



## EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT - RESULTS

<b>Title of Policy</b>	New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018 - 2022
<b>Summary of aims and desired outcomes of Policy</b>	<p>New Scots sets out the vision of the Scottish Government, COSLA, the Scottish Refugee Council and wider New Scots partners “for a welcoming Scotland where refugees and asylum seekers are able to rebuild their lives from the day they arrive.”</p> <p>This will enable them to become active members of our communities with strong, diverse relationships and connections. This in turn will help to strengthen Scotland’s communities.</p> <p>The strategy recognises that integration is a long-term, two-way process which involves positive change for both individuals and host communities.</p>
<b>Directorate: Division: team</b>	Local Government and Communities: Connected Communities: Asylum and Refugee Integration

### Executive summary

On 10 January 2018, the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018 - 2022 was published. This followed the development of the strategy in partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and wider New Scots partners. The strategy was informed by engagement with over 2,000 people, including over 700 refugees and asylum seekers.

The vision of New Scots is that refugees and asylum seekers should be welcomed, supported and integrated into our communities from day one of arrival.

The strategy sets out five principles of the New Scots approach: integration from day one; a rights based approach; refugee involvement; community involvement; and partnership and collaboration.

The strategy sets out four overarching outcomes. Work to achieve these outcomes will be undertaken across seven themes. Initial actions have been set out in the strategy across all seven themes, for organisations involved in integration to work together in partnership to provide and deliver.

## **Background**

In 2013, Scotland's first New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities strategy was developed. That strategy set out for the first time the Scottish Government's vision for refugee and asylum seeker integration in Scotland. It established a framework to coordinate work by a range of partner organisations and groups involved in supporting refugees. It has aimed to bring together, encourage and promote partnership working and early intervention where possible.

Although asylum policy is reserved to UK Government, dispersal of asylum seekers to Scotland commenced in 2001. The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring it plays its part in the UK's legal and moral duty to provide protection to those fleeing persecution.

During the period of the first New Scots strategy (2014 - 2017), a humanitarian crisis developed, resulting in an unprecedented number of people being forced to seek safety away from their homes. By the end of 2015, 65.3 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide, an increase of 5.8 million in a single year. More than half of all refugees were from just three countries: Syria (4.9 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million) and Somalia (1.1 million). In September 2015 the UK Government announced the expansion of the Syrian Resettlement Programme and a commitment to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020. Scotland responded promptly, receiving the first refugees to arrive to the UK under the programme in November 2015 and within 2 years welcomed over 2,000 Syrian refugees across 31 of our 32 local authorities.

The Scottish Government is working towards establishing a more equal and inclusive society in the future. New Scots is grounded in equality

legislation and policy. It has been designed to contribute to work to make Scotland fairer.

The strategy will contribute to the purpose and values of Scotland's National Performance Framework. The strategy aligns with national outcomes and in particular links with the following three outcomes:

We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe;

We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely;

We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination.

The first strategy was developed in partnership with COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council. The approach was based around Ager and Strang's 'Indicators of Integration' which helped to identify the key factors of central importance for refugee integration.

The development of this second strategy has continued in partnership. It has been informed by New Scots partners working across six theme groups which were established as part of the first strategy and reflect the 'Indicators of Integration'. Wider engagement reached out to refugees, asylum seekers and members of communities they settle in, as well as organisations and groups which support them right across Scotland. Organisations were invited to host engagement events to discuss the issues facing refugees, asylum seekers and communities. Feedback from engagement events involving over 2,000 people, including over 700 asylum seekers and refugees, informed the development of priorities for the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018 - 2022.

### **The Scope of the EQIA**

The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018 – 2022 will have an impact on the lives of all asylum seekers and refugees living in Scotland. This includes people who have been granted refugee status or another form of humanitarian protection; people seeking asylum; and those whose application for asylum has been refused, but who remain in Scotland.

Scotland has a long history of welcoming refugees and asylum seekers from all over the world. Refugees have settled in Scotland from Europe during the first and second world wars and later from Vietnam, Bosnia, Kosovo and the Democratic Republic of Congo, among other places. In recent years, Scotland has welcomed refugees to communities across the country through the UK Government's Syrian Resettlement Programme and Vulnerable Children's Relocation Scheme.

The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 began a programme of dispersing people who had made an application for asylum in the UK. Glasgow has been the only asylum dispersal area in Scotland. As of 31 December 2017, there were around 3,650 asylum seekers living in Scotland, the majority in Glasgow. The large majority of refugees living in Scotland have arrived through the asylum system rather than resettlement programmes.

## **Key Findings**

The evidence identified in the EQIA does not show any negative impacts for refugees and asylum seekers:

Age:

Home Office statistics show that the age demographic of asylum seekers in the UK is predominantly young, with the majority being young adults (55% in 2016 aged 21-34). There are also a significant number of children who are part of an asylum application (9,824 aged under 18 in 2016, including dependents, accounting for 25% of asylum seekers).

Children and young people can arrive with their families through the asylum dispersal process and through refugee resettlement programmes, or they may arrive unaccompanied.

Children may have more opportunities to integrate as they are immersed in school, but this should not be taken for granted. The Education theme of New Scots has developed specific actions relating to supporting young refugees and asylum seekers (and their parents, carers or guardians) to be aware of and understand their education options, what they are entitled to and how to access support.

The strategy has a focus to ensure that children and young people can access services on a similar basis to anyone else resident in Scotland.

We will take into account that the experience of child refugees will be different from adults when planning and implementing actions. The strategy also recognises that children and young people may have had traumatic experiences in their formative years, may have missed significant amounts of education, and may require additional support to access the services they need and opportunities to participate in society.

#### Disability:

The World Health Organisation (WHO) World Report on Disability, 2011, highlights that disability disproportionately affects vulnerable populations. It also notes that the population with a moderate or severe disability is likely to increase in conflict-affected populations. Academic research considering disabilities among refugee and conflict-affected populations report that refugees and displaced persons living with disabilities can be the most excluded and neglected of displaced persons. There are a number of reasons for this, including their ability to leave and seek safety; their exposure to protection risks and discrimination when displaced; the loss of family members or caregivers who supported them; and cultural attitudes to disability in their home country which may have excluded them from access to services and make them wary of disclosing disability.

The UK's recent refugee resettlement programmes have included vulnerability due to disability or medical needs as an element of the resettlement eligibility criteria. This includes refugees who have a health need for which treatment is inaccessible in a first asylum country and survivors of violence and/or torture.

The strategy has a strong focus on promoting access to health services, including mental health care, and other services.

#### Sex:

Home Office statistics show that during 2016 there were 7,680 women and girls who were the main applicant for an asylum application to the UK and a further 4,588 women and girls who were dependents in an asylum application.

Home Office quarterly statistics do not provide a gendered breakdown of refugees resettled through the Syrian Resettlement programme.

However, it is understood that the majority of refugees resettled to Scotland have been family groups. UNHCR have indicated that women and girls can be particularly at risk in asylum countries, which can make them more likely to be referred for resettlement programmes. The UK's programme has a vulnerability criteria.

The strategy highlights and recognises different gender experiences and will consider this when planning and implementing the actions.

#### Gender reassignment:

There is a lack of any evidence relating to gender reassignment amongst refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland. The strategy is aimed at ensuring a rights based approach for all refugees and asylum seekers.

#### Sexual orientation:

There is a lack of evidence relating to issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers because of sexual orientation and their experience of integration. UNHCR recognises that in addition to severe discrimination and violence in their countries of origin, LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees are frequently subject to continued harm while in forced displacement.

Experimental Home Office statistics published in November 2017 estimate that 6% of all asylum claims made in the UK between 1 July 2015 and 31 March 2017 included sexual orientation as grounds for the claim (this may have been the sole basis or one of multiple grounds).

The strategy is aimed at ensuring a rights based approach for all refugees and asylum seekers. The strategy recognises that people seeking safety on the basis of their LGBTI identity can face particular challenges and find it difficult to be open about their identity with other people, authorities or services. The strategy will take into account the different experience which LGBTI refugees and asylum seekers may face and consider this as part of planning and implementing actions. A specific action has been set out for the Housing theme to start dialogue with LGBTI organisations in regard to issues raised through the New

Scots engagement process in relation to accessing suitable accommodation and support.

#### Race:

All refugees and asylum seekers come from minority ethnic communities, and refugees and asylum seekers may have fled persecution in their homeland because of their race. People from minority ethnic minorities can be at particular risk of discrimination and persecution.

Home Office statistics for asylum applications do not provide a breakdown of the grounds for an application, but the nationality of applicants is published. This cannot be seen as a direct indicator of race for asylum applicants but can be indicative of the diversity of racial background. In 2016, the highest number of asylum applicants in the UK were from: Middle East (3,907), South Asia (2,941) and Sub-Saharan Africa (2,298). Statistics also show that at the end of 2016 the highest number of asylum seekers living in Scotland were from: East Asia (1,003), Middle East (903) and Sub-Saharan Africa (671).

Social attitude surveys have shown that between 2010 and 2015 there has been a greater acceptance of diversity, but a substantial minority of the population still have concerns about the impact on Scotland's identity. The social attitudes report indicates that increased contact between people from different backgrounds has an impact which contributes to decreasing discrimination.

The strategy is aimed at ensuring a rights based approach for all refugees and asylum seekers. The Communities, Culture and Social Connections theme in particular will contribute to increasing opportunities and reducing barriers for participation in cultural and community activities.

#### Religion or belief:

Many refugees and asylum seekers have fled persecution in their homeland due to their association with a particular religion or belief.

The strategy focuses on eliminating unlawful discrimination through religion or belief by embedding a focus on promoting good relations throughout. It recognises the valuable contribution that faith communities can make to supporting refugees and asylum seekers. The Communities, Culture and Social Connections theme in particular will contribute to increasing opportunities and reducing barriers for participation in cultural and community activities.

## **Recommendations and Conclusion**

The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018 - 2022 will not adversely disadvantage any equality groups.

The strategy is grounded in equality legislation and policy.

Planning and implementation of actions under each of the seven themes contained in the strategy will recognise the needs of all those who have protected characteristics or specific vulnerabilities. The strategy will also take steps to prompt consideration of the particular experience of: children and young people; women; and LGBTI people, as part of a person-centred approach to the planning and implementation of actions.

The Core Group will monitor and review progress against the overarching outcomes of New Scots and have a role in ensuring that themes are using the principles of the New Scots Approach when planning and delivering actions.

Each theme will complete a monitoring form following their meetings, and these will be shared with the Core Group to capture progress made on delivering the outcomes. Consideration of the experience of particular groups will be prompted through an Ensuring Equal Access section of the monitoring form. These monitoring reports will help form a yearly progress update which will be published.

There has been strong participation from refugees and asylum seekers in developing the strategy. The Core Group has indicated to all theme groups that it is imperative that this continues and that refugees and asylum seekers remain at the heart of the strategy. The monitoring reports have been developed with a field to capture engagement of refugees and asylum seekers.