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# NAVIGATING THE MAZE: REFUGEE ROUTES TO HOUSING, SUPPORT AND SETTLEMENT IN SCOTLAND



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## GLOSSARY

AAGHA	Access Apna Ghar Housing Association
BIA	Borders and Immigration Agency
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CBL	Choice Based Lettings
CHR	Common Housing Register
CTC	Child Tax Credit
CIH	Chartered Institute of Housing
CS	Communities Scotland
DRS	Development and Regeneration Services
GASSP	Glasgow Asylum Seekers Support Project
GCC	Glasgow City Council
GHA	Glasgow Housing Association
GHP	Glasgow Homelessness Partnership
HAC	Hamish Allen Centre
HO	Home Office
HTF	Homelessness Task Force
ILR	Indefinite Leave to Remain
IS	Income Support
JSA	Job Seekers Allowance
LHO	Local Housing Organisations
LHS	Local Housing Strategy
NAM	New Asylum Model
NASS	National Asylum Support Services
NRT	Neighbourhood Relations Team
PAiH	Positive Action in Housing
RCO	Refugee Community Organisation
RSL	Registered Social Landlords
RST	Refugee Support Team
SRC	Scottish Refugee Council
TFF	Temporary Furnished Flat
SAMH	Scottish Association of Mental Health
SRIF	Scottish Refugee Integration Forum
SST	Scottish Secure Tenancy
SUNRISE	Strategic Upgrade of National Refugee Integration Service
WSRF	West of Scotland Refugee Forum
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

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## **PREFACE BY SCOTTISH REFUGEE COUNCIL & ACCESS APNA GHAR HOUSING ASSOCIATION**

Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) and Access Apna Ghar Housing Association (AAGHA) jointly commissioned Heriot Watt University and the Market Specialists to carry out this study investigating the housing experiences of refugees in Scotland.

Whilst refugees may encounter many barriers to successful integration in Scotland, such as issues surrounding health, education, employment and experiences of racial discrimination, the research focuses primarily on issues concerning refugees' experiences of accessing stable accommodation.

Primary research for this report was carried out with individual refugees and stakeholders between November 2006 and April 2007. A roundtable discussion with key stakeholders was convened on 16 January 2009 by Access Apna Ghar and Scottish Refugee Council for Heriot Watt University to present the findings and the draft recommendations. The aim was also to discuss progress and developments that have been made in this fast-moving area of policy and practice to ensure that the recommendations in this published report are accurate and relevant in light of these changes. Additional and extremely useful discussions took place in February and March 2009 with other stakeholders. Thus whilst the body of the report and its findings reflect the experiences of refugees when the primary research was conducted (Chapters 1 to 6), the recommendations (Chapter 7) are intended to reflect and improve the current situation facing refugees accessing stable housing in Scotland.

There have been many recent and important developments in the field of asylum policy and other areas which have impacted on the issue of refugee housing and integration. In terms of asylum, most notably has been the UK Border Agency's programme of resolving older asylum cases, known as Case Resolution. In Scotland during 2007 -2008 the relative numbers of asylum seekers and refugees shifted dramatically. As a result of the Case Resolution process in Scotland, many older cases were reviewed very quickly. Positively this led to many families in Scotland being granted leave to remain and as a result of strong partnership working between agencies many problems associated with the transition period between the asylum process and accessing mainstream provision, including stable housing, were alleviated. In addition, with the full implementation of the New Asylum Model, there has been a significant reduction in the length of time that an asylum claimant is in Scotland before a decision is made on their asylum claim.

It is important to stress that the report does not cover the period of Case Resolution. However many issues identified in the report encountered by refugees seeking stable housing still remain. Indeed, it could be argued that the increased speed of the asylum process means that reducing the barriers to stable and secure accommodation has become all the more vital.

Many notable and welcome changes have occurred in improving refugees' speedier access to accommodation and mainstream benefits. For example, the research found a few cases where refugees who had previously stayed in accommodation provided by the YMCA Glasgow had experienced rooflessness when moving to new accommodation. Between October 2008 and January 2009 there have been no reported instances of this through Scottish Refugee Council's integration service, reflecting YMCA's policy that they will not require asylum seekers to vacate their accommodation if there is no temporary accommodation available.

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In terms of accessing benefits, developments have included the establishment of a specialist team, the Move On Response Team, by Jobcentre Plus in Glasgow city centre to handle all benefit claims and provide tailored jobsearch and training advice. This team has worked with refugees on completion of HMRC benefit forms, fast-tracking claims for Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit, at the same time working closely with housing providers and Glasgow Asylum Support Team to ensure timely applications for housing benefits. Alongside this specialist support, Jobcentre Plus trained 40 members of staff across all Glasgow Jobcentres and from each benefit processing team on issues affecting refugees. This led to the creation of two "Refugee Champions" in each Jobcentre and processing team. Although intended as short term, this welcome measure has been kept in place by Job Centre Plus since November 2007 and their remit has been widened since March 2008 to include all refugees.

In addition while there remain delays nationwide in accessing Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants through the Social Fund, there are now nominated contacts in Glasgow in the Social Fund Centre for service providers to use to resolve difficulties quickly experienced by refugees when claiming Community Care Grants. Thus many of the views expressed by refugees in the findings of the report regarding the performance of the Job Centre Plus have positively found solutions.

Other areas of policy and process changes include:

- changes in the Refugee Support contract awarded by the UK Border Agency;
- changes by Glasgow City Council as to which division deals with old and new cases and the contracts for tenancy support;
- the ongoing hostel closure programme by Glasgow City Council;
- the establishment of "Glasgow Works" and its evolution into specific Employment programs via five Local Regeneration Agencies;
- research and publication by the Lintel Trust, into overcoming barriers to Black and Ethnic Minority members (including refugees) joining the governing bodies of RSLs<sup>1</sup>;
- the removal of "ring fencing" within the grant allocation to Local Authorities and the move to Single Outcome Agreements (one victim of which is the former Essential Furnishing Grant issued to housing associations by Glasgow City Council Homelessness Partnership); and
- Glasgow City Council has statements of best practice with housing providers throughout the city in addition to the review of the Homelessness duty.

The above changes will certainly have influenced the experiences of refugees seeking permanent secure accommodation in Scotland positively or negatively.

Many of the issues raised in the report, such as debt, rent charges and satisfaction with landlords and the location of housing are not unique to refugees and are experienced by many people in Glasgow. However these issues are compounded by the specific circumstances of refugees and their increased potential vulnerability to homelessness.

We believe that this report provides a valuable tool for ongoing engagement with key decision makers to ensure that those granted international protection can start to

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<sup>1</sup> <http://webs.workwithus.org/linteltrust3/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/reality.pdf>

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rebuild their lives in safety in Scotland through accessing stable and secure accommodation in Scotland.

We would like to thank Gina Netto for her commitment to this project and we wish to thank all of those who took part in the research and gave their valuable time to the roundtable discussion and commenting on the report. In particular, we thank all of those refugees who shared their experiences of housing in Scotland.

Janine Hunt, Director of Operations, Scottish Refugee Council

Dave le Sage, Director, Access Apna Ghar Housing Association

April 2009

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### **Note on changes to organisational names in the report:**

Several of the key organisations involved in the research have undergone restructuring and name changes since the primary research was conducted in 2007/2008. In the body of the report these organisations are referred to by the names used during the research period. References in the recommendations have been changed to reflect current naming.

### **Communities Scotland**

Communities Scotland was abolished on 1 April 2008. On that date, most of its non-regulatory functions were transferred to the **Scottish Government's Housing and Regeneration Directorate**. The work of Communities Scotland's Regulation and Inspection division has been transferred to the new **Scottish Housing Regulator**.

### **The Border and Immigration Agency (BIA)**

The Border and Immigration Agency was an executive agency of the Home Office, created on 1 April 2007. The Agency assumed the responsibilities of the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) and the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) for managing immigration control in the UK.

On 1 April 2008 BIA became the UK Border Agency (UKBA) following a merger with UKvisas and the port of entry functions of HM Revenue and Customs.

### **Sunrise**

**Sunrise** (Strategic Upgrade of National Refugee Integration Service) was the Home Office's pilot integration service for newly granted refugees. Set up in 2005, it was delivered in Scotland by Scottish Refugee Council. Sunrise has now been replaced by the Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) which started on 1 October 2008 and will also be delivered by Scottish Refugee Council. RIES will offer a 12-month service to each person granted refugee status or humanitarian protection. This will have three complementary elements: an advice and support service offering help in addressing initial critical needs such as housing, education and access to benefits; an employment advice service to help the person enter long-term employment at the earliest opportunity; and a mentoring service offering the person an opportunity to be matched with a mentor from the receiving community.

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## INTRODUCTION

Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) and Access Apna Ghar Housing Association (AAGHA) jointly commissioned Heriot Watt University and the Market Specialists to carry out this study investigating the housing experiences of refugees in Scotland.

Scottish Refugee Council is an independent charity dedicated to providing advice, information and assistance to asylum seekers and refugees living in Scotland. The organisation also provides specialist services in areas such as housing and welfare, family reunion, women's issues, community development, the media and the arts. SRC play a leading role in policy development and campaign on refugee issues to ensure that Scotland plays a full role in meeting the UK's legal and humanitarian obligations under the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees. Scottish Refugee Council's Housing Team provides information, advice and advocacy services to refugees, concerning their rights and options to housing. In addition, it seeks to promote the integration and settlement of refugees in Scotland by working with housing providers to develop best practice in the provision of housing and ensuring that refugees' needs are addressed and met. The Strategic Upgrade of National Refugee Integration Service (SUNRISE) team is a key refugee integration delivery scheme funded by the UK Government. Under the scheme, each new refugee is offered a caseworker to manage the transition from asylum seeker to refugee status and produce a Personal Integration Plan covering longer-term integration objectives. The caseworker signposts refugees on a number of matters: housing, welfare, health and child education needs, employment and training.

Access Apna Ghar Housing Association is a small scale housing provider, focusing on the BME and refugee communities and has a particular interest in evaluating the experience of its service users. We procure stock through a capital investment programme offered by Glasgow City Council, in pursuit of the recognition within its Local Housing Strategy of the need for a bespoke programme, to address the unmet needs of refugees and BME communities, in accessing affordable social housing. It has recently become a subsidiary of Sanctuary Scotland HA Ltd and a member of the Sanctuary Group, whereas in the past we partnered several Registered social landlords, in order to achieve our objectives.

The housing circumstances of asylum seekers and refugees have been significantly influenced by increasingly restrictive immigration legislation and national immigration policy in the UK that have curtailed the welfare benefits and housing options available to asylum seekers. However, there have also been major advances in homelessness policies and legislation in Scotland, following from the recommendations of the Homelessness Task Force (HTF), established by the Scottish Executive in 1999. The Scottish Refugee Integration Forum (SRIF) Action Plan and the Scottish Government's Code of Guidance on Homelessness (2005) recognise the specific circumstances of refugees and their potential vulnerability to homelessness.

In Glasgow, there have been marked changes in the housing environment. These have included Glasgow City Council's stock transfer to Glasgow Housing Association; Glasgow Housing Associations' large-scale demolition programme; a new and significantly different 'dispersal' contract between Glasgow City Council, the Border and Immigration Agency, YMCA and the Angel Group; and the requirement to promote equality and diversity.

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Developments in immigration and homelessness, combined with the significant changes in the housing sector in Glasgow may all have had an impact on refugees' housing experiences. This study is thus viewed as timely in terms of examining refugee routes to housing, settlement and support and informing the policy, planning and delivery of housing and support providers in Glasgow. Additionally, the study has important implications in relation to informing homelessness and immigration policy and the creation of an enabling environment for the integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland.

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## A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The terms 'asylum seekers' and 'refugees' are used to refer to the different immigration status of two categories of migrants. Asylum seekers are those who have arrived in the UK and are awaiting a decision on their claim for asylum. They are not entitled to permanent housing or full welfare benefits and do not have permission to work.

Under the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), Article 1A, a refugee is a person who has

*'a well-founded fear of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his (sic) nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country, or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it* (UNHCR, 1996, p. 16)

A person is recognised as a refugee when the government of the new country decides that he or she meets the definition provided above. As a signatory to the Convention, the UK is required to make social welfare available to those who are recognized as refugees on the same basis as its own citizens. Refugees now have Temporary Leave to Remain (replacing Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)) in the UK and a right to work, claim benefits, apply for social housing and access the full range of other public services, including education, health and social care.

In this report, the terms 'asylum seekers' and 'refugees' are used in the awareness that the entitlements of both groups to social housing in the UK differ. However, it would not be possible to consider the housing circumstances of refugees, without reference to their circumstances as asylum seekers, particularly immediately before and soon after they received a positive decision on their asylum application. Further, the term 'refugee' is used to refer to those who have recently achieved refugee status and /or are not yet part of established BME communities in Scotland.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main findings of the study are:

- Newly recognised refugees generally faced considerable difficulties in gaining access to appropriate accommodation in Glasgow, partly due to a shortage of accommodation in areas perceived by them to be safe and the lack of appropriately sized accommodation for larger refugee families;
- Refugees have two main means of accessing social housing: through a Section 5 referral (of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001), the ‘homelessness route’, and through directly applying to individual Housing Associations. Many refugees felt that they needed access to independent and specialist information and advice to enable them to fully understand their housing rights and options, and the processes for seeking accommodation;
- Fear and actual experience of racial harassment is a major concern among refugees, highlighting the need for harassment to be tackled effectively by housing providers;
- A key issue which emerged was the lack of clarity of the roles and responsibilities of agencies involved in supporting refugees, including the roles of the Refugee Support Team, the Scottish Refugee Council and other agencies;
- The delay of the introduction of the pilot Common Housing Register in Glasgow has contributed to the difficulties faced by refugees and other vulnerable individuals in requiring them to apply to individual Registered Social Landlords to increase their housing options instead of filling in a common application form;
- There is an ongoing need for the impartial, specialist service to help refugees navigate the housing system, particularly in the transition from asylum seeker to refugee status;
- There is concern that a number of newly recognised refugees who had formerly stayed in accommodation not provided by Glasgow City Council are ‘falling through the net’ of accommodation and support at the transition stage from asylum support and accommodation to mainstream benefits and housing. This is due to the fact that they have to make a physical move into temporary accommodation upon grant of status;
- The shortage of appropriate permanent accommodation has contributed to prolonged stay in temporary accommodation and rooflessness for a few individuals. There is a need for improved temporary accommodation for refugees, including single young men. This has led to considerable uncertainty and anxiety among the individuals concerned and difficulties in finding employment and settling down;
- A considerable level of unmet needs for support was identified among refugee tenants who had moved into permanent accommodation. This included the need for support with furnishing their accommodation, connecting and using utilities, countering fuel poverty and managing debt, including rent arrears. There is a need for expanded models of tenancy support for refugees across the city, to help meet refugees’ support needs, including preparation for entry into the labour market;

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- A major contributory factor to the invisibility of refugee and other Black and Ethnic Minority tenants in Registered Social Landlords in Scotland is the lack of published ethnically disaggregated data relating to applicants and lets. Without such data, it is difficult to encourage RSLs to improve performance;
  - Access Apna Ghar Housing Association clients reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction with their accommodation, the number of rooms, their landlord and particularly their area than other tenants. This might partly be due to Access Apna Ghar's strategy in procuring stock in areas that refugees perceive to be safe;
  - There is a lack of mechanisms for assessing refugee tenant satisfaction and encouraging refugee participation in the decision-making processes of Registered Social Landlords;
  - About a third of the refugees interviewed reported that they were 'very likely' to continue staying in their current accommodation 'a year from now', while a third reported that they were 'not sure'. Reasons for the former included many positive responses related to high satisfaction levels. However, others explained that they were unlikely to move due to lack of access to alternative accommodation; and
  - About two thirds of those interviewed reported that they were 'very likely' to continue to remain in the city, offering many positive reasons which revealed an appreciation for the city and its people, despite the difficulties experienced in gaining and securing permanent accommodation. However, others expressed an attraction towards London, towards existing networks, families and friends.

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# CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

## 1. Immigration and Asylum Acts and UK Immigration Policy

Several commentators have observed that since 1990, the UK Government has become increasingly restrictive in its immigration policies (Farland and Walsh, 1995; Kaye, 1995). Since 1990, there have been six substantive pieces of immigration legislation. One trend in this legislation has been to systematically restrict welfare and housing entitlements and the options available to asylum seekers on their arrival in Britain (Phillips, 2006). One of the most significant changes to housing and support provision for asylum seekers resulted from the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act. The Act provided for the centralisation of support mechanisms for asylum seekers under the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) of the Home Office, which came into operation in 2000. NASS negotiated housing provision through a network of regional consortia, who secure contracts with local authorities, private landlords and housing associations. While some asylum seekers choose not to apply for NASS accommodation and/or support, many others have no choice but to take the accommodation offered to them by NASS. A 'no-choice' dispersal policy was introduced to reduce pressure on London and the South-East and to move asylum seekers to other parts of the UK, including Scotland, where the demand for housing is lower. Glasgow City Council (GCC) was the only local authority in Scotland to sign a contract with NASS from April 2000 to provide housing for asylum seekers. As a result, Scotland received significant numbers of asylum seekers, the vast majority of whom were dispersed to Glasgow, primarily to areas of low demand and social deprivation.

Further changes in the form of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 increased control over the asylum seeking process through the introduction of accommodation and removal centres and the introduction of Section 55, which prohibits support for asylum seekers who fail to make their claim as soon as 'reasonably practicable' after their arrival in the UK. Although Section 55 has been successfully challenged and the Home Office has been forced to accept a less restrictive approach to this clause, concerns about destitution and homelessness within the asylum process remain (Phillips, 2006). Under the same Act, family members of refugees are prohibited 'recourse to public funds.' As Phillips (2006) points out, this inhibits access to social housing for reunited families through the homelessness route, raises concerns about affordability and constrains access to appropriate family accommodation.

Restrictions have also been placed on those who have been granted refugee status. For example, Section 11 of the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants etc.) Act 2004 restricted the right of refugees to apply for local authority housing except in areas to which they were dispersed in England and Wales.<sup>2</sup> The same Act also removed refugees' entitlements to receive backdated support payments for the time they spent in the asylum process<sup>3</sup> and instead proposed 'integration loans' to assist in their integration.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See section 4.2 for the situation in Scotland

<sup>3</sup> Asylum seekers receive 70% of basic income support. Upon being granted refugee status they were previously entitled to claim the remaining 30%.

<sup>4</sup> These were introduced on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

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*Controlling our borders: making migration work for Britain* (Home Office, 2005) set out the UK Government's five-year strategy for asylum and immigration. This was followed up by the setting up of the New Asylum Model (NAM) to speed up the asylum process in the shortest possible time, with a dedicated person taking responsibility for each claim from the beginning to the outcome of their claim. The Home Office has also set up a new executive agency, the Borders Immigration Agency (BIA) to manage immigration control in the UK. The Home Office *Integration Matters* document recognises housing as one of the key indicators of integration. This, combined with the then Scottish Executive's Integration Forum Action Plan, provides a policy framework for the inclusion of refugees in economic, social and cultural spheres.

## **2. Asylum seekers and refugees in the UK**

There has been a significant fall in the number of asylum applications over the last five years (Home Office, 2007). According to Home Office Asylum Statistics, a total of 22,750 applications for asylum were received in 2006/07. 20,710 initial decisions were made in 2006/07. Of these, 12% of initial decisions were granted asylum, 10% were granted Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave to remain and 78% were refused. In the first quarter of 2007, 6005 initial decisions were made. Of these, 15% were granted asylum, 10% Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave and 75% refused.

In the first quarter of 2007, the number of applications for asylum support was 4,575. 70% (3195) of these applications were for accommodation and subsistence support while 21% (970) were for subsistence only with the remaining 9% deemed invalid or unknown. The highest numbers of asylum seekers in dispersed accommodation were in Yorkshire and the Humber (21%), North West (18%), West Midlands (15%), Scotland (14%) and North East (9%). Glasgow was one of the five local authorities with the highest number of asylum seekers in dispersal accommodation, along with Leeds, Birmingham, Manchester and Newcastle. At the end of March 2007, the number of asylum seekers supported in NASS accommodation in Glasgow was 5,075, while the number of asylum seekers in receipt of subsistence only support from NASS was 70 in Edinburgh and 55 in Glasgow.

In terms of timeliness of decisions, 76% of applications in 2005/06 had initial decisions made and served within two months, while 74% of applications received in 2005/06 had a final decision up to and including appeal within 6 months. While the speeding up of the asylum process has reduced periods of uncertainty for new arrivals, it also means that newly recognised refugees typically will have had only a short time to become familiar with the housing and welfare system in the UK, their housing options, sources of advice and assistance and their eligibility for benefits. This highlights the importance of access to good quality advice and assistance for asylum seekers and refugees, including in relation to access to social housing.

## **3. Housing policy, advice and provision for refugees in Scotland**

Asylum and immigration are reserved matters, responsibility for which resides under the Westminster government. However, the Scottish Government has responsibility for integration and social inclusion and is responsible for the provision of housing, health, education, legal aid and police protection for asylum seekers and refugees in

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Scotland. Refugees have the same entitlements as all other UK citizens to housing and other public services in Scotland (more details are provided in Section 7).

In Scotland, policies and action plans to enable the successful integration of refugees were led by the Scottish Refugee Integration Forum (SRIF), established in 2002. The SRIF, chaired by the then Minister of Social Justice, Margaret Curran, developed 57 action plans in six policy areas, including housing, which corresponded to Scottish Executive departments as well as cross-cutting areas, such as translation and interpreting (SRIF, 2003).

Two years later, a snapshot of progress made in relation to these action plans was documented in SRIF (2005). This report noted that a number of changes recommended by the Forum, including in relation to housing, had been met. Some of the legislative and policy changes are detailed in Section 4. The intended impact of the changes recommended was that the needs of refugees should be routinely considered, along with the needs of others, and that refugees should have the same options and opportunities as others. The report also noted that Communities Scotland and the then Scottish Executive had produced a model 'Welcome Pack' to assist local authorities with providing information to refugees to find a suitable home for themselves and their families. Another sign of progress observed was the provision of funding to SRC Housing Team to provide advice and assistance to refugees and information, advice and training to partner agencies, including Refugee Community Organisations.

Research recommended by the SRIF into the housing and support needs of refugees and intended to produce a model service specification outlining how these needs can be met had also been commissioned by the then Scottish Executive (Bell Associates, 2006). Among the main findings of the research were:

- The need for a multi-agency approach in meeting the multiple needs relating to the current and future housing of refugees;
- High levels of racial harassment experienced by refugees and their need for accommodation in decent and appropriate homes where they would be safe from harassment; and
- The need for accessible and culturally appropriate advice and information from the initial stages of accessing housing through to move-in and the process of integration.

The SRIF anticipated that a year after publication, an assessment would be made of the extent to which the service specification had been met, along with an assessment of service provision across various parts of Scotland.

#### **4. Homelessness legislation and the prevention of homelessness among refugees**

Local authorities have had a longstanding obligation to prevent as well as respond to homelessness, both in law and good practice guidance. Since the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, authorities have had an obligation to assist people who are imminently threatened with homelessness (and classed 'in priority need'). The then Scottish Executive increased the official emphasis on homelessness, setting up the Homelessness Task Force (HTF) in 1999. The HTF reviewed the causes and nature of homelessness in Scotland, examined current practice in homelessness and made

wide-ranging recommendations on how homelessness can be prevented or tackled effectively. This led to the broadening of homelessness prevention policy to encompass the full range of people at risk of homelessness. Consequential legislative changes were carried through in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003. A key requirement of local authorities under the 2001 Act was to develop homelessness strategies to set out plans for preventing and alleviating homelessness in local authorities' area.

Former asylum seekers who have been granted refugee status or Exceptional Leave (now Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave) to remain in the UK may be at risk of becoming homeless as a result of having to leave NASS accommodation and will be eligible for homelessness assistance. Consistent with the recommendations of the SRIF, s.193 of the *Code of Guidance on Homelessness* highlights that this group might be vulnerable as a result of experiencing persecution or severe hardship in their country of origin. Housing authorities are also advised to carefully consider the possibility that clients from this group may be additionally vulnerable due to other factors.

Further reform of homelessness legislation is incorporated within the Homelessness etc.(Scotland) Act 2003, which envisages broadening local authority responsibilities towards homeless households; in particular, through the abolition of the 'priority need' test. This includes the target that, by 2012, all people who are unintentionally homeless will be entitled to a settled home (the 2012 target). The 2012 target involves increasing homeless people's rights to housing by removing bureaucratic distinctions between different 'categories' of homeless people and acknowledging that all homeless people, including newly recognised refugees, both families and single people, require sustainable accommodation.

#### 4.1 Section 5 referrals

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory duty on Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to provide accommodation to homeless people when requested to do so by a local authority, including through Section 5 referrals. A Chartered Institute Housing (CIH) examination of the extent to which Section 5 referrals were used by local authorities and the extent to which RSLs received Section 5 referrals found that overall, these are used to the benefit of the local authority, RSLs and the referred applicant (CIH, 2005). The study found that many local authorities had developed protocols with RSLs for Section 5 referrals. The CIH and the Scottish Federation of Housing (SFHA) have sought to encourage RSLs to accommodate refugees, including through producing good practice guides (CIH, 2005; SFHA, 2003).

**Table 1.1 Number of lets to homeless people over the past year**

Year	GHA		Other RSLs		Total
	No	%	No	%	
2003/04	1673	84.7	303	15.3	1976
2004/05	1497	75.5	487	24.5	1984
2005/06	1514	68.8	685	31.1	2199

(extracted from GCC, Report by Director of Social Work Services, 2006a)

Table1 shows that a total of 2199 houses were permanently allocated to homeless households within the city in 2005/06, an increase from 1984 for 2004/05. During

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2005/6, there has been an increase in 17 lets by GHA and an increase of 198 lets by other RSLs in the city compared to 2004/5. These figures show that while there has been an increase in the number of lets, there is in fact a reduction in the proportion of GHA lets to homeless households, and a slight increase in the proportion of lets by other RSLs. These figures need to be viewed in the context of a shortfall of provision of permanent housing to homeless households by GCC of 3,401 in 2006. This indicates a requirement for a significant increase in the provision of permanent housing to homeless households, and an urgent need for all RSLs (including those in inner city areas of BME concentration), to make greater efforts to assist the Council in discharging its statutory duty to homeless households. Indeed, a review of 19 inspections since 2003, of RSLs operating in Glasgow, found that:

*'issues to do with access to housing, including observance of allocation policies, transparency of letting, equal opportunities etc., were the most prominent cause of criticism.'* (GCC, 2008)

Although such criticisms were made of only 13 of the RSLs, the review suggests that similar issues were likely to apply to most of the 60 or so RSLs which were not inspected in this period, thus underscoring the serious nature of the problem.

#### **4.2 Local connection and Scotland**

Under the 1987 Housing Act, local authorities in Scotland have the power to refer an applicant who is assessed as being in priority need and unintentionally homeless to any other local authority in the UK. Local connection is defined in section 27(1) of the 1987 Act as a connection which a person has with the area:

- Because he or she is or was in the past normally resident in it, and this residence was of his or her own choice;
- Because he or she is employed in it.

Section 11 of the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants etc) Act 2004 amended the local connection provisions in English Housing Law (Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 but not the Scotland Act). Broadly, Section 11 provides for asylum seekers to automatically establish a local connection with the last area in which they were provided accommodation under Section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act (i.e. NASS accommodation). Subsequently, if an asylum seeker is given leave to remain in the UK and makes a homeless application in a different area and they do not have a local connection there for any of the above reasons, the local authority can refer that person back to the area of dispersal. This has the effect of reducing refugees' ability to present as homeless to UK local authorities outside of Scotland and constrains their housing options, leading refugee organisations to argue for legislative reform to allow refugees from Scotland to move to areas of choice within the UK.

### **5. The Housing Environment in Glasgow**

In Glasgow, the focus of the empirical work of this study, there have been a number of dramatic changes in the housing environment, not least of which has been the transfer of housing stock of Glasgow City Council (GCC) to the Glasgow Housing Association Ltd (GHA), a registered social landlord established to take over the stock through a large-scale voluntary transfer in 2003. A local network of Local Housing Organisations (LHO) across the city provides local management services. GHA is tasked with

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implementing a major investment programme to upgrade the housing stock inherited from GCC and a demolition programme is currently (July 2007) ongoing, including in areas where asylum seekers are currently being supported by NASS.

Although GCC no longer owns housing stock and its Housing Services Department has ceased to exist, it still retains responsibility for strategic development of housing provision across all tenures within Glasgow. The Housing Investment Division of GCC Development and Regeneration Services (DRS), established in 2003 following stock transfer, has responsibility for the Local Housing Strategy, Housing Policy, Regeneration and Grants. The Council is also now responsible for managing Development Funding (previously managed by Communities Scotland). *Glasgow's Local Housing Strategy 2003 – 2008* recognises the limited availability of social rented houses of the right size and type in or close to areas of traditional settlement for Black and minority ethnic (BME) households, due to the sale of a large proportion of council stock through Right-to-Buy. Indeed, the same recognition has been instrumental to AAGHA's strategy in selecting properties which are purchased on the open market, in high amenity inner-city and in predominantly owner-occupied areas. This has been supported by a Capital programme agreement for procurement between the DRS, AAGHA and its partner agencies, Link, Yorkhill and Sanctuary Scotland Housing Associations.

The Local Housing Strategy also acknowledges the need to ensure equal access to housing and to overcome possible barriers, such as the common use of many languages by asylum seekers and refugees in Glasgow. The need for appropriate training for staff to enable them to respond to the needs of their diverse clients, provide appropriate information and respond effectively to harassment is also acknowledged. GCC has a responsibility under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to provide housing advice and information to people living in the Glasgow area.

## **6. The role of the Glasgow Asylum Seeker Project and the Refugee Support Team**

The Glasgow Asylum Seeker Support Project (GASSP) was set up and coordinated by GCC to ensure that asylum seekers were able to access basic services. These include accommodation of a safe and suitable standard, GP services and access to education for children. GASSP also provides new arrivals with a welcome pack which contains information about the city. Two separate organisations, the YMCA and the Angel Group, also provide temporary accommodation to asylum seekers through contractual arrangements with BIA Scotland.

The Refugee Support Team (RST) was set up within GCC as a specialist homelessness team in 2002 to work with nine other community casework teams. The main source of referrals for the team is the GASSP. The team carries out homelessness assessments for newly recognised refugees, and taking into account area preferences, size and type of accommodation needed and preferred and potential support needs, makes Section 5 referrals to an RSL, which if accepted, leads to a permanent offer of housing for the individual. Joint working arrangements between the RST and GHA are guided by a *New Homelessness Duty Protocol: Statement of Best Practice in Joint Working between Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Housing Association (No. 11)* which aims to provide a sound basis for the two organisations in relation to homelessness prevention and alleviation and the creation and maintenance of sustainable communities within the City. Other working

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arrangements which have been formalised are section 5 Homeless Protocols between the Council and many RSLs in the City. Referrals from the RST can be made anywhere within Glasgow. On accepting a Section 5 referral, RSLs have six to eight weeks to find accommodation. The Code of Guidance states that homeless people should be given the same number of offers as other housing applicants.

## 7. RSLs and the Promotion of Equality and Diversity

As the housing regulator in Scotland and a public body, Communities Scotland (CS) has a statutory duty to promote equality as a regular part of all regulation and inspection work. The organisation published its first thematic study on equalities within the housing sector in 2002 (CS, 2002), assessing the performance of landlords in this area. The results of the study were mixed. While some landlords were working hard at ensuring that their services were equally accessible to all and understood the need to ensure that their organisations reflected the communities they served, others 'had to work a lot harder' to meet the regulatory bodies' expectations (CS, 2002).

In a follow-up study in 2006, Communities Scotland examined progress landlords had made in meeting challenges since 2002. The study showed that while some landlords had made good progress in meeting the challenges, others reported that

*'they lacked the resources and in some cases, the capacity to deal effectively with the full range of challenges.'* (CS, 2006: iii)

Among the findings of the survey carried out as part of this study were that social landlords and local authorities need:

- To ensure that staff have a better understanding of what an equalities commitment actually means in practice;
- Good equalities information about existing tenants;
- To establish clear objectives and targets for all service areas to drive and demonstrate continuous improvement;
- To provide information and deliver services that respond to the diverse requirements of service users through a planned rather than reactive approach; and
- To establish mechanisms which collect information for measuring organisational achievements against objectives and targets, and identify the outcome of its systems and services (CS, 2006).

In the same study (CS, 2006); housing providers reported that they needed help with:

- Consulting 'hard to reach' groups;
- Recruiting and building the capacity of governing body members;
- Cultural sensitivity in communication, use of language and methods of engagement;
- Better understanding of issues that affect the whole sector and use of benchmarks for good practice;
- Appropriate and meaningful targets in each of the areas;
- Systems to monitor and evaluate performance; and
- Learning from what others in the sector were doing (Communities Scotland, 2006).

These findings provide some insight into the extent to which social landlords are equipped to deal with the specific challenges and requirements of equalities issues,

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and are of relevance in considering the extent to which they are able to meet the housing needs of refugees, the focus of this study.

GHA's *Asylum seeker and refugee policy 2005* provides the policy framework for the organisation and Local Housing Organisations (LHOs) in addressing the needs of both asylum seekers and refugees. This states that GHA is committed to;

*'a multi-agency approach to addressing those needs and developing strategies for the provision of housing and integration of refugees.'* (GHA, 2005: 4)

As the organisation which accommodates the vast majority of asylum seekers through contractual arrangements with BIA Scotland and GCC, the extent to which GHA policy is translated in its action plans to promote equality and diversity, including in the re-provisioning of stock accompanying its clearance programme, is obviously crucial to ensuring that the housing needs of both asylum seekers and refugees are met.

## **8. Other agencies providing services to refugees**

It is important to differentiate between the wide range of other agencies which provide services to refugees. These include voluntary sector agencies that are funded to provide advice and information or make referrals, such as SRC Housing team and PAiH.

In contrast, agencies such as Unity and Loretto Care are commissioned by the GCC to provide housing support. Housing support is defined under Regulation 3 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (Housing Support Services) Regulations 2002, which outlines a wide range of prescribed housing support services including general counselling and support; assistance with the maintenance of the security and safety of the dwelling; the use of domestic equipment and appliances; arranging minor repairs and servicing of domestic equipment and appliances; providing life skills training and assisting with personal budgeting and debt counselling.

The unique interlinked services of stock procurement, tenant selection, settlement and housing support provided by AAGHA have already been mentioned in the introduction to this report. These are supported by service level agreements with its partner RSLs, Yorkhill, Link and Sanctuary Scotland Housing Associations.

## **9. Ethnic Monitoring**

In order to ensure that an equitable service is provided to social housing applicants from all sections of the community, local authorities, RSLs and lead organisations such as Communities Scotland have consistently been reminded of the need to ethnically monitor applicants, lets and waiting times (Netto et al, 2003a and b, 2004). In addition, Blackaby and Chahal (2004) suggest monitoring of various aspects of homelessness service provision, including:

- A breakdown of people seeking advice and information, compared with a breakdown of people living in the local area;
- A comparison of the ethnic origin of people applying as homeless, accepted as homeless and accommodated in various types of housing – hostels, bed and breakfast and permanent accommodation; and

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- Comparisons between the various ethnic groups of the length of time homeless people spend in temporary accommodation.

Although refugees cannot easily be differentiated from other BME applicants in ethnically disaggregated data, such data does at least provide some indication of the accessibility of social housing to them. At a seminar attended by social housing providers, voluntary sector agencies, representatives from GCC and the Scottish Executive in Glasgow, Netto et al (2004) documented a consensus on the need for ethnic monitoring to be part of public reporting on who is making use of housing services across all communities and the outcomes of such services. Lead organisations identified as playing a role in encouraging ethnic monitoring included the then Scottish Executive and Communities Scotland (through regulation and inspection of services and the reporting back of local authorities and RSLs on these). Following from the seminar, HomePoint noted that all services implementing the Scottish National Standards for Housing Information and Advice Services are required to:

‘undertake a regular exercise to determine the profile of their local community and any special needs that may exist (Standard 2.3)’ and that

‘recording of service-wide activity and service use should include gender, race and disability’ (Standard 7.7)

and that the two are matched to ensure supply matches local need. It is worth noting that from data that is available for 2005/06, in 40 of the 64 LHOs which made lets in 2005/06, there were none to BME applicants (Local Housing Strategy review, May 2006).

## **10. Structure of the report**

The report is divided into five chapters. Chapter 2 outlines the research aims and methods employed in the study. Chapters 3 to 6 are thematically organised to compare and contrast the perspectives of the refugees interviewed with those of housing and support providers. Chapter 3 considers issues related to gaining access to accommodation, including temporary accommodation. Chapter 4 considers experiences of living in temporary accommodation and homelessness. In Chapter 5, issues relating to the need for move on support among newly recognised refugees are discussed. In Chapter 6, levels of satisfaction among refugees are considered, along with other related issues such as tenant participation. Finally, Chapter 7 presents recommendations.

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## CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH AIMS AND METHODS

### 1. Research Aims

The current study is designed to inform and influence the understanding of key stakeholders, including the Scottish Government and Communities Scotland, of the experiences of refugees in gaining access to accommodation and support, either in temporary or permanent accommodation. Within this overarching aim, the study has a number of specific objectives:

- To document the housing experiences and issues facing refugees in Glasgow, including quality of housing advice, access to adequate housing information, referrals, choice of tenure and housing support;
- To identify areas of concern, common issues, gaps in access to adequate housing information and models of good practice; and
- To examine satisfaction with housing and the housing support services which accompany this, comparing and contrasting the satisfaction levels of AAGHA clients with those of other refugee tenants.

### 2. Methods

#### 2.1 Literature review

Recent policy reports and research relating to the housing experiences of asylum seekers and refugees were reviewed (Robinson, 2006; Barclay et al, 2003) The lead author of the report also drew on her previous experience of research conducted for then Scottish Executive which examined homelessness in BME communities, including among refugees (Netto et al, 2004; 2006) and homelessness prevention initiatives (Pawson et al, 2007a). The report also drew on research which evaluated homelessness prevention initiatives for the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (Pawson et al, forthcoming) and associated good practice (Pawson et al) and more focused work on tenancy sustainment (Pawson et al, 2006b).

#### 2.2 Interviews with housing providers

5 interviews were undertaken with the following housing providers: Yorkhill Housing Association, Link Housing Association, Queens Cross Housing Association, Govan Housing Association, and New Shaws and New Gorbals LHOs. Yorkhill and Link were selected since they were partner associations of AAGHA, with refugee tenants in the stock procured by AAGHA. The other RSL and LHOs were selected as operating in areas with high numbers of NASS accommodation in GHA stock and hence likely to have experiences of the permanent housing of refugees, either by referral or through waiting lists. Apart from AAGHA clients, the refugees interviewed had no specific association with the RSLs interviewed. The interview with the Community Inclusion Coordinator at Govan HA included others from the local community.

The areas covered in the interviews with housing providers included:

- The extent to which ethnically disaggregated data is available on offers, lets and refusals and the extent to which targets have been set for these areas;
- Experience of any common difficulties encountered in letting accommodation to refugees;

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- Evidence of the extent to which tenancies let to refugees have been sustained;
  - Any specific initiatives which have increased the housing support available to refugees to enable them to sustain their tenancies;
  - Measures taken to deal with complaints of racial harassment and any evidence of effectiveness in dealing with such complaints; and
  - The extent to which tenants, including refugees are involved in decision-making processes of the housing providers.

Appendix 1 provides details of the topic guide used for housing providers.

### **2.3 Experiences of other service providers**

The research obtained the views of providers of advice and information to asylum seekers and refugees as well as providers of housing support (see Chapter 1, Section 8). Individual interviews were conducted with key individuals from the Refugee Support Team, the Housing Team and Sunrise Project at SRC, AAGHA and PAiH to obtain the views of key agencies providing advice and assistance. This was supplemented by a focus group discussion which involved representatives from YMCA, SRC's Housing Team and Sunrise project, AAGHA, GASSP, GHA, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, Social Work, Community Infosource and PAiH. Appendix 4 provides details of the topic guide used for providers of advice and information as well as providers of support. The areas covered included:

- Access to service providers, including referral mechanisms to and from other service providers;
- The extent, type and nature of service provided; and
- Gaps and mismatches in services.

### **2.4 Interviews and focus group discussions with refugees**

32 refugees were individually interviewed. Of these fifteen were AAGHA clients; thirteen were identified by SRC and four by Positive Action in Housing (PAiH). Two focus group discussions were also organised to elicit the experiences of refugees who were living in temporary accommodation. One of these, consisting of nine refugees and two interpreters was organised with the support of SRC. The other, consisting of five refugees, was organised with the support of PAiH. Interpreters facilitated communication with individuals who were not fluent in English.

To encourage participation in the research and to help ensure that the interviews were carried out in a non-exploitative manner, £20 was paid to each participant. Some interviews were held in the premises of SRC and PAiH while others were held in the homes of the participants.

In order to maximise consistency of approach and ensure high quality data between the two consultants, the first four interviews were used to pilot the topic guide and undertaken by the two consultants working together. Following this, the process and outcomes of the interviews were reviewed by the researchers and the topic guide refined and adapted. Interviews almost invariably involved participants in recalling painful and difficult experiences. Since many refugees were reluctant to have their interviews tape-recorded, both consultants took extensive notes of these interviews.

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Areas covered in the interviews included:

- Experiences of accessing current accommodation, including difficulties encountered, availability of information on housing options, possible sources of support and any form of prejudice or discrimination experienced;
- Previous housing history, including any experiences of rooflessness or destitution in the UK, and staying with friends or relatives;
- Routes into and out of homelessness/various strategies employed to deal with difficulties;
- Access to formal and informal sources of support at various stages of their routes into accommodation;
- Nature of formal and informal sources of support (housing/information/financial/healthcare/social and emotional/work and related opportunities);
- Ease of obtaining information and advice. If not easy, what made it difficult? Language barriers/ineligibility for support/long waiting period?
- Duration and usefulness of formal support and sensitivity to special needs relating to gender, disability, cultural or religious background;
- Extent of connectedness to refugee networks/faith groups/wider community;
- Satisfaction with current accommodation and neighbourhood; and
- Aspirations for housing, including perceptions of the private rented sector, preferences for staying in other locations in Glasgow.

The topic guide used for individuals living in permanent accommodation can be found in Appendix 2.

The focus group discussions with individuals living in temporary accommodation covered:

- Experiences of accessing temporary accommodation;
- Advice and assistance with accessing permanent accommodation; and
- Impact of living in temporary accommodation on ability to settle in Scotland.

Appendix 3 provides the topic guide used for individuals living in permanent accommodation.

## **2.5 Refugees participating in the research**

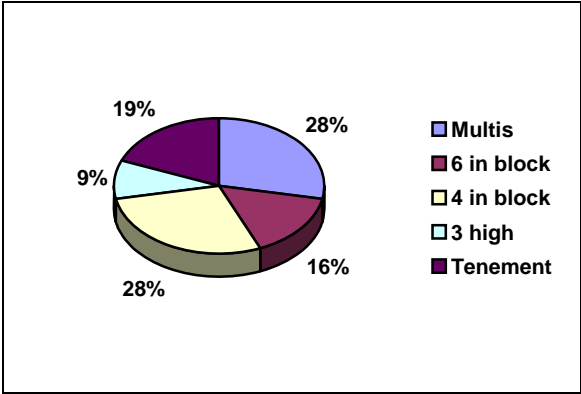
In total, the research drew on the views and experiences of 46 refugees. 27 of them were male and 19 female. The high number of singles in the sample was significantly influenced by the inclusion of AAGHA clients (who, in its first project, were all single). This is evidenced by Tables 2.1 and 2.2 in the Appendices which provide details relating to AAGHA clients and other interviewees, respectively. The ages of the refugees in the sample ranged from 20 to 56. Eight were currently employed while several others had enrolled in training or educational courses. It is worth noting that seven of the eight employed were AAGHA clients. Table 2.3 in the Appendix provides details of refugees who were living in temporary accommodation during the fieldwork stage of the study.

In terms of country of origin, the largest group was from Somalia (11), followed by Iran (7). Others came from a wide range of countries on the African continent (Zimbabwe, Congo, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Eritrea and the Ivory Coast) as well as from Algeria,

Bangladesh, Cameroon, China, Kosovo, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Syria and Turkey. Their length of stay in the UK varied from 2 months to 7 years.

Of the 32 refugees living in permanent accommodation, 30 were living in RSLs. While not all could identify their landlords (and some erroneously identified AAGHA as a landlord), housing providers included GHA, Link, Sanctuary, Yorkhill, Govan, Gorbals, Southside, Cardonald, Queens Cross, Whiteinch and Scotstoun Housing Association and Millbank. Two refugees were living in private lets. The type of permanent accommodation refugees were living in is illustrated in Figure 2.1

**Figure 2.1 Type of permanent accommodation**



19 lived in unfurnished accommodation, 6 in partly furnished accommodation and 6 in furnished accommodation.

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## CHAPTER 3: GAINING ACCESS TO PERMANENT ACCOMMODATION

In this chapter, we trace some of the main routes taken by refugees in gaining access to permanent accommodation, drawing on interviews with 32 refugees. While the interviews focused on their housing histories beginning from the point immediately before and after they had received positive decisions on their asylum application, it is worth pointing out that since their arrival in the UK, it was evident that many individuals had, through no choice of their own, already been through a tortuous immigration system for claiming asylum and support that had involved several changes in accommodation.

The individuals interviewed had mainly either arrived in Glasgow as asylum seekers through the 'no-choice' dispersal arrangements organised by NASS or had voluntarily come to the city after they had received a positive decision on their asylum application. As discussed in Chapter 1, there are essentially two main routes by which refugees can access social housing in Glasgow, either as a Section 5 referral (the homelessness route) or through making applications to individuals RSLs in the city. However, in practice, individuals can be referred by friends or agencies to a number of agencies, which might in turn refer these individuals to the RST or assist them with making applications to RSLs in the city.

### 1. Asylum seekers dispersed to Glasgow

As discussed in Chapter 1, Glasgow Housing Association currently accommodates the majority of asylum seekers supported by NASS and dispersed to Glasgow through a contractual arrangement with Glasgow City Council. Of the 32 individuals who took part in individual interviews in our study, 27 had been dispersed to Glasgow. Of these individuals, 22 (81.4%) reported that they had stayed in previous NASS accommodation converted to GCC Temporary Furnished Flats (TFF), while looking for permanent accommodation.

A few individuals reported that they had had to move to other forms of temporary accommodation while they waited for permanent accommodation. Length of stay in temporary accommodation varied greatly, ranging from a minimum of less than 28 days to a maximum of two years, with 6 individuals reporting that they had stayed in temporary accommodation for more than a year.

Under the New Asylum Model, significant reductions in waiting time have been reported, and decisions immediately communicated to newly recognised refugees through the Sunrise project, which would appear to be a marked improvement on the previous situation. The assignment of a case-worker to each individual under this model is also a step in the right direction as a means of facilitating continuity of support and information provision. While the speeding up of this stage of the process is to be welcomed, it does mean that individuals will have had very little time, typically four weeks, to familiarise themselves with housing and welfare systems and processes in the UK. Apart from dealing with the emotional and social issues associated with the asylum-seeking process, these individuals are faced with the loss of asylum support benefits and the need to quickly move onto accessing mainstream benefits.

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## 2. Refugees moving to Glasgow

Five individuals had of their own accord moved to Glasgow from other parts of the UK, namely Bristol, Coventry, Derby, Huddersfield and Manchester, after they had received a positive decision on their asylum application. There was considerable variation in the routes taken by these individuals but a recurrent theme through the interviews was the decision to move to Glasgow either due to difficulties in finding accommodation in the cities mentioned above and/or a perception that it would be easier to find employment and accommodation in Glasgow. At least three individuals also mentioned that they had decided to move to Scotland due to experiences of racial harassment and a perception that people in Glasgow would be more accepting of them. On arrival in Glasgow, two individuals had presented themselves as homeless at the Hamish Allen Centre (HAC) and then either stayed in hostel accommodation or with friends, two had contacted SRC who had helped them get temporary accommodation in YMCA and the last had stayed with friends.

## 3. Transition stage

The critical and stressful nature of the transition from asylum seeker to refugee status and the need for continuity in terms of information flow and support for newly recognised refugees has been noted in previous reports (Barclay et al, 2003; Netto et al, 2004; Wren, 2004; Phillips, 2006). Major gaps in knowledge and understanding of their position as newly recognised refugees were clearly evident, as well as the realisation that their new position placed considerable demands on them for which they were not equipped:

*'We were really unaware of the kind of support the UK government can offer, and the capacity they can work with us. It would be helpful in that (homeless) situation to know what we can draw on, what actions we can take... We didn't know what kind of information to seek.'*

*'As an asylum seeker, NASS provide all support and do not teach independent living, while as soon as you are a refugee, you have to see to everything and there are so many things to do. It is very confusing.'*

At least three individuals specifically commented on the difficulty of understanding important official letters from the Home Office, including the letter informing them of the outcome of their asylum application, indicating the need for clear communication of information at this stage, with support from interpreting agencies if necessary.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Section 6, agencies with key responsibilities for supporting asylum seekers and refugees in accessing accommodation are the GASSP and the RST. Once asylum seekers who are staying in GASSP flats are given leave to remain, the GASSP team offers the household the option of continuing to stay in the flat by converting the tenancy into a GCC TFF, which allows them to claim housing benefit. The household then awaits a homelessness assessment by GCC's RST. The RST then makes Section 5 referrals to an RSL, which if accepted, leads to a permanent offer of housing for the individual. Households who are currently staying in GASSP accommodation in GHA properties and not sure they want to remain there can also stay in the flat and claim housing benefit by signing up to a temporary occupancy

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agreement, since GHA can substitute other vacant properties to maintain the number of properties agreed with NASS. The household can then discuss with the RST whether or not they want to be assessed as homeless in order to get an offer of permanent accommodation. This arrangement is not available to individuals living in other NASS accommodation provided by YMCA and the Angel Group, providers who have limited stock. The circumstances of these individuals are discussed below.

To some considerable extent, it would appear that measures taken to prevent rooflessness when NASS support comes to an end by enabling individuals staying in GASSP accommodation to sign up to temporary occupancy agreements while they are awaiting an offer of permanent accommodation are working. However, interviews with refugees revealed that this process is not fully understood, with some expressing the view that they appear to have little choice in this regard.

*'She just told me that I must sign an occupancy agreement or I would have to stay with friends, in a hostel or even sleep on the road.'*

The same individual reported that she had been reluctant to stay in the same accommodation because her son had been harassed by other boys of his age, who had tried to burn his ear with a cigarette and sandwich him between the lift doors in the multi-storeyed block in which he had been staying, but this did not appear to be understood by the worker in the statutory agency she was dealing with:

*'She said, 'you people are just like children – you always want that ice-cream.'*

Disturbing experiences of contact with key workers at this stage were also reported by other refugees:

*'A woman at [a statutory agency] said, 'Why stay in Glasgow – you should go down to London. I was really upset and confused, so I just said, 'I will do it on my own.'"*

*'I was treated badly as if I was guilty. I was given no respect. She forced me to make up my mind within 1 to 2 days. She was very rough. She was trying to get me to sign a permanent agreement for a temporary high-rise flat. I asked where it was and realised it was where I had stayed and had been abused in a lift. I said never! The lady was not sympathetic.'*

*'They told me I was homeless and I had to take what was offered...But I was not homeless by birth. It (the remark) was offensive and rude. But I was grateful for getting a house.'*

For these individuals, advice from friends and other advice and information agencies such as SRC Housing Team was crucial in enabling them to identify other sources of support.

It was apparent that many individuals felt insecure and vulnerable at this stage, and it appeared that for many, the reassurance that they sought was not forthcoming:

*'When we became homeless, we were told anything could happen...We would have liked more information on how to avoid getting into horrible places. We didn't know what would happen next, didn't know what to expect. We would like to have been assured that we would get accommodation.'*

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Others felt that more information and support was needed to enable them to fully understand their situation and the processes for seeking accommodation through section 5 referrals as well as through individual applications to RSLs.

*'They need to explain what points you need to score to get houses. They need to explain things to stop people getting frustrated.'*

Yet others felt that they were not respectfully treated in the homelessness assessment process, making it difficult to eliminate possible racial prejudice on the part of at least some homelessness caseworkers.

Interviews with single men highlighted the particular difficulties they experienced in living in hostile hostel environments, often with lack of support from a caseworker:

*'People who are without priority stay in terrible places, (it is) not right not to give (them) a case-worker. People have (the) right to go everywhere in UK, (they) can contribute to this country, so why not (give them a caseworker?)'*

Although Section 5 referrals are prioritised by homelessness legislation, SRC Housing Team accounts suggest that, in some cases, refugees have been helped to find accommodation through RSLs' waiting list ahead of the homelessness route. This indicates that at least in some cases, there have been delays in homelessness assessment and Section 5 referrals. It was difficult to find evidence which either supported or disproved this in refugee accounts, since in many cases, individuals were not certain of which agency had helped them to find their accommodation. It was also clear that some individuals found the acronyms of SRC and RST confusing, possibly due to the use of 'S' and 'R' in both. Individuals sometimes referred to a 'caseworker' who had been instrumental in helping them find accommodation but it was not always clear whether this worker was from SRC or the RST and indeed, these findings might well reflect some degree of joint working between caseworkers at both agencies. This highlights the need for both agencies to more effectively communicate their distinct roles and responsibilities to refugees.

### **3.1 The position of refugees who were living in accommodation provided by the YMCA or the Angel Group**

There was considerable concern expressed amongst service providers over whether all refugees are gaining access to social housing through the homelessness route due to the lack of temporary accommodation. Unlike asylum seekers who are accommodated by GASSP those who are staying in accommodation provided by the Angel Group or the YMCA have to leave their accommodation 28 days after the accommodation provider is notified by BIA of the positive decision. In some cases, it appears that in this time it is not always possible for a homelessness assessment to be carried out or even for a referral to be made to a temporary furnished flat on an emergency basis.

Additionally, individuals who have to leave their accommodation for new temporary accommodation were also reported to have to move to a new Job Centre and in the process, have to resubmit forms for JSA or IS, increasing the length of time without access to benefits. The move from YMCA to other temporary accommodation was also reported to be disruptive for school-going children. The position of individuals who

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have experienced homelessness after leaving accommodation as well as due to other factors is discussed further in Chapter 4.

### **3.2 Referrals from the RST**

Referrals from the RST for Section 5 referrals can be made to any RSL within Glasgow. If accepted, RSLs have six to eight weeks to find accommodation for a Section 5 homeless referral. GCC policy states that all homeless people are entitled to two offers of accommodation deemed to be suitable, but in practice, there is some flexibility around this before refugees lose their priority status due to homelessness:

*'We do come and go because obviously some of the houses are poor, there's a lot of décor required and so on...but we try to come and go as best we can. We try to work with the RST...help each other.'* (LHO)

Interviews with refugees suggest that many feel forced to accept the offers of permanent accommodation made to them due to the length of time they have already been in temporary accommodation, the uncertainty of when another offer might be made and the lack of certainty over whether a future offer might be more desirable. Another factor which pressured individuals into accepting offers of permanent accommodation that they did not feel were suitable was experience of racial harassment in their current accommodation. This included experience of verbal or physical abuse and perceived danger to life while living in hostels and multi-storeyed and other forms of temporary accommodation.

### **3.3 Access to housing advice, information and welfare support**

Chapter 1 discussed the roles and responsibilities of a wide range of agencies, including the role of RSLs (Section 7), other agencies providing advice and information, and agencies providing housing support (Section 8). It is probably fair to report that while refugees cited a wide range of agencies as providing advice and information in terms of dealing with the transition from the end of NASS support and finding permanent accommodation, the distinct roles played by the individual agencies might not have been fully understood. The main agencies identified by refugees as providing advice and information were SRC, AAGHA, PAiH and the RST. Other sources of advice and information cited were social workers, Loretto Care, the Citizens Advice Bureau, the National Children's Charity (NCH), teachers, a few RSLs and the Job Centre.

Drop-in services where refugees could meet with others who had been through a similar process were also reported to be useful for finding out about potential sources of information and support. While the role of friends at this time seemed mainly to sign post individuals to relevant agencies and provide social and emotional support, in some cases, they also provided accommodation and financial support.

Some individuals spoke highly of caseworkers who had been very helpful in enabling them to deal with the procedures for finding accommodation, including claiming housing benefit and informing them about their housing options and areas where other refugees had lived successfully. These included those based at the RST as well as SRC:

*'If (Name of worker) did not help, we don't know what we would have done.'*

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*'I believed he helped me a lot because he knew I was suffering at the time. He was sending me to different housing associations...he was trying hard to get accommodation.'*

*'I had good impression of (agency) from when I first arrived (in Glasgow). I was helpless. They gave me money to buy food so it was a great help at the time.'*

In stark contrast to this, other individuals reported that finding sources of advice and information was not easy and involved significant time lapses:

*'There is little advice from anybody. There is no basic information on where to go to for help...People know that once they get leave to remain they need to look for a house but they don't know the system, the areas, about the points, about how to write an application, so they have less success in getting a house.'*

*'It's a hectic and stressful time. You have to apply for Income Support and Job Seekers Allowance and there is no support for your child until you claim Child Benefit. It's a long procedure'*

Yet other individuals reported that although they had received some advice and information, their success in finding accommodation was largely due to their own efforts and persistence:

*'I feel like I have been left to get on with things. I have to do everything myself. I've got tired waiting for things, but it has made me stronger.'*

*'I did a lot myself. I used to go to housing associations twice a week, as I was desperate to get a house... I made seven to eight applications in different housing associations. There is a very long queue. They were unable to say how long I would wait – they said it could be two to eight years'*

*(Agency) gave me addresses and telephone numbers, then they said I had enough English (to contact housing associations) but I didn't. It stopped me from finding suitable housing.'*

Supporting this, some individuals spoke of major gaps in knowledge and information provision that limited their ability to apply for appropriate accommodation:

*'I didn't know there were other agencies apart from GHA'*

*'If you walk into a housing association, what documents and information do they need?'*

Refugees' lack of knowledge of courses of action to take or choices that they could make was also highlighted by a housing support provider:

*'A lot of people... don't seem to have had...housing advice about what their options are in Scotland. What their options are elsewhere...And its really important because somebody can be signing up to a Scottish secure tenancy, and then think, actually, this isn't what I wanted.'*

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As has previously been highlighted as good practice (Scottish Refugee Integration Forum, 2003), some agencies felt that there was scope for asylum seekers to be better prepared about their future housing options. Existing forms of guidance such as the 'Welcome Pack' produced by the GASSP were acknowledged to be helpful. Another example of good practice identified was the 'Move On Pack' currently being produced by SRC, GHA and Glasgow Homelessness Partnership (GHP) and due to be translated into nine languages and widely disseminated to relevant agencies. However, discussion with a wide range of service providers highlighted the need for both to be evaluated, along with GCC's website and phone-line.

Refugees and service providers concurred in the need for a specialist impartial service to provide advice, information and advocacy to help refugees navigate the system, highlighting the continued need for existing services:

*'There are lots of places but people do not know where to go.'*

*'We need better advice about where to go for advice, free or affordable clothes, furniture, other essentials'*

*'People don't know how to complain if they want to, so they are losing their rights.'*

As an example of good practice and a means of addressing some of these needs, Link HA was currently developing an 18-month project to enhance the provision of advice and information to refugees and migrant workers by housing providers, which would involve refugees as volunteers to the project.

The need for impartial housing advice is likely to increase in importance given the imminent introduction of Choice-based lettings (CBL) among some RSLs, including GHA. The key features of this approach are that vacant properties are advertised and applicants are expected to actively bid for properties, rather than await allocation by an officer.

Asked what kind of information and advice they were looking for, refugees reported that they were in need of information and advice on a broad range of matters, including:

- Their housing rights;
- Housing options in the social and private rented sector;
- How to claim benefits they are entitled to;
- Areas in which accommodation is available;
- Areas where refugees are likely to be safe or free from racial harassment;
- Sources of information and support;
- Procedures for applying for accommodation; and
- Access to furniture in the form of furnished tenancies or furniture packages.

This underscores the need for existing advice and information housing services, such as those provided by SRC, to continue to be supported. For many, getting appropriate accommodation and obtaining financial support were the first priorities:

*'The key was to get a house and a roof over my head. Benefits were also important as I had no money.'*

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However, it was not uncommon for individuals to report delays in claiming a range of benefits, including Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Income Support (IS) and Child Tax Credit (CTC), leading to financial difficulty for individuals and households. This highlights the need for greater continuity in welfare support and information provision and improved sign-posting of services, particularly for those who are not fluent speakers of English.

Information about the possibility of buying property in the future was also seen to be useful. Other individuals felt that they had to deal with broader issues, such as how to access educational and training courses, English improver courses and in other ways, equip themselves for employment:

*'I was looking for everything. How to get a job, how to live independently, how to move house.'*

Barriers to accessing information and advice were reported to include:

- Discriminatory attitudes to homeless people in general;
- Discriminatory attitudes to refugees and lack of knowledge and sensitivity of providers of their rights;
- Lack of preparedness of asylum seekers for dealing with the transition between the end of NASS support and access to permanent accommodation;
- Lack of familiarity on the part of newly recognised refugees on sources of information and advice; and
- Lack of clear referral procedures between agencies.

From the service provider perspective, it was evident that there was a need for better coordination of services to prevent duplication of services, such as assistance with form-filling and sign-posting to relevant agencies. Some degree of coordination seems to have arisen through joint work by caseworkers at the RST and key voluntary sector agencies but it seems apparent that more formalised protocols would ensure a more strategic approach to providing advice and information at this crucial stage.

#### **4. Refugee experiences of finding appropriate accommodation**

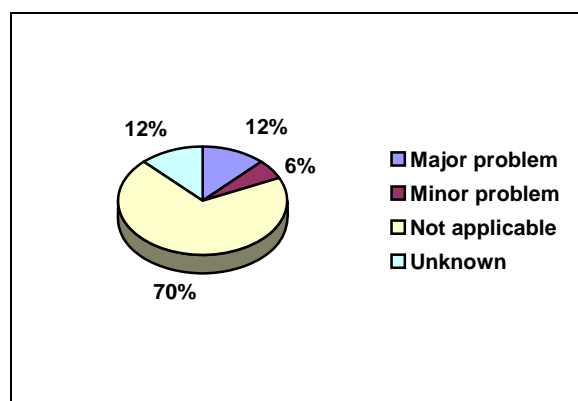
Below some quantitative data relating to the difficulties experienced by refugees in finding accommodation are considered. However, it is important to interpret this data cautiously, given the complexity of the situation that refugees are faced with and their lack of knowledge of the system and their rights to housing. Since this was anticipated in the design of the research, some qualitative responses which sought to provide further insight into their initial response was also elicited. The data below also provides a useful insight into processes and situations that refugees have to deal with which might be considered 'no problem', a 'minor problem' and a 'major problem'. This additional data supports the limitations of quantitative data and the value of a qualitative approach in dealing with potentially different frameworks of reference. In interpreting this data, it is worth bearing in mind that many of these individuals have already faced formidable challenges in their country of origin and in the process of claiming asylum in the UK.

##### **4.1 Affordability of accommodation**

Based on the results presented in Table 3.1 in the appendix and illustrated in Figure 3.1, affordability of accommodation does not appear to be an issue for the majority of

the individuals interviewed. However, these responses were mainly made by individuals who were currently in receipt of housing benefit, some of whom were preparing for employment by going for English classes and educational or training courses. Individuals who wished to work immediately and who would be likely to lose their entitlement to housing benefit if they did so reported that it would be a 'major problem' to find affordable accommodation and seek employment. For instance, one individual who responded that affordability of accommodation was a 'major problem' reported that this had led him to choose an unfurnished flat where rent levels would be lower. Highlighting the problematic nature of interpreting what might be considered to be a 'major' or 'minor' problem, another individual who responded that finding affordable accommodation was a 'minor problem' explained that he received a bursary of £350 but with the rent at £250, he has a limited amount left to cover bills, food, clothes and books. Other individuals reported that they had considered private rented accommodation due to lack of appropriate social housing but found that this was beyond their means, indicating that affordability of accommodation is a key issue.

**Figure 3.1 Finding affordable accommodation**



#### 4.2 Area of accommodation

The results presented in Table 3.2 in the appendix and illustrated in Figure 3.2 below indicate that more than half of the individuals interviewed found that obtaining accommodation in their area of choice was a major problem. This is supported by qualitative data, which illustrate that for many, safety from racial harassment is a key factor in considering housing options:

*'It was really, really difficult to get a place of your choice. You can get one in Sighthill or Govan quickly, but if it's a good area, there is a very long queue.'*

*'They killed a person in front. I was really afraid because I had two boys (aged 16 and 18 years old). I didn't want them out in the dark... Once this happened; I wanted to go somewhere safe.'*

*'I am very, very concerned about safe area... very important to me because you know Glasgow does not like some minority groups... the first offer is not the place I want, but my caseworker said if I refuse, it will take six months to get another offer and it can be any place, anywhere... and then, there can be no more offer, I am afraid for that, I can't stay anymore in the hostel and I need a place to stay... To find accommodation is very hard here, most all of if we are single here.'*

*'I can live in any house. Just the safety is all I need.'*

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Related to the importance of safety from racial harassment and elements of criminality associated with certain areas that figured prominently in these discussions, some refugees also mentioned the usefulness of information relating to the ethnic composition of the area:

*'It is good to know which areas are multicultural, rather than being in areas where there is only one culture.'*

It was clear that for some individuals, the extent to which areas were ethnically mixed was positively associated with perceptions of safety and ease of settlement. Many refugees expressed a preference to be accommodated in areas where there were other refugees, which they perceived to offer safer and more supportive living environments:

*'Make it easier for people to settle. Place refugees in clusters so that they can share problems.'*

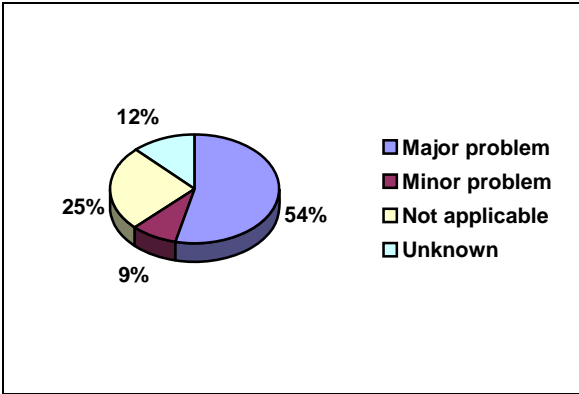
However, others expressed a preference not to be with others from the same cultural background:

*'Don't assume that people want to stay close to people of their own culture. It's better to mix and integrate. You learn English quicker and that is a key at the beginning.'*

And others actually feared for their safety, should their identity be revealed to others from their country of origin. These varying preferences highlight the need for service providers to effectively consult with refugees on preferred areas, within the limitations of available stock.

Illustrating that concepts of 'area' might be differently interpreted from those which housing providers might apply, a few respondents spoke of problems with neighbours which had made them unhappy with their accommodation. It is perhaps worth mentioning the absence of other area-related issues such as proximity to places of worship and shops providing Halal food and other culturally specific requirements in these interviews, in contrast to housing providers' views of other factors which were significant to refugees, namely, proximity to places of worship and for some Muslims, proximity to Halal shops. This suggests that for refugees, such factors were far less important than safety from harassment. In other respects, refugee preferences were reported to be indistinct from the majority population, including access to health care facilities, schools, transport links and proximity to places of work. As with other client groups, shared accommodation was reported to be unpopular.

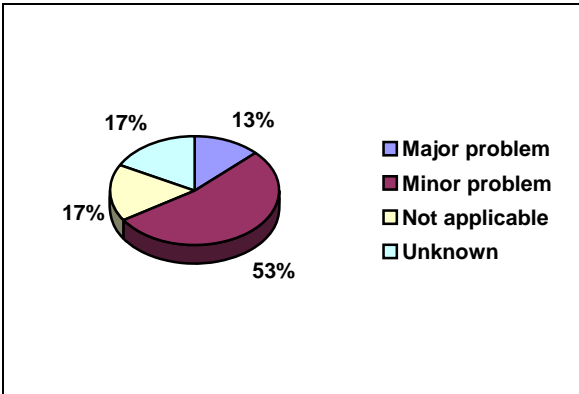
**Figure 3.2 Finding accommodation in area of choice**



**4.3 Condition of accommodation**

Figure 3.3 (based on Table 3.3 in the appendix) indicates that for half of the refugees interviewed, the condition of the flat was either a major or minor problem. Problems cited here included dampness, poor décor, faulty plumbing systems, lack of electrical supply and broken windows. The absence of furniture (‘no carpets, nothing at all’) was a major problem that many individuals had to deal with and is considered in further detail in Chapter 3. Again, an illustration that what might be considered a problem among refugee tenants might differ from the perceptions of other tenants, one individual reported that condition of accommodation was ‘no problem’ but had changed the carpets and wall coverings. Other problems cited here such as the inappropriateness of multi-storeyed accommodation for children (to play safely) illustrate not only the lack of appropriate accommodation for some households, but that refugee tenants and housing providers might have different understandings of what is meant by the ‘condition’ of accommodation.

**Figure 3.3 Finding accommodation in appropriate condition**

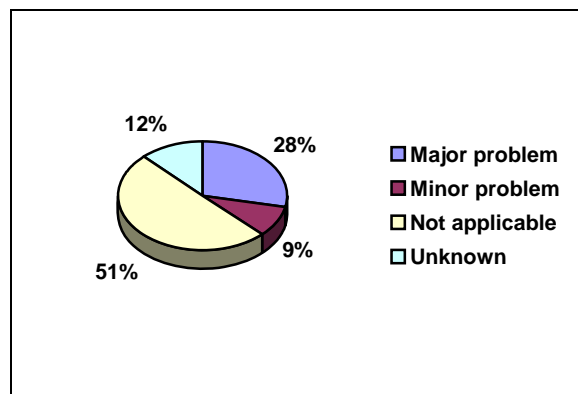


**4.4 Size of accommodation**

Figure 3.4 (based on Table 3.4) illustrates that size of accommodation was a ‘major problem’ for a third of the individuals interviewed. This included a household in which four children (a mix of boys and girls) slept in one room. Two other individuals reported that they were currently living in over-crowded accommodation because they had applied for permanent accommodation before other family members had joined them in the UK and only been allocated accommodation on the basis of the current size of their household. Apart from the general shortage of larger accommodation in

the social rented sector, this particular case highlights the difficulties of homelessness assessments that are based on the current size of the household, despite the imminent arrival of other members of the family in Glasgow due to refugees who have exercised their right to family reunion.

**Figure 3.4 Finding accommodation of adequate size**



It is perhaps worth reporting that the size of accommodation in which a twenty-year old has been sharing with a ten-year old sister for six months was viewed by the parent concerned to be only a 'minor problem.' This indicates both the inadequacy of using quantitative data as the sole basis for estimating the scale of the lack of appropriately sized accommodation in Glasgow as well as the lack of responsiveness of housing providers to young people who are entitled to accommodation in their own right. A few individuals reported that although the number of rooms was adequate for their household, the size of the rooms was too small.

In sum, interviews with refugees revealed that many individuals felt that they had been forced to accept accommodation that they perceived to be less than suitable for a variety of reasons, of which lack of perceived safety from racial harassment was one of the main factors. Two individuals reported that they had been unable to decline offers of accommodation that were clearly not suitable for existing medical conditions. For instance, one individual reported daily bleeding from the ears as a result of living on the higher levels of a multi-storeyed block and another who reported that she had only one kidney and had also been offered permanent accommodation in a multi-storeyed block found going in and out of the accommodation especially difficult when the lift broke down. However, whilst acknowledging the difficulties experienced by these and other individuals, in the view of one refugee, there is also some scope for increasing awareness among refugees of the limited supply of social housing and their willingness to consider possibilities that might not have been their preferred option:

*'Refugees ...need to accept that they should start living in permanent accommodation and progress from there. They have to recognise help offered by agencies.'*

Asked if they had encountered discrimination in seeking appropriate accommodation, many individuals responded negatively and seemed to accept that the difficulties they faced in obtaining appropriate accommodation were at least partly a reflection of the shortage of social housing in Glasgow in areas which they would have preferred. However, some individuals clearly felt aggrieved by the process:

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*'She didn't talk very well to me, she didn't accept (my situation) as housing need. She said a lot of words that is unacceptable...I think it is discrimination.'*

One individual reported that he was not sure whether he had been discriminated against or not as he had not had replies to phone calls or housing applications. Another individual raised the possibility of discrimination in his failed attempts of getting employment after attending a number of interviews but not receiving any feedback from job applications, indicating not only the importance of equal treatment of refugees in recruitment processes but the close relationship between seeking employment and finding permanent accommodation.

## **5. Accommodating refugee preferences and needs**

### **5.1 Sources of referrals for housing providers**

Since housing providers surveyed did not hold statistics relating specifically to refugees, they were not able to ascertain the main source of lets to refugees or the percentage of refugee referrals from all referrals that were actually housed. However, informally two LHOs reported that the main routes through which refugees accessed social housing tended to be homelessness referrals and the clearance programme. Yorkhill HA reported that the main source of referrals for refugees was AAGHA while Link HA reported that this was PAiH, AAGHA and Section 5 referrals. Section 5 refugee referrals to housing providers come from every casework team in the city as well as the RST.

### **5.2 Constraints facing housing providers in accommodating refugee preferences**

Although the numbers of asylum seekers who are receiving positive decisions with leave to remain has fallen significantly in recent years, it is clearly evident from the interview data discussed above that severe constraints remain in terms of accommodating refugees needs and preferences with reference to house type, area preferences and adequate size. Housing providers reported that refugee preferences and needs are considered within the context of competing demands for the stock available such as the clearance programme, other Section 5 referrals and in the case of some providers, the allocation of a proportion of properties to a particular client group, such as elderly people:

*'Some people are realistic and some people, are you know, they are quite aspirational, and it's not realistic in what we can achieve for them. So sometimes it's a kind of reality lesson in what's available in Glasgow.'*

However, in the experience of at least one LHO, refugees are not as aspirational as other tenants and express a desire to live near established communities:

*'Prior to the clearance...we interviewed every tenant. And the vast majority of them are all aspirational and they are wanting the Manswood and Eastwood...but the refugees were wanting further down the street.'*

Major factors which influenced housing providers' ability to accommodate refugee preferences were:

- lack of larger accommodation;
- the programme of clearances;

- 
- the shortage of social housing in desirable areas; and
  - the majority of homeless lets in multi-storeyed accommodation which were of variable quality and structure

### **5.2.1 Lack of larger accommodation**

All housing and support providers interviewed reported an increasing demand for larger accommodation due to the changing demographics of the refugee community with an increasing number of family reunions, posing real challenges:

*'We have been round all the landlords and we've got some really large apartments, 6 or 7, I think we had. But we could fill that so many times over, so, we've actually got a number (of refugees staying in temporary accommodation) just now, that, you know, they just aren't going anywhere...Anything above two-bedroomed is getting more difficult, anything above three- bedroomed is practically impossible to get hold of.'*

In a couple of cases, service providers reported that families have been split into two houses due to lack of appropriately sized accommodation. In other cases, households were reported to have remained in temporary accommodation, again supported by refugee accounts. There was a consensus that there was a need for greater information sharing relating to asylum seeker households (including size of household and any disabilities) between the Home Office, GHA, GCC and other support providers in order to plan for short, medium and long-term accommodation of refugees.

### **5.2.2 Lack of accommodation in perceived safe areas**

While housing and support providers acknowledge concerns of racial harassment among refugees, their ability to place them in perceived safe areas appears to be limited. At least one provider raised a dilemma that arose out of an awareness among minority ethnic communities in general of the potential for racial harassment as well as local knowledge that this was more likely to occur in certain areas:

*'Do we not make an offer on that basis? [Housing estate] is an area where there is a low BME concentration...we don't want to isolate people, ... but what if that is what is available?'*

The same provider acknowledged that there was another area where people from minority ethnic communities were trying to move away from due to experiences of racial harassment. Given the limited availability of social housing, this raised issues of local management as well as the extent to which people are supported once they are rehoused and their ability to cope. In the words of one agency:

*'It's really just a question of what support is there. Are they isolated? Do they know other people in their community? Do they have services about? Have they got services they are tied into? I find that if people do have support and other ties to a particular area, then, normally, it will be successful...I can't guarantee that anyone who we have rehoused will not be completely, you know, target free. But what we do is, it's a question of risk assessment. We have to look at the positives and what the person is like, what they are going to manage ...and the best solution for that particular family with what resources you have.'*

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### **5.2.3 Impact of the clearance programme**

Since GHA gives a higher priority to clearance cases than homelessness cases, the extent to which asylum seekers and refugees are residing in areas affected by the clearance programme has a significant impact on the future housing prospects of refugees. Where asylum seekers and refugees are present in clearance areas, they are moved along with others to other accommodation either locally or outwith the area. Where they are under-represented in such areas, the allocation of housing to refugees by providers involved in the programme is likely to be disproportionately low. While data relating to asylum seekers is available, it is difficult to track the movement of those who have obtained refugee status. It is thus not possible to ascertain the extent to which refugees will be able to benefit from involvement in this programme. Clearance re-housing policy would certainly provide some indication as to whether refugees are treated equitably and should be publicised to help ensure greater transparency.

### **5.2.4 Concerns about accommodating refugees on the part of housing providers**

Asked whether they had any concerns about accommodating refugees, housing providers reported that generally, these had decreased dramatically since the arrival of asylum seekers in the early stages of the dispersal programme. Training for staff (including that provided by the Scottish Refugee Council) on the current legislation, the rights of refugees and changes in Home Office policies and practices were reported to have helped in improving capacity in dealing with refugees. Initial hostility from other tenants was also reported to have decreased, with increased understanding that refugees were not privileged in any way. A couple of providers attested to established links with community groups which help support refugees and other minority ethnic communities. The need to establish effective mechanisms to communicate with refugees was also highlighted, for instance, in relation to the potential for flooding in high rise flats due to cultural differences in bathing and washing habits.

## **6. The role of public bodies in increasing refugee access to social housing**

The slow progress of the CHR in Glasgow and consequently, the difficulties faced by refugees and other potential applicants in accessing housing through applying to a number of individual RSLs has already been discussed in Chapter 1. Our sample of housing providers interviewed varied in terms of the measures they took to actively promote their existence in general, and to BME groups and refugees in particular. Some maintained a community presence through local events, open days, organised activities and through advertising in publications and electronic mailing lists. Organisational newsletters were commonly used to communicate information to tenants and the wider community. There was some targeted activity of certain areas to refugees and other minority ethnic communities but this tended to be the exception

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rather than the norm. Combined with the delay in the introduction of the CHR, the lack of a targeted approach to publicise vacancies and lets by RSLs highlights the importance of the role played by advice and information agencies in assisting refugees with applications to individual RSLs.

## **6.1 Ethnic monitoring**

Chapter 1, Section 3.2 emphasised the importance of ethnic monitoring of lets, applicants, waiting times and other aspects of service provision to ensure equality of access for all sections of the population. Earlier research based on information collected by the then Scottish Executive from local authorities in the financial year 2002/03 had found that generally Scottish Local Authorities had adapted well to the requirement to collect ethnicity data, with 92% of local authorities recording the ethnic origin details of homeless applicants (Netto et al, 2004). However, it is worth noting the major omission of ethnically disaggregated data relating to applicants and lets in the statistics published by Communities Scotland based on RSL returns. The reasons for this are unclear but of concern given the importance of transparency in public reporting of applicants and lets, and the positive, enforceable duty placed on public organisations by the Race Relations Amendment (2001) Act to publish data relating to the effectiveness of their race equality schemes.

Our review of a sample of RSLs found that a few of them held ethnically disaggregated data related to housing applications and lets though not of waiting times, which was reported to be difficult to collect and of limited value, since it was not possible to tell from such data whether applicants had moved into other accommodation or not. The profile of housing applicants in terms of type and size of accommodation preferred is ethnically monitored and provided by GHA on a monthly basis for management LHOs. Although such data is undoubtedly valuable, the usefulness of such data could be substantially increased if more effort could be invested into collecting ethnicity data and reducing the high proportion of entries that are currently classified as 'unknown.'

While ethnically disaggregated data relating to waiting times and lets is of value in indicating the extent to which the RSLs (and LHOs) are accessible to individuals from BME communities, it is not possible to fully discern the position of refugees from such data. Hence, it is not possible to ascertain the proportion of refugees who applied for accommodation out of the total number of applicants or the proportion of refugee tenants out of the total number of tenants. This is of concern given the difficulties faced by this client group in finding permanent accommodation as discussed above, and their potential vulnerability once they settle into permanent accommodation, which will be further discussed in Chapter 5. However, low numbers of people from BME communities among the lets of individual RSLs would indicate either low or no refugee tenants, while high numbers of people from these communities might indicate that it is likely that refugee households are also represented.

## **6.2. Increasing refugee access to affordable housing: access to the private rented sector**

Only two of the 32 refugees interviewed were living in the private rented sector. Both reported that they had felt forced to move into the private rented sector due to the lack of appropriate accommodation, despite the relative lack of security of tenure and higher levels of rent. As discussed earlier, a few other individuals interviewed reported that they had investigated options in the private rented sector and had been forced to

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rule them out due to levels of rent that would not be covered by housing benefit. These findings suggest that there is perhaps more scope for referrals to an existing rent deposit scheme to facilitate access to the private rented sector for larger families or people who want to live in a particular area. While some of the factors underlying the reported low take-up of this scheme by refugees might be attributed to the desire for permanency afforded by social housing, the reasons underlying this merit closer examination and the potential for increasing access to private rented accommodation through these means, particularly for larger families, should be seriously considered. Rent deposit schemes have been found to be an effective means of increasing choice of affordable housing for homeless households and others on a low income both in Scotland and England (Pawson et al, forthcoming, 2007a). The value of access to rent deposit schemes in assisting refugees to move on has already been documented by the Scottish Refugee Council and Shelter (2001).

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## CHAPTER 4: EXPERIENCES OF LIVING IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION AND HOMELESSNESS

This chapter provides ‘snap-shots’ of the experiences of individuals living in temporary accommodation as well as other episodes of homelessness experienced by refugees. The former is based on data gathered through two focus group discussions with individuals living in temporary accommodation while the latter also draws on individual interviews with refugees who reported that they had experienced homelessness in the form of rooflessness or being forced to stay with friends or relatives due to the lack of any other option. It is worth adding that many individuals who were currently living in temporary accommodation had experienced homelessness in the sense of rooflessness or forced stay with friends before accessing temporary accommodation.

### 1. Experiences of living in temporary accommodation

Periods of stay in temporary accommodation ranged from a few months to six years, with one individual reporting that he was currently living in his car. The two discussions revealed depressingly similar issues. One of the dominant themes was recurrent experiences of racial harassment which had previously resulted in changes in accommodation and heavily influenced choices relating to future accommodation. Individuals currently living in previous NASS accommodation converted to GCC TFFs as well as those living in hostel accommodation also reported a fear of criminality and harassment, with one individual reporting that her son had been assaulted twice:

*‘Young children are not kind to other people...maybe because we are black people. The children are afraid to go out.’*

*‘There is a drug dealer in the block, too many noises from people coming in all the time...very dangerous, very scared, very scared.’*

*‘The area is very dangerous...there is broken glass in many houses.’*

Many of these individuals reported that although they had received offers of accommodation, these had been located in areas that they felt they could not accept (including areas where they were currently staying), due to the threat to personal safety and danger to their lives. In the words of three individuals:

*‘I will not be alive to get another flat.’*

*‘So many times I told them, I am not looking for posh place, just safe place.’*

*‘Security is the main issue. If there is a bad attitude towards foreigners, I don’t want to stay there...In my current area, there is a lot of vandalism... Area is very important. I want to feel safe and secure in a good area.’*

Others complained of over-crowding in their current accommodation. For instance, one married couple was sharing a one-bedroom flat with a relative in one household and two teenagers (a boy and a girl) were sharing a single bedroom in another. Accommodation with two or more bedrooms in safe areas was reported to be very difficult to find, as was special needs accommodation, which took into account needs related to disability or medical conditions. Others complained of poor living conditions such as draughts, lack of heating and dampness.

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Considerable frustration and anxiety was expressed relating to uncertainty around the length of stay in temporary accommodation. Individuals reported that stay in temporary accommodation posed challenges to sending children to school and to pursuing educational courses or employment opportunities themselves. In addition to presenting practical difficulties, living in temporary accommodation also had a psychological impact on individuals:

*'It makes it difficult to find employment, if you are not happy, it is difficult to go for interviews.'*

Other individuals complained of social isolation, relating fear to going out of their accommodation to their ability to form friendships with local people. Single men who were living in hostel accommodation after they had received a positive decision on their asylum application spoke of their hopelessness and despair in finding permanent accommodation, due to not being considered to be in priority need.

Several individuals reported that they had taken some measures to investigate options for moving into permanent accommodation other than the 'homelessness route', such as filling in application forms for other RSLs, with the support of agencies such as PAiH and SRC Housing Team. Others reported that they had investigated the possibility of private rented accommodation but found either that their benefits could not cover rent levels or that landlords did not wish to have tenants supported by benefits. Difficulties in claiming housing benefit were also reported. Yet others reported that they had tried to seek employment but could not find jobs which would cover the rent. Future employment prospects also influenced decision-making processes:

*'It has to be affordable for when I get a job.'*

Asked what they felt would be helpful to them to move into permanent accommodation, issues related to supply were highlighted, including the need for new build with appropriately sized accommodation, reductions in waiting time or at least estimates of waiting time and help with finding employment and appropriate educational courses.

## **2. Experiences of homelessness**

Although all refugees are recognised as homeless by legislation once they have received a positive decision on their asylum application and presented as homeless, as many as ten refugees also reported instances of homelessness in the sense of being forced to sleep rough or stay with friends due to lack of any other alternative accommodation. Periods of severe hardship were reported by individuals who had slept rough.

Others who had experienced homelessness included single young men who had stayed in hostel accommodation and found that they could no longer tolerate the situation:

*'It is difficult to get points for housing if you are a single man. I had to be in the hostel to get the points, but I could not stay longer as it was so bad.'*

Individuals interviewed in this research concurred with those interviewed in earlier research (Netto et al, 2004) in reporting the hostility of the hostel environment, in

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which they were in close proximity with individuals who had issues with substance abuse and were a visible target for racial harassment. Many had used the place as simply a place to stay at night but even this proved to be too difficult for some individuals who left to stay with friends.

Danger to personal safety was also the precipitating factor for one individual who had left permanent accommodation when he realised that he resided near someone from his country of origin whom he perceived to be a threat to his safety in this country. This individual reported that although he had been offered hostel accommodation while new accommodation was found for him, he felt that he could not tolerate living in that environment either.

Others who had experienced homelessness included two individuals who had stayed in YMCA accommodation but who had to leave at short notice. They reported that since they had received no other offer of temporary accommodation, they had been forced to stay with friends.

For the majority of the individuals concerned, routes out of homelessness was crucially dependent on friends or relatives who were able to identify sources of advice and information and support such as SRC Housing team and Sunrise project, PAiH and the RST to resume the process of applying for accommodation. For some of these individuals, lack of fluency in English posed an additional challenge to finding alternative accommodation.

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## CHAPTER 5: MEETING SUPPORT NEEDS

This chapter discusses the support needs of refugees who have moved into permanent accommodation by drawing on interviews with individual refugees. As discussed in Chapter 1, Section 8, it is important to differentiate between the wide range of agencies which provide services to refugees. These include the RST and the other eight community casework teams which carry out homelessness assessments and plan care/support packages to meet identified support needs. Where significant and complex needs are identified, the RST reports that it would liaise with social work colleagues. In other cases, support providers such as Loretto Care, Gowrie, Scottish Association of Mental Health (SAMH), Aspire and Unity are contracted by GCC through a tendering exercise to provide support for six weeks after move in. The nature of housing support provided covers a wide range of services as defined under Regulation 3 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (Housing Support Services) Regulations 2002. These include general counselling and support; assistance with the maintenance of the security and safety of the dwelling; the use of domestic equipment and appliances; arranging minor repairs and servicing of domestic equipment and appliances; providing life skills training and assisting with personal budgeting and debt counselling.

Other agencies, such as SRC and PAiH are funded from a range of sources, including the Scottish Government and charitable trusts, to provide advice and information to refugees and also make referrals to other agencies, where appropriate. Advice and information agencies are guided by a quality framework developed by HomePoint, the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers. Uniquely, AAGHA provides a range of linked services, including stock procurement, tenant selection, settlement and housing support and is tenuously funded through its stock procurement service level agreement with its partner RSLs and ad hoc funding of its annual deficits, currently by the Equalities Unit of the Scottish Government.

### **1. Sources of advice, information and support**

The agencies most commonly cited by refugees as sources of support were SRC, AAGHA, the RST and the Job Centre. Other sources of support cited to a lesser extent were Positive Action in Housing, RSLs, Health care centres and teachers at colleges. Additionally, the following were each cited by at least one individual: SAMH, Loretto Care, Compass and churches. Satisfaction levels of the main agencies cited are discussed below, but caution should be exercised in interpreting this data since they relate to agencies which interviewees themselves identified as having provided support. Since the number of individuals who cited various agencies varied, it is not possible to compare the satisfaction levels of individuals with different agencies. However, the qualitative data discussed here does give some indication of aspects of the service which individuals found to be helpful as well as aspects which were less than helpful.

#### **1.1 Satisfaction levels with the RST**

Satisfaction levels with the RST were mixed. Of the 21 individuals who cited the service as a source of information, two individuals reported that they were 'very satisfied' with the service while nine reported that they were 'quite satisfied' amounting to nearly half:

*'Caseworker was good ...and could speak (language).'*

Four individuals reported that they were ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied,’ while five individuals reported that they were ‘quite dissatisfied’ and one that she was ‘very dissatisfied’.

**Table 5.1 Satisfaction with the RST**

Satisfaction level	Numbers	Percentages
Very satisfied	2	9
Quite satisfied	9	43
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	4	19
Quite dissatisfied	5	24
Very dissatisfied	1	4
Total	21	100

Aspects of the service perceived to be less than helpful were the need to make an appointment, which posed difficulties for individuals who were not fluent in English, the lack of contact with individuals, the length of waiting time involved, and in a few cases, what was perceived as a lack of respect;

*‘If I had any questions, I had to make an appointment and it all took time. Their process took time.’*

*‘I never got to talk to anyone. Just filled in the application but I would have liked to discuss the application with someone.’*

*‘Their attitude could have been better. They said abruptly, ‘Do you want it (the house) or not?’*

While some negative experiences of the service provided are inevitably related to lack of full understanding of the homelessness assessment and referral role of the RST, the pressurised housing market and the shortage of social housing in desirable areas, it appears that there is scope for the adoption of a more customer-friendly approach to individuals.

## **1.2 Satisfaction with SRC**

Satisfaction levels with the Housing Team, Sunrise project, and other staff in SRC were high, with 22 individuals citing that they were receiving support from this agency. Table 5.2 shows that of these, more than two thirds (15 out of 22 or 68%) reported that they were ‘very satisfied’ with the service and six ‘quite satisfied’ (27%), with only individual reporting that she was ‘very dissatisfied’ with the service.

Some comments serve to illustrate aspects of the service which individuals found to be helpful, indicating that a respectful attitude and person-centred approach, the provision of timely information combined with sign-posting to relevant agencies and continuity of support were highly valued:

*‘Kind staff. Respectful. A lot of staff have been a refugee so they can empathise with the situation.’*

*'Lots of information and support. I went there from day one. They directed me where to go. I still call them if I have a problem. For example, my daughter needs to find a GP.'*

*'I went to SRC just for the Sunrise Group. A few months ago I was really confused. I was worried about housing, benefits and childcare...A lady at Sunrise talked me through all the problems I might have. It was very helpful.'*

*'I am shy – sometimes I will get a friend to explain letters to me but if I use Sunrise, I don't need to bother friends all the time.'*

**Table 5.2 Satisfaction with SRC**

Satisfaction level	Numbers	Percentages
Very satisfied	15	68
Quite satisfied	6	27
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		
Quite dissatisfied		
Very dissatisfied	1	4
Total	22	100

### 1.3 Satisfaction with the Job Centre

As reflected in Table 5.3, satisfaction levels with the Job Centre were mixed. Of the ten individuals who reported that they had used the service, one individual was 'very satisfied', three 'quite satisfied', three 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and two 'quite dissatisfied' while one did not respond. The positive experience of one individual was related to several opportunities for placements and developing confidence, help with CV preparation and interview techniques which all proved to be very helpful. In contrast, another individual reported that more individualised support would have been beneficial, suggesting mixed levels of delivery on the ground:

*'All they were interested in was that you got a job and came off benefits. They didn't care what job. They didn't study my skills that much. They didn't listen to what I wanted. We are starting life all over again, so you want to do something that you will like doing.'*

**Table 5.3 Satisfaction with the Job Centre**

Satisfaction level	Numbers	Percentages
Very satisfied	1	11
Quite satisfied	3	33
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3	33
Quite dissatisfied	2	22
Very dissatisfied		
Total	9	100

### 1.4 Satisfaction with AAGHA

Satisfaction levels with the services provided by AAGHA were very high, with nine individuals reporting that they were 'very satisfied' with the service and one 'quite

satisfied.’ Comments made by individuals generally related to the helpfulness and friendliness of the support worker:

*‘(Name of worker) dealt with everything. When I moved in everything was there except a fridge and TV.’*

*‘She helped us with everything – with house, activities, work, and she is a very nice person.’*

*‘(Name of worker) is a really nice person. She gave me all the help I needed. She’s not just professional – she is really friendly, I could ask her anything.’*

**Table 5.4 Satisfaction with AAGHA**

<b>Satisfaction level</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Very satisfied	9	90
Quite satisfied	1	10
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		
Quite dissatisfied		
Very dissatisfied		
Total	9	100

### **1.5 Difficulties in accessing support**

Difficulties in identifying sources of support were confirmed by both English-speaking and non-English speaking individuals who reported considerable difficulties in knowing where to go to for help:

*‘There are a lot of places that help people like SRC. For example, the Citizens Advice Bureau. But nobody knows about it. If you have a problem you need to know where to turn to’*

*‘It was a lot easier for me because I speak English. I could even make calls by telephone. It would be a big problem for a non-English speaker. NASS does everything for you, then everything changes very quickly. It’s okay if you have English, but not if you don’t.’*

Drop-in services such as those provided by SRC were reported to be particularly helpful for individuals who could not speak English fluently and had difficulty conversing or making appointments over the telephone. However, the service was not universally known among all the individuals interviewed in the initial stages of their arrival to Glasgow, suggesting that there is scope for SRC to more effectively publicise its services, taking into account language barriers which might inhibit access.

## **2. Move on and housing support**

Following sign-up for the tenancy, the main form of support provided by tenants by housing providers is in the form of ‘settling in visits’ to all new tenants after an average of 6 weeks, followed by annual visits. Housing officers might offer some support and are trained to give advice and information but are not trained to provide any specialist support for refugees. Tenants who are identified as needing support in claiming housing benefit might be referred to welfare benefits advisers and those who need

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support with money management to a money management project. However, interviews with individual refugees evidenced cases of poverty and mounting debt which could potentially lead to rent arrears and eviction, indicating that many individuals could not readily access these services. For instance, two individuals who were interviewed reported arrears since they had been charged rent for the accommodation they had left as well as the one they were moving into. Other individuals reported encountering poor housing conditions such as dampness, lack of heating, broken windows and faulty plumbing.

## **2.1 Support with furnishing accommodation**

Support with furnishing the accommodation was identified by refugees as one of the main forms of support they received (the other main form of support received was claiming benefits). In many cases, the amount received through community care grants had helped individuals to obtain at least basic furnishing such as carpets or white goods for unfurnished or partly furnished flats, which was often supplemented by buying cheap furniture locally. However, it was common for individuals to wait up to 6 weeks to obtaining these grants. Given that the majority of the individuals had, as asylum seekers, live in furnished accommodation, completely bare flats were unfortunately, not a rare experience:

*'There was nothing, there were no carpets, nothing.'*

*'Main difficulty is no furniture in the house...big problem at the moment.'*

Adding to these difficulties, individuals experienced uncertainty over whether their application for community care grants would be successful and whether they should allocate limited resources to obtaining furniture independently. It was also reported that a local project that had helped refugees to furnish their apartments had unfortunately run out of funding. Many individuals regretfully reported that they realised that they had spent more than was necessary from their limited resources to furnish their flats due to lack of knowledge of where to go to obtain affordable furniture and furnishings:

*'I paid £560 for carpets but I could have paid £120.'*

While furnished flats might be available for newly recognised refugees who choose to stay on in NASS accommodation through a business arrangement with GHA's furnished flats section, GHA's *Asylum Seeker and Refugee policy* recognises that it is important that refugees are aware of other permanent housing options. Rent levels for these flats are significantly higher and can lead to a poverty trap should individuals choose to seek employment and cease receiving benefits. Tenants have to maintain the furniture for at least 4 years, after which they are allowed to keep the furniture and given the option of getting a new package.

There is another route for accessing furniture through the homelessness referral by GCC, which enables RSLs (including GHA) to access essential furniture grants for 'basic packages' of carpets, curtains, beds and white goods. AAGHA too has used this extensively in the past years, to avoid the need for formidable service charges and the likelihood of a poverty trap, but its continuation in the current year (2007) is uncertain. However, apart from GHA (through its furnished flat sections), RSLs have been slow to take up the furniture grant. 242 grants were taken up by GHA and only 17 other grants were taken up - mainly by AAGHA - through the West of Scotland Housing Association Forum (GCC, 2006b) There is clearly a need for supporting and facilitating

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access to furniture grants and local furniture recycling projects, and for making the terms of existing furniture packages more attractive and affordable to refugees.

## **2.2 Support with connecting and using utilities**

The other area in which significant difficulties were experienced was in connecting and using utilities. Interviews revealed instances in which refugee tenants had experienced delay in getting connected to electricity, and indeed, one individual reported that even after she had initiated contact with the energy provider, only emergency electrical supply was established, which did not cover heating. Other individuals reported that they had had difficulty converting pre-paid utility systems into more affordable alternatives. The problems faced by these individuals were compounded by difficulties in contacting the landlord (exacerbated in some cases, by language differences) or the lack of responsiveness of repairs services or fuel providers. Yet others reported that they had got into debt with electricity bills. The following comments highlight the specific need to counter fuel poverty and increase access to advocacy services for utilities services, as well as the more general need to be sensitive to 'hidden needs':

*'When someone's come from a NASS flat and not paid any bills, they have no idea how much they are going to be spending in a week, in a month...that's one real big difficulty...they just don't expect to pay that much for electricity. And some people can get themselves in real trouble with it, and really quite stressed.'* (Support provider)

*'People need to understand hidden needs. They (landlord) did not know that I had gone ten days without electricity (before she raised it). In order to help they really need to understand needs ...Talk to refugees more about their needs and problems, their real needs. They (agencies) are not doing that enough.'*

## **2.3 Support with mental health problems and other special needs**

All the support providers interviewed were aware of significant gaps in support, among newly recognised refugees, including a disproportionately high number of individuals with mental health problems whose needs might not be assessed while they are awaiting the outcome of their asylum application. Some of the refugee tenants interviewed were clearly still coping with the trauma of forced migration, the asylum-seeking process and separation from family. It is recognised that newly recognised refugees need to be in a stable condition before they can make decisions about moving on:

*'What we find is that asylum seekers don't always get the services they need as asylum seekers. So they may be entitled to aspects of care or health assessment and sometimes these community care assessments are not taking place at the right time... We find that people with considerable difficulties that sometimes that hasn't been addressed and that's something that we need to look at and make referrals'*

There is some recognition within the RST that for many refugees, including those with mental health issues or physical disabilities, the support packages provided by agencies such as Loretto Care and commissioned by GCC over a period of six weeks after moving into the temporary furnished flat, are insufficient and that there is a need to formalise on-going post-tenancy support. This highlights the importance of ensuring that support needs of refugees are identified and arrangements made for continuing

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support at the point of sign-off, including through the formalisation of adequate ongoing post-tenancy support and advocacy services, where appropriate. Other refugee tenants appeared to be isolated from informal social networks, and struggling to independently cope with their new circumstances. Many were struggling to get accustomed to their new environment as well as attend training or educational courses.

## **2.4 Racial harassment**

A major area of concern among refugees was the potential for racial harassment which unfortunately for many had arisen out of personal experiences of verbal or physical abuse to themselves or their children and damage to property. The severity of harassment experienced varied but a recurrent theme was not just the disturbance of peace or the annoyance of being subjected to anti-social behaviour but actual fear for their lives or those of their children. At least one housing provider acknowledged that racial harassment was a regular occurrence, mostly in the form of verbal aggression, and there was likely to be significant under-reporting:

*'Folks seem to expect this and will put up with this for a long time until it impacts on their kids.'*

Although there is increased awareness among housing providers of the need to effectively tackle racial incidents, which have been backed by protocols developed within a framework for tackling anti-social behaviour, there still appears to be serious gaps between policy and practice. For instance, some housing providers reported working to the standards set by the Multi-Agency Racial Incidents Monitoring (MARIM) group, while GHA's Neighbourhood Relations Policy forms the policy framework within which LHOs address racial harassment and other forms of antisocial behaviour. The latter policy is supported by a toolkit developed by GHA, *LHO Procedures and referral manual: toolkit for dealing with anti-social behaviour* and outlines a staged, escalatory victim-centred process for dealing with complaints of racial harassment beginning with interviews with the victim and warnings to the perpetrator, and proceeding to further action and possible eviction in the event of further incidents of harassment. While rehousing procedures for refugees were reported by all housing providers to be no different from those for other tenants, complaints of racial harassment could potentially lead to a management transfer. It was noted that there was scope for the introduction of 'fast track' management transfers and for management transfers in general to be used more often as a means of supporting victims of harassment.

In stark contrast to the existence of clear protocols and policies, many refugee tenants reported that they had felt unsupported when they had experienced incidents of harassment. Incidents of harassment included rude gestures, verbal abuse, physical attacks, damage to property and attacks on children by other children. In some cases, this involved the use of weapons such as knives and being trapped in lifts. In a few cases, individuals had been supported by a move to other property but in other cases, refugee tenants spoke of having made complaints to concierges or the police and not getting any feedback or indication that action had been taken.

More broadly, refugee tenants who had experienced racial harassment felt that more work should be undertaken to alter societal attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees:

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*'The general public should be more understanding of asylum seekers and refugees. They should understand where we have come from and why.'*

*'Educate children as to why asylum seekers and refugees are here so that they do not harass them.'*

*'Improve welcome and avoid racism.'*

*'Provide more assurance to refugees and be more accepting of them. Refugees are often well-educated and Scotland can benefit from them.'*

## **2.5 Entry into the labour market**

Many refugees interviewed were interested in pursuing English improver courses and relevant educational and training courses to build on existing skills and/or acquire new ones. As discussed earlier, their experiences of Job Centre support varied from a person-centred approach towards attempting to match individual knowledge, skills and experiences to appropriate training and educational courses and preparing individuals for employment (for example, by offering assistance with putting together CVs) to cursory assessments of their abilities, indicating mixed delivery on the ground. There is clearly scope here for supporting refugees' efforts to find employment through more specialised Job Centre support which will help them to widen their housing options and build a secure future.

In this context, it is worth noting the strikingly higher percentage of AAGHA clients who were employed (46.7%) compared to other refugees (5.8%) (see Chapter 1, Tables 1 and 2). This would suggest that the longer-term support provided by AAGHA, including assistance with employment, has had an impact in facilitating refugees' entry into the labour market. Alternatively, an expanded model of tenancy sustainment which allows for person-centred support to help prepare and equip tenants to take up employment, when they have successfully completed the move-in process should be considered (Lomax and Netto, 2006). It is also worth noting that AAGHA's Foyer scheme indicated greater experience among refugees in following up further education opportunities or immediately taking up employment than the offer of trades-based work experience.

## **2.6 Other support needs**

A wide range of other support needs were identified, some of which were directly related to refugees' ability to sustain their tenancies in the short-term, including:

- Need for increased support with money management, debt advice and welfare rights;
- Lack of understanding of systems, including those relating to housing benefit, rent arrears and employment;
- The need for sensitivity in responding to the situation of refugees who have been accommodated in close proximity to others with whom they might have been in conflict in their countries of origin; and
- Support in liaising with housing providers.

Other needs were more general, affecting access to a wide range of services and refugees' ability to prepare for employment, including:

- Need for effective communication and language support, including the need to distinguish between languages read and spoken by refugees;

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- Knowledge and orientation to the local area;
  - Difficulties in gaining access to further education and English classes; and
  - Need for specialist Job Centre advice in addressing refugee issues.

Interviews with refugees revealed one individual who had received some support from Loretto Care and others who had received some assistance from their landlord in connecting utilities or claiming benefits. A few others reported receiving a limited amount of language support, help with getting children into school and accessing health services. However, it was evident that many of the needs identified above were currently not being met, with individuals mostly being left to get on without support.

While SRC, PAiH and other agencies assist clients who contact them, these agencies do not provide services within the home for their clients, which limit the extent to which they can be helped. Highlighting the mismatch between the type of support available and the support needed, one support provider said:

*'They (the majority of service providers) support from a desk in an office and they don't go out anywhere. They can't physically go out and see if there is a problem. If someone had a language problem and their, say washing machine broke down but you couldn't understand how it was broken... There's a huge amount (refugee tenants have) to learn.'*

The notable exception to this is the service provided by AAGHA to the refugee tenants residing in the stock that the agency has procured for Yorkhill, Link and Sanctuary Scotland Housing Associations.

Although some housing providers notify concierges of refugees moving in, and possible language barriers among tenants, it appears that there are significant gaps in support after the move-in period which could pose a serious challenge for tenancy sustainment. There was some acknowledgement among housing providers that information and support needs might not be identified, unless refugees were proactive in contacting landlords and articulating their needs, and that for some individuals, language differences might pose a barrier in doing so. There is scope for incorporating specific requirements within 'settling in' visits to record the contacts made in this way, including any specific needs which were identified and actions taken in response to these needs, and for this procedure to be monitored and evaluated.

There was some acknowledgement among service providers that the needs of this client group in terms of gaining access to essential services and integrating into the local community were not currently being met and that facilitating access to sources of local sources of support would be useful. Some of the sources of support cited by housing providers were the Gorbals Integration Network, Framework for Dialogue, the Peer Advocacy group in the Delphi Centre and events organised by SRC's Community Development team.

Overall, the picture which emerges is one in which the level of support available to refugees, apart from those supported by AAGHA and for a limited period of time, by support providers commissioned by GCC, is piecemeal and fragmented. There was some awareness among support providers of the need for a more person-centred approach to assessment and post-tenancy support, beyond what was currently available and for closer liaison with housing providers. There is clearly scope here for the further development of specialist tenancy sustainment packages to meet their needs within the short, medium and long-term.

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### **3. Relationship between housing and support providers**

The West of Scotland Refugee Forum (WSRF) Housing and Welfare subgroup which consists of many agencies meets on a regular basis to consider how the needs of refugees might be met through improved joint working, information sharing and communication at an operational level. Section 5 homelessness protocols are in place between the RST and many RSLs in the city. While the original source of the referral is the RST, these might be implemented by any of the community casework teams. Yorkhill, Link and Sanctuary Scotland HAs have service level agreements with AAGHA, which provides a range of fixed-term tenancy support services to supplement the landlord role of the two associations. Positive Action in Housing has formalised nominations arrangements with a few housing associations which allow direct referrals to be made.

Some housing providers reported being in regular communication with a range of related organisations including Gorbals Integration Network, MARIM group, Tenants' Organisations, PAiH and SRC. While the WSRF provides a forum for housing and support providers and other key agencies to share information and good practice at an operational level, there seem to be few, if any mechanisms, for coordinated and strategic planning of refugee housing at a strategic level. There was some recognition that good quality information about the presence of refugee needs and issues was essential for community profiling and neighbourhood planning. There was also a view that there was a greater role for support providers who were specialised in dealing with issues faced by refugees and who could operate across the city in place of the current provision of post-tenancy support by generic support providers that is allocated on a geographical basis.

### **4. Tenant participation**

Since the housing providers have no mechanisms for identifying refugees among their tenants and are not clear of the proportion of their tenants who are refugees, there are real difficulties here in terms of encouraging tenant participation. There seemed to be no mechanisms for consulting with refugees except on an individual basis. Specific mechanisms for encouraging tenant participation among refugees, including in the development of their support plans, as is the case with AAGHA, appeared to be rare. The same agency reported that one of its clients was part of its management committee and that several had joined as stakeholders. Two housing providers reported that minority ethnic communities were represented on management committees, but this did not include refugees. In one organisation, tenant participation was encouraged by a dedicated tenant participation officer and increases in membership of the organisation were perceived to include refugees. In another, invitations are sent to all tenants to join the tenants' forum but the extent to which this approach has been successful in recruiting refugee tenants was not known. More generally, the extent to which targeted approaches are employed to encourage refugee tenants to participate more actively in the running of RSLs (and LHOs), for instance, by translation into other languages, is not known.

As an example of good practice in terms of information provision to potential refugees, New Shaws reported that to keep its small asylum community updated on the Clearance Programme taking place in Shawbridge Street, the organisation had

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worked with NASS and GCC South Area committee to produce a newsletter which was translated into ten different languages and delivered to every household. The same organisation reported that it translated newsletters in four languages identified as being the most widely spoken.

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## CHAPTER 6: TENANT SATISFACTION AND FUTURE HOUSING ASPIRATIONS

As discussed in the Introduction, one of the main aims of the research is to assess the relative satisfaction levels of AAGHA clients with its initial approaches to refugee housing, in terms of locations selected for stock procurement and one-stop tenancy establishment and housing support, against the satisfaction levels other refugees living in permanent accommodation. Consequently, this chapter compares the satisfaction of AAGHA clients, that is, refugees living in AAGHA procured and supported stock and against the satisfaction of 'Others' who are also currently living in permanent accommodation.

However, this chapter is of wider interest in providing an insight into the satisfaction levels of refugees with their accommodation and support, an area which is not only under-researched, but in which little information was forthcoming from housing providers. None of the five housing providers surveyed had any specific mechanisms for assessing levels of satisfaction among refugee tenants apart from the general tenant satisfaction survey, and it would be reasonable to assert that they are representative of social housing providers in Glasgow. This was even the case where the housing providers had stock in areas where refugees and BME communities formed a significant presence. As a consequence of this, it was not currently possible to ascertain whether levels of satisfaction of refugee tenants were any higher or lower than that of other tenants. There was some acknowledgement among housing providers that in general tenant satisfaction surveys, issues such as racial harassment would not be identified. On a more positive note, the use of more specific measures, such as focus groups, to elicit information from refugee tenants was considered by some providers to be feasible.

While the data should be interpreted cautiously given the small numbers in each category, the comparative analysis reveals significantly higher levels of satisfaction among AAGHA clients compared to others, with their accommodation, the number of rooms, the neighbourhood and the landlord. It is perhaps worth noting, that to some extent, the higher levels of satisfaction might be attributed to AAGHA's strategy of purchasing clusters of stock in areas into which BME communities are only beginning to move, and where they are mainly present as owner-occupiers. In contrast, the other refugees interviewed, referred to as 'Others' in this chapter, were mainly living in areas of lower demand and in social housing.

### 1. Satisfaction with current accommodation

Table 1 shows that almost twice as many 'AAGHA clients' reported that they were 'very satisfied' with their accommodation compared to 'Others'. Further, the percentage of 'AAGHA clients' who reported that they were either 'fairly dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' was slightly lower than the percentage of 'Others' who responded similarly. As might be expected, positive comments related to the proximity of the accommodation to amenities, quietness of the neighbourhood, and perceptions of safety:

*'A nice house, quiet, handy, safe, near to the shops.'*

*'We have friends, nobody treats us badly.'*

Conversely, factors which contributed to dissatisfaction included dampness of the property which had an impact on health, overcrowding, lack of adequate heating, lack of showers (and difficulties for older people in getting in and out of baths) and surrounding areas which were dirty and poorly maintained:

*We are happy not to be on the streets, but it's not big enough for 6 persons. It's very cold, we wear coats in the house. One of my children is coughing, another child has water in his lungs and has to have a tube to remove it at the hospital, another is asthmatic. It's so cold.'*

Bed-sits were also viewed as inappropriate due to lack of privacy and space. One individual was also very unhappy about having to bear the burden of financial responsibility for shared accommodation due to a breakdown in sharing arrangements. Others complained of the high costs of electricity, which they had raised with fuel providers but which had not been satisfactorily resolved, and which was contributing to financial difficulties and increasing debt.

**Table 6.1 Satisfaction with current accommodation**

	AAGHA clients		Others	
	No	%	No	%
Very satisfied	5	33.3	3	17.6
Fairly satisfied	7	46.6	6	35.2
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	0		2	11.8
Fairly dissatisfied	2	13.3	3	17.6
Very dissatisfied	1	6.7	3	17.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

## 2. Number of rooms

As Table 2 shows, four fifths of 'AAGHA clients' reported that the number of rooms was 'about right' compared to nearly two thirds of 'Others.' Reflecting the relatively small numbers of refugees in the sample who came from large households, the percentage of individuals who felt that they had 'too few' rooms was small. However, it is worth noting that more than twice as many individuals falling under the category of 'Others' reported that they had 'too few' rooms compared to 'AAGHA clients'. It is also worth noting that among those who felt that the number of rooms was appropriate, there were those who felt that the size of the rooms was too small.

**Table 6.2 Satisfaction with number of rooms**

	AAGHA clients		Others	
	No	%	No	%
Too few	2	13.3	5	29.4
Too many	1	6.7	1	5.8
About right	12	80.0	11	64.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.</b>

## 3. Satisfaction with the neighbourhood

It is perhaps in this aspect that the satisfaction levels of 'AAGHA clients' differs most markedly from those of 'Others.' Table 3 shows that the percentage of 'AAGHA clients' who responded that they were 'very satisfied' was nearly four times higher than 'Others.' While it is worth noting that nearly half of 'Others' were 'fairly satisfied' with their neighbourhood, it is also important to note that the percentage of those who responded that they were either 'fairly dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' with their neighbourhood was nearly five times higher among 'Others' than AAGHA clients.' As discussed earlier, it is very likely that this is due, in no small measure, to AAGHA's strategy of procuring stock on the open market, in high amenity inner city and in predominantly owner-occupied areas.

**Table 6.3 Satisfaction with neighbourhood**

	AAGHA clients		Others	
	No	%	No	%
Very satisfied	10	66.7	3	17.6
Fairly satisfied	4	26.7	8	47.0
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	0		1	5.8
Fairly dissatisfied	1	6.7	4	23.5
Very dissatisfied	0		1	5.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

Reasons for satisfaction with the neighbourhood expressed by the individuals interviewed included good transport links and access to open spaces. Satisfaction was also expressed where incidents of racial harassment had been satisfactorily resolved.

Individuals who expressed dissatisfaction with their neighbourhood attributed their dissatisfaction to noisy or unruly neighbours or lack of acceptance of neighbours of their presence:

*'We have problems with neighbours who say it is not our place to be here. They tell us to go back. We get that a lot.'*

*'A lot of people drink and come and kick at your door'*

*'This block is noisy and I don't feel safe. Nobody says 'hello' here. In (previous residence), people knocked on the door to see if I was okay, that makes you feel happy and confident.'*

*'I don't feel safe. It's not a friendly area.'*

*'When I was walking, they drop eggs from above, I don't know if it's racial harassment or not'.*

Asked if they had experienced racial harassment in the area, many replied positively, extending this also to places of work and study, and while using public transport. A few individuals reported that they had raised the matter with the police or the concierge but had not been informed if any action had been taken. Others who had recently moved into their accommodation were clearly wary of being harassed:

*'I am still waiting to see if there is any trouble there... I am still afraid, there are no minorities.'*

While some individuals expressed a wish to be in areas where there was a significant minority ethnic presence that they perceived to be safer than areas in which there were few or no people from a minority ethnic background, others were very clear that they did not want to be near individuals who were from their country of origin. In all cases, the reason given for this was a fear for their personal safety and a wish for anonymity. Yet others expressed a positive desire to form social relationships with others outside of their own communities, including with people from the majority population.

#### 4. Satisfaction with the landlord

The percentage of 'AAGHA clients' who reported that they were 'very satisfied' or 'quite satisfied' with the RSL (66%) from whom AAGHA had procured stock from was higher than the satisfaction of 'Others' (53%) with their landlords. In some cases, it appeared that the AAGHA worker had played a valuable supportive role in liaising with the landlord. Factors which contributed to high satisfaction levels included being made to feel welcome and responding promptly to issues as they arose:

*'They are very kind, the way they received me. They are well organised and respond quickly to things I raise.'*

Visits were also appreciated, with one individual suggesting that regular six monthly visits would be beneficial. Landlords' understanding of difficulties in paying rent and willingness to be flexible in payment arrangements was also appreciated.

However, it was not uncommon to encounter individuals who did not know who their landlord was or who had had very little contact with the landlord. For some individuals, lack of fluency in English made it difficult to contact their landlord independently, reiterating the value of visits by the landlord on a regular basis. Yet others commented that although the landlord was easy to contact, it was not easy to get issues resolved. A common complaint was the lack of responsiveness of landlords to problems of varying degrees of severity, ranging from difficulties with connecting to utilities to problems with fixtures within the house or faulty lifts:

*'They don't visit and don't know what is wrong with the house...After 4 to 5 months, there is still no solution to the heating.'*

*'The mirrors in the bathroom are risky... but the guy who came did not have a drill.'*

*'I said to come to the house and hear it (noisy lift which prevents individual from sleeping) but nobody has done so. In some ways they appear very organised, in getting appointments, but they do not deal with the problem.'*

**Table 6.4 Satisfaction with landlord**

	AAGHA		Others	
	No	%	No	%
Very satisfied	3	20.0	5	29.4

Fairly satisfied	7	46.6	4	23.5
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	0		3	17.6
Fairly dissatisfied	2	13.3	3	17.6
Very dissatisfied	0		1	5.8
Don't know	3	20.0	1	5.8
		<b>100</b>		<b>100</b>

Asked if they had any problems with housing benefit and whether it adequately covered rent, the majority of refugees responded that it did. However, the amount of benefit they were entitled to appeared to constrain their housing options to living in the social rented sector and in areas that they might not have chosen. A few individuals complained that they had had to pay rent for both their previous and current accommodation during the move-in period due to lack of knowledge of the system. Others expressed uncertainty and anxiety about whether or not they should be paying council tax. Yet others complained of financial pressure, which for some had been exacerbated by unknowingly running up high fuel charges:

*'It's very hard. Debt is a big problem and rising. I now want to work to pay off. I don't know what (to work at). I've been to job agency and supermarket but no reply in 3 or 4 weeks.'*

Those who were pursuing educational courses also spoke of the difficulties of meeting living costs within the limits of the bursary they were receiving.

## 5. Future housing aspirations

Asked how likely it was that they would be continuing to stay in the current accommodation 'a year from now', about a third of the refugees interviewed reported that this was 'very likely' while the same proportion reported that they were 'not sure.' Table 5 presents the full breakdown of responses.

**Table 6.5 Likelihood of staying in accommodation a year from now**

	No	Percentage
Very likely	11	34.3
Fairly likely	3	9.3
Not sure	11	34.3
Fairly unlikely	2	6.2
Very unlikely	2	6.2
Don't know	1	3.1
Unknown	2	6.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>

Probed for underlying reasons for the response, it emerged that while for many, staying in their current accommodation was a positive choice for reasons already stated, for others it was due to lack of other affordable accommodation:

*'We have no where else to go.'*

Others with children responded that it would be difficult to make a move. For at least one individual uncertainty about continuing to stay in the same accommodation was

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directly linked to uncertainty about how long she was entitled to benefits and whether when this came to an end, she would be able to get a job which would allow her to pay the rent for herself and her children:

*'I am so worried...if I get a job will I get enough money for us in the house? If I don't get a job what will happen to me? Will they ask me to leave my house?'*

The majority of those who anticipated that they were 'very likely' or 'fairly likely' to move reported that they were most likely to move into other RSL accommodation, although many indicated that in the longer-term, they aspired to home ownership. Only one individual (who was currently working) reported that she was investigating possibilities for home ownership. Another individual who reported that she had been forced into the private rented sector due to lack of perceived safety in her former residence, reported that she would advise friends to stay in the social rented sector for as long as they could, since it was less likely that they would have to move.

## **6. Likelihood of staying in Glasgow**

As Table 6 shows, just above two thirds of the individuals interviewed reported that they were 'very likely' to stay in Glasgow 'a year from now'. Positive comments about the city included favourable comparisons with London:

*'I like Glasgow, a big city, but overall people are helpful and they accept foreigners.'*

*'After 6 years I think I was born in Glasgow. Glasgow is my city, the city I belong to. Places, friends, I think I belong here.'*

*'When I got refugee status, I was suffering, I hate myself...In Glasgow, my life has changed, I go to college, church, I am very happy.'*

*'I like it here, it (Glasgow) feels safe. It's not too big.'*

*'It's difficult to go to new places. I am used to Glasgow now. I prefer it to England.'*

*'People are nicer here, it's easy to get to college, easier to get a job, I believe I will get a good future here.'*

However, for some individuals, other cities such as London, offered proximity to relatives and friends, which was especially important for those who were experiencing social isolation or racial harassment.

*'We are happy to look outside Glasgow – especially to avoid the children being harassed. We may try London, we think it might be easier there.'*

In some cases, lack of social networks was exacerbated by ill health, which limited opportunities for interaction. A small minority had not ruled out the possibility that they might return to their country of origin in the future, when it was safe to do so.

### **Table 6.6 Likelihood of staying in Glasgow for a year**

	No	Percentage
Very likely	22	68.6
Fairly likely	3	9.3
Not sure	2	6.2
Fairly unlikely	1	3.1
Very unlikely	1	3.1
Unknown	3	9.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>

## 7. Information about housing options

Asked what information would be useful to them in considering future housing options many did not provide an answer, stating that it was too early to consider this. However, others who were more established in their tenancies reiterated their aspiration for home ownership. Achievement of this goal was linked to greater fluency in English, successful completion of educational courses and entry into the labour market. Information about mortgages, shared ownership, whether it was possible to buy housing association property and areas in which it would be safe to stay were all identified as being useful.

Some individuals reported that they had already been seeking employment related to existing skills and (professional) qualifications but had encountered difficulties in doing so, which raised issues of possible discrimination. One individual complained that although he was already working, he had found it difficult to obtain a mortgage, highlighting the critical role of gatekeepers to owner occupied housing – solicitors, estate agents, building societies and banks amongst others – and the possibility that there is scope for discriminatory decisions to be made in the financing of house purchase:

*‘I work, I earn, I pay tax but the bank doesn’t want to help me.’*

In contrast, following her participation in the research, another interviewee had recently taken up owner-occupation following family reunion and the birth of her child.

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## CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the research. They have been informed in consultation with key stakeholders and to reflect developments and progress that has been made since the primary research was conducted.

### ***A strategic approach for addressing refugee housing, support and settlement needs***

The Scottish Government should, with key partners including Scottish Refugee Council and Glasgow City Council, consider the setting up of a strategic forum to review the housing, support and settlement needs of refugees. This forum should:

- Consider the changing policy, administrative and practice context in Scotland since the work of the Scottish Refugee Integration Forum Action Plan;
- Be informed by the work of the West of Scotland Refugee Forum Housing and Welfare Sub Group; and
- Ensure that projects providing sound, independent information, advice and advocacy on housing and welfare rights issues for refugees continue to be supported since this is vital in preventing homelessness and promoting integration.

### ***A strategic approach for easing the transition from asylum seeker to refugee status***

The UK Border Agency should, with key partners, ease the transition from asylum seeker to refugee status by ensuring that:

- Existing multi-agency working arrangements between UKBA contractors, Glasgow City Council and Scottish Refugee Council are monitored and reviewed to ensure continuity of support at the point of decision;
- Current arrangements with housing providers are monitored and reviewed to prevent homelessness, and possible rooflessness; and
- More preventative work is undertaken on matching housing need and supply in advance of decision making relating to the outcome of asylum applications to prevent homelessness. Such work would be beneficial in informing local housing strategies and regeneration and development plans for the social rented sector, including the planning of larger accommodation.

Working with key partners, the Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council and other housing providers should:

- Ensure that prolonged stay in temporary accommodation is reduced by increasing the supply of affordable, appropriate accommodation in areas where refugees feel safe;
- Increase the supply of appropriate forms of temporary accommodation, taking into account larger family size and disabilities; and

- 
- Avoid the use of hostels for refugees, including young men.

### ***Increase refugee access to the social rented sector and ensure tenancy sustainment***

In carrying out homelessness assessments, Local Authorities, in particular, Glasgow City Council's Refugee Support Team and all homeless casework teams should:

- Ensure that all staff, including operational and maintenance staff, are trained in the issues and rights of refugees to ensure responsiveness to the needs of refugee households, including with respect to their duties in addressing racial harassment;
- Incorporate the needs of households which are likely to expand due to family reunion who might need to be accommodated within review of the homeless process; and
- Consult with refugees on their preferences for areas, including perceived safety from racial harassment, whether they would like to be accommodated with other refugees, with others from their country of origin, or away from them and close to places of work and worship.

All housing providers should:

- Make all staff aware of statutory and voluntary sector support provision available for refugees (particularly in relation to mental health); and
- Review the appropriate 'sign off' point for newly housed refugee tenants to ensure successful completion of the settling in process and real commitment to tenancy sustainment, by joint working with voluntary organisations to provide support, as appropriate.

In order to increase access to appropriate, permanent accommodation for refugee households and help ensure that tenancies are sustained:

The Scottish Government must:

- Must improve the amount of affordable social housing.

Glasgow City Council and other Local Authorities should:

- Ensure that new building takes account of the demand for larger accommodation among refugee households and is located in areas which refugees perceive to be safe for them;
- Progress development of the Common Housing Register in Glasgow to increase access to the social rented sector by refugees and other vulnerable groups; and
- Develop referral processes with relevant agencies, similar to that in place between Scottish Refugee Council and Access Apna Ghar Housing Association and the Saffron Project run by Southside Housing Association.

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The Scottish Housing Regulator & Scottish Government should encourage Registered Social Landlords to widen access to the social rented sector by:

- Reviewing and publishing ethnically disaggregated data relating to applicants and lets and encouraging individual Registered Social Landlords to increase the proportion of their tenancies occupied by refugees and other individuals from Black and Ethnic Minority communities, as appropriate; and
- Considering entering into arrangements with Access Apna Ghar Housing Association or other support packages to increase access to the social rented sector among refugee tenants and ensure tenancy sustainment.

In order to increase access to social rented housing for refugees, Registered Social Landlords should:

- Put into place more effective mechanisms to collect and review ethnically disaggregated data relating to applicants and lets, and take appropriate action including publicising vacancies and lets, to ensure that the composition of their tenants is reflective of the multi-ethnic composition of Scotland.

In order to ensure that refugees have access to furnished accommodation:

- Local authorities should work with Registered Social Landlords and other partner agencies to ensure they meet the needs for household furniture; and

In order to ensure that refugee tenancies are successfully established, Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Housing Association and other housing providers should:

- Develop home-based tenancy sustainment services that are tailored to meet the complex needs of new refugees across the city to replace the current limited allocation of support packages along geographical lines; and
- Commission expanded models of tenancy sustainment which incorporate efforts to prepare refugees for entry into the labour market when they have successfully completed the moving on process.

In order to ensure that the support needs of refugee tenants are met, Registered Social Landlords and the Scottish Housing Regulator audits should:

- Incorporate specific requirements within 'settling in' visits to record the contacts made with refugee tenants, identify any specific needs and actions taken in response to these needs, and monitor and evaluate this procedure;
- Carefully monitor rent accounts of new refugee tenants and use early indications of rent arrears to put into place mechanisms for tenancy support and advice; and
- Be aware of providers of other support services such as mental health services and debt management and the potential to refer.

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### ***Tackle racial harassment effectively***

To tackle racial harassment effectively, Registered Social Landlords must:

- Clearly communicate procedures for reporting racial incidents to refugees;
- Ensure that front-line staff and concierges are effectively trained and incentivised to respond to complaints of racial harassment and other anti-social behaviour;
- Increase the potential for 'fast track' management transfers to be applied to support victims of racial harassment; and
- Apply management transfers more frequently to inspire confidence among refugee applicants of social housing.

### ***Increase access to independent, specialist advice***

There is a clear need for a strategic and coordinated approach to the provision of advice and information to prevent duplication of effort among agencies and enhance access to information and advice for refugees. This should take into account the need for:

- Impartial, specialist advice to assist newly recognised refugees in accessing permanent accommodation, which is likely to increase with the introduction of Choice Based Lettings in some Registered Social Landlords, in Glasgow;
- An independent advocacy service for refugees in accessing related housing support, including with fuel poverty and benefits;
- The uptake and usefulness of current information provision concerning refugees' housing rights and welfare entitlements provided by statutory and voluntary sector bodies should be evaluated and updated.

### ***Promote refugee settlement and integration***

In order to assess levels of satisfaction among refugees and encourage tenant participation, Registered Social Landlords should

- Supplement the information obtained through general tenant satisfaction surveys by other means, such as focus groups, to elicit refugee views.

In order to support and encourage tenant participation, Registered Social Landlords should:

- Disseminate information in the languages most commonly spoken by their tenants; and
- Encourage and support refugee involvement in decision-making, including by representation in management committees

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In the longer-term, housing advice and information agencies, including Scottish Refugee Council should work to increase housing options for refugee tenants who have successfully gained employment by making them aware of all options on ownership, including:

- By assisting them or referring them to appropriate agencies who can help with house purchase, where appropriate.

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## APPENDICES

### TABLES

**Table 2.1: Background of AAGHA clients**

Gender	Age	Status <sup>5</sup>	Years in UK	Employed
M	21 – 25	S	3 – 4	Yes
F	26 – 30	S	2 – 3	No
M	26 – 30	S	2 – 3	Yes
M	41 – 45	C	1 – 2	Yes
F	41 – 45	S	6 – 7	No
M	16 – 20	S	3 – 4	No
F	21 – 25	S	5 – 6	Yes
M	26 – 30	S	5 – 6	No
F	16 – 20	S	3 – 4	Yes
M	21 – 25	S	3 – 4	No
M	31 – 35	S	6 – 7	Yes
F	31 – 35	C	2 – 3	No
F	36 – 40	S	2 – 3	No
F	26 – 30	C	4 – 5	Yes
M	26 – 30	C	4 – 5	No

**Table 2.2: Background of Other clients**

Gender	Age	Status	Years in the UK	Employed
M	56 – 60	C	2 – 3	No
F	41 – 45	S	5 – 6	No
M	31 – 35	S	5 – 6	No
M	21 – 25	S	5 – 6	No
F	61 – 65	S	4 – 5	No
M	46- 50	C	5 – 6	No
F	26 – 30	C	1 – 2	No
F	41 – 45	S	4 – 5	No
F	26 – 30	S	1 – 2	No
M	31 – 35	C	6 – 7	No
F	31 – 35	S	5 – 6	No
F	41- 45	Separated	0 – 1	No
F	41- 45	C	6 – 7	No
M	31 – 35	C	1 – 2	No
M	26 – 30	S	5 – 6	Yes
M	26 – 30	S	0 – 1	No
M	26 – 30	C	0 – 1	No

**Table 2.3 Background of refugees living in Temporary Accommodation**

Gender	Age	Years in the	Employed
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<sup>5</sup> S for single, C for couple

		UK	
F	41 – 45	4 – 5	N
M	16 – 20	5 – 6	N
M	36 – 40	3 – 3	N
M	31 – 35	4 – 5	N
F	31 – 35	0 – 1	N
M	31 – 35	4 – 5	N
F	31 – 35	2 – 3	N
M	31 – 35	2 – 3	N
M	31 – 35	2 – 3	N
M	36 – 40	2 – 3	N
F	21 – 25	0 – 1	N
M	26 – 30	7 – 8	N
M	26 – 30	0 – 1	N
M	26 – 40	0 – 1	Y

**Table 2.4 Type of permanent accommodation refugees were living in**

Type of accommodation	Nos of refugees	Percentage
Multi-storied accommodation	9	28.1
6 in block	5	15.6
4 in block	9	28.1
3 high	3	9.3
Tenements	6	18.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3.1 Finding affordable accommodation**

	Numbers	Percentages
Major problem	4	12
Minor problem	2	6
Not applicable	22	69
Unknown	4	12
	32	100

**Table 3.2 Finding accommodation in area of choice**

	Numbers	Percentages
Major problem	17	53
Minor problem	3	9
No problem	8	25
Unknown	4	12
	32	100

**Table 3.3 Finding accommodation in appropriate condition**

	Numbers	Percentages
Major problem	13	40
Minor problem	3	9
No problem	12	37
Unknown	4	12

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	32	100
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**Table 3.4: Finding accommodation of adequate size**

	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Major problem	9	28
Minor problem	3	9
No problem	16	50
Unknown	4	12
	32	100

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# 1. TOPIC GUIDE FOR HOUSING PROVIDERS

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Does the organisation have race equality or equal opportunity policies?

## ALLOCATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

2. Does the organisation have any policies/guidance/targets relating to the proportion of BME groups or refugees that are accommodated?
3. In what ways can refugees exercise choice over the accommodation they are allocated? How many offers of accommodation are made to them? To what extent can area preferences (e.g. informed by concerns about racial harassment) be accommodated?
4. How, if at all, do refugee housing preferences differ from:
  - a. Tenants from other more established BME communities
  - b. Other client groups housed by your organisation?
5. What is the profile of refugee housing applicants in terms of the type and size of accommodation preferred/required? How, if at all, does this differ from the 'accommodation needs profile' of other groups? If larger housing is in particularly short supply, is this a special problem for refugee households?
6. What is your organisation's main source of lets to refugees?

Housing list applicants	<input type="checkbox"/>
Section 5 referrals	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Are section 5 referrals of refugees made to you via the refugee support team or from community casework teams?
8. Can you tell me the percentage of refugees from all referrals that you have housed?
9. What measures does your organisation take to encourage housing applications from members of BME communities/refugee groups?
10. How (if at all) do your rehousing procedures for refugees differ from those for other groups?

## ETHNIC MONITORING

11. Is ethnicity data available for:
  - a. Waiting lists?
  - b. Waiting times?
  - c. Housing lets?

- 
- d. Evictions/abandonments?
  - e. Shared ownership?
- If yes, is this information publicised? Can you please supply me with the data after the meeting?
- If no, do you have any plans to carry out ethnic monitoring in these areas?

12. Do you have information relating to refugees for
- a. Waiting lists?
  - b. Waiting times?
  - c. Housing lets?
  - d. Evictions/abandonments?
  - e. Shared ownership?
- If yes, is this information publicised? Can you please supply me with the data after the meeting?
- If no, do you have any plans to carry out ethnic monitoring in these areas?

### **RELATIONSHIP WITH SUPPORT PROVIDERS**

13. In dealing with refugees, is there a formal relationship:
- a. With RST? Social work department? How frequently do they establish a care package for refugees who are referred?
  - b. With other support providers? SRC/PAiH/AAGHAR?
  - c. Are there any protocols, service level agreements or contracts?
- If so, can I have a copy of this?

14. How does this work in practice? Are there any gaps or overlaps in support?

15. Do you make use of the Council's Essential Furniture Grant?
- a. If yes, how satisfactory has this been in terms of waiting times for grant approval? Size of grant?
  - b. If no, are you aware of how refugee families access furniture provision?

### **TENANCY SUSTAINMENT**

16. Are you aware of any specific needs that refugees may have in sustaining their tenancies? Prompts:
- a. Need for support in understanding tenants' rights and responsibilities?
  - b. Need for support in claiming housing benefit?
  - c. Need for support in money management?
  - d. Need for support in responding to official letters?
  - e. Need for support with literacy issues/language differences?
  - f. Vulnerability to racial harassment?
- To what extent do these differ from the needs of more established BME tenants?

17. What measures have you taken to address these? How effective are these?  
Are you planning any further measures in the future?

18. What are your organisation's service standards for responding to complaints of racial harassment? How effectively does the organisation perform against these targets? What, in practice, usually takes place in the process of investigating a claim of racial harassment? What are the possible outcomes and which usually

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result from such an investigation? To what extent does racial harassment affect refugee tenants as opposed to more long-established BME tenants?

19. Have any particular difficulties arisen in accommodating refugees? Prompts:
- a. Concerns about leave to remain status and eligibility for housing and other welfare benefits?
  - b. Hostility from other tenants due to racial prejudice?
  - c. Reluctance on the part of committee members to participate in nominations arrangements?
  - d. Differences in lifestyle which lead to cultural/racial clashes with other tenants?
20. Is turn-over of refugee tenancies noticeably higher than other tenancies?

### **TENANT PARTICIPATION**

21. To what extent do refugees play an active part in the running of the association? Are refugees (or BME tenants, more broadly) represented on the management committee?
22. In periodically reviewing the association's policies of particular relevance to refugees (e.g. on racial harassment) how does the association elicit the views of refugee households?

### **TENANT SATISFACTION**

23. What measures do you take to assess the satisfaction levels of refugee tenants with their accommodation? Do you believe these to be adequate? Yes/No Why/why not?
24. What information do you currently have on levels of satisfaction of refugees compared to other tenants?

### **COMMUNICATION WITH PARTNER AGENCIES**

25. What mechanisms exist for consulting with refugee community organisations or with other agencies representing refugee interests?

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## 2. TOPIC GUIDE FOR INDIVIDUALS IN PERMANENT ACCOMMODATION

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Source of initial contact:

- SRC   
AAGHAR   
RST   
PAiH   
Others (name)

Gender: M/F

Age

- Below 16 (please specify)   
16 - 20   
21 - 25   
26 - 30   
31 - 35   
36 - 40   
41 – 45   
46 – 50   
51 – 55   
56 – 60   
Above 60 (please specify)

Single/Couple

If couple, number of children:

Number of other dependents living with them:

Number of other dependents not living with them:

If single:

- Staying on own   
Sharing with others

Country of origin:

Interpreter required: Yes/No

If yes, in what language?

Address (including postcode number):

Length of stay in Glasgow:

Length of stay in the UK:

In employment: Yes/No

Accommodation type

- Multi-storey  4-in-block  Tenement  Other

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Tenure (interviewer will need to explain):  
RSL  Private-rented  Owner occupied   
Other (please specify)

If RSL, name of landlord: \_\_\_\_\_

If rented: Furnished  Unfurnished

### PREVIOUS HOUSING HISTORY IMMEDIATELY BEFORE AND AFTER GETTING A POSITIVE DECISION TO REMAIN

1. Where were you staying while you were waiting on the outcome of your asylum application?  
Was this in Glasgow? Yes/No  
If YES, GO TO Q2  
If NO, where was this?  
GO TO Q6
2. Which provider of accommodation was this with?  
GASSP   
YMCA   
The Angel Group   
Temporary supported project   
With friends or relatives   
Other: please specify
3. When you got refugee status and your NASS support ended, what was your experience in terms of housing? Prompt: Did you
  - a) Remain in the same accommodation as a temporary situation?   
GO TO Q4
  - b) Remain in the same accommodation as a permanent let?   
GO TO Q7
  - c) Move into other accommodation as a temporary situation?   
GO TO Q4
  - d) Move into other accommodation as a permanent let?   
GO TO Q7
  - e) Stay with relatives or friends?   
GO TO Q4
4. How long did you stay in this accommodation?
  - a) Less than 28 days  GO TO Q5
  - b) Between 28 days and 3 months  GO TO Q5
  - c) Between 3 to 6 months  GO TO Q5
  - d) Between 6 to 9 months  GO TO Q5
  - e) Between 9 to 12 months  GO TO Q5
  - f) More than 1 year  GO TO Q5
5. Were you working at the time? Yes/No Were you staying in a furnished flat?

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If YES to both, did this create a difficulty with benefits you were receiving and the high rents of the temporary furnished flat? To what extent were you able to resolve this? GO TO Q8

If NO to either, GO TO Q8

6. Why did you move to Glasgow? And with which provider of accommodation did you stay?

- a) HAC hostel
- b) Temporary supported project
- c) Private rented accommodation
- d) RSL flat
- e) With friends or relatives
- f) Other (please specify)

GO TO Q8

7. Were you working at the time? Yes/No Were you staying in a furnished flat? If YES to BOTH, did this create a difficulty with benefits you were receiving and the high rents of the temporary furnished flat? To what extent were you able to resolve this?

Are you still staying in the same permanent accommodation? Yes/No

If YES, GO TO Q8

If NO, why did you move? Where did you move to? If within Glasgow, prompt for both location and provider of accommodation. If more than one move, trace to current location and provider of accommodation. GO TO Q8

8. Since getting refugee status, have you ever been homeless in the sense that you had to stay with friends or sleep rough because you had no suitable accommodation? If YES, GO TO Q9. If NO, GO TO Q14.

### **EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS**

9. What were the circumstances which led to you losing (or leaving) your previous accommodation? (Or, if more than one incident/period of homelessness: what were the circumstances which led to your last period of homelessness?)

10. How long were you homeless? (Or if more than one incident/period of homelessness, how long was your last period of homelessness?)

11. What kind of advice and assistance did you receive while you were homeless (e.g. help to find temporary or permanent accommodation)? Who provided this advice? If agency, try to establish which agency.

12. Was this advice and assistance adequate? How could it have been improved?

13. Could you or anyone else have done anything to prevent you from becoming homeless?

### **ACCESS TO ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE**

14. When your NASS support ended, or when you first arrived in Glasgow, how easy was it to get advice and assistance? Prompt: Did you know where to go?

15. What were your main sources of advice and assistance for finding accommodation? Was this provided by agencies or friends or relatives? If

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provided by agencies, probe the nature of the agency/professional which provided this advice and assistance. Please tick more than one, if appropriate.

- RST
- SRC
- PAiH
- Social work
- RSL
- Other agency(please specify)
- Local community networks

16. What kind of advice and assistance were you seeking?

Prompt: Information about affordability of rents? Information about safe areas? Information about proximity to others from the same cultural background?

17. What difficulties, if any, did you experience in finding your current accommodation?

- Hard to find anywhere affordable
- Major problem
- Minor problem
- No problem

- Hard to find a house in an acceptable area
- Major problem
- Minor problem
- No problem

- Hard to find a house in adequate condition
- Major problem
- Minor problem
- No problem

- Hard to find a house of adequate size
- Major problem
- Minor problem
- No problem

18. To what extent was the advice and assistance offered by agencies helpful in enabling you to overcome these difficulties?

19. Was your accommodation identified by the Refugee Support Team? Yes/No  
If the accommodation was identified by the RST, was this the first, second or only offer of permanent accommodation?

20. In looking for housing, have you experienced any form of racial prejudice/discrimination? If yes, from whom? What actions revealed prejudice/discrimination on the part of the agency concerned? What was the effect on you?

## **ACCESS TO SUPPORT**

21. What support did you get after moving into your current accommodation? And for each of these types of support, from which support provider?

Prompt:

Type of advice/assistance	Yes/No	If possible, name of provider
Advice on connecting utilities?	Yes/No	
Was the property furnished?	Yes/No	
Was community care grant for furniture applied for?	Yes/No	
Help with claiming benefits?	Yes/No	
Money management?	Yes/No	
Language support?	Yes/No	
Getting children into school?	Yes/No	
Getting information about the local area?	Yes/No	
Access to health care	Yes/No	
Access to education/training courses	Yes/No	
Help with gaining employment	Yes/No	
Social and emotional support	Yes/No	
Other support (please specify)	Yes/No	

22. Was it difficult to obtain any of this support? If so, what made it difficult? Language barriers? Lack of information? Long waiting period?

23. How useful was this support? Is there anything that could have been done better? Probe: Do you have special needs relating to disability, cultural or religious background that should have been considered?

24. Was there any type of support that you or your family did not get which would have helped you?

25. In relation to this support, did you at any stage, feel that you were being treated differently (better or worse) than other people? Why do you say that? Why do you think you were being treated differently?

26. Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the support from agencies that you are receiving?

Agency 1: \_\_\_\_\_

- Very satisfied
- Quite satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

- 
- Quite dissatisfied   
Very dissatisfied   
Can you explain why this is so?

Agency 2: \_\_\_\_\_

- Very satisfied   
Quite satisfied   
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied   
Quite dissatisfied   
Very dissatisfied   
Can you explain why this is so?

Agency 3: \_\_\_\_\_

- Very satisfied   
Quite satisfied   
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied   
Quite dissatisfied   
Very dissatisfied   
Can you explain why this is so?

27. Do you have a wider network of friends, family or relatives who give you support? If yes, what kind of support was this?

- Temporary accommodation   
Interpreting and translating services   
Financial support   
Social and emotional support   
Other support (please specify)

## **SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT ACCOMMODATION**

28. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your current accommodation?

- a) Very satisfied   
b) Fairly satisfied   
c) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied   
d) Fairly dissatisfied   
e) Very dissatisfied

f) Can you tell me why? Prompt: Is there any furniture? Are you satisfied with the condition of the property?

29. Do you think the number of rooms you have in your home is:

- a) Too few   
b) Too many   
c) About right

30. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with this neighbourhood as a place to live?

- a) Very satisfied   
b) Fairly satisfied   
c) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

- 
- d) Fairly dissatisfied
  - e) Very dissatisfied

f) Can you tell me why? Prompts: Do you feel safe? Is it close to amenities/services/transport links/opportunities for education/training/others from the same community?

31. Do you know who the landlord is? Yes/No. If yes, GO to 32, If no, GO to Q35.

32. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the landlord?

- a) Very satisfied
- b) Fairly satisfied
- c) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- d) Fairly dissatisfied
- e) Very dissatisfied

33. Can you explain the reason for this? Prompt, is it easy to contact the landlord? Is it easy to communicate with the landlord? Does the landlord respond promptly to your requests? Have you had to use the repairs service? How effective has this been?

34. Are you on Housing Benefit? Yes/No If yes, does your housing benefit adequately cover the rent? Yes/No If not, what difficulties has this caused? What have you done to address these difficulties? To what extent has this been resolved?

35. Have you experienced racial harassment in your area or vicinity? Yes/No If yes, did you report this to the landlord or the police? As far as you know, was any action taken? By whom?

## **FUTURE HOUSING ASPIRATIONS**

36. How likely is it that you will be continuing to stay in this accommodation a year from now?

- Very likely
- Fairly likely
- Not sure
- Fairly unlikely
- Very unlikely

37. If likely to move, why is that? What problems are you currently facing with the current accommodation/location? What are the attractions about move-on accommodation/location?

38. If likely to move in the next 12 months, what kind of other accommodation will you be seeking?

- Private rented
- Other RSL accommodation
- Owner occupation? (buying your home)

Why?

In what city – or area within Glasgow?

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39. How likely are you to stay in Glasgow for at least one year?

- Very likely
- Fairly likely
- Not sure
- Fairly unlikely
- Very unlikely

40. Why is it likely/unlikely that you will stay in Glasgow for at least one year?

41. Overall, what are the factors which you are most likely to take into account in seeking accommodation in a particular area? Prompts (tick more than one if relevant):

- Safety from racial harassment?
- Proximity to shops and other amenities
- Proximity to others from the same country of origin
- Proximity to training or employment opportunities
- Other factors?

42. What type of information would be useful to you in considering your future housing aspirations? Prompts:

Schemes which help people get private tenancies, e.g, through rent deposit schemes? Yes/No

Transferring to other accommodation with the same housing association? Yes/No

Applying for other housing association accommodation? Yes/No

Routes into buying your own home (owner-occupation)? Yes/No

Anything else related to housing or support services? Yes/No If yes, please specify.

## **OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF ROUTE INTO SETTLEMENT**

43. Finally, I would like to invite to you to ask you about your views on the processes for settling refugees into permanent accommodation and into their new community.

Prompts: Are there any aspects of the process which are helpful in enabling you to settle into your new community? Do you have any views on aspects of the systems, which if changed, would make it easier for refugees to settle in their new home and country? Are you aware of other refugees who had an easier time than you? If so, what do you think contributed to this?

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# APPENDIX 3: TOPIC GUIDE FOR REFUGEES LIVING IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

Gender: Male/Female

Country of Origin:.....

Age: .....

Number of months/years in the UK: .....

Number of months/years since getting refugee status:.....

Current accommodation:	Hostel	Please tick
	Staying with a friend	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other: please specify	<input type="checkbox"/>

Number of months/years you have been staying in your current accommodation .....

Have you lived in other forms of temporary accommodation? Yes/No

If yes, what was this?	Hostel	Please tick
	Staying with a friend?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other: please specify:	<input type="checkbox"/>

Are you currently employed: Yes/No

Are you currently attending training or educational courses: Yes/No

---

## Experience of accessing temporary accommodation

1. When you got your refugee status, what kind of advice and assistance did you get in terms of accessing your current accommodation? Prompts
  - a. From whom was this?
  - b. What was the nature of the advice you received? Information about safe areas/affordable property/currently available property/housing providers?
  - c. Has this been helpful?
  - d. If yes, what has been helpful about this?
  - e. If no, what kind of advice would you have liked?
2. What do you like about where you are currently staying? Prompts:
  - a. Condition of property?
  - b. Proximity to support from services?
  - c. Sensitivity to cultural/religious needs/dietary requirements?
  - d. Proximity to informal support
3. What do you not like about where you are currently staying?
  - a. Condition of property?
  - b. Lack of access to support services?
  - c. Lack of sensitivity to cultural/religious needs/dietary requirements?
  - d. Threat of racial harassment/abuse?
4. While you are looking for permanent accommodation, do you have any alternatives to living here? If so, what are these? Would you consider any of these alternatives? If yes, why? If no, why not?
5. Have you experienced any other form of temporary accommodation since getting refugee status? If so, what was this? What are the circumstances which led you to move from this accommodation?
6. Have you ever been homeless in the sense of being forced to live on the street or with a friend?

## Advice and assistance with accessing permanent accommodation

7. What kind of information, advice and assistance are you getting about accessing permanent accommodation?
  - a. From whom was this?
  - b. What was the nature of the advice you received? Information about safe areas/affordable property/currently available property/housing providers?
  - c. Has this been helpful?
  - d. If yes, what has been helpful about this
  - e. If no, what kind of advice would you have liked?
8. What are the factors that you are considering in deciding on permanent accommodation?
  - a. Affordability?
  - b. Safety of area from racial harassment?
  - c. Proximity to training courses/Places of work?/Others from the same background?

- 
9. What are factors which have been helpful to you in looking for permanent accommodation?
  10. What are the factors which have made it difficult for you to obtain permanent accommodation?
  11. How has living in temporary accommodation affected your ability to settle in Scotland?: Prompts: In terms of your
    - Ability to pursue further training courses or educational courses?
    - Ability to gain employment?
    - Ability to access health care?
    - Ability to make new friends/get to know Scottish people?
  12. What do you think can be done to facilitate the process of enabling refugees to settle into:
    - a. Permanent accommodation?
    - b. Their new community/country?

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## APPENDIX 4: TOPIC GUIDE FOR PROVIDERS OF ADVICE, INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

### ACCESS TO SERVICES

1. What is the main route by which refugees reach SRC/AAGHA/RST? Is there any other route?
2. How effectively are the mechanisms for referral to (Agency) for refugees who have recently got leave to remain working? What are the main gaps in support? What can be done to improve this?
3. How are the needs of clients matched to the supply of housing? Does (AGENCY) carry out its own assessment of client needs? Does (Agency) have access to any other information about the needs of the client?
4. To what extent is it possible to enable refugees to meet their preferences for accommodation with respect to:
  - a. Local area?
  - b. Type (four in a block, tenement)?
  - c. Size?

### SERVICES PROVIDED

5. To what extent are the following services provided to refugees:
  - a. Enabling them to furnish their apartments?
  - b. Providing information about the use of utilities?
  - c. Providing information about money management?
  - d. Liasing with the landlord?
  - e. Providing information about the local area?
  - f. Enabling them to access essential services (including benefits, health and education services)?
  - g. Responding effectively to incidents of racial harassment?
  - h. Providing information about training courses and access to education?
  - i. Providing information about employment opportunities?
6. To what extent are individuals assisted in
  - a. Claiming housing benefit?
  - b. Other benefits, such as job-seeker allowance?/working tax credit?/income support/child benefit?
  - c. Accessing employment/education/training courses?
  - d. Accessing health services?
  - e. Placing children in schools?
  - f. Increasing knowledge of the local area?
7. What are the main challenges and constraints in terms of preventing homelessness after individuals have moved in? Are there any gaps in support?
8. Do you have any protocols, service level agreements or contracts for providing advice and assistance to refugees with housing providers?
9. Are there any mismatches in service provision between what refugees need and what is provided? If so, what are these areas? Prompt: Language support?

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Disability? Mental health needs? Are the needs of large households adequately met?

10. What can be done to improve this?

11. Are there any plans for future development of services?

## **FUTURE HOUSING ASPIRATIONS AND NEEDS**

12. What kind of support, if any, is provided to refugees who wish to move from their current accommodation within Glasgow?

a. If staying in RSL accommodation,  
to other accommodation within the same RSL,  
to other RSL accommodation or  
the private rented sector

b. If staying in the private rented sector  
to other private rented accommodation  
to RSL accommodation

13. What kind of support, if any is provided to settled refugees who might be considering owner occupation?

14. What kind of support, if any, is provided to refugees who wish to leave Glasgow?

## **OVERALL**

44. Finally, I would like to invite to you to ask you about your views on the processes for settling refugees into permanent accommodation and into their new community.

Prompts: Are there any aspects of the process which are helpful in enabling refugees to settle into their new community? Do you have any views on aspects of the systems, which if changed, would make it easier for refugees to settle in their new home and country?

Scottish Refugee Council is an independent charity dedicated to providing advice, information and assistance to asylum seekers and refugees living in Scotland. It also provides specialist services in areas such as housing family reunion, women's issues, community development, the media, research and the arts.

It plays a leading role in policy development and campaign on refugee issues to ensure that Scotland plays a full role in meeting the UK's legal and humanitarian obligations under the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees.

Access Apna Ghar Housing Association is a small scale housing provider, focusing on the Black and Ethnic Minority communities and refugee communities and has a particular interest in evaluating the experience of its service users. It provides stock through a capital investment programme offered by Glasgow City Council, in pursuit of the recognition within its Local Housing Strategy of the need for a bespoke programme, to address the unmet needs of refugees and Black and Ethnic Minority communities, in accessing affordable social housing. Access Apna Ghar has recently become a subsidiary of Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association Ltd and a member of the Sanctuary Group, whereas in the past it partnered several Registered Social Landlords, in order to achieve its objectives.



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