

# Scottish Refugee Council Community Development Work Strategic Review (2005)

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## Glossary of Abbreviations

<b>SCDC</b>	<b>Scottish Community Development Centre</b>
<b>RSINs</b>	<b>Refugee Support and Integration Networks</b>
<b>FFD</b>	<b>Framework for Dialogue</b>
<b>RCO</b>	<b>Refugee Community Organisations</b>
<b>GCC</b>	<b>Glasgow City Council</b>
<b>CRCG</b>	<b>Community Response Coordination Group</b>
<b>RPF</b>	<b>Refugee Policy Forum</b>

# Scottish Refugee Council Community Development Work Strategic Review (2005)

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## 1. Introduction

The Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) was commissioned by Scottish Refugee Council in March 2005, to undertake a review of its Community Development Strategy (2001), with a particular focus on making recommendations for a future strategy which is to be developed in the coming months.

It was a good time for Scottish Refugee Council to review its community development work. The original strategy was over three years old and needed to be looked at again to assess its relevance to work today. Some of the key drivers for this review included:

- The fast changing legislative and policy framework in the UK and Scotland
- The intense and predominately negative media reporting on refugee issues
- The rapid growth in refugee organisations who require guidance and support
- The changing nature of community responses to refugee<sup>1</sup> settlement
- The ongoing and endemic problem of racism and xenophobia towards these new BME communities

Most of the people consulted were more familiar with the actual content of the community development work carried out by Scottish Refugee Council community development team, than with the strategy document itself, and the findings reflect that distinction.

This report forms a review rather than an evaluation of the 2001 Strategy, and its implementation. It is based on:

- Qualitative evidence provided by those stakeholders, identified by Scottish Refugee Council, who were available to be consulted. (see appendix 2)
- A short literature review of relevant policy and practice

The report details the methods used to consult stakeholders, summarises the findings from that consultation and concludes with a series of recommendations for a future strategy.

The findings have been organised to reflect the key areas for community development which were identified in the 2001 Strategy, namely:

- Networking and Advocacy – which includes partnership working and participation in Refugee Support and Integration Networks (RSINs)
- Project Support and Development – which includes the Framework For Dialogue (FFD) initiative
- Capacity building of Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs)

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<sup>1</sup> In this document the term 'refugee' has been used to encompass asylum seekers, individuals with full refugee status and exceptional leave to enter or remain (ELE/ELR) on humanitarian grounds.

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Refugee Involvement in Scottish Refugee Council work and governance, which was also identified as a key area in the 2001 Strategy, was not within the remit of the review but several stakeholders had views on the subject, which have been included in the recommendations section.

The recommendations identify key issues highlighted in the review and outline a several options for addressing these issues.

### **2. Methodology**

An initial consultation with Scottish Refugee Council staff was used to outline key areas of interest. This was followed by five focus groups with relevant stakeholder groups. These included members of Refugee Community Organisations; members of Framework for Dialogue groups; staff from partner agencies; the community development team members and the wider staff team within Scottish Refugee Council. Details of questions asked are included in Appendix 3 and 4. Questions were adapted to suit the context but all focus groups were asked:

- Their opinion of past work undertaken by the team
- What their priorities would be for the future of Scottish Refugee Council community development work

Semi-structured face to face and telephone interviews were conducted with key stakeholders including Scottish Refugee Council Chief Executive, representatives from the Scottish Executive and the Home Office and agency staff who were unable to attend a focus groups. Focus group schedules were used as a guide when conducting the interviews.

Scottish Refugee Council identified relevant literature to be consulted. This included:

- Documentation on policy relating to refugees from England and Scotland
- Research and evaluation findings on community development work undertaken by Scottish Refugee Council
- Research detailing best practice in the community cohesion field
- Internal Scottish Refugee Council documents including the Draft Strategic Plan 2005-2008

A list of literature reviewed forms Appendix 1. The tight timescale for this report has meant that the literature review was not extensive and a further study of what can be learnt from best practice, and its implications for the work of Scottish Refugee Council, is recommended.

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### 3. Findings

The 2001 Strategy defines community development as ‘*a long-term grassroots philosophy, which uses various methods of empowering marginalised people to facilitate social change for themselves*’. It gives a clear and detailed account of the processes Scottish Refugee Council should use to achieve this change, and the actions to be taken. Although the outcomes of this work are implied in the strategic objectives, they are not specified, which makes them hard to measure.

Community development work with refugees faces particular challenges, not least that of a fluctuating population particularly susceptible to racism. Much of the work outlined in the 2001 Strategy is still going on but the context has changed rapidly, in particular in relation to the volume of refugees who have moved to Glasgow and the new emphasis on working with host communities. The team leader explained the current vision of the community development team in a recent evaluation document:<sup>2</sup>

*Successful integration of refugees can only be delivered if there is a corresponding development of consciousness, empathy and engagement of ‘host’ communities in the integration process. It is for this reason therefore that we have purposefully ensured that all our staff have developed contacts and expertise in supporting work on refugee integration from a range of stakeholder perspectives. Each worker, therefore, has responsibility for work with specific RCO developments, ‘host community’ led RSINs and local refugee led FFD initiatives. This breadth of individual staff involvement has assisted with the development of an understanding of the broader range of influences on the process of integration and its implications for community cohesion.*

For simplicity, findings on these areas of core business have been slotted into the three key areas identified in the 2001 Strategy:

- Networking and Advocacy delivered through host community led Refugee Support and Integration Networks
- Project Support and Development delivered through Framework for Dialogue initiatives
- Development and Capacity Building for Refugee Community Organisation developments

Obviously there is overlap between the three areas and some pieces of work are cross-cutting. The final section looks at the role of the community development team within Scottish Refugee Council.

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<sup>2</sup> Mick Doyle in the Home Office Refugee Integration Self Evaluation for Challenge Fund and ERF: Project Self Evaluation 04/05

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### 3.1. Networking and Advocacy

The aim of this area of work as identified in the 2001 Strategy is:

*To promote awareness of and address refugee needs with voluntary and statutory organisations and in this process to help combat racism*

The community development team has been working with 10 local RSINs across the city. The aim of the RSINs is for agencies, host communities and refugees themselves to work together to deliver support and promote integration locally. Each RSIN operates differently and independently and some have dedicated paid workers. In line with the Scottish Executive policy of mainstreaming<sup>3</sup>, the RSINs provide a support mechanism for local agencies, which are attempting to meet the needs of the newly arrived refugees. The work of the RSINs is explored in detail in the Scottish Centre for Social Justice 2004 report: Building Bridges<sup>4</sup>.

The RSINs provide a mechanism for Scottish Refugee Council to support the development of ‘social bridges’ between refugees and host communities,<sup>5</sup> as well as sharing their expertise with agencies less experienced in working with refugees.

Building Bridges cites Scottish Refugee Council as a key player alongside churches, the YMCA, Glasgow Council for Voluntary Service and others:

*When dispersal began, many areas lacked any structure or forum for the voluntary sector to address the needs of asylum seekers. The networks have therefore developed locally in a piecemeal fashion across the city during the period (2000-2002). Scottish Refugee Council has played a strategic partnership-brokering role in some areas, and in some cases has initiated the development of local resettlement and integration networks...<sup>6</sup>*

Specifically, Scottish Refugee Council has provided advice and support to RSINs; enabled the informal sharing of best practice; run conferences and training events and assisted networks to involve a wider range of stakeholders. The community development team was seen to ‘*have a tremendous body of expertise*’ and to run a ‘*very good training programme*’ (policymaker).

Scottish Refugee Council’s work with host communities is seen as ‘*very impressive*’ and ‘*groundbreaking in the UK*’ (policy maker). Their work is also valued by agency

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<sup>3</sup> Scottish Refugee Integration Forum Action Plan – Progress Report (Feb 2005)

<sup>4</sup> Building Bridges: Local Responses to the Resettlement of asylum seekers in Glasgow: Scottish Centre for Research on Social Justice (October 2004)

<sup>5</sup> Indicators of Integration. Home Office Development and Practice Report. 2004

<sup>6</sup> Building Bridges: Local Responses to the Resettlement of asylum seekers in Glasgow: Scottish Centre for Research on Social Justice (October 2004)

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partners who mentioned, in particular, the refugee women's' conference organised by the team in May 2004 and the individual work of team members;

*Colin has provided a 'point of contact' with a named person with whom it has been possible to develop a good working relationship incorporating regular support (agency partner)*

*They are supportive in the midst of difficult rhetoric (a friendly face) – (they) have a hard headed understanding of how difficult it is on the ground – (agency partner)*

Scottish Refugee Council has also played a key role in the Community Response Co-ordination Group. The Building Bridges research identified the CRCG as potentially a very effective mechanism through which networks can lobby other agencies collectively and effect change. But it also highlighted a lack of understanding of the purpose of the CRCG among local networks and a need to engage the networks more effectively and make them fully aware of the benefits of participation.

The CRCG group has not met since December 2004 when it had a review day to re-examine its role and plan a strategy for the future.

Three key concerns were highlighted in relation to locality work across the city:

- The need to acknowledge and consolidate partnership working with Glasgow City Council where it is working well and resolve any areas where difficulties exist. In some aspects of the work there is a lack of clarity about which agency is leading on particular initiatives and 'personalities' (agency partner) were identified as getting in the way. This has contributed to the recent inactivity of the CRCG group. The Scottish Refugee Council does acknowledge however the very significant role played by GCC community development staff in most of the local areas without which a great deal of progress would have been impossible.
- The challenges presented by the volume of locality work to a small and centrally located team
- The need to adhere to the community development principle that the driving force behind locality based work should be local people and local agencies

Scottish Refugee Council community development team has been considering changing the emphasis of their support to RSINs in favour of handing over more direct responsibility to the local GCC community development teams. This reflects the wider aspiration of transferring the responsibility for sustaining local structures for refugee integration, in this case the RSINs and FFD groups, to local community development teams.

This was an explicit agreement with the Council at the time of the original funding proposal and has been continuously acknowledged since that time in Council reports and face to face meetings. The process of transferring these responsibilities is

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currently underway with Scottish Refugee Council staff already playing a more strategic role in some of the areas.

This process has been accelerated by the recent Glasgow City Council decision to discontinue the deployment of a member of staff to the more strategic work across the city.

The new role proposed by Scottish Refugee Council for its staff includes continuing to provide annual review and planning sessions for the RSINs; developing support for local community development staff through the Community Development Practice Forum and providing more intensive support to a smaller number of areas.

When this was proposed, some agency partners expressed concerns about the capacity of generic community development workers to fill the gaps that would be left.

### ***3.2. Project Development and Support***

The aim of this area of work as identified in the 2001 Strategy is:

*To assist refugees to integrate and settle into Scottish society in a manner that supports independent social, cultural and economic development*

The Framework for Dialogue initiative was launched in June 2002 in five pilot areas across the city: Toryglen, the Gorbals, North Glasgow, Cranhill and Pollokshaws. It aimed to identify, investigate and begin to address the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers. Two of Scottish Refugee Council community development team are funded through a Scottish Executive and Glasgow City Council grant to work on the initiative. The work was to be delivered in partnership with Scottish Refugee Council, GCC Social Work Services community work service and a number of other local partners, including local community forums, who helped identify participants for the host community events. At the outset Glasgow City Council were seen as the key partner to ensure sustained, active and representative dialogue with refugees

Once the initial research had been completed<sup>7</sup> across the five pilot areas, refugees who had volunteered to become representatives were called back together to attend a series of FFD meetings, which are still ongoing. These meetings are facilitated by Scottish Refugee Council staff working in partnership with local GCC community development workers and in some cases other projects such as community forums. The number of areas has now been extended to seven.

The FFD groups have initiated developments in local areas including:

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<sup>7</sup> Framework for Dialogue Draft Report. February 2004

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- An integrated community safety day attended by many local residents from both asylum seeking and indigenous communities
- Improvement in relations with the police - *the police now ask for regular meetings and conflict (incidents) have been reduced by 50%.* (FFD representative)
- Meetings with the education department and head teachers to look at the issue of bullying

The FFD provides a route by which refugees can have direct representation on local RSINs. Members of FFD groups also sit on the Refugee Policy Forum in order to take issues of wider policy concern, like the right to work, to the Scottish Executive, the Home Office and service providers.

*At the outset hundreds were involved – it gave people a voice and made a big impression. It was very important for people – it gave them a place to say how they felt about the dispersal process – previously nobody listened to them or believed them (agency partner)*

However, planning for the FFD initiative was based on GCC assumption that 85% of asylum seekers were achieving refugee status and 50% of those would seek to remain in Glasgow. This analysis has not remained consistent and lack of clear and accurate management information has affected the work of the FFD. Because the percentage of refugees, rather than asylum seekers, involved in FFD work is much lower than anticipated the issues that the FFD groups want to deal with relate more to asylum and immigration questions than bridge building and cohesion work. This is inevitable given the anxiety and pressure asylum seekers experience whilst waiting for a decision on their claim.

*There have been lots of recent deportations of families – how do we fight this?*

*We came here for our safety not for work – but work is necessary for our integration!*  
*– (FFD participants)*

This is not to say that asylum seekers are not also engaged in integration activity. Most host community networks now have direct participation from panelled FFD groups.

In Pollok an asylum seekers chairs the RSIN, and in many cases asylum seekers are at the centre of myth busting and integration work.

Scottish Refugee Council is also working towards a small asylum seeker and refugee reference group for Edinburgh, in partnership with EVOC and the Edinburgh Refugee Centre, using methods developed by the FFD initiative.

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GCC staff are keen for FFD to continue, to be rolled out to other areas in Glasgow and for Scottish Refugee Council to maintain their commitment to it. Continuation of the FFD initiative forms a key component of the Scottish Refugee Integration Forum Action Plan. Policymakers are convinced that Scottish Refugee Council's work in local communities is *'making a difference'* and cite particular instances where refugees have not been targeted despite potentially explosive circumstances.

### 3.3. *Capacity Building for Refugee Community Organisations*

The aim of this area of work as identified in the 2001 Strategy is:

*To support the development of refugee community organisations enabling them to provide services to refugees and to strengthen their voice to influence policy and effect change*

Over the past year Scottish Refugee Council has been in contact with approximately 25 RCOs and has provided direct support to 11 emerging RCOs. A service agreement based approach to the delivery of that support is being developed together with criteria for providing support to a specific group. Scottish Refugee Council community development team has one post specifically funded for this work through the European Refugee Fund.

Scottish Refugee Council is keen to ensure that all RCOs are democratic, representative and accountable. Details of support provided appear in an evaluation report written for the Home Office<sup>8</sup> but it has included: enabling RCOs to develop constitutions and apply for funding; training for management committees; helping groups to identify small grants to kick-start the organisation and office resources e.g. photocopying; advising on particular issues and transport. The team has also provided support to particular groups of refugees such as women and lone parents and is seen, by partners and policymakers, as having a real expertise in this field, which can be shared with mainstream agencies.

This support has been much appreciated by RCOS:

*'they have helped us in so many different ways'*

*'they are a platform we use to be heard, they make our issues known so that we can have a stronger voice'*

It is a role which is valued by the wider staff team *'effective RCOs are very important for the organisation'* and by agency partners, whose priorities include countering the

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<sup>8</sup> Home Office Refugee Integration Self Evaluation for Challenge Fund and ERF : Project Self Evaluation 04/05

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isolation of refugees and ensuring that RCOs have good systems of accountability and don't 'run before they can walk'. The recent UK conference for RCOs (March 2005) held in Glasgow, was seen as particularly successful by policymakers and senior management within Scottish Refugee Council.

Since the development of the original strategy a number of other organisations, such as Local Economic Development companies, have been providing support to RCOs. The community development team has concerns about the quality of this support. This is one of the reasons why it is looking to develop stronger partnerships with other providers and to extend what it can offer directly to RCOs.

The Refugee Policy Forum enables representatives from individual RCOs to meet and articulate common policy concerns. It is consulted by a wide range of organisations from the Scottish Executive to NHS Glasgow, Praxis Community Projects UK and Oxfam Asylum Positive Images Project. The issues identified are being addressed. These include dealing with racism and asylum and immigration matters such as reporting adjudicator's decisions, detention and removals, and permission to work.

The team is also keen to continue to develop the role of the Refugee Policy Forum through a clear action plan which includes:

- Facilitating shared work between FFD groups and the RCOs on issues of common concern e.g. lobbying Westminster MPs to increase accountability of Scottish Immigration Services
- Deepening its relationship with Scottish Refugee Council Board of Directors

### ***3.4. The Role of the Community Development Team within Scottish Refugee Council***

The work of the community development team is appreciated both within and outwith Scottish Refugee Council. *I am confident in Scottish Refugee Council's ability to deliver' (policymaker).* A Scottish Refugee Council manager commended their 'extraordinary levels of energy and patience' and they are consistently seen to be 'punching above their weight'. However, another senior manager stated that there needed to be 'better mechanisms for getting information from the team into the rest of the organisation'. The team itself expressed concerns about the level of understanding of its work, and of community development in general, by colleagues within Scottish Refugee Council.

These concerns were echoed by the wider staff focus group who were not familiar with the 2001 Strategy and who acknowledged that 'busyness' gets in the way of good communication between teams within Scottish Refugee Council. However they were aware that the work of the community development team is an essential prerequisite for the successful outcomes in other parts of the organisation. Examples of this included:

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- Positive media relationships which rely on individual refugees being willing and able to share their experiences
- Lobbying on policy issues which relies on evidence provided through the Refugee Policy Forum and the FFD process

The community development team and wider staff acknowledged some frustration at what could be conflicting priorities between the community development team and other members of the organisation. For example the team might seek to ‘protect’ an individual from talking to the media, or be unable, or unwilling to guarantee participation in Scottish Refugee Council events run by other sections.

A community development approach involves an integration of the personal development of individuals and the building of the capacity of community groups to promote participation and involvement in the political process at a local and national level.<sup>9</sup> Scottish Refugee Council undertakes development work with individuals and also supports RCOs to enable refugees to have their voices heard.

Direct development work with refugees is not confined to the community development team. Staff working in media, employment and education, housing and generic advice services also have direct contact with refugees. But the personal development and capacity building work of staff outwith the team is not recognised nor defined as such.

### 4. Recommendations

The research undertaken for this review highlighted several issues which need to be addressed by Scottish Refugee Council:

- A lack of understanding within Scottish Refugee Council of community development as an essential approach in fulfilling the strategic aims of the agency as a whole, rather than the function of a particular team
- A need to strengthen the voice of refugees more effectively both within the organisation and outwith
- The need for a strategic approach to tackling the competing priorities of the community development team
- There is scope for improvement in some elements of partnership working arrangements with community development agencies and other agencies working with refugees. This is particularly pressing in relation to organisations who currently offer capacity building support from the BME and local economic development sectors.

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<sup>9</sup> for a fuller definition of community development. Cf Barr and Hashagen: Achieving Better Community Development. CDF. 2000

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Scottish Refugee Council's partnership with GCC community development teams, and other capacity building organisations needs to be reviewed in light of the termination of deployment of GCC community workers redirected to city wide refugee work.

The following recommendations are based on:

- The priorities outlined by stakeholders during the consultation
- Findings from a literature search of the latest research and policy documents relating to refugees
- Further conversations with Scottish Refugee Council's Head of Development and the Community Development Team Leader

### ***4.1. The Importance of a Community Development Approach to Community Cohesion***

The Community Development Exchange defines community development as:

*About building active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect.*

It is about supporting people, and particularly people who are excluded, to become involved in groups, organisations and activities in ways that increase their confidence, skills and knowledge of the world around them.

Building community cohesion involves strengthening connection and cooperation between people and communities who might otherwise find it difficult to work together.

Scottish Refugee Council takes a community development approach, working with communities at their own pace and in ways that make sense to them, to strengthen connection and cooperation between people and communities and thereby build community cohesion. At the same time it seeks to strengthen the voice of refugees by supporting the development of Refugee Community Organisations.

The SRC working definition of community development:

*The overall aim of the community development process is to enable refugees to play a full role in Scottish society by addressing the issues which they, and host communities, face in terms of settlement and integration by.*

*1. The process of supporting the development of independent, representative community organisations and networks that can provide self-organisation and leadership for refugee communities, and promote equality of access at all levels of service development and governance.*

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*2. The process of developing the capacity of public authorities, voluntary and community organisations to provide appropriate support to refugees. This involves working with refugees and organisations to remove barriers to integration by developing relationships, structures and services founded on the principles of social justice and democracy.*

*3. The process of promoting mutual self-help and partnership between new and existing residents in communities in Scotland that can enhance the quality of life for all residents, and contribute to community regeneration.*

This community development approach is endorsed both by research based on practice and by policy.

*Community development principles and processes provide a solid foundation from which community cohesion strategies can acknowledge and address past and current inequalities*

..and has been shown to work in Birmingham, Bradford and London as well as in Glasgow<sup>10</sup>.

The approach is supported by national policymakers:

*We want to build cohesive communities in which differences can be accepted and celebrated rather than resented and feared... the positive side of community cohesion is empowering and enabling communities to do things for themselves in a spirit of mutuality and co-operation.*<sup>11</sup>

*Using a community development approach reduces tensions between communities by putting the tools to deliver change into the hands of the people*<sup>12</sup>

Local policymakers are also convinced. *'The community development approach is vital – communities have to decide how they want to be for themselves..'*

**By taking a community development approach to building community cohesion, through the work with RSINs and the FFD initiative, Scottish Refugee Council places itself at the cutting edge. It is strongly recommended that it continue to do so.**

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<sup>10</sup> Gilchrist A: Community Cohesion and Community Development. CDF 2004. Chapter 5

<sup>11</sup> Blunkett D (2004) 'New challenges for race equality and community cohesion in the 21<sup>st</sup> century'. Speech to the Institute of Public Policy Research. London 7 July 2004

<sup>12</sup> Fiona Mactaggart MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Home Office in the introduction to Community Cohesion and Community Development (op cit)

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### *4.2. Strengthening the Role of Community Development within Scottish Refugee Council*

The community development team focuses its work on personal development with refugees, building the capacity of refugee and host community groups with the ultimate aims of promoting refugee rights and integration. This work is seen as distinct and separate from other areas of the organisation. At the same time it is recognised, that without this capacity building, other work of the organisation, like policy development and the media relations, would be undermined.

The personal development and capacity building work of other Scottish Refugee Council staff members is not recognised or defined as such.

There needs to be a recognition, within Scottish Refugee Council, that a community development approach needs to be (and to some extent has been already) adopted by the whole organisation in order to fulfil its strategic aims. Community development is a process which cuts across departments. It is a core process for the community development team but is also part of the work of other staff.

**A new community development strategy needs to be drawn up which works within the overarching framework of Scottish Refugee Council Strategic Plan (2005 – 2008). Drawing up the new strategy should be a collaborative process involving the Head of Development, the whole of the community development team, the Head of Policy and Communications and other relevant staff. It should be done in consultation with GCC Community Development services, refugee community organisations and any other significant partners.**

The new strategy should include clear outcomes and outcome indicators, in order that success can be measured.

Drawing up the new strategy would provide an ideal opportunity for members of the organisation to undertake some joint awareness raising/training on community development and how it contributes to community cohesion. This could lead to more effective sharing of information and good practice between departments. The development of the new strategy might best be facilitated by an external community development consultant.

### *4.3. Strengthening the Voice of Refugees*

#### *Within Scottish Refugee Council*

The 2001 Strategy advocated a change in philosophy for Scottish Refugee Council *from being a paternal organisation to one which empowers refugees.*

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At the same time Scottish Refugee Council is not a refugee-led organisation and still provides services in which refugees are clients rather than partners e.g. advice services.

Refugees themselves are seeking more involvement in Scottish Refugee Council, feeling that that would build trust between the organisation and the refugee community and promote the involvement of a wider range of refugees.

**In order to promote and strengthen the refugee voice within Scottish Refugee Council it is recommended that:**

- **Recruitment processes for the board, staff posts and volunteer posts are as clear and transparent as possible for refugees**
- **Barriers to recruitment e.g. requirements for particular qualifications are reviewed**
- **Opportunities like the Linked Work and Training Trust's scheme for black and minority ethnic community workers are investigated and made full use of**

### *To Influence Policy*

The Refugee Policy Forum involves representatives from RCOs and from FFD groups. It provides a way for refugees to articulate their concerns about policy and to lobby for change. It also provides a mechanism for policy issues to be fed back to refugee groups.

At present the Refugee Policy Forum does not have a regular and direct line of communication to the Scottish Refugee Council Board and senior management structures including the Head of Policy and Communications. **It is recommended that recent work to establish these links is developed to allow meaningful consultation and joint work to take place – without compromising the autonomy of either organisation**

The Refugee Policy Forum is affected by the same issues which beset other initiatives, namely the transience of the refugee population and the disappearance of key individuals whose asylum claims are rejected.

It is recommended that the community development team continue to develop the strength and capacity of this forum through:

- Seeking to make it more representative through encouraging new membership and supporting existing members to consult and feedback back to their constituent groups

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- Providing support and training on policy and representation issues when needed to individual members and groups
- Continuing to encourage the involvement of outside agencies like the Scottish Executive

### *Through the Development of Independent Organisations*

Scottish Refugee Council's direct development work with RCOs is an acknowledgement that refugees need to develop their own independent voice. Scottish Refugee Council listens to those voices but there will always be instances where the priorities of individual refugee organisations do not match with Scottish Refugee Council priorities. This can be an uncomfortable situation for a team performing the dual role of supporting organisational priorities as well as enabling refugees to speak for themselves. Tensions arise in all organisations adopting a community development approach and when they do, they need to be discussed within the team and in the wider organisation.

Currently, the work of the community development team with RCOs has been well received by RCOs themselves and is supported by partner agencies.

It is recommended that the community development team:

- **Continue to devote time and energy to supporting RCOs with an emphasis on their development as democratic and representative organisations (highlighted as a priority by GCC)**
- **Continue to provide and promote both formal and informal ways for refugee organisations to get together**

### *4.4. Developing a Strategic Approach to Competing Priorities*

The community development team have three main areas of work:

- Developing Refugee Community Organisations
- Supporting host community led Refugee Support and Integration Networks
- Developing the Framework for Dialogue Initiative

The review found that all three areas of work were seen as priorities by refugees themselves and by partner agencies.

However the community development team is clearly overstretched and is unable to maintain its' involvement in all three areas of work. The team leader has expressed a desire to focus more the development of Refugee Community Organisations and the

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strategic support and development of FFD. At the same time it is hoped that partner organisations and particularly GCC community development services can be encouraged to take the lead on providing local support to Framework for Dialogue groups and the Refugee Support and Integration Networks.

This would present some issues:

- Two of Scottish Refugee Councils community development team are funded to work on the Framework for Dialogue programme so the agency must maintain a control and lead role in the initiative.
- A less direct involvement in RSINs and FFDs places a far heavier emphasis on partnership working at all levels. Scottish Refugee Council has been commended as '*good at getting people together and getting things done*'. But one partner agency felt that it was not so good at '*understanding the perspective of other organisations and their limitations and priorities*'
- Doubts have been expressed by staff within GCC and other partners agencies about their capacity to pick up the work

Scottish Refugee Council has several options, which are not in themselves mutually exclusive:

- To apply for more funding in order to enlarge the capacity of the community development team and thereby maintain involvement in all three areas of work. It is estimated that one full time equivalent CD post, supplemented by the additional recruitment of two refugee CD traineeships would be required.
- To seek to improve partnership working arrangements with GCC. This could be pursued through independently facilitated meetings with key personnel with the aim of:
  - developing a realistic understanding of the roles and capacity of each organisation in relation to working on the FFD initiative and the RSINs
  - co-ordinating a joint plan for this work
  - reviewing the role of the Community Response Coordination Group
- Seek to consolidate partnership working arrangements with other agencies both those already working with refugees but taking a different approach (e.g. the Initiative) or those who have yet to become involved (e.g. agencies working in the Black and Minority Ethnic sector)

**It is recommended that as well as improvements in partnership working, Scottish Refugee Council needs to extend the capacity of the CD team, but the emphasis should be on the recruitment of refugees for CD traineeships.**

The development of the new strategy should include re-examining priorities and analyzing options for fulfilling the new priorities.

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### *4.5. Developing Good Practice and Sharing Expertise*

In 2001 there were very few organisations providing services and support to refugees in Scotland, now there are many more. The expertise of the community development team in working with refugees is well-recognised by partner agencies. The lack of expertise among mainstream agencies has also been acknowledged. Individual agencies continue to identify areas of concern:

*We would like help to sustain the involvement of refugees in our management committee – we had four but they dropped out. We need help to support their participation.*

Research for this review found that the good practice of the community development team is well-recognised by partner agencies and policymakers. Scottish Refugee Council is in a good position to promote quality in refugee empowerment and integration work through sharing expertise and recording good practice.

This could be done through:

- Continuing to provide good quality training to partner agencies
- Supporting partner agencies to maintain quality through monitoring and evaluating their work using frameworks such as: Achieving Better Community Development, Indicators of Integration and the Standards for Community Involvement<sup>13</sup>
- Documenting good practice and liaising with Scottish Refugee Council communications department with a view to dissemination
- Supporting national and international conferences, seminars and training events for refugees, Scottish Refugee Council staff and partner agencies with a view to learning and disseminating good practice
- Undertaking a study of lessons to be learnt from similar integration work with host communities in England<sup>14</sup>.
- Providing inputs to a community development pre-service training courses
- Providing support to a community development practice forum made up of those staff engaged in directly supporting refugee integration work at the local level

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<sup>13</sup> cf. Communities Scotland website

<sup>14</sup> as documented in the Community Development Foundation research being undertaken by Barry and Alison Navarro and due to be launched in June 2005

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### **5. Conclusion**

As the findings demonstrate, Scottish Refugee Council community development team works hard and effectively to facilitate the achievement of the strategic aims of the organisation in particular:

- Advocating effectively for fair and just legislation, policies and provision for refugees and asylum seekers
- Increasing public understanding of refugees and the work of Scottish Refugee Council
- Developing and improving public services and opportunities for refugees to build bonds, bridges and links between host communities and refugees

It also enables refugees to develop their own independent voice in Scotland through Refugee Community Organisations.

The recommendations highlight areas where the community development team could focus to be even more effective in future.

Scottish Refugee Council is still working within a fast moving policy context with an uncertain population. New developments could include more work outside Glasgow and focusing on the needs of other immigrant communities, like migrant workers. As a result, the strategic plan for the organisation is reviewed annually and a new community development strategy will also need to be a live document, adapted to suit changing circumstances.