

The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy: A report on the local and international dimensions of integrating refugees in Scotland.

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Terminology and list of abbreviations

In line with Scottish Government policy, this report uses the term ‘New Scots’ to refer to: individuals and family members who arrive in Scotland under various refugee resettlement schemes; people who are claiming asylum and resident in Scotland; individuals who receive refugee status or another form of leave such as Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary leave and their family members; people who arrive in Scotland to be reunited with a family member who is a refugee; young people who are claiming or have claimed asylum or have been trafficked into the UK. The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy is also relevant to other displaced groups such as survivors of human trafficking and people who are stateless.

ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
EU	European Union
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
NSRDP	New Scots Refugee Integration Delivery Project
NSRIS	New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy
COSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
SRC	Scottish Refugee Council
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
RILA	Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts
IPPR	Institute for Public Policy Research
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
LtR	Leave to Remain



Vignette

A room fills with people. It is a small space, in a building which needs painting and patching, in a run-down neighbourhood of a Scottish city. The people arriving this morning have come from many scattered postcodes, on foot and by bus. Before that, they came from many scattered countries to seek sanctuary in Scotland. In this room they gather to learn English. A small woman welcomes them. Mary is a retired nurse who learned language teaching so that she could spend her days helping New Scots build lives here.

The room fills beyond capacity: Mary realises that she sent a message about today's class to a different and much larger mailing list than usual. She calls Barbara who helps to run the building, and they decide to use their bigger hall: a tumble of coats, buggies, children and chairs is transferred to a space which is already filled with furniture and household items. Among kettles and hoovers the class resumes, with a makeshift flipchart propped up for new vocabulary.

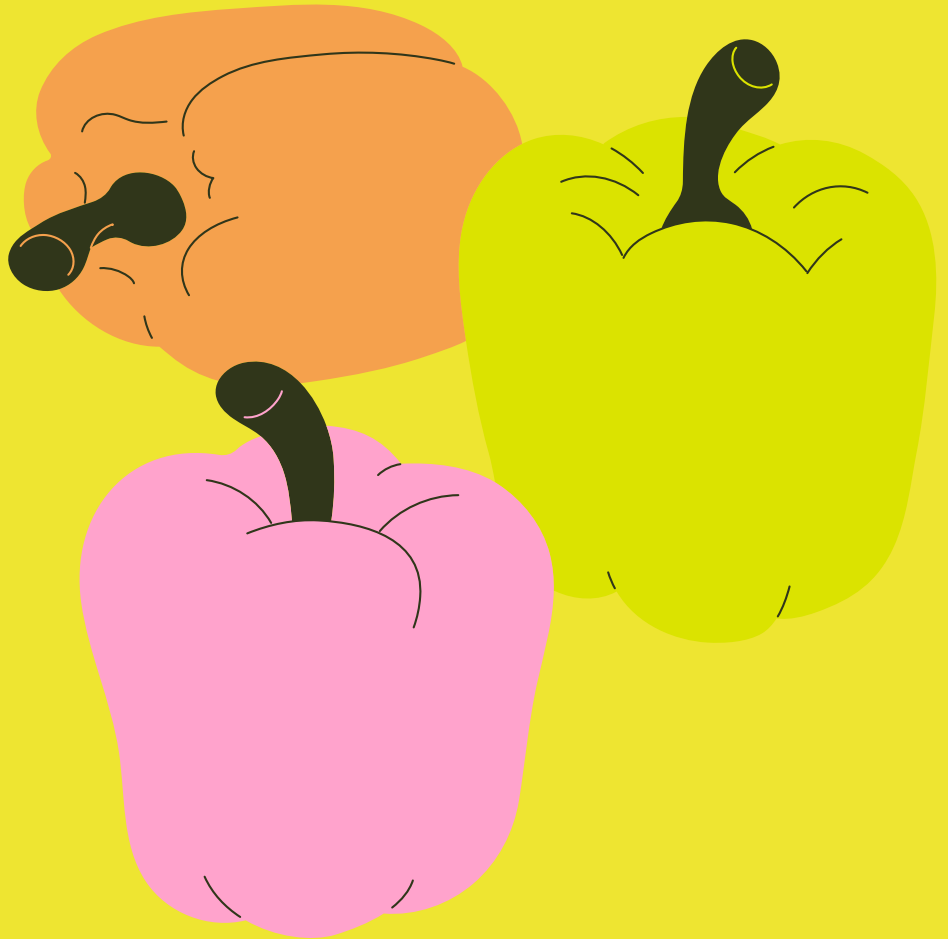
People keep coming, dripping with rain now. A researcher is there too, listening and taking notes in a corner. This catalyses a flurry of stories, all starting with variations on "Write this down so people can know". Write this down: I came here to escape death threats, we have waited for five years for a decision, I have four children and my heart breaks for their future. Write this down: if I need to get a bus for an appointment I can't afford to eat, why do they keep moving us into different flats, there is no safe place for my daughter to play outside. Write this down: in Scotland I feel safe, the people here are kind, at school my son is happy, I want to work so I can help my new country.

After an hour it is time for the class to finish. The flipchart is a constellation of words: "free bus pass", "benefits", "employment", "decision", "safety". Barbara distributes slips of paper so that people can reclaim the money for their bus fare. She tells me that the hall will now be used for a furniture service: whoever needs something can come and pick it up for free from the medley of items donated by people from the local community and a network of faith organisations.

When someone comes in, volunteers welcome them and start chatting. In conversation other needs surface, options are discussed, services signposted. A woman wearing a hijab leaves with a new frying pan and knowledge of how to find the closest law centre. Another woman comes looking for a table and finds out about a college course she can apply for. A tall man with dreadlocks, balancing a toddler on his shoulders, is given a new coat for his daughter and advice on housing.

The volunteers are from the local area and from all over the world. An older man, "born and bred just a block away", says he is learning three languages from his friends here. He gestures at Blessing and Jacques: "See these New Scots, they're teaching this Old Scot new tricks". Barbara laughs. She looks tired. The hall slowly empties as the morning moves towards noon. The researcher is still there, listening, taking notes. "Do you want to stay for lunch?", Mary asks. "There's plenty to share".

“Do you want to stay for lunch?
There’s plenty to share.”



The above vignette illustrates many of the observations, findings and recommendations present in this report. Here, integration is a process which involves many actors and is approached through practices which are intercultural, multi-lingual and sensitive to the particular needs of New Scots. The work involved brings together New Scots and people from the receiving community, which is a place often described as a ‘run-down neighbourhood’. Yet here we see an abundance of generosity helping to meet physical, linguistic, health-related and emotional needs through the provision of furniture, English classes, food and drink, company and advice. Despite tiredness and many demands, the people involved are examples of best practice which integration is based on the certainty that between New Scots and receiving communities “there’s plenty to share”.

Executive Summary and Recommendations

Background, aims and structure of this report

The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy (NSRIS) is one of the world's first and most established strategies for people seeking asylum or who have been granted refugee or humanitarian protection, under the auspices of the United Nations Refugee Convention. It is a source of pride to many living and working in Scotland. It was first established using the acclaimed model for refugee integration of Ager and Strang (2008) and modified over time to offer a framework for the development of bridges and social bonds between arriving and receiving communities.

The term 'New Scots' was chosen in the initial consultations prior to the launch of NSRIS 1 (2014) to provide an inclusive nomenclature that was without the stigma attaching to terms like 'refugee', 'migrant' or 'asylum seeker.' Immigration decision-making is a reserved policy for the U.K Parliament, but care of migrant communities - of all 'New Scots' - is devolved to the Scottish Parliament. Whilst this produces some key tensions it is also clear that in areas of health and education, culture and sport, housing and employability, there has been latitude to develop devolved and differentiated strategies. 'Integration' is itself a contested term, with many nuances and histories, as this report notes. It remains, however, a key concern in policy and research contexts; this report presents a vision of restorative and reparative integration which is a task for our whole society.

The first NSRIS ran from 2014 to 2018 and was refreshed and expanded in 2018 to run until 2022. In 2020 The Scottish Government applied for, and was granted, £5 million in funding from AMIF (the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund) to run integration projects across the country and to undertake the first piece of comprehensive research and evaluation into the New Scots Strategy. The New Scots Refugee Integration Delivery Project (NSRIDP) was funded by this grant and led by the Scottish Government, in partnership with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) and the UNESCO Chair in Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts (RILA) at the University of Glasgow. The project has sought to promote employability, education, health and social and cultural connections for refugees and to fund primary research into refugee integration in Scotland as well as funding 55 projects across Scotland to spread best practice and promote new integration practices. It has also allowed for a systematic review of the academic and policy literature on refugee integration from 2014 to 2022.

This report is based on the academic research conducted by the University of Glasgow on the NSRIDP project. It therefore provides a comprehensive presentation of the academic research undertaken over a two-year period (2020 – 2022). It is one of a number of NSRIDP outputs that are intended to inform the development of the third iteration of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy. An external evaluation of NSRIS 2 was also conducted by ScotCen as part of NSRIDP, as was a research project focused on the role of Scottish Local Authorities in delivering humanitarian protection programmes and facilitating refugee integration which was conducted by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) commissioned by COSLA in collaboration with the Scottish Government.

Some initial findings from research conducted by ScotCen and IPPR have been used to support the arguments made in this report. We have clearly stated instances where we have utilised their early findings and do not present these as our own. A second edition of this report will be published in 2023 which will fully incorporate the finalised findings of the research conducted by ScotCen and IPPR, as well as the public polling and evaluation of Refugee Festival Scotland commissioned by Scottish Refugee Council. This will allow for the unique, comprehensive and partnership approach of New Scots Refugee Integration Partnership to be fully reflected in the different reports. It also allows for triangulation of academic research against commissioned evaluations and vice versa.

This report aims to:

- Offer interpretative frameworks drawn from the academic literature on integration and intercultural studies. These frameworks aim to expand, modify and clarify the context in which discussions of functional and service-led integration, and of community-based, human-centred integration occur.
- Report on the research findings and literature review regarding the integration of New Scots in communities across Scotland, for a wide audience.
- Inform the development of NSRIS 3 through a series of recommendations based on the research findings.

The report is structured as follows:

Executive Summary and Recommendations

Part I — Setting the scene

Part 2 — Aspects of Integration across Scotland

Part 3 — Wider Perspectives

Welcome, hospitality, place, multilingual working, decolonising and restorative integration are key principles introduced in Part 1. Findings from research are outlined and discussed in Part 2, covering interconnected aspects of integration situated in Scotland. All these elements feed into an expanded conceptual framework, presented in Part 3, which constitutes a re-framing of integration to integrate empirical and theoretical learnings on restorative and intercultural integration.

This re-framing is necessary given the propensity of integration as a signifier equated, problematically, with out-dated and dangerous understandings of assimilation which can produce 'second class citizens' and are burdensome to New Scots in particular. An intercultural, trauma informed, and conflict transformational framework is offered which complements and builds on the important work towards holistic integration established by Ager and Strang (2008).

It is important that all issues discussed are understood to be profoundly interconnected and interrelated, providing an ecology of integration. For integration to be understood as only focused on efficient service delivery would be a mistake: efficient service delivery also relies on a web of relationships between individuals, institutions, communities, and activities through which intercultural and restorative integration practice is achieved. The report findings and early results of the research undertaken by both ScotCen and IPPR show that good service delivery through local authorities is supported and sustained by integration work in local communities, and equally that good local community work enhances service delivery by local authorities. Where silos and separate schemes exist, or where management is overly centralised, the system becomes strained and fragile, and New Scots suffer, as do those working to support them.

Recommendations

The report contains 70 recommendations. This underscores the abundance and importance of the findings from the research. It also demonstrates the seriousness with which participants in the research viewed matters of whole society integration and key structural and practical ways in which improvements can be made, within the devolved context of Scotland. In particular it is clear that, far from residing with one ministerial portfolio, the embedding of integration across several ministries will be important to ensuring holistic integration within Government, Local Government and third sector as we move forward to NSRIS 3.

There is much to celebrate in the strength, enthusiasm and commitment to the work of welcoming people who have sought to rebuild their lives in Scotland, but the barriers are also real, and the challenges presented require mitigation. Some of the recommendations are short term and focus on ensuring that good practices can continue to grow and expand. Some are for the longer term and address issues which are affecting much of the population of Scotland, but where those who have arrived as New Scots are particularly at risk. Some of the recommendations pertain to how we think about, describe and practice the work of integrating over time.



Re-framing Integration

01

Re-frame integration to allow for greater quality and clarity in delivery and community practice. This means understanding integration as:

- Work which is restorative in intent
- Informed by rights-based approaches of migration justice and accountability
- A process which is trauma-informed, intercultural and dynamic
- Based on practices of intercultural dialogue, multilingualism, conflict transformation, peace-building, and community learning and development

Welcome, hospitality, place, multilingual working, decolonising and restorative integration are keywords introduced in Part 1. They are central to this expanded conceptual re-framing of integration; they also link the social, scientific, and humanities literature on social justice and intercultural integration of communities.

In Part 2 this report also highlights the important and structural differences between long term community-led integration at a local level, and statutory service delivery for the resettlement of new arrivals. Learnings from Scotland are presented as reflective of and connected to a wider international context.

In Part 3 we offer a conceptual framework to visualise this wider re-framing of integration based on the findings of the report.

Methodologies

02

Creative and trauma-informed, participatory methods should be mainstreamed, alongside the numerical and statistical analytics, and given equal weight as evidence. This allows for alignment with recent scientific practice and the adoption of arts and creative methods in humanitarian contexts by UNESCO's ArtLab, for example.

03

More engagement between policy and independent academic research is required in the development of NSRIS 3, with both qualitative and quantitative research cited in Scottish Government policies regarding New Scots.

Fractal Accountability and Governance

Clear and accountable action plans need to be created with robust structures of governance, and a fractal management system. A fractal approach to management views the NSRIS in relation to the wider sociocultural environment, with the expectation that the partnership approach embedded in NSRIS since 2014 will be replicated at multiple scales, from local to national. It is at the level of day- to- day working and monitoring of private sector, public sector and third sector organisations that there is a need for change and for a system of robust accountability. This report therefore recommends:

- 04 Refreshing the New Scots Core Group as an accountability board with powers to request monitoring of the implementation of the NSRIS by institutions and organisations. This should be phased in as a way of supporting institutions and organisations to learn about how to undertake intercultural and restorative integration, with a development over time towards sanctions where the strategy is not being implemented. Funding should be put in place to support such monitoring work.

Decentralisation and Fractal Delivery

A decentralised approach is required, with resources flowing to sustain a) statutory service delivery and b) community integration and intercultural practice. This distinction is critical, and both types of integration work are necessary as part of complying with the Zaragoza Declaration as well as fulfilling the Human Right based approaches of NSRIS. This report therefore recommends:

- 05 Regular meetings, required for resilience planning to ensure that it is clear what can and cannot be offered to new arrivals and that space is made available for a certain quota each year, under resettlement programmes.
- 06 Clear guidance which needs to be developed fractally (i.e. replicated at multiple scales, from local to national) and attuned to the needs of local providers delivering NSRIS in partnership, across all Scottish Local Authorities. This could be modelled on good practice where local integration plans have already been developed because of the experience of working with New Scots under a variety of schemes. Local integration guidance should be published and part of local welcome packs.

Devolved / Reserved Powers; accountability and responsibility; human rights protection

- 07 NSRIS 3 should state more clearly which powers and areas related to integration are the responsibility of the Scottish Government and which are reserved to the UK Parliament.
- 08 To this end, a legal opinion is recommended regarding devolved / reserved powers in the context of New Scots integration.
- 09 NSRIS 3 needs to become accountable and binding. While acknowledging that this needs to be a slow and careful process, it is nevertheless a necessary next step in supporting restorative processes of integration across Scotland.
- 10 NSRIS 3 should seek to reverse the current responsibility dynamic. In other words, it is the responsibility of service providers to give regular account of – and be held accountable for – their work.

- 11 The Scottish Parliament is currently bringing forward legislation embedding Human Rights into Scots Law. It is a strong recommendation from the research underpinning this report that the rights of those seeking asylum and the human rights of refugees are fully and firmly reflected and encompassed by domestic Scottish legislation.

Intercultural dialogue and cultural safety

- 12 Embedding - across all sectors supporting the integration of New Scots - practices rooted in intercultural dialogue and education enabling sustainable peace and conflict transformation within communities. There are many tools and resources available within the intercultural dialogue and education sector promoting the kinds of human rights respecting intercultural communication that is desirable for a society where all can flourish, and which are reflected in the NSRIS 2 Theory of Change, developed by ScotCen.

English language provision (ESOL)

- 13 More guidance should come from the Scottish Government concerning the minimum amount of ESOL classes that New Scots should be entitled to. While ESOL provision should remain devolved to Local Authorities, such guidance should remove distinctions in levels of ESOL provision between resettled New Scots and people seeking asylum.
- 14 More efforts must be made to standardise ESOL provision across Scotland, including at beginner levels. Certificates can be used to show progress, though providers should be mindful of the fact that sitting tests can be a stressful experience for those not used to formal education structures.
- 15 ESOL funding arrangements should be reviewed in order to prevent New Scots from losing access to college fee waivers if they gain employment.
- 16 More clarity needed from the Scottish Government concerning which funding streams Local Authorities and colleges can access in order to fund ESOL for New Scots. This information should be made available for New Scots, LA resettlement coordinators and support groups in order to prevent New Scots receiving conflicting information from well-meaning sources.
- 17 Greater consistency and quantity of formal ESOL classes across local authorities as well as adequate resourcing of the ESOL sector, so that there is sufficient contact for efficient learning to occur. More ESOL funding is needed for this to occur.
- 18 A bespoke ESOL strategy should be developed for carers of young children to ensure they are able to fully avail themselves of opportunities for ESOL. Ideally this will include provision of childcare for New Scots from arrival.
- 19 The new Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland must address its stated aim of reviewing ESOL provision by taking note of the research in this report; in particular the responses from New Scots regarding the inadequacy of the Adult Learning Strategy in addressing their ESOL needs.
- 20 ESOL should accompany the provision of accommodation, alongside education and schooling, and of healthcare, as vital to integration. This is particularly important given that asylum dispersal accommodation is to be expanded beyond the city of Glasgow.

21 ESOL providers should consider the wider importance of ESOL in the context of integration, with targeted lessons taking place around employment needs, with the understanding that ESOL should not be seen as a fix for wider issues linked to socio-cultural isolation.

22 ESOL provision - for new learners in particular - must be planned through a holistic Community Learning and Development model, with informal ESOL classes outside the classroom (e.g. outdoor educational activities) embedded into ESOL planning and provision.

Education

23 A community development approach should be embedded into all educational practices related to New Scots and integration. This should include Intercultural communication skills to support the communication of expectations and norms around training and education.

24 Practices which are based on intercultural learning, rather than purely on competency based / proficiency models of education, should be embedded into all educational settings related to New Scots integration. This will support programmes where education facilitates integration as well as - and as part of - learning. For example, embedding in schools an approach which encourages and supports parents who are New Scots to participate in Parent Council activities would foster integration (as recommended by the [Voices and Visibility project](#)).

25 Approaches to funding allocation and distribution need to be consistent, long term and also informed by community development and human rights education models of best practice. They must include considerations such as childcare and travel costs.

26 Trauma – sensitive approaches to education should be embedded in all aspects of service delivery related to New Scots.

27 The Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland needs to be accompanied by funding if it is to support the delivery of meaningful educational services.

28 Best practice needs to be more widely shared within and across sectors. The next iteration of NSRIS is an opportunity to facilitate and increase the sharing of best practice amongst educators in Scotland, with input from New Scots, in order to increase enabling factors as much as possible within the context of the current hostile environment. The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) has published resources for schools to use when they welcome refugees, as well as booklets for NEW SCOTS children and their families (EIS 2020). The City of Sanctuary pack for schools wishing to become Schools of Sanctuary also has a wealth of resources and information (City of Sanctuary 2022b).

29 While ESOL is an educational aspect that has received much attention in the context of New Scots and integration, other aspects and types of education are less researched. NSRIS 3 should support this type of research to help widen the scope for delivery of education to New Scots.

Languages

“[Sharing lives, sharing languages](#)” offers a positive blueprint for moving forward with mutual, mother language supportive programmes for multilingualism in Scotland and for supporting translanguaging as part of a pathway to greater linguistic capacity across Scotland. This report recommends that:

- 30 The practice and learnings from “Sharing lives, sharing languages” should be extended and consolidated across Scotland, giving a context for the practice of new languages by new speakers and enabling environments where integration is happening through a common interest in practicing languages. This will complement the ESOL system adding time for practice as part of intercultural dialogue but does not take away from the need to increase the number of hours available for formal ESOL learning.
- 31 A core set of standards for interpreting and translation in statutory and non-statutory contexts is required - like those developed for the UK as National Standards in Interpreting and in Intercultural Working. These will allow the New Scots partnership to set a benchmark for interpretation and translation and to uphold the right to the use of the mother language, whilst at the same time developing language resources, ESOL services and translanguaging support in communities (see also below).
- 32 Embed intercultural communication and community development skills – these will enable service delivery professionals to better support language learning of populations who may be experiencing trauma, and whose language learning pathway is not freely chosen but has come through necessity. Intercultural listening and some aiding of the translanguaging that will make up intercultural encounters and dialogue can be embedded into the training and attitudes for professionals working in the sector. In addition, community development workers are critical to community-based language initiatives success as part of restorative integration whilst ESOL provision is a baseline for ensuring a developing approach to learning as part of efficient and effective service delivery, scaffolded by translation services.
- 33 If not provisioned under the forthcoming Human Rights Act for Scotland, ungirding the role of languages in Scottish society will be greatly enhanced by the provision of a Languages Act for Scotland, complementing the Gaelic and Sign Language Acts for Scotland.



Housing

- 34 NSRIS 3 must work across sectors to secure a long-term housing plan for New Scots, because many of the housing issues facing New Scots with refugee status are linked to broader issues relating to a [shortage of affordable housing](#) in both Scotland and the UK.
- 35 Housing provision for resettled people must urgently move from congregate accommodation in hotels, cruise ships and home-based hosting, to a hospitality management approach through rented and social tenanted sectors. This is essential for ensuring long-term agency and normalcy for people whose lives have been disrupted in many traumatic ways.
- 36 An accountability structure should be developed in accordance with the provisions set out in service contracts with the UK Home Office. Such an accountability structure is urgently needed to monitor the providers of Asylum Accommodation and Support Services (AASC) and the Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) service. This accountability mechanism must also provide New Scots with the opportunity to anonymously submit evidence of problems without fear of reprisal.
- 37 More care needs to be taken by housing providers when moving New Scots housed in hotels to their dispersal accommodation. In particular, people must be given adequate notice of the fact that they will be moved – as stipulated in the AASC contract.
- 38 There needs to be wider awareness and recognition of the fact that, when people are entered into the asylum system, the initial information they receive concerning their rights and responsibilities in Scotland is delivered through a Home Office induction booklet and user handbook issued by the accommodation provider. The information provided in these booklets should be urgently reviewed, as should the quality of the translations of the documents.
- 39 More clarity is needed concerning the boundaries between the Scottish Government and the UK Government concerning the provision of housing – especially for those with no recourse to public funds. The Scottish Government should commission and publish legal research into the boundaries between reserved and devolved matters that concern the needs of New Scots specifically ([see section on devolved and reserved powers](#)).
- 40 Alternative Scottish housing models should be sought and promoted so that Scotland can manage its own accommodation provision for New Scots.
- 41 A 'Welcome to Scotland' induction booklet or series of short informational videos should be prepared in multiple languages to introduce recently arrived New Scots to NSRIS 3 and ensure they are welcomed.
- 42 Information given by housing providers to New Scots concerning their local area should be focused on both the wider scale of the locality (e.g. city-wide in the case of Glasgow) and the immediate area (i.e. what is accessible within a 20-minute walking distance).

Employment and Employability

- 43 Colleges and Universities should be supported to develop short-term conversion courses in order to recognise the skills and qualifications of New Scots. While there are some initiatives in Scotland aimed at increasing recognition of New Scots' skills and certificates (such as the Skills Recognition Scotland project piloted through Glasgow Caledonia University), more work is needed in this regard.
- 44 Low levels of New Scots' skills recognition amongst employers needs to be urgently addressed through training programmes for businesses and increased collaboration between businesses and groups supporting New Scots. Inspiration for such collaborative work can be found in the capacity building initiatives and awareness programmes such as those developed by the Mental Health Foundation as part of their [Voices and Visibility project](#) which aimed to increase New Scots' participation in local communities and decision-making fora in Scotland.
- 45 The issues of New Scots' under-employment and unemployment across Scotland are closely linked to wider discrimination of BAME groups in Scottish workplaces (see Meer 2018). It is therefore essential that NSRIS 3 recognises such cross-sectoral problems and aligns actions with wider Scottish anti-discrimination legislation and strategies. In particular, NSRIS 3 needs to connect with the work being undertaken by the Scottish Directorate of Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights.
- 46 The employment aims of New Scots should be prioritised, with recognition that many would prefer to establish businesses rather than gain employment. More efforts should be undertaken to support New Scots in setting up their own businesses or becoming self-employed, especially given the difficulties that New Scots experience in gaining correct certifications for employment. Such an approach requires effective intra-departmental working in Local Authorities and better targeted support from Scotland's Business Gateway.
- 47 A wider recognition of people's ability to learn English 'on the job' is essential to allow New Scots the ability to gain employment and improve their English at the same time ([see also ESOL section](#)).

Health and Wellbeing

- 48 Culturally informed training should be delivered to healthcare practitioners, with emphasis on intercultural communication practices (see best practice model from GRAMNet)
- 49 Embed, at all levels and specialisms of healthcare provision, a trauma sensitive approach to working with New Scots. This includes increasing awareness of the many complicating and re-traumatising issues which affect New Scots in their access to healthcare.
- 50 Ensure that translation and interpreting services are better informed and aware of issues related to confidentiality and trust.
- 51 Increase awareness across all sectors of gender-related issues relevant to New Scots and access to healthcare.

Communities, Culture and Creativity

- 52 Encourage, support and fund community development approaches as a resource for delivering and planning successful integration
- 53 Further prioritise the inclusion of the arts and culture in the New Scots theme of 'Communities, Culture and Social Connections'
- 54 Support and develop more flexible and long-term funding initiatives
- 55 Allow free bus passes to New Scots seeking asylum, to help them access services and integrate better in Scottish communities.
- 56 Faith communities should be present as an important element in NSRIS 3, as part of a commitment to support community development practices which build bridges between communities and develop integration through strong interpersonal and inter-organisational connections and networks.
- 57 The existing resources provided by faith communities should be recognised and supported by NSRIS 3 as significant parts to the integration landscape across Scottish communities. Part of this recognition could involve a validation of the language of welcome present across all faiths which urge people to "welcome the stranger", which is a cultural resource that can be used by a wide diversity of communities across Scotland.
- 58 Following the evidence of NSRIDP sports-based projects, the critical language and role of sport in community integration – sport understood and promoted as a powerful and empowering language of the body – should be fully incorporated into NSRIS 3.

Reframing understandings around integration, needs and resources

- 59 Re-frame understandings of needs and resources in the context of refugee integration, moving away from narratives of scarcity and competition towards wider perspectives where needs and resources are held in common by both New Scots and receiving communities, and form the basis for integration.
- 60 Recognise that needs relevant to integration are related to human rights shared by both New Scots and receiving communities.
- 61 Acknowledge, value and support the resources for integration which are present across Scotland. Especially abundant are those resources which are relational; connected to knowledge, good practice, skills and human capital; based on exchange rather than competition.
- 62 In order to best support such initiatives, while accepting the reality of restricted fiscal circumstances, NSRIS 3 should push for funding bodies and models to be reviewed so that they are:
- A) More flexible: taking into account the reality of 'firefighting' the many unpredictable crises which affect different sectors working with New Scots, and the fact that community development work involves iterative co-design and co-creation.
 - B) More long term: there is a strong sense amongst refugee-led organisations and the rest of the sector in general that long-term funding is hard to come by and that, as a result, conducting strategic, future-focused work is hard to achieve.

Learning from international comparisons

Based on a comparison with other similar strategies, the next iteration of the NSRIS would be improved by:

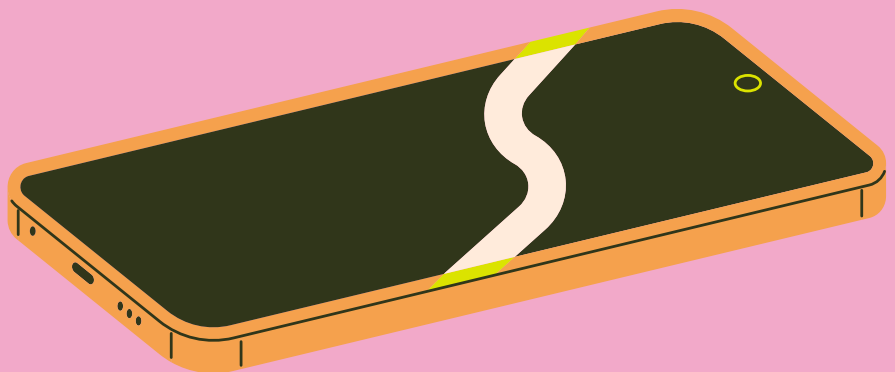
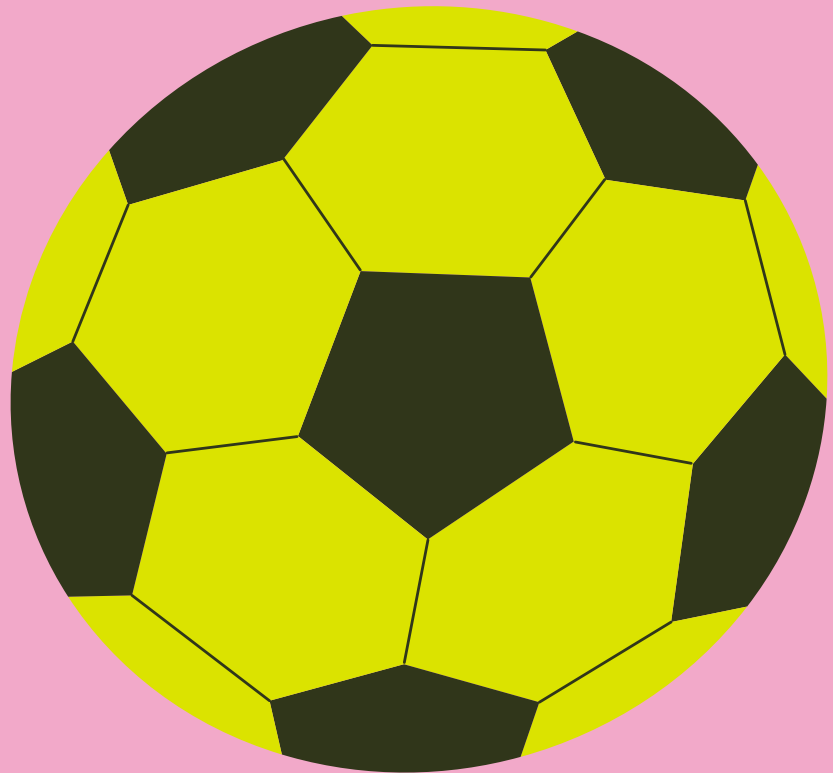
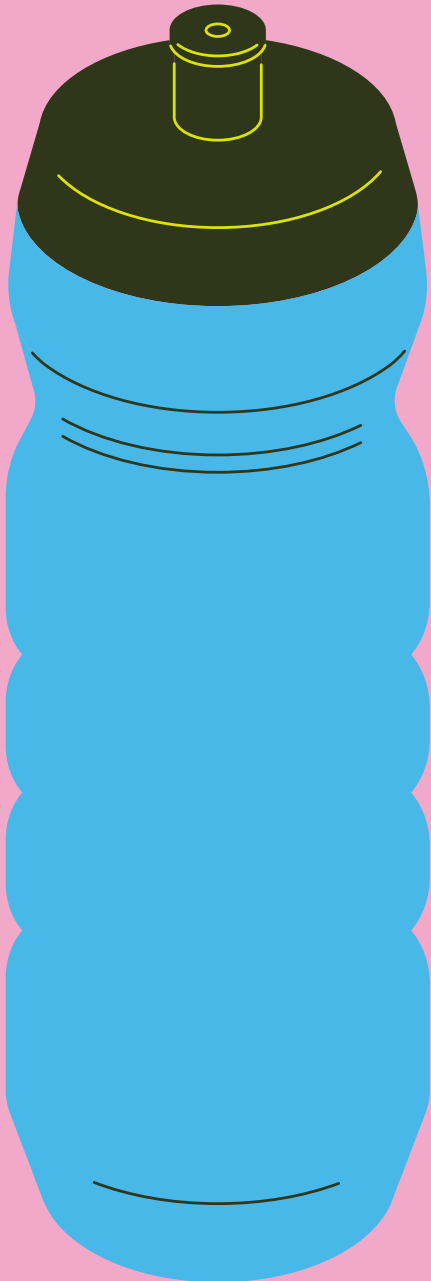
- 63 Considering the role of communities in more detail and setting out how engagement and learning activities can take place following community development models of best practice.
- 64 Developing a cross-sectoral approach to integration which sets out the different roles for Scottish Government departments, with particular focus on enabling a fractal approach to partnership working. Such an approach would go from the New Scots partnership at a national level to similar, scaled models of partnership between third sector, public sector and refugee groups in all local authorities and areas of resettlement.
- 65 Including more information on what multidirectional, intercultural integration means in practice.
- 66 Investigating how a more person-centred approach can be implemented across Scotland.

International Dimensions of NSRIS

- 67 Regular and planned submissions should be made by the New Scots Core group, with evidence and reports on the monitoring, accountability and best practice developed within the devolved Scottish context, in relation to human rights-based approaches to integration as supported by international conventions and instruments.
- 68 UNHCR Special Rapporteurs should be regularly invited to visit New Scots work as part of the provision of their own independent reports for submission to the Human Rights Council of the United Nations.
- 69 The New Scots Partnership should continue to work closely with the UNESCO Chair for Refugee Integration at the University of Glasgow, and should also widen this work to include all of Scotland's UNESCO Trail. The U.K.'s UNESCO Ambassador and the UNESCO National Commission should be invited to support its work with New Scots and incorporate appropriate examples into its reporting to UNESCO general assembly, on behalf of Scotland as a devolved nation.
- 70 Scotland should work actively as a regional government to promote the work of New Scots to the international community, in particular sustaining and developing links with the EU.

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Part 1

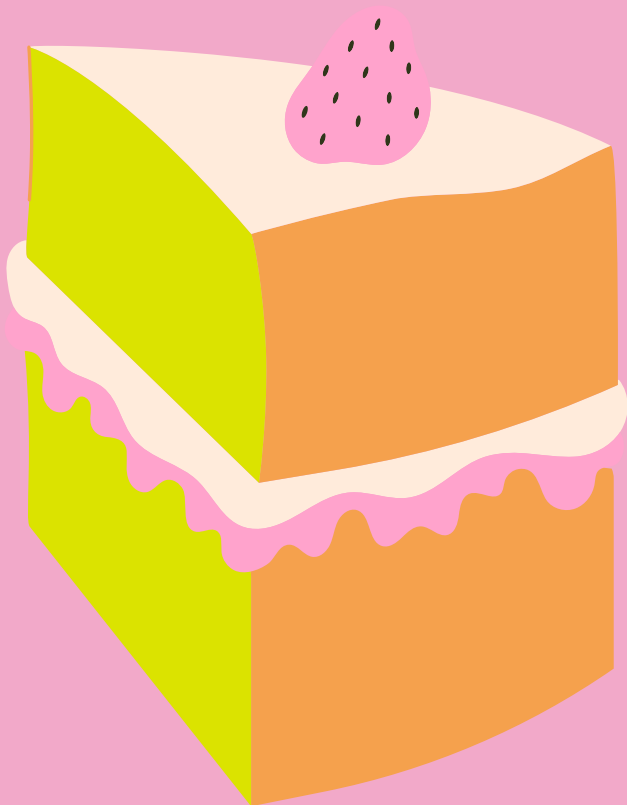


Setting the scene

Part 1 of this report begins with a review of the definitions and critical literature on integration as situated in the context of Scotland and offers a discussion of key concepts and definitions which have developed from our observation and research. It also outlines the range of methods used to gather evidence through the NSRDP partnership and offers methodological recommendations to inform the work of NSRIS 3.

Situating Refugee Integration in Scotland

Immigration is a matter reserved to the UK Parliament. As a result, the Scottish Government is not responsible for the implementation of the UK's immigration rules; the determination of applications for asylum; the housing and financial support of people seeking asylum; or the labour market restrictions placed on people seeking asylum. The Scottish Parliament, however, holds devolved powers for formulating policies concerning health, education, housing, legal aid and children's services – all of which are areas that are integral to integration. As a result, even though the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum was not specified as a policy area in the legislation that created devolution (Hepburn 2015), “migrant integration is a de facto devolved competence” of the Scottish Parliament (Hepburn 2020, p. 7).



The Scottish Government's approach to integration does not make a distinction between people seeking asylum and those with refugee status. This stems, in part, from a different interpretation of the 1951 Refugee Convention to that of the UK Government. Where the UK Government determines whether an asylum seeker should be recognised as a refugee, the Scottish Government argues that the 1951 Refugee Convention does not specify a mechanism through which states should recognise refugees and that, therefore, "recognition of refugee status is declaratory, not constitutive. This means that a person does not become a refugee because they are recognised; rather, they are recognised because they are a refugee" (Scottish Government 2018^a, p. 22). As a result, the Scottish Government uses the term 'New Scots' to indicate the need for both refugees and people seeking asylum to be covered under the aim of its integration policies, so that integration starts 'from day one' as opposed to when Leave to Remain is granted.

There have been relatively few UK Government policies and practical measures aimed at ensuring the integration of refugees, and people seeking asylum are notably absent from UK integration policies. Instead, Mulvey (2014) notes that the UK Government has tended to 'promote' integration through five broad aims, namely: social mobility, participation, responsibility, common ground and combating extremism – placing the onus of integration predominantly on the shoulders of refugees. In 2018 the UK government published the Integrated Communities Strategy (ICS) green paper (MoHCLG 2018) which claims to be non-assimilationist and to view integration as a two-way process. However, this strategy implies that newcomers are expected to adapt more than host communities and institutions: "Recent migrants should learn to speak and understand our language and values and seek opportunities to mix and become part of our communities. And resident communities, in turn, need to support them in doing this" (MoHCLG 2018, p. 11).

Scottish policy on refugee integration, on the other hand, has been driven by two successive New Scots Integrating Strategies. The first New Scots Strategy was in place from 2014 – 2017 and developed a strong partnership agreement between the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council. The second New Scots Strategy runs from 2018 – 2022 and includes seven areas of focus, namely: (i) the needs of asylum seekers, (ii) employability and welfare rights, (iii) housing, (iv) education, (v) language, (vi) health and wellbeing, and (vii) communities, culture, and social connections. Both iterations of the New Scots Strategies emphasise Scotland's welcoming approach to refugees and, in particular, that Scotland 'values diversity, where people are able to use and share their culture, skills and experiences, as they build strong relationships and connections' (Scottish Government, 2018^a, p. 10).

Refugee Integration: Key concepts

Integration as an intercultural process

This report considers integration as a multilateral, multimodal, intercultural and dynamic process. Much is made of New Scots Refugee Integration as a ‘two-way process’ occurring between receiving and arriving communities and individuals. However, as research on integration expands and understandings become more sophisticated, it is clear that a sharp delineation is required between the use of integration as a simile for out-dated understandings of assimilation and integration as a restorative process occurring in local communities. It is also clear, and implicit across the research, that restoring agency to New Scots is a critical element for recovery; as is the production and protection of agency, through negotiated needs, within different communities.

The concept of ‘integration’ has been subject to a good deal of criticism, including its use to signal assimilation; in this exclusionary sense, integration is commonly understood as referring to refugees being the ones with the task of integrating as a condition of their leave to remain. How this concept is used reflects a wide variety of opinions and understandings as well as ideological perspectives on migration more generally.

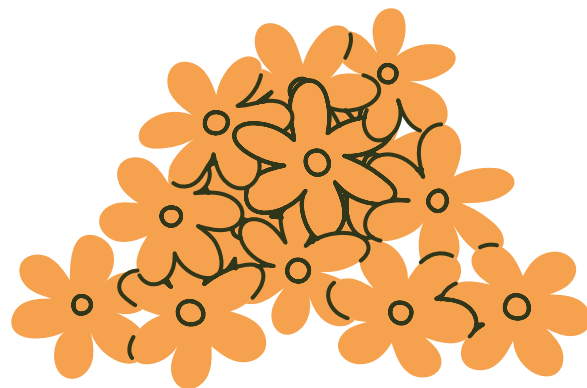
In 2010 the European Union developed the Zaragoza Declaration and a series of indicators for EU member states to follow in the pursuit of integration in the fields of employment; education; health; social inclusion and active citizenship. These represent a service-delivery and democratic citizenship approach to integration, understood as a two-way process but still with the emphasis on achieving fluency (linguistic and intercultural) in the ways of navigating the services and democratic structures of European nations. The conflict transformational, trauma-informed, restorative intercultural dimensions to integration highlighted in this research report are to be understood in addition to these functional dimensions for European societies and European member states.

A key challenge identified during the period of this research and the operation of NSRIS 2 has been the exit of the United Kingdom from binding treaties of the European Union. The guarantees and protections of the European Union’s common frameworks and declarations, and the agreements of protocols such as Dublin III, are no longer binding. As a result, much is presently being tested in the courts and critiqued via inquiries - including ways in which the UK will process asylum claims in future, with the Nationality and Borders Act proposing deportation to Rwanda for processing and settlement.

A recent inquiry, [the Asylum Inquiry Scotland's final report](#), led by Baroness Helena Kennedy and published on 11th November 2022, gives evidence of the systematic failure of the UK's asylum system. It demonstrates the importance of NSRIS but also points to the under-resourcing and need for robust accountability and governance structures which cross the domains of the devolved responsibilities:

“More could be done to embed, resource and develop further the New Scots strategy, potentially as a benchmark for good practice across the UK. Most importantly there should be recognition that integration does indeed ‘start from Day One’ as this strategy makes clear. A lack of investment in access to rights and increasing the conditions for positive human connection in the early stages of the asylum process not only impedes effective determination of asylum claims but can damage integration in the longer term. Given that both the UK and devolved governments have an interest in ensuring the effective integration of refugees and other new migrants, this seems not only inhumane but detrimental to wider governmental goals.”

(Asylum Inquiry Report 2022, p.14)



The current direction of travel of the United Kingdom's immigration policy leads to tensions with the human rights focus of the New Scots Integration Strategy and most notably with the stated strategy of integration of asylum seekers from day 1. NSRIS itself is a progressive strategy, going further than the [Zaragoza Declaration](#) and enabling both integration as service delivery and integration as multi-layered intercultural dialogue in which active citizenship plays a part. For an inclusive strategy to continue to evolve in the Scottish context it is important that integration is well resourced for the benefit of all Scots, through partnership governance and resourcing of integration activities and, critically, of accountability.

Integration requires multilingual approaches

It has become a truism of integration and integration strategies that English language competences are critical to success. Whilst it is true that formal and informal ESOL provision is vital, it is a mistake to see ESOL as a 'silver bullet' or technical fix to wider issues related to integration. Scotland is officially a multilingual country, and legislation covers the provision of Gaelic and of British Sign Language. New Scots come into this context from a wide range of linguistic backgrounds, some speaking languages which are already frequently spoken in Scotland and many also speaking indigenous languages. High numbers of languages spoken in schools or local authorities has led to the widespread use of multilingual signage since the initial development of NSRIS 1, going beyond this practice in the hospitality industry. However, such initiatives are not enough to constitute a multilingual approach to resettlement and integration.

The right to speak one's mother language and the desire to educate children bilingually and in respect of cultural heritage is a critical element in the research findings unpinning this report. The provision of mother language resources and education is often a volunteer-led endeavour, provided by community groups, 'Saturday Schools', faith groups and within families. Bilingual Education Units provide some structural support for bilingual children in schools and ESOL classes in Further Education Colleges are highly sought after. Overall, a picture has emerged of language provision and services as under-resourced and struggling to reach some groups of learners. Equally there is clear research pointing to the difficulties of people who have experienced rapid and unwanted changes to willingly embrace learning and speaking a language which has not been actively chosen.

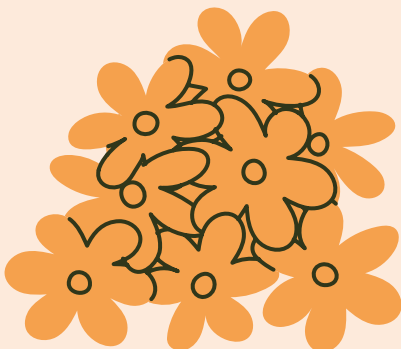
In framing integration as a multilingual and intercultural approach, it is important to understand that, for many New Scots, intercultural dialogue and encounters occur in languages which are not their first language. This means that considerable power dynamics are at play between hierarchies of languages and the resources underpinning their learning and heritage. There may also be mistaken assumptions about bilingualism being problematic; such assumptions are debunked by current research such as *Bilingualism Matters* and the work of scholars working to support New Scots and migrants in Scotland in their learning (Vender et al 2016).

Framing integration as multilingual allows the linguistic work of integrating communities and individuals to be shared and to occur multilingually. It allows for the presence of languages in communities and reduces fear of speakers of languages other than English, as well as encouraging the learning of languages spoken in local communities. In short, it allows for a landscape of linguistic hospitality and learning which can, in turn, strengthen the multilingual resources of people living in Scotland.

Welcome and Hospitality

Integration is a process that takes place between people (individuals come into contact other people and communities), place (individuals move to a new location and sue local services) and structures of governance (individuals are placed into an asylum system which has effects on their rights in the receiving country). The process of integration is governed through a series of policies and coordination, facilitated by representational techniques – such as ‘indicators of integration’, surveys, maps or expenditure data. As part of this facilitation and the governance of integration, there is an abstraction that takes place between the ‘lived’ or ‘everyday’ space and the ‘planned’ space (see Lefebvre 2009).

At an everyday level, integration is an emotive process – for both refugees and receiving communities – and feeling welcome is an important aspect of the process. Despite this emotiveness, however, there has been a tendency for integration research and policymaking to focus on the tangible, quantifiable determinants of the integration process (Phillimore 2012; Platts-Fowler and Robinson 2015). Gill (2018, p. 90) therefore warns that there can often be an over-emphasis on numeric aspects of integration over people’s lived experiences and that “‘feeling welcome’ is induced by a perception that your presence brings about joy or satisfaction in someone else [and that] refugees’ accounts of welcome often emphasise these inter-personal aspects.”



The idea of welcome highlights the emotional labour that goes into on-the-ground efforts to support integration, and the need for governing actions to support such work (Gill et al 2016). Welcome cannot be cold and mechanistic; it relies on the warmth that local communities can provide. At the same time, however, welcome is linked to governance, with planning being essential to provide the opportunities to provide support. Indeed, burnout is a common occurrence amongst those providing support due to a variety of factors including the number of barriers that need to be overcome, the vulnerability of many New Scots, unsupportive governance and short-term funding structures (Fisher et al forthcoming). Gill (2016) also draws attention to the emotional labour of those working in government positions and the need to protect them from emotional burnout, for their own sakes and also to ensure that institutional knowledge is retained to underpin positive decisions.

“Feeling welcome’ is induced by a perception that your presence brings about joy or satisfaction in someone else [and that] refugees’ accounts of welcome often emphasise these inter-personal aspects.”

Gill (2018, p. 90)

Focusing on welcome and the emotional component of the concept creates the opportunity to attend to the lived experiences and effects of policies and support efforts. Gill (2018) uses the example of university bursaries for students from refugee backgrounds which, while well-meaning, do not ensure that such students feel welcomed in the university. Indeed, Mangan and Winter’s (2017) research into refugees’ experiences of higher education across international contexts highlights issues of students’ experiences being invalidated, educators’ lack of knowledge and understanding of students’ backgrounds, racist experiences with other students, challenges with university systems and a lack of general support. As a result, despite gaining access to universities, students from refugee backgrounds do not automatically feel welcomed. Higher education is only one aspect of the integration process and, therefore, the question of whether interpersonal feelings of welcome are felt across other aspects (e.g., housing, language, employment) is a pertinent one.

Welcome “relies upon human warmth and, to a degree, the vulnerability of the welcomer” (Gill 2018, p. 91). Integration, in comparison to assimilation, is understood as being multi-directional. This process is highlighted, for instance, in the second iteration of the NSRIS, where integration is seen as a “two-way process, involving change in both individuals and host communities, which leads to cohesive, diverse communities” (Scottish Government 2018, p. 10). Yet the simplicity of this statement belies the complexity of the task, as positive change within host communities requires a certain vulnerability or openness to accept that existing practices, governing techniques or even cultural expectations need to be open to change – and this process can often be an uncomfortable one (Vollebergh 2016).

While ‘Welcome’ has become a slogan used liberally across advocacy and campaign organisations, this must be understood as only one stage in a long term, dynamic process of integration. It is not a one-off event. Whilst research and evaluation has pointed to the feelings of a ‘warm welcome’ expressed by New Scots, and the desire to offer a ‘warm welcome’ by political leaders and receiving communities, a ‘warm welcome’ is not enough and does not constitute integration. Integration requires strong, well-resourced structures and nuanced understanding of multiple communities, and their needs and potential for agency (Ager and Strang 2008).

It is in this context that literature on hospitality becomes important, including the literature on hospitality management. The latter has become critically relevant in the context of the placement of arriving New Scots into cruise ships, hotels and other congregate accommodation. In 2020, at the start of the Covid 19 pandemic, the wholesale use of hotels to accommodate those seeking asylum in Scotland was adopted under the provision of the private contractor, Mears Group plc. The service delivery aspects of integration by local

authorities and the processes of local community integration were frustrated further by the accommodating of those seeking asylum - people from Afghanistan and Hong Kong in 2021, and on a larger scale, from Ukraine in 2022 - in hotels, with hosts and on cruise ships.

This work has been undertaken during an acute shortage of social housing or appropriate accommodation for those seeking resettlement and has strained the housing provision for New Scots to breaking point. Provision of accommodation associated with hospitality and tourism, rather than everyday life, has also fractured understanding and implementation of hospitality towards New Scots. It has also negatively affected the agency with which New Scots are able to express hospitality towards hosting communities. This is a critical issue for robust and dynamic processes of integration: a New Scot living in a hotel cannot become part of a local community.

Integration is different from hospitality, but it relies on agentic, equitable processes of hospitality provision. For example, it is one of the first signs of employability and settlement of New Scots that Syrian or Eritrean or Cantonese restaurants are established. A key sign of the establishment of social bonds are shared community meals, or mutual hosting in homes of friends and neighbours, and the provision of cultural entertainment in communities, towns and cities. The establishment of community gardens and craft or art projects - many of which have been part of the NSRIDP projects - all point to strong establishing cultures of integration and mutual hospitality, as opposed to hospitality management as provided for tourism and business travel.

Just as a warm welcome is a key step into the dynamics of integration, so too the mutual provisioning of hospitality and access to the materials from which hospitality can be fashioned are indicators of integration. The Scottish Refugee Festival is a world-leading example of such cultural hospitality in action, fostering strong intercultural relationships between individuals, local authorities, NGOs, and community groups, as facilitated by Scottish Refugee Council. At Local Authority level some Scottish councils (e.g. Aberdeenshire) have established a partnership model and local government strategy for integration which can include such provision of hospitality in communities, alongside the provision of appropriate services for integrating people quickly into a form of normality after conflict and persecution.

This critical dynamic of hospitality as part of integration is under threat from a number of angles: the UK Government's policy approach, as opposed to that of NSRIS; the shift to a hospitality management model out of necessity due to an accommodation scarcity; strain on local authorities as resettlement officers are tasked with hospitality management and their work of community development is frustrated by congregate accommodation provision and the Ukraine matching schemes. There is also a high risk of burn out and exhaustion in an under-resourced third sector whose tasks have shifted during the course of NSRIS 2 - from 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic, through the various changing resettlement schemes, to the new Nationality and Borders Act 2022 - becoming substantially focused on humanitarian and crisis resettlement assistance, instead of the work of community integration and support.

In sum, 'hospitality', like 'Welcome', has become something of a slogan used to resist what has been characterised, under Theresa May as UK Home Secretary, as a 'hostile environment' for immigrants. This has led to hospitality being seen as a key element of community development and has allowed for a burgeoning cultural field of hospitality within Scottish communities. One element of this has been the 'hosting' schemes, pioneered by [Positive Action in Housing](#) and [Rooms for Refugees](#) and extended as part of the Homes for Ukrainians scheme. 'Hospitality' has also been adopted in policy circles in Scotland to differentiate the NSRIS approach from the one in play in the UK Government's Nationality and Borders Act and the Hostile Environment.

Care is needed, then, in the context of the discourse of 'welcome' and 'hospitality' characterising positive experiences of resettlement and integration, to ensure that there is clarity around responsibilities for provision and management of services and of support for community organisations enacting hospitality interculturally. Not least, hospitality must not be equated with housing. Housing is one element in the provision of integration services but the making of homes requires the ability of New Scots to be providers of hospitality themselves with a scheme of mutuality and agency that indicate strong social bonds and bridges for all members of society.

Place

Far from being a linear process with clearly defined beginning and end points, “integration is best understood as a set of overlapping processes operating within different spheres, which can proceed at different velocities, along variable trajectories and with distinct outcomes” (Platts-Fowler and Robinson 2015, p. 477). The process of integration is therefore informed and affected by various factors. These include legal frameworks in the receiving country and the rights and opportunities granted to refugees (see Ager and Strang 2008; Mulvey 2014); the demographic characteristics, cultures and capacities of resettling population(s) (see Phillimore 2011); and the social connections between refugee communities and between refugee groups and host communities (see Platts-Fowler and Robinson 2015).

However, despite these insights into the factors that affect integration, there is still a limited understanding of how they interconnect and affect the lived experiences of refugees (Phillimore 2011). While this lack of knowledge stems in part from a lack of available long-term data that takes account of the issues affecting refugees specifically, Platts-Fowler and Robinson (2015) argue that an additional reason is the general failure to attend to the importance of place and the local context to the integration experience. Yet place is essential to the integration process. It is where social relations are produced and reproduced and the space in which the factors that affect integration come together and interconnect. As Aldegheri (2022, p. 52, emphasis in original) puts it, place is the “where [that] influences what happens and how it happens.”

Place, and people’s interaction with place, therefore plays a major role in the integration process. This can also be seen by how place connects with the Ager and Strang (2008) Indicators of Integration framework (see Platts-Fowler and Robinson 2015). Employment and housing conditions, which are understood under the ‘means and markers’, are determined by local resources as well as the social and physical environment. Meanwhile, the bonds, bridges and links that form the ‘social connections’ domain of the refugee integration model developed by Ager and Strang (2008), are linked to the cultural norms of both those arriving and those of the receiving communities. Places also vary depending on their socio-political histories, identities and experience of welcoming new groups of people (Cresswell 2004). Matters of language, cultural knowledge, safety and security, which form the ‘facilitators’ domain, are also intimately connected to place. Where people are housed can have a significant impact on their feelings of safety, ease of access to language classes, mobility, ability to connect with other members of similar cultural groups or feel more at home through accessing shops that remind them of home.

As a result of the variability of place, refugee groups and receiving communities, however, it is almost impossible to derive universal approaches for integration that will suit each context. Moreover, the experience of place can vary between different groups of people (such as specific cultural groups, women, children, elderly people). In addition, research into lay understandings of integration amongst both New Scots, members of receiving communities and refugee organisations highlights how integration is always built up around locally sensitive constructions. Therefore, even when academics and policymakers might understand integration to be a two-way process, different people, groups and organisations will construct integration differently depending on the contexts in which they operate. As a result, while immigration and integration policies are set at a national level, how such policy is applied, encountered or interpreted is likely to vary according to place – which can be down to the scale of individual neighbourhoods.

Place is also the setting in which everyday encounters between people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds can occur. It is often thought that contact, through repeated encounters, can improve inter-group relations by reducing anxiety and fear of the unknown (see Pettigrew and Tropp 2008). Similarly, contact is thought to improve empathy between groups as people can develop the ability to take on the perspective of the other. However, in-depth qualitative research has shown that regular everyday encounters do not tend to provide opportunities for deeper contact or, if they do, such contact is not scaled up to the group (Matejskova and Leitner 2011). Instead, Matejskova and Leitner (2011) argue that the potential benefits of encounter are only acquired through sustained contact where individuals of different groups work side by side on common projects. Thus, community centres and workplaces are ideal settings for establishing such sustained contact – though mainly if work is collaborative and where projects are not designed simply to showcase culture. Similarly, place provides the setting in which dialogue and mutual listening can take place – leading to intercultural encounters. Yet, as Aldegheri (2022) shows, such encounters are only possible when they occur in a place that is experienced by everyone as safe.

“Integration is best understood as a set of overlapping processes operating within different spheres, which can proceed at different velocities, along variable trajectories and with distinct outcomes.”

(Platts-Fowler and Robinson 2015, p. 477)



Restorative Integration

In the context of strong academic debates relating to decolonisation (Mbembe 2021; Mignolo 2021; Phipps 2019), it is vital to understand place, in the context of integration, as multi-layered and historical. The heritages of colonisation and of slavery are emotive and live in public contemporary debates relating to integration. Many New Scots were born in contexts marked by these histories, and they encounter these histories in different ways in the places, museums, school curricula and public monuments of Scotland. This points to the necessity of a nuanced, trauma-informed, historically contextualised and educative dimension to the intercultural dynamics of integration.

The asylum system in the UK, which is the responsibility of the UK Government, has been found to erode “human autonomy, infantilizes adults, and enforces dependency” (Canning 2020, 272). In doing so, the asylum system creates a differential humanity, as people are subjected to exceptional legal and disciplinary measures in order to qualify as subjects with rights and dignity (Mayblin 2017). Scholars writing in the context of the UK’s asylum determination and support systems frequently use the work of Giorgio Agamben (1998) to draw attention to the fact that people seeking asylum in the UK can be made destitute and be abandoned by the state (see Darling 2009; Squire 2009; Klein and Williams 2012; Hasselberg 2016).

Given the ways in which destituting processes pervade the experience of seeking asylum and resettlement (from economic poverty to homelessness, fragile immigration to vulnerable service delivery and the sense of a sector lurching between crises induced by external actors) there is a vital need for the experiences of integration, as a dynamic, to be restorative in character and in delivery. In other words, there is a fundamental issue with any model or understanding of integration that does not explicitly reject the violent (im)mobilising practises of borders that people seeking asylum must navigate as they seek protection. How integration is undertaken matters as much as what people are forced to experience when they encounter the border – both in their journeys to safety and in their day-to-day interactions with the state. In the [Asylum Inquiry](#) evidence Baroness Kennedy states:

“I believe it is the current systems of asylum determination and support that makes them so. At a multitude of levels, and in many ways, it places people into marginalised social and economic situations, without adequate support, and leaves them there with ever-diminishing hope for the future. For those who have experienced trauma, this same system can compound the problem. We have heard almost countless stories of re-traumatisation and further trauma because of treatment in the UK. It is very clear to me that trauma-informed approaches should be the norm in how we treat asylum seekers.”

(Asylum Inquiry Report 2022, p.8)

Yohannes, (2022) has established the concept of '[restorative integration](#)' to characterise the methods, means and outcomes required for a robust, resilient and successful process of integration: “Restorative integration is a decolonial process of re-building the unfinished project of humanity that was interrupted by colonisation and coloniality.” Prefixing 'integration' with the concept of 'restorative', as with the prefixing with 'intercultural' allows for an expansive and deliberative approach which can escape potential colonising intent and assimilationist intent - both of which have been shown to be detrimental to a rights-based approach to integration, as established in NSRIS. Restoration refers to a past, which is not denied, and to future intent; it also encompasses present methods of delivery and service, of experience and affect.

“Restorative integration is a decolonial process of re-building the unfinished project of humanity that was interrupted by colonisation and coloniality.”

(Yohannes 2022)

Research methods informing this report

Review of Academic Literature

A thematic literature review was undertaken by researchers at the University of Glasgow to inform policymakers and other interested stakeholders of academic research concerning New Scots that has taken place in Scotland since 2014. The themes of the literature review match those of the NSRIS and key words for literature searches were developed through a close reading of the strategy. Given the differing integration contexts between Scotland and the rest of the UK, as well as the Scotland focus of this project, the literature review is based almost entirely on peer reviewed academic sources of information that focus on Scotland or include fieldwork in Scotland. Research conducted in the rest of the UK without an explicit mention of Scotland has been excluded from the review (except where making a comparison between Scotland and other contexts).

Review of Scottish Government Policy Documents

A collaborative review of Scottish Government policy documents was undertaken by researchers at the University of Glasgow and the University of Stirling to analyse the sources used to support government claims across policy concerning New Scots. Policy documents were identified initially by whether they mentioned the words 'refugee' 'asylum' or 'New Scots'. A snowball approach was then taken, and any further documents identified as relevant to integration were included in the review. The scope of the review is narrow, with only documents published by the SG after the introduction of NSRIS in 2014 included. Overall, 23 policy documents were reviewed, with 158 references to sources being made. This research identified a reluctance to cite academic sources and a frequent mentioning of a lack of numerical data concerning New Scots – indicative of a bias in favour of quantitative findings over qualitative.

Observations & Interviews of integration projects

Researchers from the University of Glasgow conducted empirical research in order to improve understandings of integration in Scotland in two interrelated aspects. Firstly they sought to better understand the current barriers that refugees and support groups encounter and gather evidence of how these barriers can be overcome and capabilities developed to encourage integration. Secondly, they aimed to expand and revise understandings of what integration is or can be. To carry out this work, researchers spoke with key stakeholders – most of whom were involved in funded NSRIDP projects – and conducted participant observations with funded projects. University of Glasgow research also included two Masters by research (MPhil) dissertations. The first focused on refugees' perspectives of ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) practices in Scotland. This work included observations of ESOL classes, volunteering as an ESOL teaching assistant, running two focus groups and conducting 30 interviews with New Scots learners and ESOL practitioners. The second project centred on interpreting in the context of asylum decision-making and was particularly focused on interpreting in the space of asylum appeal hearings. Research methods included observing asylum appeal hearings and interviewing interpreters.

Findings from the Masters by research projects will be included in the next iteration of this report.

Ketso Workshop

An Evidence in Progress Workshop was held in the COSLA event space in Edinburgh on the 23rd of August 2022. The aims of the workshop were to (i) present tentative findings and research methods, (ii) sense-check the research findings and methods with those in attendance, and (iii) gather learning outcomes from the past four years to assist the planning for the third iteration of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy. The third aim was accomplished through a Ketso workshop, based around 4 key themes with related sub-themes:

- a. Informing the development of the New Scots Strategy – Accountability, roles and responsibilities, building capacity & learning, building services around people and communities, Engaging with New Scots & receiving communities, Learnings from the Syrian VPR scheme.
- b. Lessons from the Pandemic: Digital working for New Scots integration – Community relationships, Education (all stages), Employability & welfare, Health & wellbeing, Housing & social support, Language.
- c. Working in Partnership across Scotland – Embedding the strategy in public service delivery, Engaging with New Scots & receiving communities, joining up service provision, Maintaining & growing partnerships, Communication & feedback
- d. Evolving Political Landscape – Ukraine conflict & sponsorship scheme(s); Forced removals & Rwanda policy, New UK government dispersal plans, The Nationality and Borders Act, Afghan dispersal, Hostile Environment.

International Comparisons of Integration policies

Researchers from the University of Glasgow compared Scotland's NSRIS against five other integration strategies that include the integration of refugees. The following strategies were analysed:

- England's 'Integrated Communities Strategy' (ICS) green paper (MoHCLG 2018)
- Berlin's 'Comprehensive Program for the Integration and Participation of Refugees' (SCIMBS 2018)
- Finland's 'Government Integration Programme for 2016 – 2019' (MoEAE 2016)
- New Zealand's 'New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy' (NZI 2022)
- Malta's 'Integration = Belonging: Migrant Integration Strategy & Action Plan Vision 2020' (MEAE 2017)

Particular attention was paid to who is included under the remit of each strategy, how they defined integration, who or what is considered 'responsible' for ensuring integration takes place and what are the main challenges perceived by each strategy.

External Evaluation of New Scots

In September 2021 the Scottish Government Commissioned ScotCen Social Research, in partnership with Matter-of-Focus, to evaluate the implementation and impact of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy (2018-2022). The overall aims of the evaluation were to assess how the strategy has been implemented, the progress made towards achieving its intended outcomes, and what learning can be used to inform future policy and practice.

A mixed method approach was adopted. Data collection conducted by ScotCen included:

- Qualitative interviews with stakeholders (n=30): interviewees included policy leads, representatives of refugee support organisations, national and local governmental representatives
- Online survey with organisations (n=250 respondents) covering all 32 local authorities and including representatives from government bodies, LAs, third sector, community organisations, faith groups, education providers and the private sector.
- Qualitative interviews with refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland (n=c20). Participants lived in 5 different areas of Scotland (SIMD 1-4) and were from 6 different countries. Their time living in Scotland ranged from 1 month to 10 years and included a mix in terms of gender and age.

The full report based on this research will be published in 2023 and findings incorporated into the next iteration of this New Scots Report.

Analysing the of Role of Local Authorities

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) was commissioned by COSLA in collaboration by the Scottish Government to conduct research into the role of Scottish Local Authorities (LAs) in delivering humanitarian protection programmes and facilitating integration. Research questions focused on the challenges faced by LAs, comparing approaches to integration and humanitarian protection across LAs, exploring the impact of UK Government and Scottish Government policy and legislation on LAs, and exploring what opportunities there are for LAs to improve the quality of their approach to integration and humanitarian protection. A comprehensive digital survey was distributed across all 32 local authorities in Scotland, which would complement a more in-depth case study analysis consisting of three separate and distinct Local Authority areas. Qualitative research focused on case studies with three different types of local authorities in Scotland which broadly represent the diversity of the country. This included one mainly urban Local Authority (Dundee), one mainly rural Local Authority (Aberdeenshire), and an area which had taken smaller numbers of refugees (Na h-Eileanan Siar).

The full report of this commissioned research will be published in 2023 and findings will be incorporated into the next iteration of this New Scots Report.



Recommendations: Methodologies

02

Creative and trauma-informed, participatory methods should be mainstreamed, alongside the numerical and statistical analytics, and given equal weight as evidence. This allows for alignment with recent scientific practice and the adoption of arts and creative methods in humanitarian contexts by UNESCO's ArtLab, for example.

03

More engagement between policy and independent academic research is required in the development of NSRIS 3, with both qualitative and quantitative research cited in Scottish Government policies regarding New Scots.

2

Part 2



Aspects of integration across Scotland

Part 2 of this report presents interconnected aspects of the work of integration happening across Scotland. Each section relates to one aspect involved in the dynamic, intercultural and multidirectional process of making integration work. It is important to emphasise that all these aspects are interrelated; this is highlighted by internal links to relevant parts of the report itself.

Working with the NS strategy

Partnership Working

The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy is directed by a core group made up of key strategic partners and stake holders. The majority of stakeholders interviewed by ScotCen were part of the NSRIS core group and/or themed groups. On the whole, they expressed support for themed groups as a means of improving integration: these helped facilitate new relationships and partnerships between organisations and allowed for the development of local initiatives. The fact that the NSS is underpinned by individuals/organisations with longstanding relationships also enabled support to continue in the face of Covid-related disruption and allowed the core and themed groups to respond quickly to critical incidents.

These groups were seen as an effective means of information sharing, allowing members to learn from integration work happening elsewhere. While some stakeholder interviewees indicated that the work undertaken by the groups may have happened without NSRIS, stakeholders felt that the strategy helped coordinate this work. However, interviewees also highlighted a series of barriers which limited the successful working of the various groups. These included the perceived limitations on what could be achieved due to policy reserved to the UK Parliament.

The impact of COVID was strongly felt across NSRIS core and themed groups, with some not having met since lockdown. COVID was said to have pulled Scottish Government staff and other partners away from work related to New Scots integration, with staff redeployed to other areas, while organisations shifted to focus on meeting refugee and asylum seekers' basic needs rather than deliver work related to more complex integration requirements. This led some stakeholder interviewees to disengage from the groups. Several highlighted capacity limitations, and there was considerable concern that there was no funding to accompany the NSRIS (aside from the AMIF funding for specific projects which was warmly welcomed).

“If integration is really to mean something then it shouldn't be about people staying within their known communities, we need to break down the barriers.”

(Tam, Community Group)

Impact of NSRIS 2

Research conducted by ScotCen and IPPR focused on stakeholders' perceptions of the NSRIS and the extent of its impact in Scotland. Initial findings from both studies indicate that stakeholders were generally happy with the impact of the current strategy, with 72% of respondents to ScotCen's national survey answering that they felt the NSRIS had either a 'very positive' or a 'quite positive' impact in Scotland. Interview respondents in both research projects praised how well the NSRIS articulates a positive and comprehensive vision of refugee integration in Scotland.

Respondents to ScotCen's research were generally more positive concerning the role of the strategy in helping to foster better understanding across local partnerships and to assist LAs in understanding the needs of New Scots. IPPR's research, meanwhile, found that there was a variation in the extent to which LAs used the strategy, with some LAs stating that the strategy formed the basis of their integration approach and others stating that it served mainly as confirmation of the work they were already engaged in. To a certain extent this disparity is unsurprising given that LAs have varying levels of experience in the work of welcoming and integrating New Scots.

Directions for NSRIS 3

Despite the value of the NSRIS, research participants (New Scots in particular) were concerned by the contradictions between the stated aims of the strategy and the realities for many New Scots living in Scotland. Racism, in particular, was viewed as an important issue by ScotCen's research respondents; this finding links to the need for the next iteration of the NSRIS to consider the complexities and needs of receiving communities in more depth. To varying degrees stakeholders were also aware of the fact that reserved policy acts as a significant barrier to the implementation of the strategy, as one respondent noted:

“We see that the New Scots strategy itself is still not really solving the big, massive issues of what people are facing, especially people who want access to work, opportunities, when they are asylum seekers. [...] Can the strategy] tackle these main things in reality? No, because the main issues that people face in the asylum process and things, are not under Scottish government control.”

(Hakim, local community group)

Despite such reservations, however, stakeholders called for the strategy to evolve into an action plan with clearly defined targets and accompanying resources in order to chart tangible progress made on resettlement and integration; to communicate successes to national government; and to improve resourcing of support. Indeed, while the research conducted as part of this project highlighted how the strategy had been used to enhance collaboration between LAs and other actors, representatives of refugee-led organisations and community groups were less convinced of the strategy's direct value for them:

“We see that the New Scots strategy itself is still not really solving the big, massive issues of what people are facing, especially people who want access to work, opportunities, when they are asylum seekers. [...] Can the strategy] tackle these main things in reality? No, because the main issues that people face in the asylum process and things, are not under Scottish government control.”

(Penelope, community group)

Respondents also suggested that a clear delineation of accountability and responsibility could be included as part of NSRIS 3, in order to ascertain whether actions are taking place in Scotland which adhere to the aims and vision of the next iteration of the strategy itself.

Recommendations: Fractal Accountability and Governance

Clear and accountable action plans need to be created with robust structures of governance, and a fractal management system. A fractal approach to management views the NSRIS in relation to the wider sociocultural environment, with the expectation that the partnership approach embedded in NSRIS since 2014 will be replicated at multiple scales, from local to national. It is at the level of day- to- day working and monitoring of private sector, public sector and third sector organisations that there is a need for change and for a system of robust accountability. This report therefore recommends:

- 04 Refreshing the New Scots Core Group as an accountability board with powers to request monitoring of the implementation of the NSRIS by institutions and organisations. This should be phased in as a way of supporting institutions and organisations to learn about how to undertake intercultural and restorative integration, with a development over time towards sanctions where the strategy is not being implemented. Funding should be put in place to support such monitoring work.

Effects of ongoing socio-political changes

Socio-political change

Refugee integration in Scotland from 2020 to 2022 took place during a time of acute social upheaval and unrest. The COVID 19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns; mass evacuations into Scotland of refugees from Ukraine; the evacuations and visa schemes for Afghan people and Hong Kong British Nationals; rising austerity and cost of living; the United Kingdom leaving the European Union and its many binding regulations relating to human rights – all these factors have led to a context where integration is a daily struggle and many of the gains of recent years have been put on hold or been suspended. There are a number of key elements to note with regard to the social and political changes at work affecting integration:

“Since the dispersal of asylum seekers to Scotland began, successive administrations at Holyrood have taken the position that integration should begin from the day an asylum seeker arrives in Scotland, and devolved services should, therefore, be organised to deliver this. This approach also reflects the wider commitment of the Scottish Government and all public bodies in Scotland to promoting equality of opportunity and social justice for everyone living here.”

(Scottish Government 2018, 49)

“Integration is not a set programme, it’s changeable, and people’s perspective of society is changing [...] so we can’t try to have the same format of integration, this is how integration is.”

(Hakim, Community Group)

- The use of hotel accommodation during the COVID 19 pandemic to house those seeking asylum, and the rapid move by Mears Group plc as a housing provider to take people out of private accommodation and into hotel accommodation (see [Asylum Inquiry Scotland Report](#) and [Housing section](#))
- The mental health trauma resulting from the decision outlined above, which led to the attack by a person seeking asylum in Park Inn in 2020 and to deaths by suicide in hotel accommodation Scotland. This has resulted in the [Asylum Inquiry Scotland](#), which is refugee-led and chaired by Baroness Kennedy. Trust in institutions has declined, as has trust in implementing the rule of law – especially when holding to account powerful and private institutions or corporations.
- In comparison to the UNHCR supported refugee resettlement programmes, the recent introduction of the Afghan relocation and resettlement schemes and those supporting Ukrainian Nationals has altered the nature of refugee protection across the UK with variations in legal rights and entitlements, funding provisions and operational processes.
- The use of hotels as long stay accommodation began with the COVID 19 pandemic with people seeking asylum moved at short notice into hotels and was then used for the arrival of Afghans under the ARAR scheme, and for Ukrainians under the Supersponsorship scheme operated by the Scottish Government.
- The exceeding of the original quotas of 3,000 Ukrainian nationals under the Supersponsorship and other schemes including Homes for Ukrainians schemes; this led to an accommodation and housing crisis during the mass evacuation of Ukrainians between March 2022 and September 2022. This crisis is also compounded by the need to house people seeking asylum and people on other resettlement schemes.
- The Hong Kong British National Overseas visa scheme, allowing holders of a Hong Kong BNO visa to relocate to the UK following the curtailment of freedoms and civil rights in Hong Kong in 2019 onwards.
- An increase in the numbers of unaccompanied minors transferred to Scotland for care under the auspices of the [Local Authorities](#) and the [Scottish Guardianship Service](#). The Scottish Guardianship Service is upheld as providing international good practice in provisions for young people.
- The [Nationality and Borders Act 2022](#) which has changed the relationship to integration in communities for new arrivals claiming asylum, effectively preventing the operation of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy of [integrating of those seeking asylum from day one](#) of arrival.

Effects on the delivery of NSRIS

These changes have occurred in a context of increasing global crisis; against the backdrop of a rise in xenophobia; and with ministers of the UK Government questioning or aside obligations to uphold the Refugee Convention. Alongside the development of increased complexity through the operation of multiple schemes in Scotland, they have had considerable implications for the delivery of NSRIS.

In times of crisis, resources are diverted from structural and institutional work to meeting immediate and basic needs. This has been true of the work of NSRIS, with consequences have been acutely felt in local authorities and third sector organisations, but most acutely in New Scots communities themselves. It has led to a traumatised system which is increasingly unsafe for all.

Firstly, the COVID 19 pandemic led to a suspension of the work of NSRIS, with the focus of all human resources on humanitarian aid to vulnerable populations in Scotland. This included a changed focus of support to those in hotel accommodation. Work on the NSRIS resumed formally in September 2021. It was clear from the resulting meetings of the Core Group and other stakeholders that COVID 19 had highlighted some key weaknesses and lack of resilience in systems which had derailed both policy and project work.

The pandemic also highlighted deficiencies of design in NSRIS itself: when integration requires communities for restorative processes of intercultural dialogue, substantial barriers occur if people are not living together in communities. Pandemic lockdowns disrupted community interactions; hotel accommodation is designed to be temporary and therefore does not facilitate routes to resettlement and integration. Furthermore, the UK Parliament's Nationality and Borders Act revealed the fragility of NSRIS in the face of changing legislation; it also highlighted issues of power imbalances with direct political opposition between a strategic aim of integration and inclusion at a Scottish Government level, and one of exclusion and expulsion at a UK Government level.

Local authorities were placed under impossible strain by the considerable increase in the work of providing services to those who have come to live in Scotland as a result of uncapped mass evacuation from the war in Ukraine and under bespoke, smaller scale, capped resettlement schemes for Afghans and Hong Kong BNO, as well as the ongoing UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS). This strain surfaced in stakeholders' saying during interviews with researchers that the workload is unsustainable, and planning is constantly undertaken on an emergency footing:

"The problem with the lack of guidance [...] I know I have to create new posts to cope with the level of demand. I don't know how many people will be coming to [LA] or how many hours of ESOL I'm expected to provide. Therefore, how many posts do I create? I could create five posts and then not need them, or I could create two posts and immediately we're over capacity and we have to operate a waiting list [... I just have] No idea for this, absolutely none. It's like, I don't know what to do, just make it up as I go along." (Alice, Local Authority)

Repeated crises – such as the mass evacuations of people fleeing the wars in Afghanistan and Ukraine – have revealed key weaknesses in planning capacity and capability in Scotland. As a result, when crises occurred the work required increased significantly and with a considerable lag time before further human resources could be recruited – particularly difficult in a period when recruitment has been hampered by a changing job market. Furthermore, Local Authority workers were pulled over from working on medium to long term community development as part of a robust programme of integration into working to ensuring matching of accommodation for evacuees arriving in Scotland. Within many of these areas, interviewees spoke of 'constantly firefighting'.

The following list gives an idea of the complex landscape of current resettlement schemes:

UK Resettlement Scheme

UK Government (supported by UNHCR/IOM)

Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (pathways 2 and 3)

UK Government (supported by UNHCR/IOM and Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office)

ARAP and ACRS (pathway 1)

UK Government (Ministry of Defence and Foreign Commonwealth Development Office supported)

Community Sponsorship

(UK Government)

Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme

Scottish Government

Homes for Ukraine

UK Government / Scottish Government

Ukraine unaccompanied minors scheme

UK Government

Widening asylum dispersal

UK Government

UASC National transfer scheme

UK Government

The schemes outlined above each come with different funding models, determined by the Home Office and UK Government. These funding models are differentiated, and they do not resolve the issues of systemic destitution experienced by those who claim asylum. This reflects the legislative shift in the UK Government from supporting people in the asylum system to a focus on supporting those who have arrived on resettlement and humanitarian schemes which has been in evidence since the [Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme of 2015](#).

Scotland, like all countries in 2022, is faced with the challenge of picking up what has been postponed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and planning for a future in which in-person gatherings are no longer the norm. In addition, lessons have been learned from the pandemic and New Scots have become more connected online through initiatives such as Connecting Scotland and tailored projects designed to improve the digital literacy of New Scots. In certain contexts, such as ESOL, moving to online gatherings and classes has meant that more New Scots can be reached across the country and highlighted that elements of ESOL provision can be funded and delivered across LA boundaries.

Nevertheless, despite the benefits of online learning, stakeholders at the Evidence Workshop and interviewed participants were keen to emphasise the importance of face-to-face contact in the context of integration and the need to re-establish in-person community activities.

Overall, resilience and crises work have taken a toll on the third and public sectors but have been undertaken with a strong rhetorical and practical spirit of offering a 'warm welcome' to those arriving. Over the long term this is presenting strains on service delivery in particular. However, work in communities at a local level has been thriving with hundreds of initiatives working for integration and intercultural dialogue in creative, resourceful and successful ways.

“Everything is about face-to-face. In lockdown it was very much outdoors because that is where it was safer and you can keep people in their family groups, although children were allowed to mingle.”

(Tam, Community Group)

Recommendations: Decentralisation and Fractal Delivery

A decentralised approach is required, with resources flowing to sustain a) statutory service delivery and b) community integration and intercultural practice. This distinction is critical, and both types of integration work are necessary as part of complying with the Zaragoza Declaration as well as fulfilling the Human Right based approaches of NSRIS. This report therefore recommends:

- 05 Regular meetings, required for resilience planning to ensure that it is clear what can and cannot be offered to new arrivals and that space is made available for a certain quota each year, under resettlement programmes.
- 06 Clear guidance which needs to be developed fractally (i.e. replicated at multiple scales, from local to national) and attuned to the needs of local providers delivering NSRIS in partnership, across all Scottish Local Authorities. This could be modelled on good practice where local integration plans have already been developed because of the experience of working with New Scots under a variety of schemes. Local integration guidance should be published and part of local welcome packs.

Devolved and reserved powers: governance, accountability, responsibility

This report repeatedly features many challenges associated with the currently hostile and re-traumatising UK asylum system. The fact that some powers are devolved to the Scottish Parliament, and some are reserved to the UK Parliament, is not clear to many New Scots (see Ketso findings from 23.08). This lack of awareness is linked to barriers in accessing services and resources which support integration, with New Scots unclear about whom to contact for help and where to complain about problems. Fear of reporting negligence / poor service / breaches of service is particularly recurrent when dealing with contractors such as Mears Group plc because of feared repercussions on housing, status or asylum case (see Housing section).

“Because if we claim we want to work and help people to integrate, then we should sit and listen to the people who we want to be integrated authentically.”

(Hakim, community group)

This report repeatedly features many challenges associated with the currently hostile and re-traumatising UK asylum system. The fact that some powers are devolved to the Scottish Parliament, and some are reserved to the UK Parliament, is not clear to many New Scots (see Ketso findings from 23.08). This lack of awareness is linked to barriers in accessing services and resources which support integration, with New Scots unclear about whom to contact for help and where to complain about problems. Fear of reporting negligence / poor service / breaches of service is particularly recurrent when dealing with contractors such as Mears Group plc because of feared repercussions on housing, status or asylum case (see [Housing section](#)).

More widely, clarity is needed to ensure accountability across Scotland in terms of who is responsible for delivering services to support the integration of New Scots; improving communications between different sectors and Local Authorities; and collating examples of best practice in order to inform future developments in integration work.

Local Authorities across Scotland have limited power to influence the UK Government's asylum dispersal scheme. They do have an active role in designing and delivering services for New Scots which are related to powers devolved to the Scottish Parliament - in areas including employability and labour market access, housing and ESOL. In other words, Local Authorities have some flexibility in deciding how best to approach the challenges of providing a welcome for New Scots and how best to manage these services.

It is worth noting that Scotland has a large land mass (77,910km²) relative to its population size (5.4 million). Moreover, there is considerable variability in the size and connectedness of its LAs. Island councils such as Orkney (990km²) and Shetland (1,466km²) are relatively distant from the Central Belt and connected to the Mainland by long ferry and airplane routes; other island councils such as Argyll and Bute (6,909 km²) are more frequently connected to densely populated places such as Glasgow city (175km²). Urban and rural differences are many, including the fact that some Local Authorities like Dundee city (60 km²) or Clackmannanshire (159km²) are much more compact compared to Highland (25,659km²) or Dumfries and Galloway (6,425km²).



Integration approaches across Scotland's LAs are varied, with some experiencing more success than others. This variation is in part due to the Scotland's geography, which has an effect on how integration is managed. One of the main challenges to ensuring women attend ESOL classes, for instance, is the need to provide childcare. In discussing funding bids submitted by two LAs to provide free childcare for ESOL learners, one interviewee discussed the disparate figures each had costed in their bids:

“Because [Local Authority A] is a relatively contained Local Authority in that the location of the classes [are close to people's homes] and the way the public transport works, they were able to devise a bid for 16 children for a relatively low amount of money. Whereas in [Local Authority B], they also put in a bid for about 2 children, but their bid was about three or four times as much cost-wise. So, there are definitely a lot of barriers, geography-wise, to accessing ESOL.”

(Greg, Local Authority).

Aside from geographical differences, there has been considerable variation in the planning of resettlement across Scotland; the variation in integration practices and success across different Local Authorities also reflects the differing decisions and processes taken to support New Scots.

A major factor in how resettlement has been organized in the various local authorities is determined by the department through which resettlement has been organised. For the most part, resettlement has fallen under the remit of housing departments, whereas in some local authorities it has been structured under social work. This difference, according to respondents, has played a significant role in creating “real inequalities across Scotland” (Hannah, Local Authority). Respondents from local authorities observed that housing departments have tended to focus their efforts and funds on securing housing for resettled refugees, while focusing less on issues of ESOL and employability; in these cases, New Scots have received reduced ESOL classes and have not been integrated into other classes run in the Local Authority. While these accounts cannot be proven in the context of this report, they further highlight the need for a full review of ESOL delivery in Scotland (including access for New Scots) as part of a new ESOL Strategy.

Another example of problematic lack of clarity regarding responsibility and accountability relates to the resettlement of Ukrainian nationals. One of the main difficulties experienced by local authorities following the war in Ukraine and the subsequent evacuation and resettlement efforts in Scotland was that the ‘Homes for Ukraine’ scheme did not involve Local Authorities in the planning process. As a result, where councils under the Vulnerable People Resettlement Scheme for Syrian nationals have tried to house people as close together as possible, with the ‘Homes for Ukraine’ scheme Local Authorities have instead been faced with the challenge of providing services for people spread out across their area. In order to cope with this challenge, some local authorities have decided to provide Ukrainian refugees with bus passes, while others (especially smaller Local Authorities) have not, which has caused some consternation amongst Ukrainian refugees who are aware of contacts who have received bus passes and they have not.

At the same time, a lack of past experience of resettling refugees, coupled with a lack of guidance from both the UK and Scottish Governments, has meant that some Local Authority resettlement workers have been unsure of the availability of funding for resettled New Scots. This was observed by University of Glasgow researchers at meetings we were invited to. Similarly, interviewees recounted their surprise at some of their colleagues' lack of knowledge concerning available funding for New Scots.

Despite such variation in approaches to refugee resettlement in Scotland, there is now a lot of knowledge and experience of how resettlement work can best be done amongst resettlement officers. Respondents regularly reflected on what they wish they had known or had the opportunity to put into practice at the start of the various resettlement schemes that Scotland has engaged in. It is also important to reiterate the frustration that resettlement officers have experienced at being bypassed in the UK Government's roll-out of the Ukrainian resettlement scheme.

It is of vital importance that the knowledge and experience gained through previous resettlement schemes is not lost or forgotten. There is therefore an important opportunity for further research to take place into resettlement across Scotland, but also to create a workable sharing knowledge-sharing mechanism for local authorities to use. Respondents spoke of trying to use the existing Knowledge Hub but complained that it was both clunky and underused by colleagues. The geography of Scotland means that there cannot be a one-size-fits-all mode to integration in Scotland, yet much more needs to be done to support LAs (local authorities) carrying out the work of resettlement and integration.

Recommendations: Devolved / Reserved Powers; accountability and responsibility; human rights protection

- 07 NSRIS 3 should state more clearly which powers and areas related to integration are the responsibility of the Scottish Government and which are reserved to the UK Parliament.
- 08 To this end, a legal opinion is needed regarding the boundaries of devolved / reserved powers in the context of New Scots integration.
- 09 NSRIS 3 needs to become accountable and binding. While acknowledging that this needs to be a slow and careful process, it is nevertheless a necessary next step in supporting refugee integration across Scotland.
- 10 NSRIS 3 should seek to reverse the current responsibility dynamic. In other words, it is the responsibility of service providers to give regular account of – and be held accountable for – their work.

A common statement in interviews, focus groups and engagements with New Scots and with receiving communities relates to the need for accountability, specifically either administrative duties or legislation to protect everyone in the country. The Scottish Parliament is bringing forward legislation embedding Human Rights into Scots Law; it is a strong recommendation from the research underpinning this report that

- 11 The rights of those seeking asylum and the cultural rights of refugees are fully and firmly reflected and encompassed by domestic Scottish legislation.

Intercultural communication and integration

“Actually, we need to be saying [...] is, how can I learn about Poland? How can I learn about Syria? How can I learn about all these cultures? You don’t need to learn about all of them and how to communicate with them. What you need to learn is how to communicate with everybody. How to communicate with everybody in a way that’s fair and equitable.”

(Alice, Local Authority)

Towards intercultural integration

One of the key findings from the research undertaken into the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy and the work of integration in communities is that it succeeds when the principles of intercultural dialogue are guiding principles (Phipps 2019; Cox, Phipps, Hirsu 2022; Cox and Phipps 2022). Intercultural communication is also important in successful service delivery as part of integration services (Blackledge and Creese 2019). Intercultural communication involves the decentering of one’s own experiences and cultural expectations and developing the ability to imagine and understand experiences which come from different histories, cultures and experiences of life. Intercultural encounter where there is little by way of shared heritage and when war and persecution have been reasons for forced migration, can be fraught involving fear in both arriving and receiving communities but also a lack of cultural knowledge, of intercultural competence and of practice in working towards integration as a mode of cultural change for all.

UNESCO has led the international community in developing frameworks and studies into the importance of intercultural dialogue for the sustaining of peace and building:

“All societies in our contemporary world are the result of intercultural communication. They are built on the momentum of cultural diversity, which has been a source of strength and transformation throughout human history. This is particularly clear today, in a world where a great diversity of people lives closely together, their co-existence intensified by social media and technological communication, changing the economic and cultural landscapes even in the most remote places.”

(Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO)

It is clear from the recent research undertaken by UNESCO that intercultural dialogue is vital for achieving [Sustainable Development Goal 16](#) - promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. In the report '[We Need to Talk](#)' UNESCO published a series of 'Think Pieces' which point to ways in which Governments can enable a framework of intercultural dialogue in education, culture, media and science which will support the aims of SDG 16, and of working to free societies from conflict and strengthening the institutions which promote peace.

These dimensions have been highlighted as critical to the work of integration into communities and through service delivery in Scotland. First of all, as the quote from Alice demonstrates, there is a need for understanding the cultural, faith based, environmental, rural and urban and linguistic contexts people have left, but also for arrivals to begin to understand and compare carefully the differences they find between life back home and their new experiences. Where integration networks have been set up in Scotland it is clear that this work of intercultural dialogue can flourish but it is predicated on both immense amounts of voluntary labour and small third sector and community organisations bidding for ever decreasing resources. One of the findings of the research with small organisations is that they are highly effective in working with local communities to promote intercultural dialogue through a variety of means, often through ESOL and cultural sharing events.

Cultural contexts

Intercultural dialogue is also clearly needed within receiving and arriving communities. It is easy to see receiving or hosting communities as homogenous and equally those arriving, but it is erroneous. The cultural context of rural Aberdeenshire or the Highlands and Islands have a recent history of providing resettlement services as part of integration work since 2016. The central belt and Glasgow in particular have been undertaking integration work with asylum dispersal schemes since 2000. The intercultural needs and learning in both contexts are bespoke and problems can arise when resettlement, mass evacuation or asylum services are overly centralised.

The findings from the Ketso workshop in August 2022 brought the intercultural dimensions of Scottish integration work and learning to the fore: throughout the workshop and focus groups, there was strong engagement with the opportunity to widen a welcome for New Scots across Scotland. This was partly due to increased awareness of people from Ukraine, recently resettled across Scotland, and partly due to Glasgow no longer being the only place of dispersal / resettlement for New Scots.

Recommendations: Intercultural dialogue and cultural safety

It is important for all receiving and arriving communities, and for institutions within Scotland, to be clear about rights, responsibilities and duties related to enabling sustainable peace and conflict transformation within society. Those fleeing war and persecution are doing so for the sake of living in peace - seeking asylum is undergirded by this aim. Intercultural dialogue and education are key elements in enabling this transformation; they are important both for training those new to working formally within integration sectors but also for arriving and receiving communities. This report therefore recommends

12

Embedding - across all sectors supporting the integration of New Scots - practices rooted in intercultural dialogue and education enabling sustainable peace and conflict transformation within communities. There are many tools and resources available within the intercultural dialogue and education sector, as opposed to that of integration, promoting the kinds of human rights respecting intercultural communication that is desirable for a society where all can flourish, and which are reflected in the NSRIS 2 Theory of Change, developed by ScotCen.

Intercultural dialogue is not a one-off but is part of the dynamic cycles of integration and it changes over time. It is ultimately about ensuring cultural safety, protection of human rights for all living and working in Scotland. It applies from day one of arrival and from day one within institutions and communities begin to integrate new refugee groups. It is a subtle process and one based in on going community development and education, in professional training (see Police Scotland Training for Family Liaison Officers).

English language provision (ESOL)

“So, I’ve got seven classes [a week...] I can’t say no [to the learners] because I know there’s people waiting [for ESOL classes and] they really want to do it. They’re getting pressure from the Home Office, if you’re not learning English you’re not integrating. It’s not fair, and sometimes it’s up to two years for waiting lists.”

(Mary, volunteer community group ESOL teacher)

“[English means that] I can do all my meeting, go to GP, or a school meeting with my children’s teachers; I can do every single, without support or helper. I can read all the emails, all the letters come to my home; I can do everything on my own.”

(Sara, New Scot)

ESOL provision in Scotland

English language education has been identified by UK policy makers as fundamental to supporting integration and improving community cohesion (Phillimore 2010). On reviewing the research that has been done on refugee integration in Scotland, it is clear there is a demand from refugees and asylum seekers for help to improve their English. This allows them to be able to communicate, find employment, and access information on healthcare, housing, or any other service they require (Education Scotland 2015). English language education also plays an essential role in shaping refugees’ future and personal plans as well as enhancing their well-being and health (Education Scotland 2015; Hirsu and Bryson 2017; Frimberger 2016). Moreover, learning English is essential to having a democratic voice, reducing isolation, and engaging positively with the host community (Education Scotland 2015).

Although the Scottish Government has made efforts to make ESOL provision in Scotland free-of-charge for asylum seekers and refugees (unlike the UK strategy of waiving fees depending on immigration status – see Meer et al 2019b), there has been noticeable underfunding with respect to demand for these classes and to support the aims of the NSRIS (Glasgow Community Planning Partnership 2018; Slade and Dickson 2021).

Indeed, in Glasgow in particular, even formal college ESOL classes are over-subscribed – which has led to learners in Glasgow waiting for over a year for a college ESOL place. Oversubscription for ESOL is not limited at a LA level. In one of the other LAs in which field-work was conducted, for example, ESOL teachers reported that they were only just able to provide 6-8 hours of ESOL per week. However, once students had progressed and were able to move on to ESOL classes provided by the local college, their classes were reduced to 3-4 hours per week (with students enquiring from their LA teachers if they could return to the lower level in order to access more hours of teaching).

Local authorities play a key role in the provision of ESOL for New Scots. In many cases, ESOL classes provided by LAs tend to be those delivered at the beginner levels and combine with resettlement support offered by the council:

“If we’re looking at purely at ESOL for refugees and asylum seekers, they’re coming in at a very vulnerable state and it is the Local Authority who has the statutory responsibility to care for these individuals through housing and education for the children and registering for GPs [...] So language support is part of that.”

(Greg, Local Authority)

In addition, resettlement officers have the opportunity to get to know people resettled to their Local Authority and often know if someone has specific needs (e.g. related to trauma, disability or childcare) or aims; for example, these officers can help navigate New Scots onto more advanced courses offered through colleges. It is important to note that, throughout Scotland, colleges generally provide more advanced ESOL classes. LAs will refer New Scots onto college courses after they have surpassed the introductory level ESOL classes offered by LAs. While LA ESOL classes can be targeted at New Scots specifically and taught by persons with knowledge and experience of working with vulnerable individuals, this is not the case for most classes provided by colleges.

ESOL governance

The governance and provision of ESOL in Scotland is complex, diverse and lacking in unified direction. In some circumstances this diversity can be due to geographical differences where, for example, some LAs have managed to house New Scots in close proximity to one another and others have been forced to house New Scots spread across areas. However, it is impossible to overlook the uncertainty caused by recent Scottish Government funding changes in the delivery of ESOL; the general complexity of funding arrangements for ESOL; the decision not to review and renew Scotland's ESOL strategy; and legacies of diverse past approaches to ESOL across LAs. In this section we briefly examine each of these factors in turn.

Scottish Government funding changes in 2018 gave priority to full-time accredited ESOL courses delivered by colleges and redirected how funding for ESOL was distributed across Scotland. Where LAs previously received funding directly through an ESOL plan, the Scottish Funding Council now provides colleges with funding to run ESOL classes and colleges are able to work with LAs and other third sector organisations to provide ESOL at a local level. While in some locations collaboration between colleges, LAs and third sector organisation was reported as working well, with a clear divide in purpose between ESOL delivered by the college and the LA, Laura (third sector) noted that where she works low-level community classes are taught by the college, the Local Authority and the third sector organisation that she works for. This leads to providers competing for the same students:

“There’s no central hub [to plan local ESOL delivery...] it is crazily complicated and [the providers] don’t really speak to each other because everybody’s a bit protective. They’re all chasing after the same people, because their funding depends on numbers, and so everybody wants [the students].”

(Laura, third sector)

Stakeholders gave various interpretations of the decision to change the funding system for ESOL in Scotland, including the view that the Scottish Government had believed LAs were not suitably joining up services and that LAs were not suitably capturing data concerning those accessing their services. The result of these changes is that some LAs and colleges have managed to find a means to collaborate and reduce competition for funding through defining specific remits, while others have not:

“Loads of local authorities have had a really difficult time [...] Some local authorities have completely obliterated their ESOL and said that’s delivered by the college. It doesn’t exist in [redacted Local Authority] anymore, the college does all the ESOL provision. The reason you can do that is because you’re not clear about what’s different [between LA and college ESOL provision].”

(Alice, Local Authority)

Another aspect of the complex funding arrangements concerning ESOL is how ESOL funding connects to other budgets for further education and how this interconnection can result in New Scots being given contradictory advice by well-meaning supporters. While one of our practitioner stakeholders said they advised New Scots to attend full time college ESOL courses as soon as possible, others would advise them to stay in LA ESOL classes for longer in order to not use up their allocated three years of college bursary funding, in case they would later want to go on and study an HND course. The funding situation for New Scots is further complicated by the fact that most will attend college ESOL courses on a part-time basis through a college fee-waiver if they are unemployed. However, if they succeed in gaining employment, then they are unlikely to be able to use their bursary to attend college part-time and would not be eligible for a fee waiver for college fees. As a result, New Scots can find themselves in a Catch-22 situation regarding employment, ESOL and higher education. This is, understandably, a confusing situation for both New Scots, LA resettlement coordinators and other supporters to navigate.

Research has previously found that these funding changes had the effect of reducing the availability of part-time ESOL courses, increasing competition for places, and leaving non-accredited courses in a vulnerable position (Meer et al 2019b). These changes disproportionately affect newly arrived New Scots, especially as they are more likely to attend informal classes if they lack the connections to be aware of such courses and/or the linguistic ability to navigate the registration process (Meer et al 2019b). Many New Scots, especially women with childcare commitments, struggle with the time commitments of full-time ESOL courses despite the support that the Scottish Government has put in place for free childcare. As Maryam noted, “[None] of the English classes that I wanted to register at provide childcare or crèche for kids under school age. I couldn’t start in the college unless my youngest child started a full-time nursery.” New Scots reported difficulties accessing nurseries within walking distance of their homes, particularly problematic given the lack of free transport for asylum seekers in Scotland (see Communities section). They also struggled to ensure that nursery times overlap with ESOL classes.

A further effect of the complex funding situation for ESOL in Scotland is that money for ESOL classes can come from various pots of funding and LAs are able to utilise this as they best see fit. While this arrangement grants flexibility, it is also creating inequalities amongst New Scots. For example, while some LAs pool money together from funds they receive from the Syrian and Afghan resettlement schemes to deliver ESOL classes to all New Scots, other LAs separate ESOL provision between those on resettlement schemes and people seeking asylum – so that the latter receive far less ESOL provision. Interviewed stakeholders pointed to the Home Office guidance that resettled refugees should receive eight hours of ESOL per week for their first 12 months or until they have a certain level of proficiency (Bolt 2018), while there was no similar guidance from the Scottish Government concerning New Scots in general and there has been no specific funding allocated for ESOL provision for Ukrainian arrivals¹. As a result, the amount of ESOL classes offered to non-resettled New Scots also varies depending on the Local Authority.

¹ It should be noted that the UK Government does not provide funding for people seeking asylum to study ESOL.

Not all practitioners felt that New Scots at the lower ESOL levels required eight hours of ESOL per week, as long as their learning could be continued and supported through outside-the-classroom initiatives (such as language classes or employability classes taught in English) where New Scots can practice their language skills in other contexts. These views are supported by the [Sharing Lives, Sharing Languages](#) project, which enabled peer groups to bring together non-native English speakers and local community members under the coordination of peer educators with the aim of complementing the existing ESOL provision through group-based activities which aided language acquisition (Hirsu and Bryson 2017).

Uncertainty concerning the number of hours of ESOL to provide for New Scots is, according to some stakeholders, compounded by the lack of a revised ESOL strategy for Scotland after the previous strategy expired in 2020. While the aim of Scotland's new Adult Learning Strategy (ALS) is to incorporate ESOL into the wider aims and context of adult learning, interviewed stakeholders noted that the ALS makes almost no mention of ESOL and provision for vulnerable adults:

“One of the big concerns [regarding the ALS] is that there was already such an ambiguous funding arrangement for local authorities for ESOL. This just further reduced the visibility of ESOL by having it on a random page in a large document rather than saying, ‘Here’s Scotland’s ESOL strategy. This is how we help refugees and migrants learn English.’”

(Greg, Local Authority)

During a meeting of ESOL practitioners, stakeholders were concerned over the fact that the Scottish Government has committed to a review of the ESOL strategy but no indication has been given as to when this will happen. Practitioners noted that the previous strategy could be used to in funding meetings to highlight the importance of ESOL in Scotland – although this view was not shared by all. For example, other stakeholders noted how funding for ESOL for New Scots comes predominantly from the UK Home Office and the resettlement schemes anyway, and that the ESOL Strategy for Scotland had not improved funding availability. In addition, stakeholders were of the view that the new ALS views learning progression as a means to assist people entering or moving through college, yet it does not consider the role of adult education (including ESOL) in working with vulnerable people or that learning English is a key element of integration.

The variation in ESOL approaches across Scotland is also due, in part, to legacies of past decisions and ESOL planning at level local government. Separate from funding decisions, variations in approaches across Scotland include differing opinions concerning the need to offer ESOL certificates; reported lack of standardisation across ESOL classes; varying levels of understanding of how to plan and manage classes with vulnerable learners; and differing views concerning how ESOL progression should be understood in the context of New Scots. Stakeholders also reflected on the effects of government funding for ESOL in the past having been put to use by some LAs through adult literacies departments rather than ESOL specialists. They argued that, as a result, in some LAs ESOL is taught with an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) mindset rather than focusing on the needs of those learning it for life in the UK. Moreover, stakeholders noted that the quality of ESOL provision between LAs varied depending on the staff they were able to commit to ESOL-related work. As Lydia stated, “[some LAs] don’t have an ESOL coordinator at all and [others] have an ESOL coordinator, ESOL employability coordinator, and a refugee and asylum seeker coordinator. So ESOL [provision] is very, very patchy.”

An intercultural approach to ESOL

It is also important to note that LAs have encountered cultural difficulties in teaching ESOL with New Scots who have arrived through resettlement routes. Such difficulties extend beyond the need to offer childcare and women-only classes and speak instead to a need to communicate that integration always has to be multi-directional and trauma-informed. For example, with the recent arrival of refugees from Afghanistan, some LA resettlement leads worried that there was a large “cultural gulf” between Scottish and Afghan cultures and that this would affect ESOL delivery and further integration. In this case LA leads were referring to resettled Afghan refugees’ reluctance to join ESOL classes that weren’t aimed solely at resettled Afghans. During the course of a discussion concerning the provisions being made for resettled Afghan refugees, one LA lead was reminded of the cultural challenges they still experience with resettled Syrian ESOL learners that they have not yet managed to overcome:

“Syrians for the most part live in a patriarchal society [and...] many are suspicious of how we do things in the UK [...] In particular we’ve had cases where Syrian women that have come [to Scotland] as single women/mothers being treated very badly by other Syrians [...] treated with suspicion. How are you then supposed to include those Syrian women in ESOL classes?”

(Lydia, Local Authority)

Despite the assistance that resettled refugees have received in Scotland, it is important to be mindful of the continuing effects of the refugee journey that most New Scots (including resettled refugees) have experienced. “You get the sense that people [in the sector] have grown frustrated with the Syrians,” said Adam (third sector), “that after five years their English should be better and that they should be in work. But people forget just how vulnerable most of these families were before arriving and the challenges they still experience.” This viewpoint was echoed by Eleanor (Local Authority), who stated that “Most of the Syrian [families] lived in the camps together. The separation anxiety within [the] families is off the scale [and the men] feel as though they have to drop everyone off at school and be home when they return [...] They want to help their wives go to the supermarket [and] they don’t want their wife going alone to the supermarket.” LA resettlement leads such as Eleanor viewed this separation anxiety as being part of the reason for resettled Syrians’ slow progression in learning English and finding full-time employment. Others, such as Alice (Local Authority) worried that resettled adult Syrians were quickly becoming a “lost generation” despite the best efforts of LAs. “What we found with the Syrians is [that initially] a lot of the men would come [to ESOL classes]. They were [...] really positive and wanted to learn. [They thought

they would] learn English within six months, they'd get jobs, and their families would live happily ever after. [...] But they're not able to do that and [learning] English is hard. You can see their mental health dip; you can actually see them withdrawing.”

In order to approach these challenges, stakeholders saw the need for ESOL teaching to be more holistic and to be linked more closely to the [Social Practice Model](#) for Community Learning and Development that was previously developed in Scotland. The challenges being experienced by resettled Syrian refugees pointed to the need to ensure that those teaching ESOL to refugees are able to understand the circumstances of those they are teaching, and adapt teaching training they have received (such as the Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA)) to the needs of New Scots learners:

“Most of our learners are beginner, pre-elementary or even absolutely no English, no literacy, pre-literate. These staff do not come out of CELTA with the skills they need to work in communities. They have no literacy skills; literacies are not taught in CELTA. They certainly don't have community work skills. I always say every time I'd much rather have a community worker, I'll teach them how to teach ESOL?”

(Alice, Local Authority)

In the above quote, Alice mentions the need to train ESOL staff in order to deliver a more holistic ESOL approach in which ESOL is not solely about language acquisition, but also about supporting integration in a wider sense. However, one of the other challenges faced by ESOL providers is the high turnover of ESOL teachers given the lack of funding for ESOL provision and the high demand for ESOL classes:

“Retention [of ESOL teachers] is a really big issue at the minute [...] especially recently [as the] capacity of staff to deliver has been so limited and it's a very difficult pathway for ESOL volunteers to get accredited and employed with the local authority. So there's a real over-reliance on volunteers. And whenever you're a volunteer if you're the local authority planning provision you can't plan long term because these volunteers are going to still have normal jobs a lot of the time.”

(Greg, Local Authority)

While some cultural adjustment is required within arriving populations, it is equally the case that receiving communities need to broaden their perspectives to ensure that ESOL is not seen as a technical fix to a 'language problem' or 'language barrier' but rather is framed within an intercultural approach. Effective ESOL provision will differ for different cohorts of New Scots; both formal and informal ESOL provision are merely part of the multilingual, intercultural approach required for successful integration.

Such ESOL provision requires intercultural community development and training to be developed fractally (i.e replicated at scale from small local community groups to the level of national institutions) within arriving and receiving communities and organisations. ESOL cannot and should not be seen as, for instance, a fix for socio-cultural isolation, patriarchal norms, or the integration of women and care-givers into the workplace. However, delivering intercultural ESOL still requires sufficient funding in order to retain trained ESOL teachers and institutional memory of best-practice.

It can be easy for judgement of English learners or those arriving with multiple vulnerabilities to grow to become a source of conflict, particularly if the ESOL-related needs and desires of New Scots do not accord with the delivery plans or norms implemented at organisational level. An intercultural and community development approach to ESOL, within a multilingual context, can mitigate these potential conflicts and allow for a variety of approaches and attitudes to learning.

As part of the proposed review of ESOL in Scotland, there should be a wider recognition and adoption of the understanding that ESOL classes need to be combined with outside-the-classroom activities through which New Scots learners can practice their English and combine language learning with the acquisition of new skills. Findings from the [Sharing Lives, Sharing Languages](#) project, as well as the projects funded by NSRIDP, have highlighted the benefits of bringing people from different communities together to practice English outside the classroom. As one participant of an NSRIDP project noted, they feel less 'judged' when attending outside-the-classroom activities, which give them the freedom to try and express themselves. Another participant stated, "I feel more comfortable as now I know that I'm not the only one facing difficulties talking in a new language. I like that I have been sociable, meeting new people every week instead of sitting at home doing nothing." This understanding of ESOL as being part of a holistic mechanism for integration is therefore integral to learning English, applying those learnings and forging connections across social groups.

Recommendations: English language provision (ESOL)

It is important for all receiving and arriving communities, and fo

- 13 More guidance should come from the Scottish Government concerning the minimum amount of ESOL classes that New Scots should be entitled to. While ESOL provision should remain devolved to Local Authorities, such guidance should remove distinctions in levels of ESOL provision between resettled New Scots and people seeking asylum.
- 14 More efforts must be made to standardise ESOL provision across Scotland, including at beginner levels. Certificates can be used to show progress, though providers should be mindful of the fact that sitting tests can be a stressful experience for those not used to formal education structures.
- 15 ESOL funding arrangements should be reviewed in order to prevent New Scots from losing access to college fee waivers if they gain employment.
- 16 More clarity needed from the Scottish Government concerning which funding streams Local Authorities and colleges can access in order to fund ESOL for New Scots. This information should be made available for New Scots, LA resettlement coordinators and support groups in order to prevent New Scots receiving conflicting information from well-meaning sources.
- 17 Greater consistency and quantity of formal ESOL classes across local authorities as well as adequate resourcing of the ESOL sector, so that there is sufficient contact for efficient learning to occur. More ESOL funding is needed for this to occur.
- 18 A bespoke ESOL strategy should be developed for carers of young children to ensure they are able to fully avail themselves of opportunities for ESOL. Ideally this will include provision of childcare for New Scots from arrival.
- 19 The new Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland must address its stated aim of reviewing ESOL provision by taking note of the research in this report; in particular the responses from New Scots regarding the inadequacy of the Adult Learning Strategy in addressing their ESOL needs.
- 20 ESOL should accompany the provision of accommodation, alongside education and schooling, and of healthcare, as vital to integration. This is particularly important given that asylum dispersal accommodation is to be expanded beyond the city of Glasgow.
- 21 ESOL providers should consider the wider importance of ESOL in the context of integration, with targeted lessons taking place around employment needs, with the understanding that ESOL should not be seen as a fix for wider issues linked to socio-cultural isolation.
- 22 ESOL provision - for new learners in particular - must be planned through a holistic Community Learning and Development model, with informal ESOL classes outside the classroom (e.g. outdoor educational activities) embedded into ESOL planning and provision.

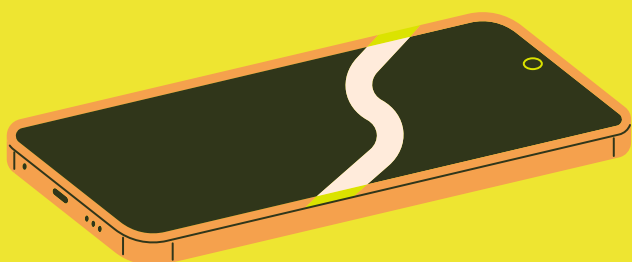
Education

The NSRIS 2 aimed to achieve the following outcomes concerning Education:

- Refugees and asylum seekers understand their rights, responsibilities and entitlements, and are able to exercise them to pursue full and independent lives.
- Refugees and asylum seekers are able to access well-coordinated services, which recognise and meet their rights and needs.
- Policy, strategic planning and legislation, which have an impact on refugees and asylum seekers, are informed by their rights, needs and aspirations (Scottish Government 2018, 48-49).

“Just sending a young boy from Eritrea to ESOL classes eight hours a week isn’t preparing him for the future and meeting all his educational needs. [...] that person needs to learn a trade, or they need to learn maths and computing. They need to learn PE and they need to have social time to mix with other young people.”

(Alice, Local Authority)



NSRIS: ambitions and achievements

The NSRIS 2 aims, outlined above, are in line with the Scottish Government statement whereby ‘It is the right of every child of school age to be provided with a school education [...] including those who are refugees and asylum seekers’ (Scottish Government 2018, p. 45). Education, in the context of New Scots integration, is more than just ESOL classes. It is one of the key markers of integration and is closely linked to people accessing work and employment once they have refugee status (Ager & Strang 2008). Given that people seeking asylum are not allowed to work, education is also one of the few spheres of activity open to asylum seekers which can help secure future opportunities and increase a sense of purpose and integration.

Schools and classrooms, in particular, are places which can provide a sense of connection, stability and community that is vital given the often-disruptive experiences of the UK asylum system. They are settings where integration happens when well supported and enabled, for example through ‘buddy’ or befriending schemes for “welcoming that person within their meeting and within the environment, contacting and sitting beside that buddy person and telling about how long this meeting will be, some of the issues that may be raised about the school, about the food, about the costume, about the uniform, and different things.” Assam, third sector. In 2018, research for What Works Scotland found that the education system was ‘considered to be the service operating best for refugee children’ and New Scots children were ‘thriving’ in school, once they were allocated a place. (McBride et al. 2018, p. 7-8).

Challenges and barriers preventing New Scots accessing education

While it is important to highlight positive and enabling factors in the context of New Scots and education, it is not clear that the above aims of NSRIS 2 have been consistently met. Also in 2018, a study commissioned by UNICEF found that Scotland had not met the twenty-day target aiming to place unaccompanied asylum minors into a school or college place within twenty days (Gladwell and Chetwynd 2018).

Research conducted for this report also found a variety of challenges and barriers preventing New Scots from accessing education across all age groups. These are discussed below and include the hostile environment perpetuated by the UK asylum system; limitations of the Scottish Government’s Adult Learning Strategy; complexities and problems related to funding for further and higher education; different cultural expectations of education systems; trauma and disrupted education; problematic educational models or practices perpetuated by service providers.

Education is a remit devolved to the Scottish Parliament, but control over immigration policy rests with the UK Home Office. Legislation such as the [Nationality and Borders Act 2022](#) has been described as ‘rights-removing legislation’, in clear contrast to the Human Rights based approach that the Scottish government is committed to (Scottish Refugee Council 2021). The UK’s ‘hostile environment’ policy exacerbates mental health difficulties among New Scots (Pollard and Howard, 2021; Mulvey, 2015) who are already at high risk of psychological distress due to the circumstances and experiences which caused them to seek refuge in the first place. Issues such as inadequate housing; short tenancies; living in an area where racism and violence is common; being forced to move housing; being placed in temporary or hotel accommodation (Strang et al 2018; Mulvey 2014; Stewart 2016; Meer et al 2019^a) – all of these these impact the ability of New Scots to access and benefit from education effectively.

However, not all problematic issues regarding New Scots and education are related to UK government policy. Some are within the remit of the Scottish Parliament's devolved powers, and these in particular are where changes and improvements can happen within the framework of NSRIS 3.

Concerns have emerged repeatedly about how both the framing and implementation of the Adult Learning Strategy (ALS) have led to confusion and extra work for Local Authorities and other education providers (see [ESOL section](#)). In particular, the lack of funding allocated to the ALS strategy has caused frustration and delays in delivery:

“It’s been made very clear that there is zero funding attached to the Adult Learning Strategy [...] how are we working so much for a new strategy and there’s no funding attached to it?”

(Greg, Local Authority)

Another concern is the lack of funded scholarships for New Scots, which means that access to higher education is severely restricted:

“There’s increased demand and we’ve got a set budget, it’s very, very difficult. I would say at the minute- so what we had, we had 480/490 applications for the scholarships, and they were whittled down to 13.”

(Meg, Higher Education sector)

Related to this is a lack of flexibility in college bursary schemes - for example, if a New Scot uses 2 of 3 years of allocated bursary for ESOL then they don't have enough left for college course:

“One of the things we try to do is hold them back from going to college too early because of the way colleges funding works. If they go too early and use all of their bursary funding up, then they can't go onto a vocational course later”

(Alice, Local Authority)

Additional complexities derive from the fact that people who are refugees are classed as 'home students' and do not need to pay tuition fees, whereas people who are asylum seekers do not count as 'home students' and can only attend part-time college classes through fee-waiver. Furthermore, students who are refugees still need funds to cover living costs in order to attend university even if they are not paying tuition fees. Such complexities in funding needs are often little understood both by New Scots and the people working to deliver higher

education services.

Generally, funding is felt to be beneficial when it is longer term and more flexible. This is especially important in contexts in which frequent crises need to be addressed, where funding needs to help resolve issues rather than be another obstacle to firefight:

“So there’s lots of things that happen in higher education, as you know, there’s always different themes or different crises that you have to deal with, try and be responsive rather than reactive, and quite often it’s firefighting.”

(Meg, Higher Education sector)

Some barriers preventing New Scots from accessing education are related to intercultural awareness and communication. Research by the [Mental Health Foundation Scotland](#) indicates that refugees need more information about school systems and curriculum content so that parents can better support their children to learn. At the same time, schools need more information about different cultural backgrounds, including cultural expectations and needs related to education, in order to best support New Scots. Increased intercultural communication can be achieved by schools through simple steps such as embedding an approach which encourages and supports parents who are New Scots to participate in Parent Council activities, thus fostering integration (as recommended by the [Voices and Visibility project](#)).

In terms of Higher Education, academic language and requirements are another obstacle to access, alongside a lack of awareness among New Scots of opportunities and options. Localised projects have been set up to address this, providing support with academic English and “breaking down that the university, or university as a whole, is something that’s tangible, it’s within your community, you can use it in different ways” (Meg, Higher Education) - but much work remains to be done across Scotland.

Other issues are specifically related to gender: for example, women who arrive as single mothers experience additional barriers to accessing education if they do not have a network of friends or family to help with childcare. This is an issue specifically identified as a barrier to accessing education by the Scottish Government (2018). At the same time, childcare provision which would enable New Scots mothers to access education is uneven and often poorly funded ([see ESOL section](#)).

Some New Scots arrive as unaccompanied minors, and are a group which presents a unique complexity of needs and requires strong multiagency working:

“We can’t just say ‘There’s your room in a house, just get on with it,’ it’s about the support for them getting into the country, getting them settled, and then support thereafter. What do they need? Do they need to go to school? Would college be a better idea? What about their language skills? It’s very, very complicated.”

(Meg, Higher Education sector)

Unaccompanied minors, as well as other groups of New Scots, may have long gaps in their educational history prior to arriving in Scotland. These may be due to not being able to access full-time education in their home country or as a result of time spent travelling, waiting to travel or in refugee camps before reaching the UK. Furthermore, New Scots may have difficulties proving their educational achievements or having their existing certifications recognised in Scotland. These issues all present significant barriers to accessing education in Scotland.

Pedagogical practices and educational models can also, in themselves, create problems for New Scots. For example, while dividing educational stages by the age of learners is a standard accepted pedagogical practice, in the case of people who are refugees and asylum seekers this presents considerable complications. Firstly, age assessment in relation to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children is a contested practice which has raised serious ethical concerns (Pobjoy 2017, Branthwaite 2021). Secondly, as we have seen, many New Scots arrive having experienced years of displacement and disrupted schooling, meaning that in practical terms a child who is of P6 age may not easily be able to join a P6 classroom without additional support - that is aside from ESOL support needs. Furthermore, whatever their age, refugees' wider "information landscapes" become "fractured" by displacement (Lloyd et al 2017, p. 39) and need to be reconstructed in ways that consider the socio-educational practices in which they were formed.

In this educational context it is therefore important to note the problems associated with certain educational models and practices. Particularly problematic are models driven by competency assessments, such as ESOL requirements geared only to the requirements of passing English exams (Meer et al 2019b); normative assumptions centred around linguistic competence which encode dynamics of power and status (Aldegheri 2022); and pedagogical practices based on a deficit-driven educational discourse (Frimberger 2016). All these are damaging in that they risk placing New Scots in the position of having 'less' - less knowledge, less communicative power, less ability - because they do not fit easily into specific models of assessment and education.

Such pedagogical approaches reduce the agency and capacity of New Scots and limit the ways and contexts in which education and learning can occur. They furthermore present education as a one-way, linear process where New Scots learn and educators teach, rather than as a two-way process of mutual learning mirroring the two-way process of integration proposed by the NSRIS. As we have seen, New Scots may have experience long gaps in their education history prior to arriving in Scotland, with some people not being able to have continuous access to formal education in their home countries (Education Scotland 2014) or living for a long time in refugee camps. Approaches which only perceive this time as a 'gap', or classes New Scots as 'less' able, will not consider other skills, contributions and forms of knowledge.

Finally, significant barriers to accessing education can be caused by the effects of trauma on memory, concentration and motivation. New Scots have travelled to Scotland seeking safety from dangerous and traumatic situations; often the journeys they undertake involve further danger and pain. To this can be added the trauma inherent in experiencing the 'hostile environment' of the UK asylum and immigration system as it currently stands (Pollard and Howard, 2021; Mulvey, 2015). Furthermore, if people have concerns for their family members and friends this can impact on their mental health and affect their ability to study:

“I wanted to stay with my parents and my brother in Iran, I always think about them and wish they are with me. I can't study I always cry that they are not here.”

(Kian, New Scot)

Our research found that a lack of trauma informed support, practice and awareness was apparent across many projects and services. This is a critical issue given the specific needs of New Scots and is in turn linked to a lack of funding and training in this area:

“The level at which people are fully trauma trained, I don’t think we’re at that, to be honest, and I think we would need external help for that.”

(Meg, Higher Education sector)

Recommendations: Education

- 23 A community development approach should be embedded into all educational practices related to New Scots and integration. This should include Intercultural communication skills to support the communication of expectations and norms around training and education.
- 24 Practices which are based on intercultural learning, rather than purely on competency based / proficiency models of education, should be embedded into all educational settings related to New Scots integration. This will support programmes where education facilitates integration as well as - and as part of - learning.
- 25 Approaches to funding allocation and distribution need to be consistent, long term and also informed by community development models of best practice. They must include considerations such as childcare and travel costs.
- 26 Trauma – sensitive approaches to education should be embedded in all aspects of educational services related to New Scots
- 27 The Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland needs to be accompanied by funding if it is to support the delivery of meaningful educational services.
- 28 Best practice needs to be more widely shared within and across sectors. The next iteration of NSRIS is an opportunity to facilitate and increase the sharing of best practice amongst educators in Scotland, with input from New Scots, in order to increase enabling factors as much as possible within the context of the current hostile environment. The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) has published resources for schools to use when they welcome refugees, as well as booklets for NEW SCOTS children and their families (EIS 2020). The City of Sanctuary pack for schools wishing to become Schools of Sanctuary also has a wealth of resources and information (City of Sanctuary 2022b).
- 29 While ESOL is an educational aspect that has received much attention in the context of New Scots and integration, other aspects and types of education are less researched. NSRIS 3 should support this type of research to help widen the scope for delivery of education to New Scots.

Languages

Under its section on Language, NSRIS 2 had the following intended outcomes:

- Refugees and asylum seekers live in safe, welcoming and cohesive communities and are able to build diverse relationships and connections.
- Refugees and asylum seekers understand their rights, responsibilities and entitlements, and are able to exercise them to pursue full and independent lives.
- Refugees and asylum seekers are able to access well-coordinated services, which recognise and meet their rights and needs (Scottish Government 2018, 54-55).

“As Scotland becomes a more multicultural society all these organisations, they don’t think about equality... They think about access in terms of disability access, but they don’t think about [...] simplifying language [...] I get sent things all the time and I just think, ‘You can’t send that out to somebody, even a Scottish person with literacy needs is going to have problems with that.’”

(Alice, Local Authority)

While language funding for New Scots mostly focuses on ESOL provision, peer-led, mutual language learning activities are also increasingly common (Hirsu 2020). Following a pilot scheme funded by the Scottish Government, mutual language sharing drop-ins, cafes and activities are now promoted and commonplace across organisations in Scotland supporting New Scots (Hirsu and Bryson 2017). These are now actively encouraged by the NSRIS partnership across all local authorities, and by third sector organisations. However, this vision does not seem to be applied consistently in practice in adult ESOL classes, and much provision still relies on a monolingual approach (Cox 2020; Cox and Phipps 2022).

Those who claim asylum and are resettled to Scotland as refugees come from contexts which are invariably rich in linguistic resources: multilingualism is the norm across the majority of countries from which New Scots arrive. Monolingualism, meanwhile, has been practiced across many European countries to the educational detriment of the population. It is important to understand that those arriving do not come with a language deficit and that the idea of a language barrier is an unhelpful concept in the promotion and practice of integration, as arriving communities are rich in valuable linguistic resources.

The practice of people using their mother tongue is also a human right and a key cultural right as an element of intangible cultural heritage for New Scots. This is equally the case for receiving communities. Whilst it is clear that ESOL provision and the difficulties produced by the cessation of the ESOL Strategy for Scotland have been common threads in the different strands of research, the matter of ESOL is secondary to that of the role of language and language learning in integration processes ([see ESOL and Languages sections](#)).

ESOL operates at the level of service delivery of classes which can enable New Scots to function well in Scottish society, progressing to becoming linguistically self-sufficient in matters of accessing services and gaining employment or access to education pathways. ESOL is also provided in various ways in the community. However, the primary role of the English language and the requests for further resource and policy attention for delivering ESOL often crowd out the wider linguistic landscape of integration for New Scots.

Translation and Interpretation Services

Scotland is a multilingual country by statute. The Gaelic Language Act and Sign Language Acts have both ensured that the indigenous languages of Scotland, and the inclusion of communities using BSL, are accounted for by public bodies and are visibly and audibly supported and resourced. However, the languages which arrive with New Scots have meant that many new languages now form part of the fabric and heritage of communities across Scotland. This brings with it certain statutory responsibilities, at the level of interpretation and translation, as well as linguistic and cultural needs at the level of service delivery of integration.

The following key issues were identified in our research:

- Court observations of asylum appeal hearings demonstrated a significant lack of consistency in the ways in which court actors worked with interpreters, including inconsistency between judges.
- There is limited awareness in the asylum process (including in court spaces) of how interpreting actually works – including instances of judges requesting exact ‘word-for-word’ interpreting. There is therefore a need to empower interpreters to explain concepts and cultural / intercultural points beyond a ‘plug and play’ transactional model of interpretation.
- The minimum levels of certification and training in terms of interpreting for the asylum process vary significantly between ‘core’ languages and ‘rare’ languages, yet judges are not instructed to take account of this difference. Meanwhile, interpreters working for the Home Office at screening interviews and substantive interviews are not required to have the same level of certification as those working in immigration tribunals, yet asylum cases depend on the accuracy of such interpreting given the need to ensure consistency within asylum narratives (Fisher et al 2021).

- Many important resources pertaining to immigration status are only initially provided in English by the Home Office.
- Lack of cultural awareness in decision-makers regarding conflicts between people from the same language group or country, especially in terms of interpreting. Sometimes interpreters are allocated to people seeking asylum who represented an opposing side in a conflict, or they might be from different ethnic groups which can negatively affect the relationship between the interpreter and the person seeking asylum.

Translanguaging: Sharing Lives, Shared Languages

Research into informal and community-based provision of language practice demonstrates the opening up of the multilingual potential of Scotland (Cox 2020). Where integration is occurring in local communities and through intercultural work in particular, innovative ways of ‘translanguaging’ in society have been developed (Cox & Phipps 2022). ‘Translanguaging’ is the academic term (Garcia 2009) for the way in which new speakers of languages will mix different languages spoken, together with multimodal forms (gestures, signs) in order to both practice new languages, and to ensure comprehensibility over accuracy.

The ‘Researching Multilingually’ project led by Phipps produced empirical evidence with unaccompanied minors and refugee communities demonstrating the psychosocial benefits of translanguaging and working to respect and become familiar with new multilingual settings for receiving communities. A range of doctoral research with the UNESCO Chair at the University of Glasgow has focused on the benefits of translanguaging and of sharing of languages through cultural and creative events in communities. A key finding from the Ketso workshop related to the need to invest in different languages including English, and UNESCO has led research in the past on the vital place of mother language education for those who have sought refuge.

In 2016 the Scottish Government agreed to fund a multilingual pilot supporting communities in projects where languages were shared and discovered. This project, called “Sharing Lives, Shared Languages”, was evaluated by Hirsu and Bryson (2017) and has been a benchmark of successfully multilingual integration. It echoes the findings of the Researching Multilingually project and led to the work undertaken by Cox with the Red Cross, Scotland looking at mutual language learning and language sharing events and workshops as part of early stages of integration.

During research interviews an important point was made regarding the needs of service delivery of languages through ESOL courses, where the life experiences of learners are bracketed out of the classroom in ESOL teacher education programmes. The need for language learning and translanguaging to be framed as intercultural dialogue and within community development settings was also stressed as vital to the community-based approaches to integration in general. It is clear from the literature review and the empirical findings that both these sets of needs are requirements of a functioning intercultural, dynamic and restorative approach to languages within integration strategies.

Trauma and Language Learning

Finally, the needs of New Scots with regard to language learning and language use need to be viewed through a trauma-informed lens. Research by De Costa (2015) and Dewaele (2013) has shown that language learning when it is enforced does not progress in the same manner as language learning when it is chosen freely. For people forced to flee, enforced language learning for integration purposes, alongside the loss of their mother language as a familiar auditory context for living and working, can form part of trauma experienced and impede learning progress. This contrasts strongly with the learning outcomes for those who have chosen their migration pathways and associated language learning needs and goals. Additionally, work by Strang and Quinn (2021) has focused on the importance of languages for psychosocial support.

Recommendations: Languages

[Sharing lives, Sharing languages](#) offers a positive blueprint for moving forward with mutual, mother language supportive programmes for multilingualism in Scotland and for supporting translanguaging as part of a pathway to greater linguistic capacity across Scotland. This report recommends that:

- 30 The practice and learnings from [Sharing lives, Sharing languages](#) should be extended and consolidation across Scotland, giving a context for the practice of new languages by new speakers and enabling environments where integration is happening through a common interest in practicing languages. This will complement the ESOL system adding time for practice as part of intercultural dialogue but does not take away from the need to increase the number of hours available for formal ESOL learning.
- 31 A core set of standards for interpreting and translation in statutory and non-statutory contexts is required - like those developed for the UK as National Standards in Interpreting and also in Intercultural Working. These will allow the New Scots partnership to set a benchmark for interpretation and translation and to uphold the right to the use of the mother language, whilst at the same time developing language resources, ESOL services and translanguaging support in communities (see also below).
- 32 Intercultural communication and community development skills should be embedded across sectors – these will enable service delivery professionals to better support language learning of populations who may be experiencing trauma, and whose language learning pathway is not freely chosen but has come through necessity. Intercultural listening and some aiding of the translanguaging that will make up intercultural encounters and dialogue can be embedded into the training and attitudes for professionals working in the sector. In addition, community development workers are critical to community-based language initiatives success as part of restorative integration whilst ESOL provision is a baseline for ensuring a developing approach to learning as part of efficient and effective service delivery, scaffolded by translation services.
- 33 If not provisioned under the forthcoming Human Rights Act for Scotland, ungirding the role of languages in Scottish society will be greatly enhanced by the provision of a Languages Act for Scotland, complementing the Gaelic and Sign Language Acts for Scotland.

Housing

Concerning housing, NSRIS 2 sought to achieve three key outcomes:

- Refugees and asylum seekers live in safe, welcoming and cohesive communities and are able to build diverse relationships and connections.
- Refugees and asylum seekers understand their rights, responsibilities and entitlements, and are able to exercise them to pursue full and independent lives.
- Refugees and asylum seekers are able to access well-coordinated services which recognise and meet their rights and needs (Scottish Government 2018, 43).

“I went to someone’s house because he was really depressed, and I was frightened he was going to do something. And he showed me round his house, and on his bed was a piece of cloth so thin, if you held it up to the window you could see out. [...] Now that man comes from Iraq, how is that going to keep him warm in bed in the winter, and how do you sleep if you’re frozen?”

(Mary, volunteer ESOL teacher, community group)

Asylum housing background

While housing policy is a devolved to the Scottish Parliament, asylum accommodation remains reserved to the UK Parliament. As a result, the UK Government has oversight over the dispersal scheme, asylum housing contracts, and housing standards (Meer et al 2019^a), although housing must also meet the minimum standards set by the Scottish Government (Mulvey 2018). Glasgow has been the only dispersal site in Scotland. The number of people in dispersal accommodation in Glasgow in December 2022 was 4,400 (Sturges 2022).

In 2012, the provision of asylum seeker accommodation was privatised through the COMPASS contracts which, in Scotland, led to Serco Group plc taking over the housing contract from previous providers, including Glasgow City Council and Ypeople. Meanwhile, in 2012, the Home Office contract for providing advice and support for people navigating the asylum process was granted to the charity Migrant Help – a predominantly phone-based helpline charity service. While the move to Migrant Help did allow for a centralising of language provision (with Migrant Help offering support in 15 languages), it also resulted in people losing access to local face-to-face support. These two decisions have led to serious challenges that local groups and New Scots have struggled to overcome. During the period when Serco Group plc held the asylum housing contract in Glasgow, the sector was faced by a number of difficulties which included:

- Issues regarding the quality of housing, as well as dispersal to areas throughout Glasgow with no history of receiving New Scots (Fassetta et al 2016; Stewart 2016; Fraser and Piacentini 2014; Mainwaring et al 2020).
- Uncertainty amongst people being housed concerning the boundaries of Serco Group plc's power (specifically whether or not housing managers had the power to affect asylum cases); the role of Migrant Help in providing assistance; their ties to the UK Home Office (Fisher 2018).
- Highly unbalanced power dynamics through which people seeking asylum felt unsafe in their own homes (Fisher 2018).
- The loss of a fluid process to move people on from asylum housing to long-term housing following their receipt of refugee status (Meer 2019^a).

In September 2019, the existing COMPASS asylum contracts were replaced by the New Asylum Accommodation and Support Services Contracts following engagement with local authorities, potential providers and NGOs (Home Office 2019). In Scotland this resulted in Serco Group plc losing the contract for asylum accommodation to Mears Group plc, and it was hoped that the standard of asylum accommodation would improve. Despite the inclusion of the need for providers to carry out inspections of accommodation in advance of the contract transition, however, the new contracts closely resemble the previous ones and many of the issues that New Scots experienced with Serco Group plc have remained unchanged (Refugee Action 2020).

Current housing issues

When the Covid-19 pandemic reached the UK and Scotland went in to 'lockdown', many asylum seekers in Glasgow were transferred to hotels in order to provide accommodation that was Covid safe and would "reduce the need for both asylum-seekers and Mears Group plc staff to make regular journeys to and from multiple accommodation locations" (Mears Group plc 2020, unpaginated). However, the combined effect of being transferred from existing accommodation with little warning, poor food quality in hotels (which frequently did not take account of cultural and religious observances), the removal of cash support, the inability to prepare food and poor social distancing measures took a significant toll on asylum seekers housed in hotels during the Covid pandemic (Qureshi et al 2020; Dempsey and Pautz 2021; Guma et al 2021).

The New Scots and refugee groups that we spoke to as part of this research also shared many frustrations with the current situation concerning asylum housing now that Scotland has partially moved out of lockdown. In the current arrangements, people seeking asylum are first housed in 'Initial Accommodation' (IA) - which for most is hotel accommodation - and then they are transferred to 'Dispersal Accommodation'. Through interviews, conversations and observations, we have learned of the following issues which still persist within initial accommodation housing:

- Workmen and maintenance staff are entering people's rooms without their permission or prior notice, often leaving rooms unlocked when they leave.
- Residents report feeling under surveillance by Mears Group plc staff, who they believe are checking whether or not they are occupying their rooms.
- There have been issues registering people in IA with NHS General Practitioners (GPs), although these are largely being resolved. Timescales to organise a meeting between a new arrival with the Asylum Health Bridging Team in Glasgow have been fluid, but are now reportedly set at 48 working hours.
- Residents in IA in Glasgow have been unable to request specific dietary requirements.
- The information pack that IA residents in Glasgow receive contains superfluous information and needs to be redeveloped with input from New Scots to provide information better targeted to their needs.
- Residents report that they have been unable to request specific dietary requirements and the quality of food provided in the hotel in Glasgow is considered unhealthy.

Issues with accommodation also persist beyond the initial accommodation stage. The housing contract with Mears Group plc states that residents will be given 5 days' notice and information concerning their new accommodation, and the area in which it is located, before being moved from their IA to their DA. However, residents are being moved without notice (i.e. being told that there is a taxi waiting for them outside the hotel residence). As a result, people are frequently losing their possessions and are (re)traumatised by the abrupt (forced) movements they experience to new accommodation. Once they arrive at their DA, new residents are asked to sign a form, which they frequently do not understand, to confirm that the accommodation is in a satisfactory condition.

Under these circumstances, however, residents are frequently unaware of their rights and/or too fearful to utilise them. As Ashraf (Community Group) noted, "[People] don't have enough information to assert their rights and the majority don't know that their [Mears Group plc] Housing Manager has no control over their asylum case." Community groups also reported that residents were often unsure of the extent of Mears Group plc's powers or the role of

Migrant Help to support them. Residents fear that both Migrant Help and Mears Group plc are able to negatively influence their asylum claims, with some residents claiming that some Mears Group plc housing managers have threatened to report troublesome residents to the Home Office if they make complaints to Migrant Help. Residents also complained of housing managers and other housing staff entering people's homes unannounced and without prior notice – despite housing contracts stipulating that residents will be given five days' notice.

Upon entering their DA, residents are given induction documents by Mears Group plc concerning the rules of their accommodation, and a Home Office guide to [living in asylum accommodation](#), yet they are given almost no information about the local area in which they have been dispersed to. Information that residents wanted to receive included locations of nearby supermarkets, halal butchers, schools, libraries, community support groups and parks – none of which they currently receive. There is a strong sense, therefore, that people are moved to their DA and then being abandoned by those charged with their housing and further support. Moreover, those New Scots we spoke to in the context of housing were unaware of the current NSRIS or how it was intended to support them in learning about and accessing their housing rights.

Community groups and people in asylum accommodation reported that Migrant Help is not sufficiently assisting people in dispersal accommodation. People complained of “never ending” time spent waiting on hold for Migrant Help to answer the phone, while receiving assistance is “getting harder” as the accommodation context becomes more complicated. New Scots reported being asked by Migrant Help employees if they were in IA or DA, yet for many this is unclear as not all IA is in hotels – which causes further confusion when seeking assistance (see the [Asylum Inquiry Scotland 2022](#) for more information). As a result, many people seeking asylum in Scotland have turned to community groups (which do not receive funding from the Home Office) in order to receive support with their asylum housing; this has further restricted the capacity of community groups to conduct the work they have been set up to do (see Fisher and Hughes forthcoming).

The lack of information received by people seeking asylum when housed in either IA or DA is of great concern, and links both to the need for New Scots to know their rights (as per the NSRIS) and the need for information to be communicated in simple terms and in a variety of languages. Moreover, once a person is informed that they will be moved to dispersal accommodation, the process of transportation to the new accommodation often happens at such speed that community groups are unable to organise anyone to accompany them to the new accommodation in order to help them read and understand the information provided by Mears Group plc and to make complaints before signing the lease forms.

Long-term housing needs

The housing section of this report has focused exclusively on housing issues pertaining to asylum housing. It is anticipated that the forthcoming report by IPPR (see [Methods section](#)) will address the challenges and opportunities faced by LAs in sourcing long-term housing for New Scots with refugee status. Following the war in Ukraine especially, sourcing accommodation for New Scots has become a significant challenge for LAs amidst an already-expensive housing market. Initial findings from IPPR indicate that LA participants fear that the current mixture of short-term funding uncertainty and housing supply issues will undermine longer-term strategic action to deliver integration initiatives across Scotland. Ensuring long-term housing creates the platform from which people can gain stability and access a range of services and activities to deepen their sense of belonging and engage in cross-community activities.

Recommendations: Housing

- 34 NSRIS 3 must work across sectors to secure a long-term housing plan for New Scots, because many of the housing issues facing New Scots with refugee status are linked to broader issues relating to a [shortage of affordable housing](#) in both Scotland and the UK.
- 35 Housing provision for resettled people must urgently move from congregate accommodation in hotels, cruise ships and home-based hosting, to a hospitality management approach through rented and social tenanted sectors. This is essential for ensuring long-term agency and normalcy for people whose lives have been disrupted in many traumatic ways.
- 36 An accountability structure should be developed in accordance with the provisions set out in service contracts with the UK Home Office. Such an accountability structure is urgently needed to monitor the providers of Asylum Accommodation and Support Services (AASC) and the Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) service. This accountability mechanism must also provide New Scots with the opportunity to anonymously submit evidence of problems without fear of reprisal.
- 37 More care needs to be taken by housing providers when moving New Scots housed in hotels to their dispersal accommodation. In particular, people must be given adequate notice of the fact that they will be moved – as stipulated in the AASC contract.
- 38 There needs to be wider awareness and recognition of the fact that, when people are entered into the asylum system, the initial information they receive concerning their rights and responsibilities in Scotland is delivered through a Home Office induction booklet and user handbook issued by the accommodation provider. The information provided in these booklets should be urgently reviewed, as should the quality of the translations of the documents.
- 39 More clarity is needed concerning the boundaries between the Scottish Government and the UK Government concerning the provision of housing – especially for those with no recourse to public funds. The Scottish Government should commission and publish legal research into the boundaries between reserved and devolved matters that concern the needs of New Scots specifically ([see Devolved and reserved powers section](#))
- 40 Alternative Scottish housing models should be sought and promoted so that Scotland can manage its own accommodation provision for New Scots.
- 41 A ‘Welcome to Scotland’ induction booklet or series of short informational videos should be prepared in multiple languages to introduce recently arrived New Scots to NSRIS 3 and ensure they are welcomed.
- 42 Information given by housing providers to New Scots concerning their local area should be focused on both the wider scale of the locality (e.g. city-wide in the case of Glasgow) and the immediate area (i.e. what is accessible within a 20-minute walking distance).

Employment

With regards to the employability and welfare rights of New Scots, NSRIS 2 aimed to achieve the following:

- Refugees and asylum seekers understand their rights, responsibilities and entitlements, and are able to exercise them to pursue full and independent lives.
- Refugees and asylum seekers are able to access well-co-ordinated services, which recognise and meet their rights and needs.
- Policy, strategic planning and legislation, which have an impact on refugees and asylum seekers, are informed by their rights, needs and aspirations (Scottish Government 2018, 37-38).

“Why can’t there be an assessment of [New Scots’] skills?”

(Linda, Local Authority)

“There are so many skills, so many talents, in this group of women. Our work is to help them see that and become more confident so they can work and feel that they have a purpose, a place here”

(Jane, community group)

Structural barriers to employment for New Scots

Successfully gaining employment is of huge importance to New Scots: working increases people's sense of belonging and safety in an area, encourages encounters and connections with the local community, enables New Scots to more easily meet friends and family (through increased availability of resources), produces more opportunities to learn and use other languages and generates both financial independence while improving mental wellbeing through such independence (Kearns and Whitley 2015). Yet, people who have been granted refugee status (and with it the right to work) are still severely unemployed and underemployed – even compared to other minority groups in Scotland (Stewart and Mulvey 2014; Pietka-Nykaza 2015).

Unemployment levels amongst New Scots with the right to work remain consistent despite their varied backgrounds, experiences, education levels, employment histories and even English language skills, gender and age before arrival in Scotland (Mulvey 2014). Such high levels of unemployment suggests that the barriers that New Scots face in terms of finding employment are predominantly structural ones, created predominantly by UK asylum policy, and are unlikely to be overcome through interventions that target at the individual level (Mayblin 2014; Mulvey 2014).

A primary issue faced by New Scots when attempting to find work following their grant of refugee status is the enforced idleness they have experienced while waiting for the resolution of their asylum claim. Due to UK Government immigration laws, people seeking asylum in the UK can only apply for permission to work if they have waited for more than 12 months for a decision on their initial asylum claim. After the 12-month period lapses, asylum seekers can only apply for jobs specified under Tier 2 of the [Shortage Occupation list](#). However, the occupations listed are severely restricted – creating yet another barrier for employment and integration for people seeking asylum (Mayblin 2014). Furthermore, it is very difficult for asylum applicants to comply with the Tier 2 shortage occupation list in order to access employment, and this clearly affects their opportunities for integration.

The enforced idleness experienced by asylum seekers restricts their opportunities to access labour market and learn English; it also creates a negative stigma around refugees struggling to enter the labour market (Mayblin 2014). New Scots are losing opportunities to acquire necessary language skills or employment-based experiences while waiting for a decision on their asylum case. Moreover, people are very aware of the gap created on their employment histories as a result of enforced idleness which, in turn, also creates a concern that their lack of experience will be a disadvantage (Pietka-Nykaza 2015). The length of time refugees spent outside the labour market places them at a disadvantage in comparison to other groups of overseas trained migrants (Pietka-Nykaza 2013). Many New Scots are therefore concerned that their age and lack of recent work experience, in addition to their poorer language skills and lack of cultural familiarity, will severely reduce their chances of gaining employment (Strang et al 2015).

New Scots with skills and qualifications often struggle to gain employment commensurate with their levels of experience. In part this issue relates to the abovementioned enforced idleness (Mulvey 2014). However, there is also a serious lack of means through which New Scots can convert their qualifications for use in Scotland. Research with New Scots who worked as teachers or doctors in their country of origin shows that the need to receive accreditation and/or recognition of their academic and professional qualifications acts as a substantial barrier to gaining similar employment (Pietka-Nykaza 2015). Similarly, LA resettlement officers interviewed for this project repeatedly mentioned New Scots with

degrees in subjects such as dentistry and accounting who could not find work or conversion courses; if these people wanted to work in their preferred profession, would have to retrain from scratch. In other cases, respondents noted how lockdown had highlighted the need for New Scots to receive targeted literacy and IT training for employment purposes. At the moment, reflected Denise, “there are highly-skilled New Scots but no structures in Scotland to meet their employment needs.” Community groups we interviewed said that women are viewed as being a particularly ‘hard to reach’ group of New Scots in terms of accessing employability training. They also said that much more information needs to be provided concerning employment during the initial stages of integration, and in languages other than English, in order to gain initial uptake and transition into the workforce.

Racism and discrimination

While the issue of recognising the skills of educated New Scots is an important one, projects and stakeholders that were interviewed as part of this research were also frustrated by employers’ refusal to hire New Scots across a variety of industries. Referring to a New Scot that she has been helping to get into the construction industry, Laura (third sector) indicated that she was now advising him to look for work in England. She explained, “He has applied for so many jobs [yet] he’s not even had an acknowledgement, it gets embarrassing after a while. He’s extremely competent, speaks English, been on huge projects in Yemen, he’s got his Heriot-Watt University Master’s degree [...] but he’s not even had an acknowledgement for any of his applications. It gets to the stage that it’s cringeworthy when we’ve got such well-qualified people, and nobody will give them a chance.” Similarly, when visiting projects funded by NSRIDP, we encountered New Scots who were fluent in English and who told us they had decided to no longer seek work and to instead aim to become self-employed.

These examples point to issues in Scotland that run beyond the lack of certificate recognition and language; rather they are indicative of wider non-acceptance of migrants from particular backgrounds. One NSRIDP project in particular encountered bias (unconscious or otherwise) against Arabic-speaking New Scots that the project was attempting to help gain employment. An industry training board also ceased involvement in one of the NSRIDP-funded projects, raising concerns among some stakeholders that it had done so because of the backgrounds of the New Scots in the project.

There was also the sense amongst stakeholders that, while some companies and industries might be willing to hire New Scots or to ‘give them a chance’, this is not taking place due to worries that they might not be able to release employees if their placement is unsuccessful (a perceived and unintended consequence of The Equalities Act 2010). Moreover, due to the need for many New Scots to (re)gain qualifications before being able to work in Scotland, they are often only able to apply for entry-level positions – at which point it is often cheaper and easier to hire younger workers with less experience and better English skills. People working with New Scots to help them find employment (or qualifications to gain employment) also reported being faced with, as Eleanor (Local Authority) put it, a “land of smoke and mirrors” as they attempted to navigate which qualifications New Scots would need to gain access to certain industries – while recognising that many industries in Scotland still hire based on word of mouth and turn a blind eye to a lack of qualification for some rather than others:

“The whole area of benchmarking qualifications and skills. It’s just not happening. Everything is there. The website is so slick [but actually] it’s like the land of mirrors, smoke and mirrors. Because all these websites are there [stating] ‘Yes, we can benchmark, and people can have their qualifications ratified, and their skills assessed.’ [But] it’s just a big, black hole.”

(Meg, Higher Education sector)

Stakeholders emphasised the need to focus support efforts on the employment aims of New Scots, especially where individuals are struggling to gain employment through standard routes:

“[many of the Syrian refugees] are people who like to be entrepreneurs. They like to set up their own businesses with their friends and family [...] so your best bet is to support them in doing that.”

(Laura, third sector)

For resettled refugees in particular, interviewed stakeholders believed that there has generally been the assumption that attending ESOL classes will eventually lead to job acquisition. Instead, interviewees emphasised the importance of on-the-job English learning and the need to encourage people into employment both to learn English but also to gain independence. Research from a previous project into refugee integration in Scotland highlighted employment successes in Bute, where the resettlement team had placed the career ambitions of individuals at the centre of their support work and supported individuals to launch several enterprises and gain work placements (GLIMER 2019). A number of factors were key to the successes in Bute, including the establishment of good connections with other elements of the Local Authority and local employers.

While New Scots face particular barriers to accessing employment, it is important to contextualise these challenges within the wider context of discrimination and racism in Scotland and beyond. Research by Quillian et al (2019), for instance, shows that white applicants in many European countries (including France, Britain and Sweden) are statistically more likely to receive a call-back for job interviews than similarly-qualified non-white job applicants. In Scotland specifically, recent research has highlighted that members of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities continue to suffer from racial discrimination (Meer 2018; Meer et al 2020). In particular, Meer et al (2020, 6) point to the results of the Scottish Parliament’s Equal Opportunities Committee’s (2016) findings: “despite having equivalent education and skills, non-white BAME Scots are more likely to be unemployed or in low-paid work than their white counterparts.”

Scottish Government (2015) data shows that in 2013 57.4% of BAME people were in employment compared with 73.8% of non-BAME people. The Scottish Government has undertaken various action plans to tackle racism in Scotland and notably announced the creation of a new Directorate of Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights in 2020. It is therefore essential that NSRIS 3 connects with wider work in this context in order to reduce the barriers facing New Scots to gaining employment commensurate with their skills. Moreover, a conflict transformational approach to unemployment allows the dynamics of labour and employment, historical and within new arrivals, to be seen through a wider lens and for potential pathways to be identified which are appropriate to levels of skill and need.

Recommendations: Employment and Employability

- 43 Colleges and Universities should be supported to develop short-term conversion courses in order to recognise the skills and qualifications of New Scots. While there are some initiatives in Scotland aimed at increasing recognition of New Scots' skills and certificates (such as the Skills Recognition Scotland project piloted through Glasgow Caledonia University), more work is needed in this regard.
- 44 Low levels of New Scots' skills recognition amongst employers needs to be urgently addressed through training programmes for businesses and increased collaboration between businesses and groups supporting New Scots. Inspiration for such collaborative work can be found in the capacity building initiatives and awareness programmes such as those developed by the Mental Health Foundation as part of their [Voices and Visibility project](#), which aimed to increase New Scots' participation in local communities and decision-making for a in Scotland.
- 45 The issues of New Scots' under-employment and unemployment across Scotland are closely linked to wider discrimination of BAME groups in Scottish workplaces (see Meer 2018). It is therefore essential that NSRIS 3 recognises such cross-sectoral problems and aligns actions with wider Scottish anti-discrimination legislation and strategies. In particular, NSRIS 3 needs to connect with the work being undertaken by the Scottish Directorate of Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights.
- 46 The employment aims of New Scots should be prioritised, with recognition that many would prefer to establish businesses rather than gain employment. More efforts should be undertaken to support New Scots in setting up their own businesses or becoming self-employed, especially given the difficulties that New Scots experience in gaining correct certifications for employment. Such an approach requires effective intra-departmental working in Local Authorities and better targeted support from Scotland's Business Gateway.
- 47 A wider recognition of people's ability to learn English 'on the job' is essential to allow New Scots the ability to gain employment and improve their English at the same time (see ESOL section and recommendations)

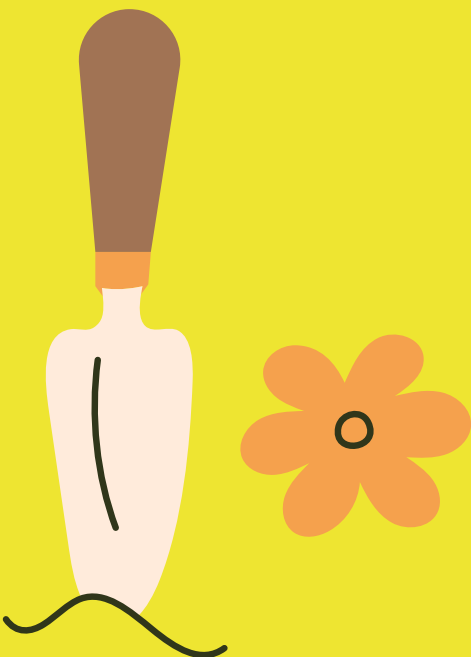
Health and Wellbeing

In order to ensure the health and wellbeing of New Scots, the NSRIS 2 aimed to ensure that:

- Refugees and asylum seekers understand their rights, responsibilities and entitlements, and are able to exercise them to pursue full and independent lives.
- Refugees and asylum seekers are able to access well-co-ordinated services, which recognise and meet their rights and needs.
- Policy, strategic planning and legislation, which have an impact on refugees and asylum seekers, are informed by their rights, needs and aspirations (Scottish Government 2018, 61-62).

“Because we’re talking about dignity, and we’re talking about valuing people, people’s life and I think that’s it’s really important.”

(Hakim, community group)



Challenges which negatively impact on the health and wellbeing of New Scots

The reasons for ill health amongst New Scots, and mental ill-health in particular, are numerous and stem in considerable part from the immobilising effects of the asylum process and the housing and support policies adopted by the UK government. Waiting for asylum claims to be processed involves separation from mainstream society with regular interaction with the Home Office and its ‘culture of disbelief’ (Kearns et al 2017). The time spent waiting for an asylum claim to progress through the abovementioned stages has been continually increasing, with an almost tenfold increase between 2010 and 2020 (Refugee Council 2021):

“The long waiting times for decision making - you’re talking about a year wait, two-year wait [...] and people are stuck in a system, so we don’t want people to be waiting until they become refugees to access those services because it’s mental like the. What the actual wait does to people, is actually, it’s mental”

(Hakim, community group)

For each additional year spent waiting for an asylum decision, Kearns and Whitley (2015) found that a person’s likelihood of obtaining available social support decreased by 12-14%. People seeking asylum can enter into a vicious cycle of isolation as a lack of initial social networks of support, combined with the uncertainty of their claim, leads to a further withdrawal from social connections (Fassetta et al 2016).

Poor housing conditions within the asylum system are consistently linked to ill-health (see section on Housing). Aside from the substandard quality of housing provided, the instability concerning housing – including regular movements, being housed on a no-choice basis without the ability to onward migrate or choose where to live, and the likelihood of losing housing & financial support following an initial refusal – all add to feelings of uncertainty related to lack of stability, fear and insecurity (Strang et al 2015; Stewart and Shaffer 2015; Fisher 2018). People seeking asylum are also often housed with people they don’t know, many of whom are also enduring similar hardships and instability. Moreover, people are often housed in areas with little history of immigration and where incidents of racism directed at New Scots increase feelings of insecurity.

The support that New Scots receive while claiming asylum is less than standard income support; this leaves people seeking asylum ‘locked into poverty’ (Asylum Matters 2020). Such poverty has direct effects on peoples’ physical and mental health. Physically it reduces the amount of healthy food that can be consumed, the number and variety of activities that people can partake in and creates practical problems for people seeking to travel anywhere beyond their place of accommodation (Asylum Matters 2020; Quinn and Strang 2014). Poverty also reduces mental wellbeing, as it inhibits the creation of strategies for problem resolution and exacerbates isolation (Quinn and Strang 2014). Furthermore, as a result of limited opportunities and poverty while seeking asylum, New Scots are unable to form intimate relationships with others from the receiving community

and few have the opportunity to develop reciprocal relationships (Quinn and Strang 2014). This goes against the aim of 'integration from day one' set out in the NSRIS. Because of enforced poverty, many people seeking asylum in Scotland are also deprived of opportunities for altruism which undermines their sense of self-esteem, purpose, belonging and mental well-being.

Strang et al (2015) have also reported a consistent pattern of 'a dramatic emotional dip' experienced by new refugees for a number of months shortly after receiving refugee status. Reasons for this dip include coming to terms with health problems that have previously been put on hold; being moved from their asylum accommodation to short term hostel accommodation; the financial complexities of the move-on period; loneliness; family separation and concern for family members; and pressure from Jobcentre Plus to find work immediately and not lose access to new support mechanisms:

“Even after you get a status, the status itself, it's another world [...] it's another challenge of you being in a system where you've been de-skilled, everything taken from you, you're not in control of everything, not on your house, not on your heating, not on your expenses, not on everything. And once you've been left one day, take a decision, go and manage your own house, your own bills, your own things, everything in your life that people never had the experience of doing it.”

(Hakim, community group)

It is important to remember that New Scots have travelled to Scotland seeking safety from dangerous and traumatic situations. Very often the journeys made to safety also involve danger and further trauma. To this can be added the trauma inherent in experiencing the 'hostile environment' of the UK asylum and immigration system as it currently stands (Pollard and Howard, 2021; Mulvey, 2015):

“Language is a barrier, new life in a new country is a barrier, and the traumatic experience of the asylum system is also another barrier”

(Hakim, community group)

Trauma and its consequences are critical considerations in the context of health and well-being of New Scots. While many re-traumatising aspects of the asylum system are currently related to policy reserved to the UK Parliament, there are aspects of life for New Scots which can be improved through pathways related to powers reserved to the Scottish Parliament - such as healthcare, education and social care (see Recommendations at the end of this section).

Regaining and maintaining trust is a key element in the process of healing from trauma as well as in relationships between citizens, institutions and communities. In terms of accessing health services, issues related to language and communication can diminish trust (see

section on Languages) This relates to the need for service providers to be skilled in intercultural awareness, and the need to improve translation and interpreting services taking into account issues of confidentiality, gender sensitivity and trust. Healthcare providers can also struggle with interpreters if they suspect that medical information is not being adequately conveyed to the patient.

Gendered aspects of health and wellbeing also add to the uneven access to healthcare for New Scots. In particular, single women with children are both more likely to suffer from mental ill-health (Fassetta et al 2016) and to be affected by poor childcare and transport provision. For women who are pregnant and going through childbirth in Scotland, intercultural communication around expectations is key, as well as awareness and sensitivity among healthcare staff of issues related to FGM or other gender-based violence which may have been experienced by female New Scots.

In terms of referrals within the healthcare system, and support in understanding how the NHS works, research respondents spoke of a “local authority lottery”. In these cases, access to healthcare for New Scots depends on where they are sent to live, on their social networks, on language barriers and on advocacy availability:

“But quite often, it’s also about whether you have good Arabic-speaking support staff, who can help you get that referral from your GP as well. You know what I mean? You sometimes need that advocate, to get through that. Because everybody would be eligible for it, but it’s just getting there, isn’t it?”

(Eleanor, Local Authority)

Intercultural communication and healthcare

Intercultural communication of how healthcare systems work, and of cultural expectations of healthcare, are key in managing relationships and expectations between New Scots and healthcare providers. New arrivals in Scotland may not be aware of how the NHS works, what is available, the referral system between GPs and specialists, how to access services and how to communicate preferences. Conversely, service providers may not be aware of the healthcare entitlements of asylum seekers and refugees (Da Lomba and Murray 2014) or of healthcare systems and expectations in the people’s cultures or countries of origin. Intercultural communication of idioms of distress is also a critical element in the interaction between New Scots patients and healthcare providers, with issues such as depression trauma and anxiety being processed and communicated differently in different cultures.

A related issue, identified by Aswan (third sector) is the fact that New Scots often do not feel as though they can participate and influence processes that other citizens can engage in – either due to a lack of language skills or understanding of how processes in Scotland work:

“If people don’t feel control in their life, that negatively impacts their mental health. [But] Say if parents could attend parents’ council in the schools, the education system, and they have a voice there so they have control, they can participate, that would help their mental health, right?”

(Hakim, community group)

Such arguments are also born out in the [Voices and Visibility report](#) conducted by Dr Sacha Hasan that has helped design best practice approaches to enable greater civic participation for New Scots in particular within decision making processes of Parent Councils (PCs) and Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) forums.

Recommendations: Health and Wellbeing

- | | |
|----|---|
| 48 | Culturally informed training should be delivered to healthcare practitioners, with emphasis on intercultural communication practices (see best practice model from GRAMNet). |
| 49 | Embed, at all levels and specialisms of healthcare provision, a trauma-sensitive approach to working with New Scots. This includes increasing awareness of the many complicating and re-traumatising issues which affect New Scots in their access to healthcare. |
| 50 | Ensure that translation and interpreting services are better informed and aware of issues related to confidentiality and trust. |
| 51 | Increase awareness across all sectors of gender-related issues relevant to New Scots and access to healthcare. |

Communities, culture and creativity

The NSRIS 2 understood the need to consider the role of communities in the context of integration and the importance of developing social connections. It therefore aimed to achieve the following outcomes:

- Refugees and asylum seekers live in safe, welcoming and cohesive communities and are able to build diverse relationships and connections.
- Refugees and asylum seekers understand their rights, responsibilities and entitlements, and are able to exercise them to pursue full and independent lives.
- Refugees and asylum seekers are able to access well-coordinated services, which recognise and meet their rights and needs.
- Policy, strategic planning and legislation, which have an impact on refugees and asylum seekers, are informed by their rights, needs and aspirations (Scottish Government 2018, 68-69).

“Integration is that confidence that people can gain back by the control in their life. Like that feeling of productive. And that feeling of being part of the community, and that is what the people want.”

(Hakim, community group)

Communities

Belonging to a community, feeling in control of living within one, having things to bring to one – these are key elements of integration. Much of the scholarship that focuses on communities, culture and social connections of New Scots highlights both the importance of constructing and maintaining social ties and the complexity of doing so. The Ager and Strang Indicators of Integration framework (Ager & Strang 2008), on which much of the NSRIS is based, highlights the importance of social bonds (connections that link members of a group), social bridges (connections between groups), and social links (connections between individuals and structures of the state).

Initiatives which successfully foster and encourage intercultural encounter and interaction are central to integration (Piacentini 2012, 2018). There are many examples of such initiatives across Scotland, from wide-ranging celebrations such as the Refugee Festival run annually by the Scottish refugee Council to small language cafes run by faith communities.

Projects that work well are those where work is undertaken within a community development framework: where projects listen and adapt to what their communities want:

“So that has been good that we can change it and adapt it, so it is very definitely what the people want, not what we think they want. So being very much led by the community and their ideas.”

(Tam, community group)

Certain places in the local community are essential for providing information and for creating opportunities of contact between New Scots and receiving communities (see Martzoukou and Burnett 2018). Green spaces and schools, for example, are key in developing connections and exploring cultural norms (see Neal et al 2015, 2016; Rishbeth et al 2019). Public libraries in Scotland, as another example, have an explicit ethos of strengthening the identity and sense of community, increasing involvement in community activities, and responding to the needs of individuals and social groups (The Scottish Library and Information Council 2015). The importance of place in integration work is also discussed in Part 1

Supporting the role of places where activities leading to encounter and integration can happen, then, is key for NSRIS 3 moving forward. Such activities include sports, theatre, language cafés, outdoor volunteering and meal-sharing. In a study focused on football in Glasgow, Blanchard (2018) found that playing football in United Glasgow FC (UGFC) created (i) opportunities for cross-cultural learning and an understanding of the city, (ii) the ability to create new social connections and networks, (iii) improve mental and physical health, and (iv) negotiate and maintain multiple forms of identity and belonging. Football-based projects funded as part of NSRDP have reported great success in their community integration work.

Interviewees from a wide variety of sectors and backgrounds repeatedly mentioned the need for support with transport costs for people seeking asylum. It could be within the power of the Scottish Government to allow free bus passes to people seeking asylum in Scotland. This would help to address the enforced poverty linked to the current UK asylum system and its detrimental consequences on health and wellbeing. It would also greatly contribute to New Scots being able to move freely and participate in their new communities:

“That’s one thing that the Scottish government can do, because transport is the number one issue for people accessing things. As I say like integration requires... If the definition of integration is an active citizen, then an active citizen needs to get to places. We’re talking about maybe £5 a bus for someone that gets £40 a week to attend three appointments or something, that’s like nearly £15 a week.”

(Hakim, community group)

Integration is predominantly experienced at the local level – where people develop connections to (and through) local places. Successful projects make uses of local resources to foster interaction and help people feel involved in their local area:

“A lot of play and playful behaviour like sports, like the Loose Parts [playing with junk], like running free STEM, outdoor cooking and fires, community garden. We are part of a community garden so some of the families have actually taken ownership of a bed and now use that and grow their own veg”

(Tam, community group)

Research also suggests that New Scots experience higher levels of trust amongst connections made through shared places of worship. Rotter (2016) draws attention to the connections people make with community groups (and faith groups in particular). Strang and Quinn (2021) and Botterill et al (2020) reported that New Scot respondents have high levels of trust amongst friends in shared places of worship – which points towards the key role of religious groups and institutions for creating opportunities of encounter and welcome (see Sim and Laughlin 2014). Moreover, Botterill et al’s (2020) research points to the role of transnational connections amongst young people especially, and how faith can play a role in supporting transnational solidarities amongst young people against racial injustice.

Faith communities, then, can be a vital support for the integration of New Scots into Scotland’s communities, providing abundant and varied resources in terms of networks, people, time, premises, donations and more. Inter-institutional elements of integration, such as communication & information sharing, are also part of the work done by and in faith communities. However, faith is currently “an afterthought in NSRIS” (Marta, community group), with “so many resources underused”.

Culture

A variety of networks, cultures and communities need to be involved if integration is to happen. Culture, here, is not a 'shadowy domain of symbolic meaning' (Ingold 2000 p. 361) but rather an intrinsic part of people's lives which informs intercultural encounter and is a critical element of intercultural communication and integration. Research repeatedly shows that successful integration projects working in the field of culture operate from a participatory community development approach, where work is planned and delivered with, for and through communities. Projects also fare better where their funding allows enough flexibility to accommodate change that occurs as a result of iterative consultation with communities:

"We actually had a meeting yesterday with the team from Scottish Government, and we agreed on the changes that we have. [...] that came from, not saying us, but saying this is what the people we're working with want. And that's a good, I think, enough [...] for them to accept that change."

(Hakim, community group)

Phipps (2017, p. 17) clearly articulates how cultural work with refugees at the social level positively intervenes in social processes of integration, as it "allows for common experiences to build capacities of care; it gives voice to experiences which are not readily understood in contexts of little conflict, and through direct experience; it offers a counterbalance to the stereotypical tropes in much mainstream media and mainstream entertainment." Much like integration, therefore, cultural work should be thought of in terms of a process rather than a series of pre-determined end goals.

Despite integration successes, there is also uncertainty amongst receiving communities of how to tackle different cultural mores or views, especially in contexts new to receiving people. For instance, regarding the role of men and women in society, and notably the experiences of Syrian women in the VPRS, there is a fear of offence which can manifest and from which conflict may begin to fester if it is not set within rights and responsibilities of all. It is also clear that there are often fixed expectations across the multiplicity of actors engaged in integration about what forms cultural behaviour might take; but individuals will often not conform to these stereotypes or will deviate from expectations in dynamic ways:

“There are instances in [ESOL classes] with some Syrians and Afghans coming in where sometimes husbands don’t want to be taught by female tutors and sometimes, they don’t want their wives to be in the same class as other men, for example. So that can cause particular issues for teachers to plan their lessons because ultimately, they only have so many hours to deliver these classes.”

(Greg, Local Authority)

These cultural misgivings reflect a lack of confidence and practice in becoming intercultural actors in society, often produced in contexts which have had little experience of long-term integration of migrant communities, and especially of communities who have suffered war and persecution. Intercultural dialogue a mechanism such as [UNESCO's 'Story Circles'](#) are helpful tools for widening the perspective on questions of culture conflicts or mistaken considerations of there being 'a clash of civilisations' and allow for intercultural dialogue to take root and prosper Scottish institutions and communities. Examples of this can be seen in the work of many projects across Scotland, including Castlemilk Community Church; Licketyspit Theatre; Maryhill Integration Network; Glasgow Afghan United; Refugee Festival Scotland; Scrap Antics; Film Project; Media Education and Syrian Futures.

It is important to recognise that intercultural encounter can be difficult; but in the difficulty lies important learning. Askins discusses the importance of difficult cultural negotiations, where people from receiving communities and people seeking asylum have to navigate emotionally complex interactions in order to 'discover each other as multifaceted and inter-dependent' (Askins 2016, p. 525). Dialogue is key to such intercultural negotiations leading to integration rather than conflict; our research confirms that individuals, organisations and projects successfully working to facilitate the integration of New Scots are skilled in facilitating and supporting intercultural dialogue.

Research shows that intercultural dialogue and encounter is aided by initiatives which bring together New Scots and receiving communities in 'shared doing' (Aldegheri 2022): endeavours linked to needs, interests, places and enjoyments which are held in common by New Scots and receiving communities alike. These can range from shared meals, the activities of a local primary school, language exchanges, information about financial or legal support, the making and enjoying of art together – the possibilities are as varied as the communities generating them. A community development approach is, again, critical to successful work, as is an approach which is open to different ideas and creative approaches.

There is another critical aspect of culture to consider in the context of New Scots integration: the wider socio-political cultural milieu fostered by political and economic choices at a governmental level. This report has repeatedly discussed the 'hostile environment created and maintained by the current UK asylum system, and the very real detrimental effects on people seeking safety wrought by this environment of menace and fear, structural violence and despair. Within such a hostile cultural environment, meaningful integration is difficult to achieve.

The Scottish Government is therefore to be commended for its commitment to a language of inclusion and welcome for New Scots at the highest levels of socio-political discourse; this commitment greatly facilitates the everyday work of integration being undertaken across Scottish communities. However, despite generally positive views towards migration in Scotland, numerous studies have found evidence of New Scots experiencing racial or religious discrimination (Sim and Laughlin 2014; Stewart and Shaffer 2015; Boterill et al 2020). Not understanding each other's languages can create problems between people ([see section on ESOL and Languages](#)). It is important also to acknowledge and learn from problems in the context of community and integration in Scotland.

Creativity

Creative intercultural work is key to increasing trust and connections between New Scots and receiving communities and addressing problems linked to discrimination and negative narratives about New Scots. At the social level, cultural work creates opportunities for shared experiences; gives voice to experiences that might be hard for receiving communities to grasp; and offers a counter to stereotypical narratives of migration and dependency. Creative work can also be uplifting and give New Scots a renewed sense of value in terms of their role in society, supporting them to feel part of “making a piece of communal work that could celebrate and create conversation and create ownership of that experience.” (Tam, community group)

Such work, however, is difficult to maintain if funding is limited, short-term or difficult to navigate. While creativity and culture are considered important in NSRIS as part of Communities, Culture and Social Connections, integration work specifically based on arts and culture is critical to intercultural dialogue and should be further supported and prioritised (Evans 2020). Many respondents across different sectors acknowledge that these are difficult times, featuring financial uncertainty and a ‘cost of living’ crisis, and as a result many cultural venues and arts-based initiatives are closing or reducing the scope of their work.

In this context, it is vital to understand creative work related to the integration of New Scots as something which benefits the broader communities in which New Scots live – not as something competing for scarce resources with other creative work. Creativity as a way of working, as an approach to resolving and transforming difficulties, is also a resource which is commonly found among many of the NSRDP projects observed and which can bring benefits and learning to the broader network of community projects across Scotland. Wider perspectives and reflections on scarcity, needs and resources in the context of NSRIS are presented in Part 3.

As we have seen so far throughout this report, integration is a multifaceted, complex, dynamic and ongoing process involving intercultural dialogue and negotiation; creative, cultural and art-based initiatives are key to such dialogue, bringing together the many resources of New Scots and receiving communities and meeting many different cultural and social needs.

Recommendations: Communities, Culture and Creativity

- 52 Encourage, support and fund community development approaches as a resource for delivering and planning successful integration
- 53 Further prioritise the inclusion of the arts and culture in the New Scots theme of 'Communities, Culture and Social Connections'
- 54 Support and develop more flexible and long-term funding initiatives (see currently ongoing work of Leah Black & EVOC looking at longer-term funds for community projects)
- 55 Allow free bus passes to New Scots seeking asylum, to help them access services and integrate better in Scottish communities.
- 56 Faith communities should be present as an important element in NSRIS 3, as part of a commitment to support community development practices which build bridges between communities and develop integration through strong interpersonal and inter-organisational connections and networks.
- 57 The existing resources provided by faith communities should be recognised and supported by NSRIS 3 as significant parts to the integration landscape across Scottish communities. Part of this recognition could involve a validation of the language of welcome present across all faiths which urge people to "welcome the stranger", which is a cultural resource that can be used by a wide diversity of communities across Scotland.
- 58 Following the evidence of NSRIDP sports-based projects, the critical language and role of sport in community integration – sport understood and promoted as a powerful and empowering language of the body – should be fully incorporated into NSRIS 3.

3

Part 3



Wider Perspectives

The final part of our report builds on the interconnected aspects of integration and related recommendations discussed in Part 2, placing them in a wider conceptual and political context. Firstly, we present a re-framing of integration which builds on Ager and Strang's Indicators of Integration framework (Ager and Strang 2008). This expanded framework is explained as a series of conceptual points and then illustrated as a diagram. Next, we consider wider implications and interpretations of community needs and resources in the context of NSRIS and the current times of increasing austerity. The report then looks at comparisons between the NSRIS and the integration policies of other countries and what we can learn from international comparisons. Finally, policies and work developing in Scotland are connected to wider international bodies and frameworks such as the EU and UNESCO, informing considerations related to the key responsibility of adhering to a human rights-based approach to integration and refugee protection.

Next steps: New Scots in an international context

Learning from international comparisons

The University of Glasgow’s comparative research concerning integration policies found that, at the end of its second iteration, Scotland’s NSRIS remains a progressive, rights-based integration strategy compared to other equivalents (a summary of our analysis can be found in Table 1 below). Scotland’s NSRIS is particularly impressive in its coverage of the challenges facing refugees and asylum seekers and its rights-based approach. It was also the only strategy analysed that combined both people seeking asylum and refugees under an inclusive umbrella term (‘New Scots’). In addition, the NSRIS clearly sets out the need for integration to be ‘two-way’, stating that integration is “a long-term, two-way process, involving positive change in both individuals and host communities, which leads to cohesive, diverse communities” (Scottish Government 2018, 10).”

Where the NSRIS can learn from other strategies is in how to deliver a more person-centred approach, ensure cross-sectoral collaboration is written into the strategy and include considerations regarding host communities in the context of integration (see Table 1 below). Finland, for instance, guarantees migrants personalised integration plans based on the Finnish Government’s Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration if they are unemployed or their initial assessment deems it would be beneficial for them. Individualised integration plans are drawn up jointly between the person to whom it will pertain and the local Employment and Economic Development Office. The aims of the integration plans are to provide “advisory and guidance services as well as an individual and gender-sensitive integration pathway building on the immigrant’s needs and competence” (MEAEA 2016, 32). Meanwhile, the Berlin Comprehensive Program for integration sets out the tasks of the various branches of the Senate Department to ensure cross-sectoral planning on integration in the city. The program for Berlin also explicitly considers the role of local communities in the process of integration and what can be done to minimise potential tension. For example, the program for Berlin states that “more offers for processing resentment and anti-democratic attitudes in the receiving society are also required. Integration only functions as a mutual process. This also includes questioning values, initiating dialogues on this topic, and appreciating diversity as a form of enrichment” (SCIMBS 2018, 73, emphasis added).

	Refugees & Asylum specific	Inclusion of people seeking asylum	Two-way integration	Awareness of specific challenges facing refugees	Emphasis on cross-government approach	Person-centred approach
England	No	No	No	No	No	No
Scotland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Partial
Finland	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
New Zealand	Yes	No	No	Yes	Partial	No
Malta	No	Partial	No	No	Partial	Partial
Berlin	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Table 1 shows a summary of our analysis of the various integration policies

Recommendations: Learning from international comparisons

Based on a comparison with other similar strategies, the next iteration of the NSRIS would be improved by:

- 63 Considering the role of communities in more detail and setting out how engagement and learning activities can take place following community development models of best practice.
- 64 Developing a cross-sectoral approach to integration which sets out the different roles for Scottish Government departments, with particular focus on enabling a fractal approach to partnership working. Such an approach would go from the New Scots partnership at a national level to similar, scaled models of partnership between third sector, public sector and refugee groups in all local authorities and areas of resettlement.
- 65 Including more information on what multidirectional, intercultural integration means in practice.
- 66 Investigating how a more person-centred approach can be implemented across Scotland.

Next Steps – international context and support for NSRIS

There are a wide range of international instruments supporting the work of an intercultural, restorative and trauma informed approach to New Scots Refugee Integration. These provide abundant resources of knowledge and practice which can inform NSRIS 3. They also constitute mechanisms of support for the Scottish Government in its continued commitment to rights-based integration work, against the trend in migration policies developed by the UK Government.

Firstly the [Refugee Convention](#) and the [European Convention on Human Rights](#) provide a baseline for the rights of those seeking asylum and those granted refugee status or humanitarian protection. New Scots aligns with both these conventions in its rights-based approach.

Secondly, the International Convention on Human Rights is the basis for each of the domains of New Scots 2 (see table 2 below).

NSRIS 2 Domain	Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Needs of Asylum Seekers	Article 14(1) "Everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution."
Employability and Welfare Rights	Article 23(1) "Everyone has a right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment." Article 22 "Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realisation [...] of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality."
Housing	Article 25(1) "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services."
Education	Article 26(1) "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all based on merit."
Health and Wellbeing	Article 25(1) "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services."
Communities, Culture and Social Connections	Article 27 "Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits."

Table 2 shows the various domains of NSRIS 2 and the articles of the Convention of Human Rights that form the basis of those domains.

Thirdly, UNHCR is the international body providing guidance on the respect for and responsibilities towards the Refugee Convention, to which the U.K. is a signatory. UNHCR is also responsible for the monitoring of the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees, and it sustains a wide body of Special Rapporteurs (SR) including the SR Refugees. Current and former mandate holders are listed [here](#). Many of the remits of SRs cover areas related to the processes of rights-based integration. These reports, requests for evidence and mandates allow for international solidarity and support, together with accountability from the international community for the work of integration.

Furthermore, the UNESCO mandate covers many of the areas related to the community-based approaches to integration and intercultural dialogue as well as education, culture, heritage and conflict transformation. The work of ArtLab, and the many reports produced on how member states, including the UK, might work to address racism, gender-based violence, multilingualism, intercultural dialogue, cultural restoration, indigenous rights, freedom of expression and peace building are critical resources for Scotland as the New Scots work develops and matures in stature.

Finally, the European Union provides examples of integration relevant to Scotland (as detailed earlier – [internal link here to “Learning From comparison” section above](#)), as well as rights-based legislative bodies such as the ECHR which support the principles behind much of NSRIS. Funding linked to the EU – such as AMIF funding – can also hugely benefit integration work in Scotland moving forward towards NSRIS 3.

Ensuring Scotland also plays a role as a good regional partner and upholds international responsibilities is critical to a global ecology of integration including family reunion and support for countries directly receiving mass evacuations.

Recommendations: International Dimensions of NSRIS

- 67 Regular and planned submissions should be made by the New Scots Core group, with evidence and reports on the monitoring, accountability and best practice developed within the devolved Scottish contest, in relation to human rights-based approaches to integration as supported by international conventions and instruments.
- 68 UNHCR Special Rapporteurs should be regularly invited to visit New Scots work as part of the provision of their own independent reports for submission to the Human Rights Council of the United Nations.
- 69 The New Scots Partnership should continue to work closely with the UNESCO Chair for Refugee Integration at the University of Glasgow, and should also widen this work to include all of Scotland’s UNESCO Trail. The U.K.’s UNESCO Ambassador and the UNESCO National Commission should be invited to support its work with New Scots and incorporate appropriate examples into its reporting to UNESCO general assembly, on behalf of Scotland as a devolved nation.
- 70 Scotland should work actively as a regional government to promote the work of New Scots to the international community, in particular sustaining and developing links with the EU.

Reframing understandings around integration, needs and resources

In this section we offer a re-framed interpretation of needs and resources in the context of refugee integration, in order to support a culture which moves beyond discourses of insufficiency and scarcity; in doing so, we identify resources and opportunities which are held in common by New Scots and receiving communities and can help support processes of integration.

Needs

The research underpinning this document has shown that there are key needs repeatedly mentioned by New Scots, staff in organisations across many sectors as well as by other stakeholders. Such needs recur across interrelated aspects of integration; where they are not met, the integration of New Scots is impeded. Key needs identified in this report include:

- Adequate housing provision, which is delivered with care and accountability.
- More language resources such as interpreting and translation
- More information in languages other than English
- Increased education provision in key areas such as ESOL and scholarships.
- Recognition of the skills, knowledge and resources which New Scots have; and support for these to be used and shared with and in receiving communities.
- Improved access to transport, specifically free bus travel for people seeking asylum.
- Safe places to live, work, learn and worship that are free from discrimination.
- Funding bodies and models need to:
 - a) Be more flexible: taking into account the reality of 'firefighting', the many unpredictable crises which affect different sectors working with New Scots, and the fact that community development work involves iterative co-design and co-creation.
 - b) Be more long term: long-term funding is hard to come by and that, as a result, conducting strategic, future-focused work is hard to achieve.

It is important to recognise that the needs related to integration are interconnected, as are the different aspects of the dynamic process of integration. However, while this recognition supports a holistic and collaborative approach to cross-sector work supporting integration, it does not provide a conceptual framework which helps to counter prevalent socio-political narratives which conflate need with needy. Such narratives depict asylum seekers and refugees as 'illegal migrants' who claim resources which rightfully belong to 'natives'. An integral part of the UK's Hostile Environment repeatedly associated with the current UK asylum system, these narratives constitute an intangible 'culture of disbelief' with tangibly negative effects on the possibility and process of integration.

The abovementioned culture of disbelief is based on accepting scarcity as a prevailing reality. This generates a narrative of competition over resources (Mehta et al. 2019) which in turn contributes to conflictual intercultural encounter. The language of hostility, disbelief and othering prevalent in this cultural landscape is used to identify who is more 'deserving' of scarce resources (Aldegheri 2022 p.210).

While not denying the reality of scarcity (particularly in times of increasing poverty, homelessness and fiscal uncertainty across the UK), it is essential to point out that scarcity-based political choices - such as those framed as 'austerity reforms' or 'cuts' - have been clearly linked to dominant narratives which centre around receiving communities having to 'defend scarce local resources against racialized incoming others, contributing to an increase in boundary-making and narrowing of the category of deserving citizen' (Askins 2016 p. 3). Scarcity, then, can be seen as a set of assumptions generated by political choices, as well as a reality experienced by people from both New Scots and receiving communities. This shifts the parameters of arguments around whether super-diversity increases conflict, especially in an age of austerity (Meer and Modood 2014), and places both refugees and receiving communities as sharing the negative consequences of austerity politics.

Building on this understanding, our report widens out the approach to conceptualising needs in the context of integration, placing scarcity alongside and not instead of available resources. In this way, the picture becomes one of complexity and increased possibility, instead of oppositional binaries. This approach is supported by - and builds on - the Indicators of Integration framework developed by Ager and Strang (2008) which informs much of the NSRIS. In this model we have a framework where areas key to integration (such as housing, employment, education and safety) are clearly presented as being to basic rights as well as basic requirements, thus contributing to a discourse where wider meanings relate to the concept of 'needs'.

Our report calls for a multifaceted understanding of needs in the context of integration. Looking again at the key needs listed above, it is clear that many are also experienced as pressing by people in receiving communities who are contending with homelessness, poverty, unemployment, discrimination and ill-health. We propose that NSRIS 3 deliberately moves beyond a discourse which understands needs as part of a wider socio-political narrative related to scarcity. Rather, we suggest a re-framing of needs as:

- Pointing to basic rights which are shared by New Scots and receiving communities (rather than as something to compete over) - and which constitute a common ground on which to build the work of integration.
- Relating to an abundance of resources which are present across both New Scots and receiving communities - and which are already being actively engaged as part of the work of integration.

Resources

We have seen that where socio-political and cultural narratives privilege competing claims - based on premises of scarcity, othering and struggle over resources - intercultural encounter is more likely to see people enter into patterns of conflict. This conflict prevents people from examining the root causes of scarcity, or identifying what resources are available (Aldegheri 2022). The research underpinning our report repeatedly shows that New Scots bring many skills, resources and types of knowledge (see for example the section on Employment). There are also abundant resources available across Scotland's communities to support the work of integration (as illustrated in the section on Community, culture and creativity) as well as an abundance of hospitality and creativity (shown in the Vignette which opened this report)

This abundance, these resources, are relational - meaning that they pertain to ways of being in relation to other people, rather than the control or ownership of things in a particular place or time (Aldegheri 2022 p.211). They also operate according to models based on exchange (of narratives, of skills, of knowledge, of volunteer time, of experience, of determination) rather than competition.

While there is a need for migration policy to increase opportunities for reciprocity and exchange (Strang and Quinn 2021), it is also important to celebrate existing programmes and spaces and focus on further enabling the existing work of the many initiatives where volunteering and sharing initiatives have created reciprocal experiences (see Hirsu and Bryson 2017). What follows is an outline of the resources which exist across Scotland, and which should be supported and valued by NSRIS 3:

- Time, volunteers and good practice. These constitute a need for many projects, but are also available as a resource among many practitioners and communities.
- Peer learning and support between New Scots themselves. New Scots are experts by experience. People who have been through the asylum process hold a wealth of knowledge and expertise, and in many projects, this is approached as a resource which can be used to support other New Scots and provide guidance as well as help in the process of integration:

“Because many people who came from that background are extremely knowledgeable, experienced. Experience itself is a huge knowledge.”

(Hakim, community group)

- Knowledge of good practice, networks and connections are abundant in communities; a community development approach to integration work means being able to see these resources and engage with them:

“So there are good connections in the city, I think, people are all working collaboratively well and we’ve all got our people that we’ll go to first, and then together we just do what needs to be done, as much as we can.”

(Meg, Higher Education)

- Creativity as a key resource in participatory community development approaches, and extends to finding creative ways to approach, find and use resources to overcome problems. This kind of creativity is able to see beyond the parameters of scarcity-based narratives and leads to transformative initiatives – for example:

“Our play project is set up around waste building materials. So, our play projects are about children playing, designing, building, exploring with old pallets and drainpipes and tarpaulins and bricks and buckets, making dens and marble runs and problem solving. All of that is just ‘waste’. So, when we talk about waste it is not rubbish, it is just excess.”

(Tam, community group)

- Decades of experience – particularly in Glasgow – of approaches rooted in practices of welcome, creativity and intercultural communication which change the perceived paradigm of what is available, shifting from scarcity and unmet needs to abundance and resources:

“This is a neighbourhood where people don’t have much, but we put out the call for furniture and look – we have a hall full of things now, and people come here and find more than just furniture, they find a community and help and care.

(Barbara, community group)

- A strong sense of social justice in communities and projects across Scotland, showing that integration flourishes when the resources and needs of receiving communities are also considered and addressed – alongside those of New Scots – from a rights-based and social justice perspective:

“The project [...] utilised what we are rich in, which is resources and space, and our belief in social justice and people. [...] One of the other things about [our] project for us is that it isn’t just only open to people from the New Scots community, but it is open to Scottish, white Scottish people who have Scottish as their first language [as well as] to people who have just arrived.”

(Tam, community group)

The understanding of integration as a process which must involve receiving communities as well as New Scots is strengthened by this re-framing of needs and resources. Integration can be seen even more clearly as work centred around building relationships, trust and peace in order to meet needs which benefit all communities: it is not just New Scots who need safe and adequate housing, accessible transport, trauma-sensitive access to healthcare.

Integration, when situated in this renewed perspective on community needs and resources, can be seen as one element in the wider landscape of community development, education, healing and peace-building. In other words, when integration is viewed as a process and is approached as participatory community development, it becomes easier to frame communities as places where resources are shared; where the decline of those resources is a matter of concern for all, not a matter of blaming incomer; where creativity and intercultural communication support ways of building new connections and collaborations to the advantage of all members of the community.

Recommendations: Recommendations: Reframing understandings around integration, needs and resources

- 59 Re-frame understandings of needs and resources in the context of refugee integration, moving away from narratives of scarcity and competition towards wider perspectives where needs and resources are held in common by both New Scots and receiving communities, and form the basis for integration.
- 60 Recognise that needs relevant to integration are related to human rights shared by both New Scots and receiving communities.
- 61 Acknowledge, value and support the resources for integration which are present across Scotland. Especially abundant are those resources which are relational; connected to knowledge, good practice, skills and human capital; based on exchange rather than competition.
- 62 In order to best support such initiatives, while accepting the reality of restricted fiscal circumstances, NSRIS 3 should push for funding bodies and models to be reviewed so that they are:
- A) More flexible: taking into account the reality of 'firefighting' the many unpredictable crises which affect different sectors working with New Scots, and the fact that community development work involves iterative co-design and co-creation.
 - B) More long term: there is a strong sense amongst refugee-led organisations and the rest of the sector in general that long-term funding is hard to come by and that, as a result, conducting strategic, future-focused work is hard to achieve.

Re-framing integration

In this final section we offer an expanded conceptual framework that widens understandings of integration. Key concepts and learnings from all parts of our report are drawn into this wider conceptual framework, which builds on NSRIS 2 and seeks to inform NSRIS 3.

The NSRIS 2 is underpinned by the 'Indicators of integration' model developed by Ager and Strang (2008). This model considers a person to be integrated once they "(i) achieve public outcomes within employment, housing, education, health etc [...] equivalent to those achieved within the wider host communities; and (ii) are socially connected with members of a [...] community with which they identify, with members of other communities and with relevant services and functions of the state" (Ager and Strang 2004, 5).

The framework is unique in that it sets out integration as both a goal and a process, built on the understanding that integration requires refugees to be able to access certain rights. It also recognises that language, cultural knowledge and safety are key facilitators of integration. Ager and Strang's Indicators framework presents ten domains split between four groups, as shown in Figure 1 below:

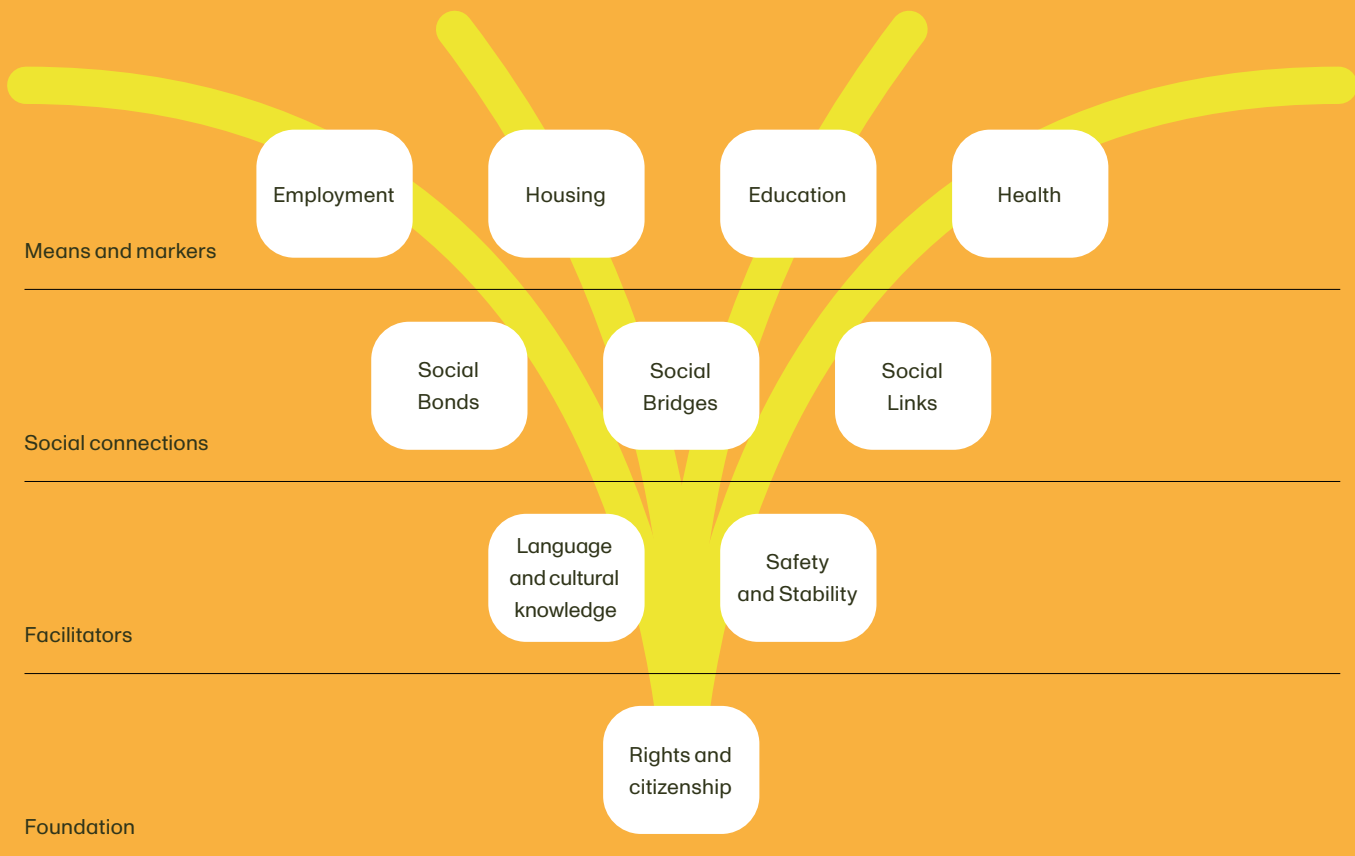


Figure 1: Indicators of Integration Frameworks (Ager & Strang 2008)

The Ager and Strang (2008) model views refugees' rights as the foundation that underpins all aspects of integration. Rights are understood in a broad sense and encompass both first order rights (e.g. human dignity, equality, freedom of cultural choice, justice, security and independence) and second order rights which are derived from the first (e.g. rights to citizenship, family reunion and equality). The framework then understands facilitators, such as language and cultural knowledge, as being essential for providing various social connections.

While most integration policy is generally defined by sector outcomes (e.g. the means and markers of integration), this model emphasises how “social relationships are at the core of a sense of belonging for both refugees and non-refugees. These range from superficial acquaintances to relationships with close family and friends, providing intimacy and emotional support” (Strang and Quinn 2021, 330).

The research presented in this report is informed by the Ager and Strang (2008) model of integration; it also seeks to further adapt this framework. Where Ager and Strang's (2008) model starts with citizenship and rights, we propose that a series of foundational groups must first be laid concerning the concept of integration itself. We have therefore developed an expanded conceptual framework, designed to be used alongside the Ager and Strang (2008) model, adding four further groups through which we understand integration.

First and foremost, we hold as a core principle that [the work of integration should be restorative in intent](#). This is to say, in order to bring about integration, there is a need for the “restoration” of the rights, histories, and subjectivities of the displaced as well as a rejection of the violent bordering strategies that continue their marginalisation. The principle of restoration allows the concept of integration to be (re)positioned in opposition to violent bordering strategies and assimilationist practices couched in the semantics of integration.

Following on from the principle that integration should be restorative in intent, we argue that integration should first recognise and redress the injustices that refugees face in their migration journeys. While most government policy and models of integration view integration and border control as being separate issues, we understand these to be two sides of the same coin. Though it is now commonly understood that the border is enforced in spaces not represented by a border line (see Fisher 2018), it is less well-recognised that the temporalities of the border are also fluid (see Andersson 2014; Griffiths 2014; Rotter 2016). Nevertheless, the effects of the border leave long-lasting marks regardless of whether Leave to Remain has been granted. Moreover, depending on the approach taken by the receiving state, the means through which integration is imagined and performed can also become an extension of the border. A rights-based approach towards integration must therefore be based on a [migration justice approach](#).

Additionally, a rights-based approach requires a [robust accountability framework](#) to ensure that those who seek sanctuary are not abandoned and made destitute by the state. Integration is frequently understood as an ‘individualised’ process that obfuscates the structural barriers which inhibit refugees' participation in society (see Mulvey 2014; Schinkel 2018). In attending to the governance of integration and ensuring accountability of those providing key services, integration more clearly becomes the shared responsibility of national government, local government, contracted service providers, receiving communities and joining groups.

Next, while integration is increasingly understood as a process (Collyer et al 2020), what this process entails is generally less well-understood – although it is also often noted that integration is a ‘two-way process’ without a clear endpoint. Here we identify [three key aspects of integration as a process](#).

- The process of integration should be [intercultural](#) to enable the positive evaluation of cultural difference and equal recognition of different cultural groups, as well as providing the means to be critically capable of engaging with such differences (Byram, 2008; Phipps, 2013, 2014). Key to intercultural processes is the creation of opportunities and spaces for equitable interaction of diverse cultures through dialogue and mutual respect (UNESCO 2005).
- A [trauma-informed](#) process is needed to ensure inclusion of refugees in the design of integration practices as well as ensure their engagement is agentic. Derived from the

Scottish Government's (2021) trauma-informed practice toolkit, such a trauma-aware process would ensure (i) the safety of actors involved in integration practices, (ii) the establishment of trust through organisational transparency, (iii) the promotion of refugee agency through supporting them to establish and achieve their goals, (iv) collaboration between refugee and community groups, local government and national government, (v) empowerment of refugee and community groups and local government to develop local integration plans and initiatives.

- Integration must be understood as a [dynamic process involving many actors](#). The Covid-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine, especially, have shown the need for integration to encompass both initial stages of welcome and long-term goals amidst changing socio-political contexts. Partnership working at multiple scales is, again, key in ensuring integration can remain a dynamic process.

Accompanying these three foundational groups are a series of [practices](#) through which we argue that integration can be enacted. These practices form the fourth foundational group of our conceptualisation of integration.

- We need [multilingual practices of integration](#) to give space for the presence of multiple languages in communities. Such multilingual practices will encourage the learning of languages spoken in communities and reduce fear of speakers of languages other than English.
- [Practices of intercultural dialogue](#) can offer a means through which cultural differences can be explored and collaboration enhanced. Practices of intercultural dialogue can also be a means through which quality relationships and connections are developed. Such relationships need to include but extend beyond refugee-led organisations and Local Authorities, to include employers and spaces where civic participation occurs (such as parent councils and health forums).
- The research in this report highlights that the work of integration can be uncomfortable and challenge existing assumptions and practices. Moreover, resources can be stretched in the face of the mass evacuation work that has taken place. [Practices of conflict transformation](#) are required that focus on promoting constructive processes focusing on the following four dimensions: (i) personal (minimising effects of social conflict), (ii) relational (improve communication and understanding), (iii) structural (understand root causes of the conflict), and (iv) cultural (identify cultural resources for handling conflict).
- [Peace-building practices](#) at a community level are essential for building trust between local actors and between local actors and government. Such practices emphasise the need to ensure participation of those who might otherwise be left out of integration initiatives and often utilise creative participation methods.
- [Practices of community learning and development](#) are essential for enabling sustainable and restorative integration to flourish, as well as enhancing community resilience. These practices should aim to be inclusive, transformative and should emphasise the multi-directionality of integration.

We present these foundations – or roots – in Figure 2 by visualising our framework of integration as a tree. We understand the 'means and markers of integration' of Ager and Strang's model to be the leaves of the tree. They are the aspects of integration that are most visible, yet they are not the core of what the tree is (though nonetheless essential). Next, the social connections are understood as branches as they connect the leaves to the tree's trunk and assist the tree in spreading its coverage. The facilitators are the trunk of the tree – helping the tree grow tall – while the foundations of rights and citizenship can be found at the tree's base.

Next, we present our restorative principle of integration as the tree's taproot. It is the first root to grow of the tree's primary roots and emerges from the tree's germinated seed. We then present our understanding of integration as being based on approaches of migration justice and accountability as the heart roots of the tree which grow from the base of the trunk in search of water. Our three aspects of integration as a process are represented by the lateral roots of the tree – these roots form a network that support the tree. Lastly, our

practices through which integration can be enacted are represented by the tree's capillary root system. These roots form a vast network and aim to cover a large surface area. Their growth pattern adapts to the soil types and weather conditions they encounter – their adaptability being key to the tree's survival.

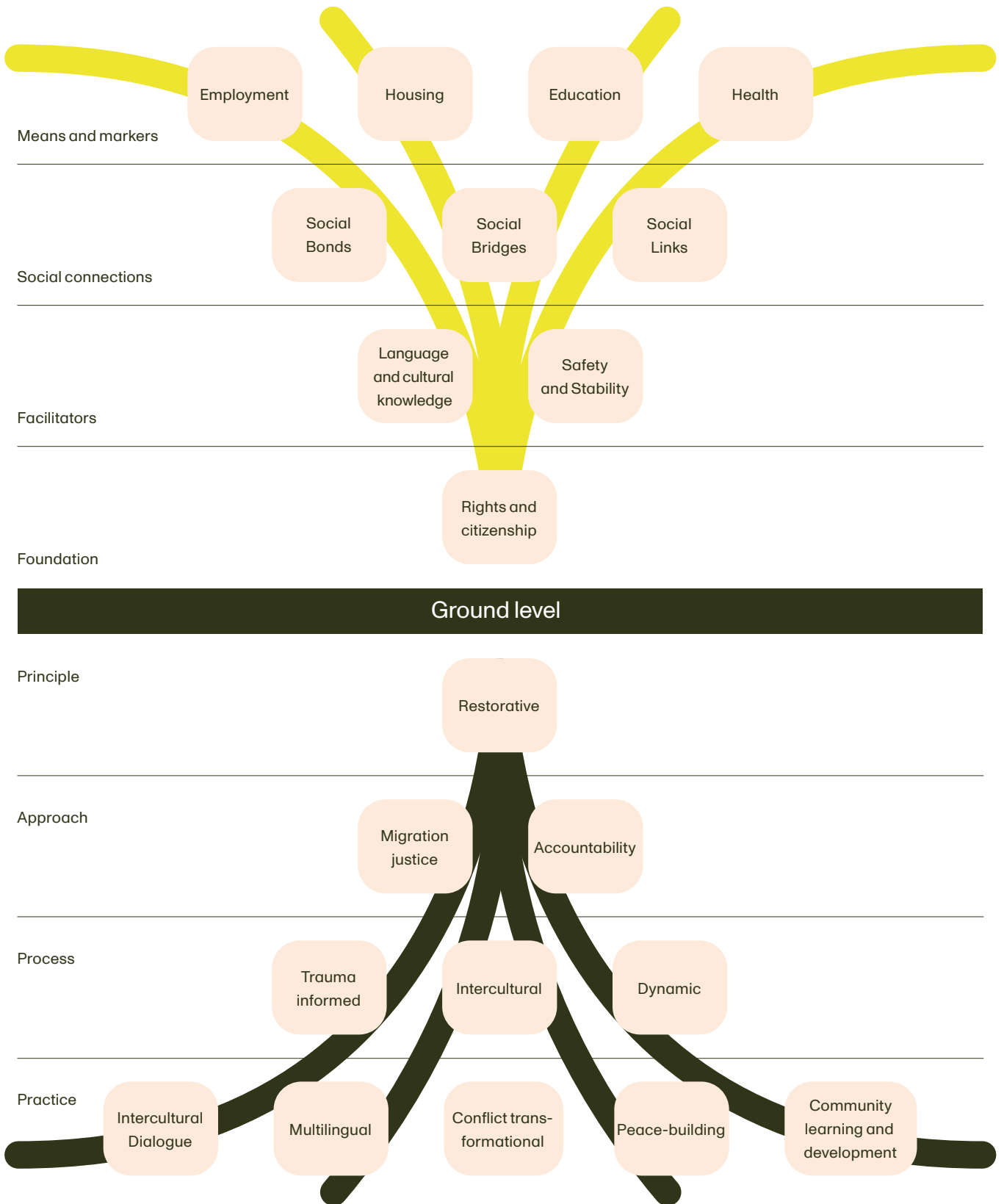


Figure 2: model illustrating an expanded understanding of integration

Overarching Recommendation: Re-framing Integration

The academic research undertaken for this report has led to re-framing the concept of integration based on the multi-lingual, multimodal and iterative practices of integration in communities and local authorities, as experienced by both individuals and collectives. This leads to the most important recommendation of this report, whereby NSRIS 3 should:

Re-frame integration to allow for greater quality and clarity in delivery and community practice.

This means understanding integration as:

- Work which is restorative in intent.
- Informed by rights-based approaches of migration justice and accountability
- A process which is trauma-informed, intercultural and dynamic
- Based on practices of intercultural dialogue, multilingualism, conflict transformation, peace-building, and community learning and development.

Afterword

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The New Scots strategy is remarkable in many respects, particularly when viewed in the broader environment in which it is implemented. We are at a moment when there are policies to view those who seek refuge “uninvited” as inadmissible; when recognition as a refugee can take two years and more; and prior to recognition employment is largely prohibited and meagre benefits provided. This environment creates emotional anguish within a population already suffering trauma, of displacement, if not also from witnessing or suffering violence. The prolonged delays in refugee status determination leads to loss of skill sets, vocational potential and opportunity to mix with local community. The economic landscape is marked by high inflation, energy and transportation costs, and an acute housing shortage. The Scottish strategy, in its most basic elements, mitigates this precarity with a response that is both humane and pragmatic. Scottish integration is extended “from day one” and explicitly includes asylum seekers as well as refugees. The inclusion into communities upon arrival, and not just once leave to remain has been granted, is particularly appropriate given that five of the top seven nationalities seeking asylum in the UK have an initial decision grant rate of above 85%.

Numerous other elemental aspects of the integration practice in Scotland are also worth replication elsewhere; that it is rights-based and empowers refugees and asylum seekers to know their rights and understand how to exercise them, giving them more control over their own integration. It puts focus and funding into integration as a two-way process: recognising that for integration to succeed, both refugees and local communities, their needs and resources, need to be included. These principles are reflected in the creativity and grass-roots nature of so many integration projects implemented to date.

The inclusive nature of the Strategy mirrors not only the need to be comprehensive but the multifaceted involvement and assets of the variety of actors in Scottish society. It is rare to see such a coming together, at the personal and institutional level, of national government, local authorities, academia, civil society, businesses, and refugee community led groups. It is this joined purpose that allows the New Scots integration strategy to progress since its inception in 2014.

While the Strategy is based on principles, such as conflict transformation, collaboration and commitment to monitoring, learning and evaluation of results and integration practice elsewhere, one must also pay tribute to the fortune that has facilitated the Strategy’s success and augurs well for its future: the warmth and solidarity of the Scottish public, and the benefits that their support bring to the integration experience of those forcibly displaced. This one can witness on a visit to Glasgow, where even the graffiti proclaims welcome to refugees.

UNHCR is delighted to see the long-standing dedication and serious intention to create a welcoming nation for those forcibly displaced. UNHCR stands ready to support these efforts whenever and wherever we can, and we encourage all local authorities, civil society, citizens, businesses, and the UK Government to be part of its success.

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