

RIGHTS, RESILIENCE AND REFUGEE INTEGRATION IN SCOTLAND

NEW SCOTS & THE HOLISTIC INTEGRATION SERVICE

A report sharing insights from the Holistic Integration Service 2013-2016

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The evaluation team has received ongoing and excellent support from the members of the Advisory Group, who acted as critical friends and explored additional ways to expand our learning.

We would like to thank Big Lottery Scotland for funding the Holistic Integration Service and for enabling it to be a learning project by supporting the evaluation from the outset of the project.

Since 2010 BIG Lottery Scotland has focused on three investment areas through its main grants programme in Scotland, 'Investing in Communities' (liC): Growing Community Assets; Supporting 21st Century Life; and Life Transitions in liC. Overall, the 'Investing in Communities' programmes has a primary focus on tackling need and addressing inequalities.

It was decided at the outset of developing liC that BIG Lottery Scotland would take a proactive approach to funding in some areas by developing specific interventions. One of these areas is improving access to mainstream services for asylum seekers and refugees.

This led to the creation of the **Joining A New Community** (JNC) intervention in July 2012, involving a total contract value budget of between £1.8M and £2M (inclusive of VAT). The JNC intervention sought to add value to, be additional to and complement existing support and services for refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland.

We would like to thank other funders who fund other work of Scottish Refugee Council and also contribute to refugee integration; these are the Scottish Government, Henry Smith Foundation and the Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board.

All pictures by Iman Tajik.

FOREWORD

Scottish Refugee Council is Scotland's leading refugee charity. Our vision is for a Scotland in which all people seeking refugee protection are welcome and where they are protected, find safety and support, have their human rights and dignity respected and are able to achieve their full potential in their new communities. The Holistic Integration Service over the last three years has been essential in achieving this aim by supporting all newly-recognised refugees referred to the service in Scotland as they move from the asylum system and begin to rebuild their lives. This innovative service has advised and advocated for nearly 2000 refugees during this critical, difficult and confusing period to ensure they have access to their rights as quickly as possible. And it has supported refugees to plan and realise their future lives in Scotland as well as shaping and improving the processes of statutory organisations, like the Department of Work and Pensions, to meet their obligations towards those who have been recognised in need of protection in the UK.

This report provides rich and robust evidence gathered through this unique service over the last three years. As such it provides valuable insights for policy-makers, statutory and voluntary sector organisations and funders not just in Scotland but across the UK and beyond in the increasingly salient area of refugee integration.

I would like to thank the lead funder of this service, the Big Lottery Fund Scotland; other funders, the Henry Smith Foundation and the Scottish Government; our staff and volunteers; and our partners. Most importantly, I wish to thank all of the men and women who have used this service over the last three years. Their experiences have contributed to this important report. The resilience and optimism for the future that they have shown is an inspiration for all Scots.

John Wilkes, Chief Executive,
Scottish Refugee Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HOLISTIC INTEGRATION SERVICE MODEL

- The Holistic Integration Service (HIS) is a unique partnership led by Scottish Refugee Council with British Red Cross, Bridges Programmes, Glasgow Clyde College and Workers Educational Association Scotland offering up to twelve months support to people who have been granted Refugee Status, Humanitarian Protection, or Discretionary Leave to Remain following an asylum claim in Scotland.
- It is underpinned by an empowerment and rights based approach that has aimed to ensure that, ***“Refugees are effectively integrated into Scottish society and able to exercise their rights and have their needs met.”***
- The service has addressed the needs of new refugees within a holistic understanding of integration based on the ‘Indicators of Integration’ framework¹. It has sought to deliver a genuinely person-centred service following the principles of: early intervention and prevention; recognising resilience and vulnerability; pursuing sustainable outcomes for refugees.

Who has benefitted from the service?

- 1,885 refugee people have engaged with the service since May 2013.
- Across the three years 78% of households presented as single
- Over the three years, 74% of households who accessed the service were headed by men.

- Throughout the service the four main countries of origin of beneficiaries have been Eritrea (30%), Sudan (21%), Iran (15%) and Syria (10%) - accounting for 76% of the total number of people who accessed the service.
- Refugees who accessed the service were primarily of working age, with the majority (73%) aged between 25 and 39.

Key features of the partnership

- Regular ‘Community of practice’ meetings of practitioners in the partnership to discuss the practicalities of service provision through real case studies were appreciated as a very effective mechanism for relationship building, problem-solving and service improvement.
- Partner managers built trust through meeting as an ‘Impact Network’ to oversee service delivery and also identify strategic issues emerging from beneficiary data. Managers identified the relationships forged as one of the most valuable outcomes of the partnership and were committed to maintaining and potentially widening this network to improve the quality of future service provision.
- The Joint Client Data Base, a case management system upgraded by the Scottish Refugee Council with the investment of its own resources (£104K), has been a key tool in the gathering of systematic information about new refugees using the service. It has depended on consistent and skilful data entry by Integration advisers and has been used widely to provide evidence for policy and practice advocacy throughout the three year programme.

¹ ‘Indicators of Integration,’ Ager & Strang, 2008

- The HIS programme learning team have hosted a range of dissemination events with policy, practice and refugee stakeholders throughout the three year programme, shared data updates with the 'New Scots' strategy Core group, and published a report annually.

Learning from and Contribution of the Holistic Integration Service

Access to Housing Rights

- HIS has played a vital role in ensuring that refugees understand their housing rights and exercise them effectively.
- HIS has continued to promote and facilitate access to settled housing as a key stage in the integration process.
- The great majority of new refugees experience homelessness: 84% of refugees who accessed the service presented as homeless to the local authority when their asylum support ended.
- Refugees continue to experience challenges in accessing statutory homelessness provision, especially temporary accommodation. This is particularly acute as most refugees have to present as homeless 'in crisis' when their asylum support ends.
- Men spend more time in homelessness than women. Refugee women spent on average 193 days in homelessness compared to 222 days for men. The reasons for this require further investigation.

Access to Welfare Benefits

- 87% of beneficiaries in year three required assistance from the service to make their initial claims, this demonstrates HIS is a vital access point to benefit entitlements.
- Ongoing delays in initial access to benefits has meant that the 28 day 'move-on' period after refugee status is granted is clearly insufficient for most refugees to avoid destitution but make a transition to mainstream welfare support.
- Engagement with DWP has improved the customer journey, but other systems – for example National Insurance Number allocation – continue to function inconsistently.
- Refugees often require and have received ongoing advice from HIS to navigate the complexity of benefits systems, particularly with regard to sanctions.
- Refugees experience acute periods of destitution and prolonged period of living on low income
- Refugees feel shame at being dependent and are keen to 'free' themselves from benefits through work and education.

Connecting through language

- The majority of new refugees (76% in year 3) have beginner English skills (Access 2) but are strongly motivated to build upon these to attain higher levels of confidence in English.
- Refugees report that limited English skills make many aspects of their lives in Scotland more difficult including getting to know local people, dealing with official appointments and letters (DWP, housing, medical).

- HIS has been an invaluable access point to initial assessment and 'Survival English' classes (WEA); and to more sustained college-based ESOL provision (Glasgow Clyde College).
- HIS had a positive impact on refugees by providing ESOL classes which include cultural and local knowledge.
- The introduction of the 'English Language Requirement' by DWP – has had an impact on the initial pathways through ESOL assessment and provision envisaged by HIS.
- While certificated ESOL provision is highly valued by refugees, there is a need to recognise and promote more social and contextual English learning environments to complement formal learning.
- Many refugees struggle to find opportunities to meet with local English speakers to practice their language skills.
- Despite experiences of racism, refugees find Scottish people friendly and this is an important factor which influences their decisions to remain in Scotland in the long term.
- At the same time, refugees would value more opportunities to interact meaningfully with Scottish people.
- Refugees reported that they were often required to meet basic needs through informal social connections, for example 'sofa surfing' when homeless, eating with friends when receiving no benefits, and finding a job. Often refugees either had no one to turn to, or felt that such requests put too much strain on their relationships
- The 'Peer Education' and 'HIS Community Conference' models recognise the importance of refugees' existing social connections whilst providing opportunities to expand and mobilise connections further and engage local communities.

Social connections

- HIS has promoted the development of new friendship through the provision of ESOL classes and employability courses. It also acted as a bridge to Scottish society by supporting refugees to navigate new systems and access services.
- Refugees report high levels of social connections with friends and family and yet many express a strong sense of homesickness and loss at being apart from close family members.
- Refugees report high levels of personal experiences of racism and verbal abuse, particularly whilst living in temporary homeless accommodation.

Independence and confidence

- HIS promoted resilience by addressing key areas of: confidence, understanding systems, accessing rights, English language ability and health.
- Recognising and supporting people's resilience has been central to the programme's ethos and outcomes.
- Refugees describe developing resilience by increasing confidence and independence. Refugees are keen to regain their independence after the forced dependency of asylum procedures.
- Developing English language skills, education and employment are seen by refugees as the principal pathways towards improved independence and a better life.

Employment & education

- While education is a priority for many refugees, few will access non-ESOL education within the first year after status as most need to improve their English language skills before they can engage in other education.
- Refugees are strongly motivated to gain employment but only 9% of refugees are recorded as having obtained paid employment within the year after being granted status.
- Barriers to employment include language, lack of work experience in the UK, and very little recognition of prior learning and qualifications.
- Refugees with higher English skills and levels of education are more likely to gain employment.
- Social connections can compensate for limited English skills, particularly where people are joining long established communities. However such work is not likely to afford the opportunity to improve English language and therefore can inhibit any progression or further integration.
- Refugees' employment is characterised by instability and poor terms and conditions.
- Refugees have well-developed, ambitious plans for future employment. Many are interested in owning their own businesses.
- The combination of education and employment service offered by HIS has successfully assisted people on pathways towards employability and paid employment. A key element has been helping people navigate the sometimes conflicting priorities of educational achievement and work experience.

Biographies

Alison Strang is a psychologist working with communities affected by conflict around the world. Her research focuses on the assessment of wellbeing and social networks. She is cofounder of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Network (www.mhpss.net) and chairs the Scottish Government strategy implementation process: 'New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities'.

Helen Baillot was the Research Assistant with Queen Margaret University for the evaluation of the Holistic Integration Service. Prior to this she has been an independent researcher and the principal investigator for studies on tackling female genital mutilation in Scotland and on the treatment of women's narratives of sexual violence within UK asylum processes.

Elodie Mignard started working with Scottish Refugee Council in 2010 to work on housing policy and practice. From May 2013, Elodie became the Integration Development Officer with the Holistic Integration Service and joined the learning team with Queen Margaret University. She was recently appointed Refugee Integration Service Manager.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. UK POLICY

- 1.1. The Home Office, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Her Majesty Revenue and Customs (HMRC) must guarantee new refugees a prompt allocation of National Insurance Number, easy access to DWP and HMRC services, and an efficient benefit claim process to eliminate the risk of destitution when asylum support ends. This can be achieved by adopting the approach developed to support the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme in 2015/16.
- 1.2. Home Office must extend the 'move-on' period beyond 28 days, to at least the 40 days as recommended in House of Lords After Clause 37 of the Immigration Act 2016.
- 1.3. Department for Work and Pension must ensure that individual 'Claimant commitments' reflect a realistic (evidenced-based) timeframe for improving English language skills to appropriate employment requirements.
- 1.4. Department for Work and Pension must invest in training for Jobcentre Plus staff to ensure that adjustments for language and specific circumstances of refugees are taken into account when assessing refugees' progression towards employment.

2. SHARED UK AND SCOTTISH RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1. To be in line with the Scottish Government's policy that integration starts from day one, the UK and Scottish Government must implement the devolution of asylum support, accommodation and advice as set out in the Smith Commission and ensure availability of integration services
- 2.2. The UK and Scottish Government should work together to plan the widening of asylum dispersal in Scotland and ensure properly resourced Integration Services are available in all local authorities taking part in the dispersal of asylum seekers. This should be done in respect of asylum seekers rights and by aiming to meet suitable housing and support standards.
- 2.3. Department for Work and Pension should work with Education Scotland to ensure that ESOL provision meets the language needs of new refugees, complements existing Scottish provision and is flexible to enable refugees to manage other priorities such as homelessness appointments. Opportunity to learn English should include learning of four skills (speaking, listening, writing and reading) to give real opportunities to people to secure employment and for Scotland to build a skilled workforce for the future.
- 2.4. Scottish Government should use data from Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grant's allocation to demonstrate levels of destitution created by the structure and failure of the current UK Benefit system and inform development of improved systems for the administration of benefits, including Universal Credit.

3. SCOTTISH POLICY

- 3.1. Scottish Government must confirm its commitment to refugee integration by renewing the New Scots strategy, 2014 – 2017. The next Refugee Integration Strategy should set the national standards for the integration of refugees in Scotland and set the premise for an innovative Integration Bill and clarify refugees' rights and entitlements.
- 3.2. Local Authorities must uphold their homelessness prevention duty by creating dedicated pathways for new refugees to access temporary housing and progress promptly to settled housing without having to access emergency homeless services when their asylum support ends. This could be achieved by adopting similar systems to those implemented as part of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme 2015/6.
- 3.3. Local Authorities should provide affordable temporary accommodation to avoid creating additional barriers to employment and education by creating a 'poverty trap' for refugees and others who are homeless.
- 3.4. Local Authorities should ensure that all households in temporary accommodation have access to advice on the implications of any change in employment or education circumstances, and full knowledge of options available to enable the pursuance of opportunities.
- 3.5. Local Authorities should invest in equality sensitive housing support for refugees to ensure all groups are provided with appropriate support, including single men, who are disproportionately affected by homelessness.
- 3.6. NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde to continue to support the work and share best practice developed by the 'Asylum and Health Bridging Team' in supporting asylum seekers to register with a GP and have their immediate health needs met.
- 3.7. NHS Health Boards to ensure that personnel across all GP practices where new refugees are settling are aware of refugees' rights in access to health services and uphold their Public Sector Equalities Duty.
- 3.8. NHS Health Scotland and Scottish Government should invest in research on the multiple impacts of poverty and the refugee experience on mental health.
- 3.9. Scottish Government and Education Scotland should invest in Social Practice of English which promotes links between refugees and local residents as a complement to ESOL teaching.
- 3.10. ESOL providers should work together to improve access to ESOL and develop stronger progression routes for learners.
- 3.11. ESOL providers should aim to mitigate barriers to accessing ESOL by supporting access to child care and consistently compensating travel costs for learners on all ESOL courses.
- 3.12. ESOL courses should incorporate the development of local knowledge and language skills for practical independent living and content should be led by learners priorities, e.g. ability to understand directions, engaging with schools, employment
- 3.13. Scottish Government should invest in employment support programmes that support refugees to remove barriers to employment (i.e. language, work experience in the UK, recognition of their prior experience, skills, learning and qualification) and enable moves within the labour market. This should involve effective engagement with employers.
- 3.14. The Scottish Government should invest in systems for the recognition of skills, prior learning and qualifications of migrants and refugees which will be accessible and trusted by employers and education institutions.

3.15. As per the Community Empowerment Act, the Scottish Government and Local Authorities should include refugees within community planning to ensure that the needs of refugees are included to the needs of the wider community.

3.16. Local Authorities and housing providers should work with local communities to promote understanding between residents in order to promote community cohesion, prevent, or tackle racism and anti-social behaviour when it occurs.

3.17. Police Scotland should continue to work closely with other stakeholders to monitor and address incidences of racism and anti-social behaviour directed at refugees.

3.18. Scottish Government should establish an online resource which can act as a gateway to refugees for information and services.

4. INTEGRATION SERVICES

4.1. Access to an Integration Service must become a statutory right for new refugees, both resettled refugees and those who are granted through the asylum process.

4.2. Integration Services should be statutorily funded and an effective referral process from the Home Office must be put in place to enable early intervention and prevention.

4.3. Integration Services must provide advocacy to ensure access to statutory rights; adopt a person-centred and holistic approach to support refugees to manage their conflicting priorities; recognise and promote refugees' own resilience as they move towards their goals.

4.4. Integration Services should invest time in building relationships with other service providers through a network or Community of Practice in order to improve the effective provision of services.

4.5. Integration Services should collect systematic data in order to provide evidence of structural barriers that impede refugees' access to rights and services. This requires investment in staff time and capacity to produce credible evidence and advocacy in order to influence policy on issues affecting refugees.

4.6. Service providers should ensure that refugees are effectively included in decisions about service design and delivery.

4.7. Service providers should prioritise supporting the development of social connections, to ensure that bridges with the local community are built and to prevent individual refugee from becoming isolated.

4.8. An effective referral system should be established to enable practitioners to alert appropriate support services (particularly mental health support) to individual needs.

4.9. Community groups, should be supported, equipped, trained and encouraged to participate in wider networks of organisations who support refugees integration.

SECTION 1 ABOUT THIS REPORT

1. ABOUT THIS REPORT

This is the final of three annual reports produced to share the learning from the Holistic Integration Service, a support and advice service offered to all new refugees in Scotland from May 2013 by a partnership led by the Scottish Refugee Council.

The first report, '[The Holistic Integration Service, Learning and Evaluation: Year 1, 2013-2014](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0000/8576/Holistic_Integration_Service_-_year_1_evaluation_report.pdf)'², explains the development of the service and the roles of respective partners. The year two report, '[Insights into Integration Pathways. New Scots and the Holistic Integration Service' June 2015](http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0001/0255/HIS_Year_2_R.pdf)'³, draws on systematic case data to present evidence of new refugees' experience of core integration challenges in Scotland. The current report brings together the set of case data from two and a half years of service delivery with extensive interview and focus group data from refugees, partners and external stakeholders. This final report examines the impact of the Holistic Integration Service in supporting refugees to integrate in Scotland.

1.1. WHAT IS THE HOLISTIC INTEGRATION SERVICE?

ADVICE AND ADVOCACY SERVICE FOR NEW REFUGEES

Scottish Refugee Council

All new refugees are eligible to participate in the service for the first 12 months after being granted status. On arrival at the Scottish Refugee Council a new refugee receives a triage session. Trained volunteers explain the programme and address any urgent priorities (including welfare benefit applications, housing options, health needs and GP registration). An English language assessment is offered as needed.

At subsequent appointments, Integration Advisers help the refugee to make a Personal Integration Plan; provide support, including advocacy, in accessing rights and services; and make referrals to other services within the HIS programme. Advisers record actions and progress through a case management system and use a categorisation system (Resilient- Guidance- Complex – Critical) to record individual's levels of resilience and need at particular times.

² http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0000/8576/Holistic_Integration_Service_-_year_1_evaluation_report.pdf

³ http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0001/0255/HIS_Year_2_R.pdf

ACCESS TO DEDICATED ENGLISH LANGUAGE SUPPORT (ESOL)

Glasgow Clyde College and WEA Scotland

WEA Scotland has provided an English language assessment to all new beneficiaries of the programme who are not fluent in English and who do not already have a formal assessment. Those whose English language capacity is assessed at Access levels 2 & 3 and Access 2 'Literacies' were offered 'Survival English' courses at WEA Scotland. Those with higher level skills were able to join appropriate ESOL classes at Glasgow Clyde College, set up through a dedicated referral pathway for HIS beneficiaries.

ACCESS TO DEDICATED EMPLOYMENT READINESS SUPPORT

Bridges Programme

Refugees with English competence Access 3 in speaking and listening skills had and no other impediments to seeking employment were referred to the Bridges Programmes. Each person received an initial employment, education and skills assessment, and developed an Employment Action Plan. Refugees were then referred according to need, to programmes provided by Bridges Programme exclusively for HIS clients: 'Life skills' and 'Advanced Life skills'. Wherever possible, each refugee was offered a work experience placement. All beneficiaries were able to have regular meetings with an assigned case worker who also accompanied them to interviews and the first day of a placement.

ENHANCED SERVICE FOR THOSE WITH COMPLEX NEEDS

British Red Cross

The 'Enhanced Service' has been provided by British Red Cross (BRC) and has offered additional support for eight weeks for HIS clients judged to have 'complex' needs by Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers. Referrals were made where people had very little or no English language; physical or mental health difficulties or were lacking confidence, isolated and without social support. These refugees have benefitted from one-to-one support, including accompanying to appointments and group work as needed, and have participated in other refugee services available at BRC.

INFLUENCING POLICY AND PRACTICE

The programme gathered systematic data on the experiences of new refugees in Scotland. This data was shared regularly at the main Scottish policy forum: 'New Scots: Refugees in Scottish Communities', and used by all partners in their respective policy development work. Annual reports have been produced for a policy and practice audience. In addition, each year the Holistic Integration Service has hosted conferences for policy makers, practitioners, wider stakeholders and communities – including refugees, asylum seekers and established local residents.

1.2 AN ACTION LEARNING APPROACH

The Holistic Integration Service has been funded by BIG Lottery Scotland as part of their 'Investing in Communities' programme. The programme aimed not only to provide support to enable refugees to better access to mainstream services, but also to capture and share the learning and impact from this investment to ensure a lasting legacy. An action learning perspective has therefore been embedded in the programme. This was led by an independent team from Queen Margaret University working together with an Integration Development Officer appointed by the Scottish Refugee Council.

The Queen Margaret University team has taken the lead in designing the data gathering and analysis. Scottish Refugee Council developed the Joint Client Database case management system and trained and supported Integration Advisers in ensuring that comprehensive and accurate data was collected. The Integration Development Officer has been responsible for compiling and analysing data from the service for evidence-based influencing work. The work of the learning team has been amplified by a number of other related studies including internal data collection on housing issues within the Scottish Refugee Council, and two studies commissioned by the HIS learning team and undertaken by students at Edinburgh University.

As part of the action learning approach, emerging information has been shared regularly at partnership management meetings. Partner managers and practitioners have contributed data and their insights and learning throughout the programme. The Integration Development Officer has led the learning team in delivering a range of dissemination activities with diverse stakeholders. Reports have been prepared by the whole learning team.

1.3 WHERE DOES OUR REPORT DATA COME FROM?

Statistics

The quantitative data presented in this report has been extracted principally from Scottish Refugee Council's Joint Client Database (see section 2.4. below). **All statistics, unless otherwise specified, are for the period 1st May 2013 to 31st December 2015.** This data relies upon refugees' self-reports of key events and experiences and so sample sizes are not always equal to the full service intake described in section 2 below.

Where possible and relevant, this data has been supplemented with project management data contributed by partners – Workers' Educational Association Scotland for English language levels (section 4.1); and Bridges Programmes for refugees gaining employment (section 5.2).

Refugee perspectives

In year three, the learning team undertook a series of qualitative interviews with refugees who had accessed HIS. 25 people, 12 women and 13 men, took part in semi-structured interviews lasting approximately one hour. These people were selected at random from the Joint Client Database following criteria agreed in advance. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by the team. Interpreters were provided for those who requested them, and a consent form was explained and signed by all interviewees.

Further qualitative data has been obtained through analysis of case file notes held on JCDB, and feedback from Community Conferences. To preserve anonymity, quotes from refugees have been attributed using B (for beneficiary) plus a number – for example, B7. Refugees' names have been changed throughout.

Staff and stakeholder perspectives

Four external stakeholders (from Education, Housing, Government and DWP), five managers and staff from Scottish Refugee Council, and four staff and managers from HIS partner agencies were interviewed individually as part of the evaluation process. Notes taken during the interviews were typed up and analysed by the learning team.

Two focus groups, led by a member of the evaluation team, were held with Integration Advisers from Scottish Refugee Council. A further two focus groups with Integration Advisers together with practitioners from partner programmes were conducted by members of the evaluation team. These were each recorded and transcribed by the facilitator and analysed by the learning team.

1.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THIS REPORT

This report brings together quantitative data from whole of the service to reflect consistencies and changes in both the composition of refugees in Scotland from 2013 to 2016, and also their experiences of integration in Scotland. In addition, the year three report draws on extensive interviews with refugees themselves to explore their priorities and perspectives, and also with internal and external stakeholders to assess impact.

‘Section 2: The Holistic Integration Service Model’ outlines the characteristics of refugee beneficiaries, describes how the programme has been delivered, and how data has been used to influence policy and practice.

Sections 3, 4 and 5 present our findings in three core sections which seek to reflect the ways in which refugees themselves talk about re-building their lives in Scotland.

‘Section 3: Accessing Rights’ deals with refugees’ experiences of homelessness, of accessing housing and welfare benefits and examines the impacts of their experiences and the overall condition of poverty on their own integration pathways.

‘Section 4: Connecting’ tackles the ways in which refugees seek to connect with Scottish communities. This includes their experiences and attitudes to learning the English language, and their accounts of the range of social relationships, from forming friendships to coping with racism in neighbourhoods.

‘Section 5: Building Independence’ brings together the different aspects of life that refugees associate with living independently in Scotland, as well as the big challenge of finding employment and accessing education needed to support this.

Each section reflects on the contribution of the service. The final section brings the findings together to consider implications for integration. Recommendations following from our findings have been presented at the beginning of the report for ease of access.

SECTION 2

THE HOLISTIC INTEGRATION SERVICE MODEL

2. THE HOLISTIC INTEGRATION SERVICE MODEL

2.1 WHAT HAS THE MODEL AIMED TO ACHIEVE?

The Holistic Integration Service (HIS) has offered up to twelve months support to people who have been granted Refugee Status, Humanitarian Protection, or Discretionary Leave to Remain following an asylum claim in Scotland.

Underpinning HIS is an empowerment and rights-based approach that has aimed to ensure that,

“Refugees are effectively integrated into Scottish society and able to exercise their rights and have their needs met.”⁴

It has sought to achieve this by following the principles of,

- Early intervention
- Prevention
- Recognising resilience and vulnerability
- Partnership
- Sustainable outcomes for refugees

Scottish Refugee Council led the design and delivery of the service, building on its long experience of working with refugees and that of its partners: British Red Cross, Bridges Programmes, Glasgow Clyde College and Workers Educational Association Scotland. It has combined the provision of an advice and advocacy service (Scottish Refugee Council) with additional programmes available on referral, including enhanced support (British Red Cross), ESOL courses

(Glasgow Clyde College and Workers Educational Association Scotland) and employability support (Bridges Programmes). These are outlined in section 1 above. Further details of the service are available in our [Year One Report](#).

⁴ Joint Delivery Plan for the Holistic Integration Service

HOLISTIC INTEGRATION SERVICE

- Joint Management Board (JMB)
- Community Practice (COP)
- Wider Integration Network (WIN – Learning Events)
- External context – HIS contribution
- CC – Community conferences

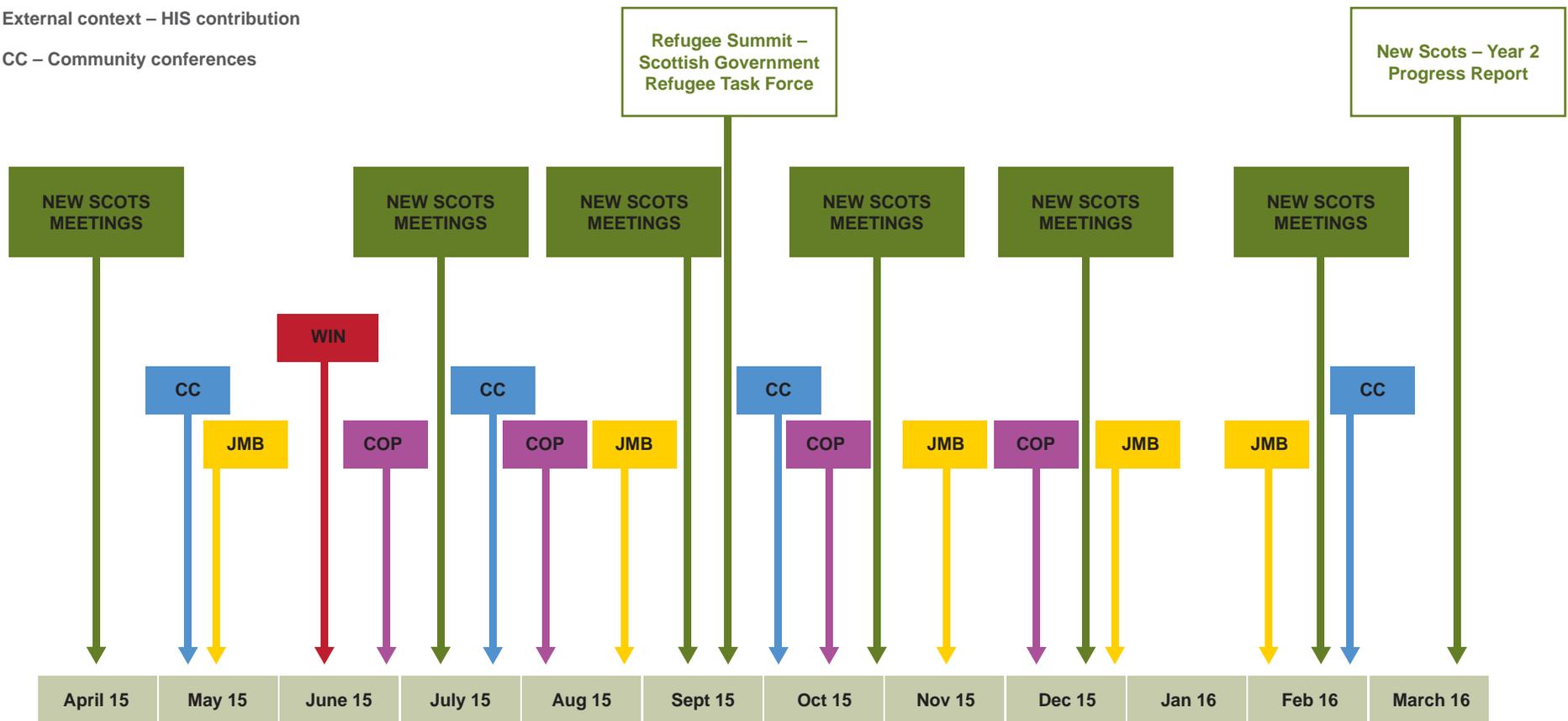
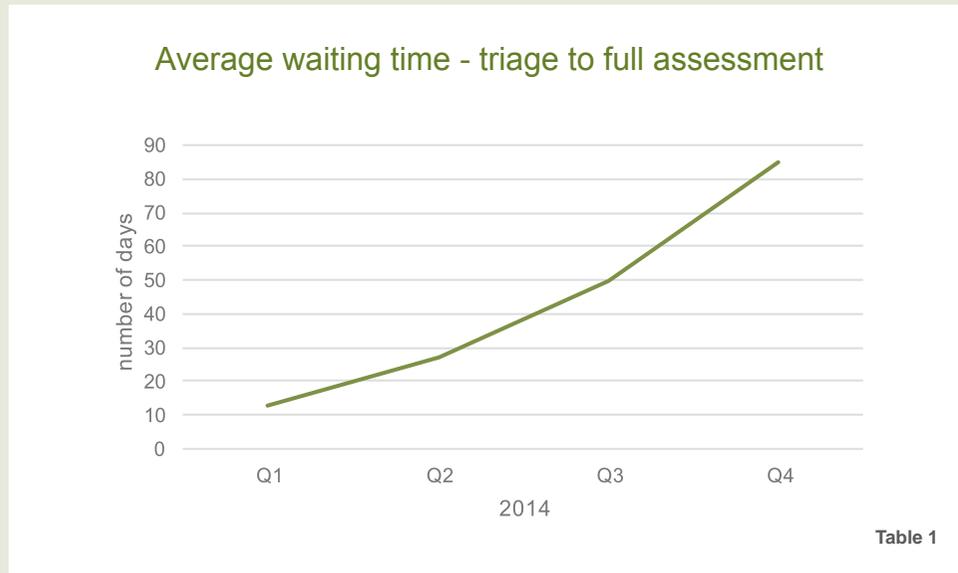


Fig 1

2.2 SERVICE CAPACITY

While the service was designed in recognition that some refugees would neither want nor need to fully engage with the service beyond initial orientation, there have been variations in service capacity throughout its operation.

In the first six months of 2014, four full-time Integration Advisers were available to conduct full assessment and ongoing review appointments. However, this reduced to only three Advisers in July 2014. There appears to have been an immediate impact upon the time refugees had to wait between their first contact with the service (triage) to their full assessments, as shown below:



These same capacity restraints meant that the proportion of people benefiting from a full assessment at the strongest point of need

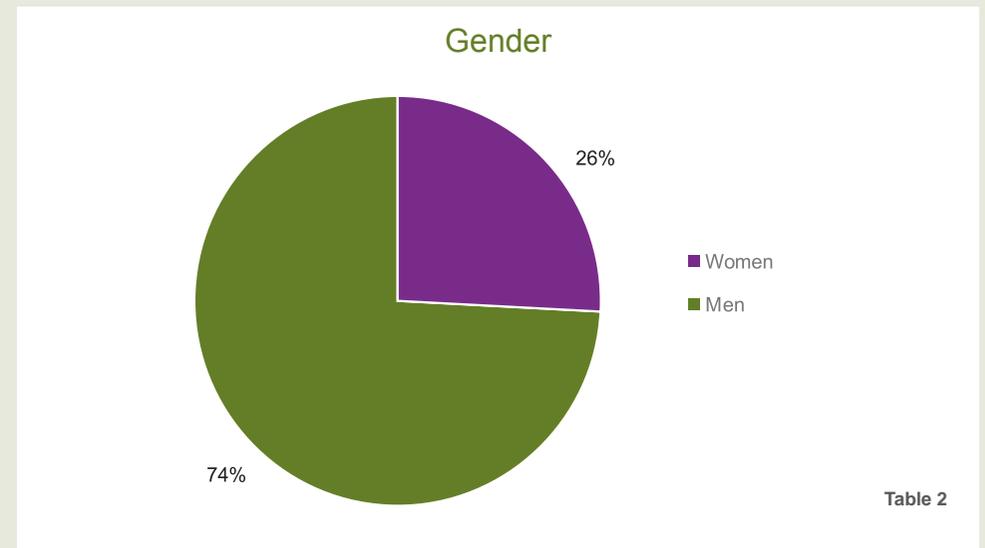
reduced from 75% in 2014 to 31% in 2015⁵. Refugees did continue to access the service but on an unplanned basis – drop-in presentations increased by 27% over the same period.

Volunteers have been vital to support service delivery, but cannot fully replace committed, full-time staff members. (74% over the last three years)

2.3 WHO HAS BENEFITTED FROM THE SERVICE?

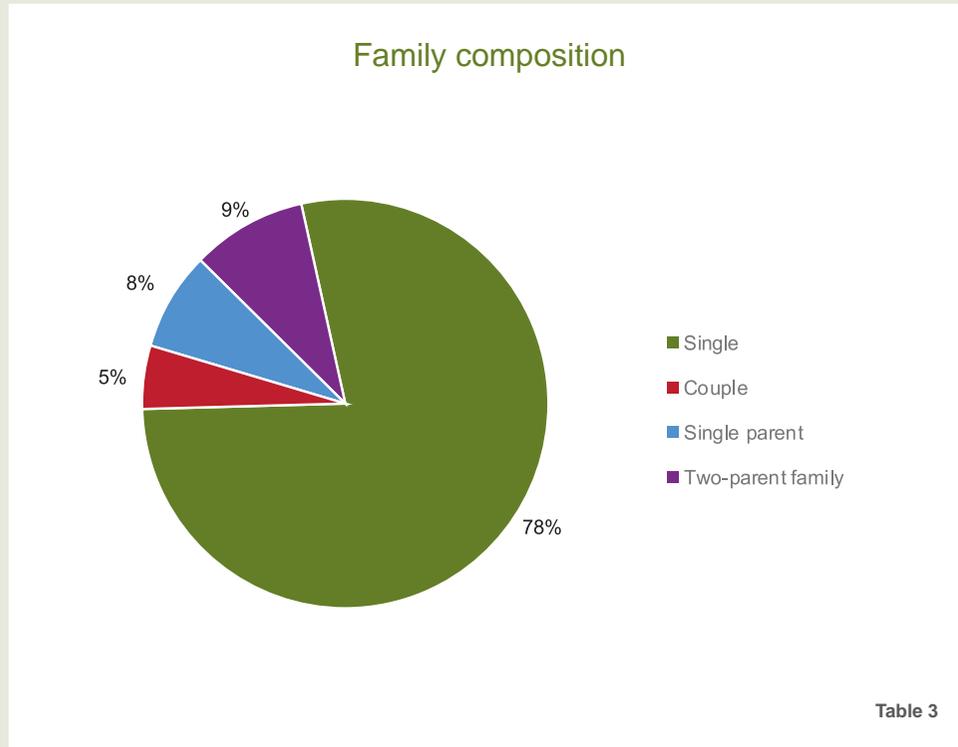
Since it began operation in May 2013, the Holistic Integration Service has provided a service to 1,885 refugee households.

Men have consistently constituted a clear majority of service beneficiaries, and this has been particularly striking in year three where male heads of household comprised 84% of the service intake.



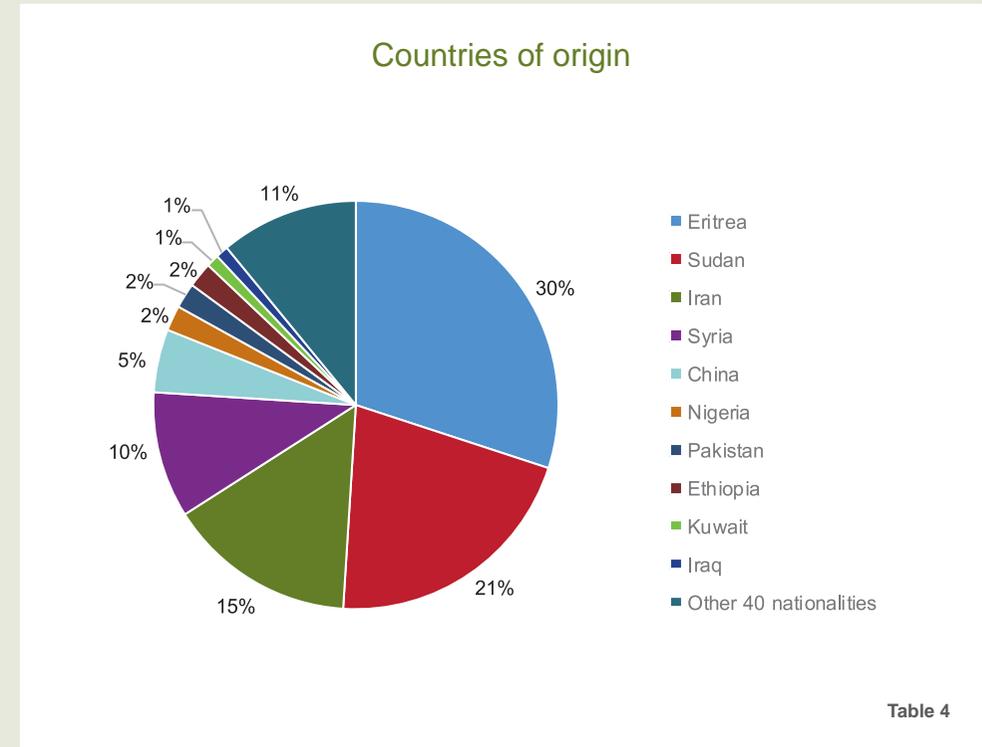
⁵ Of people who attended a triage session

Similarly, across all three years of the project, the majority of households have presented as being single. Some single people may subsequently apply to bring spouses and dependent children to the UK under family reunion.



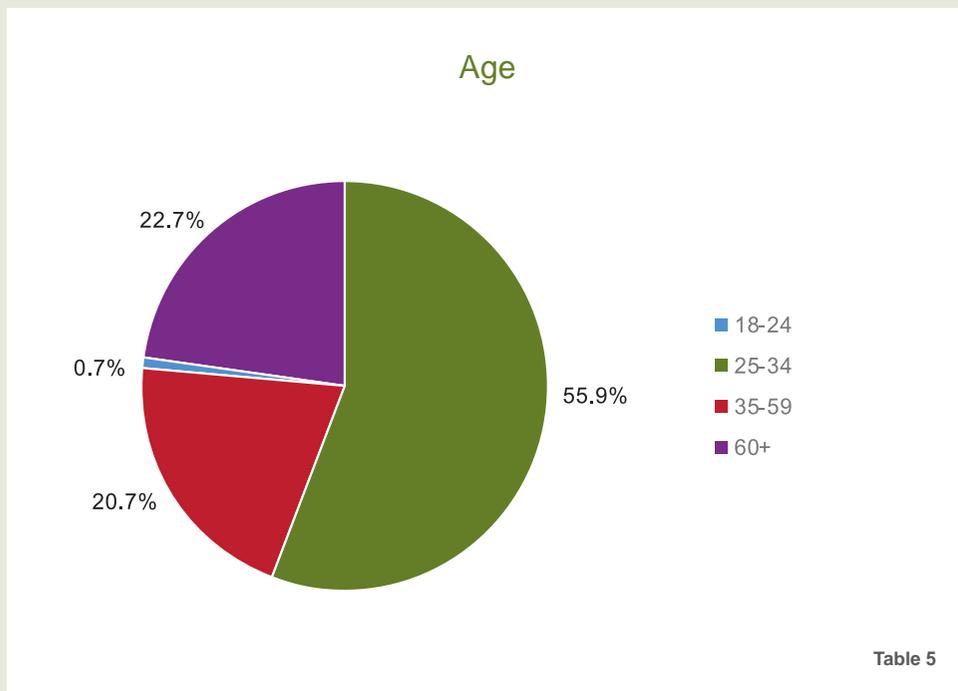
It is important to note that 127 of the 143 single-parent households (89%) were headed by women. This may have an impact on the type of benefits women access and their ability to take up education and employment after a grant of status.

People from 50 different countries have accessed HIS. However, four main countries have dominated the profile of service beneficiaries. These are Eritrea (30%), Sudan (21%), Iran (15%) and Syria (10%).



Across the three years of the project, these four countries of origin accounted for 76% of the total people who accessed the service.

Finally, refugees who accessed Holistic Integration Service were primarily of working age, with the majority (78.6%) aged between 18 and 34. Only a very small proportion of refugees were aged 60 or above – 15 people (0.7%) across the three years' operation of the service.



2.4 WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

The Holistic Integration Service has been ambitious in bringing together separate organisations, each with different experience of working with refugees in Glasgow. The service has addressed

the needs of new refugees within a holistic understanding of integration⁶. It has sought to stream-line provision and to deliver a genuinely person-centred service, with a focus on beneficiary rather than organisational needs.

HIS has brought together diverse organisations each with a different ethos and different patterns of service provision. Some partner organisations had previously worked in bi-lateral collaborative relationships with each other, but the partnership of the five organisations involved was unique to this programme.

Partners reported experiencing some challenges in the early stages of the programme. Respective organisational funding depended on the numbers of beneficiaries who engaged with the service that they provided. Referrals to these services were triggered by criteria agreed by the partnership. For example, referral to the BRC enhanced service depended on an SRC Integration Adviser assessing a client as having complex needs. Referral to the GCC language courses and to Bridges Programmes depended on a language level which was assessed by WEA Scotland⁷. This mutual interdependence resulting from the direct relationship between referral and funding required an openness and trust between partners.

Partner managers have all observed that good relationships and understanding have grown between the partner organisations during the course of the programme. This has led to resolution of emerging challenges in reaching the goals of the Holistic Integration Service, and also a commitment to continuing to work together in the future. Two key elements to building the partnership have been the 'Community of Practice' convened by Scottish Refugee Council to bring together practitioners from across the organisations, and the regular meetings of the 'Joint Management Board' which evolved into an 'Impact Network'.

⁶ Ager & Strang 2008

⁷ Unless already fluent in English or already assessed by another organisation.

2.4.1 COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE – for practitioners

Practitioners from each partner organisation have met together as a community of practice around six times a year throughout the three-year programme. The meetings, facilitated by the Integration Development Officer based at the Scottish Refugee Council, have been used to share experiences and raise concerns about the running of the programme and the needs of beneficiaries.

Practitioners reported that they found the community of practice meetings a useful place to address logistical difficulties, such as the timing of referrals, or potential timetable clashes between activities provided by the respective organisations. This helped in supporting beneficiaries to manage their conflicting priorities. By meeting regularly, staff have established relationships that have made it easier to contact each other about individual client issues. For example,

“We’re erring on the side of contacting them [practitioners in other HIS partner agencies] if we think there might be an issue. We won’t worry any more about whether we should or shouldn’t contact them, as we were initially”
(WEA Scotland practitioner)

There was agreement that discussing real cases together has enabled all staff members to develop a more holistic understanding of needs and circumstances of refugee clients. Some practitioners have also taken the opportunity to shadow each other.

Managers have strongly endorsed the value of enabling their staff to participate in the partnership wide community of practice:

“Staff get a lot out of it [Community of Practice]”
(Glasgow Clyde College Manager)

“Our staff learnt so much more [from participating in the Community of Practice]. They became more familiar with for example housing issues and benefits”
(Bridges Programmes Manager)

2.4.2 IMPACT NETWORK – for partner managers

The managers of each partner organisation met around four times a year as a Joint Management Board known as the ‘Impact Network’. At these meetings they discussed project management issues⁸ and heard reports from the Scottish Refugee Council’s casework management system on the profile of beneficiaries. As the programme developed, the emphasis of these meetings shifted from practical programme management to impact, examining trends and identifying cross-cutting issues. The learning partners convened a ‘learning day’ with practitioners and managers at the end of year one, and were invited to present insights from the evaluation at the Impact Network annually.

Several members of the Impact Network have observed that there was distrust between partners at first, but that gradually through transparency in the sharing of data and open discussion about management challenges trusting relationships have been established. Two of the partners observed that even more openness in data sharing – particularly on each partners’ performance indicators – would have improved the relationships further. There were opportunities for feedback from the Community of Practice into the Joint Management Board and these led to improvements in service delivery. One manager felt that it would have been valuable to have allowed even more time for addressing individual case management concerns during the meetings.

⁸ This did not include issues relating to each projects’ bilateral contract with Scottish Refugee Council.

However, all managers clearly valued the opportunity provided by the group to discuss strategic issues:

“It (the JMB) was also good for raising cross-cutting issues”
(Bridges Programmes Manager)

“For example, we have talked about ‘spiky profiles’ for language for a long time, but now we have the opportunity to consolidate. Data from HIS provides the support, so we can address the need to have separate classes for different aspects of language learning.”
(Glasgow Clyde College Manager)

“There was a lot of analysis of trends... and this has had a strong impact.”
(British Red Cross Manager)

2.4.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER COLLABORATION

Partner managers agree that the relationships that they have now forged have potential for lasting value. The benefit was at a very personal level for at least one manager,

“I think it has changed me!”
(Partner Manager)

Most partners made it clear that their own organisation had benefitted significantly from involvement in the HIS partnership. British Red Cross pointed out that the HIS model and emerging data has enabled them to support other branches across the UK in developing services for asylum seekers and refugees. Glasgow Clyde College suggested that learning from the programme could be applied to their other non-refugee ESOL learners.

At the time of the final interviews the HIS programme was coming to a close and partner managers were in the process of shaping a proposal to continue the work. They all agreed that they had forged valuable relationships that enabled a more strategic and holistic approach to supporting refugees.

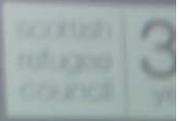
“As a result of HIS we have created a ‘hub’ for supporting refugees with partners now in close relationship of trust which had not been there before.”
(Glasgow Clyde College)

It is clear that members of the Impact Network believe that the Holistic Integration Service, has demonstrated the value of investing time in creating strong relationships between organisations working with the same client groups.

It was suggested that whilst joint service delivery had provided a strong basis for building these relationships, it would be extremely valuable to encourage the development of an even wider group of stakeholders. A number of suggestions were made for other organisations that should be drawn into this ‘hub’ including, Department for Work and Pensions, Glasgow City Council, local Integration Networks and other community networks to involve refugees and communities themselves.



Margaret Burgess, MSP
Minister for Housing and Welfare



2.5 INFLUENCING POLICY

The Holistic Integration Service has been built on the principle that service provision should generate robust evidence for development and advocacy. It has therefore been crucial to the model to collect credible data in order to ‘tell the story’ of refugee integration experience in order to influence and improve policy and practice.

Below we explore the ways in which data gathering has been integrated into the HIS model, the methods used to disseminate this data, and views on the success of this work from stakeholders within and outside the HIS partnership.

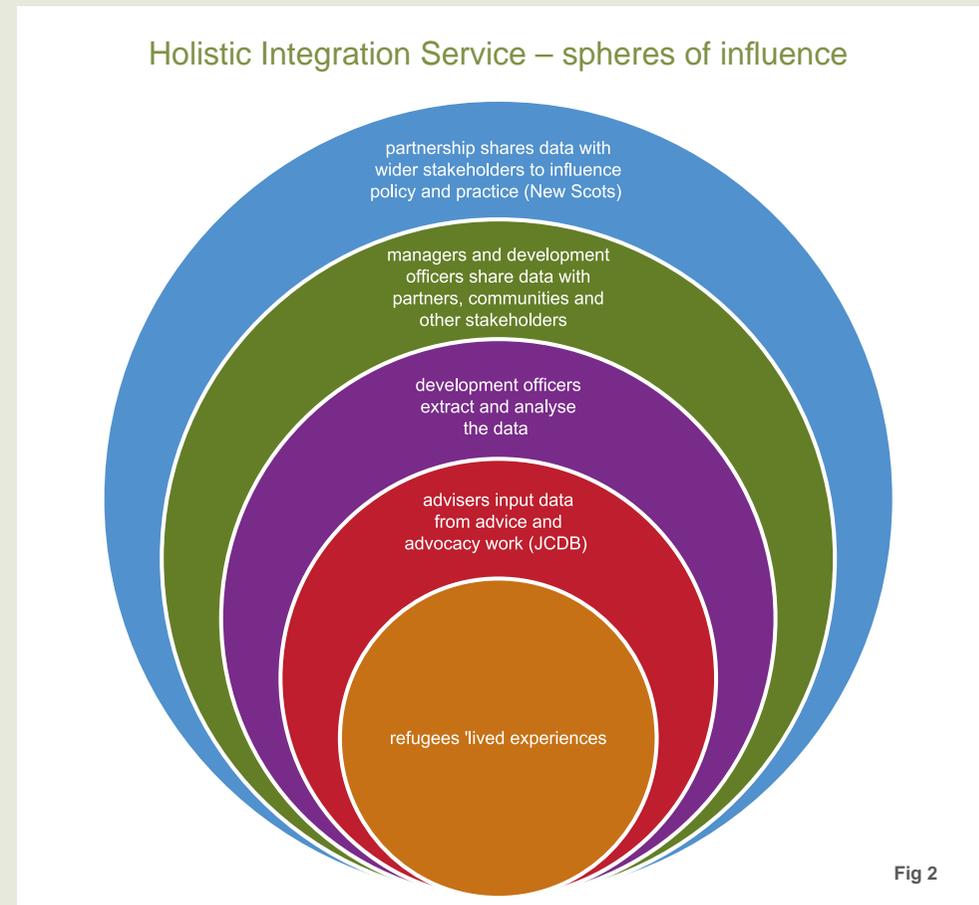
2.5.1 GATHERING DATA

The principle tool used to gather evidence about the refugee journey has been the Joint Client Database (JCDB), Scottish Refugee Council’s casework management system. Originally designed to support asylum advice work, this system was initially developed by Scottish Refugee Council in collaboration with the Refugee Council and Welsh Refugee Council. Scottish Refugee Council invested £104k of its own resource in the first year of the service to create an integration module⁹. This was necessary in order to reflect the specificities of work with refugees.

The system is structured around the ‘Indicators of Integration’ framework¹⁰, and so aims to “move beyond simply recording adviser activity” to promote a social policy-driven analysis of frontline work (SRC Manager).

2.5.2 USING THE DATA

The diagram below illustrates the ways in which data has been communicated from the level of lived experience up to policy and strategic level. Key to this process has been the work and commitment of dedicated Integration and Housing Development Officers, who have been the ‘driving force’ behind extracting, analysing and disseminating the data.



⁹ This involved development of new functions and coding which is now being used by other organisations.

¹⁰ See footnote 4 above.

2.5.3 STAKEHOLDERS' REFLECTIONS

Scottish Refugee Council: in-putting the data

Integration Advisers were generally enthusiastic about the JCDB and appear to have accepted the data entry responsibilities placed upon them. It is clear that their close working relationship with development officers has been vital to this process of adviser 'buy-in':

"It's fantastic to hear from our development workers and managers about the reports that can be gathered from it, it's just great"

(Adviser 1)

"It makes it feel worthwhile what we're doing, not just to help people get their benefits and their house, but there's information and lobbying going on in the background, the whole thing's just fantastic, it's going from client level right up to policy and Scottish and UK government."

(Adviser 2)

Scottish Refugee Council: analysing and sharing the data

Policy colleagues within SRC were similarly impressed by the ways in which new trends, based on solid evidence had been identified:

"We have seen things that we didn't see before, for example ... the gender differences in the length of time people were waiting to move into settled accommodation"

(SRC policy staff 1)

The dissemination process was also seen as having brought the policy and practice teams closer together, for example, when

working together to prepare and deliver Community Conferences (SRC policy staff 2).

The only substantial difficulty highlighted by staff has been the time and training required in order to use the system effectively, demonstrating the need for ongoing organisational investment in the data gathering process:

"... the difficult thing about it is how long it takes to train people on it and how much experience you require in order to do it properly"

(Adviser 4)

Holistic Integration Service partner organisations

The descriptive data on new refugees accessing the service was regularly shared at Impact Network meetings with the Joint Management Board, and partners found this valuable in planning their own aspect of the service. Partners provided examples where data had been used to support bids for future funding for services (Glasgow Clyde College Manager).

Each partner reported using the data to advocate within other networks that they each belonged to (e.g. Glasgow Adult Learning Network; Glasgow Homelessness Strategy; the European Council on Refugees and Exiles). Managers from partner organisations broadly agreed with the description of the data as being "well-grounded politically, well positioned to demonstrate gaps and... accessible" (British Red Cross Manager). The same interviewee explained,

"The HIS data has been accessible because of the extent of it, and the level of analysis and application available in the reports"

It was clear that partners believed that there was added value in being able to use shared data to support a collective voice,

“It is very important to bring agencies together to create a web of information”

(British Red Cross Manager)

They shared examples of using HIS data at local, national and international levels in order to “hold statutory services to account” (British Red Cross Manager) and influence political decision-makers, for example the UK Employment Minister (Bridges Programmes Manager)

Wider Scottish Policy Stakeholders

An annual report, written for a policy and practice audience, has been published each year and each year the HIS has hosted a learning event for a wide range of stakeholders. These have been interspersed with quarterly stakeholder events, often themed around specific integration domains such as housing. This has promoted the sharing of data and building a shared understanding between those concerned with the needs of refugees.

Our interviews with stakeholders external to the HIS Partnership would imply that through these, and similar activities, HIS data and learning has successfully influenced policy and practice across various integration domains.

New Scots

The Holistic Integration Service has consistently contributed data and learning to support each stage of the development and implementation of the Scottish Government integration strategy,

‘New Scots, Integrating Refugees in Scotland’s Communities’¹¹. All stakeholders made reference to the importance of New Scots working groups as a forum for sharing information and experiences, with one stakeholder identifying HIS data as being a tangible way to measure the impact of the New Scots Strategy:

“... it’s hard to measure through New Scots how successful [the strategy] was, part of the HIS report was that there was a measurable data that you could see where things were improving ... it was something that was bringing back some measurable feedback to where differences were being made....”

(Government stakeholder)

It was also pointed out that,

“HIS data has paved the way for the Syrian Resettlement scheme in Scotland”

(British Red Cross Manager)

It was equally clear that the data from HIS has had an impact on individual sectors in terms of keeping the needs of refugees at the forefront of service delivery:

“HIS is a package and the evaluation reports...constantly put refugees on the agenda for us as an organisation and highlight the uneven playing field and why there’s a necessity for us to be involved.”

(Education stakeholder)

“We have held master classes with SRC ...giving the perspective of the customer, the special perspective of the customer and giving us a greater understanding of where they have been and what they have been through.”

(DWP stakeholder)

¹¹ New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland’s Communities 2014-2017
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0043/00439604.pdf>,
Year 1 progress report <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/03/7625>,
Year 2 progress report <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/03/3869>.

Refugees and asylum seekers

The Holistic Integration Service is available for all new refugees in Scotland. However, it is recognised that many other refugees – including those who have been living in Scotland with refugee status for longer than a year, and those still within the asylum process – could benefit from integration support. In order to address this need, HIS convened several Community Conferences each year on different topics (Housing, Health, Employment, Education), to explore ways for asylum seekers and refugees to engage better with service providers and learn how to access services, their entitlements and obligations.

Learning from the Community Conferences and other interventions has prompted Scottish Refugee Council to explore new models to support asylum seekers and refugees to access essential information about their rights and options while developing social connections. The Peer Education Project for Health¹² funded by Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board is an example of that.

Learning from HIS also informed the development and operation of a dedicated service for asylum-seeking families, Scottish Refugee Council's Family Keywork Service¹³. Using a similar resilience-based, holistic approach, this service enabled families to benefit from integration support from the first days of their time in Scotland, as recommended by the New Scots strategy.



Holistic Integration Service Learning Event, June 2015

¹² http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0000/9691/Peer_Education_Evaluation_Report_FINAL.pdf

¹³ http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0001/0712/Family_Keywork_Service_Report_2016.pdf

SECTION 3

ACCESSING

RIGHTS

3. ACCESSING RIGHTS

Self-assessment data gathered from refugees at the beginning of their engagement with HIS tell us that a majority of refugees feel that they do understand their rights:

Do you agree/disagree with the statement 'I am aware of my rights here and know how to access them?'

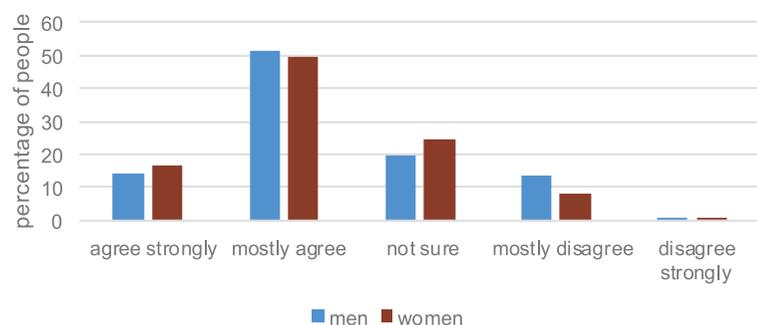


Table 6

However, with regard to accessing settled housing and achieving financial stability, it appears that structural inequalities continue to prevent people from accessing their rights without significant advocacy and assistance.

3.1 ACCESS TO HOUSING

In our [Year Two Report](#), we highlighted some of the key issues that new refugees face when they seek secure, permanent housing after being granted leave to remain. Our beneficiary interviews have allowed us to explore these in more detail in year three.

3.1.1 OVERVIEW

It remains the case that the majority of newly granted refugees present as homeless to the local authority following cessation of their asylum support. 848 refugee households made homeless applications in Glasgow in 2014/15, amounting to 13.5% of total applications across the city. This was an increase from the 448 applications made by refugee households (7% of the total) in the previous year (Draft Glasgow City Council Homeless Strategy 2015-20, p.13)¹⁴

Across the lifespan of the project, 86% of the refugees who accessed HIS presented as homeless to the local authority when their asylum support ended¹⁵.

Throughout the duration of the service, people have favoured social housing when looking for permanent accommodation. Only 6% of the 226 cases recorded were households that chose private sector housing.

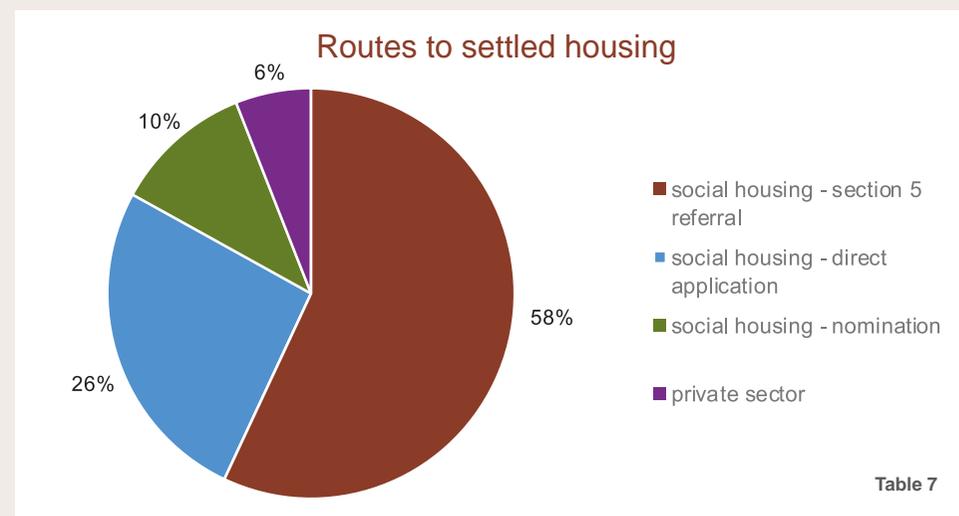


Table 7

¹⁴ Draft presented at Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership Homelessness Strategic Planning Group, not yet available online.

¹⁵ 71% in Year One; 92.5% in Year Two; 88% in Year Three.

HIS beneficiaries access settled housing more quickly than the homeless population generally. The average time spent in homeless accommodation by refugees was 207 days, compared to an average wait of 217 days by homeless people in Glasgow as a whole¹⁶.

However, for both men and women there has been apparent increase in the time refugees spend in homeless accommodation when compared to the figures provided in our [Year Two report](#). Both increases may be related to difficulties in accessing statutory homelessness assistance to move into permanent accommodation during the strike period (from April to September) and in the subsequent months while homelessness services have been subject to significant upheaval; and from HIS itself due to its own capacity in year three.

From 2015 Glasgow City Council have started to publish figures on refugee applications to homelessness services and, through their new “HL3” form¹⁷, will be producing better information on the outcomes of homeless presentations and applications. This will improve opportunities to track refugees’ experiences of access to housing rights.

3.1.2 EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS

Below we explore some of the difficulties faced by refugees while they navigate the homelessness system. Many of these resonate with problems which can affect homeless people regardless of their immigration status, but may be exacerbated due to refugees’ past experiences of forced migration and the short time they have been resident in Scotland.

Lack of provision of temporary accommodation

In year two, we noted the significant incidence of non-provision of temporary accommodation by Glasgow City Council. The local authority has recognised that this is an issue for the homeless population as a whole (GCC Homeless Strategy, p.17).

Case data indicates that at least 12% of the refugees who reported to Scottish Refugee Council that they were homeless or threatened with homelessness in the first three quarters of year three¹⁸ presented to Glasgow City Council and were not provided with temporary accommodation on at least one occasion. This increase from the previous year can be explained by the impact of the Glasgow City Council caseworker strike on all homeless applicants; and the subsequent lack of temporary accommodation caused by fewer people moving from temporary to permanent accommodation.

Four of our interviewees, three single men and one single woman, confirmed that when they presented as homeless after leaving asylum accommodation, they were informed that there was no temporary accommodation available, and were advised that they should arrange to stay with friends. Our interviewees were quick to identify that this advice may be inappropriate due to refugees’ typically limited social and family connections in Scotland:

“...all my friends at that time they were staying in hostels and some hostels you’re not allowed even to come and sleep with your friends”

B10

“They say just stay with your friends...so if you don’t have any friends you are going to suffer...”

B21

¹⁶ Based on data from Draft Glasgow City Council Homeless Strategy 2015-20

¹⁷ HL3 form is developed by the Scottish Government to be completed by all local authorities to monitor their performance against their homelessness duty. As of April 2016, it will include more data on provision of temporary accommodation.

¹⁸ 57 of 494 people.

Quality of hostel accommodation

The majority of the refugees we interviewed felt that hostel accommodation was unsuitable for them. This was particularly the case in hostels without cooking facilities, recognised by the local authority itself as being “unsuitable to accommodate homeless households” (GCC Homeless strategy, p.18). Several refugees pointed to cultural or religious reasons to explain why life in such hostels was difficult:

“...especially we had a month Ramadan we are fasting and there I couldn’t cook something”
B7

“I am Christian and at that time I was fasting as well because of my religion and I then couldn’t get like easy cook for my religion food”
B21

Another complaint about life in hostels related to the lack of freedom in hostel life, due to the enforcement of curfews and inability to invite friends over to visit or accept employment with unsocial hours.

“it’s like no visitors, you know to be alone sometimes, maybe someone want to visit me just to talk... but there is no visitors and if I want to stay outside I can’t as well...”
B7

“When you get into the accommodation when you come to sleep and morning you should to sign so there is no freedom in a hostel...”
B11

While each of these problems, taken in isolation, may seem minimal, the cumulative effect of living for long periods in an

environment where people feel unable to make and maintain social connections; can neither shop nor cook for themselves; and do not have adequate access to basic facilities; is likely to constitute a significant barrier to people’s integration.

Racism and anti-social behaviour

Eleven of the twenty-five people interviewed talked about anti-social behaviour that they had experienced or witnessed in Glasgow. This appeared to be particularly acute for refugees who were living in temporary homeless accommodation:

“The people who live in our building [temporary furnished flat] there are drug addicts and alcoholics and smokers and they insult us , they really insult us, their children throw stones at us...they insult us, sometimes they throw eggs at us...”
B14

“I don’t like that area because in that area I’ve got something that’s not nice for me...some of the white people calling my friends ‘black bastards’ as well, that’s racist, I don’t like this area”
B18

While people appeared to feel comfortable with reporting such incidents to the Police, there was little evidence that reporting anti-social behaviour to homelessness workers generated any urgency in dealing with requests to relocate:

“I told my [Homeless services] caseworker but she didn’t do anything...”
B18

“I did go to the City Council ...a ‘social worker’ [Housing support worker] comes every week on Friday and asks me if I’m ok and if the neighbour still keeps bothering me...”

B22

Conversely, those interviewees (n=13) who were living in settled housing at the time of their interviews tended to comment very positively on their perceptions of living in a “good”, “safe” or “quiet” area, with a particular emphasis on having “nice” neighbours. Those who were still looking for homes also emphasised these qualities when asked where or what sort of home they would like to have:

“...we have had some very difficult times in our lives, now we want to be calm, to be in a peaceful place...”

B14

Accessing statutory homeless services

Refugees’ experiences of accessing local authority homelessness services, the Asylum and Refugee Service based at the Hamish Allen Centre in Glasgow, were mixed. While some refugees spoke warmly of the assistance they had received from their named caseworker, others had found it difficult to either contact, or even to find out the name of, their homelessness caseworker:

“I got my leave to remain seven months ago and I don’t have a caseworker yet there... First four months they had a strike ok I understand that but now three months I don’t have a caseworker yet.”

B7

“Hamish Allan is very bad, no answer, and me every day Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday go to Hamish

Allan but no answer...my caseworker in Hamish Allan is a good man but no answer”

B15

There was some evidence of inconsistent explanations of people’s rights and options. One man recounted that his homelessness caseworker told him that if he didn’t have a caseworker at Scottish Refugee Council he was,

“... not allowed to apply for housing in Townhead”

B10

In another case, two sisters had found out that they owed rent arrears as one sister was classed as dependent on the other, something they felt had not been explored with them when they presented as homeless:

“We said ‘you didn’t explain that, if you had told us then we would have made separate applications and taken separate houses’ but they didn’t explain that to us.”

B14

Another female head of household recounted her confusion when her homelessness caseworker berated her for refusing two offers of permanent accommodation:

“...she [homelessness caseworker] started to shout to me in the office ‘You have to think about your children because if you keep refusing otherwise you will stay in the street homeless!’ You know at the beginning I didn’t know the rules and regulations, that I had to accept or if I refused the first one I should accept the second one or there should be a specific, a strong reason for refusal.”

B16

It would therefore appear the service offered by statutory homelessness services remains inconsistent and that there are still gaps in peoples' understandings of their rights, options and responsibilities as they navigate homelessness systems.

Wider barriers to integration

Refugees reported that living in temporary homeless accommodation has prevented them from 'moving on' in other integration domains. A key concern is the cost of temporary accommodation, which can prevent people from accessing part-time and other low-paid employment or full-time education:

“The problem is that if you live there you can't work because if you work you can give all the money to the hostel to pay for the hostel, £200/week, that's difficult”

B9

“I can't work because my home is so expensive for me, I can't work here...”

B18

This suggests that although local authorities have a statutory duty to provide housing at a reasonable cost, many refugees and other homeless households are not effectively accessing appropriately priced temporary housing which would enable them to engage with education or employment. There was equally little evidence of local authorities undertaking personalised assessments of cost based upon people's individual circumstances.

If we accept that a lack of stable housing can act as a barrier to integration, there are indications that gender may determine the duration of homelessness and so the severity of this barrier.

Refugee women spent on average only 193 days in homelessness while men waited for 222 days for settled housing¹⁹.

Four of the women in our sample spoke warmly of the support they had received from commissioned housing support services when applying for permanent housing. None of our male interviewees appeared to have received this type of support, even where they had diagnosed physical health problems.

Conversely, advisers themselves identified young single men as prone to walking around with “their head in the clouds”, as illustrated during some beneficiary interviews:

“Have you made any applications yourself for a permanent house?”

“No.”

“Has anyone talked to you about making applications for a permanent house?”

“No.”

B18 (living in temporary furnished flat for eight months)

While advisers felt that that early intervention was particularly important with such clients to get them to “realise their rights and entitlements” and to “create aspiration”, limits on service capacity in year three may have prevented consistent and effective engagement with those young, single and healthy people who are not typically assessed as needing intensive support.

¹⁹ See also Year Two Report, page 25 – this may be because women are more likely to have dependent children and so request two or three bedroom properties for which there is less demand.

3.1.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE HOLISTIC INTEGRATION SERVICE

Policy development

Scottish Refugee Council's Housing Development Work, funded by the Scottish Government, is based on the activities of the Holistic Integration Service and has contributed to:

- Increasing housing options²⁰ through the negotiation of nomination agreements with social landlords;
- Continuous strategic working with Glasgow City Council Homeless Services to mitigate the impact of homelessness on refugee integration – Glasgow City Council now includes data on homelessness of refugees in their Homelessness Strategy, making it visible and enabling planning;
- Working with Scottish Government, COSLA, Local Authorities and other housing partners on the delivery of the New Scots Housing Plan. This aims to improve housing options for refugees across Scotland and alleviate the issues caused by the 28-day move-on period;
- Developing key partnerships with housing stakeholders, such as Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland, to ensure that refugees' housing needs are at the centre of housing policy development in Scotland.

Initial access to services

Every refugee we spoke to had received some level of initial advice from HIS about where to go and what to expect from statutory homelessness services. Where people were not able to access

temporary accommodation Integration Advisers undertook advocacy to challenge this:

“...and after that [being told there was no temporary accommodation] I returned back to this office. When I came here SRC helped me to send me other places and get an accommodation ...”

B11

Even where refugees did not experience particular problems with homelessness provision, initial advice from HIS served as an important “first stage” of the housing journey:

“Yes I came here and I was contact with [Integration adviser] ... I got a lot of information from her, and also she was advising me how can I get a house, get a home, so I got a lot of information in Refugee Council.”

B5

“[Integration Adviser] do for me a lot of things... like sending me to the jobcentre and finding me a house where I live now, a lot of things, I'm glad to meet [him]”

B18

“...because when I received the eviction letter from my Home Office accommodation I brought this letter to here and immediately they phoned the Council and immediately they told them this lady has been granted and she will be evicted on this date and immediately I have been there ... and they provided me with temporary accommodation”

B16

Refugees who were assessed by advisers as needing only limited input; and who subsequently found their permanent accommodation with little or no ongoing assistance from any service nevertheless

²⁰ Of the 217 known families accommodated since the start of the project 10.6% have been accommodated through nominations to housing associations.

depended on advocacy by their Integration Advisers. This demonstrates that even refugees assessed as resilient may require initial assistance to access their statutory rights.

Moving on to settled housing

Four of our interviewees, all women, obtained permanent accommodation through nomination agreements between SRC and Registered Social Landlords. All four commented extremely positively about this assistance, and felt that Integration Advisers had taken into account their personal needs to find them a house that was right for them:

“I get great help from [names of advisers], they helped me to get this accommodation... They found the house and say ‘this is Mary’s house!’”

B2 (woman head of two-parent household)

“...they worked hard for me, they knew what I want, they knew I am from different culture, different religion, different areas, different country, they do appreciate all my situation...”

B16 (single mother)

“[Integration Advisers] he’s a very good man ... in one week he found for me a beautiful house...”

B15 (single woman)

Other people did not find settled housing through nomination agreements, but nonetheless commented positively on support from HIS to make their own applications to housing associations or to find housing in the private rented sector.

“So I’ve got a lot of support and motivation from [SRC staff]...I’d moved into the permanent accommodation with the housing association which [Integration Adviser] has referred me to so this was very quick...”

B19 (single woman)

This supports our findings in Year Two that engagement with HIS promoted people’s awareness of their housing choices, including the possibility of making direct applications and of taking time to choose the right, sustainable housing option.

3.2 ACCESS TO BENEFITS

HIS development officers have been particularly active in policy and development around welfare benefits. JCDB data, including the [Year Two Report](#), has made it possible to show evidence of delays in access to benefits, and ongoing partnership working with the Department for Work and Pensions and the Scottish Welfare Fund has led to recognition that processes require further refinement to work smoothly:

“... we’re taking the next step to go back and review the customer journey and further refine the process for people to move through the system and equally understanding ... where are the pinch points within the system where we can try and eradicate issues.”

(DWP stakeholder)

While these developments are welcome, our interviewees still regularly reported problems with benefit payments. Below we trace out some of these ‘pinch points’ in refugees’ journeys into and through the welfare benefits system.

3.2.1 DELAYS IN INITIAL ACCESS TO BENEFITS

In year two, we highlighted that refugees often experience periods of destitution between the cessation of asylum support and initial payments of benefits, including Jobseekers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance, Income Support (administered by DWP) and Child benefit and Tax credits (administered by HMRC).

Data available for year three continues to demonstrate that the twenty-eight day 'move-on' period prescribed by the Home Office is inadequate to allow refugees to move directly from asylum support to mainstream benefits.

Time from status to first payment

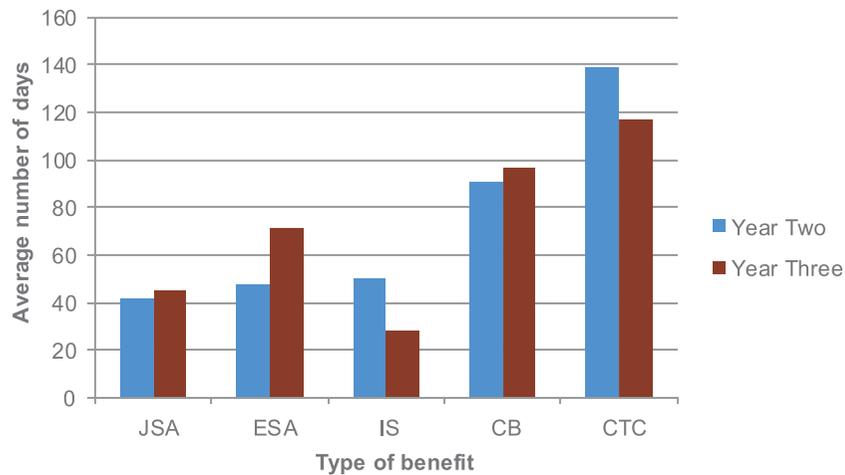


Table 8

Time from claim to first payment

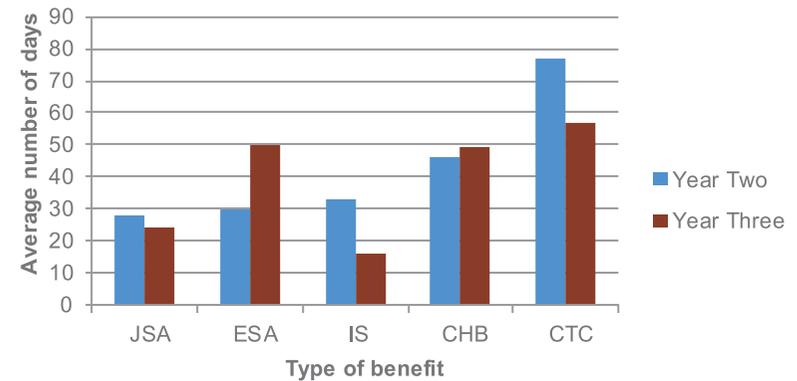


Table 9

The indications that there have been decreases in waiting times for Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA), Income Support (IS) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) are welcome. However, with Jobseekers' Allowance still being the principal benefit claimed by refugees, 24 days from claim to first payment remains too long to fit comfortably within the move-on period. Our data also shows that Jobseekers' Allowance and Employment Support Allowance claimants in year three made their claims later than people in year two. This suggests the need for stronger mechanisms between governmental agencies and services like HIS that support people to engage with DWP services and advise new refugees on their entitlements. It also shows the need for refugees to be provided with their status documents and National Insurance Number (NINo) as soon as possible as it enables access to faster benefit processes.

Days from status to claim		
	Year two	Year three
Jobseeker's Allowance	17	20
Employment Support Allowance	21	25
Income support	21	17
Child Benefit	45	45

Table 10

The DWP recently developed a helpful leaflet on welfare entitlement which should be sent by the Home Office to all new refugees.

While this is a helpful step, there are still systemic problems which need to be addressed. Indeed, many of the benefits delays recounted by interviewees stemmed from problems outside DWP systems. Of particular note were problems with the NINo (National Insurance Number) allocation process²¹:

“... all of the problem was my insurance number and they tried to take that for me and I told them when I don't have any insurance number the Jobcentre they won't help me ...”

B4

“... at that time they stopped my money I did not have a bank account and I did not have the insurance number at that time...”

B1

problems with Home Office paperwork, including instances where some family members were granted at different times:

“...even when they gave us papers, they [Home Office] said we are not entitled to public funds so everything just stopped ... they omitted to grant my wife status... she got her papers in July 2015, we got ours in November 2014...”

B8

and with the need to open bank accounts:

“...at the beginning I didn't have a bank account, I didn't know how to communicate with them ...the delay of Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit, it took time...”

B16

²¹ See HIS year 2 report (as per footnote 1) for full details on NINo allocation processes and challenges.

Moreover, DWP processes for dealing with benefits problems were frequently seen as complex and unhelpful. No interviewees were able to reference positive help that they had received directly from Jobcentre staff regarding difficulties either with initial or ongoing benefits payments.

“Did you talk to Jobcentre Plus about the problem?”

“Yes they say they will send me but they don’t do anything”

B1

3.2.2 SANCTIONS & THE ‘CLAIMANT COMMITMENT’.

In year two, we noted that most sanctions occurred in the first six months after refugees were granted status, and recommended that extra work should go into explaining the conditionality of Jobseekers Allowance.

Four of our interviewees had been sanctioned by the time of their interviews with us. Three people were sanctioned for non-attendance at the DWP English classes²² provided by Ingeus, while one woman was sanctioned due to failing to complete her job search. All but one of these interviewees explained that circumstances relating to other areas of their integration journeys had prevented them from attending classes or completing the job search as required:

“...someone from Jobcentre said to me ‘You first have to come to collect your bus pass travelling to go to Ingeus... and again the Home Office called me, ‘You have to clear out your luggage out from this house, because your time is finished here.’”

B10 (sleeping at the mosque with all his possessions at time of sanctions)

“You see they put me into a 21-day English course which I was quite keen to do but I had to go to my housing, I had all these places to go for my housing application, I had to leave two classes ...”

B15

“Jobcentre sanctioned me because our house was new and we didn’t have furniture ... so we used to sleep in the floor so I couldn’t go to the website and check the job so they sanctioned me because of that...”

B24

It would appear that sanctions are being rigidly applied even where, for example, refugees have informed staff in advance that they will have to miss classes:

“I even told them prior to going that I’m going to leave two lessons, I don’t know if they didn’t pay attention...”

B15

More generally, while many interviewees were aware of the conditionality of Jobseekers Allowance, as it relates both to the job search and to attendance at English classes:

“I’m studying a course from the Jobcentre...if I didn’t go there one day your money will stop for one month...”

B18

“... they [Jobcentre] ask do you look for job...this papers every two weeks to them I sent, writing I look for job...”

B6

There were nonetheless indications, as highlighted in our year two report, that refugees may need extra support in order to understand and comply with their claimant commitment:

²² English Language Requirement stopped in March 2016. Ongoing monitoring by Department for Work and Pensions has led to a better understanding of refugees’ language learning needs. Department for Work and Pensions will continue to fund provision that will complement existing English Language provision (New Scots Year 2 Progress Report, page 19).

“First time I didn’t know some systems and I stopped ESOL classes ... so benefits were disconnected...I got some advice from Scottish Refugee Council ... after that I went back to Jobcentre and I got the systems and then I continued classes and I got my benefits from there, after until now, I can access benefits well.”

B11

3.2.3 POVERTY AND EXCLUSION

Refugees experience poverty and exclusion in a multitude of ways, some of which are common to all groups living on limited incomes; others which are specific to their experiences as new residents in Scotland.

In year two we focused upon the strain placed upon people during temporary periods of destitution. When, in year three, we spoke with refugees, it appeared that temporary destitution has less impact upon them than the ongoing difficulties of living on a limited income. Even for those who were in employment, managing to pay council tax and fuel bills on top of basic necessities was frequently described as a daily and ongoing struggle:

“I pay my council tax, sometimes I delay to pay them ... if it [restaurant] is not busy less hours so you delay to pay sometimes...”

B17 (student in part-time employment)

Other people, still on benefits, described ways in which they limited their lifestyle in order to afford to keep up with bills:

“There is a separate gas bill that comes for me and I had to top up the electric and also the £29 for council tax and that

leaves me with not much left and some days I have to eat only one meal”

B22

In addition, people were often expected to send remittances to relatives at home, who sometimes did not understand the realities of life on benefits or in low-paid employment:

“You know people back home they don’t understand the way we live here, they think we are in a mine where money you are picking it from the streets...they don’t understand that ... and the money, you work here, you need to pay rent, council tax, it is very hard...”

B24 (supporting two children and elderly parents in home country).

Underlying many of our discussions about finances was people’s sense of shame at being dependent on benefits, and their desire to move on from this stage, either through employment or education:

“It’s not comfortable to go there [Jobcentre] to sign, it’s like unemployment especially at my age and I’m in good health...until now it was the most difficult thing for me, until now it’s difficult because I am shy to go to Jobcentre...”

B7

“I feel guilty just receiving some money from Jobseekers Allowance, because I am healthy, I have a brain to think and I can do things, instead of being helped I like to help...” B17

“I am still with Jobseeker Allowance and in fact I want to [be] independent from him...I want to be free. I think the working is better...”

B20

However, many of our discussions revealed a tension between refugees' own longer term work ambitions, and the requirements of the benefits system. We explore this in more depth in section 5.2 below.

3.2.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE HOLISTIC INTEGRATION SERVICE

Policy development

The ongoing development and policy work undertaken by HIS Development Officer and Managers, in partnership with DWP, has contributed to the following outcomes:

- DWP is currently monitoring its performance in processing first benefit claims made by new refugees;
- DWP Central Scotland District engaged with the Home Office to review processes of allocation of National Insurance numbers;
- DWP and Scottish Refugee Council have co-developed and co-delivered a Master Class to support Jobcentre staff to work with refugees and improve the quality of Claimant Commitments which should be “personalised and realistic” for all Jobseekers Allowance claimants;
- Scottish Refugee Council and Bridges Programmes are both members of the New Scots Strategy Employment and Welfare Implementation Group and inform the development of practice and policy.

Despite improvements to the ‘customer journey’, many stemming from policy development and exchange between HIS and the DWP in Scotland, refugees continue to require assistance when lodging

their initial claims for benefits. 87% of the 516 claims for benefit made in the first three quarters of year three were made with the assistance of Scottish Refugee Council.

Even once benefits are in payment, there is evidence that many refugees will continue to require some level of assistance to resolve problems that arise:

“Jobcentre, I got trouble from them, every time they stopped my benefit, I came here [Scottish Refugee Council] to solve the problem”

B2

“At that time there was a problem with language barriers so we could not understand each other when I go to Jobcentre Plus so I came here [Scottish Refugee Council] and from here someone else phoned them...”

B11

Due to partnership developed between Scottish Refugee Council and DWP, Integration Advisers have access to key contacts within DWP Benefit Delivery Centres which enable them to resolve problems about benefit delays and payments. These contacts are not made available to the general public.

Refugees reported that HIS Integration Advisers had given them advice and practical assistance in applying for Crisis Grants, and setting up arrangements for ‘Simple Payment’ for people who were struggling to open bank accounts in time for first payment of benefits:

“I came here...I tell him my problem and they phoned jobcentre and I got numbers for the PayPoint and I got there the £75”

B18

“Before I had the benefit for my son but I don’t have the bank card so I’m coming to [Integration Adviser] and she give me to go to the PP Paypoint, she gave me the number...”

B13

Integration Advisers noted that this had been a significant, and time-consuming element of their work, and agreed that it would have been useful to have a data recording system which allowed them to quantify the amount of money they had been able to access for service beneficiaries.

The only other agencies referenced by interviewees as providing assistance with benefits were some particular local Citizens Advice Bureaux. There would appear to be little other engagement amongst refugees with money advice services in the city.



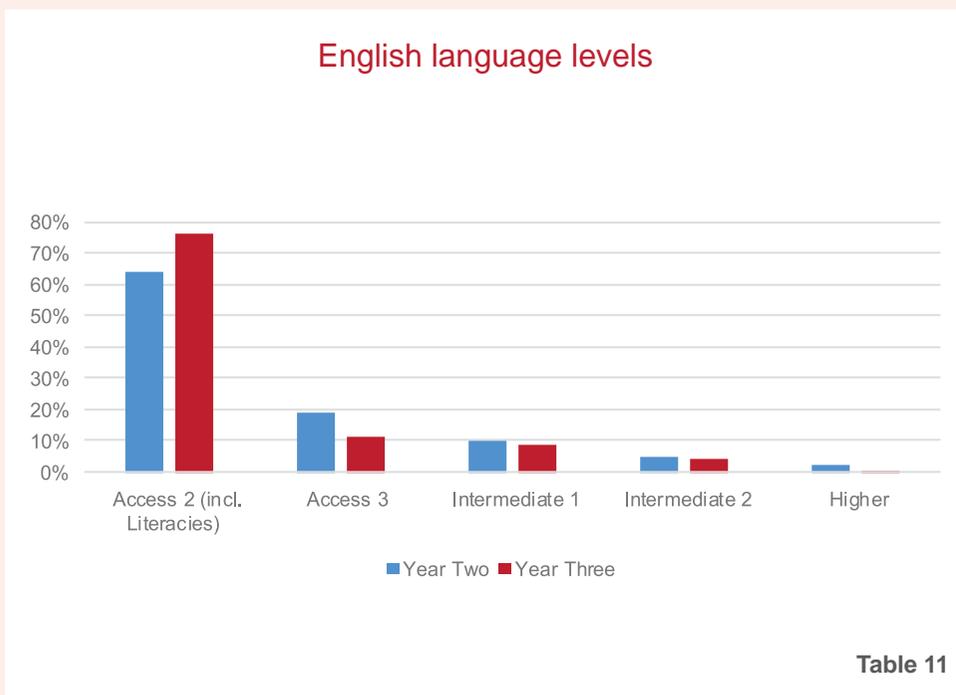
SECTION 4

CONNECTING

4. CONNECTING

4.1 LANGUAGE

As the chart below shows²³, the overwhelming majority of new refugees engaging with HIS are not fluent users of the English language. The proportion of new refugees assessed as Access Level 2 (basic skills) increased from 64% of refugees in year two to 76% in year three. This may be related to the fact that the DWP English Language Requirement classes did not accept learners who were complete beginners, leading to more people in this category being seen by WEA assessors.



Our interviews and feedback from Community Conferences confirmed that HIS service beneficiaries are consistently strongly motivated to improve their English language skills. We explore below some of their experiences of attempting to do so.

4.1.1 ACQUIRING LANGUAGE SKILLS – MOTIVATIONS AND BARRIERS

“the path to get better at everything in my life”

“essential for integration

“key for being part of the community”

(Quotes on English language, Community Conference)

The new refugees whom we spoke to as part of our evaluation, even those with very high levels of English, expressed the desire to become (even more) proficient in the English language²⁴. As we saw in year two, people perceived that achieving fluency in English had multiple roles: to enable independent access to services; to make friends and feel part of a community; and also to improve job and educational prospects²⁵.

“We need to speak English to be able to communicate, to go to hospital...”

B14

“If you want to make Scottish friends your English has to be better than now, if you speak perfect English you can make but now my English is so broken I can’t, I have to give up now.”

B18.

¹⁶ Data here was drawn from the results of the 509 assessments carried out by Workers' Educational Association from 1st April 2014 to 31st December 2015 and does not include people who did not undertake the assessment or were fluent in English.

²⁴ Excepting one person who was a native speaker

²⁵ As footnote 2, pp.33-35

Refugees determination was evidenced by several interviewees who, although their English was not fluent, refused the offer of an interpreter for the research interview as they saw it as a useful opportunity to practise their language skills.

One of these people, a young Sudanese man, appeared to have high expectations about how quickly he would become fluent:

“Somebody has problems for language but I think that’s no problem because when you come here and stay for six or seven months you can do anything and you can understand and you can improve your language.”

B9

But many beneficiaries reported that they are finding it hard to improve their English language skills, and are impatient to see improvements. For example,

“We work hard but to speak and to pronounce things it’s difficult... Until now we’ve been at college for two months...”

B14

For some refugees the challenges are compounded by the stresses created by life circumstances. One mother from Eritrea illustrated this when talking about her anxieties due to being separated from her son,

“At the beginning it’s hard because my younger son was not with me and my mind was all the time busy, I was in a different world thinking about him...but now when he joined me I am much better than before I start to concentrate on the class and understand everything thanks be to God... Now I can feel there is a lot of improvement even when I try to talk I feel there is a difference....”

B16

New refugees experiencing mental health problems face difficulties of concentration which impedes learning. One interviewee who shared with us that she was receiving support for mental health issues related these to her effectiveness at learning English,

[Due to] “... my personal issues that I don’t want to talk to everybody, but...I think those issues make me feel, make me you know... make me lose focus.”

(reference omitted to preserve anonymity)

The main frustrations that new refugees expressed around English classes concerned access. Two Congolese women commented on their experience of community classes:

“We were going to a centre near to our house but the teacher...”

“He didn’t come, it was only once a week, we did it for two months but once a week, it was nothing...”

“And he didn’t turn up, so we left it when college started...”

B14

Quite a number of our interviewees had attended the compulsory classes provided by the Jobcentre where their attendance required as part of their ‘claimant commitment’. They generally appreciated these classes as much as any other,

However, a few refugees, such as this young Sudanese man, mentioned that they resented the compulsory nature of the class,

“Yes I’m studying a course from the Jobcentre... I don’t like that course really if I didn’t go there one day your money will stop for one month, I don’t like it ...”

B18

An Eritrean woman spoke about the Jobcentre provision as being inadequate in terms of the number of hours provided:

“It’s only three days a week and I don’t think it is enough, if I was in a course five days a week I think my improvement in English language would be better.”

B16

Some of the women with children who were interviewed found it difficult to combine childcare responsibilities with the timing of classes. For example, afternoon classes clash with the need to collect children from school.

Access was also impeded by the competing demands on their time that new refugees experience particularly immediately after being granted status. In particular, we see that new refugees generally feel that they need to prioritise appointments to secure settled housing above an individual language class session. For example, a Vietnamese mother, who was already in part-time work, explained how disappointed she was when the offer of a place at college came at just the wrong time for her:

“I moved to a new house, I started class but I didn’t have time...I’m very sad, I waited for nearly for nearly two and half years to have class but now I don’t have time...”

B13

Yet it was clear that interviewees had found their own strategies to improve their English outside ESOL classes. Of these, mixing with English speakers was considered the most useful way to improve English language skills - although many new refugees reported that they found it hard to find opportunities to do so. Classroom learning was a mixed experience in this regard. Some felt that attending language classes with others from the

same background and language group could inhibit learning. In their experience students tend to talk with each other in their own shared language and so get less practice in using English (B18 young Sudanese man). However, new refugees did report that language classes had provided them with an opportunity to make friends, and this will be discussed more fully in the next section (section 4.2).

Some explained that local organisations, especially churches, offered useful opportunities to broaden their language learning opportunities,

“...if I want to improve my language I will improve my language outside, in the city or the church.”

B9

“Yes I found some friends, like at Glasgow City Mission, it’s very good that one, I go to practise with other people there.”

B10

Others reported that being at work had helped, although this was not always the case as we explore in section 5 below. For example a woman working at an Indian restaurant serving customers told us,

“Yes it has helped a lot, I’ve become familiar with the accent, before I went to work I was not familiar with the accent at all, now I understand what’s going on.”

B15

4.1.2 CONTRIBUTION OF THE HOLISTIC INTEGRATION SERVICE

Access to English language teaching at an appropriate level is central to the HIS model. Our interviewees were generally very positive about the ESOL provision that they had been able to access through HIS partners. For example one man spoke of his experiences at Glasgow Clyde College, Langside Campus:

“It’s everything! There’s good staff, and all the other people there are grateful, and it’s not far from my house.”
B18

A young mother from Vietnam spoke of her experiences of a WEA programme:

“Last year I have three months in the class... Very good!”
B13.

Refugees often mentioned that they valued classes that enabled them to gain a certificate. For this reason, although many made use of community language classes – which were generally closer to home - they preferred to attend a more formal programme if they could. This view confirmed feedback during the HIS community conference on language and education. College was seen as the best context to learn grammar, reading and writing.

However, the importance of being able to practice spoken English outside the classroom was recognised:

“I think college does not improve your language, it can give you some grammar and get you certificate but if I want to improve my language I will improve my language outside, in the city or the church”
B9

Feedback from HIS beneficiaries on their crucial need for increased opportunities to talk with native English speakers has contributed to the development of a new model for peer learning to be piloted by Scottish Government across Scotland in 2016.

SHARING LIVES AND LANGUAGES

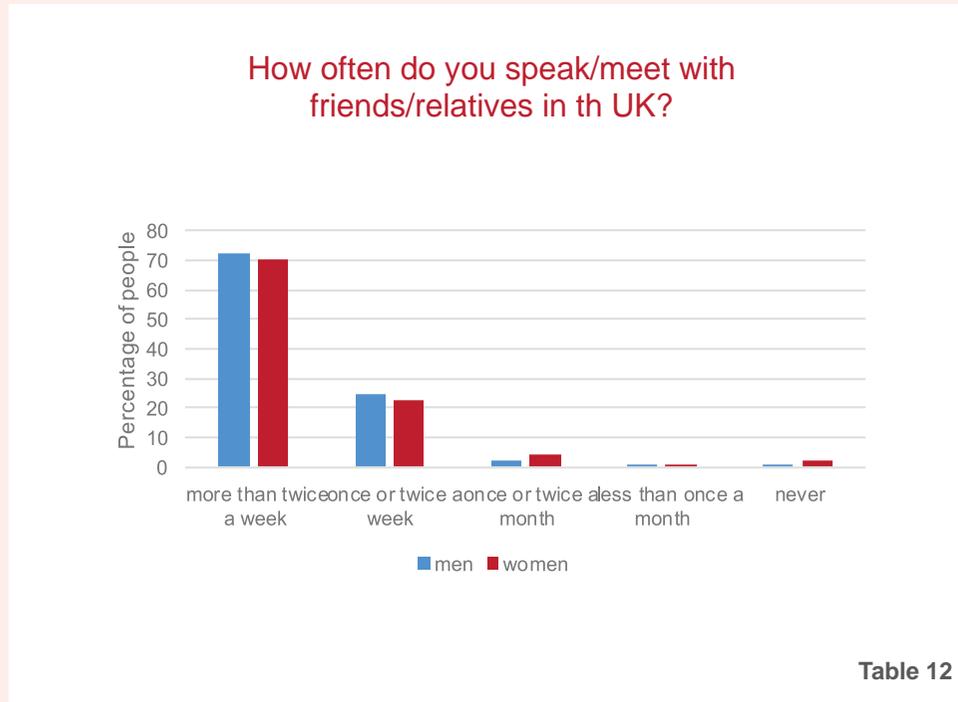
A pilot programme using peer education to bring together refugees and a local people to exchange language and local knowledge.

HIS findings on the refugees’ difficulties in finding opportunities to practice English, along with the need to promote the development of social connections between refugees and established local people have played a formative role in the development of a pilot programme to complement existing ESOL provision. The new model also draws on learning from a [Peer Education for Health and Wellbeing Programme](#) run by Scottish Refugee Council and NHS.

This new model will be piloted during 2016 with support from Scottish Government. It will bring established local people and refugees together in combined peer groups to identify and address shared concerns. In this way the opportunity will be created for new and established Scots to share their different languages, to learn together and build relationships.

4.2 SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Across the full period of operation of the service, 78% of people reported that they did not have family members in the UK. Despite this, people did report generally high levels of contact with friends or relatives.



Therefore, while we explore some of the difficulties refugees may find in making new social connections, we will also examine the multiple ways in which refugees are connected and how these connections can best be mobilised to assist with integration.

4.2.1 BARRIERS TO CONNECTION

Separation from friends and family

Many of the people we spoke to talked about feeling homesick, missing their parents, children and spouses, and having no one to talk to easily about personal issues. There were also a small minority of people who reported persistent feelings of isolation. This was apparent amongst both women and men, and particularly those with poor English. Some, like one single woman from Pakistan, struggled to adjust to the unfamiliarity of living alone:

“I never lived alone, I am coming from a family where I have five sisters and I always surrounded people, and I was scared of living alone”

B19

A single man, who was the only speaker of his language living in Glasgow, told us that, while he waited for his wife and children to arrive on family reunion, he had:

“No friends, not anything, I just go to my home, watch TV, that’s me here”

B6

Poor mental health can be linked with isolation as both a consequence and a cause. So for example one woman talked about how isolation was exacerbating her mental health difficulties,

“I need somebody to be able to talk to me in my own language, to talk about my predicament, difficulties, how to settle down...”

B15

A Zimbabwean mother who felt abandoned by friends that she had made as an asylum seeker, reported that she now stays inside her flat away from people:

“I’m always here [in my house], [...] the only time I am not here I am in hospital, or I am going to the doctor with him [baby son], or I am going shopping, that’s me...otherwise 24/7 I’m here.”

B12

One woman who was experiencing mental health problems following past trauma observed that even though she was making the effort to build new relationships, that this felt difficult,

“I have to work very hard to understand the culture, go everywhere, see people, meet people.”
(reference omitted to preserve anonymity)

For many people with family overseas, family reunion was a pressing priority on being granted status. We heard a number of examples from interviewees who had benefitted from the British Red Cross family reunion tracing and support service. Two sisters from Congo were simply relieved to know what had happened to family members, even where the news was not good:

“We didn’t know how to find our family, but thanks to the Red Cross we found our family again, despite the fact that we’ve lost our father and our children, at least we’re in touch with our family over there.”

B14

Waiting for family reunion was frequently invoked in case file notes as one reason why people were not ready to ‘move on’ – for example into settled housing – as they wanted to prioritise at all costs the arrival of their family. The arrival of family members can also bring new responsibilities and emotional and practical challenges ([British Red Cross, 2015](#)).



Community Conference on creating a Fairer Scotland, October 2015

Experiences of abusive behaviour

Our interview guide did not explicitly probe for comments about racism or abusive behaviour. However, in the course of talking about friendship and neighbourhoods interviewees shared many stories of their own and their friends' experience of abuse.

We note in section 3 above that experiences of racism appeared to be most frequent when people were living in temporary homeless accommodation. Outside of people's immediate neighbourhoods, several beneficiaries talked about their being subject to verbal abuse and racist behaviour on public transport. For example one woman recounted,

“You find people who don't welcome you and they are really racist and you know they abuse you on the bus and you know say words. I been... it happens to me and one time I was really, really upset and I was crying when I went home.”

B19

Others talked about the racism that they experienced at work. For example, an Eritrean woman told us,

“Even there are some Scottish people they are working there, they did a lot of things on me. I always complain on the supervisor, they didn't do anything. So it happens, even in my friends it happens. I don't care. I always ignore them.”

B21

Many refugees live in areas of multiple deprivation²⁶ experience the higher levels of anti-social behaviour that occur in some of these areas. Whilst the abusive behaviour is not necessarily only targeted at refugees, the vulnerability of their circumstances, and their

relative unfamiliarity with the culture can mean that the negative effect of these experiences can be serious and lasting. Verbal abuse can be more threatening when you don't understand what is being said, and potentially violent situations are more difficult to handle when you are unfamiliar with the culture.

However, not only was there a high level of reporting of experiences of racism and abuse, but there was also a notable level of resilience in refugees' accounts. Refugees generally acknowledged the existence of racism,

“Yes some people are nice, some of them are not,”

B5

But many also argued that the best response is to ignore this behaviour.

“Some people will be saying whatever they words they say, you just ignore them, you put your headstraight, you ignore whatever happened, the bad things happening, and go...”

B12

4.2.2 BUILDING NEW CONNECTIONS

Whilst refugees articulated some of the barriers above, it was evident that many had been able to make new friendships in Glasgow.

For many, their closest friends were people who shared language and cultural background. The context for making friends that was reported to us most regularly was church. This finding was also reflected in the small study conducted of new refugees who did not continue to engage with the service (Miller, 2014). Beneficiaries told

²⁶ <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0041/00410731.pdf>

us about their involvement in the Eritrean church, an Iranian church, and African churches around Glasgow. For example one Iranian man explained,

“I have a few friends there, there are some Iranians as well and I go to some Bible study classes and sometimes they give dinner as well so I do stay in touch with them over the week as well”

B22

Another man described how he is involved in volunteering through his church, as well as other organisations in Glasgow, and that this volunteering was focused on helping other refugees to integrate,

“The first thing I was active in African churches around Glasgow, so helping people how to integrate, sharing my experience... Yes, and then sometimes trying to translate for newcomers. I was working with... [a refugee support organisation], I have done a volunteer job over there. Also I was working with CAB as an adviser.”

B8

Volunteering clearly created an opportunity for friendship for some. A few refugees mentioned their links with refugee community organisations. One particularly active group appeared to be an Eritrean group:

“Yes I do have [friends] from my country, we meet once a month in the city centre, from Eritrea, we did an event night, coffee, tea, food and we met each other...”

B16

Some new refugees were definitely pleased to meet people from their own language group and culture,

“Congolese are there and the French people, when we meet in the street, we say hello, it’s nice, it makes you feel good...”

B14

However, we also learnt from a number of our interviewees that they chose not to mix with people from their home context. A woman from Eritrea and another from Pakistan both said that they kept away from people from their homeland in order to avoid gossip and judgement.

English language classes appear to be a source of both friends of the same language group and friends from other countries. Beneficiaries reported that they did make friendships with other learners, however on the whole these did not extend beyond the classroom setting. For example, when we asked one learner, a single young man if he had made friends in his ESOL class he responded,

“Only in the class. In fact I met a lot of friend but from different countries but I don’t have contact with him.”

B20

An Iranian learner replied similarly,

“Not really, not close friendships because I was the only Iranian there and it was kind of hard to communicate but I am friendly towards them and they are nice to me but not a close friendship.”

B22

Getting to know Scottish people

Beneficiaries consistently reported that they wanted to meet Scottish people and to make friends. Although this was not always easy,

“Oh so difficult because so difficult to understand them and every time you say, ‘Sorry, sorry about that...’ and it’s so boring and you can’t understand them very well.”
B10

encounters with local people tended to contribute to peoples’ perceptions that Scottish people are very friendly, and kind:

“Scottish people they are very kindly people and they are very lovely people and they welcome us every time.”
B7

“in Scotland something is very, very nice, people is very friendly and very kind and I really like that,”
B9

Interviewees shared multiple examples of neighbourliness with us:

“Yes, we go outside and say hello, we’re so happy, my son he’s goes outside and the people say ‘hi’, sometimes people are very busy, he goes and says ‘hi’...he says ‘hi five’, ‘bye bye’...”
B13

“Yes very, very nice area, very quiet, and lovely neighbours and very close to my college.”
B15

While very few interviewees told us that they had met Scots people whom they considered to be good friends, the sense of belonging

engendered by these more fleeting encounters is clearly important. A majority of people did report that they felt either very strongly or fairly strongly ‘at home’ in their local area, even at the early stages of their engagement with HIS, although we must recognise that a significant number of people continued to feel disconnected from the places in which they were living.

How strongly do you feel you belong in your local area?

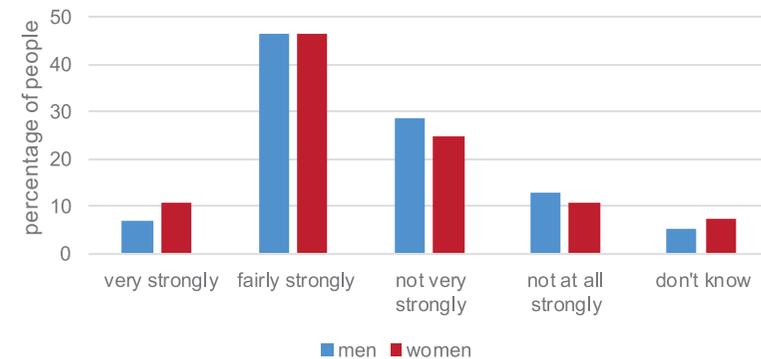


Table 13

Following her interviews with refugees who had not continued to engage with HIS, Miller concluded that feeling ‘at home’ was, ‘generally conceptualized in relation to perceived safety and acceptance by the local Scottish community’ (Miller, 2015 p13). So for example a Syrian woman in Miller’s study said,

“Physically, home is not a place, it is where I see myself and where I can start a family...unfortunately Syria is not my home, I cannot let my child play [outside]. At the moment I do not have a home”.

(in Miller, 2015, p13).

This view is supported by the data emerging from the interviews of 25 beneficiaries in the main study. Generally refugees were very positive about their experiences of Scotland, and their responses suggest that this was a major factor in people's decisions to remain in Scotland:

“I really like the people here, they're really nice, I had planned to go to London because two of my friends who have been here for 14, 15 years are in London however because I like the people here I have decided to stay...”

B22 Iranian man

“But now Glasgow is my home, and I love going to other places but I can never think of going any other, staying in any other part of the world, but Glasgow is something like I am very attached to and I feel very good.”

B19 Pakistani woman

4.2.3 MOBILISING CONNECTIONS

Refugees may require connections to feel at home, but there was evidence that these connections were also vital for refugees to meet their basic needs and to progress with their integration journey. While this may be positive evidence of the potential and power of social connections, it also highlights failures by statutory services and of the impact of such failures upon nascent communities who must use scarce resources to absorb the impact of homelessness and destitution.

Housing

The most striking cases are in relation to housing. As we note above, refugees were often advised by homelessness caseworkers to 'stay with friends' if temporary accommodation was not available. This places the burden of homelessness onto other community members, without regard for the risks involved for either party. As one single woman explained,

“They say that you have to come when you are finished with [accommodation provided as an asylum seeker] and you have to come the day you are finished. And when you call them they don't have any house. They say, ‘Just stay with your friends, stay with other friend.’ So if you don't have any friends you are going to suffer, especially if you are a lady it is very difficult.”

B21

Other interviewees stayed with friends who were still in asylum accommodation – risking those people's already insecure occupancy rights.

Other basic essentials

It was clear particularly during temporary periods of destitution that many refugees are forced to rely on friends for food, and sometimes money:

“I was staying with my friend, she bought for me everything.”

B18

Interviewer: “And while you were not getting money from the Jobcentre, did you experience days when you couldn't eat or couldn't afford food?”

“Yes...yes that I just go to my friends and have some meals...”

B10

A single Iranian man who had to wait four weeks before he received his first welfare benefit payment reported,

“I got some money from my friends, £40, £50 from my friends and I owe some money to two of them still.”

B22

Employment

More positively, refugees who had found employment often explained how they had found work through informal connections. Eight of 33 Sudanese men in employment were working in the same retail warehouse and told their Integration Adviser that they had obtained the job with the help of friends.

Connections also appeared to be useful in sustaining employment, as in the example of a Chinese couple who had started their own business and were received business advice and help with childcare from other Chinese community members in their local area.

Mobilising connections to access employment will be discussed more fully in section 5.2.

PERSONAL PATHWAY

Abdi is from Sudan. He has a physical health condition and was referred to British Red Cross for enhanced support. His BRC adviser helped him to follow up referrals made by his Integration Adviser to access the Jobcentre and to obtain temporary accommodation suitable for his health.

Abdi's first priority was to develop his English skills. Having been assessed at Access 2 by WEA, he completed an Access

2 course at Glasgow Clyde College. He felt frustrated that having to complete the DWP's English Language Requirement subsequently delayed his access to a more advanced college course.

Despite this, Abdi was confident that he would be able to access employment through friends who were already working. By the time of his final review with his Integration Adviser, Abdi had progressed to Intermediate 1 English and was working full-time on night shift in a warehouse, in a job obtained through contacts in the Sudanese community.

4.2.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE HOLISTIC INTEGRATION SERVICE

Our data points to a number of key contributions made by the HIS service that support beneficiaries in 'connecting'.

A sense of 'family'

It was striking that a number of beneficiaries used the analogy of 'family' when asked about their views of the HIS programme. As we have seen earlier, the absence of family is one of the most significant losses that refugees bear. Interviewees suggested to us that staff had helped to provide a sense of family for them. While this may raise some questions with relation to the promotion of independence, it is clear that this and similar interactions have been vital to promote the sense of belonging we explored above.

One Eritrean mother eloquently described the sense of warmth and acceptance that she had experienced through HIS:

“SRC when they accept you and open the door for you they don't do it for me personal, the best thing is that they respect my children [...] exactly the same as your mum, if you go to visit your mum or you want to ask her about anything, she will not accept you on your own, she will accept you with your children, all the family, with all welcome...”

B16

Another beneficiary who was a single woman explained how much she valued being able to rely on her advisers for support – as she would her parents:

“... like you know with your parents support you with things, they [advisers] were like always I never felt like, 'OK whether I should trust them for something?' I could always ask them for anything. They made sure if I'm all right”

B19

Similar attributes of kindness and helpfulness were expressed regarding staff from other HIS partners:

“How do you find English classes?”

“Very good, teachers very good and became my friends and helping me in many things.”

B3

“I think they [Bridges Programme] are very kind, if I want to ask something or if I need help I can straight go there, they can help me...”

B4

Promoting development of friendships

Most new refugees know no one when they arrive in Scotland. As we have seen, developing new friendships is therefore tremendously important to new refugees at many different levels. The HIS programme contributes to enabling beneficiaries to develop new friendships through;

- Providing better access to ESOL classes
- Providing ESOL classes which help with culture as well as language
- Providing opportunities for meeting others whether the beneficiary has complex needs (BRC enhanced service) or is ready to start preparing for work (Bridges Programmes).

Acting as a 'bridge' to Scottish society

We can also see that the core work of HIS is to support new refugees as they seek to establish their independent lives in Scotland. Practitioners in the partner organisations help beneficiaries to understand and navigate the formal systems (e.g. Housing provision or Welfare benefits) and informal systems (e.g. finding work or education to pursue a career) of society. As we have seen in section 3, advisers and other practitioners are often instrumental in advocating for refugees' access to rights. The goal of the service is to equip beneficiaries to access rights and services directly themselves (see section 5 Independent Agency for discussion).

SECTION 5

BUILDING

INDEPENDENCE

5. BUILDING INDEPENDENCE

The objectives of the Holistic Integration Service recognise refugees as active agents in exercising their rights:

“Refugees are effectively integrated into Scottish society and able to exercise their rights and have their needs met.”

27

Therefore, along with the core domains identified in the ‘Indicators of Integration’ framework²⁸ the programme has been concerned to promote refugees’ independent agency.

We reported in our [Year Two Report](#) on the resilience typology used by the service, building upon models used in social services. The typology enabled Integration Advisers to assess their beneficiaries on a continuum – Resilience – Guidance – Complex – Critical – at various stages of their engagement with the programme. We saw that in practice, the vast majority of refugees were assessed as requiring Guidance with 171 during the life of the service assessed as Complex needs and being referred onto enhanced support provided by British Red Cross.

Use of the categories was flexible, and the full extent of peoples’ needs sometimes only became apparent after some time:

“I had signposted a client to maybe four or five external agencies and I saw them shortly after it and I asked if they’d been to any of the external agencies - none! I’d assessed the client as ‘Guidance’, so it became apparent he had more complex needs and I referred him to the British Red Cross in the hope that they can get him to engage and accompany him to the agencies that can support him”.

(Integration Adviser)

Other people actively resisted attempts to classify them as “vulnerable”. One woman, whose past history of abuse and resulting poor mental health led to her being assessed as complex, was clear with her Integration Adviser from an early stage that she was going to look for work rather than remain on benefits. This went against the advice provided to her by her GP and a specialist support agency. She went on to obtain part-time work and explained that,

“Being back at work makes me feel better”

(B13 – case file notes)

Reflections by practitioners indicate that while the categorisation exercise was useful, perhaps its greatest contribution was in a shift of emphasis – from need to ability; and from vulnerability to resilience. Some advisers noted that Resilience became less an assessment category, and more a goal to be achieved by the end of someone’s time with the service (Adviser Focus Group).

We explore the meanings of resilience, from refugees’ perspectives, in more depth below.

5.1 INDEPENDENCE

The refugees with whom we spoke talked neither about resilience nor independent agency, but instead about a journey towards independence. This was reflected in people’s strong desire to be equipped to make their own decisions and to be able to support themselves financially, without recourse to benefits.

“Life is going better than before. Because I know if I get any problem how to change that problem.”

B18

²⁷ As per footnote 3.

²⁸ As per footnote 5.

“I like to be active myself, I don’t want to depend on others... because that’s not me...I want to participate...”

B8

“I got a job with xxx it was maybe three months after I came to UK, so since that time I pay my house rent and everything myself...it has been one year now, I got for two months housing benefit, that’s it.”

B17

Other steps towards independence are explored below.

English language skills

Refugees often felt that the main factor undermining their independence was their difficulty with the use of English. Some of those with children, especially older, teenage children explained how they relied on their children for translation:

“...any time I’m speaking on the phone, they help me when I receive any call I don’t understand, I give to my sons they can talk and explain to me, translate it...they help translate everything by phone or by paper...”

B2

Playing the role of ‘family advocate’ can however weigh heavily upon young people, particularly if they have to assist their parents to navigate emotive or conflictual situations ([Family Keyword Report](#), p. 69).

Conversely, most refugees were confident that if they could develop their abilities in English, they would be better able to cope on their own:

“When I improve my language I’m going to help myself. I’m going wherever on my own, but the problem is the barriers... the language barriers.”

B11

“I think my first barrier is my language and I am focusing on that to improve my language because when I can speak or I can understand the people I think I can do anything.”

B4

Others were clearly willing to tackle problems themselves despite not yet having reached the level of English they aspired to,

“Even with the little that we have learnt (English language), we fight for things.”

B14

Understanding systems

It was evident, that sometimes even refugees with fluent English and a high level of education found it very difficult to navigate the systems that they had to engage with:

“Once I got status...it was very confusing, the language and financial [situation]... [was] very stressful. I did not know what to do, where to go”.

B1

Integration Advisers observed that most clients needed some help at least at first to engage with services available to them.

“I think with ‘Resilient’ clients, maybe they need reassurance, you know. With ‘Complex’ they might come, saying: I’ve got this problem but have no idea how to tackle it, how to start.”

(Integration Adviser)

Even in the longer term, people noted that there continued to be differences between systems ‘back home’ and in Scotland, and that these could sometimes be cause for confusion:

“I found things are different here like TV licence, tax for housing, council tax...we don’t have this back home, we don’t pay tax...”

B2

Health and wellbeing

As in our [Year Two Report](#), people generally rated their mental and physical health positively. The chart below, based on beneficiaries’ self-assessments of health at initial contact with the service, shows that the majority of people rated their mental and physical health as being good or very good. Only a small proportion of people described their health as being fair or poor (16% for mental health, 15% for physical health out of 842 beneficiaries).

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that 12 of the 25 people we interviewed talked about health problems. These included cardiac problems, sensory impairments and more general feelings of stress and isolation. This echoes concerns we raised in year two about the persistence of ‘sub-clinical’ poor health, and in particular mental health problems.

We also found that clients who had been classified as having ‘Complex’ needs and were referred to the British Red Cross enhanced service demonstrated a consistent pattern when asked about their emotional wellbeing after notice of their positive decision. A period of initial elation was soon followed by a severe drop in mood as they encountered multiple difficulties, particularly in housing and access to welfare benefit payments. These immediate practical difficulties can exacerbate the negative impact of earlier experiences on mental health.

“No the stress is just...the stress can’t go just once in the life, it’s going and coming back, for example if I don’t trust the person in front of me I cannot speak English, I lose my words, I cannot even make any sentences because the story just from Home Office coming back”

B8



Yet many people are able to emerge from these stresses and start to take their own decisions. New hope was associated with successful family reunion, a move to satisfactory permanent accommodation, and sometimes with enrolling and making progress on a course. And with the worry of waiting for an asylum decision in the past, most were now extremely positive about the future,

“the hardest thing was before I got my leave to remain because if you don’t have something everything is dark, you can’t do something if you don’t have anything... after I get my papers everything is very easy...”

B5

Even people with ongoing health problems appeared determined not to let these prevent them from moving towards a more independent life. One client interviewed had serious problems with his eyesight which was so poor that he couldn’t see at all if he went outside. However, despite his poor health he was determined to find a job because he argued that,

“I do like to work and I have asked jobcentre to try to find something suitable for my condition because I do like to go out and work and stay active rather than stay home.”

B22

Although all of the factors listed above played roles in people’s moves towards independence, none were seen as so crucial as gaining paid employment. This dominated many of our discussions around life plans and encompassed a variety of steps perceived as being vital to obtain the work people wanted.

5.2 TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT

“I need to work to have a quality of life in Glasgow”

(Single man from Algeria, full-time cleaner, case file notes)

“Mahmoud states job is better than nothing... he really enjoys the social aspect and being busy, which is good for his mental health.”

(Single man from Iran, part-time assistant at a take-away food outlet, Case file notes)

The award of refugee status in the UK means that people become eligible to take up paid employment. The inability to take up paid work is a great frustration to most people who are in the process of seeking asylum, a frustration which remains acute for people who have waited for long periods to be granted status

“The hardest moment is just the time, the wasted, because those time I cannot catch up...because just thinking those fourteen years it’s a lot of years, so just like Home Office just took fourteen years of my life”

B8

171 people – 9% of total service beneficiaries – were recorded as having obtained paid employment during the time that they accessed the service²⁹. The average time to first paid employment, amongst those who found work within the first 12 months, was 222 days from the data of grant of status.

As in our year two report, women are slightly under-represented in terms of paid employment, when compared with overall service intake by gender.

²⁹ This data has been obtained from analysis of the JCDB and data provided by Bridges Programmes.

Beneficiaries in paid employment, by gender

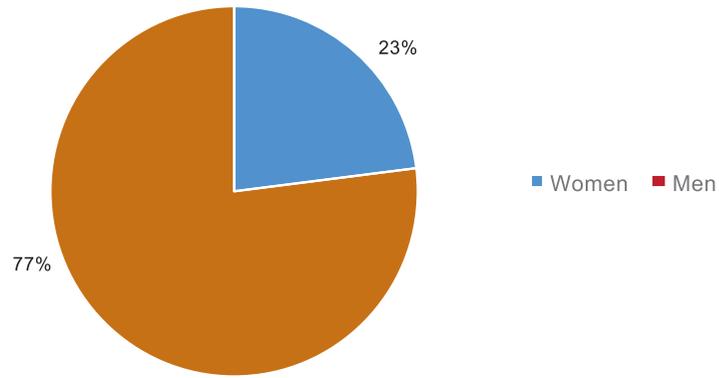


Table 15

Women in employment (n=40)

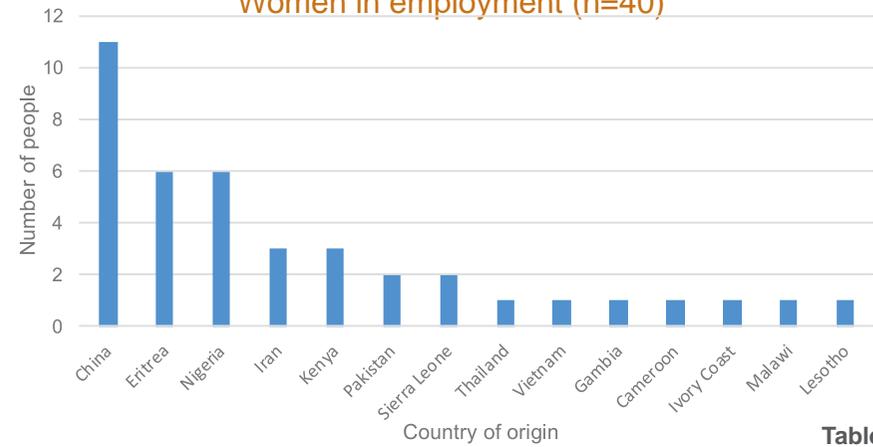


Table 17

With regard to countries of origin however, this is reversed. Of the 21 Chinese people who obtained employment, 11 were women. Chinese women also far outstrip women of any other nationality.

The phenomenon of Chinese nationals having a relatively high success rate in obtaining employment is illustrated when we compare the percentage of those gaining employment with the overall client intake to HIS.

Men in employment (n=131)

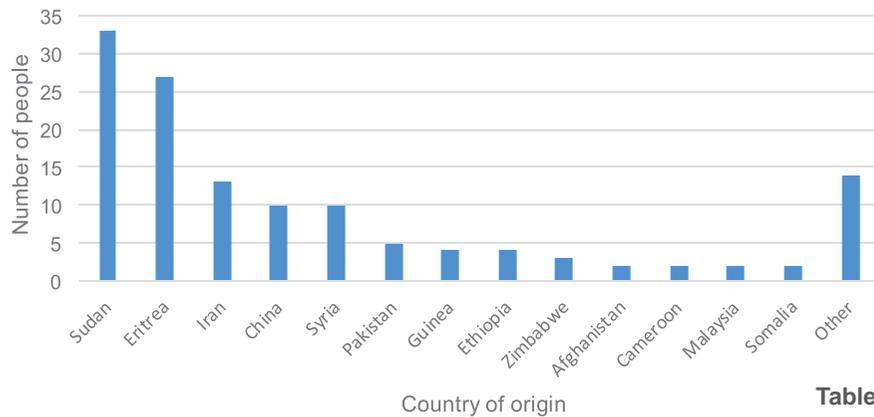


Table 16

Employment by country of origin (men and women)

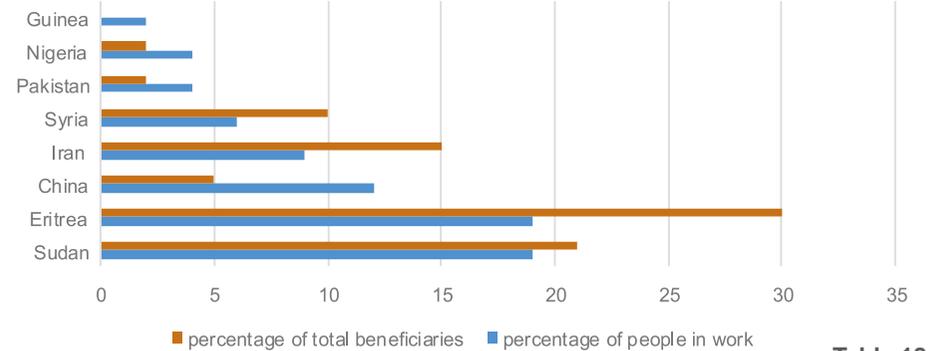


Table 18

This chart also illustrates a potential gap for Eritrean refugees, who appear to be particularly disadvantaged in terms of obtaining work. However, this may be misleading. Previous literature suggests that Eritrean nationals are among the groups most likely to leave Scotland to access work opportunities elsewhere in the UK³⁰. People who move out of Scotland (outside of the service catchment area) will no longer be eligible for HIS and so their experiences of employment will not be captured in casework data.

5.2.1 FACTORS FACILITATING EMPLOYMENT

The cases of those who do find work illustrate of some of the factors which appear to facilitate employment; whilst at the same time demonstrating the very different pathways taken by people according to personal profile, and sometimes by nationality group.

Similarly, our interviews with people who were actively seeking work illustrate some of complexities of coming to a practical understanding of their relative position within the Scottish and UK job market.

English language

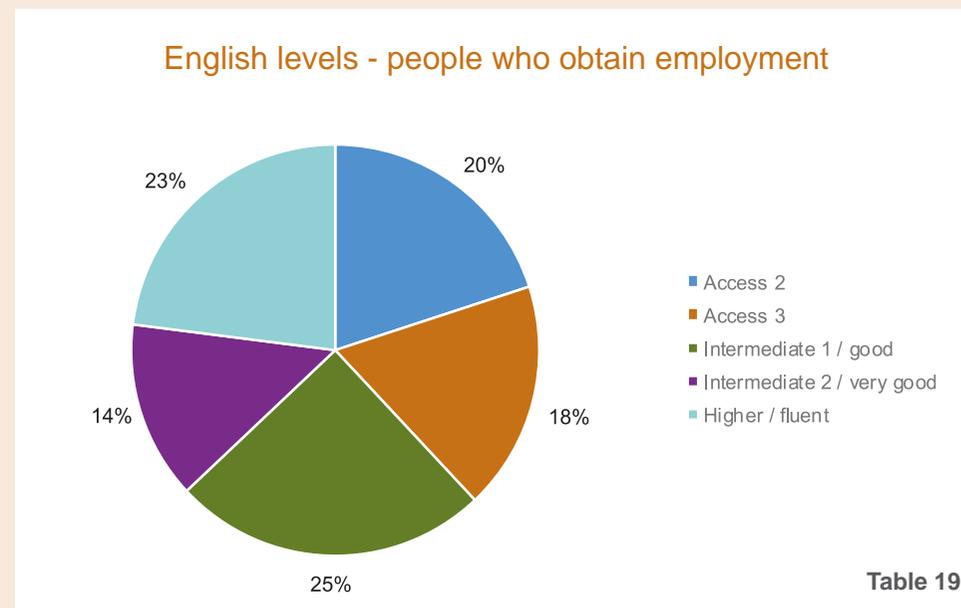
One clear finding is that people who obtain employment are typically assessed as having a higher level of English at initial assessment than the general cohort of people accessing the service. 70% of those who obtained employment, and whose level of English was recorded (n=158), had English at Intermediate 1 or above. This is almost in directly inverse proportion to the data emerging on English levels at assessment for the full cohort of beneficiaries (see section 4.1).

Actual or assumed levels of language proficiency not only appear to determine whether or not people get work but to affect the types of work people do and their future prospects:

“I applied for waiter but I didn’t get it because of the communication, compared to them especially, so I just got Kitchen Porter and they asked me if I can work cleaner and I told them any kind of job you have for me, I will so I went there, I worked around six months and after I escalate to the kitchen and now I’m working with the appetisers and desserts as well.”

B17

Moreover, being in work did not necessarily enable individuals to practice their language skills in the ways they had expected:



³⁰ <http://www.onwardmigration.com/research-findings/>

“What has been the best way of meeting Scottish people?

In school, sometimes in clubs, not in the workplace...

So it was not easy to meet people at work?

“At the workplace, Scottish people? No because they do not work in the packing area, maybe somewhere else, that’s why...”

B5, warehouse worker

Previous qualifications

Many beneficiaries who were not yet in employment were frustrated on discovering that they could not build on the qualifications they had acquired prior to arrival in the UK. For example, one woman explained that she had completed a Business Management degree in her home country, but has now discovered that this is not recognised in the UK,

“It’s been four years in my country but it’s nothing here, that’s why I have to start, yeah, from the beginning”

B21

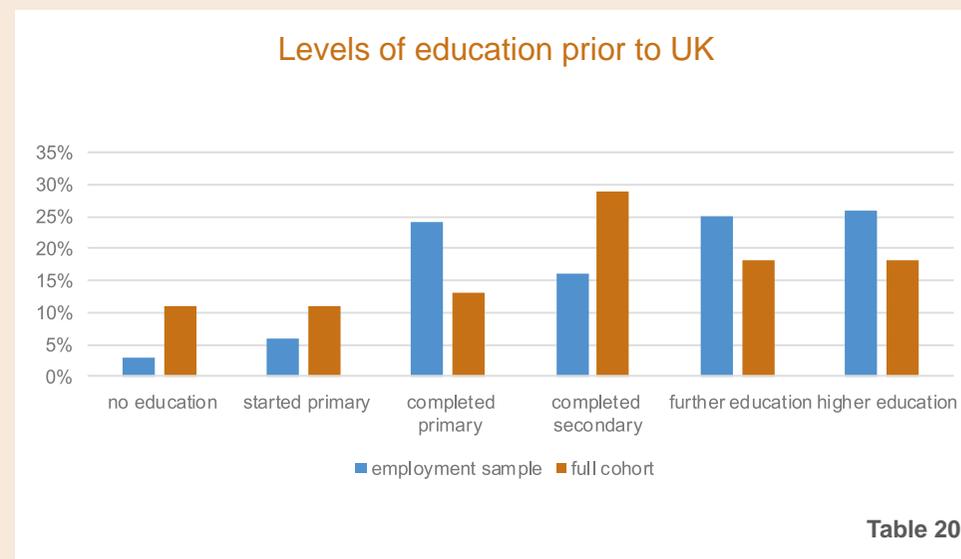
Another woman who was in a similar position explained,

“Of course I want to do anything I have done in my country, when I was 19 I went to university and I finished after 4 years and I find a good job for myself and I had everything there but here I am zero, so I think if I want to improve I need to do anything I have done that before in my country again here”

B4

This is a longstanding problem and there has been an ongoing call for a national service for the recognition of the skills, prior learning and qualifications of migrants and refugees. Despite this, our data shows that people with higher levels of education prior to reaching Scotland are more likely to be in employment within their first year of gaining refugee status.

51% of the people who gained employment were educated beyond secondary school level, as compared to only 31% for the cohort of service beneficiaries as a whole.³¹



However, many people are not employed in jobs commensurate with their qualifications. Indeed, the majority of beneficiaries who found paid employment within the first 12 months were working in entry level jobs, in low paid sectors, requiring few or no qualifications.

³¹ The sample for the full cohort comprises 433 men and 185 women whose levels of education prior to arriving in the UK were recorded during their full assessment.

Employment by sector and gender

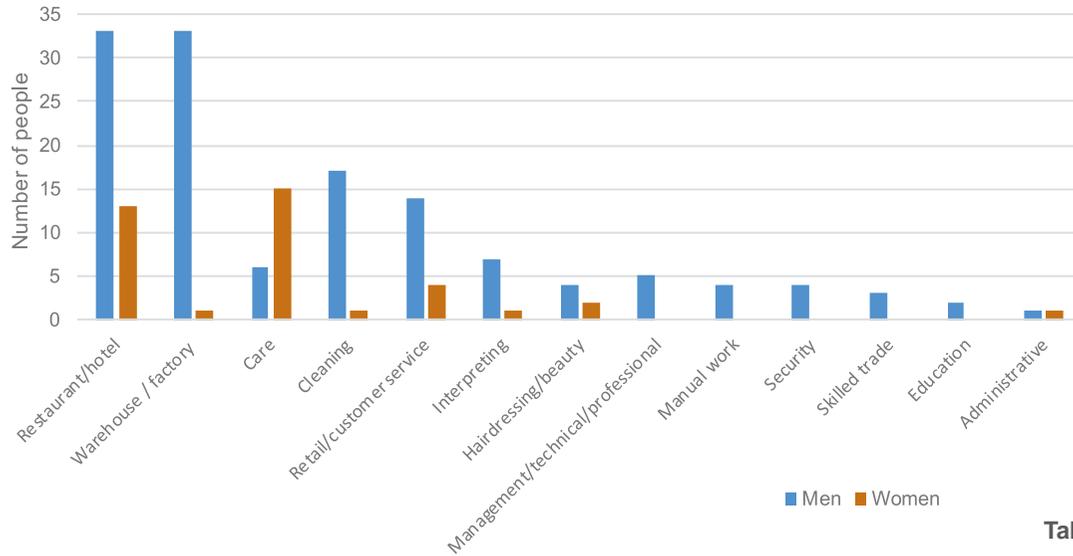


Table 21

“When I leave the job ... they just send me the final salary but they didn’t send me the money for my holiday and then because I know that they should pay me for the holiday and then I called to them and said why don’t you send my money and then they say ok we send, but for some people they didn’t know.”
B21

Only five people were recorded as having secured employment at management level or using technical or professional skills; and only two people were exercising a skilled trade. While interpreting may offer relatively high hourly wages, this remains nonetheless an insecure employment option as it is usually undertaken on a self-employed or agency basis.

Our data from interviews also indicates that people’s employment was characterised by vulnerable work conditions: zero-hours contracts, no contracts, minimum wage, ‘cash-in-hand’. Two people were hired through agencies and had no guaranteed hours. One woman in this situation worked in a supermarket, where she was notified of her hours by text - often only the day before a shift. This same woman told us that the agency tried to avoid paying her statutory holiday pay:

One beneficiary, when asked if she’d received a written contract of employment, laughed and said:

“of course not...”
B23

There was also evidence of people being asked to volunteer as a form of probation. One beneficiary who was sent to an interview for a cleaning job at a community centre in her area stated,

“You know the worst thing what he said to me, ‘oh sorry we can’t take you, you don’t have enough cleaning experience, only thing you can do you can come and volunteer and then we will see.’ My heart was broken.”
B24

Social connections

In our interview sample, four of nine beneficiaries had found work through personal contacts. They mentioned that they had found a job through a boyfriend, friend, or in one case a community member from the same country. In three out of four cases, the contact worked in the place where employment was secured. In the case of the community member, she employed the beneficiary directly.

As in our [Year Two Report](#), the Chinese community may be of particular interest in this regard. Chinese refugees continue to over-perform in terms of obtaining employment as we saw above. But in contrast to other nationality groups, only six of the 16 Chinese people whose language level was recorded had English at Intermediate 1 or above; and only one of 11 Chinese people had progressed beyond secondary level education. All but two of the twenty-one Chinese people recorded as having obtained paid employment were however working in Chinese-owned businesses, predominantly in the restaurant or takeaway sector.

While social connections were important to other nationalities (see section 4.2 above), for no other nationality group was there such a striking illustration of the ways in which community and social links can provide pathways to employment.

PERSONAL PATHWAY

Mei Ling had been in Glasgow for ten years when she was granted status. She lives with her son, who has additional learning needs, and her husband who is still an asylum seeker.

Mei Ling's initial goal was to improve her English, assessed as Access 3 level. However, at her three month review with her Integration Adviser, Mei Ling explained that she had given up her ESOL class in order to take up an offer of employment.

This was a part-time job as an assistant chef in Edinburgh, in a Chinese restaurant owned by her friend. The same friend took Mei Ling to work every day in her car. Mei Ling's Integration Adviser assisted her to apply for Working Tax Credits as she was no longer eligible for Jobseekers' Allowance.

Organisational support

The Holistic Integration Service comprises an employability element, delivered by Bridges Programmes. In addition, the wider 'Impact Network' has enabled engagement with other specialist agencies including Jobcentre Plus.

The Job Centre was mentioned by many beneficiaries, some of whom had been connected by their adviser there to useful external services,

"...[Job Centre] contacted me Jobs and Business Glasgow and I got there my advisor he helped me a lot and I got a job with xxx"

B17

However, there were perceptions that in certain Jobcentre Plus offices, the focus was not on personalised assessment of employability but on getting a job of any type.

“The Jobcentre I used to go to previously they were trying to persuade me to look for a job which is fine but not being in this country long enough I tried to tell them ‘I need your help to show me the way how to look for a job’ but we did not get on well together ...they were very rude and they were very pushy...”

B15 (in part-time employment)

“Really there are different staff in different jobcentres because I moved from three jobcentres [...] and I think sometimes some staff they pushed me to go to find work and some staff they understand I am a doctor ... I don’t have experience and a lot of jobs, for example in a restaurant, they need experience”

B7

Some of those who did not have organisational support beyond their fortnightly jobseekers’ appointments at the Jobcentre Plus appeared to be engaged in time-consuming, and apparently mostly fruitless, independent job-searching – for example distributing CV’s and cold-calling potential employers. Conversely, people who had engaged with Bridges Programmes appeared to particularly value access to volunteering opportunities as a useful bridge towards paid employment:

“when I told him [Integration Adviser] for my certificate and I want to go to university and I have some problems for language he say that’s good but I will tell you to go to Bridges Programme and him will help you for that...”

actually I went there and I started some course called Life Skills and I finished that, certainly I started another course called Social Care and I will finish that on 26th October then I will start Enable training[...] and when I finish Enable training I will start training for work placement... for six weeks I think but I hope, if that course finds me a job, I very well, find a job for this...”

B9

PERSONAL PATHWAY

Ola waited for over for over three years for a decision on her asylum claim. Ola has good English skills, and after her full assessment, her Integration Adviser referred her to Glasgow Clyde College and to Bridges Programmes.

Ola was able to build on her language skills through English courses at Glasgow Clyde College. Bridges Programmes offered Ola a Life Skills course, and then worked with her to draw up a personal employment action plan. They also helped Ola to obtain a criminal record check and to produce a CV.

After undertaking work placements in the care sector, Ola began to work part-time as a care assistant seven months after being granted status. At that stage, she returned to see her Integration Adviser to get advice about in-work benefits and discuss her longer term ambitions to return to education once her youngest child started school.

Education as a route to employment?

Throughout the data it is clear that beneficiaries of the HIS programme demonstrate a strong commitment to furthering their education. Several have pointed out that they feel a great sense of urgency because of the gaps and delays in their opportunity to study caused by conflict, flight and time spent in the asylum process. As one beneficiary interviewed put it, ***“Time waits for no one!”***

(B17).

The dominant reason for studying given by beneficiaries is to fulfil their future employment goals. For example,

“I’m starting ‘Event Management’ at college, I’m really hoping to start my business at some point ... organising events.”

B19

“So I want something where I can build my career because I was about to do ‘Access to Engineering’, but I realised it was going to take me a long time so now there is an employability course which is going to take just six months...so that’s what I am applying to do before I get a job...”

B8

“when I finish that exam I will get full time from the college, I want to stop the jobcentre because I want to study more, more, education is everything in this life, if you want to make money, without education you can’t make anything...”

B18

We learned that some refugees felt that educational opportunities in Scotland were particularly accessible compared to the rest of the UK, and that Scottish educational institutions had a high reputation even in their home countries. This was particularly the case with our interviewees from Sudan, all five of whom placed high value on pursuing university courses in Scotland:

“Sudanese famous studying in Glasgow ... so I think every people says that studying in Scotland is very easy and cheap.”

B3

This is testament to the Scottish Government’s commitment to integration from arrival and the ways in which the nation’s policy on university tuition fees widens access to university opportunities.

Yet as we reported in year two, it can be difficult for new refugees to work out what choices are the most strategic in pursuing their employment and educational options. Not only do they have to find out what options are open to them, but they also need to discover the value of different qualifications within the labour market, and match their own skills and capacities to the demands of various courses.

“I’ve got a degree in Business Management from my country but the thing is the qualifications is not equal to this country so I have to change my qualifications here. S... um... that’s why I start HND in Accounting now... I want, I plan to, I’ve got like management and if I have finished this accounting course my plan is to have like my own business so that I can manage the accounting there.”

B21

For some people, this had led to the realisation that previous career paths were no longer open to them, and a decision to move away from education and into more vocational avenues of study and work. For example a Congolese man, fully qualified as a vet, told us that during his fourteen years seeking asylum he studied IT web design, construction and bookkeeping just to keep his mind active. The same man though, was now aiming for a career as a train driver, as he felt that he could not spend any more time in education:

“due to the time that has passed, I can no longer carry out my profession ... because going back into that profession would take me a lot of time, because I have lost too much time, when I came I as 28, now I am 42 and I have children, so to do the same thing again for six years is not easy because I would have to start all over again.”

B8

Other people had managed to obtain low-paid work, but later taken a decision to go back to studying in order to ensure better long-term career prospects.

PERSONAL PATHWAY

In the course of his initial meetings with his Integration Adviser, Ahmed explained that he had begun a degree in his home country, but been unable to finish it. He hoped to increase his confidence in English and then access a full-time university course in either IT or Pharmacy.

Having completed Access 3 and then Intermediate 1 English courses at Glasgow Clyde College, Ahmed was referred to Bridges Programmes and completed their Life Skills course. He also enrolled on a part-time business course with another further education institution.

Ahmed was then successful in obtaining full-time employment in a factory. However he found it difficult to combine work and study, and decided that he would have to give up employment if he wanted to realise his educational and long-term career ambitions.

5.2.2 LONGER TERM CAREER PLANS

Most striking amongst almost all beneficiaries was the ambition and drive they expressed about their future. It was interesting to note that many of the individuals in employment - whilst willing to start in unskilled work - were very focused on improving their positions. The only person in our interview sample who was on a permanent contract was actively seeking, and being given, more responsibility in his work. Two women who had secured entry-level positions were simultaneously pursuing other areas of work - one had started a catering company, the other had just begun working in a third sector organisation.

Many people had great aspirations for their careers, and often well-developed plans, including a number of people who were interested in owning their own businesses:

“So I’m on the way, so after four years maybe I’m going to be a big industry planner...I also have a plan to do my own shop or restaurant”

B5

“I’m really hoping to start my business at some point, like a firm organising events”

B21

“...my plan is to have like my own business so that I can manage the accounting there”

B19

“I’m doing my catering, what I want the most is to have my own restaurant”

B24

Realising entrepreneurial ambitions in the longer term may be more complicated than some newly-granted refugees expect, not least because of the need for at least some initial capital:

“you want to make your own business restaurant is very good they said so I have a plan but I don’t have the money so after I finish my course and if I get good money I will make a restaurant... it needs initial capital with a contingency, 10% of that or something like that”

B5

Four case file examples from the overall employment data sample concerned people who had started their own businesses. A single man from Somalia who set up a café with a friend later reported that the business had failed. It appeared that this was in part because although he had experience in hospitality, he did not have a background in business.

However, with the right levels of support, it would appear that business ownership was a viable option for some. One couple from China opened a takeaway restaurant together, and reported that although business was slow initially, they were able to access both business advice and help with childcare from friends within the Chinese community, so felt optimistic about the future.

Another man, who had previously studied in the UK, set up his own import business with the help of Business Gateway, and was able to access to New Enterprise Allowance, acting upon advice given by his Integration Adviser.

5.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE HOLISTIC INTEGRATION SERVICE

Our data consistently suggests that HIS clients are strongly motivated to develop their independence as quickly as possible. Independence for them includes:

- The ability to make your own informed decisions and choices
- The acquisition of paid employment and so freedom from financial dependence.

There are a number of key ways in which the HIS programme has contributed to these aspects of independence valued by new refugees.

Learning about rights

Practitioners throughout the programme including Integration Advisers; British Red Cross enhanced service staff and volunteers; caseworkers and course facilitators at Bridges Programmes and

ESOL tutors at Glasgow Clyde College and WEA Scotland all contribute to raising clients' awareness about their rights:

“They lead me to know what my rights is, everything. I want to say thank you.”

B21

“... they let me know my rights, that I have the right if my children and me are unwell how and the way to arrange an appointment with the doctor, the GP, how to call them; that I have the right to be treated here fairly; I have the right to be provided with medication; that I have the right to go to the hospital as well...”

B16

“ I just pass one course [with Bridges Programme], it was about how I can act in Glasgow and what's my rights and laws it was useful for myself because there I have received a lot of information and of course I practise my English...”

B4

Sharing trustworthy information

Beneficiaries appreciated the opportunity to build a relationship with HIS programme staff. It was clear that for many, the Integration Adviser, and also the British Red Cross enhanced service team (for those with Complex needs) became the first point of contact for all queries.

“If I didn't get this support from this office... otherwise I will be lost outside because too many people they will start to give me different information which I don't know which is the right one of them, I will be lost altogether.”

B16

Building confidence

Beneficiaries commonly reported that they recognised the progress that they had made and their increased readiness to tackle challenges independently,

“After (help from SRC adviser)... right now I can do anything in Glasgow by myself, I became very professional in many things.”

B3

At the same time, several indicated that they still depended on their Integration Adviser to help out if all else failed,

“Really, any time I try to sort the problem by myself first of all and then if I can't sort it, I come to... [Integration Adviser].... until now I sorted all my problems it's good by myself but just now I have a different problem with accommodation that I couldn't sort it and I will meet ... [Integration Adviser].... maybe we will sort it together.”

B7

Guidance when navigating career and education options

We have also seen that finding the right path into employment is core to beneficiaries' pursuit of independent agency. New refugees face numerous challenges in accessing suitable employment. For most, the first hurdle is to improve their English language skills to a suitable level for employment, training and/or education. However, even with good English language skills, new refugees have to work out realistic career aspirations and make difficult judgements about which options are going to be most useful in moving them into employment. It emerges that they generally

do this whilst feeling under huge pressure: from themselves – to make up for the time that they have lost, and pressure from the Job Centre – to accept any job, however ill matched with their skill set.

The Holistic Integration Service language provision through WEA Scotland and Glasgow Clyde College supports beneficiaries to move from the lowest levels of English through to levels required for further education. For some beneficiaries this engagement with the Further Education College community has led to enrolment on other courses. Clients referred to Bridges Programmes benefitted from the opportunities to explore career choices and support to enhance their CV (through training, education and work experience) to achieve their aspirations. The community conference programme in year two included an Education Community Conference in collaboration with the University of Strathclyde which provided the opportunity for refugees to learn about education options and ask questions of education providers. Opportunities to enhance skills and experience through volunteering have been further promoted through Scottish Refugee Council's own volunteering programme, including opportunities within Peer Education Project.

PERSONAL PATHWAY

Dawit is educated to Masters level and had worked as a teacher before fleeing his country. He had a high level of English, confirmed as Intermediate 2 by WEA. With the help of his Integration Adviser, Dawit joined an ESOL class at Glasgow Clyde College to consolidate his English skills.

Dawit was referred to Bridges Programme, where he completed a life skills and an advanced course, both of which he found very useful. He went on to obtain two volunteering positions. Despite his high level of English skills and education, at his final review he was still struggling to find work, primarily because of difficulties in obtaining criminal records checks and UK employment references. However, he was confident that, having been able to upgrade his skills with the support of HIS partners, he would be able to find paid work in future.

SECTION 6

IMPLICATIONS FOR INTEGRATION

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR INTEGRATION

The opportunity to gather data and share learning with refugees, practitioners and policy makers throughout the three years of the Holistic Integration Service has provided unique insights into the integration experiences of refugees in Scotland between 2013 and 2016. This report has discussed the operation of the service and the integration pathways of refugees who have engaged with the service. In this final section we will highlight and reflect on key learning points emerging.

6.1 THE HOLISTIC INTEGRATION SERVICE MODEL

The Holistic Integration Service has served a diverse population. However, the refugees who have accessed the service are predominantly of working age, male and single. English is not the main language in the principal countries of origin of beneficiaries.

- **Robust case data can be a vital tool in informing practice and influencing policy**

The HIS model of providing credible data, focused on refugees' lived experiences, gathered by Integration Advisers and translated into clear policy and practice implications by dedicated development workers has been crucial to extending the influence of the project outside the walls of the partner organisations. Successful collection and dissemination of data requires not only powerful, integrated casework management tools, but dedicated and knowledgeable staff. Credible data has been vital not just to consolidate relationships between partners; but to shape future service

provision and influence political and policy stakeholders. One partner suggested that the collective voice of the partnership could have been even more effective through a more public shared identity such as a 'Holistic Integration Service' website.

- **Building a network of trusted relationships to improve practice**

The Holistic Integration Service approach to data gathering and analysis has demonstrated a synergy between academic frameworks of understanding – for example the 'Indicators of Integration' framework; and the lived experiences of refugees and the practitioners who aim to assist them.

However, data cannot be provided in a vacuum. The learning process continues to depend on constructing and maintaining positive working relationships:

“ I don't have enough words to say how much our organisation benefits from HIS and their personnel.”
(Housing stakeholder)

“In terms of working relationships I cannot ask for anything more in terms of the way we've been working together.”
(DWP stakeholder)

- **Community conferences provide an effective way to exchange knowledge with refugees and asylum seekers**

The Community Conference model has enabled the participation and empowerment of a wider network of refugees and asylum seekers, even those who are not service beneficiaries or active in other community groups. This has enabled a wide range of authentic voices, with recent lived experience of integration,

to be heard; has challenged certain received wisdoms; and has shaped the development of the service throughout.

6.2 ACCESS TO RIGHTS

Access to rights remains fundamental to the process of integration. Without safe and suitable housing, and a reasonable level of income, people find it hard to focus on other areas of integration, such as English language acquisition, education and employment. Yet it appears that statutory processes continue to be inflexible both in terms of policy and application, creating unnecessary difficulties for refugees in the first months after they are granted leave to remain.

- **Cessation of Home Office asylum support must tie with realistic timing of provision of mainstream support**

For example, Home Office processes for cessation of asylum support simply do not match the reality of waiting times for benefits to be processed. This is an area where data from HIS has been used to support policy work at UK level:

POLICY IMPACT: INFLUENCING UK GOVERNMENT DEBATES ON THE 'MOVE-ON' PERIOD

The After Clause 37 by the House of Lords in recent debates on the Immigration Bill proposed an amended 'move-on' period of 40 days between receipt of a Biometric Residence Permit and cessation of asylum support. This was based on evidence from charities, including HIS.

The most recent House of Commons Work and Benefits Committee Report also questions the length of the move-on period, based upon evidence from charities including Scottish Refugee Council:

“We question why the ‘move-on’ period for new refugees is only 28 days, when it is clear from research conducted by charities and the Government that it is in many cases insufficient. We recommend the DWP conduct and immediate investigation into the ‘move-on’ period and work with the Home Office to amend the length of time if necessary”

(House of Commons Work and Benefits Committee, Fourth Report of 2015-16, Para.69)

- **Refugees' experiences of homelessness often undermine integration**

Similarly, while the population of granted refugees likely to present as homeless in any given month should be predictable, refugees continue to have to make 'emergency' homeless presentations when they are made street homeless, putting stress on an already overloaded system.

- **When first granted status, even the most resilient refugees are likely to need support to access basic rights and services**

Our data consistently suggest that almost every refugee continues to require some level of assistance to navigate their initial entry into mainstream housing and benefits processes. This leaves voluntary sector services, such as HIS, in the position of attempting to close the loopholes in statutory provision. It is crucial that the policy development activities already embedded within the HIS programme continue if this situation is to change.

While we wait for this ongoing development work to bear fruit, there are practical implications for current service delivery. Firstly, services working with newly granted refugees have to 'frontload' service delivery in order to take account of the crisis period when asylum support ends and new entitlements must be taken up. It may be that in future, this 'reactive' work should be separated from the longer term integration work, where planned interventions and structured progress reviews are more appropriate.

- **Refugees can provide peer support**

Many refugees quickly pick up information and understanding. The HIS programme used Community Conferences to share information about rights and services, and also to facilitate the exchange of information between refugees. In addition, a parallel programme, 'Peer Education for Health'³² run by Scottish Refugee Council in collaboration with Health services demonstrated that group work and peer education, can be an effective way to empower refugees with knowledge of their rights.

- **Statutory agencies may respond more readily to enquiries from professionals than to direct approaches from refugee clients**

Attitudes and processes within certain statutory agencies can undermine a rights-based approach to integration work. One of our interviewees explained that he had been sanctioned due to absence from a language class. He wrote a letter to the DWP explaining the reason for his non-attendance and was told that this was not a valid reason. However, when his Integration Adviser wrote on his behalf, quoting the same reason for non-attendance, the adviser's explanation was accepted as valid and sanctions were lifted. (B10) Such examples tend to confirm that, as asylum seekers in previous research explained; "...your voice is better than ours, they don't believe us..." ([Family Keywork Report, 2016](#))³³. Therefore, whilst the ongoing developmental work of promoting good practice is crucial, integration services should continue to incorporate advocacy into their service model.

³² http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0000/9691/Peer_Education_Evaluation_Report_FINAL.pdf

³³ http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0001/0712/Family_Keywork_Service_Report_2016.pdf

- **Young, single, healthy refugee men, may require more guidance than is immediately apparent.**

Our data on access to rights highlights the potential pitfalls for people whose needs might not be assessed as complex, and who on paper may not seem to require in-depth advocacy or input. This often overlooked constituency, typically of young, single, healthy men, may require more guidance than is immediately apparent. A human rights and equalities approach is essential if they are not to be swallowed by a system within which they are largely invisible. Their specific needs and experiences will require further recognition in future services if integration is indeed to be achievable for all. Such an approach, if implemented holistically, will complement and strengthen existing frameworks which recognise the particular needs of women.

6.3 CONNECTING

- **New refugees are strongly motivated to learn English and seek greater access to ESOL support**

We have seen that HIS beneficiaries believe that improving their English language is crucial to establishing an independent life in Scotland. Many are frustrated with the number of hours ESOL provision that they have access to but most try to supplement this by finding contexts for practice and sometimes further tuition.

- **Refugees face competing demands on their time and attention which can interfere with language learning.**

Whilst refugees need access to language support as early as possible, it is important that the structure of provision is flexible

to allow them to attend to the important and often urgent appointments that they are required to attend in order to secure the basic necessities of life when first granted status. In addition, it is recognised that refugees are more likely than other learners to struggle with poor mental health. Can we design ESOL provision that supports these learners and accommodates the resulting lapses in concentration?

- **Learners appreciate certification of their learning, but would prefer local ESOL classes.**

Use of community based services and resources for ESOL learning is being considered by partners. It would appear that learners would appreciate this to save the costs of transport, fit in better with childcare responsibilities and support them in making local friendships. However, learners value the opportunity to demonstrate their achievements through formal certification. ESOL providers in Glasgow have recently developed a single point of registration which may help to improve coordination and progression between community and college based courses.

- **Language and social connections both influence prospects for employment**

Obtaining paid work can be difficult for refugees with low levels of English who are only equipped to work in contexts where use of English is not essential. People do not have the chance to practice their English in such contexts, and are likely to be unavailable to attend language classes. As a result a vicious cycle can be established which traps them in poor paid work. There was little evidence of people's other language skills – e.g. in their mother tongue – being valued by employers or perceived as a possible employability advantage.

However, existing or new social connections continue to provide refugees with access to employment opportunities.

- **Almost all new refugees experience a profound loss of social relationships**

In seeking to support integration and independent agency support initiatives must take seriously the depth of loss and likely effects of this on capacity to build new connections

Many refugees actively seek to build new friendships and connections. Whilst most refugees report that they have friends, most of these friendships are superficial, and therefore not adequate to provide adequate emotional support. Whilst service providers can and do provide this support initially, it is important to enable the development of close and supportive relationships. Evidence suggests that church groups and refugee community organisations, and courses can play this role.

- **Promoting independence**

Service providers face the challenge of providing intensive support where necessary and yet promoting independence as the person is ready. This is made more complex by the very different needs of individuals and the reality that progression towards independence does not always move steadily in the same direction.

- **Mobilising social connections**

The formal and informal structures of UK society assume that people can draw on a certain level of social connection to access resources and opportunities – for example to avoid street homelessness and destitution. Refugees, and others who do not have social networks to rely on, become vulnerable to

destitution and exploitation. Similarly we have seen that refugees in employment have generally found their job through their connections. Programmes such as Bridges Programmes are clearly crucial in enabling refugees to make the connections in order to access work.

- **Prevalence of experiences of racism**

Beneficiaries reported widespread experiences of racism and abuse. Many seem to show great resilience and dismiss the abuse, recognising that many people in society are welcoming and supportive. However, those with a pre-existing mental health concern found these experiences deeply distressing. Racism and abuse are clearly still part of everyday life in neighbourhoods where refugees live. If it is ignored it will exacerbate health problems for some individuals and undermine the development of healthy stable relationships across communities.

6.4 BUILDING INDEPENDENCE

- **Even the most resilient need some help to access their rights at first**

The picture emerging through the experiences of beneficiaries of the Holistic Integration Service is one characterised by examples of independence and resilience. Beneficiaries classified as ‘complex’ through to ‘Resilient’ exercise agency and often demonstrate great determination in tackling and enduring the challenges that face them.

Yet evidence that even those in many ways most resilient (good English language skills, educational levels, good mental health) need support to access rights at first.

- **How can the service best be designed to encourage transition to independence?**

It is clear from our data that most new refugees are very keen to enhance their independence as much as possible. A partner manager recommends that a future service model includes group settings where people can build confidence. This model could use volunteers and introduce 'orientation' activities, befriending and life skills courses and peer support.

The 'Peer Education for Health and Wellbeing'³⁴ mentioned above was piloted by the Scottish Refugee Council in 2014-2015. It built on the experiences of HIS and identified and trained refugees and asylum seekers to facilitate peer groups to address their own knowledge of health rights and services and to mobilise to improve their health. This model could be adapted to encourage refugees to support one another in their transition to independence.

- **How can a resilience categorisation be used most effectively to inform personcentred service delivery?**

It was apparent that use of the four 'Resilience' categories in the HIS model did not in practice enable more nuanced service delivery or tracking of progress. The key distinction was the categorisation as 'Complex' which resulted in referral to the Enhanced Service provided by British Red Cross. Some British Red Cross staff felt that it would have been better if they had been involved in the process of deciding which clients should be referred to the service. Integration Advisers on the other hand felt confident in their ability

to make this assessment, but suggested a more detailed system of resilience categorisation across the different integration domains. For example, somebody could be assessed as being resilient in terms of education but have complex health issues.

While a more discriminating measure of progress would have been valuable, this might have created too much burden for the advisers. The logistical difficulties of conducting joint assessments at times of high service demand would need careful consideration. More importantly, the primary utility of such assessments is to demonstrate change over time. This could only happen reliably where beneficiaries continued to visit their adviser throughout the full year. Understandably, in practice refugees were less likely to use the service once their urgent needs were met.

- **Most refugees are strongly motivated to find employment but struggle to find appropriate employment**

We have seen that many refugees are held back from employment by multiple barriers including English language skills, recognition of previous experience or qualifications and interruptions in their training or work record. It is extremely difficult, in an unfamiliar cultural environment, for refugees to work out the best way forward and many expressed to us their discouragement and temptation to give up trying to work at their former professional level. HIS beneficiaries appreciated the support they received from Bridges Programmes to learn about working in Scotland and through work experience placements have the opportunity to acquire a local employer reference.

³⁴ http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0000/9691/Peer_Education_Evaluation_Report_FINAL.pdf

- **English language skill is the key predictor of success in finding employment**

70% of those who obtained employment, and whose level of English was recorded (n=158), had English at Intermediate 1 or above.

- **Refugees with local ethnic ties are more likely to find work quickly**

We have seen that where there are existing employers from the same ethnic and language community as refugees, such as the Chinese community, it is easier for refugees to find work. However, such work could in the long term be limiting and inhibit integration if it does not give employees the opportunity to improve their English or develop their work skills and move on to other jobs.

- **Employed refugees are likely to experience insecure conditions of service**

Our data shows that many of the refugees with jobs encountered poor working conditions and insecure contracts. They were either unaware of their rights as employees in the UK or expressed reluctance to complain and risk losing their job.

- **Refugees' experiences of JobCentre support was inconsistent**

Whilst occasionally refugees talked about an adviser at the JobCentre who had been helpful, on the whole it was clear that people felt pressurised rather than helped. There is a clear tension between finding paid employment of any kind and at any level, or finding the right opportunities to develop education and skills in order to pursue a particular career path.

- **Support for long-term education and career planning**

It is clear that refugees commonly feel under pressure to progress with their careers as quickly as possible and are very aware that they have lost several valuable years of education and/or employment as a result of the circumstances in their home countries and their flight. Immediate support to take the first steps into education or work are very welcome, but longer term support is needed to enable some refugees to fulfil their potential.

- **Encouraging the entrepreneurs**

It is striking how many refugees express an interest in entrepreneurial activity. Many have come from contexts where small business is the norm and have experience of running their own businesses. However, there is very little support available in Scotland to help a refugee successfully set up and run a business.

CONCLUSION

The Holistic Integration Service has offered a unique opportunity to refugees, partners, communities and external agencies. The HIS model has focused on beneficiary need; but has equally recognised that to achieve maximum impact, organisations must invest in building successful partnerships and integrating data collection and analysis into day to day work. Finding the balance between prioritising and addressing refugees' needs, often in crisis situations; and maintaining a longer term vision of the goals of the service has not always been easy. Service capacity issues have made planned, long-term integration work harder to undertake.

Nevertheless, the Holistic Integration Service offers multiple examples of the ways in which practical service provision can be inspired by, and give inspiration to, academic, organisational and community learning in ways which now, and in the future, will improve the situation for refugees and for the areas they live in.

Importantly in this third year, refugees' own experiences have come to the fore in the evaluation process. We have learned from refugees that access to an Integration Service continues to be vital in a context where even the most resilient can find their way blocked by institutional obstacles which undermine their rights. Moreover, while people have a strong desire to be independent and above all to find work, the search for employment can be characterised by frustration and lack of progress. Support towards sustainable employment options, including the potential for setting up and running one's own business, is crucial to make refugees' sense of empowerment meaningful in the longer term.

We as an evaluation team have learnt a great deal from working with the committed practitioners, managers, development officers and policy makers involved in this project. We have been privileged to share in some refugees' journeys in the first year after they were granted status. The accounts of refugees and practitioners have challenged us to challenge our own assumptions about pathways towards integration. But above all, we have been inspired by messages of strength, tenacity and hope for the future. These are the images of refugee resilience that must, and will, underpin, our future work in this area.





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