shared issues as a potential route to integration observing that,

"Community activity shouldn't focus on peoples' status or background but on common interests, skills etc. This is particularly important in settlement sites where some negative attitudes exist."

Several interviewees drew attention to examples of this approach. These included:

- Joint campaigning around housing conditions between Glasgow asylum seekers and other tenants.

- Asylum seeker families in Glasgow organising a community clean-up of play areas which could then be used by all children.
- In Renfrewshire shared health issues were being considered as a way of promoting useful services and highlighting common experience of long term conditions such as diabetes, a condition prevalent in some parts of the BME community as well as amongst many Scots.
- Refugee women expressing a need for women-only swimming, an existing issue for local women which had not been resolved, resulting in this being considered again in the context of resettlement.

These were viewed as important bridge building opportunities and there was felt to be potential for doing more of this. Joint forums which brought people together around shared issues were suggested with some participants proposing focussing on integrated activity with multi-national communities of interest (e.g., mothers, young people) rather than on the 'refugee community' as a whole. This might make the identification of these cross-community issues more likely.

Strengthening Integration infrastructure

In Glasgow, North Lanarkshire and Aberdeenshire, participants were explicitly using a community development approach to achieve their goals of networking, coordination of existing projects and services and local planning. The extent to which this was integrated into the planning of refugee resettlement varied as did the extent to which the activity was resourced. In Renfrewshire this was a clear aspiration for networking activity with migrant communities as a whole. In Glasgow there was acknowledgement that the Integration Networks funded initially by the, Scottish Government

These examples highlighted the impact of taking a facilitative, community development approach and sharing resources and expertise to maximise refugee and receiving community.

and then by Glasgow City Council, had provided the focus for local integration, although this was not perhaps as well linked to wider integration planning as it had once been. It was reported that these had benefitted from community development support from the City Council and the Scottish Refugee Council for many years and

was where the concept of receiving community integration networking developed. These networks made use of sophisticated multi-lingual engagement processes, known as Framework for Dialogue groups, to work closely with networks to bring new and existing residents together locally and local refugees with wider nationality based independent refugee community organisations (RCOs). These examples highlighted the impact of taking a facilitative, community development approach and sharing resources and expertise to maximise refugee and receiving community influence.

There was a call to reflect on good practice from Glasgow over many years from a third sector and community perspective and a sense that this had not been adequately captured to date. The purpose of this would be to better understand the value of methods which could be adapted in the SRVPS context, although it was recognised that the much smaller scale of resettlement meant that adaptation to local circumstances would be needed. It was suggested that this could also inform wider integration networking across Scotland as well as frame links to new participation mechanisms developing as a result of the Community Empowerment Act. This is explored further in the section on planning.

The community development work as part of the Gateway programme in North Lanarkshire in 2005 was another example of a community development approach to integration on a smaller scale, with work to involve both existing local groups in the resettlement process and refugees themselves in the process if planning services. Lessons learnt here were informing the SVPRS programme both in North Lanarkshire at present and had potential to do so across Scotland.

To actively support receiving communities to play constructive roles in integration requires community capacity building skills and resources to be in place. In particular, refugee and receiving community engagement and confidence building among volunteers in terms of cultural sensitivity and awareness were highlighted as requiring investment. One person commented that 'people are trying to help, but sometimes they can do more harm than good'– and this highlights the need for adequate training and information for welcome groups, volunteers and community groups.

It is important to tackle negative attitudes in communities and challenge associated narratives using accessible information.

Key Findings

- Accurate, accessible information for communities and community groups is important in creating the conditions for successful resettlement.
- Local media should be consciously used to counteract myths and negative images including in the national media.
- Scotland's Political climate has been more supporting to resettlement, building on this is important in changing the local narrative.

Recommendations

1. There should be proactive information strategies that support positive local stories about resettlement and feature the moral case for integration.
2. Local people should be supported to effectively deliver positive messages on resettlement and integration.
3. Staff and volunteers should receive training in how to work constructively and safely in tackling negative attitudes

Social Attitudes to asylum seekers and refugees have been recognised as complex including in the context of Glasgow's asylum contract as previous research in Scotland has shown. More recent research on attitudes to migration have been shown to be significantly more nuanced and that positive social attitudes should not as assumed. Community development improves understanding of this complexity and offers a route toward building a stronger community built on values of human rights and equality. Whilst the current consensus that Scotland is more supportive than in the rest of the UK, significant numbers of racially motivated hate crimes, and the direct experiences of refugees themselves in communities, highlighted fears of complacency about this and reminds us of the need to challenge the "myth" that Scotland is always a welcoming and supportive society. This recent report from the Runnymede trust on realities of race equality in Scotland and this Glasgow University book on the "myth of Scottish exceptionalism" also confirm this view.

Understanding how to work with these issues is a key feature of community development. Participants asserted that these attitudes are sometimes a barrier to integration and could and should be constructively tested or challenged, even if this is 'hard'. There were strong views about the need to strengthen progressive narratives in some communities to educate and encourage greater empathy. Many participants felt this could prevantatively tackle the roots of racism and support an understanding of refugees as assets to the community.

Working with these issues sometimes requires safe and carefully facilitated spaces where staff and local people can acknowledge concerns and engage in dialogue on issues of asylum, or related issues like hate crime in an open way.

In general, there was recognition that dealing with prejudice required a variety of methods ranging from informing and educating, exploring and challenging attitudes and policing and justice-based responses. No single prescription existed as localities differed greatly.

Participants noted and appreciated a positive Scottish media and political narrative around the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme, contrasting this with previous experiences in the dispersal of asylum seekers to Glasgow and the current situation in the rest of the UK. One key informant commented that political leadership could frame either "good or bad refugee narratives". Cross party support in Scotland was felt to have made a huge difference.

Participants described how some UK wide media portrayals of refugees and migration fuelled by negative political attitudes denigrate refugees as undeserving, dishonest or burdensome. Understanding how these prejudices are formed and transmitted is important in mobilising and consolidating positive community activity in the long term.

Community development helped communities make sense of negative views, connect them to their own more authentic experiences of cross cultural contact and promote a progressive narrative through targeted community action.

However, within communities, participants articulated how perceptions influenced by incorrect, or poorly presented information can create suspicion and mistrust in relation to the allocation of resources and support. In Renfrewshire, participants noted how the impact of a negative social media campaign and the recent debate about Brexit needed an active approach in order to:

"Produce and promote good accessible info on push and pull factors which affect migration with clear ideas about how these could be used to equip local people with the facts and help them make a progressive case locally."

This information is important to:

"Help local community groups to discuss the issues to combat ignorance and prejudice."

In Glasgow, participants cited examples where this had not been done and misunderstanding about refugee support triggered by rumours and negative media about rights to housing and household items lead to wider negative feelings about refugees when asylum seekers came to the city in 2000.

In North Lanarkshire, sympathetic local media campaigning sought to inform people of reasons for refugees coming to the area. This was echoed in Renfrewshire where the local newspaper responded positively to the negative social media campaign which diminished its impact. In some cases, participants felt information needed to be targeted to specific groups who would be less likely to engage with welcoming activities. Community development work helped communities make sense of negative views, connect them to their own more authentic experiences of cross cultural contact and promote a progressive narrative through targeted community action.
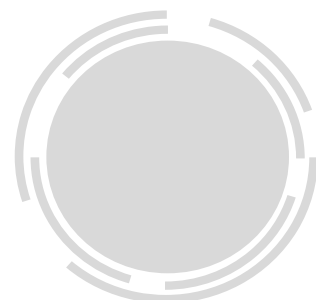
Forming social connections through face to face "encounters" between refugees and receiving communities is an important element of resettlement. We need to build on these to include reciprocal experiences that support meaningful integration.

- Encounters can happen in a variety of ways and occur naturally wherever refugees are settled in communities or in structured integration activities.
- Structured encounters can often be between refugees and people who are already supportive of refugee resettlement, rather than those within communities who are more ambivalent or opposed to it.
- More effort is needed to ensure that encounters with neighbours and other local people are equally prominent.
- However, everyone has something to offer, and encounters should be seen as an opportunity to create social and support networks to which refugees can contribute to as well as draw from.

Recommendation:

1. We should promote learning from experiences of encounters between refugees and members of receiving communities, using evaluations from across existing programmes.
2. Focus groups should be conducted to explore the experiences of encounters, in terms of their quality and the impact they had on people's lives.
3. We must build on this learning and provide communities with the resources to plan encounters as an important feature of sustainable community activity.

A clear pre-requisite for integration to be successful is that people from different backgrounds meet and form social connections with each other as described in the New Scots Strategy. The importance of these social connections is also explained in this report for NNHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde which also informed the approach in Aberdeenshire . Many of our participants described this in terms of how people 'encounter' each other. This can involve natural social processes in everyday settings while using amenities or services but can also involve more deliberate structuring of opportunities for people to meet, recognise common ground and perhaps establish longer lasting friendships.

This type of activity has been a cornerstone of both the new batch of welcome activities in the SRVPS areas, and in longer established integration approaches across Scotland, often focused around common interests. However, evidence gathering about the efficacy of encounters was rare in our research suggesting a gap which should be addressed in future.

Encounters are felt generally to offer positive opportunities for people participating in them. However, they are limited by the nature of who they attract. A participant in Renfrewshire observed that attracting those already positive about diversity to cultural or intercultural

"We celebrated Syrian activities that benefited the receiving community because now people can see them as an asset to the community."

events was self-evidently valuable but involving those with negative attitudes is a more fundamental challenge and one which should be informing our learning and planning for the future of the work. It was also noted that successfully working with people who hold more problematic and negative views in mixed environments required skilled intervention, which must be supported by appropriate training.

Various means of structuring encounters were shared, from one-to-one befriending to wider social initiatives around sport, music and food. Bigger festivals and events with an international flavour have succeeded as a method of bringing bigger social groups into proximity, as has work to support people with a shared nationality, culture or ethnicity to meet together to help them form stable platforms from which to integrate more generally.

Encounters based around shared identities or interests, such as parents through a local school were also described. In many cases this type of encounter will lead to longer term activity such as the formation of a new integrated groups or courses, however often encounters are one off opportunities which do no not necessarily lead to integrated follow up action but were felt to have cumulative value in breaking down barriers.

Some participants explicitly linked encounters to the social capital theory-based integration model of bonds, links and bridges - which values social relations based on reciprocity, whilst others related to the idea on a more intuitive level.

Encounters should also act as an opportunity for mutual or collective action. Since this is often not the outcome, it raised a more critical view of their capacity for delivering integration which requires further exploration. Building on this one refugee key informant advocated for 'informed encounters' based on people helping each other or exchanging skills and becoming more integrated together.

'If I am a passive recipient of goods or if I am being helped by someone who wants to feel good, then that is not a valid social connection and that doesn't help integration because it doesn't build social capital which is based on reciprocity.'

These more 'reciprocal', 'informed encounters' were suggested to lead to more meaningful integration with refugees recognised as an asset rather than a burden. In Aberdeenshire participants reinforced this aspiration to some degree telling us that:

"We celebrated Syrian activities that benefited the receiving community because now people can see them as an asset to the community."

At present, such highly structured exchanges are rare, and it appears that, for most, the value of encounters may lie in how they develop more reciprocally over time. Reflection on the purpose, methodology and wider place of encounters is clearly required and should be influencing integration planning, training and evaluation as should exploration with refugees and receiving communities about how they view the role of encounters.

Support for English language skills is a crucial enabler of integration, without it refugees report isolation and are less able to contribute to their new community through formal work or community activities.

- Language support is best provided through a mix of methods and settings which build on 'mainstream' provision in college, schools and in communities where services offer adults the flexibility of location, scheduling and tailored content to meet their needs.
- Language support is crucial, but it is more than a 'problem' to be fixed for individuals, it's also an opportunity to bring communities together in a way that supports integration and compliments mainstream language provision.

Recommendation:

1. Mainstream language provision across Scotland requires further analysis as it is often viewed as insufficient or inaccessible by community based partners.
2. A new model is suggested that merges tutor-led mainstream provision and peer-to-peer support, which involves receiving communities. This is already emerging in some areas. The impact of new funding arrangements for ESOL should be reviewed to assess the extent to which they support or inhibit this.
3. Language support should also be provided in a community setting, with a focus on 'every day' English and delivered in a way that includes receiving communities and builds on their strengths.
4. Funding should be increased including for training of tutors and communities to facilitate more integrated approaches to language support.
5. Translation and interpreting services should be equitably available for integration purposes for as long as is required.

Language

Providing language and communication support is hugely important to enabling refugees and other New Scots to have access to services, reduce isolation and to secure employment, although its provision is not in itself a community development function despite its importance in enabling integration. Therefore, access to

appropriate language support, such as ESOL classes (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and translation and interpretation, are crucial aspects of successful resettlement and were continuously raised by participants.

Most participants called for ESOL provision to be better funded by the state and delivered more equitably alongside community-based partners as well further or higher education providers across Scotland. A new model of ESOL provision was also suggested, inspired by adult literacy models, that merges tutor-led ESOL provision and [peer-to-peer support](#). This approach builds on the assets of refugees, and increases the capacity of community centres and groups to bring people together. Enthusiasm for this approach was tempered by concerns that demand for language support currently outstrips supply and that community-based language provision generally must be more adequately funded than at present. Several key informants and community projects raised the issues of how new arrangements for the funding of ESOL provision - and the emphasis on colleges as providers, would mitigate against CLD led and other community-based approaches. They felt that this should be urgently reviewed.

Community-delivered language provision, provided flexibly and informally in a way that includes peer-to-peer support and focuses on 'everyday' or 'workplace' English was highly valued. Where this was being done well, it was felt to be very useful in building bridges between communities and acting as a catalyst for promoting and involving people in wider community activities. Participants in North Lanarkshire said:

"Peer support is helpful to develop language skills. Some ESOL Groups are in community venues and this is a great opportunity to make links with other local activity and allow other support opportunities to develop."

Participants viewed all types of communication support as having an important role to play in building the confidence of both receiving communities and refugees and other New Scots in coming together.

This way of bringing people together combines shared learning, builds social connections and develops shared

interests, all of which are useful in their own right, and provide positive starting points for other aspects of community development activity.

Links between English language skills and employment, and the role of employment in independence and integration were emphasised throughout, particularly by refugees. Employment was described as a key driver of integration and means of securing a sense of independence. Refugees we spoke to in our research expressed a strong desire for access to good quality employment. Language skills, the recognition of qualifications and access to work opportunities were noted barriers to this. Work placements were suggested by refugees as a possible solution, with a role for the public and voluntary sectors in providing these. In addition to the emphasis on English language support, there was also a recognition that good quality interpreting and translation services would still be required in many areas for the foreseeable future. There are major challenges in accessing these services in terms of cost and/or availability, particularly for those in rural areas and for informal community-based activities which are often viewed as non-essential services. Participants viewed all types of communication support as having an important role to play in building the confidence of both receiving communities and refugees and other New Scots in coming together. In Renfrewshire focus groups participants from local community groups observed that:

"Language was the most common barrier to integration, and that interpreting support may need to be sustained for a long period to enable new migrant groups to get established and then integrate with local activity."

Some participants in Renfrewshire also wanted to see investment in helping receiving community members develop conversational skills in other languages to demonstrate that communication was a shared responsibility in terms of integration.

The needs of refugees and receiving communities should be recognised and met across a wider range of planning processes which they are able to influence

- Both refugee and receiving community's voices are essential to successful planning for integration and for services more generally. These are not sufficiently influential in planning processes for resettlement and integration in some areas.

- Links in some places between resettlement planning, equalities planning and work to tackle racism and hate crime need to be strengthened.

- Planning processes of services for refugees are not adequately embedded in wider community planning, or in key some service specific strategies.

- Resourcing participation in the above needs to be supported by appropriate staff and other resources.

Recommendations

1. Community based refugee integration activity should feature more prominently when asylum dispersal and resettlement programs are planned.

2. Refugee integration activity should be   more visible in Local Outcome Improvement Plans and Locality Plans in areas where refugees are living. This should be proportionate, but address community cohesion issues.

3. Refugees should be supported to influence local planning for specific services such as Children and Young People or Health and Social Care services.

4. Planning for integration should be explicitly linked with planning for equality, including dealing with hate crime and wider community relations.

5. Community development support for refugee empowerment and community integration should be prominent in Community Learning and Development plans.

Improving community influence in planning of refugee specific services and initiatives

Throughout our research, it was felt that refugee and receiving communities should be able to play greater roles in processes associated with planning, monitoring or evaluating asylum support and refugee resettlement programmes. The structures

Even where community-based structures such as integration networks, or other influential local organisations and community leaders were active, it was felt that these were not always effectively linked.

taking decisions about priorities and resources were mostly officer-led and mainly concerned with providing support to individual refugees and their families. In our survey, fewer respondents were working to bring community voices to bear in these processes, suggesting that this was a gap. This respondent also observed that having to respond very quickly to the SRVP initiative may have been a factor:

"This may be a feature of the speed of early developments – with everyone responding in vacuum to new experiences – we need to learn from this and better link different aspects of resettlement and integration."

Whilst the reasons for this are understood in terms of meeting immediate needs of new arrivals, the wider issues of community integration, cohesion and promoting individual and collective community agency were viewed as key to successful integration and participants across the research felt this required a more holistic approach from an early stage. One interview participant who has a national coordinating role for the SRVP confirmed   that attempts were being made to address this by exploring the role of community development in national coordinating structures and by supporting projects such as Widening the Welcome.

Both receiving community and refugee voices in planning were felt to be essential and that steps needed be taken to mobilise the contributions of both and respond to their needs. This requires dialogue to enable views to be expressed and draw out localised knowledge to inform the process of delivering integration. Even where

community-based structures such as integration networks, or other influential local organisations and community leaders were active, it was felt that these were not always effectively linked. In Glasgow, sixteen years after the first Integration Networks were formed, participants expressed a need for better coordination and more responsiveness of services to community circumstances. Although recent initiatives by the City Council to co-ordinate the work of the integration networks were welcomed, in some cases even basic knowledge of available support was not being shared, prompting one housing official to comment that:

"We need to make more links with integration networks, having learnt from resident's groups about the importance of social support and a welcome from other neighbours when refugees are allocated a home."

More generally, it was noted that enabling community participation to these processes would require the barriers which inhibit involvement to be addressed. This included the way meetings are planned and conducted, how agendas are set and how people are supported to communicate when attending them. Some participants also noted that this would require a shift in culture within some agencies and that this was reflected more generally in terms of participation in both the Christie Commission recommendations and those of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

Direct participation in every meeting of every relevant process was not felt to be the way forward, but rather co-produced opportunities to express needs, harmonise priorities and improve access to resources was proposed.

The levels of refugee and receiving community involvement in the development of the New Scots Strategy was viewed as a good example of what could be achieved in terms of active participation in setting the agenda and influencing integration more generally. It was hoped that this standard of engagement will be carried through into New Scots implementation processes and local resettlement planning across Scotland.

Improving influence of refugee voices in mainstream planning

The principles of wider participation embedded in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act set a new benchmark for participation in community planning and new duties for effective engagement with communities of place, identity or interest. Participants recognised that this required integration planning to connect with issues of regeneration, and other service priorities though Local Outcome Improvement Plans. It also suggests that the new Locality Planning processes, required by the Act to address localised inequality, should, recognise refugee needs along aside other issues. One participant in the co-inquiry in Glasgow noted that:

"Given that refugees are often placed in the most deprived areas, the Community Empowerment Act provides opportunities for the most deprived communities to challenge existing structures."

The social and economic inequality faced by refugees means that they should be recognised as a group within the community that requires targeted support at a local level. This in turn requires appropriate local engagement and planning. This is also consistent with aspirations of the governments Race Equality Framework which requires local minority populations to be included in how services, including community planning, are developed. Interview and co-inquiry participants called for learning from refugee-specific activity to be linked to other empowerment and service development processes where refugee needs were heard alongside other residents. One key informant suggested that there should be:

> **The need for flexible and co-productive approaches to how needs are understood, and projects developed, was emphasised in the co-inquiries to develop a grassroots understanding of how to deliver the greatest change.**

 "… an audit of how involved CPPs actually are in this work and to what extent it appears in LOIPs, Locality Plans and CLD plans."

Participants felt that If we are to avoid refugee support only falling to specialist groups and agencies and ensure that is becomes part of the fabric of community planning in its broadest sense active steps to connect local partners will need to be made.

Our research found examples of good practice in terms of local planning including in Glasgow, North Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire. In Aberdeenshire where the overall SVPR programme is led by a seconded staff member from the CLD service strong links exist between the refugee resettlement work and the Community Learning and Development strategy.

There was also a recognition across the research, that links also needed to be made with service specific planning including that for Children and Young Peoples services and Health & Social Care. This is to make sure that the needs of refugees were being included in assessment of local needs based on engagement with them. In general, there was less evidence that these kind of links were being made in ways which supported refugee communities to articulate their needs.

One example where refugee voices were influencing mainstream planning, was the Best Way Community Development (BWCD) group in North Lanarkshire which has been helping enable a degree of individual and collective input to local community planning process by refugees who came to Scotland via the Gateway programme.

Strategic approaches to community relations, equalities and hate crime

In the survey, subsequent interviews and co-inquiries participants were asked about explicit inks between their work to support refugee communities and other work on discrimination, tackling hate crime and fostering good community relations.   Results suggest these links were not always being made as effectively as they could be despite continuing local experience of hate crime affecting people participants were working with. In line with previous comments on the need to improve links between the formal and more community-based elements of the resettlement effort, there was a view that local co-ordination arrangements for tackling equalities or combating hate crime could be more effectively linked to resettlement work at community level especially in terms of preventative activity to alter attitudes locally.

This did not mean that hate crimes against refugee communities were widespread, or that they were not dealt with by appropriate local agencies. In fact, Police and community safety roles in promoting reporting and responding to individual incidents were acknowledged, however, it is felt that this is an area of joint work which could more effectively explore the potential for complimentary activities amongst key agencies and planning processes working to prevent prejudice and discrimination locally. Participants saw this as linked to their own work on tacking negative attitudes and made reference to human rights and equalities as core values of their work to tackle discrimination and prejudice.

Resourcing participation

Skilled and adequately resourced community engagement and capacity building support was recognised by participants as requiring closer alignment to Community Learning and Development planning to link this process to work delivering support to refugees.

Adequate resourcing of this, was reported to be affected by a general lack of investment in community capacity building (CCB) and community development, as this observation from a council colleague demonstrates.

"At the moment there are very few Community Development workers in this area who can assist with this work. As the public sector continues to contract there is more and more pressure on fewer staff. Our local CVS said from the outset that they would not be able to assist which was and remains a problem for us. Outside of the main large cities and towns minority ethnic populations are low and therefore there is a lack of information and the sorts of specialist organisations who can work with refugees."

The need for flexible and co-productive approaches to how needs are understood, and projects developed, was emphasised in the co-inquiries to develop a grassroots understanding of how to deliver the greatest change. Continuity of funding for this work was viewed as very important. The fact that in general, the value of this work was not adequately recognised when compared to support for language development, health or housing, was a cause for concern for some in terms of how Home Office integration resources were designed.

Overall, the commitment to supporting community participation was viewed as an essential prerequisite to delivering effective community cohesion and progressive integration as envisaged in the New Scots Strategy. However, the cultural, institutional and resource related barriers to achieving this were a concern for some participants who felt that the UK government was unlikely to fund "softer integration activity" and therefore a Scottish strategy for integration funding may be required, seeking to leverage funds from multiple donors.
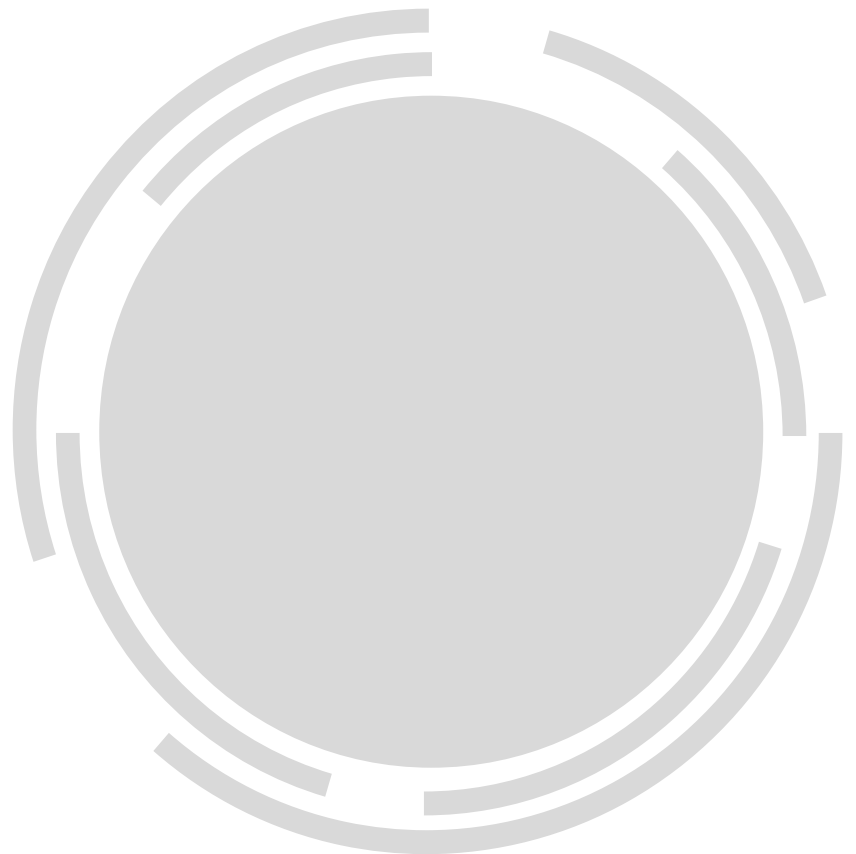
Broader conclusions

Although the asylum system in the UK is the subject of significant concerns from Local Authorities, including those involved in Scotland, Refugee resettlement has already been a very significant success with 2450 refugees via the SVPRS now located in all of Scotland's Council areas and a further 150 young people under the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme. It has been driven by a widespread mobilisation of public resources and volunteers who have made a massive contribution to providing sanctuary. This is testament to the character of those communities and the hard work of our public and voluntary services. It is this infrastructure at community level that supports Scotland's broader policy objective of working towards integration for all refugees and asylum seekers from the point of arrival.

It is people, their organisations and resources that are the assets that make it possible for communities to function, and to address their needs and aspirations. This study concludes that this is also key to refugee resettlement and integration. However, this is perhaps less well understood and resourced by those delivering refugee resettlement in some parts of Scotland. By making it more explicit we highlight the need for community development to assist communities animate and deploy their assets to contribute to integration.

Joining things up

A significant part of supporting refugee integration involves connecting the processes within communities which asses need and coordinate interventions more generally, with those that affect resettlement and community cohesion.

There is a need to improve links between planning for refugee integration; implementing the requirements of the Community Empowerment Act; promoting diversity and equality and tackling racism. This approach should also shape planning of key services such as education and healthcare. We also call for the resourcing of integration to take due regard of the statutory requirement to asses need in Community Learning and Development and address key gaps in community capacity building resources for integration.

Individual empowerment

Focusing on the vulnerability of new arrivals is a natural response from service providers, particularly for those arriving through the SVPRS which highlights their vulnerability as an access criteria for the programme. Ensuring that the immediate welfare needs of new arrivals are met is rightfully a priority, but a clear message from the study is that refugees do not define themselves by their vulnerability want to be self-reliant as soon as possible, and to contribute economically and socially to their new home.

Facilitated discussion between refugees and service providers would be useful in collecting direct experiences and sharing best practice on how refugees might balance their immediate needs with their desire to connect with their new lives and communities.

Collective empowerment

There is no doubt that self-organisation by refugees themselves empowers those experiencing the asylum, refugee settlement or immigration systems. In the study we heard about a range of self-organised groups and methods of collectively empowering refugees and asylum seekers including:

> **Local self-organised Refugee Community Organisations** bringing resettled refugees together in Aberdeenshire, Glasgow and North Lanarkshire.

> **Independent Refugee Organisations** with a common bond of language. These have a Scottish focus with less significant presence in neighbourhoods.

> **Wider alliances of RCOs** Seeking to lobby or campaign on wider issues in the asylum process or issues such as those highlighting women's experience of this.

> **Historical engagement mechanisms** bringing refugees and asylum seekers together on a neighbourhood basis to facilitate empowerment and local integration such as Glasgow's Framework for Dialogue (FFD) process.

The role being played by local RCOs such as the Amal Project in Aberdeenshire and Best Way Community Development Group in North Lanarkshire was clearly significant and offers learning in terms of promoting self-organisation in other areas. While the scale of the SVPRS in most locations does not call for a highly localised multi – lingual process of self-organisation, the Glasgow FFD model may offer elements of an approach which could be adapted to engage people in the resettlement areas without developing constituted groups. We recommend that how best to promote self-organisation would benefit from further discussion with RCOs themselves and support agencies such as Scottish Refugee Council.

Receiving communities as spaces for integration

Receiving communities can feel overlooked when resettlement is being planned, leaving some communities with a sense of distance from the process. These concerns echo those in Glasgow following asylum dispersal in 2000. There is a need to act consistently about this issue and in a way which supports the thinking in New Scots. Experience in Scotland suggests that involving communities mobilises progressive voices and that there is nothing to be feared from this process. The concept of community based integration networking is one which should therefore be spread more widely across Scotland. Its form should be determined by local circumstances but co-ordination of services involving communities is both a practical response and an important principle for delivering effective integration.

Communication and language

The process of building bonds, links and bridges can only succeed if communication between refugees, receiving communities and services is effectively enabled via language development. Whilst people recognised that this is not a community development role to fill this gap, there were many suggestions about the roles that communities could play in augmenting existing services, hosting these locally or offering complimentary support. What seems clear is that whatever solutions emerge there are concerns about how current provision is funded from service users, local providers and resettlement planners. This is an issue with potential to undermine the success of integration for many people fundamentally and those working in communities are keen to join the debate and help develop solutions.

Learning

A striking element of our findings has been the extent to which people were keen to engage with a structured learning process and offer carefully considered insights, and robust proposals for future action to improve and deepen integration across Scotland.

This has confirmed that there is a need for greater emphasis on ongoing learning as we implement the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy, and a significant number of our participants called for more opportunities to do this. In particular, there is a need to help a wider range of stakeholders to explore what the use of the bonds links and bridges framework means for their work in practice. We recommend an approach that provides continuing opportunities for reflection, sharing practice and learning, and which address some specific skills gaps that participants highlighted would enable them to be more effective.

Practice Support

In appendix A, we set out a potential practice model and programme of ongoing practice support. We propose that this should be further co-produced by practitioners, refugees and other New Scots to develop a community development approach to integration across Scotland's communities.
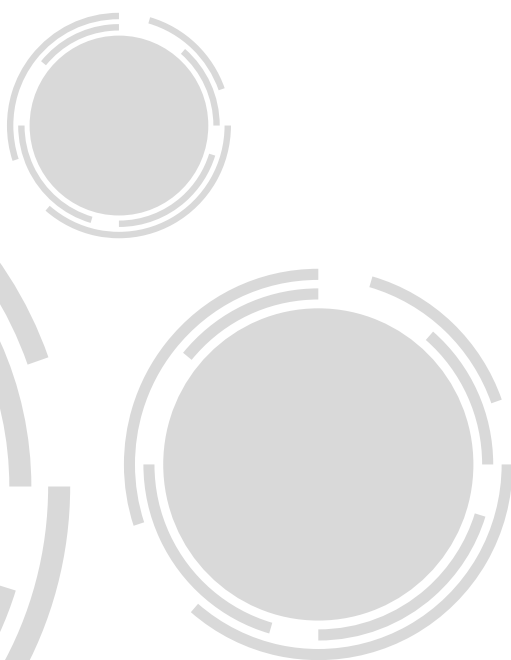
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- **Scottish Refugee Council** - Sanctuary and Solidarity in Scotland A strategy for supporting refugee and receiving communities 2016 – 2021 (2018)
- **Scottish Refugee Council** Sharing Lives, Sharing Languages: A Pilot Peer Education Project for New Scots' Social and Language Integration **(2017)**
- **Strang**, **A & Quinn N,   Institute for International Health & Development, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh-** Integration or isolation?: Mapping social connections and well-being amongst refugees in Glasgow (2014)
- **University of Glasgow** No Problem Hear, Understanding Racism in Scotland (2018)

Acknowledgments

Appendix – A: Proposed practice model for community development approaches to refugee integration

Refugees are fully empowered

- Enabling collective identification of issues and engagement with services
- Supporting self-organisation through refugee community organisations (RCO)
- Supporting self-organisation with marginalised refugees such e.g. women
- Helping build knowledge and skills for community action & alliance building
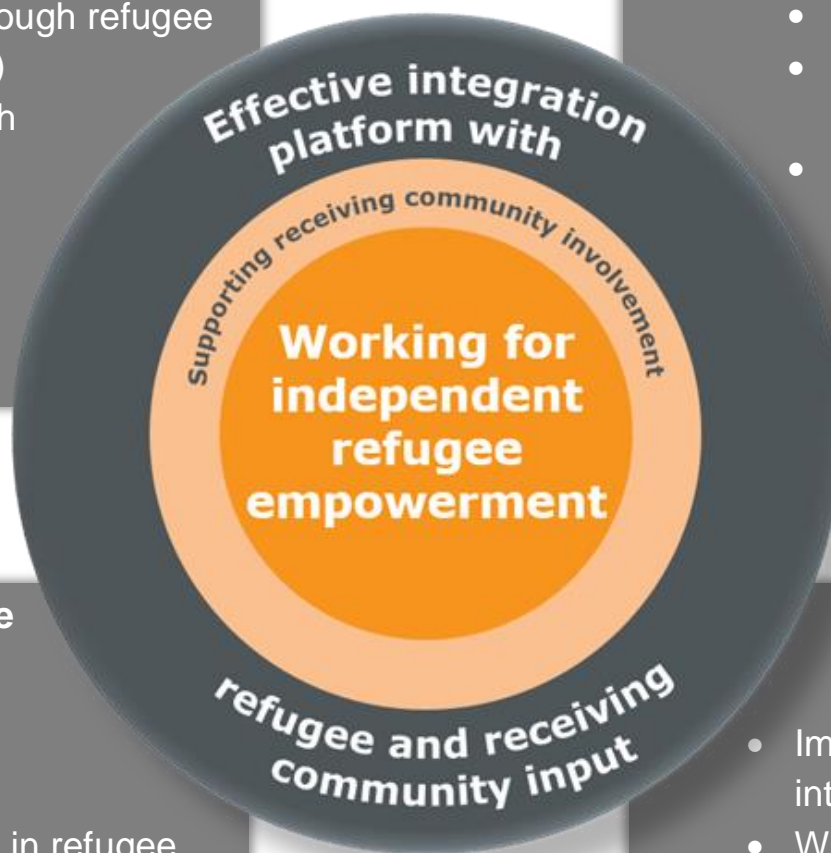
Deeper social learning shapes what we do

- Supporting development of a local learning process
- Promoting cross cultural learning
- Supporting practice sharing locally across Scotland
- Reinvesting learning in practice e.g. producing tools and publishing insights

Effective integration platform with
Supporting receiving community involvement

Working for independent refugee empowerment

refugee and receiving community input

Communities participate & influence resettlement & integration

- Ensuring that communities are consulted and engaged
- Maximising community influence in refugee specific planning
- Ensuring links are made with other relevant planning processes
- Working for adequate resourcing for community development

Building better communities

- Improving frequency and quality of intercultural encounters
- Working to combat racism and hate crime
- Promoting mutual solidarity through tackling common issues
- Supporting receiving communities to engage with wider refugee and asylum policy

This practice model is designed to provide those working in communities on resettlement and integration issues with a checklist which can be used to think about, plan, deliver or evaluate community development work on integration. However, it is not a blueprint for local activity in every resettlement area which will be affected by local circumstances.

It is intended to be dynamic and evolve alongside local practice and reflections on the work taking place across Scotland.

Appendix – B: Proposed Practice Support Package

This draft package of support will be the subject of further discussion with funders, practitioners and New Scots partners. This discussion will establish where currently funded work could contribute and where new resources are required.

Our participants emphasised the importance of reflecting on the work as intrinsic to improving outcomes. A key principle was peer to peer support within and between agencies and communities themselves. We therefore propose the following actions:

1. **Production of a toolkit/online training resource which consists of:**

   - **Source documents** like New Scots, Indicators for Integration Framework, useful literature and tools. This could be framed by the Widening the Welcome conclusions.

   - **Suggested Ways to use the social capital framework** – Reflections, case studies and tools dealing with

     o **Bonds** – Promote self -organisation in communities and amongst refs and asylum seekers**.**

     o **Bridges –** Develop local ways to bring local people and New Scots together in ways which create better communities.

     o **Links** - Build networks for service coordination and community influence.

   - **Integration networking and producing local integration plans** Guidance on how localised networking and joint planning could work building on the experience of integration networks in Glasgow

     o Networking options

     o Local Integration Plans

     o Ideas on engagement and dialogue with communities

- **Strengthening Links with other plans and partners -** Guidance for communities and local planners and what links could usefully be made between**:**
  - Community planning
  - Community Led Action Plans
  - Community Learning and Development plans
  - Equalities and community safety planning
  - Service specific plans
- **How to learn from each other locally –** a light touch guide to self-reflection & action learning for use in localities.

2. **Practice Exchange Programme**: In addition to the toolkit a programme of face to face opportunities is also proposed including:
   - Two practice development events per year per year in each region which bring people together to share experience, deepen collective learning and explore region-wide collaboration and creation of economies of scale
   - Two National events to promote broader refection linked to the implementation of the community facing aspects of New Scots

3. **Mentoring and information sharing**
   - Providing a central point for supporting enquiries about CD aspects of refugee integration and signposting people to sources of peer support.
   - Developing a community of practice. For those involved with this work.

Appendix – C: Specific Examples of Good Practice

A number of specific good practice examples were identified. These are not exhaustive, however those mentioned specifically by participants are listed below:

- The City of Sanctuary Approach in use in Aberdeen was cited as useful way of focussing local effort and linking this to a wider network across Scotland and the UK. This should be borne in mind as another source of useful learning for Scottish integration work in future.

- Al Amal Is a refugee led group for Syrian refugees in Aberdeenshire in addition to its representative role it is also working to provide opportunities which combat isolation and helping refugees access a wide range of other services and projects

- New Horizons group in Aberdeenshire successfully engaged people in activity but this has been hampered to some extent with families facing ongoing language issues and being affected by issues about family reunion.

- The Devron project in Huntley has developed a skills audit for refugees in Aberdeenshire which has contributed to employability and the targeting of educational support

- Glasgow based computer coding project Coding your Future is successfully training refugees in coding and providing employment in the tech industry.

- Fresh Start North Lanarkshire is an example of an authority wide group seeking to help new migrant arrivals in North Lanarkshire from anywhere in the world. It was developed following learning from evaluation of the Gateway Protection Programme in 2007. It provides support for community organisations to support refugees in partnership with the Council and VANL.

- The Jasmine group in North Lanarkshire is an independent organisation ran by Syrian Scots on behalf of Syrian Scots across North Lanarkshire. Its role is to support the integration and development of Syrians coming to live in North Lanarkshire.

- Scottish refugee Councils research study Sharing Lives Sharing Languages Was cited by a many participants as an excellent example of how to learn from and understand the complexities of different approaches to language learning.