



Refugee Festival 2021 Scotland



scottish
refugee
council



Highlights and Impact Report



Contents

| | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Overview | 6 |
| Key Stats | 16 |
| Media | 20 |
| Visuals | 24 |
| AMBER | 27 |
| Storytellers | 31 |
| Digital | 36 |
| Learnings | 42 |
| Thanks | 48 |
| Next Year | 52 |



Introduction

Refugee Festival Scotland is an annual celebration of the contribution refugee communities make to life in Scotland. The festival creates opportunities for people from different backgrounds to meet and get to know each other and find out what we have in common. By building bridges across communities, the festival offers a vision of hope, friendship, neighbourliness and solidarity with people seeking refugee protection in Scotland.

This year's festival included **more than 86 events** featuring visual art, dance, talks, workshops, family events and more. The festival is open to everyone with an interest in finding out about the wide range of communities who have settled in Scotland.



Maryhill Integration Network "Celebration of Life"
Scottish Refugee Council volunteer photographer Mohammed Albagir Altayyeb



AMBER: Paul Chappells



Why Refugee Festival Matters

Refugee Festival Scotland was forced to cancel in 2020 due to Covid-19, but after a gap of 12 months, this year's festival went ahead from 14 – 20 June in a mostly online format. It was a challenging year for planning and hosting the festival given the frequently changing Covid regulations and restrictions, but it was important to revive the festival after the pandemic-related hiatus.

The last eighteen months have been very tough. We have all missed out on opportunities to gather and take strength from each other, to meet new people and connect with old friends. This has been especially difficult for people who are new to Scotland and who have experienced increased isolation and anxiety throughout the pandemic. This year's festival also took place against the backdrop of increasingly hostile and frightening policies and proposals to reform the UK's asylum system, and in the wake of a number of tragedies affecting asylum communities across the UK.

With this in mind, the festival aimed to provide moments of connection and joy. To offer opportunities for people and groups to share stories of resilience, hardship and hope. To show off people's talents, whether that's painting, poetry, cookery, song or dance. To help us all reconnect and celebrate after this difficult year.

This summer also marks the 70th anniversary of the Refugee Convention, a UN treaty that defends the rights of refugees. We created space within Refugee Festival Scotland to reflect on Scotland's longstanding tradition of offering protection to people seeking sanctuary and celebrate the many ways in which refugee communities have enriched life in Scotland.

In these challenging and uncertain times, coming together in solidarity and support for Scotland's refugee communities has never been more important.

Maryhill Integration Network "Celebration of Life": Scottish Refugee Council volunteer photographer Mohammed Albagir Altayyeb



Working Together, the festival in context

Scottish Refugee Council is a key partner in the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018 – 2022. New Scots is Scotland's national strategy to achieve the vision of a welcoming Scotland where people with refugee protection and those seeking asylum are able to rebuild their lives from the day they arrive.

The festival supports the strategy's objectives in a number of ways including working to ensure:

- People with refugees protection and those seeking asylum engage in cultural, heritage and sport activities and celebrate their own culture, talents and contributions;
- Social isolation experienced by refugees and those seeking asylum is reduced, as they become active in their local communities; and
- Communities are aware of the needs of refugee and asylum seeker communities and actively seek to support them to integrate.





KELVINGROVE
ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM

Overview

Overview / Highlights

This section looks at some of the highlights of Refugee Festival Scotland to give a flavour of the vibrant events which took place online and in person across the country, when everyone came together to celebrate after such a difficult year.



We Grow Stronger Together - MILK Café:
Scottish Refugee Council volunteer photographer John Lanigan



Refugee Histories Scotland: © Gareth Evans



Festival Launch

The festival opened with an online launch event on Monday 14 June, hosted by actor Adam Kashmiry and featured highlights from some of the activities lined up for the festival, with extracts of dance, theatre, music, film and introductions from some of the refugee-led groups taking part.

A particular highlight was a filmed personal message from Jack Cochrane, lead singer of chart-topping band The Snuts, followed by a recording of the band's single *Somebody Loves You*, which went to Number 1 in the charts. The band dedicated the single to Scottish Refugee Council and produced a music video featuring refugee clients. Proceeds from the music and downloads of the single raised over £6,000 for refugees in Scotland.

In-Person Events

Although the festival was online, by mid-June some restrictions were lifting and some organisers wanted to hold in-person Covid safe events, which went ahead adhering to the Government guidelines at the time.

The International Women's Group organised a family day out in Glasgow Green. This involved a picnic on the Green and organised games for children. It was an opportunity for women and their children to meet each other face to face after 15 months in lockdown and to welcome new members of the community.



Glasgow's Welcome, Refuweegeee



Maryhill Integration Network's Joyous Choir & Colours of Life Dancers, Euro 2020 Fanzone
Paul Chappells



Central and West Integration Network (CWIN) and The Glasgow School of Art partnered on a 10-week creative project exploring textiles, fabric and patterns. Working with designer Christopher McEvoy, the group learned skills in creating different textiles, printing, weaving and embroidery and developed their own fabric designs. The final artworks that were created were displayed as an outdoor exhibition at Garnethill Multicultural Centre, entitled “A Thread is a Journey” which included a co-designed printed CWIN cloth.



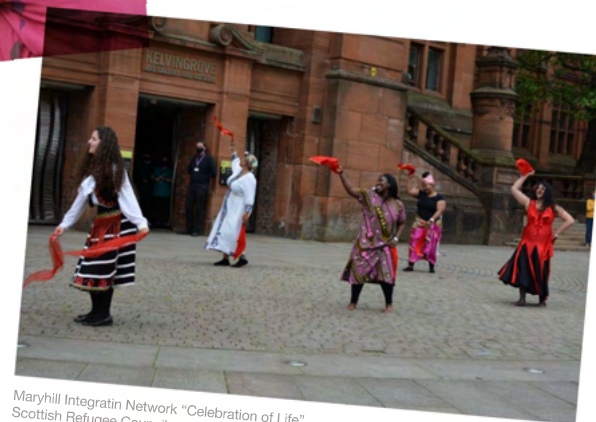
A Thread is a Journey
Scottish Refugee Council volunteer
photographer Parisa Baranaki

MILK Café organised an afternoon of celebration for their local community with food and drink, herb bouquets and cuttings to share at We Grow Stronger Together in Govanhill Community Gardens. Founded in 2015, MILK is a social enterprise set up to empower and support refugee and migrant women in Glasgow



We Grown Stronger Together - MILK Café
Scottish Refugee Council volunteer photographer John Lanigan

Maryhill Integration Network ran a wide range of events during Refugee Festival Scotland, culminating in “A Celebration of Life” performance by Colours of Life Dancers and Joyous Choir outside Kelvingrove Museum on World Refugee Day.



Maryhill Integratin Network “Celebration of Life”
Scottish Refugee Council volunteer photographer Mohammed Albagir Altayyeb



New Partners for 2021

We worked with several new partners this year, including:

V&A Dundee who organised an online tour for New Scots in Arabic and English of their current exhibition “Night Fever: Designing Club Culture”. This is the first major exhibition exploring the relationship between club culture and design from the 1960s to the present day

Eden Court Theatre in Inverness showcased “Travellers” a filmed dance piece performed by Eden Court Adult Performance Group.

The choreography and content of the piece were inspired by the shared experiences of the performers and Syrian women living in the Highlands of Scotland.

The two groups came together to dance, talk and laugh over a number of weeks. The adult performance group then drew on these interactions to create a piece of dance expressing their shared impressions and reflections.



V&A Dundee: ©Hufon+Crow



The festival's dates coincided with The Euros 2000 and we were invited by Glasgow Life, the organisers of the Euros Fanzone at Glasgow Green to put on an afternoon of entertainment on Sunday 20 June to celebrate World Refugee Day. A mixed programme of music and dance from several groups was well received.

We welcomed a new organisation The Yemeni Scottish Foundation Scotland who organised their first event for Refugee Festival Scotland – “Yemen: The Jewel of Arabia”

The event highlighted Yemen's history and beautiful culture through music, art, film and more to tackle some of the misconceptions and negative imagery of Yemen displayed in the media due to the current ongoing war and conflicts.

Food & Cooking

Coming together to prepare and eat food together has always featured heavily in Refugee Festival Scotland and this year, despite being online, was no different.

We welcomed a group from Syria who have settled in Rothesay in Bute to demonstrate Food from Bute in an online cookery class. This was a recorded film of Syrian food recipes and an opportunity to meet the chefs to ask questions about the food and cooking.

There was also Tasteful Cuisine from Africa Delice, with a recipe and demonstration on healthy eating, plus a live cooking class by Standing Tall Arts using one of the recipes from their newly produced cookbook.

The recipes were contributed by young refugees living in Scotland.

Manxhills Integration Networks, Joyous Choir & Colours of Life Dancers, Euro 2020 Fanzone
Paul Chappells



Food and Cooking: Deveron Projects



Women's Groups

Life in Time: Exhibition by Amina MWRC

Life in the Time is an urgent call to action to address the lack of support for marginalised and socially excluded women. Over one hundred Muslim, BME women came together in early 2021 to connect, reflect and create, a series of culturally responsive and mindfully curated online sessions.

The poems, films and images created are the tangible expressions of these experiences.

Amina is an inclusive organisation that empowers and supports Muslim and BME women to create an inclusive Scotland in which they can contribute fully. An inclusive world where Muslim and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women are fulfilling their aspirations.

Stronger Together: By Kurdish Women Community Group

Glasgow's Kurdish Women's Group held a virtual gathering on Zoom to share their experiences of living through Covid-19.

By bringing people together for a chat over a cup of tea, the group aimed to share experiences, listen to one another and provide an opportunity for people to be heard.

About Kurdish Women's Group:

"We are a Kurdish community group that supports asylum seekers and refugees from Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. We carry out a weekly activity for women and children to encourage them to integrate into society. Also, we raise awareness through speakers and health care professionals. Throughout this pandemic, we have supported our members emotionally and financially."



Music

Musicians in Exile — Always on the Move by THE GLASGOW BARONS premiered their film shot in Glasgow at the festival. As asylum-seeking and refugee musicians, their new film explores the journey of how they made music through the lockdown and what that music means to each of the musicians as they slowly return to live performance. Their new song, Always on the Move, speaks to their flight from danger, constant instability and hopes of settling in a new home.

The Welcoming Refugee Festival Special

The Welcoming Association Edinburgh organised The Welcoming Refugee Festival Special, an exciting online event which aimed to bring together members of the local Syrian community to celebrate and mark World Refugee Day 2021. The event featured live music, storytelling, discussion and a children's art competition on the theme of leaving home and starting a new life. The event was designed to inspire, uplift and show solidarity with the Syrian families who have been forced to flee their homes because of civil war.

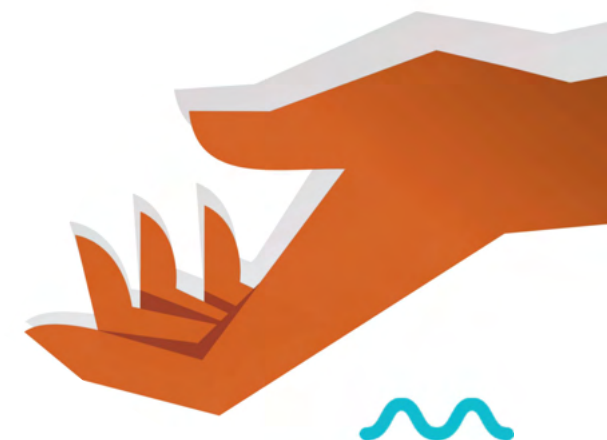
Events for Children and Families

Making Home — by Scrap Antics, Dundee

This online exhibition brought together artwork created by families from different cultures, celebrating diversity and reflecting on the idea of “home”. Families with children aged 4 to 12 years have participated in various Zoom sessions delivered in partnership with Scrap Antics CIC and Infinite Sky Murals. The ‘Making Home’ exhibition featured artworks created by families during the online sessions. The works included collages created using recycled materials and combining pictures and text to explore the theme, as well as photographs and digital family portraits. Information in English and Arabic accompanied the exhibition.



Always on the Move - Musicians in Exile: Brian Hartley



Visual Art

Artist Iman Tajik led a printmaking and mark-making workshop at the Gallery of Modern Art in (GoMA) Glasgow.

The workshop explored some simple technique to make art and participants learned about print making and mark-making using unusual materials.

Taking inspiration from famous artist like Yves Klein and David Hammons, Iman guided participants in using parts of their bodies to make prints, and there was the chance to test this technique during the session using their hands.

Our hands, through the addition of a simple creative writing exercise, will become a way to address humanity, show our connections, and learn about one another.

Film

My Window by Freedom from Torture

A Film screening of a documentary made by survivors of torture – all clients at Freedom from Torture’s Glasgow Centre. The film, produced by Urban Croft Films, explores the importance of the physical and metaphorical windows of the participants during the Covid-19 pandemic. These resilient group members look for hope and happy futures through their windows.



© Iman Tajik



Theatre

National Theatre of Scotland's film of *Black Scots* was created in 2020 for *Scenes of Survival* and is an extract from *First Snow/Premiere Neige* performed by Thierry Mabonga. It showed a young man recalling escaping the horrors of civil war in DR Congo as a child to seek asylum in Glasgow. He finds surprising parallels between the barbarity and exploitation at the heart of that conflict and the shocking revelations of murder and profiteering painted away beneath the surface of his new homeland's history

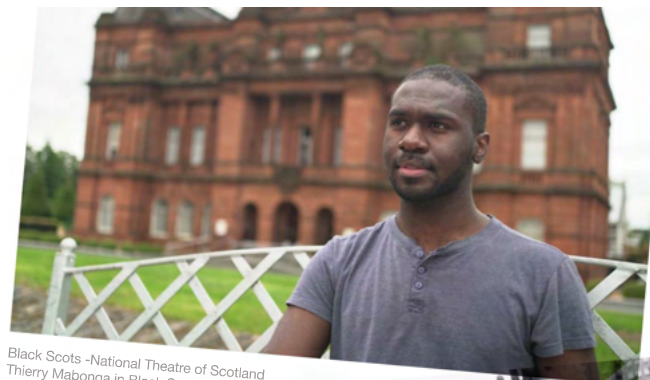
The piece featured an exclusive introduction and conversation with Director Niloo-Far Khan and lead artist Thierry Mabonga.

Talks & Discussions

Refugee Histories Scotland

by Katherine Mackinnon in partnership with Maryhill Integration Network
This was an opportunity to learn some of the stories of refugees in Scotland, from the post-war camp for Polish refugees in Prestwick to present-day experiences of life for refugees in communities around Scotland.

PhD researcher Katherine Mackinnon discussed key moments, events, and places which help us to understand the history of refugees in modern Scotland. She also discussed her work in partnership with Maryhill Integration Network using creative writing to explore and document histories of migration and everyday life in Glasgow.



Black Scots - National Theatre of Scotland
Thierry Mabonga in *Black Scots*, directed by Niloo-Far Khan and filmed by Daryl Cockburn



Refugee Histories Scotland: © Gareth Evans





Key Stats

The Festival in Numbers



20

This year we held the **20th** edition of Refugee Festival Scotland.

Co-ordinated by Scottish Refugee Council, Refugee Festival Scotland is centred on World Refugee Day, 20 June, established by the U.N. in 2000.



81

There were **86** online events organised by **81** individuals, refugee community groups and arts organisations based across the length and breadth of the country from The Highlands, Perth, St Andrews, The Isle of Bute, Glasgow, Edinburgh to Dumfries and Galloway.



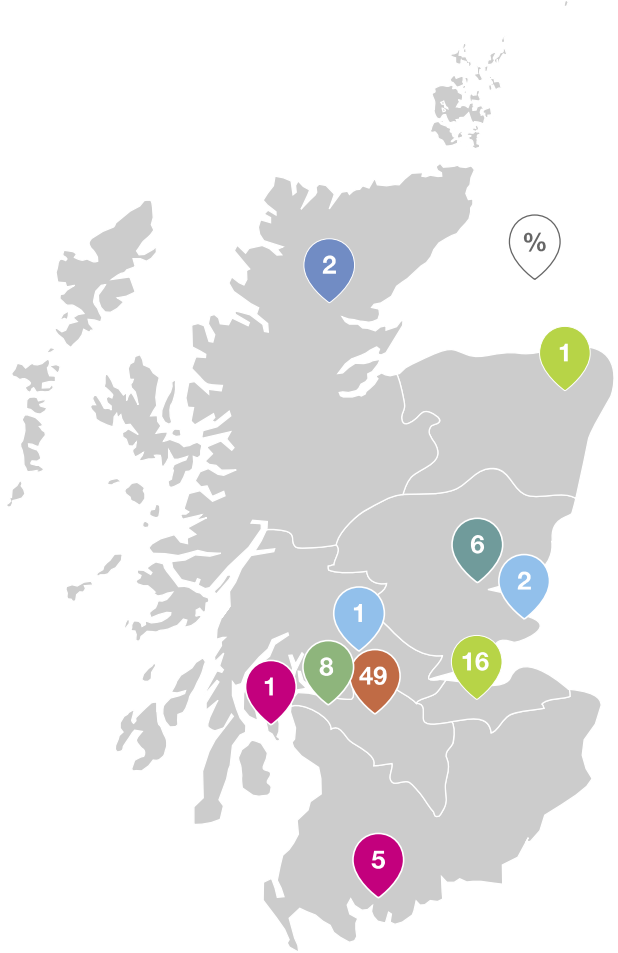
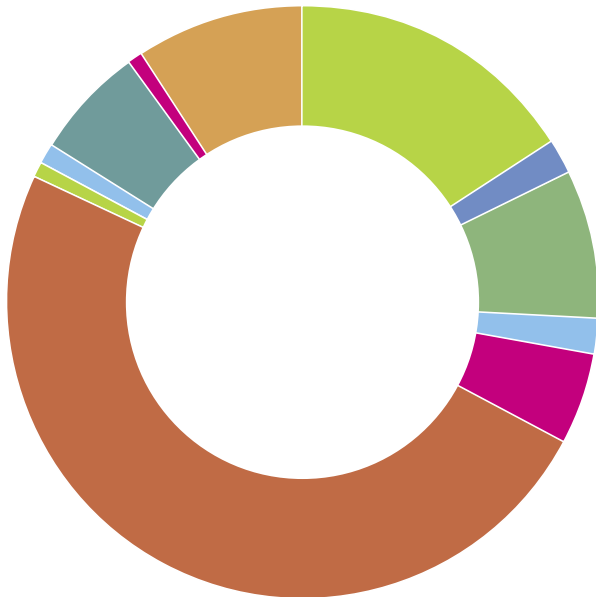
86

Of the **86** events in the festival programme, **49%** were organised by groups based in Glasgow; **16%** from groups in Edinburgh; **8%** in Renfrewshire and **6%** in Dundee.

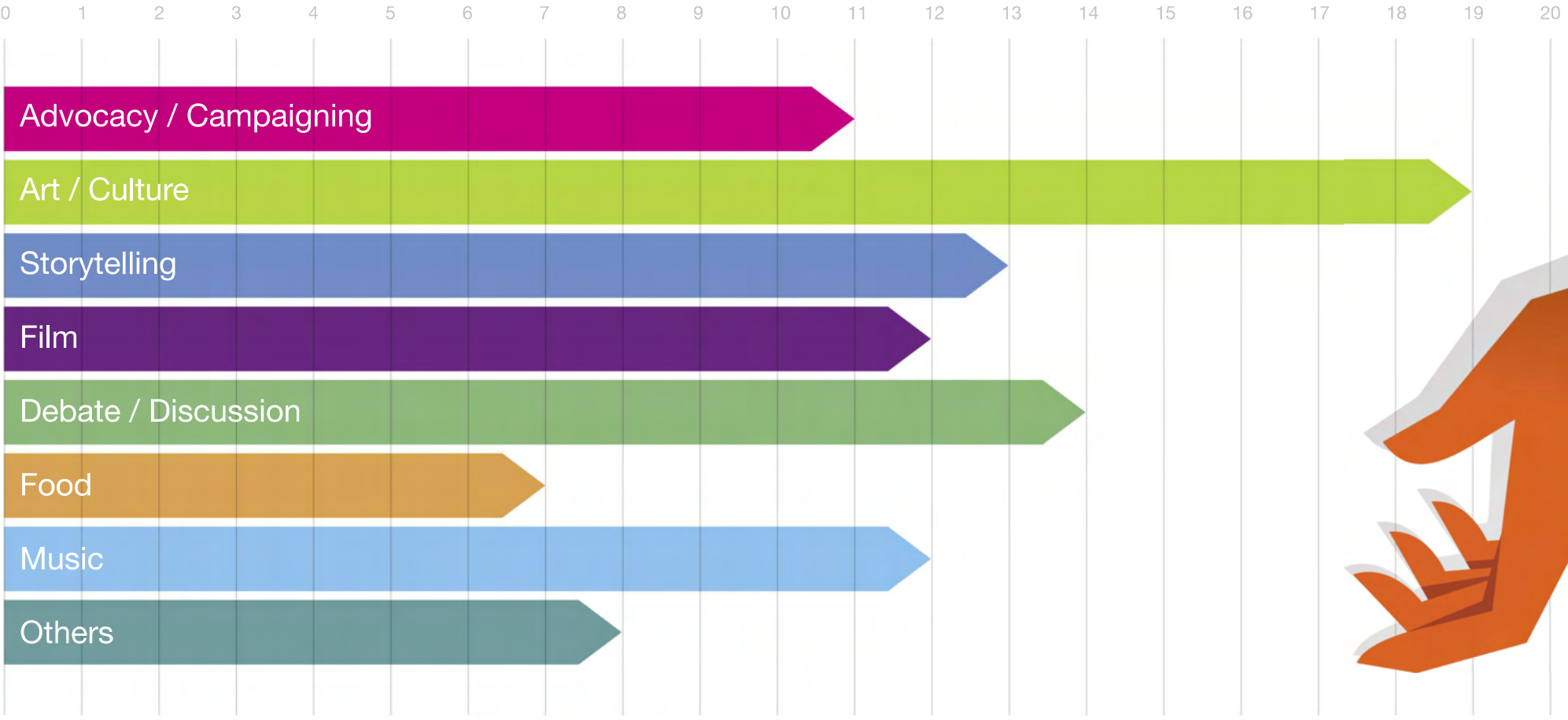


Location of Events

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Edinburgh | 16% |
| Highlands | 2% |
| Renfrewshire | 8% |
| St Andrews | 2% |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 5% |
| Glasgow | 49% |
| Aberdeenshire | 1% |
| Dunbartonshire | 1% |
| Dundee | 6% |
| Isle of Bute | 1% |
| Others | 9% |



Event Categories





Media

Media

Refugee Festival Scotland plays an important role in nurturing more welcoming and positive attitudes towards people seeking protection in Scotland.

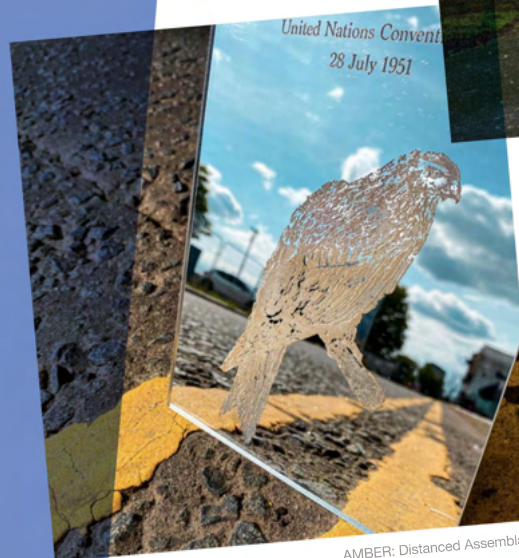
The festival provides a platform for positive media coverage of refugee issues, including stories of welcome and integration, and contributes to a greater public understanding of refugee and protection issues.

We work with a range of journalists and outlets across Scottish press, online and broadcast media. This coverage extends the festival's audience as those who are not able to attend events in person are still able to read and view stories about the festival through the mainstream media.

This year, the festival was online for the first time and the press coverage highlighted the message of the festival bringing communities together to help us all reconnect and celebrate after this difficult year.



Launch of Refugee Festival Scotland programme: Paul Chappells



AMBER: Distanced Assemblage



Examples of press coverage in the run up and during Refugee Festival Scotland 2021:

TFN The voice of Scotland's largest voluntary sector

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Refugee festival aims to bring Scottish communities together

28th May 2021
by Gareth Jones

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NEWS 28th May 2021

2021 International Children's Day
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Online International Festival announced
NEWS 24th Sep 2020

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Bookers tackle fire social bite
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POPULAR POSTS

Mayhill Integration Network (MIN), a Glasgow based charity that brings refugee, migrant and local communities together, is just one of many groups and organisations taking part.

MIN director, Bernice Dea Smith, said: "Refugee Festival Scotland is an opportunity to celebrate the richness of diverse cultures that New Scots bring to Scotland's artistic landscape and cultural life. It provides our members with a platform to share their art, ideas and creativity. We can't wait to see you all for this year's celebrations and to share the sights, sounds and colours of the festival."

What's On Edinburgh

What's On • Festivals • News • Activities

Refugee Festival Scotland comes to Edinburgh

Whatever the weather, people in Edinburgh can expect a warm welcome at Refugee Festival Scotland - and a packed programme of events showcasing refugee arts and culture.

Article Source: **Refugee Festival Scotland**
First Published: 27 May 2021 11:26
Viewed: 27 May 2021 12:11

This year's festival runs from 14 June - 20 June. From live music and dance to online art shows, film screenings, gaming marathons and family-friendly games, the festival has something for everyone.

The line-up, which showcases refugee arts and culture, aims to bring people from different backgrounds and cultures together to meet, mix and get to know each other better.

This year's festival focuses on helping communities in Edinburgh, and across Scotland to reconnect and build bonds of friendship after months kept apart by the pandemic.

Rae Alden, who is originally from Palestine and now lives in Edinburgh is one of the organisers behind this year's festival.

He said: "Each year, we evolve and adapt to changes and use new tools to support and bring people together. As a result of Covid-19, this year's festival, which runs from 14-20 June, will be different. Many events will be held online to make them accessible to all - and to keep you safe!"

"Refugee Festival Scotland connects New Scots with communities across Scotland. The festival is a place where the sky is the limit when it comes to dreams and ideas. It is a safe and open space for people to campaign for change and reach out to others in friendship and support."

The festival celebrates the many ways refugees contribute to Scotland's cultural life by showcasing the food and drink, music and dance, language and art that people bring with them when they begin new lives in Scotland.

Refugee Festival Scotland is produced by Scottish Refugee Council. Details of the 2021 festival programme are now online: www.refugeefestivalscotland.co.uk

Edinburgh highlights

Dance

New Beginnings
Anahat Theatre's New Beginnings is a playful dance theatre work in progress celebrating the point in time and space when something starts afresh.

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News > People

Euro 2020 fan zone: Choir and dancers will highlight rights of vulnerable women at Glasgow Green in celebration of World Refugee Day

Refugee Festival Scotland will take over the Euro 2020 fan zone on the afternoon of Sunday, June 20 to offer visual art, dance, talks, workshops and family events to celebrate World Refugee Day.

By **Hannah Brown**
Saturday, 19th June 2021, 3:33 pm
Updated Sunday, 20th June 2021, 4:06 pm

Colours of Life and Joyous Choir of the Mayhill Integration Network will perform at the Glasgow Green fan zone for World Refugee Day on Sunday, June 20.

The event is open to everyone with an interest in finding out about the wide range of communities to have settled in Scotland.

This year's festival focuses on helping communities to reconnect and build bonds of friendship after months kept apart by the pandemic.

0 comments

HAVE YOUR SAY



Examples of press coverage in the run up and during Refugee Festival Scotland 2021:

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WHAT'S ON / THINGS TO DO / SCOTLAND

What's On Scotland 4-18 Jun: Glasgow International & more

The next couple of weeks see Glasgow International finally hit the city's galleries and museums, with over 60 exhibitions and events on. Elsewhere, Buzzcut Festival goes online and there's real life theatre in Pitlochry.

Feature by Anahit Behrooz | 04 Jun 2021

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Refugee Festival Scotland
Online and various venues. 14-20 Jun

A celebration of the contribution that refugees make to Scotland's cultural life, this year's Refugee Festival Scotland has a jam-packed programme, from a body mark making class with Iman Tajik and the Gallery of Modern Art to a National Theatre of Scotland piece on Black Scottish history. Image: Paul Chappells.

Glasgow Standard

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Home / 2021 / June / 13 / Refugee Festival Scotland events to be held across Glasgow for refugee week

Refugee Festival Scotland events to be held across Glasgow for refugee week

3 minutes

04 weeks ago · 07 mins reading





Photo: Francisco Lirio and Paula Goddard

Refugee Festival Scotland, co-ordinated by the Scottish Refugee Council, is offering a wide variety of online and in-person events across the country during refugee week, culminating in World Refugee Day on June 20.

Whilst some events started early on June 11, most will run between June 14-20, with a range of art, music, film, food and discussion workshops every day.

In Glasgow, the week will begin with two artists from [Distanced Assemblage](#) setting off early on Monday, walking from Dunggavel House Removal Centre to the Home Office building to mark the 70th anniversary of the Refugee Convention.

"When we were approached by the Scottish Refugee Council for this anniversary, we were thinking that is it really a time to celebrate, or is it a time to protest?" said artist [Daria Goodard](#).



They will both carry mirrors on their journeys, engraved with images of British birds taken from travel documents and linked to the idea that "birds have no borders, they're free and they fly".

The act of walking will also parallel "that layer of freedom of movement" explained artist [Francisco Lirio](#). "By our act of performing, reflecting back the urban space and other people around taking part in that social reality, we thought it was a powerful way of saying that this is not only a problem of those within the asylum seeker system, but a problem of all of us."





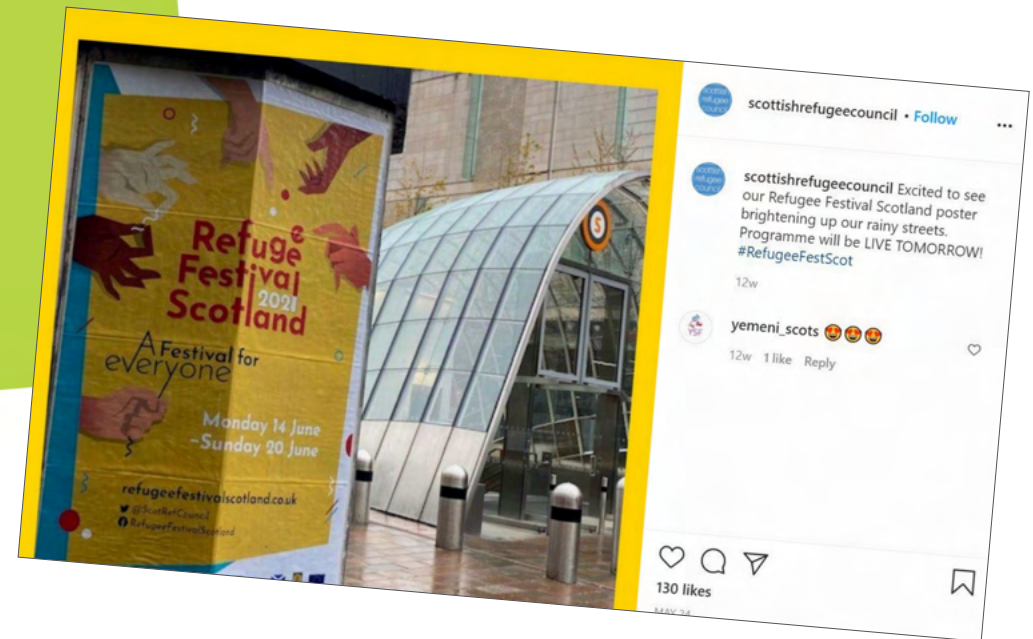
Launch of Refugee Festival Scotland programme: Paul Chappells

Visuals

We were delighted when Syrian artist Mousa AlNana agreed to create the branding for Refugee Festival Scotland's online debut in June.

The Glasgow based painter and graphic designer produced our new vibrant festival visuals which were used throughout Refugee Festival Scotland.

Glasgow School of Art graduate Mousa was the artist behind our powerful World Refugee Day graphic in 2020 and we were excited to be working with him again on this year's festival.



Here Mousa gives us some insight into what inspired his design for the festival.

“When refugees leave their countries and resettle in a new place, they want to be part of their new community and to rebuild their lives and their futures. That’s what inspired me to make a design that captured unity, and that we all can be part of something really strong and beautiful.

You can see in the design that the hands are in different shades of colour. This is to represent the diversity and the richness of the human race, and how our differences make us complete. The hands are working together and helping to build the design itself. The different elements in the design represent how we human beings can be a force for good if we work together.

I used positive vibrant colours, hoping that would leave optimistic happy thoughts when refugees are mentioned, and replace the negative sad thoughts that are usually associated with refugees and their ability to contribute to any community.

I hope this festival brings love and support to us all.

“It has always been a pleasure to work with Scottish Refugee Council and their team. Working on Refugee Festival Scotland means a lot to me personally and professionally. As a refugee, it is inspiring to get our voice and vision across.”





AMBER

AMBER

This summer marked the 70th anniversary of the UN Refugee Convention, the international treaty that upholds the right to seek refugee protection and the legal obligations of states to provide for people seeking asylum.

Over the past seven decades, the Convention has had an impact on millions of people's lives, but in 2021, the rights and principles it enshrines remain insecure and under threat.

To honour the anniversary of the Convention, Scottish Refugee Council commissioned Paria Goodarzi and Francisco Llinas Casas of Distanced Assemblage to create a piece of public art in response to this complex moment in time.

At 6am on Monday, 14 June, the two artists set off on an epic journey to mark the 70th anniversary of the UN Refugee Convention. We shared live updates throughout the day.



AMBER: Paul Chappells

AMBER: A. Murad, Bash Art Creative



Paria Goodarzi and Francisco Llinas Casas from Distanced Assemblage walked 23 miles from Dungavel Detention and Removal Centre in Strathaven to the Home Office Building in Glasgow, carrying engraved mirrors on their backs. The engraved mirrors feature elements relevant to the Convention, commenting on the freedom of movement it guarantees.

AMBER reflects on the different paths people seeking asylum in Scotland might take in their search for safety: the 'Home' office that can provide refuge under the Convention, and the 'Removal' centre, which returns people to the places they have fled.

Here, they talk about their artwork, AMBER, and what this moment means to them.

"We live in an ambivalent world where the cost of human conflict has reached more than 10,000 deaths of refugees in the Mediterranean since 2014. It's clear that the values of the Convention are threatened and, with them, the freedoms and guarantees it endows to people seeking asylum.

So we ask ourselves, is this seventieth anniversary a time to celebrate or time to protest?

*Can our protest be in itself an expression and celebration of freedom?
How can our actions help to document the moment of crisis we live in for future generations?*



AMBER: Paul Chappells



AMBER: Paul Chappells




With AMBER, we wanted to make a radical artistic expression that could engage with personal aspects our stories of migration in a celebratory way and, simultaneously, protest against the current apprehension and reforms around the UK asylum system.

Our performance responds to the different paths asylum seekers might take in their migratory journeys, commenting on the impossibility to judge their need for protection based on the way they arrive to our shores. Likewise, the walk from these two buildings examines the tension between the two ends of the system: the 'Home' office that can provide refuge according the Convention, and the 'Removal' centre which returns people to the places they have fled from. The reflection of the audience against the mirrors will uncover different layers of meaning, including the negotiation of identity and underrepresentation of refugees and minorities."

The screenshot shows a news article on the Glasgow Times website. The article is dated 2nd June and is written by Catriona Stewart, a columnist and reporter. The main headline is "Artists walk from Dungavel to Brand Street to raise questions on refugee treatment". Below the headline is a photograph of two people walking away from the camera on a paved path, each carrying a large, rectangular mirror on their back. The background shows a rural landscape with green fields and a cloudy sky. To the right of the article is a blue sidebar with an advertisement for "s1 jobs.com Awards in association with esure". Below the advertisement, there are social media sharing icons (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Email) and a "6 comments" button. The article text below the photo reads: "Artists Paria Goodarzi and Francisco Llinas Casas walk 23 miles from Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre in Strathaven to the Home Office in Glasgow to mark the 70th anniversary of the UN Convention on Refugees. Picture: Paul Chappell." Below this is a sub-headline: "TWO artists have walked from Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre in Strathaven to the Home Office building in Govan as a response to the 70th year of the UN Refugee Convention." The main text of the article begins: "Paria Goodarzi and Frank Llinas Casas used the 23 mile walking performance to question whether the anniversary is a time for celebration or protest, against a backdrop of concern about the UK's meeting of obligations under the convention." A second paragraph follows: "Paria and Frank, who form the art collective Distanced Assemblage, wore engraved mirrors on their backs as they walked to represent themes such as identity and underrepresentation of refugees." On the right side of the article, there is a "Most read" section with two items: "1 Armed cops swoop on Glasgow street after man spotted with weapon" and "2 Ex-Rangers star Josh Wintle as nets against".





Storytellers

Storytellers

Refugee Festival Scotland is an opportunity to bring people from different backgrounds together, to make new connections and highlight the incredible work of individuals and communities across Scotland through storytelling and media, and despite the challenges of the online space, Refugee Festival Scotland 2021 was no different.

There is a wealth of great stories among the community groups at the heart of the festival – and who better to tell them than the people themselves. We work with groups and individuals to help them share their stories in their own words, boost their media presence and impact and support each other by sharing skills and learning through a peer media/storytelling network.



Storytelling with Tawana Sithole: Renfrewshire's Refugee Week Cultural Programme



In the lead up to the festival, we held a media training session for prospective storytellers from community groups who were holding events during the festival. The purpose of this training was:

- To promote the work of community groups
- To connect groups with local/regional press
- To improve social connections for new Scots
- To challenge the mainstream media narrative

The digital workshop was facilitated by our Storytelling Officer Chris Afuwah and Festival Assistant/former Refugee Week Ambassador Baz Alden, with support from student journalist and former Refugee Festival Ambassador Marwa Daher.



The Museum of Things: Scottish Refugee Council



Mohammed's Story

We met with Mohammed ahead of Refugee Festival Scotland 2021. Mohammed volunteers with the Yemeni-Scottish Foundation, who held an event during the festival to promote Yemen's culture and heritage.

"My name is Mohammed, I'm from Yemen. I'm 27 years old. I live in Glasgow just now. I've been living here for around a year and 5 months so I've not really been any place other than Glasgow.

"I'm a breakdancer, a beatboxer, a kickboarder, so I love hiphop. Back home I was a major part of Da TnT Crew, which stands for Thrillers in Town. We participated in Arabs Got Talent in 2013 and that was a great experience for me and the rest of the crew members.

"I reached the UK beginning of 2020. I tried reaching out to some crews and hiphop communities here, we were going to practice somewhere and I was excited for that but then lockdown happened and we couldn't do it.

"I gather information for Yemeni-Scottish Foundation. There are asylum seekers here who are in hotels so I am asking them what they need, what is it like living in a hotel, especially during Ramadan, last Ramadan was really hard for them so I'm finding out what they need for food, clothes and things like that.



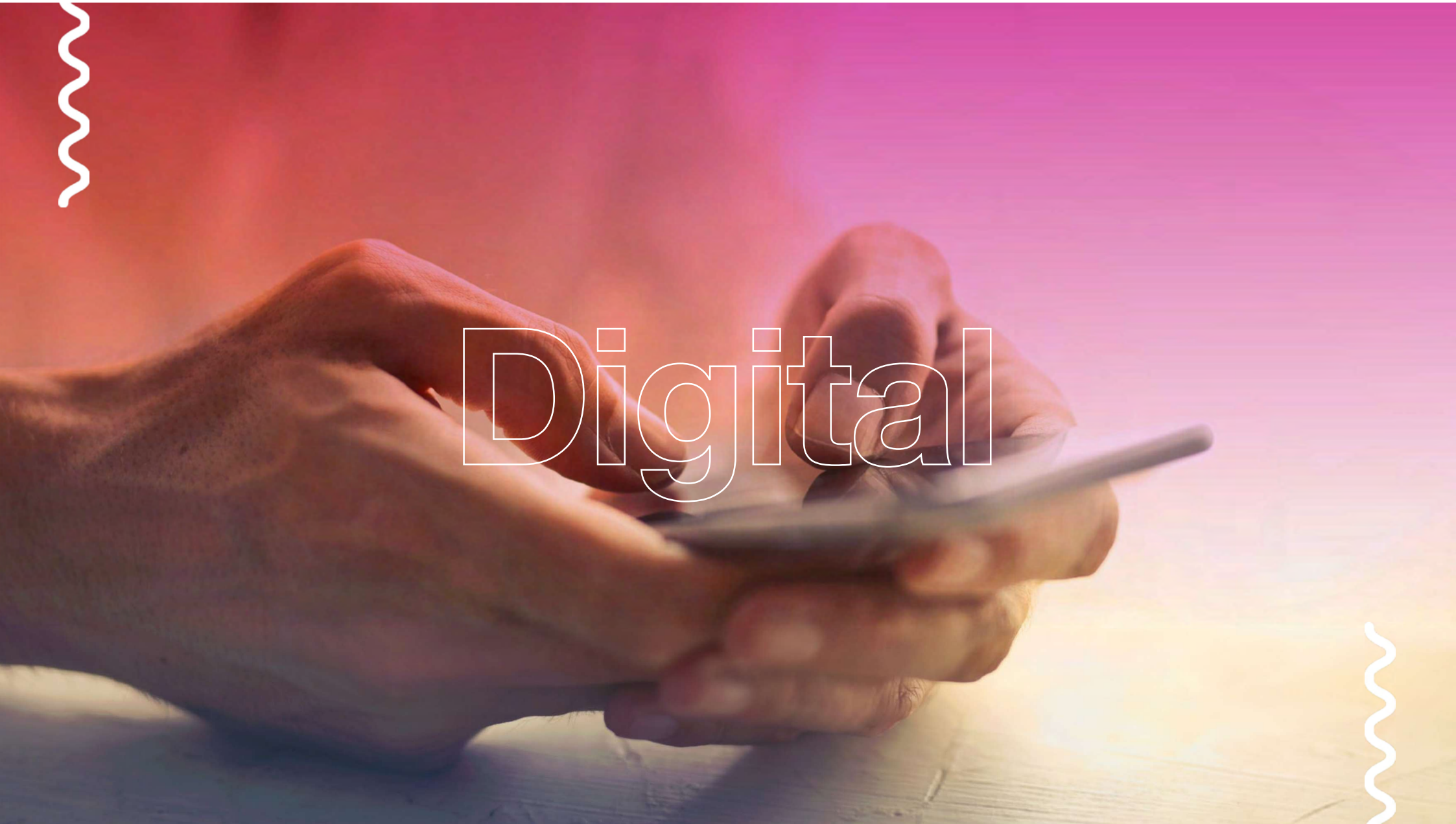
“I’m really ambitious. My passion is helping people, so I want to open an organisation and develop a vulnerable country – like Yemen – hopefully when things are better there and there is no war. I would like to open an organisation for youngsters so they can come there and learn some new skills and develop themselves. That’s what I want to do for the future. And, an orphanage. That’s going to be in Yemen, that’s what I want to do. Back home, I used to do entrepreneurship, I was good at it, so I hope in these coming years to build myself up so that I can actually help the people that I want to help.”

“I would tell people who are struggling, to be strong because this is what life is and it’s temporary. Everyone is struggling. I’ve been through a lot, especially in this year and a half. I felt like I was alone, no family, nobody, you know, when you’re far away from home it feels really bad but I’m just going to tell everyone that from my experience there’s a theme that came through. Just be strong. Look out for yourself. It’s all about self-growth. We have an opportunity here in Scotland, we can be something and do something with our lives.”

“There is just one more thing I need to say. I would love to tell everyone, every refugee, every asylum seeker, everyone struggling here, I would like to tell them we don’t have to stress over things we cannot control. Because this situation, we could never control it ourselves, we have to prioritise the things we can actually control.”

Yemeni-Scottish Foundation is a group of young people living in Scotland who felt there is a need to represent Yemen’s culture and heritage and to be active individuals in the Scottish community.





Digital

Highlights 1–21 June

Digital media was at the core of this year's Refugee Festival Scotland. Our digital media communications incorporated both the Scottish Refugee Council and Refugee Festival Scotland websites, newsletter, and multiple social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

Our social media strategy focussed on two objectives:

- Raising awareness of the festival and driving traffic to the Refugee Festival Scotland website
- Creating and sustaining high levels of digital engagement

We focused on creating shareable content along with a suite of open access festival assets available for all event organisers and partners to use and share.



Website Summary

5,502 users visited the festival website between 1st-22nd June.

The number of users was higher than on the main SRC website in this period which highlights the success of our campaign to drive people to the festival site. **The festival programme was the most visited page on the website, followed by the homepage and then the event listing for AMBER.** The vast majority of visitors to the Refugee Festival Scotland website were based in Scotland. Total audience in UK 81.20% (74.49% of which in Scotland with Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Dundee being the top three Scottish cities.)

The majority of users were people aged between 24-34 followed by 35-44. 60% of users were women, 40% men. 56% of people accessed the website using their mobile, followed by desktop 41% and tablet only 3%. Most people came directly to the site, closely followed by referrals from social media.

5,502
users visited the
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1st and 22nd June

74.49%
of visitors to the RFS
website were based
in Scotland

60/40%
60% of users were
women, 40% were men

56%
of people accessed
the website using
their mobile



Twitter summary

We currently have **23k** followers on Twitter. During the festival period 1 – 22 June, we published **143 posts** on the platform. **2.5k** of Twitter users who saw our posts interacted with them – meaning they either liked, retweeted, or commented on them.

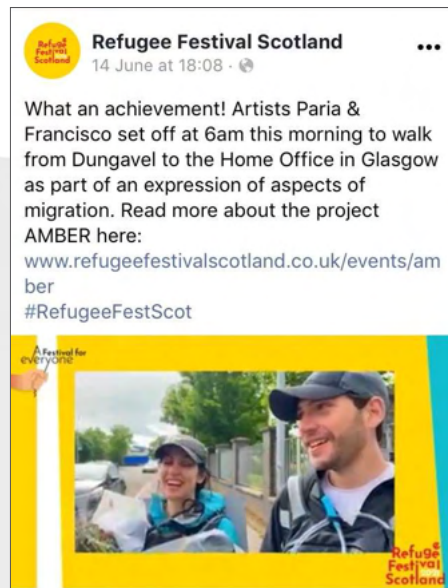
2.5k Interactions



Facebook summary

We currently have **3.5k** followers on our festival Facebook page. During the festival period 1 – 22 June, we published **71 posts**. Our top 3 posts for engagement/interactions on our Facebook page related to the AMBER project.

71 Posts



Instagram summary

We currently have **3.4k** followers on our Scottish Refugee Council Instagram page. During the festival period, we published **32 posts** on this platform. We had **1.6k** engagements/interactions (comments and likes) on these posts. Our top 3 posts for engagement/interactions on our Instagram page related to the AMBER project and The Museum of Things.

1.6k Interactions





Learnings

Learnings

As this was the first ever online Refugee Festival Scotland, it's important for us to reflect and learn from it and to listen to event organisers and participants discuss their challenges, their successes and how they felt they had managed to navigate our new online event registration process

The move online presented both challenges and opportunities. Many event organisers were able to reach wider and new audiences, but also acknowledged that digital activities rarely have the same impact as in person events. Many organisers also had to overcome access issues, including involving participants with limited access to technology or the internet. To remedy this, the festival team held one to one sessions on running events on Zoom for participants who requested support and our digital resource toolkit offered advice on how to run digital events.



Refugees welcome sign: The Educational Institute of Scotland



We asked... Did your event meet your expectations?

“Really pleased with the events – all went smoothly, no tech disasters, lovely audiences”

An Albanian-focused group aiming at shining lights on their traditions.

“We are already planning our participation in next year’s festival”

“If we had the capacity we could have shared the event with more partner organisations working with families and nurseries/schools. Maybe you could support us with a package of events/mini-events specifically for children/families to share through tailored networking”

A theatre company which works on delivering children's rights through drama and storytelling.



What did you find the most daunting to deal with/organise this year?

“Engaging people when events weren’t in person and getting it all organised in time”

A community group that aims to achieve social justice in Scotland.

“Covid measures and making sure the event was safe as well as engaging”

97.1%

had no difficulties in submitting events

26.5%

requested support from the Festival team

67.6%

thought the Festival team achieved enough media coverage

76.5%

said they would organise events again for Refugee Festival Scotland



General comments

“An amazing festival despite the challenges the pandemic posed”

An organisation that supports positive change in Scotland and aims to spread equality in society.

“Felt supported, but not overburdened. The toolkit was really helpful too”

“Could the events be more spread out as there were so many great events happening at the same time – perhaps covering 2 weekends either end of the festival, rather than just one”

A theatre company that works on empowering children and their families by acting and other methods to enhance their mental health and tell their stories.



General comments

“We would like to thank you for all your support and effort into making this year’s event possible. We really enjoyed being part of it and we are grateful for such an amazing opportunity to share our heritage”

“Really appreciate being involved and given a platform for the event to promote the musicians involved”

A group to bring musicians together including New Scots.

“We enjoyed being part of the festival greatly. Was a great platform for our members”

A movement that aims to end poverty and enhance the connection between organisations as well as people around Scotland.

“The range of digital activities available was amazing”

A community group that helps people seeking sanctuary settling down in their new city by providing 1 to 1 support and other services.





Thank You

Thank you

Thank you to all our friends, supporters, participants, community groups, audiences, volunteers, funders and partners. Refugee Festival Scotland would not exist without you.



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-A ba
gov.scot



We Grow Stronger Together - MILK Café: Scottish Refugee Council volunteer photographer John Lanigan



Participating artists and organisations:

Africa Delice
Africa Future
Amina MWRC
Amina MWRC/Vicky Mohieddeen
Amnesty International Scotland
Anahat Theatre
ArtPerUK
Bilingualism Matters:
Much Language Such Talk Podcast
Carnival Arts and Maryhill Integration Network
Central and West Integration Network
and The Glasgow School of Art
CGO Institute
Distanced Assemblage
Distanced Assemblage
and Scottish Refugee Council
Eden Court
Edinburgh Jewish Cultural Centre
Educational Institute of Scotland
Enough!
Esolperth
Farah Saleh
Freedom from Torture
Francesca Zappia, Freelance Curator
Friends of Amal
Gaming Against The Hostile Environment
Girlguiding Scotland
Glasgow Film Theatre
Glasgow Stand Up To Racism

GoMA – Glasgow Museums
Govan Community Project
Greening our Street
Hannah Rose Thomas
Happy Education Hub C.I.C.
Highland Migrant and Refugee Advocacy (HiMRA)
How It Felt
Interfaith Glasgow (Weekend Club)
International Women's Group
Kas Fitness
Kurdish women community group
Licketyspit Theatre Company
Lingo Flamingo CIC
Luna Monda
Maryhill Integration Network
Maryhill Integration Network
in collaboration with Shpresa Program @AlbScott
Massive Outpouring of Love (MOOL)
MILK
MORE
Music Broth
National Theatre of Scotland
Poverty Truth Community
Refugees for Justice
Refuweegee
Renfrewshire's Ethnic Communities
Cultural Steering Group
Renfrewshire's Ethnic Communities Cultural
Steering Group in Partnership with Jambo Radio
Ruchazie Pantry
School of History, University of St Andrews

Scottish Wider Access Programme (West)
(SWAPWest)
Scrap Antics, Dundee
Serve2020
Sewing2gether All Nations
ShwayShway Films
Skills Development Scotland
Sponsor Refugees (Citizens UK)
and Communities 4 Refugees
Standing Tall Arts
Steeple Church, Dundee
Syrian Community in Bute
Take One Action
The Glasgow Barons
The Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility
Network (IDEA Network) for Open Knowledge,
University of St Andrews
The Language Hub C.I.C.
The Others
The Reading Group
The Welcoming Association Edinburgh
The Yemeni Scottish Foundation
Turn Flicks
UNESCO Chair in Refugee Integration through
Languages and the Arts (UNESCO RILA)
University of Edinburgh
University of Glasgow
University of Glasgow / GRAMNet
V&A Dundee
World Spirit Theatre
Youth Libraries Group Scotland



Making it Happen

Refugee Festival Scotland is produced and co-ordinated by Scottish Refugee Council in collaboration with a Scotland-wide network of partners. We would like to thank everyone involved for their huge contribution and commitment, especially the Festival Advisory Group which includes representatives from many wonderful partners.

Scottish Refugee Council is an independent charity dedicated to supporting people in need of refugee protection. Our vision is for a Scotland where people are protected, find safety and support, have their human rights and dignity respected and are able to achieve their full potential.

Find out more about our vision and aims:

www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/about/vision-aims





Maryhill Integratin Network "Celebration of Life": Scottish Refugee Council volunteer photographer Mohammed Albagir Altayyeb

Refugee Festival Scotland 2022

2022 will mark 21 years since the inception of Refugee Festival Scotland. It is an important time to reflect on how far we have come – working towards a fair and just asylum system, and making Scotland a welcoming and peaceful place to live. It is an equally important time to look ahead – at what work there is still to do to protect people who have been forced to flee their homes, and how we can support them to rebuild their lives.

We are keen to talk to new potential partners, including funding bodies and local authorities to support Refugee Festival Scotland 2022 and beyond to allow us to develop and deliver next year's festival which will hopefully be a hybrid of online and in person events.

Please get in touch:

eleanor.harris@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk





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-  facebook.com/RefugeeFestivalScotland
-  twitter.com/scotrefcouncil
-  www.instagram.com/scottishrefugeecouncil

Scottish Charity Number: SC008639

Company Number: SC145067

OISC reference number: N200100084





Refugee Festival 2021 Scotland

