

# Evaluation of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018- 2022

## Key Findings Summary

This is a summary of key findings from [an Evaluation of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022](#). The evaluation was prepared by **ScotCen Social Research** and **Matter of Focus**. Evaluation findings are the views of the researchers and do not necessarily represent the views of the Scottish Government, Scottish Ministers or the project partners.



The evaluation was commissioned by Scottish Government in partnership with COSLA, the Scottish Refugee Council and the UNESCO Chair for Refugee Integration through the Languages and the Arts at the University of Glasgow



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# Introduction

## The Strategy

The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022 was developed by the Scottish Government, the Convention Of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) and other partner organisations.



The Strategy promotes a **welcoming Scotland** where refugees and people seeking asylum are able to **rebuild their lives** and **feel part of Scottish society** from the day that they arrive. The Strategy also aims to support anyone working with refugees and people seeking asylum in Scotland.

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The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022 had four main aims:

1. Refugees and asylum seekers are **safe, welcomed** and are able to **build relationships and connections** with other people in Scotland.
2. Refugees and asylum seekers **understand their rights, responsibilities and entitlements** and are able to live full and independent lives.
3. Refugees and asylum seekers are **able to access services** which recognise and meet their rights and needs.
4. The rights, needs and goals of refugees and asylum seekers **help to shape policy, planning and laws**.

The Strategy has been used :

- ❖ when designing new programmes of work or improving ones that already exist;
- ❖ to apply for money for new and existing work to support refugees and people seeking asylum;
- ❖ to build relationships between organisations so that projects could be worked on together.

## The research

To help understand what the Strategy achieved between 2018-2022 the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) hired the [Scottish Centre for Social Research](#) (ScotCen) and [Matter of Focus](#) to do a type of research called an evaluation. An evaluation tries to understand the difference that a policy or action has made.

The research for this evaluation included:



**Two** workshops with people in organisations that helped to create the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy and are using it to support refugees and people seeking asylum in Scotland.



Workshops with **12** projects working with refugees and people seeking asylum in Scotland. These projects were funded through the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).



Interviews with **30** people from different kinds of organisations in Scotland that work with or support refugees and people seeking asylum, known as 'stakeholders'.



Interviews with **21** refugees and people seeking asylum living in Scotland.



An online survey of **250** people from organisations that work with or support refugees and people seeking asylum in Scotland.

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## The results

The purpose of the evaluation was to:

- ❖ understand what progress had been made in achieving the Strategy's outcomes;
- ❖ understand what factors helped to achieve the outcomes;

- ❖ understand what factors made achieving the outcomes difficult; and
- ❖ understand what learning can be used to help with the development of the next version of the Strategy.

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## Awareness of the Strategy

To understand how well the Strategy had reached different groups of people in Scotland, the researchers studied information from the online survey and from the stakeholder interviews.



Most people who answered the survey said that they were aware of the strategy. 33% said that they had a high awareness of it, while only 15% of people said they had little to no awareness of the strategy.

The stakeholders who were interviewed felt that **awareness of the Strategy was high among those who worked in the government, in policy organisations, or in refugee and asylum support organisations**, but that the general public have little or no knowledge or awareness of it.

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## Performance of the Strategy

To understand how effective the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy had been in Scotland, the researchers studied the answers given in the online survey, the stakeholder interviews and from the workshop meetings with the 12 projects.



Most people who completed the survey and took part in the interviews said that the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy had a 'very positive' or 'positive' impact on the work of their organisation.

The things that they felt helped the performance of the Strategy were:



**Money from the Asylum Migration Integration Fund** was used to create new projects or support existing ones.



**New partnerships were developed** between local authorities, third sector organisations, community groups, and the Strategy's partners.



**Better information sharing** and support was given to refugees and people seeking asylum.



The **positive messaging** of the Strategy motivated people to work together to implement the Strategy.



The **hard work** of the people and organisations supporting refugees and people seeking asylum.



The way the Strategy has been able to **change and adapt** because of new resettlement programs and changing UK policy.

The things that were viewed as making the Strategy less effective were:



The **COVID-19 pandemic** made it more difficult for organisations to put the Strategy into action, because some of their staff and resources had to respond to the pandemic. The pandemic also caused some staff to be very stressed and overworked.



Scottish Government and organisations working with refugees and people seeking asylum did not have enough **money or resources** to enable them to put the Strategy into action.



The **UK Government's overall approach** to asylum was different from the approach in Scotland.



**Different teams** in the Scottish Government working to support refugees and people seeking asylum **did not always work together effectively**. This meant that the needs of refugees and people seeking asylum were not always reflected in the work of different parts of the Government.



**Low awareness of the Strategy** across different groups of people including public and voluntary sector organisations and the general public.



The **impact of the Ukrainian resettlement programme** which created a lot of new work for organisations supporting refugees.

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## Success of the outcomes

The evaluation aimed to understand what progress has been made towards the outcomes of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy.

**Outcome 1: Refugees and asylum seekers live in safe, welcoming and cohesive communities and are able to build diverse relationships and connections.**



Most of the survey respondents said that this outcome had been 'very' or 'quite' successfully achieved. Fewer respondents agreed that as a result of the Strategy 'refugees and asylum seekers feel more welcome in Scotland', or that 'Scotland's communities are safer for refugees and asylum seekers'.

Refugees and people seeking asylum, and other stakeholders who were interviewed, had mixed views. Some said that refugees and people seeking asylum had received a very warm welcome in Scotland and viewed it as their home. Others said that they had much more difficult experiences. Some had experienced racial abuse, feeling isolated and finding it hard to meet people or learn English.

The things which were viewed as making it easier for refugees and people seeking asylum to live in safe, welcoming and cohesive communities included:



Being able to build **strong connections and relationships** with other refugees and people seeking asylum as well as people in local communities and staff from support organisations.



**Support from organisations** working with refugees and people seeking asylum helped people to feel welcome in their communities by providing a wide range of local services and activities.



Receiving strong **support when they first arrived in Scotland**. In some local authorities support was provided to some refugees by dedicated local authority support workers.



**Opportunities for employment and volunteering**, which helped with mental health, language development, a sense of belonging and being able to build diverse relationships and connections.

The things which made it harder for refugees and people seeking asylum to live in safe, welcoming and unified communities included:



**Experiences of racism and feelings of being alone and left out** in local communities due to a lack of cultural understanding.

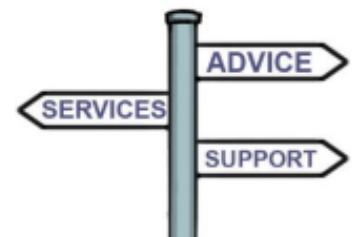


**Time spent waiting for asylum claims to be determined** led to people feeling less welcome in Scotland and feeling very isolated, less welcome and unsafe.



**Other barriers included:** language difficulties; difficulties using transport; difficulties getting housing; and restricted access to employment and educational opportunities.

**Outcome 2: Refugees and asylum seekers understand their rights, responsibilities and entitlements and are able to exercise them to pursue full and independent lives.**



The opinions about this outcome were very different among the people who answered the survey and the people who were interviewed.

Just over half of the people who answered the survey said this outcome had been successfully achieved. A higher percentage either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that 'the Strategy had supported increased awareness among refugees and asylum seekers of their rights and entitlements'.



The things which made it easier for refugees and people seeking asylum to understand and exercise their rights, responsibilities and entitlements included:



**Receiving support** from local authorities, third sector support organisations and community groups.



**Having access to translated information and interpreters.** This made it easier for refugees and people seeking asylum to access legal aid, welfare/social security support, employment support, housing support and the ability to volunteer.

The things which made it harder for refugees and people seeking asylum to understand and exercise their rights, responsibilities and entitlements included:



**A lack of clear, appropriate and accessible information** about the rights and entitlements of refugees and people seeking asylum.



**Language difficulties and not being able to use technology** such as computers or the internet in English. This meant that some people had little or no access to translated information or interpreters.



For people seeking asylum, a **lack of information made it harder to understand the process** or to complete the asylum application paperwork.



**Not being able to work.** Reasons for this included:

- ❖ people seeking asylum do not have the legal right to work in the UK.
- ❖ the qualifications, learning and experience that refugees have gained before coming to Scotland are not always accepted or recognised by employers.
- ❖ if a refugee has limited English-language skills this can make it hard to apply for jobs or mean that they might not get a job they would otherwise have been able to do.

**Outcome 3: Refugees and asylum seekers are able to access well-coordinated services, which recognise and meet their rights and needs.**



Most of the people who answered the survey agreed that the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy made refugee integration easier by helping organisations in Scotland to work together. Almost three fifths (57%) thought this helped to make services better for refugees and people seeking asylum.

The things that made it easier for refugees and people seeking asylum to access well-coordinated services included:



**Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)-funded projects helped refugees and people seeking asylum to access services**, including: support to learn English, childcare, food and mental health support, free transport and support to access computers and the internet.



The **Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) funding helped organisations to expand their work** to reach new groups of refugees and people seeking asylum, and to focus on new places, including areas where service provision had been less good in the past.



The Strategy **helped organisations to work together** and supported new relationships and connections.



The Strategy **brought more awareness** of the challenges facing refugees and people seeking asylum.

The things that made it harder for refugees and people seeking asylum being able to access well-coordinated services included:



**Not enough support to learn English** being offered in some areas, including college-based courses.



**Differences in the services and support** given to refugees and people seeking asylum depending on where they live.



**The cost of transport and not having enough transport** in some areas made it harder for some people to reach the services they need.



**Not having enough housing** to meet the needs of refugees and people seeking asylum.

**Outcome 4: Policy, strategic planning and legislation, which have an impact on refugees and asylum seekers, are informed by their rights, needs and aspirations.**



People who responded to the survey and those who took part in an interview felt that the fourth outcome of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy was the least well achieved.

The things which made it easier for policy, strategic planning and legislation to be informed by the rights, needs and aspirations of refugees and people seeking asylum included:



Having a strategy that promotes **a strong positive message** about making Scotland a welcoming place for refugees and people seeking asylum.

The things which made it harder for policy, strategic planning and legislation to be informed by the rights, needs and aspirations of refugees and people seeking asylum included:



**The fact that asylum and refugee policy is mostly controlled by the UK Government** made work to support refugees and people seeking asylum more difficult in Scotland.



However, participants also said that there was **more that could be done in Scotland to support the needs of refugees and people seeking asylum**. For example the Scottish Government could make support for learning English better across Scotland; give free bus passes to all refugees and people seeking asylum; or do more to stop racism and isolation.



**A lack of funding to support the Strategy**, as well as a lack of funding for the organisations and projects working directly with refugees and people seeking asylum.

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## Recommendations



The researchers made suggestions for improving the next New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy based on what they found out in their research:



The next Strategy should **focus on what more can be achieved using the powers Scotland has already**. Although the Scottish Government does not control UK refugee or asylum policy, Scotland does have the power to provide more high-quality services, support and information for refugees and people seeking asylum, for example in areas such as learning English, housing, employment and education.



**More funding should be given to the next New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy** to make sure that the things that need to be done can be done.



The **work being done** to support refugees and people seeking asylum by local and national government, third sector and voluntary organisations needs to **be supported to continue**, and new work should be encouraged and supported to be successful.



**More funding and support** should be given to organisations and projects so that refugees in different areas in Scotland, and refugees who have come to Scotland through different resettlement schemes can get fair and equal access to support.



There should be **more accessible information** about the rights and entitlements of refugees and people seeking asylum. This includes information in many languages and access to interpreters.



**The Strategy could be supported with laws** to ensure that the rights and entitlements of refugees and people seeking asylum are fully supported in Scotland.



More work should be done within Scottish communities to **improve understanding** of refugees and people seeking asylum and to help stop racism.



The new Strategy should have **aims that can be measured**. Work should be done from the beginning to collect information and data about progress towards achieving the Strategy outcomes.



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