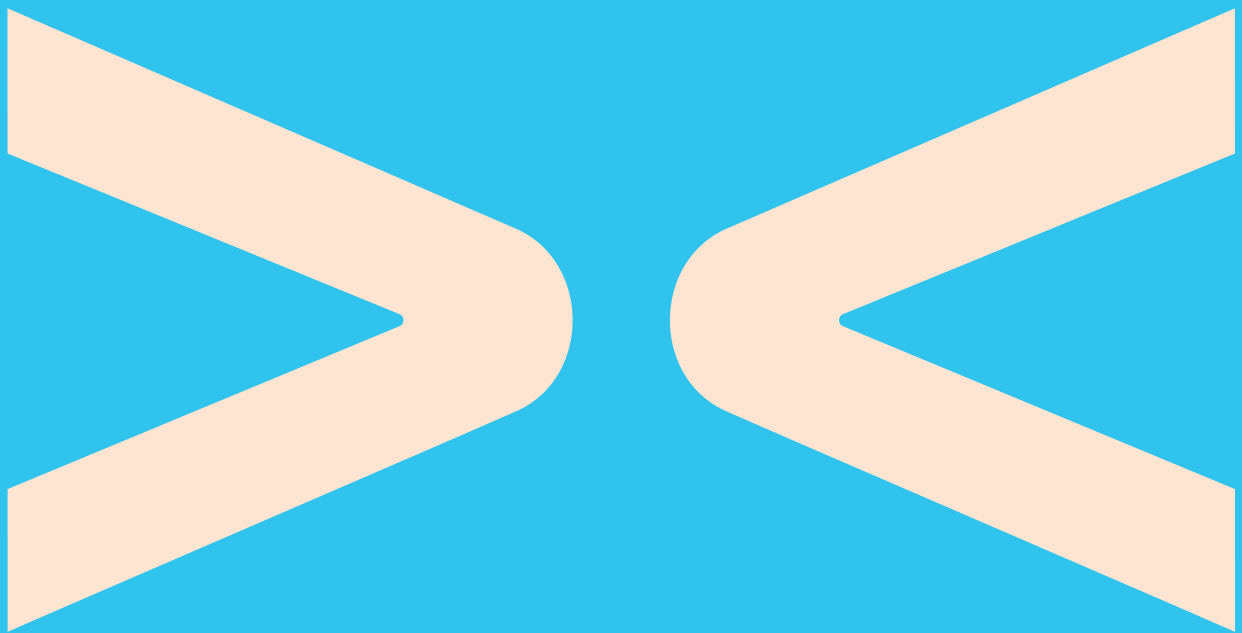


# New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2024: Engagement Analysis Report

July 2024



# Executive summary

## Introduction

The [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2024](#) is designed to foster a welcoming environment in Scotland, where refugees and people seeking asylum—referred to as New Scots—can rebuild their lives from the moment of their arrival. This strategy is a collaborative effort led by the Scottish Government, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), and the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC). The strategy aims to streamline and enhance the efforts of many diverse organisations and community groups across Scotland, ensuring a coordinated approach of support. This document details the engagement process which was a key aspect of developing the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2024.

## Engagement and methodology

Extensive engagement and consultations have shaped the strategy, drawing on:

- Research studies, including a significant [project by the University of Glasgow](#).
- An [independent evaluation of the previous New Scots strategy](#).
- Learning events focused on refugee integration themes.
- A national New Scots conference that gathered input on the draft strategy.

These activities informed the development of the draft third iteration of the New Scots Strategy, which was subsequently refined through targeted stakeholder engagement using a two-phased approach:

1. Framework Engagement Events. These events gathered a broad range of stakeholders, including representatives from local authorities, third sector organisations and charities, to discuss the draft iteration of the strategic framework with a focus on the vision, approach, principles, and outcomes.
2. Community Consultation Process. Following the framework events, community consultations were run across Scotland, engaging with people with lived experience to identify priority actions for the strategy's implementation.

## **Key themes and findings from the engagement process**

The information gathered through the engagement process covered both the structure and wording of the strategy document and a thematic analysis of findings related to aspects of the integration process that are being handled well and areas in need of improvement alongside potential actions that could be taken. The key themes and findings are presented below:

### **Vision and principles of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy**

**2024**

Vision:

- The strategy's vision was recognised for its clarity, ambition, and positive approach to welcoming New Scots from day one.
- Many participants at the engagement events felt that the vision contrasted with less welcoming approaches elsewhere in the UK, emphasising that immediate support and a warm reception were found in Scotland.
- Despite the positivity, many participants suggested focusing on a more realistic approach. Participants were slightly concerned about the vision's aspirational nature, suggesting a need for actionable plans that anticipate and address potential challenges.
- There was a desire for language that is more precise, respects and empowers New Scots, and acknowledges the diverse experiences and needs of refugees and people seeking asylum.
- The inclusive nature of the vision was praised, but feedback highlighted the importance of refining language to ensure it is respectful and clearly defines concepts like "integration" and "inclusion."

Principles:

- The principles were seen as comprehensive and aspirational, but there was concern about how these would be implemented in practice.
- Stakeholders wanted principles that not only set high standards but also were grounded in achievable, real-world applications, particularly emphasising the need for trauma-informed, inclusive practices.
- There was strong advocacy for a rights-based approach, emphasising the need for clear information about the rights of New Scots from the moment they arrive in Scotland, as well as services that align with these principles.

- The principle of collaboration was reportedly seen as both beneficial and already observed in practice; however, there were calls for more specific examples and guidance on how this can be more effectively realised.
- Feedback suggested enhancing the language used in the principles to be more action-oriented. Terms like "engagement" and "consultation" were preferred over "involvement," and a stronger emphasis on mutual efforts in integration processes was recommended.

## **Strategic outcomes**

### Comprehensive integration:

- Outcomes were appreciated for their clarity and alignment with the strategy's vision, providing a detailed pathway towards integration.
- The need for outcomes to be realistic and feasible was a recurring theme, particularly concerning current socio-economic challenges, including funding constraints and the housing crisis.
- Participants highlighted the importance of outcomes that cater to a holistic approach, covering social, economic, and cultural aspects to support the overall well-being of New Scots.
- Many participants suggested more detailed, measurable sub-outcomes that could be used to track progress and ensure that strategic goals are met effectively.

### Health and housing:

- Health: There was a consensus on the need for accessible, high-quality health services, particularly emphasising mental health and trauma-informed care. Participants discussed the challenges in navigating health services and the need for more culturally sensitive health provision.
- Housing: Quality and accessibility of housing were major concerns. Participants described the current housing as often inadequate and stressed the importance of integrating the reality of Scotland's housing crisis into the strategy. The competition for housing and its impact on community relations was also discussed, emphasising a need for strategies that avoid creating divisions between recently arrived New Scots and receiving communities.

### Education and employment:

- Education: The recognition of international qualifications and access to language support were seen as critical for integrating New Scots into

the education system. Delays in school and college enrolments were raised, with calls for more comprehensive support for students, including recognition of prior learning.

- Employment: Barriers to employment, such as unrecognised qualifications and lack of targeted job training were highlighted. Stakeholders emphasised the need for policies that facilitate smoother transitions into the workforce, including bridging programs and services that help translate qualifications into locally recognised credentials.

### **Cultural sensitivity and inclusion**

- There was a strong emphasis on avoiding assumptions and expectations of assimilation, and instead promoting a framework that respects cultural diversity and fosters intercultural understanding.
- Feedback pointed to the need for services and policies that are sensitive to the cultural differences and histories that New Scots bring with them. This includes avoiding language that implies forced diversity and focusing on valuing different cultures.
- The role of media and public perception was discussed, with a call for strategies that combat negative stereotypes and promote positive narratives about New Scots.
- Concerns about racism and discrimination were prevalent, with stakeholders calling for more explicit efforts to tackle these issues within the strategy.

### **Challenges and recommendations**

Systemic barriers:

- The interaction between devolved and reserved powers was identified as a significant challenge, affecting the strategy's capacity to meet its goals. The influence of the UK government's immigration policies on Scotland's ability to implement its own strategies was a concern.
- Feedback suggested that the strategy should explicitly address these challenges, providing a clearer understanding of what can be achieved under current political constraints.

Funding and resource allocation:

- A critical need for sustainable and adequate funding was highlighted, with participants noting that the ambitious goals of the strategy would require substantial support, particularly in sectors like housing, health, education and employment.
- Participants asked for more equitable funding distribution, especially noting that rural areas often receive less than their urban counterparts.

## Cultural sensitivity and inclusion:

- The importance of culturally sensitive approaches was emphasised, with suggestions for more training for service providers and clearer guidelines on respecting cultural differences.
- Feedback advised that the strategy should include more robust mechanisms to ensure that integration processes are genuinely inclusive of various cultural, linguistic, and gender identities.

## Clarifying and communicating rights:

- There was a strong emphasis on the need for better communication about the rights and entitlements of New Scots. Participants suggested that the strategy should include detailed information on rights and how they can be accessed and protected.

## **Strategic recommendations**

Based on the engagement events and community consultations, several key recommendations emerged to guide the finalisation and implementation of the strategy:

1. **Empower New Scots:** Enhance the empowerment of New Scots by involving them more directly in decision-making processes and ensuring that services are designed with their input and lived experiences in mind.
2. **Expand Trauma-Informed Practices:** Broaden the application of trauma-informed approaches across all services to ensure that the needs of New Scots are met in a sensitive and supportive manner.
3. **Ensure Sustainable Funding:** Advocate for consistent, long-term funding to support the strategic initiatives, especially for critical services that facilitate integration.
4. **Promote Inclusive Policies:** Strengthen efforts to combat racism and discrimination, and ensure that integration policies are inclusive of diverse cultural, linguistic, and gender identities.
5. **Clarify and Communicate Rights:** Improve the clarity and dissemination of information about the rights and entitlements of New Scots to support their full participation in Scottish society.

## Conclusion

The New Scots Strategy 2024 represents a positive step towards creating a supportive and inclusive environment for refugees and people seeking asylum in Scotland. By focusing on partnership, lived experience, and a comprehensive approach to integration, the strategy aims to ensure that New Scots can contribute fully to their communities and have the opportunity to thrive. The feedback from stakeholders highlights the importance of realism, practicality, and inclusivity in moving from vision to action, ensuring that the strategy not only sets high standards but also achieves meaningful and sustainable outcomes.

# Introduction

## Background to the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy

The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy (henceforth referred to as the New Scots Strategy) sets out a vision for a welcoming Scotland where refugees and people seeking asylum are able to rebuild their lives from the day they arrive. The purpose of the strategy is to coordinate the efforts of organisations and community groups across Scotland involved in supporting forced migrants. It provides a clear framework and governance structure for all those working towards refugee integration and aims to support an effective implementation of the rights and entitlements of New Scots. It assists the work of all partners to make the best use of resources and expertise available across Scotland by promoting partnership approaches, and joined-up working, as well as early, inclusive and evidence-based intervention as part of a place-based approach.

The New Scots Strategy is built on partnership and collaboration between the Scottish Government, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) - referred to here as the Strategy Partners - working together with public services, third sector organisations and community groups. The New Scots Strategy's approach towards integration seeks to provide a positive experience for refugees and people seeking asylum. The aim is to ensure New Scots live in safe and welcoming communities that enable them to rebuild their lives from the day they arrive in Scotland.

The first New Scots Strategy was published in 2014<sup>1</sup> and covered 2014-2017. The second updated and revised Strategy was produced to cover 2018-2022<sup>2</sup>. Unlike the first two Strategies, the third Strategy has two parts: a Strategic Framework (published March 2024)<sup>3</sup>, and a Delivery Plan, due to be published

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<sup>1</sup> [New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities 2014 - 2017](#)

<sup>2</sup> [New Scots: refugee integration strategy 2018 to 2022 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy: 2024 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

in 2024, which will be updated regularly. For the 3<sup>rd</sup> iteration of the New Scots Strategy, the partnership looked to extend the collaborative approach used previously, to ensure the New Scots Strategy continues to be shaped by refugees and people seeking asylum, as well as those with expertise in supporting them.

To this end, a lived experience involvement approach was proposed and implemented. This approach meant that leaders and representatives of New Scots communities and leaders and representatives of organisations supporting New Scots were involved, consulted and able to influence the drafting process so that the new strategy meets the major challenges and needs faced by their communities.

## Methodology

Over the last two years, consultation and engagement was undertaken with a variety of stakeholders to inform the new strategy in different ways. These included:

- Various research projects including a large research study by the University of Glasgow<sup>4</sup>,
- An independent evaluation of the New Scots Strategy delivery and learning from funded refugee integration projects<sup>5</sup>,
- A New Scots conference in November 2022.

As a result of these activities and events a draft version of the 3<sup>rd</sup> iteration of the New Scots Strategy was circulated for stakeholder review in October 2023. This was known as the New Scots Strategic Framework. It included the strategy's Vision and Purpose, Approach and Principles, as well as Outcomes sections.

The Strategy Partners then discussed and agreed a 2-phased approach to informing and engaging with New Scots, statutory and professional partners, practitioners from Third Sector organisations and refugee-assisting groups.

The 2-phased approach consisted of a series of Framework Engagement events, involving as many stakeholders as possible, at which the defining sections of the draft strategy framework were made available, and a series of questions asked to solicit feedback.

These Framework Engagement events were planned to prepare the lived experience representatives for the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase: consulting with their community groups to ascertain their priority areas in terms of actions needed. These

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<sup>4</sup> Phipps, A. , Aldegheri, E. and Fisher, D. (2022) The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy: a report on the local and international dimensions of integrating refugees in Scotland. Project Report. University of Glasgow.

<sup>5</sup> [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018 to 2022: evaluation](#)



would be collated and used to inform the interventions undertaken to implement the Strategy. A small grant was made available to each community group to facilitate their consultation event.

## **Framework engagement events**

The purpose of the Framework Engagement events was to ensure that the professionals, practitioners and New Scots all had a working understanding of the Framework and an opportunity to review the strategy through a series of facilitated discussions.

To ensure the lived experience representatives were prepared for the Framework Engagement events, a 'Framework Orientation event' was held on 26/10/23. This orientation session introduced lived experience representatives to:

- A brief history of the evolution of the New Scots Strategy;
- The purpose and anticipated outcomes of the Framework Engagement events;
- More details of the community consultation process and the need to provide an event proposal and budget; and,
- The questions for their communities to consider and respond to.

Between the 7th and 16th of November 2023 the Scottish Government, Scottish Refugee Council, COSLA and colleagues from the University of Glasgow organised and ran events with the aim to gather and process feedback and views from organisational, professional, and lived experience stakeholders. The November 2023 events were delivered in Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Glasgow and online using video-conferencing software.

At each Framework Engagement event the participants were split into groups; points related to the shape of the next strategy were discussed in the morning, points related to the shape of the delivery plan were discussed in the afternoon after a lunch break. The points are detailed below:

### **1 – Shaping the next New Scots Strategy**

- The vision of the strategy
- The draft principles of the strategy
- The draft outcomes of the strategy
- Overall views of the strategy as a whole

### **2 – Shaping the Delivery Plan and Actions**

- Actions at a local level
- Actions at a national level
- Top action to improve the lives of New Scots

At each of the in-person events participants sat themselves at a table of their choice. Every table was equipped with a facilitator who guided the sessions, ensuring that the conversations remained focused and productive, and a dedicated note taker who captured what was said on flipchart paper. The output from these events was written up by colleagues at SRC and sent for analysis by the Scottish Government with input and support from COSLA and the University of Glasgow.

In total **330** stakeholders attended the Framework Engagement events. The attendees represented a number of different organisations, as detailed in table 1 below:

**Table 1: Attendees at framework engagement events by organisational form**

Local Authority, Education, Police Scotland	126
Volunteering	9
Third Sector	23
Community Groups	74
Scottish Government	12
Scottish Refugee Council	12
Unknown/Individual	71
University of Glasgow	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>330</b>

## **Community consultation process**

Having attended the Framework Engagement events, lived experience representatives were able to organise and hold Community Consultation events. These events were all held by the end of February 2024.

To participate in this collaborative process, leaders and representatives of refugee and asylum-seeking groups and communities were asked to:

- Organise and hold an event, for which funding was provided, to consult their communities (minimum of 5 people) by discussing and elaborating responses to three set questions; and,

- Document and send their answers to SRC by a specific deadline.

Attendees were asked to discuss and respond to a series of questions related to actions needed to ensure that all New Scots, and the communities in which they live in Scotland, are able to successfully achieve the vision and outcomes of the New Scots Strategy.

The three set questions and corresponding prompts asked at these events are detailed below:

**Question 1:** In your community, local authority area, region, what are organisations (local authorities, public bodies, charities, refugee and community groups) currently doing well that contribute to supporting your integration?

How could these be improved?

What further actions need to happen locally?

**Question 2:** Thinking about the New Scots Partnership (Scottish Government, Council of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and Scottish Refugee Council) and other national organisations – what are the positive things they are doing to support your community?

How could these be built on?

What further actions are needed at a national level?

**Question 3:** Based on your discussions above, if your community could choose only one action that the Scottish Government could deliver to improve their lives, what would that action be?

In total **2187** stakeholders attended the community consultation events. Further details can be found in table 2 below:

**Table 2: Community consultation events**

Number of funded groups	<b>72</b>
Number of events held	<b>81</b>

Total number of attendees **2187**

Number of young people (under 18) **98 (where recorded)**<sup>6</sup>

Locations by Local Authority Aberdeen, Clackmannanshire, Dundee (City), East Ayrshire, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Highlands, Moray Council, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire. **(16 of 32)**

### **Representation by group demographic** (where known and recorded)<sup>7</sup>.

**8** African groups, **3** women focused groups,

**6** Ukrainian groups, **1** LGBTQI groups,

**4** Afghan groups, **3** Yemen groups,

**2** Community Learning and Development (CLD) groups, **3** Syrian groups,

**4** Groups of people seeking asylum, accommodated in hotels across Scotland.

### **Notes on necessary subjectivity and limitations**

The analysis conducted offers no commentary on the content of participants' contributions, and as such, some comments may mention areas where work should be carried out that is already happening.

The methodology underlying this engagement analysis implied a number of limitations related primarily to problems around language and IT. Firstly, given that many of the participants' first language was not English, responses were at times not entirely clear and so required a degree of reshaping to ensure they were clearer and easier to include. This task by necessity implied the exercise of some subjectivity to best interpret responses for the sake of clarity. Secondly, those New Scots who cannot speak English at all were not present at community consultation events to give evidence or insight; therefore, the perspective of individuals from this vulnerable group are not represented. It is also important to note that responses were collected from participants anonymously, so it is not possible to ascertain what comments were made by individuals or representatives from particular organisations or groups.

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<sup>6</sup> In some instances, the numbers of young people in attendance were not recorded.

<sup>7</sup> In some instances, demographic information related to particular groups in attendance was not recorded.

There are also limitations specific to the technology used during the online engagement event. This event aimed to provide access for those who could not make the events in person for various reasons ranging from finances to disability. However, the chosen methods expected to collect data during the online event were found to be quite limited. The online tool that was used to gather and reflect the feedback, similar to the flip charts used at the in-person events, allowed for a significant degree of flexibility as to where information was captured and, as a result, this information was not always arranged in order. The people copying and writing up this data for analysis were also understandably, not present at every conversation at every table or in every group and therefore could not provide context for the responses that were recorded. Consequently, some sections of the data could not be used as the original meaning of the responses could not be successfully ascertained.

Finally, it is important to note that the analysis conducted offers no commentary on the content of participants' contributions. Some comments therefore may express individual's perceptions of what needs to be done or has not been done well in particular areas, rather than accurately reflecting facts.

## **Framework engagement events findings**

### **The draft strategy – content**

The first half of the Framework engagement event sessions revolved around the content of the most recent draft of the New Scots Strategy. Questions were designed to elicit feedback on elements of the draft that had been added and changed; elements that remained the same as they were in the previous iteration of the strategy; and more generally around the wording and phrasing of the document as a whole.

### **The vision**

Overall, the vision for welcoming New Scots was seen as clear, ambitious, and distinctively positive, setting a high standard for integration and support from day one of arrival. The concept of being welcoming from day one of arrival was highly praised and the approach was seen as a stark contrast to policies in other parts of the UK. The vision's emphasis on immediate support and a warm reception was also seen as a significant strength. Participants felt that the vision's strengths include its focus on integration from day one of

arrival, recognising different cultures, and not limiting the time for integration. The vision was also seen as aligning well with other policies and strategies, creating a cohesive approach to welcoming new Scots.

It is important to note, however, that while the feedback regarding the vision was largely positive, there was an acknowledgment that the vision is largely aspirational.

“It's important to strive for the best while being realistic and planning for potential challenges.”

It was also felt that there was a need for more precise, respectful, and empowering language, along with clearer definitions and concepts that acknowledge the diverse experiences and needs of refugees and people seeking asylum. The focus should be on supporting individuals in establishing their lives in Scotland in a manner that respects their autonomy and unique circumstances.

## **The principles**

The principles were generally regarded as comprehensive and aspirational, however there was concern about their practical application. Feedback reflected a desire for a comprehensive, empathetic, and effectively implemented approach to rights and services, with a strong emphasis on trauma-informed practices, inclusivity, and real-world applicability.

The necessity of informing newcomers about their rights from day one was emphasised, with participants underlining that advocacy and clear information are crucial for effective integration.

Feedback showed that there is a need for services and resources that match the rights-based approach, ensuring that the principles are not only idealistic but also actionable and grounded in reality.

The introduction of trauma-informed principles was widely appreciated. Participants highlighted the importance of these practices in all services, reflecting a need for flexibility and understanding of individual needs.

The use of "restorative" in the context of restoring dignity and trust was welcomed. This concept aligns with trauma-informed practices and is seen as a positive step towards healing and integration.

The principle of partnership and collaboration was recognised as achievable and beneficial, having been seen as working in practice. There was

agreement that this principle enhances engagement and supports a community-oriented approach.

Phrases like 'human approach' and 'compassion-based approach' were favoured, indicating a preference for policies that are empathetic and considerate of individual circumstances.

The strategy's inclusiveness and avoidance of assimilation were praised. Embracing cultural diversity and a person-centred approach were seen as strengths, though there was a recognition of the challenges in rural areas with less diversity and less experience of welcoming New Scots.

Effective implementation of principles, especially in mental health support and trauma-informed practices, was deemed essential.

There were also some specific requests made around the content, language and terminology used, as detailed below:

1. The term 'involvement' is seen as too vague; suggestions include replacing it with 'engagement', 'consultation', or 'peer-led'.
2. 'Integration from day 1' is viewed as unrealistic and not achievable. It is recommended to rephrase it as 'Working towards integration from day 1'.
3. The concept of 'integration' is debated, with some suggesting it implies a one-sided effort. 'Inclusion and integration' are preferred to emphasise the role of both arriving and established communities.
4. The term 'restorative' used in the context of the strategy is questioned, especially considering the trauma experienced by displaced persons.
5. Participants asked for greater acknowledgment of intersectionality, recognising that people carry their identities and experiences from their home countries, and these should not be repressed.
6. Some felt that the 'rights-based approach' is too vague, and there is a lack of clarity on entitlements, such as language learning. Others, however, emphasised the importance of a rights-based approach, ensuring that the rights of newcomers are understood and respected.
7. Inclusion is favoured over integration by some, as it suggests a mutual effort.
8. Racism and the different experiences of people based on visible differences should be addressed.

9. 'Involvement' should be strengthened to 'leading', advocating for refugees to lead based on their lived experiences.
10. Cooperation and equality should be highlighted in principles, showcasing the value of refugees.

Principle 3 is viewed by some as being particularly difficult to achieve due to changing policies.

## **The outcomes**

The outcomes were generally viewed positively and were appreciated for being comprehensive, respectful, clear, and understandable to laypersons<sup>8</sup>. Participants felt that the outcomes align with the vision and principles of the strategy, offering more detailed goals. The practicality and emphasis on mutual, multilateral integration were seen as particular strengths of the strategy as a whole.

However, there were concerns raised about the realism and feasibility of the aspirational outcomes, particularly in the context of funding constraints and housing crises.

There were also some specific requests made around the content, language and terminology used, including:

1. Incorporation of terms like 'love' and 'compassion' to emphasise the importance of emotional intelligence in policy and practice.
2. Recognising the difference between treating all New Scots equally and addressing their unique needs equitably. Equity should be the focus, ensuring resources and support are tailored to individual circumstances.
3. Acknowledging the diversity of New Scots' experiences, including trauma-informed services and the need for safety, especially in contexts like temporary hotel accommodation.
4. Highlighting the importance of intercultural understanding and integration, specifically tailored to the Scottish context. Avoid language that implies forced diversity - instead focus on valuing and understanding different cultures.

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<sup>8</sup> Conversely a few participants did suggest that policy language used can be opaque and work could be done to make it more user-friendly and clearly defined as they should also be accessible to non-specialists, including migrants and those working in the third sector.



5. Addressing political challenges directly, including the complexities of the UK Government's policies and the Home Office systems.
6. Ensure that all terms and outcomes are clearly defined and understood.
7. Policies and outcomes should be realistic and measurable. Vague goals are less likely to be achieved, and there should be clear indicators for measuring success.

### **The use of the term 'New Scots'**

While there were some comments regarding the applicability of the label 'New Scot' to people who have been in Scotland for a long time, it was generally appreciated for its inclusivity and positive connotations, making it easier for people to identify with rather than being labelled as 'refugees'.

### **Thematic analysis findings – framework engagement events**

Thematic analysis of the comments made throughout the framework engagement events fell into a number of categories, presented below:

#### **Material issues**

During the strategy discussions, many participants highlighted systemic issues, particularly in housing, health, education, and employment. These were seen as some of the most pressing challenges faced by New Scots. However, several other significant concerns are also addressed in the overarching considerations.

#### **Housing**

Housing was an issue that was presented across numerous themes and was considered by many of the participants as a priority. The time it took for New Scots to receive adequate housing, the competition for housing, and issues with privatisation of housing, were discussed across the events. Several of the participants recognised the current 'housing crisis' and believed that these shortages were central to a lot of their issues:

“There's an interesting question here about temporary accommodation. I know there are colleagues at SRC and we've heard perspectives of Ukrainians about the help they had and the useful, central support they were given when they were housed on ships. The accommodation question should be addressed, maybe here. But then if there's a housing crisis,

that temporary becomes not temporary, and then we have real problems.”

“CEC have just declared a housing emergency, so homelessness is an already existing significant issue in places.”

“All great in theory, but difficult to implement due to lack of resources e.g. housing stock might not be safe (dodgy neighbours) but might not be a big deal from what they come from.”

The housing that is available is believed to be generally of poor quality:

“Integrate the reality of the housing crisis in Scotland: the housing that is left is not great / dignifying. Locals are already waiting for housing, and it creates a discrepancies between locals and new arrivals.”

“Houses in poor condition generally, build new/fix existing.”

There was also a view that these ‘housing issues’ were creating conflict between New Scots and receiving communities, and resolving the issue would in many ways counteract this:

“[housing issue] creates hostility and barriers.”

“Difficult to integrate and welcome people when competing for housing.”

“Higher or better standards in building housing for all, stops divisions; ‘why fix theirs and not mine’.”

## **Health**

The relationship between health and New Scots was heavily discussed across the engagement events. Health has been broken down into ‘health in general’, and ‘mental health’ for the sake of clarity in this report. Overall, the vast majority of responses that discussed these themes were negative. The concept of ‘trauma-informed’ also has its own specific subheading in this section in order to reveal the thoughts and feelings behind its inclusion in the latest strategy. The trauma-informed approach was generally considered to be a positive development for the new document.

## **Health in general**

The health issues faced by New Scots were generally as a result of a lack of awareness related to rights and access to the NHS, the complicated nature of health assessments and general costs related to healthcare:

“Even the ones who want to go back is because of the expensive nature of healthcare but in most cases, refugees willingly want to integrate.”

“Health assessments are too long or complicated”

## **Mental health**

Unsurprisingly, given the conditions that many of the New Scots had come from and the hostile nature of the UK asylum system, mental health was the most discussed form of health across the events. There were very few positives in the experiences or perceptions of how mental health was addressed, while the most common concerns were in relation to the stigma attached to trauma, the cultural limitations in expressing such experiences, and the lack of attention to mental health in the draft strategy:

“Principle missing - need to address mental health, mental illness, mental wellbeing. It's the foundation for everything else.”

“Person centred approach is good and vital to understanding but how slowly things move in Government often causes frustration – need to be more aware of what refugees have been through and help required – may say they are fine and display stoicism/ don't want to show weakness but they have suffered trauma by what they've lived through - left behind family/forced relocation/lack of news etc - key area that lacks support is mental health and access to psychologists/therapists.”

## **Trauma-informed**

There was acknowledgement from participants that the trauma-informed approach was vital in ensuring a more comfortable transition for New Scots. There were some queries around how effective this would be, what the term trauma-informed entailed, and some issues were raised regarding the reality of the situation for New Scots in the present and foreseeable future. It was, however, deemed by the majority who spoke on the issue as being a vitally important feature in the strategy.

“Trauma informed - Good and important as a key principle.”

“Encouraging to consider trauma, great to have this, and is necessary to have trauma-informed. Important.”

It was also believed that all staff and practitioners alike should have relevant training and understanding of this approach due to concerns that it would not be appropriately implemented:

“Make sure professionals, volunteers, orgs have trauma-informed knowledge.”

“Trauma informed - very positive principle but need training and concrete action for meaningful implementation.”

## **Education and employment**

Education and employment were very rarely discussed as separate matters during the discussions. The majority of responses in relation to these themes were quite negative in that participants felt there was a lack of recognition of skills and employment in the outcomes of the strategy.

The main areas for analysis here are broken down into three themes: transferable skills, language, and access. Very often these areas overlap but are worth noting in their own right in order to address correctly. There was also some mention of children when it came to education, but this will be addressed in the theme of ‘intersectionality’.

## **Transferable skills**

Across the events, there was a general view that the skills and potential contributions of New Scots were overlooked in the draft strategy. Several participants also drew attention to the shortages of staff in the healthcare and education sectors and believed that with a better ‘skills recognition’ system in place, alongside cheap and affordable access courses to transfer their skills, New Scots could assist with these shortages in the Scottish NHS and education.

“Skills of New Scots are not included. Should have new outcome utilising the skills of people for employment.”

“Many people back in their home country have skills they cannot use here, because integration is too long, hindered by language.”

“There is not an appreciation of skills and talents that people bring to Scotland. How do we help people understand that they bring.”

Many in attendance also felt that with a better transferable skills system in place, and with the ability to work and contribute to the economy, perceptions and stigma around New Scots would change for the better.

“Move away from refugees taking resources from Scots. Focus on what skills they bring.”

## Language

Language was a significant point that featured across multiple themes at each of the events.<sup>9</sup> However, the feedback around language in relation to education and employment was often vague, which was potentially a product of the methodology.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, it remained as an important feature in the discussions and was considered to be one of the biggest barriers when it came to transferrable skills and education:

“Many people back in their home country have skills they cannot use here, because integration is too long, and they are hindered by language.”

“Continuing support as people don't have sufficient literacy/language skills to gain employment.”

“Language is key to everything.”

There were also concerns around the lack of funding for English speaking courses, which was a sentiment shared across multiple events. Learning English was considered to be of the most vital importance for New Scots, so that they could find work, appeal to employers, and even work in roles that could benefit fellow New Scots.

“Should include more about language. More focus on ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes. Funding is declining... when the demand is rising.”

“Experience now is better but still not full integration, refugees can only access college ESOL > can have to wait up to a year. Uni course is £6000.00.”

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<sup>9</sup> See Language in relation to Policy Evaluation and Overarching Themes.

<sup>10</sup> See Limitations Section.

“ESOL now under Adult Learning - combined budget making things difficult - means people are stretched across the whole department - much less time to focus on ESOL itself.”

## **Intersectionality<sup>11</sup>**

The term intersectionality was used only once across the events. There were, however, numerous themes which fall into this categorisation and so have been placed under this section for ease of access, elaboration, and understanding in this report.

## **Gender**

Gender was one of the most prominent areas for discussion in relation to intersectional issues. In every case, this was in relation to women, and was mostly in relation to mothers. There was a general view that there should be better education around gender differences within the draft strategy.

“Group members reflected that they would appreciate the inclusion of gender-specific language to acknowledge how policy/ strategy has gender-specific implications.”

“Integration needs to be looked with a gendered lens as men and women will have very different experience.”

In relation to mothers, there were issues raised regarding childcare and the inability to work due to a lack of support, language barriers, and a lack of understanding around their rights.

“Home for Ukraine - many single mothers. Lack of network creates real problems for childcare - key barrier for integration and work. No job from 0900 till 1500. College classes not accessible during school hours (travel time in rural areas.”

## **Age**

Discussions around age were in almost every instance related to children but were quite limited. There were concerns from participants that the draft strategy did not reflect on or engage with the needs and rights with children enough. The biggest concerns were around education, language and the mental health of children, with a view that there was a lack of support in each

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<sup>11</sup> Intersectionality is an analytical framework for understanding how individuals' various social and political identities result in unique combinations of discrimination and privilege.

of these areas. There was also uncertainty around how children from different backgrounds and with different needs were being assisted.

## **Disability**

Data on disability again was quite limited and that which was discussed tended to emphasise children, who were seen to have a lack of support, with the view that there was little said about children with disabilities (or 'special needs') in the draft strategy.

## **LGBTI and gender recognition**

Only one mention was made in regard to the LGBTI community which was around sharing accommodation:

“[There should be a] place people LGBT feel comfortable [going to].”

It should be acknowledged, however, that a lack of discussion on this matter does not necessarily reflect a lack of need.

## **Evaluating the strategy document**

The draft strategy received a mixed response in terms of its message and its proposed delivery. There was a general agreement across the events that the message was ambitious, positive, inclusive, and direct - although the latter point was not a view shared by all participants. Many contributors agreed that although the message is ambitious, it needs to be supported and underpinned by funding to make it a reality. These differences are reflected in the following positive and negative categories:

### **Positives**

There was a generally positive response about the strategy as a whole. Many of the participants took pride in the fact that so much attention and consideration was being given to New Scots and how it made them feel welcomed in the country:

“Proud of strategy, proud to live in Scotland and be in a place of safety for persons who need it.”

“Strategy is aspirational and positive.”

“Strategy is very good, built on development and work over the last few years and having good reflection on how we can build.”

Specific aspects of the draft strategy such as lived-experience and the person-centred approach were especially embraced:

“Overall, very inclusive and positive - ambitious but possible - mentoring by lived experience and welcome packs again.

“Person-centred approach - not grouping or labelling people.”

## **Negatives**

### **Scepticism**

Although the strategy was viewed as generally quite positive, there were numerous instances in which individuals were sceptical about its achievability. In the majority of cases this scepticism came from concerns around resources:

“Strategy document as a whole - great to be ambitious, but it also needs to be more realistic according to current resources/policies/funding/outcomes need to be deliverable.”

There were also some issues in terms of how the existing resources were managed:

“This strategy is an essential need but perhaps consider as a framework for moving resources to target key areas rather than universal application across Scotland. Sometimes arrival support for refugees is not happening from day one.”

### **Measurability**

There was a belief from numerous participants that while the message of the draft strategy was mostly positive, it failed to set out how success was going to be achieved and measured. This was often down to a lack of clarity and how vague the language was in the document, or in relation to it being over ambitious.

### **Does not reflect the reality for New Scots**

There was a strong view from numerous participants that although the strategy claimed to support the notion of ‘rebuilding’ the lives of refugees and people seeking asylum, this claim did not reflect the reality of the situation for many New Scots. Some of the discussions in this respect mentioned the lack of support from ‘day 1’, and how after 18 months, some were still not able to ‘rebuild’ their lives, which overlapped with some of the other themes:



“After 18 months some people have not been able to learn English, be part of communities, what are their prospects of rebuilding?”

“Rebuilding lives: that may not be their truth.”

“...that people can rebuild their lives from Day 1 is an assumption.”

There were also issues in respect of how the term ‘rebuild’ was used, with some suggesting it was not ‘positive’, and that it should not be considered solely as a rebuild as this suggests they need to be ‘saved’ or that they were in some way broken which could be taken negatively, and is contrary to the idea that New Scots have something to offer Scotland:

“Issue with a deficit model/terminology - “help refugees and asylum seekers REBUILD their lives.” Implies we have to save them and that they arrive in Scotland with nothing to contribute’.”

“Rebuild has connotations of mentally broken which put people down in society.”

### **Scottish Government vs UK Government issues (devolved / reserved powers)**

Many of the participants were concerned about the difficulties in realising the strategy due to the lack of devolved powers, and the powers held at a reserved level. Many felt that UK Government is holding Scottish Government back from doing what is required to achieve the outcomes, others believed that the aims and outcomes were just not achievable at all; in many instances participants felt that the draft strategy did not elaborate on these facts enough:

“A crucial point is, due to UKG controls and separation between devolved matters, outcome No. 6 isn’t relevant to overall strategy as not in SG’s influence or power – this is a significant disparity, and the outcome is aspirational.”

“How can we apply this with people still seeking asylum who don’t have access to public funds. We have Scottish aspirations that have limitations because of devolved matters.”

Some of the most common concerns, however, were around the lack of knowledge of rights and the UK asylum system, perceived human rights violations, and the implications of these issues for New Scots:

“UK government are making asylum seeking illegal in the UK, or certainly they are making it very difficult. If the illegal migration bill passes, then the Scottish Government go against the grain with that, how will that play out? Should we just be more open about wanting a community where everyone is welcome and if people want to live here then they can live here? An international human rights-based approach.”

“Damage is done in first two weeks - SG should say to UK Gov this is against Human Rights.”

While data on this front was limited, the differences in approach were in some cases considered to have a material effect on individuals:

“We shouldn’t have to be dealing with problems caused by UK Gov. e.g. phones being taken - 3rd sector then has to provide phones. Wearing same clothes for a month, false promises and lies.”

The relationship with the UK Government and media was also a concern for participants who believed that these issues could be addressed in the strategy, and in doing so could challenge the existing negative narratives around immigration:

“Myth Busters - myths about people coming to the country - myths about services - strategy could include challenges against UK Gov approach and media demonisation - this should be directly challenged in the strategy - easily accessible challenges against myths.”

“The media narrative is very negative and a lot of this is coming from the UK government, we should maybe get SG to come out and clarify their position.”

## **Funding**

Generally, participants were concerned about the lack of funding and felt the aims were potentially over-ambitious as a result. Several participants spoke about the sudden cuts to specific funding areas:

“Huge concerns around funding or resources, as needed to provide. Community / Learning and Development around ESOL, funding has been cut.”

“Rights-based approach, nice idea, but not always deliverable. Funding cuts have killed a lot of services. Having to rely on churches for some services.”

Funding was also believed to be an issue regarding staffing and job security for those in services and roles dedicated to New Scots:

“Staff retention issues due to lack of funding security- inability to plan for future - SG are focused on Ukraine which is problematic for third sector and local authorities who aren't working with one community/ nationality.”

“Implementation gap because of a resource gap/lack of funding. We don't have the mechanisms for delivering the outcomes.”

## **Rural provisions**

Some participants were of the view that funding was not evenly distributed, and that more rural areas of the country often significantly lacked the means to provide similar or sufficient levels of support to those offered in more urban areas, particularly in areas with long established support networks:

“Try to make funding, info and support more geographically inclusive - often there are services, support that's only for central belt / or only accessible in the central belt and geared to city experience e.g. guardianship.”

“Lack of funding for smaller or rural authorities to realise these outcomes. There are big differences geographically in resources and integration.”

Many of the participants also believed that there was a lack of transport in rural areas which created further isolation:

“Not really a mention of transport. Idea of bus pass next year. Extend freedom of movement to more groups. People in more rural areas need good access. Can be quite isolating.”

“Transport is an issue - lack of local buses to get New Scots to services if placed in rural areas.”

## **Collaboration**

Most participants were positive about collaboration and partnerships in the draft strategy, as they believed it was something that has worked in the past, and was central to much of the successes within communities:

“Partnership and collaboration feels like an achievable principle which we have seen working in reality.”

“Partnership and collaboration is important in educating each other and transferring that knowledge across peers and partners.”

Some participants were specific in their response to collaboration to provide examples of where such approaches had worked well:

“Orkney partnered with City of Edinburgh Council to access their library resources app call My Libby – great collaboration.”

“Public Health Scotland - once for Scotland Approach.”

However, there were still some concerns about collaboration and the limitations in this approach:

“The partnership and collaboration can be one of the most difficult parts, at least that's my experience locally.”

“Differences (tension) within the refugee communities hinder collaboration - engage advisors.”

## **Documents and information**

There was a general view that accessible information was at times extremely unorganised and unhelpful or otherwise entirely unavailable. There were some mixed responses regarding how this should be handled, with some suggestions that face-to-face or in-person information sharing was better than information provided online or in print, with others suggesting the contrary. However, some of the strongest themes to emerge in this respect were in relation to suggestions around the creation of a universal or centralised directory:

“Need a partners New Scots Network - online directory - who does what - New Scots connect map - not funded.”

“Need a universal directory.”

“No centralised power - 'pillar to post' Hubs were good but could be better supported eventually disbanded. No central place for info - create stability. 24 hour helpline?”

## **Culture and identity**

Culture and identity were important themes that re-appeared across the events. In some cases, these overlapped with the idea of the ‘New Scots’ identity<sup>12</sup> but were relevant mostly in relation to building communities, assimilation, integration and challenging racism.

## **Building community**

Most participants agreed that the wording in the draft strategy around communities was positive. Participants took pride in the idea of ‘integrated’ and ‘inclusive’ communities. However, it was generally viewed that there should be more support for community hubs and other such places:

“Give time to local churches to set up coffee morning, make connection in community.”

“Community Hubs - space for local community to get together.”

“One stop shop- hub where people can go for Maybe more funding for community hubs - Some areas have access/ difficulties in rural areas + outside central belt.”

There was some limited scepticism around this approach as some felt that their own culture would be considered as secondary:

“Integrating into intercultural communities can be a big challenge depending on local population/socio-economic factors – e.g. Orkney is not a diverse community therefore it doesn’t apply in the same way there and Syrian families have not been able to integrate as there aren’t enough of them to create something meaningful.”

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<sup>12</sup> Addressed in the overarching themes section.

“Inclusive, intercultural communities - many people think it is assimilation but should be able to keep identity.”

### **Integration<sup>13</sup>**

Participants across the events largely believed that integration must be worked on by all sides involved. This includes New Scots themselves, the receiving population and the Government. Some of the ways in which they felt this could be done was through education and cultural exchange:

“Education community as a whole - more collaboration in schools, more funding for ESOL!! More sports culturally rooted!”

“'Integration intercultural' - needs tidied up - two way is good - integration is intercultural - exchange of culture.”

Some participants considered other ways to try and encourage participation and interest from all sides, which included the introduction of a New Scots Tartan, and shared community events that would show the positives of such cultural exchange:

“Like the idea of wider stakeholder engagement, bring in different voices, including asylum seekers' voices, different to persons with refugee status.”

“Talk up the positive narrative of what refugees can offer - using media, events like Refugee Festival Scotland to communicate/ deliver a positive message.”

There remained however a lot of concerns around the media and the issues this created for New Scots which was why there had to be a nation-wide counter narrative:

“Lack of knowledge causes fear, strategy needs to do more to engage the general public to challenge the narrative in the media.”

“the narrative in the media just now is overly negative, and as part of the strategy we need to have something that addresses that so that the general public have a more balanced view and more understanding. A lot of the emphasis is on people arriving

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<sup>13</sup> Recommendations on integration are available in the relevant section at the bottom of the document.

in the country and integrating, we need to look at the other side and think how do we support the general public to be welcoming.”

### **Tackling racism**

There was a strong feeling across the groups that racism had to be challenged far more effectively in Scotland. Some participants felt the draft strategy did not do enough to reflect this and were quite vocal in their opinions on this matter, and how it could be addressed:

“Need to address racism and acknowledge the difference of experience of people based on their visible differences.”

“Going into schools - key to have in schools - starts at school.”

“Item 4 should directly link to anti-racism policies in Scotland. The responsibility shouldn't be on the New Scots, but Government and Communities.”

### **Engagement events experience**

Regarding the events themselves, there were very few comments recorded and in discussion with facilitators and note-takers, general feelings from participants at many tables on the day were broadly positive. This suggests that a significant caveat should be provided regarding the data captured here as it is not of sufficient weight to be considered generalisable. However, for those who did make comments that were captured, the sentiments were particularly negative and pessimistic:

“Involvement isn't big enough - it's not enough to invite people along once and ask a few questions.”

“It's not good enough to have people along to rubber stamp something at the end.”

### **Other feedback**

The Community Learning and Development Standards Council provided a response, separate to the engagement events, regarding integration in the draft strategy. They suggested:

“The current draft strategy references education in both its principles and outcomes however there is no mention of

accessing ESOL as a critical part of integration. We assume that the right to access learning opportunities to develop an individual's English language skills will come under the banner of education, however we strongly urge that this strategy separates education and language acquisition and specifies the right to English tuition for all ages. Without these specified principles and outcomes, the achievement of an "education outcome" may only be recognised through provision for young people in schools. If this is the case, the vital need for community and college based ESOL for older aged refugees and people seeking asylum will not be recognised and therefore not funded."<sup>14</sup>

## Community consultation events analysis

Analysis of the community consultation events followed a broadly similar methodology to the framework engagement events. Responses were gathered from the various events and collated in an excel spreadsheet. Preliminary coding was done to extract key statements related to the provided questions and build a series of themes across each of the questions. This initial coding was further refined by the research team with similar thematic areas grouped into a more concise set of broad, overarching themes. This refinement resulted in the identification of 27 distinct overarching themes. Each theme was validated for consistency and detailed with direct participant quotes to ensure they accurately reflected community input and were directly linked to the questions posed, providing a comprehensive synthesis of local and national integration efforts. This structured approach not only highlighted current successes but has also, more importantly, pinpointed areas needing improvement and suggested further actions.

The thematic findings from both questions 1 and 2 have been merged into the 27 themes detailed below. The questions were posed, with their prompts, as detailed below:

**Question 1:** In your community, local authority area, region, what are organisations (local authorities, public bodies, charities, refugee and community groups) currently doing well that contribute to supporting your integration?

How could these be improved?

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<sup>14</sup> CLD Standards Council Scotland Response to Consultation, New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy, 20th December 2023, p5.



What further actions need to happen locally?

**Question 2:** Thinking about the New Scots Partnership (Scottish Government, Council of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and Scottish Refugee Council) and other national organisations – what are the positive things they are doing to support your community?

How could these be built on?

What further actions are needed at a national level?

## **Thematic findings from questions 1 and 2**

### **Funding**

The comments reveal a significant desire for increased and better-targeted funding to support refugee activities and integration services. Participants specifically mentioned the lack of accessible funding for volunteers and small community organisations which directly impacted their ability to conduct meaningful events and support vulnerable individuals. There was also frustration about the distribution of funds, suggesting that more resources should be allocated to grassroots initiatives rather than predominantly to larger institutions. A recurring suggestion was for longer-term funding commitments that provide stability to programs aiding refugees, particularly in education and community development.

Participants also raised a perceived inequity, with rural areas often underfunded compared to urban counterparts. Suggestions included the desire for a more equitable distribution system that can enhance service provision in under-supported regions, potentially improving outcomes for refugees and people seeking asylum across diverse geographic locations.

"Funding should be sufficient for activities that support the integration and mental health of refugees."

"There is still less funding for the activities that support refugee and asylum seeker issues."

"The New Scots strategy is great but needs to come with some source of funding support for community organisations like ours."

"Charities are the main source of support for a lot of people, but don't get any money from the Scottish Government."

“One concern about the New Scots Refugee Strategy is the need for more information about how the plan will go to resources. For us, a Strategy with funding attached to it is a good use of time, and we would like to ask the Scottish Government to announce how it will resource the strategy and how frontline service providers will be supported to implement the new plan.”

“Some parts of Glasgow City get better support on that point than other [areas in Scotland] which makes it unequal.

## **Agency and representation**

Participants expressed a desire for greater involvement in decision-making processes affecting their lives. They advocated for direct participation in the design and implementation of integration strategies, which they believe should be informed by those who live the experience. Many participants suggest that New Scots should be involved at all levels of governance and planning, ensuring that policies are not only inclusive but also effectively address the real needs of the refugee populations.

There was an awareness that loss of agency was a problem both for New Scots and for receiving communities who did not necessarily choose to have new people in their community.

"We need to be involved in the decisions about policies affecting us, not just consulted."

"It is vital that refugees themselves can contribute to the policy-making that impacts their lives."

"Having refugees in leadership roles within organisations that serve us can make a huge difference in understanding our needs."

“Ensuring inclusion of local community residents so that local skills and resources can be pooled. If local residents feel and are included in decision making stages, surely a 2-way integration process will be more successful. This could help counter the issue of resistance to change within host communities.”

## **Health**

Healthcare accessibility emerged as a critical issue, with many participants detailing encounters with systemic barriers to obtaining adequate care. This

included a lack of mental health support, the challenge of navigating health services without sufficient language assistance, and perceived discrimination within healthcare settings. Participants stressed the importance of culturally sensitive health provision that acknowledges their specific health histories and current needs, suggesting that integration strategies include the provision of more interpreters and training for healthcare providers to better understand and respect cultural differences in health practices.

"Not every asylum seeker or refugee is lucky enough to fall in an area where good quality health services are provided with support in their language."

"Health services treat us like we are not human, they are disrespectful and they don't trust us."

"There is a huge negative impact on asylum seekers who are unable to access mental health services due to long waiting lists."

## **Education**

Educational challenges were highlighted extensively, with a focus on the need for better recognition of international qualifications and more support for English language learning. Participants pointed out that children and adults alike face significant delays in school and college enrolments due to administrative hurdles. Participants suggested more comprehensive educational support that facilitates quicker integration into the school system and addresses the specific learning needs of refugee students, including additional language tuition and recognition of prior learning and qualifications. Specific topics included the right to education, access to education, language barriers, bullying in school, and the lack of culturally appropriate food in schools. There was a sense that schools are under pressure and turning away students. Participants also mentioned instances of racism within schools which need to be addressed.

"The educational opportunities should be given to New Scots in terms of apprenticeships so they can advance academically."

"I was told as an asylum seeker I can't do a full time course but education is a human right."

"The right to education, access to education, language barriers, bullying in school, lack of halal food in schools. Schools under pressure and turning away students."

“I was told my son can’t attend our local school as it would cause overcrowding and they would have to employ an extra teacher.”

“[We need to] ensure involvement of refugees and asylum seekers and teachers in the design of course material and resources, informed by best practice examples internationally, for all pupils in schools to help aid integration for asylum and refugee pupils.”

“The school do not provide halal food. We’ve been there for 6 months and we’ve asked many times for halal food. We just have to eat tuna every day and we’re sick of it. We have given up hoping they will provide some halal food.”

“I was told they would give me money to go and buy halal food and prepare it myself to bring to school. But the shops that sell halal food are very far away and it is so expensive.”

## **Employment**

Employment was identified as a vital component of successful integration, yet New Scots and supporting organisations reported facing multiple obstacles in gaining meaningful employment. These included not only language barriers and unrecognised qualifications but also a lack of targeted job training programs that align with New Scots’ skills and professional backgrounds. The responses suggested a need for policies that allow easier access to work permits and job opportunities such as bridging programs that facilitate the transition into the local job market and support services that help in translating qualifications into locally recognised credentials. Many participants reported that more needs to be done to support people seeking asylum who are currently excluded from the workforce.

"Many asylum seekers are qualified, they just need training to work in their career."

"Employment opportunities should be created specifically for New Scots to encourage them to take part in training and the labour market."

“Employment and welfare – statutory restrictions on rights to work has an impact of people who are keen to work but have to meet the required immigration status. If people can’t work, this leads them to seek illegal work which puts new Scots at risk of exploitation. This also applies to those have good levels of

education but do not have locally recognised qualification or work experience in the UK. Opportunities for training are very few.”

## **Community & integration**

Integration into local communities was discussed in terms of the need for supportive environments that facilitate cultural exchanges and mutual understanding. Participants expressed a desire for more community centres, local events, and programs that encourage interaction between refugees and host communities.

"Community groups should continue to receive funding from the Scottish Government to provide skills development."

"Integration is not a one-way street; how to promote this from different angles within the community needs consideration."

“Social isolation and the desire of refugees and asylum seekers to connect to people in the communities they are settling in. This included the challenge of building friendships and social networks, particularly for people in the asylum process, people living in rural areas, women, disabled people and people in the LGBTI community.”

"Open up funding opportunities and sharing information to people in the communities."

## **Support (financial & legal)**

The lack of comprehensive financial and legal support was a recurring theme in the responses. Participants detailed difficulties in accessing sufficient legal representation, particularly in asylum cases, and expressed a need for more financial assistance programs that address the immediate needs of newly arrived individuals. Suggestions included the establishment of more advisory services that can provide both legal and financial guidance tailored to the unique situations of New Scots as well as the provision of better guidance through asylum and residency applications.

"Help us become self-employed - who can help us, what loans / grants could we have?"

"There should be sufficient resources for legal support as many refugees struggle to navigate the complex legal system."

"Financial support should be tailored to the specific needs of refugees, taking into account their unique circumstances."

### **Services (access to, coordination, etc...) and lack of information**

Participants reported frustration with the fragmented nature of services available to them, citing a lack of coordination among service providers and insufficient information on how to access necessary support. They called for a more integrated approach to service provision, with better communication and information sharing among agencies. This included the need for centralised information resources that can guide refugees through the complexities of services ranging from healthcare to housing and employment. The lack of information or the lack of co-ordinated information was the single largest concern, with requests for one-stop shops, joined up information at the point of arrival, and better linkages across service providers.

"There is some support we see available which is a good step in [the] right direction. Further funding to continue the support of national services."

"More funding and resources needed for organisations/councils that are supporting New Scots."

"There is a need to circulate information clearly about services available for communities by increasing awareness about the support available through joint hubs/ portals and Networks between organisations. Moreover, Collaboration and coordination is crucial between local communities in each area, local councils can also be involved in the process. This can be achieved by reaching out to the new Scots or by providing them the information needed on how to contact them."

"Home Office should proactively contact third sector services 'on call' to advocate / explain / accompany people on arrival. E.g. Contact LGBT Health and Wellbeing when someone is claiming asylum because of LGBT"

### **Languages and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)**

The critical importance of language acquisition was underscored in many responses. Participants emphasised the need for expanded English language

training opportunities and the provision of language services that can assist them in their daily interactions with institutions and community members. There was a particular call for language support in administrative and healthcare settings, where language barriers can significantly impact the quality of service received.

Participants also requested education in source-community languages and better support for different sections of the community such as elderly people or secondary school students.

“Diversified Language Curriculum: Introduce a more diverse and effective curriculum for teaching English, exploring different methods to enhance language learning in a short time.

“Incorporate Mother Language Studies: Provide opportunities for individuals to study and maintain proficiency in their mother languages, alongside English education.”

“Enhanced English Education: Improve the quality of English education in schools to ensure better language acquisition.”

“Cultural Understanding: Implement programs that facilitate cultural understanding, recognising the importance of language proficiency in building connections.”

“Some major languages of New Scots could be taught in schools in the same way Spanish, German and other languages are taught.”

## **Cultures**

Cultural integration was seen by participants as being key to the successful settlement of refugees. The responses suggested that more should be done to celebrate cultural diversity within communities, including through cultural festivals, events, and educational programs that foster a deeper understanding of different cultural backgrounds. Participants advocated for initiatives that encourage cultural expression and promote intercultural dialogue.

"Education in cultural differences! - This was a theme that came up throughout the meeting when speaking about instances of injustice and discrimination."

"It was proposed that a group of New Scots could be trained up to provide cultural difference training for different professions."

"Teach people about other cultures. People should learn about the cultures of New Scots"

## **Digital access**

Digital inclusion was recognised as essential for enabling New Scots to access services, seek information, and participate fully in society. The lack of access to digital technology is seen as a barrier to education, employment, and social interaction. Suggestions include providing New Scots with the necessary technology and training to navigate digital platforms effectively.

When services move online, that does not in itself guarantee accessibility; some participants reported that it was actually harder to use forms or request support online, as there was no one there to help with translations or explanations, and the language was often bureaucratic or obscure.

"Digital access is crucial for us to keep in touch with our families and access services online."

"New Scots need to be able to access digital services. Need to train them and give them access so they can."

"We need more support in getting access to the internet and learning how to use digital tools effectively."

## **Housing**

This was the second-most commented topic at the community consultation events. Participants raised concerns about inappropriate housing conditions, abusive landlords, long waits for housing, unfit housing, cold, damp, hotels, and unavailability of large enough houses.

Stable and appropriate housing was frequently mentioned as a foundational need for New Scots. The responses highlighted issues with the adequacy of housing provided, the accessibility of housing support, inadequate repairs and the discrimination faced by refugees in the housing market.



There was also, however, acknowledgement that local authorities have played a key role in facilitating access to essential services including housing and that this has been very positive.

"Immigrant students' families are not allowed to rent council housing (no access to public funds). I recommend that this policy be improved upon by allowing immigrants' family to have access to public funds/council housing."

"Acknowledged for their pivotal role, local authorities facilitate access to essential services such as housing, healthcare, and education. Their proactive approach in addressing specific refugee needs, from overcoming language barriers to providing legal assistance, has been instrumental in laying a strong foundation for successful integration."

"More housing is needed in Edinburgh. Some participants are also living in housing that is too small for their needs."

"Repairs to housing should be done to a better standard. Help to deal with bad neighbours is particularly needed."

"Our homes are very cold in the winter; we are only receiving Universal Credit and cannot afford to keep our homes and our children warm."

## **Safety & security**

Safety and security emerged as significant concerns, with participants detailing experiences of feeling unsafe and encountering hostility within their communities. They advocated for more protective measures and community policing strategies that address their specific vulnerabilities and promote a safer living environment. There were several comments around (1) fraud within communities – for example, translators representing themselves as lawyers (2) worries about dangerous neighbourhoods (3) bullying (4) coercion from landlords or housing authorities. Also, some participants reported that authorities in general and police in particular were not always perceived as a source of security or wellbeing.

"There should be improved safety measures in areas where refugees are housed to prevent incidents of violence and harassment."

"Security concerns are significant, especially for families with young children in less secure accommodations."

"We need assurance from local authorities that our safety is a priority and will be actively monitored."

"We don't know who we can trust...I'm scared of police (hostile response at airport on arrival). I don't want to have anything to do with them."

"there are many drug addicts living [where we are], who often behave extremely inappropriately, so the police is a frequent guest in our district. Also, I see drug addicts in the same place under the windows every day looking for apparently hidden drugs. This creates an even more unhealthy atmosphere. Also, due to the behaviour of ill-mannered teenagers and drug addicts, it is sometimes scary, because they destroy everything in their path if they don't like something, and just to have fun, too. It is not very safe to return home late if the situation calls for it."

"On the issue of housing, what I think could be improved is the way the people who are foreigners are segregated and not being offered accommodation despite meeting all the criteria by landlords and housing." "There is still discrimination and non-integration in Universities and colleges, there is a need of raising awareness about refugees and asylum seekers."

## **Discrimination**

Participants called for stronger anti-discrimination policies and more effective enforcement of existing laws to protect New Scots from bias and prejudicial treatment.

"Children of asylum seekers and refugees are still suffering from racism within schools."

"Discrimination is a daily reality for many of us, whether in jobs, housing, or public places."

"There needs to be more done to educate the public about refugees to reduce instances of discrimination."

"Anti-discrimination laws should be strictly enforced, and we should be informed about how to report and proceed in cases of discrimination."

"I have been called names at school because I wear hijab, the girls kept asking me to take it off. I cry when this happens. My religion is important to me."

"Anti-Racism Education should be a priority. Conduct awareness programs for police and educational staff to address racism and biased behaviour."

## **Families and children**

The specific needs of families and children were highlighted, particularly the challenges faced by New Scots in schools and the impact of resettlement on family dynamics. The importance of family reunification was stressed, along with the need for targeted support services that address the educational and emotional needs of children. The need for childcare was raised many times. Emphasis was also placed on single-parents as they faced compounded challenges and barriers.

"Support for families is crucial, especially those with children who need stable schooling and healthcare."

"Programs for children, like after-school clubs or sports, are important for their integration and development."

"There should be specific support services for single-parent families who face unique challenges."

## **Transport**

Transport accessibility was identified as a barrier to integration, affecting New Scots' ability to access employment, education, and services. Suggestions included subsidised transport options for New Scots and better integration of transport planning in resettlement programs. Many participants suggested the introduction of free transport for refugees and people seeking asylum, complaining that it was impossible to meet legal obligations or seek work without access to transport.

"Affordable transport is essential for us to get to work, appointments, and social engagements."

"Public transportation options are not always accessible from refugee accommodations, which isolates us."

"Subsidised transport passes for refugees would be a significant aid in our daily lives."

"Transport is what we need access to! Especially for people that have to report to the Home Office."

### **Skills recognition**

Participants highlighted that the non-recognition of international qualifications and skills is a significant barrier to employment for many New Scots. They expressed a need for more robust skills assessment frameworks that would recognise and utilise their professional capabilities and facilitate smoother integration into the workforce.

"My qualifications are not recognised here, which forces me into jobs that do not use my skills or education."

"There needs to be a system in place to assess and recognise the skills and qualifications of refugees quickly."

"Recognition of our skills would allow for better job placements and contribute to the economy more effectively."

"If we want Scotland to progress make the most of the Ukrainian talents sitting wasting away in hotels!!"

"So many people come with qualifications and asylum systems deteriorate knowledge, skills, experience. Is it possible to enable professional placements?"

### **Systems and processes**

The complexity of systems and processes that New Scots must navigate was reported as a major source of stress and confusion. Some participants advocated for the simplification of administrative procedures, particularly those related to asylum applications, residency, and access to services.

"The bureaucracy is overwhelming, especially when you're new and still learning the language."

"Clearer, simplified processes for accessing services and applying for documents would greatly help."

"There should be a one-stop-shop for all our needs in the first few months, where we can get help with all the paperwork."

### **Green spaces, sport, and environment**

The role of green spaces and sports in promoting mental and physical health was recognised. Participants appreciated the availability of such resources but called for more inclusive and accessible community sports programs and environmental initiatives that encourage participation from all community members. Several participants asked for days out, trips to explore Scotland, summer camps for kids and opportunities for women, in particular to go outside and explore green spaces. Some participants raised concerns about not being able to play outside in Scottish weather and highlighted a need for indoor play spaces. Some participants reported that the neighbourhoods where New Scots were resettled often had few parks and the parks were "rough", with hazards such as discarded needles and exposed rubbish.

"Access to green spaces and sports facilities is important for our physical and mental health."

"Environmental initiatives that involve the community can also be a great way for us to feel part of the society."

"We appreciate the parks and recreational areas, but more organised sports activities for refugees would be beneficial."

"Access and opportunity to sport for New Scots especially professional sports has been challenging due to a cultural difference and understanding of the game football in particular."

### **Charities**

The work of charities was highly valued, but many participants suggested greater support and funding for these organisations. Participants felt that charities often provide critical services that are not adequately covered by government programs.

"Charities play a crucial role in providing services that the government does not cover."

"We rely heavily on charity shops for affordable necessities, and they also offer volunteering opportunities."

"Funding for charities should be increased as they are often on the front lines of support for refugees."

## **Faith groups**

Faith groups were mentioned as important support networks for many refugees, providing not just spiritual support but also practical assistance. There was a recognition of the need to better integrate these efforts with other community support mechanisms to enhance the overall support system available to New Scots.

"Faith groups provide not just spiritual support but also practical help and a sense of community."

"Interfaith activities could help integrate the community and promote understanding."

"Support for faith-based initiatives is important as they help maintain our cultural and religious practices."

## **Urban/Rural**

Differences in the availability and quality of services between urban and rural areas were raised, with rural New Scots reporting particular challenges in accessing support. Increased focus on improving services in rural areas was suggested to ensure equitable support across different geographies.

Participants with lived experience residing in areas outside of the big cities often remarked on the cumulative effect of the lack of services – in terms of travel, childcare, education, and employment which they felt made it more difficult for them to progress. At the same time, some participants living in Aberdeen or the Central Belt felt they were housed in undesirable neighbourhoods which were unsafe.

"I have four children, and it's difficult for me to integrate if I cannot find a job. I have time while my children are in nursery

and school, and then I can work. But to find a job with such a schedule is difficult in our small town where we live. But I really want to find a job and start a new life in Scotland.”

“Community projects in places where asylum seekers live (MIN or other charities can be far for people living outside of Glasgow)”

“Living in a small town is difficult, I want to move to Glasgow or Inverness, where there are other people who look like me. Where I live now, everyone stares at me.” (UASC)

"Living in rural areas can be isolating due to fewer services and less diversity."

"Urban areas have better services but also more competition and higher costs of living."

"Policies should consider the unique challenges and opportunities in both urban and rural settings for refugees."

## **Trauma**

The impact of trauma on New Scots’ mental health and integration was profoundly acknowledged in the feedback received. Many participants felt that there was a need for mental health services that are specifically designed to address the complex traumas experienced by refugees, including specialised counselling and support programs.

Trauma was explicitly mentioned in a number of responses, but more generally it was reported that isolation in hotels, lack of community, and hostile interactions with lawyers, police, housing officials, and Home Office officials created a sense of discomfort and insecurity that prevented people with lived experience from effectively recovering from whatever prior trauma they had endured.

"Many of us come with heavy traumas and need psychological support to deal with past and current stresses."

"Counselling services should be readily available and equipped to handle the specific traumas of refugees."

"Workshops on dealing with trauma and stress management should be part of regular support for new arrivals."

“Participants [at our table] share concerns about feeling uneasy around the police and observe differential treatment by teachers. They suggest educating the police on appropriate conduct.”

“Police involvement causes immediate fear, it's handled like seeking asylum is illegal! The treatment is terrible. All luggage and treatment reinforces this”

## **Disability**

The additional challenges faced by New Scots with disabilities were highlighted, as was a need for more tailored support services that address both their status as New Scots and their specific disability-related needs. Support for disability came up in relation to housing, specifically the provision of housing that is adapted for disabled New Scots.

"Refugees with disabilities face even greater challenges and need tailored support."

"Accessibility should be a priority in all refugee accommodations and services."

"There should be specific programs addressing the needs of disabled refugees to ensure they receive proper care and opportunities."

“All this services will not only be for children but for anyone who is in need, we have mothers who struggle with autistic children, and all sorts of challenges and no one helps them they are completely alone.”

“I kindly request that they pay more attention to the issues my family is suffering from, because I have three disabled individuals in my family, and particularly because none of us can speak English, we encounter difficulties in housing, employment, training and education.”

## **Gender**

Gender-specific challenges were recognised, particularly the unique vulnerabilities faced by women and LGBTQ+ New Scots. Responses called for gender-sensitive policies and programs that address the specific risks and needs of these groups. There were a number of comments specifically around



the risks around dealing with lawyers who are not friendly to LGBTQI+ New Scots. Several participants asked for more culturally sensitive, or completely separate, female-only facilities for sport and leisure, as well as support for childcare so that women can access education. There were also requests for protection and support for women in case of relationship breakdown or as a result of domestic violence.

"Women need to be able to access services to support them if or when they feel they no longer wish to be in a relationship with their husbands or partners."

"There are not as many, or enough groups and organisation set out to support men like there are to support women."

"Women refugees often face more significant challenges and risks, needing targeted support."

"Gender-specific health and safety programs are essential to address the unique vulnerabilities of women and LGBTQ+ refugees."

"There should be safe spaces and support networks specifically for women and LGBTQ+ individuals among the refugee community."

## **Youth and elderly**

The distinct needs of young and elderly New Scots were raised, alongside requests for age-appropriate services and programs. For young people, there was an emphasis on education and employment opportunities, while for the elderly, the focus was on social inclusion and accessible healthcare.

"Youth need education and engagement activities to keep them integrated and hopeful about their future."

"Elderly refugees often feel neglected and need more attention in terms of healthcare and social activities."

"Programs should be age-sensitive, addressing the specific needs of both younger and older refugees."

"I'm 58 years old, and it's difficult for me to study language. I have health issues. Without language, it's difficult to find a job, especially in a small town where you don't have a car to get to

the future job. Even with the support of interpreters, it is difficult to find a common language with a GP.”

“the older generation are isolated and lonely if only there was a place where they can have their own safe place to be ..”

### **Examples of good practice**

Several participants provided examples of programs and initiatives that have successfully supported New Scots’ integration. These examples were cited as models that could be replicated or expanded, including community partnerships, employment programs, and cultural integration initiatives.

“The resettlement team has been instrumental in helping with integration. Their remarkable service and assistance in settling better should continue.”

“Effective Initiatives - Support from various organisations, including the Scottish Refugee Council, Ukrainian societies, and university bodies.”

"Programs that successfully integrate refugees should be highlighted and replicated."

"Sharing best practices among organisations can lead to better service provision and integration strategies."

"Learning from what works well is crucial for improving our approach to helping refugees settle and thrive in new environments."

### **Thematic findings from question 3**

The thematic findings from question 3 (detailed below) are presented separately as this question focused on specific actions that could be taken to improve the situation for New Scots. Alongside the thematic findings specific actions raised by the participants relevant to each theme have also been raised.

**Question 3:** Based on your discussions above, if your community could choose only one action that the Scottish Government could deliver to improve their lives, what would that action be?

There are two important points to note regarding responses to this question:

- a. Many responses indicate that many participants did not understand which powers are devolved and which reserved in relation to the needs of New Scots. This is particularly relevant for theme 13 (safety and security) and 18 (systems and processes).
- b. Rights – access to information about rights, upholding rights, understanding rights – was a cross-cutting topic across all thematic areas.

## **Funding**

Lack of sustainable, long-term funding was flagged by many participants as a key problem, leading to organisations working with refugees and people seeking asylum often relying on short-term funding to run initiatives and projects.

Funding was also an important factor in supporting communities and integration with New Scots, with responses underlining the importance of:

“Active participation in community development projects with available funding to enhance positive values and support right objectives.”

According to participants, key recommendations for action include:

- Allocate additional funding and resources to improve access to tailored support services for asylum seekers and refugees: for example, establish business start-up funding for refugee communities and core funding for ESOL and mental health support for New Scots
- Deliver Scottish Government funding at a local authority and local community level

## **Agency and representation**

The need for greater representation of New Scots was raised very often. Many participants raised the lack of representation of New Scots in decision making structures in many different areas as an area for improvement. People pointed out that New Scots are experts, people with lived experience who would bring great knowledge and improvement to policies and services:

“Refugees know their need and their voices should be heard”.

Participants suggested the following key recommendations for action:

- New Scots should be embedded into drafting policies, planning, and the decision-making process of national bodies from the beginning stages - (including Scottish Government) who support inclusion, diversity and equality.
- Amplify the voices of refugees in decision-making processes and policy development, ensuring that their perspectives, experiences, and aspirations inform the design and implementation of initiatives aimed at supporting their integration and well-being

## **Health**

People reported insufficient access to dental care, and difficulty in accessing GPs and other health services due to language barriers. The great majority of responses spoke of the high levels of need and the scarcity of provision to support the mental health support of New Scots. This impacted on many areas of people’s lives:

“mental health issues, anxiety issues, breakdown of relationships, lack of trust, stress and depression, lack of confidence, fear, discomfort, confusion, challenging behaviour”

Many responses expressed, in different ways, the need for the following actions:

- Need to raise awareness about mental health issues among asylum seekers, refugees and their families.
- Understanding of health and wellbeing needs and experiences by service providers to enable them to meet the needs of refugees and people seeking asylum. This includes increased awareness and training on trauma informed practice, as well as broader issues such as the impact of social isolation and racism.
- More therapy with shorter waiting times

## Education

Responses connected to education were divided into two broad categories: actions to support the education of New Scots so they could flourish in Scotland, and actions to support the education of agencies and communities in Scotland so they could understand the needs of New Scots.

The first category of actions suggested related mostly to removing inequalities and other barriers to accessing higher education:

- The Government should support individuals within the asylum system to have the same access to higher education as other people.
- Support better communication (especially translation) between education settings and parents to help them understand the Scottish education system.
- Help colleges to work more closely with community service providers.

With regards to primary education, people said that there was a need for:

- More “support in schools or bullying policies”.
- “schools to have students ‘buddy up’ [to support New Scots]”.

Many people were keen on courses for New Scots to learn about their rights:

- Rights Course for New Scots: Create a course where New Scots can learn about all their rights in Scotland.

A great deal of responses also indicated the need to engage in the education of receiving communities regarding the needs and cultures of New Scots and what can support them. Actions suggested in this regard include:

- Yearly National conferences aimed at showcasing [...] contributions of New Scots, and promoting general understanding.
- Professional learning for health workers and services who haven’t worked with new Scots before.

- Scottish Government to put the topic of asylum and refugees into the curriculum of excellence so children can learn about diversity and how to live (accept people coming to live here in Scotland).

## **Employment**

This theme gathered a great number of responses, most of which came down to the need for permission to work for asylum seekers and all expressed the same urgent need for action:

“Change the law - let me work!”

To alleviate the frustration and deskilling stemming from the fact that people seeking asylum are not currently allowed to work, actions suggested included:

- Support volunteering more: Ideally a dedicated resource to support with volunteering (especially for people seeking asylum). Align with the volunteering action plan.

To support New Scots in gaining employment, people suggested the following actions:

- The policy can further integrate ways to provide onsite job training [...] similar to apprenticeship programs to support people seeking asylum and refugees transition from unemployment to being productive citizens.
- Allow people seeking asylum to do the jobs that they are skilled in from their home.
- Local employment opportunities for members from the group as a way of promoting integration, connections and general understanding.

## **Community & integration**

Actions suggested for this theme included supporting community education related to New Scots and their needs:

- [Support] more awareness within the wider community.

- Support receiving communities as well as New Scots in the work of integration.

Many people suggested having hubs around to help New Scots to integrate, with the Scottish Government supporting places where New Scots communities can meet and also encounter receiving communities:

- To create hubs that would help with settling in local areas: consulting with finding housing and work, language courses, consulting on the organisation of leisure for parents and children. Space for people to gather 2-3 times per week to communicate, exchange information, groups by interest.

Further actions suggested included:

- Strengthen partnerships with local communities, civil society organisations, and grassroots initiatives to leverage collective resources, expertise, and support networks in promoting refugee integration and fostering social cohesion at the grassroots level.
- Support ESOL provision in communities: People newly arrived in Scotland are expected to integrate, however without language skills this is largely impossible.

Housing was also seen as particularly important:

- “[access to suitable accommodation is] fundamental for refugees' stability and successful integration into the community.”

### **Support (financial & legal)**

This theme was strongly represented in many responses. Participants reported that New Scots often have limited advice support provisions and no access to legal aid and information. Furthermore, financial support is non-existent or extremely minimal:

“The money we get is not enough, it is only enough to survive.”

Further actions suggested included:

- Provide legal advice and support.
- Enhance financial support for people seeking asylum without the right to work.

Suggestions also included drawing on the knowledge and lived experience of New Scots to support other New Scots through financial and legal difficulties:

- Support newly set up charities by lived-experienced refugees [so] that they can pass their skills and expertise to newly arrived people seeking asylum, and better develop the bespoke support required.

### **Services and lack of information**

People expressed the need to be informed of their rights (to employment, education, healthcare etc) and opportunities, and stated that unfortunately in many cases access to services and information about services was inadequate or lacking. Access to services and information about services was understood as being strongly linked to integration and supporting the agency of New Scots. Many responses stressed that New Scots should be given the platform and opportunity to understand their rights, responsibilities and the right information for them to live independently. Actions suggested included:

- Improve awareness of services (that are designed to aid individuals finding their feet).
- [Provide] unified list of local services for arriving people.
- Advice in self-employment and how to start [their] own business here in Scotland.

Suggestions for specific information courses for New Scots were repeatedly made including:

- Workshops for adults on Scottish rules and laws, regulations, cultural differences, educational system and options available to New Scots when faced with discrimination or if they are a victim of a crime.



- More advice and guidance in the job centres related to the benefits an individual is entitled rather than to frame the information into just commitment to work without explanation or guidance leaving the refugees in a full darkness of how the system works.

## **Languages and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)**

The vast majority of people were aware of the importance of improving their English in order to be able to access education and/or the job market.

Languages and ESOL were also connected to integration. Suggested actions for this theme were divided into two broad categories: those related to ESOL learning, and those related to languages beyond just English.

Regarding engagement with ESOL, responses indicated that access to classes was complicated by New Scots struggling with mental health and uncertainty over their status. Literacy is an issue in some communities, and this affects ESOL provision, with some New Scots not reportedly not literate in their own language. Suggestions to improve ESOL provision in order to meet the specific needs of New Scots include:

- [New Scots community language] teachers for ESOL [...] due to difficulty communicating with native English speakers (basic level learners)
- English for Kids and Teens
- Evening school to learn the English language for those who work full time, and the provision of language courses focused on certain professions.
- Increasing the number of language teaching hours
- Structured opportunity for organisations to communicate e.g. ESOL network.
- Develop educational resources on refugee rights for ESOL learners, the public etc.

Beyond just English, responses related to language raised the issue of bureaucratic and policy 'jargon' which is a language many New Scots find very difficult to access. Participants suggested that:

- Government should focus more on better policy making and easier to understand without using big jargons and sentences that complicates the public.
- Policy makers should understand that not everyone holds a high level of language skills. Words used in policy should be easy to understand.

Participants indicated that for some community languages in particular it is very difficult to find interpreters. Suggestions therefore included:

- Increase translation and interpreting particularly for specific hard-to-find languages.

Translation and interpreting was seen as especially important to access services - and to make consultations meaningful and representative. Actions suggested included:

- [Make more] translations and interpreters [...] available.
- [Support} More services and healthcare providers [to] use interpreters. Social work should use them more.
- Create more accessible and translated information/documents – from housing application forms to school forms.

The language used more widely across society to talk about New Scots was highlighted as crucial to dignity and equality. Participants suggested that the Scottish Government should work to:

- [...] challenge some of the racist and derogatory language and discussion had in media for example – 'stop the yachts not the boats'.

Specific language needs, other than ESOL, generated suggestions for actions such as:

- Support in accessing BSL (link to Disability theme)

- Do the driving theory test in people's own language (link to Transport theme)

Community languages were also seen as something that needs to be maintained and a desirable skill, with participants making the following suggestions for action the Scottish Government could take in this regard:

- Add Arabic to the available options to study at school. This would enable them to be able to receive another SQA qualification for their C.V.
- [Support] Ukrainian Sunday school with state accreditation, [teaching] Ukrainian language and literature, history and culture of Ukraine, etc.

## **Cultures**

Participants expressed the importance of culture in many different aspects of life. These ranged from daily living arrangements related to housing and food to the broader need of enhancing community engagement and social connections through culturally sensitive programs and activities. Suggested actions included:

- [supporting] Opportunities for the New Scots to promote their diverse culture and integrate and engage in the community should be made available.
- Promoting cultural understanding across the country
- School curriculum should reflect the cultures of the different cultural groups in the community.

Culture also related to health, in particular mental health, with suggested action to support:

- Culturally informed mental health approaches based on and highlighting different cultural understanding and informing.

## Digital access

The relatively few responses related to this theme were all connected to information about services. Participants indicated the need for provision of online information calling for the following actions:

- An online Scottish Government portal where [New Scots] could see information on rights, FAQs and ask their own questions anonymously about life in Scotland.
- A searchable database of services, based for example on postcode available to refugees and people seeking asylum.
- Regularly available online consultations on the matters of rights, housing, education, including chat box features and mobile apps to assist New Scots who face language barriers.

## Housing

This theme featured in a great number of responses, linking in particular with mental health and integration. The quality of housing for New Scots was often very poor:

“[New Scots] mentioned [...] poor conditions, such as no flooring, mould, no heating etc.”

“Housing is not good. Damp on walls. No carpet. No furniture.”  
There was also great scarcity of available housing, particularly in major cities. People also called for actions to increase agency and representation in determining housing for New Scots, saying that they felt “lack of control of the housing.”

The many different responses on the theme of housing are summarised into the following key calls for action:

- More available housing for New Scots
- Better quality housing
- Less waiting times for housing access

- Priority housing availability for families with children
- Stop hotel accommodation for people seeking asylum.

### **Safety & security**

Responses related to this theme were expressed with strong emotions, particularly given that New Scots had experienced extremely unsafe situations in their country of origin and, very often, also on their journeys to Scotland. People repeatedly stated that to feel safe and secure they needed certainty over their immigration status:

“I’m the mother of four children. I’m from the region of Ukraine that is under constant shelling from the start of the war. I’d really want some certainty since there is nowhere for me to go back to Ukraine. My children want to study here and integrate. When we go back to Ukraine, there is no job in our town, and I don’t know how we will live there. I’d really want to have an option to stay in Scotland to give my children the opportunity to study and develop in peace.”

Further actions suggested included:

- A more definite civil status for living in UK.
- A sense of certainty about the future, after [...] visas are expired. It’s really important to know about permanent residency.

Responses also called for actions to make New Scots feel safer in Scotland through better:

- Education for Police Scotland to recognise and address hate crime and support New Scots in issues with neighbours. (Link to discrimination, 14)
- Confidentiality when accessing services.

### **Discrimination**

Responses indicated that “systemic discrimination and racism exists in social and formal educational structures including in Scottish asylum and immigration policies”, with extremely negative consequences on educational attainment and mental health. Respondents also spoke about discrimination and racism in housing allocation and repairs and hate crime issues.

People called for:

- Anti-racism work: linking with the building racial literacy programme.

With regards LGBTQ+ people, a key action suggested was related to embedding understanding of their particular needs and situations:

- Understand how hard it is for LGBT people to seek asylum. We're like second class citizens. Some support is homophobic or we're scared of coming out because of our experiences. We also experience racism / tribalism, homophobia, fear, prejudice, "lowest of low" (whilst being criminalised)

## **Families and children**

High priority amongst responses related to this theme was given to:

- Supporting access to education for children
- Support accessing childcare to help parents secure employment.
- Giving an allowance for the third and fourth child under Universal Credit

There were also requests for processes that make it easier for family reunification to happen quickly.

- Key actions is to save our families back home. They are under threat and have been abducted.
- Reduce visa fees for refugee families especially with children.

## **Transport**

Alongside the right to work, a great many responses requested the right to free bus travel, saying that it would allow New Scots to see more of Scotland and feel less ‘trapped’ and ‘isolated’, and would also help them attend appointments and look for volunteering opportunities. Suggested actions included:

- Give access to free bus travel for refugees, people seeking asylum and those with no recourse to public funds.

This key point was connected to systems and processes and seen as an important way to:

“alleviate the difficulty of the time spent waiting for the asylum claim outcome”.

Responses also indicated the need for straightforward access to information as vital for helping New Scots navigate their new environment and access essential services, alongside the importance of learning to drive. People asked the Scottish Government to provide:

- Better information provision regarding transport
- Support with driving lessons and getting a driving licence.

## **Skills recognition**

Closely linked to Education and Employment, the responses related to Skills recognition presented practical suggestions for actions to:

- “Give asylum seekers a chance to share knowledge, skills, and ideas.”
- Advocate for the recognition of overseas qualifications and professional skills.
- Coordinate with the private sector to simplify employment procedures for skilled individuals and enabling refugees to enter the job market with basic language skills is essential.

- Ensure better communication between local authorities to facilitate skills recognition.
- Address barriers that prevent individuals without formal qualifications from accessing higher education.

## **System and processes**

Most responses connected to this theme revolved around problems with the UK immigration and asylum system as it currently stands. Repeatedly, grave concerns were raised regarding the system's impact on people from refugee background mental health and breaches people human rights and the rights of children. Most responses also indicated that people were not aware of the delimitations between devolved and reserved powers. Those who were aware of these delimitations were still keen to stress that this very situation can negatively affect New Scots.

A central concern, repeatedly referred to many times, is the length of time it takes for people's asylum claims to be processed, with people stressing that:

“expediting the naturalisation process for refugees is crucial for their seamless integration into society.”

A significant number of responses suggested:

- The need for quick decisions on asylum claims
- Streamlining family reunification procedures
- Considering the asylum waiting period as part of the residency requirement for permanent residency is recommended.

In terms of systems, many responses suggested action to support better systems of communication between agencies:

- Communication across national organisations - it has to be a continuous process so as to learn from and support each other. It avoids redundancy, duplication and ignorance.
- Establishing a central government body which is responsible for coordinating all services and support for refugees and people seeking asylum.



## **Green spaces, sport and environment**

The majority of responses connected to this theme related to the needs of children and young people and involved action around improved funding of activities for these groups of New Scots, including:

- Funding to be provided to children of people in the asylum process and those with leave to remain but no recourse to public fund to participate in sports and Leisure activities within their community.
- Access to children's summer camps
- Develop more local leisure facilities for children, both indoors and outdoors.

Some barriers to access were mentioned, in particular language issues:

“In sport, we notice that lots of young New Scots talents are struggling due to communication issues, the integration process can be frustrating at times and they struggle to feel part of a team due to language barriers therefore communication should be the main priority”

Gendered barriers to accessing sports led to calls to:

- Organise events to enhance community integration, including sports (especially for women).

Aside from children's needs, cricket and football were the sports most mentioned as being preferred by New Scots.

## **Charities**

All responses related to this theme revolved around suggestions for:

- More funding for charities and third sector organisations.

## **Urban/rural**

The few responses which referred to this theme acknowledged that in some rural areas with high deprivation there can be hostility towards new communities, and asked the Scottish Government to:

- support communities that are here already and [can] support integration.

Participants also reported that cities have larger communities over longer time periods than rural areas but can still have difficulties in relation to racism and unconscious bias. They stressed that it is still important to take forward anti-racism work, asking the Scottish Government to:

- Increase and provide professional learning in relation to [anti-racism] as well as integration.

## **Trauma**

This theme linked closely to Health and Education. New Scots have specific needs related to the traumatic events they experienced in their countries of origin as well as in the journey towards seeking sanctuary in Scotland.

Participants suggested the following actions:

- Support for people coming from places that don't know to ask for help about mental health support after trauma.
- Provide tailored support for vulnerable groups within the refugee population, including unaccompanied minors, survivors of trauma, and individuals with disabilities, to address their specific needs and ensure their full participation in society.
- More funding to support the mental health and integration of torture survivors.

Responses also indicated that there is a strong need for action to improve understanding of health and wellbeing needs and experiences by service providers to enable them to meet the needs of refugees and people seeking asylum.

Suggestions to this end included:

- Increased awareness and training on trauma informed practice, as well as broader issues such as the impact of social isolation and racism
- Trauma informed outreach services
- National training [for ESOL teachers] on being trauma-informed when working with ESOL learners.
- Ensuring that all services are trauma-informed, especially job centre.
- Stopping age dispute and assessment and child detention for people seeking asylum who experienced torture.

## **Disability**

Responses indicated that there was not enough information regarding New Scots who have needs related to disabilities; that there was insufficient support tailored to specific trauma-related needs; and that current structures of service provision were difficult to navigate. Participants therefore asked for actions to provide various types of support:

- Support [...] for identifying housing for families with disability needs.
- Tailored support for vulnerable groups within the refugee population, including unaccompanied minors, survivors of trauma, and individuals with disabilities, to address their specific needs and ensure their full participation in society.
- Support in navigating structures / access/ health / social care/ housing / does it recognise the needs of new Scots with multiple needs and descriptors.

## **Gender**

All responses related to this theme were about women who were single mothers. Many responses suggested providing greater support for single mothers to access opportunities to work and study, by:

- [providing] school aftercare and childcare for free.

Other responses asked for more awareness and action specifically regarding:

- Support for maternity, birth and postpartum help for women on their own.

## **Youth and elderly**

Many responses were related to financial support and funding, covering various aspects of young people's lives:

- Support with funding for young artists.
- Provide a winter clothes voucher for all under 18s.
- Standardise financial support: young people in different local authorities get different amounts [of financial support]

Unaccompanied minors were recognised as a specific group within young New Scots, with particular needs and experiences of trauma. Suggested actions to support unaccompanied minors included:

- Run legal workshops for young people on the laws and regulations in Scotland. This would help inform them on the behavioural expectations from the police, school, council etc.
- Stopping age dispute and assessment and child detention for people seeking asylum who experienced torture.

Participants recognised that many New Scots, including young people, suffer from isolation. Employment and education were recognised as factors that can alleviate social isolation; however, young people whose status is not yet determined face systemic barriers to employment and accessing higher education. People therefore suggested actions to:

- [improve] access to employment for young people to create financial freedom.
- Consider the impact on younger individuals, including access to subsidised university education.

### **Examples of good practice**

There were not many responses related to this theme, but all indicated the importance of recognising and sharing good practices to support organisations in their delivery of services. Suggestions included:

- Recognition of the micro-organisations that are set up, particularly [those] set up by refugees.
- Find ways to connect and share what they are doing.
- ‘Sharing life sharing languages’ – a refresh of that project is required.

### **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) consultations**

Three consultations were also conducted with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in Aberdeen, Inverness and Glasgow. Across these three areas 33 young people ranging from 15 to 20 years old were consulted.

The young people were asked the same three questions as the community consultations:

1. In your community, local authority area, region, what are organisations (local authorities, public bodies, charities, refugee and community groups) currently doing well that contribute to supporting your integration?

How could these be improved?

What further actions need to happen locally?

2. Thinking about the New Scots Partnership (Scottish Government, Council of Scottish Local Authorities [COSLA] and Scottish Refugee Council) and other national organisations – what are the positive things they are doing to support your community?

How could these be built on?

What further actions are needed at a national level?

3. Based on your discussions above, if your community could choose only one action that the Scottish Government could deliver to improve their lives, what would that action be?

The output from each community event was translated, where necessary, and written up for analysis by the Researchers.

With regards to question 1, the responses from the young people being consulted about integration services in their community reveal several thematic areas of concern, along with their thoughts and suggestions for improvement:

### **Accommodation and living conditions**

- Support and Safety Concerns: Young people feel isolated, especially those living alone or in student accommodations. They report a lack of regular contact and check-ins from social workers, which contrasts with their previous experiences in supported accommodations where staff frequently checked on them.

- **Desire for Autonomy and Choice:** Some express dissatisfaction with being moved by social workers to locations where they feel out of place or uncomfortable. Others prefer living alone or in less crowded settings and have specific needs for accommodation that aligns with their personal and cultural preferences.

### **Social work and support**

- **Inconsistency in Contact and Support:** There is a significant discrepancy in the frequency and quality of contact from social workers. Young people in Glasgow report infrequent contact and feel unsupported, whereas those in other regions like North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, East Renfrewshire, and North Ayrshire report more consistent interactions.
- **Accessibility and Responsiveness:** Many young people do not know how to reach their social workers or who to contact if their social worker is unavailable. They desire more consistent and reliable communication channels.

### **Financial support and resources**

- **Variability in Financial Assistance:** Young people notice disparities in the financial support provided by different local authorities, affecting their ability to afford necessities. Those in areas without affordable grocery options find it particularly challenging to manage with the allowances they receive.
- **Support for Personal Needs:** There are calls for better provision for personal needs such as clothing, where some feel their choices are restricted or not respected by social workers.

### **Education and opportunities**

- **Barriers to Education:** Many young people face delays and obstacles in accessing education, particularly in enrolling in colleges or courses like ESOL. Some are told they have to wait for extended periods due to space unavailability or are restricted in their choice of study until they attain certain legal statuses.
- **Need for Inclusion in Schools:** Requests for culturally appropriate options like halal food have gone unaddressed, impacting the daily lives of those dependent on school meals.

## **Health and wellbeing**

- **Healthcare Access and Mental Health Support:** Registrations with GPs and regular health check-ins vary, with some receiving adequate support and others experiencing neglect, especially those in temporary accommodations like hotels.
- **Physical and Mental Health Challenges:** The limited availability of health services in hotels and the lack of proper nutrition are particularly highlighted as inadequate and detrimental to their well-being.

## **Cultural and social integration**

- **Social Isolation and Community Integration:** Young people discuss the lack of social and recreational activities in some areas, which hampers their ability to integrate and form friendships. The importance of support in joining local teams or groups is emphasised.

Overall, these young people are calling for more tailored and responsive support from social work and local authorities, better financial and personal support systems, and more inclusive and accessible educational and health services to improve their integration and quality of life.

The responses to the second question about the New Scots Partnership and other national organisations reveal several key areas where young people see a need for improvement and further action at a national level.

## **Life skills education**

- **Training and Support:** Young people express a need for more structured education in life skills, particularly as they transition from supported to independent living. Essential skills mentioned include making phone calls to healthcare providers, understanding and navigating local regulations, and using public transportation.
- **Early Introduction to System Navigation:** They would benefit from early and clear explanations about navigating various life stages in Scotland, including education systems, healthcare, and legal matters.

## **Education**

- **Access and Support:** There is a strong desire for better access to education, especially for those with disrupted or minimal educational backgrounds. Young people emphasise the need for more tailored

support in learning English and understanding the educational pathways available to them.

- **Clarity and Guidance:** They seek clearer guidance on educational stages and expectations, suggesting that earlier intervention could make educational transitions smoother.

### **Guardianship and support networks**

- **Enhanced Guardianship Programs:** Guardianship is highly valued for the support and social connections it facilitates. Young people appreciate the availability of interpreters and a variety of activities through these programs, but they request more opportunities, such as competitions and more frequent social activities to further aid in community integration and language practice.
- **Inconsistent Support Across Locations:** Concerns are raised about the variability in care and support among different councils, leading to calls for standardisation of services to ensure equity regardless of geographic location.

### **Health services**

- **Interpreter Services:** The lack of interpreters at critical healthcare appointments, like dental surgeries, is a significant issue, highlighting the need for reliable language support in healthcare settings.
- **Feedback and Transparency in Consultations:** Young people express frustration over the lack of feedback following consultations with authorities, indicating a need for more transparent communication and follow-up actions.

### **Support and accessibility**

- **Support Person Accessibility:** When asked whom they would contact first for support, responses vary, indicating reliance on guardians, key workers, and social workers. This diversity underscores the importance of these roles and the need for their availability and accessibility.
- **Recreational Opportunities:** There is a desire for more inclusive and accessible recreational activities, particularly sports programs like football, which not only keep them active but also help in social



integration. The lack of local teams in places like Peterhead forces young people to travel, limiting their participation.

Overall, the young people consulted are calling for more comprehensive and consistent support across various services, enhanced educational and life skills training, improved communication and feedback mechanisms, and greater access to recreational and social opportunities at a national level to support their integration and development within the community.

With regards to the third question young people reported a number of priority actions.

### **Priority actions**

Three priority actions stood out in the responses collected, namely:

1. **Education:** Many participants suggested providing bursaries to young people without status to enable them to pursue education. Additionally, there is a desire for more opportunities to study subjects beyond English and expanded access to ESOL classes to accommodate those who already speak English well.
2. **Financial Equality and Support:** UASC express concerns about the insufficiency of the financial support provided, which only covers basic survival needs. They also highlight disparities in the financial assistance offered across different local authorities, suggesting a need for standardised support that ensures fairness and adequacy.
3. **Health and Mental Health Services:** They also reported excessively long waiting times for basic healthcare services, including hospital and dentist appointments. They emphasised the need for better access to mental health services and shorter waiting times for therapy, indicating an overall need for improved healthcare accessibility and responsiveness.

### **Single key action for the Scottish Government**

- **Standardise Treatment Across Councils:** The most critical request is for the Scottish Government to make a rule ensuring that all councils treat young people seeking asylum and refugees equally and fairly. This request stemmed from frustrations over inconsistencies in financial support, healthcare access, and educational opportunities depending on the region.

## **Other important Issues raised**

- **Interpreters:** The need for more widespread use of interpreters in healthcare and social work is frequently mentioned, highlighting a gap in communication and service accessibility for those who are not native English speakers.
- **Living Conditions:** Concerns about living in hotels due to poor food quality, restrictions on food storage, and the unfulfilled promises of relocation underscore the need for improved accommodation standards and more transparent communication regarding housing plans.
- **Legal and Asylum Process:** Calls to speed up legal proceedings and the asylum process reflect the stress and uncertainty faced by individuals awaiting the outcomes of their asylum claims.
- **Recreational Activities:** The request for more sports and activities points to a need for more comprehensive integration efforts that include recreational opportunities to improve well-being and social connections.

In summary, these responses point to a broad consensus on the need for more equitable, comprehensive, and responsive support systems for people seeking asylum and refugees in Scotland, with a particular emphasis on ensuring uniform treatment across different regions.

## **Conclusion and key points**

The development of the third iteration of the New Scots Strategy involved an extensive engagement and consultation process, undertaken in order to understand and incorporate the needs, experiences, and aspirations of refugees and people seeking asylum into a cohesive strategic framework. This process has not only highlighted the complexities of integration but also underscored the diverse needs of New Scots.

The key points from both engagement phases are detailed below:

1. **Enhanced funding and resource allocation:** The consultations revealed a critical need for sustainable, long-term funding to support essential services for New Scots. Increased and more flexible funding is necessary to enable community organisations and service providers to deliver continuous, comprehensive support. This includes funding for housing initiatives that address the shortages and quality issues that many New Scots face, as well as for mental health services that are

currently under-resourced. Participants emphasised the importance of establishing mechanisms for stable funding to avoid the disruptions that come from short-term grants and to ensure that successful programs have the longevity needed to make a meaningful impact.

2. **Empowerment and agency:** Feedback from the engagement sessions strongly indicates that New Scots value opportunities to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. It was noted that empowering refugees and people seeking asylum involves more than just consultation; it means actively involving them in shaping policies, programs, and services. This empowerment can be facilitated by creating formal roles within advisory and governance structures and by supporting initiatives that are led by New Scots themselves, ensuring that their expertise and experiences directly inform strategy development and implementation.
3. **Improved access to services:** Access to key services like housing, healthcare, education, and employment was consistently highlighted as a major barrier. Participants highlighted that strategies to improve access must include removing language and bureaucratic obstacles that prevent New Scots from utilising these services effectively. For instance, expanding translation and interpretation services across healthcare and legal services can greatly enhance accessibility. Additionally, participants felt that there is a need for a proactive approach in schools and workplaces to recognise and support the unique cultural and educational backgrounds that New Scots bring with them.
4. **Education and language support:** Participants highlighted that enhancing educational support for New Scots is about more than language acquisition; it is about integrating these individuals into the fabric of Scottish society. It was suggested that support for English language learning (ESOL) needs to be coupled with programs that recognise and utilise the professional and academic qualifications that New Scots bring. Educational programs should also include initiatives that help children and adults alike navigate the Scottish education system, understand their rights and opportunities, and receive support to overcome the educational disruptions many have experienced.
5. **Social inclusion and community integration:** True integration goes beyond physical and legal support; it involves building a society that embraces cultural diversity and mutual respect. Participants suggested that efforts need to be expanded to include more community-based programs that facilitate interaction and understanding between New Scots and their local communities. This includes funding and supporting

cultural festivals, community dialogues, and local mentorship programs that build bridges and foster a sense of belonging.

6. Mental health and trauma-informed services: Participants highlighted that the trauma experienced by many New Scots cannot be overstated, and the strategy must continue to develop mental health services that are specifically tailored to their needs. This involves training for service providers in trauma-informed care and ensuring that mental health services are accessible, respectful, and sensitive to the cultural and personal histories of refugees and people seeking asylum. Participants felt that initiatives should include community-based mental health support that can be accessed without stigma or bureaucratic hurdles.
7. Partnerships and collaboration: It was noted that the strategy's success is heavily reliant on robust partnerships across various sectors, including government, non-governmental organisations, community groups, and the private sector. These partnerships need to be dynamic and responsive, capable of adapting to changing circumstances and needs. Strengthening these collaborations involves regular communication, shared goals, and joint initiatives that leverage the strengths and resources of all partners involved.
8. Transparent and responsive governance: It was suggested that ensuring the New Scots Strategy remains effective and relevant requires a governance structure that is transparent, accountable, and inclusive. Regular monitoring and evaluation, coupled with transparent reporting and opportunities for feedback, are viewed as essential to adapt the strategy to new developments and challenges. This includes establishing clear metrics for success and mechanisms for adjusting policies and programs in response to feedback from New Scots and other stakeholders.
9. Addressing systemic challenges: Beyond individual services, many of the experiences shared by participants highlighted a need to tackle systemic challenges that affect the integration of New Scots. This includes advocating for changes in national immigration policies where necessary, addressing labour market barriers, and ensuring that all levels of government are aligned in their approach to supporting refugees and people seeking asylum. Participants noted that efforts must also be made to combat racism and xenophobia, which can undermine the integration process and create hostile environments for New Scots.
10. Promoting long-term integration goals: Integration is a long-term process that requires ongoing commitment and support. It was suggested that future strategies should look beyond immediate needs to

consider the long-term aspirations of New Scots, including pathways to citizenship, long-term career development, and the integration of future generations. The strategy should also consider the diverse trajectories of integration that different individuals and communities may take, recognising that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to integration.

The New Scots Strategy represents a comprehensive and ambitious approach to making Scotland a welcoming place for refugees and people seeking asylum. By building on the insights gained through this extensive engagement process and by continuing to adapt to the evolving needs of New Scots, the strategy can continue to foster an environment where all individuals have the opportunity to thrive and contribute to the richness of Scottish society.



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-83601-445-4 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, June 2024

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA  
PPDAS1475458 (06/24)

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