

Sanctuary and Solidarity in Scotland

scottish
refugee
council

Scottish Refugee Council
Community Development Strategy
2018–2021

A strategy for supporting refugee
and receiving communities



Introduction

Scottish Refugee Council's vision for communities, both refugee communities and receiving communities, is that they feel safe strong, are sustainable and creative and, by being involved and influential, make a contribution to society.

This strategy sets out the outcomes and objectives for how Scottish Refugee Council's Community Development Team and the wider organisation will work towards the fulfilment of the strategy.

Our Community Development Strategy was originally developed in 2016 but was updated in 2018 in response to Scottish Refugee Council's new Strategic Plan 2017-2020 and the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022.

More than 120 external stakeholders including representatives from 22 refugee community organisations in Scotland and a wide range of other agencies helped develop this strategy.¹ We carried out significant engagement between January 2016 and April 2016 with key stakeholders, including refugee community organisations, community activists, Community Development Practitioners, integration networks, welcoming groups, staff and volunteers and statutory, public and voluntary agencies. We used a variety of methods including needs assessment surveys and focus groups with refugee community organisations, and feedback from two large community conferences.²

We would like to thank all of the community representatives and individuals as well as wider stakeholders who participated in the development of this strategy. We are hugely grateful to Glasgow City Council, Scottish Government and Goldberg Trust for their investment and support for our community development work.

This Community Development Strategy contributes to the Scottish Refugee Council strategic objective of *'Sharing our expertise with other organisations in Scotland working with refugees'*. In addition, it contributes to the objective within the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022 that: *'Local community groups and refugee and asylum seeker-led organisations play an active role in supporting refugee integration'*.

This strategy sets out the direction for our work with communities over the next three years, building on our expertise developed over the last 33 years working with both refugee and receiving communities in Scotland. There are approximately 200 local, national, voluntary and community groups working with refugees across Scotland and around 35 refugee community groups. As a national charity, we believe that community development work is most effectively delivered in partnership with a range of stakeholders and other community development practitioners.

1 The output from this extensive consultation is published on the Scottish Refugee Council website, under the title *Background and Research Evidence for: A strategy for supporting refugee and receiving communities 2016 – 2021*. scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/get_help/community_support

2 Scottish Refugee Council's *'Shaping a better future with refugees – What next?'* Conference in March 2016 and *'Sanctuary, Solidarity and Social Capital; Supporting Refugees through Community Development'* led by the Community Development Alliance Scotland.

Our Community Development Approach

Scottish Refugee Council, since its inception more than 30 years ago, has valued the importance of community development in its work to uphold human rights and improve the integration, protection and welfare of refugees in Scotland.

“We put refugee empowerment and involvement and ensuring refugee voices are heard at the heart of everything we do”

“We involve and engage communities and the wider public in our work”³

Community Development is a skilled intervention, which strengthens communities to take collective action towards positive change. This long-term process starts from people’s own experience and enables communities to work together to improve the quality of their own lives, the communities in which they live and societies of which they are a part by:⁴

- Identifying their own needs and actions;
- Taking collective action using their strengths and resources;
- Developing their confidence, skills and knowledge;
- Challenging unequal power relationships;
- Promoting social justice, equality and inclusion.

Communities have many strengths and assets. However supporting communities to use their assets cannot alone address the structural inequality and disadvantage within communities.

‘Good community development work is done in ways which challenge disadvantage and tackle inequalities. It involves changing the relationships between ordinary people and people in positions of power. ... It is an approach to social change. It is based on the idea that disadvantage and social injustice cannot be tackled in top down solutions alone’

3 Scottish Refugee Council Strategic Plan 2017-2020.

4 Community Development National Occupational Standards 2015, scdc.org.uk/media/resources/CDNOS%20mar2015.pdf



Our Community Development interventions are based on Ager and Strang's Indicators of Integration framework⁵, which highlights the importance of developing relationships and social connections within communities and specifically:

- **Social Bonds** within communities (for example our work supporting refugee community organisations to participate in Refugee Festival Scotland);
- **Social Bridges** between communities (for example enabling dialogue between new and receiving communities), and;
- **Social 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).

“Research has shown that when communities feel empowered there is greater participation in local democracy; increased confidence and skills among local people; higher numbers of people volunteering in their communities; greater satisfaction with quality of life in a local neighbourhood”⁶

5 *Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework* (Ager & Strang 2004)
academic.oup.com/jrs/article/21/2/166/1621262

6 Scottish Government, gov.scot/Topics/People/engage



Our Vision for Communities

Our vision is of communities across Scotland that feel safe and strong, thus enabling them to be sustainable and creative and, by being involved and influential, make a contribution to society.

To realise this vision, our mission is to enable:

refugees to build their lives here in Scotland by creating refugee communities who:

- have a sense of belonging;
- are able to identify and respond to their needs and aspirations; and
- influence policy and practice that impact on their lives,

and receiving communities who are:

- vibrant and welcoming; and
- embrace diversity and nurture solidarity.



Community Development Outcomes

To realise this vision, we will work with communities towards four outcomes:

1. **Refugee communities are strong, influential and have a voice, and are supported to develop social connections.**
2. **Receiving communities are welcoming and informed and refugees are welcomed into their new communities.**
3. **Community practitioners have increased knowledge and understanding of working with refugee and receiving communities.**
4. **Refugee communities influence the priorities of Scottish Refugee Council.**

Our objectives to achieve these outcomes are:

1. For Refugee Communities

We will ...

- Provide skilled long-term community development support to grass-roots refugee community organisations to enable them to organise, develop and achieve their aims. We will also support the development of both new and established groups as appropriate.
- Enable refugee communities to work collectively and develop a collective voice by supporting representative forums which can represent the views of refugee communities.
- Develop and support opportunities for meaningful engagement between communities, agencies and decision makers, by establishing strong relationships with refugee communities. We will also work with agencies and decision makers to help them understand the needs of refugee communities and how to engage effectively for example, in the development of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy.
- Influence funding opportunities for refugee community organisations and receiving community organisations to access the resources they require.
- Address the needs of additionally marginalised groups (such as women, young people, LGBT and older people) by developing specific projects or approaches.

2. For Receiving Communities

We will ...

- Engage with receiving community groups across Scotland to identify their needs and provide seminars, training and opportunities for dialogue and networking to address these needs. Thus enhancing the receiving communities development and ability to involve refugee communities in their work.
- Support and develop solidarity between communities within their neighbourhoods by supporting the involvement of refugees in their local community and/or their participation in local decision-making structures. To achieve this we will work with local community development practitioners and other relevant organisations as appropriate. This includes our work through Refugee Festival Scotland, other relevant arts and cultural work, and our work to improve Scotland's public understanding of refugees.



3. For Community Practitioners

We will ...

- Share good practice by developing connections with local community development practitioners and working with key national Community Development agencies in order to influence and support practice development.

4. To enable Refugee Communities to influence the priorities of Scottish Refugee Council

We will ...

- Provide regular updates to refugee and receiving communities to enable them to influence policy and ensure that community development work supports the wider advocacy and lobbying work of Scottish Refugee Council.
- Support the implementation of the Scottish Refugee Council Service User Involvement Policy that ensures refugee participation and involvement at all levels by establishing the Communities Refugee Advisory Group.
- Engage effectively with individual refugees and refugee community organisations, ensuring that their needs and aspirations influence our priorities and agenda.

Community Development Activity Highlights 2017



PHOTO: FARIS DANNAN

We introduced a programme of capacity building training (*above*) over a four-week period which allowed 16 refugee communities to access funding opportunities supported by Foundation Scotland.

As part of Refugee Festival Scotland 2017, we provided a structured programme to support applications to a small-grants scheme which enabled 16 refugee and receiving communities to obtain funding for their local integration events and activities.

In partnership with the Scottish Community Development Centre and North Lanarkshire Council, we led information and awareness sessions on Participatory Budgeting and Asset Transfers to representatives from 16 refugee community organisations.

We provided regular community development to help further strengthen a number of refugee community organisations including Arbroath Refugee Community, Refugee Women's Support Group (RWSG), Eritrean Women's Group and the New Scotland Policy Forum (NSPF).

We supported 2,000 people, including more than 700 refugees and people seeking asylum from across Scotland to have their voices heard in the development of Scotland's second New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2020. We did this by producing a facilitation guide to run engagement sessions, administering a small-grants scheme on behalf of the Scottish Government and co-delivered four engagement sessions.



Scottish Refugee Council is an independent charity which provides advice and information to people seeking asylum and refugees living in Scotland.

We campaign for a fair and humane asylum system in the UK, and support and promote diverse and welcoming communities.

There are many ways to help us support refugees and people seeking asylum – campaign, volunteer, fundraise, donate, or join us as a member.

Visit scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk for more information.

Or give the funding team a call on **0141 248 9799**.

For up-to-date news and information, get social with us:

 ScottishRefugeeCouncil

 @scotrefcouncil

 Scottish Refugee Council

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