

# New Scots Integration: Rights & Communities Evaluation Report





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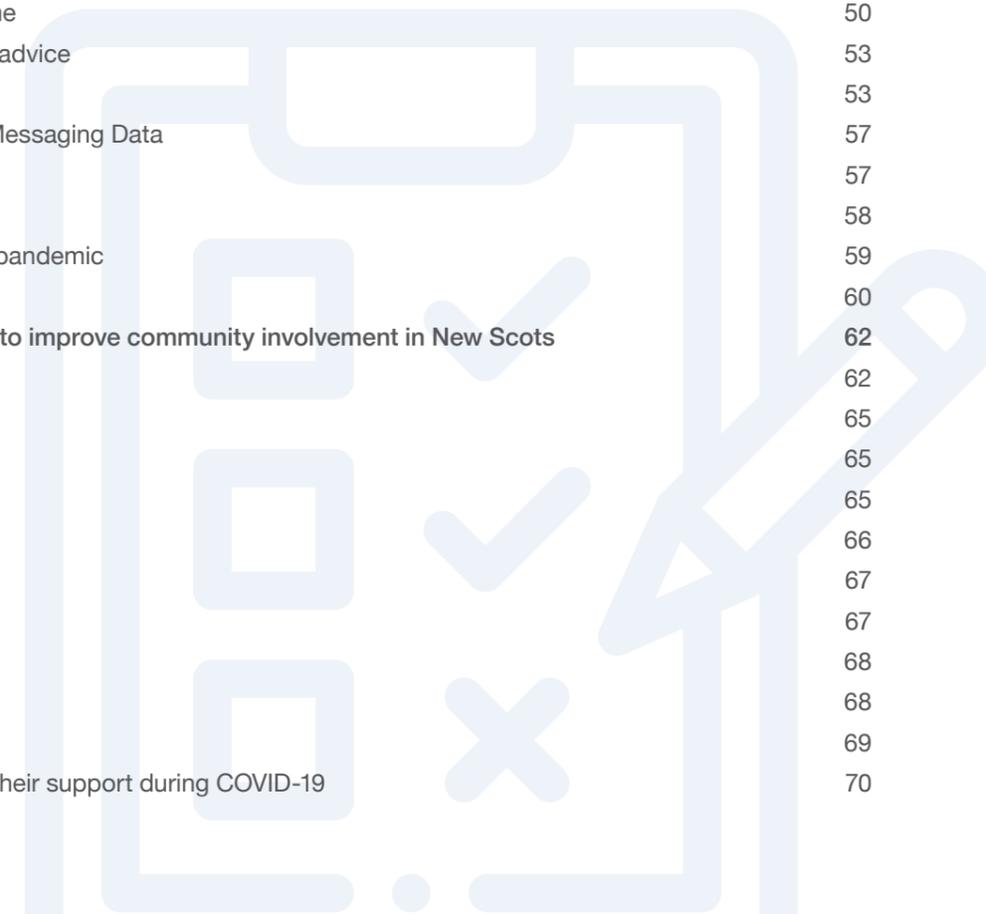
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## Acknowledgements

The *New Scots Integration: Rights & Communities* Programme would not have been possible without the support of all staff and volunteers at Scottish Refugee Council, the Workers, Educational Association, The Bridges Programmes and the Church of Scotland.

The ambitious programme has also benefited from the support of many different organisations, charities and communities across Scotland. We would like to thank the Refugee Advisory Group at the Scottish Refugee Council for their advice with a number of these projects. We would like to thank the Steering Group of the New Scots Integration Strategy who advised and guided the project, as well as the different thematic groups and organisations involved in the strategy.

We are grateful to Evaluation Support Scotland for their guidance during these two years.

The second year of our programme coincided with the escalation of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst the regulations brought into control the spread of the virus in Scotland impacted on many of our programme's goals, we were able to use the networks, partnerships and tools we had developed in our first year, to rapidly respond to the needs of refugees and communities during COVID-19. We express our deep gratitude to the community groups, third sector organisations and local authorities who worked with us and who were able to support people across Scotland during this unprecedented and difficult period. Scottish Refugee Council is proud to support you and inspired by your work to welcome New Scots into our communities. The report was written by Scott Preston, Monitoring & Evaluation Officer.





## Foreword

Understanding and accessing your rights and building social connections in a new country can be challenging for those who have fled persecution and violence.

Scotland's New Scots Integration Strategy (2018-2022) recognises these challenges but it also recognises that refugees bring strength, knowledge and skills. New Scots are assets to our communities and, as they rebuild their lives here, they help to make Scotland stronger, more compassionate and more successful as a nation.

The New Scots Integration: Rights and Communities (2018-2020) programme, aligned to the principles and goals of Scotland's integration strategy, was ambitious in its focus: not only to provide individual, advice, advocacy and support to refugees in Scotland who have been recognised in need of protection by the UK Government to understand and enjoy their rights; but to network and build capacity of local actors in all parts of Scotland now home to refugees.

Effective work towards refugee integration requires a wide mix of statutory, private, third sector and community organisations working in tandem. Collaboration through the development of the New Scots Connect network, delivery of integration projects and partnerships with the Workers' Educational Association, The Bridges Programmes and the Church of Scotland has been a key success of the programme.

Building social connections in a time of COVID-19 is a significant challenge and some of the aspirations of our programme to bring people together physically had to be curtailed due to COVID-19 restrictions. Nevertheless, the New Scots Connect infrastructure set up in the first year of the programme has allowed Scottish Refugee Council and others to quickly respond to meet essential needs of refugees disseminate funding and public health information.

It has been an exciting journey for us working so many organisations and individuals working together to build a more welcoming and fairer Scotland for people seeking protection here. The learning from this programme will certainly inform our future direction and I hope that the programme's final toolkits equally inform the work of others beyond Scotland.

**Sabir Zazai**  
Chief Executive



Section A

# Methodology and Theory of Change

## Introduction

*New Scots Integration: Rights & Communities*, is a Scotland-wide project to welcome and support people who have recently received refugee protection. The project works with people to help them achieve their ambitions for work, education and community life. At the same time, the project works with community groups and other charities to help them welcome New Scots and integrate them into community life. This project is funded by the European Union Asylum, Integration and Migration Fund.

This project was run in partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council, Workers, Educational Association, The Bridges Programmes and the Church of Scotland.

### Project Structure

There are two distinct work streams for this project:

#### Workstream One: Individual Advice & Support to New Refugees

- Over two years, the project will support 1200 refugees and their families to effectively integrate into Scottish society, to achieve their goals and have their needs met.

#### Workstream Two: Community Integration Tools and Frameworks

- Digital Scotland-wide network and 5 Regional Integration Co-ordinators to support a network of refugee and refugee-supporting organisations.



- Capacity building tools for third sector organisations.
- Develop a national and regional framework to improve refugee and community involvement in New Scots.
- Develop, publish and promote a final online toolkit of good practises

### Toolkits to support refugee integration

As part of the *New Scots Integration: Rights & Communities* Programme, for many of the strands of work we have produced a Toolkit that will allow different audiences to see the work that was carried out as part of this project, our methodology, learning, impact and recommendations to practitioners, policy makers and funders.

These tools can be used by multiple audiences in the UK and other countries to support integration, for example if a regional or local authority on the continent wanted to look to create a map of community groups supporting refugees, they can use the taxonomy tool detailing how Scottish Refugee Council created a list of activities and types of organisations. The local authority can then use the mapping toolkit to consider how to carry out this activity.

## Theory of Change



In designing the *New Scots Integration: Rights & Communities* Programme, it was agreed to focus on foundational rights, social connections and public attitudes. The programme was based on the following assumptions:

- Scottish Refugee Council has provided an effective and well used integration holistic integration advice and advocacy service<sup>1</sup> for new refugees, which could be expanded to provide further employability and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) assessments and practical support by utilising the expertise of partners in the sector;
- Individuals benefit most from support for integration in the first months of receiving refugee status;
- Scotland has a strong integration policy framework and good cross-sector working but limited capacity for implementation;
- Communities across Scotland need to be prepared to support integration effectively, ensure community cohesion and reduce social isolation of refugees;

- With the expansion of the UK's refugee resettlement programme across Scotland there has been a growing number of refugee-assisting keen to support integration but there is a lack of networking and capacity-building to support quality activities, or involvement of refugees. To simplify this, the programme set the following outcomes:

- Improved social connections of refugees;
- Improved capacity of third sector organisations;
- Improved community understanding of refugees; and
- Improved involvement of refugees in policy making

In order to address these outcomes, two distinct work streams were developed to support refugee integration across Scotland

### Workstream 1

**Individual support for newly granted refugees**

### Workstream 2

**Community integration tools and frameworks**

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Final\\_Integration\\_Report\\_Executive\\_Summary\\_June\\_2016.pdf](https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Final_Integration_Report_Executive_Summary_June_2016.pdf)



### Why was there a need for the 'New Scots Integration: Rights & Communities Programme'?

The design of the programme was based on Scottish Refugee Council's experience as the national refugee charity in Scotland, our work with key partners in the sector, and research and consultation with refugees and communities in Scotland. A key source of evidence of need for this programme was an engagement process in 2017 which supported the development of the New Scots Strategy 2018-22. The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy is Scotland's multistakeholder refugee integration strategy encompassing different domains of the integration process that is led in partnership by the Scottish Government, Consortium of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and Scottish Refugee Council. Over 2000 people, including over 700 refugees, participated in this process. Through this engagement exercise,<sup>2</sup> refugees and all stakeholders identified the need for information on rights and for advice and support to access these rights across the seven thematic areas of the New Scots strategy.

Social isolation was raised as a key challenge affecting refugees' ability to connect to people in the communities they are settling in. This included the challenge of building friendships and social networks, particularly for people living in rural areas, women, disabled people and people in the LGBTI community. Sport, culture, arts, leisure and community activities were all identified during the engagement exercise as positive ways for refugees to make social connections, contribute and feel part of the community. Awareness of available opportunities and understanding of how to access them was seen as a key issue, including entitlements to access local services and events. Helping to build social connections between refugees and their local communities was identified as a solution to tackling social isolation.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-and-analysis/2018/06/news-scots-2-engagement-analysis-new-scots-refugee-integration-strategy/documents/00537019-pdf/00537019-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00537019.pdf?forceDownload=true>

Key messages from this consultation included:

- The need for refugees to understand rights, entitlements and responsibilities and to be able to access services;
- Refugees' desire to gain language skills and meaningful employment;
- A recognition of the essential role communities play in helping people to feel safe, settled and able to access services.<sup>3</sup>

### Workstream 1

Research published in August 2017 looked at the transition experience of new refugees in Glasgow and confirmed the need for independent advice and support to assist new refugees in their integration journey following positive decisions on their asylum claim. The research found that even the most resilient people need additional support in order to access their rights. The report stated that the transition from 'asylum seeker' to 'refugee' is a pivotal moment in the relationship between the refugee and the receiving society. It is the point at which the state acknowledges a humanitarian and legal responsibility towards the individual. There are explicit changes in rights and responsibilities, however very little is known about the way these are implemented and the impact that this has on the wider personal and social environment. People's experiences of transition from a 'tolerated' asylum seeker to an 'accepted' refugee provide a context in which to examine integration in practice both from the perspective of the structures of the receiving society and the agency of the refugee. (Strang, Baillot and Mignard, 2018).<sup>4</sup>

The Survey of New Refugees in the United Kingdom, based on an analysis of data conducted between 2005 and 2009, showed that new refugees typically described most changes in their employment, housing and English language skills within the first eight months after receiving their asylum decision. During this time refugees were most likely to change accommodation, take up employment and attend English language classes. The research report recommended that support for refugees during these

early months following their asylum decision should be most intensive (Cebulla et al. 2010)<sup>5</sup> This has been further confirmed through the evaluation of Scottish Refugee Council Holistic Integration Services funded by Big Lottery Fund (2013-2016) (Strang, Marsden and Mignard 2014).<sup>6</sup>

### Workstream 2

In developing Scottish Refugee Council's Strategic Plan 2017-2020, significant engagement took place between January and April 2016 with a range of stakeholders, including refugee community organisations, community activists, integration networks, welcoming groups and statutory, public and voluntary agencies.

A variety of methods were used in this engagement process, including a strengths and support needs assessment survey, a needs assessment workshop delivered to refugee community organisations, 'Supporting refugee led groups and working with communities' workshop and a Communities workshop at our 'Shaping a better future with refugees – What next?' Conference in March 2016. Over 120 external stakeholders participated including representatives from 22 refugee community organisations and a wide range of other agencies.



<sup>3</sup> <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/new-scots-refugee-integration-strategy-2018-2022/pages/13/>

<sup>4</sup> Alison B. Strang, Helen Baillot & Elodie Mignard (2018) 'I want to participate.' transition experiences of new refugees in Glasgow, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44:2, 197-214, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2017.1341717

<sup>5</sup> Cebulla, A, Daniel, M. and Zurawan, A, (2010) Spotlight on refugee integration: findings from the Survey of New Refugees in the United Kingdom. UK Data Archive Study Number 6556 – Survey of New Refugees, 2005-2009, Home Office [http://doc.ukdataservice.ac.uk/doc/6556/mrdoc/pdf/6556\\_aggregate\\_report\\_37.pdf](http://doc.ukdataservice.ac.uk/doc/6556/mrdoc/pdf/6556_aggregate_report_37.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Strang, A., Marsden, R., and E. Mignard (2014) The Holistic Integration Service: Learning and Evaluation Year One. Available at <https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Holistic-Integration-Service-year-1-evaluation-report.pdf>

In addition, Scottish Refugee Council was involved in the 'Sanctuary, Solidarity and Social Capital; Supporting refugees through community development' conference delivered by Community Development Alliance Scotland which was attended by 80 community development practitioners, community activists and agencies.

From these discussions groups identified key common needs:

- to share learning and experience and to build on good practice across Scotland, while acknowledging the differences between the asylum dispersal experience in Glasgow and Syrian refugee resettlement across Scotland;
- to know where people are being dispersed or resettled in order to provide support and/or make interventions;
- to work together and share resources to meet need;
- to develop an understanding of the role of community development in integration; and
- to work with communities in order to develop shared outcomes.

As Glasgow is the only asylum 'dispersal' city in Scotland for asylum seekers and most refugees remain in Glasgow or the surrounding Local Authorities after status has been granted and community groups and charities aimed at supporting them are established in these areas. With the introduction of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) in 2015, all 32 of Scotland's local authorities agreed to support refugees and their families to join their communities. As a result, across Scotland there has been a growth in community groups and local charities who are able to support these New Scots to integrate into the local community.

Scottish local authorities have continued to welcome refugees arriving through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme and have committed to further intake. This programme has led to much wider involvement of new local authority actors. Local authorities in Scotland have managed the initial reception and done so with little contracting out to the expertise of the third sector, however, they are now dealing with the longer term integration needs of refugees such as employability, language and social connections, where third sector involvement is required.

With the rise in organisations supporting refugees across Scotland, there is no current comprehensive list of community groups in Scotland with a refugee support remit, and as such it is difficult to identify any gaps in service provision across Scotland. Scottish Refugee Council knew informally that most supporting organisations are run purely on a voluntary basis and there is a handful of community and voluntary groups who are delivering direct support to refugees on behalf of the local authority. By carrying out detailed mapping of organisations and community groups working in the sector would allow supporting activities to be planned across the sector if needed.

Creating both physical and digital support networks would allow both direct and indirect support to be provided to community groups across Scotland, allowing knowledge to be shared by groups working in different environments across the country and able to create regional support networks to share good practise and create links to better support refugees in their local communities. Regional coordinators can have the role of working in these communities across Scotland whilst signposting organisations to the digital resources available as part of this project.

By identifying organisations who support the integration of refugees in Scotland this will allow Regional Integration Coordinators to provide advice, support and information to Local authorities and third sector organisations in these regions to better support New Scots to integrate into communities across Scotland.

In order to capture the impact of this project, an evaluation framework was developed to capture data from each work package. This ensured that both qualitative and quantitative data was collected to evaluate the project against the following outcomes:

- Improved social connections of refugees;
- Improved capacity of third sector organisations;
- Improved community understanding of refugees; and
- Improved involvement of refugees in policy making

Each individual work package had its own reporting and monitoring template that was set up to capture information to fulfil both our UK Responsible Authority (UKRA) programme reporting requirements, and provide information to evidence the impact of the programme.

## Methodology

### Workstream 1

#### Individual advice and support to new refugees

Our Refugee Integration Service works with people who have recently received refugee status in the last 6 months. The service provides advice and advocacy to help people through this time, including practical support to resolve their immediate needs and financial support. Our Integration Advisers also work with clients to create their Holistic Integration Plans, working with people to identify what support they would require in terms of English language practise, access to employment, and integration into the community.

Every refugee who has accessed this service has developed their own Holistic Integration Plan in which they have identified their goals and steps to achieve those goals with the support of their Integration Adviser.

We have collected detailed information on all of the support we have provided to clients on our Joint Client Data Base (JCDB) and since November 2019 our Inform system. This data collection has enabled Scottish Refugee Council to report to United Kingdom Responsible Authority (UKRA) quarterly to highlight the interventions made and the results of this work, as well as our work by our partners Workers, Educational Association and The Bridges Programmes.

Workers, Educational Association and The Bridges Programme provide quarterly reports to Scottish Refugee Council highlighting their impact.

The Beneficiary Spreadsheet from UKRA is used by all AMIF Funded organisations to report on their work. Whilst this does not capture all of the support interventions provided by our service, it is used in this report as the primary data source.

### Workstream 2

#### Community Integration Tools and Frameworks

The *New Scots Integration: Rights & Communities* Programme aims to support the New Scots Integration Strategy by focusing on networking and building the capacity of local community groups to make a lasting difference for refugee integration across Scotland, not just at the individual level but for the community as a whole.

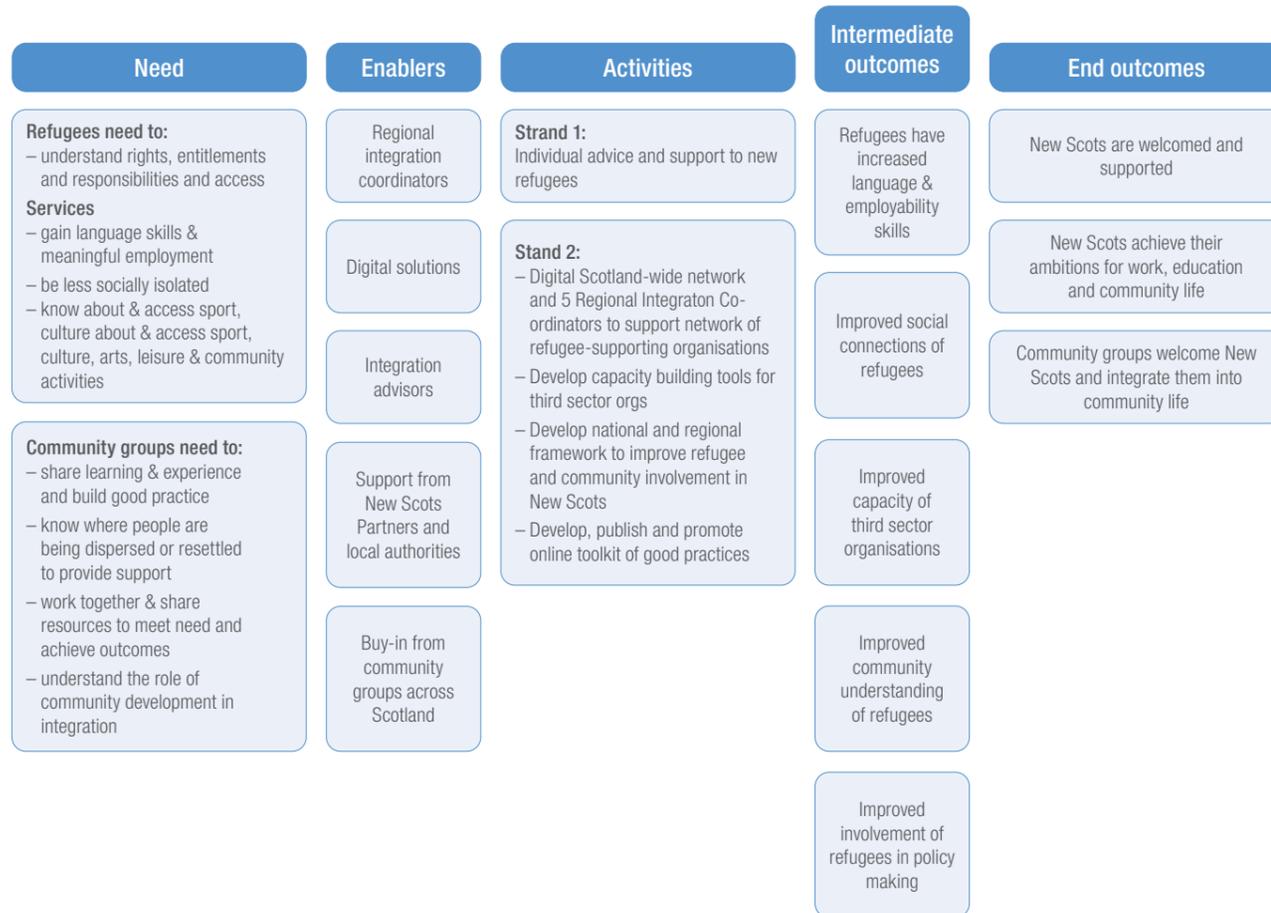
Many of the key deliverables of the programme feed directly into delivering this national strategy to support refugee integration across Scotland.

This workstream can be broken down into 4 sections, each relating to 15 different work packages:

- Digital Scotland-wide network and 5 Regional Integration Co-ordinators to support a network of refugee and refugee-supporting organisations.
- Developing capacity building tools for third sector organisations
- Developing a national and regional framework to improve refugee and community involvement in New Scots
- Developing, publishing and promoting an online toolkit of good practices

Each work package has its own methodology for gathering data relating to the 4 outcomes noted above.





- Assumptions:**
1. Scottish Refugee Council provides an effective and well used integration service for new refugees that could be expanded to provide further employability and ESOL support by utilising the expertise of partners in the sector.
  2. Individuals benefit most from support for integration in the first months of receiving refugee status
  3. Scotland has a strong integration policy framework and good cross-sector working but limited capacity for implementation
  4. Scotland communities need to be prepared to support integration effectively, ensure community cohesion and reduce refugees' social isolation
  5. A growing number of community groups are keen to support integration but lack of networking and capacity-building to support quality activities, or involvement of refugees





Section B

**Providing advice  
and support to  
newly granted  
refugees**

# Methodology

## Workstream 1

### Individual Advice and Support to New Refugees

For over 30 years Scottish Refugee Council has been supporting New Scots to find a welcoming home in Scotland. In 2011 Scottish Refugee Council developed the Holistic Integration Service with the principles of “early intervention, prevention, recognising resilience and vulnerability; partnership and sustainability”.

The *New Scots Integration: Rights & Communities* Programme continued this work with a partnership between Scottish Refugee Council, the Bridges Programme and Workers Educational Association. This partnership model allows the programme to provide integration, employability and English language support.

Our Refugee Integration Service, in partnership with the Bridges Programme and WEA, provides a focused intervention that addresses the immediate needs of newly granted refugees. It enables individuals and families to access suitable accommodation, removes the risk of destitution by empowering people to access the services available to them, and through the Holistic Integration Plan helps to enable people to take charge of their futures, improve their English and integrate into society through employment and education.

### Top line figures

- 1190 clients supported with our Refugee Integration Service
- 320 clients provided with one to one employability support
- 136 CV workshops
- 86 supported to look for a job
- 105 applications supported to the National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom (NARIC) to recognise integration qualifications and skills
- 39 people moved into paid employment
- 192 people provided with ESOL classes



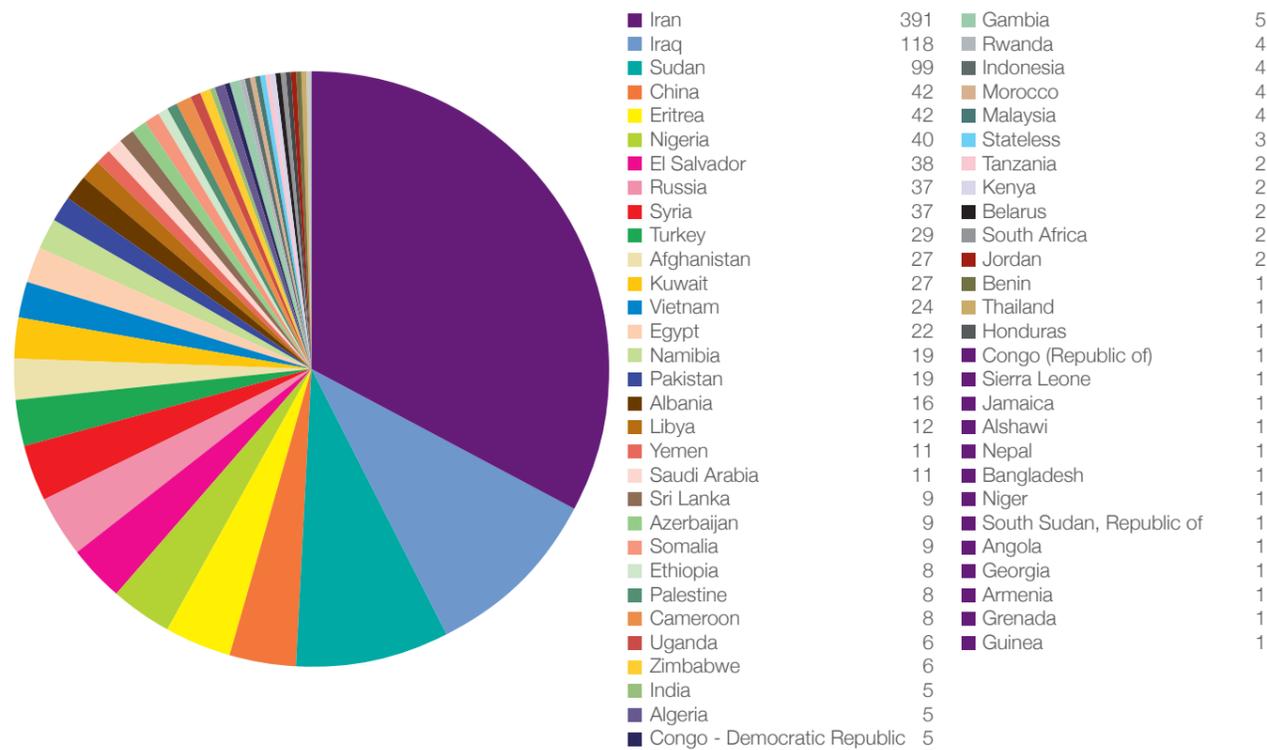
### Refugee Integration Service

Our Refugee Integration Service has supported individual refugees who recently received a positive decision on their asylum claim. Over the course of the two years we supported 1190 individuals from 57 different countries – the top 5 countries of origin amongst clients are currently Iran, Iraq, Sudan, China, and Eritrea. Our advisers have provided support and advice on issues such as housing, financial stability, health, education (including language), employment and social connection.

Every refugee who has accessed this service has developed their own Holistic Integration Plan, in which they have identified their goals and steps to achieve those goals with the support of their Integration Adviser. The Holistic Integration Plan gives the individual a plan to support their integration and importantly the document is owned by the individual, if they leave the service they still have a document that they can refer to or provide to another organisation if they want any further support.



Figure 1. Nationalities of people accessing our services



People can access our service from a number of ways. They can be referred from a third party, attend our duty desk or through the telephone helpline. People meet with our advisers and have an Initial Assessment, where our advisers discuss:

- Accommodation
- Financial stability
- Legal
- Social connections
- Employability
- English language support
- Adult education

Depending on the client, not all topics will be discussed, and the session follows the needs of the client. From this initial assessment goals are set and clients are invited back for further follow-up appointments.

Once a client has met with their Integration Adviser, they can be referred to the Bridges Programmes for employability support, and the Workers, Educational Association for Survival ESOL (English as a Second Language) Course.

**Impact of the service**

**Access to secure accommodation**

95% of clients reported being in unsecure accommodation at their initial assessment. Advisers are able to use contacts developed with Glasgow City Council and local housing associations, which then allows clients to access the services available to them in order to access suitable accommodation for themselves and their families. Over the project we have supported 110 to move into secure accommodation.



**Access to financial services**

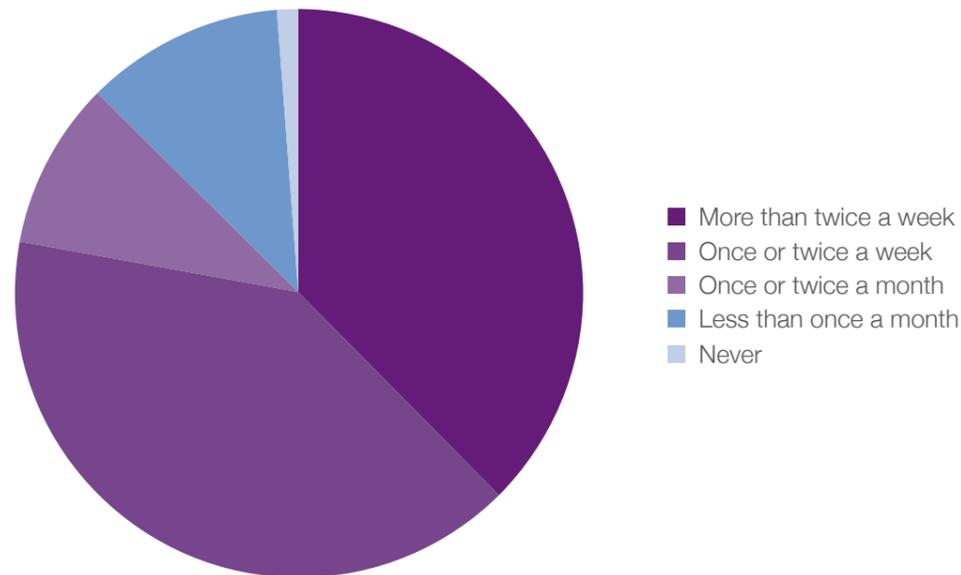
Access to financial services is also important in preventing people from falling into destitution. At their initial assessment, 49% of clients were not receiving all eligible benefits, and 33% did not have access to a bank account. In 2017, only 2% of Scottish households reported not having a bank account.<sup>7</sup>

To improve financial inclusion of refugees, recommendations have been made by both the ‘All Party Parliamentary Group’ (APPG) on Refugees<sup>8</sup> and the British Red Cross<sup>9</sup> on how to remove barriers, however our clients still report issues such as banks not accepting their Biometric Resident Permits (BRPs) as a valid form of identification, or questioning their address if they are in temporary accommodation. Our service is able to provide letters to clients that can be used as proof of address in order to set up bank accounts. Our advisers are able to support clients to manage the Universal Credit system to ensure they can access the support to which they are entitled.

All clients are provided with financial advice and a bank letter.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-people-annual-report-results-2017-scottish-household-survey/pages/7/>  
<sup>8</sup> [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/APPG\\_on\\_Refugees\\_-\\_Refugees\\_Welcome\\_report.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/APPG_on_Refugees_-_Refugees_Welcome_report.pdf)  
<sup>9</sup> British Red Cross (2018) “Still an ordeal: the move-on period for new refugees” Available at <https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/research-publications>

Figure 2. Frequency of contact with someone in the UK



**Increasing social connections**

The UK Government’s Integrated Communities Strategy defines their vision for integration as “communities where people, whatever their background, live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities”<sup>10</sup>

In order to welcome New Scots to our community, it is important to build strong social connections to enable people to rebuild their lives in Scotland. Our Integration Advisers are able to signpost people to different services available to them in the community, and our Regional Integration Advisers can also work with community groups to help support new clients. 18% of clients<sup>11</sup> speak to someone less than once a month. Our advisers can support them to community groups and other support networks that are available.

Integration Advisers can also use the New Scots Connect Map available on the Scottish Refugee Council’s website.<sup>12</sup>



<sup>10</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/835573/home-office-indicators-of-integration-framework-2019-horr109.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/835573/home-office-indicators-of-integration-framework-2019-horr109.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> From a sample of 113 clients

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/location/>

**Case Study from our Integration Service**

**Scottish Refugee Council’s Refugee Integration Service supported a couple from Russia that arrived in the UK in September 2018, and engaged with our service in February 2019. They were socially isolated and found it difficult to access health, banking and welfare services.**

**Scottish Refugee Council supported the couple to access benefits, as they struggled to contact the welfare agency (DWP) without support of an interpreter. The couple were referred to WEA and attended English language classes.**

**The couple report increased confidence, and informed their caseworker they feel less isolated in their community. With their new financial stability, they have been able to engage with their local community, and their increased confidence in English means they have been able to engage in other social and religious networks outside their community.**

**Employability**

When discussing if people had worked in their home country, 84% of those who talked about this (404 people) reported having been in paid employment in their country of origin. Clients frequently show interest in finding/progressing into employment when they access our service. Access to employment opportunities enables our clients to take charge of their own futures and contribute to society.

The recruitment process for jobs in the UK is often much more complex than in clients’ home countries, for example CVs and health and safety legislation, and so our Employability Team was developed to work with newly granted refugees to understand the process, gain confidence to identify the skills they have, meet employers and access job opportunities.

All clients who wish to receive employability support work with Scottish Refugee Council’s Employability Team to create an Employment Action Plan, and, if appropriate, are referred onto the Bridges Programmes. 320 Action Plans were created for people accessing our service (27% of all clients).

Scottish Refugee Council’s Employability Adviser supported clients to look at what is the best route into employment, and through partnerships with large, national employers such as Greggs, Starbucks and Barclays:

- 91 clients attended employer focused employability training sessions
- 16 clients attended basic employability training (using interpreters) for those with lower levels of English
- 13 clients started working with employers as a result of the employer focused employability training sessions

The Bridges Programmes is an employability agency, supporting the integration of refugees, migrants, and anyone for whom English is a second language.

Across the two years of this project they have supported:

- 181 clients with one-to-one employment advice identifying clients goals and what further services Bridges Programmes can provide
- 138 clients to take part in CV workshops
- 105 applications supported to the National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom (NARIC) to recognise integratiopna qualifications and skills

From both the Bridges Programmes and Scottish Refugee Council’s support, 39 people have found part-time (29) and full-time employment (10) in a range of jobs and employment areas including Care Assistant, Barista, Architecture and working for the NHS within the timeframe of the programme.



Figure 2: Attendee visiting the Scottish Refugee Council stall at our Job Fair, 11th September 2019.

### Job Fair

In partnership with the Bridges Programmes, Scottish Refugee Council organised a Job Fair at the National Piping Centre in September 2019. This event attracted 173 clients and 14 employers from a range of job sectors.

During the job fair, one client made the following comment:

**“This is the first time in the UK that I have attended something like this. [The UK has] a very different culture to search for a job in, and it can be difficult for refugees. But this has been a very good experience for me, and I hope to attend another job fair in the future and will keep researching so that I find the right job for me.”**

Scottish Refugee Council has followed up with clients who expressed an interest in opportunities with the employers we invited, either by inviting them to attend training or informing them we will be in touch when there is relevant training available.

**Abner (name changed)<sup>13</sup> came to the UK in 2019, and after a year he was granted Leave to Remain in January 2020, with his family and children. He attended high School in El Salvador started working straight after graduating, working as a builder, mechanic assistant, assistant manager.**

**He engaged with Scottish Refugee Council soon after receiving his status, and we supported the family with financial and housing advice. Abner was keen to start working, and our Employability Adviser met to create an Action Plan with him to identify his short and long-term goals.**

<sup>13</sup> In all case studies in this report, names have been changed to protect the identify of clients

**The Employability Adviser referred Abner to the Bridge Programmes, who provided direct support to help him develop his CV, and practise interview skills. Despite the employment challenges posed by COVID-19, in June he started working in a bakery in Glasgow, The Employability Adviser also signposted Abner to a community organisation that could provide a bike to help him travel to and from work.**

### Improving Language Skills

Our Integration Advisers have met clients from 57 different countries, with varying levels of English. When discussing their Holistic Integration Plan, people often state they wish to improve their English language skills. Scottish Refugee Council partnered with Workers, Educational Association, a national organisation that, amongst other things, supports the language learning needs of people with little or no English.

Language skills not only help people integrate into their communities, they empower people to access employment, and are intrinsic to refugee integration and wellbeing.<sup>14</sup> There is a wealth of evidence highlighting the importance of effective language programmes and the wider benefits that they deliver, for example reducing the risk of social isolation and long-term dependency. Improved language skills allow people to have more contact with their communities and improve wellbeing.<sup>15,16</sup>

Workers, Educational Association offer language classes at different levels to support all learners to improve their English. People are invited to an Initial Language Assessment, where they can be placed into a class based at their level. WEA have developed their ‘Survival ESOL’ curriculum that allows people to learn English. Incorporated into the course are visits to different places across Glasgow where the groups can practise their English in the community.

WEA have worked with 192 people during the two-year programme.

WEA also manage the Glasgow ESOL register – a city-wide waiting list used by all key providers to fill ESOL classes and so are able to ensure that clients are linked in with colleges across Glasgow. This partnership with WEA has meant that the majority of clients who have expressed an interest have received a referral to college ESOL or community and volunteering opportunities.

**Deborah was an artist in her home country. Her English level was already high when she accessed WEA’s ESOL classes. She was delighted to be in class and attended regularly. She was very inquisitive and often asked questions related to English but also to wider issues of Scottish culture and the geography of Glasgow among other things. Deborah wanted to learn ‘Scottish’ words so this was incorporated into the class by introducing two new ‘Glaswegian’ words or phrases into each lesson.**

**Deborah was desperate to find access to an organisation which could provide her with materials so she could recommence working on her art. The WEA signposted Deborah to an initiative run by Glasgow museums that she joined and her work was shown as part of an exhibition in July 2019. After requesting donations of art materials from contacts in Glasgow WEA were able to pass on a range of paints and sketchbooks which Deborah put to good use. Along with other learners Deborah mentioned that she would like a bike to travel to the class and around Glagsow and asked if there were any organisations which could help. Directed to Bikes for Refugees, they provided Deborah with a bike, On her feedback form Deborah said:**

**“The class has helped to me for information about this city.”**

<sup>14</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/812891/intergrating-refugees-2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/812891/intergrating-refugees-2019.pdf)  
<sup>15</sup> Tip, L. K., Brown, R., Morrice, L., Collyer, M. and Easterbrook, M. J. (2018) ‘Improving refugee well-being with better language skills and more intergroup contact’, *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 10 (2), pp.144-151  
<sup>16</sup> <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/migration/research/integrationcitizenship/refugeeresettlement/reports>

**The teacher help me about many things. I need some materials for painting and my teacher help me a lot. I'm happy for this class.'**

Deborah went on to join the higher level WEA English class which she is currently attending regularly and has been offered a college place for an ESOL course starting next term.

#### COVID-19 and the impact on our services

In March 2020, services were adapted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Scottish Refugee Council, WEA and the Bridges Programmes all moved services online or by telephone. Since April 2020 Scottish Refugee Council has supported 214 clients.

WEA adapted their programme delivery and provided the same number of classes as pre-lockdown, with up to 5 x 40 hour classes running at any one time, or up to 10 sessions in any given week. They utilised Zoom as a classroom and Canvas, a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

One of the challenges was moving to online initial English language assessments for learners. This process allows WEA to place refugee clients in the level of class that is right for them and allows them to progress to the relevant college class after their 10-week course. Before lockdown, these were completed in person on a fortnightly basis. During lockdown an online assessment was devised and implemented using a mixture of 'cloud' based resources for reading and writing, and 'Microsoft Forms' and Zoom or telephone calls for speaking and listening skills.

The Bridges Programmes carried out one-to-one employability sessions with clients virtually, and continue to engage with employers at this uncertain time, with the success of helping some clients to find employment.

Systems that were put in place before the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the telephone helpline, allowed Scottish Refugee Council to quickly adapt all services online.

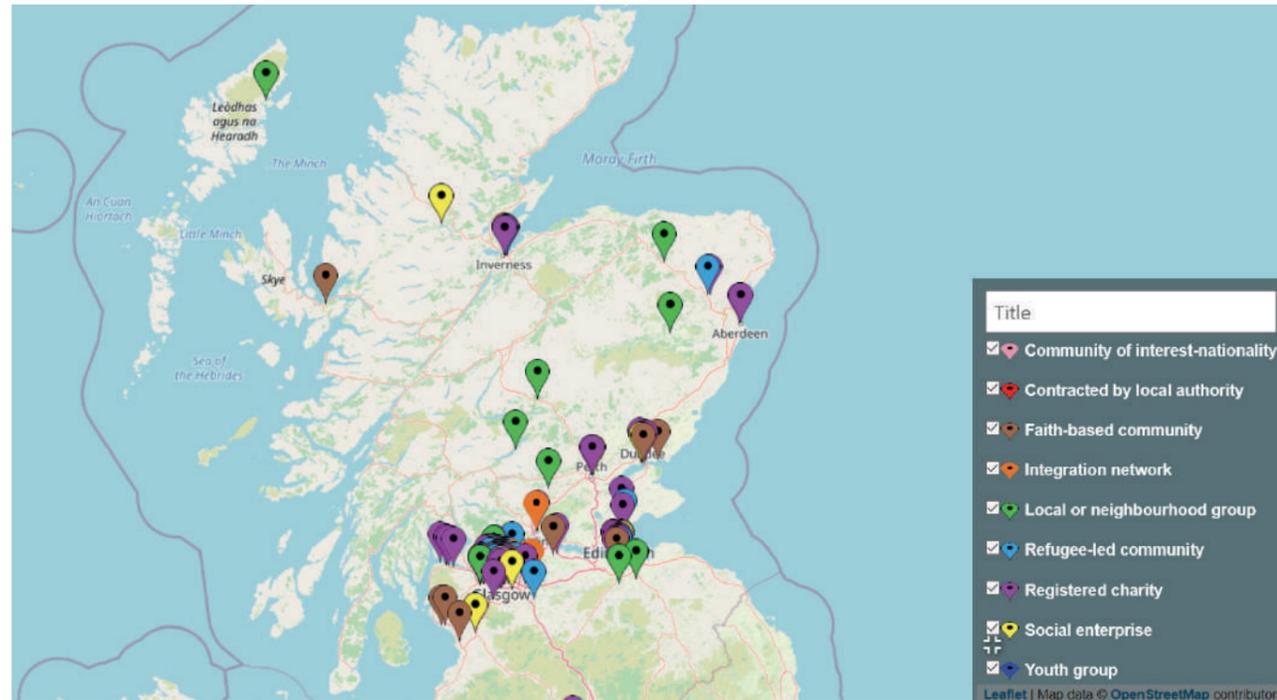




Section C

# Community Integration tools and Frameworks

# Creating a physical and digital network of refugee supporting organisations New Scots Connect



Community groups and third sector organisations across Scotland have been supporting refugees for a number of years. With the VPRS scheme, local authorities agreed to welcome refugees since 2015 and as part of this programme the Scottish Refugee Council wanted to support the integration of refugees and receiving groups, so created New Scots Connect.

### New Scots Connect

As part of this national programme to welcome New Scots to communities across the country, Scottish Refugee Council developed New Scots Connect, which includes:

- Regional Networks through Regional Integration Coordinators
- A digital forum
- An interactive online map

Our digital tools (forum and map) are the first ever national digital communications platforms for refugee community groups in Scotland. Our physical and digital networks allow groups to share good practice and promote their work to the general public, individuals and refugees.

### The New Scots Connect Map allows third sector organisations, community groups, local authorities and refugees to find out what organisations are working in their local area.

New Scots Connect was launched on 30 of January 2019 by Aileen Campbell MSP, the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government, and community groups and third sector organisations were then encouraged to complete an online form to join the digital map and forum.

### Regional Integration Coordinators

In communities across Scotland, there are a number of different groups who support both newly granted refugees and refugees that have made Scotland their home for a number of years. As part of the initial mapping activity in 2018 using details from OSCR-Scotland Charity Register and the Scottish Refugee Council's own internal data 187 organisations were identified that supported refugees across Scotland.

As part of the New Scots Integration Programme, 5 Regional Integration Coordinators were recruited to create or strengthen networks of organisations across Scotland working with refugees, and provide support to these groups.

Scotland was split into 5 distinct regions to cover all 32 Local Authorities across Scotland, and so best support the third sector organisations in each region. As Glasgow is the only dispersal city in Scotland and is home to the highest number of New Scots, a Coordinator was recruited to support groups in the city.

### Regions

North West Region	North East Region
Argyll & Bute	Aberdeen City
East Dunbartonshire	Aberdeenshire
Highland	Angus
Western Isles	Clackmannanshire
Orkney Islands	Dundee City
Perth & Kinross	Fife
Shetland Islands	Moray
Stirling	
West Dunbartonshire	

South West Region	South East Region
East Ayrshire	City of Edinburgh
East Renfrewshire	East Lothian
Inverclyde	Falkirk
North Ayrshire	Midlothian
North Lanarkshire	Scottish Borders
Renfrewshire	South Lanarkshire
South Ayrshire	West Lothian
Dumfries & Galloway	

### Are there organisations across Scotland supporting refugees?

As part of the VPRS and VCRS, Local Authorities across Scotland have resettled refugees displaced from Syria.<sup>17</sup> Each Local Authority put in place support systems to address issues such as accommodation, ESOL classes and supporting people to access support from the state. Communities also wanted to support these refugees, and across Scotland charities and other third sector organisations also provided support and services to newly granted refugees. Since 2015 there has been a growth in the number of organisations that have been formed and created to support refugee integration throughout Scotland.

Prior to the creation of the VPRS and VCRS scheme, most refugees settled in the central belt of Scotland, particularly in Glasgow, as Glasgow has been the only dispersal area in Scotland since 1999, and so groups are longer established in this region.

17 <http://www.migrationscotland.org.uk/our-priorities/current-work/syrian-refugee-resettlement>



In 2018, Scottish Refugee Council carried out initial desk-based research that mapped community groups across Scotland based on information that was publically available from the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and Scottish Refugee Council's internal data. This research generated 187 organisations, however the OSCR list only included registered charities and did not include community groups or other third sector organisations. This analysis did highlight organisations that were based across Scotland and the need for more detailed research on the type of work carried out by these groups and what support they receive.

**The role of Regional Integration Coordinators**

With communities and third sector organisations across Scotland providing support for refugees, the Regional Integration Coordinators support the creation of regional hubs as part of New Scots Connect. This physical network of community groups and third sector organisations across Scotland compliments the digital network, the New Scots Connect Forum.

The Regional Integration Coordinators are the first line of communication for community groups and organisations working throughout Scotland looking for information and support. They are able to find out about trends in each region and support links being created between Local Authorities and third sector organisations.

With over 150 groups and organisations in Scotland working to support refugees, the Refugee Integration Coordinators can identify what is happening in their area and signpost organisations to other groups that can support or complement their work. Although Scottish Refugee Council had contact with a large number of community groups and charities before this programme, the Refugee Integration Coordinators were able to make new connections with other groups across Scotland, and provide more direct support to these groups in their regions. This allowed for more groups to share good practice, create links between different organisations, and the Refugee Integration Coordinators have encouraged these groups to participate in the digital tools to take part in the national conversation.

**Impact of Refugee Integration Coordinators**

Stong impact	Less impact
Refugee support groups know where to go for help and feel supported	Groups and public agencies are better able to build community cohesion and integration
Groups are better able to achieve their aims and sustain their work	Refugees themselves are better able to access integration support
Groups are better able to collaborate and share learning with each other	There is more and better support for refugees
People working with refugees have improved knowledge and skills to support refugee integration	
Communities are better able to access support at difficult times	

The Refugee Integration Coordinators used the regional network and digital tools (see below) to promote other parts of the *New Scots Integration: Rights & Communities* Programme. For example, the Refugee Integration Coordinators contacted community groups to promote the digital tools, and then promote the Small Grants Scheme and encourage groups to apply for the Sharing Lives Sharing Languages project. By having Regional Integration Coordinators to create these networks, it has helped to ensure that the programme has been promoted to and has supported community groups from across Scotland, and in turn New Scots across the country.

A review of the role of the Regional Integration Coordinators was carried out with Evaluation Support Scotland in November and December of 2020. From RICs self-evaluation as well as feedback taken from key stakeholders the diagram above summarized the impact of the RICs against their planned outcomes.

15/16 stakeholders who completed an online survey were able to provide an example of something really useful the Regional Integration Coordinators had done over the last two years. From this feedback the main themes were:

- Building connections
- Providing advice and information including funding advice

**“The RIC gave training to our volunteers/staff on Refugee and Asylum Seeker’s Rights. It gave our volunteers a better understanding of the challenges faced by some of the people who use our spaces.”**

### Falkirk Round Table – April 2019

In April 2019, the South East Regional Integration Coordinator organised a roundtable of community groups to allow them to discuss further collaborations. This event brought together Friends of Scottish Settlers, Rainbow Muslim Women's Group, Trinity Church, Science Ceilidh, CSREC and Al-Masaar. The meeting was well received by groups, allowing many to meet for the first time to discuss their work and the challenges they face in the sector.

### Sharing knowledge and good practise across Scotland

Al-Amal project is a refugee-led group working in Aberdeenshire. The group works closely with Aberdeenshire Council and Friends of Amal, a local voluntary group established to support the refugees who were resettled under the VPRS scheme in the area. With the VPRS scheme coming to an end, many refugees are now needing to apply for Leave to Remain, however there is little formal support for people for this process. Al Amal have established a WhatsApp group to help people to prepare for the Life in the UK test. This closed group allows admins to keep in touch with members, while supporting them to prepare for their exam.

Many community groups across Scotland have also highlighted the need for support for those who came to Scotland under VRPS in applying for LTR, and the Al Amal project are sharing this project with community groups across Scotland. RIC's have been able to share this project in their own regions. This simple project helps allows community groups to provide practical support to New Scots during an uncertain time.



### Supporting communities and third sector organisations during a crisis

With the COVID-19 Pandemic there has been many incidents in Glasgow involving accommodation in hotels. There was much uncertainty, fear and confusion. Through our digital forum we were able to put out community reassurance messages from Police Scotland, and our Glasgow and South West Refugee Integration Coordinator quickly set up meetings with community representatives, Mears the asylum housing provider and Police Scotland.

From these meetings the need for dialogue between the Police and community groups was identified, and highlighting the benefits of such a communication. The Refugee Integration Coordinator was able to coordinate contact between Police Scotland's new Liaison Officer and relevant community groups and support with appropriate information and updates.

This was a difficult time for the city, and through the relationships that the Refugee Integration Coordinators have with community leaders they were able to quickly support them to meet with Police to find out more information and pass this into their communities. This will be an important relationship in the future as this new role will support community relations and communications between refugee community group and the Police.

### New Scots Connect Forum

The New Scots Connect digital tools (forum and map) were launched in September 2019. The Refugee Integration Coordinators supported groups to sign up to both the map and forum throughout the year, and both were launched with the new Scottish Refugee Council website.

The Forum utilised the Basecamp platform, an online project management tool that allows users to:

- Share information and engage in discussion on the Message Boards on different topics
- Message other users of the service directly
- Share documents and files that are relevant to each region
- Use the calendar to post events

To join the forum and map groups are required to fill out an online form and are then granted access by the Digital Officer at Scottish Refugee Council. This is to ensure that the forum is compliant with GDPR and safeguarding issues, as members are able to send each other messages directly. This is the first such national forum of community groups supporting refugees in Scotland.

Since September 2019, there was a steady growth in the number of groups using the forum, with 158 groups active on the forum as of September 2020. Although the forum was envisioned as a way for community groups to start discussions, the majority of the discussions most have been started by members of staff from Scottish Refugee Council. This has been valuable in allowing different members of staff from Scottish Refugee Council to share information directly with community groups, with the Refugee Integration Coordinators able to provide follow up in their region. The Refugee Integration Coordinators have been able to use posts on the forum as a means to connect with their groups in the community and keep up both means of communication.



Most posts on the message board have been announcements, with Scottish Refugee Council staff giving information on changes to services, and community groups promoting events or some of the work they are doing. It has also been used to share policy papers and research documents from Scottish Government and other bodies, such as the Scottish Human Rights Commission. It has also been used to post messages about resources and initiatives across Scotland and about funding opportunities through the New Scots Integration Programme, and these have been followed up by our Refugee Integration Coordinators to ensure groups are supported to apply for funding.

When the forum was launched it was thought that community groups would use the platform to communicate with each other and share ideas of best practice, funding opportunities, and issues that have been affecting them in their area. This has not been the case, and almost 66% of the content is posted by Scottish Refugee Council staff, with 70% of messages not receiving a response from community groups. Most groups use the platform to share information with other groups, instead of for discussion.

Figure 3. Interactions on New Scots Forum

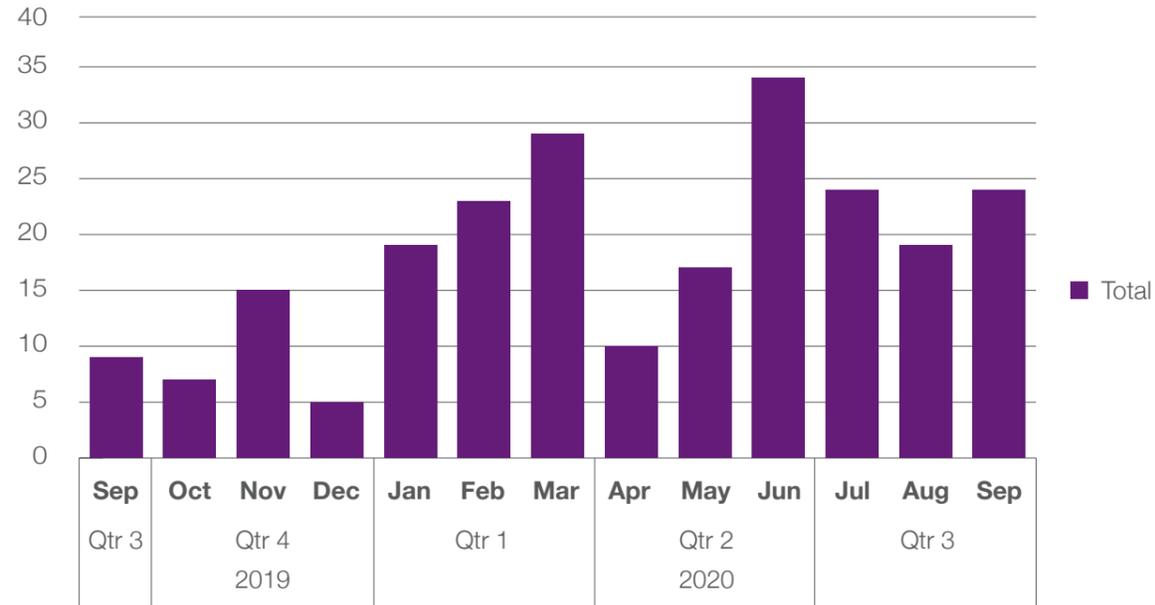


Figure 4. Who is posting on the platform

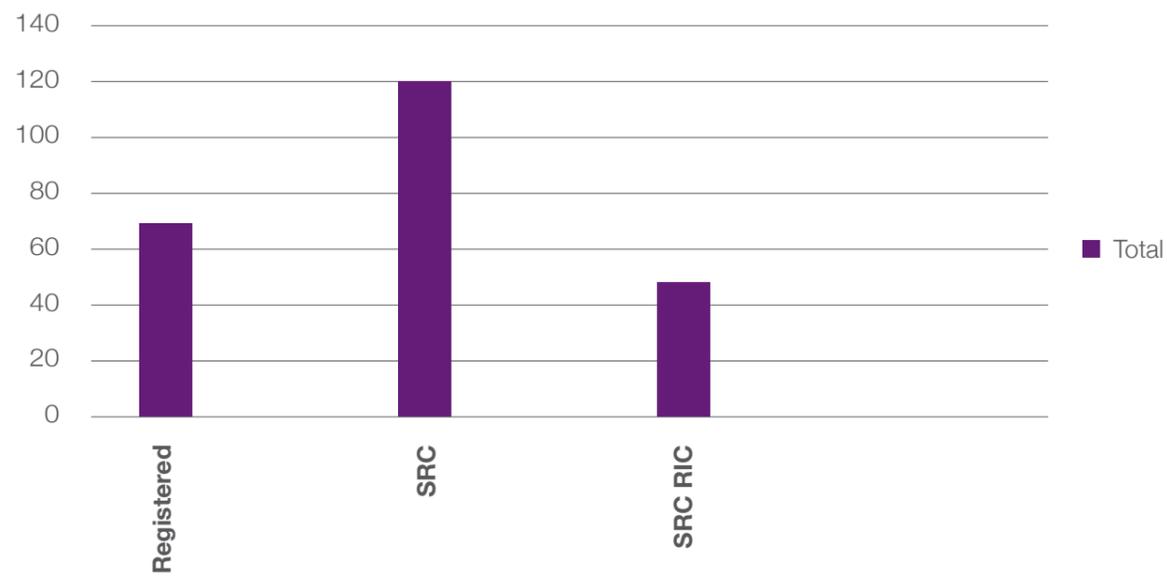
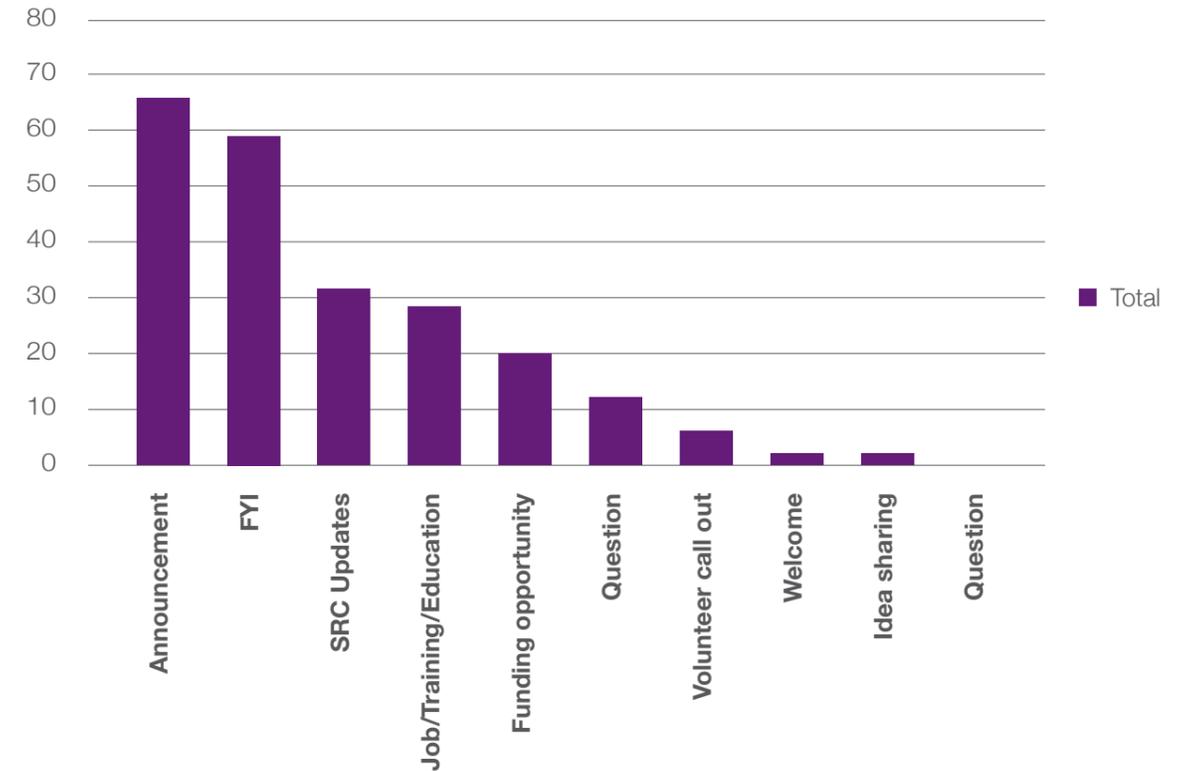


Figure 5. Type of message



The graph of interactions shows a steady growth in the number of posts to the forum, and then a dip due to the impact of COVID-19, before growing again in May and June. This dip in April may be due to groups being on furlough or not operating in the month, however it was promising to see interactions growing into July at an expected rate.

Most communication between the Refugee Integration Coordinators and community groups has happened in their own regions face to face or via email, and the graph shows that the forum has been used by other members of staff from Scottish Refugee Council. This gives increased access for both community groups and Scottish Refugee Council to share information or promote different activities that are taking place, for example the Communications Team have used the forum to gather case studies and stories about integration activity across the country.

**Mapping community groups and third sector organisations across Scotland**

The New Scots Connect map allows newly granted refugees, community groups, local authorities and other third sector organisations to see what services and integration activities are available in their area to support refugees.

This map provides newly granted refugees with a resource to look for support in their area, and allows third sector organisations to link and create networks to better support New Scots to integrate into our communities.

From a policy perspective, this allows local authorities and the Scottish Government to identify gaps in service provision of integration activities to support refugees.

### Mapping third sector organisations who support refugees

To effectively map all organisations, descriptors and taxonomies of activity were developed in consultation with the New Scots Communities, Culture and Social Connections Thematic Group. Organisations were invited by the Refugee Integration Coordinators to complete an online form<sup>18</sup> and to sign up to both the map and digital communications platform.

Groups were asked to share information about:

- Where they operate
- What kind of organisation they are (registered charity, community group, social enterprise etc.)
- What kind of work they do

This information was then used to build the New Scots Connect Map, a fully integrated map available on the Scottish Refugee Council. The platform allows users to search for a group by type and by location throughout Scotland. Community groups can signpost people they support to other groups in their area providing different services such as befriending or English language support.

The Refugee Integration Coordinators worked with groups to describe the work that they were carrying out, writing short profiles of integration activity that are available on the digital map. These profiles allow groups to provide greater detail about the work that they are doing, which can be useful for people wanting to access their services.

Since launched in October 2019, the the New Scots Connect map has highlighted the work of 158 organisations, with 57 profiles of particular integration activities available on the platform. The map has been accessed 1941 times, (161 per month) with 1373 unique views<sup>19</sup>

### Profile of integration

#### Interfaith Glasgow

**Interfaith Glasgow's Weekend Club project aims to reduce the social isolation experienced by refugees, asylum seekers and new migrants on the weekends. We bring together volunteers from across Glasgow's diverse faith and belief communities to help organise monthly, fun, free events for newcomers, to provide opportunities for refugee participants to make friends, learn something about Scotland, and practise their English. Since September 2015, the Weekend Club has catered for hundreds of asylum seekers and new migrants from over 20 different countries.**

**While there are other groups in Glasgow working with refugees and asylum seekers, helping develop social connections. However, the Weekend Club is unique in our interfaith approach, intentionally drawing our volunteer team from diverse faith traditions to organise events; facilitating awareness of Glasgow as a multi-faith city; offering insight into diverse religious festivals (for example, Easter, Eid, Christmas); and encouraging people in constructive interfaith engagement. This project is particularly valuable, as many of our participants have come from countries where they have been persecuted on grounds of faith, and this has proved to be a positive model of integration for newcomers to Glasgow. Our events also aim to include the experiences of local people and we often collaborate with local faith communities and other organisations when delivering our activities. Previous events have included, for example: A Burns supper, a kite-making workshop, an Eid party, a trip to Loch Lomond Country Park, a dialogue event on climate change, and a shortbread-making event. We always reimburse participant travel so poverty is no barrier to participation.**

### Data analysis from the map

This mapping exercise was also the first time that all of the organisations in Scotland working with refugees were mapped in such a way, providing insight into not just how many groups were actively working with refugees, but also the activities they were carrying out.

Analysis of this data in October 2019 showed that:

- New Scots are supported by a diverse range of organisations providing various different integration activities to welcome them into our communities. Over 160 organisations offer 19 different services, from advice and information to befriending. Organisations also work to reduce prejudice faced by refugees and provide policy support and research to further support refugee integration.
- There are a large number of organisations providing support services to refugees in Scotland. Over half (54%) of these organisations are registered charities. Refugee-led community groups also play an important role, making up 21% of organisations across Scotland, particularly in Glasgow where 68% of Scotland's refugee-led community groups are based.
- Organisations reported to be providing 19 different types of integration activity to New Scots. This was mainly social and cultural activities for refugees, followed by advice and information services. On average organisations provided 6 different integration activities to refugees, highlighting the wide range of support and activities organisations provide to refugees.
- Organisations provide a wide range of services to different beneficiaries. People with mental health/physical health disabilities receive the least amount of support.

- The majority of organisations from the dataset are based in Glasgow and the South West of Scotland, with the fewest organisations mapped in the North East of Scotland. Given the fact that this region covers Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Dundee this could highlight a gap in service provision in this area.
- The taxonomy of activities and groups was agreed with the New Scots Communities and Culture Thematic Group. The initial taxonomy of type of organisations was 10, however this rose to 26 when taking into account those who used the 'other' field. For activities, most organisations' integration activities were able to be categorised using the initial list of integration activities, and 4 more categories were added to best represent the breadth and scope of work carried out by organisations to support New Scots.

The full data mapping report is available on Scottish Refugee Council's website.

#### Sharing Lives Sharing Languages (SLSL)

- Improved social connections
- Improved capacity of third sector organisations

Sharing Lives, Sharing Languages is a successfully piloted<sup>20</sup> and evidence-based peer education project that provides a structured intervention and model for community groups to support refugees to build social connections with the wider community, improve cultural orientation, increase language practise and build employability pathways. Eight organisations across Scotland successfully bid to run projects based on this model, and began delivery of this project in June/July of 2019. This one-year project aimed to utilise the learning from the successful initial pilot in 2017 to deliver a community development approach to language learning to groups throughout the country. Tenders were assessed by a panel consisting of Scottish Refugee Council staff, COSLA, Community and Learning Development Standards for Scotland Council and 4 members of Scottish Refugee Council's Refugee Advisory Group.

18 [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeLmi-5LjeE2mdmQMxeTsD4Myrongd5WNQSDnOXFBI-G\\_pV9w/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeLmi-5LjeE2mdmQMxeTsD4Myrongd5WNQSDnOXFBI-G_pV9w/viewform)  
19 Data up to 17th of September 2020

20 Sharing Lives Sharing Languages - <https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Sharing-Lives-Sharing-Languages-Summary-June-17.pdf>

These 8 selected groups were:

- Refugee Survival Trust
- Perth & Kinross Council Communities Team and ESOL Perth
- WEA Highlands
- Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC)
- Sewing2gether All Nations
- Pachedu
- Govan Community Project
- Argyle and Bute Council

Each organisation delivered their project in a different way, however all utilised the peer education model where members of the local community support the programme. This style of language support brings people together to practise English outside of the ‘classroom’ and allows groups to create social networks and use English in a different way.<sup>21</sup>

All projects referenced a focus on helping refugees to achieve goals.

### The projects

GREC used a language café model, with an integration adviser also available to support refugees, while peer educators work with refugees on conversational English in a café environment. GREC stated that “it has been evident that individuals’ capability and confidence to communicate can be improved by regular practise.”

Govan Community Project ran a Bring Your Own Language (BYOL) programme in partnership with NACUSSO (Natural Cultural Soundscape and Storytelling Organisation) This programme was allowed to develop naturally with the support of staff, with members of the groups taking the lead. At Christmas 2019 they held a forum offering participants to decide what they wanted to do in the thenew stages

of the project, with groups working on ways to tell their story with the support of a film maker. The film was publicly screened for the first time in December 13th 2020 and the trailer can be found online.<sup>22</sup>

Pachedu’s Sharing Lives Sharing Languages Project (PSLSLP) held weekly meetings in Paisley focusing mainly on discussion and language related to employment and employability. This focus arose out of responses to the pre-project questionnaire which indicated that participants’ main interests and concerns around English language ability and English language learning were mainly related to finding work or finding better work. These groups started with a ‘core group’ of participants and this allowed focused sessions on employability and typical ESOL however as more people joined with lower levels of English the groups became less structured. The group recruited a Peer Education Volunteer who helped to support this less structured and more “go with the flow” model by supporting people with one-to-one or small group support to those with lower levels of English while still taking part in the larger group activities.

Refugee Survival Trust (RST) set up their “Wee Welcome Group,” and identified members to lead different sessions and activities. They usually had 9 families attending weekly. In addition, they also signposted members of their group to other services such as Govan Community Project, helped them to apply for destitution payments, and helped them to sign up to the free bikes scheme.

On the Isle of Bute, the local council used the Sharing Lives Sharing Languages project as an opportunity to engage with Syrian refugees on the island in a different way, linking people from the local community with the families they support and organising trips and visits to different parts of the island.



This opened the island up to the refugee community that live there, many of whom had been on the island for 3 years but had not visited different places on it. They visited Mount Stuart House, a Victorian House, and the tour guides had been prompted with questions to ask the group to support language practice. To visit these local attractions the group used public transport, and were encouraged by their peer educators to communicate with local people on the bus, and the drivers. This encouraged local people from the island to become involved in supporting refugees in their community.

**“as an ESOL tutor I have been able to see people in a different light and think this has been useful as I have been able to build a better relationship which should help when teaching in the future”**

ESOL Tutor, Argyll and Bute.

21 Morrice, L., Tip, L. K., Colyer, M. and Brown, R. (2017) English language for resettled refugees. Policy Brief. Available online: <http://blogs.sussex.ac.uk/policy-engagement/files/2017/06/Policy-Brief-English-Language-for-Resettled-Refugees.pdf>

22 <https://nacusso.com/byol-bring-your-own-story-in-collaboration-with-govan-community-project-glasgow-scotland/>



Sewing2Gether All Nations set up a sewing workshop in a community hub in Paisley, and attracted women from across the South-west of Scotland, with one lady coming from Edinburgh. This informal setting started with the group meeting in the community café, before moving into a large hall that was available. Group members introduced themselves using a globe of the world and talk about where they came from and their families. Groups would use material to learn to sew and chat to each other in an informal setting, with links to the local primary school.<sup>23</sup>

Sewing2gether All Nations continued to engage with their service users during lockdown and, as part of their work produced handmade hearts to provide as gestures of goodwill to NHS staff and patients at Renfrewshire hospitals.

ESOL Perth and PKC Communities had previously worked independently of each other with 7 refugee families that had been settled as part of the VPRS scheme. Their Sharing Lives Sharing Languages project used both events and classroom activities, with outings organised to events such as the Highland Show, Christmas Party and local panto, as well as some classroom based sewing classes. This new partnership allowed the organisations to work with the families in a different setting developing better relationships and understandings of each of the families.

WEA Highlands used a similar model to Perth and Kinross using both events and classroom based activities and linking with local organisations. New Scots taking part in the groups set up a study group and each participant had a different interest, such as driving test theory, English, or college homework. WEA volunteers worked on each topic on a one-to-one basis, using local facilities that allowed people to gain the confidence to use these facilities when not in class.

Although the programme was based on the tested peer education model, groups were free to adapt this to fit the needs of those in their own community. This allowed for a variety of different informal English learning models that community groups would be able to use to support participants. These blended models of both classroom and community based learning allowed different examples of English language support in the community. Nevertheless, all projects were able to build social connections and provide a space to practise English. Employability was a topic covered by many of the groups however this employability outcomes were not well evidenced in this project due to the level of English of participants and their own wants and needs. The flexibility of the programme allowed organisations running the projects to adapt to the needs of the participants, and base activities on this.

23 <https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/community-links-and-friendship-in-paisley/>

In order to evaluate the different models, Scottish Refugee Council worked with Evaluation Support Scotland to create a good practice guide. Groups submitted quarterly monitoring and financial reports. One group highlighted that they found this quarterly reporting practise useful and will take forward as it allows them to gather good evidence for future funders.

Groups highlighted that the programme was a success in building social connections between participants, peers and in the local area, building confidence to use local facilities such as libraries and public transport.

The groups identified 6 factors to help make a successful project:

- Having fun
- Getting timing of activities right
- Good volunteers
- A good space to meet
- Giving New Scots some control
- (For some) arranging childcare

The good practice guide highlights practical tips and ideas for other organisations wanting to develop their own informal language classes to follow.



24 <https://www.socialconnectedness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/oidsc-symposium-report.pdf>

25 <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/blog/how-arts-can-help-improve-your-mental-health>

### Small Grants Scheme

The Small Grants Scheme aimed to increase the quantity and quality of community-led activities by providing two rounds of small grants in 2019 and 2020 to organisations across Scotland. The Scottish Government's New Scots Strategy developed an agreed set of priorities to improve community and social connections through local community interventions, and the programme ran two small grants programmes to help promote social connections, improve public attitudes towards refugees and increase the capacity of community groups.

From music to dance, food and entertainment, many different events take place throughout the year in communities across Scotland, such as the Edinburgh Festival, various Highland games, and for the last 20 years Refugee Festival Scotland has taken place to promote refugees' contribution and to the culture of Scotland.

Community events can help to promote shared culture, but also improve community integration by bringing people together. Many studies highlight the benefits of arts based events, such as reducing social isolation by addressing "the issues of identity, dignity, belonging, agency and voice",<sup>24</sup> promoting wellbeing and creating a safe space for social connections.<sup>25</sup> These events can also encourage communities to find out more about issues that affect refugees, create spaces to encourage communities to advocate for refugees and can be a source of empowerment for the vulnerable (Cockburn-Wooten, McIntosh and Phipps, 2014).

In consultation with the New Scots Strategy Communities, Culture and Social Connections Thematic Group, the 2019 tranche of grants focussed on arts, social, cultural and sport activities. A Small Grants assessment panel, which included 5 refugees representing different communities, Scottish Refugee Council's Arts & Cultural Development Officer and a member of the New Scots Group, was formed. The assessment panel received training on the evaluation matrix and scoring sheet used to evaluate grant applications. One of the evaluation panel used the experience scoring these applications in a job interview and secured employment with the Big Lottery Fund.

Regional Integration Coordinators promoted the Small Grants Scheme in their local areas, and 3 drop-in sessions were held across February and March 2019 to allow community groups to find out more about the application process and ask for clarity on intended applications. In total, Scottish Refugee Council received 79 applications to the 2019 Small Grants Scheme. The Small Grants assessment panel evaluated and scored all applications, with 43<sup>26</sup> awards being granted and a total of £21,358 being provided to the successful groups.

The majority of the funding went to refugee-led community groups and charities. Of the 43 events, the majority took place in Glasgow (25) and Edinburgh (9). Organisations across Scotland also utilised the funding, from Angus to Cromarty in the Highlands, highlighting the breadth of organisations using the Small Grants Scheme to host events that promote refugee issues and bring different communities together.

In total 3239 people attended events supported by the Small Grants Scheme. From feedback collected from 30 events that took place during Refugee Festival Scotland in June 2019, 70% of events promoted "bridging"<sup>27</sup> social connections, bringing together people from different backgrounds. All organisers felt that their event helped people to have new experiences, and helped to raise awareness of refugee issues.

These events also showed that small grants of £500 are able to have an impact on social connections.

### Case Study

**"Art Speaks All Languages", hosted by the Edinburgh Alwaleed Centre and Bilingualism Matters, under the banner of "Syrian Future Project" in Edinburgh, brought together 75 young people, students and lecturers from the University of Edinburgh.**

**The exhibition of art works created by members of the Syrian refugee community in Edinburgh, reflected on language and the sense of home. The aim of the event was to allow the Syrian Refugee Community to share their personal stories through art, and inspire viewers to reflect on their own experiences and understanding of bilingualism, refugee languages and integration. This fit in with the overall theme of the festival "Making Art, Making Home"**

**Scottish Refugee Council's volunteer stated that "The workshops were an amazing opportunity bringing Syrian youth together and empowering them to tell their story. The exhibition than built bridges as young people, University students and staff were discussing the art work and having conversations."**

The organisers of the event felt that they benefited from being part of Refugee Festival Scotland, stating it "allowed us to meet new people working on similar things or interested in our work, and we were able to establish new working relationships for future collaborations."

After reviewing the impact of the 2019 grants, we in 2020 we expanded the Small Grants Scheme, and it was agreed for the level of grants to be increased to £1000. The criteria for funding were based on the analysis of the mapping exercise we had conducted and gaps in terms of integration activities undertaken by community groups. Therefore, in addition to projects supporting social connections, the criteria included funding for events and projects on health and well-being, supporting people into employment and reducing prejudice and stigma. The second round of the funding was launched in February 2020, with an application deadline of early March 2020.

In total 79 applications were received, and 50 grants awarded initially.

Groups initially planned to carry out their events between April and July, however with the COVID-19 Pandemic, and following health and safety guidelines from the Scottish Government, groups were contacted to identify alternative ways they could use the funding to support their communities during this time. Three options were given:

- Postponing activity: 19 projects ran later in the year
- Deliver project digitally: 6 were delivered digitally
- Refocus grant to support community: 25 applied to repurpose their small grant

Below are two examples from each of these streams:

### Helping their community during COVID-19 pandemic – ESOL Perth

ESOL Perth continued to keep in touch with their students through a WhatsApp group, and by chance when one member said they couldn't respond till after 4pm, they asked their students and discovered that for all of them, their mobile devices were being used by their children for school work.

"We need a rapid response to this situation created by COVID-19. Before lockdown these children were already part of a very vulnerable group, without being able to access online learning efficiently, they will fall even further behind in their schoolwork. Parents who are at college are also using phones to access learning, mainly because of the cost of using the internet. How can you answer questions effectively, write an essay or interact with the class and teacher on a mobile phone?"

They were able to purchase 22 tablets and 2 laptops that were given to families to support them to access education.

This was an example of COVID-19 highlighting the digital poverty and exclusion that affected thousands of people during the pandemic.<sup>28</sup> With most services moving online people required the resources to access these. ESOL Perth was able to support their students, and their families, to continue to receive their support, and their families to keep up with school.

### Digital event – Deveron Projects

**Based in Huntly in Aberdeenshire, Deveron Project's planned to run their annual Slow Marathon event in June. Their programme "Slow Marathon 2020: Under One Sky" aimed to raise awareness of the global refugee crisis and the informing critical themes of empathy, solidarity, borders, freedom/restriction and human rights through discussion. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit they were aware of the "general isolation and feelings of uncertainty and helplessness in not only our local community of Huntly, Aberdeenshire, but in our global contacts with whom we were in touch". They decided to reimagine their event to move their "slow marathon" (a 26 mile walking challenge celebrating the human pace) online and create a digital event linking participants locally and globally, raising awareness of refugee issues across the world.**

26 45 Grants were initially awarded, with 2 events cancelled.

27 Ager and Strange (2008) "Journal of Refugee Studies" Volume 21, Issue 2.

28 <https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/covid-19-information/impact/>



They used their small grant to address the issues of borders, freedom of movement, social inclusion vs social distancing, and the global refugee crisis in events from both a local and global perspective. They did this by working artists and activists to create a range of different events, such as a group walk with live global link-up to participants around the world and aimed to reach as many people from different backgrounds. They worked with a range of partners to enable the themes and activities to be accessible online.

In total, they supported 1299 participants across all events, activities and platforms for Slow Marathon 2020: Under One Sky, and participants managed to walk the half way around the world.

Deveron Project worked linked with other organisations such as Scottish Detainee Visitors, Care4Calais and Oxfam to raise awareness of their work supporting migrant detainees and refugee communities in crisis

“It has meant a great deal to me to share in this way when I was suddenly isolated and also recently had to restrict the distance I walk for a while. I knew that all the time I could continue to be included in walking round the world with this amazing group of people who care very much about including people. I have learnt a lot and thought a lot as a result of the Marathon and feel very sobered by different people’s experiences I feel we are stronger because by walking together we can be with each other from a distance. ... I honestly have never really watched the sky every day as I do now and just doing that changes my perspective. I thought about it being One Air as well as One Sky that we all share.”

### New Scots Holidays

- Social connections
- Improved understanding of refugee issues

This project was developed in partnership with Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees and allowed members of receiving communities to welcome refugees in their homes and communities for short breaks. It aimed to support cultural orientation and the building of social connections, and strengthen intercultural and interfaith dialog.

Many refugee families have been living in Scotland for a number of years but have not had the chance or opportunity to visit any other towns or cities across Scotland. This project enabled families to see more of the country they now call home. The project also aimed to identify host communities in areas where there were not many refugees, in order for hosts to understand more about refugee issues and integration.

This project was led by Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees, who initially carried out extensive desk-based research on various formal and informal hosting programmes across the UK. On the basis of this research Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees developed policies and protocols for how a holiday programme for refugees could work. They worked closely with the Church of Scotland Safeguarding Service, the Church of Scotland Insurance Company, the Law Department and Health and Safety Team to ensure that any holiday stays would be safe for all, and that all taken reasonable steps had been taken to minimise risk for those involved.

As part of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees’ Awareness Raising Programme, long-standing relationships and word-of-mouth they were able to identify host communities who were interested in taking part in these pilot holiday programmes. For insurance and safeguarding purposes, it was agreed that for the initial pilot at the end of 2019 hosts would come from Church of Scotland congregations, with the aim to extend this in the second phase of the project.

Churches and hosts were recruited through a safe recruitment process and a member of staff from Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees carried out a risk assessment of each host house. Hosts were also trained and received support throughout the hosting process. The time required to recruit, train and support hosting communities successfully, through dedicated staff time and administrative support, is a factor which would need to be considered in future programmes.

For the first pilot the programme Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees partnered with Aberdeenshire Council’s refugee resettlement team. They had an important role to play in terms of communicating the opportunity to potential guests, preparing the guest and supporting them during their stay. Throughout the consultation, planning, and through the evaluation it was found that a responsive, engaged and transparent referrer is key to the success of a hosting project like New Scots Holidays. It is important that referrals are only accepted from established institutions that are able to vouch for the client they are referring. Working with a referral partner this also ensured that we were able to identify those who would benefit the most from taking part in a short break and would benefit from building new social connections and cultural insights.

The initial pilot took place in three locations in Scotland: Isle of Skye, Humble and Forfar. Each of these trips ran slightly differently to each other which was beneficial for this pilot. In Skye, 6 families took part in the holiday with 5 hosts and one holiday cottage, in Forfar, the host was also the local minister, and in Humble the participating family stayed in holiday accommodation with local befrienders supporting them.

In Forfar, the participating family visited the town, enjoyed a trip to the beach, and enjoyed a day trip to Glasgow with other families from the church congregation. A trip to Glasgow was one the family had wanted to do since they arrived in Scotland.

In Humble, the family attended a meal with 16 people from the local community, including those not from the church community, catered for by a local restaurant who wanted to support the programme and welcome the family from Inverurie to their community.

In Skye, 6 families opened up their homes to become hosts for families from Inverurie, and this was covered in the local press. The families visited the various beauty spots on the island, took a ferry trip and participated in a community ceilidh.

From each holiday there were examples of families finding out more about different cultures, gaining confidence, and hosts developing a better understanding of the difficulties that refugees face in terms of English language support and employment. Each holiday also provided examples of wider community involvement. In Skye for example, the host church managed to get discounted entrance from a local tourist location, organised a lunch hosted by a different church on the island, and a community ceilidh was organised with the wider community providing an excellent example of sharing culture and building social connections. The host in Forfar has already visited their guest family a number of times since the holiday took place.

Feedback sessions were held with hosts, Aberdeenshire Council and the families who took part in the project. All agreed that the holidays went well and were beneficial for both the host communities and the families taking part. There was evidence of increased social connections and understanding of refugee issues. Aberdeenshire Council were keen to continue the programme in the future and found it was an invaluable experience for their clients.

Learning from this initial pilot was going to be used in the second phase of the holidays in 2020, with Stirling Council agreeing to be a referral agency. The second phase had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 public health restrictions put in place. Although a second phase would have been able to build on the initial three holidays, the first pilot clearly showed the benefits of such a programme.

#### Overall observations:

- Host communities appreciated the support of a Coordinator and awareness raising sessions and training before the holiday. This gave the host community confidence and support throughout the programme.
- Working with a referral agency was beneficial as it allows the agency to support families to take part in the programme, and identify families that they have worked with who could most benefit from a short break.
- Host communities should be provided with a small grant to help contribute to the costs of hosting holidays.
- Host families and communities learnt more about refugee issues, and wanted to do more to support refugee integration in the future. This is particularly relevant in Skye and Forfar, where there are no refugees located in these areas. These programmes not only provide respite for refugee families but also can be a call for action to local communities across Scotland to continue to support refugees in their communities.

A handbook for the New Scots Holiday Programme is available on Scottish Refugee Council's website.

#### Training Programme

- Increased capacity of third sector organisations
- Increased understanding of refugee issues

In order to further build the capacity of community representatives across Scotland, two training packages were developed by Scottish Refugee Council staff to be delivered by the Refugee Integration Coordinators in their regions: Refugee Rights and Entitlements and Sharing Your Story – Working with Local Media. Two of the aims of the *New Scots Integration: Rights & Communities* Programme were to increase the capacity of third sector organisations and increase understanding of refugee issues.

For a number of years Scottish Refugee Council have successfully delivered training to local authorities and service providers. With the Refugee Integration Coordinators building regional networks across Scotland, this was an opportunity to expand training to a wider range of groups as part of this networking.

The Rights and Entitlements training was developed using the Indicators of Integration by Ager and Strang,<sup>29</sup> and targeted at community groups and small charities. It was designed to be an introduction to refugee rights and entitlements here in Scotland, providing information on the asylum process, refugee statuses and organisations working in the sector. The training was specifically designed to provide information and signpost community groups to specialist organisations who would be more suitable to provide support to people.

The Sharing Your Story – Working with Local Media training was aimed at groups wanting to find out more about how to promote their work with newly settled refugees. It has been used to support people to get good news stories out to local media while helping groups to understand the need to protect people from having to tell difficult stories of settling in Scotland after having been forced to migrate. This training package was developed with Scottish Refugee Council's Media and Communications Manager.

Both training courses were designed to be delivered to small groups and to last around 3 hours, and the content was designed for volunteers and non-specialist staff.

The Refugee Integration Coordinators took part in the Train the Trainer Course at Scottish Refugee Council before going into their communities to deliver the training from May 2019 until May 2020.

Over the course of the two year project, the Refugee Integration Coordinators delivered 21 training sessions across Scotland to 213 people.

Glasgow	2
North East	2
North West	5
South East	8
South West	4

The training sessions were delivered to a range of different types of organisations, including community groups, charities and local authority resettlement teams. Particularly in the more rural North West and North East regions of Scotland, the training sessions were an opportunity to bring a range of groups together. In Aberdeenshire, the training was hosted by the local authority and brought together two third sector organisations in the region.

As each region in Scotland is different and has their own unique challenges, the Refugee Integration Coordinators adapted the Rights and Entitlement Training to signpost to the organisations in their own region. This also allowed groups in attendance to share information about other groups that they know locally, and share connections. By keeping the training informal, this fostered more discussion around the content and between participants.

The Rights and Entitlements training was delivered 19 times, with only one Sharing Your Story media training delivered over the course of 2019. It is not clear why more groups were interested in the rights and entitlements training over the media based training, possibly this was due to groups wanting to provide an introduction to rights and entitlements to volunteers. The COVID-19 pandemic could have also had an impact, as only one training was delivered online during this time, although groups may have been interested in the media training after having the rights and entitlements training at the start of the project.

To evaluate the trainings groups used an Evaluation Target and call to action. Target evaluations are useful to provide instant feedback from groups, with most organisations providing positive feedback from the trainings, with suggestions on improvements to handouts and the length of the training programme which was adapted over the period.

The Welcoming Association, an organisation based in Edinburgh, planned to adapt this training programme into their induction for new staff.

The project allowed the Refugee Integration Coordinators to help build the capacity of these organisations, but also create a safe space for people to ask questions and build connections with other groups.



29 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/835573/home-office-indicators-of-integration-framework-2019-horr109.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/835573/home-office-indicators-of-integration-framework-2019-horr109.pdf)

### Awareness Raising Programme

- Improved community understanding of refugees;

In order to help communities across Scotland gain a better understanding of some of the issues faced by refugees, Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees developed awareness-raising sessions for a diverse range of faith groups where refugees have recently resettled, or where there are few or no refugees. These talks aimed to provide communities across Scotland with information about refugees in a global and local context, and act as a call to action for receiving communities to encourage them to get involved in welcoming New Scots to their community.

Although refugees were initially settled in Glasgow as part of the dispersal scheme, the VPRS and VCRS have meant that communities across Scotland have now welcomed people from Syria and the MENA region. Since 2014, 3569<sup>30</sup> people have been resettled across all Local Authorities in Scotland as part of the VPRS scheme, and this Awareness Raising Programme aimed to provide more information to these communities across Scotland.

Between February 2019 and March 2020, 30 presentations were delivered as part of this programme, reaching 1,022 participants in 11 Local Authority areas, from a diverse range of faith backgrounds.

Communities across Scotland, including the Isle of Skye, Elgin, Inverurie and Edinburgh, have engaged in the programme, and some communities have continued to support wider *New Scots Integration: Rights & Communities* Programme, from taking part in the pilot of the holiday programme (New Scots Holidays), to looking at how their wider faith community can better welcome refugees.

These talks covered as the following content:

- Brief global overview
  - Numbers/global phenomenon
  - Who is a refugee? Difference refugee/asylum seeker/ migrant/ IDP
  - Hot spots or examples from across the globe
- Scotland-wide overview (Syrian VPRS, VCRS and Asylum)
- Local context
- Integration
  - Two-way process
  - Day one
  - Integration vs. assimilation
  - Holistic process
  - Indicators of integration
  - Possible challenges/ barriers to integration (English, employability, mental health)
  - Role of social connections
- A personal refugee story
- Call to respond plus examples/opportunities
  - Pray
  - Give (financial and material aid)
  - Act (local and national opportunities)
  - Call for change

Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees were able to utilise their network of diverse faith communities to promote the talks, and they developed a presentation that could be used and adapted for each group setting. For example in Dundee the talk was adapted to promote groups that supported refugee integration in this area, to encourage participants to find out more locally.

Initially it was expected presentations with more participants to have greater impact as these allowed more people to hear about the issues, however some of the most valuable sessions were those with smaller numbers. These allowed the local faith group to explore its own role and position, leading to the development of new activity to support integration.

Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees had a good relationship with faith based communities in Skye, and they were interested in taking part in New Scots Holidays. As part of the planning process for this the National Faith Group Refugee Integration Coordinator travelled to Skye to deliver a talk to the community. The community were also interested in participating in other projects to support integration such as the Community Sponsorship Scheme and the Coordinator was able to signpost the community to projects in Edinburgh currently supporting refugees and taking part in this scheme.

These talks not only inform communities about issues that affect refugees, but also give them the confidence to act to welcome more refugees into their communities. In Edinburgh, Liberton Kirk are keen to use their café space to engage with local refugees, and to look at the language café model for supporting refugees to practise their English and build social connections. The Coordinator at Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees can signpost these organisations to our Refugee Integration Coordinators who can then further support these organisations to engage with refugees in their communities.

A strength of this project was having a dedicated staff member and resources to deliver the Awareness Raising Programme across Scotland. In order to ensure that the programme could be delivered, and be open, to all communities, not just those within easy access to the central belt, it required dedicated resources and funding. This should be considered for future awareness raising programmes, as well as the benefit of building relationships and links with these rural communities in supporting refugees to integrate all across Scotland.

Another benefit of the programme was being able to utilise the network of faith based communities that Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees work with. They were able to identify and engage with communities across Scotland, particularly in rural locations.

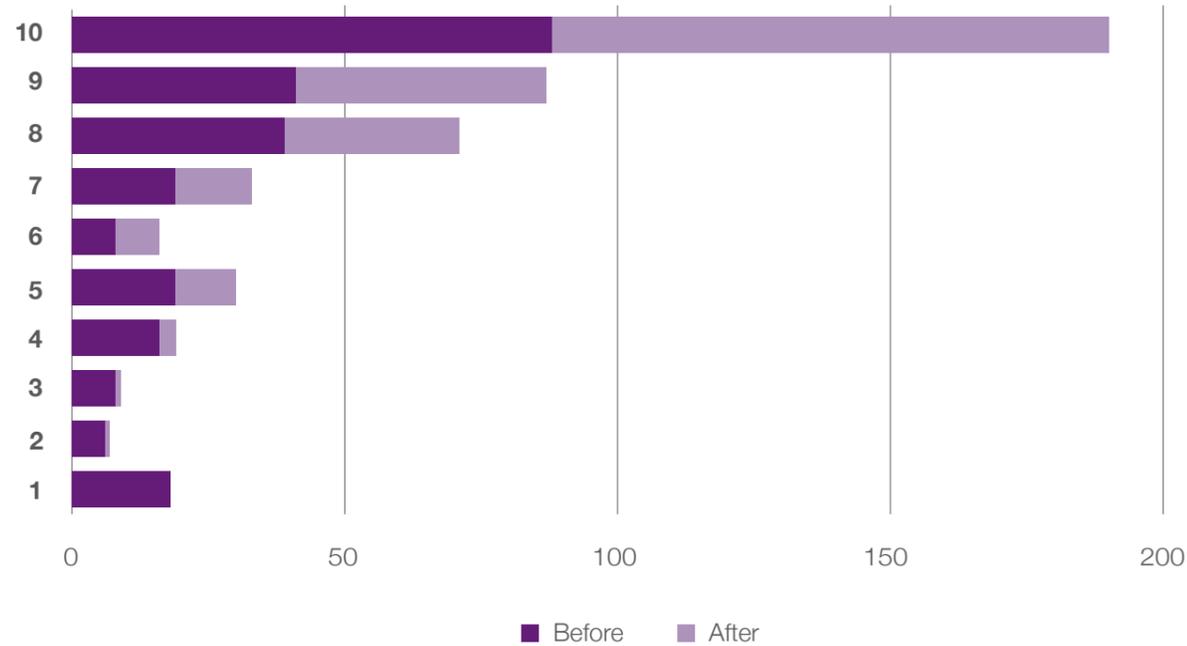
### Impact of the talks

To measure the impact of these talks, attendees were asked to fill out a simple 6-question questionnaire before the talk. With scores of 1-10, participants indicated their own level of understanding on the following:

- I know which areas in Scotland refugees are living
- I understand the principles of refugee integration in Scotland
- I know what my faith says about refugees
- I know how to be more involved in refugee integration
- I know which organisations are involved in refugee integration in Scotland
- I would be happy to have more refugees resettled in Scotland

This method was used as the nature of the talks varied (Church services, information evenings, panel discussions) and so short questionnaires were used across all events to standardise feedback.

Figure 6. Q3. I know what my faith says about refugees



These questions were then asked again at the end of the talk as a chance for attendees to provide written feedback. From the feedback it is evident that after the talks people have a greater understanding of issues that affect refugees, and how they can become more involved in welcoming these New Scots into their communities. The feedback also shows that the talks are able to tackle some of the negative media stories, particularly about the number of refugees coming to Scotland, and inform people about the different organisations in their area that are working with refugees.

**Data from speaking programme**

The data above shows the changes in knowledge before and after the talks, and for most highlights a positive change in knowledge. Questions 3 and 6 have a fairly consistent response. This suggests that people have an understanding of what their faith says about refugees, and would generally also welcome more refugees without the speaking events, however the positive responses for all the other questions show increased knowledge and the positive impact of these talks.

Figure 7. Q5. I know which organisations are involved in refugee integration in Scotland

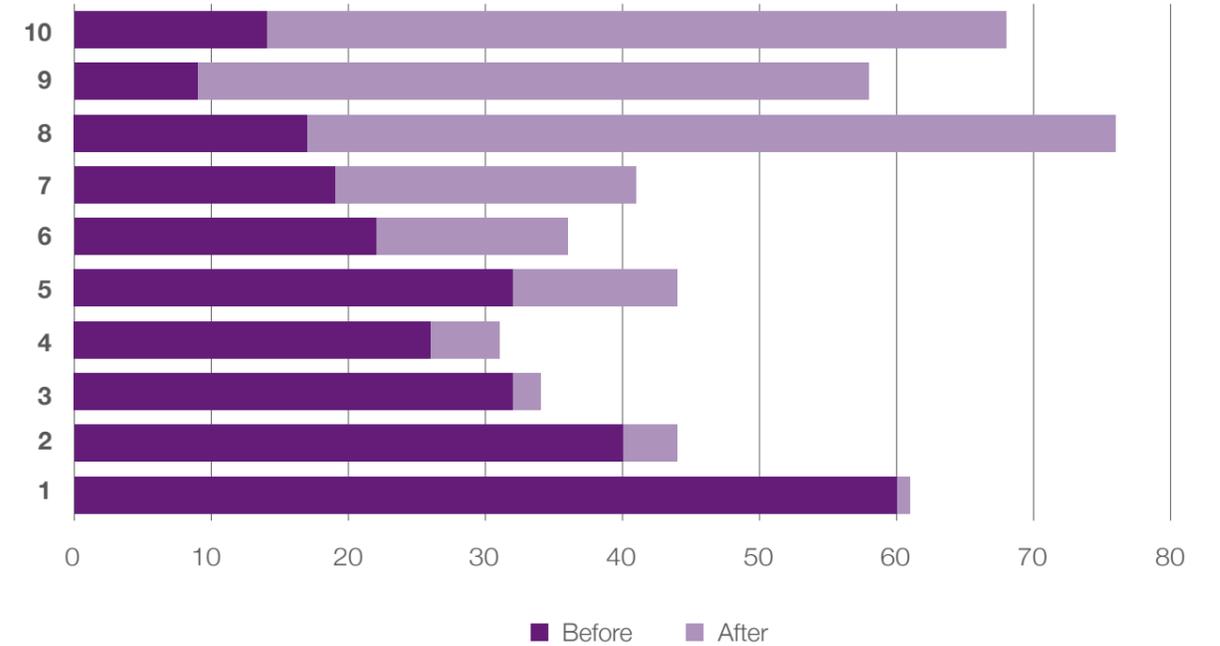
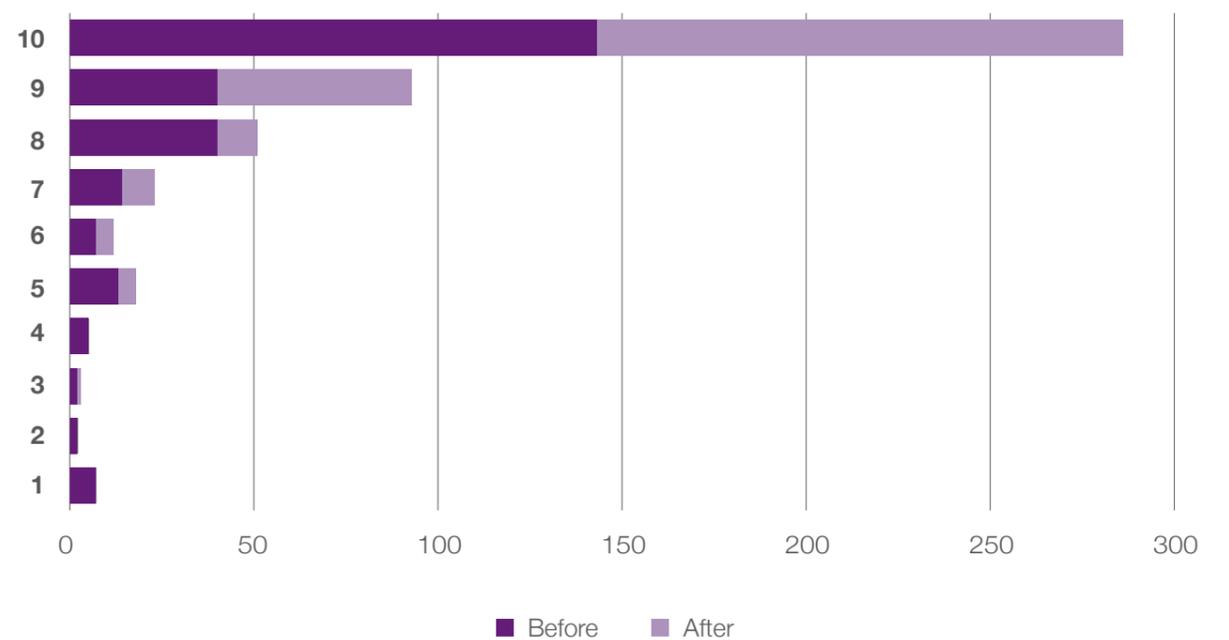


Figure 8. Q6. I would be happy to have more refugees resettled in Scotland





At the talks faith groups were encouraged to think about what they could do to support refugee integration. Many groups answered the call, for example Corstorphine Churches Together were in contact with their local MP about how they might work more closely with her on some practical support for asylum seekers and refugees in the area. Sacred Heart Church in Edinburgh hosted a local integration event for refugees, supported the Edinburgh Christmas Hamper Initiative, with the aim of establishing connections between members of the local community and refugees for the first time and develop long-term friendships. One of their members attended the New Scots Steering Group to talk about the programme.

After an awareness raising talk they hosted an integration event for refugees (the Weekend Club) and participated in a Christmas Hamper initiative, collecting several hundred pounds to make up Christmas presents and deliver them to families over the holidays. The aim of this was also to establish connections between members of the local community and refugees for the first time and develop long-term friendships.

The talks are also able to signpost people to other aspects of the wider *New Scots Integration: Rights & Communities Programme*, such as informing communities about the role of the Regional Integration Coordinators, and New Scots Connect.

In September 2020 Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees published *Sanctuary in Scotland*, a resource on refugee integration for faith groups to: increase awareness and support for refugee integration by receiving communities; and to compliment the awareness raising presentations amongst communities. The *Sanctuary in Scotland* resource includes facts and figures, definitions, current issues and ideas for practical action by and for faith communities in Scotland. It was prepared in response to a consultation and requests for information in addition to what could be delivered in presentations, and for people who were unable to attend a presentation or organise an event for their community. 3000 copies were printed at the end of September and an online version was made available for download. Within 2 months over 1109 hard copies had been ordered through an online ordering system. Faith groups across 14 local authority areas in Scotland had made orders, from the Scottish Borders to the Highlands. The survey responses collected indicate that the resource has increased readers' understanding of refugee integration. One person commented: 'I learned about many organisations that work in this field that I hadn't been aware of. This is incredibly helpful in allowing us to form partnerships in the future'. All respondents noted that they would do something practical in response to reading the resource and would recommend it to a friend or colleague.

### Telephone helpline and digital advice

In order to continue to provide information on integration rights and entitlements in accessible ways to refugees, communities and local authorities, we continued to develop our Telephone Helpline that was created and piloted in 2018, and developed two digital solutions, a LiveChat messaging service and interactive Artificial Intelligence platform.

All of these tools were developed to allow a further means of communication with Scottish Refugee Council for clients, agencies and members of the public, and to help support our Refugee Integration Service to deal with clients. Scottish Refugee Council operates a duty desk to deal with urgent queries from refugees and asylum seekers, which on average sees 368 clients per month<sup>31</sup>, on top of client appointments. By introducing digital tools this will allow clients to access advice and services remotely without having to travel to meet an adviser, allowing our staff in the office to carry out more casework.

This online service was also a first for the sector, providing a platform for people to receive real-time feedback from a dedicated member of staff, and an additional means for people to contact Scottish Refugee Council in order to receive information and support.

Both the Helpline and Livechat messaging service are operated by an OISC registered adviser. This allows clients accessing the Refugee Integration Service to be provided with qualified information, and also means that agencies and members of the public can receive information about different services that are available.

### LiveChat and AI-Bot

The online chat platform was embedded into the Scottish Refugee Council website, and prompts users to ask a question. If an adviser is unavailable, users can still leave a message that can be answered by the adviser later. In March 2019 the LiveChat was introduced in a pilot phase for 2 days per week, before being officially launched on 1 May 2019.

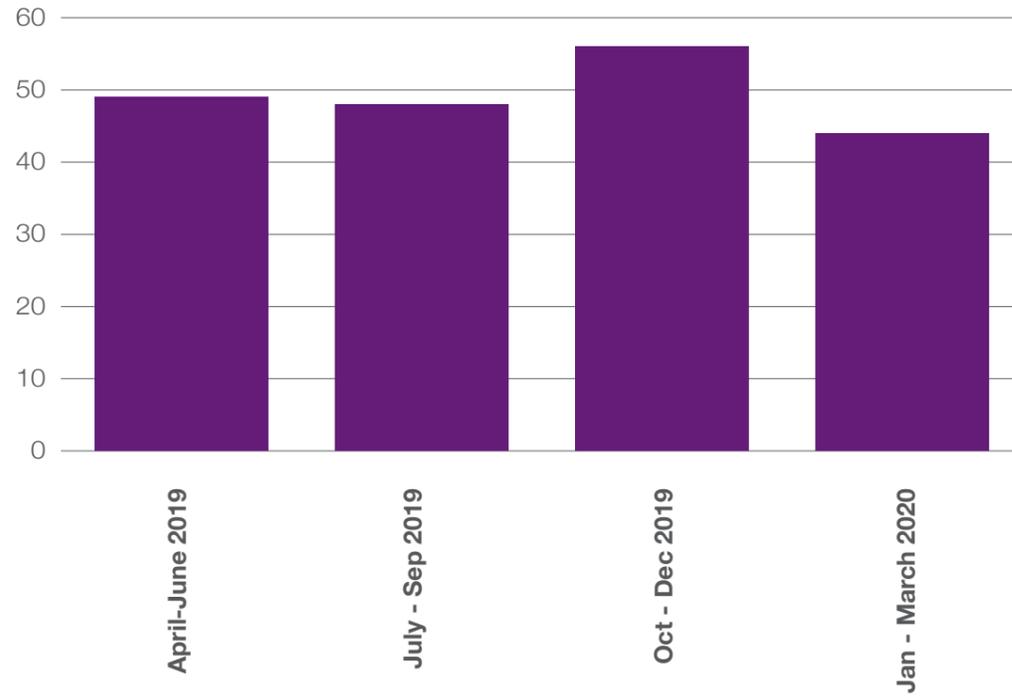
Queries from the online messaging service were collected and analysed to look for common themes, for example researchers asking for the number of refugees in Scotland, and clients asking for the opening times of services. From this analysis the Scottish Refugee Council Digital Officer developed a system for these questions to be answered automatically, without having to be seen by the adviser. This interactive module takes the user through a set of questions to allow them to find out the information they need, and if they are still not able to find the information they are put through to the adviser. Many of the queries were from people outside of the UK wanting information about the asylum process. Scottish Refugee Council only supports people who are in the UK seeking asylum or who have been granted status, and so a screening question was introduced to link people with this question to the Home Office website, freeing up time for our advisers to answer other queries.

Information was collected on the source of the interaction and the issue. The same coding was used between the Livechat, messaging service and telephone helpline services.

The coding was reviewed to ensure that it was representative of the issues that our advisers were addressing. The large number of issues reflects the range of questions that our advisers have to answer across all platforms.

31 Figures taken from Duty Log register from Dec 2019 -Feb 2020

Figure 9. Total LiveChat Interactions



\*LiveChat did not operate in April-June 2020 due to resources being allocated to the Telephone Helpline

Figure 10. Source of Query – Live Chat

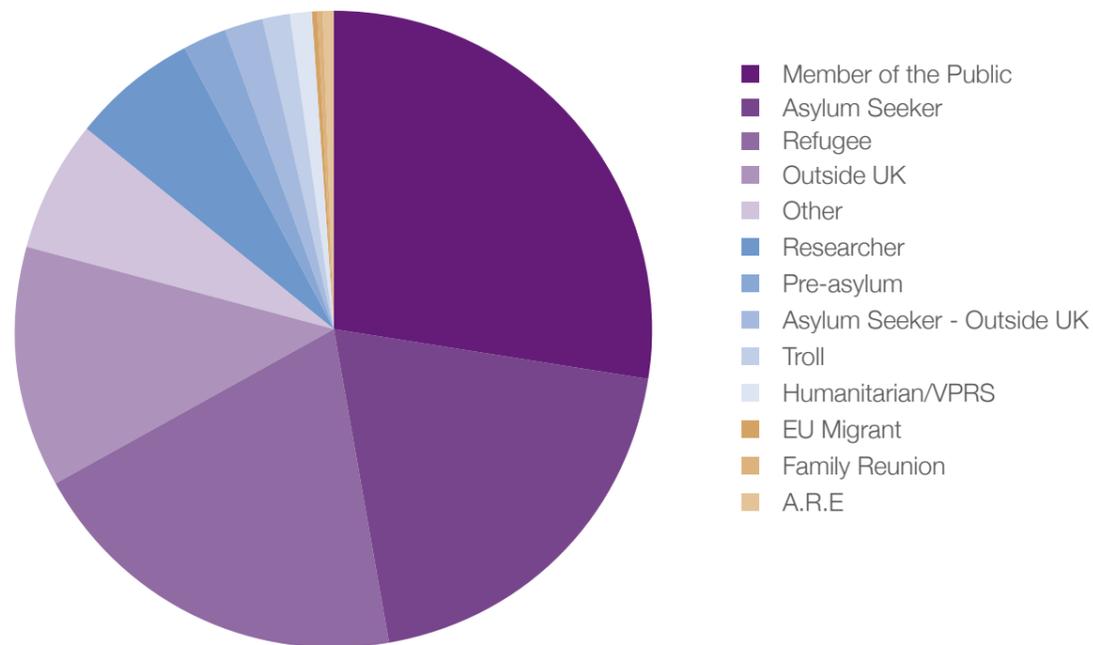


Figure 11. Livechat Query

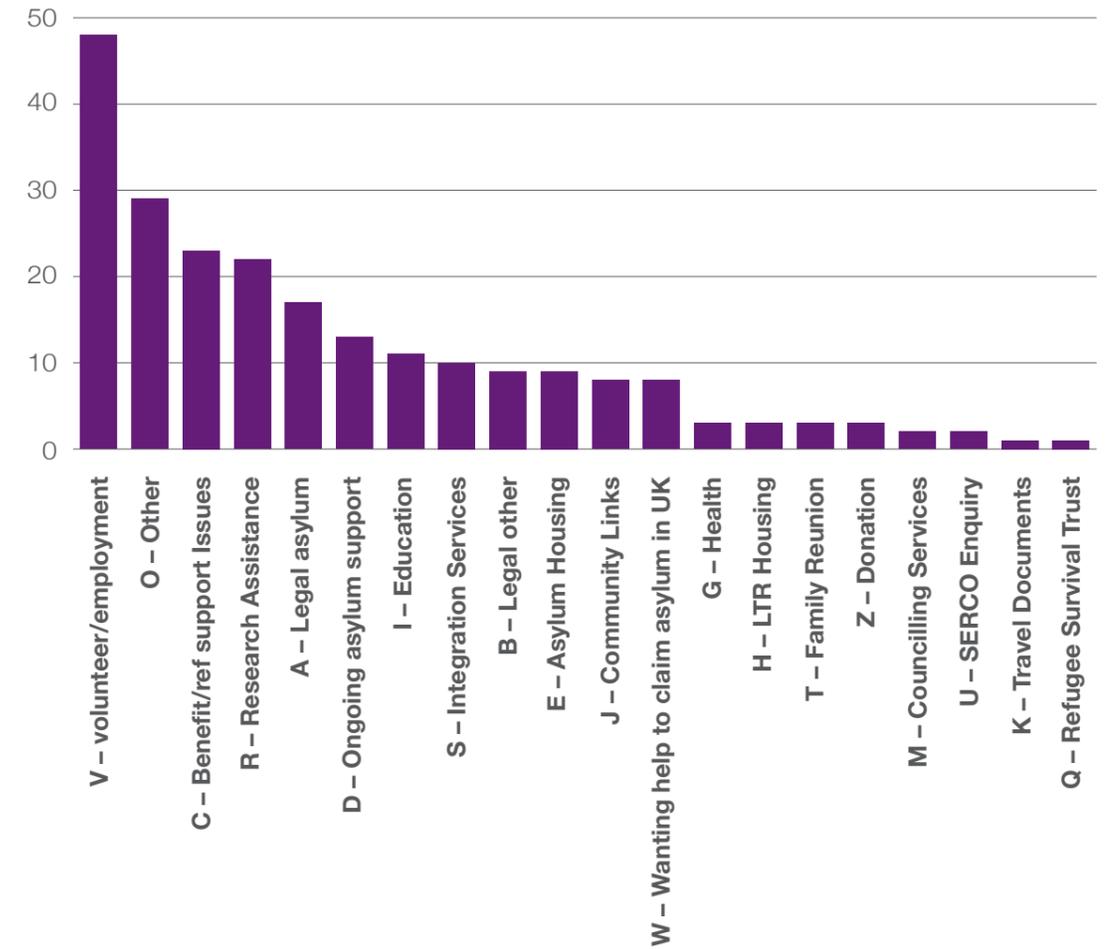


Figure 12. Message Service Interactions

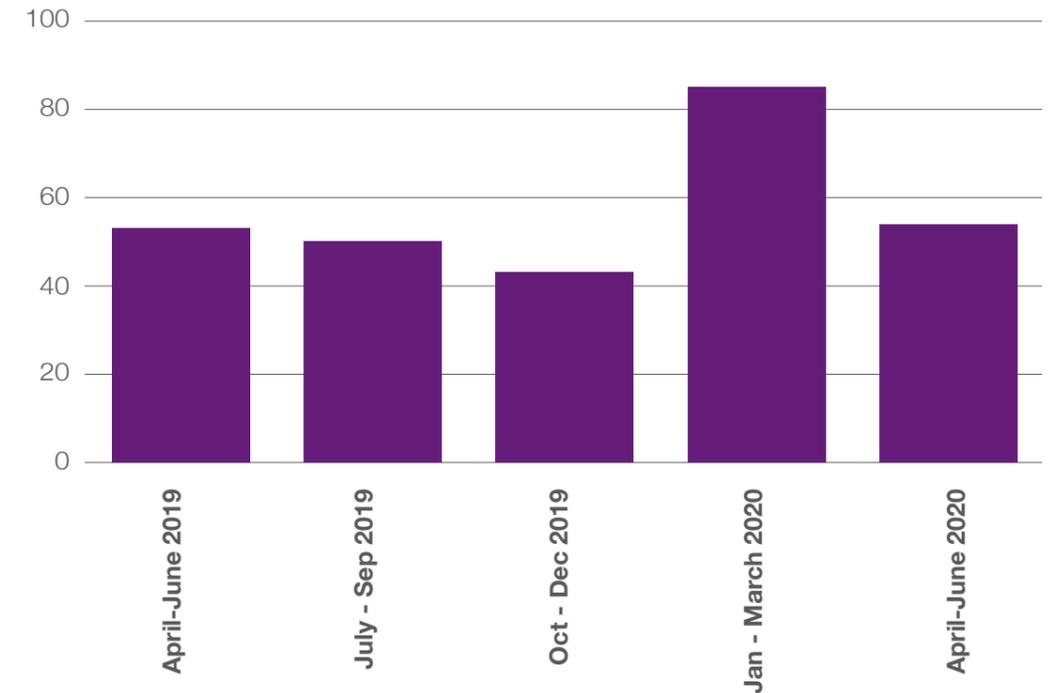


Figure 13. Source of Message

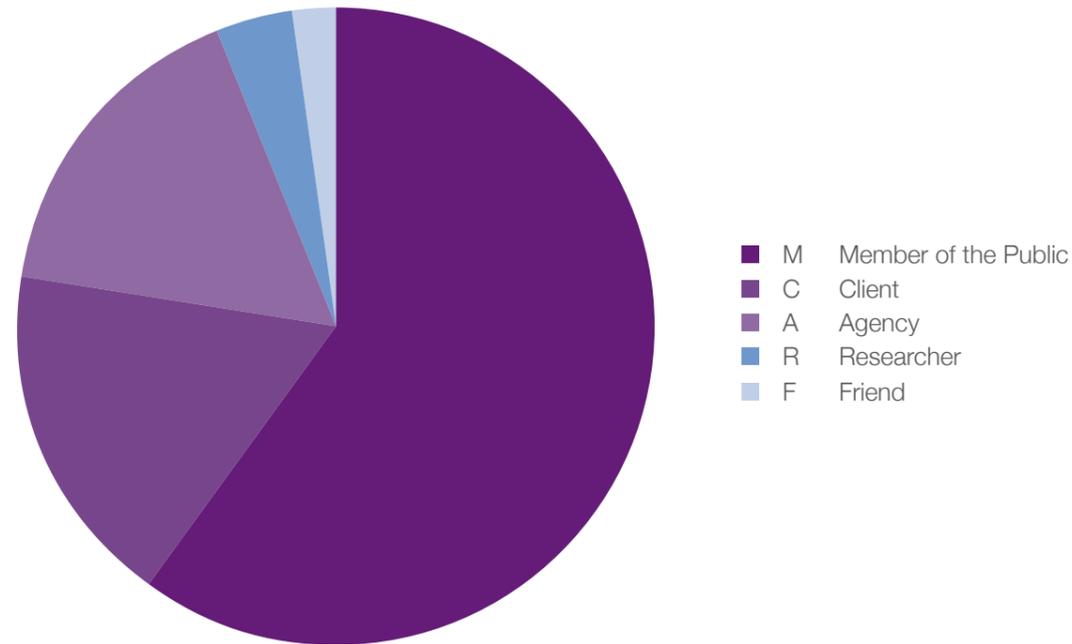
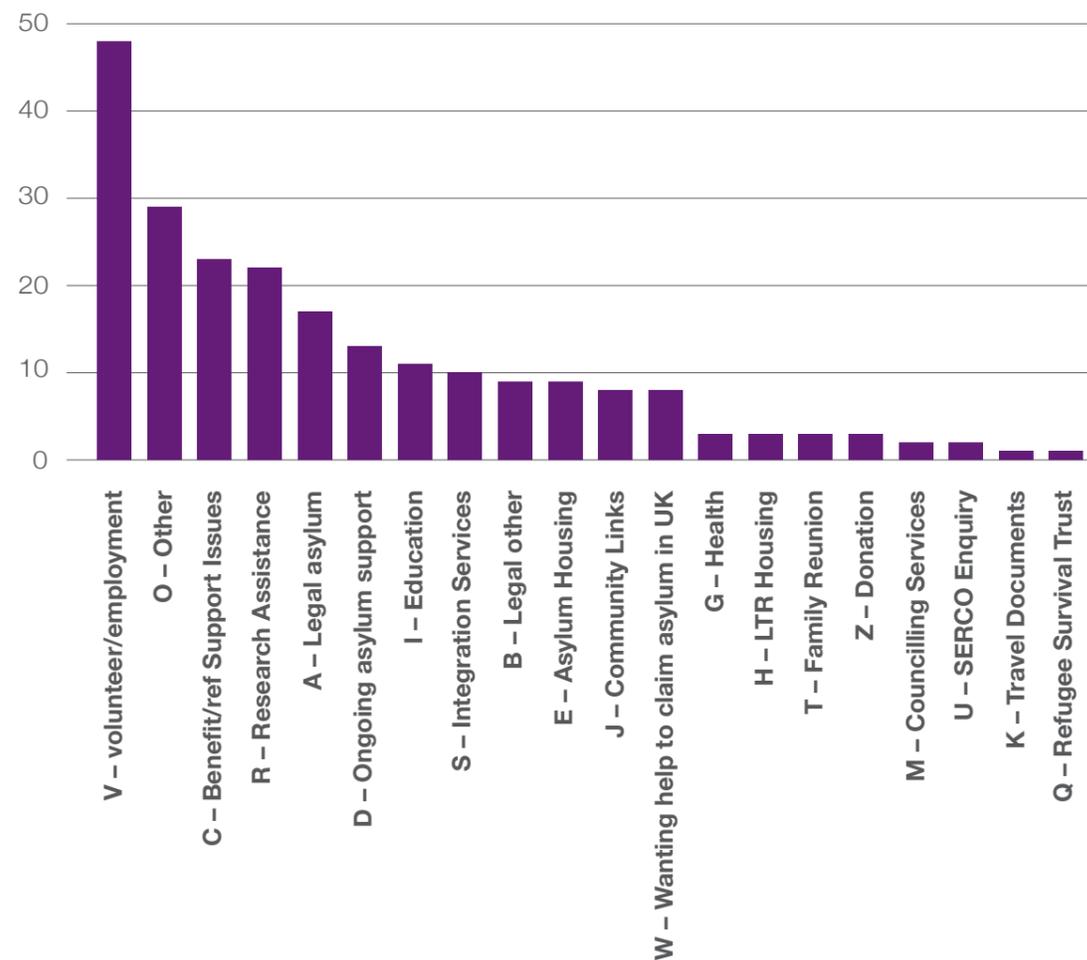


Figure 14. Issues Raised – Messaging Service



**Analysis of the LiveChat and Messaging Data**

Each system shows consistent demand throughout the year, with both system dealing with over 40 interactions each quarter.

For both systems they are accessed by a wide range of people, from members of the public, refugees, asylum seekers and agencies.

Both systems are have similar interactions, there are some differences. The messaging service is used by more people who are outside of the country, and the majority of queries were from people wanting help with their asylum claim. Scottish Refugee Council does not provide this service and so we will introduce a screening question as part of the AI bot to highlight this to those leaving messages before they come through to an adviser.

Many of the queries are about employment or volunteering. Integration Advisers are able to pass these queries over to our Employability Team and Volunteer Coordinators to support people with these queries.

For both the Livechat and messaging service, clients have contacted Scottish Refugee Council for support with their benefit advice. Our Advisers are able to help them with their issue, or book an appointment for the clients to see their caseworker. By supporting these clients using these systems, it means that advice and support can be provided quickly to clients, without the need for them to book an appointment, or visit our offices, freeing up advisers time for casework with other clients.

There has been a number of queries from academics and students requesting support for their research. Many people request numbers of refugees or asylum seekers in Scotland requests for research respondents or answers to particular questions.

**Creating an AI system**

From the issues that have been raised on the Livechat, messaging service and telephone service, we analysed the queries raised and created an AI Bot called Chatty to answer some of the most frequently asked questions.

This system works by guiding users through a series of questions and then signposting users to different sections of our website where they can receive more information. If the AI cannot determine the issue it will try to forward the chat to an adviser if one is available. This will be particularly useful in screening issues that are not appropriate for Scottish Refugee Council to support, for example people outside of the UK looking to seek asylum in the UK. This will allows adviser to focus on casework and other issue they can deal with.

“Chatty” the AI bot was first launched in the middle of July and saw 550 interactions until the end of September 2020. Lessons from this initial launch showed that there is still the need for an adviser to answer the most complex issues, with around half of interactions being signposted to the relevant section of the website.

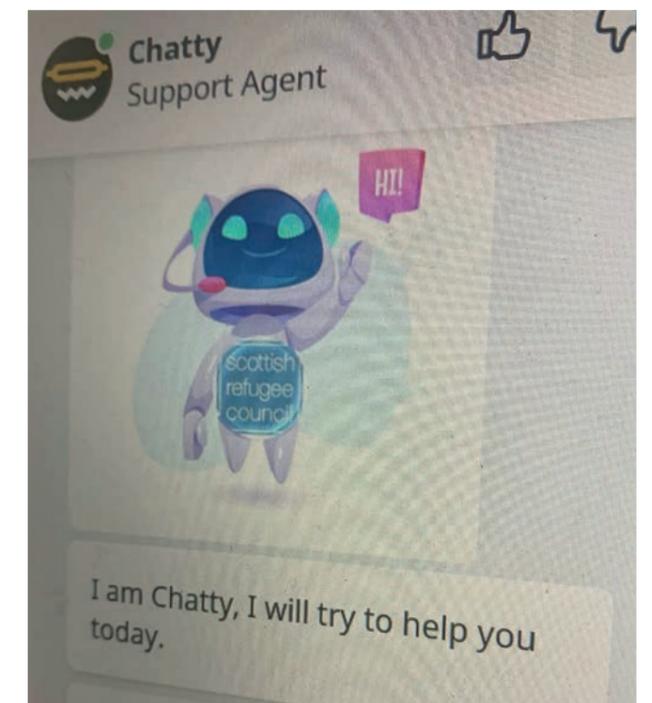
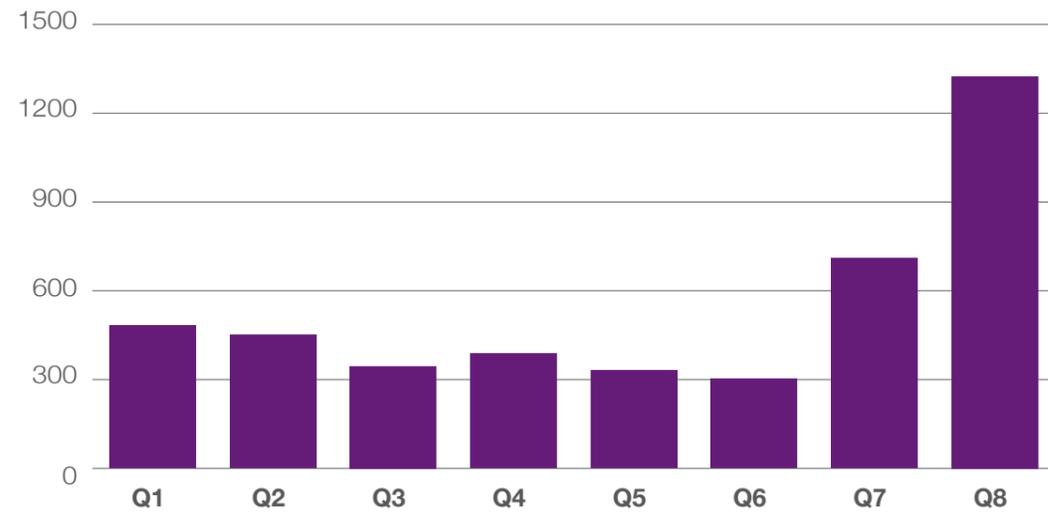


Figure 15. Calls to telephone helpline – Oct 2018 to Sep 2020



**Telephone Helpline**

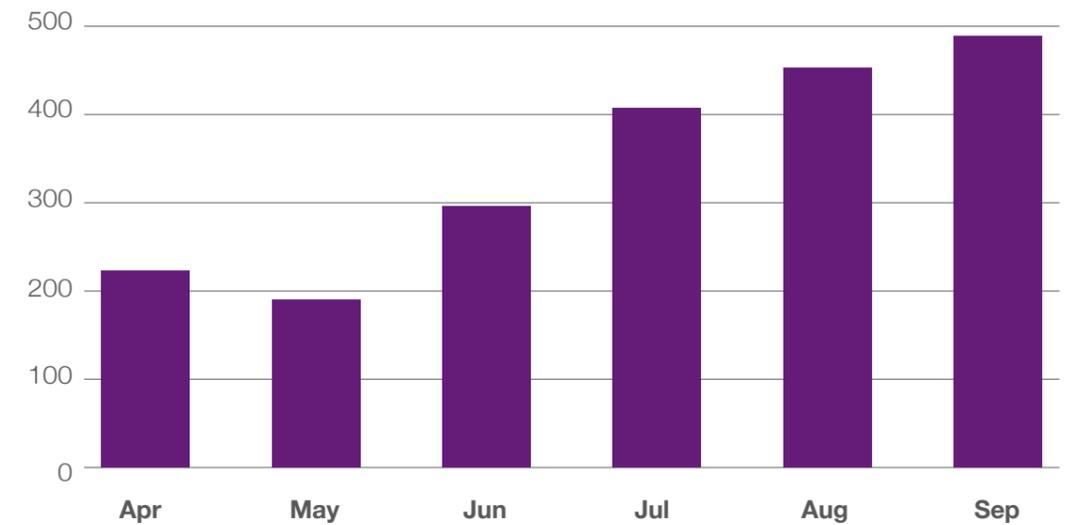
The telephone helpline was initially piloted in 2018, and has proved to be a popular way for people to access our services. On average our Helpline Adviser answered on average 383 calls per quarter, with calls from agencies, clients, refugees and the general public. Calls ranged from a member of the public asking if Scottish Refugee Council can signpost them to services in a local area, to supporting our clients in terms of casework.

The helpline has provided to be a vital service for Scottish Refugee Council, not just providing information to refugees, asylum seekers, agencies and members of the public with information, but also during a crisis situation, such as the Serco Lock Change Campaign,<sup>32</sup> and the COVID-19 Pandemic.



32 <https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Stop-Lock-Changes-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>

Figure 16. Calls to Helpline During Covid-19 Pandemic

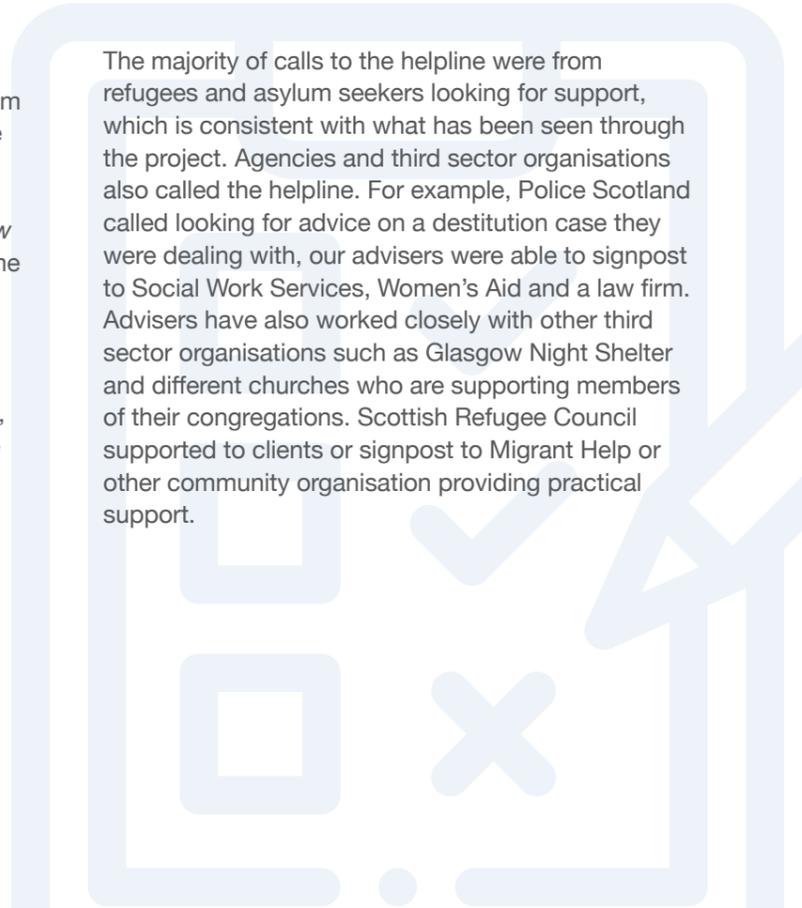


**Helpline during the COVID-19 pandemic**

With the COVID-19 pandemic affecting services from the end of March 2020, many services had to close their doors. Scottish Refugee Council was able to continue to offer support and information to clients and the public utilising tools created during the *New Scots Integration: Rights & Communities Programme* with the helpline being a vital resource available to refugees, asylum seekers and agencies.

Since April there was an initial drop in calls, but towards June and July the demand was high again, and 4 advisers were available to handle the volume of calls.

The majority of calls to the helpline were from refugees and asylum seekers looking for support, which is consistent with what has been seen through the project. Agencies and third sector organisations also called the helpline. For example, Police Scotland called looking for advice on a destitution case they were dealing with, our advisers were able to signpost to Social Work Services, Women’s Aid and a law firm. Advisers have also worked closely with other third sector organisations such as Glasgow Night Shelter and different churches who are supporting members of their congregations. Scottish Refugee Council supported to clients or signpost to Migrant Help or other community organisation providing practical support.



### Issues dealt with in this period

The helpline is open to anyone, and so there is a wide range of issues raised. In order to analyse these issues, we have categorised these into 26 different issues, however due to the complexity of the calls and support that people need, there is still a large number of issues classed as “other” (227).

The main issue highlighted “Donation”. Digital poverty and the lack of devices for clients has continued to be a major concern, and with educational institutions running their programmes online we have been able to support our beneficiaries to access these devices. In addition to some donated devices, Scottish Refugee Council secured funding from the Scottish Government Wellbeing Fund and successfully supported 217 households to secure devices:

- 167 received laptops
- 25 received tablets
- 160 received Wi-Fi boxes
- 24 received smartphones

The common issues after laptop donations was “ongoing asylum support” and “benefit/support issues”. These relate to advice and advocacy Scottish Refugee Council were providing to clients, and support to access financial support, such as applying for Universal Credit. Scottish Refugee Council were able to support clients to do this or signpost to the UK Government’s contracted provider for information. For destitute asylum seekers Scottish Refugee Council supported clients to apply for UK Government support (S4 support).

The helpline has been a vital tool for Scottish Refugee Council throughout the New Scots Integration: Rights and Communities programme and this is further highlighted during crisis periods, such as COVID-19. Scottish Refugee Council were able to increase capacity of the helpline to deal with the demand for the service. The helpline and digital advice tools have supported individuals and agencies throughout the programme, has allowed clients to contact the service without coming to the office, and provided information and signposting to other agencies to support refugees and asylum seekers.



## Developing a National Framework to improve community involvement in New Scots



Figure 12: National Gathering 2019

### National Gatherings

- Build social connections
- Improve refugee voices in policy making
- Increased capacity of third sector organisations

In order to engage with refugees and community groups from across Scotland, as part of the framework for engaging refugees in policy making, a national event was planned to bring together refugees, key policy makers, community groups and third sector organisations.

These events brought together policy makers and refugees to discuss the New Scots Integration Strategy, share stories of different integration practices and projects, and promote services and opportunities available to refugees.

The 2019 National Gathering was held in Glasgow, and was organised in partnership with the 'Scotland Welcomes Refugees Coalition,' a Scotland-wide group of organisations working to support refugees in Scotland. The coalition includes the British Red Cross, Amnesty International, Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees, Oxfam, Refuweegee, City of Sanctuary and other third sector organisations.

110 people from across Scotland attended and participated in the talks and workshops. The Refugee Integration Coordinator supported groups to travel from across Scotland to Glasgow for the event. The keynote speakers for the event were the UNESCO Chair in Refugee Integration, who spoke about the New Scots Strategy, and Scottish Refugee Council's Chief Executive, who talked about the importance of welcoming New Scots to our communities.

Community groups and third sector organisations from across Scotland were also able to promote their work and speak to attendees about what services they offer. The Bridges Programmes promoted their employability services, and Rights and Choices, a women's support project, talked to attendees about their drop-in sessions, befriending service and skills development courses. United Glasgow, a football team that offers open, affordable and accessible football, promoted their organisation and events. ANYISO, Children's Health Scotland, Volunteer Scotland, AMMA Birth Companions and Eilidh's Box Bike were also present at the event, highlighting the support services available to refugees across Scotland, and created a space for these organisations to network.

The event also hosted workshops aimed at supporting community organisations who attended the event:

- a storytelling and creative writing workshop "Telling your own story." This workshop gave people the tools they need to tell their story of integration or of supporting integration in their own community.
- a workshop that aimed to break down stereotypes and learn about Syrian history in an interactive way. Other workshops included designing and printing welcome tote bags with Print Clan, a poetry workshop hosted by Amnesty International, Scotland's Music Library's Music Broth, and a theatre workshop ran by Licketyspitt.

Although the event discussed the New Scots Strategy and anecdotal information was shared, it was difficult to have more detail of the strategy discussed and to receive feedback on it from individuals and community groups without having a dedicated session focusing on the strategy.

The event was also organised by a coalition of organisations who work to help refugees build social connections and settle to become New Scots. This helped to secure more funding, promotion and buy in for such an event.

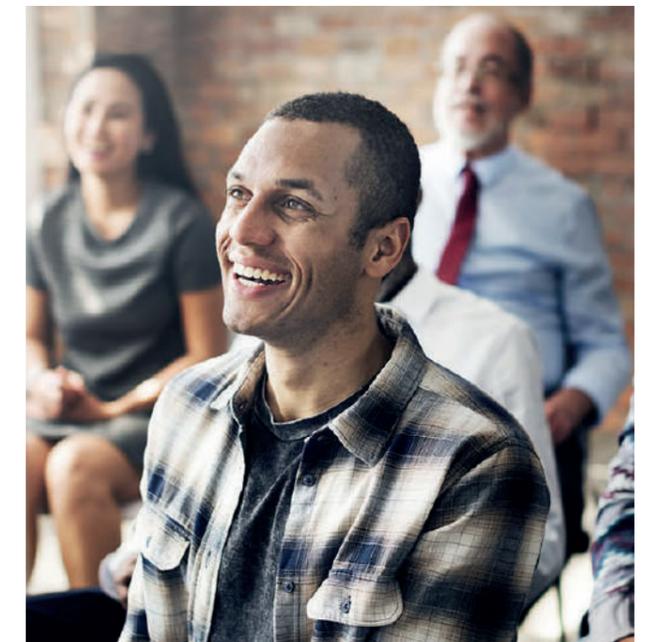
The national gathering attracted people from across Scotland, some whom were supported by the Refugee Integration Coordinators to travel to the event. This event was complimented by the regional gatherings that also took place as part of this project.

The event was a success in bringing refugees together from different areas of Scotland, building connections and creating a family friendly environment for people to relax, find out more about the strategy and meet people from across the country.

Feedback from participants was collected, and highlighted that the event informed people about the New Scots Strategy, developed their skills, knowledge and confidence via the workshops, and gave them the opportunity to work with other organisations to "amplify refugee voices together."

The event also attracted coverage from the national press.<sup>33</sup>

A second national gathering was planned for 2020 however with the COVID-19 pandemic this event was cancelled.



33 <https://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/news/17710049.refugee-week-2019-hundreds-gather-in-glasgow-in-national-gathering/>

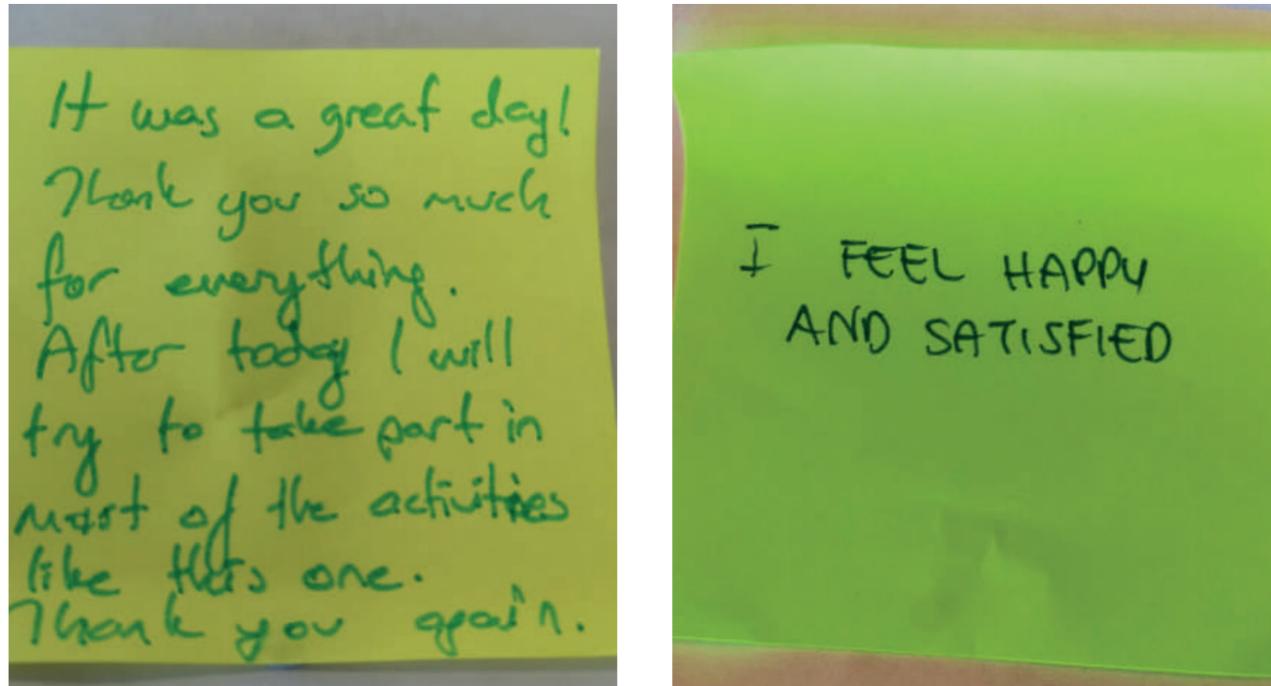


Figure 13: Feedback from attendees at the National Gathering, 15 July 2019.



## Regional Gatherings

- Improved capacity of third sector organisations
- Refugee involvement in policy-making
- Improved social connections

Part of the strengths of the New Scots Rights and Communities Programme is that it has enabled Scottish Refugee Council to share skills and knowledge built up over 35 years to support refugee integration across the country. The Regional Integration Coordinators link and signpost organisations in their areas, and in order to further strengthen these links and promote their work, regional gatherings were organised in each of the regions across Scotland. These gatherings aimed to increase social connections, build on the capacity of third sector organisations, improve understanding of refugee issues and increase refugees' voices in policy making.

These regional gatherings also aimed to allow community groups across Scotland to feedback on the New Scots Strategy, and by holding these events in different locations across Scotland, to allow more community groups and refugees living in these communities to talk about the strategy.

As part of the programme, Scottish Refugee Council hosted three regional gatherings across Scotland.<sup>34</sup> Below is a short summary from each of the three events. Separate reports from each event are available on Scottish Refugee Council's website.

### South West

In the South West of Scotland the event was held in the University of the West of Scotland in Paisley on the 19 of October 2019, and attracted 63 people. The event offered an accessible and interactive platform for refugees living in Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire, North Lanarkshire, Inverclyde, Dumfries and Galloway and Ayrshire to come together and engage with the New Scots Integration Strategy. Organisations across the region also came to meet refugees in their area, and used the opportunity to network with each other.

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Shelter Scotland and many community groups working in the area were able to promote their services and the event allowed for the local councillor for Motherwell and Wishaw, Angela Feeney, to meet these groups and New Scots in her area to discuss issues they face.

Feedback from the gathering showed that New Scots found the event useful in connecting with refugees from other areas, and finding out about other organisations that offer services to support refugees to integrate into our communities.

### South East

In Edinburgh, 170 people from across the South East of Scotland attended the second gathering in Central Halls, held on the 26 of October 2019. This event was able to showcase different organisations from across the South East that help to integrate New Scots, as well as creating a welcoming environment for families across the region to meet with each other and feed back into the New Scots Strategy.

This event brought 16 different community groups and organisations together. There was musical performances and family activities, and the event allowed refugees from across the South East of Scotland to meet for the first time.

Scottish Refugee Council also hosted a feedback stall at the event to talk to people about the themes of the New Scots Strategy. People highlighted what some considered to be the strengths of the strategy, for example free ESOL classes and befriending services. The feedback stall also allowed refugees to suggest where the strategy could be improved, for example more practical language classes, and highlighted the lack of service provision in rural areas. This information was passed on to the New Scots Core Group.

Two workshops on entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship were ran on the day, with one being led by a member of Scottish Refugee Council's Refugee Advisory Group.

<sup>34</sup> There was a 4th Gathering Planned in the North West of Scotland however this was cancelled due to COVID-19.

### North East

The North East Gathering was held in Dundee in February 2020, and was based on the theme “Building Bridges, Not Walls”. Refugees, asylum seekers, community groups and residents of the North East of Scotland were invited to meet, chat and collaborate together towards this theme.

Integration is a two way process in which New Scots and communities learn and adapt to each other to build a shared future. Focusing on this, the Regional Gathering in Dundee was an initiative to celebrate and present some of the cultural aspects of where the refugees come from, as well as learning about what the New Scots Integration Strategy is and the progress it is making to address integration issues throughout Scotland.

This was a very large event with over 300 people in attendance. Aberdeenshire Council, which has supported many aspects of the New Scots Integration Programme (such as New Scots Holidays) supported 130 people from their area to come to the event. 25 different organisations and community groups from the region were in attendance and able to share ideas and information. Groups were able to talk to each other, share ideas, make links, and hear from people who want to access their services.

One of the highlights of this event was the new friendships made, with New Scots traveling over 3 hours to attend the event. People from different parts of Scotland were able to meet up with other New Scots and share experiences of Scotland and of home.

Many families also discussed Family Reunion, as the majority of the families who attended the event have a close relative that lives abroad, and whom they are concerned about. The Refugee Integration Coordinators received many questions about this during the day and at other events during the year. Many feel that the information here is not clear and that this puts pressure on Local Authorities trying to support these families. This information and how it is passed onto people is something that the New Scots Strategy can look to address in the future.

These events allowed groups to meet and discuss Scotland’s New Scots Strategy, however with such large number of people in attendance, it was difficult to draw out details without having focussed sessions. Having dedicated groups of people to run these sessions or workshops would have allowed greater discussion on the New Scots Strategy.

These events allowed refugees and community groups to discuss and input into the New Scots Strategy. It was noticed and mentioned to facilitators the absence of relevant individuals from local authorities or the New Scots Strategy group at the event, with one focus group leader stating it felt like “we were asking people for their opinion when the people who needed to hear this weren’t there.” Although these events are on during weekend and this can make it difficult for key policy makers to attend, efforts should be made to engage with refugees and community groups at these events.

All three events were able to bring together different refugees from across large regions of Scotland, for some people they have not had a chance to meet people from similar backgrounds outside of where they stay, and so these events allowed people to build “Bonding” social connections as well as “Linking” with different local authorities who were in attendance. These events also allowed third sector organisations to promote their services, and to speak to those involved in the New Scots Strategy.

Overall, these events brought together 500 people and 95 organisations, and were some of the largest gatherings of refugees and third sector organisations across Scotland. These events created a space for refugees from across different regions of Scotland to come together and share stories of their time in Scotland and back home, and find out about services that were available from community groups in these regions.

## Equality Gatherings

- Improved refugee voices in policy making
- Increased understanding of refugee issues
- Building social connections

In order to ensure that the voices of refugee communities are heard, and as part of developing a framework to ensure refugees are involved in policy making, it was important to ensure all everyone was included in this process. Scottish Refugee Council has worked with those who identify as being from different equalities backgrounds voices heard and their feedback passed back, and setup different Gatherings as a platform for these groups.

Two planning groups were established to help to lead on these gatherings. These groups were made up of:

- Refugee representatives (who self-identify as belonging to one or several of the five Equalities Groups – young people, older people, disabled people, women, and LGBTI people), whose aim was to examine and analyse New Scots’ work in relation to their own experience, and develop ideas for how to present their findings at the Gatherings.
- Refugee representatives and third sector organisations, whose aim was to plan the format of the Gatherings, identify good practice and evaluate the gatherings’ success.

These groups took ownership of these gatherings, creating refugee-led events that discuss the issues they want to raise, with the support of the Equalities Officer at Scottish Refugee Council. Workshops were held with both groups outlining the aim of these gatherings, and how best to deliver them to enable constructive discussion on the New Scots Strategy. From these initial workshops the groups felt strongly that all events should be accessible to everyone from the five equalities groups, rather than holding separate events for each of the groups, as they identified that people have intersecting identities. Through further workshops the groups decided that the Gatherings should be based around the New Scots Themes, and how different people identifying with these equalities groups are affected by issues relating to the themes of the strategy.

These planning groups also identified the need for the gatherings to be attended by representatives from agencies at both operational and strategic level, and that key stakeholders from the New Scots Thematic Groups should be in attendance to ensure that issues raised at these gatherings are listened to and fed into high-level discussions on the strategy.

From each event groups identified issues and recommendations for key policy makers to take forward. Below is a highlight to some of the key recommendations from the event, and the full reports from these gathers can be found on Scottish Refugee Council’s website.

### Housing

1. Trial a project that matches asylum seekers with like-minded flatmates. Asylum seekers can safely talk about their identities when applying for housing so that the provider can match them according to identity (e.g. LGBTI, age, religious background). This would help build social connections, reduce isolation and loneliness, and may reduce accommodation complaints about service or housemates.
2. Encourage the Scottish Government to communicate clearly with communities how it can take a leading role to address known issues in asylum housing and destitution and explicitly mention equalities groups.
3. Establish women-only emergency accommodation for destitute women.
4. Ensure that people from equalities groups have access to information that allows them to understand the housing system in Scotland and that the terminology is clear. This should also include information on how non-housing rights such as entitlements can affect your housing.
5. Organisations to ensure that they have a good understanding of how their service users’ protected characteristics might impact their housing experiences before giving advice or referring onwards.

6. Support refugees to sit on housing association planning forums and support equalities groups to organise peer-to-peer learning on housing information, so that refugees can use their experience and knowledge to help other people going through the same process.

### Health and Wellbeing

1. The New Scots Strategy needs to ensure that food poverty is a first priority when addressing the mental and physical health needs of refugees and asylum seekers.
2. Women and disabled people in particular recommend that the New Scots Strategy review existing written information on health rights and services to make it more accessible.
3. Disabled and older asylum seekers recommend that health and social care services provide clearer guidance on rights and entitlements that specifically or especially affect disabled and older asylum seekers.
4. All equalities groups recommend that services must make it easier to access and understand complaints procedures. This is important as some GPs have misunderstood or not been compassionate towards members of these groups. They must consider how language barriers and sensitive/stigmatised health issues specific to different identities makes it difficult for people to complain. Currently people do not know how to complain or feel that reception desks discourage them.
5. Health services must ensure that the interpreters they hire are properly trained in specialist health and disability terminology. They must ensure that interpreters maintain and renew this knowledge, as poor interpretation means poor health and anxiety for disabled people.
6. All equalities groups agree strongly with this objective and recommend that policy makers and service providers create structures to engage with each of them (peer-led projects, forums etc.) to ensure that refugees' voices can influence policy knowledge on social factors.

### Education

#### Schools

1. There should be a consistent approach that Scottish schools take to providing guidance to refugee parents and their children about the school system, especially advice given to asylum seeking children about further and higher education rights. Everyone must have access to good guidance – it should not be a postcode lottery.
2. Remove all barriers to academic and extracurricular activity caused by poverty and ensure that teachers understand how refugees' experiences of poverty affects how children learn and how parents engage with schools. This will reduce the stigma children experience among their peers and improve children's confidence, health and future prospects.
3. Work with other Scottish Government strategies e.g. the Child Poverty Action Plan (for which several participants have shared views for) to help progress action to stop poverty being a barrier to education for refugee children.

#### Further Education

1. Recognise barriers that can hinder refugee and asylum seeker students' progress at college and work together positively with students to overcome them. Improve college childcare provision, recognising that refugee women often do not have support networks, and address ESOL waiting lists issues in Glasgow.
2. Allow asylum seekers full-time options and open apprenticeships to asylum seekers.
3. Ensure that providers give clear and accurate information about further education rights and entitlements. This prevents young people especially from receiving misleading advice that they are not empowered to challenge. Other equalities groups recommend that students receive more information about how their qualifications from their home countries are assessed.

### Higher Education

1. Recognising qualifications from people's home countries is a priority. Make funding available for refugees and asylum seekers to get their qualifications translated.
2. Engage further with refugee communities to learn and understand people's experiences of institutional racism at universities.
3. Provide clearer information and guidance for applying for refugee scholarships and accessing English classes to ensure that applicants submit good quality applications on time.

### Employability

1. Disabled and older people both recommended that Scottish Refugee Council advice should include dedicated advice time to ensure we know how to access other welfare and employability services once our time with Scottish Refugee Council is finished. We are sometimes not confident about finding work or other opportunities because we are concerned that we face discrimination because of our disability or age.
2. People from all equalities groups agreed that Scottish Government should clearly demonstrate that they support lifting the ban on the right to work for asylum seekers. The Scottish Government should endorse the campaigns that are working to lift the ban.
3. LGBT people recommend that potential employers or work placement places develop training and good practice for working with LGBT refugees. We are apprehensive about entering new employment or work placement spaces if we do not know if the workplace culture is welcoming towards both LGBT people and refugees, as we have experienced racism, xenophobia and homophobia all at once. We recommend that organisations to demonstrate through their inductions, trainings and organisational values that their workplaces will be safe and welcoming for us.

4. All equalities groups said they feared or had experienced subtle discrimination from potential employers.
5. Some LGBT people and disabled people identified this objective as a priority as many had been self-employed in their countries of origin. These groups also felt that potential employers frequently discriminated against them (e.g. could not support access needs for physical disabilities), so had a better chance of setting up their own businesses. Their recommendations for designing services to help people develop business skills:
  - Support existing small businesses who are trusted by refugee communities to develop networks that will provide mentoring and advice.
  - Give space and time to people to develop their ideas
  - Help asylum seekers to access such services so that they have a focus and can build confidence

A common theme across all events was that information needs to be clearer and more accessible. This is a recommendation that can be put across all of the New Scots Strategy.

One of the key aims of these gatherings was to allow people to find out more about the New Scots Strategy and be able to ask questions directly to those involved in shaping government policy, particularly after the previous New Scots Strategy 2014-17<sup>35</sup> where the thematic issues were discussed. Some organisations were able to come however it was difficult to get Ministers and key policy members to attend the events. Although it is understandable that it is difficult to make time at the weekend, it was disappointing to those who organised the events, and this was reflected by participants.

Reports from these events were shared with the relevant thematic groups, who were able to take on board the comments and feedback from these different groups. Although there was not always direct interaction from key policy makers which was an aim of these gatherings, these events created a safe space and an opportunity for individuals and groups voices to be heard and feedback to be shared with thematic groups delivering services to New Scots.

#### Equalities working group and their support during COVID-19

The final Equalities Gathering was cancelled due to COVID-19, and the Equalities Gatherings refugee working group wanted to continue to meet throughout the pandemic to provide support to each of the 18 members.

The groups agreed the purpose of these meetings were to :

- Listen to people's issues
- Help to improve each other's mental health
- Focus on a key issue or experience that affects one or many people
- Have fun. Ideas: games, quizzes, competitions, bingo
- Learn and share. Ideas: learn about food, music from different countries.
- Help others learn about an issue that is important to an equality group you are part of.

These meetings were held remotely using Zoom and Scottish Refugee Council were able to provide digital equipment to group members. Through these meetings the group learned how to use new techniques such as breakout rooms, polls and different these different tools to keep connected.

The group identified two priority topics:

- mental health
- friendship and communities.

After these initial meetings the group moved their focus on the theme of communities and how this affects those in different equalities groups. They developed ideas for action on three recommendations they agreed:

- Equalities groups need to develop their own informal systems for supporting isolated individuals in their communities whom they cannot see
- Volunteer-based community organisations need to prioritise how they can provide wellbeing support to isolated equalities group members they visit or whom they do not know (within current rules)
- Organisations should think creatively about how to bring together refugees and local Scottish people together while social distancing is in place – this integration work has been sidelined during COVID-19.

#### “Talking relieved my depression”

**“Having [xxx] ask the question how do you feel now compared to at the start of lockdown helped us to talk about how things have changed – some things for better, some things worse. It was a relief. No one has ever asked me how I feel about all of this”.**



**“Enjoyed a fun games at the start of discussion – lifts mood”**

**“So good to see everyone again, reminds me that things are still going on in life”.**

**“I am alone – this is a way to be friends, people now know me, I hope this [meetings] can help me make friends.**

**“After this time supporting each other's health I think we are now in a better position to talk about actions on communities”**



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Within Reach**



SCOTTISH FAITHS  
ACTION FOR REFUGEES

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