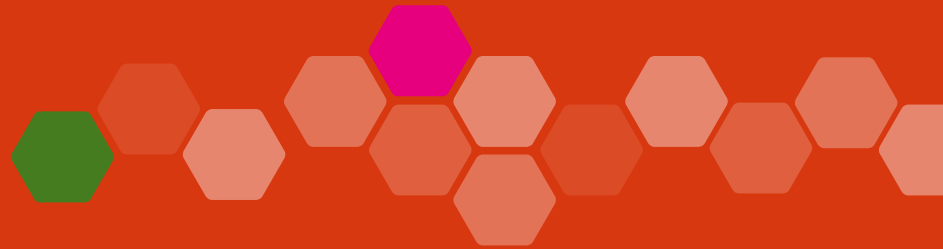# The role of local authorities in refugee integration in Scotland

PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND PLACES

social
research

The role of local authorities in refugee integration in Scotland
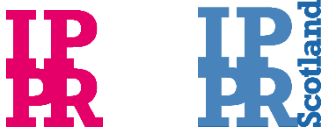
An IPPR report for COSLA and the Scottish Government

Contents

List of abbreviations

ACRS – Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme

AMIF – Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

ARAP – Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy

ARE – Appeals Rights Exhausted

CLD – Community Learning and Development

COSLA – Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

EAL – English as an Additional Language

ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages

GIRFEC – Getting It Right For Every Child

IOM – International Organization for Migration

NRPF – No Recourse to Public Funds

NSRIDP – New Scots Refugee Integration Delivery Project

NTS – National Transfer Scheme

SMP – Strategic Migration Partnership

UASC – Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UKRS – UK Resettlement Scheme

VCRS – Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme

VPRS – Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

Executive summary

Over the last decade, Scotland has welcomed thousands of refugees and people seeking asylum. As the UK Government has introduced new humanitarian protection programmes in response to a series of global crises, Scotland has played a leading role in receiving new arrivals. Local authorities in Scotland have been at the forefront of delivering these programmes, providing a comprehensive package of integration support for refugees and people seeking asylum.

Local authorities have been required to adapt quickly in order to implement successive schemes. In doing so, they have developed extensive experience, learning and insights about what has worked well and less well.

Recognising the importance of the experience and expertise that local authorities have developed through this work, in February 2022 Scottish Government and COSLA commissioned IPPR and IPPR Scotland to undertake new research to document some of the learning and insights that local authorities have developed, alongside the challenges they have faced in doing so.

The aims of the project include identifying the operational functions and statutory obligations of local authorities in their delivery of humanitarian protection programmes; describing and assessing their different approaches to humanitarian protection and the coordinating function of COSLA; exploring opportunities and challenges; and understanding the impact of reserved and devolved policy for local authorities undertaking this work. The research is intended to help inform future approaches to refugee integration at both the local and the national level.

The report explores and assesses the role of Scotland's 32 local authorities in supporting the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum. It draws on a range of quantitative and qualitative research activities, including:

- An online survey for local authorities and partner organisations, with a total of 103 responses (July-October 2022)

- In-depth case studies investigating the work of three local authorities (Aberdeenshire, Dundee and Na h-Eileanan Siar) through focus groups and interviews (June-November 2022)

- A policy workshop with local authority resettlement officers from across Scotland (October 2022).

Key research findings

The delivery of integration support for refugees and people seeking asylum in Scotland involves collaboration between the UK and Scottish governments, local government, service providers, and the third sector. While the UK Government is responsible for setting immigration and asylum policy, the Scottish Government has powers over areas such as housing, education and training, which directly shape the provision of integration. Crucial to the delivery of integration work is the New Scots Refugee

[Integration Strategy 2018-2022](#), which provides a framework for welcoming refugees and people seeking asylum to Scotland.

In practice, local authorities are critical in providing integration support on the ground. All 32 of Scotland's local authorities have been involved in refugee resettlement and since 2015, they have scaled up their humanitarian protection programmes and refugee integration work in response to a series of international crises. They have adapted flexibly to unpredictable refugee patterns, including a slowdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and a rapid surge in arrivals in 2021 and 2022 with the introduction of the Afghan and Ukrainian schemes. Moreover, local authorities are increasingly playing a central role in supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, who are now dispersed across Scotland via the mandated National Transfer Scheme, in addition to supporting people in Scotland who have arrived via the UK Government's mandated programme of asylum dispersal.

As the representative body for local authorities in Scotland, COSLA plays both a vital operational role – including through coordinating the matching of resettled refugees to local authorities – and an advocacy role, through communicating the views of local authorities to the UK and Scottish Governments. This dual role is unique in the UK and has helped to inform the design and implementation of refugee and asylum policies and improve the coordination of the humanitarian protection programmes in Scotland.

Successes and challenges

The survey and fieldwork explored successes and challenges across six key indicators derived from the themes of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy: education; employment; housing; welfare rights; health and wellbeing; and communities, culture and social connection. The research found that local authorities faced a number of challenges in delivering humanitarian protection programmes in Scotland, including high levels of demand, shortages of affordable housing, and stretched resources. But the evidence demonstrated how local authorities had adapted to these challenges by delivering provision using innovative and collaborative practices to facilitate refugee integration.

Education

Education plays a critical role in refugee integration: it can support skills development, labour market participation, and community integration. Local authorities have responsibilities for education in a number of areas, including providing school places for children and English language training for adults on the Home Office's resettlement schemes.

Ensuring children are supported in school is a high priority for local authorities, despite more recent challenges across Scotland due to limited school places and provision for children with English as an additional language. Survey responses highlighted the expertise built by local English as an Additional Language (EAL) services and support provided by extra-curricular activities to help children learn English and build their confidence. From the fieldwork in Dundee, there was an example of a 'homework club'

for refugee students set up as a partnership between the EAL and adult ESOL teams, which had been widely attended.

The survey and case study research found that many local authorities are taking an innovative and needs-led approach to ESOL provision, in the face of high demand and funding pressures. This was delivered via a mix of council-run courses and partnerships with local colleges and third sector organisations, including both online and face-to-face sessions. Aberdeenshire, for instance, has developed a joined-up ESOL system between the council's Community Learning and Development (CLD) team, WEA Scotland (a charitable provider of adult education), and local colleges, where all new arrivals are initially assessed by the CLD team and then signposted to appropriate provision. In Na h-Eileanan Siar, despite practical challenges with resourcing ESOL, there was also evidence of creative work on the part of the council – for instance, in recruiting volunteers to provide informal language support.

Overall, the research found that local authorities are generally delivering high-quality education provision for refugees and people seeking asylum. While there are a number of pressures due to limited school places, lack of resourcing, and the recent scale of arrivals, local authorities have often responded creatively. ESOL provision was one of the most inventive areas of delivery for local authorities, with examples of council workers collaborating with employability teams, blending language learning with orientation support, and engaging volunteers to help people practice their conversational English in an informal setting.

Employment

Securing employment and in-work progression are central for refugee integration. Research suggests that, while refugees bring a diverse set of skills and experiences, they also face particular barriers in the labour market – including language barriers and a lack of formal recognition of professional qualifications. There is therefore often a need for bespoke employability support as part of supporting refugee integration.

Evidence from the survey suggests that councils typically support labour market integration of refugees through their employability teams, alongside partnerships with a wide range of different suppliers, including Jobcentre Plus / DWP, Skills Development Scotland, Fair Start Scotland, as well as further education colleges, charities and social enterprises. Activities may involve support with CV and interview preparation, identifying training opportunities, and recruitment events with employers.

A common challenge raised through the fieldwork was the difficulty for refugees to have their prior skills and qualifications recognised in Scotland and the wider UK. There is ongoing work in Scotland to support skills matching, though it was argued this was geared towards those with skills at intermediate level or above and more could be done to support those with other skillsets.

The fieldwork highlighted the thorough and creative work of many local authorities in delivering employability provision in Scotland, with interviewees illustrating a variety of success stories of local authorities supporting individuals to find work. For local authorities with smaller refugee populations, the benefits of a person-centred and tailored approach to supporting people into employment were clear. For instance, in

Na h-Eileanan Siar, the council takes a needs-led approach by working in partnership with the training officer at the DWP locally to facilitate access to training opportunities, resulting in examples of individuals harnessing their entrepreneurial potential to open small businesses.

Case studies also highlighted the importance of joint working between ESOL and employability teams. For instance, in Dundee, the council's ESOL and employability teams developed an eight-week course to help people's language skills and employment prospects and supported them to connect with local employers.

Housing

The provision of safe and affordable housing is a fundamental pillar to successful refugee integration, because it is foundational to securing a decent standard of living. Yet housing has become one of the greatest challenges in the delivery of humanitarian protection programmes for local authorities, with Scotland and indeed the UK facing an ongoing and protracted housing crisis. The pressure on housing stocks and lengthy homelessness lists place constraints on the ability of local authorities to accommodate those seeking protection across different schemes.

In practical terms, the research survey demonstrated that the delivery of housing provision involves engagement with council housing and homelessness teams, as well as local housing associations and the voluntary sector. Accommodation options include social housing and the private rental sector, with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children often housed in supported accommodation, residential homes or foster placements.

Under the VPRS and UKRS Home Office resettlement schemes local authorities developed an effective approach to resettlement because they had adequate time to plan, source and prepare housing matched to those who arrive directly from third countries. However, a series of specific and acute challenges have emerged around housing as part of the Afghan and Ukraine schemes. Thousands of people have stayed in temporary accommodation, such as bridging hotels and cruise ships, for protracted periods of time because of the limited supply of longer-term housing options. Refugee families have at times been reluctant to relocate to some local authorities, especially in rural areas. Councils have also struggled to find suitable properties for the many larger families on the Afghan schemes.

To address housing challenges, local authorities have been exploring innovative solutions, such as purchasing and reintroducing larger properties into the letting pool and partnering with local charities to increase accommodation options for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. In the case of the Afghan schemes, local authorities have adapted HMOs to meet the needs of larger families and have procured multiple properties in the same street or neighbourhood. This approach is intended to encourage moves to more rural areas by enabling family members or friends to live alongside each other.

The research found that housing is one of the greatest challenges for local authorities and there is clear room for improvement in this area of provision. Local authorities were making great efforts to find suitable solutions in response to the limited affordable

housing available and the pressures of the Afghan and Ukraine schemes, though many of these measures were work in progress at the time of fieldwork. Housing will be an ongoing priority for local government in delivering integration, given many of the challenges in this area – such as the lack of affordable housing and the design of the recent humanitarian schemes – are deeply entrenched and hard to resolve at the local level alone.

Welfare rights

Access to welfare benefits plays a crucial role in the integration of refugees through supporting household incomes and protecting against poverty. In Scotland, welfare policy is partially devolved, resulting in a combination of UK, Scottish, and local government administration of benefits.

The research survey and case studies highlight numerous instances of local authority good practice in facilitating access to welfare and helping people to understand their rights and entitlements. Some councils have dedicated money, benefits, and debt officers who provide budgeting advice, assistance with navigating the benefits system, and benefit checks. These measures promote financial independence and alleviate pressures on integration teams. For instance, in Aberdeenshire, the council employs a money advice officer who offers ongoing specialist welfare and financial guidance to refugees, ensuring they are aware of their entitlements and assisting them in applying for benefits.

Overall, the research indicated that many local authorities had good-quality provision in place at the local level for advice on money and benefits. However, concerns were also raised about the implications of the cost of living crisis, suggesting that further consideration may be necessary for how to adapt integration services and support to the current economic context.

Health and wellbeing

Good physical and mental health is widely recognised as a crucial factor in refugee integration, given its foundational role in supporting personal wellbeing and prosperity. But refugees and people seeking asylum tend to have particular health challenges – for instance, they are particularly likely to have mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression – and they may also face language barriers and discrimination when accessing healthcare.

The research survey revealed that local authorities engage in various activities to support the health of refugees and people seeking asylum – including assisting with GP and dentist registration, arranging eye examinations and dental hygiene appointments, and coordinating interpreter services. Collaboration with Health and Social Care Partnerships, local health services, other council departments (such as social work), and the third sector has been integral in delivering these services.

According to the survey responses, challenges exist regarding the high levels of trauma experienced by refugees and the capacity of mental health services to meet their needs. Efforts are being made to address this, including initiatives such as outdoor therapeutic programmes aimed at improving the physical and mental health of

refugees and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Partnerships between the Mental Health Foundation and multiple councils have also been formed to implement community-based projects that raise awareness about mental health.

The case studies underscore the significance of multi-agency collaboration in delivering health services to refugees and people seeking asylum. The presence of health leads within NHS services, for instance, was found to be particularly beneficial, as they can take the lead on difficult areas like GP registration and are likely to have better influence with colleagues compared to external professionals.

The research suggests that there has been effective partnership working between local authorities and health services in the delivery of humanitarian protection programmes. However, there is an ongoing gap in the area of mental health provision. While there is evidence of innovative work taking place on the ground to address this, improvements in mental health services and early intervention and support are important priorities going forward.

Communities, culture and social connections

A central facet of refugee integration is the forming of social connections, both in terms of 'bonding' (relationships between people with shared identities) and 'bridging' (relationships between people with different identities). Evidence suggests that social connections have a positive relationship with other indicators of refugee integration, particularly in the case of health and language.

Local authorities have an important role to play in creating the conditions for social connections to flourish. Survey findings highlight the diverse efforts made by local authorities, such as organising summer activities, cultural celebrations, and leisure and sports programmes. Partnerships with the third sector and community organisations have proven to be essential in delivering effective support in this area.

Case study research illustrates successful examples of good practice, such as Aberdeenshire's Al-Amal and Friends of Al-Amal projects, which have empowered New Scots families through employment cafes, cultural trips, and volunteer-led initiatives. Dundee's approach connecting ESOL and community development and Na h-Eileanan Siar's engagement of volunteers for language support and befriending activities were other notable examples.

The research found many instances across Scotland of successful community-led interventions working with refugees to support social connections, often involving partnerships between councils and charities or the involvement of volunteers. But it was also recognised that in order to effectively meet local demand for events and activities, more could be done to resource the community and third sector organisations supporting social integration on the ground.

Comparing experiences across Scotland

The research explored differences in support for refugee integration depending on the geography of local authorities. While the survey results indicated there were broadly similar levels of local authority provision across urban, rural and mixed rural-urban

areas, it also suggested that more remote areas and island communities tended to have limited community infrastructure (i.e. local community groups and civil society activists) for meeting the needs of refugees and people seeking asylum.

The research highlighted opportunities and challenges for refugee integration in both rural and urban areas. Research interviews found that urban areas tend to have more opportunities for refugees to secure employment, while rural areas have less access to infrastructure and services such as legal advice. Research participants in Dundee highlighted how, in a compact city with a comprehensive bus network, it was relatively straightforward to organise integration activities and provision from a central hub, which contrasts with the transport and access difficulties for communities in more rural areas.

On the other hand, findings from the case study research suggested that lower population numbers and stronger local identities in rural areas can offer their own benefits – for instance, making it easier to set up local community projects like the refugee-led group Al-Amal in Aberdeenshire. Close community ties – combined with smaller numbers of refugees – can also allow for a more personalised approach to council provision, as was clear in Na h-Eileanan Siar.

Exploring the impact of policy and legislation

The work of Scottish local authorities in supporting refugee integration sits within a complex network of devolved and reserved legislation. The research sought to explore how different UK and Scottish Government policies and schemes impacted on local authorities' activities.

According to the online survey, around half of respondents thought that the UK Resettlement Scheme and the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme were 'fairly' or 'very effective'. There was support for the funding, coordination and advance planning involved in the Syrian schemes.

By contrast, only a third of respondents thought that the Afghan and Ukraine schemes were 'fairly' or 'very effective'. The Home Office and DLUHC administered Afghan relocation schemes were criticised for being too slow and allowing local authority properties offered to families to remain unoccupied for long periods of time. In the case of the Ukraine schemes, the key challenges focused on the scale of new arrivals and the lack of consultation with local authorities.

Research participants across the fieldwork also highlighted difficulties over the operation of the NTS for UASC. These focused on the short lead-in time for new arrivals, the lack of funding available, limited housing options, and Home Office inflexibility.

Survey respondents were generally welcoming of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy: around three fifths of respondents said the impacts were somewhat or very positive. Research participants thought it was a valuable framework and some council officers were directly applying it to their local integration work, though others felt that they were doing this work already independently of the strategy.

Looking ahead and policy implications

The research explored the future of refugee integration in local authorities in Scotland and the implications of the findings for future policy.

In the online survey, respondents were asked about the greatest challenges facing local authorities in delivering humanitarian protection programmes and facilitating refugee integration. The challenges rated most highly included the cost of living crisis, insufficient housing, and insufficient staffing.

The research also explored lessons learned to inform future improvements and changes. Research participants placed a focus on the importance of partnership working, particularly through collaboration between councils and the third sector. Partnership working between councils was also a common theme discussed, including regional partnerships between neighbouring areas – with COSLA playing a critical role in helping to share good practice.

The research findings – and in particular the workshop held with local authority officers – draw out a number of important implications for future policy:

- First, local authorities highlighted the benefits of a community-based partnership strategy, involving close partnerships with external organisations based in local communities.

- Second, research participants spoke of the need for a renewed focus on ESOL and employability support, given ongoing barriers over skills recognition and language learning.

- Third, participants called for more joined-up thinking within local authorities – whereby buy-in for the work of the refugee resettlement team is secured across the local authority, including housing, health, ESOL, employability, children's services and other staff.

There were also lessons for the next iteration of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy:

- Researchers heard that the strategy could be more ambitious and outcome-oriented, setting out clear targets to drive forward improvements in provision.

- Consultation with local government was considered to be central to the success of the strategy, to ensure it accounted for local housing and resourcing pressures.

- It was argued that a consistent approach should be taken to funding, rights and entitlements, and service provision for all arrivals. This would help to shift policy from a crisis-driven response towards a more sustainable model of integration which aims to draw parity and consistency across all humanitarian protection schemes.

- Finally, the case was made for the strategy to come with new funding attached, in order for local authorities to have the necessary resources to deliver effectively on its outcomes.

1. Introduction

Since 2015, Scotland has welcomed an increasing number of refugees and people seeking asylum in reaction to a wave of recent humanitarian crises, from the civil war in Syria to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. At the forefront of the response to new refugee arrivals has been Scotland's local authorities, who have played a pivotal role in delivering humanitarian protection programmes and supporting refugee integration. In a complex and fast-moving policy environment, local authorities have adapted to a succession of new schemes to deliver a comprehensive package of integration support for refugees and people seeking asylum.

Through their work, local authorities in Scotland have developed a range of learning and experience in supporting refugee integration. At the same time, they have faced challenges in delivering integration support, particularly in response to the recent increase in refugee arrivals on the bespoke Afghan and Ukrainian humanitarian routes. Yet there has been little research to explore how local authorities have delivered humanitarian protection programmes and what can be learnt from their experiences. Given their wealth of expertise, it is critical to reflect on the work of local authorities in recent years to help inform future refugee integration strategy at both the local and the national level.

Purpose of the research

This report aims to explore and assess the approaches of Scotland's 32 local authorities in supporting the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum. It intends to offer an in-depth understanding of the role of local authorities in facilitating refugee integration in Scotland, including the unique role of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) in coordinating refugee resettlement activities and advocating on behalf of local authorities to shape refugee integration policy.

Local authorities in Scotland have built up considerable knowledge and experience in refugee integration since 2015, as delivery on the ground has had to respond at pace to new policy developments and humanitarian crises. By capturing the different approaches taken by local authorities across Scotland, their partnership working with other statutory agencies and the third sector, and the coordinating function of COSLA, the report aims to illuminate the work of local authorities in order to learn from recent successes and challenges. The ambition is for the report to inform both policy and practice, including the next iteration of the New Scots refugee integration strategy, as well as future local authority approaches to supporting refugees and people seeking asylum.

The report is the culmination of a research project on the role of local authorities in delivering humanitarian protection programmes and facilitating refugee integration, commissioned by the Scottish Government and COSLA's Migration, Population and Diversity team. This is part of the New Scots Refugee Integration Delivery Project (NSRIDP), a two-year (2020-2022) EU-funded programme aimed at understanding, documenting and expanding the impact and reach of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy (2018-2022). The programme is supported by the European

Commission's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and involves a partnership between the Scottish Government, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), the Scottish Refugee Council and the UNESCO Chair at the University of Glasgow.

One of the core aims of the New Scots Refugee Integration Delivery Project is to understand and assess current approaches to refugee integration in Scotland to build on good practice and support innovative approaches to this work. As part of the overarching NSRIDP work, the eight aims of this project are to:

1. Identify the operational functions and statutory obligations of Scottish local authorities in their delivery of humanitarian protection programmes, including refugee resettlement and integration, asylum dispersal and supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

2. Describe and assess different approaches to humanitarian protection work across Scotland's 32 local authorities.

3. Explore the coordinating function of COSLA's Strategic Migration Partnership and its effectiveness in supporting different humanitarian programmes from the perspective of local authorities.

4. Identify the opportunities and challenges facing local authorities in delivering humanitarian protection programmes and facilitating refugee integration.

5. Understand how devolved and reserved policy impacts on the work undertaken by local authorities.

6. Generate insight and learning for local authorities and other stakeholders in Scotland, identifying and highlighting areas of good practice as well as challenges, gaps and areas of this work that have potential for improvement.

7. Present and communicate findings and outputs in ways that are accessible and useful to a wide range of audiences, including local authority practitioners and policymakers.

8. Generate actionable insights and findings that can be considered and reflected within the next iteration of Scotland's New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy

This report refers throughout to 'humanitarian protection programmes'. While the meaning of this term can vary depending on the precise context, for the purposes of this report, 'humanitarian protection programmes' refers to the UK resettlement and relocation schemes, placements for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, as well as service provision as part of asylum dispersal and those in emergency asylum accommodation.

Overview of methodology

The project has involved a range of quantitative and qualitative research activities. These included:

- An online survey for local authorities and partner organisations to find out about their delivery of humanitarian protection and refugee integration programmes.

- In-depth case studies investigating the work of three local authorities: Aberdeenshire, Dundee and Na h-Eileanan Siar. The case study work included interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders working to deliver humanitarian protection programmes and facilitate refugee integration, as well as with refugees and people seeking asylum.

- A policy workshop involving local authority resettlement officers from across Scotland.

Chapter Two sets out the methodology behind the research in more depth.

Context to the research

The policy landscape for the delivery of humanitarian protection programmes and refugee integration in Scotland is a complex one, involving a number of different actors working in collaboration. This section sets out the current policy context, as well as the main details of current and recent humanitarian protection routes.

The role of UK, Scottish and local Government in refugee integration in Scotland

Immigration and asylum policy is reserved to the UK Government. The UK Government – primarily the Home Office – therefore has overall control and responsibility for humanitarian protection programmes and for the UK asylum system. Legislation on immigration and asylum is made at the UK level. In recent years, the UK Government has introduced a number of new refugee resettlement schemes, as discussed in greater depth later in the report.

The Scottish Government is not directly responsible for the immigration and asylum system, but it has considerable powers over policies which impact on the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum, including in relation to housing, transport, and education and training. The Scottish Government also has specific responsibilities for the Ukraine Super Sponsor Scheme (see further discussion below).

While policy decisions are largely decided at the UK level by the Home Office, Scotland's 32 local authorities are at the forefront of the delivery of humanitarian protection programmes and refugee integration on the ground, including in relation to the provision of housing, orientation, welfare advice, education and training, health and wellbeing services, and social integration activities. Local authorities work closely with other public and third sector organisations to deliver support for refugees and people seeking asylum, including Health Boards, educational institutions, the police, and charity and community groups. Typically within local authorities, resettlement teams lead the work of supporting and integration refugees, while those supporting UASC are based within children's services.

Strategies supporting refugee integration in Scotland

The Scottish Government, COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council have in collaboration developed the **New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy**, which sets out Scotland's approach to welcoming and supporting refugees and people seeking asylum from day one of their arrival. 'New Scots' is a broad term referring to anyone who has migrated to Scotland, regardless of background or immigration status, but the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy focuses on refugees and people seeking asylum. The first iteration of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy began in 2014 and finished in 2017; it was followed by a second running from 2018–2022. The third iteration of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy is currently being developed.

The strategy adopts a rights-based approach to integration, in line with the UK's international obligations and Scotland's commitment – at both the local and national level – to treating refugees and people seeking asylum with humanity, fairness and decency (Scottish Government 2018). The strategy is centred on four main outcomes:

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

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

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

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

To work towards these outcomes, the strategy sets out action points across seven different themes:

- Needs of asylum seekers
- Employability and welfare rights
- Housing
- Education
- Language
- Health and wellbeing
- Communities, culture and social connections.

The current strategy has been developed through a partnership approach between the Scottish Government, COSLA, and the Scottish Refugee Council. To help shape the strategy, an engagement process took place involving events across Scotland, run by local authorities, service providers, and third sector organisations. More than 2,000 people – including over 700 refugees and people seeking asylum – participated in the engagement process (ibid.).

The implementation of the strategy is overseen by a Leadership Board, comprised of the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities in the Scottish Government, the COSLA Spokesperson for Community Wellbeing, the Chief Executive of the Scottish Refugee Council, and the Chair of the New Scots Core Group. The Core Group is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the development of New Scots and coordinating the work of seven Theme Groups, which focus on actions under each of the New Scots themes. These Theme Groups are made up of representatives from statutory and non-statutory organisations (e.g. from local government, the third sector, and other relevant providers).

While the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy does not come with a specific funding programme, the Scottish Government has used its equality budget to fund a number of integration activities for refugees and people seeking asylum, including more than £2.7 million between 2017 and 2020 on third sector projects (ibid).

Alongside the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy, the Scottish Government has also developed a number of other strategies and programmes which play a role in refugee integration:

- The **Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland 2022–2027**, which is aimed at improving life chances for adult learners. It includes an objective to review and build on the Scottish Government's former 2015-2020 English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) strategy, which sought to ensure that every Scottish resident who did not speak English as their first language were able to access high-quality ESOL provision. The former strategy set out a number of objectives and outcomes, including on access to provision, co-design of learning opportunities, and the role of ESOL learners in transforming their lives and communities (Scottish Government 2015a).

- **No One Left Behind**, the Scottish Government's person-centred approach to delivering employability services (Scottish Government 2020a).

- The **Young Person's Guarantee**, the Scottish Government's commitment to offer a job, apprenticeship, education, training, volunteering or enterprise opportunity to every 16-24 year old in Scotland (Scottish Government 2020b).

- **Keeping The Promise** implementation plan, which sets out how the Scottish Government will keep 'The Promise' to transform the care system so that all children in Scotland grow up loved, safe and respected (Scottish Government 2022a).

- The joint Scottish Government and COSLA **Ending Destitution Together** strategy, which is aimed at improving support for people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) in Scotland, including support for destitute people seeking asylum (Scottish Government 2021a).

COSLA and its role in refugee integration

The **Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)** – the representative body for local authorities in Scotland – plays a critical role in the delivery of refugee integration. Within COSLA, the Migration, Population and Diversity team deals with all aspects of migration policy in Scotland, including areas such as refugees and people

seeking asylum, human trafficking, population and demographic change, and oversight of equality and human rights issues.

COSLA's Migration, Population and Diversity team is also responsible for the function of the COSLA Strategic Migration Partnership (CSMP). The CSMP is a local authority-led partnership which works with the public, private and voluntary sector to provide strategic support on migration and coordinate refugee integration and resettlement efforts. It is one of 12 Strategic Migration Partnerships operating across the UK.

COSLA is central to the operation of the UK Government's resettlement schemes in Scotland. Like other Strategic Migration Partnerships, COSLA plays an intermediary role between the UK Government and local government, coordinating caseloads of refugee referrals from the Home Office and matching them with councils. Given Scotland's size and unique geography and demographics, COSLA has played a particularly active role in this matching process to meet the needs of both refugees and local authorities – ensuring, for instance, that complex cases are referred to local authorities where the appropriate services are available. This has helped to create a greater sense of ownership over the matching process in Scotland.

For the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), this model worked well. However, a different model has been used for the Afghan schemes, based on local authorities putting in accommodation pledges and COSLA then trying to match these with individuals. Long delays in the matching process under these schemes have posed challenges for local authorities, and at the time of the research COSLA was intending to shift the operation of some of these schemes to the previous model.[1] For the Ukraine Super Sponsor Scheme, COSLA has also been involved in the matching process, though a different approach has been taken – see the below section on the Super Sponsor Scheme for further details.

COSLA also has a pivotal role in administering the rota system for the National Transfer Scheme for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. COSLA's understanding of individual local authorities – what provision they can offer and where they face constraints – has helped it to accommodate local authorities' needs while managing the rota in a fair and systematic way.

COSLA's other operational work on resettlement, UASC and asylum dispersal includes liaising with relevant teams at the UK Government, the Scottish Government, and key partners in the public and third sector. In addition, COSLA hosts regular meetings for local authority resettlement leads and for UASC leads to promote learning and capacity building opportunities, as well as share best practice. It has also set up a Knowledge Hub for local authority officers to share information and ask and answer questions.

CSMP is unique in that, in contrast with other Strategic Migration Partnerships, it has a dual role in both providing operational support and advocating on behalf of Scotland's local authorities. As the representative voice of local authorities in Scotland, COSLA is

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[1] Specifically, this includes the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme pathway 2 and 3 as well as direct ARAP matches from third countries. See the following section for a detailed explanation of these schemes.

specially placed to gather issues raised by local authority officers and use its political structures to make representations to the UK and Scottish Governments on local authorities' behalf. Because COSLA's operational work is underpinned by securing buy-in from local authorities, it can persuasively communicate the local authority perspective in its engagements with the Home Office. This dual model has therefore both helped to improve operational delivery and inform the design of asylum and refugee policy, ensuring the collective voice of local authorities is properly represented.

Recent humanitarian protection programmes operating in Scotland

The UK has introduced a series of major new humanitarian protection programmes in recent years which have shaped the context of refugee integration for local authorities across Scotland. This section details the main new schemes and their key features.[2]

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS)

Originally introduced in January 2014 in response to the Syrian civil war, the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) was scaled up significantly in September 2015 after then Prime Minister David Cameron made a commitment to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020 (Home Office 2017). The scheme has now been closed and replaced by the UK Resettlement Scheme (see below).

The scheme operated through a partnership with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN's refugee agency, and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The UNHCR identified vulnerable refugees from Syria for resettlement, whose details were then shared with the UK Government for consideration and screening. The IOM conducted health assessments and cultural orientation sessions and managed the arrangements for the refugees to travel to the UK.

Refugees were originally given five years' leave on a Humanitarian Protection visa with entitlements to work and claim (most) benefits. In 2017, the UK Government determined that all arrivals should receive refugee status, which offered some additional benefits. Those resettled refugees who had been previously granted Humanitarian Protection were able to make an application to switch to refugee status.

Local authorities could participate voluntarily in the scheme by contacting their Strategic Migration Partnership. In Scotland, COSLA coordinated between the Home Office and local authorities to refer refugees to appropriate areas, based on the availability of accommodation and services (as explained further above). Local authorities were given detailed information about the refugees they were resettling 6-12 weeks before arrival. For year 1 (i.e. the first year after arrival), local authorities were responsible for the following aspects of resettlement and integration:

- Organising appropriately furnished accommodation and ensuring registration with utility companies.

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[2] This review does not cover some of the smaller schemes, including the Mandate Scheme, the Community Sponsorship Scheme and the now-defunct Gateway Protection Programme.

- Making initial reception arrangements, including meeting and greeting at the airport and providing a 'welcome pack' made up of groceries and an initial cash allowance.

- Providing advice and support, including in relation to distributing Biometric Residence Permits, registering with schools and English language/literacy providers, going to benefit assessments at Jobcentre Plus, registering with GPs and other healthcare providers, referring to mental health and specialist services where applicable, and offering support with access to employment.

- Ensuring arrangements were in place for refugees who potentially had special needs or community care needs.

- Providing educational places for under 18s, including by arranging payment to providers.

- Providing English language training for adults, including by making an initial assessment of their needs, offering access to conversational practice, and, where Formal Language Training was considered appropriate, offering 8 hours of training per week within a month of arrival (for at least a year or until Entry Level 3 was reached if sooner).[3]

To carry out these activities, local authorities were provided Home Office funding according to a tariff. For the first year of arrival, this came to a total of £8,520 per person. Funding continued for years 2-5, where local authorities were given the flexibility to use it as they saw fit to support the continuing integration journey of the refugees on the scheme. During this period, the funding tapered down from £5,000 per person in year 2 to £1,000 per person in year 5. Additional funding was made available for education (£4,500 per child for 5-18 year olds and £2,250 per child for 3-4 year olds in year one only) and ESOL support (£850 per adult refugee and additional funding for childcare support during classes).

Scotland has played a major role in delivering the VPRS and integrating Syrian refugees. In 2015, the Scottish Government committed to resettling 10% of refugees under the scheme. In fact, according to the Home Office's latest statistical release, Scotland has resettled 3,328 refugees under the scheme, 16% of the total UK number and far higher than the Scottish Government's target (and the share of Scotland's population of the UK) (Home Office 2023b).

Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS)

In 2016, the UK Government introduced the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS). The objective of the scheme was to resettle to the UK refugee children who were 'at risk' – along with their families – from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The UK Government originally aimed to resettle up to 3,000 people (largely children) under the scheme. The VCRS did not only focus on unaccompanied children; it also included a range of other children at risk, including separated children, children without legal documentation, and children with disabilities and specific medical

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[3] These responsibilities are based on the funding instructions to local authorities for the VPRS (Home Office 2023a).

needs. As with the VPRS, the scheme is now closed and has been replaced by the UK Resettlement Scheme (Brokenshire 2016; Home Office 2021a).

As for the VPRS, the UK Government partnered with the UNHCR and the IOM to deliver the scheme. Local authorities could volunteer to participate in the scheme on the same terms as the VPRS and the same levels of tariff funding were available. Unaccompanied children on the scheme were subject to separate funding arrangements, in line with the UK's system for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (see below).

Scotland resettled a total of 256 people under the VCRS over the course of its operation, 14% of the total UK number (1,838 – substantially lower than the 3,000 figure originally cited by the UK Government) (Home Office 2023b). As with the VPRS, Scotland resettled a disproportionately high share of refugees under the VCRS, compared with both the Scottish Government's 10% target and the share of Scotland's population of the UK.

UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)

The UK Government launched the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) in 2021, replacing and consolidating the VPRS, VCRS and Gateway Protection Programme (a small-scale resettlement route which operated between 2004 and 2020). The UKRS aims to resettle vulnerable refugees from across the globe who are in need of protection (Home Office 2021b).

As with the VPRS and VCRS, the scheme is operated in partnership with the UNHCR and the IOM. Local authorities can volunteer to participate on the same basis in which they participated in the VPRS and VCRS and the same levels of tariff funding are available (Home Office 2023a). From October 2021, refugees are now given settlement immediately, rather than five years' limited leave as they were under the previous schemes.

As of the first quarter of 2023, Scotland had resettled 235 refugees under the UKRS, around 11% of the UK total (Home Office 2023b). While the scheme has only been up and running for a short while, this again suggests that Scotland and its local authorities will play a key role in the delivery of the new scheme. However, numbers are still relatively low overall because of the pressures of the Afghan and Ukraine schemes (see below). In addition, a large number of UNHCR referrals under the UKRS have complex medical or mobility needs, which local authorities have struggled to accommodate given the broader pressures on local authority resettlement teams.

Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)

The UK Government launched the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) in 2021 in preparation for the military withdrawal from Afghanistan. The scheme is aimed at helping Afghans who previously worked for or with the UK Government during its presence in Afghanistan (and eligible family members). Afghans eligible for relocation to the UK under the scheme include:

- Individuals 'assessed to be at high risk or imminent threat to life' (who are to be relocated urgently).
- Individuals 'who were directly employed by the UK Government in Afghanistan, or those who were contracted to provide linguistic services to or for the benefit of the UK's Armed Forces in Afghanistan, on or after 1 October 2001', where operations 'would have been materially less efficient or materially less successful if a role of that nature had not been performed' and where their role 'exposed them to being publicly recognised as having performed that role', posing a risk to their safety.
- Certain other groups who are to be assisted on a case-by-case basis.

Applicants are considered by the Ministry of Defence, who make an immigration application to the Home Office on their behalf if they are eligible. Those who are eligible are granted immediate indefinite leave and full access to employment and benefits (but not refugee status) (Home Office 2023c).

Local authorities can volunteer to participate in the scheme. Those receiving individuals under ARAP are responsible for arranging accommodation and integration support on a similar basis to the UKRS, including initial reception arrangements, support with registering for key services and benefits, additional support for those with special needs / community care needs, education for school-age children, and English language provision for adults. Funding is provided by the Home Office at the rate of £10,500 per person for year 1, £6000 per person for year 2, and £4,020 per person for year 3. This amounts to a total of £20,520 per person, the same level of funding under the UKRS but provided across three years rather than five. There is additional reimbursement for education and ESOL costs, as with the UKRS (Home Office 2023d).

Since the introduction of the scheme in 2021, significant numbers of arrivals from Afghanistan have been accommodated in temporary 'bridging hotels' across the UK. Given the urgent humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and the hastily organised evacuation of Kabul, Afghans under ARAP were not directly matched to local authorities from abroad, in contrast with the VPRS and the UKRS. Instead, they tended to be accommodated in hotels while more permanent arrangements were organised. However, there has been a series of challenges in matching people to accommodation – particularly in the case of larger families, where suitable properties are limited – which mean that individuals have often spent significant periods of time in bridging hotels. Moreover, as people have become more settled in bridging hotels, some have been more reluctant to relocate, particularly where this involves moving to rural areas.

Local authorities do not have control over bridging hotels; the Home Office is responsible for booking the hotels and allocating individuals to them (House of Commons Library 2023). However, local authorities are responsible for providing wraparound support to people in hotels in their areas before they move on to permanent accommodation. This includes:

- Support with accessing key services, including services in relation to health, education, benefits and employment.
- Safeguarding support.

- Support with 'moving on' from bridging hotels, including 'Move On' conversations and a personalised 'Move On' plan outlining steps to leaving hotel accommodation within 3 months of the start of the plan.

- Integration and orientation support.

- Support with healthcare provision in hotels and NHS access.

- Risk mitigation via identification of local police/security/community support officers

- Support with National Insurance registration.

Local authorities are granted funding of £28 per person per day to deliver this support. On top of the £28 per person, additional funding is also available for local authorities who provide accommodation to people who are evicted from bridging hotels because they refuse offers of permanent accommodation and present as homeless (in line with their statutory duties). This funding for temporary accommodation and support is available for up to six months (Home Office 2023e).

While this support is meant for people in temporary accommodation only, in practice many Afghans have stayed in bridging hotels in Scotland for several months. Local authorities have therefore needed to consider and adapt their approaches to ensure they are adequately meeting the needs of Afghans and are facilitating their integration locally.

There have been a range of efforts by UK, Scottish and local government to manage the situation in bridging hotels and support people into longer-term accommodation. Examples include:[4]

- The UK Government has developed an Afghanistan housing portal to facilitate property matches.

- A 'Find Your Own Accommodation' pathway has been developed by the UK Government to encourage households to work with local authorities find and secure their own private lets.

- Local authorities have leased suitable Service Family Accommodation (SFA) properties from the Ministry of Defence for Afghan families.

- The Scottish Refugee Council, COSLA and the Scottish Government have produced a series of videos aimed at promoting Scotland as a place to settle for Afghans living in bridging accommodation.[5]

- The UK Government has set up a Housing Costs Fund for local authorities to help them cover housing costs for larger Afghan families.

Most recently, in March 2023 the UK Government announced new measures to withdraw the use of bridging hotels for Afghans on ARAP and the ACRS (see below). This included a £35 million package for local authorities to support the integration of

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[4] For a further discussion of efforts to reduce the use of bridging hotels, see the housing section of Chapter 4 of this report.

[5] [YouTube playlist titled 'A Scottish Welcome' uploaded by the Scottish Refugee Council](#)

Afghans who are being moved from bridging hotels into longer-term accommodation (Home Office 2023f). The new funding – combined with the government allowing for greater flexibility in the use of the Housing Costs Fund – means that £7,000 of flexible funding per person is available to local authorities for move-on support.

At the time of writing, Afghan refugees had been given three months' notice to leave bridging hotels and find alternative accommodation. With the notice period beginning to expire for some at the end of July, serious concerns have been raised by campaigners and local authorities that this could lead to widespread homelessness.

The latest statistics on the Home Office's Afghan schemes indicate that 968 people were in Scotland on Afghan schemes as of 31 March 2023. The figure is provisional and includes people under both ARAP and ACRS (see below). Out of this, 305 were in bridging accommodation and 663 were in settled accommodation (Home Office 2023g). COSLA estimates that a total of 93 families (384 individuals) came through the ARAP/ACRS routes in 2021 and 59 families (241 individuals) came through the ARAP/ACRS routes in 2022. The numbers have receded since the initial crisis in 2021, in part because some families have been unwilling to accept accommodation offers in Scotland. This meant that many properties offered through the ARAP/ACRS routes remained empty for a period of months, accruing costs which were retrospectively paid by the Home Office. Moreover, there are now fewer property offers for the Afghan schemes due to the need to urgently accommodate large numbers of arrivals through the Ukraine routes.

Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)

In addition to ARAP, the UK Government introduced the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) in August 2021 during the evacuation of Kabul under Operation Pitting. As with its predecessor, the VPRS, the UK Government has committed to resettling 20,000 people at risk.

There are three pathways for eligibility under the ACRS:

- Pathway 1 is for vulnerable and at-risk people who came to the UK during the Afghan evacuation (as well as those who were called forward or authorised for evacuation but could not board flights and who have since then come to the UK).

- Pathway 2 is for referrals via the UNHCR of vulnerable Afghan refugees in neighbouring countries.

- Pathway 3 is for people who are at risk and supported the UK and others in Afghanistan and for particularly vulnerable groups. For year 1, there are 1,500 places available for British Council / GardaWorld contractors and Chevening alumni.

Eligible candidates under the ACRS get indefinite leave and full access to employment and benefits (Home Office 2022a). Only people arriving under Pathway 2 receive refugee status.

Local authorities can volunteer to participate in the ACRS on the same terms as ARAP. The same policies – and challenges – in relation to bridging hotels and local authority wraparound support also apply here.

As detailed above, provisional figures suggest that by the end of March 2023 there were 968 people on the ARAP/ACRS in Scotland (Home Office 2023g). There are no Scotland breakdowns by pathways, but UK-wide figures suggest the majority of people on the ACRS have arrived via Pathway 1, with very low numbers entering through Pathways 2 and 3. In line with the information provided above, COSLA estimates that 93 families (384 individuals) came through the ARAP/ACRS routes in 2021 and 59 families (241 individuals) came through the ARAP/ACRS routes in 2022. COSLA reports that at the time of writing referrals under ACRS Pathway 2 were slowly being received and considered by local authorities in Scotland.

Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine)

In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the UK Government introduced the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (also known as Homes for Ukraine) in 2022. The scheme is open to all Ukrainian nationals who were resident in Ukraine before 1 January 2022, along with their immediate family. Applicants need to find an eligible sponsor who can provide suitable accommodation for them for at least six months. Sponsors must be adults based in the UK with at least six months' leave. In Scotland, the Scottish Government can also be a sponsor – see below for further details of the Super Sponsor Scheme (DLUHC 2023). This section focuses on the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme as it relates to individual sponsors (also known as the Individual Sponsor Scheme).

Unlike other resettlement schemes set up previously, the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme is run by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, rather than the Home Office, and has a number of unique features. The scheme is reliant on members of the public acting as sponsors and providing rent-free accommodation for a minimum of six months. They receive a 'thank-you' payment from the UK Government of £350 per month (increasing to £500 per month for guests who have been in the UK for more than 12 months) (Scottish Government 2023a).

Guests on the scheme are granted three years' limited leave and full access to work and benefits (but not refugee status). The Department for Work and Pensions and Social Security Scotland have taken action to remove residence-based conditions for entitlement to benefits to allow for immediate access on day one of arrival (ibid).

Local authorities do not play a direct role in agreeing where guests settle in their area under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme, because guests move to wherever households offer sponsorship. However, they are expected to carry out a range of resettlement and integration activities (ibid). These include:

- Conducting housing checks before the guests arrive to ensure accommodation is appropriate and has adequate facilities.
- Applying to Disclosure Scotland for enhanced disclosures for hosts and determining overall suitability for hosting.

- Conducting welfare checks, including a minimum of one in-person visit to the property after the guest has arrived.
- Distributing the 'thank you' payments to hosts from the UK Government.
- Arranging an initial discussion with guests to determine immediate and long-term needs and registering guests with key services (including GPs, dentists, benefits advice, and employment support).
- Arranging school places for children of school age.
- Providing advice and referrals to relevant services, such as social care and children's services.
- Helping guests to attend Jobcentre Plus appointments for benefits assessment and employment support.
- Providing homelessness assistance in line with local authorities' statutory duties (see the housing section under Chapter 4 for further details).
- Offering broader integration support, e.g. in relation to ESOL provision, translation support, community events, community champions, and interfaith groups.

Local authorities previously received DLUHC funding according to a tariff of £10,500 per person for year 1, in line with the Afghan relocation and resettlement schemes. From 1 January 2023, this has been lowered to £5,900 per person for new arrivals. This funding is not ringfenced, but it is expected to cover the above activities. Additional annual funding per pupil is available to cover education costs (£3,000 per pupil for 2-4 year olds, £6,580 per pupil for 5-11 year olds, and £8,755 per pupil for 11-18 year olds).

The UK Government has also asked local authorities with main points of entry to set up 'Welcome Hubs' to provide initial welcome and support to guests under the scheme. In Scotland, the main Welcome Hub is in Edinburgh and carries out a triage assessment to determine relevant needs.

Concerns have been raised about the risk of homelessness for guests on the scheme after the initial six months of hosting is complete. To help address this concern and encourage hosts to accommodate guests for longer, the UK Government has extended 'thank you' payments to up to 2 years and increased the payment from £350 to £500 after 12 months. A further one-off £150 million pot of funding was announced at the end of 2022 for local authorities to support Ukrainian guests who are at risk of homelessness.

According to figures from the UK Government, as of 20 June 2023 a total of 4,864 people had arrived in the UK who were sponsored by a Scotland-located sponsor under the Individual Sponsor Scheme (Home Office 2023h). In May 2023, Scottish Government statistics estimate that around 4,145 guests were known to have arrived at matched accommodation under the scheme in Scotland (Scottish Government 2023b).

Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme

Alongside the Individual Sponsor Scheme, the Scottish Government set up its own scheme for Ukrainians (and family members) in March 2022. The Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme works in a similar way to the Individual Sponsor Scheme, but the Scottish Government acts directly as a sponsor itself. This means that applicants can travel to Scotland immediately without the need to find a match with an individual sponsor. There was significant uptake for the scheme – a total of 35,501 applications – until it was suspended in July 2022 (Scottish Government 2022b).

Because the Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme does not require an individual host before guests arrive in Scotland, generally individuals on the scheme have stayed in temporary 'Welcome Accommodation' before moving on to longer-term homes. This includes the use of hotels and passenger ships (MS Victoria in Edinburgh and MS Ambition in Glasgow). Challenges with finding longer-term accommodation have placed pressures on the scheme, leading to a pause in the scheme.

In response to the high uptake of the scheme, the Scottish Government and COSLA developed a national matching service to connect guests in Welcome Accommodation with host accommodation and longer-term housing. This is an addition to matching facilitated directly by local authorities or informal matching handled between guests and hosts. Matching under the national service takes place after the initial triage assessment at Welcome Hubs and in coordination with local authorities. Property offers from local authorities can include social housing, private rental housing, or offers from individual sponsors under Home for Ukraine who have agreed to be matched with guests via the Super Sponsor Scheme (Scottish Government 2023a). In addition, the Scottish Government has introduced a £50 million Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund for local authorities and registered social landlords to increase the supply of accommodation through improvement works for empty and void properties (Scottish Government 2023c).

Once guests are matched to longer-term accommodation, local authorities provide equivalent integration support as they do under the Individual Sponsor Scheme. The same funding package applies, including the £350 host 'thank you' payments when guests are matched to individual hosts. The Scottish Government has made available an additional £11.2 million in funding for local authorities to help with the Super Sponsor Scheme, including for the expansion of resettlement team capacity, refurbishing of properties, and other integration costs (ibid).

Based on figures from the UK Government, as of 20 June 2023 a total of 19,952 people from Ukraine had arrived on the Super Sponsor Scheme (Home Office 2023h). According to the Scottish Government, in May 2023 around 6,000 guests had arrived at matched accommodation, 3,405 were in temporary welcome accommodation, and a further 975 were in cabins on the MS Victoria. These numbers are likely to have fluctuated since the publication of the data release, and the number of people in cabins

has been on a downward trajectory, as the MS Victoria is vacated (Scottish Government 2023b).[6]

Asylum dispersal

The UK is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol, which serve to protect refugees. The Convention defines a refugee as someone who:

- Has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion

- Is outside the country of their nationality or former habitual residence

- Is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country or return there

Under the Convention, the UK subscribes to the principle of 'non-refoulement', whereby a refugee should not be expelled or returned to the territory where their life or freedom are threatened.

As a result of its obligations under the Convention, the UK Government operates an asylum system. Individuals who make a claim for asylum in the UK have their application processed to consider whether their claim is well-founded (unless they can be declared 'inadmissible' owing to a former presence or connection to a safe third country). If an individual's claim to asylum is accepted, they are granted refugee status.

Asylum claims have increased in recent years, largely as a result of the rise in arrivals of people crossing the English Channel via small boat. At the same time, processing times for asylum claims have lengthened, placing considerable pressure on the UK's asylum system.

Due to these pressures, people seeking asylum may wait for considerable periods before receiving an outcome on their claim. During this time, they are generally not allowed to work or claim benefits.[7] Where they do not have adequate accommodation or cannot afford to meet essential living needs, they are able to access housing and/or financial support.

Housing for people seeking asylum is provided through a system of asylum dispersal. This was introduced in 2000 by the UK Government to address pressures on housing in London and the South East of England. Until recently, local authorities across the UK volunteered to be asylum dispersal areas. The Home Office contracts private providers to manage accommodation on a regional basis (known as Asylum Accommodation and Support Contracts or AASC).

There are two main types of asylum accommodation: initial accommodation, which is provided temporarily before an application for asylum support and accommodation is

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[6] At the time of writing, the MS Ambition had already been vacated.

[7] People seeking asylum may only work in jobs on the Shortage Occupation List and only after they have been waiting for their claim for at least a year.

approved, and dispersed accommodation, which is for longer-term use. For initial accommodation, full-board, half-board or self-catered hostel-type facilities are typically used, while dispersed accommodation is usually made up of flats and houses. There has been a significant increase in the use of hotels and other forms of contingency accommodation to house people in initial accommodation in recent years. This is due to a number of factors, including the rise in people needing to be accommodated as part of the Covid-19 pandemic response, the increase in arrivals and applications, and the growing backlog within the asylum decision-making system (House of Commons Library 2020; ICIBI 2022).

In Scotland, Glasgow was until recently the only asylum dispersal area and the contract for asylum accommodation in the city is held by Mears Group (Asylum Matters 2019). Glasgow has for a long time been a major recipient of people seeking asylum. According to the most recent data, around 5,086 people seeking asylum were in receipt of support in Scotland at the end of March 2023, the vast majority (4,520) in Glasgow (Home Office 2023i).[8]

There have been particular challenges with asylum accommodation in Glasgow in recent years. In 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, Mears Group moved 321 people from serviced flats (used as initial accommodation) into hotels, ostensibly for safety reasons. Major concerns were raised about the process of the move and the quality of the hotel accommodation. After a suspected suicide and a stabbing attack took place in the hotels, an independent inquiry was launched, which found that the move from flats to hotels had a serious negative impact on the mental health of those affected, and that the conditions at the hotels were crowded and inadequate (Independent Commission of Inquiry into Asylum Provision in Scotland 2022).

As a result of ongoing pressures on the asylum system, in April 2022 the UK Government announced it would move to a 'full dispersal' model, where all local authorities would be designated as asylum dispersal areas on a non-voluntary basis. As part of the new arrangements, local authorities now receive additional (non-ringfenced) funding for people dispersed to their areas, including a one-off £750 payment per person seeking asylum in Home Office accommodation as at 1 April 2023. They also receive £3,500 per new occupied bedspace – including contingency accommodation – opened between April 2023 and the end of March 2024. This is a significant uplift on the earlier funding made available in 2022/23 as part of the initial roll-out of full dispersal, reflecting concerns raised by local authorities about pressures from asylum dispersal on their areas (Home Office 2023j).

While the Home Office and its contractors are primarily responsible for asylum accommodation and support, local authorities and partners have statutory duties to provide education, social care, social services, and healthcare. This may oblige local authorities to provide support to people seeking asylum and people who are 'Appeals Rights Exhausted' (ARE) – that is, they have had their asylum application refused and completed the appeals process. Relevant legislation which creates statutory duties for local authorities includes:

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[8] This includes people receiving section 4, section 95 or section 98 support.

- Under Section 22 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, local authorities have a duty to 'safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area who are in need'. This means that local authorities may be required to provide accommodation and/or financial support to asylum-seeking families with children in need – e.g. where they are ineligible for Home Office support or there are delays in accessing this support. In these cases, local authorities need to carry out a GIRFEC (Getting It Right For Every Child) assessment to assess children's needs and whether support can be provided. For people who are 'Appeals Rights Exhausted' (ARE) and who claimed asylum in-country, a further human rights assessment is necessary to determine whether the provision of support is needed to avoid a human rights breach (COSLA 2019a).

- Under Section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, local authorities have a duty to 'promote social welfare by making available advice, guidance and assistance on such a scale as may be appropriate for their area'. Moreover, where adults present to local authorities with an appearance of care needs, they are obliged to carry out a community care assessment. As a result of this Act, in some cases local authorities have a duty to provide accommodation and/or financial support to adults with care needs who are seeking asylum – e.g. where they are in Home Office accommodation but the local authority determines they need to be housed in residential accommodation. For in-country ARE people seeking asylum, a human rights assessment is necessary before providing support (ibid).

- Under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, local authorities in Scotland (in their role as education authorities) have a statutory duty to ensure 'adequate and efficient provision of school education and further education' in their area. This includes the provision of education to school-age children seeking asylum in their area.

- Under the Public Health etc. (Scotland) Act 2008, local authorities have a duty to make provision 'for the purpose of protecting public health in its area'. This duty was particularly relevant for containing the spread of Covid-19 during the height of the pandemic.

While not covered explicitly under statutory duties, local authorities are also expected to support community cohesion and integration with respect to people seeking asylum. This means that, while local authorities in Scotland do not have control over the arrangements for asylum accommodation and support, they have a strong interest in how people seeking asylum are accommodated and supported in their areas, as well as any potential impacts on local services and communities.

The UK Government has recently proposed further legislation to restrict the right of asylum (under the 'Illegal Migration Bill'). If enacted, this legislation would place a legal duty on the Home Secretary to remove anyone who arrives irregularly and to not consider their asylum claim. This could have major consequences for the future of the asylum system in Scotland, though the full implications are not yet clear, as the UK Government's intentions to remove all those who arrive in the UK by small boat or

other irregular means appear legally and practically unworkable (Morris and Qureshi 2023).

National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

There are specific arrangements and responsibilities in place for local authorities with respect to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) (according to the Immigration Rules, someone who was under 18 when applying for asylum in their own right and who is 'separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who in law or by custom has responsibility to do so'). In 2016, the UK Government introduced the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) to distribute UASC more evenly across England. In 2018, the scheme was extended to Scotland (as well as to Wales and Northern Ireland).

There have been a number of changes to the operation of the NTS in recent years. In July 2021, a voluntary national rota was introduced to ensure local authorities were taking it in turns to receive UASC in a fair and equitable way. Moreover, while the scheme was originally voluntary, in November 2021 the UK Government wrote to all local authorities with children's services to let them know that they would be mandated to participate, in light of the pressures on the asylum system, the rise in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving via small boats, and the use of hotels to accommodate them. This drew a critical response from the Scottish Government, which argued that, while local authorities had been willing to actively participate in the voluntary scheme and the Scottish rota, the new plans created 'added bureaucratic and legal complexities' and posed risks for children were they to be 'passed needlessly between local authorities'. Concerns were also raised about the lack of funding attached to the new arrangements (Scottish Government 2021b).

Under the current system, if an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child presents to a local authority which is already responsible for UASC above or equal to a threshold of 0.1% of their child population, they can refer the child into the NTS. The child is then allocated to a nation/region, where the Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP) is responsible for the distribution of allocated referrals to specified local authorities (DfE and Home Office 2022).

Transfers to nations/regions are allocated according to a national rota. Allocations to local authorities are calculated based on a total figure of 652 UASC. Allocated shares for each nation and region are determined according to a weighting system, taking into account factors including the total child population, looked after children population, UASC population, former UASC care leaver population, and supported asylum population.[9] No local authority with UASC making up at least 0.1% of their child population is given any referrals (ibid).

The total tranche of 652 UASC is managed through four cycles of 163 children. For each cycle, a nation/region takes responsibility for receiving UASC up to their allocated

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[9] Differences in data availability in the devolved nations meant that in these cases the weighting methodology needed to be adapted as appropriate.

share. At this point, the rota is handed over to a different nation/region, until all nations/regions have had their turn and a new cycle of transfers starts over (ibid).

In Scotland's case, 63 children are allocated to local authorities per 652 UASC. As Scotland's Strategic Migration Partnership, COSLA is then responsible for managing the rota within Scotland and allocating UASC across the 32 local authorities. This allocation is based on an equivalent methodology to the national rota.

The current operation of the scheme is, however, unpredictable. The cycles restart on a much faster basis than originally envisaged, due to the very high numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving in the UK on small boats. This has placed further pressure on local authorities receiving UASC through the rota.

Moreover, the allocations within nations/regions are recalculated at the end of every tranche of 652 UASC to account for when any local authority meets the 0.1% threshold. This means that the numbers going to different local authorities in Scotland have fluctuated, making it more difficult to plan and prepare for arrivals. The rota is centrally managed and top-down, so local authorities have little flexibility, which has placed further pressures on their capacity and resources.

Local authorities in Scotland that become responsible for UASC – either through the NTS or otherwise where they present to a local authority after travelling there themselves – must fulfil a number of statutory duties to safeguard their wellbeing. According to Section 25 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, local authorities are obliged to provide accommodation to all UASC in their area. They also have duties to prepare children for no longer being looked after, to provide aftercare support for formerly looked after children aged at least 16 and under 19, and to assess and where necessary meet eligible needs for those aged at least 19 and under 26 (and may do so for longer). Where those aged 18+ have exhausted their rights to appeal after making an in-country asylum claim and used to be looked-after children, local authorities may be required to provide aftercare support if this is needed to avoid a human rights breach (COSLA 2019a).

In practice, local authorities typically provide emotional and practical support to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children through UASC support workers in their children's services departments. They arrange appropriate accommodation, including foster placements, children's homes, or semi-independent accommodation, depending on the needs of the child or young person.

Local authorities receive funding from the Home Office for providing support to UASC. Under the latest funding arrangements, those local authorities who have a total cohort of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children of under 0.7% of their child population receive £114 per person per night, while local authorities with a cohort of at least 0.7% of their child population or those who are transferred UASC through the NTS from local authorities with a cohort of at least 0.7% of their child population receive a higher rate of £143. Funding is also available for the support of care leavers at the rate of £270 per week per person (Home Office 2022b).

The UK Government also introduced temporary additional funding initiatives to address some issues in the operation of the NTS. In August 2022, additional funding of up to £6,000 was offered for transfers which took place within five working days from the date of referral to the local authority. This funding ended in December 2022, at which point, to help reduce the use of hotels, a further temporary funding arrangement was announced. This meant that, from 16 December 2022 and up to the end of February 2023, local authorities that received children from UASC-dedicated hotels or from the Kent Reception and Safe Care Service within five working days from referral were granted a further £15,000 payment (ibid).

At the end of February 2023, there were over 280 children transferred to Scotland under the NTS. Around 260 of those children arrived since the rota was mandated in November 2021. In 2022, there were only two months when the number of children transferred to Scotland fell below 10; and in the three months of 2022 which reported the highest rates of arrival, there were around 30 children arriving in each month. By comparison, in the years preceding the mandatory scheme, the number of children transferred did not exceed 20 per annum.

Summary of context

The picture for refugee integration in Scotland has shifted rapidly over the last decade. Since 2014, a range of new resettlement schemes have been introduced in response to new conflicts and humanitarian crises, from the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Scheme to the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme. As a result, the number of refugees and displaced people arriving in Scotland has increased considerably. At the same time, pressures on the asylum system have led the UK Government to introduce new non-voluntary models for asylum dispersal and for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, which mean that people seeking asylum are now being accommodated across Scotland. Collectively, these policy changes mean that local authorities are playing an increasingly active role in supporting the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum.

The delivery of integration support for refugees and people seeking asylum in Scotland involves collaboration between the UK and Scottish Governments, local government, service providers, and the third sector. While the UK Government is responsible for setting immigration and asylum policy, the Scottish Government has powers over areas such as housing, transport, and education and training, which directly shape the provision of integration. Crucial to the delivery of integration work is the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy, which is based on a partnership between the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council and provides a framework for welcoming refugees and people seeking asylum to Scotland.

In practice, local authorities are critical in delivering humanitarian protection programmes and providing integration support on the ground. Typically, this work is coordinated by resettlement teams within the local authority, though often it is children's services who are responsible for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. As the representative body for local authorities in Scotland, COSLA plays both a vital operational role – including by coordinating the matching of resettled refugees to local authorities – and an advocacy role, through communicating the views of local

authorities to the UK and Scottish Governments. This dual role is unique in the UK and has helped to inform the design and implementation of refugee and asylum policies and improve the coordination of the humanitarian protection programmes in Scotland.

The structure of this report

The remainder of this report is structured under the following chapter headings:

Chapter 2 (Methodology) gives an overview of the approach and methods taken to conduct the research.

Chapter 3 (Understanding the current picture) sets out what local authorities and COSLA's Strategic Migration Partnership are currently doing to deliver humanitarian protection programmes and to facilitate refugee integration.

Chapter 4 (Identifying successes and challenges) explores how far local authorities have made progress in supporting refugee integration in Scotland and identifies where they have had particular successes and challenges.

Chapter 5 (Comparing experiences across Scotland) compares the experiences of delivering humanitarian protection programmes and facilitating refugee integration across different local authorities in Scotland.

Chapter 6 (Exploring the impact of policy and legislation) assesses the role of policy and legislation (both devolved and reserved) in influencing the activities of local authorities on the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum.

Chapter 7 (Looking ahead) discusses the priorities, opportunities, and challenges for local authorities delivering refugee integration support in Scotland in the years ahead, reflecting on the lessons learnt over the past few years.

Chapter 8 (Conclusions and policy implications) concludes the report with a short summary of some of the key findings and a consideration of the implications of the research for future refugee integration strategy in Scotland.

2. Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology behind this report. The research approach can be divided into three main components:

- A survey was developed and distributed to staff and partners in all 32 of Scotland's local authorities. The survey questions aimed to gather insights about the different perspectives, realities, and challenges involving refugee integration and humanitarian protection work across Scotland, drawing out the breadth of the work, and the contrasts between different local authorities.

- Case studies were carried out in three local authorities, involving more in-depth engagement with how local authorities deliver integration work in Scotland.

- An online workshop was held with local authority resettlement officers to discuss the provisional findings and recommendations of the research.

Survey research

Researchers developed and conducted an online survey to capture the diversity of experiences across all 32 of Scotland's local authorities and explore specific issues and policy areas faced by local authorities in supporting refugee integration. The survey was designed to be completed by those with direct experience of working on the development and implementation of refugee integration and humanitarian protection activities at the local level. This included people directly employed by the council, as well as partner organisations in the wider community (charities, grassroots community organisations, and the private sector).

Survey design

The survey was developed and assembled over the course of several weeks. This involved producing a series of draft survey questions, which fell under five different themes and took the form of one of three question types (either a binary response, a Likert scale, or a written response). There was a rigorous process of review and reformulation of questions within the immediate IPPR research team, in liaison with COSLA and the Scottish Government.

Once the IPPR research team and COSLA and Scottish Government colleagues agreed on the full suite of questions to be presented to respondents, they then translated the survey into an appropriate and functional electronic format. The survey was created through the software Survey Hero (chosen because of variety of question types and readability), which allowed for the survey to be circulated by electronic link to participants, answered, and data collected and collated centrally.

The survey itself was broken down into five main research themes:

1. Gaining an understanding of the current picture on the ground in the delivery of humanitarian protection programmes and refugee integration.

2. Uncovering where local authorities have found successes and faced challenges.

3. Examining how different experiences compare across Scotland's 32 local authorities.

4. Determining the impact of policy and legislation on local authorities' refugee integration strategies.

5. Exploring how local authorities might change and adapt their approach in the future.

Consisting of 48 questions in total, these included a mixture of multiple-choice questions, many on a 5-point Likert scale, and open-ended questions which allowed respondents to enter figures or provide more detailed written responses. Some of the questions sought to establish particular facts or figures relating to a local authority's refugee strategy. Others focused on how individual respondents rated different aspects of integration particular to their respective local authority, or gauged how respondents evaluated national policy and legislation. For a full list of the questions in the survey, please see Appendix A.

The questions were designed to be answered from different local perspectives. Respondents could choose not to answer questions where they lacked relevant knowledge or experience, either by leaving a question blank or selecting 'Don't know' when a question required a response to continue. Certain questions, however, drew upon information which could only be reasonably expected to be answered by local authority employees (e.g. question 3 asked how many refugees have been resettled in a local authority in the last 12 months, and question 4 asked for the number of 'full-time equivalent staff' working directly for their local council on the resettlement and integration of refugees and people seeking asylum. The survey was designed so that those two questions could only be answered by respondents who selected in the initial establishing questions 'Local government' as their employer. This was to avoid respondents working outside local government, who are not privy to this kind of information, inputting answers.

Fieldwork

With the help of partners in COSLA and the Scottish Government, researchers asked resettlement leads across all 32 local authorities to distribute the electronic survey to individuals and organisations involved in different aspects of resettlement and integration work within their respective local authority, including those working directly for local authorities and those working for partner organisations. Responses were collected between the end of July and mid-October 2022, with a target to gather a minimum of 100 total responses from across Scotland. As the survey was conducted during the summer holidays and during a time of intense pressure facing local authorities responding to the Ukraine crisis, the timeline was extended beyond the anticipated two months to achieve the 100-response target and get responses from all 32 local authorities.

During the period the survey was live, the researchers regularly monitored the response rates from different local authorities to identify which local authorities were

submitting complete responses, and which were lagging (proportionate to the size and resource available to local authorities). At a minimum, researchers established that all local authorities should submit one complete response from someone who is directly employed by the local authority, and could be relied upon to provide accurate information. Where that was not possible, this was flagged to colleagues at COSLA and the Scottish Government who reached out to the relevant local authority and encouraged potential respondents to complete the survey.

Responses

At the close of the survey, researchers recorded a total of 103 responses registered from across Scotland. The vast majority of respondents (approximately 80%) were employed in local government. 11% worked in the third sector and 2% worked in local community organisations. A further 7% worked in 'other' types of organisations, including in health, education, and faith organisations.

All local authorities except one, the City of Edinburgh, were able to provide at least one submission from a respondent directly employed by the council. In order to complement the survey, virtual interviews were conducted with officers from five local authorities, including the City of Edinburgh, either as a substitute for completing the survey or to add context and detail to existing incomplete survey responses. The questions in these interviews mirrored those in the survey in order to capture similar information, as well as allowing for some more in-depth answers to give a more detailed insight into council officers' perspectives.

In terms of the geographical spread of responses, more responses were received from local authorities with larger, urban populations – notably Glasgow and Dundee, where more than 10 people responded to the survey – while every other local authority, aside from the City of Edinburgh for which there were no survey responses, ranged between one and five responses each.

Table 2.1: Survey responses received by local authority and geographic profile

Geography	Local authority	Population density (number of usual residents per km^2)	Respondents
URBAN	Glasgow City	3,555	14
	Dundee City	2,477	16
	City of Edinburgh	1,947	0
	Aberdeen City	1,207	3
	North Lanarkshire	726	2
	Renfrewshire	703	3
	East Dunbartonshire	625	2
	West Dunbartonshire	557	2

SEMI-URBAN/SEMI-RURAL	East Renfrewshire	556	2
	Falkirk	533	5
	Inverclyde	489	2
	West Lothian	424	3
	Clackmannanshire	325	1
	Fife	280	2
	Midlothian	273	3
	South Lanarkshire	185	1
	East Lothian	165	4
	North Ayrshire	151	3
RURAL	East Ayrshire	95	1
	South Ayrshire	91	1
	Angus	52	2
	Moray	42	2
	Stirling	42	5
	Aberdeenshire	42	3
	Perth & Kinross	29	2
	Scottish Borders	25	2
	Dumfries & Galloway	23	3
	Orkney Islands	22	1
	Shetland Islands	16	1
	Argyll & Bute	13	3
	Highlands	9	3
	Na h-Eileanan Siar	9	2
More than one local authority selected			3
Scotland (non-local authority specific)			1
Total Responses			**103**

Analysis

The analysis of the survey results varied according to the type of survey question. For survey questions investigating specific factual issues restricted to local authority staff– e.g. whether a local authority has a dedicated refugee integration strategy, or the number of refugees resettled in a local authority within the last 12 months – researchers calculated a single response for each local authority based on the individual responses provided. In some cases, individual responses from the same local authority contradicted each other. In these cases, researchers chose the answer given by the respondent who, firstly, was employed within the relevant council, and secondly would be expected, given their job title, to have the greatest knowledge of the particular issue. Where it was difficult to make this judgement, an average figure was taken from the respondents employed by the council to give an approximation.

Other questions in the survey asked how individual local authorities performed in certain areas. Respondents were asked to provide an answer quantified on a 4- or 5-point Likert scale. For instance, some questions sought to quantify the level of support provided by the local authority in specific areas relating to resettlement and integration from '0 = No support' to '4 = A great deal of support'. Others asked respondents to, on a 4-point scale, assess local authority coordination with different institutions . For analysis of these questions, researchers wanted to ensure each local authority was weighted evenly, given some local authorities had more responses than others. A mean value was therefore calculated for all the responses submitted within a single local authority, producing a single local authority response for each relevant question.

For multiple-choice questions not specifically about the delivery of services by the local authority – e.g. those relating to the impact of policies and legislation – researchers analysed the results at an individual response level, without accounting for disparities in the number of responses between local authorities. This was because these questions did not focus on the support provided by local authorities across Scotland, so it was determined that it was not necessary to ensure that each local authority was weighted evenly in the analysis.

For the open-ended survey questions, written questions were posed to allow respondents to provide additional context and detail to preceding multiple choice, factual, or Likert-scale questions. At the close of the survey, researchers were able to extract written responses into a separate word processing document per question. Acting as a log of written responses, full submissions by individual respondents could be cross referenced against the profession of the person making the submission, and by their associated local authority. This allowed for analysis of responses, question-by-question, complementing the analysis of non-written responses.

Case study research

Site selection

The qualitative research was carried out between June and November 2022 in three case study areas. The case study research sought to illustrate an in-depth and nuanced picture of humanitarian protection and refugee integration across Scotland. With advisory input from COSLA and Scottish Government, a shortlisting process aimed to select three areas that were diverse in i) their geography, ii) their histories of resettlement and migration, and iii) their approach to humanitarian protection and refugee integration.

Initially, it was intended that the researchers would work with local authority areas that broadly fell under the following three categories: 'rural', 'urban' and 'partnership working'. The first two categories reflected the ambition to select areas that were geographically diverse and that had different histories of resettlement and migration. The third sought to spotlight the partnership approach taken to humanitarian protection and refugee integration by neighbouring local authority areas. In selecting candidates to approach for inclusion in the case study research, consideration was also given to known capacity and workload challenges, as well as existing research taking place in particular areas, to avoid overburdening these local authorities. For this reason, for instance, Glasgow was not approached to be the 'urban' case study area.

Fieldwork

Following selection on the above criteria, local authorities were invited by email to participate in the research and/or to attend an introductory meeting with a researcher to learn more about the project and the requirements of the research. Both the shortlisted options for the 'rural' and 'urban' areas agreed to participate in the research – Aberdeenshire for the former and Dundee for the latter. However, due to capacity and workload issues, brought about by the complexity of humanitarian protection programmes at the time of the fieldwork, the local authorities identified as candidates for the 'partnership working' category were unable to participate in the case study research. In order to secure a third case study area, an open invitation to participate was shared with all local authorities. This led to the participation of Na h-Eileanan Siar, a valuable addition for the opportunity to understand humanitarian protection and refugee integration work in a more remote context.

For each of the three case studies, the researchers planned to conduct:

- One-to-one interviews with approximately six stakeholders within each respective local authority with senior responsibility for the delivery of refugee integration and humanitarian protection work.

- A focus group for each case study area with a maximum of six people with direct experience of working on the ground in refugee integration.

- Four one-to-one interviews with refugees and/or people seeking asylum living in the case study area and who have experience of receiving support within the local authority area.

In the first instance, stakeholders with senior responsibility for refugee integration in each case study area were identified by COSLA, and researchers were introduced to these individuals to set up an online interview (via Teams). Further participants were

identified through a snowball approach, with all participants asked if they could identify other people either with senior responsibility for refugee integration or who were involved in the direct delivery of refugee integration work. This proved a successful method and highlighted the close-knit nature of much refugee integration work, as multiple participants suggested inviting the same individuals to participate. Prior to interview, all participants received an information sheet and were asked to complete an online form to record their consent for participating (see Appendix B). All stakeholder interviews were conducted online via Teams, while interviews with refugees were held either via Teams or on the phone.

Refugees were recruited by first asking stakeholders to ask people that they worked with whether they would be interested in speaking with a researcher about their experiences of integration in Scotland. Contact details of those who agreed were shared with the research team and interview dates arranged directly with participants. Participants received a copy of the information sheet (see Appendix C), were asked if they would like an interpreter present at interview, and were offered a £40 supermarket voucher as a thank-you for their contribution to the research.

In Aberdeenshire, researchers held six interviews with eight stakeholders, one focus group with five stakeholders, and four interviews with five people with lived experience. In Dundee, researchers held five stakeholder interviews, one focus group with five stakeholders, and interviewed four people with lived experience. In Na h-Eileanan Siar, researchers held five interviews with stakeholders, and interviewed one person with lived experience. In total, across the three case study areas, researchers spoke with 28 stakeholders and interviewed 10 resettled refugees. Stakeholders interviewed included those responsible for policy and/or operational matters and people delivering support on the ground. The research team faced challenges in recruiting a greater number of people with lived experience in Na h-Eileanan Siar due to the small numbers of people resettled there. Similarly, a smaller pool of people working on refugee integration on the islands meant that they were unable to recruit stakeholders to a focus group.

Research tools

Topic guides were developed through an iterative process, with a draft version shared with COSLA and the Scottish Government for input and feedback. The topic guides broadly covered:

- What refugee integration provision looked like in the case study area
- Identification of successes and challenges
- The unique attributes of the case study area that support or pose a challenge to successful refugee integration
- The impact of policy and legislation on refugee integration
- Suggestions for changes that could promote improved refugee integration outcomes.

Interviews were semi-structured, and the topic guides were intended to aid discussion rather than be prescriptive. Following early interviews, researchers made the decision

to reduce the number of questions in the interview, in order to avoid repetition and to prevent the interviews from being overly long (in light of the workload pressures on many of those being interviewed). For the full topic guide see Appendix D. For those taking part in a focus group the interview questions were slightly adapted and shortened to accommodate multiple participants.

Refugees who were interviewed were asked about their experiences of integration support, challenges and successes faced, suggestions for policy and practice, and their hopes for the future. There was a focus on understanding who had supported them in their integration journey so far, how they felt about the support or services received, and the extent to which integration support matched up with their expectations. For further details see Appendix E.

Ethical considerations

A number of ethical measures were put in place to support and protect the rights and dignity of participants throughout the research process. In particular, for participating refugees, researchers took the following steps:

- Offered to translate or interpret the information sheet and privacy notice into their preferred language, to ensure consent to participate was informed and freely given.

- Asked partner organisations supporting researchers with recruitment to identify people who they anticipated would be appropriate to invite to participate, in particular taking into consideration any acute difficulties or challenges they were currently facing.

- Agreed that participants who had identified support needs during the course of the interview should receive a follow-up call from the referring organisation to discuss these further (with permission of the participant).

- Reiterated the rights of participants at the beginning of the interview, particularly in relation to being able to withdraw without penalty and that they were free to decide not to answer a question should they prefer. Participants received an information sheet assuring them that researchers were independent, that only anonymised data would be shared with Scottish Government, and that their participation would in no way impact on services they receive. They were also advised to take a break should they need one.

- Informed participants of the safeguarding protocol that researchers would follow, in line with IPPR's safeguarding policy.

For further details about the ethical considerations and measures put in place, see the 'ethics statement' in Appendix F.

Analysis

Analysis of interviews and focus group transcripts were conducted by the research team using an a-priori code list drawn from the topic guide and with reference to the overall research aims. The research team discussed their individual analyses as a group and compared findings in each case study area against one another to

understand common themes, differences and key learnings across the case study areas.

Policy workshop

Towards the end of the project in October 2022 a virtual workshop was held with refugee resettlement staff from across different local authorities in Scotland. This workshop helped to test out initial research findings and inform some of the policy implications discussed in the final chapter of this report. The workshop was divided into two halves, with each half comprised of a briefing of the research, followed by a 'breakout discussion'. For breakout discussions the participants were divided into three groups and invited to respond to findings and questions posed by one of the researchers who hosted the discussion.

The first portion touched on the successes and challenges faced by local authorities around ESOL provision, skills and employability support, housing, and how local authorities' models of resettlement responded to recent pressures on Syria, Covid-19 and Ukraine. The session also fed back to participants what the research found regarding how varying geographies impacted resettlement efforts. During the breakout session participants were asked what surprised them about the research findings and what from the perspective of their local authority was missing.

The second portion turned to what the research team had determined to be the implications for policy moving forward. Several ideas were presented to participants, among them that resettlement teams should be granted core status within local authorities, and a more goal-oriented New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy with a mechanism to hold local authorities to account on New Scots. Following the briefing, participants were asked what they thought of the various policy implications and recommendations presented, what other recommendations the research team should consider, and hopes for the next iteration of the strategy.

Researchers, alongside colleagues from COSLA who were also in attendance during the discussion sessions, took note of the proceedings and what participants shared to inform the policy discussion and final recommendations in this report.

Methodological limitations

There are a number of methodological limitations of the survey which are important to note. First, the survey does not capture a representative sample of respondents and so should not be interpreted as reflecting the opinion of the total population of staff members of local authority and partner organisations working on refugee integration across Scotland.

Second, in spite of considerable efforts, researchers struggled to secure the desired response rate, and some responses were incomplete. Moreover, among the responses received, there was an uneven number of responses received per local authority. As a result, the survey results should be understood as illustrative of the different experiences of local authorities and partner organisations in delivering humanitarian protection programmes and refugee integration work and not as fully representative of

the whole population of local authority staff and partner activities across Scotland. While researchers have worked hard to ensure all local authorities are represented in the survey – and have in some cases corrected skews towards certain local authorities through weighting the results as discussed above – the limitations of the fieldwork should be taken into account when interpreting the quantitative findings.

On the case study research, and as noted above, key limitations arose in relation to the third case study area. First, researchers were unable to recruit the ideal third case study which would have highlighted the partnership working of two or more neighbouring local authorities. Second, within Na h-Eileanan Siar, researchers were unable to engage the proposed number of stakeholders and refugees. This is likely due to the relatively small size and scale of refugee integration work on the islands, and the smaller numbers of refugees resettled there. In addition, delays in securing this third case study area meant that researchers had less time to undertake recruitment in this location. Despite this limitation, interviews with stakeholders point to similar challenges and successes – which suggest that researchers did manage to get a fair understanding of the experiences of refugee integration in this local authority area.

Finally, limitations are likely to have arisen from the Covid-safety measures that researchers were required to adhere to during the project, which prevented researchers from visiting case study areas to conduct research. While this is a relatively small limitation, rapport and trust with participants and the richness of data may have been impacted by conducting interviews and focus groups online or via telephone compared with in-person.

3. Understanding the current picture

This chapter sets out how local authorities in Scotland manage humanitarian protection programmes and support refugee integration. Drawing on evidence from the research survey and immigration data, it details the wide-ranging efforts made by local authorities to provide support to refugees and people seeking asylum, including how they approach collaboration and partnerships with other organisations.

Refugee resettlement across Scotland

As explored in Chapter 1, local authorities have been at the forefront in delivering a series of major new resettlement schemes which have been put in place since 2014. While before this period resettlement numbers were very low and many local authorities in Scotland had no experience of supporting humanitarian protection programmes, councils have scaled up their work over time and all 32 of Scotland's local authorities are now involved in refugee resettlement.

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 below illustrates some of the changes in refugee arrivals which local authorities in Scotland have responded to since 2014. As Figure 3.1 shows, resettlement numbers under the VPRS increased significantly between 2014 and 2020. During the pandemic period in 2020, resettlement in effect stopped. However, as illustrated in Figure 3.2, the number of arrivals increased significantly during 2022 under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme. (There have also been large numbers of arrivals since 2021 through the Afghan schemes – while time series data is unavailable, 968 people on Afghan schemes were in Scotland as at 31 March 2023.) The charts highlight how local authorities across Scotland have had to continually adapt to unpredictable and fast-moving refugee patterns in recent years. Figure 3.2 illustrates how the number of arrivals under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme increased significantly during 2022 and a more graduated increase through much of 2023.

Figure 3.1: Cumulative arrivals through the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme, Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, and UK Resettlement Scheme
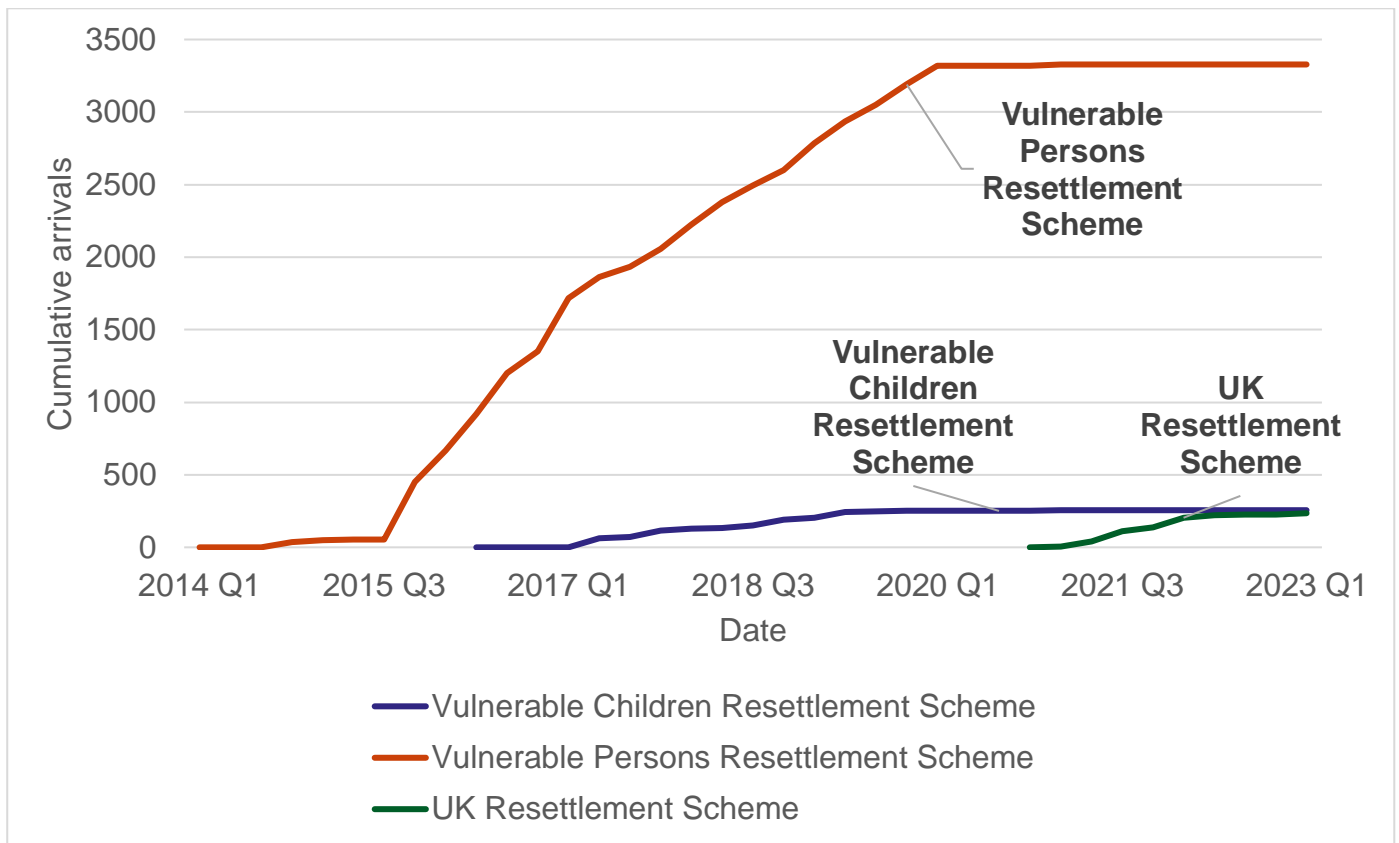
Source: IPPR analysis of Home Office 2023b
Note: ARAP/ACRS are not included.

Figure 3.2: Cumulative arrivals in Scotland through Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (including Scottish Government sponsorships), from 2014 to mid-2022
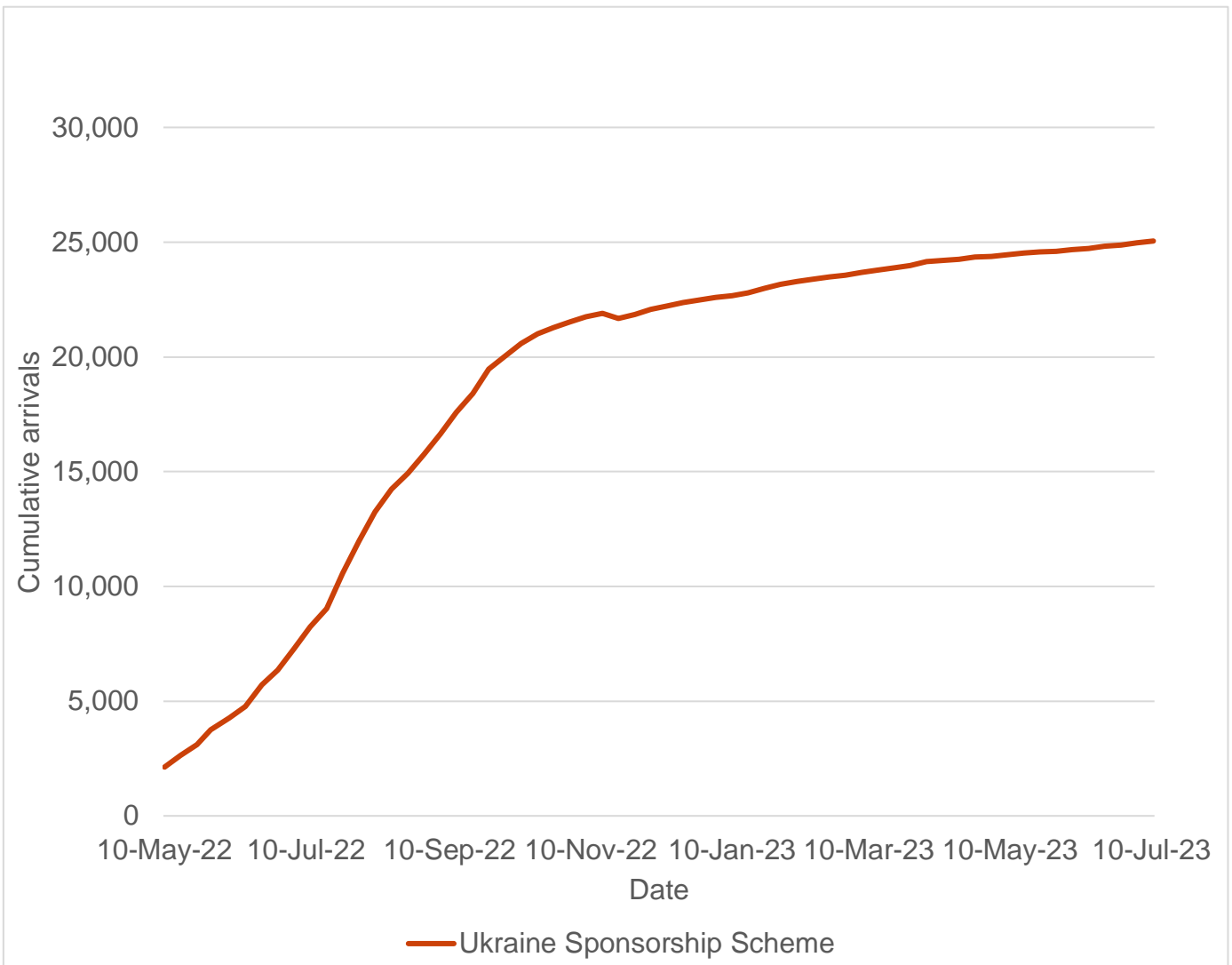
Source: IPPR analysis of Home Office 2023h

Sponsorship Scheme refer to the number of Scotland arrivals on a weekly basis as published by the UK Government. Figures for the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme continued to increase significantly in late 2022. From 22nd Nov 2022, the analytical methodology to de-duplicate the arrival figures at the local authority level was amended to be consistent with Home Office reporting; therefore, any decrease in the figures compared to previous releases may be a result of this deduplication. This has had the effect of a small dip in what is otherwise a cumulative figure which gradually increases.

To illustrate the breadth of involvement across Scotland, Figure 3.3 shows the local authorities where refugees have been resettled under the VPRS, the resettlement route involving the largest numbers of refugees (outside of the bespoke Afghan and Ukraine routes). All of Scotland's 32 local authorities resettled refugees under the VPRS, most in at least double digits. Out of a total of 3,328 refugees resettled under the VPRS since 2014, the local authorities receiving the largest numbers include Edinburgh (484 refugees), Glasgow (366 refugees), North Ayrshire (201 refugees),

Aberdeenshire (176 refugees), and Dundee (170 refugees) – a mix of both urban and rural areas (Home Office 2023b).

Figure 3.3: Number of people resettled under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) by local authority
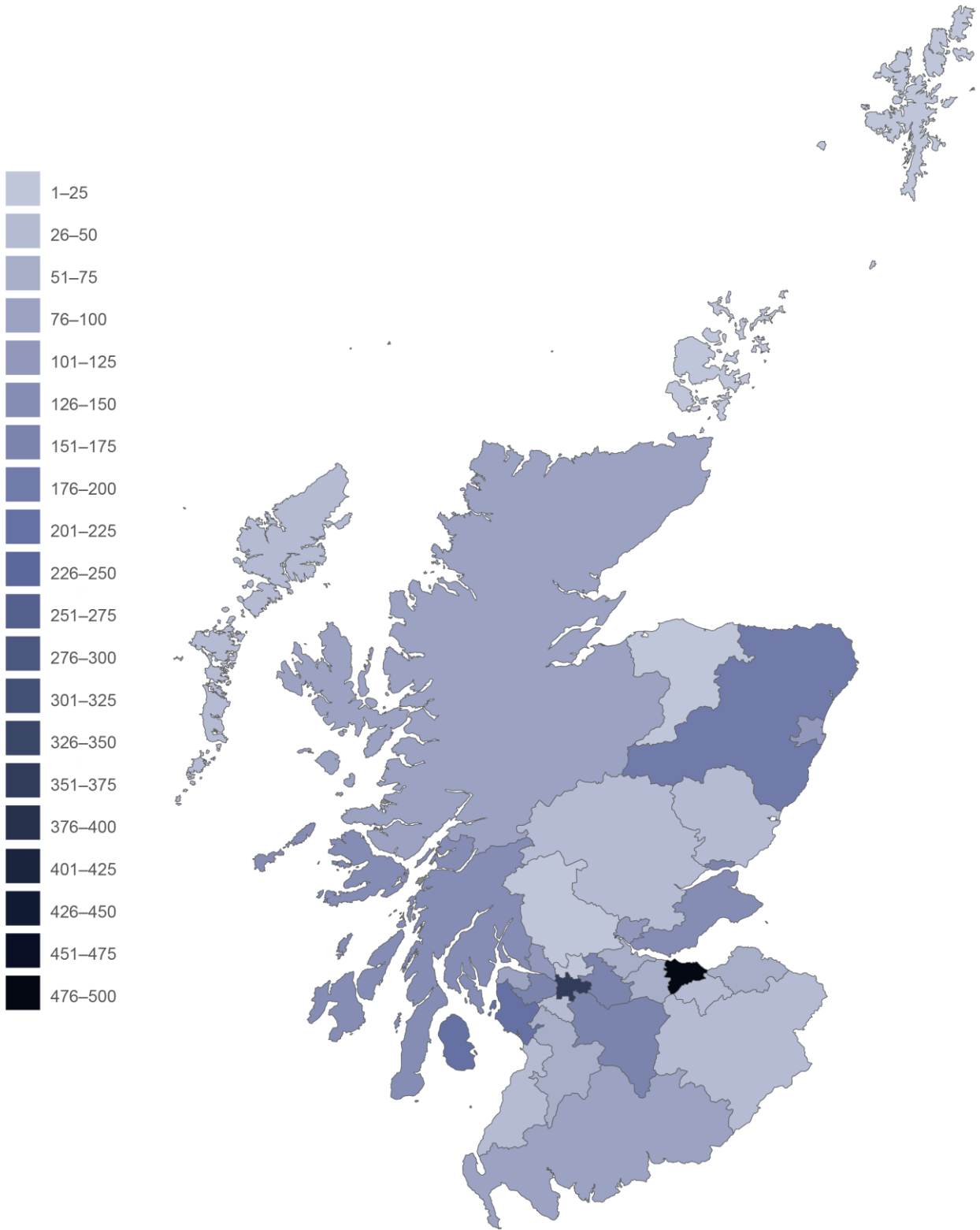
Source: IPPR analysis of Home Office (2023b)

However, the pattern of resettlement across Scotland varies depending on the precise route. Of those resettled under the VCRS (a total of 256), more than half (155 or 60%) of the total number of people resettled were resettled in Glasgow. Of those resettled under the UKRS so far (a total of 235), around half (49%) have been resettled in Edinburgh. These resettlement routes are therefore more concentrated in Scotland's largest cities. The UKRS is however in its early stages and these figures are likely to change as the route develops.

For the Afghan schemes, as at 31 March 2023 people in bridging accommodation were located in Aberdeen (143), Edinburgh (109), and Fife (56). Those in settled accommodation, however, were most commonly living in Glasgow (124), Edinburgh (109), and Inverclyde (78) (Home Office 2023g).

Different patterns emerge again with the new Ukraine schemes. Figures 3.4 and 3.5 illustrate where refugees have settled in Scotland under both the Super Sponsor Scheme and the Individual Sponsor Scheme, according to the available data. The local authorities with the largest numbers of guests who have arrived at longer-term accommodation under the Super Sponsor Scheme include Edinburgh, Aberdeen, South Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire. The local authorities with the largest number of guests under individual sponsorship include rural areas such as Fife, Perth and Kinross, and Highland, as well as Edinburgh (ibid). This may be because households in rural areas are more likely to have spare rooms to host guests as individual sponsors.

Figure 3.4: Total number of individuals matched where guests have arrived at longer-term accommodation under Ukraine Super Sponsor Scheme by local authority (as of February 2023)
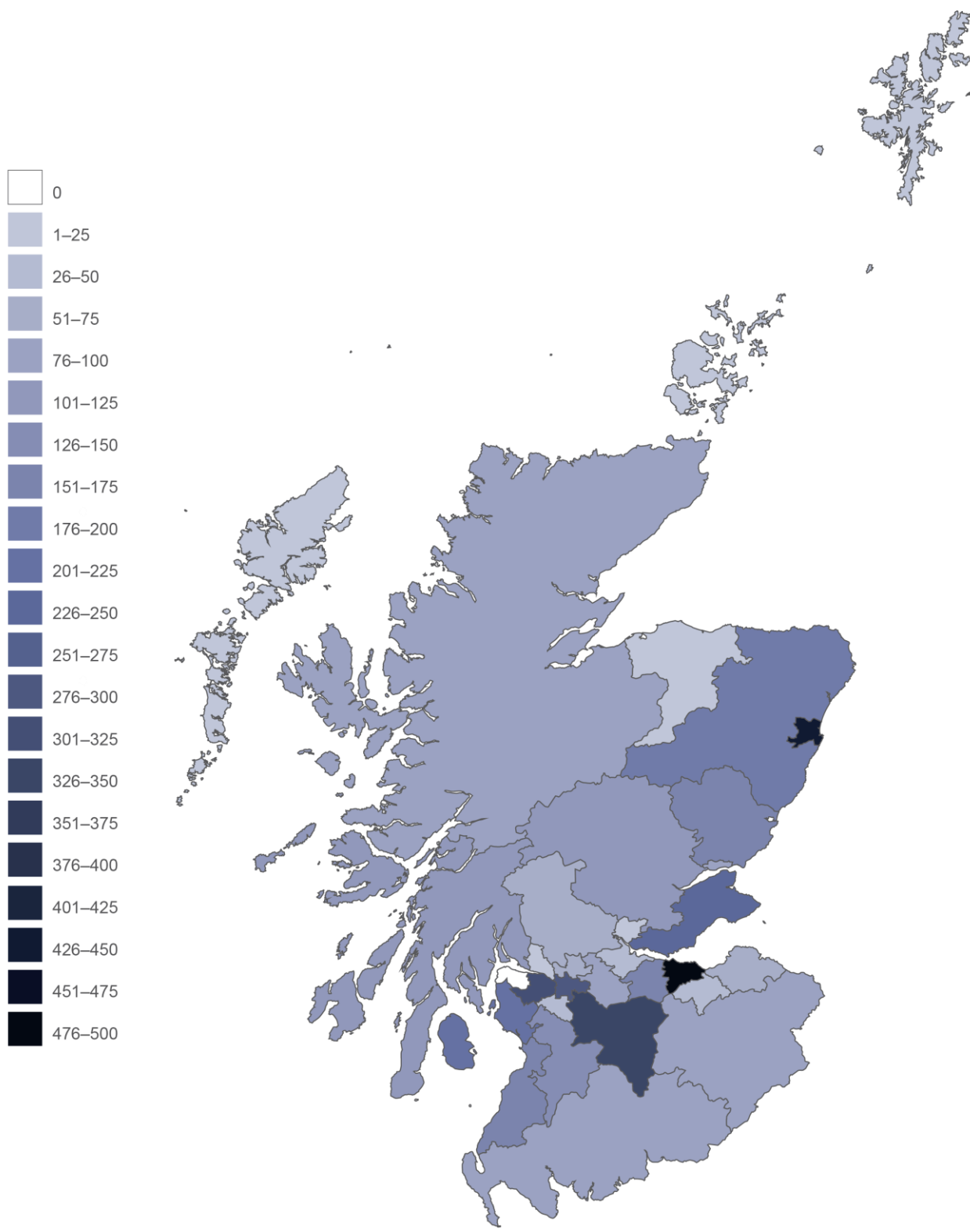
Source: Scottish Government 2023d
Note: Based on provisional data and may underestimate completed matches. All figures rounded to the nearest 5 due to disclosure control.

Figure 3.5: Total number of guests known to have arrived at longer-term accommodation under Ukraine Individual Sponsor Scheme by local authority (as of May 2023)

	0
	1–25
	26–50
	51–75
	76–100
	101–125
	126–150
	151–175
	176–200
	201–225
	226–250
	251–275
	276–300
	301–325
	326–350
	351–375
	376–400
	401–425
	426–450
	451–475
	476–500
	>500
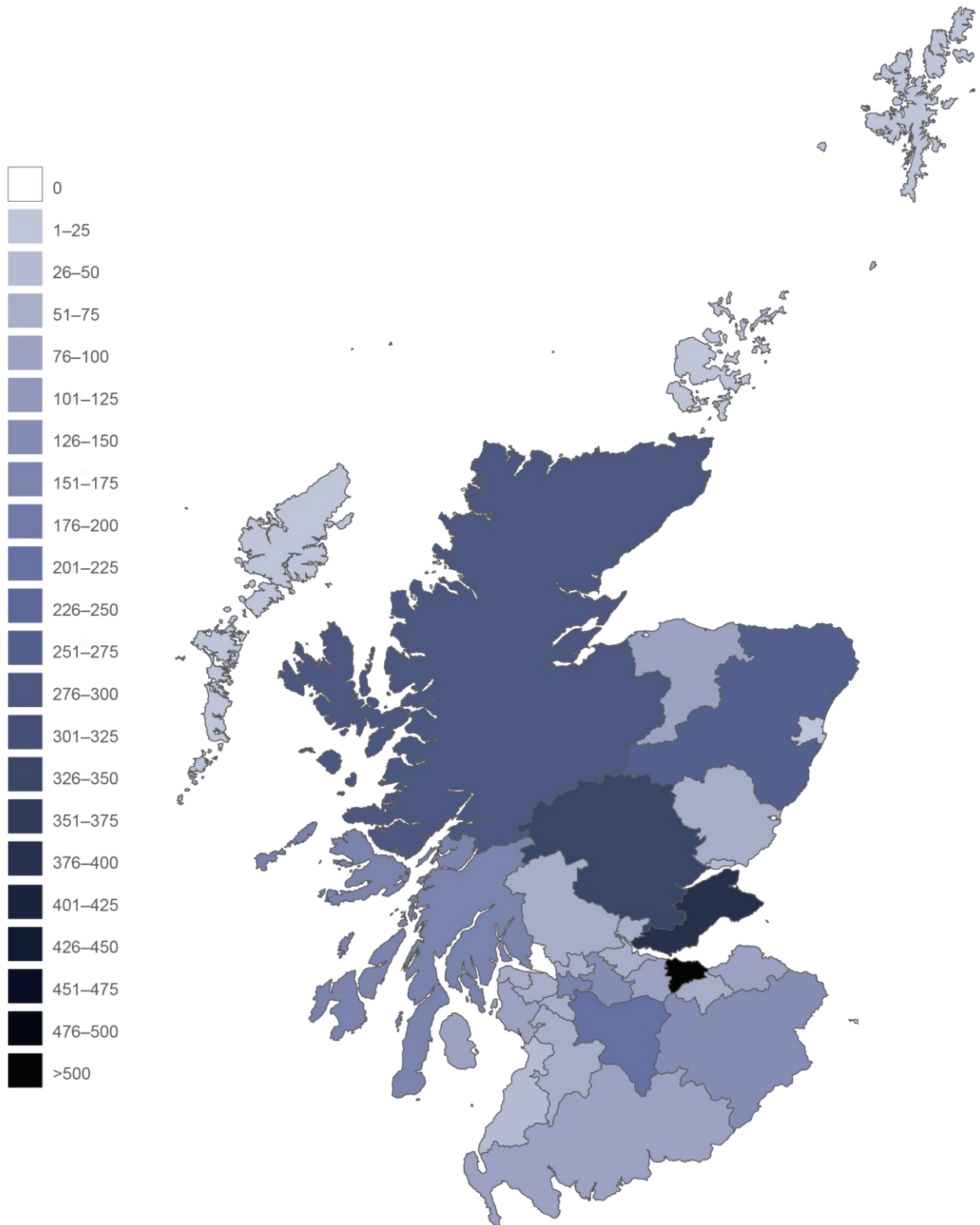
Source: Scottish Government 2023b
Note: All figures rounded to the nearest 5 due to disclosure control.

As explained in the introduction, the move to full dispersal in the asylum system and to a mandated National Transfer Scheme for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children – as well as the growing use of temporary accommodation by the Home Office – mean that people seeking asylum are increasingly being accommodated across different parts of Scotland.

There are early signs of this shift in the latest available data from the Home Office. As at 31 March 2023, the vast majority (89%) of people seeking asylum in receipt of support were in Glasgow, but there were recent sharp increases in people seeking asylum in receipt of support in other local authorities. For instance, Perth and Kinross had eight people seeking asylum in receipt of support on 30 September 2022, increasing to 106 on 31 December; while Aberdeen had nine people seeking asylum in receipt of support on 30 September, increasing to 107 on 31 December. There were also sharp increases in Edinburgh, Falkirk, Inverclyde, Renfrewshire, and South Lanarkshire (Home Office 2023i). Most of this appeared to be driven by the use of contingency accommodation in these areas, and not yet the move to full dispersal.

Moreover, Home Office transparency data indicate significant increases in UASC transferred to local authorities in Scotland via the National Transfer Scheme in recent years. In the first quarter of 2021, five transfers were made into Scottish local authorities (including from ports/intake units), whereas in the first quarter of 2023 there were a total of 55 transfers. The number of transfers has ranged considerably between local authorities: in the year ending March 2023, some local authorities had zero or 1-2 transfers, while others had significantly higher numbers, including Aberdeenshire (30) and Highland (27) (Home Office 2023k).

This analysis shows that, since 2014, all local authorities across Scotland have been actively facilitating refugee resettlement. While many did not have experience before then, the roll-out of the VPRS meant that for the first time many local authorities were tasked with new responsibilities for integrating refugees and needed to quickly develop new expertise and ways of working. Given the UK Government's move to full dispersal and the mandated NTS, local authorities are now also becoming more involved in supporting people seeking asylum – particularly with respect to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, where they have a range of responsibilities. The following section explores how local authorities carry out their responsibilities for delivering humanitarian protection programmes.

How local authorities deliver refugee integration activities

Local authorities typically deliver the bulk of their refugee integration work through refugee resettlement teams. These teams are part of the council and lead on supporting refugees who arrive in the local authority area through different resettlement programmes. They are responsible for coordinating provision for resettled refugees, including welcoming people on arrival, arranging accommodation, and ensuring registration and access to relevant services. Resettlement teams are

generally funded through the Home Office, according to the tariff funding for the different resettlement schemes discussed in Chapter 1. Support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children is typically staffed separately through children's services.
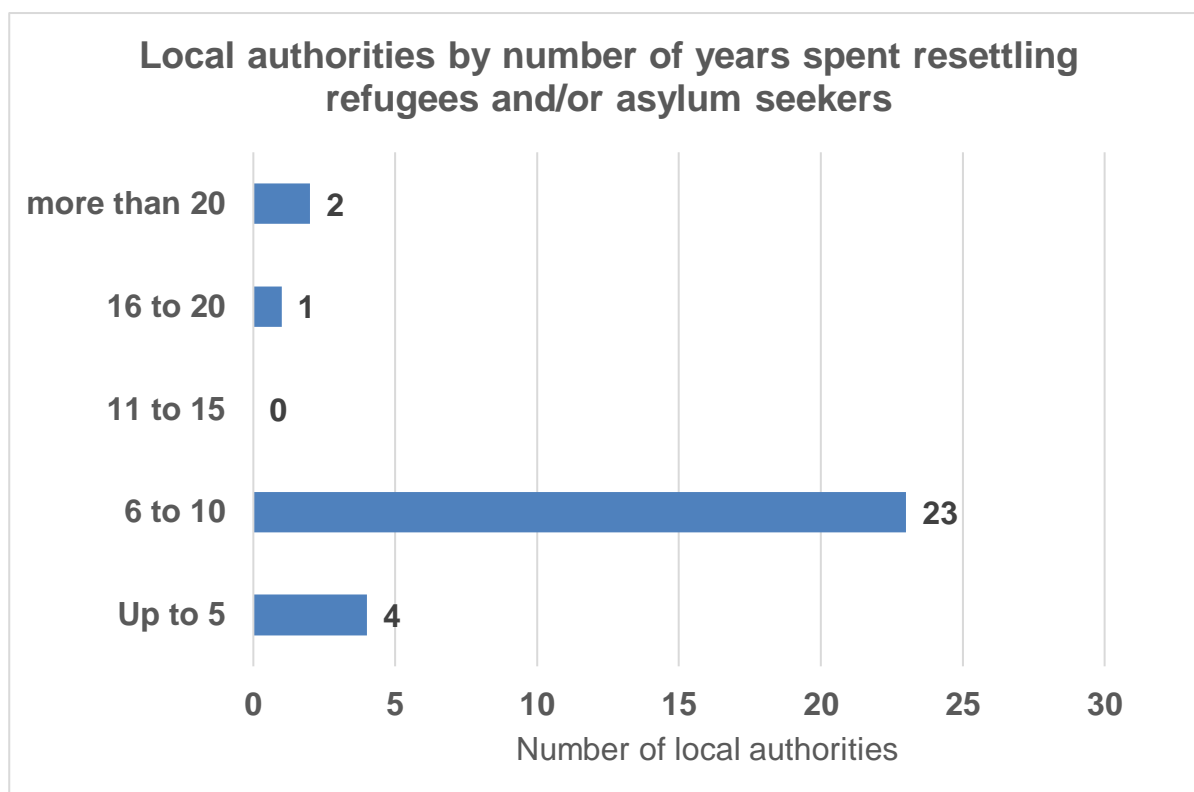
The Scotland-wide survey of local authorities and partner organisations gave further insights into the role of resettlement teams. Based on the survey responses, the vast majority of local authorities in Scotland (30 out of 32) have a refugee resettlement team, and even among those who answered that they do not, the remaining two local authorities were in the process of either recruiting a team or awaiting for a newly recruited resettlement team leader and staff to assume their position.

However, these teams vary considerably in size: some local authorities (a total of 4) only had one full-time equivalent (FTE) staff member working directly for the council on the resettlement and integration of refugees and people seeking asylum, while other local authorities had more than 10 FTE staff members. This likely reflects the different scale of refugee arrivals across local authorities, with more rural areas tending to have fewer staff. However, it may also be partly due to differences in interpretation of the question (e.g. whether or not respondents included ESOL teams), as well as varying models across local authorities (e.g. whether councils contract out services to partner organisations).

The survey also asked respondents how long their local authority had been supporting refugees and/or people seeking asylum, in order to understand the histories and experiences of local authorities in delivering refugee integration activities (Fig 3.5). For most local authorities, the median answer given was 6-10 years, reflecting how resettlement efforts have been scaled up since the introduction of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in 2014. For some local authorities, less experience was indicated – for instance, the answer for Angus, East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire and Moray was less than five years – while for other local authorities (e.g. Glasgow and East Lothian) it was suggested that there were longer periods of experience.

Together, these answers highlight the changing nature of refugee resettlement across Scotland, whereby the introduction of new resettlement schemes have meant that an increasing number of local authorities across Scotland have become actively engaged in the refugee resettlement process. It also indicates the value in sharing learning between local authorities, given the years of experience and expertise in local authorities with a longer history of managing refugee resettlement schemes and, in Glasgow's case, asylum dispersal.

Figure 3.6: Experience of local authorities in supporting refugees and people seeking asylum by number of years

Local authorities by number of years spent resettling refugees and/or asylum seekers

Years	Number
more than 20	2
16 to 20	1
11 to 15	0
6 to 10	23
Up to 5	4

Number of local authorities

Source: IPPR analysis of local authority survey/interviews (median answer by local authority)

Additional interviews with council officers highlighted further details about the workings of resettlement teams. The interviews suggested some important differences between local authorities. While urban local authorities tended to have large and established resettlement teams, this was harder to do in rural local authorities due to what one interviewee described as 'diseconomies of scale'. As the interviewee explained, smaller local authorities struggled to secure enough Home Office funding to set up a fully-fledged resettlement team, given they were only resettling small numbers and funding was available on a per-person basis. This meant that staff had often had to work on resettlement alongside their day-to-day roles, leading to burnout and high turnover. This suggests that the tariff structure of Home Office funding – and the uncertainty in predicting future numbers – can make it hard for local authorities to properly and sustainably resource their resettlement teams.

Council staff also discussed how resettlement teams had developed and grown in their local authorities. One interviewee noted that, in general in local authorities, resettlement work emerged out of housing teams, though this was not always the case – the interviewee in question had originally been a social worker, while another council officer spoke of staff members coming from a community development background. The development of refugee resettlement teams shaped their priorities and focus: for instance, in the case of Dundee, whose team developed out of social services, social work was placed at the centre of their approach (e.g. all adults were given a social work assessment on arrival).

A further point emphasised by one council refugee resettlement lead concerned the need to secure buy-in from across the local authority for humanitarian protection and refugee integration activities – in particular within social work and housing teams, who could often be quite removed from resettlement work. In their words, it was a "deliberate strategy from the start to ensure that refugee resettlement was a responsibility across the council". By playing the role of a coordinator and bringing different elements of the council together on these issues, the resettlement lead explained that they helped to build knowledge and understanding of refugee integration across different council teams.

As part of building a picture of how local authorities delivered humanitarian protection programmes in Scotland, it was important to understand the extent to which they took a strategic approach to refugee resettlement. As explained in Chapter 1, the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council have jointly developed the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy, which provides a framework for refugee integration work across Scotland; it was therefore important to understand whether local authorities had responded by developing their own strategic approaches. In the survey, respondents were asked whether their local authority had a defined refugee integration strategy in place. Out of the 32 local authorities, respondents indicated that 13 had such a strategy, while in the remaining cases respondents said either there was no strategy or they were unsure (Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7: Number of local authorities by whether they have a defined refugee integration strategy*
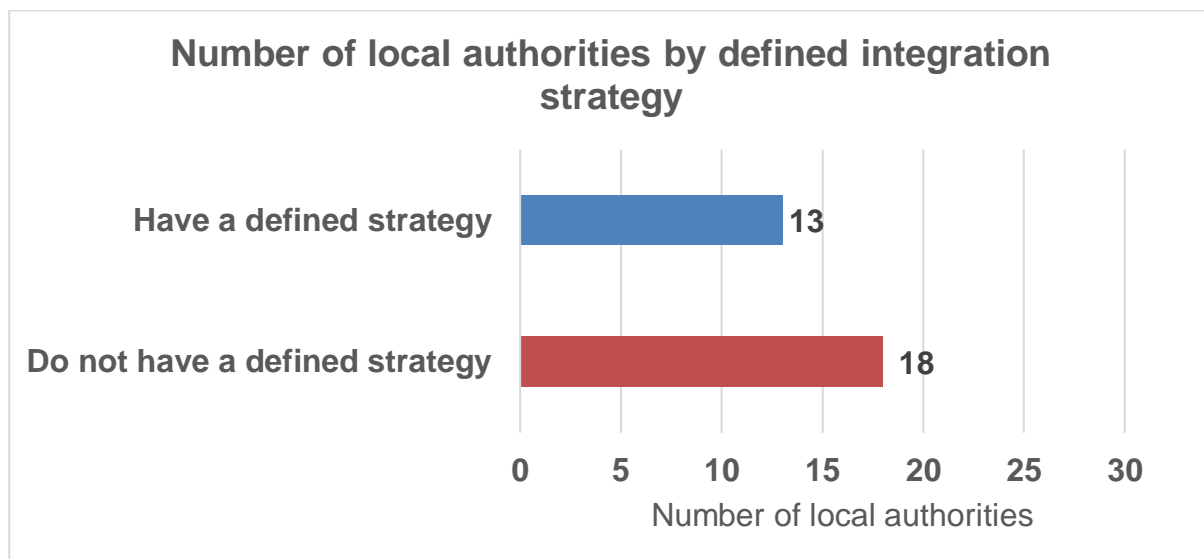
Source: IPPR analysis of local authority survey/interviews
*Does not sum to 32 as one local authority provided the response 'Don't know'

The interviews with resettlement leads offered some further insights into how local authorities had developed strategies for refugee integration. One council officer explained that they did not have a bespoke local strategy of their own, but they "work broadly to the New Scots integration strategy". This suggests that some of those local authorities that said they did not have a strategy may have been using the Scotland-Wide New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy as the framework for their integration activities.

A common theme in the interviews was the challenge in balancing strategic and operational priorities. One interviewee said that their council had recently agreed a new paper underpinning the different resettlement schemes, but this now needed a re-evaluation in light of the new policies for Ukrainians. An interviewee from a different local authority said that the council was hoping to develop a more strategic approach but, given the pressures and limited resources of the team, "at the moment we are purely focused, really with the needs [of new arrivals] and delivering at an operational level". The recent new Afghan and Ukraine schemes therefore appear to have made it particularly challenging for local authorities to focus on an overall refugee integration strategy due to the schemes' pressures reducing the available time for strategic thinking.

Nevertheless, the additional interviews with council officers also highlighted the commitment and flexibility of local authorities in the face of a series of recent crises, from shifting rapidly to online learning during the Covid-19 lockdown to managing accommodation and integration support for the surge of arrivals through the new Ukraine schemes. For instance, one council spoke of organising daily multi-agency meetings with 20-30 different partners in the initial two months of the Ukraine response. In the words of one interviewee, Scotland's local authorities were 'very good at responding to emergencies'. This flexibility was a hallmark of local authority approaches to refugee integration, as explored in further detail in the following chapters of the report.

How local authorities coordinate their integration activities with others

As discussed in Chapter 1, the delivery of refugee integration work in Scotland involves a balance of responsibilities between the UK Government, the Scottish Government, COSLA, local authorities, and other public and third sector providers. Effective cooperation between these groups is essential to successful refugee integration.

The survey asked respondents how closely their local authority coordinated with different institutions and organisations – including COSLA, the Scottish Government, the UK Government, local third sector organisations, other local authorities, and other local public service providers (e.g. Health Boards, education providers and the police) to deliver humanitarian protection programmes and support the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum. Respondents were asked to choose between four responses indicating different levels of closeness in local authority coordination. This ranged from '0 - No coordination', '1 - Limited coordination', '2 - Fairly coordinated', to '3 - Highly coordinated' (see Figure 3.8). An average of responses per local authority was then taken as an overall national average.

COSLA's Strategic Migration Partnership received the highest overall average response rate at 2.7 out of a possible 3, indicating high levels of coordination by local authorities with COSLA. This reflects COSLA's central coordination role in Scotland – for instance, through matching resettled refugees to local authorities, managing the

NTS rota, and organising monthly/fortnightly meetings for local authority resettlement leads.

There were high average scores for coordination with third sector organisations (scoring an average of 2.3) and local public service providers (2.6). This reflects the joint partnership working taking place at the local level to deliver integration support, which will be discussed in more depth in the following chapter.

There was also a high average score for coordination with other local authorities (2.5), suggesting that there is a fairly strong degree of sharing of knowledge and best practice on refugee integration between councils across Scotland. Over the course of the project, researchers heard of particular examples of effective partnership working between local authorities. For instance, North and South Lanarkshire resettlement teams work closely together, providing peer support and sharing resources, and have developed a joint piece of work with NHS Lanarkshire, the regional Health Board. Another example is the partnership approach of North, East and South Ayrshire, including joint working between the three local authorities under the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

Average scores were lower for the Scottish Government (average score of 2.2) and, in particular, the UK Government (average score of 1.8, falling between limited coordination and fairly coordinated). This could be because the Scottish and UK Governments are less involved in the operational delivery of integration support at the local authority level compared with the other organisations listed above, and because they tend to coordinate with local authorities via COSLA rather than directly with local authorities. It may also reflect recent challenges with delivering the Afghan and Ukraine schemes, as well as the NTS. Interviews conducted for the case studies corroborated this by highlighting problems with how the schemes had been organised and communicated by the UK Government.

Figure 3.8: Extent of local authority coordination with different institutions and organisations to deliver humanitarian protection programmes and support the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum (mean scores)

Mean scores for coordination between local authorities and different institutions and organisations

Organisation	Mean score
COSLA (SMP)	2.7
Local public services	2.6
Other local authorities	2.5
Third sector organisations	2.3
Scottish Government	2.2
UK Government	1.8

Mean score
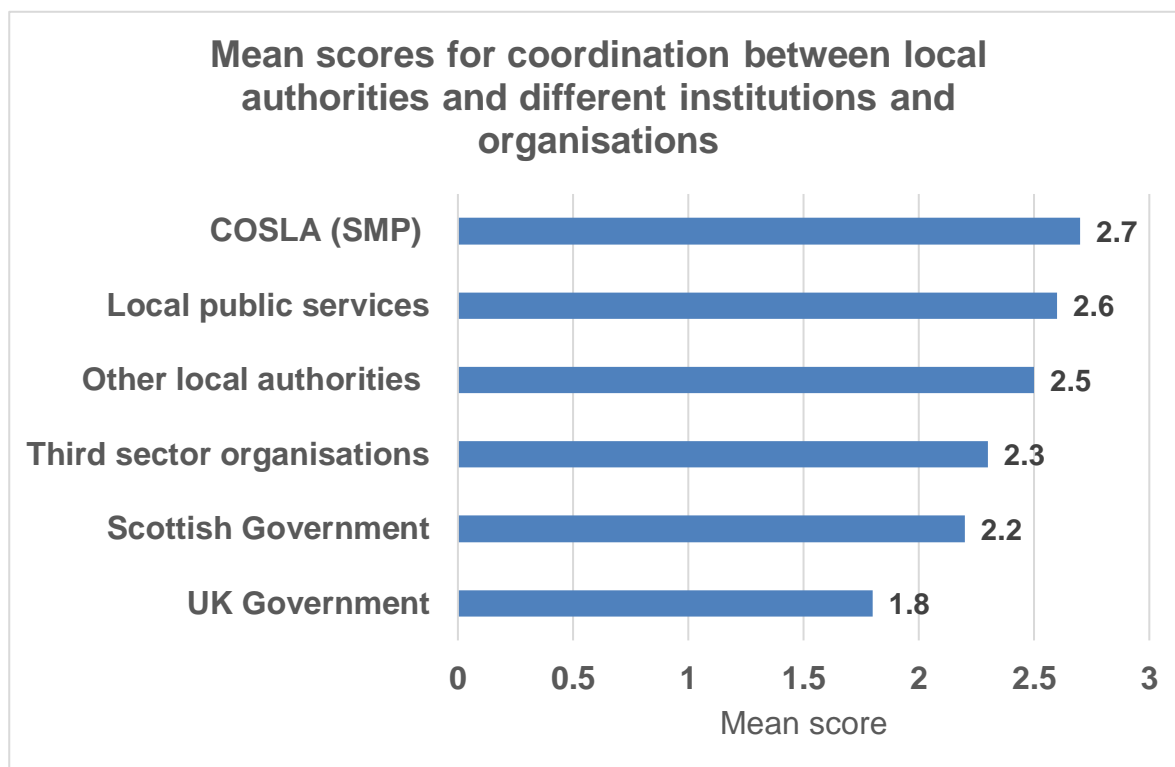
Source: IPPR analysis of local authority survey

The role of lived experience

One of the overarching outcomes of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy is to ensure that policy, strategic planning and legislation impacting on refugees and people seeking asylum are informed by their own needs, rights and aspirations. The research therefore aimed to explore the extent to which the lived experience of refugees and people seeking asylum help to shape integration policy and processes at the local level. The survey asked respondents to determine to what extent their local authority succeeded in incorporating the views and experiences of refugees and people seeking asylum in their policy and strategic planning. Responses ranged from '0 – Not incorporated at all', up to '4 – Highly incorporated'.

The national average score, taken from the average score for each local authorities, was 2.7. This is higher than the mid-point between 0 and 4, suggesting that on average local authorities are to some extent incorporating the views of refugees and people seeking asylum, though there is also room for improvement. Importantly, respondents to this question will only present a partial view, given they represent the voices of local authorities and partner organisations; for a fuller account, a survey would need to be conducted for those with lived experience of the refugee and asylum system, but this was outside the scope of this research project.

Through the survey, respondents were able to provide written responses to elaborate on why they provided the score they did. These answers reflected a range of mechanisms for incorporating the views of refugees and people seeking asylum, including feedback forms and surveys, focus groups, and more informal means of engagement.

The responses suggested local authorities made concerted efforts to get input from refugees and people seeking asylum, but to varying degrees of success. One local authority noted that they conduct home visits and drop-in sessions on a weekly basis to understand people's needs and make improvements. Another respondent explained how their local authority benefited from a Syrian Network (now developing into a New Scots Network), which fed into the Community Board level decision making and council planning. However, other respondents said that their efforts to incorporate views of refugees and people seeking asylum were still in their infancy and that limits on capacity and Covid-19 had made it harder to carry out this type of engagement.

Local authority approaches to refugee integration: Overview of the three case study areas

The research for this report involved in-depth analysis in three case study areas: Aberdeenshire, Dundee, and Na h-Eileanan Siar. This section provides an overview of each of the case study areas and their approaches to delivering humanitarian protection programmes and supporting refugee integration. The information presented here is based on interviews and focus groups with staff from the three local authorities, other local service providers, and third sector and community organisations, as well as refugees and people seeking asylum.

Aberdeenshire

Aberdeenshire is a geographically large rural local authority in the north-east of Scotland. The borders of Aberdeenshire stretch from Moray in the west, along the North Sea coast, around the periphery of the City of Aberdeen (which is a separate urban local authority), south towards Angus, and extending deep into mountainous Cairngorms in the west. The large geography of Aberdeenshire accounts for the local authority's low population density, with the population spread across multiple towns separated by extensive farmland. Despite this the overall population is relatively high with more than 260,000 residents according to latest estimates (Aberdeenshire Council 2022a). Peterhead, Inverurie, and Fraserburgh are among the largest urban areas in terms of population, with the council identifying 18 'main towns'.

While Aberdeenshire is serviced by several railway stations, they are limited to two connected lines running north along the North-East Mainline to Aberdeen, and a link between Aberdeen and Inverness. Therefore, car and bus travel act as the primary link between Aberdeenshire's dispersed population centres and access to health, social, and cultural services, with 10% of every kilometre of Scotland's roads located in Aberdeenshire (Aberdeenshire Council 2018). The area is serviced by bus routes operated by Stagecoach as well as community transport initiatives throughout the various towns of Aberdeenshire and a free Dial-A-Bus service operated by the council to maximise personal mobility.

Traditionally, agriculture and fishing dominated Aberdeenshire's economy; however, with the discovery of oil and gas in the North Sea in the 1970s, the energy sector features as the focus of today's economy. This has led to a consistently lower unemployment rate compared with the Scotland average, and higher average household income (Aberdeenshire Council 2021; Aberdeenshire Council 2022b). The growth of the energy industry has coincided with an increase in the population, and in 2020-21 Aberdeenshire had the fourth highest net total migration level (total internal and external to Scotland) of Scotland's local authorities (National Records of Scotland 2022a). A traditionally ethnically homogeneous area of Scotland with low levels of migration, the energy industry has attracted migration from around the world. Meanwhile, in recent years the number of refugees resettling in Aberdeenshire has increased with a corresponding development of Aberdeenshire's resettlement team in staff, capability and experience.

Aberdeenshire's approach to refugee integration

In Aberdeenshire, the local authority has coordinated integration support for resettled refugees since 2016 with the arrival of Syrian refugees under the VPRS. While significant numbers of Syrian refugees were resettled in the area, only a small number of Afghans have been resettled in recent years – reflecting the broader problems with the Afghan resettlement schemes. Similarly, at the time of interview, the local authority was struggling to attract Ukrainian displaced people – despite having a couple of hundred sponsors approved, they had only had a handful of matches under Homes for Ukraine.

At the same time, increasing numbers of UASC are being housed in Aberdeenshire – and while numbers at the time of fieldwork were relatively small on the whole (jumping from two young people at the end of 2021 to 10 by August 2022), the work to support these young people is significant.

The council takes a Community Learning and Development (CLD) approach,[10] in line with Scotland's CLD policy and is underpinned by the Aberdeenshire New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy (Aberdeenshire Council 2022c; Education Scotland nd). Support is geared towards empowering refugees with the knowledge, skills and tools to be independent and advocate for themselves. Over time the resettlement team has learnt to balance an individualised approach with one that sets clear boundaries and supports self-development, in order to avoid refugees becoming over-reliant on the local authority and to promote their independence and agency.

> "I think at the beginning we made the mistakes that most people make where we personalised and individualised a lot of the work that we did… we got very involved in every question and every answer… and then we thought, we can't do this, this is too much. We're over-personalising, we're over-involving, people are becoming over-reliant. We then made very, very clear frameworks, so we let people know, this is what your resettlement officer does, this is how they will help you. They will help you develop your toolkit, they're not the tools in your kit." (Local authority worker)

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[10] See chapter 4 for further discussion of CLD practices.

As there is a small third sector in Aberdeenshire working with refugee communities, the council takes a very hands-on approach to resettlement work locally. Over time, the team has been restructured: while originally the resettlement lead sat in education and the rest of the team in housing, more recently the team was brought together under a manager responsible for tackling poverty and inequality, within business services. According to the team, this structure has been to their benefit, because rather than being placed within education, housing or social work and following the culture of that particular service, they have been able to focus on independently delivering on the outcomes they consider most important.

At the same time as the recent restructure, staff in the resettlement team had their salaries increased and their roles upgraded from housing officer to resettlement officers, in light of the specific knowledge and skills that they bring to the role. As a result, there is high staff retention and satisfaction among the team.

The council staff work with other public sector services, colleges, faith organisations and national third sector organisations to coordinate effective resettlement support. In addition, they work alongside the Friends of Al-Amal group, which was established after the arrival of Syrian refugees and supports the Syrian community locally to develop social connections through activities such as poetry nights, organised trips and community gardening initiatives.

There is a strong focus on multi-agency working in Aberdeenshire. For instance, one stakeholder, working to support children and young people in education, really welcomed being a part of multi-agency working groups such as the Refugee and Asylum Seeking Strategic Group and the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children Working Group. They said: "It's really positive that we're involved in conversations at those meetings because it means that we can feed in and also understand what's going on. It's working together."

Dundee

Dundee City, located on the River Tay and a historic port city to the North Sea, is Scotland's most geographically compact local authority, and the second densest by population after Glasgow. The local authority comprises exclusively the City of Dundee and the wider metropolitan area including Broughty Ferry in the east. In total, according to the most recent population estimate, the local authority is home to 148,100 residents (National Records of Scotland 2022b).

The city is served by two train stations (Dundee and Broughty Ferry) with rail connections to Perth and the Highlands in the west, the Central Belt through Fife to the south, and onward connections to the north-east of Scotland and Aberdeen. Dundee also has a small airport which provides primarily domestic flight connections. Within Dundee there is fairly comprehensive bus network operated by Xplore serving the city and metro area, and Stagecoach Strathtay connecting the city with the more rural Angus and Grampian regions to the north.

As Scotland's fourth largest city, Dundee is home to a variety of services in close proximity, including health, social, and cultural services. The prominence of Dundee's

educational services, including universities and colleges, and high-tech jobs in computing and game design are a positive attraction for inward migration of students and young people from around the world. Despite a long history of migration from across Europe, Africa and east Asia, net migration in Dundee has been in decline in recent years (National Records of Scotland 2022b). However, an established and expanding refugee resettlement team has seen a similar increase to Aberdeenshire in recent years in response to the crises in Afghanistan and Ukraine, with a particular community-centred approach to resettlement.

Dundee's approach to refugee integration

Dundee City Council has developed an established model of refugee integration since it first started resettling refugees in 2015. Outside the bespoke Afghan and Ukraine schemes, interviewees estimated that Dundee had resettled around 250 refugees, primarily from Syria and Iraq. More recently, the city has supported two Afghan families, but has otherwise struggled to find matches despite offering accommodation as part of the scheme. Difficulty making matches can be attributed to high refusal rates by people resident in bridging hotels under the Afghan schemes. This has had a particular effect on slowing down the resettlement process in Dundee.

Dundee has also supported significant numbers of Ukrainians over the past year: at the time of fieldwork, around 60 people had arrived under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, with 23 people in local authority housing and a further six houses in the process of being furnished. Finally, Dundee is also playing an active role in supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, over and above the numbers allocated by the rota under the National Transfer Scheme.

Dundee's model of refugee integration involves close working with the Scottish Refugee Council, which is contracted by the council resettlement lead to provide day-to-day support to refugees in the local authority area. Dundee City Council and the Scottish Refugee Council now share office space, which helps with coordinating provision. The council also contracts an employability staff member and ESOL workers and works closely with local authority leads in social work (children and families), social work (adults), education, police, DWP and NHS.

This multi-agency working forms the basis of Dundee's Humanitarian Protection Partnership, which informs the wider Dundee resettlement strategy, allowing stakeholders from different professions and expertise to raise queries or issues related to cases, and come to resolutions on a monthly basis. This multi-agency working was praised in interviews with Dundee stakeholders who described the forum as a "lifeline" which means "There's always someone that I feel I can go to if I have a query". Both the local authority and the Scottish Refugee Council spoke positively about the partnership and the positive feedback they received from refugees.

The onset of the Ukraine crisis is now testing the success of this partnership working. For the Homes for Ukraine scheme, the resettlement team is involved in providing disclosure checks for hosts and arranging visits, and there is close working with the council's homelessness team to raise any concerns and provide support if there are breakdowns in the relationships between guests and hosts.

The Scottish Refugee Council play a critical role in refugee integration in Dundee. They are the first point of contact for resettled refugees in the city, helping with issues such as benefits, housing, education, GP registration, and utilities. They take new arrivals around the city to orientate them and organise a WhatsApp group and newsletter sharing information about local activities. This work is supported by volunteers, some of whom are refugees themselves. There are also other key organisations which provide support to refugees in Dundee, including the council's ESOL and Employability teams and other third sector organisations such as Dundee International Women's Centre.

Na h-Eileanan Siar

Na h-Eileanan Siar is the most geographically diverse local authority in Scotland and is perceived to be among the more remote areas of Scotland. The archipelago off the west coast of mainland Scotland comprises 15 inhabited islands, the largest by population including Lewis, Harris, North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist, and Barra. The latest population estimate indicates there are 26,200 residents, a majority of whom reside on the largest islands of Harris and Lewis, where the single largest urban settlement, and administrative centre of Stornoway is located (National Records of Scotland 2022c; Comhairle nan Eilean Siar 2023). Na h-Eileanan Siar is the only local authority in Scotland where a majority of the population can speak Gaelic.

With the joint lowest level of population density (alongside Highland) among Scotland's 32 local authorities, population centres are small and spread out across the archipelago. This makes connectivity between settlements difficult. Road travel is possible by car and bus services, though ferries are required to connect the three main island groups (Harris and Lewis; Benbecula, North and South Uist; and Barra), alongside three airports allowing travel between the islands and the mainland. The geography of the local authority means it can take a long time to traverse the length of the archipelago, with Stornoway hosting the main health, social, and cultural services of the local authority. Reliable access to the mainland (by ferry and plane) is crucial to access key services such as health provision.

The archipelago has been losing population considerably since the early 20th century with a history of emigration rather than immigration, though in recent years the population has stabilised at around 26,000 residents (National Records of Scotland 2022c). As a result, the local authority has an ageing population, with the 65-74 age demographic increasing by 39.5% between 2001 and 2021 (National Records of Scotland 2022c). In terms of resettlement efforts, the small population paired with the rurality and geographical conditions of the local authority has meant that until recently very few refugees have settled here. However, since the introduction of the new resettlement schemes in recent years, the local authority has developed a resettlement team and begun welcoming new arrivals.

Na h-Eileanan Siar's approach to refugee integration

Na h-Eileanan Siar was new to refugee resettlement when it first started supporting refugees around six years ago. Resettlement in Na h-Eileanan Siar started with relatively small numbers: the local authority initially received two Syrian families,

followed by a further group of around seven families under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.

Na h-Eileanan Siar has also supported an Afghan family via the Linda Norgrove Foundation, a private charity helping women and children in Afghanistan. While the council had offered accommodation for two more Afghan families, they were still waiting to receive them at the time of fieldwork. A small number of Ukrainians had arrived, but despite significant numbers of hosts signing up to the scheme, many were reluctant to move to the islands. At the time of fieldwork, there were also efforts underway to sponsor a refugee family under the government's community sponsorship scheme. Finally, the local authority was supporting two unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who had been transferred from Kent (though numbers may have changed since fieldwork took place).

The scale of the voluntary and community sector in Na h-Eileanan Siar – and the size of the council's resettlement team – are smaller than elsewhere, which means the nature of delivery is different. The council typically provides direct bespoke support to individuals, who are all well-known to the community. This support involves taking people to their house on their first night and acclimatising them, arranging registration for bank accounts, Universal Credit, GPs, dentists, and other appointments, supporting children with introduction into the education system, helping with housing issues, arranging ESOL, supporting work placements, and helping with other aspects of day-to-day living.

To support refugee integration, the council has recruited volunteers, who in many cases have grown close with the families they support. There is an active focus on multi-agency working: meetings involving the resettlement team, DWP, housing, education, police, and health are organised regularly in the run-up to a household's arrival. Given the close-knit ties within Na h-Eileanan Siar, multi-agency work is often based on personal relationships between different council officers and external services, which lend a distinct personal approach to the delivery of refugee resettlement work across the local authority.

Key findings

Since 2014, local authorities in Scotland have scaled up their humanitarian protection programmes and refugee integration work in response to a series of new schemes. They have adapted flexibly to unpredictable refugee patterns, including a slowdown in the Covid-19 period and a rapid surge in arrivals in 2021 and 2022 with the introduction of the Afghan and Ukrainian schemes.

All 32 of Scotland's local authorities have been involved in refugee resettlement. The local authorities which have resettled the most refugees under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme include Edinburgh, Glasgow, North Ayrshire, Aberdeenshire and Dundee – a mix of both urban and rural areas.

Given the UK Government's move to full dispersal and the mandated National Transfer Scheme rota, local authorities are now also becoming more involved in supporting

people seeking asylum – particularly with respect to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Local authorities typically deliver the bulk of their refugee integration work through refugee resettlement teams, which are responsible for coordinating provision for resettled refugees, including welcoming people on arrival, arranging accommodation, and ensuring registration and access to relevant services. The research survey suggests that the vast majority of local authorities in Scotland have a refugee resettlement team, though they vary considerably in size and level of experience.

Resettlement teams have developed within their local authorities in different ways – some developing out of housing teams, and others from community development or social work. This has played a role in shaping their priorities and focus.

Out of 32 local authorities, survey responses indicated that around 13 had a defined refugee integration strategy. A common theme highlighted was the challenge in balancing strategic and operational priorities: the recent surge in arrivals from Afghanistan and Ukraine have made it particularly challenging for local authorities to focus on strategic thinking. At the same time, it was clear that local authorities had responded with speed and flexibility to a series of recent crises, from the Covid-19 lockdowns to the operation of the new Ukraine schemes.

The survey suggested that local authorities coordinate most effectively with COSLA, reflecting its central role in matching resettled refugees to local authorities, managing the NTS rota, and organising regular meetings with council officers. Respondents also indicated high levels of coordination with third sector organisations, public service providers and other councils, reflecting the effective partnership working within and between local authorities.

The three case studies for this report – Aberdeenshire, Dundee and Na h-Eileanan Siar – each have their own approaches to refugee integration:

Aberdeenshire takes a Community Learning and Development (CLD) approach, underpinned by its own refugee integration strategy. Support is geared towards empowering refugees with the knowledge, skills and tools to be independent and advocate for themselves. Recently the team has been restructured and brought together from different services under a manager responsible for tackling poverty and inequality within business services. This has helped the team to focus independently of other services on delivering their own outcomes.

Dundee's model of refugee integration involves close working with the Scottish Refugee Council, which is contracted by the council resettlement lead to provide day-to-day support to refugees in the local authority area. The council also contracts an employability staff member and ESOL workers and works closely with local authority leads of other services. This multi-agency working forms the basis of Dundee's Humanitarian Protection Partnership, which informs its wider refugee resettlement strategy.

Na h-Eileanan Siar's approach to refugee integration involves direct personalised support by council officers and volunteers, who are recruited by the council. This

reflects the smaller scale of the voluntary sector in the local authority and the lower levels of refugee resettlement. There is an active focus on multi-agency working, which is often based on personal relationships between council officers and external services, lending a distinct personal approach to the delivery of refugee resettlement work.

4. Identifying successes and challenges

This chapter explores where local authorities have made progress in supporting refugee integration in Scotland and where they have faced challenges. It is divided into six thematic areas, covering the key responsibilities for local authorities in delivering refugee integration support (and covering the equivalent breadth of the seven key themes of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy):

- Education and language
- Employability
- Housing
- Welfare rights
- Health and wellbeing
- Communities, culture and social connection.

The chapter reflects the structure of the survey for local authorities and partner organisations, which asked respondents about the level of support provided by councils across the above six themes. Respondents were asked, across 12 different areas, to rank the level of support provided by the local authority to refugees and people seeking asylum on a scale from 0 to 4 (where 0 represented no support and 4 a great deal of support). For each local authority, an average result was then calculated based on the responses from people within that local authority. Finally, an overall average was calculated from the individual local authority averages, to ensure each local authority was weighted evenly in the analysis.

Figure 4.1 summarises the results from this analysis across each of the 12 areas, including:

- access to ESOL education
- help with the recognition of qualifications
- access to training opportunities
- access to employment opportunities
- access to benefits and other financial support
- access to suitable and safe housing options
- help setting up home
- help tackling homelessness
- access to healthcare
- help with meeting general health and wellbeing needs
- help with tackling social isolation and loneliness
- access to culture, heritage and sporting activities and opportunities.

The chart therefore allows for a comparison across all the different policy areas discussed in the survey. It suggests that the highest levels of provision are in the areas of ESOL, benefits and financial support, safe and suitable housing, setting up home, tackling homelessness, and access to healthcare. The lowest levels of provision are in areas such as the recognition of qualifications and access to culture, heritage and sporting activities and opportunities. The differences in scoring are likely a result of the different responsibilities of local authorities. Under the funding arrangements for the resettlement schemes, local authorities are generally required to provide accommodation, help with accessing benefits and healthcare, and (excepting the Ukraine schemes) ESOL support. There are not, however, the same requirements to support people with recognition of qualifications or provide access to culture, heritage, and sport. The scores may also reflect the differing needs of refugees; as became clear from the case study research, specific emphasis is placed on areas of support such as ESOL, housing and benefits, because they are essential building blocks to supporting long-term integration outcomes.

Figure 4.1: Extent to which the local authority is providing support for the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum in 12 areas of integration policy (average local authority scores)

Average ratings for 12 indicators of integration policy

Mean scores

Indicator	Score
ESOL	3.6
Recognise qualifications	2.8
Help accessing training	3.3
Help accessing employment	3.4
Access safe/suitable housing	3.6
Set up home in local authority	3.6
Tackling homelessness	3.6
Benefits and financial support	3.7
Access healthcare	3.7
Meet health/wellbeing needs	3.5
Tackle social isolation/loneliness	3.3
Access cultural/heritage/sport	3.0

Legend:
- Education and language
- Employability
- Housing
- Welfare Rights
- Health and wellbeing
- Communication, culture, and social connection

Source: IPPR analysis of local authority survey

The following sections explore the results of the survey in more depth. For each of the six themes, findings from the survey analysis and case study research are reported. This analysis highlights the key successes and challenges for local authorities in delivering humanitarian protection programmes and refugee integration across these six themes.

Education and language

Background

Education and training for both children and adults play a critical role in the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum. Education provision can support skills development, labour market participation, and community integration (OECD 2019). Language learning is widely recognised as being of particular importance for

supporting refugee integration, by helping to improve access to employment, wellbeing, and community contact (Coley et al., 2019).

In Scotland, education is a devolved competence, and there has been a longstanding distinct education system compared with the rest of the UK. The executive agency Education Scotland leads on quality and improvement in education. Local authorities are responsible for delivery and have a statutory duty to ensure adequate provision of school and further education in their areas.

Under the funding instructions for the different resettlement schemes, local authorities are responsible for providing education places for school-age children. For the Home Office's resettlement schemes, they also have a duty to provide English language training for adults, including where appropriate eight hours per week of Formal Language Training within a month of arrival (for at least a year or until Entry Level 3 is reached if sooner). In the case of the Ukraine schemes, however, there is no additional funding or specific requirement to provide ESOL provision.

For school-age children, the Scottish Government has a number of policies in place which help to support their inclusion and integration. Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) – the Scottish Government's approach to enhancing the wellbeing of children and young people – aims to provide a 'scaffold of support' in response to their needs (Scottish Government 2023e). Under the Scottish Government's policy and legislation on Additional Support for Learning, local authorities are required to make provision for children and young people with additional support needs, including by supporting those with English as an additional language (Scottish Government 2017a).

For higher education, refugees who are eligible under the residency criteria do not have to pay tuition fees for their first degree (or equivalent) when studying full time. People seeking asylum may access higher education but cannot receive student support. For further education, however, part-time and non-advanced college courses are free for people seeking asylum (Scottish Government 2018).

The Scottish Government also takes a distinct approach to the delivery of ESOL provision. ESOL is part of the Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland 2022-2027. The former 2015-2020 English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) strategy – which the new strategy commits to reviewing – set out a vision to ensure that:

> "all Scottish residents for whom English is not a first language have the opportunity to access high quality English language provision so that they can acquire the language skills to enable them to participate in Scottish life: in the workplace, through further study, within the family, the local community, Scottish society and the economy." (Scottish Government 2015a)

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) has developed ESOL qualifications for different learner needs, from National 2 ESOL (beginner) to Higher ESOL (advanced). Courses are delivered by a range of different organisations – including local authorities, universities, colleges, schools, private providers, and the third sector – and often through partnerships between providers. Unlike in England, ESOL courses are free for people seeking asylum.

Community Learning and Development (CLD) practices are central to the delivery of education provision in Scotland, particularly in the case of post-16 and ESOL provision. CLD encompasses a range of different activities which aim to improve opportunities for learners and build community capacity. Under the Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013, local authorities in Scotland are required to facilitate CLD work in their area, where CLD is defined as "programmes of learning and activities designed with individuals and groups to promote the educational and social development of those individuals and groups".[11] In the case of language learning, community ESOL is a common form of CLD practice, which involves the delivery of accredited and/or non-accredited classes in a community setting (e.g. a library or community centre). Classes may include a focus on employability or social integration or involve informal peer learning and community volunteers.

Survey findings

In light of the overarching context set out above, the survey explored how local authorities are delivering school-age and adult education.

Respondents were asked about current challenges and pressures in relation to education for refugees and people seeking asylum in their local authority. A recurrent issue across a number of responses was the limited space available in many schools, with some families having to travel significant distances to attend a school with available space. It was also raised that, depending on the availability of housing, children were being placed in schools that had not previously supported children with English as an additional language – with reduced provision or expertise available to support these children. Particular pressure points were identified around large families, unaccompanied children and young people who "often have interrupted schooling and require additional support", and – looking ahead – to the additional spaces that may be needed as a result of full dispersal. For unaccompanied young people in particular, one respondent raised the challenge of supporting and accommodating older pupils in mainstream provision – given the likely gaps in schooling and language barrier that they face. For such young people, flexible pathways into ESOL and further education were thought to be more appropriate.

There was evidence in the survey, however, that despite these challenges, finding school places and ensuring that children are supported in school is a high priority for local authorities. One respondent highlighted that their council places an "emphasis" on ensuring that all children who move into the area, including those housed in hotels and temporary accommodation, are offered a school place. Another wrote that schools in their local area have been "very supportive indeed", in ensuring that children are involved in extra-curricular activities that help build their confidence and improve their English. One respondent in a rural local authority area also wrote of the successes that can come with effective English as Additional Language (EAL) support, highlighting that the local EAL service has "built significant experience and developed resources

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[11] The Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013

and training for schools", and as a result young people in the area have built their literacy skills and many have "gone on to achieve qualifications, including SQA ESOL."

Regarding adult education, survey respondents referred infrequently to further and higher education specifically (though discussion of ESOL, below, is inclusive of further education). Those who did referred to the entry of refugees into adult education as a signifier of successful integration work. For instance, one local authority manager in a small urban area wrote:

> "Historically two Syrian families via VPRS have set up their own businesses and moved onto further education. One Ukraine guest has accessed further education to potentially become a primary school teacher and recently took up employment as a primary school assistant at a private school."

Asked about how ESOL is delivered within their local authority, respondents referred to a mix of council-run courses and partnerships with local colleges and third sector organisations. Councils tended to provide beginners SQA classes directly, while colleges were often involved for higher-level learning. Delivery tended to be through a mix of online and face-to-face sessions.

There were widespread concerns over the lack of funding and pressures on the system, including difficulties meeting the demand for school and ESOL places. Particular concerns were raised over supporting recent Ukrainian arrivals, who one resettlement manager in a suburban authority noted were "keen to learn English and find jobs" but "may be a little frustrated at times with the provision". One respondent in Aberdeenshire explained that the nature of the Homes for Ukraine scheme meant that refugees were more spread out across the local authority, because they moved to accommodation with spare rooms, rather than where there might be pre-existing migrant and refugee communities. This made language provision harder to deliver.

Some respondents also mentioned running community-based ESOL or more informal 'conversation classes' for learners. Hybrid models that blend formal provision – in-person and online classes – with community-based provision were mentioned a number of times by respondents. For instance, one lifelong learning worker in a rural authority area highlighted that a key part of their ESOL provision was community-based conversation classes, as well as classes for women specifically. It was acknowledged by the resettlement lead in a suburban area that volunteer provision supplemented the council's provision and was "well attended by our guests."

It is apparent from survey responses on ESOL provision that local authorities and their partners in schools, colleges, universities and the third sector, as well as in local communities, are taking a creative and needs-led approach to respond to the language learning needs of refugee communities. This is something explored in more detail through the case studies below.

Case study findings

In **Aberdeenshire**, a mobile English as an Additional Language (EAL) service provides comprehensive support to children, families and schools. They assist newly arrived

families to navigate the education system, provide information and support to schools about new pupils, support enrolment, support families to understand and access their entitlements (e.g. free school meals), assess and monitor English language progress, refer into mainstream specialist provision (e.g. speech and language therapy), provide training and share good practice, and develop resources for schools and teachers such as the 'Culturally Responsive Schools' toolkit (forthcoming).

Additional resources were put into the EAL team to support Syrian and Afghan families, with a two-day per week post (funded by the Home Office) offering early intensive help for these families from the date of their arrival in Scotland. However, it was noted by one stakeholder that the same level of support had not been possible for Ukrainians due to the scale of arrivals. In a few months they had received over 70 referrals for Ukrainian children, and so they had "fallen back to the normal route where the school would send a referral to our service and the normal EAL teacher for the school would follow up the referral, cos it's just been impossible to follow them all up."

In supporting unaccompanied children and young people seeking asylum, the EAL service also recognised particular challenges for this group in accessing education. One challenge relates to the often large gaps that young people have experienced in schooling, meaning that they tend to have additional support needs that can't always be met by schools. With increased numbers of young people, and a quicker pace of arrivals via the NTS, this had placed pressures on local schools and support services. Moreover, due to availability of housing, most had been located in the same area and had been placed in the same school –placing pressure on that school in particular.

In the face of these challenges, the EAL service has been proactive and creative. For instance, it launched a Microsoft Teams space where resources were made available to parents and teachers alike and where people can ask questions and share information. The group has around 200 members. Multi-agency working (as described in chapter 3) has also provided a strong foundation for managing and responding to such ongoing challenges.

With respect to further and higher education, stakeholders tended to refer to individual cases of refugees enrolling on college and university courses as illustrative of successful integration locally - for instance, one Syrian man had gained a degree at a local agricultural college. Some stakeholders interviewed noted that there was a bit of a mismatch between the expectations of refugees and unaccompanied young people in accessing further and higher education and the reality, with some individuals frustrated by the inability to enrol onto their course of choice before gaining the required level of English proficiency, for instance.

One refugee woman interviewed in Aberdeenshire expressed frustrations with further education as she could not enrol on her preferred course due to it being fulltime only, which did not fit around her childcare responsibilities. She had been advised by the college to seek an apprenticeship instead, but so far had been unable to secure a workplace that would take her on as an apprentice – this, she said, made her feel "sad, because this not my plan… I just sit and wait."

In terms of ESOL, Aberdeenshire's approach to supporting refugees to learn English has developed over time. The area has moved from a system where different providers offered siloed provision, to a system that is joined up across the council's CLD team, WEA Scotland (Workers Educational Association, a charitable provider of adult education) and local colleges. All new arrivals are assessed by the CLD team to ensure consistency and accuracy in assessments and are then signposted to the most appropriate provision dependent on their level of English. Beginners are entered onto a WEA course, and those with an intermediate level of English onto a college course. The online provision that WEA offer is highly regarded and is seen to be particularly helpful for ensuring refugees in rural areas can access quality-ESOL classes. This was also thought to improve access for mothers who, one local authority worker told us, "never wanted to leave their kids in a creche."

Interviews with refugees in Aberdeenshire highlighted that learning English is a priority for individuals and families, and that this was a key area with which they had received support from the local authority. Two key challenges, however, were raised by one family. First, as learners improve their English and move on to college-based learning, travel can be a barrier – one woman studying a more advanced course was enrolled at a college one hour away from her home. This can create additional challenges for families with dependent children, and women in particular. As the primary carer to her children, the long distance to college was especially problematic, as her husband shared:

> "It doesn't seem to be feasible for us because my wife has to take our child to school at nine o'clock. I don't know, this might create a difficulty for her to join her classes or taking care of our child and taking him to school and getting him back to home. So this might be a problem for us, and that's why we have approached many housing associations, and we are trying to get a home [closer to the college] in order for my wife to continue ESOL classes in college, and also continue life."

In **Dundee**, a small EAL team, housed within the council's Accessibility and Inclusion Service, supports newly arrived refugees into school. They take a 'three-pronged' approach that supports pupils, families and schools. In a city where over 80 languages are spoken, the team is very busy - and particularly so following the arrival of around 60 Ukrainian pupils during the summer holidays (in 2022). The team were committed to offering a consistent level of service to these families, as they had done with previous Syrian groups and other new arrivals. As one stakeholder said:

> "We really emphasise the importance of an enhanced welcome and enrolment meeting where we sit down individually with families with an interpreter to allow them to share background with us, so we know about everything from the child's educational background, additional support needs help, and anything else families want to share with us. So it's been an emotional time for our team meeting with all these families because they really appreciated that one-to-one approach that we do in Dundee."

A person-centred approach means that the EAL team supports children, young people and their families not only in education, but with emotional and social support needs too. The team works in partnership with schools, and with other agencies (such as

health, police, social work) via the council's Humanitarian Protection Partnership – which means that a full package of support for families is offered.

One particularly good example of partnership working emerged through collaboration with the adult ESOL team. An initiative to set up a 'homework club', where ESOL volunteers supported (largely Syrian) refugee students in two secondary schools was widely attended. However, the clubs were paused while the ESOL team focused their efforts on the new intake of Ukrainians – it was hoped that these could be restarted in the future.

One issue raised in relation to school provision for new refugee communities is the variable expertise and support that schools are able to provide for refugee pupils. In Dundee, a stakeholder indicated that one school in particular excels at offering a trauma-informed approach to supporting their refugee students, while others display "a lack of understanding about how difficult it is to find yourself uprooted and in another country and in school and learning a language perhaps you don't want to learn." Efforts to improve teacher training courses, so that new teachers are better prepared to support an increasingly diverse student group, alongside the provision of ongoing training and development for school staff, were thought to be important to bring all schools up to the same standard when it comes to pastoral support for refugee pupils.

For stakeholders that spoke about young people's education, a common concern was apparent around the education provision for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people. While stakeholders understood that "education is an absolute priority" for this group, it was also reported that some schools would not accept young people aged 16 or over, and as such young teenagers were initially placed in adult ESOL provision.

Local authority staff worked with Dundee and Angus College to use ESOL partnership funding to create a summer school for UASC living in the city and young people, aged 16-18, who had arrived from Ukraine. Young people from across Dundee, Angus and Fife were invited to apply and were able to enjoy a supported transition to college over the summer. As well as formal ESOL tuition, staff from Dundee and Angus college helped the young people with applications and all of them were able to gain places to study at college in September.

The adult ESOL team generally works with people aged over 18, but has occasionally supported young people over 16 who have not been able to access language tuition elsewhere, when there has been capacity within the team and where it has been deemed to be appropriate. As a result of the conflict in Ukraine, the number of adults arriving in the city seeking to learn English has meant that the team no longer has the capacity to support people under 18 as there is a waiting list for this adult service. There is, therefore, the potential for some young people to be unable to access any education provision at all.

As with Aberdeenshire, mention of further and higher education by Dundee stakeholders was largely related to sharing individual case studies of services supporting refugees to go to college and university, where this had been identified as their aspiration. For instance, one young person who had been out of education for a long time was supported to enrol in college for a vocational Higher National Diploma

(HND) and then went on to university. Two of the resettled refugees interviewed explained that they were drawn to move from England to Dundee because of the quality of further and higher education and the free tuition which their children could access in Scotland.

ESOL was a prevalent part of the research team's discussions with stakeholders in Dundee, and there were a number of projects and initiatives demonstrating effective and collaborative practice in supporting refugees to learn English in the city. Given how closely related they are, a number of initiatives relate to both ESOL and employability, with further examples discussed in detail in the next section.

A report from Dundee's ESOL team[12] shows the extent of their support for new Ukrainian arrivals. In less than six months, the team assessed over 170 Ukrainians and registered them either for ESOL support or employability support. Figures available for 140 of these individuals show that 32% were assessed at beginner level, 24% at elementary, 28% at pre-intermediate/intermediate and 16% at upper intermediate/advanced.

Due to this increase in learners, the council and education providers have had to adapt their usual approach to delivering ESOL in Dundee. As before, the council focused on supporting adult learners at beginner-elementary level and Dundee and Angus college on learners working at pre-intermediate level and above. Due to the demand, the council and college have increased their community based ESOL classes to extend capacity, particularly for those people at beginner-elementary levels (totalling 56% of all new Ukrainians registered for ESOL support in the city). Dundee University has also responded by running classes for learners at intermediate and above levels, providing additional support for Ukrainians and other new arrivals in the city. The council also increased the ESOL summer courses it normally holds in local parks, in order to allow Ukrainian citizens arriving in the city additional opportunities to learn English and navigate the city together as a family prior to children starting school in August.

In addition, like other local authorities, Dundee have piloted a self-study online course (with input from online tutors) from Klik2Learn.[13] This has been rolled out on a pilot basis with new Ukrainian arrivals to ensure they could get quick access to learning materials before accessing in-house provision. The Klik2Learn service has been evaluated as being very helpful at a time of unprecedented demand; however despite being a 'self-study' course, the success of the pilot required face-to-face IT and linguistics support, as well as ensuring learners had access to devices. Looking ahead, both staff and learners have indicated a preference for more traditional face to face ESOL learning. Despite these limitations, some ESOL learners enjoyed managing their own learning and progressed well with the Klik2Learn platform – for these learners, Dundee council hopes to continue to offer this approach to learning on a more limited basis.

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[12] Report received via personal correspondence and is not publicly available.

[13] Klik2Learn homepage.

A survey, conducted in 2022 by the Dundee and Angus ESOL partnership,[14] of ESOL learners found that the key reasons people give for learning English are to build their confidence, meet new people and help them to secure a new or better job. Asked how ESOL could be improved, around 30% (of 147 respondents) asked for more classes. The survey also evaluated respondents' views on online versus face-to-face classes. While face-to-face classes have increased since lockdown restrictions eased, online classes are now a feature of the city's offer to learners. For some – i.e. for people who can't drive or have childcare responsibilities – this is seen favourably, while for others it presents challenges. As one ESOL worker said:

> "Some of them they don't have IT skills, or they just don't like that online learning, they want the more personal relationship which they had prior to the Klik2Learn. So it's mixed reviews, and from what I picked up from observing the sessions… I think the younger learners are doing better than the slightly older ones, and again it differs from person to person how they're feeling."

Initiatives such as the 'Conversation Café' and the 'Out and About' walking group illustrate the proactive and creative approach that ESOL practitioners in Dundee take to providing access to quality and practical ESOL provision. The Conversation Café, held in various sites across the city – including at the V&A museum and at Dundee University's student union – are spaces where people can come to "chit-chat" and "practise their English speaking", while the 'Out and About' walking group helps people to orientate in the city – to know "street names and shop names", while also learning and practising their English. These initiatives, which take English learning outside of the classroom, aim to support refugees not only to learn the language but to meet new people, get to know their new home better, and integrate with the local community.

Having a blended approach to English language learning is important to Dundee council. Beyond a formal, intensive approach to learning, their community-based ESOL team supports the integration of the newest arrivals in the city, as well as promoting their English language skills. This approach not only complements formal provision but also allows the ESOL team to tailor their services based on the interests and expertise of both learners and staff. By utilising volunteers in conjunction with CLD staff, the council effectively increases its capacity to deliver English language provision and meet the growing demand for ESOL support in the community.

In **Na h-Eileanan Siar**, only a small number of families have been resettled in the area and there is very little other inward migration. Supporting children and young people into education therefore is a highly personalised process, with the resettlement support worker supporting individuals into school and nursery places on arrival. Stakeholder interviews indicated that part of supporting new arrivals included listening to the concerns and fears of parents in adapting to a new educational context and managing their expectations around these. For example, people coming from contexts where education is delivered in single-sex settings sometimes expressed concerns about the mixed-sex educational approach. One family had faced delays with accessing early

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[14] This partnership is made up of Dundee City Council, Angus Council, Dundee and Angus College and Dundee international Women's Centre.

years provision, due to the limited capacity of nurseries in Stornoway. However, there were also successes – for instance, stakeholders spoke about a young Syrian boy who was excelling at learning Gaelic in school, and who had been featured in the local newspaper as a result.[15]

There is one further education college in Na h-Eileanan Siar, with a number of campuses across the islands. Researchers were told about one Syrian man who had been supported by the resettlement worker to apply for a hairdressing course at UHI Outer Hebrides, and to attend a barbering training course in Glasgow. He has since opened a successful and thriving barbershop on the islands – and has been featured on BBC Scotland.[16] Another stakeholder, working with Afghan families on the islands, found the college to be very supportive and willing to offer advice on different options for adult learners. A refugee interviewed for the project spoke about the support they received from the council's resettlement worker to enrol on a three-month course at the college. While only small numbers of refugees have been resettled in Na h-Eileanan Siar, it is apparent that they have been able to access personalised support with accessing education and training, through both the support of the resettlement worker and the broader networks and connections that the islands offer.

ESOL provision in Na h-Eileanan Siar had to develop rapidly in order to respond to the new refugee community. When the first Syrian families arrived, workers in the local authority prioritised funding towards supporting people to learn English. Initially, tutors were put in place for individuals, and subsequently the adults received eight hours per week in a group setting. This first intake of English learners brought their children and babies to class, with volunteers providing a childcare function to enable adults to learn. Learners progressed at different paces, and as such the group was split – with those struggling receiving more intensive one-to-one support, and additional opportunities (e.g. work placements) made available for those who had made more progress.

The council also coordinated a volunteer base who could support the new arrivals through more informal conversations. This had the added benefit of supporting their wider integration into the local and close-knit community. As one volunteer explained:

> "One of my friends and I, informally, used to work with two women who were quite friendly with each other, and we would take them around the shops, we would go for a coffee. We did a day trip to Inverness on the ferry with them, which went down very well. So, it has been a mixture of befriending, helping with the language, taking them shopping… [One lady joined] a knitting group in Stornoway and when she was brought to that the first time she had hardly any English. But gradually she got more and more confident and although she sat next to me, you know, she used to speak to the other ladies; when it was coffee time, she'd go and make the coffee, and her English improved, her self-confidence improved."

This combination of class-based and community-based ESOL was seen to be crucial for language acquisition and integration in Na h-Eileanan Siar, as one stakeholder

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[15] Article in The National – 'Syrian school boys in Stornoway win awards for learning Gaelic'

[16] YouTube video posted by BBC Scotland on the barber shop set up by a Syrian refugee in Stornoway

explained: "a good strategy going forward is to have that language acquisition support outside of an ESOL setting".

However, roadblocks have emerged when it comes to resourcing ESOL in Na h-Eileanan Siar. The fall in resettlement numbers during the pandemic disrupted the council's ESOL funding model, which relied on resettling two families every year, and so the [two] council ESOL posts had to be cut. Moreover, contracts for ESOL tutors tend to be short-term for limited and unpredictable hours, and so at the time of fieldwork the council was facing challenges in recruiting tutors for face-to-face teaching.

Key findings

Education and training for both children and adults play a critical role in the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum. Local authorities are responsible for providing education places for school-age children and English language training for adults under the Home Office's resettlement schemes.

Concerns were raised over limited school spaces for young people arriving in Scotland, with some families having to travel significant distances to attend a school with available space. Moreover, children were not always placed in schools with experience and expertise in providing appropriate English as an Additional Language (EAL) support for new arrivals. There were particular pressure points in relation to large families, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people who had experienced interrupted schooling.

Ensuring children are supported in school remains a high priority for local authorities, despite challenges over limited school places and provision for children with English as an additional language. Survey responses highlighted the expertise built by local EAL services and support provided by extra-curricular activities to help children learn English and build confidence. In Dundee, an example was given of a 'homework club' for refugee students set up in partnership between the EAL and adult ESOL teams, which had been widely attended.

ESOL is delivered via a mix of council-run courses and partnerships with local colleges and third sector organisations, including both online and face-to-face sessions. Community-based ESOL and 'conversation classes' for learners play a critical role in complementing more formal approaches, and in meeting the demand for English language provision among new arrivals.

Many local authorities are taking a creative and needs-led approach to ESOL provision, in the face of high demand and funding pressures. Aberdeenshire, for instance, has developed a joined-up ESOL system between the council's CLD team, WEA Scotland (a charitable provider of adult education), and local colleges, where all new arrivals are initially assessed by the CLD team and then signposted to appropriate provision. In Dundee, examples were given of a creative initiative to blend ESOL provision with wider integration work, such as an 'Out and About' walking group to take English learning outside of the classroom and orientate people to the city.

In Na h-Eileanan Siar, there were practical challenges with resourcing ESOL due to the fall in resettlement numbers during the pandemic, which meant that the two council posts had to be cut and funding was only available for part-time staff with limited hours. Yet there was also evidence of creative work on the part of the council in recent years – for instance, in involving volunteers to support with childcare while adults participated in ESOL classes.

Employability

Background

Securing employment and in-work progression are central for refugee integration. Past research has suggested that people who have moved to the UK for asylum reasons are less likely to be employed and on average have lower earnings than others (Kone et al., 2019).[17] Challenges in the labour market include language barriers, lack of formal recognition of professional qualifications from other countries, and restrictions on the right to work for people seeking asylum (see below). This means that, while refugees have a diverse set of skills, experiences and qualifications, they cannot always apply them in the labour market. There is therefore often a need for bespoke employability support for refugees and people seeking asylum.

Under the Home Office's resettlement programmes, the funding instructions for local authorities require them to provide assistance with access to employment in year 1. For years 2-5, funding is flexible but employment support is meant to continue. For the Ukraine schemes, local authorities are also expected to offer support with work and benefits. People seeking asylum are generally not able to work, but they may be employed after 12 months of awaiting an initial decision (and where the delay is not considered their fault) if the job is on the Shortage Occupation List (SOL) (House of Commons Library 2022).

The UK, Scottish and local governments are all involved in the delivery of employability provision in Scotland. Jobcentre Plus, part of the Department for Work and Pensions, provides employment support and advice across the UK. At the same time, the Scottish Government is responsible for skills and training policy and each local authority in Scotland has its own employability service. There are a number of employability policies and programmes delivered by the Scottish Government, local authorities, and other providers:

- No One Left Behind is Scotland's strategy for employment support. The approach is driven by a series of core principles, including the delivery of 'person-centred' and 'flexible' provision which helps people 'into the right job at the right time'. As part of No One Left Behind, funding allocations are provided to councils to support the delivery of local employability services (Scottish Government NDa). These are delivered through local employability partnerships, involving a range of partners including local councils, Skills Development Scotland, Department for Work and Pensions / Jobcentre Plus,

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[17] This group is formally defined as non-UK born people whose main reason for originally migrating to the UK was asylum.

colleges, and private and third sector organisations (Scottish Government NDb).

- Launched in 2018, following the partial devolution of employment support services, Fair Start Scotland is Scotland's employability service, targeted at supporting the long-term unemployed and people with disabilities to (re-)enter work. The service is devolved to nine contract areas across Scotland, involving a mix of local government, private and third sector providers (Scottish Government NDc).

- The Young Person's Guarantee offers opportunities for all 16-24 year olds in Scotland to access a job, apprenticeship, education, training, volunteering or enterprise opportunity. Activities are delivered through local employability partnerships (Scottish Government NDd).

An important part of supporting refugee integration into the labour market is help with getting prior skills and qualifications recognised in Scotland. For the recognition of educational and professional qualifications, it is possible to apply for a 'Statement Of Comparability' through the UK-ENIC service. This requires sufficient evidence demonstrating the level of existing overseas qualification (UK ENIC 2023). However, UK-ENIC does not cover all forms of work skills and training.

The Scottish Government tried to address challenges in relation to the recognition of qualifications and broader skills shortages in the labour market by piloting a 'Skills Recognition Hub' to help support the recognition of training gained in other countries in sectors including social care, construction and hospitality (Scottish Government 2019). The pilot has now been developed into Skills Recognition Scotland, a service which helps people to map their international skills to the Scottish qualifications framework (SRS ND).

Survey findings

Given the overall context of employability work in Scotland, the survey sought to understand how local authorities delivered employability services in practice and the successes and challenges they had found with their work. The survey responses indicate that councils typically deliver work through their employability teams, alongside partnerships with a wide range of different suppliers, including Jobcentre Plus / DWP, Skills Development Scotland, Fair Start Scotland, as well as further education colleges, charities and social enterprises. Responses suggest that councils tend to coordinate this work, through formal consortia and dedicated workstreams on employability as part of wider refugee resettlement work. For instance, Dumfries and Galloway have a multi-agency 'Resettlement Project Board' responsible for agreeing and delivering resettlement work, which names 'education and employment' as a key workstream.[18]

The most prevalent need identified by survey respondents was English language acquisition. Addressing the language barrier that prevents refugees from accessing and progressing in the labour market is foundational for resettlement work. ESOL and

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[18] Council webpage detailing information about the Resettlement Project Board

employability are often interlinked, with English-language classes tailored to support learners into employment. For instance, North Lanarkshire commissioned a private language school in Glasgow to "deliver a bespoke ESOL Employability course that was linked to a work placement in North Lanarkshire Council". Respondents also mentioned activities such as support with CV and interview preparation, identifying training opportunities, and recruitment events with employers. Some noted that specific services were needed for Ukrainian arrivals given the recent increase and explained that dedicated advisors were being hired.

We asked respondents for examples of successes in the areas of education and employment. Respondents highlighted instances of effective employability courses and workshops and demonstrated how their work had helped refugees to find jobs or start up their own businesses. They also emphasised the importance of partnership working, including with colleges, employers, and the third sector. Examples of local activities included:

- In West Lothian, a programme to support Syrian women into work, which offered a qualification and helped participants to build confidence and find out about new employment opportunities.

- In West Dunbartonshire, the opportunity for ESOL learners to access other learning opportunities, such as SQA Childcare and Digital Literacy courses, with creche funding through the resettlement programme.

- In Argyll and Bute, support from the council's Business Gateway services with helping refugees set up their own business, including entrepreneurial training courses and advice for developing business cases. This led to refugees opening a number of successful businesses (Argyll and Bute Council 2016-2019).

- In East Renfrewshire, training opportunities for refugees are identified through the council's 'community benefits' initiative, where council suppliers and contractors that secure large contracts are required to support local causes, e.g. through offering training and employment opportunities and work placements.[19]

Respondents also noted a range of challenges and pressures when asked by the survey. As well as English language barriers (discussed above), childcare responsibilities were also noted as a major barrier for progressing education and employment. One respondent noted that English language difficulties meant that refugees tended to do work which does not reflect their prior experience, while others said that a lack of qualifications – or difficulties in translating qualifications from other countries – made finding work difficult. One respondent, from East Lothian Council, mentioned that the council had started to work on the "translation of existing qualifications" for Ukrainian guests, but overall this was not prominently featured in survey responses.

Going forward, some respondents emphasised the importance of offering ESOL and employability support and providing work placements to build on existing skills. Others

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[19] East Renfrewshire Council web page with information on project wish list for community benefits initiative

highlighted building closer links with employers and called for additional funding and staffing to assist greater numbers of people.

Case study findings

In **Aberdeenshire**, the council have a great deal of in-house expertise, including in employment support – with a dedicated employability worker supporting refugees to access employment opportunities, in partnership with Jobcentre Plus and "mainstream employability streams". They work closely with ESOL colleagues to help refugees improve their language skills where this is holding them back from gainful employment. Supporting refugees into employment is understood by the resettlement team to be "crucial" for promoting integration and for helping refugees forge "relationships outwith their own group and starting to get more social contacts and learning more about their community". This model of support was also commended by a voluntary sector worker in Aberdeen (who supported refugees in Aberdeenshire). They said:

> "the Shire's done a lot of good work around the employment stuff… when one of the local New Scots is looking for support with employment stuff, they have someone that they know that they can go to… and you could access that support and that person was sort of tuned into everything else that was going on so… they knew who to direct you towards and they knew who else they could pull in… I felt like that was really well organised there."

Stakeholders also pointed to some of the challenges facing refugees looking for work in the Aberdeenshire area. Refugees were "picking up on" the news about job losses during the pandemic and a more general downturn in the oil industry and were concerned that they would face a "greater relative disadvantage because they were now in this pool of even more skilled workers". As elsewhere in Scotland, the challenge of recognising qualifications was also mentioned. Resettlement workers also spoke about the unique challenges facing Syrian refugees, who tend to have been doing labouring work, perhaps without qualifications, in their home country. Moreover, resettled refugees on the Syrian VPRS had usually been selected to resettle as a result of particular vulnerabilities (i.e. health conditions) that may put them at a disadvantage in the labour market.

Employment was a prominent topic of discussion among the refugees interviewed in Aberdeenshire – and they presented a mixed picture. While some were working, this was often in roles significantly below their existing qualifications. One man who had resettled in 2021 felt held back by being placed in a rural setting – even though eventually he had been successful in finding a highly-skilled job. He told researchers:

> "…where I've settled down in Peterhead, someone in his or her sixties would have been a good place for him or her to be settled down here. I'm a young person, I have energy and I should work, I should work and become independent, and it would have been much better for me to have been resettled in a bigger city, like Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh, because in Peterhead there's only so many opportunities around."

However, there were plenty of success stories too. For instance, one person was working for a local engineering firm, while another was learning English alongside volunteering in a local nursery setting – both with the support of resettlement workers. For resettlement workers in Aberdeenshire, success came in varied guises - while for some success looked like moving into work, for others completing an ESOL course or training programme or finding a volunteering opportunity was also a big achievement on the path to employment:

> "Sometimes it's the smaller steps for me that are seen as the bigger [successes]. You just know that this is the first step in something moving forward… So it can be lots of different things, even volunteering and things like that, because again, it's stepping outside their norm. Improving their English, all these things, is just that step towards securing long-term employment."

In **Dundee**, innovative practices supporting refugees into employment have developed as a result of joint work between ESOL and Employability teams in the city.

For instance, Dundee City Council led on the NSRIDP project 'Building Skills Together' (funded by Scottish Government and AMIF), which aimed to support resettled refugees to get the certification they need to be able to work in the construction industry. Building on refugees' existing skills and qualifications, two training courses were developed for beginner and advanced learners to provide students with the language skills and knowledge needed to pass the CSCS operative test (Construction Skills Certification Scheme, which functions as a licence to work on a construction site). The project was evaluated as having successfully engaged almost 50 learners (by November 2022), with many passing their test. Another successful element of the project was the partnership working, not only with the construction sector and WEA ESOL tutors, but also with neighbouring Fife and Clackmannanshire councils – whose engagement enabled pilot projects to test the materials with refugees and migrant groups who had previously worked in the construction sector prior to moving to Scotland. A key outcome of the project has been that the resources developed through the course of the project are now available free to use across the UK.

Another project which had initial success in Dundee was a collaboration between the council's ESOL and Employability teams to develop an eight-week course to support refugees to develop their language skills and employment prospects. During the course, learners were supported to understand how to apply for jobs, prepare for interviews, about their employment rights, national insurance, health and safety and other aspects of workplace culture – with the aim of building confidence in people looking for work. The project also helped to connect individuals with local employers through links with the employability team.

The course was delivered eight times, with the first of these being very successful – five of eight participants quickly moved into employment and full-time education. However, subsequent courses did not manage to achieve the same level of success. This was due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which reduced the effectiveness of collaborative working while teams were delivering lessons either online, or in very restrictive socially distanced in-person classes. Followed swiftly by the Ukraine schemes, Dundee's ESOL provision has been over-subscribed, and the team has had

to refocus resources to support new arrivals. While the scope for innovation in ESOL delivery has been limited by the dual impact of the pandemic and the arrival of Ukrainians, the council's Employability Team has continued to provide employability support to resettled refugees.

A key challenge raised by stakeholders related to skills matching and skills recognition of refugees who arrive in Scotland with existing qualifications and experience. Stakeholders spoke about highly skilled plasterers, joiners, and carpenters who were well-established in their home countries but were working in low-paid jobs in Dundee, because there is no formal process to officially verify their training or skills. As noted above, Skills Recognition Scotland is a new service which supports with skills recognition, but one interviewee expressed concern that more work was needed to help those with below-intermediate level skills. These barriers had impacted their wellbeing and self-esteem. As one council officer put it:

> "So, people who [are] like an artisan carver or plasterer or bricklayer cannot work in that… they're getting jobs as takeaway drivers on zero hours contracts, and that then becomes extremely soul destroying for them, so they become depressed, and they become long term unemployed."

However, initiatives such as the 'Building Skills Together' programme, discussed above, illustrate the proactive approach that Dundee council takes in order to tackle the systemic problems faced by refugees in accessing employment.

One interviewee with lived experience, a Syrian refugee (who had been through the asylum system), spoke about her experience of trying to progress her career as an architect. Teaching Arabic online while trying to verify her qualification, she spoke about the challenges and the costs that come with the process:[20]

> "the procedures which I have to follow are complicated and this process takes about three years and I have to pass three exams. I have to pay for each exam like one thousand six hundred pounds, and if I [do not] pass it, so I have to pay again for this exam, which is, like, a really complicated process."

She described how she had not been able to access the same level of tailored employability support that was described by some other participants that had come to Scotland via a resettlement route, though she had signed up for support from Skills Recognition Scotland.

In **Na h-Eileanan Siar**, the council provides bespoke employability support to resettled refugees – for instance, supporting one Syrian man to become a barber by sourcing a training programme for him and helping him open his own barber shop . Multiple stakeholders described how the council resettlement worker takes a needs-led approach to supporting new arrivals to access relevant training and work-based placements. Employability support is a core element of the resettlement offer, with the

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[20] Webpage detailing the application process to register with the Architects Registration Board

council working in partnership with the training officer at the DWP locally to support refugees to access training opportunities.

Stakeholders highlighted the importance of understanding refugees' favoured employment pathways and developing their confidence over time by identifying suitable work and volunteering opportunities. Examples were given of people who had been supported into meaningful volunteer and work roles through both community links and the council. For instance, refugees had found work or volunteer roles in a local Arts Centre, with the council, and at a local charity shop.

There were some notable success stories of entrepreneurialism in Na h-Eileanan Siar, with evidence of the local community supporting new businesses owned and operated by refugees. For instance, as one stakeholder explained:

> "Another guy who had been an upholsterer in Syria has opened his business upholstering people's chairs, settees and whatnot, and regularly posts on Facebook. Local people have made very kind comments, but sincere comments on the standard of his work and recommended him."

As part of this personalised approach a training assistant – a post funded by the European Structural Fund (ESF) which was part of the council's Employability Team – sought to support up to 10 people to become "fully employable" through 1-1 coaching and mentoring, training and wider support with job search activities (COSLA 2019b). As well as successes already described in this section, one refugee was able to do a paid work placement via the council's mainstream employment, enterprise and training programme (OH-MEET),[21] which supports unemployed people into work, and was funded by the local authority, ESF and Jobcentre Plus. Funding for the ESF component of this programme, as well as for the training assistant post, came to an end on 31 December 2022.

Inevitably there are challenges that come with a limited job market on the islands, with some refugees finding that their existing skillsets were either not in demand, or – as elsewhere – that their qualifications and employment history were not recognised. As a result, some were inclined to leave Na h-Eileanan Siar and settle in mainland Scotland (or England) to search for job opportunities. This is something that was recognised by stakeholders – with refugees who decide to do this being supported to apply for jobs locally and further afield (in, for instance, Glasgow and Edinburgh) according to the career aspirations of individuals.

Key findings

Securing employment and in-work progression are considered central aspects of refugee integration. The UK, Scottish and local governments are all involved in the delivery of employability work in Scotland. Under the Home Office's resettlement programmes, local authorities are required to provide assistance with access to

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[21] Council web page containing information on the Managing Employment, Enterprise and Training (OH-MEET) initiative

employment, while for the Ukraine schemes, local authorities are expected to offer support with work and benefits.

Evidence from the research survey suggests that councils typically deliver work in this area through their employability teams, alongside partnerships with a wide range of different suppliers, including Jobcentre Plus / DWP, Skills Development Scotland, Fair Start Scotland, as well as further education colleges, charities and social enterprises. Activities may involve support with CV and interview preparation, identifying training opportunities, and recruitment events with employers.

An important part of supporting refugee integration into the labour market is help with getting prior skills and qualifications recognised in Scotland. This was a common ongoing challenge raised throughout the fieldwork, with evidence that refugees found it difficult to navigate the processes involved. There is ongoing work in Scotland to support skills matching – in particular, Skills Recognition Scotland has been set up to help people to map their international skills to the Scottish qualifications framework – though it was argued that this was geared towards those with skills at intermediate level or above and more could be done to support those with other skillsets.

The fieldwork highlighted some success stories in supporting people into employment. For instance, in Na h-Eileanan Siar, the council takes a needs-led approach and works in partnership with the training officer at the DWP locally to facilitate access to training opportunities – in one case, supporting a Syrian man to become a barber by sourcing a training programme for him and helping him open his own barber shop.

Case studies highlighted the importance of joint working between ESOL and employability teams. For instance in Dundee, the council's ESOL and employability teams developed an eight-week course to help people's language skills and employment prospects and supported them to connect with local employers. The initial course was successful – five of eight participants quickly moved into employment and full-time education – though the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the demands of large-scale resettlement schemes have posed challenges for subsequent courses.

Housing

Background

Housing is a key marker of integration and can shape the experiences of refugees and people seeking asylum in their destination country. However, the research literature indicates that refugees and people seeking asylum can often face particular challenges with housing in the UK, including poor-quality accommodation, insecurity, and discrimination (Brown et al., 2021). For people seeking asylum in particular, initial accommodation can be substandard, while the policy of asylum dispersal has often led to vulnerable groups moving to deprived areas with limited support options. There are also particular challenges for people making the transition from asylum accommodation once gaining refugee status, who have a '28 day move on period' to find new housing (ibid).

Under the Home Office's resettlement schemes, the funding instructions outline that local authorities must provide furnished accommodation which is 'affordable and sustainable' and 'meets local authority standards' on arrival. The cost of renting accommodation can be supported through the housing element of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit (based on Local Housing Allowance rates).

For Homes for Ukraine (Individual Sponsor Scheme), accommodation is provided by hosts, but local authorities are expected to conduct housing and safeguarding checks, administer host payments, offer move-on support, and provide homelessness assistance and rematching where appropriate (e.g. where there is a breakdown in guest-host relations). In the case of the Super Sponsor Scheme, local authorities are involved in offering properties in their areas to displaced Ukrainians; this may include social or private rental housing, hotel rooms, or accommodation from hosts via Homes for Ukraine.

As discussed in Chapter 1, local authorities also have specific responsibilities for accommodating unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and, in some cases, vulnerable families and vulnerable adults who are seeking asylum. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children may be placed in foster placements, children's homes, semi-independent accommodation or other appropriate placements depending on their needs.

Scotland faces ongoing challenges with a shortage of affordable housing more generally, as over the past few decades house prices have risen sharply and the share of social housing has fallen. Figures from 2022 suggest that more than 180,000 households are on local authority social housing waiting lists in Scotland (Scottish Housing News 2022). Moreover, the number of homelessness cases in Scotland in September 2022 reached 28,944, the highest on record (Scottish Government 2023f).

Housing policy is devolved to Scotland, and the Scottish Government has set out an ambitious 'Housing to 2040' strategy with a route map for expanding the supply of affordable housing so that everyone in Scotland has 'a safe, high-quality home that is affordable and meets their needs in the place they want to be' (Scottish Government 2021c). The Scottish Government is aiming to meet its target to deliver 110,000 affordable homes by 2032 of which 70% will be for social rent and 10% in remote, rural and island communities (Scottish Government 2023g).

Scotland takes a distinct approach to homelessness. Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, local authorities have a duty to provide permanent accommodation to people found to be homeless, provided they are satisfied they did not become homeless intentionally. They also have a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that someone threatened with homelessness does not become homeless, again provided they are satisfied this is not intentional. Unlike in other parts of the UK, priority need has been abolished, which means these duties apply to everyone equally, regardless of whether they are a vulnerable group. The legislation also allows for greater flexibility for refugees who were previously housed in dispersal accommodation in one local authority to be supported by local authorities elsewhere (Scottish Government 2018).

Scotland and its local authorities follow a 'Housing Options' approach, which aims to offer advice on the different options available to people who present with housing difficulties. Best practice and knowledge sharing on Housing Options are supported through the work of five Housing Option Hubs across Scotland, led by local authorities in partnership with others (Scottish Government 2018).

The Scottish Government and COSLA have developed the 'Ending Destitution Together' strategy to help those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), which in this context encompasses people seeking asylum and those who have had their application refused (who are not eligible for public funds and so cannot normally get local authority homelessness assistance). The strategy commits to a five-year delivery plan for ending destitution among people with NRPF (Scottish Government 2021a). The Fair Way Scotland delivery plan has been developed through a partnership between the public, charity and academic sector and seeks to 'design-out destitution by providing accommodation pathways and support to people with NRPF who are at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping' (Homeless Network Scotland 2021).

As discussed in Chapter 1, housing has been a particular challenge for both the Afghan and Ukraine schemes. Under the Afghan schemes, many people have stayed for long periods in bridging accommodation – temporary accommodation (largely hotels) procured by the Home Office – due to difficulties with matching them to longer-term accommodation. One of the primary challenges here has been finding properties which are suitable for the size of the family being accommodated. At the same time, the very large numbers of arrivals under the Ukraine Super Sponsor Scheme have meant that many guests have stayed in welcome accommodation – temporary accommodation for displaced Ukrainians, including hotels and cruise ships – while local authorities look for appropriate long-term housing. A key difficulty for local authorities across both schemes has been a reluctance on the part of some households to take up property offers, particularly those in more rural locations.

In response to these challenges, the UK, Scottish and local governments have made various efforts to reduce the use of temporary accommodation. The UK Government has introduced an Afghanistan housing portal to facilitate property matches, a 'Find Your Own Accommodation' scheme for Afghans to use themselves, and flexible funding for local authorities to support Afghans to find permanent accommodation (House of Commons Library 2023). For the Ukraine Super Sponsor Scheme, COSLA and the Scottish Government have set up a national matching service, as outlined in Chapter 1. Information from COSLA indicates that local authorities are also taking innovative steps themselves – for instance, in the case of the Afghan schemes, by adapting HMOs (houses in multiple occupation) for larger families, or by procuring multiple properties in the same street or neighbourhood and negotiating with larger families to see whether they would be willing to live across these multiple properties instead of in one household.

Nevertheless, ongoing significant challenges remain, particularly in light of Scotland's wider shortage of affordable housing. Looking ahead, there are also concerns about further pressures being added as hosting arrangements with Ukrainian guests come to an end. The initial commitment for hosts under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme is six months, and so – while sponsors are being encouraged to accommodate guests for

longer – some Ukrainians are at risk of homelessness if they are no longer able to stay with their hosts.

Survey findings

The survey asked respondents how their local authority delivers housing services. This revealed a complex picture. Depending on the local authority, respondents referred to in-house support within council housing and homelessness teams, as well as close working with local housing associations and the voluntary sector. Respondents wrote of finding accommodation through social housing landlords and the private rental sector, as well as temporary accommodation in hotels.

Support tended to vary according to the various humanitarian protection schemes: one respondent explained that for Home Office resettlement schemes, housing had been identified in advance of arrival and furnished as required, while for the Homes for Ukraine scheme a team of housing officers oversaw safeguarding processes and acted as a single point of contact within the Housing Service, providing advice and signposting to external agencies for assistance in accessing wider housing options. The responses made clear that the lead-in time and managed approach for the Home Office resettlement schemes allowed for carefully planned delivery of housing support, while the Ukraine schemes were by their nature more ad hoc. Nonetheless, there was evidence of local authorities making persistent efforts to address the housing requirements of Ukrainian guests – for instance, one council worked in partnership with registered social landlords to make ten properties available in their area.

Other respondents described different provision for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children – including supported accommodation, residential homes, and blocks of flats. One respondent highlighted collaboration with external partners (such as Action for Children for older UASC). In one case, a local authority noted the use of unregulated bed and breakfast accommodation, which the respondent recognised as "not ideal" but was a consequence of the housing shortage in the area.

As discussed above, there are ongoing challenges with finding permanent accommodation for Afghans and Ukrainians, leaving large numbers of Afghans in bridging accommodation and Ukrainians in welcome accommodation Respondents were asked how many refugees were in bridging accommodation across local authorities. The responses suggested that some local authorities had very large numbers (more than 120) of refugees in bridging accommodation – including Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Scottish Borders, and South Lanarkshire. Generally, the more detailed responses and additional interviews suggested that these largely comprised of Afghan and Ukrainian refugees in hotels, which local authorities recognised was not their preferred option but which they had no control over.

The survey asked respondents about local authority successes in the areas of housing and social security. Respondents spoke of how they had helped refugees into different council and private sector tenancies and had worked with partners to offer holistic provision. Examples of successes included:

- In Aberdeen, several unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people were placed in supported accommodation and were helped to develop their own skills and independence. This led to three individuals securing their own tenancies.

- In North Ayrshire, the housing team worked as part of a refugee taskforce, incorporating partners from Education, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, DWP, the Health and Social Care Partnership, ESOL and local colleges, Employability, Finance, Legal Services, Community Learning and Development, Dental Care, Protective Services, Police Scotland, and Scottish Fire and Rescue. The taskforce had helped refugees to engage with services and address any access barriers.

- In East Lothian, around five Ukrainian families were placed into private rental sector tenancies with support in September 2022, with the council providing the deposit and rent in advance and access to essential furniture items.

Separate from the survey, COSLA highlighted an example of another notable housing success story. This involved Edinburgh council developing a successful local matching approach for Afghan families. The council allocated housing to more than 20 families from Afghanistan who were living in bridging hotels in their local authority and worked with the Ministry of Defence to use former Service Family Accommodation (SFA) as properties for larger families.

At the same time, respondents detailed extensive challenges in this area. One of the most common concerns was the lack of suitable and affordable housing for refugees, particularly for large families, as discussed earlier. Some respondents highlighted overwhelming demand for properties in their areas with long waiting lists for social housing and high private rents. One local authority, for instance, explained that they had around 4,500 applicants on the social housing list and significant homelessness pressures. Others in rural areas noted that they sometimes had properties available but struggled to find matches with refugees. As discussed earlier, local authorities are taking a number of innovative approaches to address these issues, such as adapting HMOs to larger families and procuring multiple properties in the same street for family members to live alongside each other. One respondent from Falkirk Council explained how their local authority was thinking creatively about how to purchase and bring back larger properties into the letting pool through their 'buy-back' and 'empty homes' services.

There were particular issues over the matching process under the Homes for Ukraine and Super Sponsor Schemes, as well as the risks of homelessness for where matches did not work or after the initial six month hosting period. One respondent noted that, for the Super Sponsor Scheme in particular, it was challenging to match Ukrainians with hosts or find them appropriate move-on accommodation. They expressed concern about the lack of a long-term housing strategy or plan for Ukrainians on the Super Sponsor Scheme, who in some cases faced being accommodated in contingency accommodation for a long time.

Moreover, while respondents noted a number of benefits of the hosting model, such as the potential for enhanced integration outcomes and increased accommodation

options, the challenges were also substantial, with respondents noting concerns around homelessness in the mid-long term, and a general lack of clear guidance to effectively implement such a model at pace. One respondent noted that relations between hosts and guests in their area had become strained and that many hosts were now indicating that they could not support guests beyond the six-month period. They explained that this would place pressure on the council's homelessness services. Overall, preventing homelessness and providing suitable housing were therefore understandable priorities for a number of respondents going forward.

Case study findings

In **Aberdeenshire**, the local authority has, over the years, experimented with different approaches to providing housing to refugees and displaced persons in the area. For the Syrian VPRS, the council acquired private sector properties on a two-year lease in the rural and "sought after" town of Kintore, ten minutes south of Inverurie and relatively well connected with the city of Aberdeen. Kintore was expressly selected to try resettling households in more affluent areas, with the view that this may support their experience of integration. While key resettlement stakeholders saw that this location had proved successful regarding integration into the existing community, the model proved not to be sustainable as local landlords – often owning just one property – would end the tenancies, for instance, to sell the property or so that their children could move in. This was said to be common, driven by increasing numbers of properties being put up for rent, since the rise of the oil and gas industry. One stakeholder spoke about how families, who then had to present as homeless, were placed in temporary accommodation for long periods, as there were very few social housing properties in central Aberdeenshire.

There was a perception that social housing properties were more desirable than private rental properties among some participants . Asked about support needs, one refugee who arrived via the Syrian VPRS referenced housing as the main challenge that he and his family had faced in Aberdeenshire. They had been placed in a private rental flat, though, he said, they would have preferred to be placed in a social housing property rather than a private rental. Explaining that this would make him feel less vulnerable to being evicted and more secure, he set out the broader significance of housing for successful integration:

> "When you feel more comfortable, you will go outside doing well. You will meet the people, doing well with them, because you have your comfortable time at home, so you have the ability to go outside again full of energy, less stress, less angry."

Learning from their previous experience, the local authority placed resettled households from Afghanistan in an area where social housing and housing association properties were available – in Peterhead, the area's largest town in the far north of Aberdeenshire. While Peterhead was argued by some stakeholders to offer more in the way of employment opportunities, it was also described by one stakeholder as an area with "complex issues… [and] a very different feel about it", and by another stakeholder as feeling "quite cut-off". The main issues raised by stakeholders regarding Peterhead included there being fewer refugee families resettled in the town, which meant there was a reduced sense of community; fewer culturally appropriate

amenities, such as a halal butchers or mosques; and expensive and infrequent public transport into the city of Aberdeen.

Similarly, for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, researchers also heard that Peterhead could feel quite isolating, with one stakeholder stating that initially there was "no sense of community, no connection to a peer group". Social workers have however sought to address this by housing young people (all aged 17 or over) with one other young person for company and support, and by partnering with the resettlement team to link up the unaccompanied young people from Afghanistan with the wider resettled Afghan community in the town. Furthermore, they have provided transport support to make sure that the young people can access the mosque and Friday night prayers in Aberdeen City.

With just four families arriving in Aberdeenshire via the ARAP scheme, far fewer people had arrived from Afghanistan than the local authority was prepared to resettle. As described in chapter 1, this has meant that properties identified for families from Afghanistan were "kept void for almost six months". Efforts to reclaim the costs of this from the Home Office had faltered and stalled at the time of fieldwork, meaning that further work was going to be needed to persuade the Home Office to fund these properties. In the meantime, stakeholders were concerned that the housing department would be deterred from taking the risk to earmark properties ahead of refugees arriving in the future. Instead, the council has asked that the Home Office identify individuals and families "who are willing to come", so that they can then identify properties for them.

In the case of the Ukrainian schemes, at the time of fieldwork, Aberdeenshire had two hundred sponsors but was at the early stage of the matching process, with only four matches having been made through the Individual Sponsorship Scheme. This was thought to reflect a relative lack of desire among many refugees from Ukraine and Afghanistan to move to more rural and suburban areas instead of to the major cities. However, based on the data in Chapter 3, it is clear that significantly greater numbers of Ukrainian guests have now arrived in Aberdeenshire since this interview took place.

In **Dundee**, stakeholders illustrated a complex picture when it comes to accommodating refugees and displaced people in the city. For those on the VPRS, one of the key challenges was gradual overcrowding over time – that is, as families get larger, they outgrow the original properties that they were housed in. As in other areas, ongoing challenges over the undersupply of housing and long waiting lists mean that many families find themselves in this situation. One stakeholder suggested that this was because refugee families tended to be relatively large and Dundee properties are generally too small. Another explained how the council had tried to spread housing for refugees across the city, which they thought allowed for better integration. But despite the council's efforts, refugees often struggled to find suitably sized housing and found themselves in what, one resettlement coordinator described as "reasonably inappropriate housing". Resettlement workers responded as best they could given the inadequacy in supply of housing in Scotland – regularly reviewing and checking the status of people's position on the housing waiting list – but the fact remained that Insufficient housing stock and long waiting lists for properties often prevent refugees and the general population alike from securing suitable social housing.

The interviews with refugees also highlighted challenges with housing in Dundee. One interviewee, who was initially resettled in Sheffield alongside her husband and children, explained how when they moved to Dundee to pursue educational opportunities, they relocated into a flat that was much smaller than their former Sheffield house. Having relocated, it took six months to find and settle in the new flat – a process which they described as "difficult". Another refugee facing problems with housing described securing accommodation as a "really complicated process". They cited issues in understanding how the housing market works in Scotland – for example, how to rent accommodation, set up a bank account, and find suitable accommodation for rent as a person with refugee status – stating "nobody will accept a refugee to rent a house". They suggested that a single point of contact to offer advice on housing and other matters would be helpful.

Stakeholders spoke of the huge effort undertaken by those involved in resettlement and integration work in Dundee following the arrival of large numbers of Ukrainians in the city. At the time of interviews there were roughly 60 people that had arrived to join hosts directly via the Homes for Ukraine scheme and around 40 people housed under the Super Sponsor Scheme in housing association properties. The council had been to visit and do safeguarding checks with around 110 people who had offered to host Ukrainian guests. Early reflections from stakeholders suggested that "the Homes for Ukraine matches seem to have gone very well", while the Super Sponsor Scheme seemed "to be a slow process", with this attributed to offers being refused:

> "There seems to be a lot of refusals coming when people are matched with the hosts, people in the hotels are saying: 'no, thank you'".

As a result of the increased workload (including safeguarding checks, health and safety inspections and mediation between hosts and guests to avoid relationship breakdowns), the council was – at the time of fieldwork – in the process of recruiting two housing support staff members to help support the new Ukrainian arrivals. In addition, a further 250 people from Ukraine were temporarily accommodated in hotels, having arrived in the country via the Super Sponsor Scheme. These were described as 'contingency hotels' by Dundee City Council and are also known as 'welcome accommodation', as explained in Chapter 1. People living in hotels were supported by a team set up by the health and social care partnership. At the time of interviews, a meeting was due to be set up between the resettlement team and the 'hotel team', to ensure that there was effective communication between the two teams.

In an interview with a Ukrainian woman living in Dundee, she indicated that she had been relatively fortunate in her housing experience compared with others who had arrived later than her. She explained that she spent three weeks across two hotels when she first arrived, and after that was rehomed in a good quality housing association apartment in Dundee. She was grateful for the support she'd received from the local authority and from the Scottish Refugee Council, saying "I have only good experience with support and help".

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people living in Dundee are often housed in a children's residential home, where they are supported through a voluntary sector organisation, Action for Children, with a dedicated support worker directly funded by

the local authority. As increased numbers of young people were due to arrive in the city as a result of the changes to the National Transfer Scheme, the council was in the process of establishing a new social worker post to support these young people. To increase their accommodation options, the council was also establishing a partnership with Carolina House Trust, a local charity that provides foster placements for separated children and young people, which they anticipated would be up and running by October 2022.

Given the much more limited profile of resettlement in the third case study area, housing in **Na h-Eileanan Siar** was less of a prominent issue compared with Aberdeenshire and Dundee. Housing for refugees is managed by the council's homelessness team, which provides households with furnished accommodation and gives guidance on heating and housing costs (households can buy back the furniture after the first year). The resettlement officer provides ongoing support and advice to refugees to maintain their tenancies.

As with Aberdeenshire, Na h-Eileanan Siar faced ongoing challenges with attracting people to move to the islands. An interviewee explained that they had informed COSLA they were able to accommodate two Afghan families but, despite finding two available properties, they had struggled to make a match from the bridging hotels. At the time of fieldwork, one of the properties was being occupied by Afghan refugees through a private arrangement with a local charity, but the other property was left empty because families were refusing to take it up. Similarly, despite having an official list of 64 sponsors under the Homes for Ukraine scheme (which the council believed to be in fact higher), only three hosts had received guests at the time of fieldwork due to the high number of accommodation refusals. The interviewee reflected that this was a challenging situation, and that while some have argued that families should not be given a choice of where to move to, she understood the sensitivities involved:

> "They've been in hotels so long that they've built up homes in the hotels and friendships and schooling and nursery and so then they're not going to want to come to the other side of the country…"

Key findings

Housing is a key marker of refugee integration and one of the greatest challenges for humanitarian protection programmes in Scotland. There is an ongoing affordable housing crisis in Scotland, and homelessness cases among the general population are at a record high.

Under the Home Office resettlement schemes, local authorities must provide furnished accommodation which is 'affordable and sustainable' and 'meets local authority standards' on arrival. For Homes for Ukraine (Individual Sponsor Scheme), accommodation is provided by hosts, but local authorities have a range of responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and preventing homelessness. For the Super Sponsor Scheme, local authorities are involved in offering properties in their areas to displaced Ukrainians.

The research survey suggested that delivery of housing provision involves engagement with council housing and homelessness teams, as well as local housing associations and the voluntary sector. There are a range of accommodation options, including social housing and the private rental sector. For UASC, options may include supported accommodation, residential homes, and blocks of flats for more independent living.

This provision varies according to the various humanitarian protection programmes. Under the VPRS/UKRS Home Office resettlement programmes, the long lead-in time and managed approach allows for carefully planned delivery of housing support, while the arrangements for Ukrainians have been more ad hoc.

Housing has been a particular challenge for both the Afghan and Ukraine schemes. Many people have stayed for lengthy periods in temporary accommodation. In the case of the Afghan schemes, it has proved challenging to find properties of a suitable size for families. In some local authorities – including the Aberdeenshire and Na h-Eileanan Siar case studies – councils found available properties but they were left empty as families have declined to move in, because they were reluctant to move to more rural areas. There were similar difficulties with uptake of offers of accommodation to Ukrainians, despite large numbers of sponsors offering spare rooms.

While respondents noted a number of benefits of the hosting model, such as the potential for enhanced integration outcomes and increased accommodation options, the challenges were also substantial, with respondents noting concerns around homelessness in the mid-long term, and a general lack of clear guidance to effectively implement such a model at pace. Survey respondents and case study interviews indicated that the Super Sponsor Scheme was viewed as taking a short-term view in its design, with participants concerned about that there were not enough move-on housing options available to those accommodated in temporary accommodation.

Local authorities have thought creatively about how to address housing pressures. In the research survey, one council was looking at purchasing and bringing back larger properties into the letting pool through their 'buy-back' and 'empty homes' services. In Dundee, the council was planning to increase accommodation options for UASC by establishing a partnership with a local charity that provides foster placements for separated children and young people. In the case of the Afghan schemes, researchers were told by COSLA that local authorities have tried to adapt HMOs for larger families and procured multiple properties in the same street or neighbourhood for family members to live alongside each other.

Welfare rights

Background

Access to welfare benefits or other financial support is a critical factor for the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum. Recent research has found that cutting welfare benefits for refugees can reduce disposable household incomes and have negative effects on crime rates and educational attainment (Anderson et al. 2019). Financial support is particularly important for new arrivals while they settle into

their neighbourhoods and look for work. Given rising inflation and the cost of living crisis facing the whole of the UK, access to welfare support is expected to be particularly important for refugee integration in the coming months and years.

Welfare policy in Scotland is partly devolved and partly reserved. Through the Scotland Act 2016, welfare powers have been devolved in a number of areas, including: disability, industrial injuries and carers' benefits; benefits for maternity, funeral and heating expenses; and discretionary housing payments (House of Commons Library 2019). The Scottish Government is currently acting on these new powers – for instance, by improving disability benefits and introducing a new Scottish Child Payment for qualifying households with all children under the age of 16 receiving £25 per week.

However, many benefits continue to be the responsibility of the UK Government, including Universal Credit, Child Benefit, Contributory Job Seeker's Allowance, and the State Pension (Scottish Government 2017b). This means that benefits are administered in Scotland by a combination of UK, Scottish and local government: Jobcentre Plus administers Universal Credit and some other reserved benefits; Social Security Scotland, an executive agency of the Scottish Government, administers a number of devolved benefits including the Scottish Child Payment; while some other benefits, such as Discretionary Housing Payments, are administered by local authorities.

Refugees are entitled to welfare benefits in the UK, as are people on the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme. People seeking asylum, however, cannot access mainstream benefits and are instead only eligible for Section 95 accommodation and financial support where they do not have adequate accommodation or otherwise cannot meet essential living needs. This currently stands at £45 per person per week (Home Office ND).

Under the funding instructions for the Home Office's resettlement schemes, local authorities in year 1 are required to help refugees to register for mainstream benefits and to attend appointments at Jobcentre Plus for benefit assessments. They also must provide an initial £200 cash allowance per person to help refugees during the period before the first benefit payment is made. For the Ukraine schemes, local authorities are also expected to provide support with benefits, including help with Jobcentre Plus appointments and support accessing other benefits via Social Security Scotland (Scottish Government 2023a).

Survey findings

The survey asked respondents about local authority successes in the areas of housing and social security. Section 3 of this chapter details how local authorities responded to the survey specifically on issues relating to housing. This section instead looks at social security, welfare benefits, and income support as an element of integration for refugees and people seeking asylum. The survey findings illustrate a number of cases where local authorities were able to develop systems for successfully boosting the incomes of people settling in Scotland. Examples of successes included:

- In Stirling, the council had hired a dedicated New Scots money, benefits and debt officer – resourced through the European Social Fund and resettlement funding – who gives budgeting advice, support for accessing the benefits system, and benefit checks for people to ensure they are accessing their entitlements.

- Renfrewshire offers a comprehensive, universal income maximisation strategy for resettled people (including refugees and UASC arrivals) involving debt management, supporting migrants to access benefits, and advice.

- In Fife, there has been close partnership working between the local authority housing team, DWP, and Social Security Scotland to support those in bridging accommodation. This has helped ensure people can access benefits within as short a timeframe as possible. The local authority has coordinated the arrangements and hotel visits.

At the same time, respondents raised a number of challenges relating to social security. One respondent from West Lothian explained that once people enter employment, local government workers can lose contact with them, which makes verifying whether people receive their social security entitlements more difficult. Another respondent reflected concerns about the impact of the cost of living crisis on their service users. There was also a call for additional funds in light of fuel poverty and the cost of living crisis.

In line with the discussion of the 'move-on' period in the housing section above, a Glasgow respondent wrote of the risk of destitution for recently recognised refugees after leaving Home Office asylum accommodation and before obtaining new housing. They highlighted the gap between Home Office financial support ending and Universal Credit or employment beginning. While this is currently a challenge for Glasgow in particular because most people seeking asylum in Scotland are based there, the move to full dispersal is expected to raise similar challenges in other parts of Scotland as well.

Case study findings

In **Aberdeenshire**, the council employs a money advice officer who provides specialist welfare and money advice to refugees, advising people on what they're entitled to and supporting them to apply for benefits. This is a role that provides support in an ongoing way to refugees. As one stakeholder said, as individual and family circumstances change – "somebody gets an illness, somebody has a baby" – so do their entitlements:

> "To me that was one of the most important posts to put in place, was somebody that was a conduit into mainstream money advice support. Because that's the kind of thing people will always need but will find difficulty navigating because of language and understanding."

In addition, advice and support had also been available to refugees via the Grampian Regional Equality Council, a voluntary organisation that provided a support hub function, where they were able to provide ad hoc advice and support on a number of issues, including welfare benefits. Through working closely with partners, they were

able to provide specific support around key benefit areas. For instance, they worked with the council to hold a day dedicated to completing discretionary housing payment forms, at which council officers attended and interpreters were available. Post-pandemic, however, these sorts of sessions have largely been moved to an online format.

In **Dundee**, refugees and people seeking asylum receive day-to-day support from the Scottish Refugee Council, including help to access benefits. There is also a welfare rights team within the council that provides mainstream support and advice to Dundee residents on benefit and tax credit problems. Support workers from Scottish Refugee Council are able to link up with this team where necessary to resolve any benefit issues.

Refugees interviewed for the project in Dundee gave positive feedback about the welfare support they received. One respondent said the council has been 'so helpful' in providing welfare support, by listening to their circumstances, letting them know about the availability of different benefits, and advising on how they can apply.

In **Na h-Eileanan Siar**, the council resettlement team organises the initial sign-up to Universal Credit for new arrivals. Through the interviews, it became clear there was very effective and close working between the council and the local DWP and Jobcentre Plus to help people navigate the benefits system and access Universal Credit. Regular multi-agency meetings are held in the run-up to a household arriving and the council provides a key intermediary role between DWP and refugees to resolve issues. The small community in the local authority means that this work is inherently more bespoke and personalised than elsewhere. As one council stakeholder explained:

> "because we've got a good relationship [with DWP] if there are any issues with families not understanding universal credit they will contact me and ask if I could talk this through with them. I can't imagine in a city you'd be able to do that and maybe the person would just get sanctioned or not understand what they're signing. So here they are excellent in the sense of can you support them with this and I'll support them online and take them in here and try and talk them through things."

Key findings

Access to welfare benefits and/or financial support is a critical factor for refugee integration, particularly in the context of the current cost of living crisis. Welfare policy is partly devolved in Scotland, which means that benefits are administered by a combination of UK, Scottish and local government.

Refugees are entitled to welfare benefits, but people seeking asylum are not eligible and can only access Home Office accommodation and financial support at £45 per week where they do not have adequate accommodation or otherwise cannot meet essential living needs. There are particular risks of destitution faced by recently recognised refugees, due to the gap between Home Office financial support ending and Universal Credit or employment beginning.

Under the Home Office's resettlement schemes, local authorities are required to help refugees to register for mainstream benefits and to attend appointments at Jobcentre Plus for benefit assessments. For the Ukraine schemes, local authorities are also expected to provide support with benefits.

There were numerous examples of local authority good practice in supporting access to welfare in both the research survey and case studies. One council in the survey explained that they had hired a dedicated money, benefits and debt officer who gives budgeting advice, support for accessing the benefits system, and benefit checks, which helps to build financial independence and reduce pressures on the wider integration team. Similarly, in Aberdeenshire the council employs a money advice officer that provides ongoing specialist welfare and money advice to refugees, advising people on what they're entitled to and supporting them to apply for benefits.

Health and wellbeing

Background

Physical and mental health are widely recognised as a core consideration for refugee integration (Home Office 2019). Refugees and people seeking asylum can also face particular health challenges. People who have moved to the UK for asylum reasons are more likely to report long-term health conditions than those who are UK-born (Kone et al. 2019). Refugees and people seeking asylum are particularly likely to have mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression (Blackmore et al. 2020). They may also face difficulties in accessing healthcare provision – for instance, due to language barriers and discrimination (WHO 2022).

Refugees and people seeking asylum have free access to healthcare in Scotland. Unlike in England, all those who have applied for asylum and have been refused continue to be eligible for free secondary NHS care (OHID 2023).[22]

Under the funding instructions for the Home Office's resettlement schemes, in year 1 local authorities are required to support the health and wellbeing of refugees in a number of ways, including through help with registration with a local GP and other medical providers; advice and, where appropriate, referral to mental health services and/or services for victims of torture; and care provision for those with special needs / community care needs. Funding is flexible for years 2-5, but should cover social care costs at a minimum. For the Ukraine schemes, local authorities are expected to also provide advice and referrals to specialist health services where appropriate (Scottish Government 2023a).

Health and social care are devolved to Scotland. Healthcare is primarily delivered through 14 Health Boards, which are responsible for providing services to their regional populations. In 2014, the Scottish Parliament passed legislation to begin the process of integrating health and social care through 31 Integration Authorities (or

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[22] People seeking asylum in Wales and Northern Ireland, like Scotland, are also entitled regardless of whether they are refused asylum status (BMA 2023).

Health and Social Care Partnerships). This integration process is underpinned by a set of nine National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes, which are rooted in a human rights-based approach to health and social care (Scottish Government 2015b).

Survey findings

The survey included a question on how local authorities deliver services relating to health and wellbeing. This portion of the research will look at survey responses relating to accessing physical and mental health support.

The responses highlighted that a wide range of activities are undertaken to support the health of refugees in Scotland. In line with the duties of local authorities under the Home Office resettlement schemes, respondents wrote of supporting refugees with GP and dentist registration, as well as eye examination and dental hygiene appointments, and providing any necessary emergency treatment upon arrival. They also spoke of arrangements made for interpreters or, in one case, the identification of health professionals who spoke Ukrainian or Russian and so would be able to directly communicate with patients.

Much of this work was delivered through collaboration with Health and Social Care Partnerships, local health services, other council departments (e.g. social work) and the third sector. Respondents referred to partnerships with third sector organisations offering counselling and mental health support and online resources signposting to health and wellbeing services.

One local authority respondent explained that typically a coordinated approach was taken for those arriving under planned resettlement programmes to ensure access to health services at the point of arrival and highlight identified needs, but that the pace and scale of recent arrivals from Ukraine had placed pressures on GPs. They highlighted a close working relationship with health teams in relation to support for people in bridging and temporary hotel accommodation, including through the provision of in-reach health services such as wellbeing assessments and coordination of GP registration.

Responses referred to separate arrangements for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, including the arrangement of health assessments upon arrival. One respondent explained that young people can be nervous about accessing healthcare and are offered an initial appointment through their GP and children's services, where they can then be referred for further treatment if needed.

Another respondent from a third sector organisation explained how they offered an innovative outdoor therapeutic approach to improving physical and mental health of refugees and UASC. The service is delivered in partnership with a number of different local authorities, following the Team Around the Child approach and underpinned by the GIRFEC guiding principles.[23]

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[23] A Team Around the Child approach involves a multidisciplinary team of individuals working together with the child or young person to support their needs. For an explanation of GIRFEC (Getting It Right For Every Child), see the 'Education and Language' section of Chapter 4.

The survey question on local authority successes in the areas of health and general wellbeing generated further examples of good practice. They included:

- In Clackmannanshire, there is a dedicated health team in hotels in the local authority serving displaced Ukrainians.

- In West Lothian there is a dedicated mental health hub which has developed translation information packs for service users, as well as help for families who require ongoing support.

- In response to a different question, Renfrewshire highlighted that through funding from AMIF it had set up a West of Scotland Refugee and UASC Service, which provides support with health, wellbeing, integration and opportunity.

When asked about challenges in this area, respondents highlighted existing pressures on health services and long waiting times for GPs and dentist appointments, issues which also affect the wider population in Scotland. There were complaints too that a lack of necessary resources means that service providers are unable to deliver a consistent service, and that funds should be made available to deliver better outcomes for patients. Respondents also flagged that patients with limited English and who are unable to speak via an interpreter may struggle to communicate their symptoms or illness, potentially leading to worse health outcomes through misdiagnosis. Poverty and restrictions on access to funds were also referred to as challenges which could lead to poorer diets and limit life chances.

A number of responses referred to the high levels of trauma experienced by refugees, and concerns were raised about whether mental health services could meet their needs. One respondent noted that current policies – including the use of hotel accommodation and bans on people seeking asylum working – had a detrimental impact on health and wellbeing. Improvements in mental health services and early intervention and support – together with getting people out of hotels – were deemed important priorities going forward.

Local authorities have been making efforts to address these mental health concerns and improve the quality of support. Respondents in the survey referred to the delivery of trauma services for UASC and access to counselling and psychological support via third sector organisations. As referred to above, one third sector project offers an outdoor therapeutic approach for refugees and UASC. Beyond the survey, there are other examples of innovative practice at the local level – for instance, the Mental Health Foundation has worked with Glasgow City, North Ayrshire and North Lanarkshire Councils on a series of community-based projects aimed at capacity-building and raising the awareness of refugees' mental health needs within health and care systems. The projects have involved the recruitment of volunteer participants to participate in gardening activities, share stories about their lives in Syria, and produce a video on the mental health experiences of refugees and people seeking asylum, as well as on the benefits of their participation in civic forums (COSLA 2019b).[24]

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[24] YouTube video entitled 'Voice and Visibility – The New Scots'

Case study findings

In **Aberdeenshire**, researchers heard how everyone who arrives through one of the resettlement schemes is assessed for additional support needs and registered with a local GP practice. One interviewee explained that some families had arrived with children with disabilities, and so the local social work team had conducted assessments to determine entitlement for a support package for the child and their family.

Research participants spoke of the council's multi-agency approach to refugee resettlement, which involved refugee leads within the local health and social care partnership. This gave partners clear roles and responsibilities and allowed them to take action on specific issues – for instance, in the case of GP registration, which was acknowledged to be a 'tricky area', the dedicated contact within the health and social care partnership could take the lead and 'go and knock on the doors' to ensure that any registration issues were addressed. According to the view of one stakeholder, this approach worked effectively.

In **Dundee**, the Humanitarian Protection Partnership has a health lead based within the local NHS who helps register new arrivals with GPs and supports with any misunderstandings and concerns. One stakeholder highlighted the benefit of having a health lead based within the NHS, because they would have greater purchase with colleagues compared with an external professional. The Scottish Refugee Council also provides support for resettled refugees to navigate the health service – for instance, by booking appointments or liaising with GPs to arrange interpreters where they face language barriers.

For UASC, NHS Tayside – which covers Dundee – has a dedicated LAC (Looked After Children) team with a focus on unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and allows for a coordinated response to meeting young people's needs. The council has also worked in partnership with The Corner, a health and wellbeing service for young people, to arrange additional provision for UASC.

There were some ongoing challenges with respect to healthcare in Dundee, much of which were outside the council's control – including long waiting times, problems securing an interpreter, and limited mental health support. Nevertheless, it was clear from interviews that Dundee's Humanitarian Protection Partnership were aware of these challenges and support workers did their best to advocate on behalf of refugees – for instance, by booking appointments for them, asking for interpreters, and providing information about mental health workshops .

In **Na h-Eileanan Siar**, the council's resettlement team played a direct role in supporting the health of resettled refugees, by personally registering them with a GP and dental practice, arranging appointments, and working with refugees to support them to attend at the appointed time. One interviewee explained how some refugees had become more independent over time and were now arranging appointments themselves. Work was also done to support the mental health of resettled refugees – through for instance arranging volunteering opportunities to encourage refugees to build their confidence and meet new people. This work was underpinned by the

council's partnership approach, which involved multi-agency meetings with a range of partners, including health leads.

Key findings

Physical and mental health is widely recognised as a core consideration for refugee integration. Under the Home Office's resettlement schemes, local authorities are required to support the health and wellbeing of refugees in a number of ways, including through help with registration with a local GP and other medical providers and referral to mental health services and/or services for victims of torture as appropriate. For the Ukraine schemes, local authorities are expected to also provide advice and referrals to specialist health services.

The survey findings indicate that local authorities carry out a range of activities to support the health of refugees and people seeking asylum, including GP and dentist registration, help with eye examination and dental hygiene appointments, and arrangements for interpreters. Much of this work is delivered in collaboration with Health and Social Care Partnerships, local health services, other council departments (e.g. social work) and the third sector. Concerns were raised in the survey about pressures on health services and long waiting times for GPs and dentist appointments. This reflects broader challenges for health services across Scotland in meeting the needs of the general population.

Particular concerns were raised during fieldwork about the high levels of trauma experienced by refugees and whether mental health services could meet their needs. A range of activities were taking place to address this – including a project delivering an outdoor therapeutic approach for improving the physical and mental health of refugees and UASC, as well as a partnership between the Mental Health Foundation and multiple councils on a series of community-based projects aimed at raising mental health awareness. Nevertheless, the survey findings indicate that improvements in mental health services and early intervention and support are important priorities going forward.

The case studies highlighted the importance of multi-agency working to deliver on health provision for refugees and people seeking asylum. Research participants spoke of the benefit of having health leads based within NHS services, who would be able to lead on difficult areas (e.g. GP registration) and had greater purchase with colleagues compared with external professionals.

Communities, culture and social connections

Background

A central facet of refugee integration is the forming of social connections, both in terms of 'bonding' (relationships between people with shared identities) and 'bridging' (relationships between people with different identities) (Home Office 2019). Evidence suggests that social connections can have positive impacts on other indicators of refugee integration, particularly in the case of health and language (Cheung and Phillimore 2013). Access to cultural institutions and events is also considered an

important indicator for integration (Home Office 2019). However, refugees and people seeking asylum are particularly vulnerable to becoming socially isolated (Mort et al., 2022). This may be related to a number of factors, including language barriers, lack of awareness of local opportunities, and experiences of trauma.

Communities, culture and social connections are an important consideration for local authorities delivering humanitarian protection programmes. There are no specific activities dedicated to communities, culture and social connection in the Home Office's funding instructions for its resettlement schemes, though many of the responsibilities for local authorities relate to this thematic area – e.g. making initial reception arrangements for refugees and developing a support plan to facilitate local orientation during the first year of resettlement. For the Ukraine schemes, local authorities are expected to support guests with community integration, including through community events, community champions, and interfaith groups (Scottish Government 2023a).

There are a number of relevant policies and practices in Scotland which support integration work in relation to communities, culture and social connection. As part of its Culture Strategy for Scotland, one of the Scottish Government's aims is to 'extend opportunities that enable people to take part in culture throughout their lives' and to 'recognise each community's own local cultures in generating a distinct sense of place, identity and confidence' (Scottish Government 2022c). This includes funding for communities to develop cultural projects through a new Creative Communities programme, including activities with refugees and people seeking asylum (Inspiring Scotland 2022).

At the local level, a range of different types of organisations – including councils, charities, neighbourhood groups, refugee-led groups, youth groups, and faith-based groups – are involved in delivering social and cultural activities, as well as many other projects supporting refugee integration. A mapping exercise in 2020 by the Scottish Refugee Council of 163 different organisations providing community support illustrates the range of refugee integration projects on offer (Scottish Refugee Council 2020). Refugee Festival Scotland – which is coordinated each year by the Scottish Refugee Council – also provides a focal point for events across Scotland to mark the run-up to World Refugee Day, which takes place on 20 June (Scottish Government 2018).

Survey findings

The survey results illustrate the work of local authorities across Scotland in supporting refugees and people seeking asylum to feel able to integrate socially and culturally into their new communities. This work involves a range of activities and resources, including befriender programmes, information packs, and cultural celebrations. There was also an emphasis on sports and leisure activities, including through the provision of bicycles and free access to sports facilities. A focus was placed in one response on supporting refugees to practise their cultural and religious beliefs – including by ensuring access to places of worship – together with celebrating Burns Night and St Andrew's Day, as well as other cultures from around the world. Another response highlighted the importance of strong links with internal partners, the third sector and community organisations for this work, given they may often be better suited to organising these types of events and activities.

The survey responses highlighted a number of examples of good practice in the area of community, culture and social connection. They include:

- In East Lothian, all Ukrainian guests are provided with a free 6-month leisure pass and a 12-month bus pass to support access to services and employment and help with integration.

- In East Renfrewshire, the council organised a visit to Benmore Gardens, a nature and botanical preserve, and are looking for other options for community activities and events for refugee families and guests. The purpose of the visits is to create an informal environment to help bring people together and enable them to become more accustomed to Scottish culture.

- In Moray, the council ran a summer activities programme over the school holiday period to help build confidence and learn English. The respondent noted that the programme had been considered "a great success with families meeting, exchanging numbers and making wider connections".

Where challenges were cited, one respondent reflected on the limits of important cultural and religious centres being located in Scotland's central belt – for instance, forcing refugees to travel from Perth to Glasgow. Some respondents highlighted the importance of properly resourcing community and third sector organisations so they can meet increasing demand, given the reliance on these groups to facilitate integration activities and social events.

Case study findings

As discussed earlier in Chapter 3, **Aberdeenshire**'s work on refugee resettlement is grounded in a Community Learning and Development (CLD) approach, aimed at strengthening local community capacity. One of Aberdeenshire's flagship pieces of work was the refugee-led Al-Amal (Hope) project, which began in 2016 to 'act as a voice and support mechanism for New Scots' families'.[25] The project sought to boost community participation, share and communicate stories of resettlement, and advocate for refugees. It was steered by a committee of refugees and involved a range of activities, including employment cafes, buddying, and cultural trips.

Later, in 2019, a new group called Friends of Al-Amal was constituted in Aberdeenshire, led by volunteers from refugee and receiving communities and working in partnership with Al-Amal and the local council. The idea behind the group, as explained to researchers during the fieldwork, was to support refugees with ideas for projects or activities to put them into practice, by helping to secure funding, facilitate meetings, and work on a development plan.

Friends of Al-Amal were involved in various projects and activities at the time of fieldwork, including organising trips, running a women's group and poetry nights, and coordinating one-to-one additional English language support with volunteers. In one case, they liaised with a local church to provide a space for refugees to get involved in community gardening initiatives. Interviewees spoke of how one man had been

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[25] Local government web page with information on the Al-Amal Project and Friends of Al-Amal

growing plants from seeds native to Syria and how women with farming backgrounds had the opportunity to attend the gardens and "put their hands in the earth". The community garden project was therefore seen to have a range of benefits – not only for general wellbeing but also for skills and educational development.

Interviewees felt that the original Al-Amal project was highly successful in building relationships and empowering refugees to settle in Aberdeenshire. They reflected that, after the first couple of years of the project, many of the early issues facing refugees had been resolved and they had become more integrated into the community, which meant that the focus of Al-Amal shifted to becoming more socially focused. In recent years, the project has become less active, and Friends of Al-Amal now plays a larger role. Again, interviewees were highly supportive of the work of Friends of Al-Amal, which played a key role in providing support in Aberdeenshire given the local authority's relatively small voluntary sector. In particular, it was noted that the model underpinning the work – based on a different power relationship between refugees and receiving communities, because everyone interacted with each other as volunteers – was an exciting and innovative approach to refugee integration and empowerment.

Further integration work in Aberdeenshire was being run by the Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC), a charity based in Aberdeen which work across the North East of Scotland. The charity had secured funding from AMIF for two projects on women's empowerment and digital inclusion, the second of which was based in Aberdeenshire.

The project on digital inclusion was a partnership between Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City councils and involved identifying the potential for digital champions in the community, as well as supporting people with hardware, connectivity, and other issues. At the time of fieldwork, the digital inclusion project was on track to be completed and had been successful at getting devices to the community and supporting people with maintaining online accounts and filling in online forms. However, key challenges remained over digital skills, and there were concerns that language barriers were still a root cause inhibiting digital inclusion.

Specific work was also carried out in Aberdeenshire to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. In recognition of the support that young people need to build trust and settle in their new home, the council collects the young people they are responsible for directly from temporary accommodation located in Kent. This demonstrates the local authority's commitment to supporting young people to transition to Aberdeenshire and gives staff an opportunity to get to know them and provide a warm welcome. This approach has been shared via COSLA's UASC working group and other local authorities now take a similar approach.

Once unaccompanied young people began arriving in Aberdeenshire, the council made various efforts to support their social integration. One interviewee explained how they pulled together a summer programme for young people, involving a combination of twice-weekly ESOL classes, weekly trips, and other activities (e.g. mural painting at one of the family resource centres). They also gave an example of how a council worker had supported some of the young people to get involved in the local cricket club, and around four now took part in cricket training on a weekly basis (with two

playing regularly in the local team). While this had happened organically, the interviewee highlighted it as a powerful example of how unaccompanied young people had built social connections with local residents through their involvement in the cricket club.

In **Dundee**, the Scottish Refugee Council play an important role in supporting initial orientation for resettled refugees, by taking them around the city with local volunteers and pointing out shops, libraries, and other places to go. An interviewee explained that this encouraged volunteers who know about the city to help new arrivals. The Scottish Refugee Council also organises a WhatsApp group and a monthly newsletter to share information about local activities. These are translated into Arabic, and at the time of fieldwork there were plans to translate them into Ukrainian as well.

At the time of fieldwork, the council was also in the process of recruiting a community development worker. The post had been filled previously and had been involved in allotment activities, a cycle scheme, as well as work with the local football team, but it had been hard to sustain this work during the Covid-19 lockdown. The council hoped that this new recruit would bring some imaginative ideas to the role and allow for greater community development post-Covid.

As noted earlier in this chapter, Dundee's ESOL provision is closely linked with its community work. The ESOL team works with Dundee's International Women's Centre, where women-only language provision is offered, blending English classes with opportunities to get involved with other activities such as a painting class, sewing group, or parenting group. The ESOL team also works closely with the community empowerment team – adult learning sits within the council's community learning and development service – and some ESOL provision is based directly in community centres. This allows the tutors to take students to community cafes and encourage them to participate in volunteering – for instance, at the community centre food banks. One ESOL worker had set up a young women's group for 16-25 year olds, which helped participants to learn English while also acting as a community hub to build friendships and take part in activities (e.g. going for walks and doing Zumba). This was considered to have worked well at both supporting English language learning and building confidence among participants.

In **Na h-Eileanan Siar**, the council takes an active role in supporting resettled refugees to participate in activities which reflect their personal interests – for instance, sewing, knitting or fishing. The resettlement team has taken mothers to mother and toddler groups, in order to encourage them to meet other people and tackle the risk of social isolation. As with other aspects of the resettlement team's work, this reflects the council's hands-on and personalised approach to refugee integration, aimed at directly meeting the specific needs and interests of resettled refugees who arrive on the islands.

Another key aspect of the council's work involves the recruitment of volunteers, who have been critical in supporting refugee wellbeing. The council issued a call-out for volunteers, conducted PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) checks, and issued timetables for when to meet with families. Volunteers have supported resettled refugees with ESOL classes (including babysitting while adults were being taught),

accompanied them while shopping and to appointments, and helped with practising English conversations, alongside other befriending and orienteering activities. Much of this work blends formal activities with informal social connections, given the close-knit community in Stornoway. As one volunteer explained:

"And one of my friends and I, informally, used to work with two women who were quite friendly with each other, and we would take them around the shops, we would go for a coffee. We did a day trip to Inverness on the ferry with them, which went down very well. So, it has been a mixture of befriending, helping with the language, taking them shopping – and they're very, very friendly, and invited us into their homes for coffee and meals and things like that."

Another interviewee agreed that the volunteer approach had been really valuable for refugees, helping them to meet other members of the community, familiarise themselves with the local area, and build friendships over time.

Key findings

Communities, culture and social connections are an important consideration for local authorities delivering humanitarian protection programmes. A key aspect of refugee integration is the forming of social connections, both in terms of 'bonding' (relationships between people with shared identities) and 'bridging' (relationships between people with different identities).

A number of the responsibilities of local authorities under the Home Office resettlement schemes relate to communities, culture and social connections, including making initial reception arrangements for refugees and developing a support plan to facilitate local orientation for their initial 12 months. For the Ukraine schemes, local authorities are expected to support guests with community integration, including through community events, community champions, and interfaith groups.

The survey findings detailed a variety of work delivered by local authorities to support this thematic area, including arranging summer activities programmes, organising cultural celebrations and trips, and facilitating leisure and sport activities (e.g. through free leisure passes and access to sport facilities). The importance of partnerships with the third sector and community organisations was emphasised in the responses.

The case studies also highlighted examples of good practice. Aberdeenshire's refugee-led Al-Amal project, which began in 2016 to 'act as a voice and support mechanism for New Scots' families', was seen as an initial success. The project was steered by a committee of refugees and involved activities such as employment cafes, buddying, and cultural trips. More recently, a new group called Friends of Al-Amal has been constituted, led by volunteers from refugee and receiving communities. This model of working – where receiving and refugee communities engaged with each other as volunteers, shifting power relationships – was considered an innovative approach to refugee integration and empowerment.

Other examples of good practice included Dundee's approach to connecting ESOL and community development and Na h-Eileanan Siar's engagement of volunteers to

help resettled refugees – for instance, one ESOL worker in Dundee had set up a young women's group for 16-25 year olds to support language learning and build friendships, while Na h-Eileanan Siar took steps to blend childminding and conversational language support with befriending and orienteering activities.

The research found numerous examples of successful community-led interventions working with refugees to support social connections. But it was also recognised that in order to effectively meet local demand for events and activities, more could be done to resource the community and third sector organisations supporting social integration on the ground.

5. Comparing experiences across Scotland

Scotland's 32 local authorities all have different geographies, facilities and resources, as well as different histories of supporting and integrating refugees and people seeking asylum. These unique contexts have an impact on how local authorities deliver services. As a result, there are a variety of different approaches taken to delivering humanitarian protection programmes and facilitating refugee integration across Scotland. This research project therefore aimed to explore some of these differences and how they manifest themselves in practice. Of particular importance was comparing how local authorities in more urban and more rural areas have worked on refugee resettlement and integration in recent years.

Survey results

For the survey analysis, researchers carried out a comparison of responses from local authorities by clustering them into three groups based on population density: high-density (urban) areas with over 600 people per square kilometre, mid-density (urban-rural mixed) areas between 100 and 600 people per square kilometre, and low-density (rural) areas with under 100 people per square kilometre.

As expected, the analysis confirmed that urban local authorities (including Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen) tend to have larger refugee and asylum populations. They also on average have more staff supporting refugee integration, reflecting their larger refugee and asylum cohorts. Moreover, urban local authorities hosted considerably larger numbers of refugees in bridging accommodation. The distribution of bridging hotels is not in the hands of local authorities; instead, the skew towards urban areas is most likely because they typically have greater hotel capacity for temporarily accommodating refugees.

The analysis suggests there is little difference in the extent of support provided by local authorities in urban, rural or mixed urban-rural areas. A comparison of local authority scores across the 12 indicators of provision from Chapter 4 suggests that in general local authorities on average score similarly regardless of whether they are high-density, mid-density or low-density. One notable exception, however, was Glasgow: respondents from Glasgow produced figures lower than the local authority average for many of the indicators. This is likely because, until recently, Glasgow has been the only asylum dispersal area in Scotland and, while the council is not in general responsible for the integration of people seeking asylum, concerns over the quality of accommodation and support provided by the Home Office and Mears Group may have impacted the scores across a number of the indicators.

A further question in the survey sought to understand the community infrastructure available for meeting the needs of refugees and people seeking asylum within their local authorities. Community infrastructure in the survey was defined as 'local community groups and civil society activists'. The full extent of community infrastructure may be comprised of charities, refugee-led groups, faith groups, youth groups, any other grassroots community organisations which engage locally with refugees and people seeking asylum.
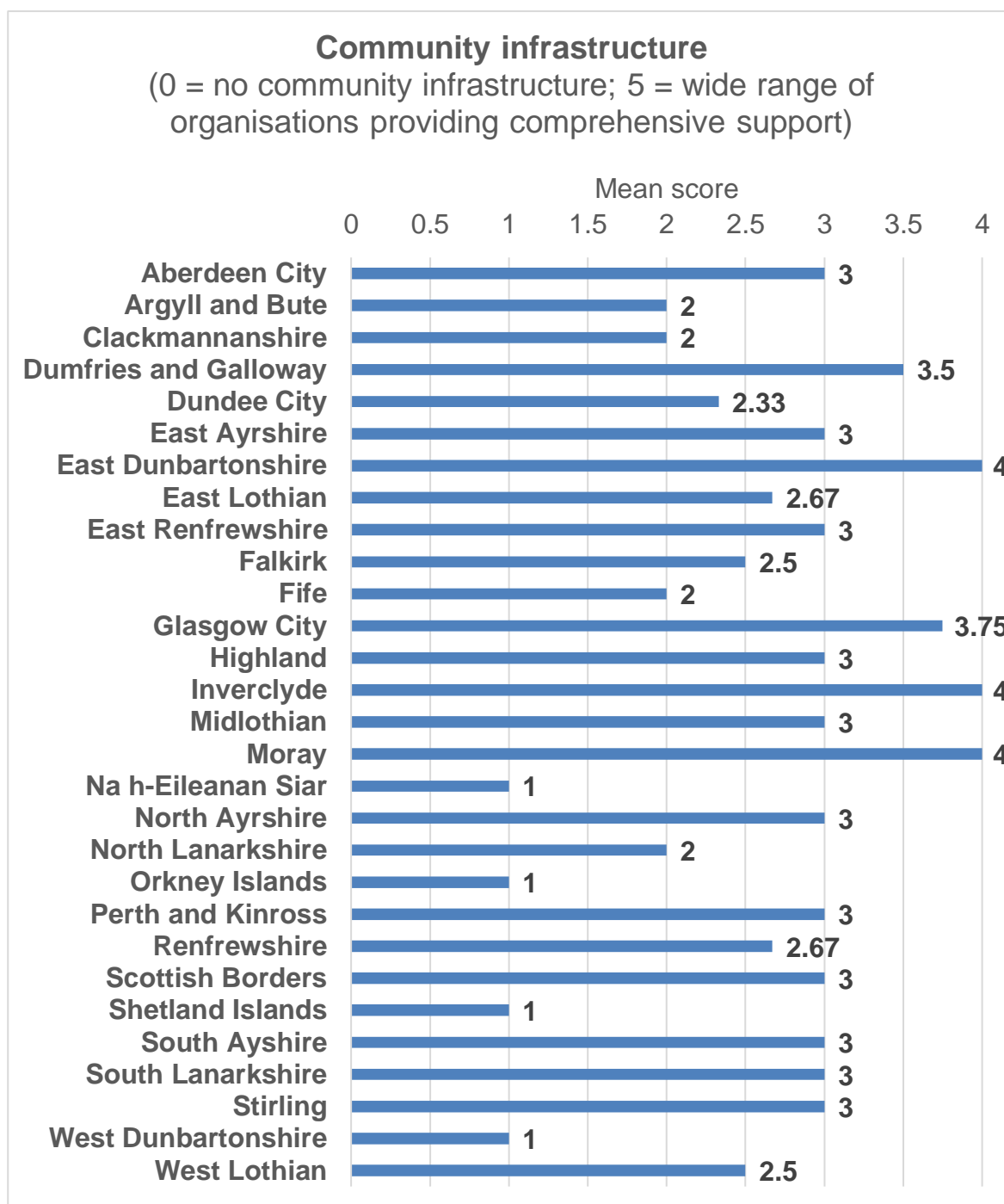
Respondents from some rural local authorities – notably more remote rural areas such as Shetland, Orkney and Na h-Eileanan Siar – tended to indicate that there was very limited community infrastructure in their areas.[26] This highlights one of the difficulties facing more remote areas and island communities, in delivering refugee integration. Despite this, reflecting back on the case study on Na h-Eileanan Siar, it is evident that more rural or island communities are not necessarily impeded from developing strong community support networks. Na h-Eileanan Siar, given the small number of refugees, was able to develop a unique closeness between newly resettled people and the local population, with the council playing a direct and bespoke role in supporting individuals' integration and locals informally supporting arrivals and familiarising them with island life (taking them to the bank, shopping on the high street, etc). The lack of extensive or embedded migrant-specific community infrastructure is compensated by a more intimate, informal support network on offer to refugees and people seeking asylum.

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[26] For the purpose of this report, 'remote' means areas which are situated far from the main centres of population in Scotland. This is distinct from 'rural', which refers to areas of low population density.

Figure 5.1: How each local authority responded (average of responses per local authority) in describing the strength of existing community infrastructure to support the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum (where 0 = no community infrastructure and 4 = a wide range of organisations providing comprehensive support)*

*29 local authorities are listed – the remaining three either did not provide a response or answered 'Don't know'

Community infrastructure
(0 = no community infrastructure; 5 = wide range of organisations providing comprehensive support)

Mean score

Local authority	Mean score
Aberdeen City	3
Argyll and Bute	2
Clackmannanshire	2
Dumfries and Galloway	3.5
Dundee City	2.33
East Ayrshire	3
East Dunbartonshire	4
East Lothian	2.67
East Renfrewshire	3
Falkirk	2.5
Fife	2
Glasgow City	3.75
Highland	3
Inverclyde	4
Midlothian	3
Moray	4
Na h-Eileanan Siar	1
North Ayrshire	3
North Lanarkshire	2
Orkney Islands	1
Perth and Kinross	3
Renfrewshire	2.67
Scottish Borders	3
Shetland Islands	1
South Ayrshire	3
South Lanarkshire	3
Stirling	3
West Dunbartonshire	1
West Lothian	2.5

Source: IPPR analysis of refugee integration survey

To understand their experiences in more depth, the survey asked local authorities about how their geographies had presented opportunities and challenges in their approaches to refugees and people seeking asylum. A number of local authorities noted problems with transport in more rural and semi-rural areas, which can make it hard to access services and activities or organise group events, particularly where refugees were widely dispersed. It was also noted that in comparatively large rural local authorities with dispersed population centres it was more challenging to get around easily, compared with local authorities with more concentrated populations and smaller geographies.

For example, the lack of an extensive rail network within Moray, owed in part to the increasingly mountainous terrain and reducing population as one moves south, means communities are highly reliant on car travel, or – for those who do not have access to a car – a comprehensive bus network. Stagecoach currently operates Moray's bus network, although the council directly runs a small number of scheduled services which reaches into underserved communities in the south such as Knockando and Archiestown (On Your Bus Stop Moray 2023). A response from Moray council said that they were trialling a new system on a smart app with Stagecoach for some of the recent Ukrainian arrivals, in order to help address transport issues.

Some respondents in remote areas also highlighted that it could be difficult to attract refugees, who might prefer to be in more urban areas with larger communities from their home countries. As discussed in Chapter 4, this has been a particular challenge in the case of Afghan and Ukrainian arrivals, though there has been a concerted effort on the part of local councils, COSLA and the Scottish Government to encourage people out of bridging and welcome accommodation and into more permanent homes in various parts of Scotland. A number of responses highlighted that rural areas tended to have fewer amenities and services for refugees, while in some cases refugees travelled to Glasgow or Edinburgh to access support and community groups.

Legal services in particular were noted to be difficult to access north of Dundee. However, it is clear that efforts are being made to address these gaps – for instance, COSLA has worked with the Ethnic Minorities Law Centre and IOM to increase the provision of legal advice.

The survey also highlighted some advantages of rural settings for refugee integration. One respondent from a largely rural local authority, Stirling (comprised of the city in the south-east of the local authority, and dispersed population centres throughout the rural and mountainous Trossachs, car and bus travel is the primary means of transit) noted that where services did exist, they tended to be high quality and "New Scots feel like they get a lot of support". In particular, Stirling offers New Scots access to a dedicated employability worker to support them into employment and collaborate with the local Jobcentre Plus, alongside a fully funded New Scots money adviser who provides money-related and benefits advice. Another respondent from Perth and Kinross (which has a similar geographic profile to Stirling, largely rural with a dispersed population outwith the city of Perth connected primarily by road) said that because the area was more rural, local residents had set up lots of community groups throughout the local authority to support refugees.

Case study findings

Aberdeenshire is a geographically large, rural local authority, with a comparatively large population of more than 260,000 people settled in towns spread across almost two and a half thousand square miles, connected by roads and a fairly comprehensive bus network.

A key issue cited by stakeholders reflecting on Aberdeenshire's geography is how it – as a rural local authority – is perceived by refugees. While some of the refugees interviewed said that they specifically wanted to live in the countryside, where it "is quiet and it's much safer for children, for family", ultimately those on the Syrian VPRS had no choice about where they would be located. However, more recently, Ukrainians housed in temporary welcome accommodation under the Super Sponsor Scheme and Afghans in bridging accommodation are reportedly refusing properties in Aberdeenshire, as there is a preference for living in urban areas in the central belt. At the same time, local authority interviewees felt that the effective integration work taking place in Aberdeenshire – including its comprehensive resettlement team and strategy, its community development approach, and its Al-Amal and Friends of Al-Amal projects, as set out in the previous chapters – demonstrated how it could be just as welcoming and supportive to new arrivals as more urban parts of Scotland.

Some interviewees highlighted a few specific challenges resulting from Aberdeenshire's geography. For instance, a small number of Afghan families are based in Peterhead, a town in the north of the local authority. Research participants explained that they found it difficult to find halal meat or access a mosque, owing to a lack of historical immigration of Muslims into Aberdeenshire, while buses to Aberdeen – where there are mosques and where a lot of key services are located – were infrequent and expensive. Researchers explained that this lack of accessibility was a source of frustration for the Afghan refugees, because it meant going without something they considered such a critical part of their identity and community.

At the same time, the council had made considerable efforts to integrate the new Afghan households – for instance, by connecting them with the existing Syrian families and encouraging them to participate in cultural trips, activities and events. Nevertheless, one interviewee explained how, due to the small number of people arriving at the time of fieldwork, it was harder to apply their usual community development approach to the Afghan arrivals in Peterhead, and they hoped that progress would be made over time as people made their way through the resettlement programme.

Through the fieldwork, concerns were also raised about Ukrainians living in isolated parts of Aberdeenshire, which can make it difficult to get immediate access to services without travelling by car. This was due to the nature of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, whereby sponsors host Ukrainian guests in their homes, as explained in Chapter 1, meaning that guests can be dispersed across the local authority depending on where sponsors have offered up their spare rooms. Interviewees highlighted, however, the work being done to build community connections in spite of these barriers – for instance, the setting up of a Ukraine WhatsApp group, whereby people can direct

questions to the resettlement team and connect with others who may be living in the same area.

While stakeholders recognised that there were practical challenges that come with rural living, there was also the feeling that Aberdeenshire's model of resettlement had a considerable amount to offer to new arrivals, and that this needed to be better communicated to refugees looking to make their home in Scotland.

By comparison with Aberdeenshire, **Dundee** is a compact city that has a comprehensive bus network in which it is possible to cross the entire local authority in less than half an hour, which makes it relatively straightforward to organise integration activities and provision from a central hub. At the same time, as a mid-sized urban area, Dundee is large enough to resettle a significant number of refugees, allowing the council to access sufficient funding for key resettlement posts. The city also has significant employment opportunities, compared with more rural areas. It was noted too that Dundee had facilities for different cultures and religions, including a number of mosques and halal food stores. As identified in the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy and discussed in Chapter 4, opportunities for accessing the labour market and contributing to cultural life are key tenets for successful refugee integration (Scottish Government 2018).

One Dundee stakeholder who had previously worked in Aberdeenshire was able to offer a direct comparison of the two case studies. She highlighted that while Dundee offered practical advantages for refugees, it was sometimes harder to integrate with neighbours compared with a rural area such as Aberdeenshire, because of the sheer number of people and the nature of urban living. Moreover, in rural parts of Scotland, communities may be more likely to identify with their local areas, while in cities they may consider their areas to be more functional, and this could affect experiences of integration. She explained:

> "And so, I think that's the benefit of being in a rural community that the communities, people have managed to integrate with their neighbours more easily and that might not happen in Dundee because there are just so many people."

The respondent felt that this meant that projects such as Al-Amal in Aberdeenshire could be harder to set up in urban areas such as Dundee. This comparison between Aberdeenshire and Dundee reflects broader evidence highlighting how community relations tend to be stronger in rural areas (ONS 2022).

At the same time, Dundee has also taken steps to support social integration and connections for refugees and people seeking asylum, as discussed in Chapter 4. These include the orientation work and WhatsApp groups and newsletters run by Scottish Refugee Council, the community ESOL work led by the local authority, and the community development work which the council was planning to get up and running again at the time of fieldwork.

Na h-Eileanan Siar was the most remote local authority area of the case studies, with a history of de-population throughout the 20th century and low levels of migration from overseas. Research interviews with stakeholders highlighted both opportunities and

challenges with the geography of the island. On the one hand, most refugees tend to be resettled in the main town of Stornoway, where services and facilities are largely within walking distance. On the other hand, there tended to be fewer employment opportunities for refugees on the islands.

The community as a whole on the islands has taken a proactive response to resettling refugees, including by establishing a mosque in Stornoway which some resettled refugees attend. Local volunteers have supported refugees through both the formal volunteering scheme as discussed above, as well as more informally through social activities and introductions to friends. Stakeholders highlighted how the local community had welcomed the resettled refugees – one new arrival explained:

> "The local community, people in Stornoway they are all very welcoming, when we go outside, they smile and at least they say, 'Hi' or they leave a comment about the way. The don't give us that feeling that we are an outsider …"

The close-knit nature of the community and small number of people resettled meant that much of the provision by the council was personalised, with officers going out of their way to provide bespoke support to individuals, from taking refugees to mother and toddler groups to arranging training programmes based on their employment interests.

On the other hand, Stornoway's location has posed certain challenges: job opportunities are limited and there are fewer activities available than on the mainland. Stakeholders also noted that there were challenges with finding Arabic interpreters or Middle Eastern food on the island. As noted above in relation to ESOL tutors, there are also challenges with recruiting staff to deliver support services to help integrate refugees. Moreover, as with Aberdeenshire, the council has at times found it difficult to encourage refugees to resettle in Na h-Eileanan Siar, and some of the resettled refugees have chosen to depart – for instance, to find work elsewhere.

That said, the local authority had been making considerable efforts to support refugees' entrepreneurialism on the island, and some refugees had set up or were in the process of setting up different small businesses.

Key findings

The specific context of each of Scotland's 32 local authorities – their geography, facilities, and history of immigration – shapes the local delivery of humanitarian protection programmes and refugee integration work.

The research survey suggested that urban local authorities tend to have larger refugee and asylum populations and a greater level of staff supporting refugee integration. In general, it did not find significant differences in the extent of support provided by local authorities in urban, rural or mixed urban-rural areas. There were indications, however, that more remote and island communities had less community infrastructure – defined as local community groups and civil society activists – compared with elsewhere.

The survey and case studies highlighted both opportunities and challenges for refugee integration in both rural and urban areas.

The research findings indicated that urban areas tend to have more opportunities for refugees to secure employment, while rural areas have less access to community infrastructure and services such as legal advice. Research participants in Dundee highlighted how, as a compact city with a comprehensive bus network, it was relatively straightforward to organise integration activities and provision from a central hub, which contrasted with more rural areas like Aberdeenshire where the population is more dispersed and travel more difficult. Moreover, Dundee is large enough to resettle a significant number of refugees, allowing the council to access sufficient funding for key resettlement posts.

On the other hand, the research suggested that lower population numbers and stronger local identities in rural areas can offer their own benefits – for instance, making it easier to set up local community projects like the refugee-led group Al-Amal in Aberdeenshire. Where there are close ties within the community and refugee numbers are smaller, this can also allow for a more personalised approach to council provision and a more intimate, informal support network for refugees and people seeking asylum, as was clear in Na h-Eileanan Siar.

There was extensive evidence of how more rural local authorities had worked to overcome challenges to provide high-quality integration provision for refugees and people seeking asylum. For instance, in Na h-Eileanan Siar, the community had taken a proactive approach to resettling refugees, including by establishing a mosque in Stornoway, while the council had been supporting some refugees to set up their own independent small businesses on the island.

6. Exploring the impact of policy and legislation

The work of Scottish local authorities in supporting the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum sits within a complex network of devolved and reserved legislation. As discussed in depth in the previous chapters, immigration and asylum policy are reserved matters led on by the Home Office, but many areas of policy which impact on refugee integration – including education and training, health and social services, housing, and aspects of social security – are the responsibility of the Scottish government.

As discussed in detail in Chapter 1, the UK government has introduced a range of different routes to support refugees in recent years, all of which have important differences in their purpose and structure. The system has become significantly more fragmented and complex with the introduction of the bespoke Afghan and Ukraine schemes. The recent changes to asylum dispersal and the National Transfer Scheme for UASC have raised further issues for local authorities, and the picture is a constantly evolving one.

Moreover, as explored earlier, while the Scottish Government is not responsible for these schemes – with the exception of the Ukraine Super Sponsor Scheme – it has set out a distinct approach to refugee integration by co-developing the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy with COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council. There are also a series of other national strategies which interrelate with integration activities, from No One Left Behind, which is directly relevant to supporting the employability of refugees, to the joint Scottish Government and COSLA Ending Destitution Together strategy, which includes a focus on destitute people seeking asylum.

The interactions between devolved and reserved policy create additional complexities for the delivery of humanitarian protection programmes and refugee integration at the local level. In particular, while the overall integration strategy for Scotland is set by the joint Scottish Government, Scottish Refugee Council and COSLA New Scots Strategy, most of the funding for integration work comes through the UK Government resettlement schemes and the operational delivery of these schemes requires close coordination with the Home Office. The recent Super Sponsor Scheme has added further subtleties, because it is the responsibility of the Scottish Government, while the parallel Homes for Ukraine scheme involving individual sponsors is the responsibility of DLUHC.

In meetings with COSLA staff members conducted for this project, COSLA explained how they had often ended up negotiating between the Scottish and UK Governments on the Afghan and Ukraine schemes, due to the UK Government's lack of understanding of the devolved context. For instance, the different legislative approaches in Scotland on homelessness and housing have important implications for where people are at risk of destitution – an area where the UK Government had little knowledge.

Given this complex picture, the research project aimed to explore in more detail how different UK and Scottish Government policies affected the work of local authorities in supporting refugee integration.

Survey results

The survey began this area of investigation by asking all respondents to rate the effectiveness of the design and implementation of previous and current humanitarian protection schemes for the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum, including the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS), the Afghan resettlement and relocation schemes (specifically ARAP and ACRS), the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme, asylum dispersal, and the National Transfer Scheme.

Table 6.1 and Figure 6.1 below present the results. Around half of respondents answered that the UKRS and VPRS were fairly or very effective. Most said that they did not have enough knowledge of the VCRS. For the Afghan and Ukraine schemes, by contrast, only a third of respondents thought that they were fairly or very effective (with around 30% saying 'don't know', similar to the responses for the UKRS and VPRS). There was least support for asylum dispersal, where only 14% thought that the scheme was fairly or very effective and a total of 34% thought the scheme had limited effectiveness or was not effective at all (with around half answering 'don't know').

The proportion of 'don't know's' was high across the board, particularly in the case of asylum dispersal, the NTS and the VCRS. This does not necessarily mean that there was not expertise within the local authority on these schemes; instead, it is likely that certain schemes were allocated to specific members of staff, and so not all respondents felt confident answering questions about every individual scheme. For instance, as discussed earlier in the report, UASC under the NTS tend to be the responsibility of staff in children's services, rather than resettlement teams. In the case of asylum dispersal, the high proportion of 'don't know's' is most likely down to Glasgow being, until recently, the only asylum dispersal area in Scotland[27] . Finally, the large share of respondents answering 'don't know' in the case of the VCRS is possibly because it is often subsumed under the VPRS, though it may also be because many of those resettled under the VCRS were located in Glasgow, as discussed in Chapter 3.

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[27] The move to full dispersal was in its early stages at the time of the fieldwork.

Table 6.1: Views of respondents on effectiveness of design and implementation of different humanitarian protection schemes in supporting integration of refugees and people seeking asylum

	UKRS	VPRS	VCRS	Afghan schemes	Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme	Asylum dispersal	NTS
Not effective at all	4%	4%	2%	12%	14%	14%	2%
Limited effectiveness	12%	8%	6%	24%	25%	20%	14%
Fairly effective	31%	24%	20%	25%	24%	10%	20%
Very effective	20%	29%	8%	8%	10%	4%	10%
Don't know	33%	35%	64%	31%	27%	53%	55%

Source: IPPR analysis of refugee integration survey

Figure 6.1: Views of respondents on effectiveness of design and implementation of different humanitarian protection schemes in supporting integration of refugees and asylum people seeking asylum
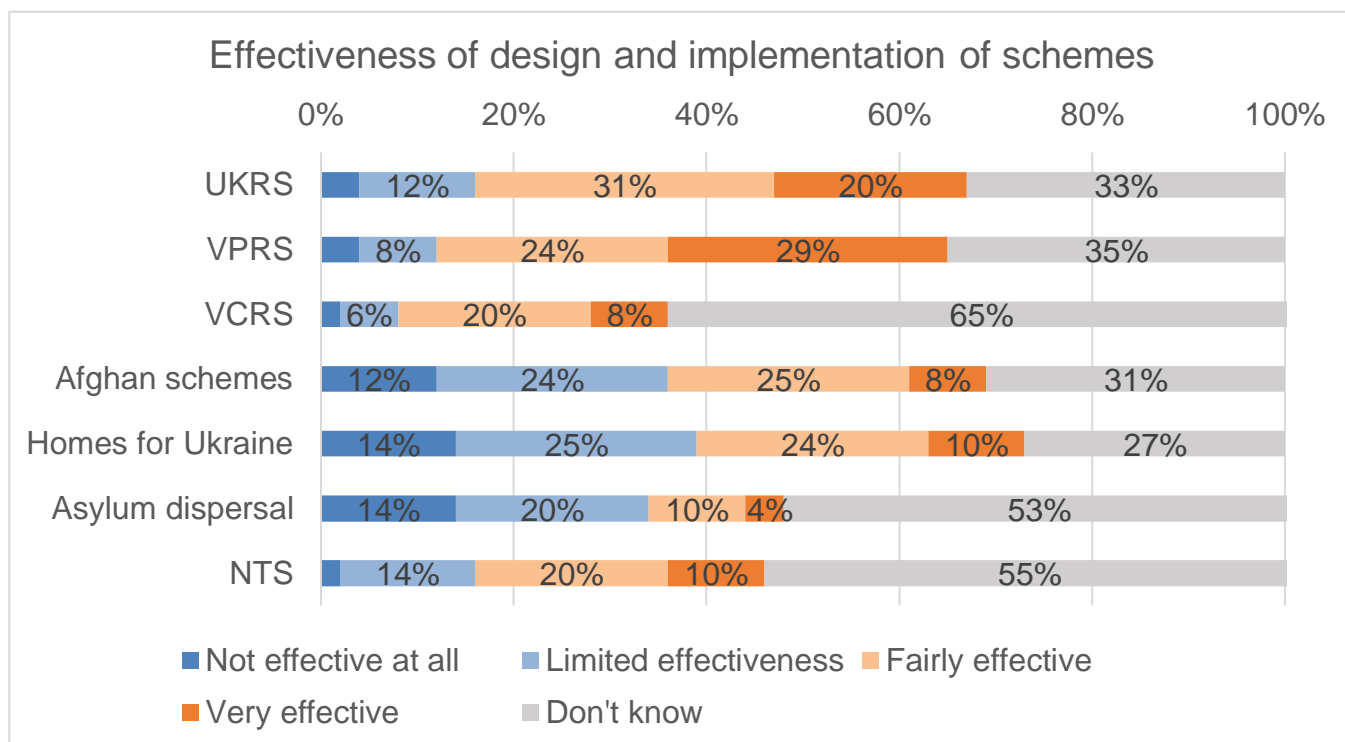
Source: IPPR analysis of refugee integration survey

Respondents were also asked for the reasons behind their ratings of the different schemes. In the responses, there was praise for the funding, coordination and advance planning of the Syrian schemes. One respondent explained how the advanced notice and ability to plan for arrivals under the VPRS and UKRS meant that it was possible to carefully plan education provision. Another explained how, with these schemes, the local authority's role has been 'clear, defined and well-managed' and that resettlement decisions were based on the available resources and ability for services in the local area to respond.

This was contrasted, however, with the challenges faced with the Afghan and Ukraine schemes. As discussed earlier in the report, a major challenge with the Afghan scheme has been difficulties around matching households with accommodation while waiting in bridging hotels. One respondent explained that the scheme was operating too slowly and that many properties which local authorities made available for households had been left unoccupied, which deterred local authorities from supporting the scheme.

As noted in the research meeting with COSLA, one of the key issues here appeared to be the differences in the approach to matching between the VPRS (and UKRS) and the Afghan schemes. Under the VPRS, COSLA liaised between the Home Office and local authorities to find appropriate property matches for refugee households. Resettled refugees would then move directly into these properties after arrival, with no refusal mechanism in place. This eliminated uncertainty for local authorities and allowed for longer-term strategic planning. On the other hand, the model for the Afghan schemes was based on local authorities first making accommodation pledges before the Home Office matched them with households, who were already staying in the UK in bridging accommodation. This led to Afghans refusing accommodation offers – for instance, because they were in more rural areas or were far from their existing bridging accommodation, where they had become settled – which meant that local authority properties remained empty. At the time of fieldwork, COSLA was trying to move back to an approach closer to the VPRS model, whereby households would be referred to COSLA, which would then coordinate between local authorities to identify appropriate accommodation matches or refer households to local authorities to source a suitable property.

On the other hand, the main criticism of the Ukrainian schemes focused on the scale of new arrivals and the lack of consultation with local authorities, in contrast with the planned and well-managed approach of the VPRS and UKRS. One response highlighted how the sudden high number of arrivals forced staff to refocus their priorities to the detriment of other schemes and led to many working well beyond their contracted hours. Some responses noted particular issues with the hosting model – including the risk of breakdowns in host-refugee relations, which could be time-consuming to manage. Others suggested that the Super Sponsor Scheme organised by the Scottish Government was particularly problematic – with one response noting the high cost, use of temporary accommodation, and inefficient matching process.

Concerns were also raised about the national transfer scheme for UASC: while numbers on this scheme were relatively low at the time of fieldwork, some respondents emphasised that they did not have enough lead-in time to plan for arrivals or that they

were unaware when young people would arrive. Challenges with the NTS were elaborated further in one of the additional interviews with local authority staff: a council UASC lead spoke of a range of challenges they were currently dealing with, including a lack of funding and staffing for their team, limited housing options, and Home Office inflexibility when transferring UASC to their local authority. On funding, they explained that the daily rate of £143 barely covered the costs of interpreters, ESOL and other provision. In spite of these challenges, the council officer was taking exceptional steps to support UASC – for instance, by working with housing colleagues to identify a flat, moving two young people into semi-independent living, and teaching them cooking lessons. At the time of fieldwork, they were looking to develop an independent UASC team to manage the current pressures and develop a more strategic approach to their work.

One of the challenges for local authorities delivering refugee integration work in Scotland has been the recent shifts in UK Government policy development on refugees and people seeking asylum, as discussed in Chapter 1 – from the proliferation of recent humanitarian protection schemes for Afghans and Ukrainians to the development of new legislation to restrict the right of asylum in response to the rise in people crossing the English Channel by small boats. Increasingly, this has placed the UK Government at odds with the Scottish Government's New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy, which is grounded in a human rights-based approach to refugees and people seeking asylum. To explore these dynamics further, the survey asked respondents to discuss the impacts of current UK government policies on refugee integration. One of the most common issues raised in the survey was the multiplicity of different routes and processes for refugees and people seeking asylum. Respondents highlighted a lack of joined-up thinking and siloed working. This was said to have a significant impact on resources – including housing, staffing, social work, ESOL, and translation services – at the local level. There was also concern about unfairness between the different schemes, given the differing levels of provision and funding. As one response noted:

> "Moving away from the wider rights / entitlements provided via humanitarian protection causes more complex pathways to be navigated for families and increased worry for those affected. This in itself does not aid the personal integration journey."

The additional interviews with council officers reiterated the difficulties over the fragmented and ever-changing nature of the current system of refugee resettlement, highlighting particular frustrations with the UK Government's handling of the Afghan and Ukraine schemes. One interviewee, however, also reflected on how the operational relationship between their local authority and the Home Office had changed over time: they recognised that while the relationship was currently strained, they were now on better terms since the Home Office had created its own Scotland office. The interviewee highlighted in particular effective partnership meetings on asylum involving the Home Office, COSLA, contractors, health colleagues and others, which had helped to build up the relationship between local and UK Government.

The survey also asked questions about the impact of the Scottish Government's strategies and policies on the local integration of refugees and people seeking asylum.

This included questions about the impacts of a number of key areas of Scottish Government policy-making, including the Ending Destitution Together strategy, the No One Left Behind strategy, the Young Person's Guarantee, the ESOL strategy, and the government's health and care reform agenda.
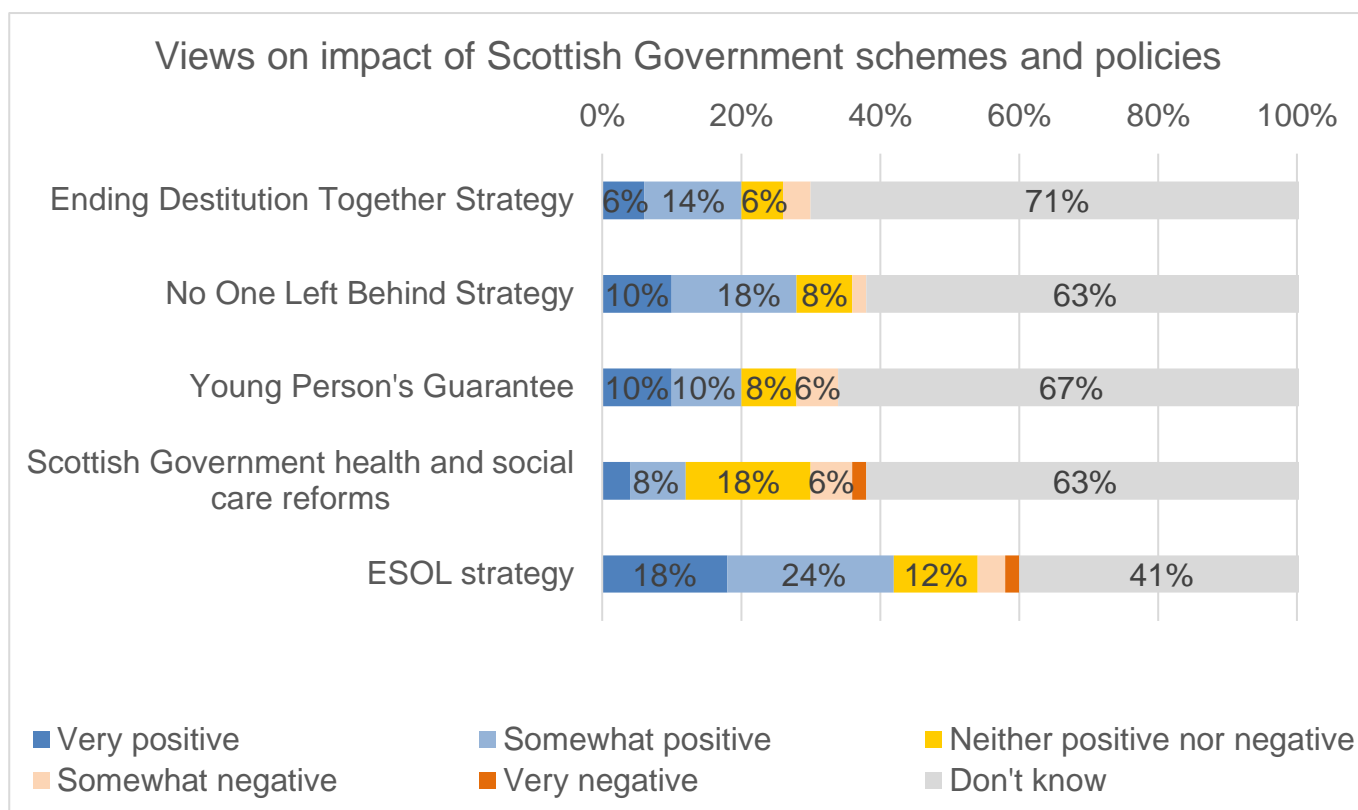
As detailed in Table 6.2 and Figure 6.2 below, with the exception of ESOL, a majority of respondents said that they did not know the impact of each policy initiative on refugee integration. Where they did have a view on the impact, most respondents either said that the policy initiative had a somewhat/very positive impact, or the impact was neither positive nor negative. In the case of the Scottish Government's ESOL strategy, 41% of respondents said they did not know the impact, while 42% said that the impact was somewhat/very positive.

Table 6.2: Views of respondents on impact of Scottish Government schemes and policies on integration of refugees and people seeking asylum

	Ending Destitution Together Strategy	No One Left Behind Strategy	Young Person's Guarantee	Scottish Government health and social care reforms	ESOL strategy
Very positive	6%	10%	10%	4%	18%
Somewhat positive	14%	18%	10%	8%	24%
Neither positive nor negative	6%	8%	8%	18%	12%
Somewhat negative	4%	2%	6%	6%	4%
Very negative	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%
Don't know	71%	63%	67%	63%	41%

Source: IPPR analysis of refugee integration survey

Figure 6.2: Views of respondents on impact of Scottish Government schemes and policies on integration of refugees and people seeking asylum

Views on impact of Scottish Government schemes and policies

Strategy	Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neither positive nor negative	Somewhat negative	Very negative	Don't know
Ending Destitution Together Strategy	6%	14%	6%			71%
No One Left Behind Strategy	10%	18%	8%			63%
Young Person's Guarantee	10%	10%	8%	6%		67%
Scottish Government health and social care reforms	8%	18%	6%			63%
ESOL strategy	18%	24%	12%			41%

Source: IPPR analysis of refugee integration survey

When asked about why they gave these answers, respondents generally felt that they did not have enough knowledge or experience of the policies to be able to comment – for instance, because some were relatively new or because they did not consider the strategy to be their area of expertise (there may have been greater recognition among colleagues in other local authority departments).

The one exception was the ESOL strategy, as discussed in Chapter 1, which was the focus of a number of the answers: some respondents highlighted the need for additional support to meet ESOL needs, while others noted that the new ESOL strategy was now incorporated into the Scottish Government's wider Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland. One respondent highlighted that the focus on ESOL was "perhaps diluted" as a result. Another highlighted how the strategy was being reviewed as part of the Adult Learning Strategy, as noted earlier in the report.

The survey also investigated how local authority and partner organisations viewed the impact of the New Scots refugee integration strategy on the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum. Respondents largely welcomed the strategy: around three fifths (62%) of respondents said the impacts were somewhat or very positive. Looking at the remaining responses, 6% said the impact was neither positive nor negative, 6% said the impact was somewhat/very negative, and 26% said they did not know.

As with the questions about the UK Government, respondents were asked about the impacts of Scottish Government policies relating to the integration of refugees and

people seeking asylum. This shed some light on the perceptions of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy, which respondents felt was 'inclusive' and 'very helpful'. The additional interviews with councils gave further details: one interviewee who was involved in developing the strategy thought it covered nearly all of the different layers of the resettlement process and could be a useful toolkit for local authorities who were newer to working on refugee resettlement. This was supported by staff members from different councils, one of whom said that they could 'cut and paste' from it across into their local work. Another said that the strategy was a 'useful framework of principles to work within' and sent a positive signal in shaping overall policy and discourse, though it was hard to point to specific services and programmes within the local authority which directly emerged from it.

There were, however, some challenges to the Scottish Government's approach. For instance, one respondent in the survey argued that the Scottish Government's policies and strategies were 'well-meaning' and more supportive than the UK Government, but they risked losing substance without adequate resources to deliver them.

There were also a number of responses focused on perceived challenges with the Super Sponsor Scheme: concerns were raised over increased pressures on local authority resources and the challenges with finding property matches, as discussed earlier in the report. One respondent noted that "the Scottish Super Sponsorship scheme is all consuming and is mainly focused, through necessity, in finding accommodation leaving little time for real resettlement work such as integration." Similarly, one of the additional local authority interviewees argued that the Scottish Government had not listened sufficiently to their concerns about the availability of accommodation in Scotland when pursuing the scheme.

While not directly related to the Scottish Government, there was also a mention of COSLA in the responses to this section: one respondent highlighted the care and consideration taken by COSLA in the refugee matching process and the awareness they had of the impact of resettlement on both the individual and the wider community. This reflects the earlier description of COSLA's work on matching refugees under the VPRS in Chapter 1.

Case study findings

Across the three case studies, there were a range of conversations on the role of Scottish and UK government policy in refugee integration. Some people interviewed for the project did not have strong views on overarching policy and preferred to focus on the day-to-day work at the local level. This was generally because their role tended to be more focused on on-the-ground delivery rather than on overall strategy. For others, there was a sense of frustration with the policy and legislative context due to a lack of funding, the management of the new Ukraine and Afghan schemes, and challenges with the asylum system.

In a number of cases, the UK government came under strong criticism, with some interviewees stating that they did not feel comfortable with the current Home Office approach to asylum. One stakeholder described the current level of financial support for people seeking asylum as "absolutely scandalous".

At the same time, some also praised the management of the Home Office resettlement schemes and noted that at the operational level cooperation with Home Office officials went smoothly. One respondent noted that at times there were issues with the accuracy of medical information received via the Home Office, but generally it was considered that cooperation with civil servants through these schemes worked well, the reporting and recording requirements were appropriate, and queries were dealt with reasonably promptly. The policy context is, however, more challenging for the different Afghan and Ukraine schemes, particularly given the surge in arrivals, the difficulties over securing accommodation, and the bureaucracy and new responsibilities involved in the Ukraine schemes.

Moreover, fieldwork in the case study areas also found evidence of difficulties in the operation of the NTS: there was a perception from one interviewee, reflecting the findings earlier in this chapter, that the Home Office took an inflexible approach to UASC referrals. In this context, COSLA were recognised to be a significant source of support to help manage the referral process to meet the needs of local authorities, because they would be "as flexible as they can be within the parameters that are set within the Home Office".

Interviewees in the different case study areas said that the Scottish Government tended to adopt a more welcoming approach to refugees and people seeking asylum, as exemplified by its commitment to the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy. Interviewees were generally supportive of the strategy, which one described as an 'overarching, encompassing kind of framework' for refugee integration, though some noted that they were already doing this work independently of the strategy.

At the same time, research participants also highlighted challenges with Scottish Government policy. There was particular concern over the Ukraine Super Sponsor Scheme, which one interview described as being in 'panic mode' at the time of fieldwork. Researchers heard frustration that the Scottish Government had not taken advice from local authorities to have a 'robust framework' in place to deliver the scheme – that is, a comprehensive and well-defined structure or set of guidelines that would have ensured effective coordination and decision-making – which could have helped to avoid the pressures on temporary accommodation.

Looking ahead, one interviewee wanted the future iteration of New Scots to be a 'more unifying and aspirational document', which set out a clear framework with specific expectations for refugee resettlement services. This approach, the interviewee hoped, would enable all local authorities to 'work out where they need to get to in terms of growing integration and growing the resettlement work that they do'.

Key findings

The work of Scottish local authorities in supporting the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum sits within a complex network of devolved and reserved legislation. Immigration and asylum policy are reserved matters led on by the Home Office, but many areas of policy which impact on integration outcomes – including education, health and housing – are the responsibility of the Scottish Government. Moreover, the Scottish Government, the Scottish Refugee Council and COSLA have

developed the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy, and, more recently, the Scottish Government has led on the Super Sponsor Scheme for displaced Ukrainians.

According to the survey of local authorities and partner organisations, around half of respondents thought that the UKRS and the VPRS were fairly or very effective. There was support for the funding, coordination and advance planning involved in the Syrian schemes. In the interviews for the case studies, while there was criticism of Home Office policy more broadly, there was also praise for the management of the schemes, with some noting that at the operational level cooperation with Home Office officials went smoothly.

By contrast, only a third of respondents thought that the Afghan and Ukraine schemes were fairly or very effective. The Afghan schemes were criticised for being too slow and letting properties offered to households go unoccupied, putting local authorities off from participating. Researchers were told by COSLA that they were now trying to redesign the matching process to address these issues.

In the case of the Ukraine schemes, challenges focused on the scale of new arrivals and the lack of consultation with local authorities. Concerns were raised over increased pressures on local authority resources and the challenges with finding property matches under the Super Sponsor Scheme.

Research participants across the fieldwork also highlighted difficulties over the operation of the NTS for UASC. These focused on the short lead-in time for new arrivals, the lack of funding available, limited housing options, and Home Office inflexibility.

Survey respondents were generally welcoming of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy: around three fifths of respondents said the impacts were somewhat or very positive. Research participants thought it was a valuable framework and some council officers were directly applying it to their local integration work, though others felt that they were doing this work already independently of the strategy.

7. Looking ahead

This chapter focuses on the future of refugee integration in local authorities in Scotland. Drawing on the evidence from the survey, case studies and policy workshop, it explores the lessons learned from recent experiences by local authorities, emerging challenges for refugee integration, and priorities for future work.

Survey results

The final part of the survey asked local authority and partner organisations about current and emerging challenges facing local authorities in delivering humanitarian protection programmes and facilitating refugee integration. The survey listed a number of options for respondents, including the UKRS, the Afghan relocation and resettlement schemes, the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme, the National Transfer Scheme, asylum dispersal, the cost of living crisis, insufficient funding, staffing, and housing, as well as Covid-19. Respondents could score their answer between 0 ('not challenging at all') and 4 ('extremely challenging').

Figure 7.1: Extent to which respondents rated issues facing their local authority in terms of how challenging they are for delivering humanitarian protection programmes and facilitating refugee integration
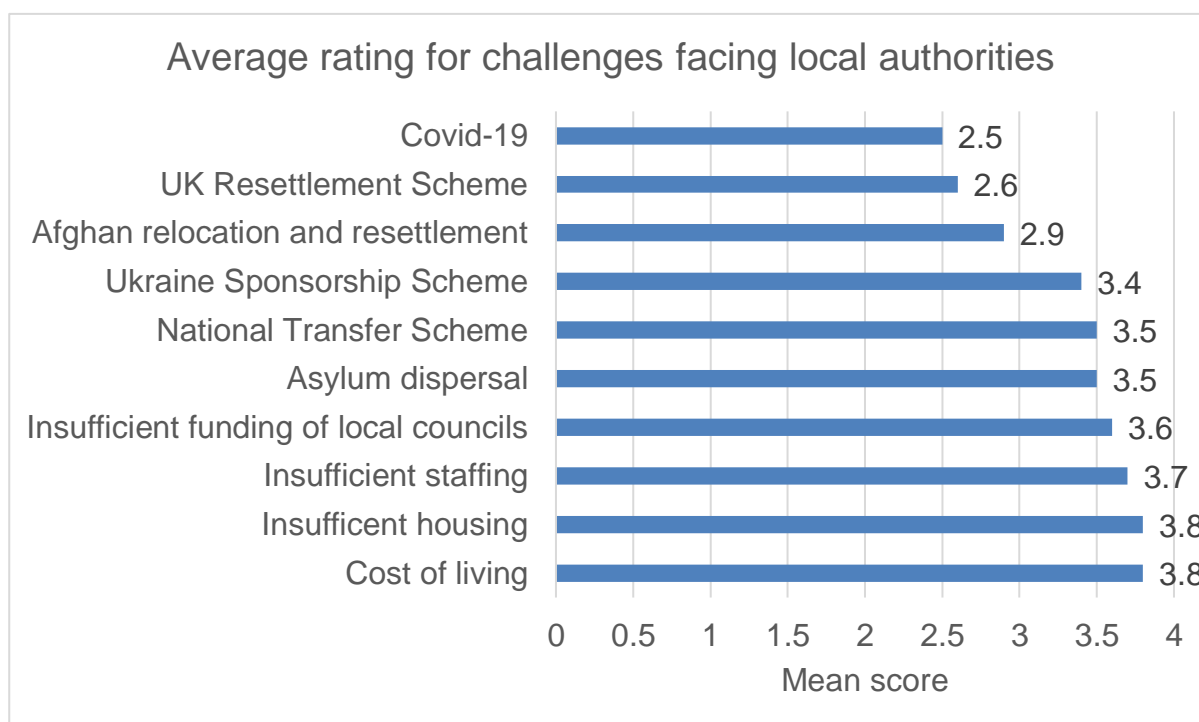
Source: IPPR analysis of refugee integration survey

To analyse the results from this question, a straightforward average was calculated for all responses, without applying weighting to ensure equal representation across local authorities. The highest overall average scores given – indicating the greatest challenges for local authorities – were the cost of living crisis (average 3.8), insufficient housing (3.8), and insufficient staffing (3.7). Other challenges that scored highly were

insufficient funding for local councils (3.6), asylum dispersal (3.5), the National Transfer Scheme (3.5), and the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (3.4). Issues that scored somewhat lower included the Afghan relocation and resettlement schemes (2.9), the UK Resettlement Scheme (2.6) and Covid-19 (2.5).

This scoring is broadly in line with the earlier findings in the report. As discussed in Chapter 4, the limited supply of affordable housing across Scotland had proved to be a key challenge for local authorities delivering integration work, especially in light of the larger numbers of Afghans and Ukrainians in temporary accommodation at the time of fieldwork. Insufficient staffing in local authorities was also a common theme, particularly given the additional pressures resulting from the new Ukraine schemes and the shift to the mandated NTS. Finally, while the cost of living crisis was not a major topic of discussion, this may be because it was an emerging issue during the period of fieldwork (summer 2022), but was recognised as a priority by respondents going forward.

Respondents were asked if there were any other challenges beyond those listed. There were few responses here, suggesting that the issues listed largely comprised the main concerns. One of the most common other issues raised was the need for additional ESOL capacity – for instance, one respondent explained that there was a need for basic ESOL tutor training and additional staffing to cover increased demand at the local level. This reflects the importance of language learning for supporting integration outcomes, as discussed in Chapter 4. It may also relate to the lack of dedicated additional funding for English language provision within the Ukraine schemes, unlike the Home Office's resettlement schemes; which means that the recent surge in demand from Ukrainian arrivals has not been met with the necessary expansion of funding for ESOL provision.

Reflecting on the successes and challenges faced by organisations within the local authority area in recent years, respondents were asked how they were drawing on these to inform improvements and changes to their work with refugees and people seeking asylum. While some responses emphasised that it was difficult to reflect on lessons learned given they were currently "fire-fighting" in response to current needs, others highlighted that the resettlement meetings hosted by COSLA were useful for knowledge-sharing and supporting each other (in the words of one respondent a "godsend").

Some others noted that the adaptation to online learning in response to Covid-19 restrictions was now an ongoing part of their integration work with refugees. One respondent explained how adapting to online learning meant that they could now offer ESOL learners a choice of online or face-to-face learning, and that they have adapted their ESOL provision to a hybrid (part virtual, part in-person) model in response to learner needs.

A number of responses highlighted the importance of partnership working, particularly through collaboration between councils and the third sector. One respondent explained that partnership approaches were effective because partners could draw on their strengths and focus on where they were best placed to provide support – for instance,

through third sector organisations leading on community and social integration activities.

These survey responses reflect broader discussions on partnership working which emerged across other parts of the fieldwork. Sometimes partnership approaches involved the direct commissioning of external partners to deliver integration work – e.g. Scottish Refugee Council in the case of Dundee. In other cases, partnership working simply referred to effective coordination between different agencies and organisations. For instance, in one of the additional research interviews with local authority officers, the interviewee reflected that their partnership working on Ukraine was a 'paradigm' for Ukrainian response work. This involved in the initial months of the response daily meetings with 20-30 different partners including the council, health police, border force, DWP, different council services, and third sector organisations. Bringing the key stakeholders together was considered essential for managing the logistical challenges within the Ukraine schemes.

In the additional interviews with council officers conducted to complement the survey findings, participants also highlighted the importance of partnership working between local authorities (as noted in Chapter 3). COSLA was considered to be a key driver of communication and sharing of good practice between local authorities through their regular meetings with council officers. One local authority interviewee from children's services working on UASC detailed how they had a unique role in providing advice to various other local authorities who they had met through the monthly COSLA meetings. Another council officer from a local authority with a long history of resettling refugees explained how they had built links with all of the other Scottish local authorities and were willing to provide support and advice based on their own experiences and learning.

There was also discussion of a shift to more regional working between local authorities – for instance, collaboration between local authorities within Edinburgh City Region (comprising East Lothian, Edinburgh, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian), as well as the neighbouring local authorities Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Highlands and Moray. This regional approach had proved useful for collaborating on shared regional issues (e.g. on finding properties for people in hotel accommodation) and on coordinating provision (e.g. pooling funds for a pan-Grampian approach on healthcare).

The next stage of the survey asked respondents about their priorities for supporting refugees and people seeking asylum within local authorities over the next three years. Survey respondents raised a variety of issues. Common priorities related to housing and resources: responses emphasised the current housing crisis and argued that local authorities needed a greater range of housing options, as well as advice and assistance. Despite the innovative work done by local authorities to address the housing needs of refugees and people seeking asylum, as discussed in depth in Chapter 4, this was still seen as a major challenge going forward, with one respondent describing it as 'undoubtedly the single greatest barrier to future resettlement effort[s]'. Furthermore, a number of responses wrote of the need for additional funding to expand resettlement teams and deliver services (e.g. for ESOL and homelessness

support). Some highlighted the need to increase staffing to meet local needs – for instance, by hiring additional EAL staff in schools to support surges in new arrivals.

Finally, the survey asked what respondents would like to see addressed in the next iteration of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy. The most common issue raised related to resourcing to meet the needs of refugees – particularly in the case of ESOL provision in both college and community classes – and ensure organisations could deliver on the strategy. Chapter 1 explained that the strategy does not include specific provisions for funding, though the Scottish Government does provide funding for refugee integration within its equality budget. The responses here reflect the importance of ensuring any strategy is complemented with new funding to deliver it effectively. The recent AMIF funding for the New Scots Refugee Integration Delivery Project – which support the development of the next New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy and local projects on refugee integration – is therefore a valuable resource for local authorities and the third sector in an overall challenging fiscal context.

Case study findings

For many stakeholders in **Aberdeenshire**, their concerns when looking ahead broadly coalesced around the lack of suitable housing stock for the growing refugee and asylum-seeking community, the cost of living crisis, and a need for greater legal advice provision locally. The absence of legal advice was a source of frustration for some interviewees, who explained that many people had to travel to Glasgow to get the advice they needed.[28]

In the focus group with council workers, concerns were raised too about the risk of waning public support in the face of multiple, protracted global crises, and the implications this could have for tensions over people looking for housing. Again, this reiterated the need for more affordable housing stock: participants explained that the private rental market was unaffordable due to the shortfall between benefit levels and rents and called for more social housing stock, for instance through buying back ex-council houses.

There were also calls for ESOL provision to be more flexible to the needs of diverse learners – for instance, by supporting people with mental health needs or caring responsibilities and allowing for virtual or hybrid sessions:

> "There needs to be a trauma-informed way of looking at everything that affects people who've been displaced. I think the way that ESOL has been offered up till now has been very inflexible and is 'if you don't come then you'll lose your place', and it's at certain times of the day that sometimes women or people that are caring for other family members can't access. It's not online, it's not hybrid, all these things which could quite easily be resolved in my opinion, but there doesn't seem to be that flexibility in the agencies that are offering these things."

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[28] One interviewee did note, however, that the Covid-19 pandemic had made the process a bit easier as support could be provided virtually from Glasgow.

Looking ahead in **Dundee**, a range of issues were raised by the research participants. There was continued concern about pressures on housing. One refugee interviewed for the project expressed concerns over the lack of housing options compared with where they had previously lived in the UK and the financial impacts of paying for the costs of the accommodation. Another explained how they had been waiting for two years for a new home on a lower floor to meet their health needs, though they also noted that their landlords were very helpful and offered an excellent service.

Some interviewees suggested that more work was needed to ensure that people with specific skills – particularly tradespeople – could work in their former professions. According to one interviewee, this could involve a Scotland-wide skills recognition process for people at all skill levels, building on the work of Skills Recognition Scotland discussed above.

Some research participants suggested other ideas for developing refugee integration in Dundee. One person suggested that ESOL provision could be widened by harnessing the skills of local people in the city. This could be done through classes to train locals to become English language volunteers and support refugees in their neighbourhood to integrate. Another research participant highlighted a recent example of a teacher who had voluntarily set up a 'coffee and chat' in a hall, which had proved popular with families across the whole city, and suggested that more regular pop-up shops and events – with different activities and interpreters available – could play a vital role in supporting communities to feel more welcome.

In **Na h-Eileanan Siar**, the issues raised were somewhat different to the other case studies, given fewer refugees have been resettled there in recent years and so there was less pressure on local services. Interviewees were keen to welcome new refugees and at the time of fieldwork there were plans by volunteers to sponsor a refugee family under the UK government's Community Sponsorship Scheme. There was some frustration that a property made available for Afghan refugees had not yet been accommodated, though researchers have been informed that this had now been occupied by a family under the ACRS.

Overall, stakeholders were pleased with the success of the past schemes and hoped to build on these efforts in future, after a hiatus during the Covid-19 period, by welcoming new families – for instance, through the Afghan schemes. There was also a desire to develop more sustainable ESOL provision, in order to move on from the post-pandemic funding and staffing challenges discussed in Chapter 4. Researchers heard that the council was now hoping to work towards a more consistent ESOL staffing model, rather than 'scrabbling constantly' to secure sufficient provision.

Policy workshop findings

Towards the final stages of the research project, researchers held a virtual policy workshop with local authority resettlement officers to discuss the provisional research findings and policy implications. Part of the focus of the workshop focused on looking ahead to future policy on local refugee integration and the next iteration of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy.

There were a number of useful discussion points in the policy workshop which build on and complement the earlier findings in this chapter. One important theme was the need for the UK and Scottish Governments to take their lead on refugee integration from local authorities which are delivering this work on the ground. Relatedly, one council officer argued that the UK and Scottish Governments adopt too siloed an approach to different aspects of refugee and asylum policy and argued that the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy – which had been developed in collaboration with local government – should have been central in informing the recent Ukraine response.

There was support in the workshop for ensuring every local authority had its own resettlement team and that staff were recruited into permanent posts. It was claimed that delivering resettlement work as a 'core' local authority service would require proper resourcing, rather than a funding model which involved poaching pots of funding from housing, environment, and other areas. Another workshop participant argued, however, that there were risks to mainstreaming resettlement funding, because this would make resettlement teams more vulnerable to cuts, and suggested that the current model of external funding allowed for greater creativity and responsiveness. This suggests a careful balance is needed between ensuring consistent and well-resourced provision across all local authorities, while also allowing for sufficient flexibility.

Some workshop participants suggested that, while local authorities should have their own dedicated resettlement teams, New Scots work should not sit on its own, but should also be integrated across other policy areas, such as housing and anti-poverty work. This was considered important to ensure parity of approach for all residents in Scotland and to mainstream refugee integration work into other council services.

There was a suggestion in one of the workshop sessions that a 'community-based partnership strategy' – i.e. a strategy involving close partnerships with external organisations based in local communities – was vital for successful refugee integration. This needed to move away from an ad hoc approach and involve more systematic engagement with the third sector, where partnerships were considered essential to local delivery. Another workshop participant highlighted the importance of shared frameworks and quality assurance processes across all of Scotland's local authorities for the delivery of integration work.

Concerns were also raised in the discussion about a lack of parity between different schemes – with, for instance, different arrangements for Ukrainians compared with the resettlement offers under previous schemes. As set out in Chapter 1, there have been a plethora of schemes in recent years, which risks both creating a fragmented system and contributing to inequalities or frictions between different groups.

Finally, there were some reflections in the workshop on the focus of the next iteration of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy. A number of participants expressed the importance of attaching new funding to the next strategy in order to 'give it teeth'. This reflects comments from survey respondents about the need for the new strategy to come with new resources so that outcomes can be delivered in practice. If new funding were not possible in practice, then in one of the discussion groups the point was raised that local authorities should be directly involved in devising the strategy,

given they knew what resources they have available and therefore what activities are feasible within their budget constraints.

There was also a call for the next New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy to be more ambitious in its approach, by developing a framework for refugee integration with targets related to each area of policy to instil aspiration and drive. It was argued that a clear set of frameworks and outcomes across Scotland was needed to allow for comparisons across local authorities and programmes.

A further point was made by one council officer about the importance of 'horizon-scanning' at a national level. As another participant noted, the current context for refugee integration has changed dramatically in recent years due to the humanitarian crises in Afghanistan and Ukraine. It was suggested that horizon-scanning needed to consider the potential for future crises and factor this into strategic planning on refugee integration.

Key findings

Reflecting on some of the different issues facing their local authorities, survey respondents indicated that the cost of living crisis, insufficient housing, and insufficient staffing were the greatest challenges for delivering humanitarian protection programmes and facilitating refugee integration. Other issues considered particularly challenging were insufficient funding for local councils, asylum dispersal, the National Transfer Scheme, and the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme.

Thinking about lessons learned to inform future improvements and changes, a number of responses highlighted the importance of partnership working. Other parts of the fieldwork reflected this focus on partnerships, covering a range of approaches – from the direct commissioning of external partners for service delivery to multi-agency working in response to Ukraine. Partnership working between local authorities was also a common theme discussed by research participants, including regional partnerships between neighbouring areas. COSLA was considered to be a key driver of communication and sharing of good practice between local authorities through their regular meetings with council officers.

Future priorities discussed by survey respondents commonly related to housing and resources. This was reflected in conversations in the case studies: in Aberdeenshire, for instance, some research participants called for more social housing stock, e.g. through buying back ex-council houses. ESOL provision was also a common priority in the different case study areas: in Na h-Eileanan Siar, the council was hoping to work towards a more consistent ESOL staffing model after losing posts during the pandemic.

In the policy workshop conducted with local authority resettlement officers for this research project, a number of further discussion points were raised with implications for future policy. There was support in the workshop for ensuring every local authority had its own resettlement team and that staff were recruited into permanent posts. At the same time, it was argued that New Scots work should not simply sit on its own within local authorities, but should also be integrated across other policy areas, such

as housing and anti-poverty work. This was considered important for mainstreaming refugee integration work into other council services.

There was also a suggestion that a 'community-based partnership strategy' – i.e. a strategy involving close partnerships with external organisations based in local communities – was vital for successful refugee integration.

Finally, the discussion on the next iteration of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy in the workshop included calls for the strategy to be more ambitious and outcome-oriented in approach and to come with new funding attached to 'give it teeth' and make it deliverable.

8. Conclusions and policy implications

Over the past eight years, there has been a transformation in the work of local authorities supporting refugee integration. Local authorities – many of which previously had little experience of supporting refugees and people seeking asylum – have adapted rapidly to deliver a number of ambitious resettlement programmes, from the Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme to the recent Homes for Ukraine and Super Sponsor Scheme.

Through the research for this project, local authorities and partners spoke of how they had scaled up their efforts over this period to deliver wide-ranging support for refugees and people seeking asylum, including ESOL and employability training, temporary and long-term accommodation, welfare and housing advice, registration with GPs and dentists, access to travel and leisure activities, and help connecting with other members of the community. Delivering this support has involved considerable partnership working with local services, charities and community groups. Close working between officers from different local authorities – often facilitated and coordinated by COSLA – has been critical for sharing learning and pursuing joint initiatives, including regional partnerships between neighbouring councils. While the work has at times been challenging, there has been political buy-in and commitment across all 32 of Scotland's local authorities, which have adopted a flexible working approach as new schemes have emerged and the external context has changed.

The last few years have been a tumultuous period for local authorities, which needed to adapt their provision abruptly during the Covid-19 lockdowns beginning in early 2020, where resettlement numbers ground to a halt at the same time as it became more challenging to deliver many of the services and support that refugees and people seeking asylum require. Since mid-2021, this situation has sharply reversed, as the pandemic has receded and major new routes for Afghans and Ukrainians have opened up, placing unprecedented pressures on local authority resettlement teams. This has raised ongoing challenges of meeting the surge in demand for housing and of ensuring adequate resourcing and staffing for integration activities – particularly within a wider context of housing scarcity, Covid-19 recovery, and the cost of living crisis. As local authorities have been responding as best they can to current pressures, many have inevitably had less time to invest in longer-term strategic thinking to support refugee integration.

A number of important lessons for future policy have emerged from the findings. First, local authorities have highlighted the benefits of a community-based partnership strategy for supporting refugee integration. While this may look different depending on the local context, the research suggests that integration activities were most effective when they involved regular and sustained collaboration with local services and charities and community groups. There is a case for a more systematic and comprehensive approach to partnership working, especially with the third sector. Existing efforts to meaningfully involve local community groups in the development of

the next iteration of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy are an example of this and such partnerships should be further utilised and built upon.[29]

Second, a number of research participants spoke of the need for a renewed focus on ESOL and employability support in the coming years, at both the local and national level. Many refugees in Scotland struggle to find work matching their prior qualifications, and English language learning continues to be a major barrier to securing well-paid and sustainable employment. The evidence from the fieldwork suggests that the most effective ESOL provision was creative and responsive to the needs of learners, combining formal and community-based provision. Often examples of best practice involved blending ESOL provision with other activities – whether that was community orientation or employability support. Likewise, the stand-out successes for employability tended to involve bespoke support on the part of councils in response to the needs and ambitions of refugees. At the same time, the research made clear the importance of balancing a personalised approach to integration with one which sets out clear parameters for what provision is available in order to encourage refugees' self-development and agency over time.

Third, participants often called for more joined-up thinking within their local authorities. To make integration work effectively across Scotland, every local authority should, at a minimum, have its own permanent team for refugee resettlement – varying in size depending on the scale of new arrivals and with relevant expertise on areas such as education, community development, social work, and/or housing – as well as staff with responsibilities for UASC and people seeking asylum. This could be supported via a dedicated funding stream from the Scottish Government as part of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy, alongside the existing UK Government funding for its resettlement schemes.

But also raised in the fieldwork was the need to avoid siloed working: while dedicated teams for refugee resettlement and integration were considered necessary, the most effective provision also involves buy-in from staff across the local authority, including from housing, health, children's services, ESOL, employability, and other relevant officers. This approach allows refugee integration work to become mainstreamed across policy areas and helps to ensure collaboration on cross-cutting issues.

The feedback from research participants has important implications for the next iteration of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy. Those who participated in the study had a broadly positive view of former strategies, recognising their value in setting a framework for local authorities to deliver their work.

Nevertheless, they highlighted the following areas for improvement. First, the next New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy could be more ambitious and outcome-oriented in different policy areas, setting out clear targets to drive forward improvements in provision. Second, there is a critical need for the strategy process to involve comprehensive consultation with local government, who are often at the heart of refugee integration work taking place on the ground. Third, there were concerns about

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[29] For the next iteration of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy, the Scottish Government has offered small grants to organisations for engagement events for New Scots (Scottish Government 2023h).

disparities and inequalities for refugees and people seeking asylum across different routes: there could be a role for the next New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy in emphasising equity for all those fleeing persecution and conflict in Scotland, regardless of their origin, and in ensuring a consistent approach is taken to funding, rights and entitlements, and service provision for all arrivals. Fourth, a number of participants urged that the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy should be matched appropriately with adequate resources, in order to allow local authorities and their partner organisations to deliver on the strategy.

Such an approach would help to ensure that when in future Scotland welcomes new refugees in response to humanitarian crises such as those in Afghanistan and Ukraine, there is effective consultation and joined-up working between COSLA, Scottish Government and UK Government to support refugee integration. Importantly, this consultation should take into account all the different humanitarian protection schemes being delivered on the ground and the wider resourcing and housing pressures for local authorities. By developing this approach, the next iteration of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy would help to shift policy and practice away from a crisis response and towards a more consistent model of support, based on parity across all schemes.

This report comes at a particularly demanding time for delivering humanitarian protection programmes and refugee integration support in Scotland, with local authorities working hard on the new Ukraine and Afghan routes while grappling with the aftershocks of Covid-19 and the current cost of living crisis. But despite the pressures on councils, the research has found that there is a range of exceptional work taking place to welcome refugees and people seeking asylum across Scotland. Local authorities have adapted swiftly to a range of policy changes, built new services from the ground up, and collaborated closely with local services, charities, and each other to support the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum. With the policy landscape expected to change further in the coming months and years, local authorities have a strong foundation upon which to build for the future.

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Glossary

Asylum dispersal
The policy by which people seeking asylum are distributed across the UK in Home Office accommodation, with the aim of addressing pressures on housing in London and the South East of England.

Bridging accommodation
Temporary accommodation procured by the Home Office for people on Afghan schemes: the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)

CLD (Community Learning and Development)
A policy approach which according to the Scottish Government aims at 'empowering people, individually and collectively, to make positive changes in their lives and in their communities, through learning'.[30]

COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)
The representative body for local authorities in Scotland.

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)
English language learning provision aimed at people whose first language is not English.

Humanitarian protection programmes
For the purposes of this report, these refer to the UK resettlement and relocation schemes, placements for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, as well as service provision as part of asylum dispersal and those in emergency asylum accommodation.

New Scot
A person who has migrated to and made their home in Scotland.

Person seeking asylum
A person who has arrived in a country and formally applied for refugee status and is awaiting the outcome of their application.

Refugee
According to the Refugee Convention, someone who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; is outside the country of their nationality or former habitual residence; and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country or return there.

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[30] Scottish Government guidance for Community Planning Partnerships on Community Learning And Development

Third sector
The part of society comprising non-governmental and non-profit making organisations and associations, including charities, voluntary and community groups.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)
According to the Immigration Rules, someone who (a) claimed asylum when under the age of 18, (b) is applying asylum in their own right, and (c) is separated from both parents and is not cared for by an adult who in law or by custom has responsibility to do so.[31]

Welcome accommodation
Temporary accommodation for displaced Ukrainians sponsored by the Scottish Government.

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[31] Immigration Rules part 11: asylum

Appendix A

Survey: Refugee and Asylum Seeker Integration in Scottish Local Authorities

Delivering humanitarian protection programmes and facilitating refugee integration in Scottish Local Authorities

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey on how local authorities deliver humanitarian protection programmes and support the integration of refugees and asylum seekers.

We are the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) Scotland, a registered charity and progressive think tank dedicated to supporting and improving public policy. We are working in collaboration with the Scottish Government and COSLA to investigate the role of local authorities in delivering humanitarian protection programmes and facilitating the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland. Through fieldwork with stakeholders across Scotland we hope to:

Gain an understanding of the current picture on the ground of how local authorities deliver humanitarian protection programmes and facilitate refugee integration

Uncover where local authorities have found successes and faced challenges

Examine how different experiences compare across Scotland's 32 local authorities

Determine the impact of policy and legislation (both devolved and reserved) on local authorities' refugee integration strategies

Explore how local authorities might change and adapt their approach in the future

Data generated in this research will be used for the purpose of evaluating refugee integration work in Scotland and to inform the next New Scots strategy.

Data will be anonymised, analysed, and held securely by IPPR researchers. At the end of the research project, a final report will be made publicly available by Scottish Government and COSLA. Please follow the link to access a legal statement relating to the research here.

Below we ask for your name and email in case it would be helpful to follow up with further questions on your survey responses. This is optional and you do not have to provide these details if you would prefer not to. If you choose to share your name and contact details with us, we will keep them on our records until the end of the project (December 2022), when we will securely destroy them.

Participation is voluntary and if you do decide to participate you can withdraw your consent without giving any reason for your withdrawal.

Please let us know by September 2022 if you would like to do this, and we will delete your data.

As part of the survey we will ask a range of questions across 5 topic areas: 'Understanding the current picture'; 'Identifying success and challenges'; 'Comparing experiences across Scotland'; 'Exploring the impact of policy and legislation'; and 'Looking ahead'.

Please note that that this survey refers to refugees and asylum seekers who have arrived in your local authority area via humanitarian protection programmes, including all UK resettlement and relocation schemes (e.g. the UK Resettlement Scheme, Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy, Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme, Mandate Scheme, Gateway Protection Programme, Community Sponsorship Scheme, and Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine), including the Scottish Government Super Sponsor Scheme), placements for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and asylum dispersal and emergency asylum accommodation.

While we ask you to complete the survey to the best of your ability, if you feel you cannot answer a question please select 'Don't know' on the multiple choice, or leave open-ended questions blank. The survey has been designed so that many different people can contribute (within and outside the council).

To fully complete the survey will take around 30 minutes. You do not have to complete the survey in one sitting.

The deadline for completing the survey is the end of August 2022.

Do you give your consent to complete the survey on this basis?

I consent

I do not consent

Please tell us the name of your organisation / institution. (You don't need to tell us this, but it is helpful for us if you do.)

What is your job title / role? (You don't need to tell us this, but it is helpful if you do.)

What best describes the type of organisation / institution that you work for?

Local government

Third sector organisation

Local community organisation

Private sector organisation

Other please specify

What is your local authority area? (You can select more than one if your work goes beyond one local authority or a 'Scotland-wide' option if you operate at a national-level)

Aberdeen	Aberdeenshire	Angus
Argyll & Bute	Clackmannanshire	Dumfries & Galloway
Dundee	East Ayrshire	East Dunbartonshire
East Lothian	East Renfrewshire	Edinburgh
Falkirk	Fife	Glasgow
Highland	Inverclyde	Midlothian
Moray	Na h-Eileanan Siar	North Ayrshire
North Lanarkshire	Orkney & Kinross	Perth
Renfrewshire	Scottish Borders	Shetland
South Ayrshire	South Lanarkshire	Stirling
West Dumbartonshire	West Lothian	Scotland-wide

Section 1: Understanding the current picture

In this section we aim to understand the current context in which your local authority delivers humanitarian protection programmes and refugee integration work.

1) Does your local authority have a dedicated refugee resettlement team?

Yes

No

Don't know

2) Does your local authority have a defined refugee integration strategy?

Yes

No

Don't know

3) Please provide a numerical answer to the following questions on refugees, asylum seekers, and unaccompanied asylum seeking children in your local authority.

Please enter only numbers in the 'Number of persons' column. If you do not know the answer to these questions, please skip.

How many refugees have been resettled within your local authority area under any relocation or resettlement schemes in the last 12 months (e.g. the UK Resettlement Scheme, Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy, Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme, Mandate Scheme, Gateway Protection Programme, Community Sponsorship Scheme, and Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine))?

How many asylum seekers (not including unaccompanied asylum seeking children) have been dispersed to your local authority in the last 12 months?

How many unaccompanied asylum seeking children have been transferred to your local authority in the last 12 months?

Looking back over the last 12 months, approximately what number of refugees and asylum seekers have presented as homeless to the local authority?

4) To the best of your knowledge, in terms of staffing, how many 'full-time equivalent staff are working directly for your local council on refugee and asylum seeker resettlement and integration? Enter a numeric value or if you do not know, leave the text box blank.

Full-time equivalent (FTE) = one full time staff member (35hrs and above) counts as 1.0 FTE. A part-time employee who works half of 'full-time hours' would be a 0.5 FTE, while someone who works a quarter of full-time hours would be a 0.25 FTE. For example, three full-time employees plus one employee who works half of full-time hours would equal 3.5 FTE)

5) Reflecting on the history of your local authority, how long has your local authority been supporting refugees and / or asylum seekers?

Up to five years

Six to ten years

Eleven to fifteen years

Sixteen to twenty years

More than twenty years

Don't know

Section 2: Identifying successes and challenges

In this section we explore where local authorities are facing particular success and challenges in the integration of refugees and asylum seekers.

Education and Employment

6) To what extent is your local authority providing support for the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in the area of education and employment?

Please indicate how much support your local authority is able to provide in the area of education and employment, where 0 is 'no support' and 4 is 'a great deal of support'.

Access to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) education

Help with recognition of any qualifications acquired prior to arrival in the UK

Access to training opportunities (help individuals attain a skill or trade)

Access to employment opportunities

7) How does your local authority deliver ESOL services? Does this include working with any external partners?

Leave the text box blank if you do not know.

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

8) How does your local authority deliver employability services? Does this include working with external partners?

Leave the text box blank if you do not know.

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

9) Can you provide examples of where your local authority has achieved success and developed expertise in the integration of refugees and asylum seekers with respect to education and employment?

Leave the text box blank if you cannot answer.

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

10) Please tell us about the current challenges and pressures regarding education and employment for refugees and asylum seekers in your local authority.

Leave the text box blank if you cannot answer.

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

11) What would you say are the priorities for improving the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in the areas of education and employment during the current Covid-19 recovery period, in your local authority area?

Leave the text box blank if you cannot answer.

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

Housing and Social Security

12) To what extent is your local authority providing support to help with the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in the area of housing and social security?

Please indicate how much support your local authority is able to provide in the area of housing and social security, where 0 is 'no support' and 4 is 'a great deal of support'.

Access to benefits and other financial support

Access to suitable and safe housing options

Help to set up a home within the local authority area

Help tackling homelessness

13) How does your local authority deliver housing services for refugees and asylum seekers? Does this include working with external partners?

Leave the text box blank if you do not know.

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

14) Approximately how many refugees are currently in bridging accommodation in your local authority at the time of responding to this survey?

0

1 to 30

31 to 60

61 to 90

91 to 120

121 to 150

151 to 180

More than 180

Don't know

15) Approximately how many asylum seekers are currently in emergency initial asylum accommodation in your local authority at the time of responding to this survey?

0

1 to 30

31 to 60

61 to 90

91 to 120

121 to 150

151 to 180

More than 180

Don't know

16) Can you provide examples of where your local authority has achieved success and developed expertise in the integration of refugees and asylum seekers with respect to housing and social security?

Leave the text box blank if you do not know.

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

17) Please tell us about the current challenges and pressures regarding housing and social security for refugees and asylums seekers in your local authority.

Leave the text box blank if you do not know.

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

18) What would you say are the priorities for improving the integration of refugees and asylum seekers with respect to housing and social security during the current Covid-19 recovery period within your local authority area?

Leave the text box blank if you do not know.

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

Health and General Wellbeing

19) To what extent is your local authority providing support to help with the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in the area of health and general wellbeing (including social connections, for example)?

Please indicate how much support your local authority is able to provide in the area of health and general wellbeing, where 0 is 'no support' and 4 is 'a great deal of support'.

Access to healthcare

Help with meeting general health and wellbeing needs (physical and mental)

Help with tackling social isolation and loneliness

Access to cultural, heritage, and sporting activities and opportunities

20) How does your local authority deliver services relating to health and general wellbeing for refugees and asylum seekers? Does this include working with external partners?

Leave the text box blank if you do not know.

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

21) Can you provide examples of where your local authority has achieved success and developed expertise in the integration of refugees and asylum seekers with respect to health and general wellbeing?

Leave the text box blank if you do not know.

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

22) Please tell us about the current challenges and pressures regarding health and general wellbeing for refugees and asylum seekers in your local authority.

Leave the text box blank if you do not know.

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

23) What would you say are the priorities for improving the integration of refugees and asylum seekers with respect to health and general wellbeing during the current Covid-19 recovery period, in your local authority area?

Leave the text box blank if you do not know.

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

Local Authority Coordination

24) Thinking across all of your work, how closely does your local authority coordinate with the following institutions and organisations to deliver humanitarian protection programmes and support refugee and asylum seeker integration?

Please indicate the extent to which your local authority coordinates with each.

[Options: No coordination, Limited coordination, Fairly coordinated, Highly coordinated, Don't know]

COSLA's Strategic Migration Partnership

Scottish Government

UK Government

Local third sector organisations

Other local public service providers (e.g. health boards, education providers, the police, etc)

Other local authorities

25) To what extent does your local authority incorporate the views and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers when deciding policy and strategic planning?

Please indicate the extent to which the lived experiences of refugees and asylum seekers are incorporated into decisions made within your local authority, where 0 is 'not incorporated at all' and 4 is 'highly incorporated'.

26) Thinking about your answer to question 25, can you describe how your local authority facilitates participation of refugees and asylum seekers in policy and strategic planning?

Leave the text box blank if you do not know.

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

Section 3: Comparing experiences across Scotland

In this section we are looking to understand how local authorities' experiences of integrating refugees and asylum seekers vary across Scotland.

27) How extensive is the community infrastructure (local community groups and civil society activists) dedicated to meeting the needs of refugees and asylum seekers within your local authority?

Please indicate how extensive the community infrastructure is in your local authority, where 0 is 'no community infrastructure' and 4 is 'there is a wide range of organisations providing comprehensive support'.

28) Can you provide examples of how the geography of your local authority has presented opportunities and/or challenges in how it approaches the integration of refugees and asylum seekers?

Leave the text box blank if you cannot answer.

For example, access to local services, employment opportunities, local transport, networks and linkages, etc.)

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

Section 4: Exploring the impact of policy and legislation

The following questions seek to explore the impact of both devolved and reserved policy on your local authority's experience of delivering humanitarian protection and integrating refugees and asylum seekers.

29) How effective has the design and implementation of the following UK Government schemes and policies been for the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in your local authority?

Please indicate the effectiveness of design and implementation (from 'Not effective at all' to 'Very effective' according to each individual scheme and policy).

[Options: Not effective at all, Limited effectiveness, Fairly effective, Very effective, Don't know]

UK Resettlement Scheme

Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme

Afghan resettlement and relocation schemes

Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine)

UK Government policy on asylum dispersal

National transfer scheme for unaccompanied asylum seeking children

30) Thinking about how you answered the previous question, please explain the reasons for your answers?

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

31) Please tell us more about how current UK Government policies relating to refugees and asylum seekers are having an impact on integration at the individual level, in communities, and in the wider local authority.

Leave the text box blank if you cannot answer

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

32) How would you rate the level of financial support provided by the UK and Scottish governments for the following groups of people?

Please indicate how much financial support the UK and Scottish governments provide, where 0 is 'no support' and 4 is 'a great deal of support' according to each group of people.

People on Afghan resettlement and relocation schemes

People on the UK Resettlement Scheme

People on the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

People on the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme

People on the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine)

Asylum seekers

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

33) How would you describe the impact of the following Scottish Government schemes and policies on the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in your local authority?

Please indicate how you would describe the impact (from 'Very negative impact' to 'Very positive impact' according to each individual scheme and policy).

Ending Destitution Together Strategy

No One Left Behind Strategy

Young Person's Guarantee

Scottish Government health and social care reforms

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) strategy

34) Thinking about how you answered the previous question, please explain the reasons for your answers?

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

35) Please tell us more about how current Scottish Government policies relating to refugees and asylum seekers are having an impact on integration at an individual level, in communities, and the wider local authority.

Leave the text box blank if you cannot answer

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

36) How would you describe the impact of the New Scots Strategy on the integration of refugees and asylum seekers within your local authority?

Very negative

Somewhat negative

Neither positive nor negative

Somewhat positive

Very positive

Don't know

Section 5: Looking ahead

This section focuses on the future of refugee integration in your local authority.

37) How would you rate the below issues (current or emerging) facing your local authority in terms of how challenging they are for delivering humanitarian protection programmes and facilitating refugee integration?

Please indicate which of the issues listed will prove to be most challenging for integrating refugees and asylum seekers in your local authority, where 0 is 'not challenging at all' and 4 is 'extremely challenging'.

Afghan resettlement and relocation schemes

Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine)

UK Resettlement Scheme

National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Asylum dispersal policy

Cost of living crisis

Insufficient funding of local councils

Insufficient staffing

Insufficient housing

Covid-19

38) If we missed any particularly pressing challenges facing your local authority, please write them here. Otherwise, leave blank.

(500 characters limit - around 100 words)

39) How are organisations in your local authority area (including local government, 3rd sector organisations, etc.) drawing on the successes and challenges faced in recent years to inform improvements and changes in how they work with refugees and asylum seekers?

Leave the text box blank if you cannot answer

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

40) Looking at the next three years, from your perspective, what should be the key priorities within your local authority area to help support refugees and asylum seekers?

Leave the text box blank if you cannot answer

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

41) Reflecting on the challenges that your organisation has faced since the publication of the last New Scots refugee integration strategy, what are the most important gaps or needs which you would like to see addressed in the next New Scots strategy?

Leave the text box blank if you cannot answer

(2000 characters limit - around 400 words)

If you are willing for us to contact you with any follow-up questions regarding this research, or to let you know when this research is published, please share your contact details here. This is optional.

What is your name?

What is your email address?

I agree that the research team may contact me with follow up questions.

Yes

No

END

Thank you for completing our survey

Appendix B

Research on the role of local authorities in delivering humanitarian protection and refugee integration in Scotland: Overview for interview and focus group participants

Who is doing this research?

This research project is being conducted by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) Scotland. IPPR Scotland is an independent charity which carries out research and policy analysis in Scotland. The research team are Marley Morris, Lucy Mort and Casey Smith.

What is this research about?

This research will investigate the role of Scottish local authorities in delivering humanitarian protection programmes and supporting the integration of refugees and asylum seekers. The findings will inform the next New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy.

Through fieldwork with stakeholders across Scotland we hope to:

- Gain an understanding of the current picture on the ground of how local authorities facilitate refugee integration
- Uncover where local authorities have found successes and faced challenges
- Examine how different experiences compare across Scotland's 32 local authorities
- Determine the impact of policy and legislation (both devolved and reserved) on local authorities' refugee integration strategies
- Explore how local authorities might change and adapt their approach in the future

How can I participate in this research?

You have been invited to take part in this research as someone who has experience supporting refugee integration in Scotland. Your knowledge and experience of delivery on the ground can offer crucial insights into our research and therefore your participation will be vital to the success of this study. You will be invited to take part in either a focus group or 1-1 interview.

Interviews with stakeholders

You will be asked a range of questions which draw upon your professional experience working within or alongside the local council on the topic of refugee integration. This will help us determine the successes and challenges facing local authorities and what is particular to the local authorities across Scotland chosen to reflect the three case

study areas. Your contribution will help give depth to and highlight the experiences of local authorities on the matter of humanitarian protection programmes and refugee integration work.

Focus groups with stakeholders

You will take part in a focus group comprised of several people who are on the ground helping to deliver humanitarian protection programmes and refugee integration work within their local authority. We hope that by facilitating a discussion between stakeholders we will be able to delve deeper into the reality of integrating refugees and asylum seekers and explore some of the successes and challenges in your work.

Who is funding this research?

This research project is commissioned by the Scottish Government and COSLA, and is funded by the EU Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). The research project will be conducted by independent researchers at the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) Scotland.

Do I have to take part in the research?

No, it is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to show your agreement by completing a consent form. You can withdraw your consent at any stage of the study without giving any reason for your withdrawal. Please let us know by September 2022 if you would like to do this, and we will endeavour to delete your data.

What will happen to my personal information?

All personal details such as names, email addresses and phone numbers will not be shared with people outside this project. Your contribution will remain anonymous, and all personal data will be kept separate from the research data.

How will the data be used in this research?

Data generated in this research will be used for the stated purpose of evaluating refugee integration work in Scotland and to inform the next New Scots Refugee Integration strategy.

Anonymised data will be analysed by IPPR researchers.

At the end of the research, a final report will be made publicly available by Scottish Government and COSLA.

More information

If any questions or concerns arise during or after your participation, please contact:

- Lucy Mort at l.mort@ippr.org
- Marley Morris on 020 7470 6112 or at m.morris@ippr.org

IPPR is an independent charity that carries out research and policy analysis. For more information, please visit our website: https://www.ippr.org/

COSLA is a representative body which works on behalf of Scotland's local authorities to focus on the challenges and opportunities they face and engage positively with the Scottish and UK governments. For more information, please visit their website: https://www.cosla.gov.uk/

Privacy notice

Our purposes for collecting your personal information are:

- to assist with research
- to maintain a record that you have consented to this research

The data controller for this project is Scottish Government which means that they decide what personal data is collected from you as part of this research. The data processor for this project is IPPR, which means that IPPR will be responsible for collecting information from you via this survey, securely storing data and using the data to write a report on behalf of the Scottish Government and COSLA.

The legal basis we rely on for collecting and processing your personal data is 'public task'. This means that your data is being collected in the public interest and will aid the functioning of government. In this case your data will be processed to conduct social research into the delivery of humanitarian protection programmes and refugee integration in Scotland.

Where you provide personal data, we will keep your name, contact details and consent form on our records until the end of the project (March 2023) when we will securely destroy them.

We won't share any personal information that could identify you, unless for safeguarding reasons we are required by law to do so.

We will keep your information safe and only use it in the ways you agree to.

You have the right to withdraw your consent at any time - if you do that, we'll delete the personal data we hold about you. To withdraw your consent, contact the researchers listed below.

The personal data you have contributed to the research will be stored securely by IPPR and only the IPPR research team and third party transcribers will have access to your personal data. Staff within the research teams at COSLA and the Scottish Government, who have commissioned this project, will only have access to anonymised data.

The information IPPR collect from the research will be used to write a report for the Scottish Government and COSLA; however, no personal information will be published which can reveal your identity. The information will be used for research purposes only and all handling of data will adhere to the relevant data protection legislation. At the end of this research project, IPPR will delete all personal data. Anonymised transcripts and final outputs will be transferred to the Scottish Government and COSLA.

As a data subject, you have a number of rights. You can:

- access and obtain a copy of your data on request;

- require us to change incorrect or incomplete data;
- require us to erase or restrict processing your data under certain conditions;
- object to the processing of your data under certain conditions;
- request that we transfer the data that we have collected to another organisation, or directly to you, under certain conditions.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding how your personal data is collected or used, or if you believe we have not complied with your data protection rights you can contact IPPR's data protection lead by email at: r.geffen@ippr.org or alternatively you can contact the Scottish Government's Data Protection Officer by email at: DataProtectionOfficer@gov.scot.

Details of your rights under the Data Protection Act 2018, your rights as a Data Subject, and your right to complain over how your personal data is being processed to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) are available at the following link: https://ico.org.uk/concerns or by calling the ICO helpline on 0303 123 1113.

More information

If any questions or concerns arise during or after your participation, please contact:

- Lucy Mort at l.mort@ippr.org
- Marley Morris on 020 7470 6112 or at m.morris@ippr.org

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Research on the role of local authorities in delivering humanitarian protection and refugee integration in Scotland: Informed consent to participate in research and to share your contact details with us

Please tick if you agree:

I have read the information sheet, or it was read to me, and I understand the contents.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I agree that the interview or focus group can be audio recorded.

I agree that IPPR can record my name and a copy of my consent form, so that they know what I have consented to.

I understand that audio recordings, transcripts and relevant personal data will be stored securely and destroyed by the end of the project.

Name of Participant (printed):
_____

Signature of Participant:
_____

Date:_____

Appendix C

Research on the role of local authorities in delivering humanitarian protection and refugee integration in Scotland: Overview for refugees and asylum seekers

Who is doing this research?

This research project is being conducted by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) Scotland. IPPR Scotland is an independent charity which carries out research and policy analysis in Scotland. The research team are Marley Morris, Lucy Mort and Casey Smith.

What is this research about?

Through research with people across Scotland we hope to understand how Scotland's local authorities are supporting the integration of refugees and asylum seekers. We will explore:

- How councils and other organisations support refugees and asylum seekers to integrate into their new communities
- What has worked well and what the challenges or barriers to successful integration are
- The impact of government policies on refugee integration
- How policy and practice can be changed to better support refugee integration in the future

Why have I been asked to take part?

You have been asked to take part because you are a refugee living in Scotland.

As someone with lived experience, you have a unique perspective that will be invaluable to understanding how refugee integration works in practice in Scotland. We want to hear from you about what has worked well to support your integration, and what have been the greatest barriers or challenges to integrating in Scotland. Your experiences will help to shape future policy and practice on refugee integration in Scotland.

What will happen if I decide to take part?

If you agree to participate, you will be invited to a one-to-one interview with one of the research team at IPPR. We will contact you to organise a date and time to talk that suits you.

The interview will either be over the phone or online (via Zoom or Teams) – you can tell us which you prefer. The interview is likely to last around one hour. If you like, we can also arrange for an interpreter to be present.

During the interview we will ask you about your experiences of receiving support from the council, charities and community groups to help you settle and integrate into your local community. We will also ask for your opinion about what needs to change to better support refugees to integrate in Scotland.

After the interview, you will receive a £40 supermarket voucher as a thank you for sharing your insights with us.

How will researchers take care of participants?

We hope that this will be an interesting research project to be involved in. It is an opportunity to share your experiences of being a refugee in Scotland, and to share ideas about how local authorities and communities can better support refugees and asylum seekers to integrate into Scottish society.

The researchers will work to ensure you have as comfortable an experience as possible, and you only need to tell us as much as you feel happy to share.

During the interview you can take a break if you think it would help. Please feel free to talk with the researcher about how else we can support you to take part, for instance, you may want to be joined by a key worker or an interpreter during the interview.

With your permission, we will ask that someone from the organisation that referred you to IPPR checks in on you following the interview, to check that you're happy with how everything went and help you with any queries that you may have.

If you share something with the researchers that suggest you or someone else is in danger, then we may have to share information with other organisations. This is because we are required to do so by law, for example to prevent the risk of harm to an individual, or if we think a serious crime is likely to happen.

IPPR is independent from government and your participation in this project will in no way impact on any governmental support that you receive. If you decide not to take part, this will not have any impact on any support you receive from public services or charities.

How will you use what I say in the research?

Our interview with you will be used to evaluate where things are going well and where there are challenges for integration in Scotland. Our findings will directly inform the Scottish Government's next New Scots strategy.

To ensure we have an accurate record of our conversation, the interview will be recorded and **transcribed**. That means that someone will listen back to the recording and type up what was said in the session. These documents will be stored on a secure computer system. These are **confidential**, that means only the researchers working on the project will have access to these. Only when these are **anonymised** will these be shared with COSLA and the Scottish Government. This

means that what you say will not be linked to your name or other identifying personal details.

At the end of the research IPPR will share a report of our findings with COSLA and Scottish Government. If we publish what you say we will make sure this is **anonymous**. This means we won't use your name or anything else that could identify you such as email addresses and phone numbers, and all personal data will be kept separate from the research data.

If you decide that what you have said in the interview should not be used for the research, you can speak to the researchers about this, and we will not include anything you have said in the final report. Please let us know by September 2022 if you want us to do this.

Who is funding this research?

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Do I have to take part in the research?

No, it is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to show your agreement by completing a consent form. You can withdraw your consent at any stage of the study without giving any reason for your withdrawal. Please let us know by September 2022 if you would like to do this, and we will delete your data.

More information

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The data controller for this project is Scottish Government which means that they decide what personal data is collected from you as part of this research. The data processor for this project is IPPR, which means that IPPR will be responsible for collecting information from you via this survey, securely storing data and using the data to write a report on behalf of the Scottish Government and COSLA.

The legal basis we rely on for collecting and processing your personal data is 'public task'. This means that your data is being collected in the public interest and will aid the functioning of government. In this case your data will be processed to conduct social research into the delivery of humanitarian protection programmes and refugee integration in Scotland.

Where you provide personal data, we will keep your name, contact details and consent form on our records until the end of the project (March 2023) when we will securely destroy them.

We won't share any other personal information that could identify you, unless for safeguarding reasons we are required by law to do so.

We will keep your information safe and only use it in the ways you agree to.

You have the right to withdraw your consent at any time - if you do that, we'll delete the personal data we hold about you. To withdraw your consent, contact the researchers listed below.

The data you have contributed to the research will be stored securely by IPPR and only the IPPR research team and third party transcribers, translators and interpreters will have access to your personal data. Staff within the research teams at COSLA and the Scottish Government who have commissioned this project, will only have access to anonymised data.

The information IPPR collect from the research will be used to write a report for the Scottish Government and COSLA; however no personal information will be published which can reveal your identity. The information will be used for research purposes only and all handling of data will adhere to the relevant data protection legislation. At the end of this research project, IPPR will delete all personal data. Anonymised transcripts and final outputs will be transferred to the Scottish Government and COSLA.

As a data subject, you have a number of rights. You can:

- access and obtain a copy of your data on request;
- require us to change incorrect or incomplete data;
- require us to erase or restrict processing your data under certain conditions;
- object to the processing of your data under certain conditions;
- request that we transfer the data that we have collected to another organisation, or directly to you, under certain conditions.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding how your personal data is collected or used, or if you believe we have not complied with your data protection rights you can contact IPPR's data protection lead by email at: r.geffen@ippr.org or alternatively you can contact the Scottish Government's Data Protection Officer by email at: DataProtectionOfficer@gov.scot.

Details of your rights under the Data Protection Act 2018, your rights as a Data Subject, and your right to complain over how your personal data is being processed to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) are available at the following link: https://ico.org.uk/concerns or by calling the ICO helpline on 0303 123 1113.

More information

If any questions or concerns arise during or after your participation, please contact:

- Lucy Mort at l.mort@ippr.org
- Marley Morris at m.morris@ippr.org

IPPR is an independent charity that carries out research and policy analysis. For more information please visit our website: https://www.ippr.org/

COSLA is a representative body which works on behalf of Scotland's local authorities to focus on the challenges and opportunities they face, and engage positively with the Scottish and UK governments. For more information please visit our website: https://www.cosla.gov.uk/

Research on the role of local authorities in delivering humanitarian protection and refugee integration in Scotland: Informed consent to participate in research and to share your contact details with us

Please tick if you agree:

- ☐ I have read the information sheet, or it was read to me, and I understand the contents.
- ☐ I agree that the interview can be audio recorded.
- ☐ I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
- ☐ I agree that IPPR can record my name and a copy of my consent form, so that they know what I have consented to.
- ☐ I understand that audio recordings, transcripts and relevant personal data will be stored securely and destroyed by the end of the project.

Name of Participant (printed):

_____

Signature of Participant:

_____

Date:_____

Appendix D

The role of Local Authorities in Delivering Humanitarian Protection Programmes and Supporting Refugee Integration in Scotland

Stakeholder topic guide

Opening

Thank you so much for agreeing to take part in an interview for this research project looking at the delivery of humanitarian protection programmes and supporting refugee integration in Scotland.

- Can I check that you've read and understood the information sheet? *Go over key points as necessary.*
- Can I check that you've completed the consent form – are you happy with everything included there? *Go over key points as necessary.*
- Do you have any questions?
- Is there a time you need us to finish by?
- Are you okay for me to press record? Only proceed if the participant says yes.

Introduction

1. Please tell me a little about your organisation, role and the work you do to support the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in the local area.

- Role and length of employment/involvement
- Demography of people supported
- Types of activities/support offered

(Note: some workers will not be based in specific refugee resettlement teams, but in departments such as housing and social work.)

Understanding the current picture

2. *You've mentioned [X demographic],* could you please describe which groups/communities have been resettled in your local area and for how long this has been the case?

3. *You've mentioned [X services or activities],* please can you say more about the services and activities that are available to refugees and asylum seekers in your local area? In your view, who are the main organisations and actors working to support refugee integration locally?

4. Please comment on the extent to which these organisations coordinate their support in the local area.

Identifying successes and challenges

5. What does successful refugee integration look like to you in your local area?

6. Could you tell us about any particular successes or achievements that you're aware of in terms of refugee integration in your local area? Do any examples come to mind where the integration support has been particularly successful for individuals or communities?

7. On the other hand, what would you say are some of the biggest challenges for refugee integration in your local area?

8. Have refugee integration efforts become more or less effective over time? What factors have contributed to this being the case?

   (Prompt: how has expertise developed locally? How are expertise and experiences of good practice shared?)

9. Reflecting on the COVID-19 pandemic, what impacts would you say it has had on refugee integration in your local area?

Comparing experiences across Scotland

Note: The next question asks about place – inclusive of location (ie where your area is in the country and how well connected it is), geography (ie the physical aspects of the area, including whether it's urban or rural), and socio-economic factors (ie the relative wealth or deprivation of the area).

10. Is there anything unique to your area that either contributes to the success of refugee integration work or which poses particular barriers or challenges for refugee integration work?

   • Which places within your local area are best able to support the integration of refugees? Why so?

   • Which places are least able to support the integration of refugees? Why so?

11. Have you been able to learn from the experiences and examples of good practice from other local authorities? Has this learning been implemented, and if so, how?

   • Are there mechanisms for sharing experiences and examples of good practice across local authorities, and if so, what are these? If not, what could be done to support this?

12. What could other areas in Scotland learn from the experiences of your local authority?

Exploring the impact of policy and legislation

13. There are seven themes contained within the New Scots refugee integration strategy, please can you comment on how your local authority / organisation contributes to promoting integration in these areas?

Note: Only prompt participant on themes that have **not** been explicitly discussed already in the interview

- Needs of asylum seekers (if relevant)
- Employability and welfare rights
- Housing
- Education
- Language
- Health and Wellbeing
- Communities, Culture and Social Connections

14. Do you feel the New Scots refugee integration strategy has been effective in its aim to support the integration of refugees in Scotland? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

(Prompt: If the participant is not familiar with the strategy, explore the overarching outcomes:

- Refugees live in safe, welcoming and cohesive communities
- Refugees understand their rights, responsibilities and entitlement
- Refugees are able to access well-coordinated services
- Policy, strategic planning and legislation are informed by the rights, needs and aspirations of refugees)

15. The UK government has established a number of refugee resettlement and humanitarian protection programmes. Please comment on the effectiveness of these to support refugee integration in Scotland.

Note: Only ask this question if this has **not** been explicitly discussed already in the interview

16. Please comment on the extent to which devolved policy (developed by the Scottish Government) and reserved policy (developed by the UK government) supports the integration of refugees in Scotland? What coordination is there between devolved and reserved policy?

17. What policy changes do you think are necessary to bring about better outcomes for humanitarian protection and refugee integration in Scotland?

- Reference to Scottish Government / UK government policies

Looking ahead

18.   Finally, what gives you hope for (or what is your aspiration for) the future of refugee integration in your local area?

Appendix E

Refugee Integration in Scotland: Lived experience topic guide

Introduction to the research

My name is [x], I'm a researcher with IPPR/IPPR Scotland, an independent research charity. We've been asked by Scottish Government and COSLA to evaluate refugee integration programmes in Scotland, and to write a research report that will contribute to the development of the next New Scots Strategy, which sets out an approach to support the vision of a welcoming Scotland.

We're interested in understanding the experiences of refugees themselves, as we think that in order to understand what's working well, and what could be improved, we need to speak to people who have moved to Scotland via a refugee resettlement programme. We think that by better understanding your experiences, any difficulties you have experienced, and hearing your ideas about what needs to change, we can do a better job of supporting refugee integration in Scotland.

First of all, I want to say a very warm thank you for agreeing to talk with me today – your perspective will be really valuable in shaping our research. I wanted to start by just going over a few things. Most importantly, we can stop the interview at any time, and if you're uncomfortable at any point please do let me know and we can pause or take a break. There's also no pressure to share anything you're not comfortable sharing.

- Explain the conversation will last up to an hour in length.
- Provide reassurances that findings will be anonymous.
- The interview will be confidential – unless you tell us something.
- All data collected will be held securely.
- There are no right or wrong answers.

Do you have any questions you would like to ask before we start?

Are you comfortable with me recording our conversation? [Start recording if yes].

Opening question

1. First of all, would you mind telling me a bit about yourself?

- name
- age
- location
- year of arrival in Scotland
- scheme under which they arrived

- family makeup and which family members (if any) are here in Scotland with them

2. Are you currently in education or employment? Please can you tell me about your course/work?

   - How important is this course/work to feeling settled/rebuilding your life in Scotland?

   - (If not in education) Are you in the process of looking for educational opportunities and if so, are you being supported in any way?

Experiences of integration support

3. Think back to when you first arrived in Scotland, what were the main services and organisations which supported you? How did you come to be involved with them?

   - Local council

   - Charities and community groups

   - Informal support (Neighbours / local diaspora)

   - Health / education / other

4. *[If not already discussed]* What support did you receive from the local council? How would you describe the quality of this support?

   - In what areas did you receive help: health/wellbeing; welfare/employment; education/language; housing, etc.

5. *[If not already discussed]* What support did you receive from neighbours/local community? How important was this for feeling settled?

6. *[Refer back to the services and organisations mentioned]* Can you tell me what it was like to receive support from the services and organisations that you've mentioned?

   - Unpack *how* the participant was supported by the service(s) or organisation(s).

7. Did you feel that you were supported in the way that you (and your family) needed when you first arrived?

   - Unpack whether there were any differences in how individuals in the family experienced support.

   - Was it difficult to access support? If so, how?

8. What were your expectations of how life would be in Scotland before you moved here? How far would you say that your experiences of integration support matched up with what you expected prior to your arrival?

- How adequate has the support you have received been for you and different family members?

9. Overall has your experience in Scotland so far been a positive or negative one?

- What do you think of the local community you live in?
- Do you feel welcome and supported by your neighbours and local community?

Exploring challenges

10. Did you experience any particular challenges or difficulties in your efforts to settle and rebuild your life in Scotland?

- What was the impact of these on you (and your family)?
- How, if at all, were these resolved?

Exploring successes

11. What (or who) would you say has made the single biggest positive difference to your experience of settling and rebuilding your life in Scotland? Why was their help so crucial?

- What lessons do you think could be learned from this for others? Do you think other people would benefit from a similar kind of support?

Suggestions for practice and policy

12. Looking back, is there anything else that could have supported you to settle and integrate in Scotland when you first came to the country?

- Are there ways you would have liked being treated differently by organisations or the community around you?

13. This research is intended to influence the next New Scots Strategy in Scotland. The New Scots Strategy is a plan created by the Scottish Government to try and make sure refugees and asylum seekers who come to Scotland are welcomed and helped to integrate into society and become a full member of Scottish society. What do you think that strategy should include/emphasise?

- (e.g. good housing; help with English; employability etc.)
- What would you say to people who have power to make decisions about refugee integration support in Scotland? How can they best support refugees to settle and rebuild their lives in Scotland

What would be the most important changes they can make to improve the current system? What needs most improvement?

Closing question

14.   What is your hope for your future in Scotland?

- Do you intend to stay in the area or would you like to move elsewhere/return home eventually?

15.   Is there anything else that you would like to add that you feel you've not been able to say?

Appendix F

Refugee integration in Scotland: IPPR ethics statement

Summary of project aims

The Scottish Government and COSLA have commissioned IPPR to undertake a research project evaluating the role of local authorities in delivering refugee integration in Scotland.

Through fieldwork with stakeholders across Scotland we hope to:

- Gain an understanding of the current picture on the ground of how local authorities facilitate refugee integration
- Uncover where local authorities have found successes and faced challenges
- Examine how different experiences compare across Scotland's 32 local authorities
- Determine the impact of policy and legislation (both devolved and reserved) on local authorities' refugee integration strategies
- Explore how local authorities might change and adapt their approach in the future.

A final report will be authored by IPPR and published by Scottish Government and the research should influence the next iteration of the New Scots refugee integration strategy.

Methodology

The project will combine a mixed methods approach with two main fieldwork components, outlined below.

Survey of the 32 local authorities in Scotland

The survey will be shared electronically with stakeholders working in and across Scotland's 32 local authorities, inclusive of council officers, councillors, and representatives from local partner organisations carrying out refugee integration work. We aim to reach between 100 and 150 respondents through the survey.

The survey will ask questions that focus on the following five topics:

- understanding the current picture
- identifying success and challenges
- comparing experiences across Scotland
- exploring the impact of policy and legislation

- looking ahead.

We anticipate that the risk to respondents completing the survey is low. Respondents will be stakeholders engaged in the delivery of refugee integration work, and questions will relate to their professional experiences and perception of refugee integration in Scotland – opportunities for harm are therefore minimal. The ethics statement therefore focuses more so on ethical considerations with respect to the qualitative case study research.

Qualitative research based in three case study local areas

In-depth research will be undertaken in three case study areas to understand the above topic areas in more detail. Focus group and interviews will be conducted online with individuals involved in the delivery of refugee integration work, as well as with refugees and people seeking asylum.

In order to gather the views of senior stakeholders, frontline practitioners, and asylum seekers and refugees, we will deliver a series of online focus groups and one-to-one interviews with participating individuals (conducted via Teams). In each case study area, we will hold:

- One-to-one interviews with around six stakeholders with senior responsibility for the delivery of humanitarian protection and refugee integration work
- One focus group with around six individuals delivering humanitarian protection and refugee integration work on the ground from across a range of sectors and professions
- One-to-one interviews with around four refugees and asylum seekers who have lived experience of receiving humanitarian protection and integration support.

In total, we intend to speak with approximately 36 stakeholders working to deliver refugee integration work and with 12 people with lived experience of receiving refugee integration support.

Recruitment of participants

Stakeholder participants will be recruited through IPPR and COSLA networks, while we will identify partner organisations who can support us to recruit refugee and asylum-seeking participants.

In particular, we will discuss details of the research activities with stakeholders and organisations supporting us to recruit refugees and asylum seekers, ensuring that they are aware of the steps we are taking to manage ethical considerations and how we will uphold the rights and dignity of research participants. If requested partner organisations may also have access to the ethics statement.

Participants and partner organisations will be given a copy of the participant information sheet detailing what participation in the research involves. This will also outline our privacy notice and include a consent form, to ensure that participants give their consent freely. As necessary, the information sheet and privacy notice can be translated or orally explained by a researcher or interpreter.

We will take all possible steps to acquire written consent, but where this is impracticable, we will accept verbal consent and record the date that consent was received.

Partner organisations supporting us with recruitment will be asked to identify participants that they think would be appropriate people to take part in the research. This may relate to the length of time they have resided in Scotland and/or the acuteness of any challenges individuals are currently experiencing.

We are able to offer a small honorarium payment to VCS organisations supporting us to recruit participants, in the region of £100-£200 per organisation.

We will make clear than any involvement in our research is on no way related to any government (inclusive of the Home Office) or charitable service, nor will access to services be contingent on participation in the research. No penalty will be experienced for those who do not wish to participate in the research.

Incentives

Refugees and asylum seekers participating in the study will receive a supermarket gift voucher to the value of £40 in acknowledgement of their contribution to the study. This will be administered by IPPRs finance department, and will be received by participants within 10 working days.

Consent, feedback and withdrawal

Participants will be fully informed about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research project. They will be informed about what their participation in the research entails and what potential risks may be involved, so that they can make an informed decision about participation.

This information will be conveyed through a participant information sheet, privacy notice and consent form. Consent will be sought via a Google Form for ease of recording, as we are conducting all fieldwork remotely. Where this is not possible, we will accept verbal consent.

All participants will be informed about how their data will be used and that anonymity will be assured. We will inform participants about the circumstances under which we may have to breach confidentiality – namely, if we suspect that they or someone else is at risk of harm. Participants will be informed that the interview or focus group will be audio-recorded and their explicit consent for this will be sought.

For our interviews, at the beginning of the session researchers will read out the key information from the information sheet and consent form and confirm verbally that participants consent to taking part.

Participants will be informed about how they can find out about the results of the research (for instance, by visiting the Scottish Government website). Participants can request further information on the purpose and potential uses of the research project, and where appropriate this can be discussed with the participant.

All participants taking part in 1-1 interviews will be informed of their right to withdraw, advised that there is no penalty for withdrawal and that any data collected in that interview will not be used in reports. Participants taking part in focus groups will also have the right to withdraw their consent, and as far as possible we will endeavour to remove their contributions from focus group transcripts.

Confidentiality

Following best practice guidance from the UK data service, participants will be assured that their data will be anonymous in reports and their data treated confidentially throughout the transcription, analysis and write up of the research. Survey data will be pseudonymised: participants will be assigned unique identifiers and a log of these assignments will be kept and stored separately.

For our qualitative research write-up, ensuring a person's identity is confidential will mean anonymising direct identifiers. Where they may identify a person, indirect identifiers (i.e. workplace, occupation, salary or age) may also be anonymised or generalised to avoid disclosure.

Data protection

IPPR will comply with legislative requirements on data protection, as set out in the Research Ethics Policy and IPPR Statement on Cloud Security Principles.

Following best practice guidance from the UK data service, participants will be assured that their data will be anonymous in reports and their data treated confidentially throughout the transcription, analysis and write up of the research. Ensuring a person's identity is confidential will mean anonymising direct identifiers. Where they may identify a person, indirect identifiers (i.e. workplace, occupation, salary or age) may also be anonymised or generalised. All personal data will be deleted from IPPR systems at the end of the project once anonymised data has been transferred to SG/COSLA.

All personal data for this project will be held in Microsoft 365 SharePoint Online and Exchange Online, each of which is encrypted. Where any personal data is transmitted between organisations for this project, it will be password-protected and sent via an end-to-end encrypted digital platform.

Risk management
- Unable to recruit refugee and asylum seeker participants (medium risk)

We plan to work in collaboration with local authorities and community organisations to recruit refugees and asylum seekers for this project. By approaching individuals through trusted professionals, we anticipate that we will be able to recruit the required number of participants.

The budget is inclusive of incentives for participating individuals from refugee and asylum-seeking communities. In addition, we are able to offer a small honorarium payment to VCS organisations supporting us to recruit participants. This is to recognise the time and effort of organisations supporting us to meet our research objectives.

- Discussion of a sensitive topic in an interview causes distress to participant (medium-high risk)

For our interviews, participants will be given an information sheet about the topics to be discussed before the discussion, giving them time to think about issues at hand and to emotionally and intellectually prepare for the discussion.

Participants will be free to withdraw at any stage; we will signpost participants at start to external support as necessary.

If during an interview the participant becomes upset or alerts the researcher to their being distressed, steps will be taken to appropriately manage this – for instance, through taking a short break or through reordering or skipping questions.

Where appropriate, at the end of the interview, participants will be signposted to relevant support services and/or a follow-up call will be arranged with the local organisation.

- Participants' distrust of unknown research team inhibits recruitment & willingness to participate/disclose views during research (medium risk)

For the interviews, participants will be advised of the experience of researchers, and we will seek to establish rapport with participants.

Participants will be made aware of the complaints policy and procedure.

Participants will be compensated for taking part in the research and advised that they may withdraw at any time without penalty.

- Researchers are concerned about potential or actual abuse, harm or neglect toward a child or vulnerable adult (medium risk)

Protocol on disclosure of safeguarding concerns will be agreed in team and with reference to IPPR's research ethics policy and safeguarding policy.

As appropriate the researcher will reiterate ground rules related to confidentiality and the role of the researcher in responding to any safeguarding concerns.

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this <statistical bulletin / social research publication>:

☐ are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics

☐ are available via an alternative route

☐ may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact socialresearch@gov.scot for further information.

☐ cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.

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